

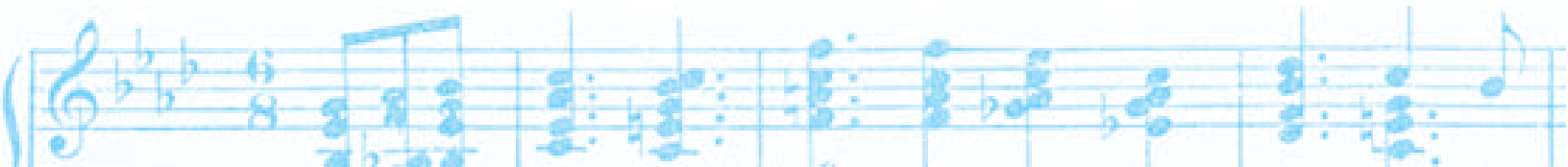
Let It Resound

JAMES WELDON JOHNSON AND BLACK POPULAR MUSIC

By Sarah Haley

The sheet music in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection represents a broad scope of African American musical genres of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Ragtime and black musical theater, concert spirituals, the blues, and early jazz all figure prominently in the collection. The collection also includes a significant volume of minstrelsy scores ranging from *Zip Coon, a Famous Comic Song* to the minstrelsy compositions of African American composers, most notably, Gussie L. Davis. While minstrelsy, jazz, ragtime, musical theater scores and concert arrangements of spirituals comprise the major genres of the collection, there are also several compositions from the latter half of the twentieth century: the decades of rhythm and blues, soul, and funk.

James Weldon Johnson's individual and collaborative musical contributions profoundly influenced the course of black musical theater in the first decade of the 20th century. In addition to his stature as a lyricist, Johnson looms large in the scholarship of black music. His *Black Manhattan* traces African American cultural and political history in New York City from 1626 through the late 1920s. Despite his claim that *Black Manhattan* is not "in any strict sense a history," it has been influential in the historiography of black music from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth. His commentary in *Black Manhattan* and in his autobiography, *Along This Way*, provides remarkable insight into the shifts in black musical trends from minstrelsy to the blues. The James Weldon Johnson Memorial collection represents works by many of the most influential black composers and lyricists of the 19th and 20th centuries, some of whom were Johnson's contemporaries. They include John Rosamond Johnson, Bob Cole, Eubie Blake, Shelton Brooks, H.T. Burleigh, Cab Calloway, Will Marion Cook, Henry Creamer, Countee Cullen, Nathaniel Dett, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Duke Ellington, James Reese Europe, Ella Fitzgerald, W. C. Handy, Langston Hughes, Andy Razaf, Noble Sissle, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor; together they provide a window into the nuances, complexities and fluid historical trajectory of African American music from the last decade of the nineteenth century through the twentieth.



A CARICATURE *Minstrelsy from Mid to Late Nineteenth Century*

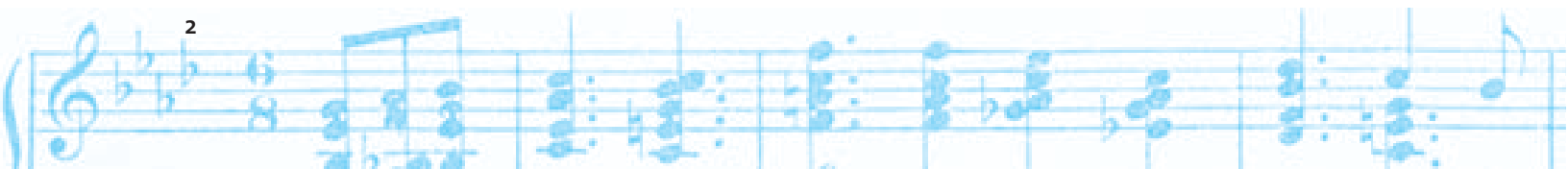
Minstrelsy was, on the whole, a caricature of Negro life, and it fixed a stage tradition which has not yet been entirely broken. It fixed the tradition of the Negro as only an irresponsible, happy-go-lucky, wide-grinning, loud-laughing, shuffling, banjo-playing, singing, dancing sort of being.

—James Weldon Johnson¹

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection includes two versions of T.D. Rice's *Jim Crow Song*. In the 1830s Rice became known as "Daddy Rice, Father of American Minstrelsy", or "Jim Crow Rice". He traveled extensively singing the *Jim Crow Song* to rousing applause, doctoring the lyrics as he went in order to ensure the appeal of his deleterious impersonations of "Jim Crow", the black stable worker he claimed to observe in creating the song. Performers' improvisations of the *Jim Crow Song* often alluded to current local and national events.² Indeed, the two versions of sheet music in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection vary dramatically, one containing nine verses and the other, forty-four. The popularity of *Jim Crow Song* contributed to minstrelsy's stature as a "national art", the most resonant icon of American music.

The "national art" of blackface minstrelsy peaked during the period between 1846 and 1870. Yet minstrelsy's relationship to popular culture was complex, ridden with conflict and inconsistency. The genre was at once a fantasy about the Old South, and a domain of the industrializing North.³ Through the early 1850s the South was reluctant to embrace minstrelsy, and it was even banned in some states.⁴ Minstrelsy gained cultural resonance during a period of escalation in sectional conflict over slavery, a historical reality negotiated in minstrelsy songs. Minstrelsy's reputation was complex; it was alternately perceived as a vulgar practice of the working class, and a national art. As historian Eric Lott contends, minstrelsy performed important cultural work in the maintenance and formation of white working class identity as it permeated broader American culture. As it perpetrated racist rancor, minstrelsy fortified racial otherness, simultaneously contributing to and policing boundaries of white culture.⁵ Minstrel men in the North visited interracial spaces and adapted imaginary plantation scenes to song.⁶ Two dominant plantation stereotypes were propagated through minstrelsy: Jim Crow, the disheveled plantation slave, and Zip Coon, the lascivious city dandy.⁷

From the mid to late 19th Century, minstrelsy was America's most popular form of theatrical entertainment, and that which was most successfully exported to the world stage. Publishers produced songbooks in the name of famous minstrels or companies. These dime songbooks usually included only lyrics, without music, providing audiences with an opportunity to sing the lyrics at home to tunes they knew from the theater.⁸ Along with T.D. Rice and E.P. Christy, Stephen Foster (1826-1864) was a preeminent minstrel composer. Considered during his time to be the century's greatest songwriter, Foster wrote such popular songs as *Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground* (1852), *Old Black Joe* (1903), *My Old Kentucky Home* (1892), and *Farewell My Lilly Dear* (1851), a part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.



