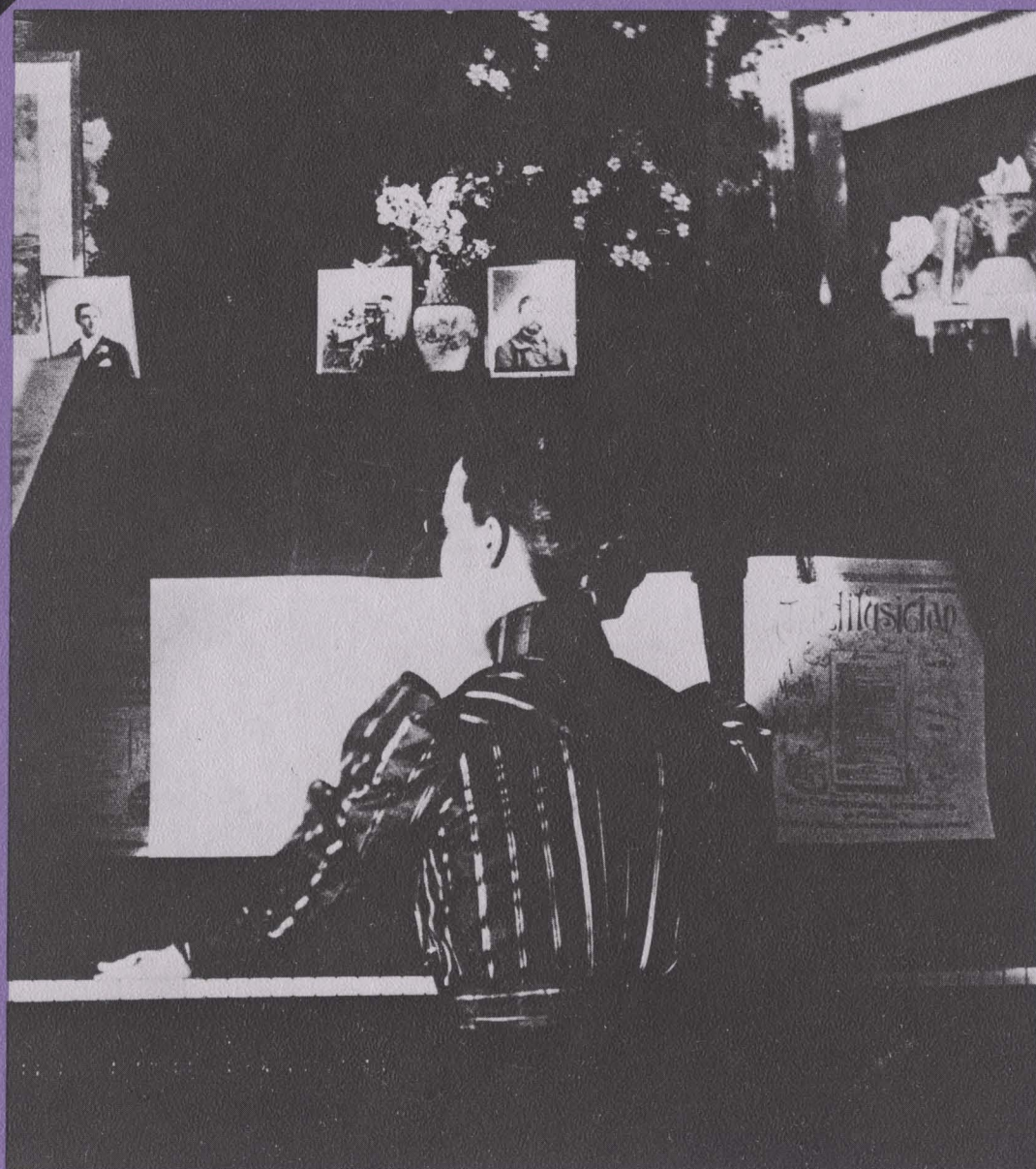


COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 49

Ragtime Piano Revival



PARLOR PIANO, CHICAGO, 1890

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 49

Ragtime Piano Revival

SIDE ONE — Interpretations

1. Harlem Rag (Turpin) — Wally Rose
2. Frog Legs Rag (Scott) — Ralph Sutton
3. Greenwich Witch (Confrey) — Morgan & Wilser
4. Raggedy-Ann Rag (Busch) — Brooke Pemberton
5. The Crazy Otto (medley) — Billy Rowland
6. Maple Leaf Rag (Joplin) — Marvin Ash
7. Canadian Capers (Cohen) — Ray Turner
8. Oriental Blues (Newlon) — Tony DeSimone Trio

