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Exploring the multi-generational influence of American ragtime music through the works of Charles Ives, William Walton and William Bolcom

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Exploring the multi-generational
influence of American Ragtime Music
through the works of Charles Ives,
William Walton and William Bolcom.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Music
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
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2012

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Date: 01/06/2012

Candidate's Declaration

I certify that this dissertation does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief,

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contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;

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Abstract

Ragtime music is a style of popular music established in America that came to prominence between the years of 1896 and 1918. It is believed to have its roots in Blackface minstrel shows, its defining feature, the heavily syncopated rhythm, quickly becoming a stereotype of African-American music. This thesis will explore the multi-generational influence of American Ragtime music on the art-music world through the works of Charles Ives (1874-1954), William Walton (1902-1983), and William Bolcom (1938-). It will timeline the undulating influence of Ragtime music on these subsequent generations of composers, noting in particular the revivals of the 1940's and late 1960 - 1970's. This thesis will investigate the change and progression of Ragtime music's associated meanings and their implications on the work of succeeding generations of composers, centering discussion on the issues of racism, cultural hegemony, and the stylistic bias underpinning both the segregation and amalgamation of 'popular' and 'serious' music. Examining one piece from the oeuvre of each composer listed, this thesis will discuss issues pertaining to both the ideology of Ragtime music, and the technical employment of its stylistic conventions.

Table of Contents

Introduction		A historical overview	1
<hr/>			
Chapter I	(i)	Musical idioms and stylistic conventions	8
	(ii)	Practical applications of Ragtime idioms	13
<hr/>			
Chapter II	(i)	Charles Ives <i>Four Ragtime Dances</i> (1904)	15
	(ii)	Ideological implications	19
<hr/>			
Chapter III	(i)	William Walton <i>Façade</i> (1922)	21
	(ii)	Ideological implications	26
<hr/>			
Chapter IV	(i)	Revivals	28
	(ii)	William Bolcom <i>Black Host</i> (1967)	29
<hr/>			
Chapter V		Conclusion A continuing legacy	35
<hr/>			
Bibliography			39

INTRODUCTION

A historical overview

As the Twentieth Century approached, European ethnocentricity, colonialism and domination of cultural discourse were beginning to wane. In the wake of Europe's receding cultural authority, American art-music composers, such as Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles (1876-1971) and John Alden Carpenter (1876-1951) were endeavouring to assert cultural independence by way of forging a unique musical identity. Simultaneously, composers of Afro-American heritage had already achieved precisely this goal through the creation and popularisation of an idiomatically unique fusion of African rhythmic and European harmonic elements¹. It was known as Ragtime. The emergence of this new strain of American popular music catalysed the creation of a wealth of stylistically referential works by prominent composers throughout the twentieth century. This thesis will explore the reach of this influence both stylistically, and ideologically through the examination of three representative works.

The origins of Ragtime music have been in constant debate since the term first appeared in the late 1890s². A review of the primary and secondary literature available suggests a vast array of possible sources. Most prominent is the belief that Ragtime was born out of indigenous American Negro musical styles encompassing work songs, plantation spirituals, banjo strumming and "patting juba"³. The musical traits idiomatic of these styles were brought into the focus of popular culture through so called "Blackface" minstrel shows and quickly became central to a stereotype of American Negro music. The rhythmic syncopation at the crux of these musical styles is almost exclusively seen as the defining characteristic of Ragtime and was commented upon by numerous 19th century writers including Charles Ives. In his *Memos*, he recalls hearing "Black faced comedians... ragging their songs" around 1892 at the Danbury Fair.

... throwing the accent on the off-beat and holding over - a thing so many people nowadays think was not done until Jazz came along.⁴

¹ Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. and Marsha J. Reisser, "The Sources and Resources of Classic Ragtime Music," *Black Music Research Journal* 4 (1984): 22-52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779473>

² Edward A. Berlin. "Ragtime." In *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/22825>

³ Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (London: University of California Press, 1980), 21. Terry Waldo, *This Is Ragtime* (Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 8-9.

Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, 4th ed. (New York: Oak Publications, 1971), 7.

William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedl, *The Art of Ragtime* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1973), 35.

⁴ Charles E. Ives, *Memos* (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1973), 57.

An example of this, given in *Memos*, is pictured in figure 1.

etc.

"I'm a-liv - in' ea - sy
 On pork chops grea - sy" *etc.*
 ("I'm al - ways a-pick - in'
 On a spring chick - in")

Figure 1. Extract from Charles Ives' *Memos* (p. 56) illustrating "ragging".

One event considered of great importance in defining the inception of Ragtime is the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, widely viewed as the point at which Ragtime was first experienced by a mass public. Blesh and Janis in their book *They All Played Ragtime* claim the Fair was attended by such Ragtime pioneers as Scott Joplin (1868-1917), Ben Harney (1872-1938), Johnny Seymour, and Jesse Pickett⁵. Though there is no documentation provided to support this statement, other sources indicate these performers were in Chicago at the time of the Fair⁶. The only confirmed performance was one by Jesse Pickett of his rag *The Dream* (figure 2), unpublished at the time but later recorded by Eubie Blake (1887-1983) in 1896.⁷

⁵ Blesh and Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, 18, 41.

⁶ Roy J. Carew, "Shephard N. Edmonds," *Record Changer* (December 1947): 14

⁷ Camille F. Forbes, *Introducing Bert Williams: Burnt Cork, Broadway, and the Story of America's First Black Star* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2008), 42.

Music score removed due to copyright reasons.

Figure 2. Jesse Pickett's rag *The Dream* (1893)

The popularity of this new style of music grew exponentially over the next decade⁸, aided by its concurrence with technological advancements in communication; most importantly to its promulgation, sheet music, piano roll⁹ and recording capabilities¹⁰. Composers and pianists Ben Harney, Scott Joplin, Johnny Seymour, Eubie Blake, Tom Turpin (1871-1922), and Joseph F Lamb (1887-1960) became Ragtime's principal exponents, joining Jesse Pickett in proliferating the style, facilitating its adoption into mainstream culture¹¹.

By 1900 commercial publication of Ragtime compositions had vastly increased, illustrating strong public acceptance¹². This was not without issue. Though there were an overwhelming number of positive accounts of Ragtime music during its inception, scathing, outraged commentary from many of the nations cultural leaders as well as the general public was initially equally common. It was typical of this criticism to cite overtly racist, xenophobic views labelling Ragtime as “the sensual depravity of African Savagery, embodied in the despised American Negro”¹³, or attributing its “un-wholesome” nature as a mainspring for youth rebellion. Resistance to the perceived “Africanisation” of popular music coupled with strong loyalty to the influence of European art-music and its academicism remained entrenched, and this new popular music was perceived as a threat to “good music”. This spurred a public outcry from Ragtime's supporters; hence the great Ragtime debate ensued¹⁴. Anti-Ragtime criticism was met with a surfeit of publications in support of the new style. By 1916 the New York Tribune was hosting Stravinsky's (1882-1971) favourable views on the topic:

I know little about American music except that of the music halls, but I consider that unrivalled. It is veritable art, and I never can get enough of it to satisfy me. I am convinced of the absolute truth of utterance in that form of American art.¹⁵

The support of such high-art exponents contributed to a shift in public reception of Ragtime and it continued to grow in popularity. This resulted in the elevation of its status, a great instigator in bringing Ragtime to the attention of the art-music world, in turn garnering the interest of visiting artists including prominent classical

⁸ *Performing Arts Encyclopedia, Library of Congress*, s.v. “History of Ragtime,” <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ih/loc.natlib.ih/200035811/default.html>

⁹ Arthur W.J.G. Ord-Hume. "Player piano." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/21928>

¹⁰ Desmond Shawe-Taylor. "Recording." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, edited by Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O011552>

¹¹ Objective “official” publication figures do not exist due to a lack of accurate accounts pertaining to small music publishers, and insufficient data for estimation of rags sold.

¹² Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 73.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴ Donald Macleod, “The Ragtime Debate” (October 3, 2007), BBC Radio 3, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0080gfj>

¹⁵ Stanley C. Wise, “American Music Is True Art,’ Says Stravinsky,” *New York Tribune*, 16 January 1916, sec. 5, p. 3

composers Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) and Percy Grainger (1882-1961)¹⁶, and later, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)¹⁷, and Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)¹⁸.

In the first decade of the century, Ragtime underwent significant development, and as a result, stylistic divisions began to be recognised. These divisions relied more heavily on subjective impressions and geographic locale rather than veritable musical analysis. The major division was between that of Classic Ragtime and Secondary Ragtime coupled with Ragtime song.