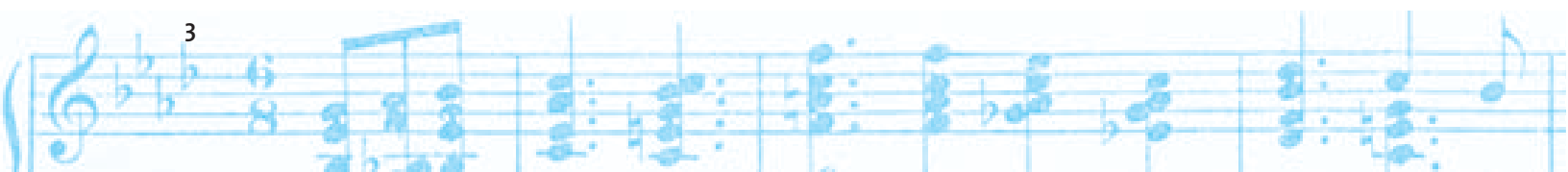
While white minstrel troupes were widely celebrated by the end of the Civil War, it was not until after the war's end that the first black minstrel troupes gained popularity.⁹ According to Eileen Southern, renowned historian of African American music, "Minstrel songs generally fell into three categories: ballads, comic songs and specialties. The songs of three songwriters, James Bland, Gussie Davis and Samuel Lucas, and of the white writer Stephen Foster, were most popular among black minstrels."¹⁰ In general, middle-class black newspapers firmly refused to review minstrelsy or to include minstrel artists in their writings on race progress.¹¹ The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection contains Sam Lucas's *De Ole Ship Ob Zion*, *Dem White Kid Slippers* and *Talk about Your Moses* as well as James Bland's *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny (Song and Chorus)* and *In the Evening by the Moonlight*.

Of Gussie Lord Davis (1863-1899), James Weldon Johnson wrote "Davis was a writer of popular ballads and as such had no superior, as anyone familiar with the songs of a generation ago will agree."¹² After initially being rejected because he was black, Davis was trained at the Nelson Musical College in Cincinnati, Ohio. He worked out an arrangement to enroll in exchange for performing janitorial work and went on to compose *The Fatal Wedding* (1894), *In the Baggage Coach Ahead* (1896), *Won't You Take Me Back to Dixie* (1899), *Coming Home to Die* (1898), *Christmas in the Old Home* (1897), *My Creole Sue* (1898) all of which are part of the collection. Despite being, in James Weldon Johnson's estimation "a typical New York writer, whose songs have not the slightest relation to the South or even to the Negro," his ballads were among the songs most frequently performed by black minstrel performers.¹³

In the 1890s minstrelsy was still an important musical form; as songwriters began to increasingly use syncopation, the so-called "coon song" gained ascendance. After a period of decline, Ernest Hogan's *All Coons Look Alike to Me* in 1896 made the form a fixture in American music. Black performers regularly refused to sing the song because of its contemptuous theme and title and Hogan himself was plagued by his own regret in writing it. Still, *All Coons Look Alike to Me* soared in popularity and sparked an invigorated genre. James Weldon Johnson poignantly expresses his disdain for the vulgarities of the coon song genre in his autobiography:

The Negro songs then the rage were known as "coon songs" and were concerned with jamborees of various sorts and the play of razors, with the gastronomical delights of chicken, pork chops and watermelon, and with the experiences of red-hot "mamas" and their never too faithful "papas." These songs were for the most part crude, raucous, bawdy, often obscene.¹⁴

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection includes two special musical supplements of the *Sunday Examiner* which printed Hogan's subsequent works, *My Gal's de Town Talk* and *I Love Ma Honey Best of All* at the turn of the century as well as numerous coon song compositions, notably *I Guess I'll Have to Telegraphy My Baby*, *Coon Song* (1898), *If the Man in the Moon Were a Coon* (1905), *Coontown Jubilee (Ragtime, Cakewalk March and Two Step)* (1898), *The Coon's Breach of Promise, Song and Cake-Walk* (1898), *Coon, Coon, Coon* (1900), *St. Patrick's Day Is a Bad Day for Coons* (n.d).



SONGS AND DANCES FOR THE PEOPLE *Ragtime, Concert Spirituals and Black Musical Theater*

Beginning as a mere butt of laughter, he has worked on up through minstrelsy and the musical-comedy shows to become a creator of laughter; to become a maker of songs and dances for the people

—James Weldon Johnson¹⁵

The term *ragtime* at first described the coon song, arrangements of coon songs for performance by instrumental groups (marching/dance bands and other combinations of instruments), and the piano rag.¹⁶ The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection houses sheet music of several transcendent ragtime composers including Joe Jordan and most importantly, Scott Joplin (1868-1917), James Hubert “Eubie” Blake (1883-1983) and Noble Sissle (1889-1975).

The earliest association of the word rag with instrumental music occurred in 1896 in the publication of Ernest Hogan’s *All Coons Look Alike to Me*; the second chorus of that song carries the caption “choice Chorus with Negro ‘rag’ Accompaniment arranged by Max Hoffman.” Rag accompaniment diverged from traditional “um-pah” accompaniment with its marked syncopation.¹⁷

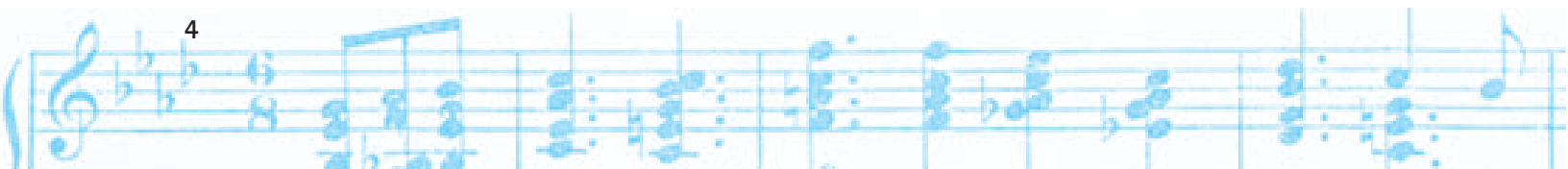
Scott Joplin’s path-breaking *Maple Leaf Rag*, published in 1899, set a new standard for piano rag music. By 1899, ragtime’s popularity enabled Joplin to find a publisher for *Original Rags* (March 1899) and *Maple Leaf Rag*. Yet, the publication of *Maple Leaf Rag* would catapult the genre to new popular and technical heights. Despite being exceedingly technically demanding, *Maple Leaf Rag* soared to monumental success, selling over a million copies as sheet music. It established a model for classical ragtime that would be emulated by composers well into the future.¹⁸

The success of the highly syncopated *All Coons Look Alike to Me* contributed to the vogue of ragtime; Broadway musicals began to include syncopated so-called coon songs in their productions. The first golden age of black musical theater began with Will Marion Cook’s *Clorindy, the Origin of the Cakewalk* and Bob Cole’s *A Trip to Coontown*, both in 1898. Broadway made narrow room for black theatrical productions, those which incorporated minstrelsy representations.¹⁹ Yet, as theater historian David Krasner argues, *A Trip to Coontown* contained surreptitious challenges to the predominant minstrelsy stereotypes that defined white expectations of black performance. Despite the show’s many conformist elements, Krasner notes that *A Trip to Coontown*’s final number, *No Coons Allowed!* creates an important parody of racism.²⁰ The tune’s upbeat tempo combines with the indictment of Jim Crow segregation to create the performance defined by parody:

There’s a dead swell gentleman of color
Saved up all the money he could find
He call’d one night and
said to his baby “My Lulu gal we’ll go and cut a shine.”

