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# Building Blocks of a National Style: An Examination of Topics and Gestures in Nineteenth-Century American Music as Exemplified in Scott Joplin's Treemonisha

Elisabet Omarene de Vallee

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A NATIONAL STYLE: AN  
EXAMINATION OF TOPICS AND GESTURES IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN MUSIC  
AS EXEMPLIFIED IN SCOTT JOPLIN'S  
*TREEMONISHA*

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Arts

Elisabet Omarene de Vallée

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Music  
Music History and Literature

August 2017

This dissertation by: Elisabet Omarene de Vallée

Entitled: *Building Blocks of a National Style: An Examination of Topics and Gestures in Nineteenth-Century American Music as Exemplified in Scott Joplin's Treemonisha*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Arts in the College of Performing and Visual Arts in the School of Music, Program of Music History and Literature.

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

---

Deborah Kauffman, D.M.A., Research Advisor and Co-Chair

---

Jonathan D. Bellman, D.M.A., Research Advisor and Co-Chair

---

Carissa A. Reddick, Ph.D. Committee Member

---

Stephen Luttmann, M.L.S., M.A., Faculty Representative

Date of Dissertation Defense 27 June 2017

Accepted by the Graduate School

---

Linda L. Black, Ed.D.  
Associate Provost and Dean  
Graduate School and International Admissions



## ABSTRACT

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Even though America's musical elite undertook a veritable boycott of American talent during the nineteenth century, efforts to define concert life along Germanic lines did not prevent the development of a distinctly American sound. The groundwork was laid in the first half of the century in folk songs, national airs, and popular tunes from minstrel shows. It came to fruition after the Civil War, and by the 1920s, all of the elements were in place for an easily recognizable "American Style." The development of musical topics to evoke the idea of "American" was essential in establishing this style.

Most topical studies focus on European art music. This study explores the roots of the topics and gestures that underlie the music of the United States — through an examination of popular songs, folk music, social dances, salon music, and orchestral works — that demonstrates how specific gestures were transformed into topics: signifiers of various peoples, regions, or social classes. It also details barriers to the establishment of a uniquely American style, including the nation's cultural inferiority complex with regard to its European artistic heritage, the systematic dismissal of native-born talent, and the impact of critics, conductors, and patrons

on the development of an American school of composition. Racism and classism are also addressed, as they too were factors in the nation's search for its artistic identity.

A "Dictionary of Topics" specific to American music and a topical analysis of Scott Joplin's 1911 opera *Treemonisha* demonstrate not only how African-American *topoi*, Afro-Cuban rhythms, and European art music traditions combine in America's classical music, but also how this combination led directly to the formation of an authentically American sound. The identification of previously overlooked racial and religious topics in the opera deepen our understanding of Joplin's life, his beliefs, and ultimately contribute to a more nuanced understanding of *Treemonisha*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project of this scope is anything but an individual effort. While I may have done the research and writing, I owe a great deal to the people who inspired and supported my work as a musician prior to undertaking this dissertation.

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I would also like to thank the faculty and staff at the University of Northern Colorado School of Music, as well as the faculty at Loyola-New Orleans, Tulane University, and the State University of New York at Binghamton.

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And to my parents, James B. and Salome K. Smith, and my sister Linda Byron Collins: You were not able to live long enough to see me graduate or become the person I was meant to be, but you taught me important lessons about the pursuit of excellence — namely that it’s more than a lifelong journey, it’s a life well spent.

Most of all, I want to thank my husband, D. Reed Eckhardt, and our daughter Simone for their support, assistance, and enthusiasm. Music has always been my first love, and although there were days when I didn’t regret stepping away from it professionally, I missed it terribly. By allowing me to pursue graduate work at UNC, you gave me back a part of my life that I needed in order to become whole again. I’m also grateful for the financial support provided by my in-laws, William and Jeri Eckhardt, as well as their patience and understanding when I lugged my bassoon or “too many” books with me when we visited. And to Kaycee and Breckany Eckhardt, who I watched develop into strong and powerful young women: the support you offered from a distance was noticed and appreciated more than you may ever realize. Thanks for cheering me on and for all that you did to encourage, and entertain, your dad and younger sister during my time in grad school.

Thank you all for the role each of you played in leading me to this point in my life and career. You inspired me to always do my best, to never stop trying. You set the standards I live by and because you set the bar high, you helped me realize that my potential as an individual, as a musician, and as an arts professional is unlimited. In no small part, I owe my success in life to you. It is a privilege to dedicate this work in your honor.

## DISCLAIMER REGARDING THE USE OF INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE

This dissertation includes language that some readers may consider inappropriate. The decision to include inflammatory language was not made lightly.

I believe it is improper for one generation to clean up the language of the past or cover its prejudices, no matter how offensive its words or ideas might be today. The role of the historian is to present the facts – warts and all. In accepting that responsibility, we are obligated to allow the voices of the period to speak for themselves. After all, if we do not research and report what truly happened in a given era, we cannot accurately share that information. Nor can we learn from the past or appreciate how far society has advanced since then. Retaining the language of our subjects is, then, an essential first step in understanding and recreating the time period, the lives and values of our subjects, and our relationship to that past.

Because this document is an examination of musical topics – the gestures and elements that created a specifically American sound – it is also a study of the role race and class played in the development of that sound during the nineteenth century. Therefore, when I quote historic documents, I use the language of that time, even when doing so is painful to me. In narrative portions of the text, I use the terms for population groups that society has agreed are more suitable for our time.

To ignore the ignorance, prejudice, and insensitivity that defined life in the U.S. during the nineteenth century – and in many ways continues to exist – would rob this document of its academic integrity and its usefulness to scholars in the future.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

John Adams (1735–1826) predicted it would take three generations for the arts to become a central preoccupation of the newly established United States of America. During his lifetime, he implied, the country would have to focus on building a government and establishing the structural underpinnings of a new political system. Growing the economy would fall to his sons, whose generation would foster the sciences, business, and commerce. He predicted his grandchildren would be born during an era of prosperity and increasing leisure, and that their generation would be charged with nurturing the arts. He estimated the process might take seventy-five years; his timeline turned out to be rather prophetic.<sup>1</sup>

In 1837, some fifty-seven years later, Ralph Waldo Emerson rallied American writers to make their own Declaration of Independence from English literary traditions. He felt it was time that American writers broke free from “the courtly muses of Europe,” that they should instead take their cues directly from America and its way of life.<sup>2</sup> Tracing the timeline of early American literature does indeed reveal a nation in search of its voice. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a truly authentic American literary

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 12 May 1780 [electronic edition], *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>, accessed 9 December 2014. What he actually said was: “I must study politics and war, that my sons may have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, natural history and naval architecture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, tapestry, and porcelain.”

<sup>2</sup> Betty E. Chmaj, “Fry vs. Dwight: American Music’s Debate over Nationality,” *American Music* 3/1 (Spring 1985), 63.

voice didn't just appear; it developed slowly as writers shed their European roots and found ways to express themselves, with their own words. In short, it was a matter of evolution rather than spontaneous generation. The writings of the colonists were clearly heavy with European influence. How could it have been any other way? They grew up in the Old World: They read its writings and were trained in its schools. But as the styles of their forefathers were blended with the frontier experiences that were uniquely American, a distinct voice emerged in the works of authors like Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe. Their works, whether in poetry or prose, told stories that spoke directly to life in a fledgling country, thereby giving voice to a culture and a way of life unknown in the Old World.

Nativism, then, was an essential component of American literature from the start. As life in the major cities became predictable and mundane, American writers and poets increasingly turned their attention to the western frontier. They wrote stories about men such as Daniel Boone, who lived in the wilds of Kentucky in the early nineteenth century, creating in the process myths and legends of pioneering frontiersmen, Indians, and seafaring adventurers. This shift in literature proved enormously popular with the public, both at home and abroad. Readers loved a good yarn, and their ready acceptance of new works prompted a steady stream of historical fiction, novels, poems, and stories with larger-than-life characters squaring off in a battle for survival in a harsh new world.

By the time the writings of Emerson and his contemporaries began to give way in the mid-century to those of Longfellow, Dickinson, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Twain, a truly American literary voice had developed using dialect, settings, symbolism, and uniquely American characters. American literature had truly become a style unto

itself. What were the basic elements of this style? The glorification of the American experience, the land, and its people, and the American way of life – through stories, poems or other works written by Americans, for the enjoyment of American audiences.<sup>3</sup>

The same process took place in the development of American music, albeit one generation later than with literature. In the 1850s, William Henry Fry and other American composers began asking the same questions that Emerson had posed only a few years earlier. Frustrated with their collective inability to schedule performances of their music and to get a fair shake from the musical press, which continued to idolize European composers and performers, Fry adopted Emerson's strategy and called for a second artistic Declaration of Independence, this one specifically for music. The time was ripe, he said, for music to be written in the United States, by Americans; American music deserved to be performed – and performed regularly – by American orchestras, opera companies, and musicians for the enjoyment of American audiences.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to this time, music in the colonies and in the early Federal period closely echoed its counterparts in Western Europe. Composers wrote minuets, gavottes, and other popular dances of the day, as well as hymns and patriotic airs. Many vocal works were created by setting poems to preexistent music, as is the case with “The Star-Spangled Banner.”<sup>5</sup> In other cases, the music was wholly original, though still derivative of its

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Reeder, *Great American Authors Since 1650*, DVD, Centre Communications, Inc. for Ambrose Video Publishing, Inc. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hatch, “Music for America: A Critical Controversy of the 1850s,” *American Quarterly* 14/4 (Winter 1962), 579. Fry issued his “Musical Declaration of Independence” in 1852 in the pages of Horace Greeley's newspaper, *The New York Tribune*, where he was employed as music critic and general editor.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Scott Key wrote new lyrics to John Stafford Smith's “Anacreontic Song” in 1814 after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by British naval forces during the War of 1812. The melody, already well known throughout America, had many sets of lyrics. Key's version, based on his poem “Defence of Fort M'Henry,” became America's national anthem in 1931. Until that time, a number of songs were deemed equally appropriate for use in official ceremonies, including “Hail Columbia” and “My Country, Tis of Thee.” The competition for which song best represented the nation took place throughout most of the nineteenth century. “Hail Columbia” was used at most official functions, but “America the Beautiful” was the sentimental favorite in the years leading up to Congress' selection of “The Star-Spangled Banner” as the national anthem in 1931. The original melody was a drinking song written for the

European forebears.<sup>6</sup> As the nation was forming, a trend in music emerged that was similar to developments in literature. European-trained musicians such as Anthony Philip Heinrich flocked to American shores, forming the first generation of “nativist” composers. Heinrich, a German violinist who wore a coonskin cap and promoted himself as the “Log Cabin Composer,” attempted to write music depictive of his new home. Later, American-born composers such as Lowell Mason and George Frederick Root, although less “colorful” than Heinrich, played an equally important role in developing American music. A shrewd businessman, Mason did not cater to the elite, but composed music for the masses.<sup>7</sup> He wrote songs, hymns, anthems, and cantatas that were accessible to singers with modest skills, while laying the groundwork for European standards on this side of the Atlantic.<sup>8</sup> Root also wrote music for the masses, but his commitment to writing “the people’s song” led him to compose works that captured the values of rural America, such as *The Haymakers*, a cantata that pays tribute to farmers eager to bring in their crop before threatening weather ruins the harvest.<sup>9</sup>

Successive waves of foreign-born virtuosos, such as pianists Leopold de Mayer, Henri Herz, and Sigismond Thalberg soon followed, contributing variation sets on well-known popular and patriotic songs as well as “descriptive fantasias,” music that paid homage to larger cities and natural landmarks. In addition to these pianist-composers, virtuoso musicians such as Jenny Lind, Ole Bull, and Louis Antoine Jullien arrived in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century. These musicians made their

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Anacreontic Society, a men’s social club in London. According to historians at the Library of Congress, the original title was “To Anacreon In Heaven.”

<sup>6</sup> Early American efforts at opera emulated Italian music; symphonic music followed German models.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama* (New York: Schirmer, 1998), 288.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Broyles, *Mavericks and Other Traditions in American Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 40.

<sup>9</sup> Kingman, *American Music*, 288.

reputations in Europe, but it was in America that they made their fortunes. And like those who preceded them, they too attempted to write or perform music that depicted the new nation, through pieces that celebrated its unspoiled countryside or its major cities by incorporating well-known songs and patriotic airs such as “Yankee Doodle,” “Hail Columbia,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Oh! Susanna,” and other melodies that appealed to Americans’ growing sense of national pride.<sup>10</sup>

While the first great wave of American literary writers emerged in the 1830s and 1840s, the U.S. was still heavily invested in sending its most promising musicians to Europe to learn their craft in the first half of the nineteenth century. New Orleanian Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869) was among the first of these expatriate virtuosi. Born in Louisiana to parents who were newly minted U.S. citizens, Gottschalk was sent to Paris at age 13 to study at the Conservatory — where he was rejected before he had the chance to even audition, simply on the grounds that he was American.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, his talent was undeniable. He studied privately with Conservatory faculty members and performed before not only the crowned heads of Europe, but also for many of the leading figures of nineteenth-century music, including Chopin, Liszt, Rossini, and Berlioz. Only twenty-two when he returned to America in 1853, he was already an international sensation across Europe. He soon became the leading figure of mid-nineteenth-century music in the United States as well.

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<sup>10</sup> Just to name but two examples from a single composer, Henri Herz wrote three major American works incorporating music already familiar to audiences in the New World: *Variations brillantes et grande fantaisie sur des airs nationaux américaines*, Op. 158 and *Fantaisie mexicaine*, Op. 162. In the first work, Herz quotes, and then combines, “Yankee Doodle” and “Jackson’s March.” The *Mexican Fantasy*, interestingly enough, is his take on Stephen Foster’s “O Susanna” rather than a presentation of anything Mexican or even Latin American in origin.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Offergeld, “The Gottschalk Legend: Grand Fantasy for a Great Many Pianos,” *The Piano Works of Louis Moreau Gottschalk*, <http://thompsonian.info/gottschalk-legend-offergeld.html>, accessed 28 October 2012. Pierre Zimmerman, head of the Conservatoire’s piano department, rejected Gottschalk without giving him the opportunity to audition, stating, “America is full of barbarians. It’s a nation known for steam engines.”

America's first musical superstar, its first matinee idol, and by far the best-known and most successful musician from the New World, Gottschalk and his Chickering piano crisscrossed the nation, dazzling listeners with his invigoratingly novel American music. Even so, critics such as Boston's John Sullivan Dwight chided him for being "popular," and for pandering to the lowest common denominator in society, rather than devoting himself to "Art" or elevating the public taste.<sup>12</sup> For Dwight, a Transcendental New Englander with a strong Puritan bent, the fashionable, multilingual Gottschalk simply wasn't American enough to represent the fledgling nation, let alone play a role in its cultural development. What Dwight detested, however, audiences in Europe, Latin America, and across the United States relished: Gottschalk's music was original and immediately accessible. It offered listeners not only the rhythmic intensity and exotic sounds of his native New Orleans, but also elements of the Black and Creole music he had heard sung by members of his mother's side of the family when he was a child. The Creole nature of his music electrified European audiences in the 1840s and seduced the entire Caribbean, where he spent most of the 1850s.

Exoticism wasn't the only thing he had to offer audiences, however: Gottschalk was gifted with the ability to speak in the musical vernacular. Wherever he traveled, he listened closely to native melodies, rhythms, and harmonies, and incorporated those local ingredients into his music. When in Spain, for example, he wrote and performed music that would appeal directly to Spanish national pride – yielding works such as *The Siege of Saragossa*, "a symphony for ten pianos" that not only incorporated the *Marcha real*, the new Spanish national anthem, and *La Jota aragonesa*, a highly popular dance, but also

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<sup>12</sup> Irving L. Sablosky, *What They Heard: Music in America, 1852–1881, From the Pages of Dwight's Journal of Music* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 38.

tapped into an audience that was fond of depictive battle music and had a rapidly expanding appetite for nostalgia.<sup>13</sup> For Paris, a city in love with foreign flavors, he wrote *Bamboula*, which showcased the sounds of New Orleans, as well as all the Caribbean islands that were still formally part of the French Empire. And for dance-crazed Havana, he wrote music that incorporated the cinquillo, tango, habanero, and other Afro-Cuban dance rhythms.

Gottschalk toured the United States twice. His first visit, in 1853, coincided with an explosion of interest in minstrelsy. Bombarded by American sounds on every street corner in New York, he explored how he might incorporate elements of Americana into his music.<sup>14</sup> He began by writing works that included national airs, producing virtuoso settings of “Yankee Doodle” and “America.” He then tried his hand at embedding popular songs and minstrel show “hits,” such as “Camptown Races,” “Oh! Susanna,” and other songs by Stephen Foster, into his music. And finally, he wrote depictive works such as *The Banjo*, which captured not only the sound and performance styles of the most popular instrument on the minstrel circuit, but also the one instrument most Americans carried with them (literally, on their knees) as they moved into the western frontier.

His second American tour began in 1861. For Civil War audiences, he wrote works that played to the emotions of a nation at war – works such as *The Last Hope* or *The Dying Poet*.<sup>15</sup> He also wrote *The Union*, music that encouraged national pride and

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<sup>13</sup> Frederick S. Starr, *Bamboula! The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 110.

<sup>14</sup> Starr, *Bamboula*, 147.

<sup>15</sup> Gottschalk’s *The Last Hope* was originally published in 1856 by Firth Pond & Co. of New York. Gottschalk revised the work a year later after William Hall bought publication rights. A third version was released by Oliver Ditson of Boston in 1862. It is the Ditson version that survives. *The Dying Poet* was first published in 1864 as Op. 110. According to IMSLP, new editions were released in 1897 and 1907.

unity through its use of patriotic melodies such as “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “Hail Columbia,” and “Yankee Doodle.”<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his career, Gottschalk incorporated the sounds of a developing nation into his music, performing these works in concerts across the United States. What’s more, he encouraged his fellow composers to find their own voices and write music that reflected their lives and experiences. In his opinion, it was far better to be a first-rate original rather than a third-rate Beethoven or a pale imitation of European composers.<sup>17</sup> Gottschalk’s untimely death at the age of forty limited the lingering effects of his legacy, and the efforts of his mid-century colleagues William Fry, George Bristow, and Lowell Mason notwithstanding, the artistic environment for a truly American musical language emerged only at the dawn of the twentieth century – and, even then, with much struggle.

In many ways, the development of nationalism in music of the United States parallels its emergence in literature. However, whereas American authors may have been encouraged to write from a distinctly nationalistic perspective, its composers were not so fortunate. From Gottschalk’s career forward, even when composers were interested in developing a specifically American music, to actually compose using a distinctively “American” voice was akin to committing artistic suicide. Conductors, critics, and patrons routinely dismissed homegrown talent out of hand. “If it were American, it had to be inferior” was the ruling philosophy.<sup>18</sup> Only musicians from Europe or trained there

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<sup>16</sup> Published in 1863 by William Hall & Son of New York under the title *Paraphrase de Concert “Union,”* Op. 48, *The Union*, as it is generally known, was actually composed in 1862.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist, The Chronicles of a New Orleans Music Legend*, Jeanne Behrend, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 212–13.

<sup>18</sup> Karl Kroeger, review of *The Search for an American Musical Identity* by Barbara L. Tischler, *Notes*, Second Series 44/1 (September 1987), 53. While there are many examples of this attitude throughout the literature, it is perhaps best expressed in an 1846 conversation between American composer William Fry and the director of the Paris Opera. The composer asked to have his work rehearsed – and he was willing to cover the entire cost out of his own pocket. The director politely declined, saying, “In Europe we look upon America as an industrial country – excellent for electric telegraphs but not for art ... they would think me crazy to produce an opera by an American.” See also Chmaj,



were capable of creating music with any artistic merit, they believed, and only the very best of those might transcend their peers and actually create “Art.” This prevailing attitude — which defined concert life along Germanic, Beethovenian lines throughout the nineteenth century — made it extraordinarily difficult for the music of *any* American composer to be programmed by the few professional orchestras then in existence. Thus the handful of composers who intentionally wrote in an American style found it doubly impossible to bring their works before the public. Nevertheless, despite this veritable boycott of American talent, a distinctly American aesthetic was actually being formed.

Although the groundwork for an American “sound” was laid throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in music such as folk songs, national airs, descriptive fantasies for the piano, and even minstrel songs, it came to fruition in the decades immediately following the Civil War. As soldiers from different regions made their way across the countryside, they experienced certain aspects of the cultures through which they passed on their way from one battle to the next. Many Northerners, for example, heard authentic slave melodies for the first time, noting how these songs varied considerably from their more familiar minstrel show counterparts.<sup>19</sup> They also heard regional forms of music, songs, and performance styles unfamiliar in their hometowns. Wartime performers, including Gottschalk, often played in houses where supporters from both sides of the conflict were in attendance, performing music that signified and reaffirmed unity, patriotism, and other national values.<sup>20</sup>

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“Fry vs. Dwight: American Music’s Debate over Nationality,” 78–79. For more on “the coarse suspicion of everything American,” see Robert Sabin, “Early American Composers and Critics,” *The Musical Quarterly* 24/2 (April 1938), 214.

<sup>19</sup> Irving L. Sablosky, *What They Heard: Music in America, 1852–1881, From the Pages of Dwight’s Journal of Music* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 259. Also Daniel Kingman, *American Music*, 302.

<sup>20</sup> Starr, *Bamboula*, 311–12. Also Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 65.

After the war ended in 1865, an interest in authentic African-American music took hold, as scholars began collecting Negro slave songs, and Black performers such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed Southern slave melodies in concerts across the North and in Europe. At the same time, music from other cultural areas emerged as noteworthy: the backwoods sounds of Appalachia, work songs from the South, labor songs from the North, and pioneer and Native American songs from the West. Each region of the nation played a role in the formation of an American sound; but perhaps more so than in any of the other art forms, the creation of an original, national voice in music could only be possible through the arrival – and participation – of all the people living here, be they native-born or transplanted composers, slaves, immigrants or members of an ethnic minority.

By the turn of the twentieth century, all the essential elements were in place for a truly American musical voice to emerge. By the time Gershwin premiered *American in Paris* and *Rhapsody in Blue* in the 1920s, the world was able to recognize topics and gestures associated not only with the United States, but also with the New World. The “American Style” was fully formed and the stage was set for composers such as John Alden Carpenter, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, Ray Harris, and Howard Hanson to develop it further.

Given this history, how did this transition, from Gottschalk to Gershwin, take place? Where and how did it manifest itself? What were the cultural factors behind the emergence, and eventual acceptance, of the American sound? And if it were a process of “coming together,” when and where did American audiences effectively hear it first? More importantly, what elements defined our hemisphere musically to native and visiting

composers eager to portray the Americas to listeners, whether here or back home? How did a distinctly American style of composition come into existence? What gestures or topics might be found in the music? Which population groups most impacted the American sound, when, and how?

To date, most studies of topics and gestures in classical music have focused solely on European music. In this study, I will explore the roots of the topics and gestures that underlie the music of the United States. The search for answers to these questions requires an examination of a number of types of music present in the nation during the nineteenth century: from popular songs, social dances, and salon music to symphonic masterpieces and theatrical presentations, and everything in between. Music performed by visiting artists, slave populations, indigenous American peoples, and immigrant groups is vitally important as well. Therefore, this examination must remain intentionally broad in order to identify and trace the development of the specific musical elements and gestures that suggest “America” to listeners. Once these devices have been identified and traced over the course of the century, I will then demonstrate how these specific musical gestures were not only incorporated into American classical music during the nineteenth century, but also transformed into musical topics, a sort of shared musical vocabulary signifying specific peoples, regions, classes, or values – a vital step in the formation of a uniquely American musical language. Because all of the essential elements of the quintessential American style were present in society by the second half of the nineteenth century, my primary focus will be on that era.

This study will also include information about barriers to the establishment of a uniquely American musical style, including factors such as America’s cultural inferiority

complex with regard to its European artistic heritage, the systematic dismissal of native-born talent, and the impact of nineteenth century critics, conductors, and patrons on the development of an American school of composition. Concerns such as classism, racism, immigration, and assimilation will also be considered, along with other cultural growing pains of a young nation in search of its own artistic identity.

### **Justification and Literature Review**

A number of books and articles on American music are available today that did not exist thirty years ago. Studies related to American music and to musical *topoi* were unheard of during a time when the historic performance practice movement, just getting underway, was focused on the Western canon. Since that time, however, a number of significant studies have been released. Textbooks for undergraduate coursework in American music and jazz history are now easy to find, and studies related to musical *topoi* have proliferated, from Leonard Ratner's groundbreaking work on musical style<sup>21</sup> and Jonathan Bellman's work on nineteenth century exoticism,<sup>22</sup> to Janice Dickensheets' work on nineteenth century topics,<sup>23</sup> all of which examine the underlying styles, gestures, and topics found in music of the Classic and Romantic eras.

Nevertheless, to this point, I know of no scholarly work on topical studies specifically devoted to American music. Other studies regarding different aspects of American music are abundant, and the work of a handful of authors in particular are helpful in offering a background for my exploration of topics in the musical works themselves. Among them are H. Wiley Hitchcock's *Music in the United States: A*

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<sup>21</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980), also *Music: The Listener's Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), and *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax* (New York: Schirmer, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan D. Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Janice M. Dickensheets, "The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Musicological Research* 31/2-3 (2012), 97-137.

*Historical Introduction*,<sup>24</sup> John Tasker Howard and George Kent Bellows' *A Short History of Music in America*,<sup>25</sup> and Richard A. Crawford's *The American Musical Landscape*<sup>26</sup> and *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music*, which he edited in collaboration with R. Allen Lott and Carol J. Oja.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Michael V. Pisani's *Imagining Native America in Music*,<sup>28</sup> Barbara A. Zuck's *A History of Musical Americanism*,<sup>29</sup> and Jack Sullivan's *New World Symphonies: How American Culture Changed European Music*<sup>30</sup> are other valuable sources.

Doctoral dissertations and master's theses have also proven helpful. Janice Dickensheets' *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel: A Topical and Literary Analysis of the Second Piano Sonata of Johannes Brahms* not only laid the groundwork for the study of nineteenth century topics, it provided the inspiration for me to consider literary associations in American music of the same era.<sup>31</sup> Brian Alber produced an outstanding study in 2012 of the music of John Alden Carpenter, identifying Carpenter's work as the starting point for a uniquely American sound.<sup>32</sup> While I believe Gottschalk and Stephen Foster are more accurately that point of origin, Alber's dissertation prompted a number of thought-provoking discussions about the evolution of the American voice. Similarly, although her subject involved the first generation of

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<sup>24</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

<sup>25</sup> John Tasker Howard and George Kent Bellows, *A Short History of Music in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> Richard A. Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Also helpful were his liner notes to *Music of the American Revolution: The Birth of Liberty* (1996) CD, New World Records 80276-2.

<sup>27</sup> Richard A. Crawford, R. Allen Lott, and Carol J. Oja, eds., *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Barbara A. Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> Jack Sullivan, *New World Symphonies: How American Culture Changed European Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Janice M. Dickensheets, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel: A Topical and Literary Analysis of the Second Piano Sonata of Johannes Brahms* (D.A. Diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Brian W. Alber, *The Beginnings of An American Style: A Study and Wind Band Transcription of John Alden Carpenter's Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* (D.A. Diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2012).

twentieth-century American composers, the work of Amanda Kriska Bekeny in her dissertation, *The Trumpet as a Voice of Americana in the Americanist Music of Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein*, was a tremendous asset, not only in terms of how I might organize a similar study but also through its content, analyses, and bibliography.<sup>33</sup>

John H. Baron's *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: A Comprehensive Reference* is a tremendous resource for music scholars and New Orleans historians in search of detailed information about classical music, performers, organizations, and facilities long before the Jazz Age.<sup>34</sup> Baron's text is also an excellent source for late-nineteenth-century accounts regarding Gottschalk's enduring reputation in the city long after his death and more than a few decades after his last appearances there.

As outstanding as each of these texts may be, none of them addresses the specific development of musical topics within American music. This dissertation, therefore, attempts to fill that gap in the scholarship and provide future researchers with a means of identifying, understanding, and interpreting the characteristic musical gestures found in music of this nation during a pivotal moment in its evolution.

By reviewing a wide variety of nineteenth-century American scores, my goal is to create a dictionary of topics specific to American music and to trace how some of those topics play out in the music itself. In order to do so, it will be necessary to review manuscripts and publications from across the entire century, particularly those from the final decades. Many of these scores are now available online, thanks to IMSLP. Others are available in monumental editions, several of which were exceptionally helpful in this

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<sup>33</sup> Amanda Kriska Bekeny, *The Trumpet as a Voice of Americana in the Americanist Music of Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein* (D.M.A. Diss., The Ohio State University, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> John H. Baron, *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: A Comprehensive Reference* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

regard. Among these are Jeffrey Kallberg's collections of the works of Europeans who wrote music for the American public, such as Sigismond Thalberg, Frédéric Kalkbrenner, and Henri Herz.<sup>35</sup> Equally impressive are John Graziano's *Recent Researches in American Music*<sup>36</sup> and Sylvia Glickman's *Three Centuries of American Music*, two multi-volume series on American classical music that are outstanding resources not only for researchers, but also for performers interested in keeping this music alive.<sup>37</sup> Piano/voice song-books such as Richard Jackson's *Democratic Souvenirs*<sup>38</sup> and Irving Schlein's compilation of the 136 songs collected by Lucy McKim Garrison, William Francis Allen, and Charles Pickard Ware (published as *Slave Songs of the United States*),<sup>39</sup> as well as songbooks featuring the music of minstrel and vaudeville shows, the songs of Tin Pan Alley, and early Broadway musicals are similarly helpful.

Contemporary music criticism provides helpful information regarding reception history. Irving Sablosky's *What They Heard: Music in America, 1852–1991, From the Pages of Dwight's Journal of Music* is a condensation of Dwight's *Journal* that provides a considerable amount of valuable background material alongside selected items published in the actual *Journal* itself.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Kallberg, ed. *Piano Music of the Parisian Virtuosos: Henri Herz (1803–1888), Selected Works* (New York: Garland, 1993). Also *Piano Music of the Parisian Virtuosos: Native and Foreign Virtuosos – Selected Works of Zimmerman, Alkan, Franck and Contemporaries* (New York: Garland, 1993); and *Piano Music of the Parisian Virtuosos: Frédéric Kalkbrenner (1785–1849), Selected Works* (New York: Garland, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> *Recent Researches in American Music*, John Graziano, gen. ed., 78 vols. (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1977–). Since its inception in 1962, A-R has published critical performing editions. Each release focuses on works by a single composer or works within a specific genre. Publications in the American Music Series date from 1977 to the present.

<sup>37</sup> Sylvia Glickman, ed., *Three Centuries of American Music: A Collection of American Sacred and Secular Music*, 12 vols. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990–1992). I found volume 4, *American Keyboard Music 1866–1910*, and volume 11, *American Orchestral Music 1887–1914*, particularly helpful.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Jackson, ed., *Democratic Souvenirs: An Historical Anthology of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century American Music* (New York: C.F. Peters/NY Public Library, 1988).

<sup>39</sup> Irving Schlein, *Slave Songs of the United States* [1867] (New York: Oak Publications, 1965).

<sup>40</sup> Irving Sablosky, *What They Heard: Music in America, 1852–1991, From the Pages of Dwight's Journal of Music* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1986).

Cultural studies specific to music are particularly enlightening, not only in terms of reception history, but also with respect to institutionalized classicism, racism, or sexism at the time works were released. In that regard, materials such as Josh Kun's *Audiotopia: Music, Race and America*,<sup>41</sup> David Brackett's *Interpreting Popular Music*,<sup>42</sup> Richard Middleton's *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*,<sup>43</sup> and William C. Banfield's *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy, An Interpretive History from Spirituals to Hip Hop* are especially helpful.<sup>44</sup>

### Methodology

As Dickensheets pointed out in her 2004 dissertation, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel: A Topical and Literary Analysis of the Second Piano Sonata of Johannes Brahms*, many of the topics found in eighteenth-century music continue to play a role in music of the Romantic Era. While her focus was on the music of Western Europe, the statement is equally true with respect to music from the Americas. Just as dances, songs, solo keyboard works, cantatas, and symphonies were created in Europe, each of these same forms was written and performed on these shores, albeit less often and on a more modest level. Before the Revolutionary War, American musicians relied directly on genres from Europe for their compositions and performances. Only after 1776 did the resolve to create a uniquely American culture and way of life begin to slowly take hold. This change of perspective, from colony to nation, provided the opportunity for uniquely American musical topics to evolve, topics that would complement the vast array

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<sup>41</sup> Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>43</sup> Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes: Makings of a Black Music Philosophy: An Interpretive History from Spirituals to Hip Hop* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010).



of styles and gestures already present in European and American music of the common practice period.

Quoting Eero Tarasti, Dickensheets explains that “musical gestures (musical elements that house referential meanings) are *performatives* – events that are complete in themselves. They do not simply make statements about something; they actually ‘do’ something, resulting in a deep affective impact.”<sup>45</sup> The process of assigning meaning to a particular symbol, therefore, begins with an examination of primary source materials, searching for gestures, rhythms, or melodies that occur in the score, and then recur in various guises in other works. Through an examination of this sort, patterns emerge and iconic gestures begin to reveal themselves, and raw materials start to suggest meanings beyond the printed score. The process of making sense of it all requires not only a way to organize and define gestures, but also a means of relating these topics to each other, and to culture as a whole.

I will begin with dance rhythms and works with titles that evoke certain aspects of American history or culture, such as Heinrich’s *Indian Carnival*, James Hewitt’s *The Battle of Trenton*, Benjamin Carr’s *Yankee Doodle Variations*, Arthur Farwell’s *American Indian Melodies*, and George Frederick Bristow’s variation set on “Zip Coon,” a minstrel tune better known today as “Turkey in the Straw.” Works that attempt to depict specific locations such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, California, Kentucky, Niagara Falls, and Carlsbad Caverns are also included, as are portraits of “Americana,” such as E.T. Paull’s *The Circus Parade* or imitations of the sound of the banjo by Gottschalk, Maurice Strakosch, and Stephen Foster. The occasional misstep is also included, as in the case of Henri Herz’s *Fantaisie Mexicaine*, which is based, not on

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<sup>45</sup> Dickensheets, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel*, 4.

Mexican themes as one might expect, but on Stephen Foster's minstrel song "Oh! Susanna." The topics I identified are noted in a dictionary found in Chapter 2. Entries include explanatory material, musical examples, and a short list of representative works where the same topic might also be seen. Some of these were fairly easy to locate, as they often feature a noticeable rhythmic quality, such as drum-inspired patterns from Native American or Afro-Cuban culture; others were discovered only as a result of deeper analysis.

After identifying and tracing the evolution of topics throughout the nineteenth century, I will demonstrate how these initial building blocks combined to create a uniquely American soundscape through a topical analysis of one major work: Scott Joplin's opera, *Treemonisha*. The selection of this work was based on a number of criteria, including – but not limited to – the number of American-specific *topoi* present in the work, the existence of documents from the composer (or recognized experts) regarding the work, its programmatic implications, and what possible extramusical meanings might be derived from an examination of its topics.

The level of ragtime scholarship has risen dramatically since I first discovered the genre. The Joplin revival took place only a few years before I started undergraduate work, and I remember how captivated I was by the freshness of his music – but American music simply wasn't a priority in academia in the mid-1970s. What little I learned about Joplin while in college was limited to an introduction to his style and the presentation of a handful of facts, some of which have since been disproven over the intervening decades. Today, experts working in a number of disciplines – in ragtime, jazz, African-American studies, and other fields – have transformed music history curricula across the nation.

Their textbooks, journals, and research efforts have unearthed a great deal of information not only on American music, but also on Joplin in particular. As a result, culling through dissertations, books, articles, and other scholarly writing to present the most complete picture of the man and his work has been an essential part of this study. Identifying topics in Joplin's work was of course the first step; understanding who he truly was – or was not – in order to more fully interpret what he's doing in the music was the ultimate goal. After all, what good is simply pointing out the location and technical definition of a topic? It seems far more valuable to take the process out another step. By drawing attention to both musical and extramusical factors that appear to have influenced *Treemonisha*, I will present interpretations of what lies beyond the surface gestures.

Joplin's *Treemonisha* also provides a model on how African-American *topoi*, Afro-Cuban rhythms, and European art music traditions combine in successful American compositions. Through its overture and twenty-six set numbers, the opera includes many of the topics, styles, and gestures that evolved in American music over the course of the nineteenth century. The opera also provides a point of reference for how still later composers — men such as Gershwin, Copland, and Bernstein — fashioned these raw materials into music that listeners around the world immediately recognized and appreciated as authentically American in style.

## CHAPTER II

### DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN MUSICAL *TOPOI*: TOPICS FOUND IN AMERICAN MUSIC

As Adams had predicted, and Emerson had hoped, during the first half of the nineteenth century American authors and poets began giving voice to a culture and a way of life unknown in the Old World, allowing a distinctly American literary voice to emerge. Their works included a cast of characters and settings unfamiliar to many urban Americans, and completely foreign to nearly all Europeans. It was the stuff from which legends were made – literally: From Hiawatha to Daniel Boone, American literature celebrated stories featuring larger-than-life characters squaring off in a battle for survival amid idyllic settings in a harsh new world. American works often featured the common man overcoming tremendous odds, or the adventures of ordinary men and women in trying circumstances – stories and plotlines the average reader might relate to personally – rather than tales of noble lords and their great deeds in a land far, far away. This glorification of the American experience, the land, its people, and the American way of life soon required a linguistic “toolkit” as unique as the nation itself, a challenge American authors readily accepted. By mid-century, they had developed their own ways of expressing the nation’s people and places through dialect, settings, and symbolism.

American composers incorporated similar compositional devices in their original works. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, composers attempted to depict American landscapes, cities, and people through programmatic gestures. Composers also

incorporated into their music the sounds of a developing nation, as well as events from everyday life: For example, dance rhythms soon became as integral to American music as they were in European music. Similarly, popular songs, work songs, field hollers, spirituals, ragtime, and even minstrel show music found their way into art music. In truth, the assortment of topics found in American music is as varied as the people and places of the nation. The challenge for the researcher is where to begin and how to manage and organize the results as patterns emerge and take shape.

This “lexicon,” or dictionary, of American musical *topoi* is a first attempt at capturing some of these defining characteristics of music from the United States. The listings that follow are sorted into broad categories, allowing readers to see a large number of related items at once. The goal is to trace the evolution of topics across the century by their genre of origin. For example, in the section related to social dancing, each dance and its associated rhythms are discussed in historic order: that is to say, in the order that each dance emerged in American life. Topics derived from other genres are similarly arranged. This process allows the reader to feel the passing of time within each field, as well as experience the development and decline of each subject.

American music is not simply a matter of chance, nor did it come to fruition in a vacuum. It draws on a rich tradition of European music, music that is itself enriched by the use of *topoi*. Scholars Leonard Ratner, Jonathan Bellman, and Danuta Mirka have described many compositional devices employed as *topoi*: gestures that suggest specific dance movements, ethnicity, and even social caste.<sup>1</sup> Janice Dickensheets has elaborated

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980) and *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax* (New York, Schirmer, 1992). Jonathan D. Bellman, ed. *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), Danuta Mirka, ed. *Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

on some of these as they relate to nineteenth-century music in her 2004 dissertation, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel*.<sup>2</sup> Because nineteenth-century American musicians often trained in Europe, many were well versed in Old World art music traditions, regularly incorporating established styles, gestures, and *topoi* into their works.

### **Dance**

The importance of dance in American life cannot be overstated: From colonial days through our present century, social dancing has been one of its essential components. Dances have been held to celebrate special occasions, to mark the end of a hard week's labor, and to bring communities together.

With few exceptions, dancing in European societies before 1800 occurred largely along class lines. The noble classes enjoyed observing professional dancers execute complex choreographies. They also participated in organized events that required the services of specialist dance masters to instruct them in the proper execution of the latest steps. The middle and lower classes enjoyed dancing as well, but the specific dances each group called their own varied significantly from those enjoyed by the more affluent. In colonial America, however, class divisions were not as sharp as they were in Europe; since the colonists' survival depended on people working together for the common good, the individual heritage or net worth of its residents often had little to do with success in the New World. As the colonies became a nation, however, class and social divisions began to solidify and once again separate communities. Nevertheless, a love of dancing – whether for celebrations or recreation – continued to unite the growing nation, and

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<sup>2</sup> Janice M. Dickensheets, *The Nineteenth-Century Sonata Cycle as Novel: A Topical and Literary Analysis of the Second Piano Sonata of Johannes Brahms* (D.A. Diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2004).

by the 1820s, Americans were dancing many of the same steps, even if they didn't all dance to the same tune, or at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

These divisions, however, lead us directly to musical topics – rhythms, melodies, physical gestures, etc. – that signify social class, race, and ethnicity. Self-referential or closed societies have for generations created music and dancing that emerged directly out of group culture. Pluralistic societies, such as America, however, were made up of diverse populations, where shared traditions often evolved out of blended experiences. Even so, in the late nineteenth century some of these combinations were formed more naturally than others, while others were seen as controversial, or even dangerous.<sup>4</sup> Because the story of the nineteenth century, indeed the story of America, is this process of coming together – the creation of one people out of many – the history of social dancing is as good a place as any to begin.

As my lexicon will show, most of the dances enjoyed in America during the first half of the nineteenth century were imported from Europe. By the end of the century, however, Europeans were looking to America for the next dance craze – and at times, Europe introduced mainstream Americans to their own forms. New dance moves were seen as increasingly vulgar to the older generation as the century progressed, and polite society sought to suppress or disguise what it viewed as sexual overtones – a challenge, indeed, as the music and novelty of Black dance moves continued to lure young White dancers to circumstances generally forbidden.<sup>5</sup> Changing tempi and the resulting

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<sup>3</sup> More precisely, people would not have danced to the same fiddler, on the same night, because by the 1820s many events would have been organized by social class.

<sup>4</sup> Anne Shaw Faulkner, "Does Jazz put the Sin in Syncopation?" *The Ladies Home Journal* (August 1921), 16, reprinted in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, Robert Walser, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 32–36.

<sup>5</sup> Thornton Hagert, "Instrumental Dance Music 1780–1920," notes to *Come and Trip It* (1994), CD, New World Records, 80293-2.

simplifications to steps also contributed to the rise and fall of dance forms. In the earlier part of the century, tempos were easily managed by amateur performers, but as the jazz age began, tempos were roughly thirty-five percent faster than they were in 1800.<sup>6</sup>

Simpler steps and the substitution of subdued body movements for more exaggerated ones resulted. Young people enjoyed the changes; parents saw declining mores.<sup>7</sup>

How dances were transmitted changed throughout the century as well. In 1800, most people learned new dance steps from their friends and neighbors, resulting in a slow pace to the adoption of new dances across the countryside. By the end of the century, the latest dances were widely publicized in the media, with printed instruction manuals, sheet music, and articles in both newspapers and magazines alerting dancers to the next craze, its steps, and the bands that were playing the music to accompany it. By the early twentieth century, radio and phonograph recordings accelerated the transmission process once again. By the mid-1920s, professional dance bands and orchestras traveled the countryside to play for public dances. Each of these advances affected both the manner in which dance music was performed and how it was received.

As a practical matter, it is impossible to include detailed information about every dance type in American music. Instead, I will make note of the major dance forms and provide fuller information on those appearing in later works of art: specifically, the contradanse, quadrille, galop, waltz, polka, mazurka, schottische, two-step, march, and ragtime dances.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Faulkner, 32–36. See also “The Jazz Problem,” *Etude* 42/8 (August 1924), 517–518, 520 and 42/9, 595–596; and Walsler, *Keeping Time*, 41–54. Leading figures in American music echo Faulkner’s sentiments as they discuss their social and musical concerns regarding the impact of jazz on music and the public. Comments from American composers Henry F. Gilbert and John Philip Sousa are included alongside remarks from Charles Wakefield Cadman, John Alden Carpenter, Walter Damrosch, Franz Drdla, Arthur Foote, Leopold Stokowski, et al. Comments from theologians were also included.



## Selected Nineteenth-Century American Dances

### Contredanse/ Contradance, Country Dance

Based on peasant dances, contredanses feature lively melodies, regular rhythms, and music that cries out for clapping or foot stomps. The term “contredanse” refers to a series of partnered folk dances in which couples dance in two facing lines or in groups of four. Contredanses feature geometric patterns on the floor, with steps announced by a caller. Dance types include square and round dances, line dances, reels, and jigs. The melodies for these rustic dances often come from pre-existing tunes, such as jigs in 6/8 or reels in 2/4, with the music provided by the local fiddler, who may have been accompanied by winds and percussion, as local conditions allowed. The banjo, mandolin, guitar, string bass, and hammered dulcimer were commonly-used string instruments, while winds might include transverse flutes, tin whistles, clarinets, cornets, tubas, or melodeons.<sup>8</sup> Bone castanets were a longtime staple and an essential component in minstrel bands, which typically played many a contredanse tune. Side drums entered the ensemble as the century progressed. Melodies were often associated with specific figurations, mostly in an AABB form consisting of two strains, each eight bars long and repeated. With an average tempo around MM120, both the beat and the step have a springing or skipping quality.<sup>9</sup>

Well-known contredanses include “The Virginia Reel” (based on “Sir Roger of Coventry”), “College Hornpipe” (also known as “Sailor’s Hornpipe”), and “La Belle Catherine” (better known as “Have You Seen the Muffin Man?”). Still other American contredanses include “White Cockade,” “Fisher’s Hornpipe,” “Rory O’More,” and


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<sup>8</sup> Melodeons were nineteenth century reed organs similar to button accordions.

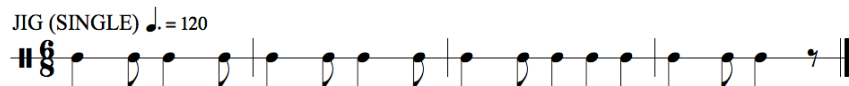
<sup>9</sup> Pauline Norton, “Country Dance,” *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music Online*, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com), accessed 23 January 2015.

“Ashley’s Ride” (or “Lesley’s Hornpipe”), as well as “Money Musk,” “Pop the Weasel,” and “Hunt the Squirrel” (or “Down Went McGinty to the Bottom of the Sea”). Specific figurations, melodies, and rhythms were often associated with country dances. Rhythms are shown in Figure 2.1; see Ex. 2.1 and Ex. 2.2 for melodies.


CONTREDANSE-QUADRILLE ♩ = 100




JIG (SINGLE) ♩ = 120




JIG (DOUBLE) ♩ = 112



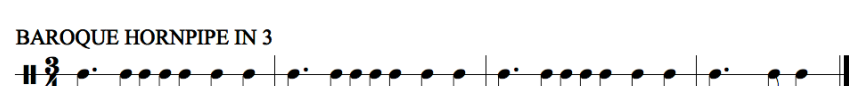
REEL ♩ = 100



HORNPIPE ♩ = 113



BAROQUE HORNPIPE IN 3



TRIPLE JIG ♩ = 126




Fig. 2.1. Selected typical country dance rhythms



Ex. 2.1 Traditional, “Chester Castle Reel,” opening



Ex. 2.2. Traditional, “Sir Roger of Coventry,” opening

### Quadrille

The quadrille was a French dance of the early nineteenth century, popular in Paris during the First Empire (1799–1815). It was performed by two to eight couples

tracing a square pattern on the floor. The dance made its way London by 1815 and to Berlin by 1821. Quadrilles were known in Austria around the same time, but it took until Carnival Season 1840 for them to become the latest dance rage in Vienna.<sup>10</sup> Originally known as the “quadrille de contredanses,” the quadrille consisted of five figures for which the music, alternatively in 6/8 and 2/4, was chosen from popular tunes or operatic airs.<sup>11</sup> Even when the music was newly composed, rather than adopted from pre-existing sources, quadrilles retained the names of the contredanses that made up the original form of the dance.<sup>12</sup>

*Le pantalon* (6/8)

The name comes from the first line of a song:  
“Le pantalon / De Madelon / N’a pas de fond”

*L’été* (2/4)

A contredanse popular in 1800

*La poule* (6/8)

A contredanse popular in 1802

*La pastourelle*

Based on a ballad by the cornet player Collinet

Finale (6/8)

The music of the quadrille was made up of lively, rhythmic themes of rigid eight- or sixteen-bar lengths, sections of which were repeated several times within a figure. The music was usually adapted from popular songs or stage works. As Andrew Lamb points out in his article on quadrilles for the *New Grove*,

The plundering of musical sources for themes for new dances and the musical distortions that often had to be made to satisfy the restricted musical form of the quadrille made it a target and vehicle for musical jokes through the arrangement of themes from particularly incongruous sources, as in the *Macbeth Quadrilles* from music attributed to Matthew Locke, the *Bologna Quadrilles* on themes from Rossini's *Stabat mater*, Chabrier's *Souvenirs de Munich* (on themes from *Tristan*

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Lamb, “Quadrille,” *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music Online, www.oxfordmusiconline*, accessed 23 January 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Willi Apel, ed., *Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music* [1960] (New York: Pocket Books of New York / Harvard University Press, 1974), 236.

<sup>12</sup> Lamb, “Quadrille.” *La pastourelle* was often replaced by a further figure, *La Trénis* (named after the dancer Trenitz). Also, both were danced in the Viennese quadrille as fourth and fifth figures in a total of six contredanses.

*und Isolde*), and *Souvenirs de Bayreuth* (on themes from *The Ring*) by Fauré and Messager.<sup>13</sup>

The quadrille was initially used in America for social dancing, but in late-nineteenth- or twentieth-century scores it is an extramusical reference, as the dance was well past its prime. Examples include *La Sonnambula Quadrilles* (based on themes from Bellini's opera), *Lancer's Quadrille*, *Mazurka Quadrille* (in 3/4) and *Caledonian Quadrille*.<sup>14</sup>

### Minuet

A dignified and graceful French aristocratic dance of the seventeenth century in moderate tempo and triple meter, the minuet was highly popular until 1800, at which point two unrelated events led to its decline: the French Revolution and the introduction of the waltz. Given the minuet's close associations with the nobility, the dance quickly fell out of favor after 1789. The waltz that replaced it was also a triple meter dance, but it had its roots in the Austrian *ländler*, a peasant dance.

The original dance steps of the minuet can be traced back to the 1680s.<sup>15</sup> The interplay of music set in 3/4 with dance steps more in keeping with 6/4 was an essential early feature; the resultant counter-rhythms introduced an enjoyable measure of tension. The music is organized in clear two-bar segments, with an implied accent on the first beat of each unit visible in the dancers' movements. The choreography of the minuet, however, unfolds over twelve bars of music, time enough for dancers to execute the six steps required to complete the minuet's classic "Z" pattern. Because most minuets feature

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The identity of composers responsible for these dance melodies has apparently been lost, with most sources either omitting a name entirely, or simply listing "traditional" or "anonymous" where the composer's name normally appears.

<sup>15</sup> Information for this paragraph is found in Meredith Ellis Little, "Minuet," *Oxford Music Online*, *Grove Music Online*, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com), accessed 23 January 2015.







Ex. 2.7. Arthur Foote, Gavotte No. 2, Op.8, No. 1, mm. 1–4 (1913)

### Galop

A dance of the mid-nineteenth century in a lively duple meter, the galop is generally in 2/4, with a characteristic rhythmic pattern supporting the dance's hopping movements and frequently-changing steps. Typical rhythms associated with this dance are shown in Figure 2.4:



Fig. 2.4. Typical rhythm patterns of the galop

Together with the waltz, quadrille, and polka, the galop was one of the most popular ballroom dances of the nineteenth century. It derived its name from the galloping movement of horses and was possibly the simplest dance ever introduced into the ballroom. While facing the line of dance, the partners held each other and proceeded rapidly down the room with springing steps. The dance originated in Germany and was popular in Vienna in the 1820s, spreading to France and England by 1830. In France, it was used as the finale of the quadrille, and later developed into the can-can. The galop was popular in England for more than fifty years, but in Vienna it was supplanted by the quadrille in 1840, and soon thereafter by the “quick polka.”

Many galops were based on popular songs or operatic themes and typically included a trio or two, and often a short introduction and a coda. The physical demands of dancing a galop meant that it lasted no more than two or three minutes, with music running approximately 126 bars per minute. Titles of galops often reflected the dance's speed and excitement; special effects – such as pistol shots – were sometimes included. The *Posthorn Galop* of Hermann Koenig, introduced at Jullien's concerts in 1844, is still familiar. Other galops include H.C. Lumbye's *Champagne Galop* (1845) and *Copenhagen Steam Railway Galop* (1847).

The lively nature of the galop made it suitable for a rousing finish to a ball or a ballet, as well as the finale to orchestral showpieces: the familiar final section of Rossini's overture to *Guillaume Tell* is an outstanding example of the galop in art music. American works include Gottschalk's *Tournament Galop* (see Ex. 2.8) and *Hurrah Galop* and Maurice Strakosch's *California Gold Fever* and *Young America Galop* (see Ex. 2.9).



Ex. 2.8. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Tournament Galop*, opening (1854)

The image shows the opening of Maurice Strakosch's *Young America Galop*. The music is written for piano in 2/4 time, marked 'ff' (fortissimo). It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The melody in the right hand is highly rhythmic and complex, featuring many beamed notes and accents. The left hand provides a supporting accompaniment. The piece ends with a 'Lunga Pausa' (long pause) marked with a fermata.

Ex. 2.9. Maurice Strakosch, *Young America Galop* (1854)



## Waltz

A moderate-tempo, triple-meter Austrian dance with roots in the *ländler*, the traditional waltz is characterized by a lovely melody floating above a nearly invisible accompaniment, whose function is to provide the pulse. The basic accompaniment pattern consists of a low bass note on the first beat and two chords in a higher register on the second and third beats. Chord tones in the melody are used as pick-up notes to set up the first step; other melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic gestures – including *sforzato* and accented downbeats in the bass line – serve the same purpose and lend the waltz elegance and a sense of forward motion. Accompaniments are kept as simple as possible to underscore the overall dance rhythm and allow listeners to focus on the melodies. The waltz developed around 1800 and was highly popular in Austria and Germany before its introduction to the rest of Western Europe and America. The *valse à deux temps* or two-beat waltz is a special type in which the melody proceeds in notes having a value of two beats, setting up syncopation and proceeding in a cross-rhythm to the triple meter of the accompaniment.

Waltz choreography focuses on two circular movements: on the couples-level, each pair of dancers turns itself in a circle around its own center; each pair progresses with continuous turns made in circles of increasingly greater circumference until the dancers reach their original starting place and the waltz is completed.<sup>16</sup> Traditional waltz tempos ranged from MM69 to MM72 for the dotted half note. Slow waltzes (also known as English waltzes) were played at MM87 for the quarter note. Waltzes found at other tempi or in contexts other than music intended for social dancing abound in instrumental


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<sup>16</sup> Lawrence M. Zbikowski, “Music, Dance, and Meaning in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 31 (2012), 148–9.


art music. In these instances, the waltz is used as a topic to reference a more elegant bygone era, the music's social setting, or the dancer's class.<sup>17</sup>

During the nineteenth century, waltz types expanded, then collapsed to the point that by 1900 all triple-meter dances were commonly referred to as waltzes, regardless of their origins or steps. Waltz-types seen in American music include the *Valse à trois temps* (three-step waltz), *Valse à deux temps* (two-step waltz), the Viennese waltz, the “galop” or *chassé* waltz, and combination types such as the waltz-redowa (or redowa-waltz) and the waltz-mazurka. Waltz rhythms are shown in Figure 2.5.

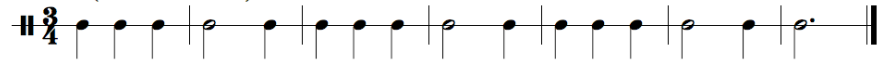
LANDLER ♩ = 140



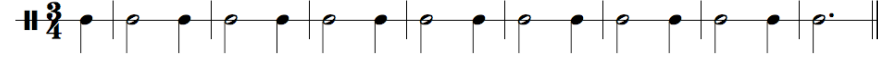
WALTZ ("CHASSE" WALTZ) ♩ = 72



WALTZ ("THREE STEP") ♩ = 72



WALTZ (BALANCE) ♩ = 69



SLOW WALTZ ("ENGLISH WALTZ") ♩ = 87

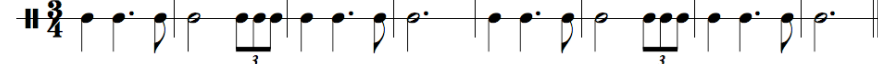


Fig. 2.5 Dance rhythms associated with selected waltz types

Typical examples of American waltzes include the *Jenny Lind Waltz* by Maurice Strakosch and *Gottschalk Waltz* by Teresa Carreño, shown in Ex. 2.10 and Ex. 2.11.<sup>18</sup>



Ex. 2.10. Maurice Strakosch, *Jenny Lind Waltz* (1850)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>18</sup> In addition to dance rhythms, these particular examples demonstrate personal styles. In the Strakosch excerpt, the composer provides a nod to Jenny Lind's singing style and her Swedish background through a yodeling-type gesture, whereas Carreño evokes Gottschalk's fluent and decorative piano style.



Ex. 2.11. Teresa Carreño, *Gottschalk Waltz*, mm. 1–5 (1863)

## Polka

Emerging around 1830, and extremely popular throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, the polka is a quick duple-meter dance, with characteristic rhythmic patterns like the one seen in Figure 2.6:

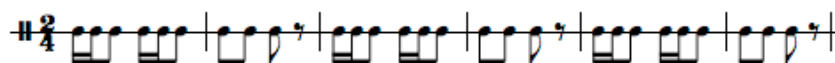


Fig. 2.6. Characteristic polka rhythm

The polka was originally a Czech or Bohemian dance; it arrived in the United States in the mid-1840s – just in time for the upcoming presidential election in which James K. Polk was a candidate, prompting numerous political jokes. The dance was extraordinarily popular. Magazines and newspapers touted its charms with numerous news items about the dance and how to perform it; advertisements showcasing stereotypical polka clothing and hats worn by dancers were also commonplace.

The tempo was similar to that of a military march. The music was usually in ternary form with eight-bar sections, with a brief introduction and coda. Pick-up beats became common after 1850.

Characteristic rhythmic patterns are shown in Figure 2.7.

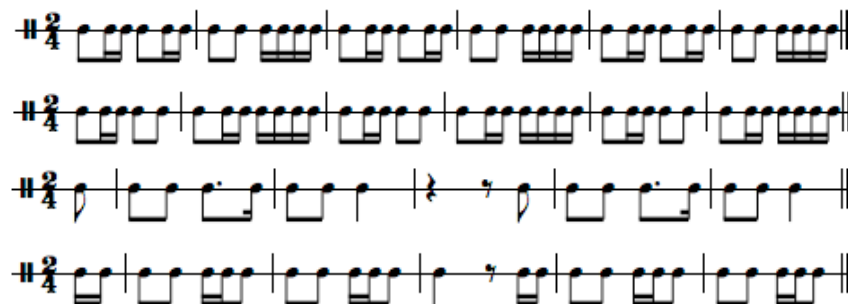


Fig. 2.7. Characteristic early polka rhythmic patterns

A fast polka, the *schnellpolka* (or *polka schnell*) employed the same pattern as the nineteenth-century galop. Popular “quick polkas” include *Unter Donner und Blitz* (Thunder and Lightning, 1868) by Johann Strauss. The rhythmic pattern traditionally associated with the *schnellpolka* is shown in Figure 2.8.



Fig. 2.8. Typical rhythm pattern of the *schnellpolka* or *polka schnell*

Throughout the nineteenth century, European composers wrote polkas to depict America, its people, and its places. Pianist-composer Henri Herz, for example, wrote polkas for his American audiences in addition to American-themed polkas for his European listeners. The titles of his publications reflect this duality: *Three New American Polkas* and *Grand Polka Brilliante* were written for Americans, while a work like *Californienne* sought to capture for Europeans the heady excitement of the 1849 California Gold Rush.

American polkas include Maurice Strakosch’s *The Magyar Polka* (Ex. 2.12)<sup>19</sup> and Henri Herz’s *Three New American Polkas* (Ex. 2.13). Other examples include Rudolph

<sup>19</sup> In addition to serving as an example of an American polka, the second measure of this example shows the *bakaso*, a Hungarian dance figure shown here in the right hand. For more information about this and other Hungarian *topoi*, see Jonathan Bellman, *The Style Hongrois in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 93–130.

Bial's *Adelina Patti Polka*, Maurice Strakosch's *Souvenir de Boston Polka de Salon*, and Henri Herz's *Grande Polka Brillante*, as well as Charles D'Albert's *Rifle Corps Polka*, which features military topics, such as trumpet calls and gunfire.<sup>20</sup>



Ex. 2.12. Maurice Strakosch, *The Magyar Polka*, mm. 1–5 (1852)



Ex. 2.13. Henri Herz, *Three New American Polkas, No. 1*, “Comic Polka,” mm. 1–5 (1848)

### Mazurka

The mazurka is a Polish national dance in triple time and of moderate speed, frequently featuring dotted rhythms and strong accents on the third beat, or less often on the second (see Fig. 2.9). Performed by four or eight couples, the dance includes a variety of bold steps, often improvised.

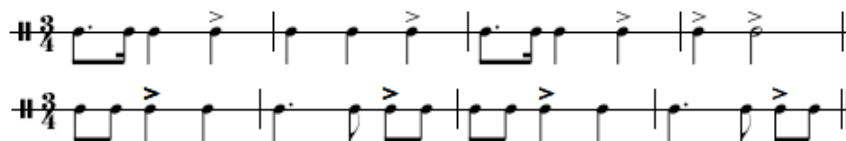


Fig. 2.9 Typical mazurka rhythms

Mazurka rhythms occur in dances of differing tempos: the fastest is the *oberek* or *obertas*, a rapid whirling dance for couples; the mazurka proper (or *mazur*) is somewhat slower, but still of lively character; the *kujawiak* is a dance of more

<sup>20</sup> D'Albert's *Rifle Corps Polka* can be found in the section of the dictionary relating to military topics. See Ex. 2.23.

moderate tempo, with longer phrase lengths. The traditional accompaniment features the Polish bagpipe, the *dudy* or *gajdy*, with its characteristic drone on the tonic, or on both tonic and dominant; violins, drums, and harmonium could also be used. The melody was generally played on a shepherd's pipe, known as the *fujarka*; lower stringed instruments might add rhythmic interest. Tempo rubato is an essential part of the music, while accents, dynamics, and other embellishments emphasize characteristic gestures of the dancers: foot stamping, heel-clicks, and leaps on accents displaced to the second and third beats of a bar. Typical forms include AABB, AABC, AAAB and ABBB. An simplified form of the mazurka was later inserted into the quadrille.

Three distinct rhythmic patterns associated with the mazurka have been identified, each relating to a specific class or variant on the dance: the aristocracy is associated with the “ballroom” pattern; the “folk” style (*oberta*) is related to ordinary people; and the polka-mazurka represents the middle classes.<sup>21</sup>

The patterns associated with each level of society are shown in Figure 2.10.

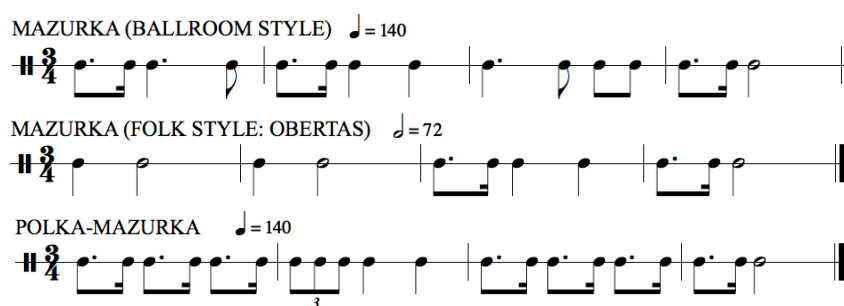


Fig. 2.10. Mazurka rhythms according to their class associations

As a topic, the mazurka has a dual meaning. In European works, because of the suppression of Polish culture, the mazurka was transformed from a regional dance into a symbol of Polish national identity. Examples include mazurkas from the opera *A Life*

<sup>21</sup> Royal Academy of Dance, <http://www.rad.org.uk/more/music/resources/dance-rhythms-for-ballet-pianists>, accessed 9 October 2014.

for the Tsar (1834) and several mazurkas for solo piano by Mikhail Glinka. Alexander Borodin included two mazurkas in his *Petite Suite* (1885), while Tchaikovsky wrote one for his *Album pour enfants: 24 pièces faciles à la Schumann*, Op. 39, No. 11. Each of these examples reference Poland and its people.

How the mazurka was used in America is less clear. There are, however, indications that it may have indicated social class. For example, Maurice Strakosch's *Les Adieux*, a mazurka for the piano dedicated to the composer's friend Louis Moreau Gottschalk, features the ballroom, folk, and polka-mazurka rhythms, either alone or in combination. This leads one to conclude that his use of all three patterns was to acknowledge Gottschalk's appeal to listeners from all levels of society, and at the same time pay homage to one of Gottschalk's mentors – Chopin – by writing in the genre most identified with him (see Ex. 2.14). A folk mazurka by Gottschalk can be seen in Ex. 2.15.

Ex. 2.14. Maurice Strakosch, *Les Adieux: Mazurka pour le piano* (all patterns), mm. 1–14 (1854)



Ex. 2.15. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Mazurka rustique*, Op. 81 (folk rhythm), mm. 75–79 (1867)

### Schottische

The schottische, a German dance form, presumably took its name because of its use of dance gestures associated with Scottish reels. Schottisches featured quick shifts from foot to foot, heel-to-toe foot striking, and toe-pointing. A “walking dance,” it was a variant of Bohemian forms that eventually led to the polka in the 1830s; indeed, the schottische includes some of the same steps as the polka. By 1840, when the dance was well established in America, the tempo was about twenty-seven bars of music per minute. Within ten years, the meter changed from 2/4 to 4/4, the tempo increased from thirty to thirty-five bars per minute, and dotted-eighth notes enlivened the previously straight rhythms. Simplifications to the steps continued as the music was played at ever-increasing speeds, factors that threatened its distinctive “walking dance” nature. By the 1890s, the form was in decline as the newer and more popular two-step took over.

Schottische rhythms are more marked than those found in the polka, with the heaviest accents occurring on the first and third beats (see Fig. 2.11). One complete sequence of the dance consists of four bars of music in 4/4. The basic step comprises four steps and a hop performed in each measure of music. The sequence concludes with a step and a hop, performed four times over two bars of music, while the final two bars require partners to rotate twice in place.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Hagert, 17.





Fig. 2.11. Characteristic rhythm pattern of the schottische

Examples include Allen Dodworth's *Jenny Lind Schottisch*<sup>23</sup> and *Grace Schottische*, as shown in Ex. 2.16 and Ex. 2.17. Other examples include Charles D'Albert's *The Flying Schottische* (1850s),<sup>24</sup> and Allen Dodworth's elaborately-entitled *Bolero or the Dodworth Schottisch or Dodworth's New Schottisch*.<sup>25</sup>



Ex. 2.16. Allen Dodworth, *Jenny Lind Schottisch* (1850), mm. 1–7 (1850)



Ex. 2.17. Allen Dodworth, *Grace Schottische* (1852), mm. 1–9

<sup>23</sup> In an age before copyright protections and image control, works featuring the names of world-famous celebrity performers in their titles no doubt aided many a composer in selling his latest work to publishers and the public.

<sup>24</sup> Hagert, 18. Written in 2/4 before dotted rhythms became fashionable, Hagert says this work is technically a schottische, but it is more suggestive of the beer-garden polka. In his opinion, a better example of a mid-century schottische is *The Flirt Polka* mentioned earlier. The author notes that the conflict between dance forms and the practice of calling one dance by another form's name was not uncommon during the nineteenth century.

<sup>25</sup> The extraordinarily long title of this work by Dodworth provides an excellent example of how dance names were used interchangeably and how composers and publishers marketed works of this nature to a mid-century dance-crazed American public.

## Two-Step

A fast ballroom dance of American origin, the two-step was one of the most popular dances in the final days of the nineteenth century. A couples dance performed in waltz position, with modified *deux-temps* or galop steps and no chasing steps, it featured swinging rhythms and lively, engaging music.<sup>26</sup> Dancers in the 1890s found the music novel, but listeners today may find the regular 6/8 patterns suggestive of marching bands. The comparison is apt, John Philip Sousa's *The Washington Post March* is a two-step.

The characteristic skipping rhythm features a light, springing melody, generally in 6/8, but occasionally in 2/4, 3/4, cut time, or common time. The tempo was about sixty bars of music per minute. Orchestras often doubled the tempo and “ragged” up simple melodies on the repeated strains toward the end of the dance. Two-steps remained popular until replaced by the one-step and foxtrot shortly before World War I.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to *The Washington Post* (Ex. 2.18), two-step examples include Thornton W. Allen's *The Washington and Lee Swing*, Louis Conterno's *Red Clouds March Two Step*, Nellie Beamish's *Thirteenth National Regiment March and Two Step*, Abe Holzman's *Blaze Away!* and Egbert Vanalstyne's *Bright Eyes, Goodbye*.



Ex. 2.18. John Philip Sousa, *The Washington Post March*, two-step (1889)

## Ragtime (Dance)

The decade before World War I witnessed a boom in social dancing, with most dance crazes developing not in Europe, but in the United States. As the above survey

<sup>26</sup> The steps, to a quick–quick–slow rhythm in each bar, were done with a gliding skip similar to that of the polka. The standard ballroom position with the man and woman facing each other was sometimes replaced by one in which the man stood behind and to the left of his partner, who raised her hands above her shoulders to take his hands.

<sup>27</sup> The one-step was popular from 1910–1920. It was set in a fast duple meter, similar to the foxtrot. The dance was superseded by “the slow fox.”

of dance rhythms indicates, most of North America's social dances were imported from Europe, with American dance masters simply copying the latest styles from London and Paris. While ballroom dances came into full bloom during the Romantic Era, by the end of the century the forms were collapsing and combining, and most balls featured only two dance forms: the waltz and two-step. At the same time, young American dancers were looking for something to define the exciting promise of the new century and to cast themselves in sharp relief against their parents' stodgy Victorian traditions. They found it in a strikingly new and lively form of syncopated music that perfectly expressed the heady years between 1890 and the start of World War I: ragtime.

The ragtime music that came out of the rural South and Midwest was "modern," lively, and a quirky, yet realistic, take on the shifting social scene. It dared to combine elements of Black and White culture, and in doing so, drove watchful, conservative parents to distraction. Ragtime dances were exotic and sexually-charged, and perhaps best of all, socially taboo. With the races still segregated, America's more adventurous young urban adults eagerly embraced the opportunity to experience a taste of the forbidden life. Animal dances such as the Grizzly Bear, Turkey Trot, Bunny Hug, and Camel Walk were anything but the formal, stylized dances of the older generation, with moves that left little to the imagination. Ragtime took America by storm, revitalizing society ballrooms and neighborhood dance halls.

Some of the earliest ragtime dances featured cakewalks, familiar to White audiences through minstrel shows, as well as through the music of Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Even so, most Americans only began paying closer attention to ragtime

after the cakewalk became a Paris sensation in 1900. If Europeans liked it, maybe there was something to it after all; as Richard Powers points out, despite the popularity of Irving Berlin's hit song *Everybody's Doin' It Now*, "most of middle- and upper-class society was only talking about it. Many Americans could not accept the new ragtime dances because of their lingering association with the lower classes."<sup>28</sup> Ragtime was blamed for an increase in underage drinking, premarital sex, venereal disease, and a host of other social ills, further contributing to its reputation with parents as the devil's music, which their well-brought up youngsters could well do without.<sup>29</sup>

The tide began to change in 1911, however, after socialites Vernon and Irene Castle began performing ballroom versions of ragtime dances. Newsreels portrayed the Castles as a young and elegant married couple, wholesome and attractive, and most important of all, members of the White upper class. As Powers wrote, "If they could dance the new ragtime dances with propriety, anyone could."<sup>30</sup> The Castles made ragtime dancing acceptable to the American middle class.