Classic Ragtime is a fully notated instrumental music that had its roots in the ‘cakewalk’¹⁹. It was considered of superior quality to other styles of Ragtime due to its compositional complexity, despite its lack in popularity with the wider public who preferred the simpler rags composed in Secondary style²⁰. The term ‘Classic Ragtime’ was used most notably by publisher John Stark (1841-1927) and composer Scott Joplin as a tool to set apart this particular style of Ragtime worthy of serious consideration and comparison to European art-music²¹. The term refers only to instrumental rags, specifically the piano rags of mid-western composers Scott Joplin, James Scott (1885-1938), Arthur Marshall (1881-1968), Louis Chauvin (1881-1908), Joseph Lamb, and Artie Matthews (1888-1958)²².

This new comparison to classical music was a great enabler and catalyst in Ragtime’s use as a referential style in the works of classical composers²³. At the end of the romantic era, harmonic and rhythmic experimentation had reached an impasse. This circuit breaker of sorts obviated the necessity for harmonic and formal innovation. Ragtime, parallel to other modernist avenues, presented an inviting new possibility for the classical composer: it was novel, stylistically highly distinct and rhythmically vital. It is logical to infer that this, in conjunction with the fact that Classic Ragtime is defined as a fully notated art form²⁴ (a defining factor that facilitated its publishment), resulted in the proliferation and employment of Ragtime in the oeuvre of contemporary classical composers. In many ways, the reinvigoration of common-practice harmonic and formal conventions through their

¹⁶ Hiram Kelly Moderwell. “A Modest Proposal.” *Seven Arts 2* (July 1917): 368

¹⁷ Barbara L. Kelly. "Ravel, Maurice." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/52145>

¹⁸ Jeremy Drake. "Milhaud, Darius." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/18674>

¹⁹ ‘Cakewalk’ is here defined as “a social and theatrical dance of African American origin, developed from a competitive “prize walk” done by slaves on antebellum plantations in southern states.” Originally accompanied by jovial, unsyncopated music, from 1897 ‘cakewalk’ music assumed the syncopations of Ragtime.

²⁰ Berlin, "Ragtime."

²¹ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 186.

Blesh and Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, 8.

²² Floyd and Reisser, “Sources and Resources”, 22.

²³ It is imperative to note that although a percentage of the public at the time considered Classic Ragtime as innately classical music, it was not until the 1970s when musicologist Joshua Rifkin, departing from the realm of his renaissance-baroque interests, recorded a selection of Joplin’s pieces on Nonesuch Records (a company that frequently ventures into the more esoteric realms of classical music), far strengthening the case towards Ragtime’s classification as classical music. This will be discussed further in chapter V.

²⁴ Floyd and Reisser, “Sources and Resources”, 22.

hybridisation with African influenced rhythm mirrored the project of the Neo-Classical composers who set out to achieve a similar end through the exploration of so-called polytonality and polyrhythm.

Secondary Ragtime was rhythmically and formally simpler than its 'Classic' counterpart, and stylistically similar to Ragtime Song. This was integral to its high accessibility and consequently its popularity. Though they share many points of stylistic convergence, the trajectory of Secondary Ragtime was vastly disparate to Classic Ragtime, becoming a central component to "novelty piano", a style of music that was popularised following the decline of Ragtime by the 1920s²⁵. Vocal Ragtime, widely known by the derogatory term "coon song"²⁶, went on to merge with other styles of American popular song.

Ragtime and Blues share their lineage and as such are mutually influential. Though the Blues was first unveiled in published form in 1912 with the song "Dallas Blues" by Hart Wand (1887-1960), there is evidence of influence in the Ragtime sphere prior to this²⁷. Widespread publication from this point onward formalised the status of the Blues and facilitated its move into the conventional harmonic language, at which point began the obfuscation of the distinction between Ragtime and Blues.

Stride Rag was a more virtuosic style of Ragtime developed by pianist/composers James P. Johnson (1894-1955), Luckey Roberts (1887-1968), and Eubie Blake. It was played at a considerably faster tempo than previous rags and employed an expanded rhythmic language, directly antecedent to Jazz piano²⁸.

The development of both Stride and Blues Ragtime and their convergence with Jazz lead to the decline in popularity of Ragtime by the end of World War I. The change from Ragtime to Jazz was originally a semantic one with the terms used interchangeably from 1917 onwards in publications of works from the period²⁹. Though its initial burst of popularity lasted for only 20 years, Ragtime enjoyed numerous revivals throughout the twentieth century. These will be discussed in further detail in subsequent chapters II through V.

²⁵ Michael Garber, "'Some of These Days' and the Study of the Great American Songbook," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 2 (2010): 197-98.

Dickinson, Peter. "Early Songs, i 1911-1913; Iii 1913-1914 by Irving Berlin; Charles Hamm: 1907-1911; Ii." *Music and Letters* 79, no. 1 (February 1998): 158.

Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 162.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 8-9.

Schafer and Riedl, *The Art of Ragtime*, 25

Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (London: University of California Press, 2008), 21.

²⁷ For instance, in Joplin's first published rag *Original Rags*, the idiomatic #2-3 melodic progression of the blues is evident.

²⁸ David A. Jasen and Trebor J. Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 240.

Berlin, "Ragtime."

²⁹ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 16.

Figure 3 below shows the key historical developments in the acceptance and popularisation of Ragtime, including some of the key Ragtime-influenced works by Western art-music composers. Stylistic changes in Western art-music have been charted alongside this. The aim of this diagram is to provide context for the ensuing discussion of the three works of focus in this thesis (highlighted in bold).

An examination of figure 3 suggests the following observations:

1. There is a cluster of works that follow the initial popularity of Ragtime. This is due in part to the prominence of Neoclassicism and its ability to absorb the rhythmic and harmonic language of alien styles.
2. There is a cluster of works post 1970; the period now referred to as the Ragtime revival. It is reasonable to deduce that, to some extent, this resulted from the coincidental decline of atonal avant garde styles, coupled with the rise of Postmodernism; a movement which highlighted stylistic juxtaposition (for instance between “high” and “low” art).
3. Since the 1970s, Ragtime has remained a constant element of the Postmodern stylistic referential pantheon beside other historical, and stylistically distinct genres such as “Chicago Style”, “Bebop”, “Cool”, “Funk” and so on.

This thesis will explore the multi-generational influence of American Ragtime music on the art-music world through examination of one exemplary work from the oeuvre of Charles Ives, William Walton, and William Bolcom. The works to be discussed have been selected based on their proximity to peaks in the continuum of Ragtime’s popularity; namely, Ragtime’s unveiling to a mass public and consequent convergence with popular culture, and the revivals of the 1930s and 1970s. This thesis will timeline the undulating influence of Ragtime, investigating the change and progression of Ragtime music’s associated meanings and their implications on the work of succeeding generations of composers. It will discuss issues pertaining to both the ideology of Ragtime music, and the technical employment of its stylistic conventions in reference to Ives’ *Four Ragtime Dances* (1904), Walton’s *Façade* (1922), and Bolcom’s *Black Host* (1967).