He put her in a cab and told the driver
“To drive us to the swellest place in town I’m gwine to buy my
gal a fine supper So I want the finest place that can be found.”

To a swell restaurant the driver took them
With his Lulu gal he started in so proud
But that coon almost went blind
When he saw a great big sign
Up o’er the door which read “No coons allowed.”



No coons allowed No coons allowed This place is meant for white folks that's all We don't want no kinky-head kind So move on darky down the line No coons allow'd in here at all.

So this coon got mighty offended Commenc'd to swearing vengeance by the yard To be thrown down in the presence of his baby 'Deed it hurt this darky's feelings mighty hard.

So he rush'd on downtown to a lawyer And told him bout the sign that he had seen He said "Boss can't you sue the firm for damage 'Cause I think that I've been tre[a]ted mighty mean."

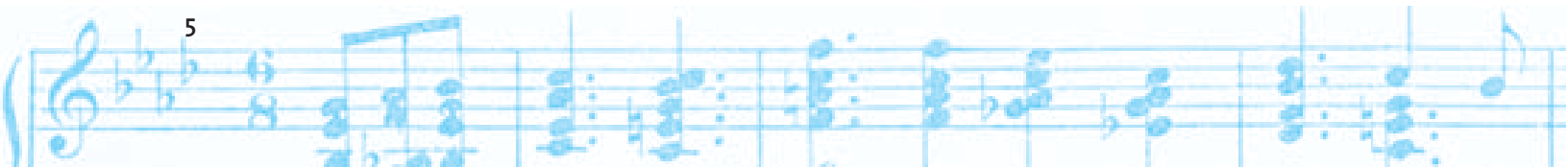
So the lawyer took the coon to the courthouse And they started in the courthouse with a crowd But his head began to swim When he saw that sign again O'er the courthouse door which read

"No coons allowed!"

A Trip to Coontown was not merely a Broadway "first". Cole and other black musicians perceived *A Trip to Coontown* as an entrée into creative and political freedom. Bob Cole's 1898 Colored Actor's Declaration of Independence boasted: "we are going to have our own shows. We are going to write them ourselves, we are going to have our own stage manager, our own orchestra leader and our own manager out front to count up. No divided houses – our race must be seated from the boxes back"²¹

In 1903, Will Marion Cook (1893-1944) reflected that "terrible difficulty that composers of my race have to deal with is the refusal of American people to accept serious things from us."²² This difficulty plagued Cook as he produced the landmark black musicals, *Clorindy* and *In Dahomey*. After much coaxing, Paul Laurence Dunbar agreed to write the libretto and lyrics. Cook eventually discarded Dunbar's script and although his lyrics were retained in the show, Dunbar vowed never again to work with Cook, who irritated him "beyond endurance."²³ *Clorindy*'s score included popular syncopated compositions including *Who Dat Say Chicken in Dis Crowd*, *Darktown Is Out Tonight* and *Der'll be Wahm Coons a Prancin'*, *Clorindy*'s grand finale. *The Sunday Examiner* published the sheet music for *Der'll be Wahm Coons a Prancin'* in a special musical supplement, which is part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. In addition to the finale from *Clorindy*, the collection contains several other Cook works including the *In Dahomey* number, *Evah Dahkey Is A King*, printed in the music supplement of the *New York American and Journal* on October 26, 1902. *Mandy Lou*, *Swing Along*, and three collaborations with James Weldon Johnson – *Ma Lady's Lips am Like de Honey*, *An Explanation* and *If the Sands of the Seas Were Pearls* – are also part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

Paul Laurence Dunbar eventually put aside his differences with Cook to collaborate on *Jes' Lak White Fo'ks* in 1899 and *In Dahomey*, a hugely popular musical that starred Bert Williams and George Walker in 1902. Yet Cook and prolific composer Bob Cole (1868-1911) developed a more enduring rift. As James Weldon Johnson describes in *Along This Way*, "seldom did they meet without a clash". Moreover, the clashes were likely to be bitter as "the argument did not always oscillate between their divergent points of view; it did not always keep itself above personalities."²⁴ According to Johnson, their animosity derived from incompatible philosophies about the role of black composers in an arena dominated by white musicians. In Johnson's view, Cook believed that Negroes should eschew white patterns and not try to do what whites could inevitably do better. Cole, on the other hand, was

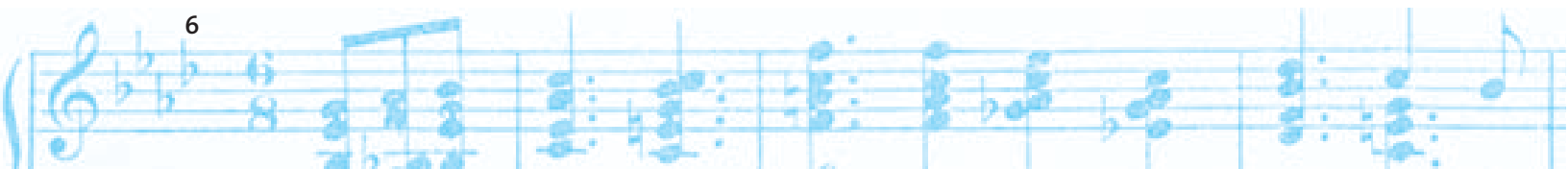


confident that black composers could match “the white artist on the latter’s own field” and should strive to create compositions that rivaled those of white composers.²⁵ In 1898, Cook’s *Clorindy* and Cole and Billy Johnson’s *A Trip to Coontown* gave birth to black musical comedy. At once enlivened by *A Trip to Coontown*’s success and frustrated by what he perceived as the production’s inadequacies, Bob Cole searched for more innovative directions in black musical entertainment and soon began his historic collaboration with James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954).

The monumental collaboration between James Weldon Johnson, Bob Cole and John Rosamond Johnson is revealed through over a hundred pieces of sheet music which span the first decade of the 20th century. As James Weldon Johnson recalls, “Bob was one of the most talented and versatile Negroes ever connected with the stage. He could write a play, stage it, and play a part. Although he was not a [classically] trained musician, he was the originator of a long list of catchy songs.” The trio produced two important operettas with all black casts: *The Red Moon* (1909) and *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* (1906). *The Red Moon*, the story of a Minnehaha, the heroic daughter of an Indian chief and African American woman, incorporated African American and Native American folklore and was billed as “ambitious”, a “sensation in red and black”.²⁶ Several songs from *The Red Moon* and *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* appear in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, including *Big Indian Chief*, *The Big Red Shawl*, *Hoola-Woola*, *I Ain’t Had No Lovin’ in a Long Time*, *De Bo’d of Education*, *Floating Down the Nile*, *Won’t You Be My Little Brown Bear?*, and *There’s Always Something Wrong*. Many of the Cole and Johnson hits were sung by the musical stars of the period, including May Irwin, Marie Cahill, Fay Templeton, Lillian Russell, Anna Held, Virginia Earle, Marie George, Mabell Gilman.²⁷

One such hit was *Under the Bamboo Tree*. The Beinecke’s copy of *Under the Bamboo Tree* includes a solemn note from John Rosamond Johnson, “Although I worked with my brother and Bob Cole on every song that was published and certainly had a great deal to do with the composition of this song, my brother’s name and mine through our carelessness were omitted from the published version of this song – One of the greatest international hits in the history of popular music. The song was made famous by Marie Cahill.” Notably, the collection also includes the sheet music for *Louisiana Lize*, the team’s first published melody, part of the 1900 production of *The Belle of Bridgeport*. Also in 1900, the Johnsons collaborated on perhaps their most important composition, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (1900), which garnered anthem status, and became popularly designated the Negro National Anthem and later the Black National Anthem.