SIDE TWO — Composer/Performers

1. Tin Pan Rag — Joe "Fingers" Carr
2. Oh! Willie, Play That Thing — Bill Krenz
3. The Old Professor — Dick Hyman
4. Solid Ivory — Jess Sutton
5. Coronation Rag — Winifred Atwell
6. Harpsichord Rag — Buddy Weed
7. Lightning Fingers — Ben Light
8. Brandon Bounce — Neville Dickie

CREDITS

Compiled & Annotated by DAVID A. JASEN

Remastering by Carl Seltzer

Documentation: RAGS & RAGTIME, A MUSICAL HISTORY,
by Jasen & Tichenor, Continuum Books, New York City.

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Ragtime Piano Revival

COMPILED & ANNOTATED BY DAVID A. JASEN

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 49

RAGTIME PIANO REVIVAL

RBF-49

Compiled & Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

The first ragtime revival started with the formation of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band in San Francisco in 1941. On December 19 of that year, they made their first recordings. One of them was Black and White Rag performed by their pianist Wally Rose as a solo with rhythm accompaniment. However well that disc sold, it wasn't until 1948 that the revival took hold nationally. And it was, strangely enough, a band recording that firmly established it. Capitol Records issued Pee Wee Hunt's orchestrated version of Euday Bowman's 12th St. Rag (see LATE BAND RAGTIME, RBF-39), and during the next three years, it was to sell over three million copies. That decided it: Capitol wasn't sure if it was Hunt, the rag, or dixieland jazz, but it tied up Hunt to a long and exclusive contract, as well as signing up every ragtime pianist and dixieland jazz band in sight. Because there weren't any ragtime pianists around, they pacted jazzmen to play rags and turned one of their Artist & Repertoire men, Lou Busch, into the greatest ragtime composer-performer-arranger in modern times: Joe Fingers Carr.

Other major record companies and a host of small, independent labels surfaced to record ragtime. The newly introduced 45 rpm disc became a major source for the ragtime revival of the late 40's and throughout the 50's. So, too, did the introduction of the Long Playing disc spinning at 33 1/3 rpm. Jazz record collectors started their own magazines and published articles on

the old ragtime composers and some old-time performers. Jelly Roll Morton's autobiography, MISTER JELLY ROLL, was published and his talk about ragtime's early days in New Orleans whetted the appetite for more of the real stuff. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis obliged with the first full-length study of ragtime published in their book, THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME. Not only did it concentrate on the ragtime composers, but it included the first discography of 78 rpm ragtime recordings as well as a piano rollography of rags and a listing of hundreds of other rags. This provided the impetus for the remainder of the 1950's, when all sorts of ragtime recordings were made and which stimulated the first generation of revival ragtime neophyte performers and would-be composers. All of this happening a good twenty years after commercial interest in ragtime had passed!

Since the beginning of the 1970's, ragtime records from the old 78 rpm discs have been made available through historical reissues on long-playing albums. This album is the first to reissue those rags which first appeared on the 45 rpm disc. It is divided into those performers who created their own interpretations of the rags on one side, and the other side devoted to those performers who also contributed their own newly created ragtime compositions.

SIDE ONE - Performers

HARLEM RAG by Tom Turpin (1873-1922), was the first published rag written by a black. It appeared on December 17, 1897 and was issued by Robert DeYong & Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Wally Rose (1913-), who had the musical taste to uncover and record for the first time many great and forgotten

rags of the past, was the rediscoverer of this extraordinary rag. This performance is still the best and became the basis for the newer generations of ragtime pianists who perform this number today.

