

African american and european influences on ragtime's development

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Due to the United States of America's size, it is not surprising that the nation's music is diverse. Generally, American music - like American culture - reflects a myriad of contributions, a blending of dreams, and a cross-breeding of several styles. One such musical genre that reflects the combination of cultures is ragtime, which is an instrumental music genre that was developed before the turn of the 20th century and is an important jazz predecessor. Piano rags are based on a constant oom-pah, or one-two, beat in the player's left hand supporting a highly syncopated melody in the right hand. In a cultural context, the upbeat ragtime musical genre is influenced by Afro-American folk dance music and Euro-American social dance music. Spirituals, the blues, and ragtime are three musical genres that were developed in America during the 18th and 19th centuries, each of them being vital for the inception of jazz. Each of genres were created to meet the performers and the audience's particular needs. All three forms also found various ways to achieve European and African traditions' cross-fertilization. Immigrants are the driving force in the creation of American cultural aspects, one of them being music. However, the early African Americans did not come willingly to the new lands. They were brought forcibly between the 1600s and 1800s, according to Starr and Waterman's book. Central and western Africa, from where most of the slaves were taken, were home to numerous distinct languages, societies, and musical traditions.

African American musical origins involved the processes of syncretism and the creation of institutions that soon became the foundations of black music: the church, the family, the school, the voluntary association, and many others. Syncretism is the selective integration of traditions derived from

Europe - with established musical traditions - and Africa. African slaves were not only brought to North America, they were also taken to other areas in the Americas. Thus, African American culture assumed various forms in Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, and Jamaica, with each country's music shaped by a set mix of European and African source traditions and by local prevalent social conditions. Spiritual music - a combination of Afro-American folk music elements and European Christianity - was created as a way for the slaves to find meaning in their lives. Spirituals are also songs of justice and expectation to help the slaves deal with the oppressive and social evils of hegemony and racism. The blues were created for the urban black population. The genre's songs bemoaned politically the destitution, difficulties, despair, and depression the African Americans experienced before, during, and after slavery. During the antebellum period, slaves played music that was syncopated in string ensembles. The players in the string ensemble jug bands used banjos, fiddles, foot stomping, and washboards. During the Reconstruction period, black musicians started to use pianos, which started to appear in juke joints and social halls across the South. At such time, the ragtime music genre came to be. Early ragtime pianists developed the genre through extensive traveling and exchanging ideas in the same way blues was created.

Eventually, the piano was already emerging as one of America's most popular instruments. Ragtime was mainly developed in the Missouri cities of Sedalia, Carthage, and St. Louis. In the cities art around 1890, young talented composers and performers gathered and started to exchange ideas.

The so-called Missouri School included Tom Turpin, Scott Joplin, Scott Hayden, Louis Chavin, and James Scott. Turpin and Joplin developed piano rags that had simple syncopation, multiple-themed structures, two strong beats for every measure, and key change. However, it was Joplin who contributed more to ragtime's development than others. He was one of the musicians who - at the turn of the 20th century - attempted to reconcile African American and Western European music to create a fresh idiom. At the later years of the 1890s, ragtime pieces were increasingly published, and the ragtime craze captivated America. Ragtime took another development path than the blues when it's early composers and players made a conscious effort for the style to have European elements. Ragtime could be created like piano music from the classical music tradition of Europe. The early composers also started to use sophisticated forms that are similar to classical music. Ragtime, as an instrumental music, is separate in style from some jazz music and the blues. Thus, ragtime's development is restricted. It was not able to evolve like jazz and the blues would evolve eventually. As an African American dance music form, ragtime poetically utilizes a cakewalk or two-step rhythm, simultaneously with a syncopated and un-syncopated beat. The ragtime style descended from minstrelsy, yet the style also represented and engagement of African American musical values and techniques, due to the growing involvement of black performers and songwriters in the music industry. Ragtime music's major patterns were derived from the banjo. It was also influenced by marching band music and Cuban habanera rhythm, which was vital for what New Orleans pianist Ferdinand Morton had called American jazz's 'Latin tinge'.

During its popularity, ragtime was played by various ensembles from brass bands, dance bands, symphony orchestras, mandolin and banjo ensembles, and solo pianists. Ragtime's popularity during the turn of the 20th century suggests a fascination by the whites with African American music. Even white American youth engaged in ragtime to rebel against their parents and authority figures cultural conservatism. Ragtime is perhaps the only African American origin music that was embraced across various social classes, race, regions, and generations. The cultural traditions of western and central Africa - combined with the cultural and musical traditions of Europe, especially the piano musical instrument - led to the creation of distinct African American music, which would eventually enjoy popularity throughout the United States. African American music was also influenced by the Cuban habanera. One such musical genre is ragtime, which is the direct predecessor of jazz. The antebellum music of the African Americans was developed together with black spiritual and gospel music that was integrated with European influences.

As slavery ended, the blues music genre led to another musical cultural identity that related to the Reconstruction era. The more jovial ragtime during the late 1800s symbolized happier times. African American music had indeed changed, depending on their status in American society - from slaves, to free men, to African American artists in the entertainment community. While ragtime is a vital footnote in the development of distinctly American music, it never quite became as popular or as developed as African American-based musical genres like jazz, gospel, or even hip-hop, due to

ragtime being an instrumental form of music limited to the piano as its main playing instrument.