After the death of their mentor and friend Bob Cole in 1911, John Rosamond Johnson and James Weldon Johnson continued their careers in music; J. Rosamond toured in vaudeville acts, wrote for the London theater revue and assumed the directorship of the Music School Settlement for Colored in New York from 1914-1919. He went on to perform in dramas in the 1930s, edit two song collections, *Shout Songs* (1936) and *Rolling Along in Song* (1937), and direct the London production of *Blackbirds of 1936*. He and James Weldon Johnson edited two more song collections, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925) and *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals* (1926).



Although J. Rosamond Johnson arranged the spirituals collected in *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, James Weldon Johnson's preface acknowledges several of the most preeminent concert spiritual composers. Among them were: Harry T. Burleigh, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Robert Nathaniel Dett. William Dawson's arrangements of spirituals for performance by the Tuskegee Institute Choir were also influential.

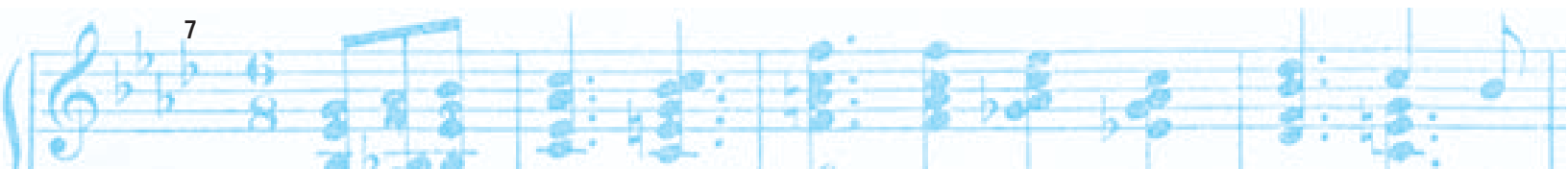
In his introduction to *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* in 1925, James Weldon Johnson noted the soaring popularity that spirituals then enjoyed:

Today, the Spirituals have a vogue. They are beyond the place where the public might hear them only through the quartets of Fisk or Hampton or Atlanta or Tuskegee The principal factor in reaching this stage has been H. T. Burleigh, the eminent colored musician and composer. Mr. Burleigh was the pioneer in making arrangements for the Spirituals that widened their appeal and extended their use to singers and the general musical public. Along with Mr. Burleigh and following him was a group of talented colored composers working to the same end: Nathaniel Dett, Carl Diton, J. Rosamond Johnson and N. Clark Smith. The vogue of the spirituals was added to by the publishing of twenty-four piano arrangements of Spirituals by Coleridge-Taylor.²⁸

Johnson's 1925 introduction converges with Alain Locke's preeminent philosophy of "New Negro," elaborated in his essay, "The New Negro," published the same year. For Locke, the spirituals were characterized by the smashing of old stereotypes, a new era of spiritual, cultural, and political production and opportunity, and the emergence of a new black subject. His essay is regarded by some as the definitive text of the Harlem Renaissance:

Recall how suddenly the Negro spirituals revealed themselves; suppressed for generations under the stereotypes of Wesleyan hymn harmony, secretive, half-ashamed, until the courage of being natural brought them out—and behold, there was folk-music. Similarly the mind of the Negro seems suddenly to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority. By shedding the old chrysalis of the Negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation. Until recently, lacking self-understanding, we have been almost as much of a problem to ourselves as we still are to others. But the decade that found us with a problem has left us with only a task. The multitude perhaps feels as yet only a strange relief and a new vague urge, but the thinking few know that in the reaction the vital inner grip of prejudice has been broken.²⁹

Like Locke, Johnson considered the success of spiritual composers, and the burgeoning public appreciation of the genre, to be emblematic of a "new attitude" by and toward black Americans. Although he acknowledged that the "country may not yet be conscious of it, for it is only in the beginning," Johnson was confident that the vogue of spirituals marked a momentous shift in popular attitudes toward black Americans. Johnson viewed this turn as an opportunity for black authors to gain entrée into important magazines. He noted landmark progress in popular acceptance for black artists: "a colored man is soloist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic; a colored woman is soloist for the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic". He proclaimed optimistically that America was beginning to see in the Negro the "divine spark which may glow merely for the fanning."



Johnson's admiration for musical genius reached its zenith in Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949). As Johnson notes in *Along This Way*, Burleigh's musicianship was unsurpassed:

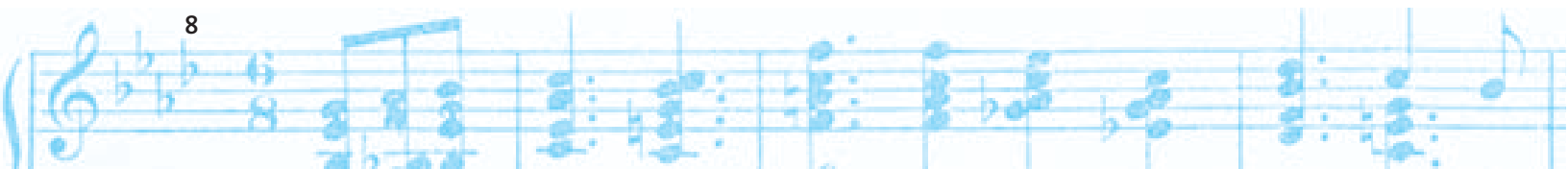
Burleigh's position was unique. He had been a student at the National Conservatory while Dvorák was the director Not only had he studied with Dvorák but he had spent considerable time with him at his home. It was he who called the attention of the great Bohemian composer to the Negro spirituals His reputation as a composer was already well in the making, based on a number of "art songs" written in the best modern manner. Among us, however, it was as a master that he was held. On all questions in the theory and science of music he was the final authority. In this acceptance, both Cook and my brother, with their own very good musical training, always joined.³⁰

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection contains over forty Burleigh compositions and arrangements including five collaborations with James Weldon Johnson as lyricist, a collection of eight songs with lyrics by R.E. Phillips, J.E. Campbell and Paul Laurence Dunbar and classic arrangements of the spirituals, *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*, *Little David*, *Play on Your Harp* and *Deep River*. He was the first of the spiritual arrangers to achieve national distinction as a composer, arranger, and concert performer.