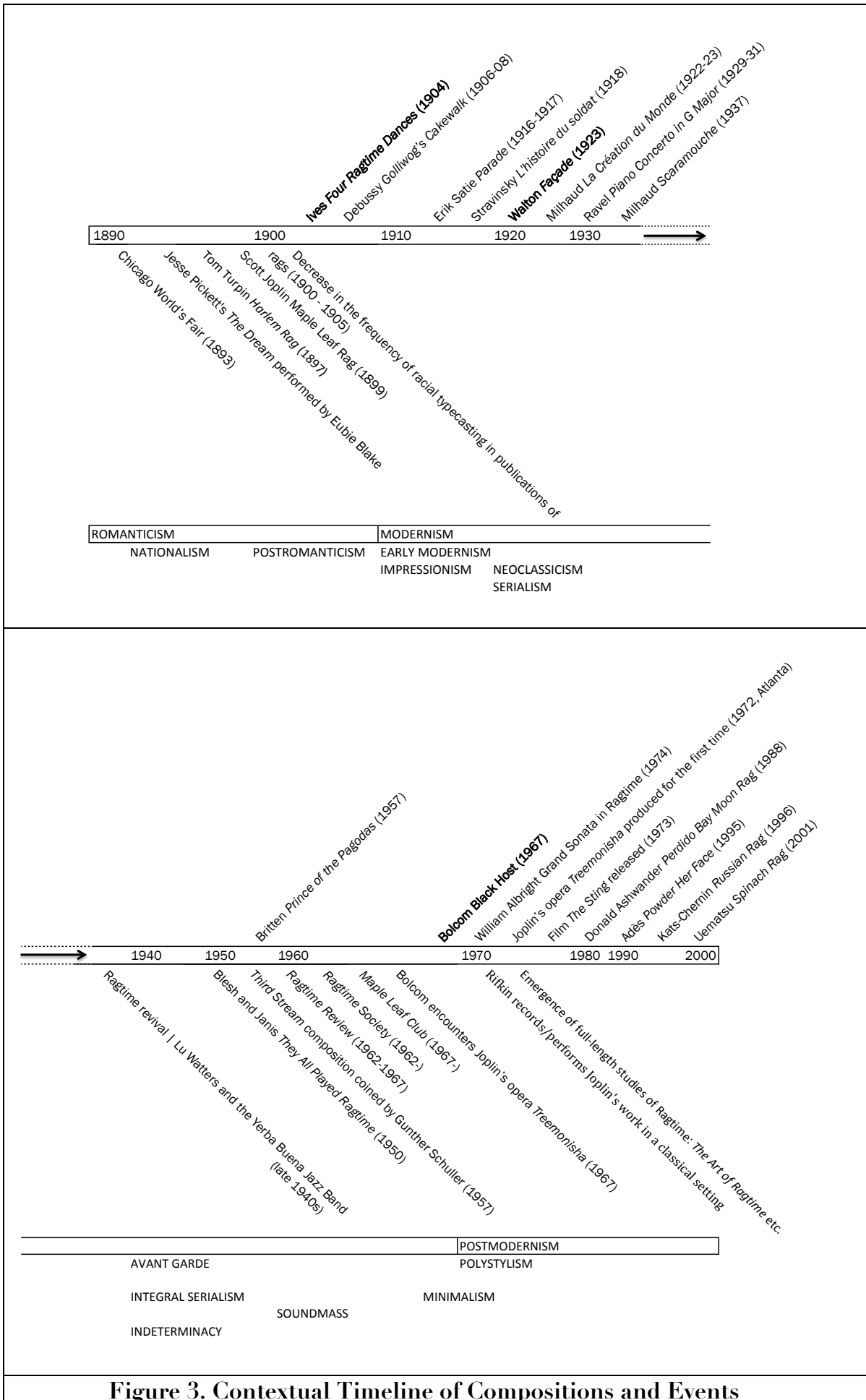


Figure 3. Contextual Timeline of Compositions and Events

CHAPTER I

Part (i) | *musical idioms and stylistic conventions*

Though the stylistic conventions to be examined in this thesis apply to both instrumental Ragtime and Ragtime song, this thesis will discuss these conventions primarily in reference to Ragtime piano.

Rhythmic conventions and harmonic influence

The rhythmic stereotypes disseminated in Blackface minstrelsy were essential to the contemporary understanding of Ragtime music. Almost any definition taken from the period of its inception makes reference to the heavy syncopation:

Rag-time (sic) is merely a common form of syncopation in which the rhythm is distorted in order to produce a more or less ragged, hysterical effect.³⁰

“Rag-Time” then may be said to be a strongly syncopated melody superimposed on a strictly regular accompaniment.³¹

In specific reference to piano rags, the right hand would employ heavy syncopation of a melody, then superimposed on a steady ‘oom-pah’ bass that reinforced the metre, most often 2/4 or 4/4. Low bass notes or octaves on the strong beats of the metre were regularly alternated with close-voiced chords in the mid-range of the piano. This pattern was frequently interspersed with a bar of octaves on all beats, close-voiced chords on all beats, imitation of the right hand melody, and foxtrot³², habanera, or tango-like syncopations³³.

Four main rhythmic figurations form the basis for the stylistic conventions of Ragtime. It is important to state that although these four figurations stated below were largely perceived as being characteristic of Classic or Secondary Ragtime, cross-pollination and extrapolation of these motifs into Blues and Stride Ragtime was common practise.

³⁰ A. J. Goodrich, “Syncopated Rhythm vs. ‘Rag-Time,’” *Musician* (6 November 1901): p 336

³¹ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 11.

³² Lois Bertha Gurney, “An Exploration and Analysis of William Bolcom's Black Host” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2009), 47.

³³ Berlin, “Ragtime.”

<p>(a)</p>	<p>(b)</p>	<p>(c)</p>
<p>Figure 4. Idiomatic rhythmic figurations of Classic Ragtime</p>		

Figures 4(a) through (c) depict rhythmic conventions attributed to Classic Ragtime. The tendency to syncopate either half of a bar (fig 4.a) was predominant in the early years of Ragtime. Fig. 4(b) shows the same figuration augmented. Both figurations were common in pieces titled ‘cakewalk’³⁴, however the second lost importance very early in the evolution of the Classic Ragtime style. The syncopation over the middle of the bar shown in fig. 4(c) was not common initially, but gained prominence after the turn of the century.

<p>Figure 5. Rhythmic figuration idiomatic of Secondary Ragtime</p>

Figure 5 shows a rhythmic figuration immediately distinct from the others due to its lack of syncopation. Despite this, the continual 3-note phrasing in the right hand juxtaposed against a steady, duple-meter bass creates shifting metrical accents³⁵ thus producing a syncopated effect. This figuration, idiomatic of Secondary Ragtime gained popularity after approximately 1906, becoming platitudinal by the end of 1910.

<p>Figure 6. Dotted Ragtime rhythms</p>

As 1910 approached, the introduction of new dances to the music scene permeated their way into Ragtime music³⁶ via dotted notes (characteristic of the foxtrot) and progressively less syncopation (fig. 6)³⁷.

³⁴ Cakewalk is considered a Black folk/popular version of a march. It employs light syncopation over a steady bass, but is distinct from classic Ragtime in its’ lack of multimeter or polymeter.

³⁵ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 87.

³⁶ Schafer and Riedl, *The Art of Ragtime*, xii.

³⁷ Berlin, "Ragtime."

Other key streams of Ragtime included the Blues flavoured rag (which soon flourished into it's own genre of Blues-Ragtime hybrid works)³⁸ and the Stride rag style (more virtuosic than the original dance-based rags, constituting a faster tempo and expanded rhythmic language, foreshadowing the Ragtime's stylistic progression into Jazz piano)³⁹.

Since the advent of Blesh and Janis's 1950 publication *They All Played Ragtime*, widely considered the first formal analysis of Ragtime, there have been several arguments presented attempting to demonstrate the lineage of Ragtime melody; an example of which is its relationship to pentatonicism idiomatic of 19th century 'Black music'⁴⁰. These arguments rely on flimsy and somewhat far-fetched correlations between Ragtime and 19th century melodic styles. An examination of this notion led Edward A. Berlin in his *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* to conclude that:

In Ragtime, aside from the rhythmic patterns, composers wrote within the safe, recognisable confines of conventional popular melody.⁴¹

³⁸ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 154-160.

Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 120.

³⁹ Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, 240.

Berlin, "Ragtime."

⁴⁰ Floyd and Reisser, "Sources and Resources", 29.

⁴¹ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 89.

Formal Conventions

Ragtime has no unique formal structure⁴²; the syncopation of the melodic line was grafted onto already established musical forms, namely the duple and quadruple-metre dances such as the polka, march, and two-step. Though liberally approached, the formal concept in the majority of piano rags adheres to that of these dances comprising three or more independent themes of 16 bar length, divided into four 4-bar phrases which are then arranged in a series of repeats and reprises. The majority of rags consist of two sections; the first stating two themes in the tonic, and the second, known as the ‘trio’, stating the remaining themes in the subdominant. Rags beginning in minor keys are far less common, however the existing rags almost always state the second theme in the relative minor, with the trio in the subdominant of the relative minor. Though there is great variation in formal thematic arrangement, several patterns appear habitually. These are illustrated in figure 7.

	<i>Section A</i>					<i>Section B - 'Trio'</i>			
Theme Key	A	A	B	B	A	C	C'		
	I					IV			
	A	A	B	B	A	C	C	B	B
	I					IV			
	A	A	B	B		C	C	A	
	i		III			III		i	
Figure 7. Three common thematic arrangements									

There are several common interpolations to this formal structure including a 4-bar thematically disparate introduction to section A, 4-bar introduction to the trio, and an interlude between trio themes which can vary from the commonly instigated 4 or 8 bars, to a 24 bar extension.