During the ragtime era, 1890–1915, American dancers gravitated to the one-step. Its appeal was partially due to its simplicity: couples simply walked one step to each beat of the music, allowing even the least-experienced dancers to appear "modern" by performing it. The start of World War I brought an end to the era. Dance floors emptied as men in Europe, and then America, left for war. But for a brief time, ragtime redefined social dancing and life in the new century. Important figures in the

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Powers, "Ragtime Dance," *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music Online, www.oxfordmusiconline.com*, accessed 23 January 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Marshall W. Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 71–72. Stearns writes about jazz performed in Storyville, New Orleans' celebrated red-light district, a thirty-eight-block area in the French Quarter packed with more than 200 brothels, nine cabarets, dance schools, honky-tonks, barrel-houses, restaurants, saloons, and casinos in the years between 1893 and 1917. Jazz and ragtime were heard in all of these locations, leading many out-of-town tourists to strongly associate the music with the "vices" enjoyed in the district, as well as elsewhere in the city.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

genre include James Reese Europe, Charles L. Johnson, Henry Lodge, F. Henri Klickmann, Arthur Green, and W.C. Handy. Europe's *Castles' Half and Half* is a typical ragtime dance number (see Ex. 2.19).



Ex. 2.19. James Reese Europe, *Castles' Half and Half*, mm. 1–12 (1914)

It is important to note that ragtime dances were not performed to Tin Pan Alley novelty songs or popular tunes. For information on ragtime as an instrumental form, refer to the discussion of African-American *topoi* found later in this dictionary.

## Martial Music

### Military Marches and Battle Music

In Raymond Monelle's introduction to military signifiers, he quotes Peter Panoff stating, "Without the march, military music is unthinkable. The two are inseparably bound together."<sup>31</sup> And yet, he goes on to explain, despite popular imagery of a band on foot, playing for troops as they marched in step, most European armies did not actually march in step until the eighteenth century. Until recent times, march tunes were ceremonial works, music played by small ensembles without fanfare or panache.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Peter Panoff, *Militärmusik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Berlin: Siegmund, 1938), 141, as quoted by Raymond Monelle in *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, Pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 113.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, Pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 113.

More commonly played on the field, from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, were drum cadences that signaled soldiers that the order to march had been given.

Unaccompanied drums, performing well-established patterns meant to relay specific messages to the troops, therefore became an essential form of communication during the heat of a battle.

Trumpet calls also conveyed specific messages to the troops. Easily heard across far distances, highly-trained brass players sounded the call to arms, directives to rally toward this or that side of the field, and orders to charge or retreat – at regular pace, in quick time, or at double times.<sup>33</sup>

Military marches and battle music evolved from field operations. Marches were commonly performed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were played by both civilian and military musicians. The earliest musical marches date from the mid-seventeenth century, with the genre evolving into its modern form during the French Revolution. Military march music accompanied state occasions, the entry of troops into a city, proclamations, assemblies, and similar events. In time, the musical march became a signifier of its own, asserting heroism, valor, victory, and national pride.

Battle music was performed in concert settings, or in the case of late eighteenth and nineteenth century music, in salons. Battle music recalled the heroism of a nation's fighting elite, depicted actions on the field for those who were not there, and provided an aural account of what happened for a populace unable to read news accounts. Battle music was also used to rally a nation into taking action or to promote national pride after

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<sup>33</sup> Raoul F. Camus, "Introduction to Volume 12: *American Wind and Percussion Music*," *Three Centuries of American Music: A Collection of American Sacred and Secular Music*, Sylvia Glickman, ed. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1992), xl-xli. Field calls and drum cadences used in the U.S. during the nineteenth century can be found starting at page 355.

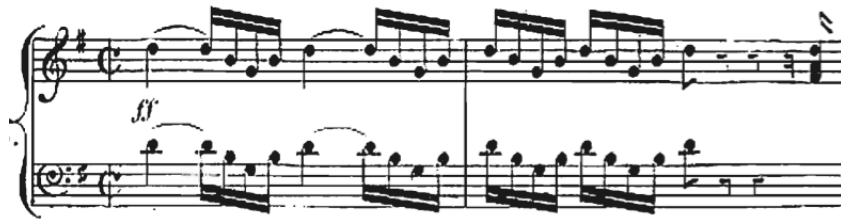
the battle had been fought. Some of the better-known European examples of battle music include Franz Kotzwara's *Battle of Prague*, Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory*, Op. 91, and Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

Composers in the New World were equally compelled to write military music. Field calls, military marches, and battle music were all popular forms of music even during Colonial times. While certain musical gestures used in battle music span all time periods — gunfire, cannons, cries, yells, and military calls — each war included vernacular references from its own era, particularly when depicting the opposing force. After the Revolutionary War, for example, American battle music works such as James Hewitt's *Battle of Trenton* included musical references to popular airs and hymns not only in the Colonies, but from England. Music from the Civil War, on the other hand, featured melodies associated with the Old South and the Industrial North: "Dixie," a popular song from the minstrel stage, became the leading signifier of the antebellum South, while "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was one of the most popular musical references to Union forces. During the Mexican War of 1845, and later the Spanish American War of 1898, composers such as Charles Grobe, Francis Buck, John Schell, William Cunning, and W. Striby commemorated specific battles by employing descriptive headings and arrangements of popular songs.

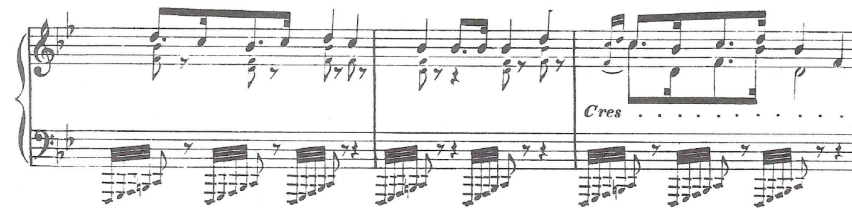
In an age when national anthems were not yet established, but national airs were familiar, it is interesting to note how certain tunes changed their associations over the course of the nineteenth century. "Yankee Doodle," an English folk song, was a rallying call for Colonial Americans fighting in the War of Independence. Seventy-five years later, the same melody was emblematic of the Yankee soldiers fighting on behalf of the

North. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the tune – as well as the word Yankee – represented imperialism to many inhabitants throughout the New World.<sup>34</sup>

Many marches, as well as all forms of battle music, employed special effects meant to recreate war-time conditions. American works demonstrating cavalry calls, cannon fire, gun shots, or other military actions are shown here in Examples 2.20-2.25.



Ex. 2.20. Charles D'Albert, *Rifle Corps Polka*, trumpet / cavalry call (1860s)



Ex. 2.21. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Union*, drum cadences (1863)



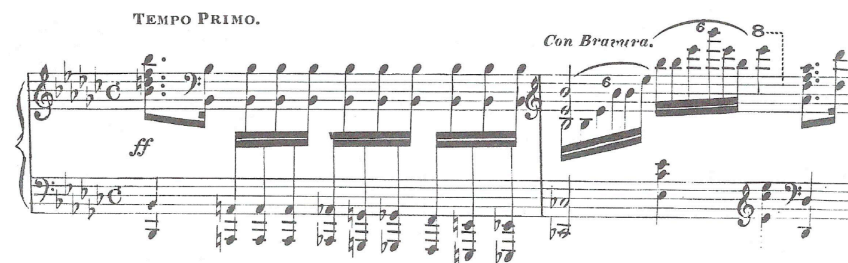
Ex. 2.22. "Blind Tom" Bethune, *Battle of Manassas*, drum and fife (1866)



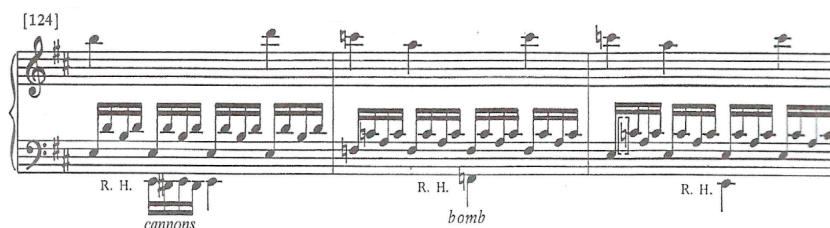
Ex. 2.23. James Hewitt, *Battle of Trenton*, gunfire (1792)

<sup>34</sup> William Gibbons, "'Yankee Doodle' and Nationalism, 1780–1920," *American Music* 26/2 (Summer 2008) 246–274.





Ex. 2.24. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Union, cannon fire* (1863)



Ex. 2.25. James Hewitt, *Battle of Trenton, cannons and bombs* (1792)

As Ben Arnold wrote in *War and Music*, “During the last half of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth – the age of the American and French Revolutions and of Napoleon, Wellington, and Washington – the western world underwent a remarkable transformation on two continents.”<sup>35</sup> Military music, battle works, and works that celebrated a nation’s victory accompanied a surge in national pride, with popular song, national airs, and military tunes taking on extra significance and ultimately transforming the character of battle music from 1789 to World War I. For the first time, composers freely incorporated popular songs into “serious” music, with tunes such as “La Marseillaise,” “Ça ira,” “Yankee Doodle,” and “Hail Columbia” finding their way into overtures, suites, sonatas, symphonies, oratorios, cantatas, and operas.<sup>36</sup>

These military-inspired compositions were immensely fashionable among the newly-formed middle class, who flocked to public concerts or bought pianos in order to

<sup>35</sup> Ben Arnold, *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Garland, 1993), 51.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* National anthems as such did not exist until after the French Revolution. Many nations adopted official songs and anthems during the nineteenth century. Operatic arias were commonly used or well-known tunes were repurposed. In the U.S., “Hail Columbia” and the “Star Spangled Banner” were the two most popular candidates for a national anthem during the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, “Hail Columbia” was no longer in the running, having been replaced by “America.”

play the latest works at home. Battle music had been popular for centuries, but in a post-revolutionary world, it was an international craze. The instrument of choice for battle music was the piano, the ultimate status symbol for the nouveau riche. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for works was insatiable, with many compositions offered in solo, four-hand, and two-piano editions.<sup>37</sup>

Many composers cashed in on the mania for military music, including Haydn, Mozart, Gossec, Schubert and Beethoven. One of the most famous compositions, Kotzwara's *The Battle of Prague* (1788) was arranged for a wide assortment of instruments for more than sixty years. The work inspired the public, as well as authors; Thoreau, Thackeray, and Twain each mentioned *The Battle of Prague* in their writings.

American composers found much to admire in the work as well, including James Hewitt (1770–1827), who emigrated to America in 1792.<sup>38</sup> His most famous work depicts a decisive battle in the American Revolution in a manner not at all dissimilar to Kotzwara's masterpiece. A programmatic work for solo piano, *The Battle of Trenton* (1797) commemorates George Washington's Christmas Day battle of 1776, a surprise attack that changed the course of the Revolutionary War and boosted the sagging morale of the American troops.<sup>39</sup> Like other battle music compositions, the work is primarily in D major, a key typically employed to signal military success.<sup>40</sup>

Musical devices include familiar gestures: fast repeated notes, triplet passages, triadic outlines, and dotted rhythms to identify march tunes or the general's orders, and

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<sup>37</sup> Arnold, *War and Music*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> Maurice Hinson, Preface to the score of James Hewitt's *Battle of Trenton* (Miami FL: CPP/Belwin, 1989), 2. According to Hinson, Hewitt worked as musician in the court of George III, where he had the opportunity to perform in an orchestra led by Haydn. He also served briefly in the Royal Navy.

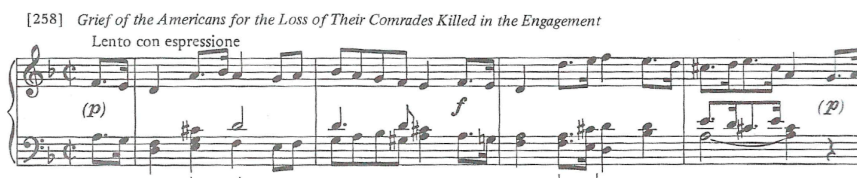
<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 238–242. According to twenty-two of the forty-three treatises Steblin cites in her study, period writers consistently described the key with attributes such as “military” and “victorious.”

special effects such as drum cadences, trumpet calls, cannon fire, and explosions. Popular airs such as “Washington’s March” (Ex. 2.26) and “Yankee Doodle” (Ex. 2.28) play roles in the work, as does “Roslin Castle,” a Scottish melody associated with funerals, in a passage labeled “Grief of the Americans for the Loss of their Comrades killed in the Engagement” (Ex. 2.27). In addition to noting field activities and identifying popular airs, headings include music for “drums and fifes,” suggesting a topic in the making.<sup>41</sup>



Ex. 2.26. James Hewitt, *Battle of Trenton* (1797); use of popular work: “Washington’s March.”



Ex. 2.27. James Hewitt, *Battle of Trenton* (1797); use of popular song: “Roslin Castle,” a Scottish grief lament.<sup>42</sup>



Ex. 2.28. James Hewitt, *Battle of Trenton*, drum and fife (1797); use of national air: “Yankee Doodle.”

Instrumental music flourished in the colonies, but vocal music also played an important role in American life. During the Revolution, war-related songs kept the people informed of current events and rallied support for independence. William Billings, one of

<sup>41</sup> A number of excerpts from this work were used to identify typical battle music sound effects. In addition to excerpts included on this page, please refer to Ex. 2.23, 2.25.

<sup>42</sup> A similar work from the same era, also by Hewitt, is *The Fourth of July: A Grand Military Sonata*. In this work, Hewitt includes the familiar air *Hail Columbia* as well as *Washington’s March*. Depictive sounds include drum and fife corps, musette, and Westminster chimes.

the most famous songwriters from this period, is perhaps best remembered for his melody “Chester” (Ex. 2.29). Originally written as part of the *New England Psalm-Singer* (1770), this sixteen-bar patriotic song epitomizes an important aspect of the American culture: the ability of a young people to defeat its older enemies. The work quickly became Billings’ most popular patriotic song and a musical topic for the entire Revolutionary period. The music was not programmatic and required no special effects; indeed, it was often sung *a capella*. Even so, only the melody is familiar today. It has been adopted by dozens of American composers over the years, with perhaps the most famous setting an arrangement for concert band by William Schuman, who scored the original tune for high winds and drums to suggest the sounds of drum and fife sound associated with the period.



Ex. 2.29. William Billings, “Chester” (1770)

America’s next war, The War of 1812, was fought for three years between the U.S. and England and its North American colonies, with Native American allies fighting on both sides. Battles took place in three main theatres: at sea, where each side attacked the other’s merchant ships during a British blockade of the Atlantic coast; in large-scale attacks along the U.S.-Canadian frontier; and finally in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>43</sup>

Although the Battle of New Orleans was very small engagement, America’s victory was important to its citizens as many Americans viewed the newly acquired Louisiana Territory as a prize the British might want to claim for themselves in an

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<sup>43</sup> The sale was made in 1804, but it took ten years for the French and American governments to officially ratify the paperwork. The Louisiana Territory was therefore not fully under American control until 1814.

attempt to reestablish its North American empire. News of the victory was quite a surprise, especially since the U.S. force was but a fraction of the size of the British one. The conflict launched Andrew Jackson's political career, which ultimately took him to the White House. The battle and Jackson were commemorated in songs and other musical works. Both are mentioned, for example, in George Washington Dixon's 1834 lyrics to "Zip Coon." Several composers wrote battle music in honor of the occasion, including Denis-Germain Etienne, Peter Ricksecker, and Frederick Abel.<sup>44</sup>

Fiddle tunes honoring of the Battle of New Orleans include "The 8<sup>th</sup> of January," named for day the battle occurred (Ex. 2.30). Jimmie Driftwood used it in "The Battle of New Orleans," which was recorded by The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Doug Kershaw.<sup>45</sup>



Ex. 2.30. Traditional, "The 8<sup>th</sup> of January"

The Mexican-American War (1846–1848) was the first war that the United States fought outside its national borders. The war pitted a politically-unstable Mexican government against the expansionist-minded administration of U.S. President James K. Polk, who believed the nation's borders should extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The conflict cost Mexico about one-third of its territory, including most of what is now California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah.

<sup>44</sup> The Abel work is a piano duet entitled *General Jackson's Triumph*. The other works are battle music suites for solo piano, all appropriately titled *The Battle of New Orleans*.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Kuntz, *Fiddler's Companion*, [http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/EIB\\_EMY.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/fiddlers/EIB_EMY.htm), accessed 5 March 2017. The original name of the tune was "Jackson's Victory." The title changed around the time of the Civil War, in response to Jackson's declining popularity.

Composers depicted the Mexican-American War in both popular songs and battle music compositions.<sup>46</sup> Patriotic song texts relate the deeds of either great or ordinary men with lyrics concentrating on the valor of the fallen, the bravery of the men on the field, the sense of duty of those still fighting, or the adventures anticipated by young men as they march off to war. In short, these songs romanticize battles, deflecting attention away from the horrors of war and toward the valor of individual combatants. By emphasizing the sacrifice of a single person, patriotic songs could rally a nation, build support for the troops, encourage men to enlist, or comfort the brokenhearted.

In that regard, “The Death of Ringgold” is typical (Ex. 2.31). Its five stanzas relate the sacrifice made by U.S. Major Samuel Ringgold. One of the first casualties in the Mexican-American War, his death was quickly enshrined in song. The song’s popularity increased public support for the war, as well as for Manifest Destiny.<sup>47</sup>

Oh! heard ye that shout! "We have con - quered the foe!" How it rings and re - ech-oes o'er  
moun-tain and plain! But, a - las! with it min-gls the sad note of woe "A he-ro has per-ish'd brave  
Ring - gold is slain!" A he - ro has perish - ed brave Ring - gold is slain!

Ex. 2.31. J.W. Turner, “The Death of Ringgold” (1846)

<sup>46</sup> Titles of works are sometimes included in histories, and on occasion, narrative descriptions of their key features are included in the text. Scores to the best examples from the period, however, are difficult to come by. Most are not yet available through online depositories such as IMSLP and few, if any, are included in monument collections. The majority of works are available in non-circulating special collections rooms. A survey of the titles I was most interested in for this portion of the dictionary indicated that no more than ten libraries worldwide had copies of any of the works. In most cases, four libraries or fewer had copies of the original sheet music. For some examples, only one American library had the music. For scholars eager to examine more works from this era, the Library of Congress has made 75,000 sheet music titles in their collection available online. Researchers are advised to start a search at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov); [www.memory.loc.gov](http://www.memory.loc.gov) is also helpful.

<sup>47</sup> This score was transcribed using materials downloaded from the Library of Congress website. Notice how the song makes extensive use of the lament rhythm, a drum cadence highly associated with death. Beethoven used it the second movement of the *Eroica*, Symphony No. 3; Chopin used it in his Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, and again in *Trauermarsch* in C minor, Op. 72, no. 2. Many nineteenth century composers followed suit and employed the same rhythm in their own funeral works. See [www.loc.gov/resource/sm1857.611580.0?sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-s](http://www.loc.gov/resource/sm1857.611580.0?sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-s), accessed 8 March 2017.

Battle music written during the Mexican-American War highlights specific battles, as demonstrated by Charles Grobe's *The Battle of Buena Vista* and *The Battle of Palo Alto and Resaca de La Palma*, or Francis Buck's elaborately-titled suite, *Fall of Vera Cruz and the Surrender of the City and Castle of San Juan de Ulúa to the American forces under Major Gen'l Scott 29 March 1847*.<sup>48</sup>

The Mexican-American War marks the emergence of protest songs. These songs painted a different picture of war with lyrics that focused on death or complaints about pay or unfair treatment. In Ex. 2.32, "The Maid of Monterrey,"<sup>49</sup> war is not glamorous or full of valor. The title figure is a Mexican woman who tended to the wounded and dead, without regard for which side the soldier served. As the lyrics explain,

The moon was shining brightly, upon the battle plain.  
 The gentle breeze fann'd lightly, the features of the slain.  
 The guns had hush'd their thunder, the drums in silence lay.  
 When came the Senoretta [sic], the maid of Monterrey.  
 She cast a look of anguish, on dying and on dead.  
 Her lap she made the pillow of those who groan'd and bled.  
 And when the dying soldier for one bright gleam did pray,  
 he bless'd the Senoretta [sic], the maid of Monterrey.



Ex. 2.32. John Hill Hewitt, "The Maid of Monterrey" (1851)

A popular song with a far stronger anti-war message was "Eight Dollars a Day."

Written in 1848 by Jesse Hutchinson, the lyrics convey the frustration of ordinary

<sup>48</sup> These works, along with Mexican-American battle pieces from John Schell, William Cumming, and W. Striby, are described in detail by Sam Arnold in *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide*.

<sup>49</sup> This score was transcribed using materials downloaded from the Library of Congress website, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov), accessed 8 March 2017.

soldiers with members of Congress, who were profiting off the war while the men who put their lives on the line in battle risked everything, earning only eight dollars a day.<sup>50</sup>

The Civil War was the culmination of the still-young country's experience with war. Neither side could have predicted the bloodshed that lay ahead or how the war would pit members of a family against each other. The end of the Civil War saw the decline of the battle music genre, with some of the last American works composed by Louis Moreau Gottschalk and Thomas Bethune, better known as "Blind Tom."

Written in 1866, Bethune's *Battle of Manassas* follows many of the traditions seen in other battle works: It is multi-sectional, full of descriptive headings, and includes the standard arsenal of military sound effects – cavalry calls, drums, fifes, trumpets, cannons, and gunfire. It is unusual in its extensive use of tone clusters in the bass to simulate cannon fire, one of the first works to employ the technique. At various points in the work, the composer quotes "Yankee Doodle" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," both of which are heard over the roar of artillery. The most unusual feature, however, is found in a passage toward the end of the work, in which the performer whistles in the style of a passing train, which the score tells us is carrying both supplies and troops. At the same time, Bethune quotes the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise," for no apparent reason.<sup>51</sup> The music also quotes American popular airs, including "Dixie," which according to the score is sung by *Northern Yankees*, not Southern Rebels, as they head off for battle (see Ex. 2.33). A light-hearted crowd pleaser, Bethune's *Battle of Manassas*

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<sup>50</sup> The lyrics of the first verse are worth sharing as they show not much has changed in the nation's capital since 1848: "At Washington, full once a year do politicians throng, contriving there by various arts to make their sessions long; And many a reason do they give why they're obliged to stay, but the clearest reason yet adduced is Eight Dollars A Day."

<sup>51</sup> Bethune quotes *La Marseillaise* several times in the composition but its significance is unclear in this context. It is possible he saw the French as supporters of liberty, equality, and fraternity, or as champions of civil rights in the aftermath of the Haitian slave revolts of the 1790s. One result of that uprising was better treatment of African-Americans by French, as opposed to Anglo-American slaveowners in the decades leading up to the Civil War. No matter what his motivation for including "La Marseillaise," its use is a clear reference to France.



comes across as a humorous parody of war rather than a depiction of the horror the Civil War wrought upon a deeply divided nation.



Ex. 2.33. Thomas Bethune, aka “Blind Tom,” *Battle of Manassas*, drum cadence in the left hand, “Dixie” in the right hand (1866)

Gottschalk (1829–1869) was the nation’s first nationalist composer, its first piano virtuoso, and its first celebrity entertainer. A native of New Orleans, Gottschalk was a showman at a time when the nation was just beginning the search for its artistic voice. Gottschalk knew exactly how to appeal to local tastes: He married his highly developed skills on the piano with patriotic airs and popular songs — and in this particular case, with his politics. Gottschalk’s Civil War extravaganza for solo piano, the *Paraphrase de Concert, The Union*, Op. 48, combines three patriotic airs — “Yankee Doodle,” “Hail Columbia,” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” — into what is arguably the most virtuosic military-themed music ever. Features include a brilliant cadenza and a particularly dramatic setting of “The Star-Spangled Banner” in F-sharp major. Rapid-fire interlocking octaves on the lower bass notes create the “roar” of cannon fire. Drum rolls are depicted in a five-note scale played just before “Yankee Doodle” and “Hail Columbia” are combined. Similar works by Gottschalk include *Bataille*, Op. 64; *Chant du guerre*, Op. 78; *Chant du soldat: Grande caprice de concert*, Op. 23; *La bataille de Carabova*; *El sitio de Zaragoza* (for ten pianos); and *Grand National Symphony: Bunker Hill* (a revision of *El sitio de Zaragoza*).

The music of the Spanish-American War (1898) reflected battle music traditions established in earlier generations. Example works include two piano suites, both entitled *Battle of Manila*. These were the last two battle suites for the piano to be written for a contemporary battle: the first by George Schleiffarth (1898), the other by J.L. Baker (1902). Both quoted “Yankee Doodle.” Works for other media include R. Kelso Carter’s victory hymn, *The Battle of Manila*, and conductor Walter Damrosch’s *Manila Te Deum*.

Battle music was no longer fashionable by World War I. Songwriters on Tin Pan Alley cranked out tearful popular songs, while classically oriented composers of the era responded by writing requiems and laments – forms that provided comfort and reflected changing social attitudes toward war and the destruction left in its wake.

#### Funeral Marches / New Orleans Brass Bands

The funeral march has played a role in art music since the nineteenth century: Beethoven included one as the second movement of his Symphony No. 3, “Eroica;” Chopin wrote several works featuring a lament motif. These works inspired other composers to include similar gestures in their own compositions, including “The Death of Ringgold” discussed earlier. In addition to funereal works by Chopin and Beethoven, Gottschalk’s *Marche Funèbre* features the same lament rhythm used by Chopin: a quarter note, followed by a dotted-eighth and a sixteenth note. (See Ex. 2.34.)

The image shows a musical score for the opening of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's *Marche Funèbre*. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains the melody, marked with the tempo 'Lugubre.' and the instruction 'Il canto sensibile sempre.' The dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'cresc.' (crescendo). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains the accompaniment, marked with 'M. M.' and '♩ = 66.' The dynamics are also 'pp' and 'cresc.'. The music features a characteristic lament rhythm: a quarter note followed by a dotted-eighth and a sixteenth note.

Ex. 2.34. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Marche Funèbre*, opening (1853)

Funeral marches are based on a long tradition of death marches and processions held in many cultures, not only in Europe, but in Africa and Asia as well. In the United States, the tradition of funeral parades can be found in isolated areas, mostly those with a predominantly large Catholic population of French or Spanish descent. No city better represents the evolution of funeral marches in America than New Orleans.

Funerals with music have been held in New Orleans since the city's founding more than 300 years ago. Known today as "jazz funerals," these processions have evolved with the city, reflecting both social and musical trends with the passing of time. Until the 1890s, funeral processions were a standard part of every burial in New Orleans. Then, however, racial prejudice brought together the Catholic Church and newly-arrived White Protestants, two normally warring factions. What united them was jazz. It was their belief that jazz was the devil's music, a poor choice for church rituals. It was closely associated with the seedier side of life: prostitution, gambling, and other forms of sin. Nevertheless, the real issue was that jazz came out of the city's Black music community; at a time of increasing segregation, the thought of a death ritual whose music was increasingly identified as African-American was simply unthinkable.

As a result, funerals with music and the later jazz funeral were banned by the city's white churches as inappropriate for respectable members of society. Since that time, jazz funerals have been held only as part of African-American funerals, or when a beloved city musician of any race has passed.

Historically, funeral music in New Orleans is performed by brass bands. These small ensembles, usually a combination of eight to twelve musicians, play solemn music as mourners gather for a wake held in the home of the deceased on the night before the

funeral. The next morning, the band returns to lead mourners to and from the church. The band plays slow hymns and dirges as the body of the deceased is carried out of church and placed in a hearse or horse-drawn carriage. Musicians wait at the gates to the graveyard during the actual burial, but as mourners gather for the walk back to the city, the band strikes up livelier music, up-tempo spirituals that celebrate the soul's release from earthly life and the joy of the deceased now reunited with friends and family already in heaven. The traditional drum cadence is sixteen bars, followed by an eight bar "roll-off" to bring the band into each song. The "front line" in every jazz funeral consists of melody instruments while the "second line" refers to dancers who twirl umbrellas as the band leads mourners away from the cemetery.

With the emergence of jazz, the music performed in parades shifted from hymns and spirituals played in a traditional manner to ragtime and jazz renditions. Bands typically consisted of trumpets or cornets, trombones, tuba, and drums. Saxophones are common additions, clarinets less so.<sup>52</sup> During funeral processions for prominent New Orleans musicians, other instruments are added to the band, as the deceased's friends often join in to show their respect.<sup>53</sup>

Music associated with funerals includes hymns such as "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," "Nearer My God to Thee," "As the Saints Go Marching In," and "Didn't He Ramble" (see Ex. 2.35). An up-tempo, swing version of "As the Saints Go Marching In" is often the transition into even livelier melodies played in the "hot jazz" or the Dixieland

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<sup>52</sup> Prior to the twentieth century, ensembles included saxhorns and other brass instruments no longer in use.

<sup>53</sup> Over the centuries, New Orleans brass bands have performed at all manner of functions, but today the bands are best known for providing street music and music for funeral parades. Several of the groups founded in the mid-nineteenth century are still performing: The Eureka Brass Band, Onward Brass Band, the Excelsior Brass Band, Tuxedo Brass Band, Young Tuxedo Brass Band, and The Olympia Brass Band are a few of the "old school" ensembles still in existence. Groups formed more recently include Rebirth and Treme Brass Band; these ensembles have built new audiences for New Orleans street music through recordings and appearances on television and in films.

style established in the early years of the twentieth century. The use of any of these works in an art music composition is a clear reference to the church or to death; the use of these, or similar musical songs scored in either a ragtime or jazz style is a clear reference to New Orleans and the jazz funeral tradition.<sup>54</sup>

Ex. 2.35. J. Rosamond Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and Bob Cole, “Didn’t He Ramble” (1902)<sup>55</sup>

### Circus Marches and Patriotic Marches

The roots of circus music extend back to antiquity, when Roman circuses employed musicians to entertain the masses. European circuses date from the late eighteenth century, when Philip Astley (1742–1814) organized the first such events since the fall of Rome. Circuses proved popular both in Europe and in America, where P.T. Barnum was among the first to introduce the circus to American audiences. Long associated with producing concert music, Barnum tried to book the most famous talent

<sup>54</sup> An excellent recording of the Tuxedo Jass Band performing “Just a Closer Walk With Thee” and “Didn’t He Ramble” can be viewed online at <https://www.preshallfoundation.org/didntheramble/>. The 1964 clip features Jack Willis on trumpet, Cornbread Thomas (clarinet, voice), Frog Joseph (trombone), Jeanette Kimball (piano), Papa French (banjo), Frank Fields (bass), and Louis Barbarin (drums).

Historic footage from many jazz funerals is now available on YouTube. Old-school jazz funerals include the procession for Louis Barbarin, beloved local drummer, in which in-church and streetside performances by a very young Pete Fountain may be heard — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05WCrH-kCgA>.

To view a modern jazz funeral, one hosted by African-American brass band members for one of their own, view the street party held in October 2007 on behalf of Kerwin James, aka Tuba Fats, a young musician who was gunned down during a funeral march only days earlier after resting a moment on the porch of a rival gang’s favorite bar during a funeral march — visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krJW2qMVv4M>.

<sup>55</sup> Score downloaded from the Preservation Hall Foundation, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/548a3b8ae4b04308d751c7ac/t/54de9ffce4b0e74b37c09c59/1423876092366/Didn%27t+He+Ramble++Full+Score+%28Concert+Pitch%29.pdf>, accessed 24 February 2017.

on the concert circuit as well as the best acrobats he could find. In 1853 he offered Gottschalk – freshly arrived in New York after many years in Europe – an annual contract worth \$20,000 in hopes of enticing the virtuoso to join his traveling show.<sup>56</sup>

The first circuses in America offered variety acts, comedy, animal acts, and other forms of entertainment such as freak shows. Circus musicians performed marches, galops, and waltzes to accompany these various stage performances. The music varied throughout the show, with specific music often played for certain types of performances. Circus marches – called “screamers” because of their fast tempi – were used for entrances and exits, overtures, finales, and acts that featured wild animals or daredevil feats.<sup>57</sup> Galops, discussed earlier in this chapter, were popular during trick riding and acts featuring fast-paced movements. Trapeze acts were accompanied by waltzes and galops; marches were used when lions, tigers, or bears came into the ring.

Popular circus tunes include *Entrance of the Gladiators* (Ex. 2.36) and *Florentiner March* by Julius Fucik,<sup>58</sup> *Barnum and Bailey’s Favorite* by Karl L. King, and *Sobre las Ondas* (Over the Waves) by Juventino Rosas (Ex. 2.37). Other popular titles include Gustav Peter’s *Memory of Circus Renz*, written in 1894 for the “new xylophone,” and Josef Wagner’s *Under the Double Eagle March*.

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<sup>56</sup> Gottschalk declined Barnum’s offer in 1853, stating he preferred to make his own arrangements. His father, who had advised strongly against his son associating himself with the circus, died shortly after the offer was made and Gottschalk spent the next chapter of his life in the Caribbean, composing and organizing the first of his internationally famous “monster concerts.” For more, see Starr, *Bamboula*, 137.

Rival circus presenters included James Bailey (who later merged his circus with Barnum’s to form the Barnum and Bailey Circus) and Ringling Brothers. The Ringling Brothers “Greatest Show on Earth” bought out the Barnum and Bailey Circus in 1907, forming the Ringling Brothers / Barnum and Bailey Circus. The last remaining nineteenth-century American circus, Ringling Brothers ceased touring in May 2017, ending a nearly 150-year tradition of three-ring family entertainment. With their closing, circus music moves from active concert use into the stuff of *topoi*. Cirque du Soleil, the only remaining circus in America, choreographs its acrobatic shows to modern music, written for its use or borrowed from pop culture.

<sup>57</sup> Screamers were played as fast as possible, generally quarter notes at 180.

<sup>58</sup> An alternate version of *Entrance of the Gladiators* was released in 1910 by Louis-Philippe Laurendeau as *Thunder and Blazes*.

Tempo di Marcia

Ex. 2.36. Julius Fucik, *Entrance of the Gladiators* (1897)

Ex. 2.37. Juventino Rosas, *Sobre las Ondas* (1885)

With few exceptions, circus tunes were generally played at one volume – forte – to attract crowds from a distance. Brass instruments were ideal for this, but circus bands also typically employed strings, woodwinds, percussion, and sometimes saxophones. The circus organ was introduced in 1856. Known as the calliope, this steam-powered keyboard instrument with forty-four keys was heard on riverboats, during the horse-drawn parades that announced the arrival of the circus into town, and during the actual circus performance. Its sound could carry up to nine miles, providing shows travelling by riverboat a unique opportunity to promote their arrival from a great distance.

King and Henry Fillmore are two Americans who wrote circus marches. Excerpts from their best-known screamers are shown in Ex. 2.38 and Ex. 2.39.

Ex. 2.38. Karl King, *Barnum and Bailey's Favorite* (1913)

Ex. 2.39. Henry Fillmore, *Rolling Thunder* (1916)

Carnivals, fairs, medicine shows, and circuses shared not only performers but many of the same forms of popular entertainment. As a result, music heard in one venue frequently was heard in the others. Calliopes, or circus organs, were often attached to carousels, playing music rooted in the carnival experience, or in some cases, minstrelsy,

It is interesting to note that American circuses almost never included marches such as those by John Philip Sousa. Indeed, Sousa's most famous march, *Stars and*



*Stripes Forever* was reserved for circus bands to play only in the event of an emergency, such as fire, a life-threatening accident, or a wild animal escaping from its cage.<sup>59</sup>

The limited use of Sousa marches underscores an important aspect of march music – the distinction between European- and American-style marches. Most circus music, and all marches written in the U.S. prior to Sousa’s career were written in the European style, that is to say, in the English tradition. Stately and lyrical, British marches feature an introduction, four repeated strains (each sixteen bars long), intricate countermelodies, and a wide range of dynamic markings. Well-known examples include *Colonel Bogey* and *The British Grenadiers*. The European march style provided the model followed in ragtime, in particular Joplin’s solo piano rags. The formal structure of European marches can be seen in Figure 2.12.

INTRO	: A	:  : B	:  : C	:  : D	:
<b>Introduction</b> 8-16 bars	<b>1st Strain</b> 16 bars P1, marcato  Dynamic contrast possible on repeat  PAC on I	<b>2nd Strain</b> 16 bars P2, marcato  Dynamic and/or orchestration contrast on repeat  PAC on I	<b>3rd Strain</b> 16 bars P3, legato  Key change  PAC on IV (III if A & B in minor)	<b>4th Strain</b> 16 bars P4, marcato  Dynamic and/or orchestration contrast on repeat  PAC on IV	

Fig. 2.12. Formal organization of European marches

*Captain Shepherd’s Quick Step*, an 1860 march by Claudio Grafulla (1812–1880), follows the European model. The work opens with triplets, making the music sound as if it were notated in 6/8. By the second half of the first strain, however, duple meter is clearly established and remains intact throughout the remainder of the work. The use of a da capo ending is a distinguishing trait: Grafulla repeats his opening material to close the work. And, as one might expect in a European march, there is no stinger or break strain in

<sup>59</sup> According to David Mogan, author of “Things You Should Know About Circus Disasters,” Sousa’s *Stars and Stripes Forever* was a musical code for circus personnel to empty out the tents. Among circus folk, the work is known as “The Disaster March.” <http://www.robotbutt.com/2014/08/03/things-you-should-know-about-circus-disasters/>. See also <https://militarymusic.com/blogs/military-music/13516461-merle-evans-toscanini-of-the-big-top>.

this march (see Ex. 2.40). Grafulla's *Washington Grays* is another example of American march composed in the European style.<sup>60</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a march. The title is 'Marziale' and the piece is 'Captain Shepherd's Quick Step' by Claudio Grafulla. The score is in 2/4 time. The piano part is marked 'PIANO' and 'FORTE'. The right-hand part features triplets and slurs. The piece concludes with a 'Ped' (pedal) marking and an asterisk.

Ex. 2.40. Claudio Grafulla, *Captain Shepherd's Quick Step* (1860)

The classic American march – made famous by American bandmaster John Phillip Sousa – is organized quite differently from European marches. Sousa (1854–1932) created the form in 1896, adapting the European model to his purposes for the premiere of his best-known work, *Stars and Stripes Forever*. According to Sousa's design, the work opens with an introduction of no more than eight bars to establish the key. Although the harmonies are typically clear in American marches, a sizeable number

<sup>60</sup> Writing about Grafulla for Altissimo Records, Jack Kopstein reports that Grafulla was the first composer to include woodwinds in regimental bands. He also reports *Washington Grays* is one of the few marches to not include an introduction. See <https://militarymusic.com/blogs/military-music/13516297-claudio-grafulla>, accessed 18 March 2017.

of dominant seventh chords are frequently found in the introduction, with the tonic sounding only as the first strain is about to begin. Four-bar phrases permeate the style; each strain comprising a total of sixteen bars. The music is largely diatonic, and highlights a tonic-dominant relationship. It is divided into four main sections: a first and second strain, a trio in the subdominant (or relative major if the work is in a minor key), a break strain or “dogfight,” and a repeat of the trio. As the music unfolds, each succeeding section introduces more musical ideas or alters the orchestration or dynamics. Second strains typically feature bass voices such as low brass or low woodwinds, as well as a greater use of secondary dominants to obscure the repetitive underlying harmony (I-IV-V). Dramatic dynamic changes from *p* to *f* also add excitement and interest. Trios often include not only first and second themes unique to that portion of the work, but also new countermelodies that are introduced in the final repeat of the trio. Trios also introduce a noticeable style change: Whereas the first two strains are typically played in a marcato – or military – style and the scoring is for full band, trios in American marches are legato and woodwind-dominated.

The most prominent distinction between the Intro-AABBCCDD format of English marches (or the ABA form of European marches in general) and American marches is the inclusion of a break strain, or “dogfight,” within an otherwise pastoral trio. This sixteen-bar section of music is tonally unstable and generally features sequential harmonies and secondary dominants that lead back to IV (or III if the work opened in a minor key), functioning as it were, as a revolving door between the trio and the grand finale. Generally performed marcato and forte, dogfights typically involve the full ensemble; indeed most are “conversations” between the high winds and the low brass.

In the final portion of the march – C’ – the trio is heard once more, but this time, countermelodies and solo obligato lines are included in order to make the finale all the more grand. Indeed, this part of the score is often marked “grandioso,” and whether by tradition or indications in the score, many conductors drop the tempo during the final trio before accelerating to a speed much faster than the original tempo by the end. A “stinger” – a crisp staccato tonic chord played loudly by the full ensemble – concludes every American march, and gives the work a dramatic finish.

Figure 2.13 shows the formal organization of American marches.

The dogfight section of Sousa’s *Stars and Stripes Forever* is shown in Ex. 2.41; the passage demonstrates the revolving door function of the section.

Examples of the short stingers that conclude Sousa’s American marches, such as *Stars and Stripes Forever* and *The Thunderer* are shown in Ex. 2.42 and Ex. 2.43.

INTRO	: A	:  : B	:  : C	:  : D	C’	:
<b>Introduction</b> 4-8 bars	<b>1st Strain</b> 16 bars P1, marcato  Dynamic contrast on repeat PAC on I	<b>2nd Strain</b> 16 bars P2, marcato  Dynamic, orchestration contrast PAC on I	<b>TRIO</b> 16 bars P3, legato  Key change PAC on IV (III if A & B in minor)	<b>Break Strain or “Dogfight”</b> P4, marcato  Harmonically open, chord progressions always lead back to IV	<b>Trio’ / Finale</b> 16 bars Grandioso  P3’ plus new countermelody PAC on IV, plus “Stinger”	

Fig. 2.13. Formal organization of American marches

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piece "Stars and Stripes Forever" by John Philip Sousa. The first system shows the beginning of the dogfight section, with instruments including Fl. Picc. 8, Cor. Irpt., Cls., and Fl. Picc. The second system continues the dogfight section. The third system marks the beginning of the grandioso finale, starting with the instruction *ff molto marcato*. This system includes parts for Fl. Picc., Cl., Cor. Irpt., Bar. Alto & Ten. Sax., 2-3 Cornets, Horns, Trbe, and Basses, Bar. & Bass Sax. Tmp.

Ex. 2.41. John Philip Sousa, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, reduced score demonstrating the revolving door function of the dogfight section into the grandioso finale (1897)

Ex. 2.42. John Philip Sousa, *Stars and Stripes Forever*, American stinger (1897)

Ex. 2.43. John Philip Sousa, *The Thunderer*, American stinger (1912)

Marches played at excessively fast tempi clearly indicate the circus.

Orchestrations that include calliope, circus organs, steel drums, or novelty special effects such as train whistles or rim shots are also clear signifiers of circus, carnivals, and other forms of festival entertainment. Circus marches performed at 140-200 beats per minute that also feature runs, fanfares, and at least one strain showcasing the speed and agility of the low brass section are most likely screamers, a distinctly American form of circus music. American screamers typically include a *maestoso* treatment of its final lyrical strain followed by an *accelerando* to a closing tempo that is faster than the original speed.

Military marches in art music settings can be either European or American. American marches often include parts for melodic percussion instruments and the sousaphone, a special marching-band variety of tuba that was named for John Philip Sousa. Cavalry field calls and drum cadences unique to the American military experience are still other indicators of the United States.

### Musical Depictions of “Other” in American Music

While dances were an essential ingredient in the formation of a uniquely American musical vernacular, they were hardly the only source material to resurface as musical *topoi*. Composers also attempted to portray the musical “other” by adopting melodies, dance rhythms, musical gestures, and harmonies from other cultures, those of Afro-Americans and Native Americans in particular. Various features of Black musical traditions, such as the cakewalk rhythm of African American slaves, played an important role in minstrelsy, ragtime, and jazz, just as field hollers and plantation songs found new life in blues and spirituals, or Barbershop harmonies came to represent the “gay 90s” and an age of innocence before the Great War of 1914. Some of these gestures were incorporated and reinforced as signifiers through popular entertainments; others were ignored if comic stage portrayals or the use of dialect better served presenters’ needs.<sup>61</sup>

Portrayals of Native Americans in music have similarly long roots. Beginning with the publication of Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* in 1855, depictions of the nation’s original inhabitants changed considerably over the remainder of the century, with imagery shifting from flattering portraits that reflected Rousseau’s concept of the “Noble Savage” – an exotic creature better attuned to Nature and human values than the White man – to the late-nineteenth century’s view of the Native American as a “Savage Warrior” – a heathen obstacle to settlement of the West by “real” Americans. The use of rhythmic patterns representing Native American drumming, for example, is nearly impossible to find in scores from before the Civil War. In later decades, however, as White Americans raced toward the Pacific to fulfill their Manifest Destiny, these

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<sup>61</sup> As will be discussed later, flattering portrayals of African Americans did not generally appear until after the Civil War. Stephen Foster wrote a handful, but even those were in the minority of his catalogue.

gestures are seen more frequently.<sup>62</sup> During the first decade of the twentieth century, an Indianist movement in music, led by composer Arthur Farwell and his Wa-Wan Press (1901–1912), gave Americans a glimpse of what Native American melodies sounded like before the last free Native Americans were banished to reservations.<sup>63</sup> The Indianists were eclipsed in the early 1920s by the next wave of “Western Frontier” music – the sounds of cowboy pioneers. Their rustic songs appealed to mainstream tastes, and their popularity signaled the victory of white values over those of a dying breed, a conquered people now marginalized to the sidelines of American culture.<sup>64</sup>

The interweaving of race, ethnicity, and folk traditions from across the world led to a truly authentic, American musical vernacular by the end of the nineteenth century. The formation of this distinctive sound, however, required the participation, willing or not, of all the groups found here: *E pluribus unum*, out of many, one, in the most literal sense of the phrase. Folk elements were essential building blocks: from African-American spirituals and work songs, to Afro-Cuban dance rhythms, Creole melodies, or the music of newly-arrived immigrants, composers did not hesitate to incorporate *topoi* to evoke the sights, sounds, and customs of “others” who joined them as fellow citizens.

Organizing these materials into this lexicon presents a variety of challenges. Several subjects listed under “Dance” could have just as easily been included in “non-dance” areas of this dictionary. For simplicity, the remaining topics are discussed along

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<sup>62</sup> This timeline was confirmed by Tara Colleen Browner’s dissertation *Transposing Cultures: The Appropriation of Native American Musics, 1890–1990* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1995). Dr. Browner found it helpful to divide Native American music into five distinct categories, each defined through events important to the Native population rather than White culture. For more, see “Native Americans and the Indianist Movement.”

<sup>63</sup> Some might say that while their goals were loftier, the Indianist composers associated with the Wa-Wan Press published sanitized, European-influenced music that attempted to exoticize Native American melodies for Anglo-American audiences, rather than music created by or for Native Americans. This distinction will be commented upon further in the section of the dictionary labeled “Native Americans and the Indianist Movement.”

<sup>64</sup> It is the author’s opinion that this position remains largely unchallenged in much popular music, even today. The pattern has repeated itself several times over, not only with respect to Black and Native American people, but to Cajuns, Creoles, Hispanics and many other racial and ethnic minorities.



broad category lines that trace the American experience through its people, places, regions, and the nation as a whole. The discussion of people begins with African-Americans, followed by Afro-Cubans and Latin Americans. These three cultures came together musically in the Caribbean during the early part of the nineteenth century, thus creating the first truly Pan-American musical vernacular. Gottschalk tapped into this fusion as a child, then again during the 1850s, bringing it to the attention of listeners in the United States and Europe. Black and Latin musical elements continued to combine and increase in popularity after Gottschalk's death in 1869, not only through the work of his students and protégés, but through new dance forms that left North Americans wanting more of this exotic and highly-syncopated music. Other, perhaps less exotic, musical depictions suggest a sense of place: not only landscapes and natural scenery, but also cities, towns, and regions of the nation, such as "North," "South," or "West."

Topics were also used to suggest the nation as a whole, both to American and non-American listeners. A common theme is the ever-increasing pace of life, reflected by the musical residue of the Industrial Age: the sounds of a developing nation, such as hammers, anvils, horses and wagons, trains, steamboats, and finally automobiles. Occupations are also the focus of *topoi*, typically through work songs of American laborers: lumberjacks, farmers, sailors, prisoners, etc. Additionally, musical *topoi* established in European art music also played an important role in American compositions. These topics, while not specifically native in their origin, are also significant in the formation of a uniquely American musical vernacular.

### ***Topoi Derived From African Americans***

Nearly every group to travel to the New World brought some sort of folk music with it, music that helped immigrants remember where they came from and the people and land they left behind. Some of this music was written down, but much of it simply passed orally from one generation to the next. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as regional cultures intermingled, many of these native traditions combined to create a new, distinctly American folk music, a genre we now call American roots music.

Unlike European settlers who came to the New World in search of a better life, African-Americans were brought here by force, as slaves to a growing nation in search of free labor in both urban environments and rural agricultural areas. And yet these Africans, from lands as diverse and as rich culturally as any European nation at the time, found enough common ground through their shared experiences to lay the groundwork for a vibrant culture that, in time, played a pivotal role in the development of a truly American musical tradition.

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an in-depth account of African-American music from the time the first slaves arrived through World War I, it is important to take note of the fact that Black culture, while often suppressed, underwent many of the same cultural influences seen in the surrounding White culture. Minstrelsy exploited the slaves' music and dance, portraying caricatures of slave life through crude jokes and skits. At the same time, a different aspect of Black culture emerged in the years before the Civil War. Created and nurtured by the approximately 500,000 free Blacks living in the North, the culture of this group reflected their experiences in the African-American middle and upper classes, in which they maintained a substantial presence in

their communities. Black cultural leaders in New Orleans, Boston, New York, Charleston, and Philadelphia, as well as Black churches throughout the nation, played an important role in developing African-American culture after the war, out of which a lively concert scene soon emerged. In other parts of the nation, enslaved African-Americans provided music for White listeners, as well as for themselves.<sup>65</sup>

Reconstruction-era African-American musicians built their work on a legacy that considerably predates the Civil War. As a result, they were confident in their abilities, proud of their accomplishments, and ready to add their voices to the nation's musical landscape.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, many Anglo-Americans knew little of African-American culture beyond the comic stereotypes and degrading impersonations developed in pre-war Ethiopian minstrelsy: "Jim Crow," the plantation slave who dressed in ragged clothes and spoke with a thick dialect; or "Zip Coon," the strutting, "uppity," urban dandy, dressed in fine clothes. In contrast, the most important venues for authentic Black culture before 1860 were churches, which served as a focal point for worship, as well as centers for amusement, relaxation, and instruction.<sup>67</sup>

Northern soldiers, journalists, and missionaries who came to the South during and immediately after the Civil War discovered and recorded the rich musical and religious heritage of Southern slaves. The first published slave songs appeared in 1861; with collections such as *Slave Songs of the United States* appearing by 1867.<sup>68</sup> These works

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<sup>65</sup> Thomas L. Morgan and William Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls: An Illustrated History of African American Popular Music from 1895 to 1930* (Washington, DC: Elliot & Clark, 1992), 7.

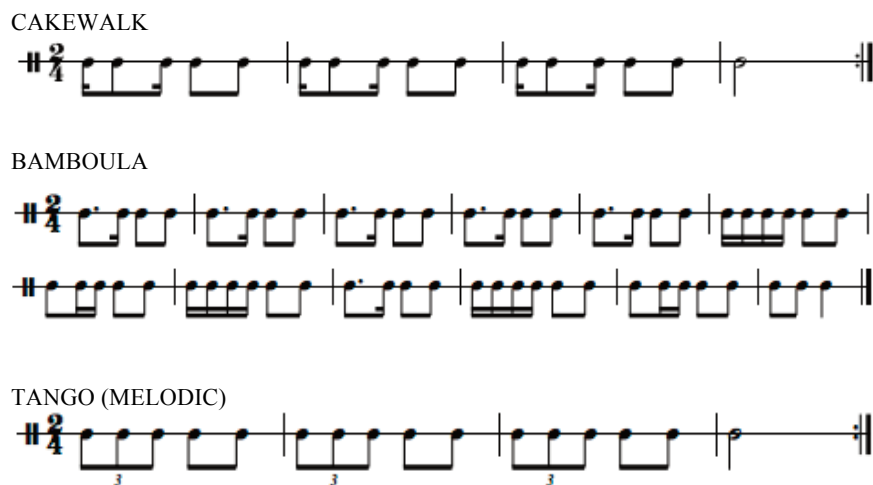
<sup>66</sup> George R. Keck and Sherrill V. Martin, Introduction to *Feel the Spirit: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Music* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), ix.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, x. The term "Ethiopian" was a nineteenth-century euphemism for anything African American. Blackface minstrel shows, for example, were Ethiopian operas; likewise, Ethiopian songs were songs with slave dialect or African-American themes.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, xi. This collection was begun at Port Royal, South Carolina, after Northern musicologists realized authentic Southern slave songs would quickly disappear once the war was over. William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware,

captured a high degree of consciousness present in mid-century Black American culture, with many songs referencing the war itself. While such publications brought well-deserved attention to this previously unknown repertory, the concert tours undertaken by groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers proved instrumental in the dissemination and acceptance of slave music by the population at large. Of all the songs the group performed, they discovered that spirituals – the fusion of European harmony and vocal practices with African traditions – were what most captured the public’s attention.

Because many forms of African-American popular music employ rhythm patterns imported from Africa or derived from fusions of African and New World music, it seems appropriate to include a brief overview of the patterns observed most often in African-American music. The cakewalk,<sup>69</sup> bamboula, tango, and habanera are African rhythmic patterns that entered the United States during colonial times through music performed by African slaves in the American South, in Cuba, in Louisiana, or in the French Caribbean (see Fig. 2:14). Each of these played an important role in African-American music, and for that reason, they will be discussed more fully in following sections.




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and Lucy McKim Garrison, musicians and historians attached to Union Forces stationed along the South Carolina coast, collected songs from both Northern and Southern blacks. This publication was the result of their work together.

<sup>69</sup> The cakewalk pattern is also associated with the Choro and Brazilian Tango.



Fig. 2.14. Typical African, Afro-Cuban, and Creole rhythms

### Spirituals

Religious folksongs, commonly referred to as spirituals, were among the first African-American contributions to the popular music of the United States. Emerging in the early 1800s, texts featuring Old Testament stories and figures were altered to fit the conditions of American slavery and the aspirations of its victims. Lyrics paid special tribute to the victory of the oppressed through references to “Brudder David” defeating the giant Goliath, “Brudder Joshua” blowing down the walls of Jericho with his trumpet, or Moses delivering the Hebrew slaves from Egypt’s wicked “Old Pharaoh” to the Promised Land. Still other heroes include Daniel in the lion’s den, Jonah in the whale’s belly and Noah on the ark; these Biblical figures were saviors and redeemers to many slaves, just as Pharaoh and Satan were the personifications of evil incarnate. Such parables echoed the slaves’ conception of good and evil, sin and retribution, and crime

and punishment, allowing the spiritual to become an important psychological weapon in the struggle against slavery.<sup>70</sup>

Songwriting was often spontaneous and collective in nature. James Miller McKim, a collector of spirituals during the Civil War, interviewed several slaves about the creative process behind spirituals. As one man told him:

Dey make 'em, sah. It's dis way. My master call me up and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise meeting dat night dey sing about it. Some's very good singers; and dey work it in, you know, till dey get it right, and dat's dey way.<sup>71</sup>

Musicologist Bernice Johnson-Reagon confirmed this sequence of events, adding that when singers heard a line of a song they knew, it was expected they would join in before the first line was completed. This practice served multiple purposes: In the fields, it informed workers that it was time to put away their tools and start making their way to the evening gathering place. It also showed singers their relative distance from each other, and which singers had responded to the call to attend the meeting.<sup>72</sup>

McKim's research showed that songs were typically created to fit a specific event, with themes shaped and reshaped as appropriate to the occasion. In 1863, a group of runaway slaves revised "Go Down Moses," for example, into "Go Down Abraham" shortly after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The text of each version shows a very close similarity between the two versions of the song:

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt land  
Tell Old Pharoah  
Let my people go.

Go down, Abraham,  
Away down in Dixie land  
Tell Jeff Davis  
To let my people go.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8. McKim's work was first published in 1867 under the title *Slave Songs of the United States*. The book was reissued under the same title in 1965 by Oak Publications of New York City.

<sup>72</sup> Bernice Johnson-Reagon, "Fisk Jubilee Singers," *American Roots Music*, DVD (Palm Pictures, PALMDVD 3039-2/1, 2001), episode 1, chapter 1.

<sup>73</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 7.



The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Is Master Going to Sell Us Tomorrow?". It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a bass clef staff. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass clef staff provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the treble clef staff. The first system of music includes the lyrics: "Moth-er, is mas-ter goin to sell us to-mor-row? Yes, yes, yes! Moth-er, is mas-ter going to sell us to-mor-row?". The second system includes the lyrics: "Yes, yes, yes! Moth-er, is mas-ter going to sell us to-mor-row? Yes, yes, yes! Oh, watch and pray." The music is written in a simple, folk-like style with a clear melody and accompaniment.

Ex. 2.47. Traditional, “Is Master Going to Sell Us Tomorrow?”

Lining-out hymns was another popular technique; indeed it is the oldest hymnological practice in North America. The practice dates to colonial times, when books were scarce and literacy rates were low. Churches in New England and in the mid-Atlantic states had largely abandoned the practice before the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The technique continued unabated in the South, however, where it was widely practiced by African Americans, as well as Scottish Americans living in isolated pockets in the Appalachian states.

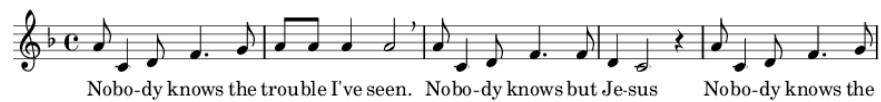
Neither singers nor leaders used written-out music, a fact that makes providing period examples of the style impossible. The technique is clearly defined, however. Whereas call-and-response requires antecedent and consequent phrases, with the leader opening a conversation and the congregation responding to what had gone before, lining out a hymn requires a leader to sing a phrase for the congregation, then, after hearing the line, churchgoers repeat the line, sometimes taking more time with it or singing it more elaborately, before the next line begins.

Jeff Todd Titon was one of many field researchers the Smithsonian Institute sent out to document the practice. His recordings of commonly lined-out hymns such as “The Old Gospel Ship,” “I am a Wayfaring Stranger,” and “Brethren, We Meet Again”

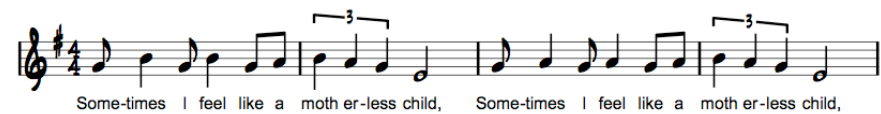


show that the music was always performed *a capella* and that congregation had no regular beat or harmonizing parts. The music was emotionally powerful.

“Sorrow Songs,” or slower-paced, somber spirituals, have their roots in both African lullabies and Anglo-American Protestant hymns.<sup>74</sup> Their long-phrased melodies are coupled with lyrics that resonate with a deep yearning for freedom and a collective vision for a brighter future – in this world or in the next. In contrast to the call-and-response style of jubilees and shouts, sorrow songs feature soloists prominently set off from the choir. Popular titles include “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” and “Motherless Child,” shown here in Ex. 2.48 and Ex. 2.49. “Let My People Go” is another example.



Ex. 2.48. Traditional, “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”



Ex. 2.49. Traditional, “Motherless Child”

Spirituals flourished after the war, and within a few years began to be viewed as iconic American treasures. Newly-established African-American churches and schools incorporated them into religious ceremonies and school music curricula. Examples of spirituals used as topics in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century literature will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, in the topical analysis section on Joplin’s opera *Treemonisha*.

<sup>74</sup> Morgan and Barlow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 8. The twentieth-century Harlem Renaissance figure W.E.B. DuBois is considered the first person to refer to “sorrow songs” as such.

## Black Secular Song

Antebellum Black secular songs included complex rhythms, gapped scales, the repetition of short melodic phrases, and call-and-response singing. Texts reflected many of the same moral and social concerns found in spirituals, but, as Thomas L. Morgan and William Barlow point out in *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, Black secular songs exhibited a greater propensity for realism and parody.<sup>75</sup> Lyrics frequently included satire, caution, or derision, with texts typically focused on common grievances, experiences, or situations with which most slaves could easily identify, as these lyrics demonstrate:

The big bee flies high,  
the little bee makes the honey.  
The Black folks make the cotton,  
and the White folks gets the money.<sup>76</sup>

The origin of these songs can be traced back to West Africa to the *griots*: musicians and storytellers who served as the “living libraries” of their communities. Another precursor was *kaiso*, an African song tradition that stressed right from wrong through humorous lyrics.<sup>77</sup> In the U.S., the practice came to be known as putting “on da banjo.”<sup>78</sup> Social satire often highlighted the contrasting roles of master and slave.

“Double-voiced” praise, lyrics that could be interpreted differently depending on the listener’s race and social position, was another characteristic trait of Black folk songs. While this technique is found in the music of more than one minority population, it was seen first in the United States in African-American music.<sup>79</sup> Songs employing double-voicing ensured that Black and White audiences came away with different understandings of the same song.

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<sup>75</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 8.

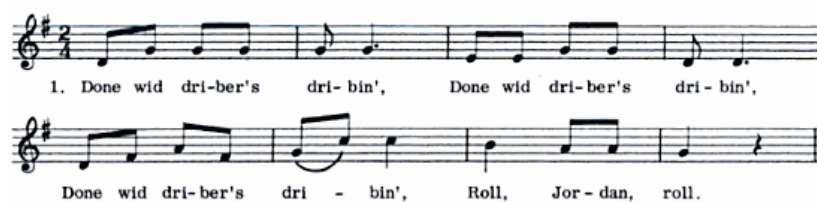
<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

Double-voiced lyrics can be found in “freedom songs,” which were common throughout the mid-nineteenth century. For obvious reasons, most Blacks refrained from singing them in the presence of Whites until it was safe to do so, principally after the Civil War. Once freedom songs began to appear, however, they quickly spread across the nation.<sup>80</sup> Songs such as “Bobolishion’s Coming” and “I Want Some Valiant Soldier” were closely associated with the abolitionist movement, while others, such as “No More Auction Block” or “Before I’d Be A Slave,” appeared in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 or two years later when Congress passed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery. “Done wid Driber’s Dribin’” is a typical example.



Ex. 2.50. Traditional, “Done Wid Driber’s Dribin’,” verse

As Eileen Southern points out in *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, the best-known of these songs is “Before I’d Be A Slave” (Ex. 2.51); its melody is the basis for “Oh, Freedom,” a popular Civil Rights anthem of the 1960s. The song was later sung by oppressed people of all races, colors, or religions during their struggles to achieve equal opportunities.<sup>81</sup> The most famous freedom song, however, is “Let My People Go,” (Ex. 2.52) which remains as popular today as it was when it was first heard more than 150 years ago.<sup>82</sup> It is also known as “Go Down, Moses: Let My People Go.”

<sup>80</sup> Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 216.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>82</sup> The first recorded hearing of the song was in July 1862 when a unit of Black soldiers known as the Contrabands of Fort Monroe, Virginia, sang the song before their fellow soldiers. The company’s White chaplain, Rev. L.C. Lockwood transcribed the melody. Horace Waters arranged the first published sheet music of the song in 1862, using the title “Oh! Let My People Go: The Song of the Contrabands.”

Be - fore I'd be a slave, I'd be bur-ied in my grave, And go  
 home to my Lord— and be saved. 1. O, what preach-in'! O, what  
 preach-in'! O, what preach-in' o - ver me, o - ver me!—

*Fine*

*D. C.*

Ex. 2.51. Traditional, “Before I’d Be A Slave”

When Is - rael was in E - gypt land, Let my peo-ple go,  
 Op - pressed so hard they could not stand, Let my peo-ple go.  
 Go down, Mo-ses, Way — down in E - gypt land, —  
 Tell — old — Pha - raoh — To let my peo-ple go.

Ex. 2.52. Traditional, “Let My People Go,” verse and chorus

Freedom songs could be familiar melodies with new words, a practice that predates the Civil War by decades. A contrafactum of “Hail, Columbia,” for example, was heard as early as 1813 in South Carolina, while Stephen Foster’s minstrel hit “Oh, Susanna” was repurposed as “I’m On My Way to Canada,” a song Harriet Tubman used to guide newly-escaped slaves across the Mason-Dixon Line via the Underground Railroad:

I’m on my way to Canada, That cold and dreary land;  
 The sad effects of slavery, I can no longer stand.  
 I’ve served my master all my days, Without a dime’s reward;  
 And now I’m forced to run away, To flee the lash abroad.

Farewell, old master, don’t think too hard of me,  
 I’m on my way to Canada, where all the slaves are free.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Philip S. Foner, *American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 90.

Whether original works or contrafacta, freedom songs enjoyed a wide popular appeal for more than a century; indeed, many resurfaced during the 1960s as anthems of the Civil Rights movement.

### Worksongs

In his preface to *American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century*, Philip S. Foner wrote, “The student of American labor history and American folklore has long believed that apart from the songs of the coal miners and a few associated with the Knights of Labor and the struggle for the shorter working day, the labor song and ballad in America began with the rise of the Industrial Workers of the World after 1905.”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, as Foner also points out, Harry F. Ward’s *Little Red Song Book* (1913) includes a message from the editor claiming “American labor is just beginning to express itself.”<sup>85</sup> Like so many other aspects of American cultural life, the history of worksongs in the United States is perennially viewed as one of “spontaneous emergence,” as the struggles and traditions of previous generations have routinely been forgotten, ignored, or discounted by the young.<sup>86</sup> In truth, the history of American work songs stretches back to the Colonial era, with songs written by workers both native-born and foreign, and of all races and ethnicities across the centuries. The present discussion will focus on worksongs from Black Americans from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I.

African-American worksongs were a vital component of nineteenth-century Black culture. Originating in West African tribal societies, where all kinds of labor – building new dwellings, clearing fields, harvesting crops, preparing food, weaving cloth, and other

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

activities – were coordinated through the use of song and music with a strong groundbeat. Both men and women sang work songs to synchronize activities and help pass the time in a more enjoyable fashion. After 1619, when the first slaves were brought to the New World, Black laborers continued to sing variations of familiar African melodies wherever they were sold into bondage. Worksongs were heard on the cotton, sugar, and tobacco plantations, in the mines and lumber camps, and in the building of railroads, canals, and roads. Slave owners and overseers usually encouraged their use, especially where they seemed to increase productivity and raise morale.

The daily routines of Southern Black agricultural laborers did not change a great deal after the Civil War, despite their new state of freedom; neither did their songs. What changed was the variety of occupations now open to Black laborers. They became stevedores, hemp spinners, turpentine makers, and furnace workers on steamships and railroads. As the variety of jobs increased, new songs evolved to reflect their experiences.

Research by Morgan and Barlow indicates that, like spirituals, worksongs were created spontaneously, with usually more than one person involved in the creative process. Lyrics centered on the life most Black people knew all too well: oppressive work conditions, labor hardships, and poor wages. Like spirituals, many songs were performed in the familiar call-and-response pattern. Song texts show workers drawing on a wellspring of rage toward their White oppressors, be they bosses, overseers, or former owners.<sup>87</sup> As with freedom songs, familiar melodies were often given new lyrics to suit work situations. The tune associated with “Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho,” for example, was refashioned into “Slavery Chain” during the war (see Ex. 2.53):

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<sup>87</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 10–11.

Slav'ry chain done broke at last  
 Broke at last, broke at last.  
 Slav'ry chain done broke at last,  
 Goin' to stand up proud and free.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff has two verses of lyrics: '1. Jo - shua fit de bat-tle of — Je - ri - cho — Je - ri - cho, — Je - ri - cho,' and '2. Slav' ry chain — done broke at last, Broke at last, — Broke at last.' The second staff continues the lyrics: 'Jo-shua fit de bat-tle of — Je - ri - cho, and de walls come tum - blin' down — Slav' ry — chain done broke at last, Goin' to stand up proud and free.' The melody is simple and rhythmic, with accents over the notes.

Ex. 2.53. Traditional, “Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho” / “Slav’ry Chain Done Broke at Last”

### Prison Songs

Due to the widespread exploitation of convict labor in the South, worksongs were sung in prisons for generations. Like spirituals, secular songs, and work songs in general, prison songs originated in the Deep South, emerging after the Civil War in the institution that most closely echoed the forced labor traditions of the antebellum era: prison farms.

As Bruce Jackson notes in his preface to *Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues*, prison songs led to early forms of the blues. In their original state, they were highly functional in nature: Prisoners sang to relieve boredom, ease tensions, and to synchronize their physical motions to prevent injuring each other while working with axes, especially on chain gangs.<sup>88</sup> The songs also provided another kind of safety: Because song rhythms paced the work, they prevented individual workers from being singled out for punishment from guards who may have thought they were working too slowly.<sup>89</sup> Prison songs were often narratives featuring well-known leading characters

<sup>88</sup> Bruce Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues* [1972] (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999), vii.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

such as Lost John, John Henry, or Stagolee. Lyrics changed to reflect shifting priorities and circumstances, with old melodies given new texts to reflect the changing times.<sup>90</sup>

Jackson reports that, by the 1960s, many young Black convicts considered prison work songs “remnants of an age for which they personally had little use and no affection.”<sup>91</sup> The songs were still performed, however, by older men until the prison song tradition ended essentially overnight, after the Texas Department of Corrections ordered the integration of field squads in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>92</sup> The end of segregation spelled the doom of group songs, which became obsolete and passed into history almost immediately. Solo prison songs survived a bit longer and eventually led to the blues, but today, even they have completely disappeared.

Prison songs reflected the jobs convicts were given to perform. Songs were used in the course of raising cotton and cane, logging, and building railways. Given the reality of life behind bars, the best-known songs were escape epics, which offered details of the prisoner’s breakout, as well as his adventures while free.

“Lost John,” a nineteenth-century prison song, is a well-known example (see Ex. 2.54). It tells the story of Lost John, a convict who outwitted the men on his trail by attaching heels on the fronts of his shoes to match those in the back.<sup>93</sup> “John Henry” (Ex. 2.55), on the other hand, was used for wood chopping and to relieve boredom while pulling corn, picking cotton, or cutting cane.<sup>94</sup> An “X” in the music shows how workers swung their axes in time to the music, but noting where ax strokes occurred.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> This discussion has focused on Texas prison farms, but the situation was similar at facilities across the South.

<sup>93</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 11.

<sup>94</sup> Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues*, 207.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 234.



Leader

Old John, Old John, Old Crook-ed foot John, Old

Group Old John, Old John, — Old Crook-ed foot John,

Crook-ed foot — John, Had a fun - ny pair of shoes, Had a

Old Crook-ed foot John, Had a fun - ny pair of shoes,

Ex. 2.54. Traditional, “Lost John”

Leader

John — Hen-ry told - a the cap - tain, — He said, "A man ain't but a man,

And be - fore I'll stand to let you drive me — down, I will

die with the ham-mer in my hand, Lord, Lord, I will die with the ham-mer in my hand."

I will die with the ham-mer in my hand.

Ex. 2.55. Traditional, “John Henry”

### Field Hollers and Patting Juba

The roots of field hollers extend back to Africa. While some overseers and slave owners may have encouraged singing in order to maximize worker productivity, the slaves often sang to themselves to express their sorrow and resignation, as well as to coordinate group activities that ensured the daily survival of individual workers. Over time, as each singer established his or her personal style, the field holler became a means for individual field hands to identify themselves to fellow workers from a distance. Hollers employed an African style of yodeling that featured falsetto, portamento,

melisma, and sudden changes of pitch. Creating a “hybrid musical language” between African and European traditions,<sup>96</sup> field hollers alternated between African pentatonic scale patterns and the European diatonic scale, a practice that led to the emergence of blue notes: bent or flattened pitches used in descending vocal lines that were sung between scale degrees, generally on the third and seventh scale degrees.

