

379
N81d
No. 4032

GEORGE GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE (SOLO PIANO VERSION):

AN HISTORICAL, RHYTHMIC AND HARMONIC PERSPECTIVE,

A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE

RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF

R. SCHUMANN, F. LISZT

AND OTHERS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

by

Steve Innis, B. M., M. M.

Denton, Texas

December, 1994

379
N81d
No. 4032

GEORGE GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE (SOLO PIANO VERSION):

AN HISTORICAL, RHYTHMIC AND HARMONIC PERSPECTIVE,

A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE

RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF

R. SCHUMANN, F. LISZT

AND OTHERS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

by

Steve Innis, B. M., M. M.

Denton, Texas

December, 1994

Innis, Steve, George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue (Solo Piano Version): An Historical, Rhythmic and Harmonic Perspective. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), December, 1994, 144 pp., 62 illustrations, bibliography, 109 titles.

The evolution of twentieth century American music involves much more than the continuation of European tradition. The music of black Americans before and after the turn of the century had a profound impact on the musical sensibility of American culture in general. Additionally, the fledgling popular music publishing industry had a dramatic effect on the course of "classical" tradition. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the music of George Gershwin.

Gershwin's importance in the history of American art music is undisputed. Why his music sounds the way it does is less understood. This paper considers the popular and folk genres that most influenced the young composer, and traces specific stylistic elements through their various popular and folk incarnations of the previous thirty years into Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue of 1924. In the course of the study, some of the music of Gershwin's contemporaries and immediate precursors is examined in detail, particularly that of Scott Joplin, W.C. Handy and Zez Confrey. The aim is to cite instances of imitation and influence on Gershwin with

specific regard to his rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary. Performance devices are also discussed, especially those dealing with the idiomatic possibilities of the piano. The resulting historical, rhythmic and harmonic perspective on the Rhapsody helps illuminate the important and intricate relationship between folk and art music in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the University of North Texas Library.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIRST RECITAL.....vii
SECOND RECITAL.....viii
THIRD RECITAL.....ix
FOURTH RECITAL.....x
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....xi

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND..... 1

PART ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POPULAR MUSIC FROM 1890 TO 1920 WITH
RESPECT TO GEORGE GERSHWIN: CROSS-POLLINATION
AND MOMENTUM.....10

II. THE BEGINNINGS: RAGTIME.....11
 Background
 Black Roots: Minstrelsy, Coon songs
 Black Pianists
 Dancing and the Cakewalk
 Scott Joplin
 Bands
 Publishing: From Ragtime to Tin Pan Alley
 Conclusion

III. TIN PAN ALLEY.....30
 The 1890s
 Dance Music

Musical Theater
Vaudeville

IV.	BLACK VOCAL TRADITION AND THE BLUES.....	41
	Social Conditions	
	Harmonic Implications	
	Formal and Stylistic Considerations	
	Implications for George Gershwin	
V.	JAZZ AND LOOSE ENDS.....	50
	The Beginnings	
	The "Jazz Age"	
VI.	ZEZ CONFREY AND "NOVELTY" PIANO.....	61

PART TWO

	RHAPSODY IN BLUE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....	66
VII.	RAGTIME: SCOTT JOPLIN'S <u>MAPLE LEAF RAG</u>	68
	Rhythm: Regular substructure; Basic syncopation;	
	More complicated substructure;	
	Idiomatic technical devices	
	Harmony: Elementary chromaticism in popular	
	music of the day; Syncopated elementary	
	chromaticism; more complex chromaticism in	
	syncopation; The effect of syncopation on	
	harmony	
VIII.	THE BLUES: W. C. HANDY'S <u>ST. LOUIS BLUES</u>	82
	Rhythm: Syncopation; Habanera; Formal	
	considerations	
	Harmony: The flatted third and seventh;	
	chromaticism; Pedal tones	
IX.	NOVELTY PIANO: ZEZ CONFREY'S <u>STUMBLING</u>	104
	Rhythm: Expansion of basic syncopation;	
	dotting the eighth; Idiomatic devices;	
	stylistic considerations	

Harmony: harmonic chromaticism; tritone
sequences; chromatic key slipping; tritone
slipping

X. CONCLUSION.....122

APPENDIX: Original Rags : A comparison between Scott
Joplin's original composition and Jelly Roll Morton's
jazz version.....124

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....136

North Texas State University
School of Music

Graduate Recital

STEVE INNIS, Piano

Monday, June 11, 1984 8:15 p.m. Concert Hall

Partita in B Flat Major, No. 1. J. S. Bach

Sonata in F Major, No. 38 Joseph Haydn

Intermission

Carnival, Op. 9 Robert Schumann

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

You are cordially invited to a reception in the
Green Room following the performance.

North Texas State University
School of Music

Graduate Recital

STEVE INNIS, Piano

Assisted by

Anna Dryer, Violin
Jennifer Saleebey, Violin
Jennifer Price, Viola
Michael Allen, Cello

Monday, April 1, 1985

6:30 p.m.

Concert Hall

Sonata in G Major for Violin
and Piano, Op. 78. Johannes Brahms
Vivace ma non troppo
Adagio
Allegro molto moderato

Intermission

Quintet in A Major for Piano
and Strings, Op. 81. Antonin Dvořák
Allegro, ma non tanto
Dumka
Scherzo, Furiant
Finale

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

STEVE INNIS, *piano*

Monday, November 15, 1993

8:15 pm

Concert Hall

Sonata, K. 310 in A Minor Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Allegro maestoso

Andante cantabile con espressione

Presto

Estampes Claude Debussy

Pagodes

La Soirée dans Grenade

Jardins sous la pluie

- Intermission -

Concert Etude in D^b Major, "Un Sospiro" Franz Liszt

Au lac de Wallenstadt

Consolation No. 3

Vallée d'Oberman

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

A reception will follow in the Green Room.

University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Lecture Recital

STEVE INNIS, *piano*

Monday, August 8, 1994

6:15 pm

Recital Hall

**GEORGE GERSHWIN'S *RHAPSODY IN BLUE*
(SOLO PIANO VERSION): AN HISTORICAL,
RHYTHMIC AND HARMONIC PERSPECTIVE**

<i>Preludes for Piano</i>	George Gershwin
<i>Allegro ben ritmato e deciso</i>	(1898-1937)
<i>Andante con moto e poco rubato</i>	
<i>Allegro ben ritmato e deciso</i>	
 <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i>	 George Gershwin

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example

3-1.	Anticipation of the second main beat in a duple meter	34
4-1.	Typical format for twelve-bar blues	45
5-1.	James P. Johnson, <u>Keep Off the Grass</u> , from the last eight bars (not counting the coda)	59
7-1.	Scott Joplin, <u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 9-12	69
7-2.	George Gershwin, <u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> measures 201-203	69
7-3.	Basic syncopation in <u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> and <u>Rhapsody in Blue</u>	70
7-4.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 1-4	70
7-5.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 30-32	71
7-6.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 190-193	72
7-7.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 18-20, left hand	73
7-8.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 72-74	73
7-9.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 7-8	74
7-10.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 105-106	74
7-11.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 5-6	75

7-12.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 69-70	75
7-13.	John Philip Sousa, <u>The Stars and Stripes Forever</u> , piano reduction, measures 1-4	76
7-14.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 18-22	77
7-15.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 127-129	77
7-16.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> with syncopation eliminated, measures 127-129	78
7-17.	<u>Maple Leaf Rag</u> , measures 51-52	79
7-18.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 3-6	79
7-19.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measure 4, transcribed with last left hand chord sounding before the Gb in the right hand	80
7-20.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measure 187	80
8-1.	W.C. Handy, <u>St. Louis Blues</u> , measures 55-62	83
8-2.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 221-229	84
8-3.	<u>St Louis Blues</u> , measures 33-36	86
8-4.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 90-92	87
8-5.	<u>St. Louis Blues</u> , measures 33-48	89
8-6.	<u>St. Louis Blues</u> , measures 17-20	90
8-7.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 72-77	91
8-8.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 3-12	91
8-9.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 244-267	93

8-10.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 90-96	95
8-11.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 142-146	97
8-12.	<u>St. Louis Blues</u> , measures 9-12	99
8-13.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 3-6	100
8-14.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 129-134	102
8-15.	<u>St. Louis Blues</u> , measures 49-51	103
8-16.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 161-163	103
9-1.	ZeZ Confrey, <u>Stumbling</u> , measures 21-22	105
9-2.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 188-189	105
9-3.	Confrey, <u>Coaxing the Piano</u> , measures 35-37	106
9-4.	Joplin, <u>Elite Syncopations</u> , measures 9-12	107
9-5.	Confrey, <u>Stumbling</u> , measures 9-12	107
9-6.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 17-18	108
9-7.	Confrey, <u>Stumbling</u> , measures 35-36	109
9-8.	Confrey, <u>Kitten on the Keys</u> , measures 7-8	110
9-9.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 328-331	111
9-10.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , arranged in the style of Novelty Piano, measures 157-160.....	112
9-11.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 157-160	112
9-12.	Confrey, <u>Stumbling</u> , measures 17-18	113

9-13.	Confrey, <u>My Pet</u> , measures 96-102	113
9-14.	Confrey, <u>My Pet</u> , measures 1-4	114
9-15.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 65-66	115
9-16.	Confrey, <u>Stumbling</u> , measures 67-69	115
9-17.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 44-45	116
9-18.	Confrey, <u>Kitten on the Keys</u> , measures 16-19	117
9-19.	Confrey, <u>Kitten on the Keys</u> measures 34-40	117
9-20.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 33-38	119
9-21.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 135-136	120
9-22.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 240-243	121
9-23.	<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u> , measures 425-430	121

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Despite a lack of sustained formal training, George Gershwin could not help but absorb much of the harmonic and rhythmic language of the early 20th century. A key to understanding Gershwin's place in the history of music composition is understanding what he was driven to do with what he absorbed. While many composers of classical music are primarily concerned with form and the logical working out of their ideas, Gershwin was more concerned with the immediate impact of his ideas. As he himself admitted "When my critics tell me that now and then I betray a structural weakness, they are not telling me anything I don't know."¹ Gershwin was by no means a "weak" composer. His art was, in the words of Arnold Schoenberg, "fundamentally different from the mannerism of many a serious composer."²

Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, which obviously suggests some connection with what is popularly referred to as "the

1. Charles M. Schwartz, The Life and Orchestral Works of George Gershwin (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1969), 30.

2. George Gershwin, ed. Merle Armitage (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1938), 97.

blues", was premiered in 1924. When we hear the piece today, we recognize that the harmonic and rhythmic content, while by no means foreign, is certainly different from that of traditional "classical" music. What exactly happened between about 1890 and 1924 that can account for this difference?

A number of influences were at work during this period. One of the most foreign to European tradition was the music of the black American. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1862 was followed by an accelerating cross-pollination among the various strands of folk music. Minstrelsy, which had begun in the 1820s as a white genre mimicking black culture, had itself been infiltrated by blacks, who cultivated the "coon song" or "rag song" before it found its way into the mainstream in the 90s.³ By the later 1890s, the coon song had developed an optional "rag" accompaniment that capitalized on the syncopations indigenous to the form. New York was introduced to rudimentary ragtime in 1896 with Mr. Johnson, Turn Me Loose, performed by the white pianist-entertainer Ben Harney. (Interestingly, Mr. Johnson adumbrated much of what was to become "the blues" during the first decades of the 20th century.)⁴

3. Nicholas E. Tawa, The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910 (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 182.

4. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, They All Played Ragtime (New York: Oak Publications, 1966), 94.

In 1903, the popular song industry that had emerged in the 1890s received its moniker, Tin Pan Alley. In 1912, W. C. Handy published his "Memphis Blues", and this "new" phenomenon helped define the 1920s. A pianist-composer named Zez Confrey had a popular instrumental hit with "Stumbling" in 1922, and a hybrid form loosely called "novelty piano" was in full force. By this time, the term "jazz" was a commonly used word (as applied to music), although no one seemed exactly sure what it meant.⁵ (1917 was the year when the word seems to have become current, and when the Original Dixieland Jazz Band made what are generally considered to be the first jazz recordings.)⁶

By 1924, the year of Paul Whiteman's historic Aeolian Hall concert premiering Rhapsody in Blue, these new forms had grown tremendously in sophistication, and entered the popular mainstream to the point that cross-pollination with "classical" tradition was often apparent. It was Gershwin's peculiar place in history to be the one who brought the jazz

5. Jelly Roll Morton had made a clear distinction between Jazz and Ragtime in the first decade of the new century. Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 139, 66-67. Blesh asserts that "...ragtime is in all truly Negroid music today...(including) Negro song and Negro jazz. Blesh, op. cit. 269.

6. Schuller, op. cit. 63.

and classical traditions forcefully together. In light of this, it is fascinating to observe that, on one hand, he had a minimal amount of formal classical training, and on the other, jazz was so new and undefined that the one many consider to be the first great jazz soloist (Louis Armstrong) had yet to arrive on the scene.⁷ It must also be noted that Gershwin is regarded today more as a composer of popular and "semi-classical" music than of jazz or blues.⁸ Accordingly, one might expect to find more antecedents for Gershwin's style in Tin Pan Alley than in nascent "jazz" or blues - and yet, as this study will discuss, Tin Pan Alley was not itself a source of any style or tradition, but an historically crucial melting pot of the various musical and social impulses at work at the turn of the century. A brief listing

-
7. Armstrong's recording debut was with King Oliver's Chicago band in 1923, as second cornet. He began recording in earnest in 1926; for the next three years his output was prolific. The recordings he made with Fletcher Henderson's New York band from October 1924 and October 1925 mark his emergence as a soloist. Schuller, op. cit. 90, 91.
 8. One of Gershwin's fondest desires was to traverse the chasm that, from birth, separated him from the classical tradition of Ravel and Shoenberg. In Leonard Bernstein's eloquent words: "Gershwin's tragedy was not that he failed to cross the tracks, but rather that he did, and once there, in his new habitat, was deprived of the chance to plunge his roots firmly into the new soil." From "An Appreciation" by Leonard Bernstein, in Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (New York: Da Capo, 1973).

of the influences on Gershwin would look something like the following:

minstrelsy	from the 1820s (including "coon" and "rag" songs)
American popular song	from circa 1866 (post civil war)
ragtime	from the 1890s
Tin Pan Alley	so named circa 1903; in existence from the 1890s
blues	first published blues in 1912, (mainstream by '20s)
jazz	some say from as early as 1895; name popularized in 1917
novelty piano	a phenomenon mainly of the 1920s (Confrey's <u>Stumbling</u> in 1922)
classical tradition	Gershwin's training was almost exclusively in the realm of popular music.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. An historical perspective on Rhapsody in Blue will unfold through consideration of the specific musical genres which had the

greatest influence on Gershwin. A rhythmic and harmonic perspective will be achieved by tracing specific stylistic elements that found their way into the Rhapsody through the various popular and folk incarnations of the previous thirty years. This part of the study will emphasize, but will not be limited to, rhythm and harmony. In the course of the study, some of the music of Gershwin's contemporaries and immediate precursors will be examined, particularly that of Scott Joplin, W.C. Handy and Zez Confrey. The aim is to cite instances of imitation and influence on Gershwin with specific regard to his rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary. Performance devices will also be discussed, especially those dealing with the idiomatic possibilities of the piano.

George Gershwin: Personal Background

George Gershwin's childhood lasted fifteen years. In May of 1914, his mother Rose finally gave up hope that her son's grades would improve, and faced the uncomfortable reality that he was not destined to be an accountant - the career for which he was being groomed. She allowed him to leave high school to become one of the youngest "song pluggers" in the youthful music publishing industry. He joined the Tin Pan Alley firm of Jerome Remick and Company as

a pianist, at a salary of fifteen dollars a week. Virtually overnight, he left schoolboy innocence for the world of the young adult professional.

That he asked his mother's and not his father's permission to leave school reflects accurately the nature of the Gershwin household. He loved his father, but Morris was a gentle, naive man with little ambition and perhaps less business sense.⁹ Rose ran the house and constituted the principle authority for the children, but she herself allowed considerable latitude in their daily affairs. For this reason, young George was often found roaming the streets and getting into fights (to which his broken nose would continually attest). According to Schwartz, he was a petty thief, and learned about sex at a tender age, acquiring a taste for brothels that remained with him for life.¹⁰

Although he demonstrated no particular interest in music as a young child, by the time he was ten he was keeping a journal of clippings from Etude magazine, to which were later added mementos from his concert attendances. He had met a schoolboy who played the violin exceedingly well,¹¹ and

9. Schwartz, Gershwin, 5.

10. Ibid. 12.

11. It was the young Max Rosen, who had a brilliant career as a solo violinist and died in 1956.

Gershwin credits this friendship for his initial interest in music. Around 1912 he began study with his first important music teacher, Charles Hambitzer, who was amenable to George's interest in "this modern stuff, jazz and what not." According to Gershwin himself, Hambitzer "made me harmony-conscious."¹² It was certainly Hambitzer, more than any other person, who prepared Gershwin for Remick's.