H.T. Burleigh began writing simple ballads in about 1898, progressed to "art songs" and instrumental pieces, and left more than three hundred compositions. Best known are the *Six Plantation Melodies for Violin and Piano* (1901), *From the Southland for Piano* (1914), *Southland Sketches for Violin and Piano* (1916), and the song cycles *Saracen Songs* (1914) and *Five Songs* (1919), texts by Lawrence Hope. His influence was unparalleled and enduring: "after Burleigh, many concert singers developed the tradition of closing their recitals with a group of Negro spirituals, sometimes intermixed with other arranged folksongs."³¹

Along with Burleigh's pieces, the Beinecke holds a volume of spiritual compositions by Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943). Dett received his formal musical training at the Lockport (New York) Conservatory and earned a B. Mus. degree in 1908 from Oberlin. He was the first African American student to complete the program at Oberlin and toured extensively as a concert pianist after graduating. His interest in black folk music was inspired by the soprano E. Azalia Hackley and he went on to arrange *Religious Folksongs of the Negro* and the *Dett Collection of Negro Spirituals*. In addition to spiritual arrangements, Dett composed several piano suites and choral works that are part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection including *In the Bottoms*, *Characteristic Suite for the Piano*.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) is best known for his trilogy of cantatas, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, *The Death of Minnehaha*, and *Hiawatha's Departure*. One of England's most impressive composers at the turn of the century, he became interested in black folk music after attending a concert of the Fisk Jubilee Singers in England. Inspired, he made a collection of piano arrangements of African and African American melodies, *The Bamboula*, *African Suite* and *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies Transcribed for the Piano*.³² The James Weldon Johnson Collection includes *African Suite*, *Candle Lightin' Time* with lyrics by Paul Laurence Dunbar as well as over forty other Coleridge-Taylor pieces.



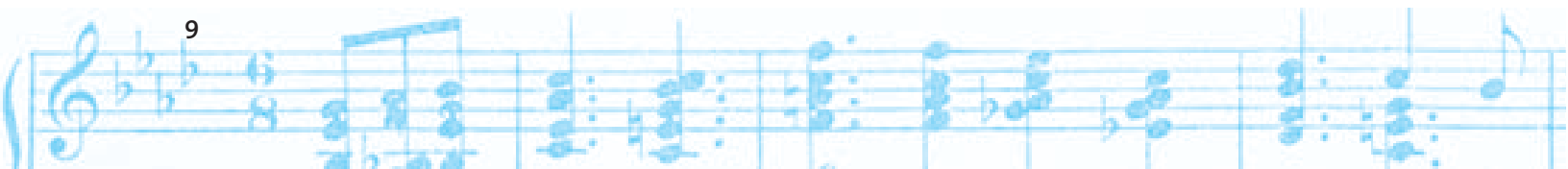
William Dawson (1899-1990) is most renowned for his directorship of the Tuskegee Institute Choir in the 1930s and 1940s. The one-hundred-voice Tuskegee Institute Chorus toured extensively as did choruses from other traditionally black colleges and universities including Morehouse College, Howard University, Wilberforce University, and Virginia State College. He earned a bachelors of music degree from the Horner Institute of Fine Arts in Kansas City, Missouri, studied at Chicago Musical College, the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and at the American Conservatory of Music (M. Mus.). In his early career he played trombone with the Chicago Civic Symphony Orchestra.

Dawson wrote in a variety of forms – chamber music, orchestral compositions, and a sonata for violin and piano – but was best known for his arrangements of spirituals and his *Negro Folk Symphony* (1934). His spirituals were sung widely, especially *King Jesus Is a-Listening*, *Talk about a Child That Do Love Jesus*, and *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley*. According to historian Eileen Southern, Dawson was directly inspired by Anton Dvorák's views on nationalism in music. His aim was “to write a symphony in the Negro folk idiom, based on authentic folk music but in the same symphonic form used by composers of the [European] romantic nationalist school.”³³ Several of Dawson's influential arrangements for the Tuskegee Choir Series are part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection, notably, *Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit*, *Oh What a Beautiful City*, *Steal Away*, *Soon Ah Will Be Done*, *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel*, *There is a Balm in Gilead* and *Ain'-A That Good News*.

By the time *The Book of Negro Spirituals* and *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals* were published in 1925 and 1926 respectively, black Broadway had experienced both a term of exile and dramatic resurgence. James Weldon Johnson designated the period from 1910 to 1917 a term of exile for black musical theater for several reasons.³⁴ By 1911, three of the pioneers of black musical theater, Ernest Hogan, Bob Cole, and George Walker, were dead. Moreover, managers of Broadway theaters escalated their use of informal policies of segregation in their theaters (prohibited by New York's Stare Penal Code, Section 514 but routinely practiced) to relegate black audiences to the far reaches of the balcony or to deny them admittance altogether. With both audience and performer gone from the Great White Way, the second decade of the Twentieth Century found black artists performing off Broadway for black audiences.

James Weldon Johnson was particularly devastated by the deaths of Bob Cole and George Walker. His respect for the comedic genius of the Williams-Walker duo and his personal and artistic bond with Bob Cole were tremendous. In *Along This Way*, Johnson recalled the impact of Bob Cole's 1911 suicide:

I was shocked and disturbed beyond measure. I had lost one of the closest friends of my lifetime, a friend whom I loved not only for his unchanging fidelity, but whom I admired for his unquestionable genius. I thought back over the twelve years of our relations; I again lived through experiences that we had suffered or enjoyed together; I tried to reckon the degree of his influence on the course my life had taken; and I felt only deep contentment in the fact that we had been friends and co-workers. Bob Cole's death was a vital loss to the Negro stage.³⁵



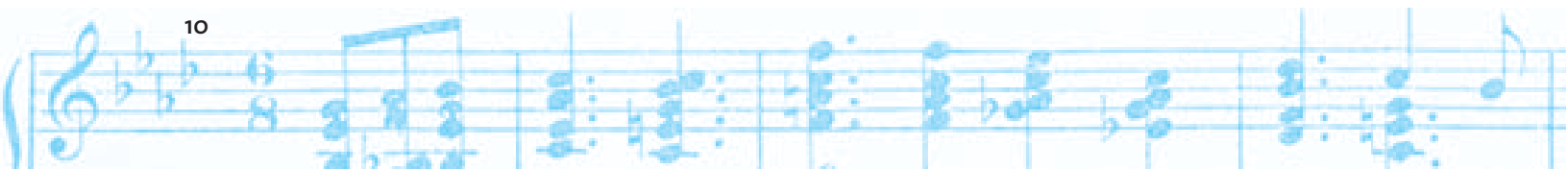
While Johnson's veneration for Bob Cole was unmatched, his respect for Egbert "Bert" Williams (1874-1922) and George Walker (1873-1911) was also immense. While recognizing that degrading caricatures of black Americans marked Williams-Walker comedy performances, he remained impressed by the comedic genius of the routine and Bert Williams's character:

Up to 53rd Street came Bert Williams; tall and broad shouldered; on the whole a rather handsome figure, and entirely unrecognizable as the shambling, shuffling "darky" he impersonated on the stage; luxury-loving and indolent, but highly intelligent and with a certain reserve which at times exhibited itself as downright snobbishness; talking with a very slow drawl and getting much more satisfaction, it seemed, out of being considered a great raconteur than out of being a great comedian . . .³⁶

Williams and Walker rose to great popularity after their first musical, *The Policy Players* (1899). The Williams and Walker duo began their careers in vaudeville and went on to huge success on the Broadway stage in *The Sons of Ham* in 1900, *In Dahomey* in 1903, *Abssinia* in 1906 and *Bandanna Land* in 1911. *In Dahomey*, composed by Will Marion Cook, with lyrics by Paul Laurence Dunbar and Alex Rogers, appeared on Broadway in New York, in London before King Edward VII, and propelled the cakewalk dance to popularity in Europe. It was the first all black show performed at a major Broadway theater. The show's historic appearance on Broadway, combined with what many viewed as its degrading plantation caricatures, sparked controversy. In *Variety* in 1907, the duo responded to the sharp critique of a black professor, Albert Ross, who accused them of using ludicrous plantation stereotypes to entertain people. Williams and Walker responded to Ross's claim, explaining that dependence on white audiences forced them to bear in mind their expectations.³⁷ Despite the show's criticism from theatergoers who were outraged by the play's utilization of minstrelsy stereotypes, *In Dahomey* earned the praise of the press for its musical excellence and the comedic performances of Williams and Walker.