⁴² Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 89.

Part (ii) | *practical application of Ragtime idioms*

There are a number of ways in which the music of Ragtime and its stylistic features are employed within the context of art-music compositions. It is of significant value to attempt to distinguish between these practical applications of Ragtime musical idioms. Adapting the model set out by Schnittke in his *Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music*⁴³, there are four methods of practical application of foreign material.

1. Allusion
2. Stylistic Quotation
3. Adaptation
4. Quotation

The practice of *Quotation* involves reproducing existing musical works or sounds. This does not only apply to direct quotation, but also reproductions that may have undergone some degree of reworking. Similarly, it is common practice to classify sampling of microelements idiomatic of an alien style⁴⁴, such as melodic patterns or harmonic sequences, as quotation.

Adaptation involves freely developing and reinterpreting a foreign musical sample in one's own compositional language. This practice may employ what Schnittke describes as "polystylistic hybrids"⁴⁵, containing upwards of three elements of contrasting styles.

Reference to, and reproduction of purely stylistic features such as rhythm, form, texture, and compositional devices of existing musical styles is here defined as *Stylistic Quotation*⁴⁶.

It is important to distinguish between these three modes of application and the fourth and final mode to be discussed, *Allusion*. Characteristic of early twentieth century neo-classicism, Allusion defines those references wherein "almost all are subtly decorated with stylistic devices from the past (allowing for the vivid individuality of the former and the undoubted eclecticism of the latter)"⁴⁷. It is far more nebulous than the other definitions presented and generally refers to an amalgamation of "fleeting memories" and "persuasive representations" as opposed to direct quotation. Allusion is more of a stylized representation with references of

⁴³ Alfred Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87-90.

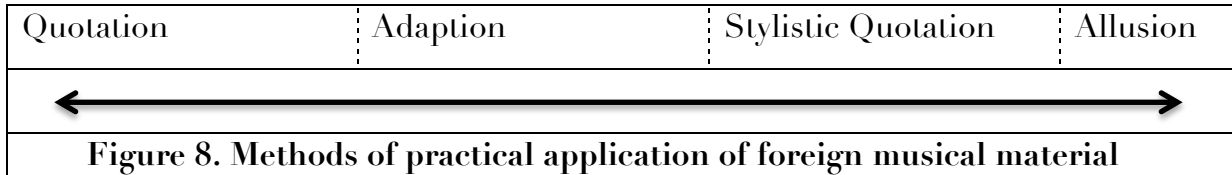
⁴⁴ Ibid, 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 87.

⁴⁶ Lindsay Vickery, "The Evaluation of Nonlinear Musical Structures" (lecture, Totally Huge New Music Festival Conference, Perth).

⁴⁷ Schnittke, *A Schnittke Reader*, 88.

varying degrees of proximity to the represented idiom⁴⁸. The four methods may be illustrated within a continuum (as seen in figure 8) with the far left of the spectrum representing the most direct form of application; closest to the musical source.



The aim of this thesis is to explore the use of the above-defined methods of practical application in the works of Charles Ives, William Walton, and William Bolcom, delineating the extent of Ragtime's influence, and its continuing legitimacy as a musical model.

⁴⁸ Björn Heile, "Transcending Quotation": Cross-Cultural Musical Representation in Mauricio Kagel's *Die Stücke der Windrose Für Salonorchester*" (diss., University of Southampton, 2001), 63.

CHAPTER II

Part (i) | Charles Ives Four Ragtime Dances (1904)

Charles Ives is widely considered as having been at the forefront of the movement towards an idiomatically American music⁴⁹. As composers were looking for new paths forward in the development harmonic and rhythmic conventions, Ragtime presented itself as an inviting new possibility in the endeavour to break away from European models. It really is unsurprising that the music of Ragtime was subsumed into Ives' works;

Ives was in the right place at the right time - living in New York City, a center of the Ragtime craze; fresh out of college, away from the watchful eyes of Horatio Parker and his other former professors, who were committed to extending the Western European tradition; and ready to experiment on his own, virtually anonymous, outside the strict confines of the concert music world.⁵⁰

Alongside this, in his *Memos* he speaks very supportively about his Grandparents involvement in the abolitionist cause, and their virtual adoption of young “negro boy” Anderson Brooks, brought home by Ives' father post civil-war service, who “later became a (revered and respected) teacher in Hampton College, Virginia”⁵¹. This upbringing no doubt aided Ives' openness to incorporating Black exoticism⁵² in his works, more so than other art-music composers of the time.

Syncopated rhythm was the most common idiomatic Ragtime device to feature among Ives' work. Though these references are clear, (as the following examples demonstrate) he establishes a distance from the source material through constant changes in meter, key, and tempo, coupled with contrasting themes and irregular phrasing, manufacturing a sound that is removed from popular Ragtime. He speaks of this in his *Memos*:

Even in the old brass-band days, there was a swinging into off-beats, shifted accents, etc. - and these Ragtime pieces ... were but working out different combinations or rhythms that these began to suggest.⁵³

This extrapolation and experimentation with rhythmic idioms of Ragtime Ives refers to, occurs in abundance in his *Four Ragtime Dances*. Figure 9 shows an excerpt from the fourth movement of *Four Ragtime Dances*. Beginning at rehearsal

⁴⁹ Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 17.

J. Peter Burkholder, et al. "Ives, Charles." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/14000>

James Mack Burk, *A Charles Ives Omnibus* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), 97.

Timothy A. Johnson, *Baseball and the Music of Charles Ives: A Proving Ground* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 5.

⁵⁰ Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 7.

⁵¹ Ives, *Memos*, 53.

⁵² Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 21.

⁵³ Ives, *Memos*, 57.

mark C, we see the heavily syncopated motif in the treble instruments (flute, oboe, Eb clarinet, alto saxophone, and violins) superimposed on the characteristic steady alternating bass of Classic Ragtime in both staves of the piano. According to the model set out in chapter I part (ii), we may classify this as *Stylistic Quotation*.

The image displays a musical score for an excerpt from Ives' *Ragtime Dance No. 4*. The score is divided into two systems, both starting at measure 30. A circled 'C' is placed above the first measure of each system. The first system includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Eb Clarinet (B♭ Cl.), Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.), B♭ Trumpet (B♭ Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Tuba, Piano, Snare Drum (Sn. Dr.), Bass Drum (Bs. Dr.), and Cymbal (Cym.). The piano part features a steady alternating bass line. The woodwind and saxophone parts play a heavily syncopated motif. The second system includes staves for Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The violin parts play the syncopated motif, with 'non div.' and 'div.' markings. The cello and double bass parts play a steady bass line with 'cresc.' markings. The piano part continues with the alternating bass line and includes a 'R.H. 8va' marking.

Figure 9. Excerpt from Ives' *Ragtime Dance No. 4*

Figure 10 carries an example of further extrapolation of the idiomatic syncopations of Ragtime music present in the second of the four dances. Again, Ives refers to this in his *Memos* stating:

For instance, if, in a few measure of 2/4 time, the second beat is not struck and the 16th note before the second beat is accented, other combinations of after-beats and beats and minus-beats etc. suggest themselves.⁵⁴

Here, this is evident in the left hand of the piano, percussion, ‘cello, and double bass in the second bar of rehearsal mark B.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for Ives' *Ragtime Dance No. 2*, rehearsal mark B. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes parts for Piano, Sn. Dr., Bs. Dr., Cym., Vln. I & II, Vla., Vc., and D.B. The music is in 3/4 time and features complex syncopation and dynamic markings like 'ff' and 'ppp'. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at rehearsal mark B. The first system shows the Piano part with a complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The second system shows the Percussion parts (Sn. Dr., Bs. Dr., Cym.) and the String parts (Vln. I & II, Vla., Vc., D.B.) with various dynamic markings and articulations. The score is marked 'a tempo' and 'solo' for the strings, and 'tutti' for the percussion.

Figure 10. Excerpt 1 from Ives' *Ragtime Dance No. 2*

Ives takes this stylistic quotation to even further extreme by superimposing more complex syncopation on top of the aforementioned figuration. This can be seen in figure 11, the fifth bar of figure D in the second movement of the work; the percussion employs the “16th note early” figuration, whilst the strings play a syncopated melody that is tied over bars of changing meter.

⁵⁴ Ives, *Memos*, 57.