His experience at Remick's lasted only a little more than two years, but its impact lasted a lifetime. Gershwin was always a song plugger. The music business was aggressive and often unscrupulous. Gershwin quickly relearned the same lesson his earlier pugilistic enterprises had taught him: it is important to try to keep ahead of the competition. To this end, he sold himself with such stamina and exuberance that it was only a matter of time before his goal of being a successful composer was reached. His first complete musical, La La Lucille, opened in May of 1919, the same year he wrote "Swanee", his first smash hit. As his fame grew, distinct characteristics of his personality became evident. Charles Schwartz, in his excellent biography, lists them:

His persistent concern with diet and his digestive debility; his enjoyment of the company of pretty women and his courting of the reputation of "ladies' man"; his immense sexual appetite and his need for the paid prostitute; his inability to extend himself fully in

12. Schwartz, Gershwin, 16.

developing his musical skills; his interest in meeting and mingling with the social elite; his relish of night life and parties; his love of improvising at the piano, whether at home alone or at parties; his tremendous drive and vitality, particularly where the interests of his career were concerned; his great confidence in himself as a tunesmith - these were traits that can be traced to his early years.¹³

13. Ibid. 67.

PART ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POPULAR MUSIC FROM 1890 TO 1920 WITH RESPECT TO GEORGE GERSHWIN: CROSS-POLLINATION AND MOMENTUM

Part One will address the state of popular music in the 1920s from an historical perspective, chiefly examining two subjects: 1) the way in which antebellum black music was incorporated into the white mainstream, and 2) the influence of music marketing in the form of Tin Pan Alley.

Black music in general has had a far-reaching impact on 20th century American music, at the very least, evolving far beyond its original forms. Understanding the evolution of those introductory forms, however, is critical to an appreciation of George Gershwin's compositional style. Ragtime in the 1890s is the first of these developments, determining in large part the nature of Tin Pan Alley (Gershwin's training-ground), the blues, and early jazz. Rhapsody In Blue is Gershwin's first elegant classical synthesis of these elements. Discussion of these genres and comparisons between them and the Rhapsody will help to illuminate Gershwin's musical inspiration.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS: RAGTIME

Background

The forcible joining of African and American culture in the 17th and 18th centuries bore fruit more exotic and extensive than anyone could have imagined. The cruel reality of slavery and racism helped mold the culture of our century in strange, paradoxical, and often magnificent ways. An entire people struggled in isolation to retain an identity, assimilate a new and hostile environment, and most of all, communicate a sense of present experience. Early manifestations of this struggle include the spiritual, minstrelsy, and coon songs. Black pianists, brass bands, the dance impulse (e.g. cakewalk), and late 18th century music publishing represent a continuation of that struggle, in the form of Ragtime.

Black Roots: Minstrelsy, Coon Song

American minstrelsy had begun in the 1820s as a white genre mimicking black culture. As opprobrious as blackface is to current sensibility, at the time it provided the only

means for the freed black performer to gain access to the stage.¹⁴ Blackface minstrelsy began with the musical forms of its white progenitors: marches, quadrilles, schottisches, waltzes, overtures. By the mid eighties, blacks themselves had taken the stage, and a new phenomenon was being heard by the white world: the so-called coon song.

There is some disagreement concerning the date of origin of the coon song. Jasen and Tichenor put it in the 1890s,¹⁵ but Blesh seems to make it clear that it existed as early as 1848,¹⁶ and probably before then. It may, in fact, predate the American minstrel itself.¹⁷

-
14. If the spiritual had helped the white listener to accept blacks, minstrelsy enabled him to laugh at them. Perhaps this aspect of derision helps explain minstrelsy's (and later, ragtime's) prolonged ascension: fear of the unknown was masked by humor. Also relevant is the historical American penchant for novelty and exoticism: in this case, white culture was fascinated with the romanticized view of life of the poor black man. This culminated in Gershwin's Porgy and Bess.
15. David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, Rags and Ragtime (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 11.
16. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, They All Played Ragtime (New York: Oak Publications, 1966), 86.
17. See also the discussion of the coon song and syncopation, in Edward A. Berlin, Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980), 63-66, 87-88, 111.

Almost certainly, the most important contribution of the coon song to music was syncopation. This "deliberate disturbance of the normal pulse of meter, accent and rhythm" (Apel)¹⁸ has had fairly limited use in European music, and when employed, has usually not been to achieve a sense of strong rhythmic continuity.¹⁹ Bits of syncopation can be found in minstrelsy from the beginning, and isolated examples can be found throughout the century in American music.²⁰ Much of the time, the syncopation would be found only in the vocal part, so that a kind of rag could result if the accompanist played the vocal line with the printed bass. An invasion of syncopation began with the mainstreaming of the coon song in the 1890s, providing the initial means to infuse the potent tradition of African polyrhythm into white music. Later, in established ragtime, the steady syncopation of the right hand is set against the regular, incessant pulse of the left, resulting in a very rudimentary "polyrhythm".²¹ In the

18. Willi Apel, "Syncopation," Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 827.

19. The Italian musical term for syncopation is "alla zoppa": lame, limping.

20. For example, see Blesh (op. cit.), 82-84 for a description of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's connection with the black Bamboula dance in early New Orleans.

21. There was also a custom of "ragging" marches and

relatively rare instances of sustained syncopation in European music, the syncopation is generally not set against a steady reminder of the original pulse, but serves to temporarily replace or obscure that pulse, as, for example, in the first movement of the second symphony by Brahms.²² Indeed, with the exception of the 15th century,²³ polyrhythmic designs play a prominent role almost exclusively in the 20th century.²⁴ In so far as it came first, and influenced what would follow, ragtime can be seen as partial father to polyrhythm in music. As a fully developed form, ragtime must be seen as conceived in syncopation - and not just syncopating a given line, or using syncopation as a developmental device of some sort. It is qualitatively different from all syncopation that preceded it. As white and black folk music alike was treated increasingly according to native African polyrhythmic techniques, statements like

familiar classical songs. This will be described later in greater detail.

22. See measures 22-31 and 135-152, among others. Also see Haydn Sonata in E flat (H. 52), last movement; Bach Invention in E major (two part).
23. See for example Baude Cordier's "Amans ames secretement", c. 1440, in Willi Apel, The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600, 5th ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 175.
24. See for example Hindemith's Klaviermusik , op. 37.

this one in Opera Magazine in 1916 began to appear: "Ragtime has carried the complexity of the rhythmic subdivision of the measure to a point never before reached in the history of music."²⁵

Black Pianists

By this point, the word "ragtime" had for some time referred primarily to piano music, and as such, it too had been developed by black musicians. The syncopation of plantation banjos and "corn fiddles", and later coon songs, pervaded virtually all black and much white folk music. It found a powerful instrumental voice in the piano, with its vast array of technical and musical resources. Black pianists quickly sprang up, motivated by the need for a rhythmically complex, emotionally powerful means of expression that had always characterized native African music. Although from the beginning the music was necessarily underwritten by white patrons in the "sporting" houses and bordellos - the "districts" of American towns and cities - it was always music by Blacks for Blacks.²⁶

25. Opera Magazine, 1916, quoted in Blesh, op. cit., 8.

26. Blesh makes an interesting, if perhaps somewhat fanciful claim: "(Ragtime's) remarkably non-erotic quality is proof of how (the black musician) was able to dissociate his musical creation from the surroundings in which he was forced to work." Blesh,

The town of Sedalia, Missouri played an important role in the history of Ragtime. In addition to harboring the now-famous Maple Leaf Club, it was a hotbed of pianistic activity. This ragtime infancy was called "jig" piano, and this frontier town had a "district" capable of supporting many itinerant "jig" players. Copyrighting, royalties, and even fame were not realistic possibilities for these artists; they had two more immediate concerns: that they have the opportunity to make music, and that they develop a personal, distinct style. According to Blesh, the pianists would gather after hours to play for and critique each other.²⁷ An underground network developed, bringing the musicians together locally and nationally. Sedalia was a special place on the network, for it is where Scott Joplin and Otis Saunders, his friend from the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893, settled in 1896. The music they played in the "Districts" very much resembled the marches and quadrilles that the white patrons were accustomed to hearing, but the essential difference, wrapped up in the improvisational nature of the music, was the syncopation. It is true that the coon song informed this syncopation; it is also true that syncopating Western music was a natural,

op. cit., 9.

27. Ibid. 17.

potent technique of assimilation for these displaced Africans. The salient point is that the syncopation, or disturbance, of the pulse was not an obfuscation, as in European music, but an addition, an overlaying onto the original pulse.²⁸

Dancing and the Cakewalk

Sound and movement, or music and dance, have always been intertwined, and jig dances, cakewalks, the buck and wing, and others helped propel nascent ragtime.²⁹ So strong was the connection that a resolution in June of 1901 by the American Federation of Musicians condemning ragtime was adapted by the Dancing Teachers' Association of America as

28. Gunther Schuller traces this development in the first chapter, "Origins: Rhythm", of his book on early jazz. Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6-26.

29. Buck and wing dancing is cited as a feature of minstrel shows, along with banjo solos, spirited walk-arounds and coon songs, that contributed to the development of ragtime. Arnold Shaw, Black Popular Music in America (New York: Shirmer Books, 1986), 46.

well.³⁰ Dancing was, of course, a major part of night life in Sedalia's and others' "districts".³¹

The cakewalk had its origins on the plantation long before minstrelsy. Shephard N. Edmonds, a black entertainer born in the 1870s, describes the slaves dressing up on Sundays and engaging in a high-kicking, flamboyant "walk-around" to the banjo music "just...because they couldn't stand still."³² The name supposedly derives from the custom of the master giving a cake to the couple with the proudest movement. The later musical tradition of the cakewalk involved sporadic syncopation, but, perhaps since it was secondary to the dance, it did not evolve as a "classic" form in its own right.³³ It was thus more closely connected with marches and other pre-existing white forms, for with their

30. Isaac Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley (New York: John Day, 1930), 234.

31. Arthur Marshall, a close friend of Scott Joplin's and a native of Sedalia tells of a certain fellow called "High Henry" -- "...he was nearly seven feet tall. He would suddenly do a flat fall forward while doing the buck and wing just as if he had suddenly fainted. When he hit, his elbows would throw him right back up as stiff as a board - he looked like a telephone pole coming down and then going up again." Blesh, op. cit., 28.

32. Ibid., 96.

33. Once ragtime was established, the distinctions between cakewalk and ragtime were increasingly obscured. For fuller treatment, see Berlin, op. cit., 13-14, 104-106.

strong, dependable pulse, these were more uniformly suited for dancing than the also developing coon song. Because of its strong entertainment value and easy accessibility from a musical standpoint, the cakewalk was more readily assimilated into white popular music than the developing "classic" ragtime. While ultimately, true ragtime was to contribute directly and forcefully to 20th century composition, the cakewalk was initially more attractive to John Philip Sousa and the other practitioners of popular white music in the late 19th century.

It is significant that the most important ragtime composition of the day was named after a Sedalia gambling hall, the Maple Leaf Club. The Williams brothers, owners of the club, had been kind to Joplin upon his arrival in town, and this was consistent with the esprit de corps that characterized the early days of the new genre. Within fifteen years of the Maple Leaf Rag's composition, however, a much stricter concept of moral behavior had completely erased the "district" of Sedalia, and the most significant cradle of ragtime disappeared with it. The historical significance is fairly clear: What was to become a genuinely new contribution to western music had its birth under conditions which society could not sanction. The European music tradition was about to be transformed, in large part by forces the traditionalists did not recognize and for which

they had little regard. The irony is that what evolved in the shadows and back-alleys of "proper" society allowed a voice to be heard - a voice society craved but had difficulty accepting.

Scott Joplin

Scott Joplin (1868-1917) was born in Texarkana, Texas, and before settling in Sedalia, spent years traveling around the country, absorbing the flavor and impulse of what was to be distilled into "classic" ragtime. In Sedalia, he lived with the family of Arthur Marshall, and he and Arthur attended the George Smith College for Negroes, operated by the Methodist church. "Jig" piano playing was primarily an improvisational art, but part of Joplin's nature was to perfect and preserve - something the formal musical training he received at Smith College could only encourage. To this point, the constant syncopation of ragtime had not been successfully notated. Scoring was another fruit of Joplin's formal studies, and although he probably did not have the first ragtime band, he put together the first one to play his music. One of Joplin's chief contributions to music was the result of his drive for classicism. He wanted the music of ragtime to have a permanence and integrity that did not depend solely on the flair of improvisational performance. He would later suffer for this conviction; in the second

decade of the century, players of ragtime increasingly incorporated new "jazz" elements.³⁴ What was born out of an attempt to harness improvisation was later compromised by improvisation. In the meantime, however, a new musical vocabulary had been established, codified, and made readily available to future composers. Ragtime had arrived, and the historical circumstances of its birth would determine the path it took to George Gershwin. That path was Tin Pan Alley.

Bands

The white American public had a number of opportunities to sample the musical ethos of black Americans, e.g. black minstrelsy, coon songs, "jig" piano in bars, the spiritual, and of course, white imitations, in the form of cakewalks and lightly syncopated pieces for brass bands. It was the latter which was the most accessible and easily assimilated.³⁵

34. Joplin was the master of "classic" ragtime. Neither he nor his publisher, John Stark, were willing to accept the many changes -- either commercial or jazz-related -- ragtime was experiencing. They began to use the designation "Don't fake" and "Do not play fast." Stark titled one of his later publications (by James Scott, 1921) Don't Jazz Me -- Rag (I'm Music). Terry Waldo, This is Ragtime (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 73.

35. In an assimilative process, the initial imitations often take on a life, or nature of their own. The brass band cakewalk is an example. Born of the urge to

Nearly every community had one or more local brass bands, and they quickly embraced the cakewalk's vocabulary of limited syncopation.

Most communities also had black bands, populated by the leaders in black social life. They played so-called "legitimate" music (nascent ragtime was never specifically called illegitimate, but the inference was clear). As syncopation gained currency, and honkeytonkers gained respect, these black bands were quickly won over, and also began playing cakewalks. The cakewalks of Sousa were never truly black in phrasing and syncopation, but they helped open a door for Blacks into white culture. While Blacks had always had their own music, it was not until the turn of the century that they developed a form (ragtime) which made significant use of European tradition. Suddenly, Whites were able to sample a small part of black culture, in an idiom which was primarily white (e.g. the cakewalks of Sousa). It was this viability of these idioms between pure black and pure white music which allowed ragtime to profoundly and immediately impact the course of popular music: they all fed directly into the developing economic institution of Tin Pan Alley. It is interesting to note the sensation caused by Sousa's band at the St. Louis fair in 1904, compared to the

assimilate Black syncopation, it became, in and of itself, a powerful shaper of Tin Pan Alley.

relatively unnoticed playing of Louis Chauvin or Arthur Marshall (two gifted black pianists) in the concession booths.³⁶ Still further removed was the ragtime playing contest, advertised along the sporting-house grapevine, that was held concurrently with the fair, but downtown in the "district" where the average white visitor to the fair would never go.³⁷ When the ragtime publishing frenzy began, the first entries were actually cakewalks.³⁸ The Mississippi Rag by William Krell, published in 1897, did not depart from standard cakewalk convention, beginning in a minor and ending in a major key, with a single-note melody. Krell had used his Cake Walk Patrol with his band in the Mississippi River country since 1895, and as would quickly become the custom, he simply applied the term "ragtime" to material with which he was already familiar.

Publishing: From Ragtime to Tin Pan Alley

Ben Harney was a white performer in New York who is credited with introducing the city to black ragtime piano music.³⁹ He was a minstrel entertainer who was apparently

36. Blesh, op. cit., 75.

37. Ibid.

38. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 17.

39. William J. Shafer and Johannes Reidel, The Art Of

much more interested in genuinely interpreting black music for white audiences than in simply caricaturing black culture. Two of his most well known compositions, Mr. Johnson, Turn Me Loose and You've Been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down, were almost certainly transcriptions of songs by obscure black composers.⁴⁰ In any case, Harney was a major figure in early ragtime publishing history, and in bringing the spirit of black music to white audiences. He was hired by M. Witmark and Sons, the archetypal early Tin Pan Alley publishing firm, to supply their answer to the coon song, with which other publishers were having some success.⁴¹

Ragtime's absorption into "white" domain involved the compromising of this new classic form. It was unavoidable, however, if this music was to have the far-reaching influence for which it was destined. The World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 is generally credited for introducing ragtime to the world. In 1897, published sheet music included Schottishes, quadrilles, coon songs, Irish ballads,

Ragtime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 35.

40. Blesh contends that You've Been a Good Old Wagon is by one Bruner Greenup, who had published it a year before Harney. Blesh, op. cit., 95.
41. David A. Jasen, Tin Pan Alley (New York: Donald I Fine, 1988), 7.

Mother songs,⁴² military and descriptive marches, overtures, quick steps and two-steps, grand gallops de concert, and the new ragtime.⁴³ The designation "ragtime" seems to have come from a Chicago newspaper journalist in late 1896 or early 1897.⁴⁴ The name was a natural. America was just coming out of a prolonged depression (1893-98), and people wanted a "fresh start." Elaborate sophistication or any kind of pretense was neither needed nor wanted. The public grabbed at a bright new fad to help them through a difficult time. This attitude had profound consequences for ragtime. While it was generally rejected as "serious" music, it spawned more than its share of hucksterism. The capitalistic institution of Tin Pan Alley was taking shape, and there was money to be made. Coon songs ("the comic counterpart to the 1890s tear-jerker ballad")⁴⁵ and cakewalks were proven commodities, and ragtime was lifted by this tide, as publishing houses began

42. Nicholas E. Tawa, The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910 (New York: Shirmer, 1990), 68, 81. The "Mother song" was a sentimental ballad about "a loved elderly mother living in a humble, rural home". It was often performed by a male quartet, a popular ensemble of the day.