Like other work songs, most field hollers were group songs, with call-and-response between a song leader and workers. Typically the leader performed a more difficult, even soloistic, part; the response came through vocalizations and/or percussive sounds made by workers’ hands and feet. The tempo reflected the nature of the work to be done and while most hollers had lyrics, some were wordless. Ex. 2.56, “Round the Corn, Sally,” is a typical field holler. Before it became a spiritual, “Steal Away” (Ex. 2.57) was used to call slaves to a meeting. While field hollers are common in the blues, Joplin was one of the few composers to use them in art music.



Ex. 2.56. Traditional, “Round the Corn, Sally”



Ex. 2.57. Traditional, “Steal Away”

Patting juba is a uniquely African-American genre. The practice, also known as “hambone,” has its roots in African drumming. Juba was introduced in the U.S. by slaves; it developed in the years between the Stono Insurrection (1732) and the Haitian slave revolts (1795). Terrified by the prospect that slaves in America might revolt, at various points in the early nineteenth century Southern planters banned drums and other

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<sup>96</sup> Chellise Allocco Stolarz, “General Blues,” <https://sites.google.com/site/generalbluesmc7/showcase/domain1>, accessed 3 February 2015.

instruments that could be sounded across wide distances or used to communicate between groups, due to the fear these instruments might relay potentially dangerous messages.<sup>97</sup> In response to the ban, slaves began using their own bodies as percussion instruments, beating, clapping, stomping, slapping, or sounding rhythms on arms, legs, chest, or cheeks. Increasingly complex patterns could be formed when a number of performers “patted juba” together. Mimicking African drum rhythms, juba lent a strong rhythmic pulse to field hollers, a vital factor in regulating the rhythm of a group of laborers, or easing the burden of physically exhausting work. Juba was used to accompany dancing, and generally involves cross-rhythms such as 2:3, 3:4, 4:6, etc.

The most popular juba rhyme shares the origins of the genre:

Juba dis and Juba dat,  
and Juba killed da yellow cat,  
You sift the meal and ya gimme the husk,  
you bake the bread and ya gimme the crust,  
you eat the meat and ya gimme the skin,  
and that’s the way, my mama’s troubles begin.<sup>98</sup>

Juba was introduced to White audiences through minstrelsy. The most famous performer was William Henry Lane, a free-born African American. His character, Master Juba, soon became one of the most recognizable stock characters in minstrelsy. Two of his rhythms became topics in their own right: “hambone” and “shave and a hair cut.”

Joplin’s use of juba in an art music setting is naturally understated. His references to the style juxtapose tango accompaniment patterns against sextuplets, or feature cross-

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<sup>97</sup> Slave uprisings were not uncommon in the U.S. during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the story of Nat Turner (1800–1831), a slave in Virginia, has been retold not only in history books, but in feature films such as Nate Parker’s *The Birth of a Nation* (DVD: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2016). Similar to the Stono uprising nearly a century earlier, Turner and his supporters traveled from plantation to plantation, killing approximately sixty people over a two-day period. In retaliation, White mobs murdered 120 slaves, many of whom may not have been involved with the revolt, and the State of Virginia tried and executed 60 African American men for having been part of Turner’s group.

<sup>98</sup> In the song, Juba is not just a drum or a drumming practice, but an actual character: “Juba dis and Juba dat” soon became “Juba up and juba down,” words that referred to Juba running around after killing his master (“da yellow cat”).

rhythms or syncopations set against a backdrop of a 2:3 or 4:6 (see Ex. 2.58 and Ex. 2.59). As a folk tradition, juba rhythms are not usually fully notated; however, the score to Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* includes stage directions in each of the examples included here indicating that the cast should complete the effect by clapping and stamping their feet during these passages in the music.

Ex. 2.58. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 23, “Abuse,” mm. 10–11 (1911)

Ex. 2.59. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven,” mm. 8–10 (1911); note the tango accompaniment pattern in the piano’s left hand.

### African-American Ballads

Modeled after British ballads sung by White settlers in the Appalachian Mountains, African-American ballads were narrative songs infused with African rhythms and folklore. The songs told stories of real-life historical figures, heroes, tricksters, and

outlaws, in contrast to their Anglo-American counterparts, which were often about lost love, tragedies, and natural disasters. “John Henry” (see Ex. 2.60), perhaps the most famous of all African-American ballads, is a song about a real man: a Black worker who pitted his skills driving steel spikes with a hammer against the new steam drill while working for a railroad construction company in West Virginia in the 1870s. He won, but soon died from exhaustion.

The image shows a musical score for the traditional ballad "John Henry". It consists of three staves of music in a 4/4 time signature, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words underlined to indicate syllable placement. The lyrics are: "John Hen-ry tol - his Cap - n' That a man was a natch-al — man. An' be - Cap - n says John Hen - ry, "Goin' to bring me a steam-drill roun'; Take that fore he'd let that steam drill beat him down, He'd fall dead wid his ham-mer in his steam-drill out up - on — the — job, Goin' to whip that — steam — drill han' down He'd fall dead wid his ham - mer in his han'. Goin' to whip that — old — steam - drill down."

Ex. 2.60. Traditional, “John Henry”

In addition to celebrating the deeds of famous people, the lyrics of African-American ballads also featured tricksters, prototypical characters based on West African folklore. In this tradition, anthropomorphic animals such as the Clever Spider, Signifying Monkey, or the Indestructible Boll Weevil outsmart their opponents, be they man or beast, while providing a moral lesson for listeners both young and old. The most famous of these cunning critters was Br'er Rabbit, the prankster hare featured in the seven *Uncle Remus* books published by Joel Chandler Harris in 1881.

Still other African-American ballads championed outlaws, anti-heroes who died as a result of their misdeeds. Of all the outlaws featured in the lyrics of Black ballads, the most famous outlaw was Stagolee. As legend has it, “Stag” Lee Sheldon and Billy Lyons got into a fight on a cold winter’s night, shortly before Christmas 1895. Sheldon and

Lyons, both figures in the St. Louis underworld, were drinking in the Bill Curtis Saloon. Reportedly, Lyons tried to steal Sheldon’s Stetson hat; Sheldon shot Lyons and left him to die, retrieving his hat on his way out of the club. Sheldon was convicted of the murder in 1897, but was pardoned in 1909. Two years later he returned to prison for armed robbery, dying behind bars in 1912.<sup>99</sup> John and Alan Lomax collected the story and its melody during fieldwork sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup>

The fact that both “John Henry” and “Stagolee” gained national recognition as folk legends suggests that these ballads were not only integral to Black popular music of the day, but also that these songs enjoyed considerable popularity among White listeners.<sup>101</sup> Stagolee’s story inspired hundreds of later songs under a variety of titles; published works based on songs sung by Black riverboat workers appeared in print as early as 1897, with the first recordings made in the 1920s. The original melody is shown in Ex. 2.61.

Sta - go - lee was a bad man, ev - ry bo - dy knows.  
Spent one hun - dred dol - lars just to buy him a suit of clothes. He was a  
bad man, that mean old Sta - go - lee.

Ex. 2.61. Traditional, “Stagolee,” verse

<sup>99</sup> Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Boston: Harvard University Press 2003), 23–36.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–45.

<sup>101</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 13.

## Minstrelsy

Emerging in the 1830s, minstrel shows were the first uniquely American theatrical genre “made in America” for the enjoyment of ordinary Americans; anyone with a quarter in his pocket could take in a show that featured music, comedy, and dancing.<sup>102</sup> There was nothing fancy about minstrel shows; indeed, it was their low-brow popular appeal that endeared them to the public-at-large and allowed them to play a significant role in the development of later genres, such as vaudeville and Broadway musicals, theatrical forms that emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Following traditions established by figures such as Thomas “Daddy” Rice, Dan Emmett, and E.P. Christy, most minstrel shows were organized into three acts. In the first act, three White actors in blackface makeup sat in a semi-circle at center stage to exchange wisecracks and sing a few songs.<sup>103</sup> Their humor was crude and fast-paced, with more than the occasional innuendo slipped into their routines, especially during the opening portion of the show. In the second act, the four men offered a wide variety of entertainments, including parodies of political figures giving their “best” stump speeches. The final act featured slapstick plantation skits or spoofs on well-known plays, such as Shakespearean plays and other European entertainments.<sup>104</sup>

Minstrel sketches featured stock characters from the “Ethiopian theatre,” based in

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<sup>102</sup> Newspaper advertisements displayed at the Atlas Theatre in Cheyenne, Wyoming, indicate prices for an 1888 performance by the Elks Minstrels were \$1.50 for a box seat, \$1 for the main floor, 75¢ for the balcony and side seating, and 25¢ for the gallery. Gallery seats in Eastern theatres were priced as low as 5¢ in the years before the Civil War.

<sup>103</sup> Greasepaint might also have been used, especially later in the century. Both practices allowed for the actors’ makeup to function as a mask.

<sup>104</sup> Ray B. Browne, “Shakespeare in American Vaudeville and Negro Minstrelsy,” *American Quarterly* 12/3 (Autumn 1960), 374–391. Sample titles of full works parodied include *Julius Sneezzer*, *Desdemonum*, *Roamy-E-Owe and Julie-Ate*, *O-Thello and Dars-De-Money*, and *The Old Clothes Merchant of Venice*. In addition to these works, dialogue and references to other works by Shakespeare were frequently incorporated into the texts of nineteenth-century minstrel shows as ad lib material or as part of the published script.

Spirituals were introduced to minstrel show audiences in the 1870s, making them the first authentic African-American music employed in the shows.

some degree on stock characters from the Commedia dell'Arte: The most popular were the slave, the dandy, Mammy, Old Darky, the provocative mulatto wench, and the Black (Buffalo) soldier. After the War of 1812 and the subsequent push to establish uniquely American forms of literature, music, and theatrical arts, minstrel shows shifted their focus from Blacks in general to dirt-poor Southern slaves and affluent Northern dandies.

To be clear, minstrel shows were controversial even in their heyday, and minstrelsy was in no way an authentic portrayal of African-American people, their songs, dances, or mannerisms. The shows were a mainstream attempt to define a less powerful culture through the arts and to profit from the enterprise. Minstrelsy reached its peak in the years leading up to the Civil War, parallel to the rise of the abolitionist movement and the publication of books such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Its heyday also coincided with the rise of the labor movement; as men from all ethnic groups competed for jobs in a rapidly industrializing economy, minstrelsy confirmed existing racial prejudices and helped unite diverse workers against a common enemy: African-Americans. Minstrelsy lost its punch after the Civil War, but it survived as an entertainment in one form or another well into the twentieth century.

On a musical level, most minstrel songs were English, Irish, or Scottish in their origin; no *topoi* specific to African-American music can be seen in songs from the antebellum era. This is not surprising since minstrel composers were, after all, White men with little to no first-hand experience of life in the South, let alone close interactions with the four million slaves being held there. Minstrel shows often featured many songs that would soon be considered Americana, including "Dixie," "Camptown Races," "Oh! Susanna," "My Old Kentucky Home," and "The Old Folks at Home."



In no time at all, composers were using popular minstrel tunes as the basis of larger compositions. Sample titles include George Frederick Bristow's *Zip Coon, with Brilliant Variations* (1840) and James G. Maeder's *Oh! Susanna: Introduction and Brilliant Variations* (1849).

Minstrel bands began as small ensembles featuring the banjo, tambourine, and bone castanets with instruments such as the piano, guitar, violin, trumpet, tuba, or drums introduced over the course of the nineteenth century. Even though Black musicians played the banjo, tambourine, and castanets, their association with blackface minstrelsy led late-nineteenth-century African-American composers, especially men born in the first generations after the Civil War, to exclude these instruments from their works.<sup>105</sup>

The dominance of White performers and composers in minstrelsy led to the portrayal of African-Americans through stock characterizations, many of which became musical *topoi*. Southern slaves, for example, were depicted as foolish, lazy, and careless, speaking only in dialect. Urban Blacks and Northern free men of color were portrayed through various incarnations of Zip Coon, a pretentious, over-dressed, uppity dandy.

Women's roles were even more limited than those for men: the kaleidoscope of real-life possibilities focused on only two main characters, reflecting the age-old images of Madonna and Whore. The maternal figure was Mammy, a large, dark-skinned woman, full of homespun, clear-eyed wisdom that she doled out liberally.<sup>106</sup> Creoles and light-

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<sup>105</sup> Rick Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 61–64. Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, 2011. CD, New World Records: 80720-2. Joplin, for example, did not write a part for banjo in his opera *Treemonisha*. Benjamin's research indicates none of New York's major African-American theatre composers employed it, including Will Marion Cook, H. Lawrence Freeman, and Joe Jordan. Similarly, Afro-English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor omitted the banjo from the scores of his African-American inspired works.

<sup>106</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 16. Closely related to Mammy was Old Aunt Jemima, a character created by African-American minstrel performer Billy Kersands in the 1870s to dramatize a fable contrasting the reality of freedom after the war with its promise. Aunt Jemima survives today as the face of pancake syrups and batters. Her male counterpart, Uncle Ben, another kind soul whose persona falls under the Sambo group of characters, is now the face of rice products. Morgan and Bristow note that Kersands may have inadvertently contributed to the

skinned women were considered exotic, and as such, they were cast as temptresses, whores, or agents of the devil.<sup>107</sup>

With the exception of songs by Stephen Foster and a handful of other works, many once-famous minstrel songs have now passed into history. Typical examples, however, are not difficult to find. The melody for “Jump Jim Crow,” the catchy tune that inspired a teenaged Foster to pursue a career in the theatre, is a traditional Irish folk song. The character of Jim Crow established a model in dress, attitude, and song for others to follow. He was the first fixed role on the minstrel circuit, and his arrival necessitated playing his special theme song (see Ex. 2.62).<sup>108</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the song "Jump Jim Crow." It consists of four systems of music. The first system is an instrumental introduction with a treble clef staff labeled "AL LA" and a bass clef staff labeled "NIGAR O." The second system begins with the vocal line: "Come lis, ten all you galls and boys Es jist from Tucky, hoe, I'm". The third system continues the vocal line: "goin to sing a lit,tle song, My names Jim Crow, Weel about and turn about and". The fourth system concludes the vocal line: "do jis so, Eb' ry time I weel about and jump Jim Crow". The score includes both vocal and piano accompaniment parts.

Ex. 2.62. Traditional, “Jump Jim Crow,” mm. 1–12

emergence of so-called coon songs, a self-parody of an African-American stigma associated with darker skin pigmentation. These race-mocking songs flourished after the Civil War, reaching their peak in the 1890s with works such as Kersand’s “Mary’s Gone with a Coon” and Ernest Hogan’s “All Coons Look Alike to Me.” The Hogan song had nonsensical lyrics, but the title was enormously popular with the public and the entertainment industry. It is credited for bringing minstrel stereotypes full force into music written on Tin Pan Alley and for Broadway shows.

<sup>107</sup> “Racial Stereotypes,” *Jim Crow Encyclopedia: The African-American Experience* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008). <http://testaae.greenwood.com/doc.aspx?fileID=GR4181&chapterID=GR4181-5570&path=encyclopedias/greenwood>. Accessed 7 April 2015.

<sup>108</sup> Notice the performance directive on this early edition of the song, published by Firth and Hall of New York without date. This suggests a “style” was well-established by the time this work was released.

While there have been many versions and alternate texts, the one constant was the refrain, in which the title character narrates his actions as he dances across the stage. The character of the song is lighthearted and memorable, and the combination of hesitations in the steps and hemiolas in the music lend emphasis to the vernacular dialect of the text.

Come listen all you gals and boys,  
 I's just from Tuck-y-ho,  
 I'm goin to sing a little song,  
 My name's Jim Crow.  
 Wheel about and turn about an do jis so,  
 Ebery time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow.

O I'm a roarer on de fiddle,  
 An down in old Virginny,  
 They say I play de skyntific,  
 Like Massa Pagannini.  
 Wheel about and turn about an do jis so,  
 Ebery time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow.

I went down down to de riber,  
 I didn't mean to stay,  
 But dere I see so many gals,  
 I couldn't get away.  
 Wheel about and turn about an do jis so,  
 Ebery time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow.

I got upon a flat boat,  
 I cotch de Uncle Sam,  
 Den I went to see de place  
 Whar dey kill'd Pakenham.  
 Wheel about and turn about an do jis so,  
 Ebery time I wheel about I jump Jim Crow.

It is interesting to note that Thomas D. "Daddy" Rice, who created the character in the early 1830s, did not perform as a cast member of a minstrel troupe, but played the character of Jim Crow as a solo number between the acts of the minstrel show proper. This is rather similar to how intermezzi were inserted between the acts of opera seria during the Classical Era. Indeed, just as intermezzi grew into the independent genre of opera buffa, Rice's portrayal of Jim Crow eventually led to late nineteenth-century

buffooneries and ultimately to vaudeville and musical comedy. Foster’s “Ring, Ring de Banjo,” in Ex. 2.63, displays characteristics similar to “Jump Jim Crow,” a song that likely inspired the young composer when writing his own take on the legendary minstrel character.

De time is ne-ver drear-y if de dark-ey ne-ver groans. De la - dies ne-ver  
wear-y with de rat - tle of de bones. Ring, ring de ban-jo, I like that good old  
song. Come a - gain my true love, oh, where you been so long?

Ex. 2.63. Stephen Foster, “Ring, Ring de Banjo!” (1851)

Another character whose presence was required in every minstrel show was the well-dressed urban dandy, Zip Coon. As with Jim Crow, the character was first introduced to audiences as an intermezzi between acts, and his first appearance on stage was marked by specific music. One of the more popular melodies associated with the character was the eponymous song “Zip Coon.” (See example below.) Premiered in 1834 by Bob Farrell in New York City, the song uses the tune of “Turkey in the Straw” to paint all upwardly mobile African-American men as “uppity” pretenders.

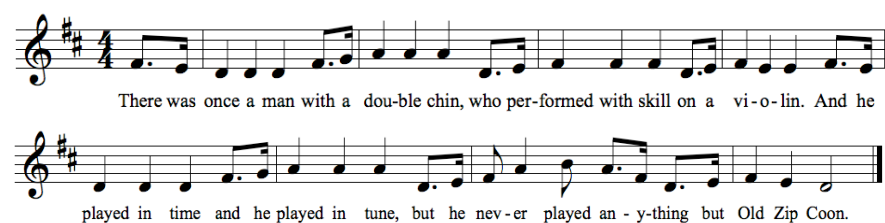
Verse:

Old Zip Coon he is a larned skolar  
Stings ‘posum up a gum tree an’ coony in a holler.  
‘Posumup a gum tree, Coony on a stump.  
Den over dubble trubble, Zip Coon will jump.

Chorus:

O Zip a duden duden duden zip a duden day.  
O Zip a duden duden duden zip a duden day.  
O Zip a duden duden duden zip a duden day.  
Zip a duden duden denen zip a duden day.

While the text of “Zip Coon” may no longer be familiar, the melody of “Turkey in the Straw” certainly is (see Ex. 2.64). The tune is based on “My Grandmother Lived on Yonder Little Green,” which is itself based on an even older song, the old Irish ballad “The Old Rose Tree.”<sup>109</sup>



There was once a man with a dou-ble chin, who per-formed with skill on a vi-o-lin. And he played in time and he played in tune, but he nev-er played an - y-thing but Old Zip Coon.

Ex. 2.64. Traditional, “Zip Coon”

Portrayals of other stereotypical characters abound, but only one final example will be discussed – Sambo, also known as Uncle, Rastus, Rufus or Boy. “Sambo was the pre-eminent caricature, first among unequals,” according to scholar Joseph Boskin.<sup>110</sup> He was the ideal slave, happy on the plantation and eager to resume his place at massa’s side after the war. Essentially a jester, Sambo spoke in a high falsetto voice and was generally smiling, joking around, or eating watermelon. He was unthreatening and stupid, a reassuring portrait for many White Americans of what all Black people were “really” like: a weak race in need of society’s guidance.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Sambo was depicted with Africanisms that evoked Black Americans. Ex. 2.65 and Ex. 2.66 show how Kerry Mills associated the character with the cakewalk rhythm, a dance rhythm with Afro-Cuban origins.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Eloise H. Linscott, *Folk Songs of Old New England* [1939] (New York: Dover, 2011), 244.

<sup>110</sup> Yusef Nuruddin, “Racial Stereotypes,” *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African-American History*, Nikki L.M. Brown, ed. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 651.

<sup>111</sup> Example 3.75 shows Kerry Mills mixing race and dance topoi, specifically the African-American cakewalk rhythm and the Anglo-American two-step; whereas in Ex. 3.76, the composer combines two traditionally Black topoi, cakewalk and ragtime. These topoi will be discussed further in an upcoming section of this dictionary.



Ex. 2.65. Kerry Mills, *Rastus on Parade*, opening (1895)

Ex. 2.66. Kerry Mills, *Whistling Rufus*, opening (1899)

Positive images of Blacks in minstrelsy are rare. Nevertheless, Foster provided two excellent examples: “Nelly was a Lady” includes the first reference in American culture to any African-American woman as a lady, while “My Old Kentucky Home” portrays nostalgia over a rapidly vanishing way of life. Foster reveals only in his final stanzas of the latter that the song is actually about the breakup of a slave family as its members are sold down the river. Markings on the final page of Foster’s original manuscript clearly indicate that the song was inspired by his reading of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Randall MacLowry, director, *Stephen Foster: America’s First Great Songwriter*. VHS: PBS Home Video B8540, (2001). Originally aired 23 April 2001 on *American Experience* (Season 13, Episode 15).

As mentioned previously, the most popular instrument in minstrel bands was the banjo, excitement over which reached a fever pitch in the early 1850s, with songwriters for the minstrel stage, as well as more serious composers, racing to cash in on the fad. Many mid-century compositions, such as Gottschalk's *The Banjo*, were written to depict its unique sound. Still other composers heralded the banjo's supremacy over the fiddle as the preeminent voice in minstrel bands.

Works showing banjo as a topic can be seen in three examples, each demonstrating different gestures associated with the instrument's performance practice: Ex. 2.67 depicts the earlier style of playing, which was entirely picked; Ex. 2.68 represents a later practice from around the mid-century, in which guitar-like strumming was introduced into banjo music; and Ex. 2.69 demonstrates block chords, a still later practice.

Gottschalk, perhaps the first composer to incorporate the sound of a banjo into piano music, grew up listening to virtuoso players in New Orleans who used the earlier practice. He heard the guitar style in New York City while on his first national tour in the 1850s. Taking note of the public's mania for banjo music, he took up the challenge of writing piano works inspired by the instrument; the success of the resulting compositions, *The Banjo* and *Deuxième Banjo*, prompted many imitations, including songs by Foster and solo piano works from Strakosch.

Writing still later in the century, Joplin's piano accompaniment to the "happiness theme" in *Treemonisha*, is not only reminiscent of strummed chords, it demonstrates how references to the banjo found their way into art music.



Ex. 2.67. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Banjo, Grottesque fantasie, An American Sketch*, mm. 9–12, picked style (1850)



Ex. 2.68. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *The Banjo, Grottesque fantasie, An American Sketch*, mm. 25–28, strummed style (1850)



Ex. 2.69. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha, Overture*, block chord style (1911)

While minstrel-show depictions of African-Americans may have served as a theatrical complement to other American stage characters, such as the thrifty “Yankee” or the “Frontiersman” of tall tales, what generations of audiences actually took from the shows was an abundance of negative images of Black people and an undervalued sense of the potential role African-Americans might play in the development of a growing nation. Small wonder then that minstrelsy forever colored White Americans’ “take” on all matters relating to African-Americans – be they social, cultural, or musical – and continued to do so long after the genre’s decline. Minstrelsy played a significant role in the interpretation and lack of reception of legitimate forms of Black culture throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly the introduction and



acceptance of African-American music into the concert hall, that last great bastion of White culture and High Art, the sacred space where discriminating listeners worshipped the masters of European classical music.

These factors strongly suggest minstrelsy not only helped to create musical *topoi*, but that it also served as a topic in its own right. Minstrel shows are depicted in art music through orchestrations that prominently employ banjo, tambourine, and castanets, even if the music itself – whether up-tempo and catchy or somber and melancholy – has an underlying Celtic influence with few, if any, African elements.

### Barbershop Harmony

Contrary to common understanding, Barbershop quartets and their distinctive harmonies originated in the African-American community. Colorado Barbershop expert Johnny Bugarin explained that barbershops were a significant gathering place for African-American men beginning in the last half of the nineteenth century. Men would harmonize familiar melodies, such as spirituals, folk songs, and popular songs, as they waited for their turn in the barber's chair. Their four-part, unaccompanied singing style prominently featured fully-voiced chords for every note of the predominantly homophonic melody. The overall effect was clearly tonal, but the distinctive color of Barbershop is derived from tightly-voiced harmonies with regularly occurring diminished-seventh, dominant-seventh, or augmented-sixth chords, in addition to triads with added sixths.<sup>113</sup>

Barbershop songs feature singable melodies and easily understood lyrics. While the songs have a clear tonal center, mode changes and shifting tonalities occur frequently

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<sup>113</sup> Johnny Bugarin, presentation on “Barbershop Harmony,” Rocky Mountain District Barbershop Harmony Society Annual Meeting, Little America Hotel and Resort, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 9 October 2015.

throughout due to the judicious placement of alternating major and minor chords, as well as “Barbershop seventh chords”: dominant and secondary dominant-seventh chords. Barbershop chords resolve in a manner not found in classical music, which lends the genre its distinctive sound.<sup>114</sup> In slower songs, especially ballads, the beat is anything but steady: Notes are often held or sped up as the music requires. Each of the four vocal parts has its own role in the ensemble, and while voice crossings occur and roles may change, generally the lead sings the melody, the tenor harmonizes above the melody, the bass sings the lowest harmonizing notes, and the baritone completes the chord. Occasionally passages may be sung by fewer than four voice parts, but typically, all four members of the quartet participate equally in the music.<sup>115</sup>

Barbershop arrangements stress chords and chord progressions that favor “ringing” at the expense of suspended and diminished chords and other harmonic devices found in ragtime and jazz, musical styles that were evolving at roughly the same time. Indeed, the defining characteristic of the barbershop style is the *ringing* chord. While commonly referred to as the “barbershop seventh,” the term has been alternatively described as “expanded sound, “the angel’s voice,” “the overtone,” or as Gage Averill put it, “the perception of a ‘fifth voice’ emerging from the four-voice texture.”<sup>116</sup> Modern arrangers believe seventh chords are so vital to barbershop harmony that 35% to 60% of a song should contain these chords to create an “authentic” sound. The tradition appears rooted in historic practice: “Play That Barber Shop Chord” (1910) contains the lines:

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Bugarin explained that Barbershoppers freely admit their usage of music terminology is imprecise and that it has been since the genre first took root. For many singers, the term “minor chord” simply means any chord other than a major triad. Similar liberties exist when discussing “dominant seventh-type chords” and diminished chords.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. With the exception of the bass, the voice parts in barbershop singing do not correspond to their classical music counterparts; the tenor range and tessitura are similar to those of the classical countertenor, the baritone is most closely associated with the Heldentenor or lyric baritone in range and a tenor in tessitura, while the lead generally corresponds to the tenor of classical repertoire, with some singers possessing a tessitura similar to high baritones.

<sup>116</sup> Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 164–166.

“Cause Mister when you start that minor part I feel your fingers slipping and a-grasping at my heart, Oh Lord play that Barbershop chord!”

Minstrel singers co-opted the style late in the nineteenth century, producing the earliest arrangements of popular songs such as “Shine on Harvest Moon” and “Sweet Adeline.” Barbershop was extremely popular between 1900 and 1919, but interest waned in the 1920s. Outside of White revival groups, freestyle Barbershop harmonies may still be heard in gospel arrangements performed in Black churches. Unlike ragtime and jazz, genres that share Barbershop’s African-American origins, the use of Barbershop harmonies in art music suggests nostalgia, the “Gay ’90s,” and wholesome, old-fashioned, American values. The style is shown in Chauncey Olcott’s “My Wild Irish Rose” (1899) and Joe Howard and Ida Emerson’s “Hello! My Baby” (1899). These songs tapped into a distinct segment of American life – the youth market. While “My Wild Irish Rose” (Ex. 2.70) is a love song to which lovers of any age might relate, “Hello! My Baby” (Ex. 2.71) celebrates the telephone and its usefulness in arranging a date between would-be suitors hoping to meet without chaperones, violating prevailing social norms.<sup>117</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the song "My Wild Irish Rose" (1898) by Chauncey Olcott. It is a two-part setting for Tenor Lead and Baritone Bass. The music is in 3/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The lyrics are: "My wild I-rish rose, the sweet-est flow'r that grows, You may search ev-ry-where, but none can com-pare With my wild I-rish". The score includes a treble clef for the Tenor Lead and a bass clef for the Baritone Bass. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across lines.

Ex. 2.70. Chauncey Olcott, “My Wild Irish Rose” (1898)

<sup>117</sup> “Hello! My Baby” was written by Joe Howard and Ida Emerson, a husband-and-wife entertainment act, for use in their own shows. It was published in 1899, the same year as Joplin’s *Maple Leaf Rag*. Barbershop historians regard it as the one of the earliest ragtime songs to appear in print.

Olcott also composed “When Irish Eyes are Smiling.”

to ba - by mine: mine: to ba - by mine: Hel - lo! my ba - by, Hel - lo! my hon - ey,  
 Hel - lo! my rag - time gal; Send me a kiss by  
 by wire, wire, Ba - by, my heart's on fire!

*CHORUS:*

Ex. 2.71. Joe Howard and Ida Emerson, “Hello! My Baby” (1899)

## Ragtime, Blues, and Jazz

### Ragtime

#### Instrumental Music Not Intended for Dancing

The music we generally associate with the term “ragtime” was heard only rarely on dance floors. As perfected in piano rags by Scott Joplin, Joseph F. Lamb, James S. Scott, and Eubie Blake, authentic ragtime music emerged in the 1890s and was heard primarily in sporting houses, barrooms, casinos, and other “red light district” locations typically avoided by gentlemen from polite society – at least, when their wives and children were with them. More specifically, this music developed largely in the riverboat cultures of New Orleans and St. Louis, although the small towns lying between played an important role in the dissemination of the style.

The secret of ragtime’s appeal was in its constant syncopation: an essential element in African and Caribbean music, but far less characteristic of European music.

Ragtime's use of constantly-syncopated melodies played over the steady beat of a traditional sixteen-measure European march form made the style both immediately recognizable and startlingly novel. Its roots include minstrel songs of the 1840s and marches played by brass bands in New Orleans street parades, as well as spirituals, blues, and barbershop. Nevertheless, as scholar Richard Zimmerman explains,

Ragtime's origins are clouded by time – its development not recorded for history by observers who sat in bordellos, dance halls, and saloons during the latter part of the nineteenth century listening to itinerant pianists, both Black and White, play marches, songs and popular dance tunes with a novel and peculiar “snap.”<sup>118</sup>

How the music first came to public attention is equally unclear. Zimmerman credits Chicago's 1893 World Columbian Exposition with giving ragtime its first major exposure. Musicians from across the country heard its ragged sounds and began experimenting. The earliest works were adaptations of existing music played in ragtime's buoyantly syncopated style. Songs and instrumentals written entirely in ragtime soon followed, but no one seems to know where the genre's name came from or when the term “rag” was first used in reference to music.<sup>119</sup>

By 1900, however, ragtime was everywhere, performed and composed throughout the nation by young men and women of all ethnic backgrounds. The diversity of ragtime reflected music heard in the different regions of the country: There were rags for dancers, singers, and for instrumentalists, in styles as varied as the composers themselves. There were melodic folk rags, slow drags, dazzling pianistic rags, bluesy rags, comic rags, and serious rags. “It was the first time in

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Zimmerman, notes to *A Century of Ragtime: 1897–1997* (1997), CD, Vanguard 167/68-2. Zimmerman further suggests that ragtime pianists intentionally sought to imitate the rhythmic sounds of the banjo, a topic discussed elsewhere in this dictionary.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

American music history,” Zimmerman wrote, “that teenagers had their own music – a music that reflected their enthusiasm and optimism about themselves and America at the start of the twentieth century.”<sup>120</sup>

By the end of the 1890s, a rag was clearly understood to be an instrumental number written in march form, containing three or more ragtime themes. Whether those themes were original or pre-existing tunes played in a ragtime style, the melodies were easily singable and highly memorable. The public was particularly attracted to syncopated rhythms added to already familiar music: songs, marches, and even lighter selections from classical-art music. Popular dance rhythms like the cakewalk and march were equally a part of the style. Orchestrations of ragtime music betray its origins in minstrelsy, with many rags scored for banjo, flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba, strings, and percussion.

Part of what made ragtime instantly familiar was its use of the march form. The syncopated melodies were usually located in the treble register, sitting easily under a pianist’s right hand; in ensemble pieces, bass lines were played by the tuba. Higher wind instruments, when not playing the melody, were given parts perhaps best described as “filigree,” intricate passagework that added immeasurably to the energetic forward momentum found in many instrumental rags. The use of the slide trombone not only provided additional support to the bass line, but often added comedic effects or interesting countermelodies to numbers such as George Botsford’s *Black and White Rag* (1908) or James Scott’s *Grace and Beauty* (1909). Percussionists provided not only rhythmic support but also special effects such as gunshots or horse hooves.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Topics derived from ragtime include many of the dance rhythms discussed earlier (schottische, one-step, two-step) as well as cakewalk, rag, slow drag, foxtrot, and Charleston. “Stop-time,” walking bass, gunfire, horse hooves, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Dixieland are still other topical associations. Classic ragtime rhythmic patterns include accent displacement, ties across the bar or within otherwise steady patterns, and irregular groupings. Figure 2.15 shows three typical patterns.<sup>122</sup>



Fig. 2.15. Typical ragtime rhythmic patterns

*Heliotrope Bouquet* by Scott Joplin and Louis Chauvin (Ex. 2.72) and Joseph Lamb’s *Ethiopia Rag* (Ex. 2.73) are representative ragtime works.<sup>123</sup>

Ex. 2.72. Scott Joplin and Louis Chauvin, *Heliotrope Bouquet*, opening (1907)

<sup>122</sup> The third of these three patterns is an excerpt from Euday L. Bowman’s 1914 ragtime hit, *12<sup>th</sup> Street Rag*. This pattern was later adopted into popular dance forms such as the Charleston.

<sup>123</sup> On the score, the composer noted this work as a “two-step or march.”



Ex. 2.73. Joseph Lamb, *Ethiopia Rag*, introduction and first strain (1909)

### Blues

As mentioned earlier, the decades immediately following the Civil War saw unprecedented growth in American music, in African-American music in particular. As scholar David Evans explained, “The blues, music that came from the lowest rung of the social ladder, would soon take its place at the heart of this musical explosion, providing the harmonic language, style, sound, and attitude that underlies much of the popular music that followed it.”<sup>124</sup>

Although the Civil War resulted in the freeing of slaves, a new form of slavery based on economic servitude and racial segregation soon began to take shape. Hundreds of laws enacted to preserve the cultural traditions of the Old South impeded African-Americans’ civil liberties.

It is not surprising, then, that the 35-year period between the end of the Civil War and the start of the twentieth century saw an enormous upswing in the number of

<sup>124</sup> David Evans, “The Birth of The Blues,” *American Roots Music* (New York: Ginger Group Productions and Rolling Stone Press, 2001), 37.



incarcerated Black men. With many White Southerners viewing prisons as the logical successor to plantation life, able-bodied African-American men were sent away in record numbers to serve hard time on behalf of the state. Prisoners planted cotton, laid rail lines, picked crops, and hauled the state's harvest to market while Anglo-Americans rigged the system, effectively blocking African-American efforts to rebuild their families or lay the groundwork for the next generation to realize its share of the American Dream.<sup>125</sup>

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, a new form of music evolved, one that gave voice to community's widespread suffering: the blues. Musicologist David Evans described the music, saying:

The blues spoke both from, and to, the heart of an impoverished, disenfranchised population that was bound to rural poverty through sharecropping and seasonal labor, or dislocated through migration to urban areas where work was equally hard. Institutionalized racism had systematically stripped away whatever political rights and economic advances Blacks gained during Reconstruction. Substandard education, dead-end employment, Jim Crow laws, and an oppressive, white-defined social system undermined the community's standing in society. Blacks who objected to or questioned their status – or who were believed by whites to have done so – risked harassment, arrest, violence, or incarceration in a prison work farm. Lynching – the ultimate sanction – reached a peak in these years of about three per week in the South, often with the participation of mobs numbering in the hundreds. It was out of this oppressive social and economic environment that the blues emerged. These were songs of general dissatisfaction, fundamentally shifting and ambivalent in character, expressed in allusive and elusive language. They rarely discussed the causes of oppression but commented instead on the safer subject of male-female relationships under these pressures, an area within the black community where there was more room to maneuver and safely express one's individuality.<sup>126</sup>

No one can say exactly who performed the first blues song or if a single individual was the source of the genre. Most probably, the blues are a collective

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<sup>125</sup> For more on this subject, see the section on "Prison Blues." The sharecropper and tenant farmer systems also served to maintain the status quo and keep the poor tied to the land. See the section labeled "Worksongs" for more information on the music specific to Reconstruction-era working class people.

<sup>126</sup> David Evans, "Birth of the Blues," *American Roots Music*, 38.

enterprise, rising from those who worked the earth, blending a number of concurrent Black musical forms, such as spirituals, field hollers, worksongs, and folk ballads.<sup>127</sup>

Dating from the 1890s, the earliest blues were loosely-structured songs performed by individual singers, guitarists, or banjo players. Texts fell into two broad categories: those that were sexual in nature, and those that served as commentaries on everyday issues. The music and lyrics encoded subject matter that, for safety or social reasons, singers could not express openly regarding racism, social oppression, unfair labor practices, poor working conditions, or an unfortunate turn of events. Coded lyrics could be interpreted based on the hearer's race, politics, or social class, allowing singers the opportunity to publicly express frustration with circumstances beyond their control without arousing suspicion.

Melodies have their roots in the plantation field holler. Tunes were generally melismatic and free-flowing, and included an abundance of “blue notes” — pitches borrowed from the parallel minor, such as lowered thirds, sixths, or sevenths — that provide not only harmonic color, but lent a deeper inflection to the lyrics. Blue notes were created by techniques using items near at hand; guitarists, for example, bent notes by sliding a knife or bottleneck along the strings, whereas harmonica players redirected their air flow to change tone color or alter pitches.<sup>128</sup>

The lyrics of early blues songs – like the field hollers from which they emerged – typically described the work field hands were asked to perform or a singer's frustrations with his love life. The now-familiar three-line form was established by the 1890s: AAB, two rhymed lines followed by a one-line refrain.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

Although distinctive blues styles and repertoires emerged throughout the rural South, three locations — the Mississippi Delta, East Texas and the Piedmont – are known for their important repertoires.<sup>129</sup>

Delta Blues got their start in Southern cotton fields, soon becoming a focal point for African-American social life. Early blues musicians – mostly guitarists and harmonica players – supplemented the usual offerings at weekend parties with music straight from the workers’ day-to-day lives. Field hands by day, the first generation of blues artists worked mainly for food and drinks. The next generation – born between 1880 and 1900 – introduced the form to a national audience. Some of the more prominent artists include Son House, Charley Patton, Tommy Johnson, and Skip James. Their music featured two contrasting vocal styles: “the rough, guttural, declamatory shouts of Charley Patton, and the tormented, introspective falsetto of Skip James;”<sup>130</sup> and a guitar style that included the use of a slider, such as a bottleneck worn over a finger, to create a poignant crying sound similar to the human voice.<sup>131</sup> “Dry Spell Blues” and “My Black Mama” by Son House represent the genre’s early days.<sup>132</sup>

Another important blues tradition developed in East Texas. The state of Texas was a gold mine for Confederates seeking to extend slavery as long as possible. Many African Americans were relocated there in the decade leading up to the Civil War and put to work building levees, cutting timber, and laying railroad tracks. East Texas was a cotton-producing area, and the home of the South’s most notorious prison farms. As a result, railroad blues, worksongs, and prison ballads are important to the East Texas blues

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<sup>129</sup> Morgan & Barlow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 29.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Special thanks to Michael DeLalla, author of *The Mindful Guitarist* (Niwot, CO: Falling Mountain Music, 2015) for his assistance in helping me transcribe Son House’s music from tablature into standard notation. Unfortunately, due to copyright restrictions, these scores cannot be included in this dissertation.

tradition. The style was first popularized by “Ragtime Texas” Henry Thomas, the son of former slaves, who spent his life riding the rails and working as an itinerant musician. His work inspired the next generation, including Blind Lemon Jefferson and Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter, who introduced the East Texas style to the nation.<sup>133</sup> With its jazz-influenced harmonies and complex rhythms, Jefferson’s “Black Snake Moan” is a representative example of the East Texas style, while Leadbelly’s “Leaving Blues” shows an early variant of the AAB form, a form that would soon be replaced by a more predicable twelve-bar blues pattern.<sup>134</sup>

The largest of the three rural areas where the blues developed was the Piedmont, which lay between Richmond, Atlanta, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Appalachian Mountains. Emerging roughly a decade after the blues appeared in East Texas and the Mississippi Delta, the Piedmont sound was light and sweet. Piedmont blues musicians drew inspiration from secular folksongs, ballads, and popular standards, factors that led to local players’ preference for lilting melodies sung in a high, plaintive style. Early Piedmont blues innovators such as Blind Arthur Blake incorporated ragtime techniques into their guitar playing, ragging blues melodies to create intriguing cross rhythms. Finger-picking dexterity was emphasized in guitar and harmonica duos that featured intricate, interchangeable, and often overlapping call-and-response patterns. The Piedmont sound failed to gain an urban foothold, thus limiting its influence.<sup>135</sup>

Both the harmony and form of the blues have played an important role in the formation of a distinctly American sound. Although the genre takes its name from the “blue notes” heard in the music — the third and seventh scale degrees are “bent,” or

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<sup>133</sup> Morgan and Barlow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 29–30.

<sup>134</sup> Due to copyright restrictions, these scores cannot be included in this dissertation.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

lowered by a half step — the organizing principles that lie beneath the poetry and melodic dissonance of the genre have deeply influenced later forms of American music. The underlying structure of the blues is a twelve-measure harmonic progression, a sharp contrast from the eight- or sixteen-bar patterns seen in ragtime, a genre that emerged around the same time. Featuring a smoother, less percussive rhythm and a slower tempo than ragtime, lyrics were organized into three phrases, each four bars long. The first phrase presents a statement, the second repeats it, and the third completes it. As the following examples illustrate, the lyrics could describe typical troubles, romantic difficulties, or sexual humor:

Well, I'm going away, Lord, won't be back till fall.  
 Well, I'm going away, Lord, won't be back till fall.  
 And if I meet a good gal, mama, won't be back at all.<sup>136</sup>

Backwater rising, Southern peoples can't make no time,  
 I said, backwater rising, Southern peoples can't make no time  
 And I can't get no hearing from that Memphis girl of mine.<sup>137</sup>

Rebecca, Rebecca, get your big legs off me,  
 Rebecca, Rebecca, get your big legs off me,  
 It may be sending you baby, but it's worrying the hell out of me.<sup>138</sup>

In these and countless other songs, the singer was the protagonist, living on the edge of society's norms, ready to “catch the train and ride” if trouble or opportunity arose.<sup>139</sup>

The three-line AAB form of blues songs soon developed its own characteristic harmonic sequence, with space at the end of each line for an instrumental response.

Called the twelve-bar blues, the format soon proved to be among the most popular chord

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<sup>136</sup> Tommy Johnson, “Bye-Bye Blues,” 1928. Johnson, a Mississippi Delta blues man, was a guitarist equally famous for his ability to go from a low growl to a high falsetto.

<sup>137</sup> Blind Lemon Jefferson wrote “Rising High Water Blues” in 1927 in response to a flood that occurred in the spring of that year. Several states were impacted and recovery efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee took years to complete.

<sup>138</sup> Big Joe Turner recorded his song “Rebecca” in 1946. The Kansas City blues singer was more famous for later works such as “Shake, Rattle, and Roll,” which was remade by Elvis Presley, and “Flip, Flop, and Fly,” which in the 1990s was used as the theme song for the animated film *Chicken Run*.

<sup>139</sup> David Evans, “The Birth of the Blues,” *American Roots Music*, 41.

progressions in American music, found today in jazz, bop, boogie-woogie, rock and roll, and rhythm and blues. In the 12-bar blues, each line of text is represented by four measures of music. The tonic chord is heard over the first four bars. The second line of text opens with eight counts of the subdominant, with two bars in the tonic to close. The third line of text features the dominant and the subdominant in its first half; a return to tonic for the closing two bars coincides with the end of the text. To put it more simply, most of the music was based on the tonic chord, with the openings of the second and third lines of text based on IV and V. The twelve-bar blues may be standard today, but the stanza length could, and often did, vary in the genre's formative years.<sup>140</sup> Chords could be sounded as triads or as arpeggios, which became known as the “walking bass,” seen in Figure 2.16.<sup>141</sup>



Fig. 2.16. Walking bass, 12-bar blues

Melodically, blues tunes were based on chord tones, with each line a strophe of the text needing four bars to complete. Chord changes, however, occurred at two- or four-bar intervals, a situation that creates both interest and predictability for listeners, while allowing performers flexibility and ample opportunities for improvisation. Rhythmic

<sup>140</sup> Alternate versions include the eight- and sixteen-bar blues.

<sup>141</sup> Non-jazz musicians may be interested to note that the first eight bars of a 12-bar blues pattern are always the same. In addition to the progression shown above, variations in the last four bars also include the following: a)  $V^7-V^7-I^7-I^7$ ; b)  $V^7-IV^7-I^7-V^7$ ; c)  $V^7-IV^7-I^7-I^7$ ; d)  $IV^7-V^7-I^7-V^7$ ; or e)  $V^7-IV^7-I^7-V^7$ . Jazz theory allows for the use of  $I^7$  rather than the more standard notation of  $V^7/IV$ .

patterns follow a simple two-bar pattern, repeated every two measures. At the same time, the melodic rhythm employs a simple two-bar pattern repeated six times.

In many blues arrangements, particularly those involving a piano, only the tonic chord is played in root position, with the dominant and subdominant typically in second inversion. Voicing chords in this manner ensures smooth transitions from chord to chord without leaps in the pianist's left hand.<sup>142</sup> Chords are generally found in closed position, with all chord tones falling within an octave and with most roots located within the bass clef staff or a third above it.

The number of art music compositions influenced by the blues is impressive. Both European and American composers experimented with the style.<sup>143</sup> George Gershwin employed blues harmony in songs such as "I Got Rhythm," as well as in *Rhapsody in Blue* and *American in Paris*. Similarly, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and George Antheil also found ways to incorporate the blues in their music. W.C. Handy's scores are among the earliest to use chord symbols and markings such as "vamp," notated in Ex. 2.74 as "'Til ready."

Ex. 2.74. W.C. Handy, *Memphis Blues*, opening (1913)<sup>144</sup>

<sup>142</sup> This is one of the characteristics that distinguishes the genre from other contemporary forms. Ragtime, for example, often features the root of the chord on strong beats.

<sup>143</sup> Blues harmonies can be seen in Weill's *Three Penny Opera*, Milhaud's *La Creation du Monde*, Shostakovich's *Jazz Suites* and *Tahiti Trot*, Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, Ibert's *Divertissement*, and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G.

<sup>144</sup> In a later passage in this work, Handy conveniently includes his own name in the lyrics, an act that demonstrates how at least one African-American musician cleverly dealt with the cutthroat tactics of the American sheet music industry at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Chorus

Got de St. Lou - is Blues jes as blue as - Ah - can be  
 I - loves dat man lak a school boy - loves - his pie -  
 A - black head - ed gal make a freight train - jump - the track -  
 Lawd a blonde head - ed wom - an makes a good - man - leave the town -  
 Oh ash - es to ash - es and dust to dust

Ex. 2.75. W. C. Handy, *St. Louis Blues*, chorus (1914)<sup>145</sup>

## Jazz

Jazz is America's most complicated and most highly developed indigenous music. It is, in many respects, the summation of the African-American experience in America, and a reflection of the culture that developed over three centuries of slavery, resistance, and assimilation.<sup>146</sup> The origins of jazz lie in ragtime, blues, spirituals, shouts, ballads and “coon songs,” performed long before the word jazz was used to describe the music. Sacred and secular references, as well as elements from both popular and classical music are also key components. Complex rhythmic patterns, cross-rhythms, and polyrhythms are still other ingredients. While we don't know for certain when jazz was first performed, an early form of the music was most likely heard during minstrel shows since similar instruments were used in early jazz bands.<sup>147</sup>

What initially set the genre apart was its swung rhythms and its focus on improvisation. Like no other music before it, jazz connected the African traditions from which it sprang to the American musical experience and European forms to establish a wholly new musical language that maintains a high degree of correlation between speech, music, and dance. A largely instrumental genre, jazz required active listening from both

<sup>145</sup> This is one of the earliest examples I found with chord notations included in the score. The figures here are for ukulele in D.

<sup>146</sup> Hilred Roach, *Black American Music: Past and Present*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Malabar, FL: Krieger, 1994), 57.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.



performers and listeners. More so than in any other American form of music to have emerged before World War I, jazz players spoke to each other through their instruments during the act of performance, and — as was the case with field hollers and spirituals — expected a response from the other musicians to keep the conversation going. In short, it is the first fully-developed American musical language.<sup>148</sup>

Although musically, jazz encompasses much of what preceded it, it nonetheless emerged as a wholly new art form. The earliest works were largely triadic, with seventh chords becoming quite popular before the turn of the century. Altered chords were added to jazz harmonies around 1910.<sup>149</sup> Even though ragtime had introduced syncopated melodies to America, its melodies were played over a predictably steady bass line. Jazz, on the other hand, featured syncopations that were not only more daring, but could be heard at any time, in any voice. Moreover, its use of cross-rhythms was bold and invigoratingly new to White audiences accustomed to sentimental ballads and parlor songs that included few, if any, dotted rhythms or chromatic surprises.

Jazz evolved as more players became involved in the style and as America's musical tastes continued to develop. According to Hildred Roach, author of *Black American Music: Past and Present*, the first phase of the genre's development grew out of Africanisms from generations of slaves, minstrelsy, and various forms of American folk music. The second phase probably began during Reconstruction, when Black performers started finding work with travelling shows and as stage performers in their own right. A third phase began around 1900, as group performances started to give way to solo artists – men such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, and an increasing

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

number of women, such as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Josephine Baker. These performers played a type of music known as “hot” or “sweet” jazz, which incorporated not only the “Dixieland” style popularized by White jazz players, but also blues and swing styles heard in rags and other small-form compositions.<sup>150</sup>

Early jazz ensembles were typically small and featured a rhythm section – a piano, bass, and drum – that provided harmonic support and rhythmic underpinning. Other players included melody instruments such as saxophones, clarinets, and trumpets, as well as trombones and tubas. The banjo was a common instrument in early jazz bands, but was supplanted by the guitar around 1920. Some bands featured singers, who introduced vocal techniques such as vibrato and scat singing (nonsense syllables) to a largely instrumental genre.

Popular music in New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, frequently combines earlier forms; thus jazz blended brass band marches, French quadrilles, ragtime, and the blues. The music also featured a sort of group polyphony, in which multiple lines of music sounded together across the band. The “Dixieland” style, as it came to be known, featured the “front line” of the band – melody instruments such as trumpet or cornet, trombone, or clarinet – and a rhythm section. One instrument typically played a melody, while the others improvised around the tune, resulting in a more a heavily polyphonic form of jazz than later styles. Two of the best-known melodies performed in this style include *Muskrat Ramble* and *Basin Street Blues*, seen in Ex. 2.76 and Ex. 2.77.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 60.

*mf* 1. Look at them shuf - fl - in', a - shuf - fl - in' down; \_  
2. Look at them shuf - fl - in', a - shuf - fl - in' down; \_

ram - bl - in', scam - bl - in', a - head - in' for town. \_  
look at the band \_ pa - ra - din' all o - ver town. \_

Hus - tl - in', bus - tl - in' and  
Look at the hap - pi - ness a -

Ex. 2.76. Edward “Kid” Ory, *Muskrat Ramble*

G Am7 Bb° G/B Bbm7 Am7 D7 G G7/F

Won't you come a-long with me down the Mis-si-sip-pi? We'll take a boat to the

C6/E Cm6/D# G/D D7

land of dreams Steam down the ri-ver down to New Or-leans. \_\_\_

Ex. 2.77. Spencer Williams, *Basin Street Blues*, main theme

As jazz soloists became more prominent, changes to the music put them in the spotlight. Musical lines became more clearly defined and players were assigned written parts. Choruses — sixteen-bar or thirty-bar interludes between presentations of the main themes — allowed band members an opportunity to come forward, but the focus of these works was clearly on the soloist.

Although jazz started out as an African-American form of music with a reputation for being — in the words of Hilred Roach — “loud, bawdy, untamed, and low-class,” it did not remain that way for long.<sup>151</sup> Jazz exerted its influence on orchestrations, harmonic outlines, rhythms, forms, and even the titles of works. African-American rhythmic patterns, polyrhythms, swung rhythms, and other forms of syncopation soon found their

<sup>151</sup> Roach, *Black American Music*, 60.

way into “classical” symphonic works, such as Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, Milhaud’s *La Création du Monde*, Ravel’s *Bolero*, William Grant Still’s *Afro-American Symphony* and James P. Johnson’s *Yamekraw: An Afro-American Rhapsody for Jazz Piano and Orchestra*. Opera and musical theatre were similarly affected. Jazz-inspired stage works include Kurt Weill’s *Three Penny Opera*, Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, and Bernstein’s *West Side Story*.<sup>152</sup>

Orchestrations were greatly affected by jazz; indeed, an essential part of the American jazz sound was a greater reliance on wind instruments. The addition of the saxophone, the banjo, and the slide trombone influenced composers around the world. Classical music written in a jazz style included musical features associated with these instruments, such as bent notes and growling glissandi. Other features reflecting jazz’s influence include expanded instrumental ranges, jazz-derived melodies and harmonies, and the introduction of improvisation, small combos, and exotic percussion instruments in formal settings.<sup>153</sup>

A list of works influenced by jazz is simply too long to include here as the genre captured the attention of composers across the world. As with ragtime, European enthusiasm for the genre persuaded a reluctant American public that jazz was not only worthwhile, but that it was the nation’s true musical voice. For more than a century, composers from every nation have found it an invigorating source of inspiration.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Popular songs were among the first works to include a jazz element. Indeed, many songs not only included the musical traits of the genre, but also the lingo spoken by performers. Examples include Cab Calloway’s “Minnie the Moocher,” as well as scat classics such as Louis Armstrong’s “Heebie Jeebies” and Duke Ellington’s “Cottontail.”

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

### **New World Creole Populations: Black, White, Afro-Cuban, Latin American, Caribbean, and Louisiana**

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, melodies, rhythms, and even musicians freely travelled between Europe, Cuba, Haiti, and New Orleans. After the Haitian slave revolts of the 1790s, however, French colonists emigrated en masse to Cuba and New Orleans, resulting in even stronger cultural connections between Creole New Orleans and the Caribbean. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, shortly after the governance of Louisiana was transferred from Spain back to France, and ultimately to the United States, the hybridization of Spanish, Native American, and Black musical elements in colonial French and Spanish settlements was already well underway.

The music of eighteenth century Cuba, for example, developed along clearly-defined ethnic, racial, cultural, and class lines. Spanish colonial music created for the enjoyment of the upper classes, for example, was highly European in its forms and overall aesthetic; its musicians and audiences were often from Spain. Music for the middle classes was Cuban in origin and had a tropical, earthy flavor. Whether Spanish or French, White Creole musicians often received their training in European or Cuban conservatories; their works often included popular dance rhythms and Creole melodies. By contrast, musicians at the lowest levels of society took part in an oral tradition that evolved along distinctly African lines, creating music that featured polyrhythms and communal drumming. Often earning their living as street musicians, they performed in barrios and nightclubs, as well as at civic events and for funeral processions. The three levels of society did not mix freely, and the music reflected this.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, composers such as Manuel Saumell (1818–1870) embraced popular trends and explored ways to incorporate

elements from all three levels of society into their music. Saumell was among the first to devote his career to combining “low art harmonies,” as he called them, with syncopated rhythms associated with Black Creoles and the dance forms that Cubans adored.<sup>154</sup> His efforts were overwhelmingly successful: Today he is considered not only the father of the Cuban contradanza and habanera, but the first truly Afro-Cuban composer.

Cultural links between Cuba, Haiti, and New Orleans remained strong, and as immigration from the islands to the United States increased, musical connections grew stronger still. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, for example, was a White French Creole composer whose maternal family settled in Haiti to raise sugar cane only to flee after the Haitian Slave Revolt of 1795. The family settled briefly in Cuba, and from there emigrated to New Orleans, where Gottschalk was born in 1829.

In addition to the sounds of New Orleans – street vendors, dance music, opera, Native American music, and folk and classical music of all kinds – island music was a part of Gottschalk’s childhood.<sup>155</sup> As a boy, he learned Creole songs from his grandmother and his Black mammy “Aunt Sally.” He also watched slave dances held at nearby Congo Square, hearing African and Caribbean melodies, rhythms, and harmonies on a regular basis. Music from neighborhood dances in the city’s French Quarter and popular music of the time wafted through the air. The sounds of riverboats, street vendors, and brass bands were still other influences. While Gottschalk’s talents were exceptional, his experience was hardly unique. Many New Orleans performers have benefited from the musical gumbo that resulted from the city’s blending of French, Spanish, Creole,

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<sup>154</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba* [1946], trans. Alan West-Durán, ed. Timothy Brennan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1946), 192.

<sup>155</sup> S. Frederick Starr, *Bamboula: The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 39.

European, and African cultures with other American music, regardless of whether they self-identified as Black, White, American, Creole, or Latino. In considering the discussion of Afro-American, Afro-Cuban, and Latin American *topoi*, it is not my intention to negate the contributions of any individual stream to the American sound; combining them acknowledges the contribution to American music of this multicultural Creole community, which is often overlooked in both music and cultural histories. The wholesale infusion of French, Spanish, and African elements into the fabric of American music did not take place until late in the nineteenth century, which allowed Anglo-Americans ample opportunity to marginalize each individual group through various depictions of the “other” before the public was able to hear each community’s authentic music. The melding of three cultures, however, created something distinctly and wholly original to the New World. The “creolization” of American music provided a number of building blocks toward the creation of an American sound and its musical *topoi*.<sup>156</sup>

#### Selected Afro-American, Afro-Cuban, and Latin American *Topoi*

Institutionalized racial segregation significantly affected the ability of musicians of color to book and travel safely to performances. By law as well as by social tradition, African-Americans were relegated to “Coloreds Only” venues, including theatres where the standard instrumentation was often “piano, plus eleven”; that is, one player per string part, percussion, and a wind band comprised of flute, clarinet, two cornets, and trombone, rather than the full string section with pairs of winds found in White auditoriums.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> I must give credit to Christopher J. Smith for this turn of phrase. His book, *The Creolization of American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013) is an outstanding resource for information on the role music from New Orleans and other Creole locations played in American society during the nineteenth century.

<sup>157</sup> Rick Benjamin, Notes to *Treemonisha*, 62. Benjamin specifically states that his orchestration of Joplin’s opera does not include the banjo, as that instrument, while African in origin, had become a symbol of slavery and minstrelsy to many Black progressives by the year 1900.

Orchestration as a topic associated with African-American music will be discussed briefly in this dictionary, with more information provided in the Joplin case study in Chapter 3. Orchestration issues associated with other ethnicities can be found in material related to those population groups. Because dance rhythms are the easiest topics to identify, we begin our discussion there.

### Cakewalk

Originally from the Caribbean, this syncopated dance pattern quickly made its way into the U.S. after the Haitian Revolution of 1795, where it was prominently featured in the Creole music of New Orleans and South Louisiana. By midcentury, the pattern had become familiar to White audiences through minstrel music. The cakewalk evolved from dance contests among slaves, with winners traditionally awarded a cake by their masters. Although the ruling class may not have realized it, the steps of the cakewalk were created from exaggerated parodies of the elaborate social dances of White society. The American cakewalk rhythm, shown here in Figure 2.17, is similar to the Cuban *cinquillo*, a Latin dance rhythm that also led to the choro and the Brazilian tango.<sup>158</sup>

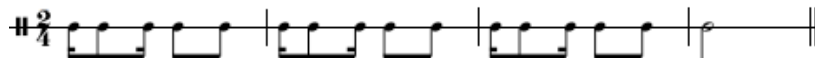


Fig. 2.17. Characteristic cakewalk rhythm

A significant number of works by nineteenth-century composers feature the cakewalk rhythm. Europeans were introduced to it in the 1840s through the solo piano works of Gottschalk, which featured the rhythms of his native New Orleans, as well as of Haiti, where the maternal side of his family lived until the late 1790s.<sup>159</sup> Other works that

<sup>158</sup> See Typical African, Afro-Cuban, and Creole rhythms (Fig. 2.14, 76–77) for popular *cinquillo* rhythmic patterns.

<sup>159</sup> Many scholars have said that Debussy's use of the cakewalk was inspired by ragtime; Jeanne Behrend's research suggests another possibility. Gottschalk's music was not only widely known in Paris; it was used for competitions held at the Paris Conservatory. Saint-Saëns was enrolled when Gottschalk's *Bamboula* was the contest piece. It is entirely



use the cakewalk rhythm include Claude Debussy's *Le Petit Nègre* (1909) and *Golliwog's Cakewalk* (1908); Henry Franklin Gilbert's *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* (1910), *Negro Dances* (1914), *Negro Rhapsody* (1915), and *Three American Dances* (1919); Ethelbert Nevin's *An African Love Song* (1901); and Bernard Franklin's *Blackville Society Cakewalk Two-Step* (c. 1899).<sup>160</sup>



Ex. 2.78. Bernard Franklin, *Blackville Society Cakewalk Two-Step* (c.1899)



Ex. 2.79. Henry F. Gilbert, *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* (1910)

### Bamboula

The “bamboula” is not only a specific Afro-Cuban dance rhythm, but also a type of native island drum. As Figure 2.18 shows, the rhythm uses and extends elements from the cakewalk, predating both the tango and the habanera.

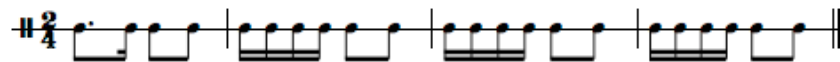


Fig. 2.18. Characteristic rhythmic pattern of the bamboula

possible that years later, as a faculty member, Saint-Saëns introduced Debussy to Gottschalk's Creole rhythms. It is also possible that Gottschalk's childhood friend, Ernest Guiraud, who was Debussy's first teacher at the conservatory, enjoyed that honor. See *Notes of a Pianist: Chronicles of a New Orleans Music Legend* [1964] (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), xxv and xxxv.

<sup>160</sup> The third measure of this example shows the tango pattern.

Gottschalk introduced the bamboula to White audiences in Europe and North America in the 1840s through his solo piano work, *Bamboula*, Op. 2 (Ex. 2.80). The melody is based on the Creole song “Quan’ patate la cuite na va mange li,” which he learned from his maternal grandmother’s side of the family. Many non-Creole composers who used the bamboula rhythm also incorporated this same tune, thus allowing multiple interpretations of this particular gesture to signify Black, Creole, Afro-Cuban, Latin America, Louisiana, New Orleans, or simply Gottschalk.

M. 112

PIANO.

*mf* *stacc.*

*fff* *Ped.*

*p* *fff* *Ped.*

*p* *sec.* *cresc. en*

*do.* *ff* *très rythmé.*

*p* *Très marqué le ff temp. de chaque mesure.* *Ped.*

*sempre stacc.* *ff* *Ped.*

Ex. 2.80. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Bamboula*, Op. 2 (1850)

The rhythm is featured prominently in the second movement of Gottschalk’s Symphony No. 1, *Nuit des Tropiques* (1853). Both the dance rhythm and the melody of “Quan’ patate la cuite na va mange li” can be heard in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s *Twenty-four Negro Dances*, Op. 59, No. 8 (1905), as well as in Henry F. Gilbert’s *Dance*

*in Place Congo* (1908). Gilbert's *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* (1910) and his *Three American Dances* (1919) also employ the rhythm, as does Ellsworth C. Phelps' *Bamboula Polka* (1853).



Ex. 2.81. Henry F. Gilbert, *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* (1910)



Ex. 2.82. Ellsworth C. Phelps, *Bamboula Polka* (1853)

### Tango and Habanera

The tango and habanera are Latin American dance forms whose characteristic rhythms include both melodic and accompaniment figures. In music from the United States, however, melodic and accompaniment patterns are considered as independent agents; they can be found together or separately, depending on the composer's preferences, expertise, or knowledge of these local styles. In Latin America, the tango and the habanera are two distinct dances; in the 1870s, when they moved to the U.S., their distinction became less clear. This is perhaps due to the number of patterns found in both dances, or the fact that many composers chose to place their accompaniment figure beneath melodies using the cakewalk, only further obscuring the line between the dances. Both the tango and the habanera strongly signified Latin America to listeners, allowing composers to use whatever elements they preferred, as the *topoi* had already been established. Characteristic rhythms of the tango and habanera are shown in Figure 2.19.

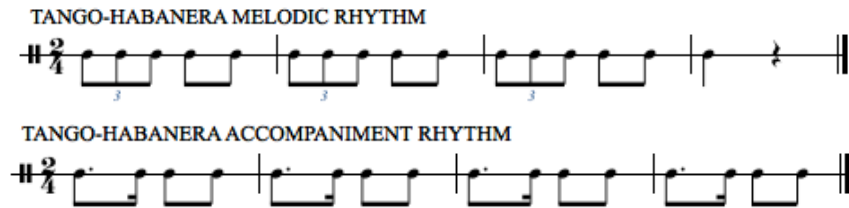


Fig. 2.19. Characteristic rhythms associated with the tango and habanera

The use of tango and habanera in nineteenth-century North American music clearly suggest Latin America, an all-encompassing term for the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America. As *topoi*, the dances are associated with distant sunny locales, steamy tropical nights, and dark-eyed beauties: in other words, exoticism tinged with sensuality in lands that featured colorful and somewhat revealing clothing, lush surroundings, exotic cuisine, and carnal pleasures. Both patterns can be seen in Henry F. Gilbert’s *Two South American Gypsy Songs*, No. 1, “La Montonéra.”



Ex. 2.83. Henry F. Gilbert, *Two South American Gypsy Songs*, No. 1, “La Montonéra,” opening (1906)

Gilbert’s “Pirate Song” (Ex. 2.84) also employs these dance rhythms; indeed, it is important to notice how the composer abruptly changes to a Latin figure when the lyrics mention “hate lies close to love of gold,” a reference to tensions between Spain and England dating back to the 1500s.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>161</sup> In my opinion, *topoi* used in this manner are a throwback to the Elizabethan age, in particular the years leading up to the invasion of England in 1588 by the Spanish Armada. The English victory changed the balance of power between these two seafaring nations, with English prejudices playing out in the New World, setting in place policies that have marginalized Hispanics from the colonial era to the present. Stereotyped presentations of “other” resurface in many nineteenth-century American works as Anglo-Americans sought to define people of color as minorities, less powerful and less valuable, than White citizens.

Yo! ho! ho! and a bot-tle of rum. Hate lies  
close to love of gold

*misterioso*

*ff*

*Cres.*

Ex. 2.84. Henry F. Gilbert, “Pirate Song,” mm. 21–30 (1902)

Works depicting African Americans often combine African, Afro-Cuban, and African-American elements. John Phillip Sousa, for example, used cakewalk and ragtime rhythms in *Dwellers in the Western World*, “The Black Man.” See Ex. 2.85.

*f*

*p*

*pp*

*ff*

*p*

Ex. 2.85. John Philip Sousa, *Dwellers in the Western World*, “The Black Man,” opening (1910)

Other compositions depicting African Americans can be seen throughout this lexicon; for example, Kerry Mills combines the cakewalk with the two-step in *Rastus on Parade*.<sup>162</sup> Mills joins the cakewalk with ragtime figuration in the opening of *Whistling Rufus*. See Ex. 2.65 and Ex. 2.66, respectively.

<sup>162</sup> Identified by the composer as a two-step march on his score.

### Native Americans and the Indianist Movement

In her dissertation *Transposing Cultures: The Appropriation of Native North American Musics, 1890–1990*, Tara Colleen Browner asks, “Who owns the products of the Native American cultural past? Is Native American music expression part of every American’s heritage or does it belong to those Native American groups who brought it (forward), and continue to bring its songs to life?”<sup>163</sup> As Browner explains, because traditional Native American musics are the only entirely indigenous forms of musical expression on the continent, the music has an “unarguable authenticity, which composers – both Native and non-Native Americans – seek to evoke when they use Native music or imagery.” To use Native American music, she writes, is “not simply a musical choice. It is a political statement, commenting on native musical achievement or some aspect of Native American-White relations, or, as so many film scores of the past, contrasting the ‘primitive’ sounds of Native Americans with the heroic ones of the White pioneers in an aural depiction of Manifest Destiny.”<sup>164</sup>

Similarly, Richard Crawford identifies authenticity and accessibility as hallmarks of music performance in America where the use of ethnic signifiers is involved:

Accessibility seeks out the center of the marketplace, whereas, authenticity arose as an ideal countering the marketplace’s devotion to accessibility. Authenticity privileges works over occasions. In fact, authenticity *invests ultimate authority in works and the traditions within which they are composed* ... A performer is duty-bound to seek that spirit, to be guided by it, to remain faithful to it.<sup>165</sup>

Accessibility, on the other hand, has no other goal than to reach the greatest number of people in the shortest timeframe possible.

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<sup>163</sup> Tara Colleen Browner, *Transposing Cultures: The Appropriation of Native North American Musics, 1890–1990* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 1995), 2.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin* [1993] (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000), 87–88. Emphasis in original.

Crawford's observations directly speak to the Indianist music outlined in this dictionary. Composers and ethnomusicologists such as Arthur Farwell, Charles Cadman, Carlos Troyer, and Harvey Worthington Loomis were devoted to capturing the sounds of Native Americans before the last of the tribal members were rounded up and sent to reservations. Although they recorded Native American music and incorporated elements of it in their original compositions, in no way were they writing music in the Native American tradition. They wrote music meant to appeal to mainstream listeners, using a Native melody or perhaps an iconic drumbeat, upon which they superimposed European harmonies and phrase structures. Even though they may have preserved bits and pieces of the Old West, the price of making these works accessible to the public required the original source materials be altered to suit the public's taste.

By the 1890s, the number of Native Americans living on reservations proved especially alluring to anthropologists and ethnologists. For the first time in American history, a critical mass of Native people were concentrated into small confined areas, giving Anglo-American researchers ready access to cultures many of them had never before encountered. Armed with the new Edison cylinder, field workers eagerly recorded songs of the "vanishing" Native Americans. Some of these collectors aimed to document and preserve the music for posterity, to keep it from disappearing entirely as Native American culture was increasingly marginalized. Others labored under a process described by Renato Rosaldo as "'imperialistic nostalgia,' the melancholy longing by a people or culture for what they have destroyed."<sup>166</sup>

Hundreds of North American Native melodies were transcribed during the forty-year period between 1880 and 1920. As materials became available, musicians from the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 8.

U.S. and Europe incorporated them into their compositions. The use of Native materials in non-Native works was not new, but during this period it was highly fashionable. The West had been won, and with the removal of people who Anglo-Americans had previously considered threatening, there came a new interest in Native American culture. This portion of the dictionary shows how composers referenced Native Americans in music written throughout the nineteenth century.

