

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 42

Ragtime Piano Novelties of the 20's

COMPILED AND ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN



MINSTREL POSTER, ALABAMA, PHOTO BY WALKER EVANS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 42

Slipova - Patricia Rossborough
The Cat's Pajamas - Harry Jentes
Monkey Business - Sid Reinherz
Pianoilage - Henry Lange
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Doll Dance - Pauline Alpert
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Out of the South - Willard Robison
Dusting the Keys - Cecil Norman
Polly - Al Siegel
Dancing Dolls - Jack Wilson

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

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43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., 10023 N.Y., U.S.A.

Ragtime Piano Novelties of the 20's

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Ragtime Piano Novelties of the Twenties

RBF42

Compiled and Annotated by David A. Jasen

Novelty Ragtime flourished throughout the nineteen twenties. As in any form of composed music, there are always a few leaders. The RBF series has fully documented them with the appearance of ZEZ CONFREY: CREATOR OF THE NOVELTY RAG (RBF-28), THE SNYCO-PATED IMPRESSIONS OF BILLY MAYERL (RBF-30), ROY BARGY: PIANO SYNCOPATIONS (RBF-35), and NOVELTY RAGTIME PIANO KINGS: RUBE BLOOM and ARTHUR SCHUTT (RBF-41). Other anthologies in the series highlight yet other Novelty rags and like this present collection, feature expert interpretations and performances, none of which have ever been presented on LP before.

The twenties was not only the era which spawned the flapper, but also jazz bands with their attendant virtuosi. Ragtime piano music in its latest development, the Novelty Rag, had its virtuosi too. Most of them composed the music while a few were content to arrange and perform their highly individualized conceptions. This assemblage offers a nice balance of the composer/performer and the virtuoso performer.

Novelty ragtime requires tremendous skill and digital dexterity, as it is the most complex form of popular music. It started out by taking the French Impressionistic music and adding syncopation as well as creating a thick, syncopated texture as demanded by the piano roll arrangements. All of these elements required a thorough training in piano playing that only years of systematic study could produce.

The two major Novelty rag composers - Zez Confrey and Roy Bargey - are represented by their fine compositions in this collection as well as the rarely heard Harry Jentes, Sid Reinherz, Jean Paques, Jay Wilbur, Walker O'Neil and Willard Robison performing their own Novelty rags.

SIDE ONE

SLIPOVA was composed by famed Roy Bargey (1894-1974) whose Melodee piano roll performance has been reissued on RBF-35. The first recording of this unusual rag was made by studio pianist Frank Banta and composer Cliff Hess in 1923 (see Ragtime Piano Interpretations, RBF-24). This rare recording, made in England a decade later in August, 1933, by Patricia Rossborough, is the only other one ever made of this marvelous rag. The Rossborough performance, while dynamic and finely conceived, contains idiosyncratic and uncharacteristic endings of sections not in keeping with the original conception.

THE CAT'S PAJAMAS is the lovely invention of vaudeville pianist Harry Jentes (1887-1958) who made two performances each of this rag on both records and rolls. It is astonishing that such a popular favorite on stage didn't also do voluminous recording, but such is the case, with only three titles to his credit.

MONKEY BUSINESS was never copyrighted or published and only exists on this rare April, 1924 recording by its composer, the Boston, Massachusetts bandleader, Sid Reinherz. His piano style (which can also be heard on Ragtime Piano Originals, RBF-23 and on Piano Ragtime of the Teens, Twenties and Thirties, Vol. 2, Herwin 405), features a light, swingy touch, something of an oddity in Novelty ragtime performances. The bouncy lilt is most contagious!

PIANOFLAGE, Bargey's masterpiece, was performed in this September, 1922 recording by the then featured pianist with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra, Henry W. Lange. In just two years, Bargey was to take over that role. Lange was born in Toldeo, Ohio on July 20, 1895 and at this writing, is still alive there. He made an

early name for himself by composing the famous 20's tune, Hot Lips. He made piano rolls for Melodee and U.S. Music Rolls, sought after today for their interesting arrangements. In 1925, Lange organized a dance band which he successfully led for eleven years. They also recorded throughout the twenties. Lange's own venture into the Novelty rag field consisted of three compositions - CHOPIANO, CLASSIC-ANNA & SYMPHONOLA - all taken from the classics. Other Novelty rags include WIPPIN THE IVORIES and OH! YOU DARKIES.

RAGMAN'S EXERCISE was composed by publisher Harry D. Squires (1897-1961) in 1922. This, its only recording, was made in London, England in April, 1923 by Stanley C. Holt, a British pianist and dance band leader who recorded mostly Novelty ragtime piano solos. His one excursion into Novelty ragtime composition was entitled LOOSE FINGERS. This EXERCISE is an excellent example of how to practice Novelty runs and breaks. A clever way to demonstrate various components of the Novelty rag.