43. Blesh, op. cit., 6,7.

44. Ibid., 100.

45. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 12.

to retain composers to fit syncopated "ragtime" accompaniments to pre-existing songs. "Ragtime" as a viable commercial product was almost single-handedly promoted to the public by Jerome H. Remick and Company, the same publishing house that was to hire Gershwin away from high school in 1914.⁴⁶ Remick ultimately had around five hundred pieces called ragtime in their catalogue, roughly one-sixth of the entire published output.⁴⁷ The term is loosely applied; it includes the previously-mentioned "rag" accompaniments to coon songs, and many inferior compositions -- the average ragtime composer of 1897 was concerned with syncopation to the exclusion of other musical qualities.⁴⁸ The immense popularity of the Maple Leaf Rag (published in 1899) helped establish ragtime as a legitimate, distinct genre.⁴⁹

46. Remick's did not actually publish a piece by Gershwin until 1917. It was "Rialto Ripples", a piano solo in ragtime style. It had been written the previous year with a collaborator, Will Donaldson. Prior to 1917, Gershwin had been flatly told by Remick's that he had been hired as a pianist and plugger, not as a songwriter. Schwartz, Gershwin, 31, 24.

47. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit. 5.

48. Ibid, 19.

49. Jasen and Tichenor define ragtime this way: "Ragtime is a musical composition for the piano comprising three or four sections containing sixteen measures each which combines a syncopated melody accompanied by an even, steady duple rhythm." Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 1.

The popularity of the many cheap ragtime imitations that dominated the market from 1899 to 1917 was arguably bad for ragtime, but perhaps good for music. Money and exposure served as twin incentives to bring the rag impulse full into the mainstream. The piano, too, was a potent vehicle of assimilation of black ragtime by whites. The piano was a symbol of culture and respectability for the aspiring middle class, and before the automobile, it was for many families the largest single purchase, other than a house. Piano study provided a means of discipline and "cultural education" for young people, especially young girls. It is somewhat ironic that two of the white groups most familiar with ragtime were the men (who visited the bordellos and gaming houses), and the young girls (who learned to play the piano).⁵⁰

By the end of 1897 (Dec. 17), the first rag by a black composer was finally published, Tom Turpin's Harlem Rag (not to be confused with the "Harlem Stride" style of piano playing developed by James P. Johnson, Willie "the Lion" Smith and Thomas "Fats" Waller in the 1920s and '30s). Harlem Rag is a useful example of early folk rag, as distinct from the "classic" rag of Joplin. As its name

50. Hasse provides data on piano sales during this period, and discusses the social implications, as well as the implications for the publishing industry. Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Shirmer, 1985), 11-23.

implies, folk rag has always depended more on the spontaneous, improvisatory impulse, and was consequently an important conduit for the migration of black style into the popular mainstream. Turpin's composition is one of only a handful that writes out a theme with several variations, giving us insight into the world of early ragtime improvisation.⁵¹ It is this performance-oriented side of ragtime that helped spawn jazz, and later contributed to the diffusion (or perhaps compromising), of classic ragtime.⁵²

Conclusion

Ragtime provided the principle basis for the infusion of black music into white popular music (Tin Pan Alley), and then into art music (Gershwin, for example). The evolution of black popular music continued primarily in the development of jazz and blues, and these later forms continued to exert influence on Tin Pan Alley, and the "classical" or Euro-American tradition. Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue represents the first successful foray of this ragtime-based branch of American musical development into the European tradition. In

51. Ibid, 29.

52. Two independent influences were responsible for the dilution of "classic" ragtime: the commercializing force of Tin Pan Alley, and the improvisatory nature of jazz.

Chapter VII, the Rhapsody is compared with the most successful and one of the most representative ragtime compositions, Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag.

CHAPTER III

TIN PAN ALLEY

The blues represents, among other things, the strongest incarnation of solo black musical impulse to evolve in the twentieth century. Ragtime was the first genuinely black musical genre to find widespread acceptance in white culture, largely because it borrowed so heavily from European tradition. If blues and ragtime were the primary art forms of black culture, Tin Pan Alley was the primary means of dissemination. Without a doubt, "the Alley" was much more than simply a dispenser of black culture. Simply put, it was the business of all popular song, but the fascination with black musical culture in the 1890s and 1900s was responsible for much of its tremendous early growth.

George Gershwin was a phenomenon of Tin Pan Alley. The Alley brought him ragtime and blues; the Alley trained him and introduced him to musical theater. Tin Pan Alley was not a musical form; it proceeded from no single cultural source. It was pure commercialism - a conduit for the distribution of whatever "forms" or "cultural interest" caught the public's attention. Tin Pan Alley provided the means for the various

popular musical impulses of this era to come together, paving the way for, among other things, Rhapsody in Blue.

The 1890s

The Alley had its beginnings in the 1880s (Willis Woodward was the premier publisher), but the first multi-million dollar hit came in 1892, with "After the Ball", a tear-jerker by Charles K. Harris. This decade saw more songs published and sold than any previously, including "Daisy Bell" (The Bicycle Built for Two), "The Band Played On", and "The Sidewalks of New York."⁵³

Although there were many others, two song styles were especially popular during this decade of the "gay" nineties: sentimental ballades, or "tear-jerkers", and so-called "coon songs" - a generic term for black music, usually presented in comic form, with or without the imitation of black dialect.⁵⁴

53. Although the first notable music publishers had extensive experience in other fields -- sales, corsets, water heaters, etc, -- Tin Pan Alley music publishing was largely a young man's game. The Whitmark brothers of M. Whitmark and Sons were the first major full-line popular sheet music publishers of the '90s, and established the professional and marketing standards for the industry. The oldest boy was seventeen, the youngest (and financial head) was fourteen. "M" was the father -- a figurehead only, needed for legal reasons since the boys were minors.

54. David A. Jasen, Tin Pan Alley (New York: Donald I

With this preponderance of sad songs, usually story ballads in verse/refrain form, in 3/4 time, and generally written by whites, the term "gay" nineties coincides in large part with ragtime and the black contribution. As discussed elsewhere in this study, sustained syncopation first entered western music during this decade. In his book The Search for Order, 1877-1920, Robert Wiebe describes the rural, conservative, hesitant social attitudes that prevailed during the reconstruction period after the Civil War.⁵⁵ Nicholas Tawa describes the "uncomplicated songs of the heart and hearth variety" that typify the period immediately prior to Tin Pan Alley.⁵⁶ Blesh credits the prolonged depression of 1893-98, which provoked riots, hunger marches and threats of revolution, for a social atmosphere conducive to the "fresh start" of ragtime: "(there were) no past associations...not a tear in ragtime, and no irony, malice, bitterness or regret hid in the laughter."⁵⁷

Fine, 1988), 5.

55. Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (London: Macmillan, 1967), 2-3.
56. Nicholas E.Tawa, The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910 (New York: Shimmer, 1990), 102ff.
57. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, They All Played Ragtime (New York: Oak Publications, 1966), 4.

There were many other song types in the early days of Tin Pan Alley, including topical songs (e.g. "President Grover Cleveland's Wedding March") and Irish songs (e.g. "My Wild Irish Rose").⁵⁸ Three institutions within Tin Pan Alley are worthy of separate consideration for their ultimate influence on George Gershwin. They are vaudeville, musical theater, and the dance music tradition.

Dance Music

Dance remained a major force in the marketing of popular music. The cakewalk was followed by the two-step in the 'teens, lightly syncopated and originally in 6/8 time. The later designation "characteristic march and two-step" suggested 2/4 time, and it became an easier alternative to ragtime for the amateur pianist. By the 'teens, the

58. In 1907, the Remick publishing concern offered this list of current song types, with an example of each:

Ballad: "The Tale the Church Bells Told"

Cowboy Song: "San Antonio"

Novelty: "Be My Little Teddy Bear"

Irish Comic: "Patsy Dear"

Coon Song: "Yo' Eyes Are Open But You're Sound Asleep"

Indian Love Song: "Iola"

Waltz Song: "Somebody's Waiting for You"

Topical Song: "Traveling"

Sentimental Ballad: "Sweet Julianne"

March Song: "Alice, Where Art Thou Going?"

March Ballad: "So Long, Joe"

Tawa, op. cit., 162.

evolution of popular dance beyond the waltz was authenticated by Vernon and Irene Castle, propagators of the national ballroom dance craze. Many "animal dances" were written for them and because of them, including the grizzly bear, the bunny hug, the turkey trot, and of course, the fox trot. The clear winner in that category, the fox trot, was joined by the one-step, and the shimmy in the early twenties, along with the dance form that defined the decade: the Charleston. James P. Johnson's composition by that name (the beginning of the craze) was for the Broadway show of 1923 Runnin' Wild. This dance craze was a formal, concise embodiment of the basic syncopation that had been slowly seeping into popular consciousness: the anticipation of the second main beat in a duple meter, as in example 3-1.

Example 3-1. Anticipation of the second main beat in a duple meter.



It is fitting that the Charleston was composed by the leader of the Harlem Stride piano movement, a man who was one of the early, main links between ragtime and jazz. It is fortunate

that Tin Pan Alley had cultivated a mass market for the fruit of Johnson's inspiration.

Musical Theater

The legitimacy and sophistication of popular musical theater got a tremendous boost from the collaboration of its two most respected disciples in the 1890s: Victor Herbert and Oscar Hammerstein (grandfather of the famous lyricist). Hammerstein's career began in the 1880s, with an interest in vaudeville theaters and opera houses. His opera troupe premiered The Tales of Hoffman, Pelléas et Mélisande, Thaïs, and Elektra. After selling his opera company to the Metropolitan Opera, with the condition that he refrain from producing opera for ten years, he turned his considerable expertise to the Broadway stage. His first venture was a collaboration with Herbert, who also had considerable experience with classical music. For three years, he had conducted the famed Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. His remarkable score for Hammerstein, Naughty Marietta, yielded "Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life", and "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp", which have remained classics to this day.

Herbert's influence on George Gershwin was significant. He was in many ways the most respected composer of musical theater of his day, possessing far more technical skill than

either George M. Cohan⁵⁹ or Irving Berlin. His musical legacy, more than that of anyone else, moves through Jerome Kern, to George Gershwin.⁶⁰ One of Herbert's last works⁶¹ ("Suite of Serenades") was included in the concert featuring the Rhapsody's premiere, and he had been one of the elite guests at post-rehearsal luncheons that Whiteman had arranged to curry favor with the music world's most influential people.⁶² Impressing Victor Herbert could not but help any budding composer (or entrepreneur). Jerome Kern (Gershwin's idol) was an honorary pallbearer at Herbert's funeral in 1924. Theirs had been a long and somewhat tempestuous relationship. Kern's schoolmates recall young Jerome's excitement at seeing his first Herbert play, and later, Herbert accurately predicted that Kern would inherit his mantle. They fought bitterly in at least one collaboration

59. Cohan often professed to play to an imaginary factory hand and his date in the last row of the balcony.

Gerald Bordman, Jerome Kern (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 316, 317.

60. An analysis of musical theater in the early twentieth century moves beyond the purview of this paper, but the chain of influence is relevant to a general understanding of what shaped the Rhapsody.

61. He died on May 24, 1924. At noon on that day he had completed a tune for the Ziegfeld Follies. Jasen, op. cit., 25.

62. Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 84.

(Miss 1917, with the nineteen year old Gershwin as rehearsal accompanist), they worked together in ASCAP, and Herbert had testified on Kern's behalf in a copyright infringement suit a year before his death. With his passing, Jerome Kern, at thirty-eight, became musical theater's undisputed leader.

Kern's influence on Gershwin was more direct. Gershwin was originally motivated to write show tunes after hearing Kern's "You're Here and I'm Here", and The Girl from Utah. His friends remember his determination to publish music of "the kind Jerome Kern is writing."⁶³ In March of 1917, he left Remick's, and within four months he had found employment as the rehearsal accompanist for the Kern production Miss 1917. After Miss 1917 closed Gershwin secured a position as composer with the T. B. Harms company.⁶⁴ In 1918 he served again as Kern's rehearsal pianist (in Rock-a-Bye Baby). This time he caught the famous composer's attention, and so

63. Bordman, op. cit., 158.

64. There is some disagreement among scholars on this point. Gerald Bordman, in his excellent book on Jerome Kern, states that it was after Miss 1917 closed that Gershwin resigned from Remick's, and was taken on by Harms. Ibid., p 158. Charles Schwartz, Gershwin's principle biographer, reports that Gershwin departed Remick's on March 17, 1917, and that he began his employment as rehearsal pianist for Miss 1917 sometime in July of that year. Schwartz, op. cit. 31, 32.

began a paternal relationship that lasted for years.⁶⁵ According to the November 18, 1924 New York Times, Otto Kahn, chairman of the Metropolitan Opera, approached Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and Gershwin about composing an opera for his company.⁶⁶ Berlin flatly admitted he lacked the proper tools, and it was Kern who hinted that Gershwin would be the most capable, just as Victor Herbert had earlier expressed his belief in Kern. (Ironically, the Metropolitan failed to mount Porgy and Bess when Gershwin finally composed it.) Kern outlived Gershwin by nearly ten years, and before he died, he had moved away somewhat from his early sweet romanticism, in favor of the newer, jazzier style Gershwin had developed.⁶⁷

Vaudeville

Benjamin F. Keith opened his first vaudeville palace in 1893. This "father of vaudeville" as he was known,

65. Bordman, op. cit. 175. Kern apparently advised Gershwin to consult him before making any major career moves. When Gershwin did not entirely heed this advice, their relationship cooled for a few years. Neither Victor Herbert, Jerome Kern, nor George Gershwin were known for their reticent personalities.

66. Ibid., 260.

67. Ibid., 122.

championed the performer, not just the song.⁶⁸ Though vaudevilles lacked the plot of Broadway shows, they had an enormous impact on the Alley, because, as Keith and other early vaudeville promoters quickly learned, the public responded to a personality. The performers were often identified throughout their careers by their individual trademarks, from Maggie Cline's backstage racket ("Throw Him Down, McCloskey!")⁶⁹ in the 1890s to Al Jolson's blackface and white gloves in the 'teens, to Rudy Vallee's megaphone in the 1920s. The performers themselves, though, commonly acknowledged that they were only as good as their material,⁷⁰ and vaudeville attracted the best talent in the Alley. The many classic tunes born from early vaudeville include "The Sidewalks of New York", "Shine On, Harvest Moon", "Take Me Out to the Ball Game", and "Alexander's Ragtime Band". So great was the influence of a top vaudeville performer that Al Jolson could and did regularly demand to be "cut in" on the writing credit of the songs he deigned to perform. He was a

68. Tony Pastor preceded Keith by twenty eight years. His variety theater opened in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1865, and moved to New York that same year. Risque acts were frowned upon in favor of more wholesome entertainment, and women and children were admitted. Tawa, op. cit., 74.

69. The story is in Jasen, op. cit., 26.

70. Tawa, op. cit., 58.

brilliant entertainer, and shared "authorship" of some of the Alley's greatest songs, although he never wrote a line in his life!⁷¹

Tin Pan Alley was ubiquitous. Theater, dance, vaudeville, revues, silent films, "talkies", radio, nightclubs, the concert stage, advertising, black music, white music, peacetime, wartime - the business of music publishing covered a lot of ground. Crass and commercial as it may have been, it was the means by which the disparate musical elements of early twentieth-century folk music were forged together. Without it, there would have been no Gershwin, no Rhapsody in Blue, no popular music as we know it.

71. Jasen, op. cit., 105.

CHAPTER IV

BLACK VOCAL TRADITION AND THE BLUES

Of all the important new forms and types of music associated with antebellum America, the origin of "blues" is perhaps the hardest to establish. Ragtime had a fairly documented beginning, Tin Pan Alley existed by virtue of documentation (publishing), and nobody seriously claims that "jazz" existed before 1895. (The word did not gain currency before 1915.)⁷²

Social Conditions

The blues and the black spiritual had their antecedents in the "field hollers" and work songs of enslaved black Americans.⁷³ After legal emancipation, blacks could and did travel across the country, as itinerant sharecroppers, and in migrations to the cities, and to the North.⁷⁴ The principle mode of transportation, the railroad, became the focal point

72. Arnold Shaw, Black Popular Music in America (New York: Shimmer Books, 1986), 16.

73. Charles Nanry, The Jazz Text (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1979), 8.

74. LeRoi Jones, Blues People (New York: William Morrow, 1963), 95.

of a kind of "circuit"⁷⁵ where entertainment and folk art were exchanged, in the form of traveling minstrel shows, vaudevilles, carnivals, tent shows and circuses.⁷⁶ Several important and disparate musical impulses were colliding in this new cauldron of antebellum race relations. Nanry speaks of 1) the white folk art tradition which gravitated towards use of pentatonic scales (Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races", for example), 2) European art music which was increasingly chromatic and 3) African-American impulse which was non-harmonic, modal, and rhythmically complex.⁷⁷

Harmonic Implications

Gilbert Chase's description of the call-and-response impulse so characteristic of African music⁷⁸ helps illuminate one means of reconciliation between these elements: The solo voice was the "leader", and the instruments followed, or responded, weaving semi-independent melodic lines which

75. cf. the "network" described in chapter II on ragtime.