As Michael Pisani demonstrates in *Imagining Native America in Music*, Native Americans may have been viewed as exotic creatures to composers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but they were generally held in high regard and seen as pastoral people who were at one with nature and whose values had not been corrupted by the outside world.<sup>167</sup> This romanticized view held sway, more or less, through the first two decades of the nineteenth century. But between 1830 and 1860, the relationship between Native Americans and White America dramatically changed: When the California Gold Rush got underway in 1849, the migration of Americans rushing toward the Pacific accelerated. It was not in the nature of Anglo-Americans to peacefully co-exist with indigenous populations. The U.S. government had already broken several of its promises to the Native American nations of the East, pushing them further westward to make room for Anglo-American settlers as the frontier moved from Kentucky into the Midwest; it was not about to let Native Americans block the nation's access California's gold. For most nineteenth-century Americans, there was only one option for safe passage to the West: the removal of existing residents — in particular, Hispanics and Native Americans. Marked by prejudice, cruelty, and successive waves of violence, the process of "taming the West" began with the Mexican-American War. It was interrupted only by the Civil

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<sup>167</sup> Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 17–44.



War, which encouraged even more migration to the West, due to unprecedented levels of destruction across the South and the resulting displacement of millions of people. By the late nineteenth century, as the last of the nation's remaining free tribes were removed from their homelands, some Americans began to consider the social cost of Manifest Destiny. A new romanticism soon surrounded Native Americans, and composers working at the turn of the twentieth century tapped into this enthusiasm.

Some late-nineteenth-century composers actively collaborated with anthropologists to preserve Native cultures, taking melodies or rhythms derived from field recordings and using them in original compositions. Others were inspired to follow Antonín Dvořák's advice to draw on the music of Native- and African-Americans as source material for a uniquely American sound. Both Farwell and Cadman wrote Indianist works as an expression of nationalism and sympathy for the plight of Native American people, whereas Ferruccio Busoni's "Indian" works treat Native Americans as exotica.<sup>168</sup> Other turn-of-the-century composers included "Indian" influences in their original music as a nod to public taste, using programmatic titles and the occasional stereotypical gesture without further referencing authentic Native American culture or Anglo-America's romanticized pretensions about it.

Regardless of a composer's intentions, most nineteenth-century "Indian" music written by White composers was "improved" in some shape or form, in a manner not unlike mainstream society's efforts to improve and assimilate Native Americans in the early twentieth century.<sup>169</sup> Melodies were embedded into European musical structures

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<sup>168</sup> Browner, *Transposing Cultures*, 8–9.

<sup>169</sup> From 1860 until the 1920s, thousands of young Native American children were forcibly removed from their families and shipped off to boarding schools for assimilation. Many of these schools were located across the West, but many were located in Eastern states. Student experiences were similar across the nation: Traditional clothing was taken from them upon entry and their hair was cut in popular Anglo-American styles. Children were not allowed to speak

and harmonized with late-nineteenth-century Wagnerian harmonies. The structure of the melodies was often changed as well in order to fit them more “naturally” into the periodic phrase structures commonly found in Western music but seldom in Native cultures. By the time a melody had been transcribed, harmonized, and retrofitted into a European mold, few Native melodies were still discernible. Most had been distorted beyond recognition, having little or no relationship to the source material.<sup>170</sup>

Music related to Native Americans reflects shifting attitudes in the U.S. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, for example, depictions of Native Americans in literature, visual art, and music were often positive. The story of Pocahontas, for example, captured public attention on both sides of the Atlantic. John Davis’ romanticized account of her life in *Travels in the United States of America* served as the basis for James Nelson Barker’s “operatic melo-drame (sic) in three acts,” *The Indian Princess ou La Belle Sauvage* (1808), the first surviving stage work based on her life. In 1855 John Brougham produced a burlesque based on the life of Pocahontas, a work he called *Po-co-hon-tas or the Gentle Savage*. Although James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* was an equally compelling subject, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* (1855) most often inspired composers. Throughout the remainder of the century, both American and European composers wrote Hiawatha-themed works, beginning with Emile Karst’s *Hiawatha Cantata*, an 1858 work the text of which was a

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their native languages, sing familiar songs, or perform ceremonial rituals (dances, etc.) When Native children completed their studies, which often included college-level work, some tried to return to their villages: Most discovered they were neither Native American or White, and as a result, became even more separated from both mainstream and Native societies. While the experience of the Native Americans was widespread and closely parallels ethnic cleansing efforts seen in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, it is important to note their experience is neither isolated nor unique in American history. Other groups in American society have been treated similarly, including French-speaking Americans in New England and Louisiana. See *Reveil, Waking Up French: The Repression and Renaissance of the French in New England* (Bucksport ME: Northeast Historic Films / Watching Place Productions, 2004), for more about the systematic destruction of French-speaking communities in Maine, or visit <http://www.wakingupfrench.com>.

<sup>170</sup> Browner, *Transposing Cultures*, 9.

freely-adapted version of Longfellow's poem.<sup>171</sup> Robert Stoepel worked directly with the poet to craft his fourteen-movement extravaganza *Hiawatha: An Indian Symphony* (1859).<sup>172</sup> Ellsworth Phelps wrote an equally ambitious work in 1878, a five-part symphony inspired by Longfellow's poem.<sup>173</sup> Louis Coerne wrote a four-part symphonic suite in 1893, prefacing each section with a quotation from the original work. Rubin Goldmark, one of Antonín Dvořák's students in the U.S., published his *Hiawatha Overture* in 1896, and Hugo Kaun's *Minnehaha* and *Hiawatha* were both premiered in 1901. *The Farewell of Hiawatha* (1886) by Farwell was dedicated to the Apollo Club of Boston, an all-male choir whose members performed the work at its premiere. Frederick Russell Burton's dramatic cantata *Hiawatha's Death Song: Song of the Ojibways* was set not only to Longfellow's text, but also to words from other writers.<sup>174</sup>

The loss of free Native populations was a concern to a small, but influential, group of composers we now call "Indianists." Inspired by Dvořák's 1892 admonishment to establish a uniquely American sound using elements from the various forms of folk music readily available on these shores, Farwell began composing short pieces based on Native American melodies. After he failed to find a publisher willing to print a suite he titled *American Indian Melodies*, he founded the Wa-Wan Press in 1901. The company's name means "sing to someone" in the Omaha tradition. Farwell hoped the firm might play a role in leading the nation away from its obsession with German classical

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<sup>171</sup> Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 130.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Still other composers who created Hiawatha-inspired works include popular entertainers and songwriters such as Charles Crozat Converse ("Death of Minnehaha," 1856) and George W. Meyer ("Hiawatha's Melody of Love," 1908). While often considered a Longfellow tribute, Neil Moret's (aka Charles Daniels) "Hiawatha: A Summer Idyl" was not actually inspired by the poem, but by the rhythm of the rails as the composer traveled to Hiawatha, Kansas, in 1901. Moret was able to spot an opportunity when he saw it, however: James O'Dea added lyrics in 1903 and the music was subtitled "Song to Minnehaha." The song went on to become a rag and eventually a jazz standard after Duke Ellington incorporated the work into his jazz suite *The Beautiful Indians* (1946–47).

compositions and toward a more uniquely American sound: music rooted in this country, written for Americans, by Americans.<sup>175</sup> The Wa-Wan Press operated for 11 years, from 1901 to 1912, publishing the works of thirty-seven composers, nine of whom were women. From the start, the company stood out from its competition. Because Farwell found inspiration in the music of Native Americans and American folk traditions, the firm attracted many of the nation's most progressive composers, musicians who shared his interest in developing the nation's own musical voice, rather than continuing along European lines. During its brief existence, Wa-Wan represented some of the nation's more intriguing composers, men and women who were eager to play a role in the emerging national sound, including Farwell, Cadman, Henry F. Gilbert, Carlos Troyer, Gena Branscombe, Caroline Holme Walker, Virginia Roper, Julia Damon, Louise Drake Wright, and Rubin Goldmark.

Wa-Wan published works intended to have a lasting impact on American life, but their Indianist works cannot be considered Native music. Certainly they drew inspiration from Native American melodies, and at times incorporated bits of song and rhythm collected during field studies, but the harmonies and accompaniments were in keeping with then-current trends in classical music, making it, as Crawford called it, "accessible" rather than "authentic." Moreover, despite Farwell's noble intentions, much of this music includes stereotypes that discerning modern ears might label as unflattering or racist.

Interest in "Indianist" music peaked just prior to World War I. By the time the troops came home, the country was no longer romanticizing Native Americans, but

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<sup>175</sup> Evelyn Davis Culbertson, "Arthur Farwell's Early Efforts on Behalf of American Music, 1899–1921," *American Music* 5/2 (Summer 1987), 156–175.

glorifying Cowboy culture instead. With that change, a return to Anglo-American values and Celtic-inspired harmonies once again dominated popular culture.

In *Imagining Native America in Music*, Michael Pisani traces the evolution of musical *topoi* associated with Native Americans and provides a list of musical styles based on aspects of Native music.<sup>176</sup> Native Americans who performed with traveling Western shows on Eastern stages used a high falsetto voice, singing phrases that began in an extremely high range and dropped over the course of the phrase – sometimes falling by nearly two octaves. Sliding pitches were commonly heard, as were pulsating tones sung on vocalized syllables, which Pisani calls “vocables,” or non-lexical syllables. Melodies were rooted in a non-European tuning system, and were often modal and pentatonic. Accompaniments included persistent drumbeats, played by drummers sitting nearby.<sup>177</sup> Dancers’ costumes also contributed to the percussive effect, with strings of dried beads tied just below the performers’ knees producing a rattling effect.<sup>178</sup> Overall, the music featured dotted rhythms, repeated bass or accompaniment figures (often to an ominous effect), with the insertion of alternating fourths or fifths used to break up repeated figures.<sup>179</sup>

These characteristics had been observed from the time European explorers first “discovered” North America, but most were not incorporated into art music composed prior to the late-nineteenth century, when composers began looking for ways to weave elements appropriated from Native culture into compositions using musical shortcuts

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<sup>176</sup> Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 94.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. In his book Pisani described the sound as castenet-like.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

– topics – that signaled “Indian” to listeners whether those gestures were rooted in historic practice or not.<sup>180</sup>

The first time many of these markers for “Indian” were used in combination was in Henry Bishop’s opera, *Cortez*, which was published in 1823. The most popular number in the work was “Yes, ‘tis the Indian Drum,” a round that included not only all of the characteristics noted in *Imagining Native America in Music*, but one other important trait – the use of G minor for the melody, a key Pisani identified not only as prominent, but historically associated with musical exoticism since the seventeenth century.<sup>181</sup>

Popular entertainments often included musical stereotypes depicting Native Americans. Composers employed in theatres did not have the luxury of writing historically-informed, let alone culturally-sensitive, music. They were working on a deadline with employers who wanted only enough markers of a style to quickly establish “Indian” to listeners. Devices were meant to mimic sounds heard during performances given by touring Native American performers, as well as underscore Native Americans as exotic and outside the boundaries of polite society. For this reason, composers seeking to depict Native Americans significantly altered how Natives normally addressed melody, modality, harmony, rhythm, and even cadential formulae.

As Figure 2.20 shows, a number of gestures were created as *topoi* to suggest Native Americans; when used in combination, there is no mistaking the music for anything but “Indian.”

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<sup>180</sup> Jean-Baptiste Lully, Antonio Vivaldi and Henry Purcell, three well-known Baroque composers, wrote music referencing Native Americans and yet none of them incorporated authentic Native materials, or even audible markers of Native American, New World, or life in the Americas into their works.

<sup>181</sup> Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 86.

<b>OVERVIEW OF TECHNIQUES THAT SUGGEST “INDIAN”</b>	
<b>MELODY</b>	<p>Short phrases, generally 2-bar segments</p> <p>Frequent use of hopping thirds, leaping octaves</p> <p>Hopping minor thirds preferred device</p> <p>Grace notes or quick sixteenth note gestures</p> <p>In solo piano music, this might begin as a figure that alternates between the hands before becoming more insistent and later playing a key role in the melody</p> <p>Modal, flute-like melodies accompanied by drum effects, open fifths, triadic, or oscillating basslines</p> <p>Generally set within a minor pentatonic scale</p>
<b>MODALITY</b>	<p>Minor mode, with the minor pentatonic scale V of i, <sup>b</sup>3, 4, 5, <sup>b</sup>7 being the most popular</p> <p>Minor dominants — Always v, never V</p> <p>Melodies that shift between various minor-mode pentatonic scales</p> <p>Regular use of <sup>b</sup>7, P4, tritones</p>
<b>HARMONY</b>	<p>Block harmonies (diads, triads, chords)</p> <p>Modal, not chromatic, progressions without harmonic implications</p> <p>Parallelisms and Open Fifths</p> <p>parallel fourths and fifths or melodic doublings at the fourth, fifth, or octave</p> <p>Oscillating, triadic, or two-note basslines often centered around i-v or drone pitch</p>
<b>RHYTHM</b>	<p>Sharp accents on downbeats or downbeat of every other bar</p> <p>Regular patterns, starkly rigid, percussive, marcato or staccato accompaniments often found with legato melodies</p> <p>Dynamic changes are dramatic, not incremental, and closely align with rhythmic figurations</p> <p>Limited catalogue of stereotypical gestures</p>
<b>CADENCES</b>	<p>Most often seen cadential pattern: VI – ii<sup>6/5</sup> – i – v6 – iv6 – ii<sup>6/5</sup> – i</p> <p>Final cadence might involve i<sup>7</sup></p>

Fig. 2.20. Overview of techniques that suggest “Indian”

Because one of the markers for “Indian” is a rhythmic intensity not typically found in European or Anglo-American compositions, we will begin our investigation of topics with drum patterns.

### Tom Tom

An imitation of Native American drumming, the Tom Tom features a steady rhythmic pattern, often a subdivision of the beat, with accents falling on the first and third beats in a 4/4 setting. In solo piano music, this gesture can be found in either hand, but it seems more prevalent in accompaniment patterns in open fifths (see Fig. 2.21).



Fig. 2.21. Rhythmic pattern associated with the Tom Tom

Tom Tom is one of the more recognizable Native American *topoi*; representative examples include John Alden Carpenter’s *Little Indian* (1918), Farwell’s *American Indian Melodies*, Op. 11 (1901) and *Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony of the Omahas*, Op. 21 (1906), and Edward MacDowell’s Suite No. 2, Op. 48, better known as the *Indian Suite* (1897).

The image shows a short musical excerpt in 4/8 time. The bass clef contains a steady Tom Tom pattern of eighth notes with accents on the first and third beats. The treble clef contains chords, with dynamics markings of *f* and *p*. There are also some performance markings like 'Ped.' and '\*' below the bass line.

Ex. 2.86. Arthur Farwell, *American Indian Melodies*, Op. 11, “Ichibuzzhi,” opening (1901)

The pattern is typically found in the bass, but it can be found in other voices, particularly when the melody is in the tenor range. The opening of Carpenter’s *Little Indian* is an example of the figure placed over the melody. See Ex. 2.87.



Ex. 2.87. John Alden Carpenter, *Little Indian*, bass line melody with Tom Tom (1918)

### Honor Beat

This gesture is meant to evoke war drums. The angular, highly accented, but very regular rhythmic pattern is repeated relentlessly throughout a passage, but unlike the Tom Tom pattern that is heard on subdivisions of the beat, the honor beat pattern is heard only on the strong beat (see Fig. 2.22). Patterns may appear in straight rhythms or in regularly-occurring dotted rhythms and syncopated figuration. The key feature is that of regularly unchanging, underlying patterns. Scores often included directions to the performer to play in a “harsh, angry, or detached” manner, “as savagely as possible,” “with savage abandon,” or “with rough vigor, almost savagely.”

Fig. 2.22. Rhythmic pattern associated with the Honor Beat

Honor beats can be seen in Farwell’s *Navajo War Dance* (1905), Harvey Worthington Loomis’ *Lyrics of the Red Man* (1903–1904), and in the third movement (“War Times”) of MacDowell’s *Indian Suite* (1897). (Examples below.)

With intensity, not too fast. ♩ = 76

*p murmurendo*

*mp With severe precision*

*Sva bassa .....*

*of rhythm throughout, and savagely accented.*

*sf mp* *sf*

Ex. 2.88. Arthur Farwell, *Navajo War Dance*, bass line, opening (1905)

*mp*

*sempre leggiero.*

*cresc.*

Ex. 2.89. H.W. Loomis, “Music of the Calumet” from Book 1, *Lyrics of the Red Man*, Op. 76 (1903–1904)

### Tomahawk

Tightly-voiced chord clusters – often chromatic – are frequently used following a passage of “honor beat” rhythms. Dramatic shifts in dynamics (from *mp* to *fffz* in the example below) are followed by a short moment of rest, then a passage of forceful, accented rhythms are played *forte* before another blow is struck or the conflict subsides.

Ex. 2.90 from Farwell’s *Navajo War Dance* shows the use of “Tomahawk.”

*mp*

*fffz*

*fffz* *f*

Ex. 2.90. Arthur Farwell, *Navajo War Dance*, mm. 48–57 (1905)

## Indian Melody

Pisani describes “Indian melody” as sectional and modal in sound (see Fig. 2.23). But he rejects the common assumption that Indian melodies employ the pentatonic scale, suggesting instead “the emphasis on a lowered 7th scale-degree indicates the use of natural minor.”<sup>182</sup> After the opening A-section, B is typically in the relative major, with music that hints at pentatonic and whole tone scales.<sup>183</sup> An element of Native American drumming may be present beneath the tune, especially the Tom Tom or Honor Beat: The Tom Tom rhythm in open fifths is often found in the bass; the Honor Beat is often used in octaves. Descending chromatic lines often occur in the middle of the harmony. Melodies often include “Indian signifiers” such as regularly-placed accents on the beat; repeated chords using the same voicing and inversion; pedal tones (in drumbeats or as drones); cross-rhythms (generally 2-against-3 rhythmic patterns between between bass and treble); open fifths or octaves (in the bass); constant rhythmic motion (with regularly-repeated duple-rhythm patterns); irregular phrase lengths; simple triadic harmonies; pentatonic melodies; and melodies featuring gestures such as Tom Tom, Honor Beat, or Tomahawk. In ensemble works, countermelodies are given to the flute, an instrument found in most Native American cultures.



Fig. 2.23. Stereotypical Indian melody

Art music featuring Indian melodies is not difficult to find. Examples include Carpenter’s *Little Indian*, Loomis’ *Lyrics of the Red Man* (see Ex. 2.91), Victor Herbert’s

<sup>182</sup> Michael V. Pisani, “Creating Native American Identities in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Music,” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, Jonathan D. Bellman, ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 218.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

*The Dagger Dance* from *Natoma* (1911) and MacDowell’s “From An Indian Lodge,” from *Woodland Sketches* (1896).

Ex. 2.91. H.W. Loomis, “Music of the Calumet” from Book 1, *Lyrics of the Red Man*, Op. 76, opening (1903–1904)

In addition to works created by classical musicians or composers affiliated with the Wa-Wan Press, songwriters on Tin Pan Alley also wrote “Indianist” works. These songs often featured racist lyrics and cover art, as well as stereotypical musical gestures. Written at the outbreak of World War I, *Big Chief Killahun* (Ex. 2.92),<sup>184</sup> Maurice Abrahams’ collaboration with Alfred Bryan and Edgar Leslie, is one such work. The sheet music cover features a color illustration of a dark-skinned Native American wearing nothing more than a loincloth and beads, while holding a tomahawk over his head and clutching three German figures in his arm — images that strongly suggest that not only were Native-American warriors ready to join their Anglo-American brothers to fight the Kaiser, but that they were eager to fight on behalf of “Uncle Sammy” and the U.S.A.

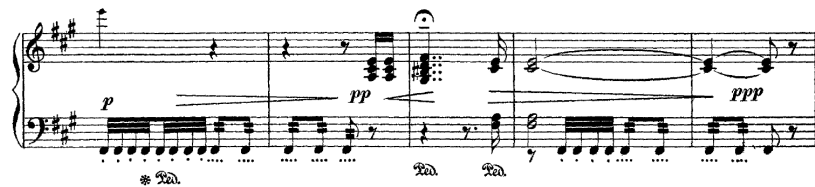
<sup>184</sup> Transcribed from materials downloaded from the Library of Congress website, <http://memory.loc.gov/natl/lib/ih/as/service/wwi-sheetmusic.1/200198176/200198176.pdf>.



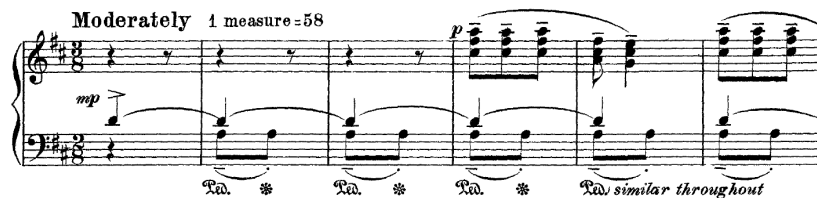
Big Chief put his war-paint on and kissed his squaw good-bye, Threw a-way his Persh-ing wants to catch the Kais-er, take him live or dead; Big chief says he's pipe of peace, and went to do or die. He said, "Un-cle Sam-my feeds me, sat-is-fied if he can get his head. There will be no more Bud-weis-er gives me all I get,— Now that Un-cle Sam-my needs me, Big Chief no for-get." in the Kais-er's brew, All he's goin' to get to drink will be some Wat-er-loo.— Big Chief's on his way to Ber-lin, just to do his share, Big Chief's goin' to make 'em squawk, When he hits 'em with his tom-a-hawk. Big Chief's goin' to scalp the Kais-er, take a-way his gun; Oh! oh! he have heap much fun; Goodbye Her-man, no more Ger-man; Big Chief Kill-a-Hun.

Ex. 2.92. Maurice Abrahams, Alfred Bryan, and Edgar Leslie, "Big Chief Killahun" (1918)

Music with drum- and drone-effects was also prevalent in Indianist works.



Ex. 2.93. Arthur Farwell, *Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony of the Omahas*, Op. 21, "Song of Approach," closing (1906); this gesture also appears in mm. 3 with the direction: Tremolo with one finger in imitation of Native American drum.



Moderately 1 measure = 58

Ex. 2.94. Arthur Farwell, *Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony*, Op. 21, "Nearing the Village," opening (1906)

### Indian Intermezzo

Farwell's work to advance the Indianist cause at the turn of the century led to a demand for popular music with a Native American flavor. Tin Pan Alley supplied popular songs, but the demand for such works was so high that composers such as Edward MacDowell dabbled in it. Dance-oriented composers joined in by creating a new genre, the "Indian Intermezzo," which employed syncopated dance rhythms like ragtime. Neil Moret's *Hiawatha* (1901) and Kerry Mills' *Red Wing* (1907) were two of the more popular "Indian intermezzo two-steps," a variant form of the two-step described earlier in this chapter. As the incipit of Moret's *Hiawatha* in Ex. 2.95 shows, stereotypical Native drum patterns played an important role in the Indian Intermezzo. Other examples include Percy Wenrich's *Silver Bell* (1906) and Charles L. Johnson's *Iola* (1906).



Ex. 2.95. Neil Moret, *Hiawatha, A Summer Idyll*, Op. 6, opening (1901)

Moret's *Hiawatha* established the model for later composers. However, as Paul Mayberry, a member of the Chatfield Brass Band, points out on the band's website, all Indian Intermezzi share common features.<sup>185</sup> Through music, lyrics, and dance steps, Indian Intermezzi sought to romanticize how the public saw Native Americans. Although texts address typical Native American subjects, there is little evidence of any authentic Native American material, other than a few melodies in minor keys (or modes), and a limited palette of drum patterns. The form, Mayberry notes, seldom deviates from those

<sup>185</sup> Paul Mayberry, "Hiawatha and the Indian Intermezzo," Chatfield Brass Band and Music (Online) Lending Library, <https://chatfieldband.lib.mn.us/uncategorized/hiawatha-and-the-indian-intermezzo/>, accessed 3 November 2016.

employed in cakewalks and marches: A-B-Trio-C-D. Prevailing tastes of the time meant that at least one section of an Indian Intermezzo included elements from ragtime.

The Indian Intermezzi experienced keen, if short-lived, interest, peaking just prior to World War I.<sup>186</sup> Sousa, however, was one of the genre's champions, hiring J. Bodewalt Lampe in 1903 to arrange Moret's *Hiawatha* for his band.

Sousa also wrote a few Indianist works of his own. *Dwellers of the Western World*, a concert suite from 1910, includes three movements, each devoted to a specific American race: "The Red Man," "The White Man," and "The Black Man." Even though some have regarded Sousa's composition as respectful of Native American culture, a brief examination of the movement shows it is heavily laden with stereotypical rhythms. Cover art on the sheet music depicts each race as seen by Anglo-Americans. Even more revealing is the length of the movements. "The White Man" runs 76 pages in length, while "The Red Man" and "The Black Man" are relegated to a mere two pages each, prompting one to consider that Sousa's suite may represent the minorities' displacement and the presumed cultural superiority of these peoples by Whites.



Ex. 2.96. John Philip Sousa, *Dwellers in the Western World*, "The Red Man," main solo passage, performed first by oboe and later by cornet (1910)

## Regional Depictions

### North and South, Yankees and Rebels

American composers had many occasions throughout the nineteenth century to create music representing each of the nation's regions and the people who lived there.

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<sup>186</sup> Interest in Native American songs followed on the heels of two earlier movements that could be construed as characteristic: the minstrel show of the mid-1890s with its cakewalks and coon songs, and the birth of piano ragtime in the late 1890s. Both of these dealt with the newly-introduced syncopated rhythmic elements of African-influenced music.

Sometimes, the music associated with one era resurfaced in another, its signification changed. Drum and fife music, for example, started out as military music, the soundtrack to the Revolutionary War and later the War of 1812. As the style fell out of fashion, drum and fife music came to symbolize not only America's formative years, but life in the original thirteen colonies more generally. Similarly, composers often repurposed a song for the changing times. The song "Yankee Doodle" is a prime example: During the Revolutionary War, it was an English song that became associated with the American forces; seventy-five years later during the Civil War it was the most popular song used to identify the Union Army, whose soldiers hailed almost entirely from the northern states. The song also held meaning for non-American listeners. The expression of pan-American friendship and goodwill between North and South Americans, for example, was a central goal of *Á Montevideo*, Gottschalk's second symphony. In this 1866 work, the composer quotes not only "Yankee Doodle," but also the national anthem of Uruguay.<sup>187</sup>

"Yankee Doodle" was by far the most obvious signifier of Union forces during the Civil War, but "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" was a close second. It used a melody from a Methodist hymn called "Say, Brothers, Will You Meet Us?," written by William Steffe. The melody has been used for a number of songs, including music "John Brown's Body," a song about the 1859 execution of abolitionist John Brown.<sup>188</sup> The lyrics we now associate with this melody were written by Julia Ward Howe in 1862.<sup>189</sup>

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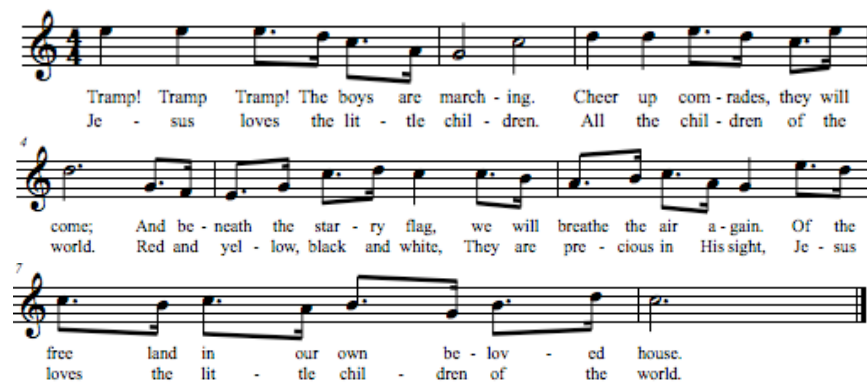
<sup>187</sup> Similarly, Kenneth J. Alford's 1942 march *The Eagle Squadron* celebrates the U.S. service men who joined the British Royal Army-Air Corps in the years just prior to America's entry into World War II by incorporating the *Star Spangled Banner*, the *Royal Air Force March*, and pitting the two works against Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelung*.

<sup>188</sup> Library of Congress, online resources. [http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/songs/john\\_brown.html](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/songs/john_brown.html), accessed 21 March 2017. Union soldiers added a number of verses, including one that promised to hang Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy. In response, Rebel troops penned an alternate version featuring John Brown swinging from a tree.

<sup>189</sup> <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/on-the-homefront/culture/music/the-battle-hymn-of-the-republic/the-battle-hymn-of-the.html>, accessed 17 March 2017.



The North was also represented by “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!,” “Battle Cry of Freedom,” “Hail Columbia,” and “The Star Spangled Banner.” “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!” was among the most popular songs sung by Union troops during the Civil War. Noted American composer George F. Root wrote both the words and the music “to give hope to the Union prisoners of war.”<sup>190</sup> The song was often parodied: During the Spanish-American War, it came back as “Damn, Damn, Damn the Filipinos” and during World War I, it was retitled “Belgium Put the Kibosh on the Kaiser.” But the most famous version is “Jesus Loves the Little Children,” a longstanding favorite for children’s worship services in many churches. Root’s original lyrics are shown in Ex. 2.98, along with lyrics from “Jesus Loves the Little Children.”<sup>191</sup>



Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! The boys are march - ing. Cheer up com - rades, they will  
Je - sus loves the lit - tle chil - dren. All the chil - dren of the  
4  
come; And be - neath the star - ry flag, we will breathe the air a - gain. Of the  
world. Red and yel - low, black and white, They are pre - cious in His sight, Je - sus  
7  
free land in our own be - lov - ed house.  
loves the lit - tle chil - dren of the world.

Ex. 2.97. George F. Root, “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!” (1864)

The Confederacy and Southern life were also portrayed musically, most often through the minstrel song “Dixie.” Other popular songs signifying the South include “Bonnie Blue Flag,” “Goober Peas,” “Flight of the Doodles,” and “God Save the South.” “Bonnie Blue Flag” rivaled “Dixie” in the hearts of Confederate soldiers. Sung to the

<sup>190</sup> Col. Nicolas Smith, *Stories of Great National Songs* (Milwaukee WI: Young Churchman, 1889), 127.

<sup>191</sup> <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/on-the-homefront/culture/music/tramp-tramp-tramp/tramp-tramp-tramp.html>, accessed 12 March 2017. The melody was also used in a Mormon hymn entitled *In Our Lovely Deseret*. While a publication date is uncertain, it appears that “Jesus Loves the Little Children” first appeared in Baptist hymnals around 1913.

melody of “The Irish Jaunting Car,” the song relates not only the order in which Southern states seceded, but also each individual state’s grievances with the North.

Union forces had their own version of “The Bonnie Blue Flag,” written by commander Col. J.L. Geddes, while he was held prisoner in a Confederate jail near Selma, Alabama. Apparently the colonel heard the song so often he felt new lyrics were in order. His version of the song, called “The Bonnie Blue Flag with the Stripes and Stars,” was sung by Union forces.<sup>192</sup> A comparison of the two settings can be seen in Ex. 2.98, with the Confederate lyrics as the first two verses and the Union lyrics as the final two verses.

CSA 1. Though we're a band of pris - o - ners, let each be firm and true, — For  
 2. The sword in - to the scab - bard, and the mus - ket on the wall, — The  
 USA 3. We're fight - ing for our Un - i - on, We're fight - ing for our trust, — We're  
 4. We treat - ed you as broth - ers, Un - til you — drew the sword, With  
 no - ble souls and hearts of oak the foe can ne're sub - due. — We  
 can - non from its blaz - ing throat no more shall hurl the ball; — From  
 fight - ing for that hap - py land, Where sleeps our Fath - er's Dust. — It  
 im - pious hand at Sum - ter You cut the sil - ver cord, — So  
 then will turn us home - ward to those we love so dear, — For peace and hap - pi -  
 wives and babes and sweet - hearts, no long - er will we roam, For ev' - y gal - lant  
 can - not be dis - sev - er'd, Tho' it cost us blood - y wars. — We ne - ver can give  
 now you hear our bu - gles; We come the sons of Mars, We ral - ly round that  
 ness, my boys, oh, give a hear - ty cheer. — Hur - rah! — Hur - rah! — For  
 boy — shall — seek his cher - ished home. —  
 up the land where float the Stripes and Stars. — Hur - rah! — Hur - rah! — For  
 brave old flag Which bears the Stripes and Stars. —  
 peace and home, Hur - rah! — Hur - rah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that ends this cru - el war. —  
 e - qual rights hur - rah! — Hur - rah! for the brave old flag that bears the Stripes and Stars.

Ex. 2.98. Harry McCarthy / William Stewart Hawkins, “Bonnie Blue Flag;”  
 Harry McCarthy/ J.L. Geddes, “The Bonnie Blue Flag with the Stripes  
 and Stars” (1861)

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

Other songs were used to represent the Civil War combatants. “Goober Peas” (see Ex. 2.99) was sung by soldiers on both sides of the Civil War. In Southern slang, “goobers” are peanuts; because soldiers often had little more to eat than peanuts, the song “celebrates” their steady diet when supply lines were cut.<sup>193</sup>



Ex. 2.99. Traditional, “Goober Peas”

“Flight of the Doodles” refers to the Confederate victory at Manassas in 1861, when the Yankee “Doodles” retreated after a stunning defeat. Its melody comes from a minstrel song called “Root, Hog, or Die,” the title of which is based on an old Southern expression about the need to be self-reliant.



Ex. 2.100. Traditional, “Flight of the Doodles”

While Civil War depictions of North and South are perhaps most familiar, other areas of the country were also evoked in music. Musicians touring the nation from the 1830s forward found inspiration in the cities, towns, and scenic vistas throughout their

<sup>193</sup> Harry R. Wilson, Joseph A. Leeder, and Edith White Gee, *Music Americans Sing* (New York: Silver Burdett Co., 1948), 7.

travels. Composers such as Henri Herz and Frederick Kalkbrenner wrote “souvenirs,” “remembrances” and lamentations to capture the essence of their New World adventures in music. While no specific *topoi* seem to have developed, American-born songwriters still found ways to evoke various regions of the country. Life in the Appalachians and other mountain ranges along the Eastern seaboard was captured in songs such as “On Top of Old Smoky,” “She’ll Be Coming Round the Mountain When She Comes,” or “Down in the Valley,” while cowboy songs such as “Home on the Range” and “Red River Valley” celebrated life in the flatlands on the western frontier, with accompaniments that echoed the slow-meandering lope of a horse on the trail. Specific locations as well as the laborers who shaped them were also commemorated in music through songs such as “Old Hundred,” “The Girl I Left Behind,” “The Erie Canal,” and “The Yellow Rose of Texas,” which depict New England pilgrims, Colonial America, Upstate New York, and the state of Texas, in that order.

### Western Songs

Western songs reflect the popular music that developed in newly-acquired territories such as Texas, Arizona, and Oklahoma. As the product of an ethnically diverse region, Western songs are a mix of Anglo, Celtic, Spanish, and other European traditions, as well as African-American, Native American, and Central American traditions. During the great trail drives in the second half of the nineteenth century, young men from across the country raced out West to work as cowboys. They reworked familiar folk melodies and popular song forms according to their own tastes, inserting new lyrics to better relate to their lifestyle, along with special calls and hollers used during cattle drives and when trying to communicate with each other across expanses of open land. Developing

alongside cowboy poetry, Western songs were disseminated quickly, often at railroad terminals where cowboys gathered to load stock. Cowboys heading back east took the music with them, as new arrivals hearing the music for the first time took it with them to their next stop. “Home on the Range,” for example, was written in 1874 in Abilene, Kansas, and was quickly adopted by cowboys working across the West.<sup>194</sup>

As mentioned in the Battle Music section of this dictionary, large portions of land that was formerly part of Mexico were incorporated into the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War of 1848. As these lands were settled, corridos such as *Corrido villésta de la toma de Matamoros* became popular. These ballads were often sung in Spanish by those with close ties to both Mexican and American culture, as the lyrics often related to the shared history of the two nations.<sup>195</sup>

Pioneer songs, gold rush songs, and music related to the law – Texas Rangers, local sheriffs, and the like – are other important parts of the Western song tradition. The minstrel song “Root, Hog or Die,” mentioned earlier in the dictionary, was a popular pioneer song. Other popular songs include “Freighting from Wilcox to Globe,” “The Texas Ranger,” “The Dreary Black Hills,” and of course, “Clementine.”

As the popular press romanticized life in the West, readers across the world relished larger-than-life mythologies about cowboys, Native Americans, outlaws, and the wonders of Western landscapes. As with minstrelsy a generation earlier, songwriters with no experience or firsthand knowledge of the region played a leading role in the creation

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<sup>194</sup> Library of Congress, “Western and Cowboy Songs,” The Library of Congress Celebrates the Songs of America, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/popular-songs-of-the-day/western-and-cowboy-songs/>, accessed 20 March 2017.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. Still other Spanish-language songs such as *La Cucaracha* and *Cielito Lindo* found their way into American culture much later. A traditional song used for centuries in Spain and Mexico, the lyrics of *La Cucaracha* (“The Cockroach”) were re-written between 1910–1920, and refer to specific figures involved in the Mexican Revolution. The melody of *Cielito Lindo* was given English lyrics in 1967 when it was used to advertise corn chips. Today millions of North Americans know the melody solely as “The Frito Bandito Song.”

of songs about the American West. A few authentic voices came out of the West through medicine and Wild West shows, the most famous of which was Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, featuring not only Buffalo Bill Cody himself, but also Chief Sitting Bull and sharpshooter Annie Oakley, a sharp-shooting exhibitionist. A full brass band traveled with the troupe, performing music appropriate to the various acts, much like circus bands. Popular songs, cavalry marches, and program music were typical fare. Ex. 2.101 shows a passage from Karl King's *The Passing of the Red Man*, which was regularly played during the Buffalo Bill shows.



Ex. 2.101. Karl L. King, *The Passing of the Red Man*, opening, solo cornet part showing cavalry calls (1916)

Written in 1913, Maurice Abrahams' "At the Bully Woolly Wild West Show" (Ex. 2.102), depicts the frontier shows of the late nineteenth century and provides a look at how early twentieth century composers attempted to evoke the era. The song's lyrics describe the upcoming visit of an Old West show, complete with train robbers, Army troops, cowboys, Native Americans, and pioneer settlers. The narrator wants his "honey" to go with him to the performance; if they hurry they can "just catch that car," but they shouldn't go home early because "the cowboys come and drive those red men back into their tents, we'll see it all for just fifty cents." Rather than an authentic representation of the West, the song sold the experience of attending a show to the popular song audience, in particular to urban city dwellers along the Eastern Seaboard. Written when ragtime was at its peak, the introduction to this novelty song features the cakewalk rhythm and a

number of Native American gestures including accents, the Honor Beat, and regularly repeated open intervals such as fourths, fifths, and octaves.<sup>196</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of five systems of music. The first system is a piano introduction with a treble and bass clef. The second system continues the piano accompaniment and includes the instruction 'till ready'. The third system introduces the vocal line with the lyrics 'Run dear, my hon dear, and put on your best, And I will'. The fourth system continues the piano accompaniment. The fifth system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'make you be - lieve you're out West. It will thrill you, chill you, fill your'. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature.

Ex. 2.102. Maurice Abrahams (music), Edgar Leslie and Grant Clarke (lyrics), “At the Bully Woolly Wild West Show” (1913)

The American Southwest produced its own dance music, a blend of German and Mexican traditions. Mexican musicians adopted the accordion and put their own mark on European waltzes and polkas: the combination of oom-pah, cowboy cattle calls, and Latin music is evident in Mariachi music. Similarly, Texas fiddlers developed their own sound: In addition to a preference for trios and “long bow” fiddling, they included a touch of the

<sup>196</sup> The complete score can be seen at <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-52e8-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

blues in their music.<sup>197</sup> “Sally Goodin” is a typical Texas fiddle tune, meant to showcase the performer’s virtuosity (Ex. 2.103).



Ex. 2.103. Traditional, “Sally Goodin”

After life on the open range was ended by the invention of barbed wire, cowboys worked mostly on ranches and earned extra money performing in rodeos. As the cowboy became an icon, real Western music gave way to Eastern imitations, like “Ragtime Cowboy Joe.” Written in 1912 by Lewis F. Muir and Maurice Abrahams, with lyrics by Grant Clarke, the song was intended for the popular song market.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, two collections of authentic cowboy songs were published in the first decade of the twentieth century: Jack Thorp’s *Songs of the Cowboy* and John Lomax’s *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*.

Western and cowboy songs were popular additions to films in both the silent and “talkie” eras. Well-known melodies include “Rounded Up in Glory,” “A Roundup Lullaby,” “Back in the Saddle Again,” and “Tumbling Tumbleweeds.” The latter two were made famous by Gene Autry, “The Singing Cowboy,” during his years with the Sons of the Pioneers, a Western singing group he co-founded with another famous singing cowboy, Roy Rogers.

<sup>197</sup> Library of Congress, “Western and Cowboy Songs,” <https://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/popular-songs-of-the-day/western-and-cowboy-songs/>, accessed 20 March 2017.

<sup>198</sup> Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeNRwvXnzJ8> to hear the first recording of this song played on a Victrola.



## Other Ethnic Portrayals

### Irish and Jewish

Although this dictionary cannot provide a complete profile of every ethnic group that came to America, two cultures deserve special mention here: the Irish and the Jews. Irish immigrants represent one of the largest population segments in American society. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, political unrest, high levels of unemployment, and severe food shortages forced many Irish people to move to the United States in search of a better life.

Irish immigrants brought their traditional music and instruments with them, infusing into American songs Celtic melodies and lyrics that reflected the common man's point of view. Scholars such as Mick Moloney claim that until the 1890s Irish-American musicians dominated every aspect of entertainment in the U.S. from minstrelsy, vaudeville, and variety shows to songwriting and performing.<sup>199</sup> From traditional folk and Gaelic songs to Irish-American songs, and in songs created on Tin Pan Alley or in vaudeville, the Irish left an indelible mark on popular music. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Thomas Moore (1779–1852) was one of the leading figures in Irish-American music. During his lifetime, the popular music market was flooded with Irish songbooks, many of them filled with Moore's songs, including his most famous work, "The Minstrel Boy."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Mick Moloney, "If It Wasn't for the Irish and the Jews": *Irish and Jewish Influences on the Music of Vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley*. Video. Benjamin Botkin Lecture Series, Library of Congress, 1 Dec. 2009, accessed 18 April 2017. <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200196501/>.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. Moloney reports that the work was an early Victorian favorite, regularly performed by American brass bands throughout the nineteenth century, and that it remains popular in Ireland even today.

The ready supply of such publications underscores a contrast between cultures; in Ireland, songs were passed orally through the generations while in the U.S., Irish settlers learned about their homeland not from their parents, who seldom spoke of the hardships they had endured, but from composers writing for the musical stage or Tin Pan Alley. Naturally, the nature of Irish-American songs differed from those of their European counterparts. Rather than stressing the harsh realities of life in Ireland, the lyrics of the Irish-American songs romanticized life on the Emerald Isle by

Daniel Decatur Emmett (1815–1904), an Irish American veteran of the minstrel stage, was a leading figure in American music in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Emmett worked as a circus performer before joining Thomas “Daddy” Rice on the minstrel stage, and he later formed his own blackface troupe, The Virginia Minstrels, which he took to Ireland in 1843. His tour introduced both minstrelsy and the banjo to Irish audiences. The instrument proved highly popular with local music lovers, and within a year, more than 7,000 instruments had been sold.<sup>201</sup> Several of his songs for the minstrel stage have become classic Americana, with “The Boatman’s Dance” (Ex. 2.104)<sup>202</sup> and “The Blue Tail Fly” (“Jimmy Crack Corn”) the most famous. He also claimed to have written “Dixie.”<sup>203</sup>



Ex. 2.104. Dan Emmett, “The Boatman’s Dance”

Stephen Foster (1826–1864) is perhaps America’s most beloved songwriter. Among his more than 200 songs are perennial favorites such as “Oh! Susanna,” “Camptown Races,” “The Old Folks at Home,” “My Old Kentucky Home,” “Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair,” and “Hard Times Come Again No More.” The son of Irish and Scottish immigrants, Foster wrote songs that feature an undercurrent of sorrow and loss, particularly the loss of the ancestral home and a life tied to the land. His songs also

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emphasizing the character of its people or their contributions to the American experience.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> This melody was later used by Aaron Copland in *Old American Songs*.

<sup>203</sup> Three men claimed they wrote *Dixie*. See the dictionary entry for “Minstrelsy” for details on that song’s history.

reflect life changes taking place in many American families during the first half of the nineteenth century, a time when an increasing number of young people left farming in hopes of building better lives in the city. Much of his music was written for the minstrel stage; after the release of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1853, however, Foster became increasingly uncomfortable with minstrelsy and his own somewhat *laissez faire* attitude toward slavery. He spent his final years composing parlor songs aimed at the nation's burgeoning white middle class, writing only one song that rivaled his earlier successes, "Beautiful Dreamer."<sup>204</sup> Foster's melodies were memorable, and his lyrics offered a straightforward presentation of experiences to which ordinary people could relate — factors that led many Americans to view his songs as authentically American folk tunes. As a result, when later composers chose to evoke classic Americana, Foster's work was often incorporated into art music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Other prominent Irish-American musical figures of the nineteenth century include Ned Harrigan, Tony Hart, Patrick Gilmore, and Victor Hebert. Harrigan (1844–1911) was an actor, singer, dancer, lyricist, playwright, and theatrical producer. From humble beginnings in minstrelsy and variety shows, Harrigan's versatility paid off. By the end of his career, he was considered one of the founding fathers of American musical theatre. His partner Tony Hart (1855–1891) was equally talented. A singer, dancer, and blackface performer when he met Harrigan in 1870, Harrigan and Hart were America's first vaudeville team.<sup>205</sup> The two performed together more than 14 years. Their most famous work was "The Mulligan Guard," a spoof of life in Irish neighborhoods.

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<sup>204</sup> Mick Moloney, "If It Wasn't for the Irish and the Jews." According to Moloney, Thomas Moore's songs were an early and strong influence on Foster's parlor songs.

<sup>205</sup> Mick Moloney, "If It Wasn't for the Irish and the Jews." According to Moloney, Tony Hart was born to be in show business. As a seven-year-old child, he would host shows in his parents' home, charging boys a penny for a ticket while letting the girls in for free.

Patrick Gilmore (1829–1892) was America’s most famous bandmaster throughout of the nineteenth century, his fame eclipsed only by Sousa in the late 1880s. Gilmore’s influence on popular music was widespread. As a composer, he is fondly remembered for his marches, but it is his collaboration with Louis Lambert<sup>206</sup> that resulted in his most famous work — “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again.”

Victor Herbert (1859–1924) took over Gilmore’s band after the noted bandmaster died in 1892. An Irish cellist, composer, and conductor, Herbert dominated Broadway with his operettas from the 1890s through World War I. He also wrote two grand operas; the first of these, a Native-American themed work by the name of *Natoma*.<sup>207</sup> In addition to stage music, Herbert wrote music for solo piano and instrumental ensembles, including *Pan-Americana*, which was written for the Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo New York in 1901. The suite is written in three sections, each employing a characteristic rhythm or gesture signifying the peoples of the Americas: Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics. In the opening section, “Indian” is suggested through repeated drumbeats in the bass line and a melody whose intervallic pattern conforms to common stereotypes (Ex. 2.105). The cakewalk rhythm employed in the second section is highly associated with African Americans (Ex. 2.106) while in the final section of the work, Herbert includes tango and habanera dance rhythms from Latin America (Ex. 2:107).

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<sup>206</sup> As mentioned in the Civil War section of this dictionary’s passage on “Battle Music,” Louis Lambert was a childhood friend of Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Louis and his brother Sydney followed Gottschalk to Paris to study music in the 1840s. When the Civil War broke out, the Lambert family moved to Brazil where they became piano manufacturers. Louis and Sydney remained in contact with Gottschalk, hosting him on his South American tours and introducing him to child prodigies such as Ernesto Nazareth, a pianist and composer whose work later influenced Hector Villa Lobos, Francisco Mignone, Darius Milhaud, and other leading figures of the 1920s.

<sup>207</sup> After jazz and ragtime replaced operetta as the nation’s most popular music forms, Herbert spent the remainder of his career providing music for ballet and stage revues for Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and the Ziegfeld Follies until his death in 1924. It is perhaps ironic to note that despite Herbert’s indifference to jazz, one of his works became a part of many a jazz player’s repertory — *Indian Summer*. Al Dubin added lyrics in 1939, shortly thereafter Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller recorded it, making it into a No. 1 hit song for each of their orchestras. Other artists closely associated with the song include Sydney Bechet, Coleman Hawkins, Gene Krupa, Paul Desmond, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Duke Ellington, and Frank Sinatra.

Molto moderato e marcato.

*ff* *sfz*

*f molto marcato e feroce.*

Ex. 2.105. Victor Herbert, *Pan-Americana*, Indian gestures in opening of A-section (1901)

*pp e con delicatezza.*

*pp*

Ex. 2.106. Victor Herbert, *Pan-Americana*, Cakewalk rhythms in B-section (1901)

*p grazioso e con gusto.*

*p*

Ex. 2.107. Victor Herbert, *Pan-Americana*, Latin American rhythms in C-section (1901)

Irish music had a lasting influence on the development of American popular music. Celtic settlers brought to America traditional singing techniques such as *Sean-nós*, an ancient singing method passed down orally through the generations. The word *sean-nós* literally means “old style” and is identified by a solo, unaccompanied melody, sung in English or Gaelic, and embellished with grace notes and melismas. Irish-American songs were often written by composers working on Tin Pan Alley or in theatres. The songs typically feature simple melodies that are tonal, memorable, and highly singable. Lyrics might yearn for an imagined Ireland or reflect traditional Irish values.

Perhaps the most famous ballad pertaining to Ireland and its people is “Danny Boy,” which is usually sung to the tune of “Londonderry Air,” a melody collected in the mid-nineteenth century by English folklorists. The combination of its folk melody and nostalgic lyrics make it an excellent example of what one might expect in such a work.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Oh Danny Boy" in G major, 3/4 time. It consists of three staves of music with lyrics underneath. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (F major). The melody is simple and melodic. The lyrics are: "Oh Dan-ny Boy, The pipes, the pipes are cal-ling, From glen to". The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "glen, and down the moun-tain side, The sum-mer's gone, and all the flow'rs are". The third staff concludes the melody with lyrics: "dy-ing, 'Tis you, 'tis you must go and I must bide." The score is numbered 5, 11, and 17 at the beginning of each staff.

Ex. 2.108. Traditional / Frederick Weatherly (lyrics), “Oh Danny Boy” (1910)

In contrast to the simplicity of Irish songs, Irish dance music features Celtic melodies set over multiple layers of fiddles, fifes, drums, and drone pitches that form a thick and lush accompaniment. Each of these instruments became musical signifiers of Ireland in art music, joining the harp, which for more than a century had served as a marker for the Emerald Isle and its bardic tradition in European and American music.

Yiddish theatre was born in Europe; it found its greatest success in America, where it debuted in Manhattan in 1882. New York's Yiddish theatre district, known locally as "Second Avenue" after the street where most Jewish theatres were located, expanded rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Important figures in the early days of American Yiddish theatre include producers Abraham Goldfaden and Boris Thomashefsky, as well as composers and songwriters Abraham Ellstein, Alexander Olshanetsky, Sholom Secunda, and Joseph Rumshinsky. Even though most of their songs were known only within New York's Yiddish-speaking world, a few hits such as *Bei Mir Bistu Schon*, *Ikh hob dikh tsuful lib*, and *Abi gezindt* became quite popular, even if they had to be modified to increase their appeal to mainstream listeners.<sup>208</sup>

Music performed in Yiddish theatres featured two main types that often were co-mingled: popular songs and klezmer. Klezmer is a form of folk music developed by Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews during the Middle Ages. It was established in the U.S. between 1880 and 1924 during the first massive wave of immigration by Eastern European Jews.<sup>209</sup> The word klezmer comes from the Hebrew words *kley* meaning instruments and *zemer* meaning music.

The music itself is not religious in any sense; the genre consists of dance tunes and instrumental pieces for celebrations such as weddings and bar mitzvahs. A large assortment of musical ornaments (*dreydlekh* in Yiddish) were used to recreate the sobs and wailing sounds heard in liturgical chanting. In many Eastern European countries, klezmerim were not allowed to perform "loud" instruments: As a result, klezmer bands

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Jeff Janczko, "Yiddish Theatre, Vaudeville, Radio, and Film," Great Songs of the American Yiddish Stage, Milken Archive of Jewish Music, <http://www.milkenarchive.org/music/volumes/view/great-songs-of-the-american-yiddish-stage/>, accessed 22 April 2017.

typically include the violin, *tsimbl* (a type of cymbalom or hammered dulcimer), flute, cello or bass, and small drums. A particularly important addition was the clarinet, which eventually supplanted the violin in the late nineteenth century as the ensemble's leading voice. Mournful and sentimental, yet surprisingly buoyant and life-affirming, klezmer is characterized by expressive melodies and sounds meant to mimic the human voice, in particular, laughter, wailing, and sobbing.<sup>210</sup> The music is modal and sectional, with different keys or modes employed as songs unfold.<sup>211</sup> While many klezmer melodies end with an upward glissando or chromatic run followed by an arpeggiated tonic chord played slowly and markedly staccato, some works conclude with a coda, featuring a change in the tempo as well as the underlying rhythm.

Klezmer sounds heard in art music include the opening clarinet glissando in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. It is important to note that not all composers employing klezmer have been Jewish. Shostakovich, for example, quoted traditional klezmer melodies in several of his chamber music works, in particular his Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57 (1940), his Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 (1944), and his String Quartet No. 8 in C minor, Op. 110 (1960). The style can also be heard in jazz and popular music, particularly in the work of Jewish performers such as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Ziggy Elman, and Mickey Katz.

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<sup>210</sup> This description of klezmer comes from Jeffrey Kauffman's review of *The Last Klezmer: Leopold Kozlowski, His Life and Music*. *The New Yorker*, 18 November 2008. The author describes klezmer as "Jewish soul music," while his colleague across town, Stephen Holden, film reviewer for the *New York Times*, calls klezmer "Jewish jazz."

<sup>211</sup> Five distinct modes are employed in klezmer music; the name of each corresponds to the name of a prayer mode heard during services. Musically, *Ahava Rabbah* or *Freygish* corresponds to the natural minor scale with lowered second and augmented third scale degrees. *Mi Shebeirach* is similar to the natural minor but includes raised fourth and sixth degrees. *Adoyn-y Moloch* is most similar to the Western Mixolydian mode, a major scale with a lowered seventh (raised at cadences). *Mogen Ovoys* corresponds closely to the Western melodic minor while *Yishtabach* lowers the second and fifth scale degrees. For more, consult <http://www.clarinet-klezmer.com/Klezmer-Music-Modes.html>.



Composers have a number of tools at their disposal to suggest Klezmer, Yiddish, or Jewish topics in art music, including the use of traditional klezmer tunes, music from the Yiddish theatre, minor-key melodies, or borrowed pitches from the minor, such as the lowered third, sixth, and seventh scale degrees. Augmented thirds are another defining gesture, as are glissandi or arpeggiated tonic chords to close a work. Music that suggests the plaintive sound of a solo violin is yet other marker, which can be seen in works such as Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **Songs of a Growing Nation (Transportation)**

Songs that reflected a growing nation, such as the development of its economy and its transportation system, are still other valuable areas for topical investigation. The Erie Canal opened up the Midwest for development. The largest civil engineering project undertaken in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, it took twelve years to build.<sup>212</sup> Once open in 1825, the canal ferried supplies to settlers in Western New York, and with trade came music, art, ideas, and more people, many of whom infused the nation's interior with new languages, customs, and traditions. The Erie Canal became a symbol of American ingenuity, while establishing a central element of the nation's character: the belief that in America anything was possible, if only you had vision, determination, and a willingness to work hard.<sup>213</sup>

Thomas S. Allen's 1905 song, "The Erie Canal," is a nostalgic look back at the years between 1825 and 1880, when barges were pulled by mules on the banks,<sup>214</sup> but with the coming of steam-powered barges, both the singer and his mule, Sal, are being

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<sup>212</sup> Details of the canal's construction and impact taken in part from <https://eriecanalway.org/learn/history-culture>, accessed 2 Oct. 2016.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Dave Ruch, "The Erie Canal," [www.ErieCanalSong.com](http://www.ErieCanalSong.com), accessed 17 March 2017.

retired.<sup>215</sup> This Anglo-American song employs an African-American technique – call-and-response – with lyrics alternating between the mule driver and others, his helper, and possibly the passengers (See Ex. 2.109).

Driver Helper / Passengers

I've got a mule, her name is Sal, Fif-teen miles on the

Driver Helper / Passengers

E-rie Can-al. She's a good ol' work-er an a good ol' pal, Fif-teen miles on the E-rie Ca-nal.

Ex. 2.109. Thomas S. Allen, “The Erie Canal” (1905)

Similarly, the construction of railways across America inspired songwriters.

Works such as “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” (1898) show the duality of American society. The song was popular with White audiences, even with references to African-Americans in its modern “cleaned-up” lyrics. Railroads were owned and managed by White men, but Black men often did much of the construction work to build and maintain the lines.<sup>216</sup> Direct connections to African-American life can be found in the second and third stanzas with the introduction of the character named Dinah, a common slave name. The horn she is exhorted to blow is not the train whistle, but the signal to end the workday. Similarly, the musical topic “dinner bell,” discussed in the upcoming chapter on *Treemonisha*, is a longstanding slave tradition, also reflecting quitting time. The song’s minstrel roots can be easily seen in the original lyrics; set in dialect, the text is highly offensive today:<sup>217</sup>

<sup>215</sup> For a song written for Tin Pan Alley, the lyrics are particularly sad, but the timing was good; around 1900, just a few years before the song was written, diesel-fuel engines replaced steam-powered ones and a number of “replacement workers” lost their jobs as well.

<sup>216</sup> This is true in the eastern half of the U.S. and in the first half of the nineteenth century, however, it is important to remember that Chinese and Irish workers built American railroads in the latter part of the century, particularly in the western half of the nation.

<sup>217</sup> Kim Ruehl, “The Folk Story of ‘I’ve Been Working on the Railroad,’” <https://www.thoughtco.com/ive-been-working-on-the-railroad-traditional-1322525>, accessed 23 March 2017. For a variety of both musical and non-musical

(SOLO) I once did know a girl named Grace--  
 (QUARTET) I'm wukkin' on de levee;  
 (SOLO) She done brung me to dis sad disgrace  
 (QUARTET) O' wukkin' on de levee.

I been wukkin' on de railroad all de livelong day,  
 I been wukkin' on de railroad ter pass de time away.  
 Doan' yuh hyah de whistle blowin'?'  
 Ris up, so uhly in de mawn;  
 Doan' yuh hyah de cap'n shoutin',  
 "Dinah, blow yo' hawn."

Sing a song o' the city; Roll dat cotton bale;  
 Niggah aint half so happy as when he's out o' jail  
 Norfolk foh its oystahshells, Boston foh its beans,  
 Chahleston foh its rice an' cawn, But foh niggahs New Awleens.

Anglo-American aspects of the song include its Celtic flavor, the use of plantation dialect, and unflattering imagery of African-Americans (especially in the original lyrics), and the repurposing of three minstrel tunes in its melody – “Old Joe,” “Somebody’s in the House with Dinah,” and “Goodnight, Farewell Ladies.”

Trains soon became part of fabric of American life, with more than 1,000 songs related to the railroad. In the nineteenth century, many train songs were associated with a better life because of their connection to the Underground Railroad, as titles such as “Freedom Train” and “Glory Bound Train” indicate. Still others offered a nostalgic glimpse of simpler times or recounted great disasters.

Many railroad songs sought to mimic sounds associated with trains. Typical gestures include repeated phrases, each played a bit faster than the last; harmonica sounds; high-hat cymbals lightly struck with brushes to mimic locomotive engines; and whistles (actual whistles or gestures such as grace notes leading into full chords). A sample of transportation-related song titles includes fiddle tunes such as the “Orange

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reasons, Ruehl says it is possible this work is not a folk song; it was published in 1898 as *Levee Song* in Princeton University’s *Carmina Princetonia*.

Blossom Special,” “Wreck of the Old 97,” “Casey Jones,” “Ballad of John Henry,” “Midnight Special,” “Railroad Bill,” “B&O Blues,” “Linin’ Track,” “Bad Luck Blues,” “Riding the Dummy Line,” and “The Ragtime Engineer” – all of which were released between 1830 and 1925. Even Joplin experimented in the genre; his *Great Crush Collision March* is a programmatic work for solo piano depicting an 1896 train wreck.

Songs related to steamboats also romanticized travel at a time when it was less convenient. Calliopes or steam-powered organs are clear signifiers of steamboats, as well as *topoi* for cities along the Lower Mississippi, New Orleans in particular. Selected titles include “Old Man River,” “Steamboat Bill,” and “Waiting for the Robert E. Lee.”

America’s life on the high seas and the transportation of goods received notice in the nation’s songbook as well. From swashbuckling adventure stories to romance on the high seas, nineteenth-century Americans loved stories centered around nautical characters.

Sea chanties were the work songs of the sea. Sailors of all kinds used songs to coordinate the work of running a ship; a chanter called out the words and the men replied with a chorus that was designed to fit to the task at hand, much like a foreman in a chain gang sang a line to which the workers responded as they swung their axes or dug their shovels deeper into the soil. Over time, a series of specialized rhythms became associated with routine tasks such as raising the anchor, hauling ropes, or hoisting the sails.

The popularity of sea chanties reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century. There were two major types: work songs and forecastle songs. Work songs such as the short drag, short haul, halyard, windlass, or capstan were sung on deck in areas where the work took place. Forecastles were ballads that told of historical events, great deeds at sea,

or the triumph of the working sailor over his superiors. As an oral tradition, the lyrics changed frequently and were often quite vulgar.

As steam- and diesel-powered ships began replacing the great tall ships, the number of men required to keep a ship in working order declined. With the disappearance of chanters, chanties soon slipped into history. Well-known songs include “rum running choruses” and lyrics overflowing with “Jolly Roger madness.” Examples include “The Ballad of Captain Kidd,” “Blow the Man Down,” “Drunken Sailor” (Ex. 2.110), and “15 Men on a Dead Man’s Chest” (Ex. 2.111).

What do you do with a drunk-en sail - or, What do you do with a drunk-en sail - or,  
 What do you do with a drunk - en sail - or, Ear - ly in the mom - ing?

The image shows two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables across notes.

Ex. 2.110. Traditional, “Drunken Sailor”

Fif- teen men on a dead man's chest, Yo- ho- ho and a bot- tle of rum!  
 Drink and the De- vil had done for the rest, Yo- ho- ho and a bot- tle of rum! The  
 mate was fixed by the bo- sun's pike, The bo- sun brained with a mar- lin- spike, And  
 coo- key's throat was marked be- like It had been marked by fin- gers ten; And  
 there they lay, all good dead men, Like break o' day in a  
 boo- zing ken, Yo- ho- ho and a bot- tle of rum!

The image shows seven staves of music in 6/8 time. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written on a treble clef. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables across notes. The piece ends with a fermata over the final note.

Ex. 2.111. Traditional, “15 Men on a Dead Man’s Chest”

In the late nineteenth century, sea chanty melodies made their way into art music. Gilbert and Sullivan referenced the genre in their operetta *The Pirates of Penzance*, most obviously in the number “The Pirate King.” American composers who wrote pirate songs include Henry F. Gilbert, Charles Daniels (aka Neil Moret), and George W. Chadwick, whose works have a decidedly Celtic flavor. The musical portrayal of French pirates typically employed Creole melodies. In orchestral works, scores employ penny whistles, fifes, fiddles, and drums, as those were the instruments most easily carried onto ships.

A tra-der sail'd from Step-ney town, Wake her up, Shake her up,

Ex. 2.112. George W. Chadwick, “Pirate’s Song” (1920)

Fif-teen men on a dead man's chest,  
Yo! ho! ho and a bottle of rum. Drink and the dev-il had done for the rest,

Ex. 2.113. Henry F. Gilbert, “Pirate Song” (1902)

The Gold Rush and similar events that moved the nation westward created opportunity for musical topics as well. As mentioned earlier, gold was discovered in California only days before the transfer of land from Mexico to the United States was complete. Songs about that historic event express every man’s dream of striking it rich.

The songs also tell of the gritty hardships faced by the miners as working men. “Some songs may fail to please the more aristocratic portion of the community,” song collector John A. Stone wrote, but they won the heart of a nation and soon became classic Americana.<sup>218</sup> Representative works include “Clementine,” “Sweet Betsy from Pike,” “The Days of ’49”, and a parody of “Oh! Susanna” called “Prospecting Dream.”

“Clementine,” perhaps one of the best-known Gold Rush songs, relates the story of a miner, “a forty niner” and his daughter, Clementine. Shown in Ex. 2.114, the song appears to be a sad ballad, but as the verses unfold, it becomes increasingly clear it actually is a parody. The tongue-in-cheek lyrics and the deadpan delivery of the tragic events in Clementine’s life only make the song more humorous.<sup>219</sup>

In a ca-vern, in a can-yon, ex-ca - va - ting for a mine, dwelt a mi-ner, for -ty  
ni - ner, and his daugh - ter Cle-men - tine. Oh my dar - ling, oh my dar - ling, oh my  
dar - ling Cle-men - tine! You are lost and gone for - e - ver. Dread-ful sor - ry, Cle-men - tine.

Ex. 2.114. Traditional, “Clementine”

The well-known song “Sweet Betsy from Pike” (Ex. 2.115) relates the trials and tribulations of Betsy and her lover, Ike, who traveled together across the country toward California. The melody is English; John A. Stone is credited with having written the lyrics. There is some speculation as to whether Betsy was a woman or a gun, as “Betsy” and “Old Betsy” were common nicknames along the frontier for rifles. A close reading of the lyrics suggests both options were possible.

<sup>218</sup> <http://www.folkways.si.edu>, accessed 8 March 2017.

<sup>219</sup> In the second verse, for example, we learn that Clementine’s feet are so big that she couldn’t wear shoes, that she had to wear size 9 boxes instead. We later learn she feeds the ducks in a nearby pond every morning at 9 and that one day, she fell into the pond and drown, leaving her father alone and brokenhearted. By the end of the song, her father has committed suicide in order to once again be with his darling Clementine, but her lover – the song’s narrator – has suddenly forgotten her (mid-verse) after a sweet kiss from her sister.



Oh, don't you re - mem - ber sweet Bet - sy from Pike, who crossed the big moun - tains with  
her hus - band Ike with two yoke of ox - en and one spot - ted hog, a tall Shang - hai  
roost - er and an old yel - low dog. Hoo - dle dang fol di die - do hoo - dle dang fol di day.

Ex. 2.115. Traditional, “Sweet Betsy from Pike”

Songs related to automobiles date from the 1890s. Like other transportation songs, music associated with automobiles reflects America’s passion for the open road, as well as an opportunity for young people to spend time alone. Songs such as “He’d Have to Get Under,” “Get Out and Get Under” and “Bump, Bump, Bump in Your Automobile” depict the hazards of breaking down and the opportunities for courtship such occasions provided. Similar songs include “In My Merry Oldsmobile,” “Henry’s Made a Lady Out of Lizzie,” “The Scandal of Little Lizzie Ford,” and “In a Hupmobile for Two.”

As cars became more popular, songwriters turned their attention to travel-related subjects, writing songs about specific car models, vacation trailers, and the numbered highway system. Even the fuel a car needed was a worthy subject as “Gasoline,” a 1913 song by Paul Pratt and J. Will Callahan attests. The lyrics extol the virtues of gas while bemoaning its cost with questions such as “What is it that keeps this world of ours a-going? What makes us happy night and day? What is the precious thing for which we’re blowing each blessed dollar of our weekly pay?” The answer: Gasoline.

As with other songs involving transportation, the sound of automobiles, traffic, breakdowns, and car crashes soon found their way into musical compositions. Gestures include short phrases that dart about in every direction and tone clusters that mimic the distinctive sound of old-time car horns from the early days of the twentieth century.



### Closing Remarks

Still other musical *topoi* can be identified in nineteenth-century American music. Areas calling for further investigation include depictions of cities, states, regions, landscapes, and scenery. A closer look at other sounds of a developing nation should also prove beneficial, as industrialization significantly advanced during the nineteenth century. The pianola style, first developed by Gottschalk, is yet another distinctly American topic. Similarly, music from olios, melodramas, and saloons also played a role in developing a distinctly national style. Music from the silent film era, a scholarly focus for musicologists such as Rick Benjamin and Michael Slowik, is yet another area worthy of further investigation. Likewise, a deeper look into music outside the mainstream should prove enlightening, as scholars have only begun to dig below the surface of music from Cajun, Creole, Chicano, Tejano, and other underrepresented cultures that played an essential role in the establishment of a national music style. Finally, the American approach to scoring – in particular, the nation’s affinity for wind instruments and folk instruments such as the banjo and harmonica – is a key component to identifying the American “sound.”

In closing this dictionary, it is important to note that it took Americans from all races and all walks of life to establish a truly national identity in music. This lexicon cannot provide a complete examination of all the source materials that went into the creation of a uniquely American sound, but I hope it serves as a helpful introduction to some of the individual elements that contributed to its formation, as well as an inspiration for scholars to more fully examine *topoi* that could not be included here.

## CHAPTER III

### SCOTT JOPLIN: AN EXAMINATION OF HIS LIFE AND MUSIC, AND A TOPICAL ANALYSIS OF HIS OPERA, *TREEMONISHA*

Scott Joplin was not particularly famous in his own time. He was well known within the African-American communities of two Missouri cities, and in New York, but few mainstream publications reported on his career; indeed, only a handful of articles from the African-American press provide insight into the man, and in the process, document a fascinating time in American music.<sup>1</sup> Joplin was, by all accounts, not especially outgoing: Recollections from his circle of friends indicate he was serious and somewhat reserved.<sup>2</sup> An African-American man living in a segregated, openly racist society, he emerged on the New York concert scene at a time when the city's African-American leaders were not only distancing themselves from rural traditions and Black popular music, but also marginalizing his generation as “throwbacks” to slavery and the Reconstruction Era. As a result, his fame was significantly impacted among listeners of both races.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, Joplin scholars such as Rick Benjamin, Marcello Piras, and Edward A. Berlin have unearthed intriguing information about the composer's life by scouring

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 6. Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, 2011. CD, New World Records: 80720-2.

<sup>2</sup> Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York: Oak Publications, 1966), 18. Benjamin also discussed Joplin's character, noting there are only four surviving photographs of him, each with a serious look on his face.

<sup>3</sup> Shelly McDowell, “*Treemonisha*: A Historical and Character Analysis,” M.M. thesis, California State University, 2010, 19–22. Also Rick Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 6.

through the Black press for articles about him.<sup>4</sup> Such research has shown that previous reports indicating the composer was born in Texarkana in November 1868 cannot be true; it is more likely Joplin was born in the second half of 1867.<sup>5</sup> Joplin was born somewhere in East Texas, where his family lived on a farm in Davis County, not far from the Louisiana-Arkansas state line.<sup>6</sup> Berlin's research confirms that Joplin was born in Davis County, Texas, but finds that the family lived on a farm near Marshall, just outside modern-day Linden, Texas.<sup>7</sup> Piras has uncovered invaluable information not only about Joplin, but about the men he studied with throughout his career, both as a youngster and as an adult.<sup>8</sup> Scholarly investigations into Joplin's life are ongoing along a number of lines of inquiry, but recent research has considerably advanced our knowledge since the 1970s, when public interest in Joplin surged, and the only published material on him

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<sup>4</sup> Rick Benjamin is a prominent figure on the American music scene. His research focuses on the music of 1880 to 1930. As conductor of Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, Benjamin travels the nation introducing Americans to music from silent film, vaudeville, and the ragtime era. He is currently on faculty at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA. His liner notes for Paragon's recording of *Treemonisha* are remarkably thorough, providing researchers not only with exceptionally well-documented findings on Joplin and his best known opera, but with behind-the-scenes information on why his orchestrations of the opera are for "piano and 11" rather than the full symphony Gunther Schuller used for the Houston Grand Opera's performances in 1975.

