

# The Early Twentieth Century: Vernacular Music (Chapter 31)

## I. Modern Times, 1889–1918

- A. “Long nineteenth century,” French Revolution to start of World War I
  - 1. four decades of relative peace
  - 2. greater global interconnection, accelerating innovation in science, technology
  - 3. 1889 Paris Exposition to end of World War I in 1918, self-consciously “modern”
  - 4. optimistic sense of progress; nostalgia for simpler past
- B. New technologies
  - 1. electrification of industry, businesses, homes
  - 2. internal combustion engines fueled by petroleum
  - 3. 1908 Model T, first widely affordable automobile
  - 4. 1903 first working airplane, Wilbur and Orville Wright
  - 5. new technologies in music: player pianos, phonographs
  - 6. moving pictures, theatrical entertainment with musical accompaniment
- C. Economy and social conflicts
  - 1. growth of industry: expanding economy, rapidly growing cities
    - a. nostalgia for the countryside: Tin Pan Alley songs, Mahler symphonies
  - 2. economic inequalities, labor unions organized
    - a. inspired social reformers
    - b. aroused revolutionary movements in Russia
  - 3. international trade increased, European nations grew rich
    - a. great powers competed for dominance
    - b. culminated in World War I
      - i. modern, efficient machinery killed millions of soldiers
      - ii. collapse of faith in human progress, deep disillusionment
- D. United States emerged as a world power
  - 1. defeated Spain in Spanish-American War, 1898
  - 2. industries, overseas trade expanded rapidly
  - 3. rivaled powerhouses of Britain, Germany
  - 4. 1917 entrance into World War I tipped scales against Germany
  - 5. rapid economic development, social conflict
    - a. Progressive movement, reforms to reduce dominance of large corporations
    - b. immigrants stream to United States
    - c. African Americans moved from the South to large northern cities
      - i. segregated neighborhoods, black urban culture developed
- E. New views on the human mind
  - 1. Sigmund Freud developed psychoanalysis
  - 2. Ivan Pavlov’s dogs, conditioning in humans
  - 3. humans subject to internal and social forces
- F. The arts
  - 1. work as end in itself, appreciated for its own sake
  - 2. success measured by intellectuals, fellow artists
  - 3. search for new, unusual content, techniques
  - 4. symbolist poets: intense imagery, disrupted syntax; suggest feelings, experiences
- G. From impressionism to cubism
  - 1. impressionists named after *Impression: Sunrise* (1872), Claude Monet
    - a. atmosphere, sensuous impressions from nature
    - b. detached observation, capture an instant in time
    - c. foreground and background distinction blurred
    - d. attention on overall impression
  - 2. cubism
    - a. three-dimensional objects on a flat plane, geometrical shapes

- b. juxtaposed, overlapped; active, colorful design
- 3. modernism
  - a. new ways of making, seeing, thinking
  - b. includes impressionism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism, abstract art
  - c. paralleled in music

## II. Vernacular Musical Traditions

- A. Vernacular music intended to reach broad musical public
  - 1. impact of recordings
    - a. preserved much more vernacular music
    - b. disseminated popular music
  - 2. lasting importance
    - a. permanence of much vernacular music rivals classical music
    - b. some become classics in their own traditions
    - c. influences on composers in classic tradition
    - d. United States became leading exporter of music to the world
- B. Popular songs and stage music
  - 1. linguistic regions, own repertoire, styles of popular song
    - a. performed in cabarets, cafés, music halls, theaters
    - b. sold as sheet music, recordings
    - c. American songs became popular in Britain
    - d. Tin Pan Alley was in its heyday
      - i. *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* (1908), Jack Norworth and Albert Von Tilzer
      - ii. *Over There* (1917), George M. Cohan (1878–1942)
  - 2. operettas and revues
    - a. revues with popular songs spread to Paris, London, New York
      - i. centered around song, dance numbers, flashy costumes
    - b. operetta tradition continued
      - i. *The Merry Widow* (1905), by Franz Lehár (1870–1948), Vienna
      - ii. *Babes in Toyland* (1903), *Naughty Marietta* (1910) by Victor Herbert (1859–1924), United States
  - 3. musicals: significant new genre featuring songs, dance numbers
    - a. styles from popular music, context of spoken play, comic or romantic plot
    - b. genre established by George Edwardes, London, 1890s
    - c. New York theater district on Broadway, main center for musicals
    - d. distinctive American style inaugurated
      - i. American subject matter, Tin Pan Alley, European styles of comic opera, operetta
      - ii. *Little Johnny Jones* (1904) by George M. Cohan; *Give My Regards to Broadway*, *The Yankee Doodle Boy*
- C. Music for silent films
  - 1. until late 1920s, films accompanied by live music
    - a. role of music
      - i. covered noise of projector
      - ii. provided continuity
      - iii. evoked moods, marked dramatic events
    - b. music accompaniment
      - i. pianist or organist, improvised, played excerpts from memory
      - ii. larger theaters, small to medium-sized orchestras; arranged or composed music
      - iii. compete with live theater, 1890s
      - iv. by 1920, tens of thousands of musicians employed in theaters across Europe, North America
    - c. film music influenced by opera, operetta
      - i. loud rapid passages: excitement
      - ii. tremolos: tension, high drama
      - iii. soft, romantic themes: love scenes

iv. strongly contrasting styles used side by side, evoke changes, dramatic situations, delineate characters