76. Giles Oakley, The Devil's Music, A History of the Blues (New York: Taplinger, 1977), 97.

77. Nanry, op. cit., 66.

78. see Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 18.

created a polyphony of often surprising complexity.⁷⁹ Thus, while the harmonic basis was simple, as is true of most folk art, the chromatic impulse was very much present, although not in accordance with contemporary European art music traditions. According to Schuller, the native African "scale" uses a flatted seventh, and correspondingly, a flatted third.⁸⁰ Nanry uses the term "worried" to describe the seventh and third degrees of American blues, making clear that they were not "flat" in the sense of well-tempered Western music, but "off the expected pitch".⁸¹ Since African music is certainly not "tonal" in the western art sense, one could reasonably expect that these variations in pitch would not exactly correspond with any of our twelve tones. On the other hand, chromaticism was certainly implied, and to this day, popular music in general makes far less use of semitones than does jazz- (and blues-) related music.⁸²

79. Gilbert Chase, America's Music (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 453-54.

80. Schuller op. cit., 45.

81. Nanry, op. cit., 63.

82. Ibid.

Formal and Stylistic Considerations

The early slave "sorrow" songs often used a three-line stanza.⁸³ This poetic form may well be African in origin.⁸⁴ According to Nanry, these stanzas were often in iambic pentameter.⁸⁵ (This coincides with the typical blues stanza with which we are familiar, for instance: "I hate to see the evenin' sun go down" are the first words to W.C. Handy's St. Louis Blues.) The problem of putting these three-line, iambic pentameter stanzas to music was, once again, helped enormously by the call-and-response impulse of African music: An instrumental or choral response (to a vocal "call") could fill out the third and fourth bars of a standard four-bar phrase. The call-and-response paradigm operates on two levels. The first is the instrumental answer, or finishing of the individual lines, the second is the nature in which the third line responds to the first two. The lyrics are different, and the harmony moves to the dominant for the first time at the last stanza.

83. Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History (New York: Norton, 1971), 192.

84. Marshall W. Stears, The Story of Jazz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 104.

85. Nanry, op. cit. 64.

Example 4-1. Typical format for twelve-bar blues.

The blues is a lowdown <i>I</i>	achin' heart disease. <i>I</i>	<i>Instrumental</i> <i>I</i>	"Answer" <i>I</i>
The blues is a lowdown <i>IV</i>	achin' heart disease. <i>IV</i>	" <i>I</i>	" <i>I</i>
It's like consumption. <i>V</i>	killin' you by degrees. <i>V</i>	" <i>I</i>	" <i>I</i>

This tripartate form (AAB) lacks immediate Western precedents. The blues was certainly not "art" music, but rather a survival-based documentation of a traumatized and isolated segment of American society. The pre-blues secular singing insured that "classic" blues would be a predominantly solo vocal idiom, and yet the evolving twelve-bar format -- the more or less final form of blues⁸⁶ -- suggests that instrumental accompaniment was beginning to be taken into consideration.⁸⁷ Any (harmonic) instrumental accompaniment

86. Schuller observes that even with the evolution of eight, twelve or sixteen-bar standard forms, "In the simple country blues sung by itinerant blues singers it is not unusual to find thirteen-bar, thirteen-and-a-half-bar, or other irregular structures". Schuller, *op. cit.*, 38.

87. Jones, *op. cit.*, 68. The rationale has already been discussed: the phrases leave room for instrumental commentary in the call-and-response tradition.

would necessarily center around the most basic chords (since European harmonic tradition itself was foreign to African music). The unpredictability and mobility of the human voice with the micro-tonal African impulse, overlaying a basic I IV V harmony, encouraged musicians to transcend the traditional limitations of the European instruments they came to employ.⁸⁸ This interchange of idioms (Western instruments and harmony, African-American vocal and rhythmic conceptions) helped establish a context for white American folk music to apprehend the musical ethos of blacks. In this respect, it resembles ragtime. The primary difference is that blues is mainly a vocal idiom; ragtime is instrumental. Therefore, blues held more directly to black experience, while ragtime was more quickly assimilated into white culture. Indeed, direct antecedents to the blues extend deep into the nineteenth century, while ragtime was a brand new phenomenon in the 1890s. Nevertheless, ragtime was "all the rage" a full twenty years before the blues' heyday.

88. Nanry, op. cit., 66.

Implications for George Gershwin

The ease with which ragtime could be assimilated into European musical tradition is very significant from the point of view of harmonic, rhythmic and stylistic development of some white classical music in the 1920s (e.g. Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue). White culture was by and large able to accept only that which it could duplicate to some extent. After all, music was sold in the form of sheet music, not phonograph records. Ragtime, with its stable (though syncopated), quantifiable rhythms, solidly diatonic harmony and traditional European instrumentation was a useful first step in the process of assimilating black musical sensibility. It was only after classic ragtime was passé that the public found an appetite for black musical expression which was closer to the vocal source.⁸⁹ By 1920, sustained syncopation had been well understood for some time, and the micro-tonal shifts which characterize the blues were about to gain ascendancy. The ragtime craze of the late 1890s and early twentieth century had given way to the "jazz craze" of the 'teens (generally agreed to have been started by the 1917 recordings of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band). This "craze" was itself, within months, replaced by the blues

89. The advent of recorded music was also an important factor.

craze.⁹⁰ It began with a recording by Mamie Smith, accompanied by Perry Bradford's Jazz Hounds sometime in 1920.⁹¹ Although Smith was not really a blues singer, nor was Bradford's composition really a blues,⁹² the unexpected tremendous success of the recording (the first "blues" recorded by a black singer) prompted an immediate flurry of activity in the fledgling recording industry. Suddenly, the public had a voracious appetite for black female blues singers.⁹³ It is hard to imagine how this could have happened before the instrumental activity of (and massive public exposure to) ragtime and early jazz.

Likewise, this development makes it easy to understand something about Gershwin: Here, in the early 1920s, was a white composer of popular music with classical aspirations. He was motivated by the popularity of the blues, but influenced more by ragtime and its immediate instrumental legacy. Gershwin was a product of what the white world assimilated from black culture. At the same time, he was

90. Schuller, op. cit., 226n.

91. Schuller says it was in November. Ibid., 226. Nanry puts the date at Valentines day. Nanry, op. cit., 71.

92. Schuller, op.cit., 226n.

93. Why the singers were almost uniformly female is an interesting sociological question, but beyond the scope of this paper.

eager to be embraced by his classical peers.⁹⁴ As this study demonstrates, his piano music relied heavily on the rhythms and European harmonies that had been appropriated by advanced and novelty ragtime composers (e.g. Zez Confrey). Gershwin was not a true "blues" composer, nor did he claim to be. The blues (as evidenced by the title Rhapsody in Blue) was a motivation, socially and melodically, and this connection will be examined, although ragtime and its tradition will be shown to be a greater compositional influence.

94. Schwartz describes in painful detail the naive and egotistical attempts Gershwin made to "study" with well known classical composers of his day. Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 125-129.

CHAPTER V

JAZZ AND LOOSE ENDS

The early history of jazz is not as important to an historical understanding of Rhapsody in Blue as is the history of ragtime or Tin Pan Alley. Louis Armstrong's recording career did not begin in earnest until after the Rhapsody had been written. Nevertheless, he and others had by that time contributed significantly to the musical spirit of the day, and clearly, these influences figured in the makeup of George Gershwin's musical disposition.

The Beginnings

It can be argued that jazz evolved partly as an inevitable response to the musical and social pressures of the early twentieth century. This thesis can be supported by the observation that the interplay of racial tensions in New Orleans that so greatly contributed to the germination of this new genre was repeated in other parts of the country. In addition, the Harlem stride school of James P. Johnson and others was not a direct result or imitation of what happened in New Orleans. Rather, it represented the continuation of the east coast ragtime tradition, infused with three

impulses: 1) the blues, 2) improvisation, and 3) a relaxing of the rhythm (the move towards a swinging rhythmic conception).⁹⁵ There is no denying the monumental significance of New Orleans in early jazz development, but no one would seriously claim that any of these three impulses were originally indigenous to New Orleans alone. With this in mind, an appreciation of early jazz development takes on an enhanced significance vis-à-vis George Gershwin. The "jazz spirit" that helped define the 1920s was more than a succession of influences from one artist to another (or one locale to another). It was truly "in the air" -- a sociological metamorphosis which influenced Gershwin far beyond his conscious familiarity with specific individuals. Tin Pan Alley was the mediator between the new musical impulses and the public -- for example, Harlem Stride pianist James P. Johnson's Charleston became the smash hit of 1923. Shaw quotes Gerald Bordman: "(Charleston) ...pronounced the beat for the 'lost generation' and liberated the whole jazz movement."⁹⁶ Without the development of jazz, there would have been far less for the Alley to mediate.

95. Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 214.

96. Arnold Shaw, The Jazz Age, Popular Music in the 1920s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 134.

Virtually the entire history of jazz is a testament to the vicissitudes of race relations in post-slavery America. In New Orleans, there were three independent cultures which played a role: African Americans, Euro-Americans, and Creoles (for the most part, descendants of the original Spanish and French settlers of the U.S. gulf states). A man's pigmentation was his most significant human attribute in New Orleans.⁹⁷ Lomax describes the prejudice between Creoles and Blacks, as the former group was forced to accommodate the latter in the new, post-slavery economy. Jazz however, demanded cooperation, in spite of the fear and hate on both sides.⁹⁸ In New Orleans, this cooperation took

97. Alan Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole, and "Inventor of Jazz" (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1950), 80. Quoted verbatim in Charles Nanry, The Jazz Text (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1979), 94.

98. Lomax later quotes the brother of legendary Creole jazzman Sidney Bechet, in a paragraph that eloquently assesses this role of jazz. It is included here because it is so clearly evocative of the entire social process of jazz evolution.

"When the settled Creole folks first heard this jazz, they passed the opinion that it sounded like the rough Negro element. In other words, they have (sic) the same kind of feeling that some white people have, who don't understand jazz and don't want to understand it. But, after they heard it so long, they began to creep right close to it and enjoy it. That's why I think this jazz music helps to get this misunderstanding between

the form of collective linear improvisation. The musicians knew each other well, and needed to depend on each other (individually lacking, as they did, the skill to carry the full load).⁹⁹ The simplicity of their individual lines made the relative complexity of the whole ensemble possible, without its disintegrating into chaos. As their musical and technical sophistication grew, this polyphonic collective style became increasingly unmanageable.

The three musical giants to emerge from the New Orleans jazz scene were Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and Louis Armstrong. All three found their way to Chicago, the next great jazz center, and all three had earned national respect by the early twenties. It is not particularly surprising, however, that none of these men were involved with the first jazz recordings. That distinction fell to a white group from New Orleans, The Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

The story of the ODJB provides a fascinating glimpse of the role of Tin Pan Alley. The band did not actually improvise. It took a new idea (Black and Creole New Orleans music), and compressed it into a rigid format that could appeal to a mass audience. It was a music promoter's dream.

the races straightened out. You creep in close to hear the music and, automatically, you creep close to the other people. You know?" Ibid.

99. This process is wonderfully described in Schuller, op. cit., 79ff.

They perpetually promulgated the notion that they "couldn't read music", the better to underscore the unschooled, spontaneous (and completely false) image that was key to their popularity. In their hands, jazz was at once formally introduced to the record-buying public, and denigrated into a cheap imitation of the real thing. Their most famous recording, outselling even Sousa and Caruso,¹⁰⁰ was Livery Stable Blues, or Barnyard Blues. This is the piece, with its barnyard hokum sounds, that Paul Whiteman was to use in his famous New York concert (where Rhapsody in Blue was premiered), to illustrate the original "vulgarity" of jazz. The ODJB was a fad -- by 1924 they had faded into oblivion -- but they brought an awareness of "jazz" four-square into the musical marketplace.¹⁰¹

The Chicago scene is vital to a history of jazz, with Morton, Oliver and Armstrong all active there, as well as serious white musicians such as Bix Beiderbecke, Jimmy McPartland and Benny Goodman. Its importance to the national

100. Schuller, op. cit., 181.

101. It is ironic that after true jazz had made its way into public awareness, concerted critical opposition to it began to form, apparently on the basis that it was too secular, and too black. The focus was keeping jazz out of the home, schools, and off the concert stage. See Nanry, op. cit., 119, who cites Neil Leonard, Jazz and the White American: The Acceptance of a New Art Form (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

musical climate which would have affected Gershwin prior to 1924, however, is probably fairly limited. Perhaps the major "Chicago" development was the resurgence of the soloist, and a corresponding change in the general texture of jazz. The social unity and melodic simplicity¹⁰² that had existed in New Orleans (despite the often rancorous racial conflicts) was not a part of the Chicago jazz experience, and collective linear improvisation was not effective. Many of the musicians were imported; the level of musical literacy and technical skill was considerably higher. The presence of Louis Armstrong in King Oliver's band (they were both trumpet players) probably contributed to the solution of this problem, as they often coordinated their breaks (the instrumental "response" that was fundamental to blues construction) on the fly.¹⁰³ The texture thus moved in a more homophonic direction. This was accelerated when the other instrumentalists began to assert their personalities more strongly. The return to the "break" of the blues (albeit now often in a completely instrumental context) fundamentally separated the Chicago style from the older New Orleans style, and was more in keeping with the jazz rage that was to sweep the nation in the early 1920s.

102. Schuller's term. Schuller, op. cit., 79.

103. Nat Hentoff and Nat Shapiro, Hear Me Talkin' to Ya (New York: Rinehart, 1955), 99-100.

The "Jazz Age"

In 1920, Mamie Smith recorded Crazy Blues (not really a blues at all), and the "jazz craze" moved on to the "blues craze."¹⁰⁴ Jazz now fell within the purview of Tin Pan Alley: The bandleader James Reese Europe¹⁰⁵ had been the New York toast of the 'teens, collaborating with the Castles,¹⁰⁶ and stood ready to smooth out the rough edges of "jazz" for high society. Jazz moved from its black (and Creole) origins, through society via James Europe et al, into "common" domain via the recording frenzy touched off by Mamie Smith. Any white New York musician who favored jazz had essentially two choices: conform to the pop "jazz" sounds of high society, or starve.¹⁰⁷ The black musician had a more attractive alternative: he could "go home" to Harlem, where a vibrant jazz tradition flourished in the nightclubs, even as his white counterpart was moving into radio. Jazz did not come from Chicago to New York. Rather, jazz evolved in New York, and was joined by migrating Chicago musicians looking

104. Discussed in chapter IV.

105. As early as 1912, a major concert of syncopated music led by three black conductors took place at Carnegie Hall. Europe was one of those conductors. Nanry, op. cit., 127.

106. Discussed in chapter III.

107. Nanry, op. cit., 128.

for the national exposure that only New York and Tin Pan Alley could provide. The individual New York evolution of true jazz (as distinct from the James Europe - Paul Whiteman tradition) brings us to Harlem stride piano and James P. Johnson.

As previously indicated, jazz could be found in Harlem - and it was not simply an extension of the Chicago or New Orleans traditions. James P. Johnson was born in 1891, and the height of his career corresponded to the beginning of jazz and recorded music. He, like Jelly Roll Morton, was instrumental in transforming the rag into a jazz idiom: the rhythms became more pliable and sophisticated, the blues influence was clear,¹⁰⁸ and Morton's and Johnson's music was improvised.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Morton, however, Johnson left his mark on successive generations of jazz pianists, from Fats Waller through Duke Ellington and Art Tatum, to Thelonious Monk.¹¹⁰

108. In a revealing interview with Tom Davin, Johnson briefly discusses the role of the blues in his career. Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Shirmer, 1985), 172-177.

109. The appendix presents a Joplin rag, Original Rags, published May third, 1899, with a transcription of Jelly Roll Morton's version of the same rag. A brief discussion, taken from Shaefer and Riedel's The Art of Ragtime precedes the music.

110. Schuller, op. cit., 214.

He received classical training in his home town of New Brunswick, N.J., and studied the playing of de Pachmann, Rachmaninoff and Hoffman.¹¹¹ He was influenced also by the advanced ragtime styles of Lucky Roberts, Eubie Blake (whose technique and transpositional ability particularly impressed him) and somebody named Abba Labba (who Johnson said "had a left hand like a walking beam").¹¹² There was considerable interplay between Johnson and James Reese Europe, e.g. through the Clef Club, the Harlem music organization founded by Europe, but despite Johnson's many interests and gregarious personality, he never compromised his basic jazz instincts in the interest of popular success.

The flow of Johnson's left hand was one of his most remarkable qualities. Although just as active as the traditional "Joplin" left hand, it articulated constant rhythmic innuendo and flexibility. Johnson was born twenty three years after Joplin, and was privy to musical influences that Joplin was not. One was the current "classical" sensibility of performers like Padereski, who constantly interpolated rubato, even when uncalled for in the score. Another, later influence was the vocality of early blues. From Johnson's first recording (Harlem Strut in 1921), his

111. Ibid., 215.

112. Ibid.

left hand helped propel his linear ideas into more rhythmically varied and fertile territory than previous ragtime had ever explored. He was not necessarily a great melodist, but the texture of his rhythmic conception must have had an intoxicating effect on all who heard it. Here is a rhythmic transcription of a section from Keep Off the Grass demonstrating his propensity for imposing ternary patterns over a basic 4/4 beat:¹¹³

Example 5-1. James P. Johnson, Keep Off the Grass.

from the last eight bars (not counting the coda)

Keep Off the Grass

(Points marked † represent syncopated anticipation; they do not alter the basic ternary pattern.)

Johnson revealed a conscious effort to swing -- to quote Schuller: "...the sixteenth- and eighth-note subdivisions of the beat filling in rather than merely dividing the beat. Each tiny rhythmic component serves as a link in a longer linear chain".¹¹⁴ Johnson was universally admired as a

113. reproduced from Schuller, Ibid, 218.