Italian musicologist Marcello Piras is an internationally respected authority on the music of Africa and Black music in the diaspora. He currently lives in Puebla, Mexico, where he is studying the African influence on colonial-era Baroque music. He hopes to soon release his magnum opus, a history of music told entirely from an Afrocentric perspective.

Edward A. Berlin is perhaps America's best-known Joplin authority. Author of numerous books and articles on ragtime, his most famous book *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* was first released in 1994. The second edition (2016) is widely considered the definitive guide to Joplin, his life, and career.

<sup>5</sup> The original source for Joplin's birthdate was the composer's "widow," Lottie Stokes Joplin Thomas, who was interviewed by Rudi Blesh for his book, *They All Played Ragtime*. Students and researchers simply made the same assumption Blesh had – that Lottie actually knew the exact date Joplin was born. As further research has taken place, it appears she did not. It's possible she remembered the wrong date or simply supplied false information to Blesh. To complicate matters, researchers have yet to discover an actual marriage license. According to Berlin, it is very possible Lottie was never actually married to Joplin. She played the role of widow well, however, regularly staking out her share of the Joplin legacy by renewing his copyrights or asking his publishers for royalties on his printed work.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Marcello Piras, "Treemonisha, or Der Freischütz Upside Down," *Current Research in Jazz* 4 (2012), [www.crij-online.org/](http://www.crij-online.org/); accessed 12 Aug. 2016. See also "Garibaldi to Syncopation: Bruto Giannini and the Curious Case of Scott Joplin's Magnetic Rag," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 9/2 (2013), <http://jjs.libraries.rutgers.edu/index.php/jjs/article/view/71>; accessed 29 Sept. 2016.

came from Rudi Blesh's collection of memories from Joplin's aging friends<sup>9</sup> or Vera Brodsky Lawrence's preface to her anthology of the composer's collected works.<sup>10</sup>

Recent research has found that Joplin was one of six children born to Florence Givens (1841–1904) and Jiles Joplin (1842–1922), both of whom were musical. Joplin's mother, a free-born Kentucky woman, was a singer and banjo player. His father was born as a slave in North Carolina; he was a fiddler and he taught each of his children to play that instrument.<sup>11</sup> They married in 1860; their oldest son, Monroe, was born as the Civil War was just getting underway.<sup>12</sup> By mid-July 1870, the family was living on a farm in rural Davis County before they moved to Texarkana, a bustling new railroad town just then being built along the Texas-Arkansas state line.<sup>13</sup>

Piras' research on Texarkana in the final quarter of the nineteenth century provides a fascinating glimpse into Joplin's upbringing. At least three local legends report that Bowie County was settled by 1820 and the area was referred to as "Texarkana" long before a town was ever built.<sup>14</sup> The county was rural, with the few people living there raising livestock and producing cotton, corn, and timber. Settlers were mostly White

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<sup>9</sup> Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York: Oak Publications, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> Vera Brodsky Lawrence, preface to *Scott Joplin: Collected Piano Works* (New York: New York Public Library, 1971). An introduction by Rudi Blesh follows Ms. Lawrence's note.

<sup>11</sup> When or how Joplin's parents met is still largely unknown, but information in Susan Curtis' *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune* fills in many of the gaps not addressed in other studies. Her research indicates that Joplin's parents moved to Texas several years before the Civil War, unlike many African Americans who were lured by the post-war promise of forty acres and a mule, an offer made to many Reconstruction-Era families after the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Florence came with her father Milton and grandmother Susan; whereas Jiles' owner, Charles Moores, brought Joplin's father to Texas in 1850 from his plantation in South Carolina. At some point over the next ten years, Jiles was sold to Warren Hooks, who bequeathed the fiddle to his daughter, Minerva Hooks, before she married Josiah Joplin in the late 1850s. Taking the Joplin name as his own, Jiles was given his freedom several years before Emancipation. He became a farmer in Cass County, where he met Florence Givens.

<sup>12</sup> Susan Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 20. There were six children in all. Edward A. Berlin (*King of Ragtime*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 4) provides the other children's names and their ages, taken from 1870 and 1880 census reports, Monroe, Scott, Robert, Jose (Osie), William, and Johnny (Myrtle). The 1880 census lists Monroe as 19 years old, Scott as 12, and Robert as 11; Osie was 10, William was 4 and baby Myrtle was 3 months old. Robert is the best known of the Joplin children, other than Scott, enjoying minor success as a composer and performer.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Piras, "Treemonisha, or Der Freischütz Upside Down." Piras cites his source for this information as "Texarkana, TX," in *The Handbook of Texas Online* (Denton TX: Texas State Historical Association), [www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdt02](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdt02), which he accessed 23 Jan. 2012.

Southern planters, but the number of slaves in the region seems to have always outnumbered them.<sup>15</sup> As the nation headed toward war, Texans overwhelmingly voted to secede. The state was spared much of the destruction and devastation suffered elsewhere in the South, but the combination of four years of war and the financial instability that followed the war took its toll.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to other Southerners, Texans did not see their fields devastated or their homes plundered and burned; nevertheless, the war ended their traditional way of life. Farmers lost their labor pool after Emancipation and without a ready supply of cheap workers, many Texans were forced to file for bankruptcy. In an effort to salvage as much of their social system as they could, some former Confederates resisted federal policies intended to improve life for African Americans, choosing instead to unleash their rage on local Black communities. Violence was widespread throughout the state, and conditions for many Black residents were actually worse than before the war, prompting the federal government to send in a garrison of Union soldiers to restore law and order. Unfortunately, the population was too dispersed for Northern forces to have much impact; the handful of soldiers assigned to Texarkana was essentially useless given the size and makeup of the county. White Texans terrorized their Black neighbors with fear, violence, and policies meant to preserve pre-war conditions. White residents who supported Emancipation seldom fared much better, as lists containing the names of anyone who sided with the Yankees, or who had voiced support for Emancipation, were

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<sup>15</sup> Based on my own reading of the charts in the Texas State Historical Association reports cited above, it appears there were roughly 5,000 more African-Americans in East Texas than White residents at any given time.

<sup>16</sup> Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 21. Curtis explains Texans had trouble accepting the outcome of the Civil War because the fighting never took place inside state lines. Albrecht corrects this historical mistake in his article "African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*" (p228, fn39), explaining that the Battle of Nueces is the only Civil War battle to have been fought in Texas. The battle took place on 10 Aug. 1862 when 65 Union sympathizers attempting to flee into Mexico were attacked by 94 mounted Confederate soldiers. By the end of the day, 19 Unionists had been killed and 9 had been injured. The wounded were executed a few hours after the battle ended. Most of the Unionists were German musicians from Comfort, TX. Among the dead were the conductor of the Comfort Liedertafel and several members of his chorus.

widely circulated in an effort to keep anyone who didn't toe the line from finding employment.<sup>17</sup> In short, whatever the newly-passed Jim Crow laws didn't cover, Texas prison farms did. Texas judges sentenced thousands of able-bodied Black men to years of hard labor, effectively robbing the African-American community of its leaders by locking away fathers and sons for minor offenses that White residents were seldom charged with. More than 90% of the Black inmates were "leased" out as cheap labor for railroad construction projects, a practice that led to higher levels of unemployment for men who weren't incarcerated, while simultaneously allowing the State to pocket the proceeds.<sup>18</sup> African Americans were trapped: If they tried to leave, they risked being shot or hanged. They risked the same fate if they fought back. Survival in Joplin's hometown was anything but guaranteed.

Railroads — whose construction resumed after the Civil War ended — served as a means of transporting the region's music, in addition to its goods. Connecting citizens to culture, entertainment, and the arts, the railroad wedded Texarkana's growing music scene to the already-established German music communities in the Lower Midwest and in the Austin-San Antonio-Houston area, as well as to the rest of the nation.<sup>19</sup> After the Civil War, Texarkana's combination of affordable land, easy travel connections, and ready supplies proved irresistible to investors, who swarmed from all parts. Almost overnight, the city grew in both size and wealth. The Joplins became part of the overnight migration to Texarkana when Jiles took a job with the railroad.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>18</sup> Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Piras, "Treemonisha or Der Freischütz Upside Down."

<sup>20</sup> Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 34. Piras reports that within two years of its founding in 1873, Texarkana was a rich city in the midst a deeply impoverished area; a situation that likely further divided the races. He also noted that the Joplins lived on the poor side of town, on the Arkansas side of the city, where most African-American families lived. See Piras, "Treemonisha, or Der Freischütz Upside Down."

According to Piras' research, many of the newcomers to Texarkana were much more diverse ethnically than the county's original settlers, and — more importantly — had little knowledge of local racial issues. Many were recent European immigrants who had personally suffered social injustice in their former homelands, and Texarkana's Jewish community was among those that quickly expanded in the 1870s. Among immigrant families who settled in Texarkana one name stands out prominently with respect to Scott Joplin's story: Julius Weiss.<sup>21</sup> One of Joplin's first music teachers, Weiss found lodging in Texarkana with one of the town's leading White citizens, retired Confederate Colonel Robert Wooding Rodgers (1820–1884).<sup>22</sup>

Joplin's introduction to Weiss, a German scholar newly arrived in East Texas, opened an entirely new set of traditions and cultural values to the youngster.<sup>23</sup> Weiss was around the age of 30 when he moved to Texarkana sometime in the late 1870s. He was hired as the private tutor for Colonel Rodgers' children,<sup>24</sup> teaching mathematics, astronomy, and German — but his specialty was music.

Florence Joplin worked as a maid in the Rodgers home; a number of sources suggest she bartered her services as a laundress in exchange for music lessons from

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Here Piras cites Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, "Texarkana, TX," [www.isjl.org/history/archive/ar/texarkana.htm](http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/ar/texarkana.htm), which he accessed 23 Jan. 2012. Another prominent boarder in the Rodgers house was Joseph Deutschmann, a Polish émigré who worked in real estate and later developed water, gas, and streetcar companies in the area. He served as president of Texarkana's Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 6–7. The Joplin home was modest in means but rich in music. Scott exhibited tremendous talent as a youngster. In addition to what his parents could offer by way of instruction, two local musicians, Mag Washington and J.C. Johnson, took him under their wings. Soon Scott was singing at home and in church choirs, and playing both piano and violin reasonably well. All the while, he absorbed the sounds and cadences of his local community, as well as its strongly held traditions and beliefs, later incorporating both into his music.

<sup>23</sup> Both Berlin and Benjamin describe him as German in nationality. Piras' research indicates he was actually born in Saxony c.1840–41 and that he was most likely Jewish. He sailed from Bremen to the U.S. in 1870, listing Prussian as his nationality on ship manifests. Piras speculates he could have listed German on the 1880 U.S. Census, but was most likely asked "in which country where you born?" As a second-generation American, this is how some of my own family records read, so I would say this is more than a reasonable assumption to make.

<sup>24</sup> Theodore Albrecht, "African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," *African Perspectives – Pre-Colonial History, Anthropology, and Ethnomusicology: Essays in Honor of Gerhard Kubik*, Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann, ed., *Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* 5 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), 215. Albrecht places Weiss in Texarkana around 1877 to 1878. His article also supplied Colonel Rodgers' full name.

Weiss for her obviously gifted son.<sup>25</sup> The exact nature of Joplin’s studies with Weiss is not known; no surviving notebooks appear to exist. Nevertheless, as Benjamin points out, Joplin’s studies most likely followed traditional European training in solfège, basic music theory, and keyboard technique.<sup>26</sup> A child prodigy growing up during Reconstruction, poor and Black, Joplin had perfect pitch and the ability to perform the music he heard with near-perfect recall, but it was from Weiss that he acquire a vitally important to would-be composers — the ability to read and write musical notation.<sup>27</sup> The opera-loving German also gave the young composer his first taste of European classical music, in Albrecht’s words, “firing within him an intense admiration for artistry and the ambition for greatness which brilliantly illuminated his life.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> There are conflicting stories on how Joplin acquired access to a piano and how he acquired his first instrument. Most sources suggest that Florence cleaned many local homes, and one of her employers, Texarkana attorney W.G. Cook, allowed Scott to play on his piano whenever she was working there. Most sources also agree that Florence offered to take on extra work, laundry mainly, in exchange for providing Scott with a musical education. Most sources assume she also arranged for Scott’s first instrument. Curtis and Albrecht, however, have a different story, claiming that Julius Weiss was sent to New Orleans to purchase a new piano for the Rodgers family (Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man’s Tune*, 36–38; Albrecht, “Julius Weiss: Scott Joplin’s First Piano Teacher,” *College Music Symposium* 19 (Fall 1979), 89–105). Berlin suggests Weiss could have gone to either New Orleans or St. Louis (*King of Ragtime*, 4), and that while he was away, Jiles bought Rodgers’ old square piano. (See also Blesh, *They All Played Ragtime*, 37.) Most sources credit Florence with having acquired an instrument, however, eliminating Jiles on the “assumption” he had abandoned his family in the early 1880s. Curtis reports family members later recalled Jiles as a less-than-faithful husband, but that he never left his family (Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man’s Tune*, 202, fn 62). Census reports from 1870 and 1880 indicate he was living with his wife and children, at least when the census was taken. Curtis and Albrecht say Jiles bought the instrument, most likely with money he was earning in Rodger’s sawmills, and that Scott’s ability to earn money performing may have provided pride – and much needed financial support – to his family, which helped ease Jiles’ concerns about Scott’s obsession with music. Albrecht interviewed Col. Rodgers’ descendants who confirmed the piano was sold while the teacher was out of town, and that Virginia, one of the colonel’s daughters, was upset the instrument had been sold before she returned from school (Albrecht, “Julius Weiss: Scott Joplin’s First Piano Teacher,” 103-104).

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Theodore Albrecht, “Julius Weiss: Scott Joplin’s First Piano Teacher,” *College Music Symposium*, 19/2 (Fall 1979), 89–105. Until very recently, little research on Julius Weiss had been undertaken. Even though Albrecht’s groundbreaking 1979 essay drew him out of the shadows, the contrast between Albrecht’s findings and the near-angelic persona attributed to Weiss by the first wave of Joplin scholars has continued to elicit questions about him. Albrecht could find nothing about Weiss’s life in Saxony and speculated that he might have left in 1866, hoping to escape conscription into the Austro-Prussian War. Albrecht suggests that Weiss most likely sailed to New Orleans, the nation’s second-largest immigration intake center and a port through which many Germans entered the U.S. (94)

In a separate study, Piras reviewed immigrant lists, finding only one Julius Weiss who matched the profile for Joplin’s teacher, docking in New Orleans in 1870, as Albrecht had assumed, just before the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Documents show that this Julius Weiss, a 28-year-old laborer from Prussia, sailed from Bremen in April 1870 on the *Frankfurt*, stopping at Le Havre and Havana before reaching New Orleans on May 9. Piras tracked him to Port Jervis, New York, a small town on the Delaware River with a longstanding German community that since 1867 had hosted its own Männerchor, making it an ideal spot for Weiss to open a school for the area’s German-speaking



Like most African-American children in his generation, Joplin needed to help support his family through hardscrabble times. He was fortunate to be able to earn money through music: teaching mandolin and guitar, and playing the piano for Saturday night dances in Texarkana's African-American community. All these experiences played a role in the development of Joplin's music and how it reflected, as Benjamin put it, "the courtly traditions of Black Midwestern social life."<sup>29</sup>

Joplin left Texarkana in his teens, and like so many other details in his story, we don't know why or when he left. Perhaps Weiss's departure prompted Joplin to leave,<sup>30</sup> or it may have been simply the case of a young man yearning to see the world. Whatever his reasons, Joplin spent the next several years working as an itinerant musician, making his way throughout the Mississippi and Missouri river valleys, visiting ports of call in Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois. As Benjamin reports, much of the territory he visited was "isolated, violent, and virulently racist," but it must have been

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children. According to contemporary newspaper clippings, he was fully immersed in the *Singverein* world; within a few months of his arrival, Weiss was playing an active role in "Concordia," the local *Singverein* or singing academy for Port Jervis' Jewish and German residents, serving as the association's first music director. As in other such organizations in American cities with German populations, a select group of German-speaking gentlemen — and sometimes ladies — spent their evenings singing, listening, dancing, eating, and drinking. Piras reports that for 25¢ a month, association members enjoyed weekly gatherings that combined music with prose and poetry. Whether the offerings were high drama or comedic routines, each meeting was divided between music, oratory, theatrical performances, and socializing. Works by German-speaking composers and authors were given prominence on the programs, which featured a variety of music from Bach, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Wagner to German folk music.

Piras' source for this information was "Concordia," *Port Jervis Gazette*, 28 Nov. 1874, 1. Piras also reports that Weiss' tales of these socials later inspired Joplin to recreate this "well-mannered environment" in *The Ragtime Dance* and *Pine Apple Rag Song*. Weiss' recollections of authentic German *Singverein* also served as a pattern for events Joplin organized later in his own career, as evidenced by 1894 newspaper clippings Piras found describing evenings with Joplin's Texas Medley Quartette. Events often ran late, with many ending around 3 a.m.

For more information, see Piras, "*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Benjamin says Joplin scholars have long loved Weiss for his "noble, almost parental mentoring of his young pupil." Since little is known of Weiss, we are free to imagine him as philanthropically as we choose. Berlin (*King of Ragtime*, p5) provides a lead to his true character: He says Weiss had debts in Port Jervis and that he skipped town without settling his accounts. Using this as his starting point, Piras offers a rather convincing portrait of Julius Weiss, warts and all. His research indicates Weiss had a second career as a con man and that his illicit activities caused him to relocate to Texas, and once established there, to move frequently about the state. Whether Joplin ever knew this side of his mentor has yet to be determined, but it is clear is that Joplin was devoted to him. Several of Joplin's friends and family recalled the composer sending Weiss money from New York on a regular basis — a fact noted not only in Rudi Blesh's *They All Played Ragtime*, 37, but also in Piras' article "*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

quite the adventure for a young man raised in what was then a very small town.<sup>31</sup> Travel was often dangerous, especially for a Black man in the segregated South. Joplin's career choice very likely made his path more difficult, as music was not always seen as a respectable occupation, and, in a nation that built its reputation on the rewards of backbreaking physical labor, composition was seldom considered legitimate "work."<sup>32</sup> Moreover, as a Black composer-performer, Joplin most likely would have been viewed as a "ne'er-do-well" in the eyes of many people, White Americans in particular.<sup>33</sup> Venues in which he could perform were severely limited by his race; viable options included playing and singing in churches in African-American neighborhoods for little or no pay, or working as a hired musician in a city's tenderloin district, supplying music for bars, brothels, or dance halls.<sup>34</sup>

Show business was another option. The allure of the footlights was a siren call for many would-be entertainers. For Black musicians in the Victorian Era, a career in the theatre represented more than artistic expression; it was a real shot at the American dream. Minstrel shows, popular since the 1830s, had traditionally featured White actors in blackface who sang, danced and performed skits that included demeaning portrayals of African-American slaves and life in the South, especially on plantations. Minstrel shows were the most popular form of entertainment in nineteenth-century America and hundreds of touring companies circulated the nation, presenting shows to anyone with enough pocket change for a ticket – including African-Americans, who began to enter the business themselves after the Civil War. Working for White-managed companies or in

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

newly-formed “colored” troupes, would-be performers found in minstrelsy the means to attain practical training on the stage. Scott Joplin was no exception; the earliest mention of his name in the press is from July 1891, when he was performing in his hometown as a member of the Texarkana Minstrels at Ghio’s Opera House.

Founded in 1877 by Antonio Luigi Ghio<sup>35</sup> in partnership with F. M. Henry, Ghio’s was the town’s first opera house and was built in the first brick building in Texarkana.<sup>36</sup> Its importance to the young composer’s cultural education cannot be overstated. Although there were eleven theatres in Texarkana by the end of the century, during Joplin’s youth Ghio’s was the only place where entertainments of all sorts were regularly offered. The theatre booked big-name celebrities and the best touring acts available, including minstrel shows, concerts, musical theater, dancers, and drama.<sup>37</sup>

Despite having an opera house, Texarkana did not have its own orchestra. It did, however, have a cornet band, a ladies’ band, and a string ensemble, and enough musicians in the area to perform at a society balls. In addition, Ghio regularly brought in travelling shows such as the Kimball Opera Comique Company, whose fusion of opera, operetta, and burlesque delighted Texas audiences. In 1883, performances by Haverly’s English Opera Company of *The Merry War* by Johann Strauss, Jr. were an enormous hit

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<sup>35</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha, or Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Piras’ research provides background on Antonio Luigi Ghio, for whom Texarkana’s opera house was named, and the role he and his theatre played in young Joplin’s life. Ghio (1832–1917) was born in Genoa, an independent city-state for more than 800 years until its transfer in 1815 to the kings of Piedmont-Savoia. Revolution broke out in March 1849, when Ghio was still a teenager. The insurrection was put down with support from the British, who bombarded the city with cannon fire. “Repression quickly turned into manslaughter,” Piras relates, “with killings of unarmed citizens (including children), robberies, rapes, etc. Prisoners were even forced to drink their own urine.” In the midst of this chaos, Piras discovered that an American ship passing through the area picked up a handful of refugees. Ghio was among the few lucky enough to escape. He landed in New York and took a job as a traveling salesman. He married Augusta Casassa, a Boston girl whose family was also from Genoa, and the two settled in Chicago, before making the move to Texas. By all accounts he was socially liberal and supportive of minorities, especially in light of his experiences in Genoa. In addition to running Ghio’s Opera House, he served three terms as Texarkana’s mayor. His granddaughter Corrine Griffith-Marshall wrote a book about him entitled *Papa’s Delicate Condition*. A film based on the book was released in 1963.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. After a fire in 1884, Ghio built a more elaborate theater at the same location.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

in Texarkana. The operetta on which it was based, *Der lustige Krieg*, had premiered in Vienna only two years earlier. For it to play in Texas so soon after it had opened in Europe is strong evidence that Texarkana's theatrical life could be cutting-edge. It also suggests that Joplin's familiarity with what his European contemporaries were writing may have been underestimated by earlier generations of ragtime scholars.<sup>38</sup>

Performances at Ghio's seem to have been open to a mixed-race audience and it is very likely that Joplin may have seen entertainments ranging from minstrel shows to Strauss operas.<sup>39</sup> Based on Piras' investigations, Ghio's programming represented far more than a steady diet of German fare, indeed, it appears it was rather eclectic, offering drama, music comedies, vocal recitals, and instrumental concerts.<sup>40</sup> English performers and works were heavily featured, but given the lack of a local orchestra, there were few performances of purely instrumental music.

Operas were often presented in abbreviated form; most touring companies could not afford their own orchestras, sets, props, and costumes, moreover, the financial risk of presenting opera was a challenge few travelling companies wanted to take on. When a "real opera" visited the region, however, newspapers did not hesitate to promote it as such; Piras cites the case of San Antonio hosting a performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz* as an example. Local newspapers noted that the Eighth Cavalry Band would be "assisting" at the performance. Area musicians could have been extra wind players, a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Joplin's rag *The Augustan Club* is just one of the example of how his work was influenced by listening to the music of Strauss. This unsyncopated waltz includes a yodeling pattern in the right hand countermelody of the A-strain.

<sup>39</sup> Piras, "*Treemonisha, or Der Freischutz Upside Down.*" Many people wonder where Joplin could have heard an opera before writing *Treemonisha*, making this story of regular exposure to opera, symphonic fare, and other entertainments – as well as to qualified instruction – relevant to his life story. It also sheds light on Joplin's designation of *Treemonisha* as a grand opera.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. As the first musicologist to investigate Joplin's upbringing in Texarkana, Piras' research has proven invaluable, not only in this passage, but in understanding the composer overall.

way to entice nearby residents to attend, or a way to add, as Piras put it, “a touch of grandeur” to the performance.<sup>41</sup>

It remains unknown whether Joplin could have seen this or similar performances in Texarkana, or whether he and Weiss went out of town together to attend performances. Many first-generation Joplin scholars have wondered if Joplin had even heard an opera before he wrote one. Piras feels strongly that he had. By the time, Joplin was studying with Weiss, trains ran regularly between Texarkana and Austin; it took about a day for the trip to Austin, whereas reaching San Antonio took only a bit more effort. People today might find the idea of an overnight road trip a bit of a stretch, but during the nineteenth century it was not uncommon to travel long distances to performances. Or as Piras put it, in the nineteenth century when the number of barns far outnumbered concert halls, “vaudeville travelled to people; and people travelled to opera.”<sup>42</sup>

Piras also points out that the concentration of German settlers in southwestern Texas guaranteed the frequent staging of major operas within reasonable train distance for Joplin and Weiss to attend.<sup>43</sup> Given Weiss’ *Singverein* connections across the Lone Star State, it is almost certain he had opera-loving acquaintances in those communities, a fact that made finding accommodations easier, especially for Joplin, who would not have

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. Piras notes these same contemporary news accounts call *Der Freischütz* a “grand opera,” a term no musically literate European would use to describe this work. In nineteenth-century America, however, the term “grand” was commonly used in news stories and entertainment advertisements to indicate the performance is of *real opera* with a full cast and orchestra, props, sets, etc. – as opposed to operetta, musical, or other “less grand” genres. This distinction between how Americans viewed operatic forms will become important in the upcoming discussion of *Treemonisha*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. As Piras reports, more than a few period newspapers confirmed that opera tickets were usually sold by auction well in advance, often to people living hundreds of miles away. The reason is obvious and just as practical today as it was then: variety shows could play in any venue — including barns. Their costs were low and the company’s entire business model was predicated on bringing big-city entertainment to the hinterlands. However, a full opera was an entirely different proposition. The world’s most expensive art form can only be staged where all the accoutrements it requires already exist: a suitable theatre with ample space for props, costumes, and dressing rooms, not to mention a large pool of qualified singers, actors, dancers, and musicians. In order to be successful in America, opera companies were forced to market their performances over a much wider geographic area in order to draw a large enough crowd to meet expenses.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Large communities of Germans can still be found in the area encompassing modern-day Austin, San Antonio, New Braunfels, and Houston, and the region remains highly invested in the arts.

been welcome in hotels, the homes of White people, or in “sundown towns.”<sup>44</sup> For his young protégé, such “musical road trips” would have provided not only an opportunity for Joplin to learn his craft, but a chance to taste what the outside world had to offer. For Weiss, it was an opportunity to show off his star pupil to likeminded German music lovers, even if it appeared to others that he was traveling with his valet.<sup>45</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Joplin left Texarkana while still a teenager. It is possible he found work in theatres during his travels. He may also have met with some of Weiss’ old friends and found ways to involve himself in musical groups around the country.<sup>46</sup> We know that he sang in a group called the Texas Medley Quartette, and that by 1894 he had found another railroad boomtown to call home — Sedalia, Missouri.

With its brass bands, orchestras, and choruses, Sedalia could boast a lively music scene by the time Joplin arrived. It also had a reputation for decent racial relations. The local theatre, Wood’s Opera House, presented touring shows similar to those Joplin found at Ghio’s: minstrel shows, melodramas, and vaudeville, or as it was called in its early days, “variety.”<sup>47</sup> Concerts and recitals were also presented regularly. Unlike Texarkana, however, Sedalia’s African-American population was large and many of its Black residents were well educated and working not in the trades, but in the professions.<sup>48</sup> Sedalia also had a vibrant nightlife, including a large selection of saloons, gambling joints, and brothels offering an abundance of work for musicians of all races. More

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<sup>44</sup> “Sundown towns” are areas where all Blacks must be off the streets before sunset. To remain outside after dark would invite arrest or violence.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 9. Although Benjamin found musical organizations were segregated according to race, there is no evidence the theatre was. Piras, however, was able to confirm that seating at Wood’s audiences was segregated through regular complaints lodged in the local black press, mainly in the *Sedalia Daily Conservator*. Seats reserved for black patrons were not good and the programming leaned more heavily on “oratory and meetings, some minstrelsy, much drama, and little else” (Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down”). His source is John Ogasapian and N. Lee Orr, *Music of the Gilded Age* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

important to a young man with a thirst for knowledge was the fact that Sedalia was home to the newly-opened George R. Smith College for Negroes.<sup>49</sup> Offering undergraduate degrees in seven disciplines, including music, the college already enjoyed a national reputation when Joplin arrived in 1894.<sup>50</sup> Only a handful of colleges in the U.S. would admit Black students at the time; access to Smith likely removed any doubts Joplin might have had about putting down roots in Sedalia.<sup>51</sup> Joplin almost certainly enrolled at Smith to study composition; his first pieces were published soon after his arrival. As Piras points out, however, syncopated music was hardly encouraged at a Methodist institution, and ragtime at a church school would have been frowned upon as “the devil’s music.” His training no doubt focused more on how to write choral music, art songs, and works for solo piano than on developing his own musical voice.<sup>52</sup>

Joplin jumped into Sedalia’s vibrant music scene with enthusiasm. He played the cornet in the Queen City Cornet Band and sang with the Texas Medley Quartette (an eight-man group that he founded and conducted),<sup>53</sup> as he continued to refine his skills as a composer. His work with syncopated music, now called “Rag Time,” began to gain attention. While ragtime was a black Midwestern folk style that had been around for decades, it became a nationwide fad in the 1890s, openly embraced by middle-class

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Piras tells us that many of the Black professors who studied or taught there proudly stressed that fact in their CVs. The college opened in January 1894, according to Benjamin’s liner notes to *Treemonisha*. Its reputation for excellence was quickly established.

<sup>51</sup> In his notes to *Treemonisha*, Benjamin, points out that like most everything else in Joplin’s life story, records that would show his exact dates of enrollment, what he studied and with whom, and when or if he graduated have been lost over the years. (11)

Piras, on the other hand, relates that most students at Smith studied English literature, Latin, Greek, and philosophy, which might account for Joplin’s command of poetry and his knowledge of Aristotle. His research indicates the college also had a well-established choir program by the 1920s, but any records showing when it had been founded, or if Joplin sang in it during his time on campus, no longer exist. See Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down” for more information.

<sup>52</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

<sup>53</sup> Joplin was a baritone. He sang in this group and sometimes appeared as a soloist with it. It’s not clear why he called the ensemble a quartet when there were eight singers in it; maybe he rotated personnel in and out or doubled the parts. Nevertheless, the group got good notices in newspapers near Sedalia and as far away as Syracuse, New York, as Piras points out in “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Also found in Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 10.

White Americans. At least one hundred rags were in print by the end of the century; publishers simply couldn't put new numbers on the market fast enough to satisfy the public.<sup>54</sup> The rags they printed, however, came largely from White composers. While racism certainly played a role in this, it is also true that many Black Midwestern pianists played "by ear" and lacked the ability to preserve their work in written form.<sup>55</sup>

Fortunately, Joplin not only had the ability to write his music down, he had the social skills and confidence in his abilities to effectively negotiate his own business deals.

Joplin was writing exceptional original American music, music overflowing with beautiful melodies, harmonies, and compelling syncopations, that used the sounds of his own people to create a fresh mode of expression. And like Foster and Gottschalk, Joplin played a significant role in developing an authentically American musical vernacular.

While the composer's stay in Sedalia was relatively brief, the city's influence on his career had lifelong benefits. He wrote the *Maple Leaf Rag* there, and local performances prompted its publication in September 1899 by John Stark, the White owner of a Sedalia music shop. The Starks would play an important role in Joplin's life and career for nearly two decades.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Edward A. Berlin, *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101–106. By all accounts, Stark (1841–1927), his English-born wife Sarah Ann Casey, and their children were rather remarkable people, especially in light of their times. Stark was mainly self-educated, yet he was highly cultured and rather philosophical. He married Sarah in 1865, while stationed in New Orleans with the Union Army. After Stark's discharge, the couple moved to Missouri where they had three children, Etilton Justus (b. 1867), William Paris (b. 1869), and Eleanor (born c1870–1872). A fourth child, Lily, died in infancy. Stark gave up farming in the 1870s and tried his hand at manufacturing and sales. He made and sold ice cream, then a rare and exotic treat for the masses. His "line" either expanded or, more likely, shifted toward music; during the 1880s he began selling pianos and organs and soon opened a music store in Sedalia. Realizing he could make more money if he printed sheet music, instead of selling it, he bought out his competitors in 1886 and set up his own shop, Stark & Sons Music Publishing.

Berlin wrote in *King of Ragtime*, "John Stark clearly found music to be of great importance; he also encouraged his children to study it." Etilton (1867–1962), also known as E.J. or "Til," was an accomplished violinist and music instructor, but it was Eleanor who was the real standout in the family. A pianist and singer of some renown, Eleanor studied in Berlin and Paris with Max Moszkowski, one of the great virtuosos of the era. She returned to the U.S. after the Spanish-American War and soon made a name for herself, performing solo recitals, chamber music and appearing as a guest artist with orchestras in Kansas City and St. Louis. Realizing she had outgrown Sedalia, Eleanor moved to St.



Named after a social club where Joplin often performed, the *Maple Leaf Rag* was an enormous success for both Joplin and Stark. The first American composition to record more than one million sheet music sales nationwide, the work was Joplin's most commercially successful effort. For Stark, it was the hit he had been waiting for.<sup>57</sup> Stark's business arrangement with Joplin was unusual; in an age when composers were not guaranteed royalties, Stark agreed to pay Joplin a part of the sales receipts, an arrangement that allowed both parties to profit from *Maple Leaf Rag* the rest of their lives.<sup>58</sup> For Joplin, it meant freedom to compose and teach, and to perform less. For Stark, it meant opportunity to parlay their initial success into serving as Joplin's principal publisher. Stark applied all his skill in promoting his young star, coining the phrase "Classic Ragtime" to describe not only Joplin's compositions, but also his growing sheet music catalog. He also dubbed Joplin "The King of Ragtime Writers" and repeated that honorific in all of his company's promotional materials.<sup>59</sup>

Although Joplin's reputation may have been established with his rags, it is clear he wanted to be known as more than a ragtime pianist; he wanted to be taken seriously as

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Louis in 1899 and opened her own music studio. The family joined her there a month later.

In addition to classical repertory, Eleanor also performed ragtime. It is very possible that her passion for the genre prompted her to introduce Joplin to Alfred Ernst, conductor of the St. Louis Symphony and Choral Society. She sang in the symphony choir and moved in the same music circles he did. The connection is worthy of further investigation.

According to Benjamin, "The Starks' home resounded with the works of Beethoven and other great masters. Yet the family was not at all snobbish and enjoyed popular music, especially the exciting sounds of authentic Black ragtime." Scholars agree that Stark was ahead of his time, both musically and socially. He was "unusually progressive in his ideas on racial relations," Benjamin wrote. "He respected African-American culture, and appreciated Black artistry in an age when those words together would have seemed oxymoronic. The alliance of Scott Joplin and John Stark was a rare and extremely fortunate happenstance, both for them and for the future course of American music" (Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 11, 13).

<sup>57</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 102. Up to this point, Berlin reports, Stark had published music tutors and easy-to-perform piano and vocal music for the amateur market.

<sup>58</sup> As we shall see in a later passage of this dissertation, it remains unclear if Joplin's business acumen determined their relationship or if Stark's sense of fair play did. Stark was not Joplin's first music publisher. He had worked with other firms, and had already been burned by White arrangers employed in those establishments, a fact that allows us to put greater emphasis on Joplin's business savvy and less on Stark's generosity.

<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, many of the images on Joplin's sheet music reinforced negative stereotypes of African Americans. In the short term, this guaranteed that buyers would identify the works as Black in origin or character. Over the long haul, it allowed critics and "discriminating" musicians to marginalize the music as folk, light, or race music instead of judging each work on its own merits.

a legitimate composer.<sup>60</sup> Based on his experiences studying European opera with Weiss, his years as a minstrel performer, and the fact that he wrote at least five large-scale theatrical works – *The Ragtime Dance* (1899), *A Guest of Honor* (1902), *Treemonisha* (1906–1911), *A Syncopated Jamboree* (1915), and *If* (1916) – not to mention a number of piano works that were essentially “theatre on the keyboard,” it seems safe to say Joplin’s true ambition was a career in show business as a stage composer.<sup>61</sup>

While still living in Sedalia, Joplin started turning his attention to the creation of larger theatrical works, beginning with *The Ragtime Dance* (1899), which established a pattern that he would follow the rest of his career: He supplied not only the music to each of these theatre pieces, but also their words and choreography. In addition, he formed his own company and organized performances in Sedalia at Wood’s Opera House, beginning in the fall of 1899. As Benjamin points out, minstrelsy began its decline at the turn of the century and many Black composers were searching for more realistic ways to depict the African American experience;<sup>62</sup> *The Ragtime Dance*, a suite of stylized social dances with narration, was Joplin’s first foray into this territory.

Joplin soon moved to St. Louis. While he may have been following the Starks, who had already relocated to that city, more likely, as Benjamin suggests, Joplin realized that he needed to live somewhere with a large enough music scene that he could make a

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<sup>60</sup> Bryan Cather, curator of the Joplin House Museum in St. Louis, shared this during a tour I took of that facility in September 2012. After my tour, Mr. Cather was kind enough to also give me a behind-the-scenes look at Joplin memorabilia being stored in his office, as well as a private tour of Tom Turpin’s Rosebud Café, located next door to the museum. He also added me to a private group on Facebook where Joplin scholars and ragtime enthusiasts discuss their research, events, publications and recordings, as well as post YouTube links to new compositions written in the ragtime style. His support of my efforts has proven invaluable. The museum is located at 2658 Delmar Boulevard in St. Louis, MO; it was Joplin’s home from 1901 to 1903. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Properties, the building is operated by the Missouri State Parks system. The site and the adjacent Rosebud Café are open to visitors from February through November. For more, visit <https://mostateparks.com/park/scott-joplin-house-state-historic-site>.

<sup>61</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 13.

living as a serious composer.<sup>63</sup> St. Louis could provide not only a steady income but also further musical opportunities through earnings from publications, students, and public performances.<sup>64</sup> Joplin arrived in the spring of 1901 and spent the next few years living with Belle Hayden in a second-floor apartment at 2658-A Morgan Street, where he wrote rags such as *The Entertainer*, *Elite Syncopations*, and *Easy Winners*, as well as his first operatic work, *A Guest of Honor*.<sup>65</sup> He and Belle enjoyed a lively circle of friends, especially after Otis Saunders and other travelling musicians also settled in St. Louis. Better still, the center of ragtime in the city, Tom Turpin's Rosebud Café, was located just steps from their front door, bringing exciting new music to the neighborhood on a daily basis. Joplin had all he required: a loving woman, like-minded friends, and even a small, but steady stream of royalties to supplement his income.<sup>66</sup> Times were good enough for Joplin, now in his early 30s, to do something most African-American musicians of the time could not yet even fantasize about: He cut back on outside commitments like teaching and performing to devote even more time to composing.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Bryan Cather, Facebook message, 12 Dec. 2016. As curator of the Scott Joplin House Museum, the facility discussed in this passage, Mr. Cather provided independent confirmation on information specific to St. Louis when published sources conflicted with each other. For example, the second edition of Berlin's *King of Ragtime* says Joplin moved to St. Louis in 1900. Cather's records indicate Joplin moved into the house in 1901, not 1900 as Berlin reported. Cather's information seems sound, given he has access to documents pertaining to occupancy dates, rent receipts, etc. This street has since been renamed as Delmar Boulevard. Cather says during Joplin's day the area was a "rough and tumble" neighborhood, noted for its drinking, gambling, and prostitution. He further reports that Tom Turpin's bar, The Rosebud Café, ran a lively side business upstairs, while downstairs quickly became the place ragtime pianists wanted to be. Plaques of historic news coverage posted on the walls at the Rosebud confirm as Rosebud performers a veritable *Who's Who of Ragtime*: Turpin (1873–1922), Joe Jordan (1882–1971), Sam Patterson (c. 1881–1955), Louis Chauvin (1881–1908), Charlie Thompson (1891–1964), and Artie Matthews (1888–1958). Cather confirms Joplin associated with all of them. By all accounts, both published and personal remembrances, it appears Joplin was quiet, well-liked, and highly respected. He enjoyed sharing a few beers with the boys, but for the most part, he spent the bulk of his time in his apartment, composing or teaching.

<sup>66</sup> Morgan and Bristow, *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls*, 21–22. The authors note that Joplin first found work in St. Louis as a pianist at "Honest" John Turpin's Silver Dollar Saloon. Turpin was a professional fighter, famous for head butting, and his saloon was a haven for young ragtime pianists, who flocked to his club for "cutting contests." Turpin's son Tom was an aspiring piano player and composer about Joplin's age; the young men were soon close friends. Tom Turpin left St. Louis in the late 1880s to prospect for gold in the Rocky Mountains, but returned a few years later, opening the Rosebud Café, complete with gambling facilities, an upstairs bordello, and a downstairs saloon where pianists Scott Joplin, Joe Jordan, Sam Patterson, Charles Hunter, and Louis Chauvin played. Turpin was also a ragtimer; his first published piece "Harlem Rag," was released shortly after his return to St. Louis.

Joplin's royalties soon provided enough money for him to buy a thirteen-room home at 2117 Lucas Avenue, where he and Belle saw the birth of a daughter.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, Belle was indifferent to music and Joplin's career,<sup>68</sup> and when their child died, so did their relationship.<sup>69</sup> In spite of all the turmoil in his personal life, Joplin's music remained as charming as ever, and his professional life continued to improve, as Dan Cabe's Black minstrel company, Coontown 400, took a newly published, condensed version of *The Ragtime Dance* on the road in 1902.<sup>70</sup>

Around this same time, Joplin met Alfred Ernst, conductor of the St. Louis Symphony and Choral Music Society. A German pianist and one of the most important cultural leaders in the Midwest, Ernst (1866–1916) took a keen interest in Joplin.<sup>71</sup> The

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<sup>67</sup> Cather shared information about this property via Facebook messages exchanged on 12 Dec. 2016. Cather says it was a two-story brick house set back from the street that was connected by way of a wooden porch to a similar building next door, set back even further. It was built around 1875 and demolished in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Cather not only confirmed Berlin's statement that Joplin rented out the rest of the house to friends and relatives from Sedalia, he supplied the list of occupants: Joplin and Belle; Arthur Marshall and his wife; Marshall's brother; and the composer's brother, Will Joplin and his wife. As for the size of the house and whether it had 13 rooms as Berlin wrote, or 11 as Arthur Marshall once told him during a ragtime event, Cather can't confirm either number through housing records or virtual re-creations of historically Black neighborhoods.

<sup>68</sup> Cather strongly suspects that Joplin and Belle were never married; he also suspects all stories about a "Mrs. Joplin" not liking music are actually referencing Mrs. Will Joplin. The original version of the story, quoted here, seems to have originated with Arthur Marshall and has been repeated in print by Blesh, Berlin, and others over the years. Her presence in the home is something Cather speculates Blesh may not have known about. Cather also disputes Belle's other alleged marriage(s). His understanding of Belle Hayden as the "widow of Scott Hayden's older brother Joe," fell apart when he discovered there was no "older brother Joe." He reports that Belle shows up in Hayden family records twice: the first time around 1900 when she was a boarder in their home; the second around 1915 with her son "Alonzo Hayden." This suggests Joplin and Belle met at the Hayden's home in Sedalia and that, while she may have followed him to St. Louis, she returned to her life in Sedalia after the death of their infant daughter. As for Marshall, the source for much of this information and ensuing confusion, Cather portrayed him as a kindly gentleman who was asked to recall details about Joplin's life in St. Louis more than 50 years after they occurred. Based on his sense of Marshall, Cather believes the whole "misunderstanding" is a product of an "honest, but faulty memory" and that Blesh ran his comments in *They All Played Ragtime* without pursuing the sort of fact checking such accounts normally require.

Berlin also speculates Joplin and Belle had a common-law marriage. He could find no records of either a marriage license or divorce proceedings. Berlin also states that, when making out a marriage license in 1904, when he married Freddie Alexander, Joplin left the space indicating his marital status blank. Berlin asserts it is possible Joplin was legally married to Belle and that he became a bigamist once he married Freddie. It's just as possible, he later notes, that Joplin's relationship with Belle was common-law, and that the marriage between Joplin and Freddie was a first for both. Either way, the clerk of court in Sedalia, where Joplin and Freddie's wedding took place, says many people left that space on the forms blank during those years. See *King of Ragtime*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 176.

<sup>69</sup> David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History* (New York: Dover, 1978), 83. While I have not been able to discover the child's name, Jasen and Tichenor say she was 2 months old when she died.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 16. Benjamin reports on page 13 that Joplin toured in the original version in 1899.

<sup>71</sup> In "*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down," Piras speculates that Eleanor Stark may have played a role in setting up this meeting. She sang in Ernst's choir and the two shared common interests in American popular music.

*St. Louis Post-Dispatch* considered their meeting newsworthy, running a story about it on 28 February 1901. This is, to date, the only known review of Joplin and his music by a highly-trained musician with impeccable, European credentials:

### TO PLAY RAGTIME IN EUROPE

Director Alfred Ernst of the St. Louis Choral Symphony Society believes that he has discovered, in Scott Joplin of Sedalia, a negro, an extraordinary genius as a composer of ragtime music.

So deeply is Mr. Ernst impressed with the ability of the Sedalian that he intends to take with him to Germany next summer copies of Joplin's work with a view to educating the dignified disciples of Wagner, Liszt, Mendelssohn and other European masters of music into an appreciation of the real American ragtime melodies. It is possible that the colored man may accompany the distinguished conductor.

When he returns from the storied Rhine Mr. Ernst will take Joplin under his care and instruct him in the theory and harmony of music. . . .

"I am deeply interested in this man," said Mr. Ernst to the *Post-Dispatch*. "He is young and undoubtedly has a fine future. With proper cultivation, I believe his talent will develop into positive genius. Being of African blood himself, Joplin has a keener insight into that peculiar branch of melody than white composers. His ear is particularly acute.

"Recently I played for him portions of 'Tannhäuser.' He was enraptured. I could see that he comprehended and appreciated this class of music. It was the opening of a new world to him, and I believe he felt as Keats felt when he first read Chapman's Homer.

"The work Joplin has done in ragtime is so original, so distinctly individual, and so melodious withal, that I am led to believe he can do something fine in composition of a higher class when he shall have been instructed in theory and harmony.

"Joplin's work, as yet, has a certain crudeness, due to his lack of musical education, but it shows that the soul of a composer is there and needs but to be set free by knowledge of technique. He is an unusually intelligent young man and fairly well educated."<sup>72</sup>

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They were also both professional pianists with extensive ties to Germany and each of them was deeply immersed in the city's Germanic cultural life. Piras also tells us that Ernst championed Joplin within St. Louis music circles but soon discovered the orchestra was simply not interested in programming music from African-American composers. In fact, once word got out the composer was Black, Ernst couldn't even run Samuel Coleridge Taylor's name in ads promoting a repeat of the orchestra's already successful performances of *Hiawatha*. Frustrated, he resigned his post and returned to Germany, where he was killed in action during World War I.

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 14–15. Albrecht suggests that, while nothing came of Ernst's "offer" to take Joplin to Europe or teach him composition, the mere conversation had to have been inspiring to Joplin. Albrecht says that if Joplin had not already begun working on his next large-scale work, he most certainly would have been inspired to get underway after such comments. See "African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," 216.

Joplin's career enjoyed yet another uptick when the *Indianapolis Freeman*, an African-American newspaper, ran a story announcing that the composer's next project would be "a ragtime opera."<sup>73</sup> As Benjamin explains,

The term "ragtime opera" appeared with some frequency in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century theatrical advertising. It was always used as a comic/ironic label for various types of minstrel entertainment; the very juxtaposition of the term "opera" (representing the loftiest heights of European culture) with the supposedly primitive music of blacks was thought to be hilarious.<sup>74</sup>

But Joplin was serious. His opera, *A Guest of Honor*, was a tribute to Booker T. Washington's 1901 visit to Washington, D.C., where he was a guest of President Teddy Roosevelt at the White House.<sup>75</sup> Joplin completed the score in 1903, a date we can confirm through copyright forms filed on 16 February of that year.<sup>76</sup> It is not clear if he was already working on the opera when he met Ernst, or if he showed him an unfinished manuscript – but it seems likely their meeting inspired Joplin to continue writing large-form works.<sup>77</sup> The storyline was clearly selected not only to promote racial pride among African-Americans, but also to attract media attention. *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*,

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<sup>73</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 16. The story ran 20 Dec. 1902.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Benjamin quotes Edward A. Berlin as saying the opera involved a dinner Washington attended at the nation's capital in 1901 with President Teddy Roosevelt. This version of the story is how Bryan Cather described the opera's plot to me during my tour of the Joplin House Museum in October 2012. Cather reports that Joplin enthusiast Larry Melton initially determined the plot revolved around Washington's visit to the Missouri governor's mansion and that the story "took legs." Melton can't identify his source for this assertion, but the story has been taken as "gospel truth," at least in some quarters. Cather's research points toward the White House dinner as the opera's plotline, since the first mention of Washington visiting Jefferson City that he's found dates from the 1930s, when the great man was in town for the dedication of a school named in his honor. Cather found two earlier collections of articles related to Washington in Missouri; the first dates from 1900 when he was invited to speak in St. Joseph; the other from a visit he paid the city of Oregon, MO, in 1903. I believe a local story would appeal to Midwesterners, but an opera about Washington at the White House would have national appeal – something that surely would not have escaped Joplin's notice. What is curious to me is why advertising materials for the show did not promote this, instead of focusing on "pretty girls, sweet singing, and elaborate wardrobe" (Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 159). Initially, I thought the show ads were meant to attract actors to join the cast, rather than ads pitched to potential theatre-goers, but, since Berlin published copies of the actual show ads in his second edition – ads that very clearly show this same marketing approach was still being used once the show was in production – we are left to wonder: Did Joplin have concerns about a political opera not selling well enough on its own? Or was the plot different from what we imagine? For what it's worth, ads for *Treemonisha* also focused on pretty girls, a point also noted in both Benjamin [18] and Berlin [159].

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Albrecht, "African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," 218.

for its part, asked noted contemporary music critic Monroe H. Rosenfeld to write a feature on Joplin.<sup>78</sup> Rosenfeld's article is important for two reasons: It is one of only a few stories about Joplin to appear in the White media; and its author was not only a composer himself, he was a leading authority on popular music — factors that made his opinion important to readers at the time and historically significant today.<sup>79</sup>

This negro is a tutored student of harmony and is adept at bass and counterpoint; and although his appearance would not indicate it, he is attractive socially because of the refinement of his speech and demeanor. ... Joplin's ambition is to shine in other spheres. He affirms that it is only a pastime for him to compose syncopated music and he longs for more arduous work. To this end he is assiduously toiling upon an opera, nearly a score of the numbers of which he has already composed and which he hopes to give an early production in this city.<sup>80</sup>

Notices across the country also started appearing. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* published an item on 3 January 1903, stating that Joplin would be starring in a production that also featured two concert vocalists, soprano Latisha Howell and baritone Chester A. Hawkes, as well as ragtime pianists Scott Hayden (1882–1915) and Arthur Marshall (1881–1968).<sup>81</sup> Later items revealed *A Guest of Honor* had received financing from a “strong capitalist” with an interest in “Negro Opera.”<sup>82</sup> Sixteen shows in five states were booked, most “one-night only” performances in vaudeville theatres that could seat 1,000 and had a five- to ten-piece orchestra already on staff. By August, rehearsals had started in St. Louis. The company went on tour before the end of the month.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> There were two daily newspapers in St. Louis during Joplin's lifetime: the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *Globe-Democrat*. Both were mainstream publications catering to a White readership. Of the two, the *Post-Dispatch* enjoyed a wider circulation. For more on Rosenfeld, see the entry for Irish-Jewish popular song in Ch. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Benjamin also tells us not only did Rosenfeld coin the phrase “Tin Pan Alley,” but that he also wrote several “top-selling” songs. *Hush, Little Baby, Don't You Cry* is the only song modern listeners might recognize. A short list of his most popular tunes includes *Johnnie Get Your Gun; With All Her Faults I Love Her Still; I'm the Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo; Alabama Walk-Around; The Cotton Field Dance; The Virginia Skedaddle; A Warm Proposition; Clean Hands and Tainted Gold; A Mother's Lullaby; and The New Berlin*.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 17. See also Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 154.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* The identity of this investor continues to fuel debate within the ragtime community.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18. Tour dates were 30 August – 12 October 1903.

While the score to *A Guest of Honor* is presumed lost, scholars have found it was a two-act opera with twenty distinct musical numbers.<sup>84</sup> As was the case with *The Ragtime Dance*, Joplin supplied the music as well as the lyrics and choreography. Joplin's choices are intriguing, providing evidence of his training and revealing patterns found later in *Treemonisha*. For example, despite his exposure to Wagner, Joplin didn't take his cues from him. Joplin's work was not through-composed, but was organized as a "numbers opera," following an Italian model that used organizational patterns established by Mozart, Rossini, and Weber. The choice could have been artistic, but it was also practical, as his audience — Black theatre-goers — was already familiar with this format from minstrel shows and vaudeville performances.

*A Guest of Honor* opened in East St. Louis, Illinois, on 30 August 1903.<sup>85</sup> Two days later, when the show moved to Springfield, Illinois, the company's manager reportedly stole the receipts and left the composer and his cast stranded.<sup>86</sup> Many Joplin scholars have concluded a catastrophe of this nature most likely ended the tour, but Benjamin discovered notices in several 1903 trade papers referring to performances previously assumed to have never taken place, including Sedalia (9 September); Clinton, Missouri (10 September); Carthage, Missouri (11 September); Vincennes, Iowa (23 September); and Fort Dodge, Iowa (10 October). Since each of these dates fall after the company was to play Springfield (2 September), the show apparently did indeed go on.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 18. Benjamin feels the premiere most likely took place at the McCasland Opera House. Berlin lists some of the theatres where the show was booked, but does not provide details on this particular performance; indeed on page 158 of the second edition of *King of Ragtime*, he says this show was probably not given.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Berlin informs us that Frank Meiser was the company manager, and as he put it, "ragtime's greatest villain" (*King of Ragtime*, 164). Cather's research indicated that Chester A. Hawks and Arthur Marshall, two important members of the production, left the show because the pay scale was too low for them to remain with the company.



The current whereabouts of the score to *A Guest of Honor* have generated a number of theories within the ragtime community. Some ragtimers say the manuscript simply vanished after the 1903 tour. Others argue that Joplin, normally very conscientious about protecting his intellectual property, failed to complete the copyright process, prompting them to believe he had further revisions to make or that he had reasons to withdraw the work. It is also possible, as Rudi Blesh notes in *They All Played Ragtime*, that he mislaid the score during his travels, or that he was forced to leave it behind.<sup>87</sup> In either case, Joplin would not be the first composer to have lost a manuscript on the road.<sup>88</sup> It is also possible that for some reason he destroyed it himself or that it was misplaced after his death.<sup>89</sup> No matter the status of the score, Joplin's admiration for Booker T. Washington and the ideals he espoused to African-Americans in that first generation after slavery seem to have been part and parcel of *A Guest of Honor*. The work's positive reception and the process of its composition provided the composer with practical lessons he would put to use in his next opera.

In the summer of 1904, during a visit to relatives in Texarkana and Hot Springs, Arkansas, Joplin met the nineteen-year-old Freddie Alexander. A vivacious young woman from a respectable middle-class Black family, Freddie was his intellectual equal. She introduced him to literature,<sup>90</sup> showed him a different side of the African-American

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

<sup>88</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 162–164. According to Berlin, Lottie Stokes Joplin Thomas said, some years after the composer's death, that Joplin left the score in a trunk in Pittsburgh, where he had used it as collateral against the rent. Berlin initially thought Lottie meant the score was in Pennsylvania, but in tracing the tour itinerary, he realized that couldn't be. In the meantime, in between Berlin's first and second editions, Albrecht discovered a more likely location: Pittsburg, Kansas ("African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," 215, fn 7). Berlin offers yet another possibility: that the score was left in Springfield (*King of Ragtime*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 164).

<sup>89</sup> We know that Joplin himself destroyed some manuscripts in his final years and that quite a few of the scores that survived were lost due to how his manuscripts were handled after his death. That his scores were transferred between various parties, and sometimes intermingled with other musicians' work, only complicates the matter.

<sup>90</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 174. Berlin believes Freddie suggested that the composer read *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

experience, clarified his ideas regarding his heritage, and deepened his sense of racial pride. She provided him with reasons to be proud of who he was, and in the process stole his heart.<sup>91</sup> He responded to her affections by composing a rag in her honor, *The Chrysanthemum*, which he described as “An Afro-American Intermezzo, respectfully dedicated to Miss Freddie Alexander of Little Rock, Ark.” Joplin had a special edition of this elegant and graceful work printed so that he might give copies to Freddie and her family on his next visit to Arkansas. He also gave copies to friends in Sedalia; Berlin mentions performances Joplin gave at the D.O.H. Hall,<sup>92</sup> formerly the clubroom of the Black 400, where the composer personally invited guests such as Billy Kersands and his minstrel troupe, as well as James Lacy, and Joe Jordan to hear it and other recent works.<sup>93</sup>

Joplin and Freddie married 14 June 1904, in a ceremony in her parents’ home. Joplin, then 37, recorded his age as 27 on the wedding license; Berlin suspects he wanted to hide his age from his in-laws, given the age of his bride.<sup>94</sup> After the ceremony, the newlyweds travelled from Little Rock to Sedalia by train, stopping here and there along the way so Joplin might perform. By the time they had reached their destination, sometime in the first two weeks of July, Freddie was ill. Doctors prescribed bed rest. Although Joplin tended to her as best he could, he had performances to give: the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair was underway and the best ragtime pianists in the country had flocked to the city in hopes of performing on the midway.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>92</sup> The building in which these performances took place is known simply as the D.O.H. Hall; the name is an abbreviation for *Deutsche Orden der Harugari*, According to Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 380, fn61, membership was limited to German immigrants and their family. The society was established in New York in 1864; the Sedalia chapter was formed in 1869.

<sup>93</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 175.

<sup>94</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 19. According to Benjamin, Joplin and Freddie courted by mail.

<sup>95</sup> St. Louis was the site of the 1904 World’s Fair and ragtime was the music people came to hear. Black artists were not allowed to perform in the concert hall, but every ragtimer who could make it St. Louis wanted a shot at the midway, where hundreds of listeners might hear them.

As Freddie's illness lingered, her older sister, Lovie Alexander, travelled to Missouri to tend to her. Newspapers announced her arrival on 8 September, while at the same time reporting that Freddie had pneumonia. While her death wasn't unexpected, it was sudden, coming two days after her sister's arrival. Joplin and Freddie had been married only ten weeks, and she had been ill seven of them. Her death devastated Joplin, and it was noticed by the African-American media: *The Sentinel*, *Democrat*, and *Capital* ran notices the following day.

“Death of Mrs. Scott Joplin”

Mrs. Scott Joplin, wife of the colored song writer, and whose maiden name was Freddie Alexander, died Saturday afternoon at the home of Solomon Dixon, 124 East Cooper Street, of pneumonia, aged 20 years. The couple had been married only ten weeks. The funeral arrangements had not been perfected last night.<sup>96</sup>

A few days later, the *Conservator* ran this obituary:

Mrs. Freddie Alexander, wife of Mr. Scott Joplin, and a bride of only two months, after an illness of seven weeks' duration, died Saturday after noon [sic] at 3 o'clock p.m. Her death was not unexpected, as she had contracted a cold which developed into a complication of complaints either of which might have resulted in death. She was married to Mr. Joplin two months ago at the home of her parents in Little Rock, Ark., and had traveled some with Mr. Joplin who was billed to give piano recitals in western towns. They arrived here seven weeks hence, and from their first day here, Mrs. Joplin has been confined to her bed at their rooms at 124 E. Cooper St. Thru-out her sickness, Mr. Joplin has administered to her every want. Her sister, Miss Lovie Alexander, arrived here last Thursday and was constantly at her side until death separated them. The internment was in the colored cemetery at the Morgan St. Baptist Church, Rev. S.A. Norris preached the funeral which occurred at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 181. In his footnote to the *Sedalia Democrat's* death notice, Berlin points out the Dixons did not live on East Cooper Street. Town directories for 1904 and for several years prior all indicate the family resided at 124 West Cooper. See page 395, fn34 for more information.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 181. In his footnote to the *Sedalia Conservator's* obituary (395, fn35), Berlin reports that the headline on the 16 Sept. 1904 obituary was “Demise of Mrs. Joplin.” He also points out an error: the paper states the couple had arrived in Sedalia “seven weeks hence.” Noting they had wed 14 June, “seven weeks hence” would have been 2 August. Joplin was playing concerts in Sedalia before mid- July, making the newspaper's account inaccurate on that point.

That Joplin grieved his wife's passing is clear. *Bethena*, the first work he copyrighted after her death, is poignantly elegiac and may be the saddest piece he ever wrote. It is dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Dan E. Davenport of St. Louis,<sup>98</sup> who helped him sort through his feelings after Freddie's death.<sup>99</sup> Berlin speculates that Joplin's whirlwind courtship, coupled with his bride's sudden demise, led the composer to re-evaluate his life and professional goals.<sup>100</sup> He began working on an opera, one that would eventually tie together all the strands of his life with Freddie and her family, and would speak to all African-Americans and empower them to create a better world through education and shared values. He would call it *Treemonisha*.

In June 1907, an article in the New York-based *American Musician and Art Journal* introduced Joplin as the composer of *Maple Leaf Rag*, and described his compositional process. According to the author, Joplin found it too much trouble to compose at the piano; he found inspiration walking around town, or while lying in his bed at night. If an idea occurred to him, he simply wrote it down on the manuscript paper he kept on his person at all times.<sup>101</sup> The reporter referred to the piece Joplin was working on as a "grand opera, containing music similar to that sung by the negroes during slavery days, the music of today, the negro ragtime, and the music that the negro will use in the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 193–195. Berlin noticed a pattern in Joplin's dedications. Generally they were to women he wanted to impress or honor, to people who could somehow promote his music, or in response to a commission. He believes the dedication of *Bethena* to the Davenports was one way he could show the couple his gratitude for all that the St. Louis bartender and his wife did to help him after Freddie's death. Berlin also noticed that many of the rags published in the years immediately after Freddie died had women's names as titles, and that the works were dedicated to women who had those names. As a result, he imagines that after Freddie died, Joplin's grieving process led him to become involved with a large number of women in a rather short amount of time.

<sup>99</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 19–20. Benjamin offers a slightly different perspective on this period. He says Joplin spent most of 1905–06 commuting between St. Louis and Chicago, and that by Fall 1906, the composer was associated with a vaudeville company called "Joplin's Alabama Jubilee Singers," a group that could have also involved Louis Chauvin and Sam Patterson.

<sup>100</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 183.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 20. Benjamin reports the meeting between Joplin and the reporter took place in New York, in the newly opened office of John Stark & Son Music, conveniently located in the same neighborhood as the fledgling magazine's Manhattan headquarters.

future.”<sup>102</sup> Joplin had already been working on the opera for some time, and he played the overture on the piano during the interview: “To say that it was exceptionally good would be putting it mildly.”<sup>103</sup> Joplin must have been pleased. He had been casting about for a new direction, a fresh start in a city where his prospects might be brighter. He packed his bags and made his farewells, and moved to New York in the summer of 1907.<sup>104</sup>

New York reenergized the composer. Within six months he had introduced himself to the city’s most important figures in the arts: writers, musicians, composers, and impresario.<sup>105</sup> The 40-year-old composer was also attracting media attention. After his interview with *The American Musician and Art Journal* and its glowing account of his work as a “serious composer,” other publications started paying attention to him.<sup>106</sup> Even Joplin’s friends “back home” thought the move suited him; they said he wasn’t just doing well professionally, he also looked good physically, and that he seemed to relish his newfound celebrity.<sup>107</sup> According to Edward A. Berlin, “Chauf” Williams, one of Joplin’s friends from St. Louis, visited New York shortly after Joplin moved there. When

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 209. Joplin had been visiting the city when the interview took place. After seeing the story, he made the decision to stay. Berlin reports Joplin made two farewell journeys prior to moving permanently to New York: one to his family in Texarkana, where he was given a hero’s welcome; the other to Chicago to see friends. In Texas, Berlin wrote, Joplin’s family and friends said the composer spoke of a European tour “in the company of a German associate.” Given Joplin and Stark’s habit of notifying the media when important happenings were taking place, had Joplin left the U.S., newspapers would have written something about it and Joplin would have likely written a few rags in honor of the visit. Since we have no such works, and no notices in either the American or European papers about a journey, it’s unlikely Joplin ever made one. It’s more likely that he told his family about Ernst’s offer to take him abroad and that the neighbors either never got the rest of the story, or that 50 years later when interviewed for Rudi Blesh’s *They All Played Ragtime*, they only remembered how excited the people of Texarkana had been for their favorite son. Berlin also reports Joplin had not originally intended to settle in New York; Benjamin speculates (notes to *Treemonisha*, 20) that Joplin may have liked what he saw during the *American Musician* interview enough to remain in the city. No matter what his intentions may have been, by July 1907, he was living in a boarding house at 128 West 29<sup>th</sup> St., not far from major theatres and publishing houses.

<sup>105</sup> Joplin began receiving offers to record his music after White banjo virtuoso Vess Ossman and his five-piece band recorded *Maple Leaf Rag* in 1907. Ossman’s recording runs two minutes and forty seconds, demonstrating how wax cylinder recording technologies forced musicians to perform works far faster than composers recommended their works be played. It also shows how the public’s distaste for ragtime played more slowly may have developed, given most people were first exposed to the music through recordings. Hear it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6qtr85Q8ho>.

<sup>106</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 221.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Williams got home, he told everyone the composer was “dressed up like a Fancy Dan of ragtime ... sporting diamonds.”<sup>108</sup>

Joplin lived at 128 West 29<sup>th</sup> Street, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues, on the fringe of the Tenderloin district. A block from Broadway, the theatre district, and Tin Pan Alley, this neighborhood was the center of New York’s entertainment world, overflowing with theatres, restaurants, saloons, gambling houses, and brothels.<sup>109</sup> Twenty-six Broadway theatres were located within walking distance of Joplin’s boardinghouse, five inside a two-block radius. Seating was segregated according to race, but Joplin soon learned local White audiences had already developed an appetite for Black musicals.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, several theatres were hosting shows written by his friends, no doubt prompting Joplin to believe his turn in the spotlight had to be near at hand.<sup>111</sup>

The nation’s leading publishers of popular music all maintained offices in Manhattan. As Joplin made the rounds to introduce himself, he sold a few rags along the way: *Searchlight*, *Gladiolus*, and *Stoptime Rag*, for example, were published by Joseph W. Stern & Co., a firm that represented a large number of the leading African-American composers of the day.<sup>112</sup> Seminary Music, a leading Tin Pan Alley publisher, released *Wall Street Rag*, *Euphonic Sounds*, and two versions of *Pine Apple Rag* in 1910. In addition to these works, Joplin self-published a *School of Ragtime*, a tutorial aimed at the amateur market.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 212. Rick Benjamin (notes to *Treemonisha*, 20) points out the neighborhood was roughly twenty blocks south of Black Bohemia, where the nation’s leading Black theatre performers, musicians, and intellectuals lived. And Susan Curtis (*Dancing to A Black Man’s Tune*, 149) informs us that African-Americans paid higher rent and that all levels of Black society lived together, with few opportunities to sort themselves by class or social position.

<sup>110</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Joplin also sought out members of the media, reporters and editors in both the Black and White press.<sup>113</sup> The *American Musician and Art Journal* ran two stories on Joplin within his first year in New York, including the aforementioned 1907 piece which, among others things, whetted readers' appetite for his new opera.<sup>114</sup> The second shared how Joplin preferred the music of Beethoven and Bach to "the light music of our day."<sup>115</sup> The article went on to say that performers who take up Joplin's music would find "profound thought in it."<sup>116</sup> New York's African-American press was equally glowing. Newspapers wanted to learn more about his opera: articles from the *New York Age*, one of the city's largest Black newspapers, tells us "there are many colored writers busily engaged even now in writing operas," but it was Joplin's opera that fascinated readers.

Music circles have been stirred recently by the announcement of Scott Joplin, known as the apostle of ragtime, is composing scores for grand opera. ... He came to New York from St. Louis and it was the opinion of all that his mission was one of placing several of his ragtime instrumental compositions on the market. The surprise of the musicians and publishers can be imagined when Joplin announced that he was writing grand opera and expected to have his scores finished by summer. From ragtime to grand opera is certainly a big jump – about as great a jump as from the American Theatre [a New York vaudeville hall] to the Manhattan and Metropolitan Opera Houses. Yet we believe that the time is not far off when America will produce several S. Coleridge Taylors who will prove to the public that the Black man can compose other than ragtime music. The composer is just in his thirties and is very retiring in manner. Critics who have heard part of his new opera are very optimistic as to his future success.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to making professional contacts in the business world, Joplin was also connecting with his peers. He joined the Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Association

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. In addition to feature stories, he kept his name before the public by running ads that offered his services as a "ragtime arranger," yet another way he might quickly make a name for himself – and his music – in the city.

<sup>114</sup> As mentioned earlier, the first article from *American Musician and Art Journal* likely prompted Joplin to settle permanently in New York.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 21–23. Text in brackets found in Benjamin. I include them here for readers not familiar with New York's historic theatres. Also, there is a discrepancy here with Joplin's age. If he were truly 37 years old in the summer of 1904 when he married Freddie, he would be 40 in the summer of 1907 when this article first appeared.

(C.V.B.A.), lending his support – and his music – to help his fellow African-American artists. By all accounts he was an active member of the group, spending many evenings with his fellow club members, working to secure better bookings for association members, organizing benefit concerts to raise money, and helping young composers get their start.<sup>118</sup>

Another group attracting Joplin's attention was the Clef Club. Formed in 1910, it was the city's most important organization for Black musicians, and its membership list included New York's most prestigious players. Headed by James Reese Europe, the Clef Club served both as a union and a booking agency for African-American musicians. Europe demanded that the players he sent out be "skilled, reliable, and musically literate."<sup>119</sup> As a result of his high standards, Clef Club musicians soon dominated Manhattan's society and dance band bookings, with players frequently earning the highest salaries in New York, sometimes making more than their White counterparts.<sup>120</sup> Europe also formed an orchestra made up of Clef Club members who regularly played concerts featuring music by Black composers; in May of 1912 the ensemble made history when it presented the first all-Black concert at Carnegie Hall.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 238.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 244–245. The 100-piece ensemble commissioned works for its rather unusual complement of eight violins, nine cellos, three basses, three percussionists (traps and timpani), twenty-seven first mandolins and bandoris, ten second mandolins, eight banjos, twenty-three harp guitars, and eleven pianos. Woodwinds, brass, and one or more organs were added in later years, as needed. Europe said this particular combination lent itself well to the "peculiar compositions of our race." One must wonder, then, how different our conception of African-American music today is from his notion of it, or where these pieces might be found. Berlin includes Europe's comments about his orchestra's makeup, explaining that mandolins and banjos played second violin parts. Pianos provided background and choral accompaniment. The overall effect of this mix provided a string-heavy sound reminiscent of a Russian balalaika band. In the same passage Europe explained how the group used two clarinets instead of an oboe because it was easier to find two decent clarinetists than one strong oboist. He also said he used two baritone horns instead of French horn and a trombone to replace the bassoon. To make the ensemble's sound even more distinctive, Europe employed no less than eight trombones and seven cornets. It is an understatement to say this was no ordinary orchestra. As Europe himself described it, "We have developed a kind of symphony music that, no matter what else you may think, is different and distinctive, and that lends itself to the playing of the peculiar compositions of our race."



