

SCOTT JOPLIN

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Preface

Scott Joplin was born in Texas around 1867 or 1868; no one knows for sure exactly when. When he was young, his family left the farm on which his father (formerly a slave) worked as a laborer and moved to Texarkana, which straddles the Texas-Arkansas border. There are stories that the young Scott had access to a piano in a white-owned home where his mother worked, and taught himself the rudiments of music. His talent was noticed by a local music teacher (Julius Weiss), who instructed him, placing special emphasis on European art forms, including opera. This teacher's influence may have been behind Joplin's deep desire for recognition as a classical composer.

There is evidence that between 1891 and 1895 he was beginning his musical career, playing with a minstrel group, leading a band, playing a cornet and traveling with a vocal group called the Texas Medley Quartette. His travels brought him to Syracuse, New York where he impressed two businessmen that published his songs "Please Say You Will" and "A Picture of Her Face."

He worked in Sedalia as a pianist, playing at various events and sites, including the town's two social clubs for black men, the Maple Leaf and Black 400 clubs. He also taught several of the local young musicians in town, most notably Scott Hayden and Arthur Marshall, with whom he later collaborated composing rags.

In 1896 he published two marches and a waltz. Late in 1898 he tried to publish his first two piano rags, but succeeded in selling only "Original Rags." This publication experience was not ideal as he was forced to share credit with a staff arranger. Before Joplin published his next rag, he obtained the assistance and guidance of a lawyer. In August 1899 they contracted with Sedalia music store owner and publisher John Stark to publish "The Maple Leaf Rag," which was to become the greatest and most famous of piano rags. The contract gave Joplin a one-cent royalty on each sale, which gave him a small, but steady income for the rest of his life.

Among Joplin's significant publications were "Sunflower Slow Drag" (a collaboration with Scott Hayden), "Peacherine Rag," "The Easy Winners," "Cleopha," "The Strenuous Life" (a tribute to President Theodore Roosevelt), "A Breeze from Alabama," "Elite Syncopations," "The Entertainer," and "The Ragtime Dance."

Early in 1903 he filed a copyright application for an opera, *A Guest of Honor*. He formed an opera company, rehearsed the work in St. Louis, and embarked on a tour. Early in the tour, someone stole the box office receipts. The tour ended with Joplin unable to meet his payroll. Furthermore, all of his possessions, including the music from the opera, were confiscated. Copies of the score were never filed with the Library of Congress and the music has never been recovered.

Through the next few years his career seems to have floundered and, having lost much of his money on the failed opera, he was in a poor financial condition. In the summer of 1907 Joplin went to New York to make contacts with new publishers and to find financial backing for *Treemonisha*, an opera he had been working on for the past few years.

Joplin set about to arrange a performance of the opera, but he was unsuccessful. Through the next four years, he announced several full productions, but none were realized. In 1911, he mounted an unstaged run-through with piano accompaniment, but it failed to win him the financial backing he sought. Joplin was never to witness a completely staged performance of his opera. By 1916, Joplin was very ill and by mid-January, 1917, he had to be hospitalized and was soon transferred to a mental institution where he died on April 1, 1917.

Signs, Symbols, and Terms

Roman Numerals

I 1	V 5	IX 9
II 2	VI 6	X 10
III 3	VII 7	XI 11
IV 4	VIII 8	XII 12

> = **Accent**. Emphasize the note.

⎵ = **Arpeggiate**. Quickly “roll” the chord.

^ = **Marcato**. Emphasize more than an accent.

BV3 = Barre three strings at the 5th fret.

BV = Barre all six strings at the 5th fret.

HBV = Hinge barre at the 5th fret. Play an individual note on the 1st string with the bottom of the 1st finger, just above the palm. Usually simplifies the next fingering.

⑥ = D = Tune the 6th string down to D

p, i, m, a = The right-hand fingers starting with the thumb.

1, 2, 3, 4, 0 = The left-hand fingers starting with the index finger, and the open string.

adagio = A slow tempo which is faster than *largo* and slower than *andante*.

allegro = Cheerful, quick or fast.

allegretto = A lively quick tempo that moves more slowly than *allegro*.

andante = A moderate, graceful tempo, slower than *allegretto* and faster than *adagio*.

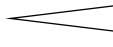
a tempo = Return to the original tempo.

cantabile = Singing.


commodo = Comfortable, leisurely.

con brio = With vigor.

con moto = With motion.

cresc. = Abbreviation for *crescendo*.
Gradually becoming louder. 

D.C. al Fine = *Da capo al fine*. Go back to the beginning of the piece and play to the *Fine*, which is the end of the piece.

dim. = Abbreviation for *diminuendo*.
Gradually becoming softer. 

dolce = Sweet.

gliss. = Abbreviation for *glissando*. To slide from one note to another. Often shown as a diagonal line with an S (slide) in guitar music.

harm. = Abbreviation for *harmonic*. Notes of the harmonic series that are very pure and clear. In this book, written at the sounding pitch with a diamond shaped note head. Touch the string lightly directly over the indicated fret and pluck, immediately removing the finger from the string.

largo = Very slow and broad.

legato = Smooth, connected.

leggiero = Light or delicate.

l.v. = Abbreviation for *laissez vibrer* (let vibrate).

maestoso = Sublime or magnificent.

moderato = In a moderate tempo.

molto = Very or much.

non troppo = But not too much so.

più = More.

poco a poco = Little by little.

rall. = Abbreviation for *rallentando*.
Becoming gradually slower.

rit. = Abbreviation for *ritardando*.
Becoming gradually slower.

sempre = Always.

sostenuto = Sustained.

staccato = Short, detached. 

tranquillo = Tranquil, calm, quiet.

vivace = Lively, quick.

The Entertainer

A Rag Time Two Step

Not fast

2 4 4 1 3 4
2 0 1 2
0 2 3 0 1 0 3
2 3 0 1 2

f

1 3 2 1 0 3 2 3 2 3 3 2 3 3

p *f*

1 3 2 4 3 1 3 4 0 1 4 0 2 4 1 1 0 3 2 3 3

p *f*

1 3 2 1 0 3 2 3 2 3 3 2 3 3

p *f*

1 4 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 4 1 4

f

0 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 1 4 0 4 1 4

f

Sunflower Slow Drag

A Rag Time Two Step

⑥=D Not Fast

mf

5

8

BII₄ BII

12

15

19

1. 2.

Peacherine Rag

Not too fast

⑥=D

5

8

11

BII₃ - - - - ,

14

18

BII₃ - - - - BII₃ - - - -

1. 2.

Kismet Rag

Not fast

Musical notation for measures 1-4. The piece is in 2/4 time. Measure 1 starts with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes with various fingerings (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) and a circled 2 above the first measure. Measure 4 ends with a circled 1 above and a circled 5 below.

Musical notation for measures 5-8. Measure 5 is marked with a dynamic of *f*. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and fingerings. Measure 8 features a circled 2 above and a circled 5 below.

Musical notation for measures 9-12. Measure 9 is marked with a circled 2 above and a circled 5 below. Measure 11 is labeled "BII" with a dashed line above it. Measure 12 has a circled 2 above and a circled 6 below.

Musical notation for measures 13-15. Measure 13 is marked with a circled 2 above and a circled 6 below. The notation continues with complex rhythmic patterns and fingerings.

Musical notation for measures 16-19. Measure 16 is marked with a circled 3 above. Measure 18 is labeled "BIII" with a circled 3 above. Measure 19 has a circled 3 above and a circled 5 below.