114. Ibid. 217.

brilliant pianist, and, like George Gershwin, would play anywhere. Although Gershwin's piano improvisation lacked the special "swinging" quality of Johnson's playing,¹¹⁵ it is almost unthinkable that Johnson's style could not have greatly influenced Gershwin. Two years before his death in 1955, Johnson reminisced about his association with Gershwin:

It was at Aeolian [a Tin Pan Alley firm] later, in 1920, that I met George Gershwin who was cutting "oriental" numbers there when I was making blues rolls which were popular then. He had written Swanee and was interested in rhythm and blues. Like myself, he wanted to write them on a higher level. We had lots of talks about our ambitions to do great music on American themes. In 1922, we had a show together in London.¹¹⁶

115. Schwartz, op. cit., 306(8).

116. Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P Johnson" in Hasse, op. cit., 177.

CHAPTER VI

ZEZ CONFREY AND NOVELTY PIANO

The popularity of ragtime peaked around 1912, but composers continued to take an interest in the form. The ragtime music of the next eight to ten years is not as well known, and the composers faced a different set of circumstances. William Schafer and Johannes Riedel put it this way: "Joplin and his peers had folk inspiration aplenty but no form into which to cast it, while the later men had a perfectly well-defined form and no direct folk inspiration for resources."¹¹⁷ By now, Tin Pan Alley had appropriated elements of ragtime for hit producing means. Other, more serious composers began using advanced harmonies, and their rags were often more difficult to perform than the average home pianist could manage. In addition to this Advanced ragtime and the dying Popular ragtime, Folk rags were still being composed, and the Joplin tradition was still represented by James Scott and Joseph Lamb.¹¹⁸ Schafer and

117. William J. Shafer and Johannes Reidel, The Art Of Ragtime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 97.

118. David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, Rags and Ragtime (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 173.

Riedel make some perhaps arbitrary but instructive generalizations about who was involved in ragtime's "second line": 1) opportunistic but gifted commercial songwriters who created respectable ragtime compositions, 2) denizens of "the Alley" who used ragtime as the basis for their popular compositions, and 3) pianist-composers working to extend the direct line of pure classic ragtime.¹¹⁹

The advent of hand-played piano rolls dates from c. 1913. Prior to that, piano rolls were cut mechanically, away from a piano. With the development of this technology (both mechanically cut and hand played rolls), an idiom evolved for the player-artist, which helped keep ragtime in demand. The hand-played artists were instructed to make full, rich arrangements which would convince the customer that all the pumping was worth it. These "novelty" artists, just as the composers of Advanced ragtime, were appealing not to the average player, but to a specific sub-group. Advanced ragtimers were writing for each other; Novelty ragtimers were writing for the machines (and each other). To everyone's surprise, the public took a sudden interest in a warm-up exercise¹²⁰ by Novelty ragtime composer Zez Confrey, Kitten on the Keys. They bought the rolls, the sheet music and the

119. Shafer and Riedel, op. cit., 92.

120. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 214.

recordings, and suddenly the race was on to satisfy a sudden, new public appetite. With this advent of Novelty piano, Chicago (Zez Confrey's home city) replaced St. Louis and New York as the center of ragtime. Many of these rags appeared only on recordings, usually performed by the composer, as the Novelty rag and the record industry grew up together.¹²¹

The Novelty rag has the same basic form as the Popular rag, with three sections.¹²² Not every critic has appreciated the Novelty rag. Confrey is barely mentioned by Blesh, and Shafer and Reidel describe Kitten on the Keys and Novelty piano in general as "a bastard form...(which) developed into the empty pyrotechnics of the cocktail pianist...a debased pianistic absurdity."¹²³ Whatever one may think of Novelty piano, there can be little doubt as to its influence on Gershwin. Novelty piano represented commercial success and "classical" sophistication, two things Gershwin adamantly desired. When Paul Whiteman was considering headliners for his much-publicized "Experiment in Modern Music", Confrey and Gershwin were his choices.

121. The rhythmic and harmonic connections between Novelty Piano and Rhapsody in Blue are examined in chapter nine.

122. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 214.

123. Shafer and Reidel, op. cit., 105, 106.

Regarding the "classical" sophistication, Jasen describes Novelty piano this way:

The distinctive sound of the Novelty rag is a combination of the influence of the French Impressionists -- Claude Debussy (sic) and Maurice Ravel -- with contrasting rhythms as used by the roll arrangers. Chromaticism is at the heart of the Novelty tradition, and the use of the whole-tone scale may have evolved from this, as it appears within the chromatic scale: in a sequence of ascending chromatic major thirds the top note of every other interval forms the whole-tone scale. Probably the most striking hallmark of Novelty writing is the use of consecutive fourths in the melody voicing.¹²⁴

Many other composers were active in the Novelty "tradition" (most of this music was published in the 1920s, and has since fallen into comparative neglect.)¹²⁵ One of these is Roy Bargy, a member of the Paul Whiteman band, who wrote one Novelty rag per month for piano-roll distribution in 1919, including Jim Jams and Knice and Knifty.

The notion of what is and is not ragtime has been charged with emotion throughout ragtime's history. From the beginning, Joplin sought to differentiate his art from the haphazard improvisations of many of his peers. Latter ragtime endured serious scrutiny by many before the moniker

124. Jasen and Tichenor, op. cit., 214.

125. Terry Waldo, This is Ragtime (New York: Da Capo, 1984), 86.

was awarded, as demonstrated by the earlier quote from Shafer and Reidel. And much more recently, contemporary pianist Ralph Sutton insisted "I'm no ragtime piano player. I'm a whorehouse piano player. Whorehouse piano swings... ."126 Regarding this constant bickering over what was and what was not ragtime, one can be reasonably sure that Gershwin did not participate. Novelty "ragtime"¹²⁷ was a winner. George Gershwin loved a winner.

126. Ibid., 155.

127. In a scholarly and insightful book on ragtime, Edward Berlin presents a reasonably persuasive argument against applying the term "ragtime" to Novelty piano as other scholars, notably David Jasen, have done. Although the music of Zez Confrey and his contemporaries was departing from much of the spirit of traditional ragtime, not the least of which was a moderate, danceable tempo, there is no doubt that the music stems directly from the ragtime tradition. Novelty piano, in spite of its artificiality and perhaps empty virtuosity, provides an instructive and entertaining look at the relationship between established ragtime and the early popular conception of jazz. See Edward A. Berlin, Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 162-166.

PART TWO

RHAPSODY IN BLUE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Rhapsody In Blue was written in 1924. Its original form was "essentially a two-piano version of the piece: one piano represented the solo part; the second piano, the orchestra".¹²⁸ From this form the orchestration for jazz band was accomplished by Ferde Grofe. The motivation to compose the Rhapsody was a commission from Paul Whiteman for a concert of symphonic jazz at Aeolian Hall on Lincoln's birthday of that year. Gershwin had originally considered a conventional "blues" composition, but instead decided to risk a genuine synthesis of jazz and classical music. His primary aim was to illustrate the flexibility of jazz rhythms, but what evolved in three weeks' time had a profound influence on virtually all areas of music to follow.

The piece was later recast (also by Grofe) in several orchestral versions which have found their way into the standard literature. The solo piano version provided by Gershwin has retained its appeal with audiences, and more than any of his other works, the Rhapsody signals the

128. Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 77.

direction of his progress as a composer. The rhythmic and harmonic elements of Rhapsody in Blue that distinguish it from most other classical music of its time can be best understood by comparing them directly with precursors in the various folk genres.

CHAPTER VII

RAGTIME: SCOTT JOPLIN'S MAPLE LEAF RAGRhythm

Regular substructure:

In his book Early Jazz, Gunther Schuller traces the migration of the rhythmic characteristics of native African song through antebellum America into 1920s jazz.¹²⁹ Three essential attributes are discussed: "(1) the foundation of a regular substructure, ... (2) the superimposition thereon of improvised or semi-improvised melodies in variable meters and rhythms; and (3) a call-and-response format."¹³⁰ The regular substructure was transferred from the native African instruments to the sounds of rowing by the slave boatmen, to the banjo, and later, to the bass drum and piano. This basic, incessant pulse is the unmistakable foundation of ragtime and early jazz, and it is often realized in a closed position chord, reiterated within a single harmony and changing by half-step to accommodate new harmonies.

129. Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6-26.

130. Ibid., 8.

In this example from Maple Leaf Rag, the chords are simply an instance of this basic rhythmic unifying device:

Example 7-1. Scott Joplin, Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 9-12

By 1924, this device had been so overshadowed by other developments that, while still a fundamental source of propulsion, its reappearance in strict form was more of a special effect. One can almost hear the pluck of the banjo in this contrasting section of the Rhapsody:

Example 7-2. George Gershwin, Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 201-203

Basic syncopation:

The development of syncopation in ragtime can be followed through increasingly complicated harmonic movement, but the principle of emphasis on an unexpected beat remains the same. In examples 7-4 and 7-5, the syncopated line begins with the accents on the beat, then in a three to four relationship (similar to the 3 : 2 relationship of hemiola), the dotted eighth accents move through the quarter note pulse, as in example 7-3:

Example 7-3. Basic syncopation in Maple Leaf Rag and Rhapsody in Blue.

Maple Leaf Rag
Measures 1 and 2

Rhapsody In Blue
Measure 30

Example 7-4. Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 1-4

Example 7-5. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 30-32

The musical score for Example 7-5, measures 30-32 of 'Rhapsody in Blue', is presented in a grand staff. The right hand (R.H.) plays a syncopated melody with accents and slurs, while the left hand (L.H.) sustains a pedal point. The tempo is marked 'a tempo' and the dynamics include 'p' (piano) and 'ten.' (tenuto). The score is in 2/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure.

Notice that in Maple Leaf Rag the left hand changes harmonies (from I to V) while the right hand stays the same. In the Rhapsody in Blue example, the harmony is far more complex, with the left hand sustaining a pedal while the right hand (the syncopation) articulates the harmony changes.

More complicated substructure:

As noted in ex. 7-5, in twenty years, syncopation had progressed from riding over a given harmonic motion to articulating that motion itself. In like manner, the blocked chord phenomenon of examples 7-1 and 7-2 was often later used not only to establish a regular rhythmic substructure, but simultaneously, to articulate a syncopation within, or as a part of that substructure:

Example 7-6. Rhapsody in Blue.

measures 190-193

As in example 7-5, we see in the preceding example that the harmonic changes are articulated by the syncopation. In example 7-6, the half-step oscillation of the harmony would have far less meaning if it were deprived of its syncopated presentation. Syncopation was no longer simply laid over a conventional harmony: it was increasingly responsible for enlivening a harmony that would otherwise have been trite. As this new rhythmic process (constant syncopation) became a more familiar part of musical vocabulary, it insinuated itself more thoroughly into the other musical elements: harmony, melody, texture.

Idiomatic technical devices:

One of the most recognizable features of piano ragtime is its "striding" left hand, which was responsible for laying down the rhythmic substructure:

Example 7-7. Maple Leaf Rag.

measures 18-20, left hand



This continuous rhythmic ground constituted the base for the developing syncopation. It was present in the latest ragtime, and was often referred to in Gershwin's music:

Example 7-8. Rhapsody in Blue.

measures 72-74

In example 7-9, Joplin uses an idiomatic device that was to permeate ragtime & novelty piano.¹³¹ The right hand plays a sequence of similar or (in this case) identical notes in ascending octaves, in a grouping that comfortably fits under the hand. The left hand introduces each grouping with a single note. The resulting effect is of a single melodic

131. This device is not new to music, but through ragtime, it did become a staple of novelty and jazz piano.

line which sounds as if it might have been played by one extremely facile hand.

Example 7-9. Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 7-8

Example 7-10 illustrates the same concept. In both cases, the device precedes new material.

Example 7-10. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 105-106

Harmony

Elementary chromaticism in popular music of the day:

The most common form of chromaticism in ragtime of the 1890s involved the upper or lower neighbor of a diatonic tone such as the fifth, third, etc.

Example 7-11. Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 5-6



Example 7-12. Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 69-70



This simple approach could be integrated into a melodic chromatic sequence, and was found in other folk music of the day as well. The introduction of Sousa's The Stars and

Stripes Forever provides a very familiar example of a chromatic approach to a cadence:

Example 7-13. John Philip Sousa, The Stars and Stripes Forever, piano reduction.
measures 1-4

In this case, the melodic chromatic approach is buttressed by the use of an augmented sixth chord.

Syncopated elementary chromaticism:

In the following example, the melodic direction is reversed, but the use of chromaticism is still rudimentary. This is the type of simple chromaticism Joplin was familiar with, but the rhythmic placement of the dissonance (the D natural in this case), became a standard convention of ragtime.

Example 7-14 Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 18-22



More complex chromaticism in syncopation:

As mentioned earlier, ragtime tends to lay syncopation over a conventional (fairly simple) harmony. Descending chromaticism turned out to be an excellent vehicle for syncopation, and the same practice of interjecting rhythmic groupings of three into a duple meter, over a chromatically descending harmony, continued into Gershwin's day:

Example 7-15. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 127-129

Note the decreased musical interest in the same passage devoid of syncopation:

Example 7-16. Rhapsody in Blue with syncopation eliminated.
measures 127-129

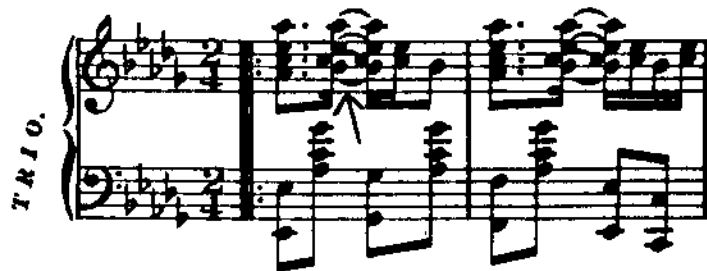


The effect of syncopation on harmony:

As previously suggested, the relationship between syncopation and harmony became more complex during the evolution towards Gershwin's style. In example 7-17, the essential (dominant) harmony is provided by the unsyncopated left hand.¹³² While this dominant quality is already present, it is underscored by the dissonance in the right hand, which does appear in a syncopation:

132. Later, the "stride" piano of James P. Johnson and others incorporated syncopation into this characteristically bouncing left hand.

Example 7-17. Maple Leaf Rag.
measures 51-52



Once again, we see the tendency in early ragtime syncopation to highlight dissonance (or consonance) which will comment on an established harmony, rather than using it to articulate the harmony itself. In the following Gershwin examples, syncopation is used to articulate the basic harmonic sonority:

Example 7-18. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 3-6

In the second measure of this example (7-18), the Ab in the right hand could be reckoned as part of the Gb harmony, or the seventh of the previous Bb harmony, but it does much more

than simply comment or expand on either of those sonorities: Melodically, it adumbrates the dissonant tension between the root of the next chord (the F in the melody) and its upper neighbor. To modern ears, this sounds so normal (as a sharpened ninth) that this passage is often misplayed accordingly:

Example 7-19. Rhapsody in Blue.

measure 4, transcribed with last left hand chord sounding before the G \flat in the right hand

Along this same line (a syncopation in Rhapsody in Blue that either presents a new harmony or comments more decisively on a pre-existing harmony than earlier ragtime), consider the following:

Example 7-20. Rhapsody in Blue.

measure 187

The F natural in the right hand of example 7-20 serves the same function as the Ab in example 7-18 at measure 4, among other things, bringing melodic dissonance to the approach of the final D dominant seven harmony. In this case, however, the process is enlarged to include the harmony. The basic progression, clearly, is from a G 6-4 (actually a suspended dominant chord) to a D dominant seven. The Ab chord in the middle, while important, is decorative only. The syncopation here articulates a more important decoration on the basic harmony than would ordinarily be found in 1890s ragtime. (In fact, this "decoration" is the sole basis for the next eight bars of harmonic activity, before the D dominant seven is re-articulated and finally allowed to resolve -- see example 7-6.)

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLUES: W.C. HANDY'S ST. LOUIS BLUES

Rhythm

Syncopation:

Notated blues of the early twentieth century made constant use of the syncopation that had been developed in ragtime. Sustained syncopation was a new technique in musical composition, and like any other technique, it did not come full-blown into existence. One of the first manifestations of syncopation (as discussed in chapter II on ragtime and illustrated in example 3-1) was simply anticipating a main beat with an accent, e.g. accenting the second half of the second beat (in 4/4 meter) in anticipation of the third. A grouping of three is implied in this simple syncopation: The rhythm is effective not only because the third beat is anticipated, but also because the initial pulse group -- the dotted quarter -- is a group of three, rather than the traditional four, eighth notes. (Obviously, dotted quarters are nothing new in music, but in a duple setting, they are generally followed by a grouping which tends to preserve that setting.) The immediate and continued repetition of a ternary grouping is a logical, formal

extension of this device. Composers (Handy in particular) became aware that in linking successive groups of three in a duple context, a main beat would ultimately be reached. The overt syncopation (the deliberate disturbance of the pulse of a continually well-defined meter) could be maintained, and its formal significance would be heightened.

Example 8-1. W.C. Handy, St. Louis Blues.
measures 55-62

The musical score for 'St. Louis Blues' (measures 55-62) is presented in a standard format. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a 'Spoken' section. The lyrics are as follows:

Or— else he— would - n't have gone so— far— from me.—
 I'll— love ma— ba - by— till— the— day— ah— die.—
 But a long tall gal makes a preach-er— ball— the— Jack.—
 But a red-head wom-an makes a boy— slap his pa - pa— down.—
 If my blues dont get you— — my— jazz-ing— must—

The piano accompaniment includes a 'Spoken' section with the lyrics 'Dog-gone-it!'.

