

Scott joplin: "the king
of ragtime"



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Ragtime played a significant role in the development of early jazz. Although ragtime was performed on nearly all existing instruments, by many ensembles and orchestras, fundamentally it is piano music. It is unknown who was the author of the first ragtime. This term was first used in the title of « Ma Ragtime Baby» - the play written by Fred Stone and published in 1893. No matter who was the founder of ragtime, Scott Joplin was the most prominent musician of this genre.

Joplin was born in 1868 in Texarkana, a small town in the north-eastern part of Texas. His father, a railroad worker, played the violin and his mother sang and played the banjo. No wonder, that all three sons - Will, Robert and Scott were drawn to music.

In the last decades of the 19th century, the U. S. experienced something like piano fever. Scott's father has also bought a piano for his son. A rumor about the talented Negro boy was spread through the county, and after a while, a talented German musician began to teach a little boy for free. Joplin received an excellent musical education and was well acquainted with the works of the greatest European composers of the early XIX century and earlier eras. Joplin had deep theoretical knowledge. Undoubtedly, he knew the Negro folk music, was familiar with the tradition of Schouten and labor songs - some of these songs e used in the opera « Treemonisha». Blesh and Grossman stated, " Able pianists were no rarity in this segregated nether world of music, but Joplin was more" (18).

Unlike the typical pianists of the time, who were concerned only with how to earn more money, Joplin was quiet, focused, and even shy; he was a good

and reliable friend, always willing to help. Unremarkable appearance concealed a proud human nature. In this regard, he may be considered as the first African-American creator of Negro music.

At the age of thirty Joplin was highly qualified musician - he taught music, practiced arrangement, led orchestras, sang, played not only piano, but, in accordance with the fashion of that time, many other instruments. Then he began to compose music.

By 1897, the country was seized by ragtime passion. Like jazz fever of 20s, swing boom of 30s and furious soul fashion of 60's, ragtime passion was associated with the dance. White musicians quickly learned ragtime, and in the period between 1900-1915 years it was a dominated music genre of the United States.

In 1899, Joplin brought some of his rags for publisher. The publisher chose just one - « Original Rags». « Maple Leaf Rag» was among the rejected ones, but Joplin knew his own worth. " One day - he said to his friend, -" Maple Leaf " will make me a king of ragtime." Soon the value of this song was noticed. « Maple Leaf Rag» was the most popular of the rags and most fans of this genre still love it. Joplin was named the best composer of ragtime as he had always dreamed.

Joplin published thirty-three ragtime motifs, about two dozen songs, waltzes and solo pieces, as well as a guide to ragtime. At the time of his death, he was almost forgotten. (Berlin)

After his death, there were still ten works, which were published only recently. He was immensely serious about music and worked hard. His music was owned by art, not commerce. Only supremely skilled pianists could play later Joplin's rags; even « Maple Leaf» required uncommon skills. Joplin condemned ragtime pianists, who accelerated pace for the sake of cheap effect. Joplin insisted that his rags must be played as they were written. Joplin's death coincided with the decline of ragtime, but this genre is not dead. In recent decades, enthusiasts organized clubs, published texts, and learned the archives. In accordance with Fuld, Joplin was awarded a Pulitzer Prize posthumously in 1976. (41) Scott Joplin was an extremely talented musician. He has made a great contribution into the development of ragtime. That is why Joplin is always credited with the name of " The King of Ragtime".