FROG LEGS RAG was James Scott's first published hit. It was published on December 10, 1906 by John Stark & Son who had moved from St. Louis to New York City to be at the center of the popular sheet music publishing industry. A jazz pianist who was forced to become involved with ragtime, playing for Blesh and Janis those rags found during their travels doing research into its history, Ralph Sutton (1922-) was born in Hamburg, Missouri and grew up under the musical influence of Fats Waller. A superb sight-reader, Sutton dashed off a batch of rags for a recording session, interpreting them as he read them. His swinging has not been beat (and, what a beat!), and is a lesson in how to add feelings to the music printed on the page and to create an atmosphere which the composer had not originally intended. This is the extra something which connotes a highly creative performer.

GREENWICH WITCH was one of the first five brilliantly original Novelty rags composed by Zez Confrey (1895-1971) and published by Jack Mills Inc. in 1921. Trombonist and orchestra leader Russ Morgan would be the last person you'd think of to record piano rags, but in the mid 1950's, he and Eddie Wilser made a series of Novelty rag duets with rhythm accompaniment which remain a delight. Two-piano teams seemed to be a thing of the past when it was happily brought back on 45 rpm discs during the 50's.

RAGGEDY-ANN RAG was published in 1952 in the Chatsworth Music folio, Bar Room Piano Solos, devoted to the newly minted rags of Lou Busch. Busch, as Joe "Fingers" Carr, was a one-man ragtime revival, as he not only recorded more rags for the first time ever and composed more rags than anyone since the original ragtime era, but also inspired a future generation of ragtime enthusiasts and performers all over the world. One such young performer was Lincoln Mayorga whom Lou encouraged and even recorded. As "Brooke Pemberton," Mayorga performed this work under Lou's supervision. Over twenty years later, Lou and Lincoln formed The Brinkerhoff Piano Company, under which label they gave concerts and made a long-playing album.

THE CRAZY OTTO was the name of a medley of tunes put together by a German studio musician named Fritz Schulz-Reichel who called himself The Crazy Otto. It was a German production issued there by the Polydor label, featuring an out-of-tune honky-tonk piano and boisterous singers getting drunk-at-a-party chiming in from time to time. Somehow, Randy Wood, head of Dot Records, heard it and wanted his ragtime champ Johnny Maddox to do what is known as a "cover" recording of it. As the medley consisted of five compositions, each of them controlled by a different publisher, they couldn't get together to allow publication of what was recorded on this medley. As time was growing short and Maddox couldn't get a printed score, Dot gave the assignment to Perry Como's accompanist, the New York studio musician supreme, Billy Rowland. Having perfect pitch, Rowland copied the German version and adapted it slightly, making

a better recording of it. It was this version which sold over a million copies in the United States.

MAPLE LEAF RAG was the first million-selling ragtime composition issued in sheet music by John Stark & Son on September 18, 1899 in Sedalia, Missouri. One of the most recorded rags, it was a natural for the ragtime revival. Here we have Marvin Ash (1914-1974), another of the traditional jazz pianists, giving us a most swinging interpretation of this classic.

CANADIAN CAPERS was published by Roger Graham in Chicago on March 26, 1915. The composer credits were given to Gus Chandler, Bert White and Henry Cohen. For the true story of its composition, we refer you to RAGTIME PIANO INTERPRETATIONS (RBF-24). Ray Turner, who died in Los Angeles in 1976, was a phenomenal pianist who played for Paul Whiteman from July, 1925 to July 1927 and who became widely heard through his impeccable renderings on the sound tracks of Hollywood's many biographical movies of classical composers. He claimed his inspiration was from Roy Barge (see ROY BARGE: PIANO SYNCOPATIONS, RBF-35) and wanted to sound like him. As this recording shows, Ray developed his own original sound. His feeling for this material, combined with his prodigious technique and formidable skill as an arranger gives us this superb rendition.

ORIENTAL BLUES was published by the composer, Jack Newlon, of Glenside, Pennsylvania on May 25, 1933. He was an organist at a local movie house and taught the piano. What is so unusual about this very late rag is that its first section is practically a direct steal of the first section from the

Will Donaldson-George Gershwin Rialto Ripples Rag of 1917! However, this theme is better suited in this context and is a much neater and original rag overall. Its fabulously happy-go-lucky performance by Newlon's pupil, Philadelphia television studio musician, Tony DeSimone, is the exact recording used as the theme song on Ernie Kovacs' TV program when he originated his NBC-TV show from Philadelphia in the 1951-52 season.