As chapter IX on late ragtime and novelty piano demonstrates, this device was enthusiastically seized upon in

the later part of the 1910s and early 20s. By 1924, it was "possible" for Gershwin to unify an entire section of a markedly duple nature with an accompaniment using this device. The effect of this passage in performance is startling: It is as if the accompaniment has no regard for the barlines. This is clearly a reference not only to blues tradition, but the "Harlem Stride" style of James P. Johnson, et al. The bass (left hand) participates in the syncopation process while never abandoning its role as a rhythmic unifier and stabilizer. The syncopation impulse, it seems, has taken over, and we can only trust that everything will come out alright:

Example 8-2. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 221-229

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 221-229 of "Rhapsody in Blue". The score is in 4/4 time and features a syncopated accompaniment. The first system (measures 221-223) is marked "ff" and "agitato". The second system (measures 224-226) continues the syncopated accompaniment. The score is in piano and features a syncopated accompaniment.



Habañera:

Abbe Niles credits W. C. Handy with the introduction of the Habañera, or tango rhythm to this music,¹³³ although it is certain that New Orleans musicians like Jelly Roll Morton had employed the "Spanish tinge" for years. (See the footnote at the end of this paragraph.) The Habañera rhythm occasionally appeared in the accompaniments (for example Beale Street Blues, Blue Gunned Blues), and its presence is curious.

133. Abbe Niles, "The Story of the Blues" in Blues, an Anthology, ed. W.C. Handy (New York: Da Capo, 1949), 28.

Example 8-3. St. Louis Blues.
measures 33-36

Gm Cm C#dim D7

wo - man, — wid_ her dia - mon' rings, — Pulls dai
Cai - ro, — make St. Louis by ma - self, — Git to
crap game, — he knows a pow'ful lot, — But when

In addition to the questions of origin that this suggests, it provides additional context for the ternary groupings discussed previously. In the case of the habañera rhythm, true syncopation is not really achieved, because the pulse of the meter is not significantly disturbed. But syncopation is just around the corner. If the last two quarter notes of the habañera rhythm are replaced by rests, the "Charleston" rhythm is the result.¹³⁴

134. According to Lomax, Jelly Roll Morton maintained that all true jazz had "a Spanish tinge". Alan Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll: the Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole, and "Inventor of Jazz" (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pierce, 1950), quoted in Charles Nanry, The Jazz Text (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1979), 69n.

Many subtle variations of these rhythms presented themselves to composers like Gershwin. Here is an example of a polyrhythm in the Rhapsody which, with duple grouping above and triple grouping below, incorporates the essential habañera rhythm:

Example 8-4. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 90-92

Formal considerations:

An interesting feature of St. Louis Blues is the temporary abandonment of the twelve-bar structure. This became a common feature, often used directly prior to the blues "chorus" - that part of the tune with which people were the most familiar.¹³⁵ The twelve-bar format is one of the

135. According to Nanry, the pattern of St. Louis Blues was widely adopted by popular song writers to turn out hundreds of Tin Pan Alley pseudo-blues. Nanry, op.

principle facets of the blues that sets it apart from other forms. Indeed, one of the first blues ever written down for publication, Handy's Mr. Crump,¹³⁶ was turned down by one Tin Pan Alley firm after another, with the same complaint: the strains were four bars short.¹³⁷ Interestingly, in the one section of St. Louis Blues that is not in twelve-bar format (besides the introduction), the flattened third is the least conspicuous (e.g. A instead of B flat in the melody of measures 38 and 46).¹³⁸

cit., 70.

136. The piece was written in 1909 for a mayoral candidacy in Memphis, Tennessee. Handy did not seek to publish it until 1912, under the name The Memphis Blues. See the chapter "Memphis Blues -- A Bungled Bargain" in W.C. Handy's autobiography The Father of the Blues (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 106-121.
137. Abbe Niles in the Handy Anthology, op. cit., 26.
138. The harmony (at measures 38 and 42 of example 8-5) does not support a B flat in the way that has been described -- B flat is not the dominant seventh tone of D7, or V(it is of C7, or IV). The fact that this section is in a minor key is relevant.

Example 8-5. St Louis Blues.
measures 33-48

C♯dim D7

33

wo - man. — wid her dia - mon' rings, — Pulls dai
Cai - ro, — make St. Louis by ma self, — Git to
crap game, — he knows a pow'ful lot, — But when

Gm

37

man roun' — by her a - pron strings. — 'Twant for
Cai - ro, — find ma ole friend Jeff. — Gwine to
work-time comes, he's — on de dot. — Gwine to

Cm C♯dim D7

41

pow - der — an' for store - bought hair, — De —
pin ma — self close — to his side, — If ah
ask him — for a cold ten - spot, — What it

Gm A7 D D7

45

man ah love — would not gone no - where, no - where. —
flag his train, I — sho' can ride. —
takes to git it, he's — cer - t'nly got. —

The call-and-response impulse described in chapter IV is still present in the instrumental completion of the phrases in the previous example (in response to the vocal line which ends at the beginning of each third measure), but it is missing on the larger level - that of a third phrase responding to two very similar previous ones.

Typical of the call-and-response phenomenon was the tendency in the responses to use repeated bursts of rhythm, in exact repetition, octave displacement or slight (e.g. harmonic) variation.

Example 8-6. St. Louis Blues.
measures 17-20

The musical score for 'St. Louis Blues' measures 17-20 is presented in G major and 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Cause ma ha-by, he done lef dis town. 'Cause I'm most wile 'bout ma Jel-ly Roll. He'd make a cross-eyed 'o-man go stone blin'. The piano accompaniment includes a bass line and a treble line. In the final measure (measure 20), several notes in the treble line are circled, highlighting a specific rhythmic or melodic pattern.

Gershwin's appropriation of this device was often a little more complex:

Example 8-7. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 72-77

Tempo giusto

Another example of Gershwin's use of the call-and-response idea may be found on the first page of the Rhapsody. Here, the presentation is more rhapsodic than formal, as if it were commenting on the idea.

Example 8-8. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 3-12

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled with a '7' on the left, features a complex melodic line with various ornaments and a dashed line above it. The bottom staff, labeled with a '10' on the left, shows a more rhythmic accompaniment with repeated patterns and slurs.


Three examples from the Rhapsody will help document Gershwin's synthesis of blues form with forms more closely related to white tradition in Tin Pan Alley. While classic twelve-bar blues does not exist in the Rhapsody,¹³⁹ the call-and-response idea is thoroughly exploited. Following is an instance where it is exploited on the more formal level. Not only is a repeated rhythmic fragment used to "answer" the

139. Abbe Niles suggests that in this strict sense, the name Rhapsody in Blue is a contradiction in terms, and adds that white song writers in general have failed to absorb the twelve-bar blues form. Handy Anthology, op. cit., 28.

melodic section of each phrase, but a third and different phrase answers two very similar phrases.¹⁴⁰

Example 8-9. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 244-267

The musical score for Example 8-9, Rhapsody in Blue, measures 244-267, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 244-248) is marked "Andantino moderato" and "p con espressione R.H.". The second system (measures 249-253) contains a circled "2". The third system (measures 254-258) contains a circled "3". Dashed lines above the staves indicate "Response" sections in measures 248-251 and 253-256.

140. Something fascinating takes place in the chromatic "response" sections of example 8-9. A three note "row" (D# - D natural - C#) is set over a five-note rhythmic pattern (). The cycle repeats every fifteen notes (3 x 5), but the harmony changes every ten notes (two measures). The same three notes have a different harmonic function in three different chords. The chromatic relationship between D# and D natural corresponds to the traditional flattening of the blues third in measures 248 and 249, and to the flattening of the seventh in measures 250 and 251.

259

263

p rit.

f a tempo

Another example in the Rhapsody of a third phrase answering two similar previous ones is found at measures 91-106 (in example 8-10). This time, however, the third phrase is delayed by an interloping motive that has never been heard from, and never will be again. The answering (final) phrase is nearly identical to the first two (only a slight rhythmic variation and the "instrumental" response are different), and it is almost as if Gershwin felt that something more was needed to separate it from its predecessors. Indeed, if measures 99-102 were left out and the harmonies only slightly modified (e.g. the G chord began at measure 103 instead of 104 -- the melody could remain the same), it would make a perfectly good twelve-bar blues chorus. (It should be remembered that blues can be traditionally found in other forms than twelve-bar, among them, sixteen-bar. Twelve-bar

blues represents the classic form, however, and the most direct incarnation of the call-and-response principle.)

Example 8-10. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 90-106

The image displays a musical score for the piano part of 'Rhapsody in Blue', covering measures 90 through 106. The score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). Measure numbers 90, 93, 96, and 99 are indicated on the left side of their respective systems. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Dynamic markings include 'mf marc.' in measure 90 and 'R.H.' in measures 93 and 96. There are also circled numbers 1, 2, and 3, likely indicating first, second, and third endings or specific phrasing. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 106.

The image contains two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled '102', shows a piano piece with a circled '4' in the first measure and a dashed line with an arrow and a circled '6' below it. The bottom staff, labeled '105', shows a piano piece with 'p' and 'cresc.' markings, and 'R.H.' and 'L.H.' labels for the right and left hands.

A final example of the impulse of blues form in the Rhapsody begins at measure 142. Here, the melodic line reaches almost completely through the phrase (the "instrumental response" is only half a measure long).¹⁴¹ This and the previous two examples illustrate how Gershwin was influenced by blues structure, specifically as filtered through Tin Pan Alley. It was the "white" alley which could not completely absorb the twelve-bar form.¹⁴²

141. It is interesting to notice that in the "interloping" third phrase (from the standpoint of twelve-bar blues), the call and response interchange shifts to intervals of one measure each.

142. Handy Anthology, op. cit., 28.

Example 8-11. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 142-156

Meno mosso e poco scherzando
(Slower)

142 ① *p* LH.

145 *espr.* ②

Response

148 Response 8 *pp* ③ Call

151 Response Call Response

154

Harmony

The flatted third and seventh:

It is impossible to think about the blues without thinking about so-called "blue notes." The harmonic implications of these tones are briefly discussed in chapter IV. The flatted third of any (major) tonality is also the lowered seventh of the subdominant of that tonality. This (the lowered seventh), together with the third degree of the subdominant form the unstable tritone interval that demands resolution. In the key of G major, for example, B flat is both the lowered third of G and the lowered seventh of C (the subdominant of G). Thus the purely melodic African tradition¹⁴³ of flattening the third naturally results in the corresponding emphasis of the tritone (the dissonant, unstable interval) between the third and the lowered seventh

143. See Gunther Schuller, Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 45.

of the subdominant. It is no wonder, in this context, that the blues relies so heavily on the subdominant for its harmonic propulsion.¹⁴⁴

Example 8-12. St. Louis Blues.
measures 9-12

G C G G7

1. I hate to see... de ev'-nin' sun go down, _____
 2. Been to de Gyp-sy to get ma for-tune tole, _____
 You ought to see... dat stove-pipe brown of mine, _____

Chromaticism:

When George Gershwin decided to write a rhapsody "in Blue," he was no doubt intending to exploit this melodic - turned - harmonic phenomenon. Gershwin was essentially a melodist, to which his hundreds of songs attest. A melody which exploits this device of flattening the third could provide its own means of harmonic propulsion. No doubt he

144. This harmonic interpretation assumes that the melodic "flattening" of the third will be by exactly one-half step. In a vocal tradition, this is not necessarily the case. But if Western instruments like the piano are to be used, there is little choice. This bolsters the argument, or assumption, that ragtime (a pianistic idiom) had to develop before the blues impulse could be adequately channeled into a "Western" guise.

did not "plan it out" in these words, but the phenomenon was in the air. The flatted third was a purely melodic device - it had meaning irrespective of the harmonic implications. That had been demonstrated to the public by many performances and recordings of Bessie Smith and other vocal artists. "The Blues" had been "the rage" for four years prior to Rhapsody's premiere. Certainly, the harmonic implications had been realized, as in the W.C. Handy examples, but the phenomenon remained melodic. Chromatic downward motion in a melody from the major third of one harmony to the lowered seventh of the next harmony was nothing new, but the melodic implications were. Gershwin (and others) realized (perhaps subconsciously) that to highlight the melodic aspect of the lowered seventh of the subdominant, via the anticipatory nature of syncopation, would combine the most critical of the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic aspects of this new music - syncopation, the tritonal tension that pervades blues, and the melodic flattening of the third:

Example 8-13. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 3-6

Notice the general abundance of chromaticism in this passage, both harmonically and melodically. As mentioned in chapter IV, chromaticism is traditionally relatively rare in popular music, except jazz- or blues-influenced music. Of particular interest in the preceding example is the Ab in measure four. This is discussed in chapter VII (example 7-18), but it bears further discussion with specific reference to the blues. Just as the melodically flatted third of I tends to result in the flatted seven of IV, so does the flatted seven of IV suggest the flatted third of I. The root motion from IV to I is intervallically identical to the root motion from I to V, which means that the flatted seven of I will suggest the flatted third of V. In measure four, the Ab can be assumed to be part of the B flat (or I) sonority (the intervening G flat chord is decorative). Melodically, it suggests the flatted third of the F (or V) sonority which follows it. (In this instance, the melody leaves A flat before the the F chord is sounded, but the inference is clear.)

Following is an example from the Rhapsody wherein the the melodic flatted third is used simply as a coloration of a major triad:

Example 8-14. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 129-134

Pedal tones:

An element of blues accompaniment which is familiar to almost everyone is the pedal tone. Over the root of the I chord, I and IV (in the six-four inversion) can endlessly oscillate.¹⁴⁵

145. The I six-four chord is usually considered to be a suspension of the dominant (V). In exactly the same way, the IV six-four chord can be considered a suspension of the tonic (I).

Example 8-15. St. Louis Blues.
measures 49-51

CHORUS G Gdim G Gdim G Gdim G Gdim G C G C

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

In Gershwin's hands, (example 8-16) this process takes on a more complicated hue. (Incidentally, this phrase is part of a formal blues design of sorts, as in examples 8-10 and 8-11.)

Example 8-16. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 161-163.

CHAPTER IX

NOVELTY PIANO: ZEZ CONFREY'S STUMBLING

Rhythm

Expansion of basic syncopation:

Syncopation in a three to four relationship with the basic pulse was observed in the early ragtime of Scott Joplin (Example 7-4). This technique became a standard practice for ragtime, and grew more sophisticated with time. In examples 7-3, 7-4 and 7-5, the basic unit of the three to four relationship was the sixteenth note. In example 9-1, it is expanded to the half note. The entire central motivic idea is repeated three times over a duple accompaniment, as opposed to simply accenting weak beats within a single motivic statement. This device is often referred to as "secondary rag," and appeared in a great deal of ragtime before novelty piano. Scott Joplin seems to have actively discouraged its use.¹⁴⁶

146. Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Shirmer, 1985), 245, 286-87.

Example 9-1. Zez Confrey, Stumbling.
measures 21-22

The same technique is present in example 9-2, with a descending motive as opposed to an ascending one. Here, the duple meter is well established in the listener's mind, and the steady metrical pulse of basic syncopation is abandoned in favor of the more complex substructure described at example 7-6. The entire passage (from measure 187 to 196) serves as a kind of "syncopation cadenza" on the one 6-4 chord before it finally resolves to the dominant and cadences in G major.

Example 9-2. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 188-189

Meno

Confrey's syncopation represented a point between Joplin and Gershwin: Although it was used on a larger scale than Joplin's (as example 9-1 demonstrates), Confrey's left hand, as a rule, conforms to the meter as in earlier ragtime. Exceptions like example 9-3 usually occur when the left and right hand are articulating a single line (also see examples 7-9 and 9-7).

Example 9-3. Confrey, Coaxing the Piano.

measures 35-37

The musical notation shows a piano accompaniment for measures 35-37. The right hand plays a syncopated melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady bass line. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Chord symbols are: Dm, Bb7, Eb7, Bbm, Cm, and Eb7.

Dotting the eighth:

Another element in the development of syncopation involved the smallest note value (usually the eighth or sixteenth) and whether they were even or dotted. The dotted eighth was rare in Joplin's music (one exception is "Solace", a Mexican Serenade, where the accompaniment is in a habañera rhythm). Syncopation was derived through emphasizing weak beats, not through what would later be called "swinging."

Example 9-4. Scott Joplin, Elite Syncopations.
measures 9-12



Confrey experimented with dotted rhythms in his first years (1921-22). (This was common in late rags in the 'teens and early 1920s.)

Example 9-5. Confrey, Stumbling.
measures 9-12

The musical notation for Example 9-5 shows four measures of music. The right hand (treble clef) features a highly syncopated melody with many dotted rhythms and complex fingerings (e.g., 2 1 2, 2 3 2, 2 1 2, 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 4 3 2 1). The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady accompaniment with quarter notes and chords. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major or D minor).

Rhapsody in Blue (written in 1924) has a conspicuous absence of dotted rhythms, and the notated syncopation is once again realized solely by accenting weak or unexpected beats.