Figure 11. Excerpt 2 from Ives' *Ragtime Dance No. 2*

From these examples, we can see clearly how Charles Ives carried certain tendencies in popular Ragtime to great extremes.⁵⁵

The question now becomes not *how* did Ragtime present itself in Ives' work, but rather *why*, and what ideological issues arose as a result of this?

⁵⁵ Judith Tick, "Ragtime and the Music of Charles Ives." *Current Musicology*, no. 18 (1974): 112

Part (ii) | ideological implications

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the assimilation of Ragtime into mainstream popular culture was met with mixed responses. Below is an example of the blatantly discriminatory viewpoint prevalent in the early twentieth century taken from Walter Winston Kenilworth's "Remarks on Ragtime".

SIR Can it be said that America is falling prey to the collective soul of the Negro through the influence of what is popularly known as "rag time" music? Some sociological writers of prominence believe so; all psychologists are of the opinion. One thing is infallibly certain: if there is any tendency toward such a national disaster, it should be definitely pointed out and extreme measures taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger if it has not already gone too far.⁵⁶

Parallel to this was the view that Ragtime was not only a legitimate musical style worthy of critical analysis, but stirred within its listeners an uplifting feeling of irrefutable positivity and vitality.

It has a powerfully stimulating effect, setting the nerves and muscles tingling with excitement.⁵⁷

It was in the wake of this division of public opinion that Charles Ives composed his *Four Ragtime Dances*. It is of utmost importance to this discussion to acknowledge the second alien style referenced in this work. Ragtime appears alongside quotation of three gospel hymns emblematic of Ives' involvement as a church organist in early adulthood. The practice of *Adaptation* (as defined in chapter I) is employed in the manifestation of "Bringing in the Sheaves", "Happy Day", and "Thy Welcome Voice". This combination of inherently 'white' and 'Black' music is at the heart of Ives complex relationship with Ragtime; involving much cultural tension and appearing to settle somewhere between the two aforementioned views. With moral standpoints strongly rooted in the New England Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau⁵⁸, he was seen as a forward thinking individual with a progressive outlook on the issues of cultural hegemony and racial prejudice⁵⁹. In light of this, one may view *Four Ragtime Dances* as reaction against xenophobia and support of mutual acceptance; an amalgamation of white sacred musical traditions and Black spirituals.

However, in recent years alternate standpoints have been presented in several publications, notably Charles Hiroshi Garrett's book *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century*, and Lawrence Kramer's article in the

⁵⁶ Walter Winston Kenilworth, "Remarks On Ragtime," *Musical Courier* (28 May 1913): 22-23.

⁵⁷ "Questions and Answers," *Etude*, no. 16 (October 1898): 285

⁵⁸ Alfred F. Rosa, "Charles Ives: Music, Transcendentalism, and Politics," *The New England Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (September 1971): 435-43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/364784>

⁵⁹ Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 29.

Black Music Research Journal “Powers of Blackness: Africanist Discourse in Modern Concert Music”⁶⁰. At the forefront of their argument is the apparent ambivalence evident in Ives’ writings toward the incorporation of an intrinsically Black music.

Instead of entirely welcoming this aspect of his musical identity, Ives compared the “shifts and lilted accents” of Ragtime to a “bad habit”; but he suggested that “it will naturally start the other rhythmic habits, perhaps leading into something of value.” In his published writings Ives never fully embraced Ragtime.⁶¹

In opposition to this argument, it has been documented that Ives went to great lengths to have *Four Ragtime Dances* performed, as well as recycling sections to use as the basis for parts of his First Piano Sonata, Three-Page Sonata, and Set of Pieces for Theatre or Chamber Orchestra⁶² (Ives referred to this himself in his memos⁶³). Surely, this is evidence to support the contrary. For many, the synthesis of hymns and Ragtime would have been perceived as outright sacrilege. Perhaps this ambivalence and anxiety felt in Ives writings is merely a reaction to this; a manifestation of his experience as a progressive art-music composer in the early twentieth century. Either explanation is feasible, but one point is undeniable; that Ives is a known collector of musical styles, employing each highly effectively to achieve a different artistic end.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Kramer, “Charles Ives: Music, Transcendentalism, and Politics,” *Powers of Blackness: Africanist Discourse in Modern Concert Music* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 53-70, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779377>

⁶¹ Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶³ Ives, *Memos*, 57-58.

CHAPTER III

Part (i) | William Walton Façade (1922)

The renaissance that British music had enjoyed at the turn of the century began to go stale in the year immediately following the end of World War I (1919). Constant Lambert attributes this to an “increasingly narrow and provincial outlook of the composers of that time”⁶⁴. It was during this decay in innovative artistry that Europe became acquainted with Ragtime, achieving widespread popularity with such composers as Martinu, Lambert, Milhaud, and Ravel⁶⁵, precisely as its popularity with American audiences had begun to wane. The phase following the cessation of hostilities coincided with the re-evaluation of social, moral, and aesthetic values, spurring the creative community to undertake a reinvigoration of their art in a new era of increased artistic freedom.⁶⁶ This ‘creatively fertile’⁶⁷ period of recovery between the first and second World Wars was spearheaded by William Walton, still a teenager coming to the end of his education at Oxford, prompted by the resolute dedication of the majority of British composers to the anachronistic “fabricated nationalism” of British music⁶⁸. This being “no time for the grinding out of stereotyped music in stereotyped formulas”⁶⁹, Walton derived what benefit he could from the most advanced artistic experiments of the day, particularly those originating in France and America⁷⁰.

Walton’s introduction to contemporary music came by way of a number of sources. Primarily, through the scores of such composers as Ravel, Debussy and Stravinsky he avidly studied in the Ellis Library of Music in Oxford where he was educated. It was here that he met Sacheverell Sitwell, brother of Edith Sitwell with whom he would soon collaborate with in the creation of one of his earliest works, *Façade: An Entertainment*. Weighty in its stylistic reference of American popular music styles, *Façade* appears to be heavily influenced by Stravinsky whom Walton met through his connection with the Sitwells, and whose work he had likely seen performed at Wigmore Hall in 1920⁷¹; in particular the work *L’histoire du Soldat* (1918), similar in

⁶⁴ Constant Lambert, “Fresh Hand; New Talent; Vital Touch: Brief Record of William Walton, Composer of ‘Portsmouth Point’ and a Score or Two Besides,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, Saturday 27 November, 1926.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Dommett, “Jazz and the Composer,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 91st Sess., (1964-65): 13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/765961>

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁷ Hubert J. Foss, “William Walton,” *The Musical Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (October 1940): 458, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/738916>.

⁶⁸ Lambert, “Fresh Hand; New Talent; Vital Touch,”

⁶⁹ Foss, “William Walton”, 458.

⁷⁰ Lambert, “Fresh Hand; New Talent; Vital Touch,”

⁷¹ Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2002), 31.

its instrumentation (narrator and small ensemble), orchestration, and stylistic reference of popular music namely Ragtime, tango, and waltz.⁷²

Fox-Trot 'Old Sir Faulk', number 20 in the set of 21 pieces, described by Edwin Evans in *The Musical Times* as being in the “the American style”⁷³, contains one of the most indisputably clear instances of Ragtime in *Façade*.

The rhythm of the opening of this piece is idiomatic of the 4-8 bar introduction of a typical rag. In figure 12 we see the characteristic syncopated melody played in the trumpet and alto saxophone. Compare this to the opening of a rag by Classic Ragtime composer, Eubie Blake (fig. 13), and the striking similarities in the rhythmic structure become apparent. A more concise comparison is provided in figure 14.

⁷² These references are most obviously evident in the titling of the sixth movement of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du Soldat*, “Three Dances: Tango, Waltz, Ragtime”

⁷³ Edwin Evans, “Modern British Composers (new Series): I. William Walton,” *The Musical Times* 85, no. 1221 (November 1944): 331, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/923513>.

FLUTE $\text{♩} = 138$ Piccolo

BASS CLARINET B \flat

ALTO SAXOPHONE E \flat

TRUMPET C *senza sord.* *f*

PERCUSSION $\frac{4}{4}$

VOICE $\frac{4}{4}$

VIOLONCELLO $\frac{4}{4}$

P. Flute

B.C. *f*

S. *f* *mf*

T. *con sord.* *f* *mf*

S.D. *mf*

V. *pizz.* *f*

Old Sir Faulk, Tall as a stork, Be fore the hon-eyed fruits of dawn were

Figure 12. Opening bars of Walton's *Fox-Trot Old Sir Faulk*

66

FIZZ WATER
By EUBIE BLAKE

Moderato

Figure 13. Opening of Eubie Blake's *Fizz Water* rag

William Walton

Eubie Blake

Figure 14. Rhythmic comparison of the introductions to Walton's *Fox-Trot 'Old Sir Faulk'* and Blake's *Fizz Water rag*

In the above examples, we see a synthesis of two rhythmic motifs characteristic of Ragtime; the two sets of four quavers tied halfway, and a variation on the alternating quaver-crotchet motif, both illustrated in chapter I - figure 4. This practical application can be categorised, according to the definitions provided in chapter I, as *Stylistic Quotation*.