SIDE TWO - Composer/Performers

TIN PAN RAG was composed by Lou Busch (1910-1979) who used the name Joe "Fingers" Carr to perform ragtime. While he published this rag in his 1952 folio, Bar Room Piano Solos, he didn't record it until the end of the 50's. It typifies the atmosphere of joy which was Lou's basic ragtime ingredient.

OH! WILLIE, PLAY THAT THING was the first of Bill Krenz' (1899-) rags during the fifties. It was recorded and published in 1952. Krenz was a studio musician in Chicago, after having a career as band pianist in such orchestras as Ray Miller's, Paul Biese's and Jean Goldkette's. His compositions combine the easy listening of the melodious Tin Pan Alley rags with the breaks of the later and more complex Novelty rags.

THE OLD PROFESSOR was one of several rags composed by Dick Hyman (1927-) during the fifties. This one was published under his own name on April 18, 1955. Usually, for ragtime, Dick hid under several pseudonyms (Knuckles O'Toole, Willie "The Rock" Knox, Arthur Charleston).

SOLID IVORY was probably composed just for this recording, as it was not copyrighted or published. Very little is known about Jess Sutton who, if the same man, wrote a few published Novelty rags in the twenties, never recorded them, disappeared until the mid-fifties to make this disc and then disappeared permanently again. From this recording, it seems a shame that this able performer never made anymore discs.

CORONATION RAG was composed and published on April 22, 1953 by Trinidad-born and educated Winifred Atwell (1914-1983). She had a superb classical piano training and came to London, England for a concert career in 1947. By a series of accidents, she was called upon to play boogie-woogie as a last minute replacement, achieved great acclaim, forsook her concert career and spent the rest of her professional life playing popular music mostly in England. She composed and recorded three original rags during 1952-53 of which this is one. She retired four years ago to Sydney, Australia where she died on February 28, 1983 at the age of 69.

HARPSICORD RAG was the only rag ever written, not for the piano, but for the harpsichord. It was published on April 13, 1955 and recorded around then by its composer, Studio pianist Buddy Weed (1918-). The first theme is extremely clever.

LIGHTNING FINGERS was probably composed just for this recording session by the prolific studio musician, Ben Light (1894-1965). His main occupation was as accompanist to singers, but he performed on record dates for every kind of popular music. He had a nice feel for ragtime. One of the accompanying instruments is a novachord.

BRANDON BOUNCE was composed and recorded as a 45 rpm disc by Englishman Neville Dickie (1937-). His lovely original shows his many influences, from Roy Bargy to Fats Waller. It was issued in 1969 and never before available in this country. The title refers to his place of birth, a village located in the county of Durham.

CREDITS

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Remastering by Carl Seltzer

Documentation: RAGS & RAGTIME, A MUSICAL HISTORY, by Jasen and Tichenor, Continuum Books, New York City.

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

RAGTIME PIANO REVIVAL

Compiled & Annotated by
DAVID A. JASEN

SIDE ONE
Interpretations

RF 49 A

1. HARLEM RAG (Turpin) — Wally Rose
2. FROG LEGS RAG (Scott) — Ralph Sutton
3. GREENWICH WITCH (Confrey) — Morgan & Wilser
4. RAGGEDY-ANN RAG (Busch) — Brooke Pemberton
5. THE CRAZY OTTO (medley) — Billy Rowland
6. MAPLE LEAF RAG (Joplin) — Marvin Ash
7. CANADIAN CAPERS (Cohen) — Ray Turner
8. ORIENTAL BLUES (Newlon) — Tony DeSimone Trio

Total Time — 19:57

Remastering by Carl Seltzer
Documentation: RAGS & RAGTIME, A MUSICAL HISTORY,
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RAGTIME PIANO REVIVAL

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SIDE TWO

Composer/Performers

RF 49 B

1. TIN PAN RAG — Joe "Fingers" Carr
2. OH! WILLIE, PLAY THAT THING — Bill Krenz
3. THE OLD PROFESSOR — Dick Hyman
4. SOLID IVORY — Jess Sutton
5. CORONATION RAG — Winifred Atwell
6. HARPSICORD RAG — Buddy Weed
7. LIGHTNING FINGERS — Ben Light
8. BRANDON BOUNCE — Neville Dickie

Total Time — 19:31

Remastering by Carl Seltzer
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