As a member of the Clef Club, Joplin was in close contact with the most important musicians in Black New York: James Reese Europe, Will Marion Cook, Harry T. Burleigh, Ford Dabney, and J. Rosamond Johnson, to name but a few. Even though Joplin and his music were familiar to them, his music is largely absent from Clef Club programs: Joplin wrote ragtime, and Europe, as head of an organization attempting to advance African-American art, was ambivalent about the genre, viewing ragtime as a means for White Americans to limit what Black artists could do. For Europe, ragtime was an art form that would ultimately hold them back, rather than one that might serve as a springboard into the future.<sup>122</sup> As the musical leader of New York's Black elite, Europe simply wrote off ragtime, considering it inappropriate for club events and preventing its programming during his tenure as president.<sup>123</sup>

In addition to composing and promoting his music, teaching held a prominent place on Joplin's schedule. In New York, he took on students of all races: Joseph Lamb, a White composer, was his greatest discovery. According to Berlin, Lamb wandered into John Stark's office and while looking at sheet music, mentioned his interest in meeting the king of ragtime. Mrs. Stark pointed at Joplin sitting in the corner of the store. The two men hit it off; Joplin invited Lamb to his home, where the neighbors listened excitedly as Lamb performed his own music. One man called Lamb's *Sensation* "a real Colored rag," a compliment the White composer took as high praise.<sup>124</sup> Stark ended up printing not only *Sensation*, but also *Dynamite* and *Old Home Rag*.<sup>125</sup> Lamb was a peer, yet open to

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<sup>122</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 246.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Ironically, while he kept ragtime at arm's length, and encouraged his successors at the Clef Club to do the same, Europe's name was soon to be closely associated with both ragtime and jazz. During World War I, he led marching bands of the U.S. armed forces in parades across the French countryside, introducing ordinary citizens to both genres everywhere he went.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 226–227. Stark eventually published a dozen rags by Lamb.

instruction: Joplin took him on as a student, advising him on how to improve his compositions, and helping him secure publishing contracts.<sup>126</sup>

Around this same time, Joplin sought out music lessons for himself. Although his studies with Julius Weiss in Texarkana, a few years of formal study in Sedalia, and some time with Maestro Ernst in St. Louis had served him well,<sup>127</sup> he wanted to know more. Beginning as early as 1909, Joplin worked with Bruto V. Giannini, an Italian pianist and composer who — unlike many White musicians — had no qualms about taking on African-American students. His studio included several prominent Black performers, including classical singer Alma Jupiter Greene and jazz pianist James P. Johnson.

Giannini was steeped in European musical traditions; opera, symphonic music, and works for solo piano were his specialties. Studying composition under Giuseppe Busi, Giannini attended music school at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna in the mid-1860s, in the years immediately following Rossini's twenty-year tenure as head of the conservatory.<sup>128</sup> Piras reports that Giannini was also deeply involved in Italy's unification, fighting with Garibaldi in a series of battles near Rome against the Pope in 1866 and 1867.

Inspired by the American and French revolutions, the nineteenth century saw the rise of new nations through revolts against multinational empires, as people in both

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid. Lamb took Joplin's suggestions to heart and incorporated changes into the final editions, which Stark published in 1908. Lamb got \$25 for *Sensation* up front, and another \$25 after the first 1,000 copies were sold (227).

<sup>127</sup> In addition to these instructors, we also know that Joplin worked closely with Rocco Venuto, librarian of the St. Louis Symphony. While the exact nature of their work together has yet to be uncovered, it is highly likely Joplin had access to the orchestra's music collection. For more about Venuto, see Piras, "*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down." Sadly, Venuto's music is not yet available on IMSLP or any other online music service.

<sup>128</sup> Marcello Piras, "Garibaldi to Syncopation: Bruto Giannini and the Curious Case of Scott Joplin's *Magnetic Rag*," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 9/2 (Winter 2013, 107–177), 120–122, 159. Piras believes Giannini studied piano with Stefano Golinelli (1818–1891). Golinelli studied with Rossini and was soon a respected composer in his own right. He was well traveled, and many established figures, from Schumann to Gottschalk, thought highly of his work. He taught at the Liceo from 1840 to 1871, and given the number of personal and social connections between Golinelli and Giannini, it is likely they worked together when Giannini was in school. While it remains to be proven, if Piras' rather convincing evidence can be confirmed, a "family tree" outlining Joplin's music teachers may be far more impressive than musicologists have ever considered.

Europe and the New World sought to affirm their political independence and establish their own cultural identities. Giannini's position on these issues was clear: All national identities are worthy of being affirmed, and all levels of society are equally important.<sup>129</sup> That he brought his politics into his work as a music teacher is clear. As Piras notes, Giannini not only incorporated the folk music he encountered into his compositions, he strongly felt that the ability of the world to progress rested on the wide dissemination of knowledge. In this regard, he and Joplin were ideally suited for each other.<sup>130</sup>

Giannini emigrated to America in 1890 to assume a position in New York at the behest of Diego De Vivo (1822–1898), the city's leading opera impresario.<sup>131</sup> He took out ads offering his services as an instructor for New Yorkers interested in vocal coaching, piano lessons, or operatic score studies. He also gave concerts and became the darling of New York's high society. By 1895, when he moved his studio into Suite 504 at Carnegie Hall, he was considered one of the city's top music teachers; the mere mention of his name opened many doors for his students.<sup>132</sup>

Despite his connections to high society, Giannini never dropped his libertarian ideals. He accepted students from all classes and walks of life, and he had no qualms about taking on promising students regardless of their race or ethnicity.<sup>133</sup> Based on extant recital programs and published concert reviews, the repertory Giannini covered was not only impressive, but it also reflected his teaching philosophy: Students were to master the classics, the music of Bach and Beethoven, before taking on virtuoso

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 148–149.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 159. Piras reports that in 1912, the noted African-American singer Alma Jupiter Greene traded her services as a maid in exchange for singing lessons; Carlette Thomas, Ernest Greene and jazz pianist James P. Johnson were other well-known Black performers who studied with Giannini.

showpieces such as those written by Liszt or Chopin. Students would then be expected to learn the music of their contemporaries, which included a working knowledge of Giannini's own music. Students who reached this level were instructed to cherish national identities and to find ways to incorporate them into their own compositions. It seems that his teaching philosophy encouraged students to build their own personal style, one that was rooted in the classics and their own folk music, rather than adhering blindly to tradition.<sup>134</sup>

Joplin and Giannini shared much in common. Both saw music as a tool they could use to achieve larger social goals, and both were passionate about education. Each was capable of celebrating his own folk traditions without compromise or denigrating other composers' traditions. Similarly, each man was deeply spiritual and yet skeptical toward organized religion. Two men well ahead of their times, both experienced hostility from their peers who were often challenged by their ideas. They were socialists with strong commitments to equality, between the races and the sexes, and both Joplin and Giannini used their talents to spread knowledge in order for wisdom to triumph in a world that they felt too often relied on wishful thinking, luck, or superstition.<sup>135</sup>

As the analysis portion of this discussion will demonstrate, Giannini's influence on Joplin's compositional style was substantial, and Joplin valued not only his instruction but also his friendship. That he held Giannini in high regard is evident in his music. He inserted references to Giannini's music in his rags as well as in *Treemonisha*.<sup>136</sup>

Joplin's life in New York encompassed far more than social clubs, interviews, publishers, and music lessons; he enjoyed an active social life as well. One woman in

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 159–160. See also 131.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 159–160.

particular played an important role in his life: Lottie.<sup>137</sup> Because she claimed to be his widow, many first-generation Joplin scholars took her comments about Joplin, his music, and their relationship at face value, widely distributing them in a number of publications since the early 1950s. As the Joplin revival got underway, researchers found a number of discrepancies in her accounts. Through an exhaustive examination of legal records filed in or near New York City, Berlin discovered that no court system in the Tri-State area ever issued the couple a marriage license.<sup>138</sup>

Nevertheless, Joplin and Lottie presented themselves as a couple. Her entrance into Joplin's life coincided with a sharp decline in his career. Joplin's primary source of income was composition, and his specialty was the instrumental rag, which was a niche market, ideal for pianists with good technique who had both sufficient time and passion working up a piece; most amateur players, however, found the music too difficult to learn, leaving publishers with unsold merchandise. After 1910, when the public started abandoning the genre in favor of the music associated with the new "animal dances" then emerging, composers were faced with a decision that required them to adapt to changing market preferences or continue writing ragtime for less money than before. The cutthroat nature of New York's publishing industry would soon force John Stark to return to St. Louis, but Joplin was determined not to let it push him out of the business. If he could not convince Tin Pan Alley to recognize the value of his work, he would publish his

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<sup>137</sup> Lottie Stokes Joplin Thomas (1876–1953). Bryan Cather, curator of the Scott Joplin House Museum in St. Louis, is a leading an investigation into Lottie. While his research was not available in time to include in this project, Cather will be presenting his findings over the summer of 2017 in a series of events organized in conjunction with the centennial of Joplin's passing.

Benjamin's notes to *Treemonisha* indicate Lottie was born in 1873. Cather has located a number of documents certifying she was born in 1876. He feels the confusion is based on a simple misunderstanding. When Lottie's brother was asked about her date of birth, he mistakenly told the interviewer 1873, the year he was born, rather than providing his sister's information. Because Cather had legal documents to back up his claim, the dates shown here reflect what Cather can prove definitively.

<sup>138</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 290. Additional information is located on page 280. See also page 266 of Berlin, "Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* Years," *American Music* 9/3 (Autumn 1991), 260–276.

compositions himself.<sup>139</sup> Joplin and Lottie established the Scott Joplin Music Publishing Company in October 1913, naming themselves directors.<sup>140</sup> To supplement their income, Lottie operated a series of boarding houses, renting out rooms in their apartment or nearby for private parties and romantic trysts on an hourly basis.<sup>141</sup>

Lottie tended to Joplin's needs over his final years, relieving him of many his day-to-day responsibilities as his health began to decline. While many Black entertainers, theatre owners, and other entertainers had begun moving to Harlem nearly a decade earlier, it is possible that Joplin and Lottie's finances prompted them to join the exodus and relocate to Harlem in 1914. Whatever the reason behind the move, Joplin took out an ad in the *New York Age* that not only notified the public of his relocation, but also reminded readers who he was and let interested pianists and violinists know he was available for private lessons.<sup>142</sup> The move established him into a far better apartment, but it did little to revive his career. To make money, he opened a mail-order sheet music business, selling six of his tunes for a dollar. He also raised his rates as the size of his studio increased, charging fifty to seventy-five cents per lesson.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, Lottie's income probably kept a roof over their heads, but once her prostitution business began thriving a bit too much for his comfort, Joplin began charging a dollar per lesson, meeting his students in their homes instead of his own.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 25. See also notes to *Treemonisha*, 40.

<sup>140</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 290. A photograph of the filing documents can be found on the following page.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* Berlin could not locate records that indicated Joplin or Lottie owned real estate in New York City. Pointing out the irony in Joplin's living situation, Berlin explains that the composer yearned for respectability and as a result, had spent his career avoiding "the district," only to spend his final years living in a house of ill repute, managed by his "wife," no less. Berlin further reports that he was able to confirm Blesh's report that when composers on Tin Pan Alley wanted "girls" for a party, the first person they would call was Lottie Joplin. See Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 301.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>144</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 41.

Based on notices published in newspapers based in both St. Louis and New York, we know Joplin was working on *Treemonisha* while still residing in the Midwest. Berlin believes he most likely completed the work in 1910; he was showing it to potential publishers and producers that fall.<sup>145</sup> His longtime publisher John Stark politely declined the opportunity to print it, as did Seminary Music and Joseph W. Stern, two New York firms that had published several of his piano rags. After nearly two years of shopping the manuscript about town, Joplin was left with no choice in the matter: he published it himself.<sup>146</sup> After filing his copyright on 19 May 1911, Joplin notified the press the work was now available for sale. *The New York Age* ran a brief about it; the following month *The American Musician and Art Journal* printed a review praising the opera as an extraordinary example of not only what the “colored race” could do, but as an inspiration for all who believed in its mission statement: that a better life was possible through education. The article ended by suggesting Joplin was the first composer to have created a purely American opera.<sup>147</sup>

In October of 1911, *The New York Age* reported that Thomas Johnson (1843–1918), a leading African-American businessman and a former director of one of Harlem’s leading theatres, wanted to bankroll *Treemonisha*. An important figure in local artistic circles, Johnson’s day job was working for Abe Erlanger and Marc Klaw, who oversaw a

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<sup>145</sup> Edward A. Berlin, “Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* Years,” *American Music* 9/3 (Autumn 1991), 266.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. In his article, Berlin relates an unfortunate twist in the *Treemonisha* story. Someone associated with one of the publishing houses reviewing the manuscript apparently “stole” a melody from *Treemonisha* and turned it into a hit song, or so Joplin said at the time. The melody, now famous as *Alexander’s Ragtime Band*, became a point of contention between Joplin and Irving Berlin, who claimed that he, not “some Negro,” had written the melody. A row erupted in the press and Joplin rewrote the passage in his opera that originally contained the melody, No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag.” Investigations into what occurred are still ongoing, but the resemblance between the two works is clear. Joplin could not prove his case definitively, although it was corroborated at the time by at least three independent sources that Irving Berlin had lifted the melody. Berlin waited more than five years to address the issue; he denied the rumors a Black man had written the tune, adding that “if the other fellow deserves the credit, why doesn’t he go get it?” Within six months, the “other fellow” was dead. See Edward A. Berlin, “Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* Years,” *American Music* 9/3 (Autumn 1991), 260–276, for more information or to review the two scores involved in this controversy.

<sup>147</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 27–28.

national syndicate of theatres. Thomas' professional connections and his expertise in setting up productions essentially guaranteed that, with his backing, *Treemonisha* might not only receive performances in New York, but also in theatres across the United States. Joplin wasted no time in following up the *Age's* story with his own announcement: Rehearsals were being organized, and some of the leading African-American singers in the nation had been secured for the premiere. The company would present shows out of town before formally opening in New York.

Joplin threw himself into the task of producing the show. He oversaw the audition process, casting, set design, props and costumes, scheduling, and countless other details. Hiring his friend Sam Patterson to help, he also began the process of orchestrating the score. Because backers in commercial theatre want proof a production is moving forward in a timely manner, Joplin arranged for his company to present the opera to Johnson and a select group of supporters. According to Benjamin, Joplin played the accompaniment on the piano while the cast sang in street clothes without sets, scenery, or backdrops. It is unclear how the performance was received, but one thing is clear: Without giving Joplin a reason, Thomas Johnson withdrew his support, forcing Joplin to find another financier to back the production.

A year later, Joplin collaborated on revising the opera with noted African-American composer H. Lawrence Freeman (1869–1954), who worked in vaudeville as a conductor of African American orchestras. Productions were organized in Bayonne, New Jersey, involving some of the nation's leading African-American vocalists and featuring noted Black soprano Laura Moss in the title role.<sup>148</sup> As Benjamin reports, "Scott Joplin's *Merry Makers*" opened at the Washington Park Theatre in July 1913 and by all accounts

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 32.



were successfully received.<sup>149</sup> Encouraged by his success on the New Jersey shore, Joplin began searching for a theatre so he could present the work in New York. Within a few weeks, the *New York Age* ran an item announcing Joplin would partner with Benjamin Nibur, director of the Lafayette Theatre, to present the opera in Harlem. Indeed, the *Freeman* reported in October 1913 that rehearsals were going well and that Joplin had a cast of twenty-two singers ready to perform.<sup>150</sup> The paper did not mention an opening date, but it is clear that something happened to cause the production to collapse.

Joplin had spent nearly five years trying to bring *Treemonisha* to the stage, but was ultimately not able to present the work in a manner he felt it deserved. Still longing for a career in show business, he did not let the challenges that held back his opera stand in his way of writing other large-scale works. In 1915, he released *The Syncopated Jamboree*, a vaudeville show he wrote in collaboration with Bob Slater, an old friend from his days with the C.V.B.A. He also wrote *If*, which he described as “a music comedy drama.”<sup>151</sup>

By late 1915, Joplin’s health was failing. Just four years after it seemed he might be able to present *Treemonisha* at theatres across the nation, Joplin could no longer hide the fact that he was dying. As a young man he had contracted syphilis, which most often meant a painful death for those afflicted. Late-stage symptoms included stuttering, memory loss, depression, violent outbursts, and the eventual loss of all muscle control.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 33-37.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Berlin discusses Joplin’s hospitalization in *King of Ragtime*, noting that while syphilis is easily cured today, in Joplin’s time the diagnosis was fatal as there were only a few therapies available. He also reports that Joplin’s death certificate listed his diagnosis as Demential Paralytica-celebral form with syphilis noted as a contributory cause. This particular form of the disease, Berlin explains, is a manifestation of the illness’ third stage, in which both mental and physical capabilities are destroyed, leaving the victim paralyzed as he waits for death. Berlin also reports that while the disease might lie dormant up to thirty years before symptoms are seen, Joplin’s death certificate clearly states the onset of symptoms began eighteen months prior to his death. See *King of Ragtime*, 302–304, for more information.

Given that the muscles in the fingers, tongue, and lips are among the first to fail, communicating even the simplest of messages became difficult. For Joplin, a musician in the public eye, the diagnosis had to have been devastating, and while one might assume that his friends and family would rally around him, scholars can find no indication of that happening. Indeed if Benjamin is correct, it appears they received Joplin's diagnosis with "vague indifference."<sup>153</sup> There are no indications that Joplin sought out even basic medical attention, let alone attempted to receive the best possible care then available.<sup>154</sup> Lottie issued two statements to the press in January 1917 reporting that Joplin was ill and that he would be relocating to Chicago in order for his sister to tend to his needs, but that he would be returning to New York in time to participate in several already scheduled productions, including the premiere of a "great ragtime number" described solely as "Symphony."<sup>155</sup> Joplin never left New York, and as despair set in, he began destroying his manuscripts.<sup>156</sup> When his illness made it impossible for him to remain in his own home, Lottie sent him packing, forcing him to travel more than 100 blocks along icy streets to seek treatment at Bellevue, a free hospital, rather than admit him into facilities much closer to their home.<sup>157</sup> Joplin's stay at Bellevue was brief. Officials there had seen enough patients to know his case was advanced and that death was imminent. Within days he was transferred to the Manhattan State Hospital, where he was confined in their mental ward until his death on 1 April 1917.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 41.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 302.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* See also Benjamin, 41.

<sup>157</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 41.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* Joplin entered Manhattan State Hospital on 3 Feb. 1917. Benjamin clarifies that Joplin was actually admitted to the State Insane Asylum on Ward's Island, a division of the Manhattan State Hospital. This fact is confirmed through funeral notices published in three African-American newspapers: *New York Age*, *The Freeman*, and *Amsterdam News*.

Joplin knew he had syphilis, but as Berlin recorded in *King of Ragtime*, he would not have been able to predict when his death might take place, or what form it might take. He had certainly seen the impact of the disease on his friends and colleagues throughout his career, as syphilis had devastated the Black entertainment world in the years leading up to World War I.<sup>159</sup> It is highly probable he knew what to expect, but regardless of what might lie ahead, he had determined early on that he would rise above his humble beginnings, that he would become an artist and that through music, he would play a role in leading his people into a better life. He spent his life demonstrating what was possible for all African Americans to achieve through talent, education, and hard work. While Joplin did not live long enough to fulfill all his dreams, his life was defined by purpose and service to his people.<sup>160</sup>

Joplin's passing attracted little attention in the media. Three African-American newspapers ran funeral notices, each riddled with factual errors, and with none of them mentioning his true cause of death. The *New York Age*, whose reporters knew him well, did not shy away from stating where he died or that he had been confined for months for "mental trouble," implying it was *Treemonisha* that killed him. The *Freeman's* notice, published on 14 April, nearly two weeks after his death, did not hesitate to blame *Treemonisha* for his passing, stating that his failure to produce the opera resulted in a general breakdown that led to his death, a story Lottie repeated years later when Blesh interviewed her for *They All Played Ragtime*.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 302–304. According to Berlin, syphilis so devastated the Black entertainment world that it apparently took more than a decade for it to rebuild itself. Several scholars noted nearly a full generation of prominent entertainers were claimed by the disease, including several of Joplin's close friends and associates: Louis Chauvin, Ernest Hogan, Bob Cole and many others.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 304–305. See also Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 44; and Blesh, *They All Played Ragtime*, 244. Lottie's version of Joplin's funeral can be found on pages 244–245. No evidence to support her statements has ever been found.

Joplin was buried in a pauper's grave in St. Michael's Cemetery, 5 April 1917. Services were held a day earlier at a local funeral parlor, but to date no record of a graveside service has been uncovered. No marker or headstone was placed on his gravesite until sixty years after Joplin's death when ASCAP purchased and installed a small bronze marker in his honor.<sup>162</sup>

Joplin died without a will, and authorities estimated the value of his estate at \$300, an amount based largely on the value of the printing plates for *Treemonisha*, which Lottie kept along with his personal effects, copies of his published music, and a large quantity of manuscripts, including the handwritten, orchestrated parts to *Treemonisha*.<sup>163</sup> According to Benjamin, she immediately sold all the remaining copies of the opera for \$1 each and signed over the rights to his last rag in order to get it published. She faithfully renewed Joplin's copyrights, and in due time enrolled Joplin into ASCAP so that she might register claims on his behalf and receive her share of whatever money *Maple Leaf Rag* and the rest of his compositions might generate. She also continued to run her boardinghouse, which catered to musicians and actors, as well as a rather profitable side business in prostitution.<sup>164</sup>

Lottie died in March 1953. In her will she named Wilbur Sweatman to serve as executor of her estate. A longtime friend of both Joplin and Lottie and one of Lottie's former boarders, Sweatman (1882–1961) got his start in show business, making his name first as a clarinetist before becoming a rather successful songwriter, publisher and bandleader.<sup>165</sup> Sweatman took possession of Lottie's collection of Joplin manuscripts,

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<sup>162</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 44.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

which she had stored in the cellar of their Harlem brownstone. He stored some of the manuscripts in his office and put the rest in his own apartment alongside his collection of old sheet music. He also established the Lottie Joplin Thomas Trust to oversee future performances and publications of Joplin's work.<sup>166</sup> In 1959, he formed the Wilbur Sweatman Music Publishing Company, to which he assigned *Treemonisha*'s copyright. Two years later, he died without a will.<sup>167</sup>

When Sweatman was admitted to a local hospital prior to his death, his illegitimate daughter emptied out his apartment, putting everything he owned — including the Joplin manuscripts — into storage. Sweatman's sister was understandably upset; she filed a lawsuit to protect her right to inherit her brother's estate. The courts eventually ruled in favor of Sweatman's sister, and the daughter was forced to return the items she had taken. But after several moves and changes of custody, Joplin's music and Sweatman's collection had become thoroughly intermingled, and many items were lost. Of all the music that Sweatman possessed — stored in his apartment, in his office, and a cellar-full of boxes from Joplin's home — only eleven boxes of music were given to his sister, boxes that included the orchestrations for *Treemonisha*, as well as other late works by Joplin, such as a symphony and a piano concerto.<sup>168</sup>

Benjamin has reported what happened to the music from *Treemonisha* in his notes to the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra's performance of the opera. During a performance of *Treemonisha* in 1989, Benjamin expressed to his audience his hope that someday the original orchestrations might be discovered. After the concert, an elderly African-

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. Benjamin explains that Lottie's "remarriage" to a man by the name of Thomas seems to be fictitious, just as her marriage to Joplin had been. Be that as it may, the Lottie Joplin Thomas Trust continues to exist. It oversaw the revival performances of *Treemonisha*, as well as the publication of Joplin's collected works.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 45–46.

American man met him backstage and introduced himself as a former member of the legal firm that had handled the Sweatman estate. He explained that the law firm had received a considerable number of boxes of music at the conclusion of a case involving Sweatman's sister and his daughter, and that the deceased's personal effects included a large collection of sheet music, including Joplin's manuscripts. After the sister had won the case, she came to the law firm's office and poked through the boxes, selecting only a few items to keep. She told the lawyers to throw the rest of it out.<sup>169</sup> The man recalled there were three or four boxes clearly marked "Treemonisha," and that because that was such an unusual word, he was intrigued to see what might be inside those particular boxes. He told Benjamin that he found "crumbling music paper written on with ink; parts for instruments — cornets, drums, violin, and other things he could not remember; bits of paper; odds and ends. Everything was dirty, and some of it had been damaged by water. It all seemed like rubbish."<sup>170</sup> After poking about in the boxes a bit more, he determined there was nothing of value inside; at which point, he confessed, he took the boxes outside, setting them on the curb for the city's garbage men to collect. "Nobody knew about Scott Joplin in 1962," he explained. "I thought somebody should know about this."<sup>171</sup> The loss of so many of Joplin's manuscripts is compounded by the fact that Joplin himself destroyed a number of scores prior to his hospitalization, fearful that others might steal his work once he was dead.<sup>172</sup> While the piano rags, a handful of songs, a few dances, and the piano score of *Treemonisha* survive, some of his most promising works may never be recovered.

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 46–47.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 43.

Two final points figure into my reading of *Treemonisha*, the first point of which is Joplin's interest in politics. He admired the writings of Booker T. Washington, in particular Washington's focus on the role education could play in improving the life of African Americans after the Civil War. Indeed, as Shelley McDowell points out in her character analysis of *Treemonisha*, Washington strongly advocated a commitment to education on the part of the first generations after slavery, especially to "industrial education," which he felt would lead to employment for many former slaves and their children.<sup>173</sup> Washington called for a mastery of the practical arts (carpentry, masonry, and agriculture) in order to position Black Americans to assume an immediate role in the nation's economy. The development of industrial skills within the African-American community, Washington said, would teach the people responsibility, reliability, industry, thrift, and value.<sup>174</sup> He saw this as a means to improving social conditions and toward gaining full citizenship for Black Americans, particularly those with whom he worked in rural areas during Reconstruction. Washington espoused caution in politics, preferring to work with White officials even when doing so meant that progress might be slow. Believing cooperation with supportive White citizens would ultimately prove more productive than would confrontation, Washington asserted that the best way to gain wider acceptance of Blacks in mainstream society was to work with people who agreed with them already, rather than to convince a racist majority to change its positions overnight.<sup>175</sup>

W.E.B. DuBois, who was also admired by Joplin, took a more direct approach. Belonging to a group of thinkers that would soon symbolize the Harlem Renaissance,

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<sup>173</sup> Shelly McDowell, "*Treemonisha*: A Historical and Character Analysis," 18.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

DuBois did not support Washington's preference of "accommodating" Whites; on the contrary, he laid out a bold, multi-point plan demanding equal rights for Blacks — immediately. DuBois agreed that education was critical, but he felt schooling focused on the trades would hold African Americans back, relegating them forever to jobs that relied on manual labor. DuBois argued that Black Americans should be entering the professions, taking their place alongside Whites as doctors, lawyers, bankers, and public officials. Perhaps reflecting his urban roots, as well as the needs of a different generation, DuBois felt strongly that a focus on higher education, specifically on the professions and the fine arts, was what African Americans needed most.<sup>176</sup> The perspectives of these two giants of African-American affairs shaped Joplin's political thinking, and played a role in the way *Treemonisha* was received.

The second issue is Joplin's religious beliefs. As more detailed information has come to light, an increasing number of scholars believe Joplin may have converted to Buddhism, perhaps doing so in the early 1890s.<sup>177</sup> This prompts a number of questions, including how Joplin came to explore world religions. We know that, in addition to music, his teacher Julius Weiss also taught philosophy and that he was familiar with Schopenhauer.<sup>178</sup> We also know that Joplin spent a considerable amount of time in Chicago, where he attended the World Columbian Exposition in 1893.<sup>179</sup> The World's Parliament of Religions was one of the most publicized events associated with the Expo; hundreds of representatives from traditions from all corners of the globe attended and spoke at the conference held in September 1893. Piras reports that one of the first orators

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Piras, "*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.



to speak from the Art Institute's stage was Swami Vivekananda. His speech, which began with the words "Sisters and brothers of America!," stressed universal acceptance and tolerance for our fellow human beings, themes that surface not only in *Treemonisha*, but in Joplin's personal life. The Swami's talks were so enthusiastically received that fair organizers arranged for him to address the crowds several more times. After the fair ended, he spent the next three years travelling the U.S., unleashing as Piras described it, "a tidal wave of interest" in Indian culture in America.<sup>180</sup> Period newspapers reported a considerable number of Americans embraced Buddhism after hearing him speak.<sup>181</sup> We know Joplin attended the Exposition; he was a performer there. It is possible he heard Swami Vivekananda at the fair and converted to Buddhism before the turn of the century.

If Piras is correct and Joplin did embrace Buddhism, it would not be surprising to see elements of Eastern philosophy reflected in his work, particularly in *Treemonisha*. Buddhism's long tradition of non-violence, for example, is evident throughout the opera, particularly in the final act when Treemonisha tells the people not to punish the conjurors for kidnapping or attempting to murder her. Instead of revenge, she asks the people to forgive the conjurors and let them go after giving them a good talking to. Buddhism's perspective on the relationship between people is also evident. In the opera, Joplin demonstrates that all classes of society are needed and that all individuals have inherent worth — principles derived from Eastern philosophy, including Buddhism.

The most telling evidence, however, is in his characters' names: Ned, Simon, Andy, and Lucy were all common names given to slaves, and their usage continues to the present day. Remus is less used as a proper name, but it is still very familiar from "The

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. Henry James, Sarah Bernhardt and Emma Calvé are but three of the intellectuals who were drawn to Buddhism after hearing Swami Vivekanada speak.

Tales of Uncle Remus.” But Monisha and Zodzetrick were never in common usage. Piras believes that Joplin purposely selected these names to provide insight into the characters’ true natures, information that, while outside the realm of experience for many listeners, has meaning for those who shared Joplin’s perspectives.

Treemonisha’s name is clearly the most unusual in the opera. Her name, as well as her mother Monisha’s, derive from Hindi names.<sup>182</sup> Manisha is the Hindi goddess of the mind who rules intelligence and desire. The name, and its alternate spelling of Monisha is a rather common name for baby girls in Nepal, where the Hindu faith is widely practiced. Likewise, “Muni isha,” is also a name related to desire. In this two-part form, “muni” refers to a wise man and “isha” the highest object of his desire. The leap to the opera, then, is short: If Ned and Monisha had no children of their own, and if they had prayed night after night that they would someday be blessed with a child, then the gift of a daughter would be the fulfillment of their highest desire. Piras suggests this is most likely the meaning Joplin intended for two characters who believed strongly in the importance of education.<sup>183</sup>

But is there a deeper meaning behind the attachment of “Tree” in the name Monisha gave her child? Piras presents a rather convincing case in the affirmative. In the opera, we learn of a “sacred” tree, a tree so special that one dare not even pick a few branches from it to make a wreath, as Treemonisha attempts to do (No. 5, “The Wreath”) before her mother commands she look elsewhere for leaves (No. 6, “The Sacred Tree”). Neither number addresses why the tree is sacred, though it may be because Treemonisha

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<sup>182</sup> Hindi is one of the official languages of India; it is also spoken in Pakistan, Nepal, Fiji, and Suriname. A Hindu is a person who practices the Hindu religion, or is born into a family from that tradition. As explained on [diffen.com](http://diffen.com), “Not everyone who speaks Hindi practices the Hindu religion, and not all Hindus speak Hindi.”

<sup>183</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” As further evidence, Piras reports that Manisha is not only one of 108 names for the goddess Devi, its direct translation from the Hindi is “intellectual.”

was found there; it also was the site where her parents' prayers for a child were answered. In contrast to Joplin scholars who have seen the opera's tree as a nod to Wagner and the sacred tree featured in *Die Walküre*, Piras believes Joplin had another sort of tree in mind, one that reflects the influence of Jainist doctrine, specifically *Ahimsa*, the practice of non-injury to any life form – including plants, which are considered sacred.<sup>184</sup>

Treemonisha, the preface tells us, was found beneath a sacred tree when she was two or three days old. For Piras, this allows for the possibility that Treemonisha is the product of a miraculous birth.<sup>185</sup> Many cultures believe their great leaders – men such as Romulus or Jesus – were conceived not by traditional means, but through divine interference or some other act of nature. Treemonisha's birth may be similarly “miraculous,” Piras suggests, and like that of a spiritual leader who *was* born beneath a tree: Siddhartha Buddha.<sup>186</sup> Combining these four links to Eastern religion with what we know of Joplin's political and spiritual leanings, it is possible to read the entire opera in a manner not previously considered. While Treemonisha might be, as Edward A. Berlin speculates, a reflection of Freddie, who died only a few months after she and Joplin married,<sup>187</sup> it is much more likely that Treemonisha represents Joplin himself, and that Buddhist values permeate the opera.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. Jainism, or Jain Dharma, is an ancient Indian religion based on non-violence and respect toward all living beings. Its three main tenets include *ahimsa* (non-violence / actions, speech, thoughts), *anekantavada* (non-absolutism), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness). Jainist practitioners seek to conquer inner passions such as attachment, desire, anger, pride, and greed. “The function of souls is to help one another” is the overall theme of Jainism; a theme not unfamiliar to *Treemonisha's* storyline. Vegetarianism, daily meditation, and a belief in karma are other hallmarks of the faith. Nearly seven million Jainists currently live in India, but large concentrations of believers can be found in the U.S.

<sup>185</sup> There is also the possibility she was of mixed racial heritage. Joplin's preface describes her as a brown-skinned child with a light complexion.

In another passage in his article, Piras speculates Joplin's quotation of Giannini's *Hymn to the Virgin* is a reference to Treemonisha's chastity. The music is provided in the upcoming section. See No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” for more information.

<sup>186</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

<sup>187</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 255–257.

<sup>188</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Joplin's political leanings tended toward socialism, suggesting yet another possible layer of interpretation. While several scholars have noted autobiographical aspects to

Joplin's interest in other belief systems can also be seen in the names he assigns to *Treemonisha*'s conjurors. Zozetrick's name, for example, indicates multiple linguistic origins. His role as a trickster is evidenced by the "-trick" portion of his name; as discussed in Chapter 3, tricksters are well-established figures in African, Afro-Cuban, and African-American literature.<sup>189</sup> Piras offers several possibilities for the meaning of "Zodze." It could be a phonetic spelling of Zozo, a Haitian voodoo figure whose name means "penis."<sup>190</sup> God of fertility, humor, and death, Zozo was widely considered a pliable medium when communicating with the dead and was often evoked when playing with a Ouija board, a game that went on the market only a few years before *Treemonisha* was written.<sup>191</sup> It is possible Joplin considered him an evil spirit and adopted the name for his lead conjuror.

As Piras explains, the word Zozo was in common use in the 1880s and 1890s; *Zozo, the Magic Queen* was a burlesque staged in theatres across the United States and was even performed at Wood's Opera House when Joplin was living in Sedalia.<sup>192</sup> While it's unlikely any American living outside of the voodoo-zone – New Orleans, the Gulf Coast, and southernmost Florida – would know about Zozo, for a learned man with wide-ranging interests, Joplin may have enjoyed naming his leading villain "Zozo Trick."<sup>193</sup>

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the opera, Albrecht's findings are perhaps the most substantial. See Albrecht, "*African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's Treemonisha*."

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. The play was presented in Sedalia 24–25 Sept. 1886. Joplin was touring at the time and possibly living in the area (he enrolled at George R. Smith College in 1894). Piras' source for this info (Fn118) is "Dates Ahead: Dramatic companies," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 25 Sept. 1886, 9. Interestingly enough, "Zozo, the Magic Queen," is now a registered trademark for series of Victorian-style calendars marketed to young girls; the distributor has a Facebook page to provide potential purchasers with more information.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

Luddud, Zodzetrick’s right hand man, also has an unusual name. Piras speculates that *Treemonisha*’s conjurors spoke in Black English Vernacular (BEV) in which the spelling for “colored” is *cullud*. According to Piras, then, the use of “ludded” in the opera

could stand for “loaded,” a word rootworkers commonly use to indicate that an object — a candle, an alligator tooth — has been treated or filled with a substance enhancing its magic power, or “loaded” like a lodestone, which is considered a magical object as well. This makes sense for a character who is always one step away from Zodzetrick.<sup>194</sup>

Nearly every analysis to date has suggested the use of spirituals in the opera reflects Joplin’s devotion to Christian ideals. Indeed, most scholars generally interpret the sermon from Parson Alltalk as an endorsement of traditional Christian teaching.<sup>195</sup>

Nevertheless, at no time during the entire opera are the words God or Jesus mentioned:

All references to a higher power are to the “Creator,” a phrase that comes directly from

Eastern religious practices. Given how easy it would have been for Joplin to have

inserted a clear marker for Christianity (such as the word Jesus) in his libretto, it is

reasonable to conclude that he purposely did not reference his childhood faith. At the

very least, he did not intentionally favor it in *Treemonisha*. And as my reading of No. 9,

“Good Advice,” at the end of this chapter indicates, Joplin did not hesitate to point out

what he saw as hypocrisy in organized religion — it being “all talk” as in the parson’s

name — even when that term might apply to those he held dear.

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> This is the mainstream position. Scholars in this camp include Edward A. Berlin, pre-eminent Joplin scholar and author of countless publications, including *King of Ragtime*, “Perfessor” Bill Edwards, America’s leading ragtime pianist and part-time musicologist specializing in Joplin, and Reed Addison, author of Joplin’s entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. (His dissertation on Joplin and later publications are also highly recommended.) Others include Rubye Nell Hebert, *A Study of the Composition and Performance of Scott Joplin’s Opera Treemonisha* (D.M.A. document, Ohio State University, 1976); and Shelley McDowell, “*Treemonisha*: A Historical and Character Analysis” (M.M. thesis, California State University at Long Beach, 2010).

### ***Treemonisha: Its Story and Symbolism***

In *Treemonisha*, Joplin relates the story of an eighteen-year-old African-American woman who, by virtue of her education, is able to lead her community away from ignorance and superstition toward a brighter future. The work includes a preface for the audience to read before the performance. *Treemonisha* can be understood without it; most of the information contained within is repeated during the first act. The preface, shown below, contains details that reveal Joplin's motivation for writing the work and provides insights into his thoughts and attitudes on matters such as faith, religion, politics, and education.<sup>196</sup>

#### **TREEMONISHA**

An opera in three acts.

Words and music by Scott Joplin

(Story fictitious)

Act I—Morning.

Act II—Afternoon.

Act III—Evening.

The scene of the opera is laid on a plantation somewhere in the State of Arkansas, northeast of the town of Texarkana and three or four miles from the Red River. The plantation being surrounded by a dense forest.

There were several Negro families living on the plantation and other families back in the woods.

In order that the reader may better comprehend the story, I will give a few details regarding the Negroes of this plantation from the year 1866 to the year 1884.

The year 1866 finds them in dense ignorance, with no-one to guide them, as the white folks had moved away shortly after the Negroes were set free and had left the plantation in charge of a trustworthy negro servant named Ned.

All of the Negroes, but Ned and his wife Monisha, were superstitious, and believed in conjuring. Monisha, being a woman, was at times impressed by what the more expert conjurers would say.

Ned and Monisha had no children, and they had often prayed that their cabin home might one day be brightened by a child that would be a companion for Monisha when Ned was away from home. They had dreams, too, of educating the child so that when it grew up it could teach the people around them to aspire to something better and higher than superstition and conjuring.

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<sup>196</sup> A copy of the libretto is located in the Appendix.



Joplin's preface to *Treemonisha* clearly states "story fictitious," but as scholars such as Albrecht, Berlin, Benjamin, and Piras have discovered, many aspects of the opera correspond to Joplin's life story; indeed, some may be thinly-disguised parallels to the composer's upbringing in Texarkana in the decades immediately following Emancipation. For example, Joplin tells us that Treemonisha was educated in the local White community and that her mother paid for her schooling by washing for White families. In September of 1884, the preface tells us quite specifically, Treemonisha was eighteen years old and just beginning to make her own way in the world as a teacher. The inclusion of such a specific date has prompted many scholars to conclude that the opera includes important biographical clues into Joplin's life, and perhaps the lives of his friends and family. For example, we know that, like his heroine, Joplin grew up in rural East Texas and that he left his home in Texarkana when he was around eighteen in order to start of his own career in music, finding work as a teacher and performer. He situates Treemonisha's home "about three or four miles" from the Red River, on a plantation in Arkansas just northeast of Texarkana, the same location where he lived before his family moved into town. The preface relates how the plantation where Treemonisha grew up had been abandoned after the Civil War, as many farms in East Texas were, and that her father, Ned, a trusted former slave, is left to take care of the property. Joplin's father was a former slave who raised his family in a cabin in the woods similar to that of Ned and his wife, Monisha. And while there were still plenty of White people in the area after the Civil War, many former plantations were abandoned due to foreclosure or better opportunities in towns created along the railroad lines built in Texas in the 1870s. Joplin further relates that when Treemonisha was around seven years old, Ned and Monisha



made a deal with a local White family: They would take care of the family's washing, ironing, and firewood in exchange for Treemonisha's education. Joplin's parents made similar commitments on his behalf in 1873, when he was around seven, working for a number of local White families in order to secure an education, as well as a piano, for the young composer. The parallels between the "story fictitious" and Joplin's real life, then, might suggest that not only are the lives of Joplin's own parents reflected, at least in some degree, in the characters of Ned and Monisha, but that the opera is at least partly autobiographical.<sup>197</sup> That his story echoes the experiences of many African-Americans across the nation at that time lends *Treemonisha* universal appeal.

At the time, Joplin was writing *Treemonisha*, few American operas existed, none of them featured African Americans, and none of them were in English. There were only a handful of professional opera companies in the U.S. at the turn of the century, and for most of them, their mission was to present masterworks from Italian, German, and French composers. Inspired by America's entry on the world stage at the start of the twentieth century, however, the nation's classical music community was excited about the possibilities inherent in "American opera." The Metropolitan Opera sponsored a nationwide contest for the best grand opera written in English by an American, offering a \$10,000 cash prize to the winner. The contest attracted scores from dozens of composers,

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<sup>197</sup> In *King of Ragtime*, Edward A. Berlin presents a number of arguments in support of his argument that Joplin's wife, Freddie Alexander, is the inspiration behind *Treemonisha*. He believes that Freddie's physical appearance — the fact that she was light-skinned and roughly the same age as *Treemonisha* — are important evidence. He states that Joplin did not hold with social reforms, such as equal rights for women or that women were intellectually equal with men. Piras', however, provides convincing evidence that Joplin supported women's rights, including the rights to marry and divorce, and to own property in their own names.

If Freddie were the model for *Treemonisha* as Berlin claims, there ought to be musical evidence to support that notion. Berlin's research indicates that Joplin wrote *Bethena* in memory of Freddie, introducing in it a gesture he calls "the Freddie chord" — a four-note motif featuring an A over a G major chord. I could find no sign of this gesture in the opera, nor in any other Joplin work, leading me to conclude that while Freddie may have provided an inspirational nudge for Joplin to write *Treemonisha*, she is not portrayed in the character. In my opinion, *Treemonisha* is a symbol for Joplin and all that he hoped to accomplish as an intellectual and a cultural leader. For more information, see Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 193 and 255–257, and Piras, "*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

but after Horatio Parker's *Mona* was announced as the winner, the *American Musician and Art Journal* published an article praising *Treemonisha* as a "thoroughly American opera" that, unlike Parker's historic piece set in Roman-occupied Britain in the year 100, featured an authentically American story as well as American characters. "Is this an American opera?" the paper asked its readers regarding Parker's work, "or are American composers striving to create a school of American opera or are they simply employing their talents to fashion something for the operatic stage (that is) satisfactory to management?" Noting the lack of interest by White composers to write an authentically American opera, the paper pointed out the real injustice: "For obvious reasons," works by members of the "Ethiopian race will hardly be accepted as American," even if their works "sprang from our own soil practically of their own accord."<sup>198</sup>

As Piras stated in "*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down," all composers who tried their hand at writing their homeland's first national opera faced the problem of pouring the contents of an ethnic identity into the old, tried and true package of Italian opera. The process generally involved the replacement of language, plot, costumes, dances, and all other paraphernalia of the genre with symbols from their own culture, and for most composers, Weber's *Der Freischütz* served as the model.<sup>199</sup> For Joplin scholars such as Benjamin and Piras, there is no doubt that *Treemonisha* is a first-generation opera for African Americans. Indeed, as Benjamin wrote in his notes to *Treemonisha*, two of Joplin's concerns in composing the opera were to pioneer the creation of works written especially for Black singers and establish a library of important African-American theatrical works. Benjamin points out that until the time the work was premiered, serious

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<sup>198</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 26.

<sup>199</sup> Piras, "*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

dramatic work for African-Americans was in short supply, and operatic music written specifically for African-American singers was almost non-existent. For the most part, Black artists were relegated to musical theatre, minstrelsy, vaudeville, and popular music — venues that not only did little to establish their talent in the public’s mind, but also offered even less to raising the reputation of the Black community in American life.<sup>200</sup>

Benjamin believes Joplin was keenly aware that he had lived through times of almost Biblical importance to his race—the years just after Emancipation. “It was essential that those days be remembered in a worthy manner and for Joplin, the worthiest of means was opera. Joplin had no choice but to write both the words and the music; there was simply no one else to help him tell this story.”<sup>201</sup>

This prompts the question: Who was the intended audience? As Benjamin points out, *Treemonisha* was not created for the upper-class Whites who controlled classical music in America.<sup>202</sup> As his experiences in St. Louis with Maestro Ernst had already proven, Joplin knew that for many White patrons of the arts, the skin color of the composer often might be more important than the quality of the work.<sup>203</sup> As much as modern audiences might prefer to think otherwise, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the race and ethnicity of the composer were always considerations. It was an age when titans of business, men such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, and Commodore Vanderbilt, had amassed great fortunes in the process of transforming the American way of life. As they and similarly wealthy White patrons of the arts began investing their family fortunes into building performance halls, America

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<sup>200</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

<sup>201</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 51.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

gained its first full-time orchestras and opera companies, as well as concert halls which, in most cases, were intended to be temples of Art. Programming music that appealed to people of all races and ethnicities was not a priority; scheduling works that showcased the diversity of people living in America was even less so. What mattered most to many in the musical elite was firmly establishing European traditions on American soil and educating the masses with music that was enlightening, rather than entertaining.<sup>204</sup>

When Joplin was composing *Treemonisha*, American audiences were only just beginning to consider the idea of opera written in English. The possibility of attending a performance of a work written in English by a White American composer might have been revolutionary at the time; the idea of attending a similar work from an African-American composer was virtually unthinkable.<sup>205</sup> This suggests rather clearly that Joplin's intended audience for *Treemonisha* was largely African-American, although not exclusively so. Given reports of New York audiences of both races attending African-American performances, it appears Joplin wanted to his opera to appeal to people who already attended African-American events, and who did so regularly as one of their main forms of entertainment. In other words, the opera was aimed directly at middle- and lower-class professionals and working folk who patronized New York's Black theatres.

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<sup>204</sup> John Sullivan Dwight, *Dwight's Journal of Music*. For nearly forty years, Boston's crusty music critic bemoaned American artists and their devotion to popular music rather than classical literature. His columns deriding Gottschalk are legendary (see entry from 22 October 1853), but the pianist from New Orleans was hardly his only target. He wrote that Stephen Foster's music made his skin itch and that when he found himself accidentally humming a Foster tune, he purposely tried to fill his head with more "enlightening" fare. In column after column, he stated performing artists had an obligation to present the classics instead of their own compositions, but he was especially harsh toward American composers such as Gottschalk, Fry, and Bristow, men who were committed to developing a uniquely American musical voice. For a sampling of Dwight's entries, see Irving Sablosky, *What They Heard: Music in America, 1852-1881* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). The aforementioned entry for Gottschalk begins on page 38. In addition to Dwight's artistic objections, class considerations were an ever-present issue with the well-to-do during America's "gilded age." As far as many wealthy Americans were concerned, not only were minorities, servants, and members of the lower classes less valuable as human beings, they were not deemed worthy of Art or in need of enlightenment. They were certainly not welcome in temples of Art; if these "social inferiors" presented themselves for entry, they would not be directed toward premium seating areas of the hall. See also Betty E. Chmaj, "Fry versus Dwight: American Music's Debate over Nationality," *American Music*, 3/1 (Spring 1985), 63-84.

<sup>205</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 51.

This audience was familiar with vaudeville and musical comedy, but not so much with opera. Joplin hoped to change that, and in the process, introduce this audience to the incredible cast of African-American performers he would assemble for *Treemonisha*.<sup>206</sup>

As an experienced theatre composer with several shows already under his belt, Joplin would have understood that a three-hour opera would not appeal to his target audience. Benjamin suggests this is why *Treemonisha* is, by European standards, rather compact. Since African-American theatres would not be able to sell tickets to a show that ran all evening, the opera needed to fit what audiences were used to and what theatres could successfully promote. In short, it would need to fit established music-hall protocols.<sup>207</sup> In most cases, this meant the opera would be scheduled as the second half of an evening offering high-class African-American entertainment. The first part of the show might be a presentation of familiar spirituals, a recitation, a bit of comedy, or a few dance numbers, events that would inspire racial pride and build toward an enthusiastic reception for the opera.<sup>208</sup>

Booking the opera into Black music halls also meant the opera needed to be practical for staging in these houses; the cast would need to be small and the number of scene changes would need to be manageable for a small crew of workers backstage. What's more, staging the opera in African-American theatres impacted musical decisions, such as the size and makeup of the orchestra, and how the music might be scored.<sup>209</sup>

The story of *Treemonisha* is a parable, a morality tale easily understood by audiences reflecting both urban and rural experiences and readily accessible to Black

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 51.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. Since the 1890s, many such shows were presented by African-American companies. Some of them even included selections from European opera in their finales.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, 60–61.

theatre-goers new to opera. The moral of the story is that African Americans must rise above superstition and ignorance not only in order to reach their full potential, but also to take their rightful place in society as a whole.<sup>210</sup> The opera includes many rural Black traditions, such as the ring dance, a form of group dances still popular in the South between 1870 and 1890 but based on a much older tradition.<sup>211</sup> It also touched on social customs familiar to many potential audience members, such as the role conjuring played in the nation and the controversies surrounding the practice even in Joplin's day. It is important to know that in the opening scene, for example, when Zodzetrick tries to sell Monisha a bag of luck, these pouches were not a matter of artistic license on Joplin's part; they were commonplace, everyday items. As Berlin records in *King of Ragtime*, the conjure tradition was deeply embedded in Southern culture, and many nineteenth-century African-Americans sought to procure items that might improve their fate or bring misfortune to those who hurt them.<sup>212</sup> At the time Joplin wrote *Treemonisha*, conjuring was viewed by social reformers as a holdover from slavery, and an obstacle to Black progress. The subject was relevant not only to practitioners, but also to African-American intellectuals, education reformers, and social activists. By placing the issue at the forefront of his opera, Joplin presented himself with an opportunity to make a strong political statement about the value of education. The contrast between the conjurers,

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<sup>210</sup> Rubye Nell Hebert, *A Study of the Composition and Performance of Scott Joplin's Opera Treemonisha*, (DMA diss., Ohio State University, 1976), 20.

<sup>211</sup> Ring dances are associated with group celebrations such as weddings, the birth of a child, or successfully bringing in the harvest.

<sup>212</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 259. Berlin states that the custom was so deeply ingrained that after the Civil War, when many former slaves made their way toward the North, more than a few small-town Yankee merchants saw an opportunity to make a profit off gullible African Americans. They created and sold bags of luck and other magical trinkets (lucky rabbit feet, items for making spells, bones, etc.) to African Americans as they made their way to larger cities.

which Joplin describes as old men, and Treemonisha, a young, well-educated woman who will eradicate superstition in her area, could not be more clear.<sup>213</sup>

In writing an opera that might set the pattern for later African-American works, Joplin included all of the elements Piras has observed in the development of other first-generation national operas: in particular, the establishment of ethnic identity through characters, plot, location, scenery, costumes, dances, melodies, and rhythms. What's more, the libretto is bilingual; Joplin wrote it in the two languages most African-Americans used, standard English for public situations and Black English Vernacular (BEV) for conversations with other African Americans.<sup>214</sup>

For Joplin, a soft-spoken serious man who championed non-violence and Buddhist values, reworking Weber's mold presented many challenges, not the least of which was how to successfully incorporate his childhood home, family, and neighbors into a morality tale about the value of non-violence and the role education might play in improving life for all African Americans.<sup>215</sup> As Benjamin wrote, "The opera's morality lesson, its small cast of stock characters (aged parents, an orphan, scheming villains, et al.), the deliberately exaggerated emotional tone, the fulsome use of mystery, shock, and surprise all plunging inevitably toward triumph are the textbook characteristics of Victorian melodrama," a form Joplin's target audience adored.<sup>216</sup> While melodrama was on the decline, Joplin most likely saw it as well suited for introducing more complex artistic and social elements to his audiences. It also provided a familiar, and comfortable,

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<sup>213</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 258–260. Joplin makes still other contemporary references in this same number. Ned's line about drinking relates directly to the temperance movement and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. According to Berlin and Cather, Joplin enjoyed his share of beer and he saw no reason for a man not to drink as long as he didn't let it interfere with his work.

<sup>214</sup> Piras, "Treemonisha or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down."

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 52–54.

backdrop for ideas many might see as radical in a time before African American stage works, let alone famous Black playwrights, singers, actors, and African-American characters other than those established in minstrelsy such as Uncle Tom or Topsy.<sup>217</sup>

As Joplin scholar Rick Benjamin wrote, the work was groundbreaking:

Joplin's attempt to introduce a serious work realistically portraying recent black history was both bold and anomalous. And yet he pushed even further: his protagonist is a magnetic young woman. His villains are not destroyed but reformed. The struggle he presents is philosophical: ignorance versus education. In essence, just as Scott Joplin had transformed ragtime, melding disparate folk and classical elements to create a new musical art, *Treemonisha* was his attempt to transform the American theater with a unique style of black lyric drama.<sup>218</sup>

In noting parallels between *Treemonisha* and *Der Freischütz*, Piras observes that Joplin's work overflows with references to Weber. More important than the obvious connections, Piras says, are the symbols that lie just beneath the surface.<sup>219</sup> For example, while the action of each opera takes place within the span of a single day, the timing is reversed in the two works. In *Der Freischütz*, the opera begins in the afternoon and ends in the morning; whereas in *Treemonisha*, the story begins in the morning and ends at night. In *Der Freischütz*, morning "marks the return to good sense after the darkness of evil," but for Joplin, darkness in the final act of *Treemonisha* is not grounded in reality as the first two acts were, but instead serves as a glimpse of a world Joplin did not live to see, a world in which the common people choose an intellectual as their leader.<sup>220</sup> Similarly, Berlin speculates that the "dense forest" surrounding the plantation where *Treemonisha* lives symbolizes the "dense ignorance" in which the people live. The thickness of the forest, then, has two functions: "it isolates the community from the

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Piras, "Treemonisha or Der Freischütz Upside Down." In the final pages of his essay, Piras provides a series of comparisons between the two works, including charts that illustrate how structural elements in one work mirror similar elements in the other.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.



society of nearby places such as Texarkana, thereby symbolizing the isolation of African-Americans from the rest of society, and it prevents the community from being reached by the light of reason and education.”<sup>221</sup>

Regarding Joplin’s preferences for the accompaniment, it is important to keep in mind that not only have all of Joplin’s orchestrations been lost, but also the revisions he made to the opera during the years in which he attempted to have it staged. Even so, there are traditions and period orchestration guides that provide insight into how Joplin may have scored the work. As Benjamin explains, for the half century spanning 1870 to 1920, the American “Eleven & Pno.” orchestra was the standard accompaniment in halls where operettas, music comedies, vaudeville, and variety shows were heard. Its instrumentation included flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet, first and second cornets, trombone, drums, piano, first and second violins, viola, cello, and double bass. “This very efficient little ‘band’ evolved as a result of both economic and artistic considerations: It made a clear, full sound, could play popular and classical music, was compact enough to fit into typical pits, and only added a dozen more names to a theater’s payroll.”<sup>222</sup> The makeup of the ensemble supported singers without overwhelming them, and yet it filled the hall with music. In preparing his orchestration of the opera, Benjamin noticed that each of the instruments mentioned in the 1911 piano score were members of the Eleven & Pno. orchestra and that cues for strings were always in the singular, indicating Joplin was not expecting more than one player per part.<sup>223</sup> Given the popularity of this ensemble and the racial politics of the day, it is unlikely that Joplin expected a large European orchestra comprised of many string players supported by winds and brass, such as the one Gunther

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<sup>221</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 257.

<sup>222</sup> Benjamin, notes to *Treemonisha*, 61–61.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Schuller organized for his reconstruction of the opera in 1976. It is far more likely, as Benjamin's research suggests, that Joplin scored the opera in accordance to American theatrical traditions, with woodwinds and brasses playing almost continuously and strings providing color.

The banjo, Benjamin explains, was not included in his reconstruction of the orchestral score. His research indicates that the leading African-American composers of the period — including Will Marion Cook, H. Lawrence Freeman, and Joe Jordan — avoided the instrument because of its associations with minstrelsy and blackface depictions of plantation life.<sup>224</sup> Given Joplin's interest in culture and refinement, not to mention his connections to progressive leaders in New York's African-American community, people to whom the banjo was a throwback to the "happy darky" stereotype they were struggling to overcome, Benjamin believes Joplin would not likely have included the instrument in the orchestra.<sup>225</sup> Music that depicted the banjo, on the other hand, would have been a welcome addition, and as the upcoming topical analysis of the opera indicates, banjo figurations play a prominent role in *Treemonisha*.

### **A Topical Analysis of Scott Joplin's Opera *Treemonisha***

For the most part, the world continues to view Scott Joplin solely as the author of ragtime works for solo piano. Only a few scholars have attempted to reframe his career as a composer for the theatre. No doubt, a significant part of the reason why is the number of lost manuscripts: three out of five major productions have been lost, and the others are

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 61–62.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

incomplete; one lacks dance steps, the other its orchestration.<sup>226</sup> I believe that by viewing Joplin's catalogue as a whole, however, his rags emerge as works that allowed the composer to hone his skills as he prepared for more demanding genres.

While many composers may have influenced Joplin's compositions – Verdi, Wagner, Mozart, and Gounod are most often mentioned – it is likely that Joplin had a different composer in mind when writing *Treemonisha*: Carl Maria von Weber.<sup>227</sup> Weber was a master of folk opera and tales of the supernatural, and his operas from the 1820s were at the height of their popularity when Joplin's various teachers set sail for America. Moreover, during the nineteenth century the U.S. was full of German immigrants and lovers of German music. The time was ripe for an American opera in the same vein.

Like the works of Mozart, Rossini, and Weber, *Treemonisha* is a numbers opera: Each individual number was printed and released as a “single” over a period of years, as his budget allowed. The opera is organized into three acts designated by subtitles – Morning, Afternoon, Evening – that showed the composer's adherence to dramatic principles set out by Aristotle: in particular, the necessity for having the entire story unfold within the span of a single day.<sup>228</sup> Each act has its own introductory music. The overture introduces many of the musical themes to be featured later in the opera. Act II

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<sup>226</sup> The three lost works are *A Guest of Honor* (opera, 1903), *Syncopated Jamboree* (vaudeville, 1915), and *If* (musical comedy, 1916). The piano-vocal score of *Treemonisha* that Joplin self-published survives; its orchestration has been lost. It is possible, given the number of revisions Joplin made as performances took place, that other versions existed at some point. The final work in this group of five major works is *A Ragtime Dance*, a folk ballet from 1899 for which Joplin provided words, music, and choreography. The music survives, along with the text and the names of the dances, but the actual dance steps, which Joplin provided free of charge with every purchase of the sheet music, have not yet been found. Given the work was published by Stark, it might be worthwhile asking heirs of the Stark family if the original plates are still in their possession, or if they were sold at some point to another firm.

<sup>227</sup> While several scholars have mentioned Weber as a possible influence on Joplin, no one has presented a more convincing case for a connection between the two than Marcello Piras. His article, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down,” presents a compelling argument outlining how Weber's most beloved work served as the framework for Joplin's opera. Read it online at <http://www.crj-online.org/v4/CRJ-Treemonisha.php> or in *Current Research in Jazz* 4 (2012).

<sup>228</sup> Joplin used this same format in *A Ragtime Dance*, indeed it is an old theatrical tradition – Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, for example, is subtitled “Follies of a Day.”

opens with music that sets the scene and prepares the listener for the upcoming stage action before immediately transitioning into No. 11 “Superstition.” Act III, which falls after intermission, opens with an extended instrumental Prelude, roughly one-third the length of the opening Overture.

While *Treemonisha* may not conform to the textbook definition of grand opera as envisioned by Meyerbeer, it more than met American expectations for that designation.<sup>229</sup> The work includes recitatives, arias, ensemble numbers, choruses, and a ballet: in essence, all the necessary ingredients for a “grand” production that audiences of the time expected. It also required props, scenery, costumes, and an orchestra. The music is entirely sung; only one character employs a speech-song style, and even that is pitched. Finally, *Treemonisha*’s storyline was laid out for audiences in advance through a Preface written by the composer. In the eyes of Joplin’s contemporaries, everything about *Treemonisha* was “grand”: even its story was inspirational, especially to African-Americans with direct personal ties to events that unfolded in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

It is worth noting, however, that despite media descriptions of the work as a ragtime work, *Treemonisha* is not a ragtime opera. It includes only isolated uses of the style, most notably in the final numbers of Acts II and III. Indeed, the word ragtime does not appear in the title or in Joplin’s introductory notes. No doubt the world expected a ragtime opera from Joplin because he was best known for composing in that genre. Perhaps it was also more practical to advertise it that way, when talking about an opera from a Black composer about Black characters living on an abandoned Southern

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<sup>229</sup> Marcello Piras, “*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Also found in Ruby Nell Hebert, *A Study of the composition and Performance of Scott Joplin’s Opera, Treemonisha* (DMA doc., Ohio State University, 1976), 13.

plantation during Reconstruction. The term ragtime was used a bit more freely in 1910 than it is today, and billing *Treemonisha* as a ragtime opera most likely would have been viewed as a better way to sell tickets than a more accurate description of its music.

As Ann Sears points out in her essay on *Treemonisha*,<sup>230</sup> Joplin employed a number of styles throughout the work. Although much of the opera resembles operettas composed in both Europe and the U.S. in the early twentieth century, it is unique in its American touches: in particular, its African-American influences. The opera presents a kaleidoscope of the styles Joplin was exposed to in the South during Reconstruction; its twenty-six set pieces include the call-and-response style of spirituals, lined-out hymns, quartet singing, and the ring dance. The opera also includes some of the earliest efforts by any composer to capture the expressive vocal inflections of African-American shouts, moans, and hollers.<sup>231</sup>

Along with important African-American musical signifiers, Joplin employed varying degrees of plantation dialect to indicate each character's class, social standing, and education level. Language also relayed important cultural and political messages. The conjurers, for example, represent the lowest level of society. Uneducated and superstitious people who prey upon others' ignorance in order to survive, they communicate exclusively in dialect. Indeed, as the lowest of the low, their leader, Zodzetrick, is assigned a style of singing not found elsewhere in the opera: a pitched speech-song style. The local preacher, Parson Alltalk, also speaks in dialect, but his speech shows a higher level of sophistication than the conjurers, even if only slightly so. Andy and Lucy, two of *Treemonisha*'s friends, speak in dialect as well, but far less so

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<sup>230</sup> Ann Sears, "Political Currents and Black Culture in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," in *Blackness in Opera*, Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, eds. (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 101–115.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

than the conjurers or the parson. Likewise, the male quartet also uses dialect, although in a revealing passage they adopt standard English when responding directly to Treemonisha. Ned and Monisha, Treemonisha's parents, are among the most educated of the townsfolk. Their lines alternate between dialect and standard English, with more dialect in the first two acts than in the third.<sup>232</sup> Remus, Treemonisha's protégé and her closest friend, almost never uses dialect. And finally, as the most highly educated person in the community, Treemonisha speaks entirely in standard English.<sup>233</sup>

Plantation dialect was first employed in minstrelsy and was adopted into turn-of-the-century texts by poets and composers of both races.<sup>234</sup> A good bit has been written about its use in the opera, with several scholars suggesting it renders an already weak libretto even more so, arguing that the lyrics are naïve and that the poetry contorted in order to fit an awkward rhyme scheme. Albrecht, however, reminds us that plots and rhyme schemes are only part of an opera's *raison d'être*; the music itself is just as important. Albrecht explains that the composer used dialect for literary reasons; it was what his characters spoke.<sup>235</sup> Their language employed dialect and turns of phrase not common outside the rural South.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Several scholars, including Sears, have noticed the lack of dialect throughout Act III. I suggest that Joplin had both musical and philosophic reasons for this. The lack of dialect allowed the music to be performed independently of the opera as a whole. Philosophically, as the entire cast of characters in *Treemonisha* approaches enlightenment, the "need" for dialect decreases in direct proportion to their acceptance of Treemonisha as their leader and of the community's collective ability to "march onward" into a brighter day.

<sup>233</sup> I noticed a parallel pattern in *Treemonisha*'s social structure – the amount of dissonance and syncopation also corresponds to a character's place in society. Complexion also plays a role as we ascend the opera's social ladder. Joplin's preface clearly states Treemonisha is a light-skinned child, implying she might be of mixed-race heritage.

<sup>234</sup> Ann Sears mentions African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), who wrote lyrics for Broadway composers Will Marion Cook and Sidney Homer (1865–1953), as an example of an established author who included Negro dialect in his works.

<sup>235</sup> Albrecht, "African, Autobiographical and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," 220.

<sup>236</sup> "Dem," "der," "dese," and "dose" were common parts of the English language in Louisiana, where I grew up – and remain so today, especially among those whose first language is not English and in areas where assimilation and/or learning how to speak standard English is not a high priority.

*Treemonisha* is a truly American work. Not only does it blend the musical trends of Black America in the nineteenth century with Anglo-American and European compositional practices, but it also synthesizes centuries of African and Southern traditions. It stands alone in U.S. literature as a genuinely American story contained in the only extant opera commemorating the dreams and aspirations of the first generations after slavery.<sup>237</sup> Joplin's authorship of the text only makes his lyrics more special, not less, as he was one of the few serious composers interested in writing such a work, and one of the very few qualified to tell this particular story.<sup>238</sup> What's more, by sharing words and ideas with a rich history behind them – from “goofer dus,” “hee hoo,” and “Zodzetrick” – Joplin preserved a world that was rapidly disappearing and today no longer exists.

Joplin's work also reminds us how deeply the first generation after slavery believed in the power of education and its ability to transform not only individual lives, but also an entire race. Freed from the oppression of slavery and optimistic about the future, many African Americans ambitiously chased both education and opportunity after the Civil War, eager to find their place in American society. This change did not take place overnight, nor was it universally adopted within the Black community, but the process began in earnest with Emancipation, with many African-Americans learning viable trades, and when possible, enrolling in colleges and universities in order to enter the professions. The townsfolk in *Treemonisha*'s area reflected various levels of education and superstition, just as many real-life towns and African-American

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<sup>237</sup> Ann Sears, “Political Currents and Black Culture in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*,” in *Blackness In Opera*, Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan, and Eric Saylor, eds., (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 101–115. These are the same arguments Rick Benjamin makes in his notes to *Treemonisha* (5–6) regarding the historical importance of the opera to American culture.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

settlements did in the decades immediately after the Civil War, a time when public education was in its infancy and schools for Black students were scarce. The opening scene demonstrates this educational disparity.<sup>239</sup>

*Zodzetrick to Monisha:*

I want to sell to you dis bag o' luck,  
Yo' enemies it will keep away.  
Over yo' front do' you can hang it,  
And good luck will come each day.

*Monisha:*

Will it drive away de blues?  
An' stop Ned from drinkin' booze?

*Zodzetrick:*

It will drive de blues, I'm thinkin'  
An' will stop Ned from booze drinkin'

*Ned:*

No, dat bag you'se not gwine to buy,  
'Cause I know de price is high ....  
... It may be worth its weight in gold,  
but to me it aint worth a possum's hair ...  
... Drinkin' gin I would not stop,  
if that bag was on my chin.

*Treemonisha to Zodzetrick (later):*

Wait sir, for a few moments stay,  
You should listen to what I have to say.  
Please come closer to me, come along,  
And I'll tell you of your great wrong.  
... You have lived without working for many years.  
All by your tricks of conjury.  
You have caus'd superstition and many sad tears.  
You should stop, you are doing great injury.

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<sup>239</sup> Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 2 "Bag of Luck," 20–27.



In my opinion, much of the criticism of Joplin’s libretto and specific word choices is unwarranted. As Albrecht demonstrated, poets of greater renown wrote “awkward” verse that didn’t keep composers from setting it to beautiful music. Joplin not only set his text to memorable melodies, he used music — as well as language — to differentiate his characters’ social status and education levels.<sup>240</sup> Along the way, he also introduced a wide array of African-Americanisms into classical music, gestures that became *topoi* in their own right. Markers signifying Black America located throughout the score include an abundance of *topoi*: Call-and-response, Spirituals, ring dances, square dancing, worksongs, syncopated ragtime rhythms, Barbershop, and African-American vocalizations such as the Field Holler, Crying, and the Closed-lip Moan. Depictions of musical instruments such as the banjo and flute can also be found, as can European *topoi* such as Pastoral, Demonic, Tempest, and Bardic. Emotions and environmental conditions are also embedded into the music – darkness, woodlands, zephyrs, anger, happiness, fighting, laughter, etc. And while scholars have yet to discuss it widely, we can also find exoticism and racial *topoi* from outside Black America in the score, subtle references to Jews, Gypsies, Russians, and Native Americans specifically.

Figure 3.1 provides an overview of topics found in each musical number in the opera. A closer examination of the specific numbers follows. The chapter concludes with a closer look at one number that, from a topics perspective, presents material not found elsewhere in the opera or in Joplin’s collected works — No. 9, “Good Advice.”

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<sup>240</sup> For example, Treemonisha represents the best in African-American society: a strong, well-educated young woman with the potential to improve life for her entire race. Her music seldom includes African-American rhythms or musical gestures. The conjurers, on the other hand, reflect all that Joplin abhorred in his contemporaries: They are not only uneducated and illiterate, they are superstitious — and worse, they preyed upon other African-Americans. To illustrate that they are the polar opposite of Treemonisha, the conjurers’ music is dense, dissonant, or highly chromatic. The music for the people, being midway between these two extremes, includes syncopated melodies as well as a number of *topoi* that suggest African Americans.