In 1908, one year before illness forced his retirement, Walker founded The Frogs Club, a black professional organization, which raised money for charities, provided a community network for actors and other professionals, maintained theater space, and held "The Frolic of the Frogs," an anticipated annual dance. After Walker's retirement Williams joined the Ziegfeld Follies. Although he was barred from performing with women in the Follies, thereby limiting his centrality in any of the productions, the critical attention he received with the Follies rivaled that of the troupe's other new star, Fanny Brice. After continuing with the Follies until 1919, Williams performed in *Broadway Brevities* of 1920 and *Under the Bamboo Tree* before his sudden death in 1922 at age forty-nine.

The fame of the Williams-Walker duo is revealed through a glance at any of the sheet music for songs that they performed. The caption "sung with sensational success" reserved for such superstars as Mae Irwin or Sophie Tucker, appears on virtually every piece of Williams-Walker sheet music in the collection, including: *I May be Crazy But I Ain't no Fool*, *The Moon Shines on the Moonshine*, *I Certainly was Going Some*, *Miss Hannah from Savannah*, *I'll Take a Kitchen Mechanic for Mine*, *My Castle on the Nile*, *The Harbor of Lost Dreams* and the *Album of Bert Williams Famous Song Hits*.

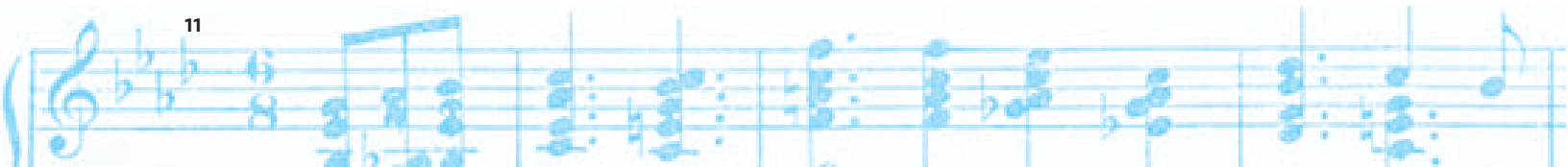


It was the syncopated sound of ragtime that paved the way for the success of the Williams and Walker team, forging black musical productions of popular success at the turn of the 20th century. And after nearly ten years of quietude, it was the genre's innovators who would also catapult it to new heights in 1921, with the Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle production, *Shuffle Along*. James Hubert "Eubie" Blake (1883-1983), the leading ragtime pianist on the east coast, in collaboration with Noble Sissle (1889-1975), changed both the course of ragtime music and ushered in a new era of black musical theater. Blake began playing professionally when he was only sixteen years old. Trained by W. Llewellyn Wilson in Baltimore, he began writing music before studying formal music theory; his first rag piece, *Sounds of Africa* (renamed *Charleston Rag*), was completed in 1898, and he wrote continuously thereafter. He enjoyed a long and varied career as a ragtime pianist, vaudevillian, Broadway and classical piano composer, and as a band leader. In 1915, he teamed up with Noble Sissle. Their first song, *It's All Your Fault*, introduced by Sophie Tucker, was a hit. Although Sissle may be best known for his collaboration with Blake, he was a renowned vaudeville performer, lyricist, singer and band leader in his own right. He led a jazz band, *Noble Sissle's Orchestra*, and during World War II, played in an army band and toured with a USO show.

After a rocky national tour, *Shuffle Along* opened on Broadway in 1921 and became a huge surprise success. Blake once described the opening of *Shuffle Along* as the proudest day of his life. The show represented a turning point in the history of Broadway. Although the balcony remained the segregated "black only" space that historically characterized Broadway theaters, the *Shuffle Along* run marked the first time in Broadway history that black patrons were allowed to sit in the orchestra and other sections traditionally reserved for whites. Black patrons were, *Variety Magazine* noted, "as far front as the fifth row."³⁸ *Shuffle Along* also included the first depiction of a love scene between black performers in Broadway history. The show launched the careers of Florence Mills and Josephine Baker and its critical acclaim re-legitimized black musicals in popular opinion. The success of *Shuffle Along* inspired two revivals, *Shuffle Along* of 1933 and *Shuffle Along* of 1952. The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection includes most of the score from *Shuffle Along*, including *I'm Just Simply Full of Jazz*, *Gypsy Blues*, *I'm Just Wild About Harry*, *Love Will Find a Way* and *Shuffle Along*. The collection also includes several other Blake-Sissle compositions, *Ain't Cha Coming Back Mary Ann to Maryland*, *Baltimore Blues*, *Gee! I'm Glad That I'm from Dixie*, *Good Night Angeline*, *Mammy's Lit'l Choc'lade Cullud Chile*, *Pickaninny Shoes* and the 1968 song, *Didn't the Angels Sing for Martin Luther King*.

Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle developed close relationships, both professional and personal, with other musical greats including Shelton Brooks, Andy Razaf, and James Reese Europe. Blake and Razaf collaborated to produce the score for *Lew Leslie's Blackbirds of 1930*. Although a box office failure, the Blake-Razaf songs of *Blackbirds of 1930* became standards.

Eubie Blake first collaborated with Shelton Brooks (1886-1975) on *It's All your Fault*, which was written for Sophie Tucker. His songs became some of the most popular, acclaimed classics of the period. Brooks led a large syncopated orchestra in Chicago's Grand Theater in 1915, one of the many great African American theaters in the City. He was also a performer, touring with the European tour of



Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1932*. The Beinecke's collection of Brooks's songs includes *All Night Long*, *Walkin' the Dog*, *Some of These Days* and *the Darktown Strutters' Ball*. *Darktown Strutters' Ball* was recorded by the James Reese Europe 39th Infantry Band in 1919.