NICKEL IN THE SLOT was Zez Confrey's (1895-1971) brilliant 1923 conception. Frank Herbin, an American pianist, recorded this in London in January, 1924. Only two others recorded on 78 rpm. Willie Eckstein's version can be found on Ragtime Piano Interpretations (RBF-24), and Confrey's own on Zez Confrey: Creator of the Novelty Rag (RBF-28). Herbin's contribution is in varying the run on the first section each time he played it. The only contemporary recording of this magnificent rag is on RIP-ROARING RAGTIME (Folkways FG-3561).

HOT PIANO is an original Novelty rag from the incredible Belgian virtuoso, Jean Paques. It was his first solo recording in London, on January 5, 1928. He accompanied many singers on their recordings and played with Henry Hudson's Melody Man, which also had the distinction of featuring Sid Phillips on clarinet.

NOLA was the brainchild of Felix Arndt (1889-1918) who named this 1915 composition for his wife. This incomparable April, 1926 recording was made by Harry Parella and Ray Turner when they were on tour with Paul Whiteman's Orchestra in London. An exquisite

example of the Novelty approach to an earlier piano piece. Harry Parella was an extraordinary pianist who, like many other gifted pianists of the day, died from alcoholism in his personal twenties. Ray Turner, on the other hand, led a full professional life in all aspects of the music business, including twenty years as staff pianist with Paramount Pictures, but lent to other studios for their biographies of classical composers.

SIDE TWO

1 DOLL DANCE, the 1927 inspiration of Nacio Herb Brown (1896-1954), was the last main source of Novelty ragtime. The basic idea was used by countless composers hoping to score with their soundalikes. Pauline Alpert, whose version of Chopsticks can be heard on Ragtime Piano Interpretations (RBF-24), was a virtuoso who made few recordings, many piano rolls and was featured on radio. This rare recording dates from November, 1927.

2 RAG DOLL was Nacio Herb Brown's own 1928 follow-up to his previous hit. Billy Mayerl, England's premier Novelty ragtime composer / performer offers his splendid interpretation of this classic. It is unusual for a sequel to come near its forerunner, but Brown did the trick with this number. It was not only a hit in its own right, but further stimulated others to imitate.

3 DIZZY KEYS was bandleader-pianist Jay Wilbur's entry into Novelty ragtime. As far as can be determined, this recording by the English performer is his only piano solo.

4 OUT OF THE SOUTH gives Missouri-born pianist / singer / composer / bandleader Willard Robison (1894-1968) a chance to perform in a rare 1924 recording. He didn't copyright or publish this fine folk Novelty rag until two years later.

5 SCALE IT DOWN is a 1924 effort by English pianist Walker O'Neil, who only recorded one other Novelty rag, his Dustin' the Keys.

6 DUSTIN'THE KEYS was given its first performance on record, not by the above composer, but by another fine English pianist, Cecil Norman, who recorded it in December, 1923. O'Neil himself recorded in on April 24, 1924.

7 POLLY was J. C. Zamecnik's (1872-1953) very late 1929 contribution to the Novelty rag. He was noted for compiling scores for silent films and composed scores for talkies as well. He was staff composer for Sam Fox Music Publishing Company, headquartered in his hometown of Cleveland Ohio. Al Siegel's version is actually a medley during which he keeps coming back to the main theme. Siegel led a varied professional life, starting out accompanying his wife Sophie Tucker in vaudeville, then led jazz and dance bands. He formed the vocal departments at Paramount Pictures and M-G-M where he coached every star from Ethel Merman to Shirley Temple.

8 DANCING DOLLS is another medley, this time created by Englishman Jack Wilson, comprising the most famous Doll novelties of the twenties: DOLL DANCE, THE WEDDING OF THE PAINTED DOLL, and DAINTY DOLL. The middle tune was also written by Doll writer Nacio Herb Brown in 1929.

CREDITS

Programming and Notes: David A. Jasen

Remastering: Carl Seltzer

Documentation: RAGS AND RAGTIME, A MUSICAL HISTORY (Continuum Books), by Jasen and Tichenor.

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SIDE I

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SIDE II

Doll Dance - Pauline Alpert
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Out of the South - Willard Robison
Dusting the Keys - Cecil Norman
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FOLKWAYS Records

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Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

**RAGTIME PIANO NOVELTIES
OF THE 20's**

Compiled and Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

SIDE ONE

RF 42 A

Total Time: 22:27

1. Slipova - Patricia Rossborough
2. The Cat's Pajamas - Harry Jentes
3. Monkey Business - Sid Reinherz
4. Pianoflage - Henry Lange
5. Ragman's Exercise - Stanley C. Holt
6. Nickel in the Slot - Frank Herbin
7. Hot Piano - Jean Pagues
8. Noia - Harry Perella & Ray Turner

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**RAGTIME PIANO NOVELTIES
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SIDE TWO

RF 42 B

Total Time: 22:22

1. Doll Dance - Pauline Alpert
2. Rag Doll - Billy Mayerl
3. Dizzy Keys - Jay Wilbur
4. Out of the South - Willard Robison
5. Scale It Down - Walker O'Neil
6. Dusting the Keys - Cecil Norman
7. Polly - Al Siegel
8. Dancing Dolls - Jack Wilson

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