<b>MOVEMENT</b>	<b>TOPIC OR GESTURE</b>
<b>Overture</b>	Black, Ragtime, Banjo, Happiness Theme, Pastoral, Tempest-Demonic, Fantasia, Fanfare, Hammerblows, Zephyrs, Water, Motives from “Abuse,” “Confusion,” “Wasp Nest,” and “A Real Slow Drag,” American Dances (Cakewalk, Schottische, Slow Drag, Stoptime, Juba).
No. 2 <b>Bag of Luck</b>	Pastoral, Tempest (danger, chaos, confusion), Innocence.
No. 3 <b>The Corn Huskers</b>	African greeting.
No. 4 <b>Going Round</b>	Contredanse (African ring-dance, Square dance), Call-and-Response, Barbershop, Ragtime, Banjo.
No. 5 <b>The Wreath</b>	Danger.
No. 6 <b>The Sacred Tree</b>	Sentimental Ballad, Zephyrs, Waltz.
No. 7 <b>We are Surprised</b>	Tempest (chaos, confusion).
No. 8 <b>Treemonisha’s Bringing Up</b>	Storyteller/bardic, Banjo, Exoticism (sorrowful, Gypsy-Jewish), Happiness, Ragtime.
No. 9 <b>Good Advice</b>	Call-and-response, Church (chorale, spiritual), Wasps, Native American (Indian melody, Honor beat), Blues and African-American song tradition (closed-lip moan).
No. 10 <b>Confusion</b>	Tempest (chaos, confusion, agitation), African-American song tradition (closed-lip moan), Anguish (crying, wailing).
No. 11 <b>Superstition</b>	Tempest (mischief, mayhem, danger), Pastoral, Outdoors, Fanfare, Zephyrs, Innocence, Church (closed-lip moan, chorale).
No. 12 <b>Treemonisha in Peril</b>	Demonic Unrest, Innocence, Church, Ragtime.
No. 13 <b>Frolic of the Bears</b>	Waltz, Chase, Laughter. Exoticism (Russian spur kick).
No. 14 <b>The Wasp Nest</b>	Outdoors (pastoral setting, afternoon heat, wasps) Tempest-Demonic (danger, flames of hell)

Figure 3.1. Topics and gestures found in Scott Joplin’s opera *Treemonisha*

<b>MOVEMENT</b>	<b>TOPIC OR GESTURE</b>
No. 15 <b>The Rescue</b>	Tempest (chaos, confusion), Fanfare, Banjo, Happiness Theme, Cakewalk, Unrest in forest (pastoral but not peaceful).
No. 16 <b>We Will Rest Awhile</b>	Barbershop, Banjo.
No. 17 <b>Going Home</b>	Ragtime, Spiritual.
No. 18 <b>Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn</b>	Fanfare, Ragtime Two-Step, Dinner Bell.
No. 19 <b>Prelude to Act 3</b>	Pastoral, Tempest-Demonic (danger, trouble, agitated), Tango, Cakewalk, Ragtime, Exoticism (Jewish).
No. 20 <b>I want to see my child</b>	Parlor Waltz, Pastoral, Tempest, Innocence.
No. 21 <b>Treemonisha's Return</b>	Fanfare, Tango, Tempest (chaos, danger, trouble), Happiness, Ragtime, Cakewalk, Stoptime, Church (spiritual, chorale, closed-lip moan), Hammerblows, Patting Juba (punching, fighting), Zephyrs (wind or waves), Field Holler, Disagreement (Happiness Theme in minor).
No. 22 <b>Wrong is Never Right</b>	Parlor ballad, Waltz, Gottschalk, Birdsong, Virtuoso style, Chorale style, Innocence.
No. 23 <b>Abuse</b>	Patting Juba (violence, anger, footstamps, fighting, fist shaking), Tempest (chaos, indecision), Cakewalk.
No. 24 <b>When Villains Ramble Far and Near</b>	Pastoral, Deus ex machina, Wagner, Vaudeville (opera buffa, music comedy).
No. 25 <b>Conjurors Forgiven</b>	Tempest (chaos, confusion), Tango, Patting Juba, Fanfare, Church (chorale, spirituals), Happiness, Gospel.
No. 26 <b>We will Trust You as our Leader</b>	Pastoral, Church (jubilee spirituals), Forest (Weber, Outdoors).
No. 27 <b>A Real Slow Drag</b>	Ragtime, American popular dances (Slow drag, Stoptime, Two-Step). Noble (coronation, ceremonial). Exoticism (Africa: Ghana ( <i>fɔntɔmfɔm</i> )).

Figure 3.1, continued

### Topics, Gestures, and Styles Seen in *Treemonisha*

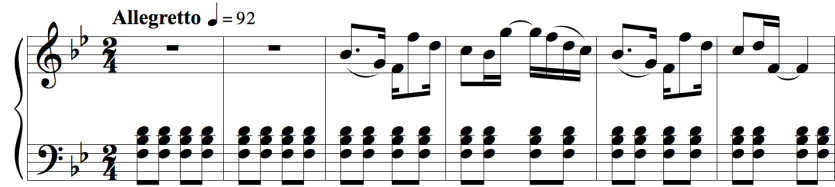
Overture — In many ways, the overture to *Treemonisha* reflects Joplin's work with Bruto Giannini, with whom he studied in New York. It presents a potpourri of themes from the opera; the most important one was singled out by Joplin in his preface to the opera – the Happiness theme. Set in ragtime style and over a series of strummed block chords in the accompaniment that suggest “banjo,” this music signifies the people's happiness when free from ignorance and superstition. There are at least six statements of this theme in the overture alone, many of which function as bridges to music referencing specific plot points. The only theme in the opera to function as a leitmotif, it opens on a second-inversion B-flat chord.<sup>241</sup> The chord position remains unchanged each time the motive appears. With one exception in the overture (and in the opera as a whole), the happiness theme remains constant; it is not altered to reflect actions on the stage. The music is heard six times in the Overture; only on its final hearing does Joplin include a root position chord in the motif — and then it is to provide a final cadence at the end of the overture. Ex. 3.1 shows the Happiness theme.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> All other reference are topical. Regarding Joplin's use of a leitmotif, Albrecht draws parallels between Joplin's overture to *Treemonisha* and Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Both works include a leitmotif, both are in the key of B-flat, and both include an accompaniment featuring chords in inversion. (Albrecht, “Autobiographical, African, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*,” 221). Berlin, on the other hand, sees Joplin's use of a leitmotif as a tribute to Wagner (*King of Ragtime*, 258). He also views the chord position as a device to create a sense of anticipation.

<sup>242</sup> There are six locations in the score where Joplin provides a glimpse of his orchestration preferences. Three are found in the overture: Joplin calls for timpani and trombone between mm. 66 and 68 just prior to the first presentation of the Wasp Nest theme (Largo con expression, page 8). At mm. 170 on page 15, there is a cue for timpani in the transition into music from No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag.” (All page numbers refer to Joplin's original 1911 piano-vocal score, now available for download on IMSLP.)

Regarding Joplin's orchestration preferences, Albrecht sees the composer's use of timpani in a manner similar to how Meyerbeer used kettle drums in the “Coronation March” from *Le Prophete*. Albrecht suspects that Joplin was familiar with this work long before Oscar Hammerstein produced it in Manhattan during 1907. The work was a popular addition to many band and orchestra concerts. (Albrecht, “Autobiographical, African, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*,” 221).



Ex. 3.1. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture (Happiness theme, banjo accompaniment)

Music from six numbers heard in the overture, in their order of appearance, are:

No. 15, “The Rescue;” No. 23, “Abuse;” No. 14, “The Wasp Nest;” No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag;” No. 10, “Confusion;” and No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven.” The first two themes to be presented are in minor keys; each uses a series of diminished seventh chords, two-voice counterpoint, and other devices that in Joplin’s concept of *Sturm and Drang* convey conflict, tension, and uncertainty to be resolved only by the reappearance of the Happiness theme. The pattern is repeated in the ensuing episodes, and the initial Happiness theme ultimately ends the movement, depicting in music the triumph of good over evil, reason over superstition, and education over ignorance.

In addition to presenting the opera’s most important musical themes, the Overture contains a number of important racial signifiers. Joplin immediately identifies the cultural orientation of the work as African American by using topics and gestures closely associated with his contemporary Black popular culture, such as dance rhythms from the cakewalk, slow drag, and stoptime; African drumming and polyrhythms from patting juba; depictions of the banjo; and ragtime syncopations. Joplin also employs topics, styles, and gestures seen in European music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Pastoral, Tempest, Demonic, Fantasia, and Fanfare. Joplin uses these topics to depict upcoming scenes, often repurposing music directly from the opera.

As the most important theme in the opera, the Happiness theme opens the overture. It is followed by an excerpt from No. 15, “The Rescue,” at m. 37. The opening topic is Pastoral and the harmony is stable (A: V7-I-V7-I). The mood quickly changes in the fifth bar when Joplin introduces the Chaos motive in the bassline. This topic is characterized by rhythmically dense, chromatic writing, and music that is harmonically unstable. In this passage, the music meets those expectations with a series of diminished and secondary diminished seventh chords that eventually lead to more stable harmonies at m. 51 with the return of the Happiness theme. The episode also includes cross rhythms, a rhythmic device that increases excitement in the passage and may suggest Patting Juba.

Ex. 3.2. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 37–47;  
heard later in No. 17, “Rescue”

Music from No. 23, “Abuse,” appears at m. 55, immediately following a second statement of the Happiness theme. The passage quoted in the overture comes from m. 7 of the number and features Patting Juba, shifting rhythms, and highly chromatic writing.

Ex. 3.3. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 52–58;  
heard later in No. 23, “Abuse”

Music from No. 14, “The Wasp Nest,” depicting a hot summer afternoon complete with swarming wasps, appears in the overture in m. 69, then again in m. 109. Topics in the passage include Pastoral, Outdoors, Wasps, and Demonic. The main theme features a meandering melody, music that evokes the buzzing of wasps (see Ex. 3.4).

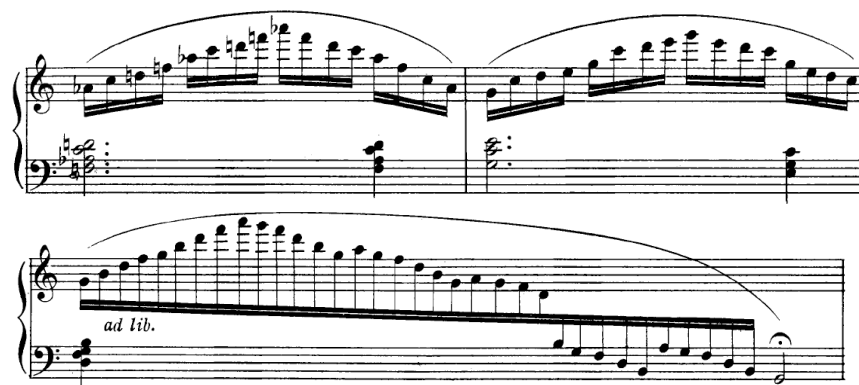
Ex. 3.4. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 69–77,  
also mm. 109–117; Wasp theme

Joplin’s use of a Demonic gesture depicting the flames of hell is reminiscent of similar passages by Mozart in *Don Giovanni*: short sequences of chromatic figuration that mimic the flickering movements of fire (see Ex. 3.5).



Ex. 3.5. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 86–88, Flames of hell

While many topics employed throughout the opera can be heard in the overture, some either do not return or are seen later only in short, fleeting gestures. Such is the case with the Fantasia style, shown here in an excerpt from measures 106–108.<sup>243</sup>



Ex. 3.6. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 106–108; fantasia

Joplin inserts music from No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag,” in m. 172. One of the few ragtime dance numbers in the opera, and perhaps one of *Treemonisha*’s most haunting melodies, the music is drawn from the Act III finale (see Ex. 3.7).



Ex. 3.7. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 169–176; heard later in No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag”

<sup>243</sup> Other examples include the virtuoso style, seen in brief cadenza-like flourishes in various solo arias.



In m. 192, Joplin quotes three measures from No. 10, “Confusion.” With its rhythmic intensity, contrary motion, and highly chromatic lines, this portion of the overture is an excellent demonstration of the Tempest-Demonic style and the Chaos-Confusion topic (see Ex. 3.8).

The image shows a musical score for three measures of Scott Joplin's 'Treemonisha' Overture. The score is written for piano and is in 6/8 time. It is marked 'Larghetto' with a tempo of quarter note = 92. The music is highly chromatic and rhythmic, with a complex bass line and a melodic line in the treble. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system starts with a piano (p) dynamic marking. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a strong sense of rhythmic intensity and chromatic movement.

Ex. 3.8. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm. 192–194; heard later in No. 17, “Confusion”

The final theme presented in the overture comes from No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven.” Like many of the other episodes, this music is also set in the Tempest style, but here Joplin adds an extra touch: the Tango rhythm. When the composer includes this distinctive rhythmic pattern in music suggesting Chaos and Confusion, there is always an added element of Danger present in the drama. In the overture, he adds still another layer of interest; he inverts the figuration seen in m. 212 when the material returns, presenting the original bass line in the treble on the repeat. Ex. 3.9 shows both the original presentation and its inversion.

Meno mosso

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The tempo is marked "Meno mosso". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes various dynamic markings: *f* (forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *cresc.* (crescendo), *poco a poco* (gradually), *fz* (forzando), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The bass line features prominent sixteenth-note patterns, often marked with a "6" (sixteenth notes). The treble line includes chords and melodic fragments. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final notes.

Ex. 3.9. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, Overture, mm 212–231; heard later in No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven” (Inversion begins at m. 228)

Fig. 3.2 provides an overview of the major themes found in the overture and the topics each employs.

<b>MM.</b>	<b>SOURCE MATERIAL</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>
1–36	Happiness Theme	Ragtime, Banjo
37–50	No. 15, “The Rescue”	Pastoral, Chaos
51–54	Happiness Theme	Ragtime, Banjo
55–68	No. 23, “Abuse”	Juba
69–88	No. 14, “Wasp Nest”	Pastoral, Outdoors, Wasps, Demonic (flames of hell)
89–103		
104–108		Fantasia
109–123	No. 14, “Wasp Nest”	Pastoral, Outdoors, Wasps
124–127	Transition	Fanfare
128–131	Happiness Theme	Ragtime, Banjo
132–139		
140–143	No. 15, “The Rescue”	Chaos, Confusion
144–169		
172–187	No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag”	Ragtime, slow drag
188–191		
192–194	No. 10, “Confusion”	Tempest, Demonic
204–211	Happiness Theme	Ragtime, Banjo
212–243	No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven”	Confusion, Tempest, Tango, Juba
244–266	Happiness Theme	Ragtime, Banjo

Fig. 3.2. Source Materials and Topics in the Overture to Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*

No. 2, “Bag of Luck” – The opera opens as three old conjurors visit Ned and Monisha’s cabin, hoping to sell them a bag of luck. Monisha is interested if it might curb Ned’s drinking, but Ned tells Monisha that he’s not interested in giving up his booze; nevertheless, the men continue trying to make a sale. Treemonisha sends them away, explaining that she and her parents don’t believe in superstition or luck, words that not only anger the conjurors but threaten their livelihood — especially if she is the sort who could convince others not to buy from them, which they surmise is exactly the situation.

Joplin uses the opening scene not only to introduce the story and his leading characters, but to also make clear the class, education level, and social position of each character through their singing styles, language, rhythmic intensity, and dissonance. Treemonisha represents the pinnacle of society: She is thoughtful and well educated, having learned to read and write at a young age. Her music is consonant, and with only one exception in the opera, her rhythms are unsyncopated. Her parents, Ned and Monisha, value education, but their language, a mix of standard English and plantation dialect, reflects their humble origins as rural Southerners and, in particular, as former slaves. Their music is mixed; when they align themselves with the villagers, their singing styles and rhythms match those of the common man; when they sing solo numbers, their styles are higher and their language, rhythms, and melodies reflect that. The conjurors represent the lowest level of society, and Joplin does not hesitate to portray his villains as tricksters, well-known figures from African and African-American storytelling traditions. These men speak entirely in dialect; their music is often rhythmic, chromatic, or dissonant. Zodzetrick, their leader, is the only character to use speech song, a technique Joplin borrows from turn-of-the-century vaudeville and music comedy.

The predominant topic of the opening scene is Pastoral, but the scene reveals early signs of gestures and styles that will be developed as the story unfolds, namely Danger-Chaos-Confusion and Innocence. Danger is first encountered in m. 77 when the key changes and dissonances are introduced (see Ex. 3.10).

Zodætrick marks cross on ground spite on it and turns back)

And I'll tell you of your great wrong. *Tempo l'istesso*

*rit.*

Zodætrick.

I've come back, my dear child, to hear what you say, Go

*f* *mp*

Ex. 3.10. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 2, “Bag of Luck,”  
mm. 75–82; Danger (mm. 77–78)

Innocence can be heard in Remus’ solo at m. 118, when Joplin evokes the simplicity of a bygone era using a consonant melody, straight rhythms, and an accompaniment that doubles the voice and provides only the most essential harmonic and rhythmic support.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. The top system is the vocal line, starting with the tempo marking 'più mosso' and a quarter note equal to 88. The lyrics are: 'She is the on - ly ed - u - ca - ted per - son of..... our race, For'. The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, starting with 'più mosso' and 'mf'. The lyrics continue: 'ma - ny long miles far a - way from this place. She'll'. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Ex. 3.11. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 2, “Bag of Luck,”  
mm. 118–122; Innocence

In addition to these features, Joplin alters his accompaniment each time Zodzetrick tries a new sales angle, with each successive attempt slightly less Pastoral. Text painting is also employed, with tremolos on the word “fear” when Ned tells Monisha she will not buy from Zodzetrick (m. 51), and silence on the word “stop” when Treemonisha admonishes the conjurers for promoting superstition (m. 100).

No. 3, “The Corn Huskers” – As the story gets underway, we see workers arriving to help the village bring in its harvest. Albrecht describes the musical proceedings reenacted in this scene as an abbreviated form of traditional African greetings, reducing a potentially hour-long exchange into a few quick hellos.<sup>244</sup> Singing and accompaniment styles again reflect each character’s social level; providing an example that demonstrates how some people alter their behavior according to their company, Joplin has his corn huskers’ switch from dialect (“de corn”) to standard English (“the whole day”) when

<sup>244</sup> Albrecht, “African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*,” 225.

addressing Treemonisha, the most important person in the area and a woman whose respect they want (see Ex. 3.12).

Cornhuskers Treemonisha Cornhuskers Treemonisha

Hel - lo! Hel - lo! We've come to husk de corn. Shall we have a

Cornhuskers

Ring - play be - fore we work to - day? Yes, and we'll stay the whole day long. —

Ex. 3.12. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 3, “The Corn Huskers” (dialect change)

No. 4, “Going Round” – Treemonisha and her friends invite the corn huskers to join them for a ring-dance to start the day’s work on a light-hearted note. As staged here, the ring-dance is a shortened version of the dances traditionally performed during slavery as a means of celebrating community events. *Topoi* in this number include Contredanse (ring-dance and square dance), Call-and-Response, Barbershop, Ragtime, and Banjo. Contredanse is featured in the opening measures, as well as between verses, and there is a Barbershop cadence in the last two measures of the number. Banjo is suggested in the opening gesture as well, with blocked chords, fingerpicking figuration and off-beat strumming in the piano part beginning at m. 23 and continuing throughout the number. The overall format, however, is Call-and-Response (see Ex. 3.13).

The image shows a musical score for Scott Joplin's "We're Going Around" from *Treemonisha*, No. 4. It consists of a piano accompaniment and three vocal parts. The piano part is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a call-and-response pattern with a banjo-like texture. The vocal parts include lyrics such as "All begin circling. O, we're go-in' a-round." and "Dere was a man be-fo' de war, O, we're go-in' a-round. Said O, we're go-in' a-round." The score is marked with dynamics like *mp* and *f*.

Ex. 3.13. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 4, "We're Going Around," mm. 1–8; Contredanse, Call-and-Response, Banjo

No. 5, "The Wreath" – In this scene, Treemonisha wants to replace the bonnet she is wearing for a wreath similar to what her friends have. Class distinction is at work here: Bonnets were fashionable among high society while wreaths, as a peasant tradition, were not. When Treemonisha decides to use leaves from a particular tree for her bonnet, Joplin supplies musical cues including tremolos, dissonance, and a sudden shift in dynamics to alert listeners of danger nearby, while in the text, Monisha gives Treemonisha and her friends an undeniably firm warning: Don't touch *that* tree. Joplin underscores the seriousness of the situation by repeating the G minor gesture that opens this number several times. The tremolos eventually subside, giving way to a child-like simplicity to introduce the lesson Monisha will present in the next number. Joplin expresses this



musically through a consonant melody and thin accompaniment that largely provides rhythmic support with block chords and octaves on each beat. See Ex. 3.14.

The image shows a musical score for two characters, Treemonisha and Monisha. Treemonisha's part is a vocal line with lyrics: "Now to make my wreath, I see, ..... I must have leaves from that". Monisha's part is a vocal line with lyrics: "tree ..... No! ..... not a leaf from dat tree take, Leave'em". The piano accompaniment consists of block chords and octaves on each beat. The second system for Monisha includes a section marked "agitato" in the piano part.

Ex. 3.14. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 5, “The Wreath,” mm. 12–15

No. 6, “The Sacred Tree” – For Monisha’s explanation of why Treemonisha must not use leaves from this particular tree, Joplin presents in music much of the material found in his preface to the opera. The aria is cast as a sentimental ballad, complete with Zephyrs and dance *topoi*. Gentle breezes are represented by triplet accompaniments surrounding discussions of the sacred tree. The Waltz topic alternates with the zephyr-like triplet passages and key changes breeze, quite literally, across nearby tonal centers (E-flat, dm, gm, G, E-flat), with a change in style at each modulation. See Ex. 3.15.

loud - ly Ned did snore..... And the ba - by's  
cry - ing seemed... to be..... some - where  
near that... sa - cred tree, And the ba - by's

Ex. 3.15. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 6, “The Sacred Tree,”  
mm. 17–29; Zephyrs

No. 7, “We are Surprised” – In a number spanning a mere six measures, *Treemonisha* reacts to the news that not only was she adopted, but that she was found beneath a tree near Ned and Monisha’s cabin. Joplin expresses her surprise not with emotions, but with a taste of the tempest style, specifically a Chaos-Confusion gesture that he will soon put to fuller use; the gesture features contrary motion, diminished seventh chords, and large melodic leaps (see Ex. 3.16).

The image shows a musical score for Scott Joplin's 'Treemonisha, No. 7, "Surprise"'. The score is in common time (C) and marked 'Lento' with a tempo of quarter note = 66. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has two parts: 'Treemonisha' with lyrics 'I am great-ly sur-prised to' and 'Corn-huskers' with lyrics 'know that you are not my moth-er. We are all sur-prised, sur-prised.' The piano accompaniment includes a triplet in the first system and various chordal textures throughout.

Ex. 3.16. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 7, "Surprise"

No. 8, "Treemonisha's Bringing Up" – In this number, Monisha explains how she raised her daughter and how she arranged for Treemonisha's education with White folks in the area. The story closely parallels Joplin's own life story; his mother bartered her services with nearby White families to secure her son an education, music lessons, and a suitable piano. Joplin uses traditional Bardic gestures to draw listeners in, replacing the harp used in European works with figuration that mimics the strumming of a banjo or guitar, instruments also used in storytelling.

For the opening of the number, Joplin employs a gesture reminiscent of late nineteenth-century people without a homeland, in particular exiled Jews or nomadic Gypsies, perhaps suggesting Treemonisha's distance from her own people. The grace notes and idiomatic nature of the line strongly suggest a solo violin as the inner voice of the storyteller (see Ex. 3.17). Joplin's use of Banjo as Monisha's aria gets underway reflects yet another Bardic tradition, one more in keeping with African-America

practices. A drone completes the effect; see Ex. 3.18. The inclusion of the Happiness theme at the end of the number shows the community accepted the news.

Lento. M.M. ♩ = 60

*mf* *p*

Recit: *Monisha*

We brought you up to be-lieve that we

were your real pa-rents, We saw noth-ing wrong in do-ing

*mf* *lento* *mf*

Ex. 3.17. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 8, “Treemonisha’s Bringing Up,” mm. 1–11; Jewish or Gypsy, Violin (mm. 1–8), Bardic, Banjo (mm. 8–11)

And<sup>te</sup> con espressione. M.M. ♩ = 80

*mf* *p*

*Monisha*

Ned has been a father..... When you were a lit-tle child of

years on-ly three, You were the most content-ed while play-ing near that tree. Mo-

Treemonisha's Bringing Up. = 8

Ex. 3.18. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 8, “Treemonisha’s Bringing Up,” mm. 56–61

No. 9, “Good Advice” – In this number, Parson Alltalk stops by to check on folks, providing enough of a distraction that the conjurers are able to kidnap Treemonisha without attracting attention. The form is ABA. The music features a divided chorus and African-American church techniques such as Call-and-Response and the Closed-lip Moan. Music depicting Wasps is heard at m. 11.

The musical score is for the piece "Good Advice" by Scott Joplin. It is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are for Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses. The piano part is for Parson Alltalk. The lyrics are: "Does yer feel lak you've been..... re - deemed? O yes, ah feel..... lak I've been re - deemed.... Aint yer glad yer have". The tempo is marked "Lento con espressione. M.M. ♩ = 60". There are several "rit." (ritardando) markings throughout the score, and an "a tempo" marking at the end of the piano part.

Ex. 3.19. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 9, “Good Advice,” mm. 28–32; Call-and-Response

The contrasting middle section, however, features an accompaniment strongly suggestive of Native Americans, specifically a pentatonic Indian melody and the use of a

drum pattern known as Honor Beat. Closed-lip moans throughout the movement indicate that the congregation agrees with the preacher's message (see Ex. 3.20).<sup>245</sup>

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Good Advice" by Scott Joplin. It is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The first system is labeled "Parson Alltalk" and includes the lyrics "Don't harm yo' broth - ers, Don't". The piano accompaniment features a steady "Double Bass" pattern. The second system continues the vocal line with "harm yo' sis - ters;... O, my neighbors, you must be good." and includes dynamic markings like "cresc." and "mf". The third system is labeled "Basses" and "Parson Alltalk" and includes the lyrics "Un - n - n - n - n - n . Re - mem - ber, each day, ... Yo'". The piano accompaniment continues with the "Double Bass" pattern. The fourth system concludes the vocal line with "debts you should pay, O, my neighbors, you must be good... Un - n - n - n - n - n ." and includes dynamic markings like "cresc." and "mf".

Ex. 3.20. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 9, "Good Advice," mm. 54–68; Indian: Melody, Honor Beat, pentatonic and parallel writing. Example includes solo voice with accompaniment only, closed lip moans in choral part omitted.

No. 10, "Confusion" – In this number, the village learns Treemonisha has been kidnapped. Joplin employs the Tempest style to show the chaos and agitation that ensues

<sup>245</sup> This number is discussed more fully in "A Closer Look at No. 9," located immediately after this discussion of the opera as a whole.

as the news spreads that Treemonisha is missing. Joplin employs African-American song traditions such as Closed-lip moans, Crying, and Wailing to evoke the villagers' anguish, inventing his own notation for a Sprechstimme-like effect (see Ex. 3.21).

The accompaniment to this moaning was foreshadowed in the Overture at m. 192 (see Ex. 3.8). Chaos and Confusion are further suggested by tremolos, syncopation, chromaticism, wide leaps, and contrary motion.

*The crying need not be in strict time  
but the accompaniment must be.*

*Spoken in crying tones.*

O!..... Go an' bring her back,

*Crying should start on a high pitch each time and the sound gradually diminish.*

Ex. 3.21. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 10, "Confusion,"  
m. 35; Crying, Wailing

No. 11, "Superstition" – Act 2 opens with an instrumental introduction that leads directly into stage action. It is now afternoon, and the conjurers are at their woodland lair when Zodzetrick brings in his prisoner, Treemonisha. The musical introduction heard before the curtain rises is largely scene painting; the music says we are outdoors, in a wooded area that is not safe. To illustrate this atmosphere, Joplin opens with a mischievous gesture in his opening bassline, followed by running scales, dramatic changes in dynamics, and contrary motion (see Ex. 3.22).

*Andante. M.M. ♩ : 132*

*mp*

Ex. 3.22. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 11, "Superstition,"  
mm. 1–8; Mischief

Joplin sets the music in the Pastoral key of F major, but shifts into F minor to highlight the sense of danger. In this same passage, Joplin also employs tremolos and scales in the twelve measures immediately preceding the conjurors' song, an ensemble number in which Simon, Zodzetrick's lead henchman, outlines a number of situations that could bring bad luck (see Ex. 3.23). Joplin includes a number of *topoi* in the number, such as a choral style of singing associated with the church, the Closed-lip Moan, Fanfares, Zephyrs, and elements from Innocence and the Tempest style (see Ex. 3.24).

**Allegretto con brio.** ♩ = 92

Ex. 3.23. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 11, "Superstition," mm. 41–51; Danger

**Sopranos CHORUS (With closed lips)**

**Altos** Un - n - n - n - n. Un - n - n - n - n. Un -

**Tenors** Un - n - n - n - n. Un - n - n - n - n. Un -

**Basses** Un - n - n - n - n. Un - n - n - n - n. Un -

**Simon** Un - n - n - n - n. Un - n - n - n - n. Un -

If a-long de road you're go - in', An' all to yo' true knowin', A







Ex. 3.27). The music is comic and highly repetitive, with a considerable number of parallel octaves, sixths, and unisons within an overall Waltz topic. A brief suggestion of exoticism is heard just prior to the fermata in Ex. 3.26, music that could suggest Russian saber rattling or spur kicking just as easily as it might suggest a moment of lighthearted slapstick, such as a bear being knocked over or landing unexpectedly on his backside after losing a “fight” with another bear. Joplin lets us know through the music that the bears are not dangerous, however; he depicts the bears’ laughter at their own foolishness by employing a technique that he also used in *Magnetic Rag*: short phrases of descending eighth notes found in various octaves, repeated three times in sequence (see Ex. 3.28).

The image displays a musical score for Scott Joplin's "Frolic of the Bears," No. 13. The score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with the tempo marking "Tempo di Valse" and a metronome marking of 120. The score is divided into four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes the instruction "(Enter eight bears.)" and dynamic markings of *mf*, *cresc.*, and *f* *decresc.*. The second system includes "(Bears begin frolicking.)" and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The third system includes "(Bears.)" and a vocal line with the syllable "Oo" and a fermata. The fourth system includes the instruction "ar!" and dynamic markings of *f* and *mp*, followed by the tempo marking "a tempo". The score features repetitive eighth-note patterns and descending eighth-note phrases characteristic of Joplin's style.

Ex. 3.26. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 13, “Frolic of the Bears,” mm. 1–20; Waltz, Russian (m. 16)

Two systems of musical notation for a piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a bass line and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 3/4 time and D major. The lyrics 'Oo - - - ar!.....' are written below the first system. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more complex treble line with various chords and melodic fragments.

Ex. 3.27. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 13, “Frolic of the Bears,”  
mm. 49–58; Chase

Two systems of musical notation for a piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble line and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 3/4 time and D major. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a more complex treble line with various chords and melodic fragments.

Ex. 3.28. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 13, “Frolic of the Bears,”  
mm. 144–151; Laughter

No. 14, “The Wasp Nest” – The conjurers are ready to act on their plan to toss Treemonisha into a wasp nest, where soon she would die. Joplin illustrates the scene with music that sets the stage and indicates danger is approaching: The outdoor, pastoral setting is suggested by a melodious flute-like accompaniment; afternoon heat complete with wasps lazily circling nearby is shown through the tempo and a meandering melody. Despite the bucolic settings, Joplin uses unexpected technique to demonstrate things are off balance: an accompaniment that doesn’t line up rhythmically with the choir until m. 7. Dissonances are prominent; word painting increases as the Demonic style takes over.

**Largo. M.M. ♩ = 60**

*Simon.*  
Ev - 'ry - bo - dy lis - 'en!

(Enter Conjurers.)

*Soprano.* What is yo' plan?.....  
*Alto.* What is yo' plan?.....  
*Tenor.* What is yo' plan?.....  
What is yo' plan?.....

My plan... is de best.

*Simon.*  
When I count three, you mus' shove dat gal..... on dat wasp -

*Altos.* Go on an' count.  
*Tenors.* Go on an' count. (Zodzetrick and Luddad lead Treemonisha close to waspnest.)  
*Basses.* nest. Go on an' count. *Simon.* One,

Ex. 3.29. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 14, "The Wasp Nest," mm. 1-10; Wasp theme. Notice how the accompaniment doesn't line up with the voices until m. 8.

Joplin's villains invoke a series of incantations in the moments leading up to their prisoner's execution. Their plans are interrupted, however, when Remus, disguised as a devil, appears out of thin air. Terrified by the sight of an actual demon in their midst, the conjurers scatter into the woods, their terror depicted with music suggesting the Flames of hell — tremolo, dissonance, “flickering” scales, and highly chromatic sequences (see Ex. 3.30). As Remus removes his disguise and prepares to take Treemonisha home, Joplin provides a lighthearted final cadence that clearly indicates all is well.



Ex. 3.30. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 14, “The Wasp’s Nest,”  
mm. 18–20; Demonic / Flames of hell

Joplin's use of the word “hee hoo!” in this number recalls the “Wolf Glen” scene from *Der Freischütz*, when Weber's villains chant “uhuii.” Piras believes this particular line is Joplin's homage to Weber, as the words “hee hoo” and “uhuii” employ similar vowel sounds.<sup>247</sup> Whether or not Piras is correct, it is important to note the many similarities between the two operas, enough that in my opinion, “Weber” could be a topic in its own right.<sup>248</sup> Both Piras and Albrecht have written extensively about connections between the two composers and their most famous operas,<sup>249</sup> but Piras' research suggests yet a deeper, more personal, reading of the scene: He considers the parallels between this scene and Weber's “Wolf Glen” scene as “an encoded key,” a moment of recognition by Joplin of his dear friends and fellow opera lovers Julius Weiss, Alfred Ernst, and Bruto

<sup>247</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.” Joplin used the same word in No. 12, “*Treemonisha* in Peril,” as a greeting between conjurers.

<sup>248</sup> Another “Weber-ism” in the opera can be seen in Joplin's treatment of woodlands: He uses gestures from Weber to turn the piney woods near Texarkana into a German forest. See the discussion for No. 26 “We Will Trust You as Our Leader” for more information.

<sup>249</sup> In addition to Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down,” see Albrecht “African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*.”

Giannini, with whom he studied over the course of his career.<sup>250</sup> The possibility is worth further attention.

No. 15, “The Rescue” – In this number, Treemonisha thanks Remus for saving her from the wasp nest as they begin to make their way home. Topics heard include Chaos-Confusion, Fanfare, Banjo/guitar, the Happiness theme, and Cakewalk. The forest they must travel through is uneasy, and to illustrate that, Joplin provides music that is Pastoral but not peaceful. Joplin also uses the number to break with traditions established earlier in the opera. For example, in No. 5, “The Wreath,” Treemonisha stood out from her neighbors through clothing, by her bonnet specifically. She is once again made to feel different when she learns Monisha and Ned are not her parents (Nos. 6–8). In each of these scenes, her responses are measured, rational, and calm, and her music is consonant. In No. 15, however, Treemonisha moves in a different direction, taking what might be considered her first real steps toward being one with her own people. For the first time in the opera, Joplin gives his heroine a syncopated accompaniment – the Happiness theme. In this number, Joplin has Treemonisha sing a mildly syncopated rhythm over this theme. As was the case in the Overture, the Happiness theme is introduced with two bars of strummed chords, once again suggesting banjo or guitar (see Ex. 3.31).<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha*, or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

<sup>251</sup> Treemonisha has weathered two difficult “storms” at this point in the opera, a personal crisis involving her identity and her place in the community, and a life-threatening hostage situation. I believe the change in her accompaniment is symbolic, that it parallels Joplin’s religious beliefs regarding self-enlightenment and the role of leaders. More on this in a later section of this dissertation.

(He approaches Treemonisha.)      *Treemonisha* (Puts her arms around his neck.)

*Allegretto*. ♩ = 88      Re-mus, you have saved me ..... from the

*mf*

(Remus looks,

aw-ful sting of the wasp. They were go-ing to shove me on that wasp nest, When

Ex. 3.31. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 15, “The Rescue,”  
mm. 5–12; Happiness, Banjo

Joplin shows us through dissonance, rhythm, and style changes that his leading characters are not quite safe, devices that serve to aid the transition from the forest to the plantation. The Chaos topic follows immediately as Treemonisha retells the events of her kidnapping. Joplin depicts Chaos by increasing the intensity (and instability) of the underlying rhythms and harmonies, alternating between C major, C minor, and E-flat major, as banjo-like strummed eighth notes give way to sixteenths, triplets, and finally sextuplets. These actions peak at a cadence on a fully-diminished seventh chord just as Remus begins to sing, and while Remus’s music may seem simpler, Joplin writes strings of seventh chords forming a sixteen-measure-long chain of suspensions, whose anticipations and retardations blur the dissonances that would have been heard in block chords (see Ex. 3.32).<sup>252</sup>

<sup>252</sup> Notice that Joplin doesn’t have Treemonisha thank Jesus or God for saving her. He could have easily inserted their names had he chosen to do so; instead he has Treemonisha thank the great Creator – perhaps a subtle suggestion that he, like his heroine, embraced a world beyond a specifically Christian one.



horror-stricken, at the waspnest.)

one of them count - ed three. But thanks to the great Cre - a - tor, ... You

*molto rit.* *Remus.* *a tempo*

came in time to save me. I am glad I ..... came in time to

save you From the aw - ful sting of the wasp. And while on my way to your

res - cue, Ma - ny hills and val - leys I crossed. I know the con - jur - ors are

su - per - sti - tious, And a - fraid of an - y thing that looks strange, ..... So I

wore the scare - crow for that pur - pose, And have scared them a - way out of

range.... Come, let us leave these woods at once, Be - cause I hear some

Ex. 3.32. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 15, “The Rescue,”  
mm. 13–37; Chaos, rhythmic intensity, chains of suspensions

No. 16, “We Will Rest Awhile” – In this Barbershop number, a group of four men are working in a cotton field as Treemonisha and Remus pass by. Block chords set the pitch<sup>253</sup> for the all-male *a capella* quartet in the first half of the number, which is accompanied on the repeat. As expected in a Barbershop quartet, strings of seventh chords with colorful, non-standard resolutions abound (see Ex. 3.33). Not surprisingly, Joplin excerpted this number and sold it to quartets around the nation in a manner not dissimilar to the marketing of the “Hunter’s Chorus,” from Weber’s *Der Freischütz*.

We will rest a - while, we will rest

a - while, 'Cause it makes us feel ve - ry good. We will  
ve - ry good.

Ex. 3.33. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 16, “We Will Rest Awhile,”  
mm. 1–6; Banjo (mm. 1–2), Barbershop (mm. 3–6)

<sup>253</sup> In his orchestration of *Treemonisha* for the Houston Grand Opera, Gunther Schuller scored the opening of this number for banjo. Rick Benjamin, on the other hand, changed the chords into arpeggios. Both men recognized the gesture as banjo-like. While it’s unclear why Joplin would accompany a quartet, the two bar opening sets the pitch.

No. 17, “Going Home” – In this short transition, Remus and Treemonisha interact with cotton pickers at sundown as a six-part SATB choir presents classic ragtime rhythms and hints of spiritual in chorale sections.

No. 18, “Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn” – Joplin shows field hands happily ending their work day. In a brief introduction to the number, a four-measure horn call simulates the ringing of a triangle or dinner bell using a Fanfare-like device that, similar to field hollers, lets workers scattered across the fields know that it is quitting time. The song features syllabic singing over strings of seventh and ninth chords. One of the few genuine ragtime numbers in the opera, the musical topic is a two-step (see Ex. 3.34).

The musical score for "Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn" is presented in a SATB choir format with piano accompaniment. The score is in 2/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The tempo is marked "Assai Moderato con espressione" and the dynamics are "mf". The lyrics are: "Aunt Di - nah has blowed de horn, An' we'll go home to stay un - til dawn. Get". The score includes staves for Sopranos, Altos, Tenors, and Basses, as well as piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent two-step rhythm in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Ex. 3.34. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 18, “Aunt Dinah has Blowed de Horn,” mm. 1–8; Dinner bell, Fanfare, ragtime two-step

No. 19, Prelude to Act 3 – Night has fallen as Act 3 opens and Treemonisha’s family is anxiously awaiting her return. To illustrate the ever-changing emotions of her loved ones, Joplin alternates pastoral sections of music with passages that quietly suggest Danger with passages that rather energetically depict agitation. The Prelude sets the scene using motives that will be explored more fully in the coming numbers. For example, the music heard in the opening twelve measures returns in No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” at m. 37; in each number the accompaniment is Pastoral, but unsettled. Similarly, music first heard in the prelude at m. 31 returns in No. 21 where at m. 76 it is repurposed as the accompaniment to lyrics that describe the community’s desire to punish the conjurors.

Dance rhythms — specifically the Tango and Cakewalk patterns — can also be found in the Prelude to Act III. Joplin uses the tango rhythm two ways in the Prelude: as a fully intact pattern and in altered form. The full rhythm can be seen in measures 5, 6, 67, and 68; variants of the tango rhythm are located in mm. 1–4, 35–36, 41, 51, 52, 57, 63, and 65. Its use in each of these situations is in conjunction with music suggesting Chaos, Trouble, Danger, and Agitation. Not surprisingly, these rhythms are prominently featured in the passages shown below in Ex. 3.35. Joplin also makes extensive use of the Cakewalk rhythm; indeed, in his four-part structure, the entire B-section is based on the pattern.<sup>254</sup> See Ex. 3.36.

A Fanfare-like figure precedes the cadences found at the end the first two sections. The final cadence at mm. 82 provides a peaceful resolution to the music heard throughout the Prelude, suggesting the opera will ultimately end on a happy note.

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<sup>254</sup> The structure of the Prelude is A-B-C-A. Each section is comprised of a single eight bar phrase which is repeated once in A, B; three times in C. Sections A and C employ the tango rhythm, an appropriate choice given the stormy nature of the passages. The peaceful B section features the cakewalk rhythm.

**Andante affettuoso**

Ex. 3.35. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 19, Prelude to Act III," mm. 1–17; Pastoral (mm. 1–6, 9–12, 15–17), Danger, Chaos, Agitation (mm. 7–8, 13–14), Tango (hints in mm. 1–4, full pattern 5–6), and Fanfare (m. 17). The scale pattern seen at m. 8 is later expanded into Wind in No. 21. See Ex. 3.39.

Ex. 3.36. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 19, Prelude to Act III," mm. 15–20; Cakewalk

No. 20, “I Want To See My Child” – Monisha yearns for her daughter’s safe return in this duet with her husband Ned. Structurally, this number is a two-part binary form – ABAB; topics include pastoral, waltz, tempest, and innocence.

No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return” – In this topic-laden number, Treemonisha and Remus complete their journey home, and the corn huskers bring the conjurors into town so the people can decide their fate. In the opening measures, Joplin depicts Monisha’s distress over her daughter’s kidnapping with three devices: rhythm, dissonance in the vocal line, and the use of the Chaos *topos*. He also includes the Tango rhythm (mm. 1–7) and the Happiness theme (m. 9), devices that reflect Monisha’s emotional state.

The musical score for "Treemonisha's Return" is presented in four systems. The first system shows the piano introduction, marked "Allegretto" with a tempo of 92. The piano part is in 2/4 time, starting with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc.*) marking. The second system features Monisha's vocal line with the lyrics "O, there is my child! Remus, you are a he - ro!". The piano accompaniment continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The third system shows Ned's vocal line with the lyrics "You are all right,". The fourth system features Remus's vocal line with the lyrics "Thank you! Thank you!". The piano accompaniment includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a "Re - mus!" marking.

Ex. 3.37. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” mm. 1–13; Chaos with Tango (mm. 1–7), Happiness (mm. 9–12)

In the first two acts, with only one exception (No. 15), Treemonisha's music had been diatonic, consonant, and rhythmically square. As the people gather to welcome her home, however, Joplin shows Treemonisha's transformation. For the first time in the opera, she sets aside music associated with Anglo-America to fully embrace her people, her heritage, even her cultural identity, through African-Americanisms associated with the common folk. Using the Happiness theme as an introduction, Treemonisha sings a ragtime melody whose accompaniment employs both Stoptime (m. 29) and the Cakewalk rhythm (m. 31), gestures that could perhaps imply she has truly found her place in the village, not as an educated outsider, but as one of the people (see Ex. 3.38).

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece with piano accompaniment. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. The lyrics are: "To scare the con - jur - ors a - way from me, — Re-mus wore that old scare crow. It scar'd them and they ran you see, For I am home you know. —". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings like "mp" and features a mix of Stoptime and Cakewalk rhythms.

Ex. 3.38. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” mm. 24–31; Ragtime, Stoptime (mm. 28–29), Cakewalk (m. 30)

A brief passage repurposing music from the Prelude to Act III (No. 19) interrupts Treemonisha's homecoming beginning in m. 37, where Joplin quotes mm. 1–12 of the Prelude, extending the earlier passage by another two measures to allow for the arrival of the corn huskers, who have taken the conjurers into custody. This portion of the music

includes Closed-lip Moans (mm. 39–48), the Tango accompaniment pattern (mm. 40–43), and tremolos (mm. 58–61) to signal danger, unrest, and trouble approaching.<sup>255</sup>

Ex. 3.39 demonstrates Wind, a European *topos* found as the corn huskers make their way on stage.

Ex. 3.39. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” mm. 44–53; Wind

Joplin’s Chaos music, complete with tremolos, cross-rhythms, and rhythmic density similar to that found in Patting Juba, signals that danger is fast approaching; the arrival of the conjurers on stage confirms what the music foreshadowed (see Ex. 3.40).

Ex. 3.40. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” mm. 58–63; Danger, Chaos, Patting Juba

<sup>255</sup> A hammerblow ends the passage. This European *topos* coincides with a door slamming at the same time the corn huskers enter Ned and Monisha’s cabin. It is found at the downbeat of measure 54.



When asked what to do with the conjurers, the people's first response is to seek revenge. As the people sing "punish them," Joplin uses contrary motion between the voices to indicate Punching Blows and Fighting gestures (see mm. 74–75). He also repeats music from the Prelude at m. 76 to accompany lyrics stating the people's intention to beat the conjurers, to punch and kick them "very hard." The passage is broken off when Treemonisha steps in to offer another solution (see Ex. 3.41).

The musical score for Ex. 3.41 is written in 4/4 time. It features a Chorus and Women. The lyrics are: "Punish them! Punish them! Re-", "Punish them! Punish them! Re-", "Punish them!.....", "Punish them!.....", "buke and beat them hard.", "buke and beat them hard.", "Men. (Shaking fists at Zozetrick and Luddud.) Yes, we will punch and we will kick them ve-ry", "Yes, we will punch and we will kick them ve-ry". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *rit.*, *a tempo*, *piu mosso*, and *cresc. molto*. The score is arranged in a grand staff with vocal lines and piano accompaniment.

Ex. 3.41. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, "Treemonisha's Return," mm. 74–80; Chaos, Confusion, Punching Blows and Fighting

Tremonisha's brief sermon is a Field Holler, a two-bar passage in which she shares her true feelings. In keeping with antebellum tradition, she sings this message without accompaniment. When the accompaniment returns, the music is Pastoral. One measure stands out, however: m. 96. Here Joplin includes three beats of triplets in thirds. Given how sweet thirds had been used to indicate dramatic harmony for more than a century by this time, it is possible to read this fleeting moment in the music as an opportunity for the community to cooperate and work together in harmony; with one line representing Tremonisha and the other, the people (see Ex. 3.42).

(Men stop, drop hands quickly to sides and step backward to where they first stood.) **Lento.** ♩ = 92  
*Tremonisha Recit.*

**Lento.** ♩ = 92  
*Tremonisha Recit.*

You will do e - vil for e - vil, If you strike them, you know; Just give them... a severe lecture, And let them freely

*mf*

Ex. 3.42. Scott Joplin, *Tremonisha*, No. 21, “Tremonisha’s Return,” mm. 92–99; Field Holler

A moment later, when conjurers try to thank Tremonisha for sparing them and Andy tells them that they have no right to speak, the accompaniment includes not only arpeggios played in contrary motion, but also a Fanfare figure (mm.102–104). The same gesture appears in unison when Tremonisha tells Andy to set them free (m. 108).

In the final eight measures of the number, Joplin shows that while the people are glad Tremonisha is home, they are disappointed that they can’t exact revenge on her

captors, and he does so by setting the Happiness theme in minor. The mode change strongly indicates the argument over what to do with the conjurors is not quite settled; indeed, the conversation continues over the next three musical numbers in solo arias for the leading men in Treemonisha's world (see Ex. 3.43).

**Allegretto.  $\text{♩} = 92$**

Ex. 3.43. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 21, “Treemonisha’s Return,” mm. 109–116; Disappointment and disagreement: Happiness theme in minor

No. 22, “Wrong is Never Right” – Remus shows his support of Treemonisha’s views in this, the first of two lectures the community is about to receive. A set-piece aria for the opera’s leading tenor, this number alternates between two main styles: parlor ballad and waltz. Some of the lesser-used *topoi* are shown in Ex. 3.44, including a brief four-measure reference to Gottschalk in an interlude overflowing with secondary harmonies (mm. 49–52), a touch of Birdsong (mm. 59–60), and a brief virtuoso-style vocal “cadenza” (m. 77). When an eight-part ensemble joins the soloist in the second chorus, Joplin confirms through the use of Innocence and Chorale in the accompaniment and in the postlude that closes the number that the crowd agrees with what Remus has said.

Wrong is nev - er right, You will a - gree with me,.....

Wrong is nev - er right, And it will..... nev - er be.....

Andante

Andante con espress.

Nev - er

treat..... your neigh - bors wrong,..... By caus - ing.....

them... to..... grieve..... Help the

*rall. e dim.*

*rall. e dim.*

*cresc.*

*mf*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a piano and voice. It consists of six systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'Andante', 'Andante con espress.', 'rall. e dim.', 'cresc.', and 'mf'. The lyrics are: 'Wrong is nev - er right, You will a - gree with me,.....', 'Wrong is nev - er right, And it will..... nev - er be.....', 'Nev - er', 'treat..... your neigh - bors wrong,..... By caus - ing.....', and 'them... to..... grieve..... Help the'.

Ex. 3.44. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 22, “Wrong is Never Right,” mm. 42–61; Waltz (mm. 42–52), Gottschalk (mm. 49–53), Birdsong (mm. 59–60)

No. 23, “Abuse” – In this number Joplin shows that not everyone believes setting the conjurers free is the best course. To show indecision, and the leaning of some toward retaliation, Joplin employs *Patting Juba* to indicate stamping feet, shaking fists, fighting, anger, and violence. The chromatic accompaniment features successive strings of diminished seventh chords, constantly shifting rhythms, and chains of suspensions that resolve only when Treemonisha assures the people that the conjurers will behave.

The image displays a musical score for Scott Joplin's "Abuse" from the opera *Treemonisha*, specifically measures 5 through 21. The score is written for piano and is in 2/4 time. It features a complex, chromatic accompaniment characterized by chains of diminished seventh chords and suspensions. The piece is marked "sempre ff" (sempre fortissimo) and includes "Patting Juba" notation, which is a rhythmic pattern used to indicate stamping feet, shaking fists, fighting, anger, and violence. The score is presented in six systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 2/4. The score concludes with a final cadence in the bass staff.

Ex. 3.45. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 23, “Abuse,” mm. 5–21; Tempest style, Juba, chains of suspensions with resolution on “good” followed by Chaos-Confusion

No. 24, “When Villains Ramble Far and Near” – In this aria for bass, the long established voice for *deus ex machina* in opera, Ned gives his opinion on what should happen next, showing the community that not only do learned folks disagree, but they can act civilly toward each other while attempting to reach consensus. The Pastoral aria is strophic with steady eighth notes in the accompaniment and predictable patterns in both harmony and melody (see Ex. 3.46). The music is largely consonant but includes a string of secondary dominants and diminished seventh chords to enact a brief modulation to  $\flat VI$ . The voice is doubled throughout, lending additional support to the song’s message. Joplin gives a quick nod to Wagnerian harmonies (see Ex. 3.47) before the buffa-like ending, complete with octave displacement mid-phrase to the lower reaches of the bass range (see Ex. 3.38). Dropping the register provides a greater dramatic effect while allowing for a calmer, more peaceful ending. When compared to mm. 31–35, where this material is first heard, it is also a comedic effect; the octave displacement breaks the tension with a device found in other popular musical entertainments of the day.

The image shows a musical score for the aria "When Villains Ramble Far and Near" by Scott Joplin. It is written for bass voice and piano. The score is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line is for a character named Ned. The lyrics are: "When vil - lains ram - ble far..... and near..... To break the peo - ple's laws,.....". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note chordal pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*. The score shows a modulation to a secondary dominant and a diminished seventh chord.

Ex. 3.46. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 24, “When Villains Ramble,” mm. 5–8; Theme



chaos-confusion motif, complete with tango rhythm, when Andy says he hates to forgive those who wronged Treemonisha. Patting Juba occurs in the same passage, a result of cross rhythms occurring between the hands in the accompaniment (see Ex. 3.49).

Ex. 3.49. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 25, “Conjurors Forgiven,” mm. 1–10; Tango, Juba, Chaos. Notice how the tango begins when Andy sings “We hate to forgive them.”

The use of four-part chorale writing beginning at m. 11 affirms the people’s agreement to forgive the conjurors. Fanfare-like trumpet calls scattered throughout the ensuing choral section function as warning signs, which are ultimately confirmed in the final line of text “be careful what you do.”<sup>256</sup> Joplin employs the opening rhythm of the

<sup>256</sup> There are three fanfares within No. 25, each appearing as an interlude between passages involving the choir. The first of these occurs at m. 17 and signals the people are no longer debating the issue; they have forgiven the conjurors. The second fanfare is located at m. 26 after lyrics that ask the conjurors to always be kind and true and just prior to the people saying once again that they have forgiven the conjurors. The third fanfare occurs in the last five measures, as running scales in the bass line give way to a well-defined final cadence.

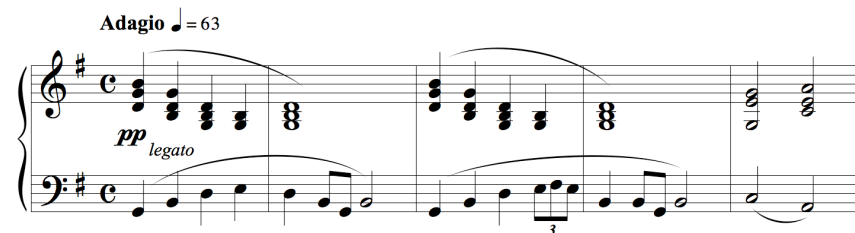


Happiness theme throughout this six-part chorale section as the choir sings of forgiveness. An abrupt style change occurs in the final six measures when Joplin exchanges the syncopated Happiness theme for a more traditional church sound. The use of a clearly-articulated final cadence heard immediately after the syncopations conclude shows the strength of the people's forgiveness, but also references its conditionality on the conjurers' good behavior. To distinguish this style from other church styles used in the opera, I have labeled this passage as Gospel.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 29-38) is in a 'Happiness, Church style' and features a syncopated melody. The second system (measures 39-48) is in a 'Gospel and Fanfare' style and features a more traditional church sound with a clearly-articulated final cadence. The lyrics are: 'We have for-giv-en you. Al-ways be kind and true, Be care-ful what you do, Be care-ful what you do...'

Ex. 3.50. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 25, "Conjurers Forgiven," mm. 29–38; First system: Happiness, Church style; Second system: Gospel and Fanfare over a clearly-articulated final progression of  $IV-V^7/V-V^7-I$

No. 26, “We will Trust You as our Leader” – In this number the people ask Treemonisha to be their leader. Joplin’s four-bar introduction is borrowed from the opening of Bruto Giannini’s 1904 art song, *Hymn to the Virgin*. Marcello Piras, who first uncovered this connection, suggests that Joplin is paying tribute to his teacher, while showing that Treemonisha was not only chaste, but a woman of exceptionally high moral character. Ex. 3.51 and Ex. 3.52 show Giannini’s original material and Joplin’s variation on it.<sup>257</sup>



Ex. 3.51. Bruto V. Giannini, *Hymn to the Virgin* (1904)



Ex. 3.52. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” mm. 1–4

As is usually the case with music associated with Treemonisha, both the accompaniment and solo line are unsyncopated. The verse opens in C major, but includes a momentary modulation to E-flat in its second strain coinciding with a rhythmic shift in the accompaniment from duple to triple that underscores the text being sung: “the ignorant too long have ruled.” To arrive at the key of A major in m. 21, Joplin modulates by way of a chromatically descending bassline that contains colorful harmonies featuring

<sup>257</sup> According to Piras, “Garibaldi to Syncopation” (157, fn 160), Giannini’s *Hymn to the Virgin* is a Christmas work originally set for soprano or contralto and piano, with words by Perley A. Child. It was published in New York by Luckhardt & Belder in 1904.

seventh, ninth, and diminished chords (see Ex. 3.53). Tremonisha sings her most dissonant passages in this number and yet the music sounds far more consonant than it is. Upon closer inspection, it seems Joplin has deflected our attention by focusing our ears on the melody rather than to the colorful harmonies, key changes, or the undercurrent of dissonance that reside just beneath the surface.

The image displays a musical score for Scott Joplin's 'Tremonisha, No. 26'. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'lead - er,..... To fol - low..... for our good,..... The ig - no-rant too long have ruled, I dont see why they should,..... And all the peo - ple they have fooled,..... Be - cause..... they found they could.....'. The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with triplets and chromatic descents. Performance markings include *mf*, *rit.*, *a tempo*, *rit. poco a poco*, and *mp*.

Ex. 3.53. Scott Joplin, *Tremonisha*, No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” mm. 10–20; Text painting, rhythmic intensity on “ignorant,” chromatically-descending bassline from “should” to “could” that sets up the modulation into A major.

An eight-part choir responds in Church style to Treemonisha's questions regarding the need for leadership. Alternating voices sing in thirds over music that is tonal and rhythmically straightforward, showing cooperation and firmness in accepting Treemonisha's leadership.<sup>258</sup> Joplin also scores the entire passage in A major, a key both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century composers often employed when writing music strongly associated with women, as well as with faith and trust.<sup>259</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a choral piece. It consists of four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'a tempo' and the dynamics are 'mp'. The lyrics are: 'We... want you as our leader,..... We... want you as our leader,..... You should lead us,..... You should lead us,..... You should lead us,..... You should lead us,..... We will trust you as our lead - er, We will trust you as our lead - er,'. The piano accompaniment features a staccato-note scale pattern in the right hand.

Ex. 3.54. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” mm. 21–24; Church: choral style

After receiving the women's blessing, Treemonisha directs her question to the men: “If I lead the good women, Tell me, who will lead the men?” The accompaniment includes a musical gesture from Weber: a Forest topic, using staccato-note scale patterns

<sup>258</sup> Mozart used thirds in a similar manner in “Là ci darem la mano” in *Don Giovanni*. In Act I, scene 9, the Don is attempting to woo Zerlina. Her music is always at odds with his; when she sings in thirds with his melody at the end of the number, listeners know she's agreeable to his proposal. While Joplin's opera has no such sexual overtones, the connection here is in the use of thirds as a musical metaphor for cooperation, for working in harmony with one another.

<sup>259</sup> See Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002). The key of A Major has been associated for centuries with “women and their sweet passions” (Steblin quoting Johann Jakob Heinze's *Hildegard von Hohenthal* of 1795, 282). The key is frequently used for “declarations of love, to express satisfaction with one's state of affairs, youthful cheerfulness, and the hope of seeing a loved one again,” as well as matters of faith and trust (Steblin quoting Gustav Schilling's *Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst* of 1835–36, 284).

to enact a temporary modulation to E-flat.<sup>260</sup> Joplin’s use of a Forest topic may be related to the fact that during the time of the opera, most men worked outdoors, and often in the woods; the music may be telling us that Treemonisha is attempting to meet the men on their own turf. When the men agree to install her as their leader, they give a one-word response — “you” — in contrast to women’s longer, more florid reply. Their response is sung twice, and is accompanied only during the second half of the strophe (see Ex. 3.55).

The musical score for Ex. 3.55 consists of four staves. The top staff is for Treemonisha, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The lyrics are: "If I lead the good wo - men, ... Tell me, who will lead the men?". The second staff is for Tenors I & II, marked with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and a fermata. The third staff is for Basses I & II, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a fermata. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, marked with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The piano part features a complex, undulating accompaniment figure.

Ex. 3.55. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” mm. 53–56; Forest

At this point, Joplin repeats the number’s original introduction, solo verse, and two choruses. The shift from duple to triple meter in m. 13 of the first verse on the word “ignorant” is heard now in conjunction with “for ignorance is criminal,” possibly underscoring the composer and his heroine’s commitment to education, enlightenment, unity, and joy. Joplin concludes the number with a section that not only confirms the key of A major, but also the people’s confidence in Treemonisha’s abilities by employing an undulating accompaniment figure that signals smooth sailing ahead (see Ex. 3.56).<sup>261</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Piras, “Treemonisha or Der Freischutz Upside Down.”

<sup>261</sup> Albrecht speculates that Joplin’s call for a leader is similar to Verdi’s Risorgimento operas of the 1840s. He believes that through the opera Joplin is asking his fellow Black Americans to commit to education, to become well-

The image shows a musical score for the closing of 'We Will Trust You as Our Leader' from Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*. The score is written for five vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegro ma non troppo' and the dynamics are 'f' (forte). The lyrics are 'you... We will trust you as our lead - er...'. The piano part includes the instruction 'Allo' ma non troppo'.

Ex. 3.56. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 26, “We Will Trust You as Our Leader,” closing; calm

No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag” – In the finale — probably the most famous single number of the opera — the townspeople usher in an era of peace and harmony brought about through education and enlightenment as they come together to celebrate the selection of Treemonisha as their leader. The number is set in slow ragtime, and the score includes several references to the choreography for a popular ragtime-era dance, the Slow Drag.<sup>262</sup> First heard in the Overture at m. 172, the combination of the slow tempo of the dance, its exaggerated movements, and high kicks make it an ideal choice for ceremonial purposes. Joplin also includes references to the choreography of nineteenth-century Anglo-American dances such as the Schottische, March, Stoptime, and Two-Step,

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read on the issues of the day, and to serve as community leaders in order to better serve the entire race. Albrecht feels support for Treemonisha to serve in that capacity was revolutionary in 1911 as women did not yet have the right to vote. While I have more confidence in the Black community’s support of women based on the number of women in leadership roles throughout the nineteenth century, it is worth noting that, barring cuts, *Treemonisha* asks the men for their support at least four times. For more, see Albrecht’s “African, Autobiographical, and Earlier Operatic Elements in Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*,” 233.

<sup>262</sup> Dances mentioned include American popular dances such as the Schottische, Slow drag, Stoptime, Slide, Prance, March and Two-Step. Joplin employs only the choreography in No. 27, not the music normally associated with the steps. Detailed descriptions of many of these dances can be found in Chapter 2.



Albrecht relates how the word “slowly” in Joplin’s text corresponds to “majestically” and “right” equals “that’s the way” in the African texts. “Talk lowly,” not mentioned (but implied) in Joplin’s lyrics, Albrecht says, relates to speaking softly, as in conversing in a controlled manner in the leader’s presence.

Albrecht suggests Treemonisha has been chosen chieftain of her village and that she is being celebrated, much as she would have been in Africa. Although Joplin had no direct ties to Africa, Albrecht posits that, since many slaves came from Ghana or nearby locations, this tradition may have been deeply embedded in cultural memory even as late as 1910. Through his reference to the slow drag and its elongated dance movements, Joplin may have sought to make one final emotional connection with his audience, even if it might have been deeply buried in the subconscious.<sup>264</sup>

I believe the music supports Albrecht’s theory, and for that reason I have labeled it as the Noble topic, a signifier for the ancient African ceremonial processions and coronation rituals he described. The Noble topic begins at m. 21 and continues throughout much of the remainder of the number, as the following examples show.

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.



*Treemonisha*. (All march, doing the dude walk.)

March - ing on-ward, march - ing on-ward, marching to..... that  
*Lucy.*  
 March - ing on-ward, march - ing on-ward, marching to.... that

*p legato*

love - ly tune; March - ing on-ward, march - ing on-ward,  
 love - ly tune; March - ing on-ward, march - ing on-ward,

*cresc. poco a poco*

(Slide, first on one foot, then the other.)  
 hap - py as..... a bird in June. Slid - ing on-ward,  
 hap - py as..... a bird in June. Slid - ing on-ward,

*p*

Ex. 3.58. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 27, "A Real Slow Drag,"  
 mm. 21–30; Noble

(All dance.) (All prance.)

Dance..... slow - ly, prance..... slow - ly, Now you do..... the real

Dance slow - ly, prance..... slow - ly, Now you do..... the real

*cresc. poco a poco*

(All Slow Drag.) (All walk.) (All whisper to partners while walking.)

“Slow Drag.” Walk..... slow - ly, talk..... low - ly,

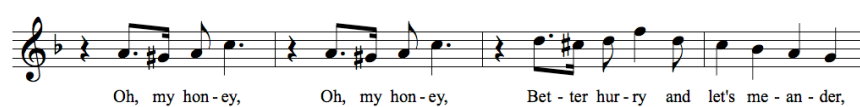
“Slow Drag.” Walk slow - ly, talk..... low - ly,

*b* *mf*

Ex. 3.59. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag,” mm. 43–48; Noble

As discussed earlier, Joplin circulated copies of the opera in hopes of finding a publisher willing to print it. One of the firms he shared the music with was Seminary, the firm that published *Paragon Rag*, *Pineapple Rag*, *Pleasant Moments*, and *Solace*. The company shared management and office space with another Tin Pan Alley firm, Ted Snyder Music, where Irving Berlin was employed. It is possible that Berlin received the manuscript or was in the office when someone played it on the piano. Members of the Stark family, as well as Joplin’s friends shared stories with Rudi Blesh, Harriet Janis, and Trebor Tichenor, claiming Joplin was livid after *Alexander’s Ragtime Band* came out. According to those who knew him, Joplin felt Seminary had had more than enough time to review the opera; when he returned to the office and asked Berlin to return his manuscript, Berlin refused. After *Alexander’s Ragtime Band* was published, Joplin

accused Berlin of stealing his work, not only the melody originally intended for No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag,” but also the music he had included for *Mayflower Rag*. Furious about what he perceived as musical theft, Joplin revised *Treemonisha*’s final number in order to distance his opera from “Berlin’s hit” shortly before registering the copyright edition. As a result, we may never know how close the two tunes originally were (see Ex. 3.60–3.61).<sup>265</sup>



Ex. 3.60. Irving Berlin, *Alexander’s Ragtime Band*



Ex. 3.61. Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*, No. 27, “A Real Slow Drag”

It is interesting to note that Joplin did not write exit music for the opera; indeed, there appears to be no record of any music having been played for bows or as audiences left the theatre. To address that shortcoming, Rick Benjamin wrote a three-minute medley employing tunes from the opera for the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra’s productions of *Treemonisha*. Benjamin’s exit music opens with an up-tempo version of Joplin’s “Slow Drag.” When played at a faster speed, one discovers that a rousing two-step is hidden inside the music.

<sup>265</sup> Berlin, “Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* Years,” 267. See also Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, 251–254. According to Joplin scholar Edward A. Berlin, when Joplin first heard “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” he cried out, “That’s my tune!” He was upset not only that someone had stolen his music, but that the melody had been transformed by a White man into a non-syncopated song, and worse, that the song was the biggest hit of the 1910s. While rumors of a theft quickly spread through Tin Pan Alley and circulated for years, Irving Berlin consistently denied the allegation when questioned about it. Five years later, as Joplin was dying, Berlin told an interviewer that he was aware of the rumors surrounding “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” specifically that he had “paid a negro ten dollars for it” and then published it under his own name. Asking to whom he owed his other hits, Berlin added, “If a negro could write ‘Alexander,’ why couldn’t I? If they could produce the negro and he had another hit like ‘Alexander’ in his system, I would choke it out of him and give him twenty thousand dollars in the bargain. If the other fellow deserves the credit, why doesn’t he go after it?” Joplin was not the first composer to accuse Berlin of stealing his work, nor was he the last; but his health did not allow him to fully pursue the matter. Six months after Berlin addressed the issue in the media, Joplin was dead.

### A Closer Look at Number 9, “Good Advice”

While scholars have written extensively about various aspects of *Treemonisha*, from a topical perspective one of the most fascinating discoveries of this investigation pertains to No. 9, “Good Advice,” Parson Alltalk’s entrance in the first act. The song follows the expected ABA formula of a da capo aria. In the opening and closing sections, Parson Alltalk and the chorus of villagers sing of redemption. The music is call-and-response style, a technique that comes out of African-American spirituals. Joplin was well versed in this tradition, having grown up in the Deep South, near the borders of Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. To find spirituals in an opera where the plot is focused on freed slaves living near their former plantation is not a surprise; indeed, it would be surprising if they were absent, given their popularity not only in Joplin’s day but also in our own.

In sharp contrast to most musicologists’ assumptions about Joplin’s use of spirituals as a reflection of his own Christian value system, Piras writes that Joplin’s use of them is not an endorsement of Christian values at all.<sup>266</sup> His research suggests, rather convincingly, that Joplin rejected his Christian upbringing and embraced Buddhism as an adult, roughly fifteen years before *Treemonisha* was written. Piras makes a strong case that Joplin uses this number to illustrate the hypocrisy he saw in organized religion. Joplin tells us rather obviously through the parson’s name — Alltalk — that this man of the cloth is all talk and no action. As a child, Joplin frequently observed church leaders turn blind eyes to the suffering of Black Americans; naming the opera’s preacher in this fashion would be an effective way to underscore the hypocrisy he saw growing up in East

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<sup>266</sup> Piras, “*Treemonisha* or *Der Freischütz* Upside Down.”

Texas, a hotbed of activity for the KKK. It is also notable that this number is the only time the preacher is seen in the opera. He appears out of nowhere, puts in just enough time with the people to “make an appearance,” and then he vanishes. He truly has no impact on the people, let alone on how they manage their affairs. This could reflect the composer’s experiences as a youngster, seeing local or itinerant preachers pitch their tents long enough to give a sermon and make the people feel good, and collect their offerings, but not long enough to address the community’s poor living conditions or day-to-day suffering, and certainly not with enough influence to hold the perpetrators accountable.

As a well-read, learned man, Joplin shows Parson Alltalk’s incompetence as a leader even more subtly — through his language. As stated earlier, Joplin indicates his characters’ social status throughout *Treemonisha* using dialect, rhythm, chromaticism, texture density, and dissonance: When a character’s social class or education level is low, for example, the music contains higher levels of dialect, syncopation, or chromaticism; when a character is part of a higher class, these signs are less evident. The parson speaks entirely in dialect. Joplin’s message? Alltalk is no leader. For Joplin, a man who had studied the writings of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and other important Black political figures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leaders were exceptional individuals. If Joplin held, as DuBois did, that the future of the African-American race lie with the “talented tenth,” a small, well-educated elite who could guide the masses to their full potential, then it’s clear Parson Alltalk could not possibly meet the criteria for leadership. He may be a good man, but he is not sufficiently educated to play a greater role in local affairs, let alone take a place on the world stage.

The parson's line, "Does yer feel lak you've been redeemed?" is a typical example of this approach. Joplin's use of dialect shows the parson's place on the social ladder is below that required of a leader. His questions are not open-ended but rather lead the congregation into responding that, of course, they feel redeemed, that they treat each other well, etc. How could they respond any other way? Joplin's message: Those in the crowd — as well as their pastor — live unexamined lives. Their idyllic ways are the ultimate expression of "pastoral." Their lives are simple, their conflicts easily resolved — there is no trace of the generations of mistreatment in their psyches, let alone in their daily reality.

What is more telling is the timing of his appearance in the opera. Parson Alltalk is seen only in No. 9, "Good Advice," making his a particularly minor role, but it is a significant one. He comes on stage after Treemonisha tells the conjurors to leave because she doesn't believe in superstition and immediately after she learns that she had been adopted. Equally important, his entrance coincides with the conjurors' return to the village. While Alltalk is asking the townspeople if they feel redeemed, the conjurors are kidnapping Treemonisha and dragging her into the woods, where they plan to kill her.<sup>267</sup> The parallels to Joplin's upbringing — when he likely saw his fellow residents on the Black side of town stolen away, bound and gagged, and then killed — are obvious. Joplin has the church provide "cover" for Treemonisha's kidnapping to underscore a point: Evil happens when good people look the other way.

It is important to note that I am not suggesting the pastor was in any way involved with the crimes committed against Treemonisha, and Joplin provides no suggestion of

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<sup>267</sup> Joplin foreshadows Treemonisha's kidnapping by including music that depicts wasps in the Lento introduction to Parson's Alltalk's sermon. To examine the music, see the tremolo figures on pages 75–76 of the original piano-voice score.

that either. But it is clear that Alltalk's appearance at this point in the story isn't just dramatically convenient. It means something. Starting from the obvious, his presence provides a distraction so the conjurors can put their plan into action without being noticed, not unlike how religion can serve as a distraction from the realities around us. On a subtler level, it sets up a clear contrast with the "lectures" heard in the final act. Those numbers provide guidance to the people on how to address the issues in their lives, and they also position two diametrically opposed characters as potential leaders. Will the people follow tradition and select a man of the cloth, or will they choose Treemonisha, a highly-educated woman, to lead them instead? By the end of the opera, the answer is clear – as is Joplin's presentation of Treemonisha as a member of the "talented tenth," someone who truly can guide her people into the future and do her part to inspire and lift up an entire race.