Noble Sissle was so motivated by his close friend James Reese Europe's genius and character that he completed a biography of Europe in 1942, entitled *Memoirs of Lieutenant Jim Europe*. James Reese Europe (1880-1919) was the musical director for Cole and Johnson's 1907 *The Shoo Fly Regiment* as well as the 1909 production of *Mr. Lode of Koal*, composed by J. Rosamond Johnson, and starring Bert Williams. In 1910 he founded the Clef Club, a fraternal organization and black musicians' union. The Clef Club Orchestra, under the direction of Europe, first performed at Carnegie Hall in 1912. It enjoyed such a warm reception that it was invited back in 1913 and 1914. Europe went on to serve as band leader for Vernon and Irene Castle. This collaboration brought fame to all three as he composed special music for their dance salon and even invented several of the dances featured by the Castles, including the fox-trot and turkey-trot. He added the saxophone to the band he directed for the Castles and was instrumental in transforming the status of the instrument from novelty to legitimacy. The Beinecke holds several songs composed by the Europe-Castle collaboration including *Castle House Rag*, *Trot and One Step*, *The Castle Walk Trot and One Step*, *Castles in Europe the Innovation Trot* and *Castles Half and Half*.

In 1914 Europe resigned from the Clef Club and after a short stint directing the Tempo Club at the start of World War I, enlisted in the army. While with the Tempo Club, however, Europe was considered to be so important that the Victor Record Company signed him to a recording contract, the first time in history that an African American band had been so recognized. With the army Europe toured, leading the famed Hellfighters 39th Infantry Band. His monumental career was cut short when he was killed at age 37, but despite his relatively short career he is considered a pioneer in the emergence of jazz music from its ragtime roots. In addition to his collaborations with the Castles, sheet music for Europe's *My Heart Goes Thumping and Bumping for You*, *What it Takes to Make me Love You – You've Got It* (a collaboration with James Weldon Johnson), and several other songs are part of the collection.

FOLK POETRY *The Blues and Jazz Eras*

It is my opinion that the blues are of more value as a repository of folk-poetry than of folk music.

—James Weldon Johnson³⁹

Ragtime's syncopated sound, as well as the instrumentation and "front line/back line" structure of brass band music contributed to the genesis of jazz. Early jazz improvised popular music to create a new sound, a new song. Jazz interpretations of 1920s musical staples included, *Panama*, *Didn't He Ramble*, *Original Rags* and *Maple Leaf Rag*. Jazz compositions took on marches and dance pieces, traditional work songs, such as *John Henry*, and spirituals like *Down by the Riverside* (or, *Ain't Goin' to Study War no More*). Jazz fused ragtime, brass-band music, and dance music. Most importantly, jazz

incorporated blues melodies of all kinds, traditional and composed.⁴⁰ “It is from the blues” contended James Weldon Johnson, “that all that may be called *American music* derives its most distinctive characteristic.”⁴¹

W.C. Handy (1873-1958) first popularized the blues with the compositions *Memphis Blues* in 1912 and *St. Louis Blues* in 1914. The earliest blues songs in print were *Baby Seale Blues* (Artie Matthews, 1912) and *Dallas Blues* (Hart A. Wand, 1912). Gertrud “Ma” Rainey remembers first hearing the blues in 1902 as she was touring Missouri with the Rabbit Foot Minstrels. She included the song she heard in her next act, where it became popular; she claimed to give “the blues” its name after being asked by an audience member to classify the type of songs she was singing.⁴² In his 1941 autobiography *Father of the Blues*, W.C. Handy recounts how the blues “gets glorified” from its humble beginnings to popular success with a performance at Carnegie Hall.

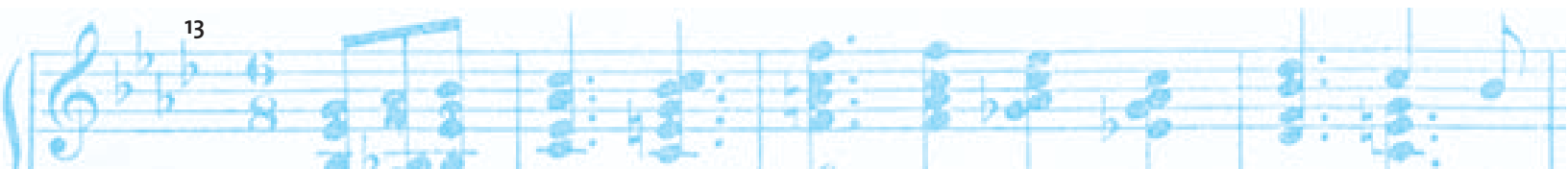
The blues were all born humble but they were not content to stay in the shady districts beyond the railroad tracks. Time came when they put on top hat and tails, so to speak. In one of his first books the late James Weldon Johnson predicted that the blues would form a basis for symphonic structure . . . [and] his prophecy was fulfilled when Paul Whitman played a program at Carnegie Hall.⁴³

W.C. Handy’s work is well represented in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. Johnson admired Handy and the blues, as he recalls in *Black Manhattan*,

1912 was also the year in which there came up out of the South an entirely new genre of Negro songs, one that was to make an immediate and lasting effect upon popular music; namely, the blues. These songs are as truly folk-songs as the Spirituals, or as the original plantation songs, levee songs, and rag-time songs that had already been made the foundation of our national popular music. The blues was first set down and published by William C. Handy . . . It was not long before the New York song-writers were turning out blues of every variety and shade. Handy followed the blues to New York and has been a Harlemiter ever since, where he is known as the “Father of the Blues.”⁴⁴

The Beinecke houses the sheet music for approximately forty compositions and arrangements by W.C. Handy including *Beale Street Blues*, *St. Louis Blues*, *Memphis Blues* and his arrangement of *Go Down Moses (Let my People Go)*.

The sheet music for compositions by blues musician Perry Bradford is also part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. Bradford was a major blues figure who commented that he owed his introduction to the blues to black prisoners at the Fulton Street Jail in Atlanta. He lived next door to the jail, and reflected that the folk and blues songs of prisoners were influential in his musical development.⁴⁵ He would go on to become a pioneer in the popularization of blues music in America. Perry Bradford managed Mamie Smith (1883-1946), who, on Valentine’s Day 1920 made the first blues recording by a black artist, and the first record by a black woman. Issued by the Okeh Label, Smith recorded two of Bradford’s songs, *That Thing Called Love* and *You Can’t Keep a Good Man Down*, both part of the Beinecke collection. Okeh records refused to release the album, believing that there was no market for black records. But the record leaked to dealers, circulated underground, and became immensely popular. Perry Bradford’s persistence and the underground success of *That Thing Called Love* combined to persuade Okeh records to officially release Smith and Bradford’s *Crazy Blues*



on August 10, 1920. The record caught fire, reportedly selling 75,000 copies in its first week. The Bradford-Smith recordings engendered a new industry: Okeh soon released a “race record” series, and other companies hustled to compete, clamoring for black blues artists to record “race records”.⁴⁶ It was in this context that blues legends Gertrude “Ma” Rainey and Bessie Smith made their first blues recordings in 1923.

Clarence Williams, Thomas “Fats” Waller and Chris Smith also wrote for Mamie Smith and other blues women (although Waller is most renowned as a jazz artist) and their compositions are part of the Beinecke collection. Chris Smith’s *The Farm Yard Blues (I Miss My Mississippi Home)*, *If You Don’t Want Me Send Me to My Ma*, “the original blues song,” and *San Francisco Blues*, and Williams’s *West End Blues* are some of the works that comprise the James Weldon Johnson collection of blues music.