2. cue sheets and film scores

- a. 1909, film studios issued cue sheets: sequence of scenes, events, suggest appropriate music
- b. printed anthologies of pieces, excerpts; grouped by mood, situation
- c. first film score, *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (1908), by Saint-Saëns
- d. Joseph Carl Breil (1870–1926) popularized the idea, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)
  - i. excerpts from Wagner, Tchaikovsky, popular songs, original music

D. Band music

1. military origins, amateur wind band traditions remained strong
  - a. bands in colleges, schools, sporting events, concerts
  - b. Sousa's band toured, pioneer in phonograph recordings
  - c. Helen May Butler's Ladies Brass Band, one of several all-female ensembles
2. concert repertoire
  - a. few original pieces written by major Classic, Romantic composers
  - b. core repertoire emerged, early twentieth century
    - i. Suites No. 1 in E-flat (1909) and 2 in F (1911), by Gustav Holst (1874–1934)
    - ii. *Dionysiaques* (1914–1925), by Florent Schmitt (1870–1958)
    - iii. *Irish Tune from County Derry* (1917), *Lincolnshire Posy* (1937), by Percy Grainger
    - iv. *English Folk Song Suite* (1923), *Toccata marziale* (1924), by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)
  - c. composers drew on folk songs, used modal harmonies, symphonic-style instrumentation

### III. African American Traditions

A. African American bands

1. turn of the century, black bands important in black and white social life in big cities
  - a. bandleaders, composers attracted national, international attention
    - i. James Reese Europe, Tim Brymn, William H. Tyers, Ford Dabney
  - b. performed from notation, relatively little improvising
  - c. swinging, syncopated style distinguished them from white bands

B. Ragtime

1. featured syncopated (“ragged”) rhythm, regular marchlike bass, popular 1890s–1910s
  - a. syncopation derived from clapping *Juba*
  - b. originally encompassed ensemble music, songs
    - i. derived from manner of improvising, “ragging”
    - ii. today known as piano style
  - c. cakewalks introduced syncopation
    - i. couples dance, derived from slave dances
    - ii. printed without syncopation until 1897
  - d. 1897, instrumental works called “rags” published
  - e. cakewalks, rags among best-selling instrumental music
2. Will Marion Cook (1869–1944), classically trained violinist, composer
  - a. rhythms introduced into Broadway tradition
  - b. *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898)
  - c. *In Dahomey*, produced in New York, 1902, and London, 1903
3. many popular songs written with ragtime rhythms
  - a. black and white composers, songwriters, performers, embraced the style
4. Scott Joplin (1867–1917), leading ragtime composer
  - a. son of a former slave, studied music in Texarkana, Texas
  - b. moved to New York in 1907
  - c. *School of Ragtime*, études published 1908
  - d. *Treemonisha* opera published in 1911, most ambitious work
  - e. regarded his piano rags as artistic works on level of European classics
5. style example: *Maple Leaf Rag* (1899, NAWM 169a), by Scott Joplin

- a. follows form of a march, sixteen-measure strains, each repeated
  - b. second strain, rhythms typical of ragtime
    - i. left hand: steady eighth-note pulse; bass notes and chords alternate
    - ii. right hand: figures syncopate within and across the beat
    - iii. impression of 3/16 meter in right hand, against 2/4 meter in left hand
  - c. mixture of European and African elements
    - i. rhythmic elements, repetition of short rhythmic pattern traced to African music
    - ii. musical form, left hand pattern, harmony, derived from European sources
- C. Early jazz
- 1. 1910s, development of jazz, African American roots
    - a. mixture of ragtime, dance music, elements of the blues
  - 2. New Orleans, “cradle of jazz”
    - a. slaves allowed to gather in public before emancipation
    - b. close connection to Caribbean, Haitian, Cuban, Creole rhythms
    - c. dance bands interwove these with European styles
    - d. small ensembles
      - i. melody instruments: trumpet, clarinet, trombone
      - ii. bass instrument: tuba
      - iii. percussion: snare and bass drums
    - e. 1913–1918, New Orleans Jazz Band popularized term “jazz”
  - 3. the term “jazz”
    - a. style first known was New Orleans style ragtime
    - b. “jazz” performances in Chicago, New York
    - c. term popularized
      - i. 1913–19, New Orleans Jazz Band, black group
      - ii. 1917, Original Dixieland Jazz Band, white group, first jazz recording, wide audience
  - 4. manner of performance
    - a. players extemporized arrangements
    - b. *Maple Leaf Rag* (1938 recording; NAWM 169b), played by Jelly Roll Morton (1890–1941)
      - i. anticipations of beats
      - ii. swinging rhythm
      - iii. many added grace notes
      - iv. enriched harmony
      - v. weaving of brief motives into a more continuous line
  - 5. jazz and classical music
    - a. reception of ragtime, jazz entangled with racial politics
    - b. minstrelsy: ragtime, jazz welcomed as popular entertainment
    - c. classical composers introduced elements of ragtime, jazz
      - i. Debussy, Ravel, Satie, Stravinsky, Ives, Milhaud

#### IV. Classics of Vernacular Music

- A. Vernacular music created for immediate consumption
  - 1. few operettas, no musicals performed more than a few seasons
  - 2. overtures, waltzes, songs continue to be performed
    - a. Lehar’s *The Merry Widow Waltz*
    - b. Cohan’s *Give My Regards to Broadway*
  - 3. 1960s on, silent movies revived
  - 4. works by Holst, Vaughan Williams, Grainger: classics of concert band repertoire
  - 5. ragtime revived after World War II, gained popularity 1970s
  - 6. jazz increasingly popular after World War I