A second example of the use of Ragtime in *Façade* is exemplified in the vocal and piano parts, displayed in figure 15.

'Sal - ly, Ma - ry, Mat - tie, what's the mat - ter, why cry?' The hunts - man and the rey - nard - co - loured

sun and I sigh; 'Oh, the nur - sery - maid Meg With a leg like a peg

Figure 15. Dotted rhythms featured in *Fox-Trot Old Sir Faulk* (bar. 16-21)

The experience Walton gained in his upbringing in writing and scoring fox-trots for the Savoy Orpheans⁷⁴ has undoubtedly made an impact on this work. Not only is the work authentically titled *Foxtrot 'Old Sir Faulk'*, but the dotted rhythms employed in the above example (fig. 15) are characteristic of the later styles of dance-influenced Ragtime music, as can be seen in figure 16. This gives support to the statement made by Walton's friend and colleague, Constant Lambert, "Walton has demonstrably been influenced by the rhythms of modern dance music, while

⁷⁴ Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire*, 271.

the necessity of writing in a popular idiom had a salutary effect in clarifying his melodic line”⁷⁵.



Figure 16. Dance-influenced Ragtime
Euday L. Bowman's *12th Street Rag*

Notable also is the presence of a steady, metrically accented bass in both of the examples above (fig. 15 and fig. 16), alternating with mirroring between left and right hand (fig.16); stylistic features strongly idiomatic of Ragtime⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ Constant Lambert, "Some Angles of the Compleat Walton," *Radio Times*, August 7, 1936.

⁷⁶ As discussed in chapter I of this thesis.

Part (ii) | ideological implications

As time progressed, there was a dramatic shift in the acceptance of Ragtime as an exclusively Black ‘exoticism’⁷⁷, to being categorised as white popular music. This is evident in the diminishing racial emphasis in publications of Ragtime music in the early twentieth century. A comparison between 1902, where the vast majority of rag publications made reference to the race and colour of its exponents, to 1904 shows a profound difference in the frequency of racial typecasting, beyond which 5% of publications or less followed this trend⁷⁸.



Figure 17.
Racial Typecasting
The Mississippi Rag (published in 1897)

Figure 18.
Dissolution of Racial Typecasting
The Honeymoon Rag (published in 1908)

This new view of Ragtime music as “quaint”⁷⁹ and “jubilant”⁸⁰ rather than “music of a depraved nature that is malevolently conceived”⁸¹ had a profound impact on its use in subsequent musical explorations; it began to be used to musically depict a sense of frivolity and gaiety. This novel attitude towards Ragtime appears to be

⁷⁷ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁹ Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation*, 17.

⁸⁰ Berlin, “Ragtime.”

⁸¹ Daniel Gregory Mason, “Concerning Ragtime,” *New Music Review and Church Music Review* 17 (March 1918): 114. 12

paramount in its application in Walton's *Façade*, in addition to its use as a reactionary tool; an "artistic impudence which cocked a snook at convention".⁸²

The wit and satire exemplified in Edith Sitwell's abstract poetry is mirrored in Walton's parodist reference to popular music styles of the time. The music is "deliberately written in an adopted manner; it speaks with a consciously feigned accent"⁸³ in order to enhance the "novelty" character of the work. *Façade* was designed quite simply as an entertainment⁸⁴, Edith Sitwell herself noting, "*Façade* is a work for the most part of gaiety...the audience is meant to laugh"⁸⁵. This aligned with the post World War I attitudes "marked by a furious passion for dancing, the vogue of Jazz, cynical wit, and an anti-romantic outlook"⁸⁶. This perspective is a far cry from the ideological implications in play in Charles Ives' *Four Ragtime Dances* eighteen years earlier.

The use of Ragtime musical idioms in Walton's *Façade* is indicative of its continuing relevance as a referential style, despite its wane in popularity in American circles.

Notwithstanding the virtual disappearance of purely Ragtime works in the 1920s and 1930s, the stylistic idioms continued to be adapted for use in contemporary art-music works including those by Stravinsky, Lambert, Milhaud, and Britten (illustrated in figure 3).

⁸² Dommett, "Jazz and the Composer", 12.

⁸³ Frank Howes, *The Music of William Walton*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 461.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸⁵ Rebecca Rice, "Walton's 'Façade' and Its Descendants," *Journal of Singing - The Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 66, no. 4 (March 2010): 401.

⁸⁶ Howes, *William Walton*, xiii.

CHAPTER IV

Part (i) | Revivals

The end of the Second World War precipitated further change in the attitude towards music and similar art forms. The composition of music in the Western art tradition was approached with an increased intellectual rigidity⁸⁷, as opposed to the relative artistic freedom of the twenties and thirties discussed in the previous chapter. Simultaneously, Ragtime experienced an upturn in popularity in the late 1940s due to the revival of “the old music”, specifically Dixieland Jazz. This movement’s main exponent was Lu Watters who formed the Yerba Buena Jazz Band, a conglomerate of white San Francisco Bay musicians, after growing tired of the “over-arranged big bands” and “unimaginative solo-after-solo small groups” that typified Jazz in this era⁸⁸. Following the huge success of Dixieland, indicated by the elevation of a number of rags to bestseller status⁸⁹, Ragtime took on new appearance as “honky-tonk” in the early fifties that brought with it a “happy-go-lucky” vibe lingering throughout the next twenty years⁹⁰.

This Ragtime revival spread to the academic realm upon the publication of the first true historical study of Ragtime, Blesh and Janis’ *They All Played Ragtime* (1950)⁹¹, exalting Ragtime’s status among a newly developed scholastic audience. The early 1960s brought with it the establishment of coteries dedicated to preservation and performance of Classic Ragtime including the *Ragtime Review* (1962-1967), the *Ragtime Society* (1962-), and the *Maple Leaf Club* (1967-)⁹². Parallel to this, composers were once again reconsidering their approach to music, “intellectual rigidity” giving way to a more relaxed manner of composition encompassing openness to using “the vast resource of varied styles throughout the history of music as a reference point”⁹³. This is reflected in the establishment of *Third Stream* composition (coined by Gunther Schuller in 1957) which “synthesizes the essential characteristics and techniques of contemporary Western art-music and other musical traditions” under a core belief that “any music stands to profit from a confrontation with another”⁹⁴. The emergence of the “Third Stream” aesthetic directly influenced William Bolcom’s innovatively eclectic work *Black Host*.

⁸⁷ Gurney, “William Bolcom’s Black Host”, 7.

⁸⁸ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 133.

⁸⁹ Pee Wee Hunt’s recording of Euday Bowman’s 12th Street Rag became a bestseller in 1948

⁹⁰ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 158.

⁹¹ Berlin, “Ragtime.”

⁹² Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 178.

⁹³ Gurney, “William Bolcom’s Black Host”, 8.

⁹⁴ Gunther Schuller. “Third stream.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/27850>

Part (ii) | William Bolcom Black Host (1967)

There are a number of prolific musicians who have proved hugely influential in the development of William Bolcom's eclectic style. He began his studies at the University of Washington with George Frederick McKay who had an affinity with folk, Jazz, and Blues, and John Verrall, a former student of Kodaly who encouraged experimentation with a wide range of compositional resources including symmetrical scale systems. Bolcom then went on to study at Mills College with Milhaud whose music "embodied a free spirit where Jazz idioms and Latin American rhythms find a comfortable place"⁹⁵, later following him to the Paris Conservatoire. It was here that he studied with Messiaen and developed his interest in the European "academic" music tradition through the work of Pierre Boulez⁹⁶.

Alongside these influences, Bolcom showed a great interest in the work of other composers who borrowed from popular musical idioms like Ragtime. He wrote:

It might be argued that the "serious" composers of Europe have been more able to draw from American sources than our own have. Ravel's G Major Concerto draws heavily on Gershwin; Milhaud's *La Creation du monde* is inspired by American Jazz; Satie wrote a parody of an Irving Berlin tune to use in his ballet *Parade*; and Stravinsky was reportedly impelled by the look — only the look — of a page of printed American Ragtime to write his *Piano Rag-Music*, the rag in *L'Histoire du Soldat*, and other Ragtime-flavored pieces.⁹⁷

This was undoubtedly a key trigger to his incorporation of Ragtime and other popular music styles within his own work.