Is this the opera a wholesale rejection of Christianity or of Joplin's most-likely Protestant upbringing? I don't think so, but sufficient evidence is present — in the music — to state with some confidence that Joplin and his characters embraced a different value system. As mentioned earlier, the words God and Jesus do not appear in the libretto; whenever a deity is mentioned, it is always the Great Creator. Likewise, there are only two references to the devil, one specifically mentioning Satan, the other referring to a demonic presence. Similarly, while there are spiritual-like passages and church-related *topoi*, there are no references to any other important figures in Christian philosophy in the libretto. If the opera, or simply No. 9, were truly a reflection of Joplin's Christian values,

as others have suggested, there is little evidence to support that conclusion.<sup>268</sup> There is, however, a case to be made for the work being a reflection of Buddhism.

Setting aside dramaturgical concerns, there is more to the music in “Good Advice” than scholars have acknowledged. The number is an ABA da capo aria; the topic in the outer portions is call-and-response from the jubilee tradition of African-American spirituals, featuring Parson Alltalk and the choir exchanging easy-flowing, closely-voiced harmonies. The choral writing is full and lush, and very much in keeping with established traditions, particularly in the rural South, where Black Protestant churches continue to sing in this manner.

Writers who see Joplin as advancing Christian values dismiss the middle section as simply a “contrasting middle section.” For me, however, this is the most interesting part of the number because it includes the most intriguing and unexpected *topos* in the entire opera. Beginning at measure 44 (Largo, page 79), the B-section features Parson Alltalk singing without the choir. And his accompaniment? Instead of the expected African-American style or gesture, Joplin employs an accompaniment figure that comes directly out of Native American *topoi*.

A triadic baseline, Honor Beat, pentatonic melody, and falling thirds in the right hand of the piano part are evidence of Native American *topoi*; taken together, they cannot be ignored. This is no mere “contrasting middle section.” The use of these *topoi*, repeated continuously from bar 54 through the end of measure 68, is an unmistakable statement on

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<sup>268</sup> Berlin, *King of Ragtime*, relates this is the only work in Joplin’s entire catalogue in which he expressed his views on organized religion, and in this instance, his position is decidedly negative. While Berlin feels Joplin had ample reason to feel skepticism toward a faith that went after alcohol and gambling but turned a blind eye to the suffering of African Americans, he remains unconvinced that Joplin intended to parallel religion with superstition. In Berlin’s opinion, No. 9 offers nothing to the opera but empty platitudes; that it does very little to advance the story other than illustrate the community’s need for a real leader, such as Treemonisha (261–264). Addison, Hebert, and McDowell are still other scholars who see Treemonisha embracing Christian teachings and No. 9 as endorsement of Christianity.



Joplin's part. But what does it mean? And why include it in the opera when it is conspicuously absent from his solo piano rags, songs, and other large-form works?<sup>269</sup>

It seems to me that Joplin is making a political statement of his own, embedded neatly inside his opera, though ironically it is delivered through Parson Alltalk. It is a statement of universal brotherhood, suggesting through the use of this Native American accompaniment that African-Americans are not the only victims of racial prejudice in the United States, that Native Americans too have been mistreated. In this context, the placement of this number makes more sense: It's as if Joplin is telling audiences, as well as his characters, "You thought you were redeemed after the emancipation of the slaves? Think again. There are others among us who have suffered, and are suffering still."

This is not idle speculation. As Browner pointed out in her dissertation,<sup>270</sup> the use of Native American *topoi* is — in and of itself — a political statement. What's more, Piras' research strongly indicates that Joplin was a pacifist, a quiet and serious man who converted to Buddhism in the early 1890s and who believed in universal brotherhood and non-violence not only toward his fellow men, but to animals and plants as well.<sup>271</sup> At the time he was writing *Treemonisha*, the White people of the United States felt they had completed their Manifest Destiny. With the displacement of Native Americans, the West had been "tamed." The arrival of Anglo-American settlers in the West during the final decades of the nineteenth century coincided with the imprisonment and systematic

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<sup>269</sup> My examination of Joplin's works indicates this one number in *Treemonisha* is the only time Joplin ever employed a Native American topic in his music. I could not find any reference to Native Americans in his piano rags, songs, dance music, or even in music written for the minstrel stage. I believe this makes his use of it in the opera all the more significant.

<sup>270</sup> Tara Colleen Browner, *Transposing Cultures: The Appropriation of Native North American Musics, 1890–1990* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Michigan, 1995). Browner's work was discussed in Chapter 2. See the section on "Native American and Indianist Music."

<sup>271</sup> Piras, "Treemonisha or Der Freischütz Upside Down." Piras' research has led him to conclude that Joplin may have been a Jainist, that he saw plants and animals as equally important to the world as people. Piras believes this may explain why Joplin's rags have "botanical" titles. On the other hand, a number of parlor works with "floral" titles date back to the mid-nineteenth century.

murder of thousands of Native Americans — men, women and children. Those who remained were given a choice: assimilation or exile to a reservation. While many Americans today may pay little heed to the full story of “how the West was won,” Joplin and his contemporary Americans were keenly aware of it. Newspapers widely circulated stories about Native children being taken from their families and sent away to resettlement schools, institutions designed to teach them how to be “good citizens.” Stripped of their cultural identity as children, many graduates were never fully accepted by White America nor were they able to return to their tribes as “real Indians.” Those who would not assimilate, or could not, found themselves adrift in the mainstream culture.<sup>272</sup> During the Jim Crow era, when many Blacks remembered how similar efforts had been proposed to round up African-Americans and either exile former slaves onto reservations or enroll them in special schools to teach them a trade, how to be good citizens, or how to integrate into a mainstream society, this was indeed a sobering thought. Therefore, I believe the use of Native American gestures in this number has meaning, that it is not simply “contrasting material.” Could Joplin be telling his audience that Native Americans were being mistreated by mainstream White Americans? His text

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<sup>272</sup> The Indian boarding school movement began after the Civil War at a time when many Americans regarded Native people with fear and loathing. Social reformers concerned about the integration of Native Americans into mainstream society created schools such as the Carlisle Indian School (founded 1879) in order to facilitate “assimilation through education” — the goal of most Indian education programs between 1880 and 1920. Modeled after similar schools created for Blacks during Reconstruction, these schools were far less successful in integrating Native Americans into mainstream society. For many students, Native schools were as painful as death. Students were snatched from their families and a supportive Native culture as toddlers and were stripped of their national identities and cultural traditions — much like African-American slaves had been centuries earlier when slave ships traveled the Atlantic. And much like African slaves, Native American students from opposing nations were thrown together without regard for tribal differences and expected to “get along” as they transitioned into “Americans.” From the time they arrived on campus until graduation, they were not allowed to speak Native languages, observe their religion, wear traditional clothing, sing familiar songs, or even play Native games. Students wore uncomfortable American clothing; boys’ heads were shaved when they were enrolled and girls had their hair closely cut and styled in European fashion.

It is important to note that while the transition into American life would not be as extreme for European immigrants, similar schools were organized for newly-arrived European settlers.

For more information, see Carolyn J. Marr’s essay “Assimilation through Education: Indian Boarding Schools,” University of Washington, University Libraries, <https://content.lib.washington.edu/aipnw/marr.html>, accessed 7 June 2017.

in this part of the movement certainly suggests so, with lyrics that state: “Don’t harm yo’ brothers, Don’t harm yo’ sisters; O, my neighbors, you must be good. Remember each day, yo’ debts you should pay; O, my neighbors, you must be good.” Considering Joplin’s politics and religious beliefs, as well as the tenor of the times, it seems entirely possible that he embedded this message into the opera. More importantly, the music tells us so — if only we will listen closely to what it has to say.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOWARD A GREATER UNDERSTANDING SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the nineteenth century, American composers experimented with folk elements, topics, and musical gestures, setting the stage for the emergence of a national voice. The process by which musical topics and the meanings attached to them eventually came to create a meaningful whole began in popular music, most clearly in minstrelsy. While minstrel composers had no interest in paying homage to the slaves and free Blacks the genre openly mocked, the music composed for minstrel shows introduced into mainstream society a number of elements associated with African-American folk music, such as dance rhythms from the cakewalk or musical instruments such as the banjo, tambourine, and bone castanets. Hambone, a rhythmic technique created in response to crackdowns following slave uprisings, also proved enormously popular with minstrel show audiences, as did authentic African-American dance forms such as the slow drag, stoptime, and soft-shoe, which were introduced to minstrelsy by African-American performers such as Billy Kersands. By hearing the other's music, even in the crude form presented during minstrel shows, the general public was able to experience new sounds beyond the music it already knew.

Social dancing also played a significant role in bridging the gap between cultures and across the racial divides that separated the nation. At the start of the nineteenth century, Americans were dancing to forms established in Europe, such as contredanses, quadrilles, and polkas, but by the end of the century, Europe was

looking to America for the latest dances — and more importantly, to music that was far more novel than anything heard on the Continent. In the 1870s, for example, dances with a tropical flair were all the rage in the U.S. when war-weary Americans began returning their attention to social dancing. In a similar manner, African-American music became increasingly more popular with the general public after the Civil War, with some White dances, such as the Boston-Dip, borrowing music from Barbershop, an African-American genre. White dances were also absorbed into Black forms of music such as ragtime, or used as music for sporting events, circuses, and military parades. These forms were adopted by Europeans; indeed, one particular two-step, Sousa's *Washington Post March*, set off worldwide enthusiasm for American dance music.

Ragtime also played a significant role in the blending of diverse cultures toward the end of the nineteenth century. Its use of syncopated melodies over a steady, almost mechanical, bassline was immediately popular with listeners of both races. Ragtime's employment of the march form, with its sixteen-measure sections from European regimental marches, provided a familiar structure that allowed listeners to easily enjoy the music. Similarly, ragtime dances from the Charleston to "animal dances" such as the Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear, and Bunny Hug also functioned as a unifying force in American music. With music, steps, and tempi meant to appeal to young people, these dances captured the enthusiasm and optimism of the 1890s. Topical references embedded into the music were part of what appealed to listeners, providing novelty effects such as the sound of horse hooves, gunshots, stop time, and the new walking bass line, as well as aural clues to dancers regarding

where they might interpolate steps associated with older dance forms such as the schottishche, polka, or the cakewalk, or with emerging new forms such as the foxtrot.

Popular songs played a similarly important role in the development of an American sound. In a time before television, radio, and the automobile, families would frequently gather in the evening to sing. Some of the songs they enjoyed most were first introduced in the minstrel theatre, such as “Zip Coon,” “Jump Jim Crow,” and “Golden Slippers,” or favorites such as Stephen Foster’s “Oh! Susanna,” “Camptown Races,” or “The Old Folks at Home.” Other songs, like Foster’s “Beautiful Dreamer,” “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” or “Molly! Do You Love Me,” were written for the salon. Comic songs were also popular, especially when the lyrics poked fun at the opposite sex or people whose politics differed with the family’s, as Foster’s “That’s What’s the Matter” and “My Wife is a Most Knowing Woman” attest. Songs tinged with sadness also graced many families’ pianos, as did music that celebrated important milestones in the history of the nation, and novelty songs related to current affairs and new inventions, such as the telephone or the automobile. Popular songs united the country and reinforced a sense of national identity, out of which emerged a portrait of the nation’s character.

African-American musicians played a vitally important role in the process; indeed, without their involvement a distinctly American sound might not have emerged at all. Whether working as slaves in the South or as freemen in the North, African-American musicians performed not only their own folk, popular, and art music, but also European and Anglo-American music. Their regular exposure to a wide variety of music, regardless of its origins, made African-American musicians

exceptionally well positioned to synthesize what they heard into music that reflected the diversity of the nation.

In short, by listening over the walls that traditionally separated ethnic and racial groups, musicians used popular music as a sort of playground where they might experiment with elements created by others, keeping what worked and discarding what did not. The process was slow, but with the passing of time and continued interactions between racial and ethnic groups, a uniquely American musical language began to emerge — one that reflected the nation's multicultural roots.

William Fry, George Bristow, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, and other composers had urged their fellow American composers to incorporate the music of this nation in their art music since the 1850s. The movement gained momentum in the 1890s, however, when Czech composer Antonín Dvořák accepted a teaching position at the National Conservatory in New York. Dvořák spent many hours in the company of his African-American protégé, Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866–1949), who introduced him to spirituals as well as songs by Stephen Foster. Through his contact with Burleigh and other American musicians, Dvořák discovered uniquely American sounds of which he felt American musicians were unaware. He issued a challenge not only to his students, but to all American composers, to turn away from European models and compose music that incorporated the folk and ethnic music of the United States. That, he explained, was how the U.S. would develop its own national voice.

Dvořák specifically encouraged his peers in the New World to mine the wealth of materials to be had from African-American and Native Americans sources. Unfortunately, Dvořák did not fully appreciate the inherent racism and classism

within American society, factors that considerably slowed the formation of a national sound. Indeed, in a country where Manifest Destiny had been the rule of the land for nearly a century, very few Americans were eager to intentionally compose in a style that might be perceived as glorifying a vanquished people, be they former slaves or Native Americans. As a result, only a few composers initially accepted Dvořák's challenge, and many of those who did proceeded with great caution. On the other hand, Henry F. Gilbert (1868–1928) and Arthur Farwell (1872–1952) accepted Dvořák's challenge with great enthusiasm, composing music that drew heavily on elements of African-American and Native American music, as well as gestures from Latin American and Creole traditions. An increasing number of White composers began to write music with a distinctly "American" character in the first decade of the twentieth century, perhaps without realizing that Gottschalk, Creole, and African-American composers and writers of popular song had already done so for more than half a century.<sup>1</sup>

Composing confidently with a distinctly American musical voice did not come easily, however. Like trying to make sense out of the multitude of colors in a kaleidoscope, American composers had to deal with the diversity of topics and sounds they inherited from the nineteenth century. Some composers discovered that working in one family of topics was the means to their end; others employed two or three. It took most of the nineteenth century for America to set the stage for a truly national voice to emerge. The use of topics in American music continued into the twentieth century and beyond. Like any language, topics emerge with each new genre

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<sup>1</sup> After writing their multicultural pieces, composers accepting Dvořák's challenge then hit another barrier, one that composers such as Gottschalk, Fry, and Bristow knew all too well: the difficulty of convincing conductors to accept the scores, rehearse the music, and schedule performances.



and population group, and as composers and listeners identify them, they take on specific meanings and associations, generally related to the original material, its source, or how the music was initially heard. With the passing of time, topics continue to evolve and develop, and new topics emerge. Some gestures take on greater importance as musical styles and social values change; others eventually die off, no longer relevant to the music or to listeners.

Viewing topics in this manner strongly suggests, then, that the topics identified in this dissertation did not simply disappear in the whirlwind of social and cultural changes that redefined life in the years following World War I. On the contrary, nineteenth-century *topoi* significantly informed twentieth-century music, with some of the topics described in Chapter 2 influencing not only twentieth-century art music, but also the development of a uniquely American sound. Racial *topoi*, for example, particularly musical gestures associated with African Americans and Native Americans, were immortalized for twentieth-century Americans through the music they heard in movie theatres, on the radio, or on television. They also appeared in the music Americans sang or performed in school, or music they encountered during private lessons – much as they had in the nineteenth century. For many early twentieth-century composers, incorporating folk songs, spirituals, or well-known popular songs from the previous century was an effective way to ground their compositions in an American tradition, regardless of the musical styles their works employed.

John Alden Carpenter (1876–1951) was one of the first American composers to incorporate ragtime and jazz in art music, through which he sought to encompass

the spirit of America. During Carpenter's lifetime one of his most famous works was *Adventures in a Perambulator* (1913). A six-movement orchestral suite, the music attempts to convey a baby's impressions while being wheeled to and from the park by his nurse as he rides in a perambulator — a baby carriage. From a topical perspective, two passages stand out: In the third movement, "The Hurdy-Gurdy," Carpenter injects music from "Alexander's Ragtime Band" when the child hears music coming out of a box located in the park; and in "Dogs," the fifth movement, he includes fragments from well-known children's songs, such as "Where, Oh Where, Has My Little Dog Gone?" and "Did you Ever See a Lassie." The work also features brief passages of clashing seconds, suggesting the honking of car horns as the dogs dart in and out of road, a gesture seen fifteen years later in Gershwin's *American in Paris*.

Daniel Gregory Mason (1873–1953) employed nineteenth-century topics in his symphonic works, such as his *Variations on Yankee Doodle in the Style of Various Composers*, Op. 6 (1912), which presents the well-known American tune in the styles of nineteenth-century composers: Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Debussy, MacDowell, Dvořák, and Liszt. In the only movement reflecting the work of an American composer, Edward MacDowell (with whom Mason studied at Harvard), Mason briefly references the cakewalk, a rhythm closely associated with African Americans throughout the nineteenth century.

Aaron Copland (1900–1990) was also inspired by American popular and folk music. *Appalachian Spring* is perhaps the composer's best known work based on folk music; in this case, the music was drawn from "Simple Gifts," a Shaker hymn the composer discovered after he was commissioned to write an "American-themed"

ballet for Martha Graham in 1942. The use of a Shaker melody lends a prayerful mood to the music and also evokes life in the early nineteenth century. Topics and depictive gestures include Pastoral, Morning, Evening, Country Fiddling (hoedown), Horses (sounds of hooves and galloping rhythms), Wedding night celebrations, a clumsy Waltz, and jazz-like shifts in meter.

Morton Gould (1913–1996) found valuable source materials in Americana. *Foster Gallery* (1939), for example, is a thirteen-movement tableau featuring Gould's reworking of some of Stephen Foster's most beloved tunes, including "Camptown Races," "Swanee River," "Old Black Joe," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair," "Fill No Glass For Me," and "Oh! Susanna." Nineteenth-century topics found in the thirty-five minute work include Banjo (strummed chords and pizzicato passages played by violins), Military cavalry calls (spreading from the trumpets into the ensemble), Galop/running horses (repeated patterns such as two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note), Circus (calliope evoked through the composite sound of celeste and glockenspiel), Waltz, Contredanse, and the harp as the voice of the bardic storyteller. Minstrelsy is evoked not only through the use of Banjo and Foster tunes, but in the final moments of the work when Gould scores "Oh! Susanna" for plucked strings, flute, and glockenspiel. The use of xylophone in this passage suggests bone castanets, a popular instrument in many minstrel bands.

African-American music often employs rhythm patterns imported from Africa or derived from the fusion of African patterns with influences from the New World. The use of syncopation, cross-rhythms, and shifting meters generally ensures the music will almost always contain a higher degree of rhythmic intensity than works

written by White composers. Because a considerable amount of African-American music of the nineteenth century is largely based on folk traditions, early twentieth-century art music composers frequently incorporated melodies, harmonies, or compositional techniques associated with spirituals, the blues, Barbershop, ragtime, or jazz into works intended to suggest African Americans.

From the first, Henry F. Gilbert (1868–1928) strove to write indigenous American music, building his best works on African-American or Native American melodies or popular folk music drawn from the storehouse of America’s past. His African-American inspired works include *Negro Episode* (1896), *Americanesque* (1905), *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* and *Negro Rhapsody* (both 1911).<sup>2</sup> Gilbert’s *Dance in Place Congo*, Op. 15, is a programmatic symphonic poem based on Afro-Cuban and African-American dance rhythms and Creole melodies. The music was inspired by a story by novelist George W. Cable entitled “The Dance in Place Congo” in which the author described the “wild and quasi-barbaric revels of the slaves on Sunday afternoons,” when they were enjoying the last few hours of their weekly day of rest.”<sup>3</sup> Five songs native to Louisiana Creoles and a number of African-American references are featured in the music, including the cakewalk, tango, and bamboula rhythms, and the evening bell. The work also quotes, embellishes, and extends passages from Gottschalk’s *Nuit des Tropiques*, using the same melody, rhythms, and exotic percussion instruments employed in the bamboula

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<sup>2</sup> *Americanesque* (1905) is an orchestral suite that Gilbert wrote based on minstrel tunes. *Comedy Overture on Negro Themes* was originally intended to be a prelude to a larger work based on Joel Chandler Harris’ *Tales of Uncle Remus*. This work and *Negro Rhapsody* were also released in two- and four-hand piano versions.

<sup>3</sup> Henry F. Gilbert, note to the score of *Dance at Place Congo* (New York: H.W. Gray, 1922), 7. Gilbert’s note indicates this material was reprinted from the Boston Symphony Orchestra program book of 21 February 1920.

portions of his 1853 symphony.<sup>4</sup> One of the most interesting facets of the work, however, is found in the final section, when Gilbert adds an additional interpretative component to the work. As the evening comes to a close, the slaves' dancing and merrymaking approaches an out-of-control frenzy. Gilbert signals the return of "law and order" using music reminiscent of Richard Wagner's Prelude to *Die Meistersinger* to indicate the reassertion of White supremacy over the slaves.

Art music composers of both races found spirituals to be a wellspring of source material, with William Grant Still, Robert Nathaniel Dett, Harry T. Burleigh, Morton Gould, Leroy Anderson, and George Gershwin including them in their works. Spirituals also served as source material for many protest songs throughout the twentieth century; songs such as "We Shall Overcome,"<sup>5</sup> "Oh, Freedom!" and "Eyes on the Prize," were all adapted from spirituals originating in the nineteenth century.

Pioneer songs, fiddle tunes, Gold Rush songs, and music associated with cowboys and Indians are important parts of the Western song tradition.

Ferde Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite* (1931) is an example of twentieth-century "Western" music drawing on topics established during the previous century. In this work, Grofé (1892–1972) portrays the varied and changing colors of the Grand Canyon. Jazz techniques are employed throughout this highly depictive music. In its five movements — "Sunrise," "Painted Desert," "On the Trail," "Sunset," and "Cloudburst" — Grofé provides music that suggests daybreak, the awe and mystery

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<sup>4</sup> Many of these same elements can be found, in a simpler form, in Gottschalk's *Bamboula*, a work written in the 1840s during Gottschalk's time in Paris. The music Gottschalk employed in this work attracted the attention of other musicians. Afro-English composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, for example, used the same materials in his "Bamboula," No. 8 in *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, Op. 59, which he published in 1905.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Library of Congress, "We Shall Overcome" is a merger of the gospel hymn "I'll Overcome Someday" with the spiritual "I'll Be All Right." See [www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/](http://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/) for more information. Accessed 5 July 2017.

of the landscape, the distant calls of animals in the canyon, and the approach, outbreak, and dissipation of a desert thunderstorm. The third movement employs a cowboy tune, which Grofé set against music that depicts the hooves of a donkey or mule walking along the trail. At the end of the first hearing of this passage, Grofé includes clarinets playing a sequence of falling thirds to evoke the distinctive “hee-haw” sound of braying.<sup>6</sup>

Copland’s 1938 ballet *Billy the Kid* relates the story of a real-life American gunfighter who killed twenty-one men before he reached his twenty-first birthday. To lend the work a Western “feel,” Copland embedded cowboy songs such as “Git Along, Little Dogies,” “The Old Chisholm Trail,” “Old Paint,” and “The Dying Cowboy” into the music.

Copland’s *Rodeo* similarly incorporates cowboy and Western topics. Written in 1942 for Agnes de Mille, the ballet included five main musical sections: “Buckaroo Holiday,” “Corral Nocturne,” “Ranch House Party,” “Saturday Night Waltz,” and “Hoe-Down.”<sup>7</sup> American folk tunes abound, with cowboy songs and fiddle tunes featured in nearly every portion of the music. “Sis Joe,” an old railroad song, is heard throughout “Buckaroo’s Holiday,” as is the cowboy tune “If He’d Be a Buckaroo.” Copland viewed “Saturday Night Waltz” as a sort of “Texas Minuet”; this portion of the music quotes “Hooligan,” a cowboy tune also known as “I Ride An Old Paint.” Cowboy music plays a prominent role in “Hoe-Down,” but the movement also references nineteenth-century topics such as Contredanse, Square dancing, the Reel,

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to the *Grand Canyon Suite*, Grofé also composed *Death Valley Suite*, a short work depicting the westward travels of pioneers through California’s Death Valley.

<sup>7</sup> Copland revised the work in 1943, releasing it as a one-movement suite in which music from all but “Saturday Night Waltz” was included. He left the remaining sections largely intact, with only slight revisions. “Hoe-Down,” featured recently as the music for “Beef, It’s What’s For Dinner” ads, is the best-known movement.

Fiddle Tunes, and Irish folk songs through its use melodies such as “Bonaparte’s Retreat,” “Miss McLeod’s Reel” and “Gilderoy.” Topics based on the sounds of real life are also featured in the music, including trotting Horses and weather effects such as Thunder.

Yet another “cowboy” work is Morton Gould’s *Cowboy Rhapsody* (1940), in which the composer employed “The Trail to Mexico,” “Little Old Sod Shanty,” “Home on the Range,” “Old Paint,” and other cowboy songs as source material.

Military music, battle works, and music that celebrates the nation’s successes took on growing importance throughout the nineteenth century as American composers began writing works that commemorated important moments in the nation’s history. Compositions frequently included gestures borrowed from military maneuvers, such as marches or cavalry calls, as well as sound effects intended to mimic battle noises. The inclusion of popular airs was another favorite device, one that identified the combatants through their music.

A number of twentieth-century composers incorporated nineteenth-century military topics and music associated with decisive battles in American history into their original compositions. For example, in his *New England Triptych*, William Schuman (1910–1992) included “Be Glad Then, America,” “When Jesus Wept,” and “Chester,” melodies heard in New England during the Revolutionary War, as the principal themes of this three-movement work based on the music of American colonialist William Billings. The music features *topoi* from the era such as Drum and Fife, Military Drum Cadences, Hymns, and Marching tunes. Similarly, Morton Gould’s 1942 *American Salute*, a classic in band literature, opens with Military Drum

Cadences and prominently features variations on the Civil War tune, “When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again.” John Knowles Paine’s 1904 *Hymn to the West* includes Cavalry Calls in its opening measures, a topic that is confirmed in the piano score with a note indicating that the passage will eventually be scored for trumpets.

Music in the New World reflects a fascinating series of influences from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and South and Central America. Because of the fusion of Spanish, Indian, Black, and Creole forms of music taking place in Latin America during the 1830s and 1840s, a Pan-American style of music developed throughout the rest of the continent long before similar developments were encouraged in the U.S. This music merged art music traditions with local color, well-known dance rhythms, and popular songs, creating classical music based on European symphonic ideals as well as popular music.

Caribbean and Creole folk songs have long graced concert stages in New Orleans. Nevertheless, even though Louis Moreau Gottschalk included several of them in his most prominent works from the 1840s and early 1850s, composers in the United States began to regularly include elements from the tango, habanera, rumba, or other Latin American dances into their art music compositions only in the 1870s, when Latin American dances first became popular here. On the other hand, the presence of a critical mass of Mexican nationals within the borders of the United States exerted an influence on art music much earlier.

Copland’s *El Salón Mexico* is a tribute to a famous dancehall the composer visited in Mexico City in 1932. In order to compose a work that captured the spirit of the people, Copland embedded Mexican folk tunes and dance rhythms into the music.



Similarly, Morton Gould's setting of the Cuban rumba *Peanut Vendor* is based on a *son* composed by Moisés Simons. The original work set off an international mania for rumbas that lasted well into the 1940s; "El manisero," as it was originally titled, became a favorite not only with jazz performers, but also with classically-oriented composers interested in exotic dance music. Topics include Latin American dance rhythms and Banjo/Guitar. The music is highly syncopated and relies on trumpets to carry the melody and Latin percussion instruments to complete the effect.

Gershwin's *Cuban Overture* (1932) references well-known Latin American songs such as "La Paloma" and "Échale Salsita," a pop song by Ignacio Piñero that Gershwin heard during a visit to Havana. Like other works in this vein, the music includes Latin American dance rhythms and a battery of Latin American percussion instruments. Gershwin specified in the score that these instruments – the bongo, clave, gourd, and maracas – should be placed immediately in front of the conductor's stand so that audiences could watch the musicians more closely.

Art music associated with circuses enjoyed a prominent role in the twentieth century, with music written for bands, small ensembles, vocalists, and solo piano. Charles Ives wrote his song "Circus Band" in 1894. Gestures from circus music include drum cadences between musical strains, countermelodies ideally suited for the cornet, material reminiscent of high woodwind filigree, sectional writing reflecting the structure, character, and tempi of American marches, and the oom-pah bassline found in circus music. Ives regularly included nineteenth-century source materials as topics; indeed, his style is noted for its highly original blending of his own work with hymn tunes, patriotic and traditional songs, parlor ballads, fiddle

tunes, Stephen Foster songs, marches, and music that generally reminds listeners of small town bands and circus parades.

The 1938 ballet *The Incredible Flutist* by Walter Piston (1884–1976) is another example of the use of circus *topoi* in art music. The music includes parade whistles and a circus march to indicate the arrival of the circus into town, as well as exotic harmonies and short chromatic passages that depict snake charmers. The work includes several dances – a tango, waltz, minuet, polka, and a siciliano – as well as sounds of a barking dog, street vendors, and the chiming of the town clock.

In a manner not unlike the way minstrel songs inspired popular songs during the nineteenth century, composers working in vaudeville, music theatre, and on Tin Pan Alley in the first half of the twentieth century created thousands of songs and shows that played an important role in establishing an American musical voice.

Whereas songwriters such as Harrigan and Hart, John Philip Sousa, Irving Berlin, and Victor Herbert entertained audiences with shows meant to appeal to specific ethnic groups in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, composers such as Robert Russell Bennett, Leroy Anderson, Ferde Grofé, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, and Leonard Bernstein entertained theatre-goers with music meant to appeal to the masses. The music they wrote showcased a wide variety of American characters: men and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds and varying social classes and value systems. Works written after World War I, such as *Porgy and Bess*, *Showboat*, *Oklahoma*, *West Side Story*, and *Annie, Get Your Gun*, depicted Americans throughout the nation and established a market for “semi-popular” music,

works ideally suited for the pops market that emerged in the years leading up to World War II.

The works of Leroy Anderson are an excellent example of this new style. Optimistic, whimsical, carefree, and highly memorable, Anderson's music was often based on the sounds of everyday American life, with titles such as *The Syncopated Clock*, *The Typewriter*, and *Horse and Buggy*. Anderson depicted musical instruments in pieces such as *Plink, Plank, Plunk*, a work based entirely on the sound of pizzicato strings, repeating a pattern established by Foster and Gottschalk's banjo works almost a century earlier. *Sleigh Ride*, his best-known work, depicts the sounds of sleigh bells, whips, and the galloping of horses along snowy streets, images deeply engrained with many Americans as signals of Christmas.<sup>8</sup>

Jazz provided twentieth century composers with an unending source of inspiration. Carpenter is often considered one of the first American composers to include jazz in a symphonic composition, but he was far from the only American composer experimenting in the style. George Gershwin's music comes immediately to mind. Less well known are Copland's *Three Moods for Piano* (1921), *Music for the Theater* (1925) and his Piano Concerto (1926), which were all jazz-inspired, as were George Antheil's *A Jazz Symphony* (1925) and William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony* (1930) and *Blues from Lenox Avenue* (1937).

Morton Gould noted that the combination of jazz, swing, jive, and folk songs identified American music to listeners.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, some of his most popular works

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<sup>8</sup> While many people consider "Sleigh Ride" a Christmas song, it is actually a winter holiday song. The lyrics do not refer to Christmas but since the work is commonly performed during holiday programs, the association is a strong one with many Americans.

<sup>9</sup> David Ewen, *Music for the Millions: The Encyclopedia of Musical Masterpieces* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1944), 240.

combine jazz with Americana songs, including *Chorale and Fugue in Jazz* (1934), *American Symphonette* (1938), and the *Boogie Woogie Etude for Piano* (1943).

It is important to note that jazz musicians themselves wrote art music, and much of it is infused with the sounds they knew best. Noted African-American pianist James P. Johnson, for example, composed *Yamekraw: An Afro-American Rhapsody for Jazz Piano and Orchestra*.<sup>10</sup> In this 1927 work, the composer blends elements from high and low art, using topics and techniques from nineteenth- and twentieth-century “popular” and “classical” music, such as the use of the banjo, sixteen-bar solos for traditional jazz instruments (trombone, muted trumpets, clarinet, and saxophone), twelve-bar blues and the walking bass, and piano styles that encompass pianola, honky-tonk, and barrelhouse traditions.

George Gershwin (1898–1937) was, without question, the most important composer and songwriter of the early twentieth century. He so completely embodied the American sound that his music provided everyone who followed him with a road map on how to compose in a distinctly American style. His idiom was the popular music of the day, blending Jewish, Russian, and African-American elements with the European symphonic tradition to create a style that was cosmopolitan, yet rooted in the everyday world. Songs such as “I Got Rhythm,” “Embraceable You,” and “Summertime” became jazz standards while concert works based on jazz, such as his 1924 *Rhapsody in Blue*, introduced club music into the concert hall. Other works, such as *An American in Paris*, two piano concerti, and his opera *Porgy and Bess*,

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<sup>10</sup> *Harlem Symphony* (1932) is another jazz-inspired work Johnson composed. Like *Yamekraw*, the work was heavily influenced by Gershwin’s music.

continued to blend jazz and blues into classical genres, ultimately forging a new musical language, one that the entire world easily recognized as uniquely American.

Because *Rhapsody in Blue* forever changed how listeners around the world perceived American music, it is worth noting that musical topics played a significant role in this groundbreaking work.

The Blues are evoked in the very first notes of the *Rhapsody*, but the jazzy-Klezmer-like effect heard at the premiere was not an effect Gershwin originally notated in the score. The opening is written as a trill followed by a 17-note ascending scale; during rehearsal, clarinetist Ross Gorman played the final portion of the scale as if it had been written for trombone. Gershwin liked what he heard and insisted that Gorman not only repeat the technique during the concert, but that he add even more “wail” to the passage. Known in jazz as a “smear,” notation for this “growling glissando” was added to later versions of the score and remains part of the performance tradition associated with this work.<sup>13</sup>

Five principal themes and a “tag” make up the bulk of *Rhapsody*’s thematic material; they are all based on blues scales, and while their presentations vary when themes are shifted from the piano to the orchestra, each appears in both settings. David Schiff provides a name for each theme, its location in the score, and a short incipit in *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue*,<sup>14</sup> where he labels the primary themes as Ritornello, Train, Stride, Shuffle, and Love, names that reflect the music’s function, topic, or character.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Schwartz, *Gershwin: His Life and Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 81–83.

<sup>14</sup> David Schiff, *Gershwin: Rhapsody In Blue*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Due to copyright restrictions, the music cannot be reproduced here, but a comparison of Schiff’s examples to the solo piano version of the work indicates the first appearance of the ritornello theme occurs in the second measure of the work, and again at m.16. Music suggestive of locomotives introduces the train theme in m.89, with



were musical salesmen; as a way to promote sheet music sales, the plugger tried to create the illusion of an orchestral accompaniment by placing the melody in a middle voice and surrounding it with figuration derived from either ragtime or classical music.<sup>20</sup> As Schiff outlines in *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue*, the song-plugger style is in the Ritornello (reh. 5), in Shuffle (reh. 25), and in the Love theme (reh. 32).<sup>21</sup>

Stride shares some of the stylistic features seen in the song-plugger style, but as an African-American genre its social function differed. Stride pianists such as James P. Johnson and Fats Waller performed at dance parties, and in order to keep the music fresh, and the dancers on their feet, improvisation was a practical, as well as an aesthetic concern. As a result, in much of this music the melody was less important than virtuosity and rhythmic intensity. The pianist's left hand functions as a rhythm section, replacing the octaves associated with ragtime with tenths and rolling chords. The style also employs added sevenths, ninths, and blue notes to the harmony.<sup>22</sup> The Train theme, for example, is based on techniques associated with stride piano.<sup>23</sup>

The Novelty style developed in the Midwest, providing classically-trained pianists an opportunity to perform syncopated music such as ragtime. Novelty piano works follow the same basic format as ragtime works, but the music is generally more rhythmically complex and more harmonically sophisticated. The music also features cross-rhythms, irregular note groupings, parallel fourths and ninths, and it is often infused with elements from the blues and Latin American popular music. In addition to being one of Harlem's leading stride pianists, Zez Confrey was a master of this

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 36.

style; indeed, Gershwin scholars such as Schiff see many connections between the *Rhapsody* and some of Confrey's biggest hits, particularly *Kitten on the Keys* (1921) and *Coaxing the Piano* (1922).<sup>24</sup> Novelty piano can be seen in the Train theme and in two-hand appoggios and cross-hand passages located throughout the score.<sup>26</sup>

Ethnic influences are also present in the *Rhapsody*. In addition to the African American markers found throughout the work, Latin American rhythms such as the clave also can be heard in the *Rhapsody*.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Gershwin scholars have also noted both Jewish and Russian connections in the work. For many listeners, the wailing clarinet passage and lowered sevenths heard in the train theme strongly suggest klezmer, and the lush and soaring Love theme is akin to Russian music from the late Romantic Era, such as Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* or Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*.<sup>28</sup>

Since the 1890s American composers had been casting about in search of a uniquely American musical language, and many of them dabbled in nineteenth-century topics, sampling them as they saw fit. Scott Joplin played a significant role in this effort and his opera, *Treemonisha*, provides a model on how African-American

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 35. Schiff also sees Confrey's influence in Aaron Copland's music.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 36. Comic piano is a style first popularized by Jimmy Durante and Chico Marx. The music often features hesitations in order to set up a comedic situation on stage. This style is also seen in the *Rhapsody*, beginning at reh. 22 with a long-running sequence of sixteenth notes embedded with grace notes.

<sup>27</sup> Instead of using the 2+3+3 clave pattern listeners might expect, Gershwin used a 3+3+2 pattern.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 19–23. This particular theme has still more topical information embedded within it. As Schiff explains, the theme implies two different phrase structures, depending on how the notation is interpreted: "If the theme is played *Andantino*, it's a sluggish foxtrot, but if it's played faster, and with *rubato*, a more *Grandioso* treatment is paired with the jazzy nervousness of Confrey's stride piano style."

The entire issue is a reflection of changing practices. As Schiff explains: Ragtime was typically notated in 2/4; jazz in 4/4. Foxtrots were an interim step between ragtime and jazz. They were written in 2/4, 4/4, and 2/2. Whiteman's recordings indicate he conducted the Love theme in a "gracious" 2/2; modern conductors typically alternate a broad 4/4 with a hectic 2/2, which provides greater energy and dramatic contrast.



*topoi*, Afro-Cuban rhythms, and European art music traditions combine in successful American compositions. Through its overture and twenty-six set numbers, the opera includes many of the topics, styles, and gestures that evolved in American music over the course of the nineteenth century. The opera also provides a point of reference for how still later composers fashioned these raw materials into music that listeners around the world immediately recognized and appreciated as authentically American in style.

In writing this dissertation, my hope is that scholars not only will take a similar approach to musical *topoi* in the twentieth century, but that collaborations between historical musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and experts in jazz, ragtime, and popular music will be formed. While such partnerships are important in the study of European music, any serious examination of American music demands it. Many of the individual topics and sources for American topics are worthy of further study, and this project, while substantial, is only a beginning. Gestures from the nineteenth century continue to inform American music, as do topics from early twentieth-century musical theatre and popular music. Some of these elements found their way into film music, as well as into commercial genres such as rock, country, and pop music. One also might look at how topics have continued to be used in music from the 1950s to today, as many gestures that emerged in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century inform composers tasked with providing music for feature film and video games. The definition of the American sound also needs to be refined. While a dictionary of topics that have emerged since World War I would be a valuable place to start, how have the topics identified in this document evolved as this nation has

undergone decades of political and social upheaval? What new topics have emerged and how will our generation be evoked in music yet to be written?

As I wrote this dissertation, a central theme emerged: *E pluribus unum*, out of many, one. America's musical voice was created through the styles, topics, and gestures that developed throughout the nineteenth century. It did not come from any single race or region of the nation, nor did it come from the establishment, forced onto artists and their compositions from those at the highest levels of society. Instead, it bubbled up from the American people themselves over the course of the nineteenth century. After the First World War, musicians such as Gershwin, Copland, and Leonard Bernstein used the musical language they inherited to more fully develop an easily recognizable American style, but it was the work of composers such as Joplin and thousands of ordinary people who prepared the ground and planted the seeds. Those who followed harvested the results — what we now know as the American sound.

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APPENDIX A

LIBRETTO TO SCOTT JOPLIN'S OPERA *TREEMONISHA*

Libretto to  
**TREEMONISHA**  
 Scott Joplin, author

**Act I—Morning**

**No. 1, OVERTURE**

**No. 2, “THE BAG OF LUCK”**

*Quintet. Curtain rises.  
 Zodzetrick enters.*

**Zodzetrick** (to Monisha):  
 I want to sell to you dis bag o’ luck,  
 Yo’ enemies it will keep away.  
 Over yo’ front do’ you can hang it,  
 An’ good luck will come each day.

**Monisha**: Will it drive away de blues?  
 An’ stop Ned from drinkin’ booze?

**Zodzetrick**: It will drive de blues,  
 I’m thinkin’, An’ will stop Ned  
 from booze-drinkin’.

**Monisha** (reaching for bag): Well!

**Ned** (angrily): No, dat bag you’s not gwine  
 to buy, ’Cause I know de price is high.

**Zodzetrick**: I mus’ tell you plain an’ bold,  
 It is worth its weight in gold.

**Ned**: It may be worth its weight in diamonds  
 rare, Or worth the earth to you. But to me, it  
 ain’t worth a possum’s hair, Or persimmons  
 when they’re new. Drinkin’ gin I would not  
 stop, If dat bag was on my chin. I’m goin’ to  
 drink an’ work my crop, ’Cause I think it is  
 no sin.

**Monisha**: Dis here bag will heaps o’ luck  
 bring, An’ we need here jes dis kind o’ thing.

**Ned**: You shall not buy dat bag, ’Cause I don’t  
 want it here. ’Nough o’ dat thing we’ve had.  
 ’Twill do us harm, I fear. (to Zodzetrick:)

Say ole man, you won’t do, You’s a stranger  
 to me. Tell me, who are you?

**Zodzetrick**: Zodzetrick—I am de Goofer dus’  
 man, An’ I’m king of Goofer dus’ lan’. Strange  
 things appear when I say “Hee hoo!” Strange  
 things appear when I say “Hee hoo!”

*Zodzetrick starts away. Exit Ned. Monisha  
 goes into the cabin.*

**Treemonisha** (to Zodzetrick): Wait, sir, for a  
 few moments stay, You should listen to what I  
 have to say. Please come closer to me, come  
 along, And I’ll tell you of your great wrong.

*Zodzetrick marks a cross on the ground spits  
 on it and turns back.*

**Zodzetrick**: I’ve come back, my dear child,  
 to hear what you say, Go on with your story,  
 I can’t stay all day.

**Treemonisha**: You have lived without  
 working for many years. All by your tricks  
 of conjury. You have caused superstition  
 and many sad tears.

You should stop, you are doing great injury.

**Zodzetrick**: You ’cuse me wrong for injury  
 I’s not done, An’ it won’t be long ’fore I’ll  
 make you from me run. I have dis bag o’ luck,  
 tis true, So take care, I’ll send bad luck to you.

**Remus**: Shut up old man, enough you’ve said;  
 You can’t fool Treemonisha—she has a level  
 head. She is the only educated person of our  
 race, For many long miles far away from this  
 place. She’ll break the spell of superstition in  
 the neighborhood, And all you foolish  
 conjurors will have to be good. To read and  
 write she has taught me, and I am very  
 thankful, I have more sense now, you can see,  
 and to her I’m very grateful. You’d better quit  
 your foolish ways—and all this useless strife,  
 You’d better change your ways today—and  
 live a better life.

**Zodzetrick**: I don’t care what you say, I will  
 never change my way. (*He starts away.*) I’m  
 goin’ now, but I’ll be back soon, Long ’fore  
 another new moon. Did you all hear me?

**Treemonisha & Remus**: Yes, and we are glad  
 you are going.

*They stand looking at Zodzetrick  
 as he walks slowly away.*

Hope he’ll stay away from here always,  
 always.

**No. 3, “THE CORN HUSKERS.”**

*Chorus of Corn huskers in distance*

**Corn huskers**: Very fine day.

**Treemonisha**: The folks are coming to husk  
 our corn, I hear them singing a very sweet  
 song. See, there they are now, almost here,  
 I’m glad the day is clear.

*Enter Corn-Huskers.*

**Corn huskers**: Hello!

**Treemonisha & Remus**: Hello!

**Corn huskers**: We’ve come to husk de corn.

**Treemonisha**: Shall we have a Ring-play  
 before we work today?

**Corn huskers**: Yes, and we’ll stay the whole  
 day long.

**No. 4, “WE’RE GOIN’ AROUND”  
A RING PLAY**

*All form a ring by joining hands, including Lucy, Andy’s partner; Andy stands in the center of the ring.*

**Andy** (All begin circling): Dere was a man befo’ de war,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** Said he didn’t like his moth’n-law,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** I know we’ll have a jolly good time,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** Because de weather’s very fine,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

*Stop circling. Andy swings his partner— Lucy—the next lady to her swinging Lucy each time before swinging each succeeding lady. Every time Andy swings his partner the other gentlemen swing their partners.*

**Andy:** Swing dat lady,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing dat lady,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing her gently,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around, Keep on goin’ around, ’round. Swing,

**Andy:** Swing dat gent’mun,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing dat gent’mun,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Swing, swing, goin’ around, Keep on a-goin’ around, keep a-goin’ ’round.

*Andy is in circle; Lucy, in center, swings Andy, then next gentleman to him, swinging Andy again before swinging another gentleman.*

**Andy:** Gals all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Gals all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Smilin’ sweetly,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Keep on goin’ around, ’round. Boys,

**Andy:** Boys all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Boys all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Swing, swing, goin’ around, Keep on a-goin’ around, around.

*Lucy in circle; first gentleman to the right of Andy goes center.*

**Andy** (Begin Circling): All join hands an circle once mo’,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** Don’t go fast, an’ don’t go slow,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** Let yo’ steps be light an’ neat,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

**Andy:** Be careful how you shake yo’ feet,

**Corn huskers:** O, we’re goin’ around.

*Stop circling. Gentleman in center swings his partner.*

**Andy:** Swing dat lady,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing dat lady,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing her gently,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around, Keep on goin’ around, ’round. Swing,

**Andy:** Swing dat gent’mun,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Swing dat gent’mun,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Swing, swing, goin’ around, Keep on a-goin’ around, keep a-goin’ ’round,

*Gentleman, in center, goes back to the circle and his partner goes to center.*

**Andy:** Gals all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Gals all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Smilin’ sweetly,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Keep on goin’ around, ’round. Boys,

**Andy:** Boys all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around.

**Andy:** Boys all smilin’,

**Corn huskers:** Goin’ around. Swing, swing, goin’ around, Keep on a-goin’ around,

*They sit around the corn and begin husking slowly.*

’Round, ’round, ’round.

**No. 5, “THE WREATH”**

**Treemonisha:** You girls are wearing wreaths on your heads,

*Monisha opens the cabin door and stands, listening.*

And I am wearing a bonnet instead.

**Lucy:** You should wear a wreath made of pretty leaves.

**Treemonisha:** Now to make my wreath,  
I see, I must have leaves from that tree.

**Monisha:** No! Not a leaf from dat tree take,  
Leave 'em there, child, for my sake, Take 'em  
from another tree, An' very fine yo' wreath  
will be.

**Treemonisha:** There are pretty leaves on this  
tree so near, But, to please you, I'll to another  
tree go. Tell me why this tree is, to you, so  
dear?

**Chorus:** Please tell us, we would all like to  
know.

#### No. 6, "THE SACRED TREE"

**Monisha:** One Autumn night in bed I was  
lying, Just eighteen years ago, I heard a dear  
little baby crying, While loudly Ned did snore.  
And the baby's crying seemed to be  
somewhere near that sacred tree, And the  
baby's crying seemed to be somewhere near  
that sacred tree. It was twelve o'clock, or just  
before, When the rain fell hard and fast, The  
baby's cries I heard no more, It had gone to  
sleep at last. And very quiet it seemed to be,  
Somewhere near that sacred tree, And very  
quiet it seemed to be, Somewhere near that  
sacred tree. I came out in the yard to see, And  
find out where the child could be; And there,  
in rags, the baby laid, Sheltered by that tree's  
cool shade. I found it where I thought 'twould  
be, There besides that sacred tree, I found it  
where I thought 'twould be, There besides that  
sacred tree. I took the child into our home,  
And now the darling girl is grown, All I've  
said to you is true, The child I've told you of is  
you. Take not a leaf but leave them be, On that  
dear old sacred tree; Take not a leaf but leave  
them be, On that dear old sacred tree. The rain  
or the burning sun, you see, Would have sent  
you to your grave, But the sheltering leaves of  
that old tree, Your precious life did save. So  
now with me you must agree, Not to harm that  
sacred tree; So now with me you must agree,  
Not to harm that sacred tree.

#### No. 7, "SURPRISED"

**Treemonisha:** I am greatly surprised to know  
that you are not my mother.

**Corn huskers:** We are all surprised, surprised.

#### No. 8, "TREEMONISHA'S BRINGING UP" *Recitative*

**Monisha:** We brought you up to believe  
that we were your real parents.  
We saw nothing wrong in doing so.

If our friends and acquaintances had  
discovered that you were not our own child,  
It would only have been a question of time  
when they would have told you the truth.  
On a dark still night, Ned hitched up the old  
mules, and taking you, We were soon driving  
along the road, And the next day were twenty  
miles away. Calling on some friends, We told  
them that you were our first-born and that I  
intended to stay at their house for eight weeks  
for the benefit of my health. We presented to  
our old friends six bushels of corn and forty  
pounds of meat. Ned went back to the old  
home and told the folks all about his baby of a  
few days old. The neighbors were much  
surprised at what Ned told them, But of course  
believed him, And so you have never learned  
the secret of your birth until now. When you  
were seven years old, There being no school in  
the neighborhood, A white lady undertook  
your education. (*points to the trunk of the  
sacred tree.*) I found you on that spot, And  
your parents I know not; Ned and I love you  
true; You have been a faithful daughter.

**Treemonisha:** I love you and Ned too, And  
your bidding I will do. To me you have been a  
mother, And Ned has been a father.

**Monisha:** When you were a little child of  
years only three, You were the most contented  
while playing near that tree. Monisha first I  
named you, The honor was for me.  
Treemonisha next I named you, Because you  
loved that tree.

**Treemonisha:** I will take leaves from another  
tree, And very fine my wreath will be.

**Corn-Huskers:** Take them from another tree,  
And very fine your wreath will be.  
*Treemonisha and Lucy go among the trees.*

#### No. 9, "GOOD ADVICE"

*Parson Alltalk enters.*

Parson Alltalk: Lis'en friends, Do not tell lies  
an' steal, because it ain't right. Remember all  
I say to you, Because it's good advice.  
*All kneel in prayer. All rise.*

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer feel lak you've been  
redeemed?

**Chorus:** O yes, ah feel lak I've been  
redeemed.

**Parson Alltalk:** Ain't yer glad yer have been  
redeemed?

**Chorus:** O yes, om glad ah have been  
redeemed.

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer always aim ter  
speak de truth?



**Chorus:** O yes, ah always aim ter speak de truth.

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer love all yo' neighbors too?

**Chorus:** O yes, ah love all ma neighbors too.

**Parson Alltalk:** Lis'en friends, Always live lak brothers an' sisters, Because it is right. Remember all I say to you, Because it's good advice. Don't harm yo' brother, Don't harm yo' sister; O, my neighbors, you must be good.

**Chorus:** (With closed lips.): Un . . .

**Parson Alltalk:** Remember, each day, Yo' debts you should pay; O, my neighbors, you must be good.

**Chorus:** (With closed lips.): Un . . .

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer feel lak you've been redeemed?

**Chorus:** O yes, ah feel lak I've been redeemed.

**Parson Alltalk:** Ain't yer glad yer have been redeemed?

**Chorus:** O yes, om glad ah have been redeemed.

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer always aim ter speak de truth?

**Chorus:** O yes, ah always aim ter speak de truth.

**Parson Alltalk:** Does yer love all yo' neighbors too?

**Chorus:** O yes, ah love all ma neighbors too.

*Exit Parson Alltalk.*

## No. 10, "CONFUSION"

*Ensemble*

**Monisha:** Look! Lucy is comin' back, I can't see Treemonisha. I wonder where she is? Lucy has somethin' over her mouth, An' her hands are tied behind her.

**Chorus:** [women:] What is de trouble [men:] What's wrong, Lucy?

*Lucy enters and falls to the ground exhausted. All gather around. Monisha unties Lucy's hands and takes the handkerchief from over her mouth. Lucy then sits up.*

**Chorus:** Speak! Lucy, Speak! Lucy, Speak! Lucy, Speak! Where is Treemonisha?

[sopranos & altos] Speak to me, please speak to me! [tenors] Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, speak to me! [basses:] Speak, Speak, Speak, Speak, speak to me!

**Lucy:** Zodzetrick an' Luddud have tied a han'kerchief over Treemonisha's mouth, An' have tied her han's behind her jes' lak dey tied mine.

**Chorus:** Tell it quick, quick! Tell it quick!

**Lucy:** An' Zodzetrick got on his mule's back An' lifted Treemonisha on after him, Den galloped away into de woods.

*Women crying. The crying need not be in strict time, but the accompaniment must be. Lucy rises and begins to cry.*

**Chorus Women:** Oh—! *Spoken in crying tones.* Go an' bring her back, boys.

**Chorus Men:** We will bring her back. *The corn husking boys run down the road after the conjurors. Remus goes to the cornfield gets the scarecrow suit and disguises himself to follow and frighten the conjurors.*

**Chorus Women:** Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

*Ned comes running from the field.*

**Ned:** Hey!

**Monisha,** speak! Where is Treemonisha an' de boys?

**Monisha:** Among the trees to gather leaves Treemonisha and Lucy went, They thought not of the conjurous thieves, While on their pleasure bent. But Zodzetrick and Luddud made haste while they could, They have captured Treemonisha, and their threats they have made good. The boys went to rescue her and bring her back to me, She is our only daughter, and with us she ought to be.

**Ned:** I'll beat dat trifling Zodzetrick, Until he runs lak a big cur dog, And I'll kill dat scoundrel Luddud,

*Enter Remus*

Jus' lak I would kill a hog.

**Remus:** *He puts on the scarecrow suit.* I'll wear dis ugly scare-crow, While through the woods I roam, 'Twill scare away the conjurors, And I'll bring Treemonisha home. *He goes running down the road. Ned, Monisha and the girls look at Remus as he runs down the road.*

**Chorus:** Run faster, Remus, Remus, Keep straight ahead. Run faster, Remus, Remus, Keep straight ahead.

*Curtain down.*

## Act II—Afternoon

### No. 11, "SUPERSTITION"

*SCENE I. Woods. Conjurors meeting. Wasp's nest hanging on bush.*

**Simon:** If along de road you're goin', An' all to yo' true knowin', A black cat cross'd yo' path, Yo' bad luck will long last.

**Conjurors:** Tis true, tis true, We all believe tis true. Tis true, tis true, We all believe tis true.



*looks, horror-stricken, at the wasp-nest.* When one of them counted three. But thanks to the great Creator, You came in time to save me.

**Remus:** I am glad I came in time to save you From the awful sting of the wasp. And while on my way to your rescue, Many hills and valleys I crossed. I know the conjurors are superstitious, And afraid of anything that looks strange, So I wore the scare-crow for that purpose, And have scared them away out of range. Come, let us leave these woods at once, Because I hear some very strange grunts.

*Remus and Treemonisha leave, going in the opposite direction from the conjurors. The scene is suddenly changed to a cotton field which occupies greater portion of stage; a wagon road in front, men and women seen picking cotton.*

**No. 16, "WE WILL REST AWHILE"**

*Male Quartet in Cotton Field*

**Quartet:** We will rest awhile, We will rest awhile, 'Cause it makes us feel very good, very good. We will rest awhile, We will rest awhile, Soon we'll be at home chopping wood, chopping wood. We will rest awhile, We will rest awhile, 'Cause it's almost eatin' time, eatin' time. We will rest awhile, We will rest awhile, 'Cause restin' is very fine.

*Cotton pickers sit down to rest.*

**No. 17, "GOING HOME"**

*Duet: Remus and Treemonisha, Chorus of Cotton Pickers. Enter Treemonisha and Remus on road.*

**Treemonisha and Remus:** Hello strangers!

**Cotton Pickers:** Hello!

**Remus:** Does this road lead to the John Smith plantation?

**Foreman** (in the field): Yes, and three miles from here, You'll reach your destination.

**Treemonisha and Remus:** Thank you.

**Foreman:** You are welcome.

**Cotton Pickers:** Quite welcome.

*Remus and Treemonisha go on their way.*

*During pause the cotton pickers hear Aunt Dinah blow a horn three times.*

**No. 18, "AUNT DINAH HAS BLOWED DE HORN"**

**Cotton Pickers:** Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' we'll go home to stay until dawn.

Get ready, put yo' sack on yo' back, I'm so happy I don't know how to act, how to act. Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' she wants us to come straight home, We have not much time for delay, 'Cause our work is finished for today.

O yes, Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' we'll go home to stay until dawn. Get ready, put yo' sack on yo' back, I'm so happy I don't know how to act, how to act.

Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' she wants us to come straight home, We have not much time for delay, 'Cause our work is finished for today.

O yes, Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' we'll go home to stay until dawn. Get ready, keep yo' sack on yo' back, I'm so happy I don't know how to act, how to act.

Aunt Dinah has blowed de horn, An' she wants us to come straight home, We have not much time for delay, 'Cause our work is finished for today.

*Curtain down.*

**Act III—Evening**

**No. 19 PRELUDE TO ACT 3.**

**No. 20, "I WANT TO SEE MY CHILD"**

*Duet—Soprano and Bass. SCENE—Interior of Ned and Monisha's cabin. Ned and Monisha are seated on a bench, she leaning against him.*

**Monisha:** I want to see my child tonight, I want to see her now, Those men have carried her away for spite, I would rescue her if I knew how.

**Ned:** Perhaps you'll see her tomorrow,

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now.

**Ned:** And then you'll have no more sorrow;

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now, O! . . .

**Ned:** Do not grieve and complain, You will see her again.

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now.

**Monisha:** If I could see my darling now, I would be happy again, The tears are falling from my brow, I must see her soon, or go insane.

**Ned:** Perhaps you'll see her tomorrow,

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now,

**Ned:** And then you'll have no more sorrow;

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now, O! . . .

**Ned:** Do not grieve and complain, You will see her again.

[**Monisha:**] I want to see her now.

**No. 21, “TREEMONISHA’S RETURN”**

*Ensemble. Enter Remus and Treemonisha.*

**Monisha:** O, there is my child! Remus, you are a hero!

**Ned:** You are all right, Remus!

**Remus:** Thank you! Thank you!

**Ned:** I see a crowd of people coming this way, They are very happy and gay.

**Treemonisha and Remus:** They are almost here. *The Crowd enters.*

**Visitors:** Treemonisha, We are glad to see you home again.

**Treemonisha:** Thank you! To scare the conjurors away from me, Remus wore that old scarecrow.

**Visitors:** Scarecrow!

**Treemonisha:** It scared them and they ran you see, For I am home, you know.

**Visitors:** Hurrah for Remus!

*All shake hands with him.*

Unnn! Unnn! Unnn! Unn! Unn!

*Stop shaking hands. Everyone looks toward door.*

**Corn husking Boys in distance:** Hey! . . .

**Treemonisha:** The boys are coming back again.

*Boys enter with Zozetrick and Luddud as prisoners.*

**All:** Hurrah! Hurrah!

*Prisoners are silent. They stand the prisoners in the middle of the room the others circle around them.*

**Andy:** Dese are de guilty men, Dat carried Treemonisha away. We went to de conjurors den, An’ captured dem today. What will we do wid dem?

**Chorus:** Punish them! Punish them! Punish them! *Treemonisha is silent.*

**Women:** Rebuke and beat them hard.

**Men Shaking fists at Zozetrick and Luddud:** Yes, we will punch and we will kick them very hard, very hard. *The men advance toward Zozetrick and Luddud, raising their fists threateningly.*

**Chorus:** You must/will beat them hard.

**Treemonisha:** Stop!

*The men stop, drop hands quickly to sides and step backward to where they first stood.*

**Treemonisha (Recitative):** You will do evil for evil, If you strike them you know; Just give them a severe lecture, And let them freely go.

**Zozetrick and Luddud:** Thank you! Thank...

**Andy:** Shut up! You have no right to speak here.

**Chorus:** Don’t speak here!

**Treemonisha** *To Andy and pointing to conjurors:* Andy, make them free!

*Andy does not move. All look with surprise at Treemonisha.*

**Treemonisha more forcibly:** Make them free!

*Andy removes the ropes from Conjurors wrists. The others grunt their disapproval.*

**Chorus:** Unn!

**No. 22, “WRONG IS NEVER RIGHT”**

*A Lecture.*

**Remus:** Never treat your neighbors wrong, By making them feel blue; Remember that the whole day long The Creator is watching you. Never do wrong for revenge, In the day or night; Wrong must not on right infringe, For wrong is never right.

Wrong is never right, That is very true, Wrong is never right, And wrong you should not do. Wrong is never right, You will agree with me; Wrong is never right, And it will never be.

Never treat your neighbors wrong, By causing them to grieve, Help the weak if you are strong, And never again deceive. Your deeds should please heaven’s throng, For you are in their sight, You should never think of wrong, For wrong is never right.

Wrong is never right, That is very true, Wrong is never right, And wrong you should not do. Wrong is never right, You will agree with me; Wrong is never right, And it will never be.

**Octet Chorus:**

[second tenor] Wrong is never right, That is very true,

[sopranos] Wrong is never right, That is very true,

[altos & tenors] Do right,

[basses] Wrong is never right,

[sopranos] Wrong is never right, And wrong you should not do.

[altos & tenors] Wrong never do.

[basses] Do right, right do.

[second tenor] Wrong is never right, You will agree with me;

[sopranos] Wrong is never right, You will agree with me;

[altos & tenors] Do right, Do right,

[basses] Wrong is never right,

**Remus:** Wrong is never right, and it will never be.

[sopranos] Wrong is never right, and it will never be. [altos & tenors] Do right, And happy you will be. [basses] Do right, And happy you will be.

**No. 23, "ABUSE"***Ensemble*

**Andy:** We should beat these men, Look at their guilty grin.

*People shaking fists and stamping their feet as they speak to conjurors. Treemonisha silent.*

**Chorus:** You two low, mean conjurors! Now be good! Be good!

**Treemonisha:** Do not abuse them. They will be good, they will be good.

**No. 24 "WHEN VILLAINS RAMBLE FAR AND NEAR." A Lecture.**

**Ned:** When villains ramble far and near, To break the people's laws, Their punishment should be severe, Within the devil's claws. When villains ramble far and near, With their hearts full of sin, They do much wrong without a fear, But someday right will win. We stay close at home, When villains rambling we can hear, We have no chance to roam, When heartless villains are so near. We dare not sleep at night, When we have an awful fear. We keep a brilliant light, When villains ramble far and near. When villains ramble far and near, And cause great alarm, We wish for them a short career, Before they do great harm. When villains ramble far and near, To treat other people bad, They should be dispatched to the other sphere, To make old Satan feel glad. We stay close at home, When villains rambling we can hear, We have no chance to roam, When heartless villains are so near. We dare not sleep at night, When we have an awful fear. We keep a brilliant light, When villains ramble far and near.

**No. 25, "CONJURORS FORGIVEN"***Ensemble*

**Treemonisha:** Will all of you forgive these men for my sake?

**Andy:** We hate to forgive them, tho' we may forgive them for your sake.

**Chorus:** For your sake we will we will forgive them.

**Treemonisha** *Shakes hands with Conjurors:* Let us now shake hands with these men.

**Chorus** *All shake hands with Conjurors:* We have forgiven you, We have forgiven you. Always be kind and true, Always be kind and true. We have forgiven you, We have forgiven you. Always be kind and true, Be careful what you do, Be careful what you do.

**No. 26, "WE WILL TRUST YOU AS OUR LEADER"**

**Treemonisha:** We ought to have a leader In our neighborhood, An energetic leader, To follow for our good. The ignorant too long have ruled, I don't see why they should. And all the people they have fooled, Because they found they could.

**Chorus:**

[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] We want you to lead, for none could lead like you,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead, for none could lead like you,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader, No one else could lead like you,  
[sopranos] You know what is best to do.  
[altos & tenors] You know what is best to do.  
[basses] For you know what is best to do.  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] Lead us, lead us, and we will surely rise.  
[altos & tenors] If you lead we will surely rise.  
[basses] You must lead for you are wise, And we will surely rise.  
[sopranos] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[altos & tenors] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[basses] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[sopranos] Lead us, lead us, And we will always follow you.  
[altos & tenors] If you lead we'll always follow you.  
[basses] Dear, your bidding we will do, and we will always follow you.  
[all] We feel blue, dear, we feel blue!  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader, We want you to lead us.  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us, You should lead us.  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader, We will trust you as our leader.  
**Treemonisha:** If I lead the good women, Tell me, who will lead the men?  
**Chorus Men:** You, you, you, you, you!

**Treemonisha:** Women may follow me many days long, But the men may think that I am wrong.

**Chorus Men:** No, no, no, no, no!

**Chorus (all):** We all agree to trust you, And we will be true. We all agree to trust you, And we will be true.

**Treemonisha:** There's need of some good leader, And there's not much time to wait. To lead us in the right way Before it is too late. For ignorance is criminal In this enlightened day, So let us all get busy, When once we have found the way.

**Chorus:**

[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] We want you to lead, for none could lead like you,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead, for none could lead like you,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader, No one else could lead like you,  
[sopranos] You know what is best to do.  
[altos & tenors] You know what is best to do.  
[basses] For you know what is best to do.  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader,  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us,  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader,  
[sopranos] Lead us, lead us, and we will surely rise.  
[altos & tenors] If you lead we will surely rise.  
[basses] You must lead for you are wise, and we will surely rise.  
[sopranos] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[altos & tenors] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[basses] We want you to lead, You should lead us,  
[sopranos] Lead us, lead us, And we will always follow you.  
[altos & tenors] If you lead we'll always follow you.  
[basses] Dear, your bidding we will do, and we will always follow you.  
[all] We feel blue, dear, we feel blue!  
[sopranos] We want you as our leader, We want you to lead us.  
[altos & tenors] You should lead us, You should lead us.  
[basses] We will trust you as our leader, We will trust you as our leader.

**Treemonisha:** I will lead you; O yes, I will lead you.

[chorus] lead now, please lead now,

**Treemonisha:** O yes, I will lead you.

[chorus] please lead,

**Treemonisha:** Yes, I will lead you.

[chorus—sopranos, altos, tenors] for we will trust you, [chorus—basses] We will trust you as our leader.

## No. 27, "A REAL SLOW DRAG"

Directions for The Slow Drag.

1. The Slow Drag must begin on the first beat of each measure.
2. When moving forward, drag the left foot; when moving backward, drag the right foot.
3. When moving sideways to right, drag left foot; when moving sideways to left, drag right foot.
4. When prancing, your steps must come on each beat of the measure.
5. When marching and when sliding, your steps must come on the first and third beat of each measure.
6. Hop and skip on second beat of measure. Double the Schottische step to fit the slow music.

SCOTT JOPLIN.

*Treemonisha and Lucy stand on bench in rear of room.*

**Treemonisha:** Salute your partner, do the drag, drag, drag.

(Salute partners. Slow Drag forward.)

Stop and move backward, do the drag.

(All stop. Slow drag backward.)

All of you stop. (All stop.)

Look to your right and do the drag, drag, drag.

(All look to right. All Slow Drag sideways to right.)

To your left, to your left, That's the way.

(All Slow Drag sideways to left. All stop.)

Salute partners.)

**Treemonisha and Lucy** (All march, doing the dude walk): Marching onward, marching onward, marching to that lovely tune.

Marching onward, marching onward, happy as a bird in June. Sliding onward, sliding onward, listen to that rag.

(All stop, put right hand to ear and listen to music.)

Hop, and skip, now do that slow – o, do that slow drag. (All dance.)

Dance slowly, (All prance.) prance slowly, while you hear that pretty rag. (All dance.)

Dance slowly, (All prance.) prance slowly, (All Slow Drag.)

Now you do the real "Slow Drag." (All walk.)

Walk slowly, (All whisper to partners while walking.) talk lowly,

**Treemonisha, Lucy, and Chorus** (All stop, put right hand to ear and listen to music):

Listen to that rag, Hop,

(All hop.)

and skip,

(All skip.)  
 now do that slow – o,  
 (Slow drag forward.)  
 do that slow drag.  
**Treemonisha** (All Schottische.): Move along,  
 Don't stop, don't stop dancing,  
 Drag along,  
 (All Slow Drag.)  
 Stop.  
 (All stop.)  
 Move along,  
 (All Schottische.)  
 Don't stop, Don't stop dancing,  
 drag along,  
 (All Slow Drag.)  
 Doing the real slow drag.  
 Move along,  
 (All Schottische.)  
 don't stop, don't stop dancing  
 (All Slow Drag.)  
 Drag along, Stop!  
 (All stop.)  
 (All Schottische.)  
 Move along, don't stop, don't stop dancing,  
 (All Slow Drag.)  
 Drag along, doing the real slow drag.  
**Treemonisha and Lucy** (All march, doing the  
 dude walk):  
 Marching onward, marching onward,  
 marching to that lovely tune. Marching  
 onward, marching onward, happy as a bird in  
 June. Sliding onward, sliding onward, listen to  
 that rag.  
 (All stop, put right hand to ear and listen to  
 music.)  
 Hop,  
 (All hop.)  
 and skip,  
 (All skip.)  
 now do that slow – o,  
 (Slow drag forward.)  
 do that slow drag.  
 Full Company (All dance.):  
 Dance slowly, prance slowly, while you hear  
 that pretty rag.  
 Dance slowly, prance slowly, Now you do the  
 real "Slow Drag."  
 Walk slowly, talk lowly,  
 (All stop, put right hand to ear and listen to  
 music.)  
 Listen to that rag.  
 Hop  
 (All hop.)  
 and skip,  
 (All skip.)  
 now do that slow – o

(All Slow Drag)  
 do that slow drag,  
 (All stop.)  
 slow – o – o – o.  
 (Curtain down.)

*End of Opera.*

### **Important dates related to *Treemonisha***

28 Feb 1965

First known modern concert of the opera's  
 music was given by the Utah State University  
 Concert Chorale. Performance commercially  
 recorded.

1971

Excerpts from the opera were presented at  
 Lincoln Center by William Bolcom, Joshua  
 Rifkin, and Mary Lou Williams with a small  
 group of backup singers.

28 Jan 1972

Morehouse College, in a production staged by  
 Katherine Dunham and conducted by Robert  
 Shaw, with orchestrations by T.J. Anderson.  
 This production received fine notices and  
 brought *Treemonisha* to international  
 attention.

10 Aug – 14 Aug 1972

Performances at Wolf Trap, featuring  
 orchestrations by William Bolcom.

23 May 1975

Performances by the Houston Grand Opera,  
 using orchestrations by Gunther Schuller.  
 Commercially recorded, televised on PBS.

2003–2008

Rick Benjamin creates historically-informed  
 "Eleven & Pno." arrangement of the score.

2011

Rick Benjamin stages *Treemonisha* with  
 Paragon Ragtime Orchestra using his "Eleven  
 & Pno." arrangements of the music. Joplin's  
 grandniece, Mrs. LaErma White of Texarkana,  
 reads the preface during the performance.  
 Commercially recorded, orchestral parts  
 available on rental basis.

2017

Centennial of Joplin's passing. Ragtime fans  
 honor the composer with a marble bench  
 installed near his grave bearing the inscription,  
 "We Will Rest Awhile." Organized by Edward  
 A. Berlin; music provided by Rick Benjamin  
 and the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra.