CHAPTER

31

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: VERNACULAR MUSIC

The early twentieth century was a time of rapid change in technology, society, and the arts, including music. The invention of devices for recording sound began to change the way music was preserved, distributed, and sold, making music in sound as permanent and widely available as music in notation. As a result, the vibrant traditions of ***vernacular music*** loom larger in the history of twentieth-century music than in any earlier era. African American musicians, soon joined by white collaborators and competitors, developed new currents in ***ragtime*** and ***jazz*** that won the world's attention and made popular music more culturally and historically significant than it had ever been. Composers in the classical tradition, forced to compete for space on concert programs with the classics of the past, sought to win an audience in the present and secure a place in the permanent repertoire of the future by offering a unique style and perspective that balanced tradition and novel elements. This chapter will describe the historical background for the last years of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, and then will focus on developments in vernacular music, especially the African American tradition. The next two chapters will examine the first two generations of modern composers in the classical tradition, born between 1860 and 1885.

Modern Times, 1889–1918

The turn of a new century is a convenient and memorable marker for delineating a new historical period, but life rarely follows the calendar so closely. Historians sometimes speak of a "long nineteenth century" from the French Revolution in 1789, which ended the older order, to the start of World War I in 1914, which ended four decades of relative peace in Europe. In other respects, the new age of greater global interconnection and accelerating innovation in science and technology characteristic of the twentieth century already seemed to be underway by the time of the Paris Universal Exposition (World's Fair) of 1889, when people gathered from all over the world and the Eiffel Tower, the tallest structure humans had ever built and a triumph of modern engineering, was opened to the public. Figure 31.1 shows this impressive structure as it appeared in March 1889 at the opening of the Fair.

The period between the Paris Exposition and the end of World War I in 1918 was more self-consciously "modern" than any previous era, so much so that a century later we still think of art, music, and literature from this time as modern. The pace of technological and social change was more rapid than in any previous era, prompting both an optimistic sense of progress and a nostalgia for a simpler past.

New technologies

One symbol of progress was the electrification of industry, businesses, and homes. Electric lighting increasingly replaced gas lighting, and electrical appliances were produced for the home market. Internal combustion engines fueled by petroleum gradually replaced coal-fueled engines in steamships and factories. By streamlining production and distribution, Henry Ford made his Model T the first widely affordable automobile in 1908.

FIGURE 31.1: *The Eiffel Tower and the Champ de Mars as seen at the Paris Exposition of 1889. At the time, it was the tallest structure built by human hands.* (COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION)

launching the modern world's love affair with the car. Wilbur and Orville Wright flew the first working airplane in 1903, and by the end of the next decade airplanes were used for both military and commercial purposes. New products, improved transportation, and new marketing techniques combined to expand the mass market for manufactured goods. Of crucial importance for music were new technologies for reproducing music, from player pianos to phonographs (see Innovations: Recorded Sound, pp. 768–69). Meanwhile, moving picture shows—the movies—offered a new form of theatrical entertainment with musical accompaniment.

Economy and social conflicts

The growth of industry fostered an expanding economy and rapidly growing cities. The first steel-framed skyscraper was erected in Chicago in 1889, packing more indoor space for people and businesses into a smaller area of land than ever before, and in the coming decades the tall buildings transformed the look of cities around the world. People continued to migrate from rural areas to cities, although not without regret; Tin Pan Alley songs and Mahler symphonies alike expressed nostalgia for the countryside. Economic inequalities prompted workers to organize in labor unions to fight for better conditions, inspired social reformers such as Jane Addams to work with the poor, and aroused revolutionary movements in Russia and elsewhere. International trade continued to increase. European nations grew rich importing raw materials and food, and marketing manufactured goods to the world. The great powers—Britain, France, and the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires—competed for dominance, while the peoples of eastern Europe, from the Balkans to Finland, agitated for their own freedom. Increasing tensions and complex political issues culminated in World War I. The modern, efficient machinery of war killed millions of soldiers, ending the hope that technological improvements would lead inevitably to the betterment of humankind. The collapse of widespread faith in human progress left deep disillusionment in its wake.

United States

During these years, the United States emerged as a world power. It easily defeated Spain in the Spanish-American war of 1898, taking over Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, and other Spanish colonies. American industries and overseas trade expanded rapidly, growing to rival the industrial powerhouses of Britain and Germany. The United States' entrance into World War I in April 1917 on the side of Britain and France tipped the scales against Germany and Austria-Hungary, and President Woodrow Wilson played a leading role in negotiating the peace.

As in Europe, rapid economic development brought social conflict. The Progressive movement created reforms to reduce the dominance of large corporations. Immigrants continued to stream to the United States, now increasingly from southern and eastern Europe, and their presence in cities caused strains with earlier immigrant groups. Looking for new opportunities, African Americans from the South moved to the large northern cities but because of racist attitudes settled into segregated neighborhoods. Here a black urban culture began to develop, in which music was a major cultural force.

New views on the human mind

Psychologists raised new questions about what it meant to be human. Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalysis, theorizing that human behavior springs from unconscious desires that are repressed by cultural restraints and that dreams are windows into a person's internal conflicts. Ivan Pavlov showed that dogs accustomed to being fed after a bell was rung would salivate at the sound of the bell even if no food was present and that humans could likewise be conditioned to respond to stimuli in predictable ways. These approaches challenged the Romantic view of individuals as protagonists of their own dramas, seeming instead to portray humans as subject to internal and social forces of which they were only dimly aware. Such changing views of human nature played a strong role in literature and the other arts.

The arts

Sustained by Romantic notions of art as a window on the divine and of the artist as an enlightened visionary, artists increasingly regarded their work as an end in itself to be appreciated for its own sake. Success was measured not by wide popular appeal but by the esteem of intellectuals and fellow artists. Many artists searched for new and unusual content or techniques. Symbolist poets such as Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, and Stefan George, for example, used intense imagery and disrupted syntax to evoke an indefinite, dreamlike state and to suggest feelings and experiences rather than describing them directly. They focused on the senses and on the present moment, opening new possibilities of sensuality that had strong parallels in art and music.

From impressionism to cubism

In the late nineteenth century, French painters known as *impressionists*—named after Claude Monet's painting *Impression: Sunrise* (1872), shown in Figure 31.2—inaugurated the first in a series of modern artistic movements that utterly

FIGURE 31.2: *Claude Monet,* Impression: Sunrise *(1872). Monet entered this work and eight others in an exhibition he helped to organize in 1874. A critic headlined his mocking review "Exhibition of the Impressionists," picking up on Monet's title and coining a term that would encompass an entire artistic movement. Instead of mixing his colors on a palette, Monet juxtaposed them on the canvas to capture a fleeting moment of the early light of day. Apart from the rowboats and the sun reflecting from the water in the foreground, the tall ships, smokestacks, and cranes blend into the misty blue-gray background against a reddish sky.* (MUSÉE MARMOTTAN, PARIS/ART RESOURCE, NY)

INNOVATIONS

Recorded Sound

The advent of recording technology had the most significant impact on musical culture of any innovation since the printing press. It completely revolutionized the way we experience and share music as listeners, performers, or composers.

When Thomas Edison made the first playable sound recording in his laboratory in Menlo Park, New Jersey, in 1877, using his tinfoil cylinder phonograph shown in Figure 31.3, he intended his new device as a dictation machine for offices. He had no idea that his invention would catapult some musicians to fame and fortune, deliver their product to huge audiences, and spawn a multibillion-dollar industry.

Edison's phonograph recorded sound by a mechanical process. The sound waves, collected by a horn, moved a diaphragm that transmitted its motions to a needle. The needle cut a groove in the cylinder as the latter rotated, turned by a hand crank. The undulations in the groove corresponded to the motions of the diaphragm. To play back the record, the process was reversed: as the crank rotated the cylinder, the shape of the groove made the needle move, which in turn moved the diaphragm, and its vibrations sent the recorded sounds moving through the air.

Edison soon replaced his fragile tinfoil cylinders with wax cylinders, which could be mass-produced by a molding process. Adding a motor to the machine made it possible to maintain a steady speed of rotation, necessary for recording music. Members of John Philip Sousa's band and other artists made recordings that were sold commercially, but quantities were limited because each cylinder had to be recorded separately.

In 1887, Emile Berliner invented a more practical system that recorded on a flat disc, which could be used as a mold to make any number of duplicates. Record players like the one in Figure 31.4 became available in the 1890s, and ten-inch discs with a capacity for four minutes of music on each side were sold for a dollar each, the equivalent of about twenty dollars today.

FIGURE 31.3: *Thomas Edison with his original phonograph, which recorded sounds through impressions on a tinfoil cylinder.* (PHOTO BY HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES)

The early discs featured famous artists, such as the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), who made his first recording in 1902 and whose many records encouraged the medium's acceptance as suitable for opera. Because he became one of the recording industry's earliest superstars, it has been said that "Caruso made the phonograph and it made him." His recordings also preserved his performances beyond the grave. The new technology allowed performers to achieve for the first time the kind of immortality previously available only to composers.

Mechanical recording was well suited for voices, but the limited range of frequencies it could reproduce made orchestral music sound tinny. For years, the only symphony available was Beethoven's Fifth, recorded in 1913 by the Berlin Philharmonic for His Master's Voice. Because it was such a long piece, the company had to issue it on eight discs gathered in an "album," which became the standard format for longer works.

In the 1920s, new methods of recording and reproduction using electricity—including the electric microphone—allowed a great increase in frequency range, dynamic variation, and fidelity, making the medium still more attractive to musicians and music lovers. Falling prices and continuing improvement of the recording process stimulated a growing market for recordings, from popular songs and dance numbers to the classical repertoire. Record companies competed to record the most famous performers, and by the late 1940s most of the better-known orchestral works had been recorded more than ten times each.

FIGURE 31.4: *The "Trademark Model" of the phonograph by His Master's Voice, available beginning in 1898. The firm's name and the dog's pose implied that the device reproduced sound so faithfully that a dog would recognize a recording of his owner's voice.* (BETTMANN/CORBIS)

Encouraged by competition, companies continued to develop new improvements. In 1948, Columbia Records introduced the long-playing record, or LP, which rotated at 33-1/3 revolutions per minute instead of 78, used smaller grooves, and thus allowed twenty-three minutes of music per side instead of four. Longer pieces could be played without interruption, and as shown in Figure 31.5, LPs took up much less space. Music lovers bought the LPs by the millions and got rid of their old 78s. High-fidelity and stereophonic records were introduced in the 1950s, which also saw the debut of an entirely new recording technology: magnetic tape. Philips introduced cassette tapes in 1963, and by the 1970s tape sales were rivaling those of records, especially among consumers who valued portability more than faithful sound reproduction. Then in 1983, Philips and Sony unveiled the Compact Disc, or CD, which stored recorded sound in digital code etched onto a four-inch plastic disc and read by a laser. Even as listeners were replacing all their LPs with CDs, new technologies were being developed that made it possible to download music from the Internet onto a personal computer or portable device.

FIGURE 31.5: *At the unveiling of the new long-playing record, a Columbia Records spokesman compares the foot-high stack of LPs in his hands with the ten-feet-tall pile of 78s needed to record the same amount of music.* (ERIC SCHAAL/TIME MAGAZINE/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES)

The development of recordings irrevocably altered the way people listen to music. No longer did they have to go to a concert hall or gather around a bandstand. They could now sit in their homes and order up a favorite singer or an entire orchestra at their convenience. The visual element of music-making suddenly disappeared; listeners heard performers without seeing them, and musicians played in recording studios for invisible audiences. Listening to recordings often replaced amateur music-making at home, with the paradoxical effect that people devoted less time and effort to engaging actively with music as participants. For many people, listening to music became no longer a communal activity but a largely solitary pursuit. People increasingly used recorded music as a background to other activities, rather than listening with focused concentration.