Bolcom became acquainted with Ragtime specifically in 1967 by way of Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha*⁹⁸.

When I discovered Ragtime, I discovered a kind of music that I could relate to in every way.⁹⁹

I think what interested me about Scott Joplin and how I wanted to suddenly find myself writing rags was that Joplin brought together so many different elements of American music and married them in a real, organic way.¹⁰⁰

This underpins a concept at the heart of Bolcom's compositional style; the desire to erase boundaries between popular and so-called serious music¹⁰¹.

⁹⁵ Gurney, "William Bolcom's Black Host", 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁷ William Bolcom, "Song and Dance," in *The Lives of the Piano*, ed. James R. Graines (New York: Harper & Row, publishers, 1981), 157.

⁹⁸ Jane Vial Jaffe, "Ragomania: A Classical Overture For Orchestra," Aspen Music Festival, http://www.aspenmusicfestival.com/index.cfm?method=c.programNote&pnID=797&swf_plugin=0,1,2

⁹⁹ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 180.

¹⁰⁰ Yeung Yu, "A Style Analysis of William Bolcom's Complete Rags For Piano" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007), 32.

¹⁰¹ Sarah Fishko, "The Fishko Files: William Bolcom" (November 17, 2006), WNYC, <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/fishko/>

It's a shame that we have accepted these market distinctions between types of music. I think music is music.¹⁰²

His work employs dramatic atonality and modernist techniques in direct contrast to American popular music styles including Ragtime, popular song (particularly in his cabaret songs), waltz, and Blues among others. Like Walton, Bolcom does not discriminate between musical styles. The analysis below clearly illustrates this in the context of his work *Black Host*.

Black Host can be divided into seven clear sections, the rag comprising the sixth. The presence of Ragtime is very clearly evident in Bolcom's use of stylistic idioms, in particular, his use of the rhythmic motifs outlined in chapter I of this thesis.

The image shows a musical score for Figure 19, titled "Ragtime in Bolcom's *Black Host* (p. 14 of score)". The score is arranged in a system with five staves. The top staff is for Piano, the second for Cymbal, and the third for Tape. The bottom two staves are for a theater organ, with the upper staff labeled "1st time (4)" and the lower staff labeled "2nd time (5)". The score includes a bass line labeled "A" and a melody labeled "B". Handwritten annotations include "ad lib. ride cymbal, begin discretely (1)", "pp insistently (2)", "Jw.: theater-organ sound (3)", "mp", "etc. sounds like (6)", and "1st time (4)".

Figure 19. Ragtime in Bolcom's *Black Host* (p. 14 of score)

Figure 'A' in the above excerpt (fig. 19) clearly shows the establishment of a metrically emphasised 'oom-pah' bass line distributed between the pedals and left hand of the organ. Superimposed on this is the melody at figure 'B', depicting the

¹⁰² Sarah Fishko, "The Fishko Files: Bolcom/Warren" (January 3, 2007), WNYC, <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/fishko/>

tyed syncopation idiomatic of Classic Ragtime particularly popular after the turn of the twentieth century. The higher activity in the bass, which is interspersed with the ‘oom-pah’, is homologous with the increased complexity characteristic of Stride Ragtime¹⁰³ (as shown in figure 20).

Figure 20. Stride characteristics in Bolcom's *Black Host* (p. 13 of score)

Bolcom not only employs various rhythmic motifs characteristic of Ragtime, but also emulates the structure of a classic rag. The form of this section follows the pattern A B B C C D D which is very similar to a great many of Scott Joplin's piano rags including his well-known *Maple Leaf Rag* (A A B B A C C D D)¹⁰⁴. The tonal structure is based around closely related keys shifting from Db major (as indicated by the first appearance of a key signature shown in figure 20) to the relative minor, and through the subdominant before returning to the tonic once more. In this section of *Black Host* Bolcom not only emulates the rhythmic and formal structure of a classic rag, he imitates idiomatic melodic patterns (figure 19) and harmonic sequences. In line with this reasoning, we may classify Bolcom's application of Ragtime here as *Quotation*, rather than merely *Stylistic Quotation*.

In this work, Bolcom channels the 1950s “happy-go-lucky” outlook of Ragtime to great effect. The accompanying tape track gradually undermines the liveliness and jocularly of the rag, progressively disintegrating, eventually drowning it out effectively portraying the concept that lay at the heart of this work.

It is an emotionally based piece, and if it is about anything, it would be fear.¹⁰⁵

Figures 21-23 contain three excerpts of the score that illustrate this.

¹⁰³ Gurney, “William Bolcom's *Black Host*”, 47.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ William Albright, *New Music for Organ*, Nonesuch H-71260, Record, 1971. (Notes from the record jacket.)

Handwritten musical score for Figure 21. The score consists of several staves. At the top right, there is a handwritten instruction: "Cl.: clarinet; or heavy (5) Solo reed with B^b flute". Below this, the first staff contains musical notation with a dynamic marking "a. poco cresc." and a "p" marking. A second staff is labeled "Tape" on the left and contains a wavy line representing a tape recording. Above this wavy line, there is an upward-pointing arrow and the text "switch on: TAPE BARELY AUDIBLE (6)". Below the wavy line, there is another staff with musical notation. At the bottom left, there is a "T" marking. The score is written in a dark ink on a light background.

Figure 21. Extra-musical meaning in *Black Host*: excerpt 1 (p. 13 of score)

Handwritten musical score for Figure 22. The score consists of several staves. At the top left, there is a handwritten instruction: "(R.H. is independent rhythmically of everything else) (3)". Below this, the first staff contains musical notation with a key signature change to one sharp. A second staff contains musical notation with a dynamic marking "p". A third staff is labeled "C" on the left and contains a wavy line representing a cymbal recording. Above this wavy line, there is a handwritten instruction: "Cymbals: gradually grow in intensity (5)". Below the wavy line, there is another staff with musical notation and a dynamic marking "cresc.". At the bottom left, there is a "T" marking. The score is written in a dark ink on a light background.

Figure 22. Extra-musical meaning in *Black Host*: excerpt 2 (p. 17 of score)

Figure 23. Extra-musical meaning in *Black Host*: excerpt 3 (p. 19 of score)

From the above examples it is clear that not only is Bolcom quoting both Classic Ragtime and Stride, he is using them to great effect to serve the extra-musical meaning of the work.

The favourable shift in the public's perception of Ragtime throughout the fifties and sixties lead to its re-popularisation in both the art-music and popular spheres. Bolcom was at the forefront of this, a direct precursor and impetus to the significant revival of the 1970s wherein the work of Scott Joplin was raised to eminent status¹⁰⁶. The use of Ragtime in *Black Host* does not bear the same racial significance as in Ives' *Four Ragtime Dances*: by the late 1960s the acceptance and importance of Black culture in the United States had greatly advanced. Bolcom's stance towards Ragtime as an American music style is considerably more neutral, as is the cultural climate in which Black music has now completely permeated. The divisiveness of racial politics is now, at least in music, significantly reduced, thus permitting *Black Host* to function as a vessel by which to amalgamate Americanisms resulting in a statement of American culture and music.

I am not a nationalistic composer or pianist or musician. By accident of birth, however, I am American, and for much of my life I have been fascinated by what that means. One can't be bound by it, but one ignores it at one's peril, for then the musician is fated to be nothing but a dispossessed European. Only by understanding it and accepting it can one transcend being American to make music that is truly universal.¹⁰⁷

I like the fact that they are so totally integrated that they struck me as very important for the history of American music. We are still finding our national I won't say national style but the kind of thing that a French composer or

¹⁰⁶ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 179-198.

Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 179.

Berlin, "Ragtime."

¹⁰⁷ Bolcom, "Song and Dance", 161.

German composer or Italian composer takes for granted, and is still being formed for us, so that was so important to see that Joplin had done it.¹⁰⁸

The goal in utilising Ragtime, among other American popular music styles, is to break down the barrier between popular music and so-called ‘serious’ music to proliferate a style wherein the definition of music is broader. This eventuates in the ability to draw music from any genre that suits one’s expressive needs¹⁰⁹, whether that be due to stylistic, or ideological implication.

The idea is to be authentic, real. We get influenced by everything we hear. I need to directness of pop, and the abstruseness of something that’s much more complex, simply because without that, my language is poor.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Yeung Yu, “A Style Analysis”, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Gurney, “William Bolcom’s Black Host”, 6.

¹¹⁰ Fishko, “The Fishko Files: William Bolcom”

CHAPTER V

Conclusion | a continuing legacy

The significant revival of the 1970s led to a reconsideration of the musical status of Ragtime in all sectors; academia, popular culture, and art-music included. This can be attributed to a group of exceptional musicians, artists, and scholars whom I will endeavour to discuss in the forthcoming chapter.

Bolcom's role in this revival was not only contributory in a compositional sense, but as importantly, in a performance sense. To date, Bolcom has featured on no less than forty albums as both a performer and composer, several of which have been nominated for Grammy Awards¹¹¹. Bolcom's friend and colleague, William Albright, was himself a great contributor to the burgeoning success of the Ragtime style. Bolcom and Albright wrote a surfeit of brilliantly modern rags "for their own amazement and amusement"¹¹², many of which were recorded, appearing side by side on many of the aforementioned albums. Perhaps Albright's greatest contribution to the legacy of Ragtime is his *Grand Sonata in Ragtime* (1974), which has made its way into standard piano repertory of the 21st century¹¹³. The work is comprised of three movements, with the first aptly titled "Scott Joplin's Victory". Both Bolcom and Albright hold status as two of the key figures in the Ragtime revival. However, Bolcom's contribution extended beyond performance and composition, and into the realm of publications.

In 1970, Bolcom contacted Vera Brodsky Lawrence (pianist, editor, and American music historian¹¹⁴) who had just received a grant to edit an Americana-collection music series for the New York library. Bolcom was responsible for suggesting the work of Scott Joplin as a logical starting point¹¹⁵. *The Collected Works of Scott Joplin* was published in 1971¹¹⁶, the first in a projected series of American Music Collections. Contributions to the publication came first from Ragtime aficionados including Max Morath, Trebor Tichenor, and Mike Montgomery¹¹⁷. Contributions then began coming from the general public, a mark of the extent to which ideologies had changed in the 75 or so years since Ragtime's establishment. The

¹¹¹ William Bolcom, "The Complete Rags For Piano," The Database of Recorded American Music (DRAM), <http://www.dramonline.org/albums/william-bolcom-complete-rags/notes>

¹¹² Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 181.

¹¹³ Maurice Hinson, *The Pianist's Dictionary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 69.

¹¹⁴ Alann Kozinn, "Vera B. Lawrence, 87, Pianist and American Music Historian," *New York Times*, September 22, 1996. <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/22/nyregion/vera-b-lawrence-87-pianist-and-american-music-historian.html>

¹¹⁵ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 181.

¹¹⁶ Kozinn, "Vera B. Lawrence,"

¹¹⁷ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 184.

rare, out-of-print music was made available to performers and they seized this opportunity.

One such performer and key figure in the 70s revival was musicologist Joshua Rifkin. Departing from the realm of his renaissance-baroque interests, Rifkin recorded a selection of Joplin's pieces with Gunther Schuller on Nonesuch Records; a company that frequently ventures into the more esoteric realms of classical music¹¹⁸. Of particular interest to this discussion is the emergence of the Nonesuch Explorer label in 1969. Its establishment was indicative of the encyclopaedic taste for exoticism in music that heralded the beginning of the Postmodernist era; in particular the emergence of so called "taste cultures"¹¹⁹. Rifkin began performing rags as-written on a concert grand piano, perhaps under the influence of the authentic historical performance movement of which he was a part. This undoctored method of performance highlighted the musical sophistication present in piano Ragtime that had been overshadowed by the improvisatory methods of performers in earlier years¹²⁰. In his review of the record, H. Wiley Hitchcock expressed Joplin's pieces were "the precise American equivalent in terms of a native style of dance music, of minuets by Mozart, mazurkas by Chopin, or waltzes by Brahms".¹²¹ As a result of Rifkin's work, Ragtime began appearing on recital programs and became worthy of musicological investigation¹²². The publication of Joplin's pieces in combination with the performance work of Rifkin spurred a great change in the academic perception of Ragtime, far strengthening the case towards its categorisation as classical music¹²³. Harold Schonberg, esteemed classical music critic of the New York Times, waxed lyrical on the "Joplin renaissance"¹²⁴. Ragtime enthusiast Max Morath observed:

Once Harold Schonberg said Joplin was alright, all these classical-music people, who has known about Joplin but disregarded him, decided he was a genius. These are the same people he was up against his whole life.¹²⁵

Following on from this, a surge of full-length studies of Ragtime appeared on the scene, many of which formed the basis for this thesis. Among the most thorough are Schafer and Riedel's *The Art of Ragtime* (1973), Peter Gammond's *Scott Joplin and The Ragtime Era* (1975), Terry Waldo's *This Is Ragtime* (1976), and the first edition of Edward A. Berlin's *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (1976).

¹¹⁸ "Nonesuch: Artists," Nonesuch Records, <http://www.nonesuch.com/artists>

¹¹⁹ Judith Irene Lochhead, *Postmodern Music/postmodern Thought* (London: Routledge, 2002), 96.

¹²⁰ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 179.

¹²¹ H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Ragtime of the Higher Class," *Stereo Review* (April 1971): 84

¹²² Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 180.

¹²³ Though Ragtime is now considered worthy of musical scholarship, it has resisted classification. "It's music of the individual and of all groups" (Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 208)

¹²⁴ Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 184.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

Ragtime's exceptional re-popularisation is indebted to American composer, conductor, author, historian, and Jazz musician Gunther Schuller¹²⁶. In 1973, Schuller arranged, recorded, and performed selections from the *Red Back Book* with the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, a group he established whilst president of the New England Conservatory¹²⁷. A film producer encountered the record and, "intrigued by the fresh 'new' sound"¹²⁸, decided to use the rags of Joplin in his film *The Sting* (despite its anachronistic placement to the film's 1936 setting). The film led to Joplin's mass acclaim, going on to win Oscars for "Best Picture" and "Best Musical Score" in 1974¹²⁹. Ragtime was once again brought to the forefront of popular culture; Joplin's *The Entertainer* permeating best sellers lists alongside the Jackson Five and Ray Stevens¹³⁰.

The whole nation has begun to take notice.¹³¹

This newfound appreciation for Ragtime music has continued throughout the subsequent decades of the twentieth and into the 21st century, proliferated through the work of composers such as Donald Ashwander (*Perdido Bay Moon Rag* 1988), Thomas Adès (*Powder Her Face* 1995), Elena Kats-Chernin (*Russian Rag* 1996), and Nobuo Uematsu (*Spinach Rag* 2001). These works are not only present as art-music but permeate a number of modern artistic mediums including film (Kats-Chernin), and video gaming (Uematsu).

Since the emergence of Ragtime music, the perception of the style has undergone several phases of reconditioning. In 1901, the American federation of musicians made their view on this new style of music resoundingly clear.

...in their official statement they labelled Ragtime "musical rot" and pledged to discourage its playing and publication.¹³²

The subsequent decades demonstrated a gradual repudiation of racial and musical bias toward the style, resulting in the alteration of Ragtime's ideological meaning and shift in the implications of its employment in the work of twentieth century composers. The discussion and supporting analysis of the three works of focus underpin an historical account of the breadth of Ragtime's influence both ideologically and stylistically. Not only is Ragtime now considered worthy of extensive academic scholarship, the re-evaluation of its legitimacy and significance

¹²⁶ Mark Tucker, et al. "Schuller." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., edited by Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.ecu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/J688300pg1>

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 182.

¹²⁹ "The Sting (1973)," International Movie Database (IMDb), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070735/awards>

¹³⁰ According to the Billboard Hot 100 and the American Top 40 music chart on May 18, 1974

Casey Kasem, "American Top 40: 18th May 1974," Old Radio Shows, <http://www.oldradioshows.com/at40/051874.html>

¹³¹ John Kronenberger, "The Ragtime Revival: A Belated Ode to Composer Scott Joplin.," *New York Times*, July 11 1974.

¹³² This statement was made at the American Federation of Musicians's annual meeting in Denver, Colorado in 1901

Waldo, *This Is Ragtime*, 47.

in the sphere of popular culture has solidified its trajectory as an important musical model.

Ragtime is more than a musical style; it is the achievement of cultural independence and identity.¹³³

¹³³ Berlin, *Ragtime: A History*, 196.

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