Example 9-6. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 17-18



This does not represent a step backwards, but rather an acknowledgement of performance practice developments. With the evolution of "stride" piano and improvised jazz, performers assumed a flexibility with the division of the pulse that had not existed in early ragtime. It is true that Rhapsody in Blue was intended for the concert stage (see examples 9-10 and 9-11), but on his own piano-roll recordings of the Rhapsody, Gershwin occasionally "swings" these straight-eighths. Interestingly, Confrey did not regularly employ notated dotted rhythms after 1924.¹⁴⁷

Idiomatic devices:

The idiomatic technique of dividing a single line between the hands continues through Zez Confrey's music. (See example 7-9, Maple Leaf Rag, measures 7-8.) These lines are

147. There are some notable exceptions (e.g. Jack in the Box and Jay Walk in 1927).

often made up of quicker note values than surrounding material, and a virtuosic effect is intended:

Example 9-7. Confrey, Stumbling.
measures 35-36

The musical score for Example 9-7, Confrey's Stumbling, measures 35-36, is presented in two staves. The right hand (R.H.) part is marked *loco* and features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The left hand (L.H.) part provides a bass line with various fingerings. The score includes annotations for 'R.H.' and 'L.H.' parts, as well as specific fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8) and a tritone resolution in the R.H. part.

The tritone played an increasingly important role in novelty piano music of the 1920s. The harmonic significance is discussed in examples 9-18 through 9-23. There was another, more immediate significance to the tritone resolutions used by Confrey in his 1921 hit Kitten on the Keys. It was an idiomatic gesture on the keyboard which involved sliding the second finger from a black note to a white note. This "trick" could make a less nimble pianist appear more fluent, and was no doubt a contributing factor to the piece's success.

Example 9-8. Confrey, Kitten on the Keys.
measures 7-8



The whole concept of "novelty piano", in fact, revolved around finding new twists on current material. If something could be more easily executed, or sound more facile, people were interested.¹⁴⁸

When Gershwin accepted the commission to write the Rhapsody, he was certainly thinking in terms of what would interest the performing public. (Sales of sheet music, not record sales, were the primary royalty generator.) The last major section of Rhapsody begins with a "novel" idiomatic device. The performer soon realizes that the notes barred in groups of two from above need only a single impulse from the wrist. A gentle drumming of the hands could produce a single line that was both exotic in its rhythm and impressive in its speed. While idiomatic writing is nearly as old as composition itself, it was the rise of syncopation in ragtime

148. It is this phenomenon that drew people to clever titles, captivating art work, etc.

and novelty piano that created a public appetite for passages such as this:

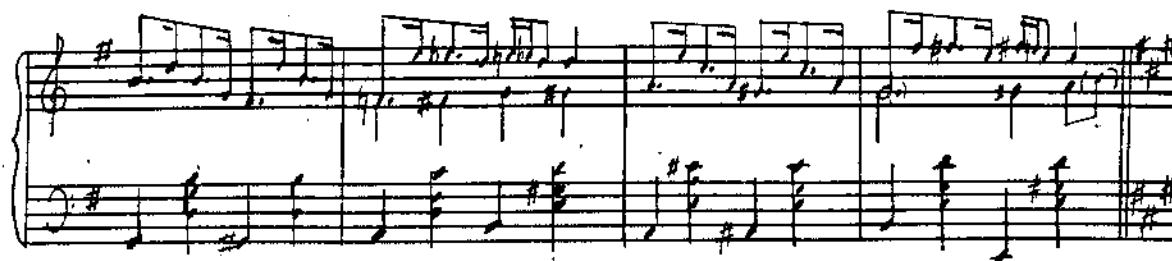
Example 9-9. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 328-331



Stylistic considerations:

As close to Confrey as Gershwin is harmonically and rhythmically, Rhapsody in Blue is intended as a piece of classical music, not novelty piano. There are places in the Rhapsody that look as if they could just as easily come from a novelty piano piece by Confrey, if only they were slightly rearranged. Consider the following four measures, with their light-hearted syncopation and contrary motion between the hands:

Example 9-10. Rhapsody in Blue. Arranged in the style of novelty piano.
measures 157-160



Here is what Gershwin actually wrote. Neither the rhythm or the harmony is substantially different, but the passage, in this "smoothed out" form, is utterly transformed:

Example 9-11. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 157-160

Harmony

As discussed in chapter VII, syncopation was first used to articulate only the most basic chromatic formulae, if any chromaticism was involved at all. By the early 1920s, more

advanced chromatic formulae were regularly presented in syncopation. Here is an example of a melodic line which outlines chromatically descending sixths:

Example 9-12. Confrey, Stumbling.
measures 17-18

The musical score for Example 9-12 shows two measures of music. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with a chromatic descending pattern of sixths. The notes are: G4 (finger 2), F#4 (finger 5), E4 (finger 1), D4 (finger 2), C4 (finger 5), B3 (finger 4), A3 (finger 1), G3 (finger 5), F3 (finger 5), E3 (finger 5), D3 (finger 5), C3 (finger 5). The left hand (bass clef) plays a simple harmonic accompaniment with notes: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2, C2.

Harmonic chromaticism:

Confrey's interest in European chromaticism is clearly evident in My Pet of 1921. Written in a minor key (B), he takes advantage of the major six chord in chromatic proximity to the dominant:

Example 9-13. Confrey, My Pet.
measures 96-102

The musical score for Example 9-13 shows two measures of music. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with a chromatic descending pattern of sixths. The notes are: G4 (finger 5), F#4 (finger 4), E4 (finger 3), D4 (finger 2), C4 (finger 1), B3 (finger 5), A3 (finger 4), G3 (finger 3), F3 (finger 2), E3 (finger 1), D3 (finger 5), C3 (finger 4), B2 (finger 3), A2 (finger 2), G2 (finger 1). The left hand (bass clef) plays a simple harmonic accompaniment with notes: G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F1, E1, D1, C1. The score includes a tempo marking 'Grandioso' and a dynamic marking 'mf'. Chord symbols F# and G7 are indicated above the right hand staff.

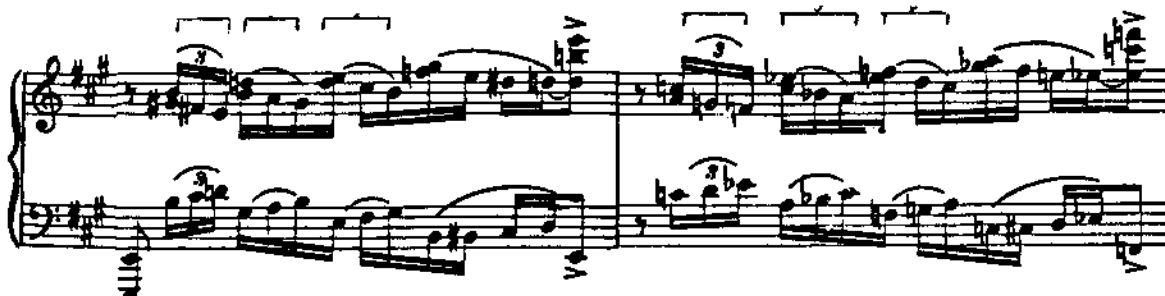
The piece is built around this idea from the beginning, which alternates the dominant with the subdominant, always in an inversion which highlights the chromatic proximity of F#- A# and G - B.

Example 9-14. Confrey, My Pet.
measures 1-4

Allegro moderato

Gershwin was still more adventuresome in syncopated chromatic presentation. Example 9-15 involves chromaticism at multiple levels (melodic and harmonic), and in both parallel and contrary motion between the hands.

Example 9-15. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 65-66



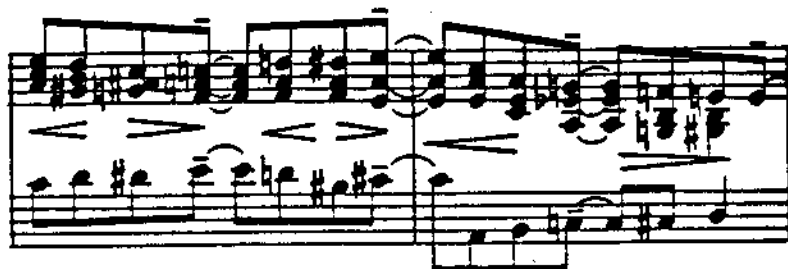
Example 9-16 provides another opportunity to observe Confrey's syncopated chromaticism. As in example 9-12, notice the preponderance of sixths (and thirds).

Example 9-16. Confrey, Stumbling.
measures 67-69

Here is an example of Gershwin's chromaticism with thirds and sixths, in syncopation and contrary motion. Confrey's chromaticism was generally limited to single lines, two note intervals where the voices could move in parallel or contrary motion, or blocked chords where all the voices moved in parallel motion. Gershwin's writing was often denser: he was more likely than Confrey to use blocked chords where

the individual voices moved chromatically in varying directions.

Example 9-17. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 44-45



Tritone sequences:

As early as 1921, Confrey was using multiple tritone resolutions in quick succession, and abrupt "special effect" modulations which were dependent on chromatic motion.

Example 9-18 illustrates the effectiveness of these quick multiple tritone resolutions. Its impact was undoubtedly not lost on Gershwin - Kitten on the Keys was a big hit, performed at the Aeolian Hall concert that premiered the Rhapsody, and remains one of Confrey's most popular compositions.

Example 9-18. Confrey, Kitten on the Keys.
measures 16-19



Chromatic key slipping:

Capricious "slipping" from one key to another was made possible by this bolder chromaticism. In one of the most delightful moments in Kitten on the Keys, the key of Db major is abruptly interrupted by the very foreign E major:

Example 9-19. Confrey, Kitten on the Keys.
measures 34-40

The method of return to Db is significant. Example 7-4 illustrated simple chromaticism via a lower neighbor (in the left hand). In example 9-19, the lower neighbors to the fifth and dominant seventh of B are introduced in the same way (in their incidental relationship to the chord tones), but then suddenly take on an important role: they become enharmonically transformed to the third and fifth of Db. (E# and G# become F and Ab.)

Tritone slipping:

Gershwin takes chromatic implication still further, when in Rhapsody (indeed, in much of his work), he uses a sequence of tritone resolutions to blaze through a series of tonalities. This is often, but not necessarily transition material, and it may or may not be used for modulation. The following series of examples illustrate the flexibility with which Gershwin used this device. In example 9-20, the tritone sequence is non-modulatory and is part of the presentation of basic material. Although it is all dominant in nature, it is transitional only in the limited sense that it divides materials which can more easily be considered "thematic."

Example 9-20. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 33-38

The musical score for Example 9-20, Rhapsody in Blue, measures 33-38, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 33-34) is marked *f LH* and *martellato*, featuring a dense texture of chords and triplets. The second system (measures 35-36) continues the dense texture with various articulations. The third system (measures 37-38) is marked *pp* and *poco rall.*, showing a transition to a more sparse texture with a long, sweeping melodic line in the right hand.

Many novelty rags use similar writing, especially in the introduction and modulatory sections. See Confrey's Greenwich Witch (1921), introduction and transition to the third strain for effective use of chromaticism and syncopation. Also see his Coaxing the Piano (1922), same transition passages.

The tritones in example 9-21 are neither modulatory nor significant as basic material in any way. The series of tritones is a "noveltyism": piano trickery tossed off

nonchalantly, in this instance, to close out a completed section.

Example 9-21. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 135-136

The tritones in example 9-22 do effect a modulation of sorts: The tonal center immediately prior to this excerpt has been shifting rapidly; the latest center was G major. The move (in measure 240) to the dominant of E is without warning, and as if to justify this unprepared jump, the same measure is transposed (to the dominant of Bb!), then repeated in its original form an octave higher, where it is allowed to resolve normally to the next section of the piece. (It is interesting that this measure of tritones is itself twice transposed by a tritone.) It is as if Gershwin discovered the symmetry and flexibility of the tritone (doubtless in part from Zez Confrey) and used it almost indiscriminately.

Example 9-22. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 240-243

The following excerpt is the longest contiguous chromatic phrase in the Rhapsody. It is a tour de force by Gershwin's 1924 standards. It is fully chordal, involves continuous tritone movement, articulates continuous thirds and sixths, is fully chromatic in all voices, and uses continuous contrary motion. It also effects a modulation (to the coda).

Example 9-23. Rhapsody in Blue.
measures 425-430

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

George Gershwin was a great talent, and he was a product of his times. His was the first generation of composers to experience the kind of notoriety that only the twentieth century could provide. He was not drawn to music in the way most historically well known composers have been. Gershwin arrived at a precipitous moment in history: music, and the business of music, was to change more radically in a shorter time than ever before or since. Gershwin was not like Josquin or Beethoven: he did not create new musical forms to address his age. He was not like Bach or Brahms: he did not carry a noble tradition forward to new elegance. He was no great innovator, but he was certainly not merely a follower. Gershwin was excited by the rapidly changing sounds he heard, and those sounds were not emanating from European musical tradition. It is likely that if he had been born into privilege, and had the finest musical education at his disposal, he would not have been so attracted to the unpolished sounds he heard around him. We are fortunate that Tin Pan Alley was able to educate him to these unpolished sounds. We are fortunate, not only that he had talent, but

that he had the drive to succeed -- not as an artist, but as a composer. For him, this had less to do with art than with adulation. To be fully developed as a musician was far less important than to be fully recognized as a worldly success. For all his effort at self-promotion and marketing, the flow of his fertile imagination proceeded almost effortlessly. His best composition was born of improvisation -- and yet he never learned to play well enough to handle the standard repertoire. By the time of Porgy and Bess he was gaining the musical stature of a truly great composer. At the time of the Rhapsody, he was a tunesmith. But he had an uncanny ability to synthesize the disparate musical forces that caught his attention. This made him, in Leonard Bernstein's words, "one of the greatest voices that ever rang out in the history of American urban culture."¹⁴⁹

149. quoted in "An Appreciation" by Leonard Bernstein.
Charles Schwartz, Gershwin: His Life and Music (New York: Da Capo, 1973).

APPENDIX

ORIGINAL RAGS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN SCOTT JOPLIN'S ORIGINAL
COMPOSITION AND JELLY ROLL MORTON'S
JAZZ VERSION

The evolution from ragtime to jazz is one of the most fascinating chapters in American folk music. Any insight into how this transition happened helps us to better understand Gershwin's musical milieu. In their book The Art of Ragtime, William Schafer and Johannes Reidel discuss in some detail the difference between ragtime and later jazz piano styles. The following is an excerpt from that discussion, followed by Scott Joplin's Original Rags (published on May 3, 1899), and a later version of that rag by Jelly Roll Morton.

The idea of "ragging" was current even while Joplin's classic rags made their first impact on the public, and there was never a clear distinction between the formal principles which Joplin represented and this concept of a flexible folk-ragtime style.

The distinction between ragtime and those later styles derived from it is perhaps clearer. Most early jazz pianists were trained on ragtime and knew it well, both in folk versions and through the formalized works of Joplin and his followers. An excellent jazz reconstruction of ragtime occurs in Jelly Roll Morton's personalized version of Joplin's first published rag, "Original Rags." Jelly Roll's "transformation" of Joplin's music was consciously and carefully developed. In his Library of Congress interviews with Alan Lomax,

Morton discussed early ragtime stylists and writers, and he described his own departure from principles of ragtime as a process of creative exploration. To demonstrate, he played "Maple Leaf Rag" - first a fairly strict version of Joplin's written score, then his own free adaptation, in "Jelly Roll style". After this demonstration, he went on to record "Original Rags" in the same kind of free transformation. Morton's close friend and backer, Roy Carew, a long-time ragtime historian, urged him to continue his work with ragtime. At the time of his death, Jelly Roll was contemplating a "transformation" of Tom Turpin's highly inventive "A Ragtime Nightmare" (1900).

...Morton's basic method of transformation (is) a more sophisticated musical process than the early "ragging" idea or the later popular practice of "swinging" the classics. Morton alters the boom-chick bass line of Joplin's composition and uses a freer left hand, which is often syncopated more than ragtime usually allows. Morton gives himself the liberty of adding syncopations to Joplin's treble line also, a process of "jazzing" that can destroy the coherence of ragtime melody and rhythm unless used with Morton's selectivity and restraint. This becomes what Morton commonly called "stamp" piano, a propulsive two-handed improvisatory style that departs from ragtime's classical restraints but retains its form. An example like this transcription of "Original Rags" stands between classic ragtime and Morton's later original ragtime-jazz works such as "Perfect Rag"... . Morton never traveled far from his early ragtime discipline, and this example, when compared with Joplin's score, shows in detail his debts to ragtime.¹⁵⁰

150. William J. Shafer and Johannes Reidel, The Art Of Ragtime (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 178-179.

ORIGINAL RAGS

BY SCOTT JOPLIN

The first system of musical notation for 'Original Rags' consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a complex, syncopated melody in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) is present in the right hand.

The second system of musical notation continues the piece. It features a melodic line in the right hand with various ornaments and a steady accompaniment in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is visible.

The third system of musical notation shows further development of the syncopated melody and accompaniment. The right hand has a dense texture of notes, while the left hand provides a solid harmonic base.

The fourth system of musical notation continues the intricate rhythmic patterns. The right hand features a series of sixteenth-note runs, and the left hand maintains a consistent accompaniment.

The fifth system of musical notation concludes the piece. It includes a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2.'). The second ending features a *tr* (trill) and a *vall* (ritardando) marking. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand.

First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic marking. The music consists of chords and melodic lines in both staves.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with similar chordal and melodic textures in both staves.

Third system of musical notation, showing a change in dynamics to *f* in the treble clef part. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

Fourth system of musical notation, marked with a first ending (*1st time p*) and a second ending (*2d time f*). The notation includes slurs and dynamic markings.

Fifth system of musical notation, featuring a complex melodic line in the treble clef with many slurs and ties, and a supporting bass line.

Sixth and final system of musical notation on the page, ending with a double bar line and repeat signs. The treble clef part has a final flourish.