Along with performers and listeners, composers too have been influenced by the new technologies, being able to avail themselves of musical styles and ideas outside of their ordinary experience. Music from Africa, India, Asia, and elsewhere became available via recording without the hardships or expense of travel, as did the entire history of Western music, from the singing of plainchant by monks in a faraway monastery to the most recent pop tune. Composers since the 1940s have used recorded sounds to make music, allowing them to incorporate an unprecedented variety of sounds.—BRH & JPB

changed styles and attitudes toward art. Rather than depicting things realistically, the impressionists sought to convey atmosphere and sensuous impressions from nature, adopting a stance of detached observation rather than direct emotional engagement. The idea was to capture an instant in time, as one apprehends a scene, before reason can process it. In Monet's paintings, objects and people are suggested by a few brush strokes, often of starkly contrasting colors, leaving it to the viewer's eyes and mind to blend the colors and fill in the missing details. The effect of light on an object is often as much the subject of a painting as is the object itself, as in Monet's series of paintings of haystacks (1890–91) and of the Rouen Cathedral (1892–93) captured at different times of day. The distinction between foreground and background is blurred, flattening the perspective and focusing our attention on the overall impression. Although impressionist paintings are widely popular today, they were at first poorly received, derided as lacking in artistic skill and opposed to traditional aesthetics. Such reactions would also greet other modern styles of painting and music.

Each impressionist painter had a highly individual style, and later artists extended their ideas in unique ways. Paul Cézanne depicted natural scenes and figures as orderly arrangements of geometrical forms and planes of color, as in his painting of Mont Sainte-Victoire (1906) in Figure 31.6. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque further abstracted this idea in *cubism*, a style in which

FIGURE 31.6: *Paul Cézanne,* Mont Sainte-Victoire *(1906). Cézanne painted many versions of this scene visible from his house in Aix-en-Provence in southern France, rendering the massive mountain and the details of the city and countryside as juxtaposed blocks of color in geometrical arrangements.* (PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, MOSCOW, RUSSIA. PHOTO: ERICH LESSING/ART RESOURCE, NY)

three-dimensional objects are represented on a flat plane by breaking them down into geometrical shapes, such as cubes and cones, and juxtaposing or overlapping them in an active, colorful design. Figure 31.7 shows an example, one of a series Picasso painted in 1912 that used the violin as a subject.

The revolution begun by impressionism stimulated new ways of making, seeing, and thinking about paintings, giving birth to movements such as expressionism (discussed in chapter 33), surrealism, and abstract art. All of these movements can be seen as forms of ***modernism*** in art, paralleling the varied forms of modernism in music that we will encounter in the next two chapters. In most of these new movements, artists and their approving critics no longer placed as high a value on attractiveness, immediate comprehensibility, or pleasing the viewer as had painters from the Renaissance to the Romantics. Instead, they sought a deeper engagement, demanding that the viewer work to understand and interpret the image.

We will see all these trends reflected in music in this and the next several chapters. Music was directly affected by the expanding economy, new technologies, the devastation of World War I, the emergence of the United States on the world stage, the role of African American urban culture as a source for new musical styles, new thinking about human nature, and the new modernist artistic movements, with particularly close parallels to symbolism, impressionism, expressionism, and cubism.

FIGURE 31.7: *Pablo Picasso,* Still Life, *1912–13. This cubist painting includes a violin on the right, broken into its various components and planes, and a clarinet on the left, stylized as multiple bars (gray, blue, brown, and black-and-white), most with fingerholes, and concentric circles and a cone to represent the instrument's bell.* (PRIVATE COLLECTION. © 2004 ESTATE OF PABLO PICASSO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY, NEW YORK/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY)

Vernacular Musical Traditions

The impact of prosperity and technology on music, and the growing importance of the United States and especially African Americans, are apparent in the varied and vibrant musical traditions outside the classical concert hall and opera house. These traditions are sometimes referred to as ***vernacular music***, since they are intended to reach a broad musical public in a widely understood language, rather than appealing to an elite.

Impact of recordings

Vernacular traditions assume greater significance in recounting the history of twentieth-century music than in earlier centuries because the advent of recordings has preserved so much more vernacular music. In addition, recordings and other mass media disseminated forms of popular music that otherwise would have remained strictly local.

Lasting importance

Moreover, much vernacular music of the twentieth century has achieved a permanence rivaling that of classical music. We have seen a few examples of

TIMELINE

The Early 20th Century: Vernacular Music

MUSICAL HISTORICAL

- **1889** Paris Universal Exposition
- **1898** Spanish-American War
- **1899** Scott Joplin, *Maple Leaf Rag*
- **1899** Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- **1900** Oil fields discovered in Texas, Persia, and Russia
- **1903** Wilbur and Orville Wright fly first airplane
- **1904** George M. Cohan, *Little Johnny Jones*
- **1905** Albert Einstein's first paper on relativity

popular music that have endured: dance tunes in John Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1651), waltzes by Johann Strauss and Joseph Lanner, songs of Stephen Foster and Tin Pan Alley, Sousa marches, and African American spirituals. But in the twentieth century, the trickle becomes a flood, as some popular songs, Broadway shows, film scores, band pieces, piano rags, and jazz performances become classics in their own traditions, widely played and in many cases more familiar a century later than are the classical works of the same era. These traditions must be part of any history of music since 1900, for they are an integral part of musical culture, important in their own right and as influences on composers in the classical tradition. It was in the realm of vernacular music, with ragtime, jazz, and popular song and later film scores, rock, and hip hop, that the United States became the leading exporter of music to the world, matching in music its impact in industry and world affairs.

POPULAR SONG AND STAGE MUSIC

The most ubiquitous music of the early twentieth century was popular song, performed in cabarets, cafés, music halls, and theaters and published for the home market. Each linguistic region had its own repertoire and styles of popular song, although growing trade and travel enabled some songs to reach an international market. British songs had found audiences in the United States since the eighteenth century, and in the twentieth century American songs became increasingly popular in Britain. Tin Pan Alley was in its heyday, and some hits of the time became classics that are still familiar, such as *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1908) by Jack Norworth and Albert Von Tilzer and *Over There* (1917) by George M. Cohan (1878–1942).

Operettas and revues

Many of the best-known popular songs came from stage shows. Revues spread from Paris to London, New York, and elsewhere, increasingly centered around song and dance numbers, often with flashy costumes and sets. Franz Lehár (1870–1948) continued the Viennese operetta tradition with *The Merry Widow* (1905) and other works, while in the United States Victor Herbert (1859–1924) achieved successes with his operettas *Babes in Toyland* (1903) and *Naughty Marietta* (1910).

Musicals

A significant new genre, the *musical comedy* or ***musical***, featured songs and dance numbers in styles drawn from popular music in the context of a spoken play with a comic or romantic plot. English theater manager George Edwardes established the genre by combining elements of variety shows, comic operas, and plays in a series of productions at the Gaiety Theatre in London in the 1890s. British musicals were soon staged in the United States, and the New York theater district on Broadway became the main center for musicals, along with London's West End. George M. Cohan inaugurated a distinctive style of American musical with his *Little Johnny Jones* (1904), which brought together American subject matter and the vernacular sounds of vaudeville and Tin Pan Alley with the romantic plots and European styles of comic opera and operetta. That show included two of the most famous and enduring popular songs of the era, *Give My Regards to Broadway* and *The Yankee Doodle Boy* (whose chorus begins "I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy"). From these roots would grow the musicals of Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Andrew Lloyd Webber, among many others.

- **1905** Franz Léhar, *The Merry Widow*
- **1906** Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*
- **1907** Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso paint first cubist pictures
- **1908** Henry Ford designs the Model T automobile
- **1909** Gustav Holst, Suite No. 1 in E♭ for band
- **1914–18** World War I
- **1915** D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* with music by Joseph Carl Breil
- **1916** Albert Einstein proposes general theory of relativity

MUSIC FOR SILENT FILMS

Moving picture shows began to compete with live theater in the 1890s and became enormously popular in the twentieth century. Films were silent until the late 1920s but were always accompanied by music, just as dance and other spectacles had been. The first such public display was Emile Reynaud's *Pantomimes lumineuses* (Luminous Mime Shows, 1892), presented in Paris, with music by Gaston Paulin. Music covered up the noise of the projector, provided continuity to the succession of scenes and shots, evoked appropriate moods, and marked dramatic events. Often the music was performed by a pianist or organist, who might improvise or play excerpts from memory, drawing on both classical and popular pieces. In larger theaters, small to medium-sized orchestras played music arranged or composed for the film by the resident music director. By the 1920s, tens of thousands of musicians were employed in theaters across Europe and North America, providing music for a variety of entertainments, including silent films.

Music, drama, and emotion

Opera and operetta were important influences on film music. These genres had already established conventions for enhancing drama through musical accompaniment, and music for films borrowed many of them, including loud, rapid passages for moments of excitement, tremolos to suggest tension or high drama, and soft, romantic themes for love scenes. Strongly contrasting excerpts or styles, from Wagner to popular song, were used side by side to evoke changes of scene or dramatic situation and to delineate characters.

Cue sheets and film scores

Because the music affected the audience's reactions to the movie and thus its profitability, filmmakers made efforts to standardize the music for their films. Beginning in 1909, studios issued cue sheets that showed the sequence of scenes and events in a movie and suggested appropriate music. Music publishers saw a market niche and printed anthologies of pieces and excerpts grouped by mood or situation, of which Giuseppe Becce's *Kinothek* (Berlin, 1919) was among the most widely used. Saint-Saëns's score for *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (1908) inaugurated the era of the film score, composed to accompany a particular film. This idea was popularized especially by the orchestral score Joseph Carl Breil (1870–1926) created for D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), in which he interwove excerpts arranged from Wagner, Tchaikovsky, popular songs, and other sources with his own music. Later composers increasingly wrote original scores that evoked the styles and conventions of Romantic or popular composers.

BAND MUSIC

The tradition of military and amateur wind bands remained strong across Europe and North America. In the United States and Canada, bands increasingly found a home in colleges and schools as well, playing at sporting events and in concerts. Sousa's band continued to tour and became a pioneer in making phonograph recordings. Among the many other professional bands was Helen May Butler's Ladies Brass Band, one of several all-female ensembles formed in response to the exclusion of women from most bands.

Concert repertoire

The twentieth century saw a growing effort among bandleaders to establish a repertoire of serious works for band worthy of comparison to the orchestral repertoire. Because of the band's long association with the military and with amateur performance, there were very few original pieces for band by the major Classic and Romantic composers, who were represented on band concerts mostly by transcriptions. In the first decades of the century, a new seriousness of purpose emerged in pieces that soon formed the core of a developing classical repertoire for band, notably Suites No. 1 in E♭ (1909) and 2 in F (1911) by English composer Gustav Holst (1874–1934); *Dionysiaques* (1914–25) by French composer Florent Schmitt (1870–1958); *Irish Tune from County Derry* (1917) and *Lincolnshire Posy* (1937) by Australian composer Percy Grainger (1882–1961); and *English Folk Song Suite* (1923) and *Toccata marziale* (1924) by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). Holst, Grainger, and Vaughan Williams drew on folk songs for themes, distributed the melodic content more evenly between winds and brass, used modal harmonies within a tonal context, and developed a symphonic style of instrumentation.

African American Traditions

African American bands

Brass bands were one of the main training grounds for African American musicians, along with black churches and dance orchestras. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, black bands occupied an important place in both black and white social life in many big cities, including New Orleans, Baltimore, Memphis, Newark, Richmond, Philadelphia, New York, Detroit, and Chicago. Among the bandleaders and composers who attracted national and international attention were James Reese Europe, Tim Brymn, William H. Tyers, and Ford Dabney. Their bands performed from notation and did relatively little improvising, but they played with a swinging and syncopated style that distinguished them from white bands. Europe's band created a sensation in Paris during and after World War I, and the French Garde Républicaine tried in vain to imitate its sound.

RAGTIME

Among the dances played by both brass and concert bands were pieces in ***ragtime***, a style popular from the 1890s through the 1910s that featured syncopated (or "ragged") rhythm against a regular, marchlike bass. This syncopation apparently derived from the clapping *Juba* of American blacks, a survival of

African drumming and hand clapping. The emphasis on offbeats in one rhythmic layer against steady beats in another reflects the complex cross-rhythms common in African music.

Ragtime is today known mostly as a style of piano music, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the term also encompassed ensemble music and songs. Ragtime was originally a manner of improvising or performing, "ragging" pieces notated in even rhythms by introducing syncopations. One vehicle was the cakewalk, a couples dance derived from slave dances and marked by strutting and acrobatic movements. Music for cakewalks was printed without syncopations until 1897, when syncopated figures characteristic of ragtime began to appear. Beginning that year, instrumental works called ***rags*** were published, especially for piano, and cakewalks and rags were soon among the best-selling forms of instrumental music. Classically trained African American composer Will Marion Cook (1869–1944) introduced the new rhythms into the Broadway tradition with *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898), and his *In Dahomey*, produced in New York in 1902 and London in 1903, brought the cakewalk and ragtime style to Europe. Many popular songs were also written with ragtime rhythms. Both black and white composers, songwriters, and performers embraced the style; indeed, the Sousa band made some of the first ragtime recordings.

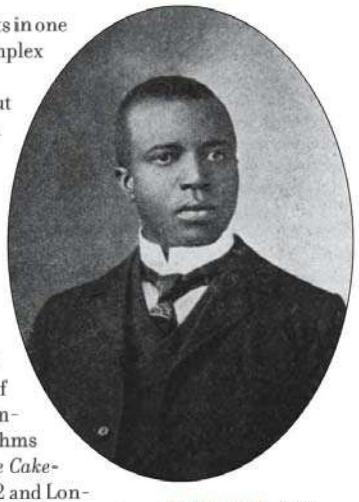
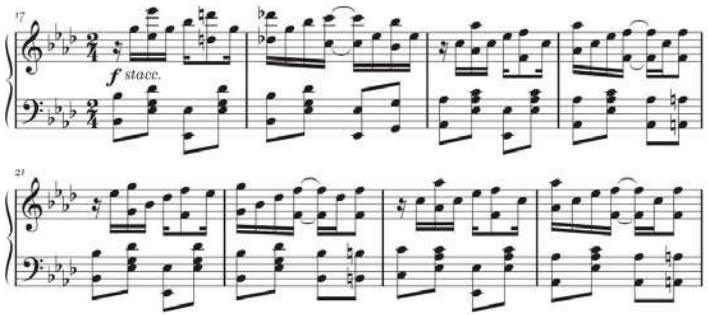


FIGURE 31.8: *Scott Joplin in a photograph printed on the cover of his rag* The Cascades *(1904).* (JOHN EDWARD HASSE)

The leading ragtime composer was Scott Joplin (1867–1917), shown in Figure 31.8. Son of a former slave, he studied music in his home town of Texarkana, Texas, and worked in Sedalia and St. Louis, Missouri, before moving to New York in 1907. His most ambitious work was the opera *Treemonisha*, published in 1911 though not staged until 1972. But he was best known for his piano rags, which he regarded as artistic works on the level of the European classics for piano. Indeed, Joplin published a ragtime primer in the form of études, the *School of Ragtime* (1908), for the express purpose of legitimizing his craft as composition. His first best-selling rag, and still his best known, is *Maple Leaf Rag* (1899; NAWM 164a). Like most rags, it is in $\frac{2}{4}$ meter and follows the form of a march, with a series of sixteen-measure strains, each repeated. The second strain, excerpted in Example 31.1, shows several rhythmic features

Full

EXAMPLE 31.1: *Second strain from Joplin's* Maple Leaf Rag



typical of ragtime. The left hand keeps up a steady pulse in eighth notes, alternating between bass notes and chords, while the right-hand figures syncopate both within and across the beat. The notes in octaves, which receive extra stress, occur every three sixteenth notes, momentarily creating the impression of $\frac{3}{16}$ meter in the right hand against $\frac{2}{4}$ in the left. Essentially the same rhythmic idea appears in each two-measure unit. Such repetition of a short rhythmic pattern, like syncopation and multiple rhythmic layers, is a characteristic of African American music that can be traced back to Africa. So while the form, left-hand pattern, harmony, and chromatic motion all ultimately derive from European sources, the rhythmic elements have African roots, and the resulting mixture is quintessentially African American.

EARLY JAZZ

The 1910s also saw the early development of another type of music from African American roots: ***jazz***. Jazz evolved into a diverse tradition encompassing many styles, genres, and social roles but seems to have begun as a mixture of ragtime and dance music with elements of the blues (described in chapter 34).

New Orleans

New Orleans has long been considered the "cradle of jazz," although recent research has uncovered early jazz in other regions as well. The cultural and social environment of New Orleans nurtured the development of early jazz. The French and Spanish background of the city gave it a flavor different from other cities in the United States. Before Emancipation, New Orleans was the only place in the South where slaves were allowed to gather in public. As a result, music in New Orleans retained some African traditions that were lost elsewhere. Moreover, the city had close connections to the Caribbean, and rhythms from Haitian, Cuban, and Creole music also influenced early jazz. The dance bands of New Orleans interwove these strands with European styles, gradually producing a new kind of music. Typically, these bands were small ensembles with two or three melody instruments, such as trumpet, clarinet, and trombone; a bass instrument such as a tuba; and snare and bass drums.

The new style had no name at first, or was simply known as the New Orleans style of ragtime. But when bands from New Orleans began playing in Chicago, New York, and elsewhere, they used the term "jazz." Bands who popularized the term included a black group that toured in 1913–18 as the New Orleans Jazz Band, and a white band that in 1917 performed in New York and made recordings as the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Manner of performance

Jazz differed from ragtime particularly in the way it was performed. Instead of playing the music "straight," observing the rhythms and textures of a fully notated piece, players extemporized arrangements that distinguished one performer or performance from another. Listening to early jazz pianist and composer and New Orleans native Jelly Roll Morton (1890–1941) play Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* in a recording from 1938 (NAWM 164b), we recognize that this is unmistakably jazz and not ragtime because of the anticipations of beats; the swinging, uneven rendering of successions of equal note values so that notes on the beat are longer than those on the offbeats; the many added grace notes; the enriched harmony; and the weaving of ragtime's brief motivic units into a more continuous line.

Full

Jazz and classical music

Despite (and at times because of) the wide appeal of ragtime and jazz, they were regarded with suspicion and condescension by many practitioners of classical music. In the United States, the reception of ragtime and jazz was entangled with the racial politics of the period, when the freedoms African Americans had won after the Civil War, like the right to vote, were being taken away all across the South through new state constitutions and Jim Crow laws, and racial discrimination in all parts of the country restricted economic opportunity and forced African Americans into segregated neighborhoods and schools. The long tradition of blackface minstrelsy, and of black musicians performing for white audiences, meant that ragtime and jazz could be welcomed as popular entertainment, but few whites would have agreed with Joplin that his rags were on a par with the waltzes and mazurkas of Chopin. Yet there were also classical composers who admired the new styles and incorporated elements of ragtime or jazz in their own music, including Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Stravinsky, Ives, and Milhaud (see chapters 32, 33, and 35). For many in Europe, ragtime and jazz represented the raw energy and newness of the United States. As we will see in later chapters, after World War I jazz became an emblem of modernity on both sides of the Atlantic, and by midcentury it was beginning to be accepted as an art music tradition in its own right.

Classics of Vernacular Music

Vernacular music of the early twentieth century was created for immediate consumption as entertainment, and most of it is long forgotten, yet many of the pieces discussed here became classics in their own traditions. Few operettas and virtually no musicals of the time were performed for more than a few seasons, and modern productions are rare. Nonetheless, overtures, waltzes, and songs from operettas and musicals have continued to be performed, from Lehár's *The Merry Widow Waltz* to Cohan's *Give My Regards to Broadway*, and so have some of the era's popular songs. Music for silent films was always an art for the moment, not for the ages, but from the 1960s on, the tradition of improvised accompaniment on organ or piano was revived along with silent movies themselves, and in recent decades a few of the full scores have been performed again with their films. The band works of Holst, Vaughan Williams, and Grainger have remained classics of the concert band repertoire. Ragtime fell out of fashion in the 1920s, was revived after World War II, and regained wide popularity in the 1970s after the rags of Scott Joplin and others were brought back to life in print and recordings. Jazz became increasingly popular after World War I and grew into a diverse current widely recognized as one of the twentieth century's most important contributions to musical culture. All of these musical traditions now have a permanent place in musical life and receive increasing attention from historians, as reflected in this book, whose first four editions ignored them completely.