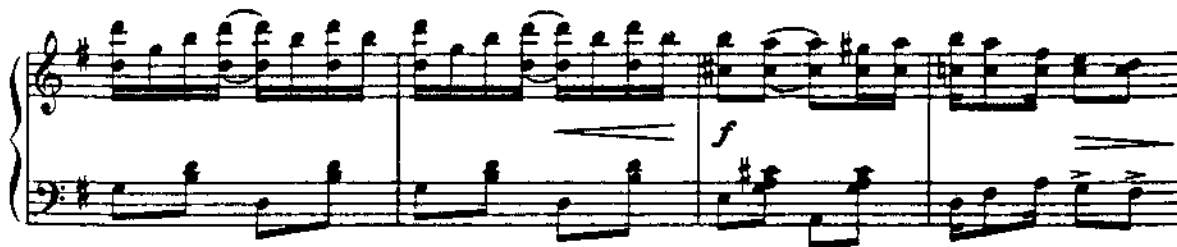
58



First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *ff* (fortissimo) and includes a *dim.* (diminuendo) instruction. The key signature has one sharp (F#).



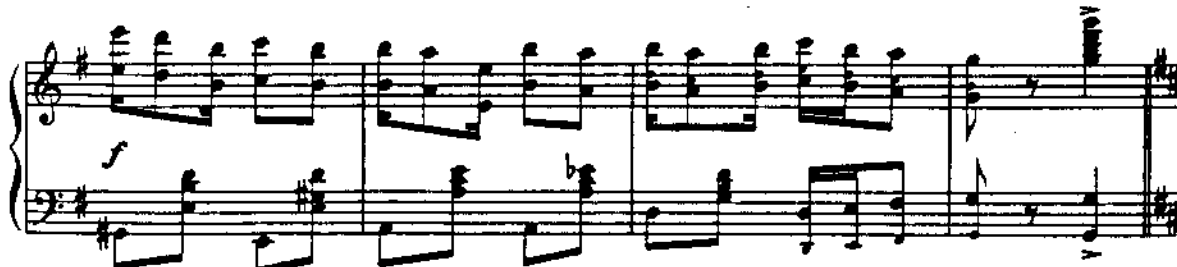
Second system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *p* (piano). The key signature has one sharp (F#).



Third system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *f* (forte). The key signature has one sharp (F#).



Fourth system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *p* (piano). The key signature has one sharp (F#).



Fifth system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *f* (forte). The key signature has one sharp (F#).



Sixth system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The music is marked *ff* (fortissimo) and includes the instruction *Brilliant.* The key signature has one sharp (F#).

This page of musical notation is arranged in six systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system features a complex melodic line in the treble with many beamed notes and a steady accompaniment in the bass. The second system continues this texture with similar rhythmic patterns. The third system begins with a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in the bass staff, indicating a strong, loud passage. The fourth system shows a more melodic development in the treble with slurs. The fifth system continues the melodic and harmonic progression. The sixth system concludes the piece with a *Fine* marking in the bass staff, indicating the end of the composition.

Scott Joplin's
ORIGINAL RAGS

as played by
Jelly Roll Morton

Transcribed by
Richard Thompson

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a tempo marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lower staff is in bass clef. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex, syncopated melody in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

The second system of musical notation continues the piece with two staves. The right hand features a highly rhythmic and syncopated melody, while the left hand provides a consistent harmonic and rhythmic foundation.

The third system of musical notation shows the continuation of the piece. The right hand's melody is characterized by frequent syncopation and a driving eighth-note pattern. The left hand maintains a steady accompaniment.

The fourth system of musical notation continues the piece. The right hand's melody is highly rhythmic and syncopated, with frequent use of triplets and sixteenth notes. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

The fifth system of musical notation concludes the piece. The right hand's melody is highly rhythmic and syncopated, with frequent use of triplets and sixteenth notes. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand.

First system of musical notation, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a series of chords and eighth-note patterns. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and a steady eighth-note bass line.

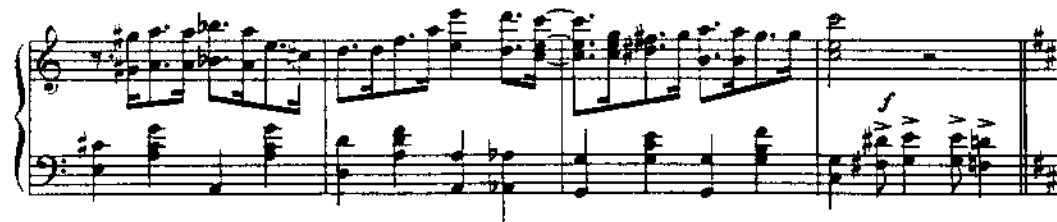
Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece. The treble staff features more complex chordal textures and rhythmic patterns. The bass staff continues with a consistent accompaniment.

Third system of musical notation. The treble staff shows a progression of chords with some melodic movement. The bass staff maintains the accompaniment.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble staff has a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff has a more active line. A dynamic marking *mf* is present in the bass staff.

Fifth system of musical notation. The treble staff features a more active melodic line with sixteenth notes. The bass staff has a steady accompaniment.

Sixth system of musical notation. The treble staff continues with a melodic line. The bass staff has a steady accompaniment.





First system of musical notation, featuring a treble and bass clef. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. A dynamic marking 'v' is present in the bass staff.

Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece. The treble staff shows a more active melodic line with some sixteenth-note passages. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment. A dynamic marking 'v' is present in the bass staff.

Third system of musical notation. The treble staff features a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff has a consistent accompaniment. A dynamic marking 'f' is present in the bass staff.

Fourth system of musical notation. The treble staff has a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

Fifth system of musical notation. The treble staff has a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment.

Sixth system of musical notation, the final system on the page. The treble staff has a melodic line with some grace notes. The bass staff continues with a steady accompaniment. A dynamic marking 'v' is present in the bass staff. The word 'gua' is written above the treble staff.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Apel, Willi. The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600, 5th ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1961.
- Armitage, Merle. George Gershwin, Man and Legend. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1958.
- George Gershwin. Armitage, Merle, ed. New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1938.
- Berlin, Edward A. Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1980.
- _____. Reflections and Research on Ragtime. Brooklyn, NY.: Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City of New York, 1987.
- Blesh, Rudi and Janis, Harriet. They All Played Ragtime. New York: Oak Publications, 1966.
- Bordman, Gerald Martin. Jerome Kern, His Life and Music. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Brooks, Tilford. America's Black Musical Heritage. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- Buerkle, Jack Vincent and Barker, Danny. Bourbon Street Black. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Charters, Samuel Barclay. The Legacy of the Blues. New York: Da Capo, 1977.
- Chase, Gilbert. America's Music. New York: McGraw Hill, 1966.
- Cone, James H. The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972.

- Cook, Bruce. Listen to the Blues. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973.
- Copland, Aaron. What to Listen for in Music. New York: The New American Library, 1967.
- Courlander, Harold. Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.
- Ewen, David. A Journey to Greatness; the Life and Music of George Gershwin. New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1956.
- Feel the Spirit, Studies in Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Music. Keck, George R. and Martin, Sherrill V., ed. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Gammond, Peter. Scott Joplin and the Ragtime Era. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.
- Goldberg, Isaac. Tin Pan Alley. New York: The John Day Company, 1930
- Handy, W. C. Father of the Blues, an Autobiography. New York: Macmillan, 1942.
- Hasse, John Edward, ed. Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music. New York: Shirmer Books, 1985.
- Jablonski, Edward and Stewart, Lawrence D. The Gershwin Years Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co, 1973.
- Jasen, David A. Recorded Ragtime 1897-1958. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973.
- _____. Tin Pan Alley: The Composers, the Songs, the Performers and their Times. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1988.
- Jasen, David A. and Trebor Jay Tichenor. Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.

- Jones, LeRoi. Blues People. New York: William Morrow, 1963.
- Kanter, Kenneth Aaron. The Jews on Tin Pan Alley. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982.
- Leonard, Neil. Jazz and the White American: The Acceptance of a New Art Form. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Lomax, Alan. Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole, and "Inventor of Jazz". New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1950.
- Nanry, Charles. The Jazz Text. New York: D. Ban Nostrand Co, 1979.
- Oakley, Giles. The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co, 1977.
- Osgood, Henry Osborne. So This is Jazz. Boston: Little, Brown, 1926.
- Payne, Robert. Gershwin. New York: Pyramid Books, 1960.
- Reed, Addison Walker. The Life and Works of Scott Joplin. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1973. Ph.D. Dissertation for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973.
- Roach, Hildred. Black American Music, Past and Present. Boston: Crescendo Publishing, 1973.
- Schafer, William John and Johannes Riedel. The Art of Ragtime; Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973.
- Schuller, Gunther. Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Schwartz, Charles M. George Gershwin: A Selective Bibliography and Discography. Detroit: Information Coordinators, for The College Music Society.

_____. Gershwin: His Life and Music. New York: Da Capo Press, 1973.

_____. The Life and Orchestral Works of George Gershwin. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc, 1969.
Ph.D. Dissertation for New York University, 1969.

Shaw, Arnold. Black Popular Music in America. New York: Schirmer, 1968.

_____. The Jazz Age: Popular Music in the 1920s. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Slonimsky, Nicolas. Lexicon of Musical Invective. New York: Coleman-Ross, 1953, pg. 105.

Small, Christopher. Music of the Common Tongue. New York: Riverrun Press, 1987.

Southern, Eileen. The Music of Black Americans: A History. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971.

Stravinsky, Igor and Robert Craft. Dialogues and a Diary. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963.

Tawa, Nicholas E. The Way to Tin Pan Alley: American Popular Song, 1866-1910. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990.

Waldo, Terry, with forward by Eubie Blake. This is Ragtime. New York: Da Capo Press, 1984, c 1976.

Walton, Ortiz. Music: Black, White and Blue. New York: William Morrow, 1972.

Wiebe, Robert. The Search for Order, 1877-1920. London: Macmillan, 1967.

Whitcomb, Ian. After the Ball, Pop Music From Rag to Rock. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972.

Wilder, Alec. American Popular Song, the Great Innovators, 1900-1950. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Articles:

Apel, Willi. "Syncopation", Harvard Dictionary of Music, 2nd ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972.

Arvey Verna. "Afro-American Music Memo" Music Journal XXXVII/9 (November 1969), 36, 68-69.

_____. "George Gershwin Through the Eyes of a Friend" Opera and Concert XIII/4 (April 1948) 10-11, 27-28.

Bernstein Leonard. "A Nice Gershwin Tune" The Atlantic Monthly LXCIV/4 (April 1955) 39-42.

Briggs, John. "George Gershwin: A Reappraisal" Tomorrow VII/11 (July, 1948), 20-24.

Buchanan, Charles L. "Gershwin and Musical Snobbery" The Outlook CXCIV/5 (February 7, 1927), 146-48.

Cadman, B. Meredith. "Gershwin Algerized" Etude LXIV/9 (September 1946), 491. Book review of Ewen's A Journey To Greatness: The Life and Music of George Gershwin.

Campell, Frank C. "The Musical Scores of George Gershwin" The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions XI/3 (May 1954) 127-39.

_____. "Some Manuscripts of George Gershwin" Manuscripts (Winter 1954), 66-75.

Chasins, Abram. "Paradox in Blue" Saturday Review of Literature XXXIX/8 (February 25, 1956), 37, 39, 64-66.

Christensen, A. W., Ed. Christensen's Ragtime Review v. 1-2, no. 7; Dec. 1914 - Apr. 1916. Chicago, 2 vol. ill. (including music).

_____. ed. Ragtime Review v. 2, no 8 - v. 4, no. 1; May 1916 - Jan. 1918. Chicago, 3 vol. ill. (including music).

David, Hubert W. "Gershwin, the Man We Love" Melody Maker XXX/1108 (December 11, 1954), 8.

Downes, Olin. "A Concert of Jazz" The New York Times LXXIII/24, 126 (February 13, 1924). A review of the premiere of Rhapsody in Blue.

Downes, Olin. Gershwin Memorial: Retrospect of Rapid Rise of Composer and the Development of His Art" The New York Times LXXXVII/29, 387 (July 10, 1938) Sec. IX, 5.

Engle, Carl "Views and Reviews" The Musical Quarterly XVIII/4 (October 1932) 646-51.

Gauthier, Eva. "The Roaring Twenties" Musical Courier CLI/3 (February 1, 1955), 42-44.

Gershwin, George. "Does Jazz Belong to Art?" Second Line XIV (September-October 1965), 120-123. Reprinted from Singing I/7 (July, 1926) 13-14.

_____. "Mr. Gershwin Replies to Mr. Kramer" Singing I/10 (October, 1926), 17-18.

_____. "The Relation of Jazz to American Music" in Henry Cowell, ed. American Composers on American Music. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1933, reprinted New York: Fredrick Ungar, 1962, 186-87, also 8, 139, 207.

Gershwin, Ira. "Gershwin on Gershwin" News-Week XXXIV/17 (October 23, 1944), 14.

_____. "Twenty Years After" The New Yorker XXVIII/13 (May 17, 1952), 26-27.

"'Gershwin's Music Subversive' says Senator McCarthy" Melody Maker XXIX/1031 (June 13, 1953), 12.

Gilman, Lawrence. "Paul Whiteman and the Palais Royalists Extend Their Kingdom; Jazz at Aeolian Hall" New York Tribune LXXXIII/28, 213 (February 17, 1924), 9.

Goldburg, Isaac. "What's Jewish in Gershwin's Music" B'nai B'rith Magazine L/7 (April, 1936), 226-227, 247.

Hammerstein, Oscar. "Gershwin" The Music Journal VIII/4 (April, 1955), 21.

"Inside Stuff -- Music" Variety CCII/5 (April 4, 1956), 49.

Jablonski, Edward. "Gershwin on Music" Musical America LXXXIII/7 (July, 1962), 32-35.

Jacobi, Frederick. "The Future of Gershwin" Modern Music LV/1 (November-December, 1937), 3-7.

Kolodin, Irving. "Paradox in Blue" The Saturday Review XXXIX/8 (February 25, 1956), 37, 60-61.

Levant, Oscar. "Variations on a Gershwin Theme" Town and Country XCIV/4, 206 (November, 1939), 58-61, 83-84.

Levine, Henry. "Gershwin, Handy and the Blues" Clavier IX/7 (October, 1970).

Lipsky, Leon. "George Gershwin, Jazz Glorified" The American Hebrew CXVIII/2 (November 20, 1925), 59, 67.

Mabie, Janet. "Rhapsody on Gershwin" The Christian Science Monitor XXVII/219 (August 14, 1935), 3,14. (In Weekly Magazine Section).

Maier, Guy. "Adventures of a Piano Teacher" Etude LXIX/11 (November, 1951), 26.

Mellers, Wilfrid. "Gershwin's Achievements" The Monthly Musical Record LXXXIII [= No. 943] (January, 1953), 13-16.

Morgan, Alfred Lindsay. "New Musical Heights in Radio" Etude LX/12 (December, 1942), 806. (About Rhapsody in Blue).

"The Most Potent Forces of the First Half of the Twentieth Century" Etude LXIX/1 (January, 1951), 9-11, 47-48.

"Music by Slide Rule" News-Week XXIV/13 (September 25, 1944), 80-82. (Studies with Schillinger).

Newell, George. "George Gershwin and Jazz" The Outlook CXLVIII/9 (February 29, 1928), 342-43, 351.

Niles, Abbe. "A Note On Gershwin" The Nation CXXVIII/3319 (February 13, 1929), 193-94.

Osgood, Henry Osborne. "The Jazz Bugaboo" The American Mercury VI [No. 23] (November, 1925), 328-30.

Slonimsky, Nicolas. "Musical Oddities" Etude CXXIII (April 1955), 4-5.

Stravinsky, Igor and Robert Craft. "Some Composers: By Igor Stravinsky with Robert Craft". Musical America LXXXII/6 (June 1962), 6, 8.

Taylor, Deems. "Words and Music [review of Rhapsody in Blue]" New York World LXIV/22, 825 (February 17, 1924), 2-M (Metropolitan Section).

"The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Premiere Performance" Southwestern Musician XV/8 (April, 1949), 314.

Van Vechten, Carl. "George Gershwin: An American Composer Who Is Writing Notable Music in the Jazz Idiom" Vanity Fair XXIV/1 (March, 1925), 40, 78, 84.

Waters, Edward N. "Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue" The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Acquisitions IV/3 (May, 1947), 65-66.

Editions of Music:

W. C. Handy, ed. Blues, an Anthology. New York: Da Capo, 1949.

Confrey, Zez. Ragtime, Novelty and Jazz Piano Solos. Introduction by David A. Jasen. Melville, NY.: Belwin Mills, 1982.

Gershwin, George. Gershwin at the Keyboard, 18 Song Hits Arranged by the Composer For Piano. Seacaucus, N.J.: Warner Brothers, no date given.

_____. "Preludes for Piano." Seacaucus, NJ: Warner Brothers, 1927.

_____. "Rhapsody in Blue." Seacaucus, NJ: Warner Brothers, 1924.

Joplin, Scott. Scott Joplin, Best of Ragtime, Carol Cuellar, ed. Miami: CPP/Belwin, 1992.

Marrone, Sandy, ed. "The St. Louis Blues" and Other Song Hits of 1914. New York: Dover, 1990.

Sousa, John Philip. Sousa's Great Marches in Piano Transcription, selected and introduced by Lester S. Levy. New York: Dover, 1975.