Jazz is, perhaps, the genre most indebted to the blues for its distinctive features. The vocal orientation, individuation and improvisation of these two genres amount to their symbiosis. Eileen Southern, along with numerous other scholars, cites the parallels between blues and jazz forms:

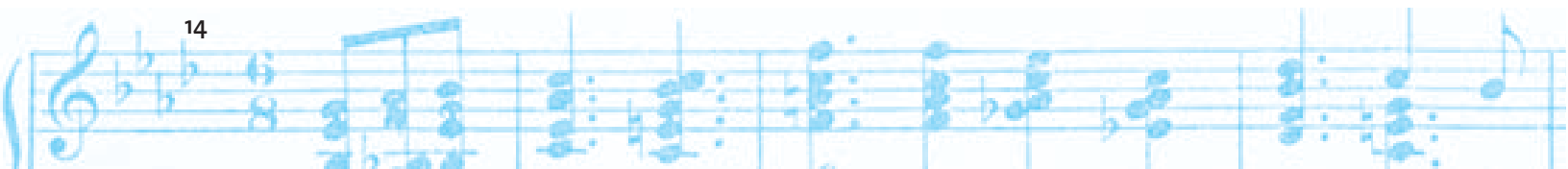
[Jazz musicians] replace the voice with their instruments but try to recreate the voice’s singing style and blue notes by using scooping, sliding, whining, growling, falsetto, and the like . . . the performer is at the same time the composer, shaping the music into style and form. A traditional melody framework may serve as the takeoff point for improvisation, but it is the personality of the player and the way he or she improvises that produces the music. Like the blues tune, the preexistent core of musical material used by jazz players is generally short.⁴⁷

Jazz innovators including “Jelly Roll” Morton, Ella Fitzgerald, Thomas “Fats” Waller, James Price Johnson, Count Basie and Duke Ellington infuse the sheet music in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. From the “Kaycee” School of Jazz to the Harlem small combos and swing bands, the nuanced evolution of jazz is documented through the sheet music in the Beinecke collection.

While Ma Rainey claimed to give the blues its name, Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton (1890-1941) boasted that he invented jazz. “Everyone today is playing my stuff” he proclaimed in 1941, “and I don’t even get credit. Kansas City style, Chicago style, New Orleans style – hell, they’re all Jelly Roll style.”⁴⁸ Morton is touted as the father of jazz piano. The first published jazz arrangement in history was his own *Jelly Roll Blues* in 1915. Moreover, he was an innovator in virtually all of jazz’s precursor genres. As a rag pianist, composer, bluesman, and jazzman, Morton was a crucial figure in the evolution of African American music. His piano style synthesized chief characteristics of the blues, piano ragtime and orchestral jazz, producing significant compositions including *Kansas City Stomp*, *The Naked Dance* and influencing the likes of James Price Johnson and Thomas “Fats” Waller.

While Jelly Roll Morton boasted the invention of all jazz, the form developed from and into overlapping styles and traditions. As prominent jazz critic and historian Albert J. McCarthy reveals, rigidity in distinguishing between schools of jazz is wholly inaccurate:

Semanticists would probably find the analysis of jazz styles an interesting if somewhat confusing field of study. For two decades critics have attempted rigid categorisation of the various schools, but as soon as one has finally thought that a written definition could be produced, the innumerable exceptions to the rule come to mind.⁴⁹

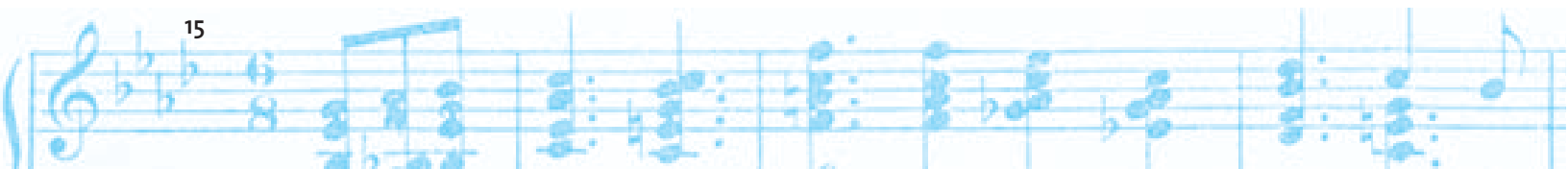


Historians and critics of jazz have generally (if too easily) divided jazz into four categories of stylistic development, which correspond to region—New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City (“Kaycee”), and Harlem Stride. Contextualized by histories of black migration at the turn of the century and amidst World War I, jazz’s stylistic trajectory is markedly fluid. New Orleans is designated the birthplace of jazz. In 1897, New Orleans passed a resolution that instituted vice segregation, creating a section of the city that would be named Storyville. Black musicians went to Storyville where they could find steady work and better wages; over the next decade the earliest jazz (or “jass”) styles developed, largely in Storyville, with musicians incorporating ragtime and blues into brass band and orchestral music.⁵⁰ In 1917, Storyville was closed down by United States naval order, sending many of its musicians north to Chicago. Chicago became home to legendary jazz orchestras, including those of King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band, Jelly Roll Morton and his Red Hot Peppers, and Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven.⁵¹ During the 1920s, the South Side of Chicago became the most important center for jazz. Later, in the 1930s, Kansas City became a vital jazz hub, with its location providing a sanctuary for itinerant jazzmen from the South as well as members of touring bands from the East, Chicago, and the West.⁵²

Harlem’s reputation loomed large in jazz culture, vying with Chicago for prominence. Known for having the best black pianists and drummers in the country, it helped to catapult the jazz reputation of several artists. James Price Johnson (1891-1955) began his professional career as a rag pianist in 1904. Classically trained, he first recorded in 1912. This recording, *Carolina Shout*, proved to be his most important, becoming a test piece for jazz in the same way that Scott Joplin’s *Maple Leaf Rag* set the standard for rag compositions. He went on to compose many other popular songs, many of which are James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection: *Aintcha Got Music*, *Charleston*, *I Need Lovin’*, *I Was So Weak*, *Love Was So Strong*, *If I Could Be with You*, *My Headache*, *Old Fashioned Love*, *Stop That Dog*, *Yours All Yours*. *Yamekraw Negro Rhapsody*, which was orchestrated by William Grant Still, premiered in Carnegie Hall in 1928.

Johnson’s protégés, Willie “The Lion” Smith (1897-1973) and Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904-1943), were hugely influential to the Harlem “Stride Piano” school. Smith, noted for his combination of power and delicateness, toured as a soloist, recorded, and played in nightclubs in Harlem, Greenwich Village and throughout New York City. Smith also toured in Europe and Africa enjoying fame for his accomplished, original style. The Beinecke holds several Smith songs, including *Between Sharps and Flats*, *Conversation on Park Avenue*, *Karnival on the Keys* and *Love Remembers*.

Fats Waller is perhaps the best known of the Harlem pianists, largely for his integral role in developing a cohesive jazz sound. Scholars contend that Waller was responsible for creating a sound in which ragtime was still a discernable part but no longer acted as a separate element thereby propelling modern jazz pianism. Mentored by James P. Johnson, he toured as a singer, orchestra pianist and soloist. He composed most of the songs for the classic musical *Ain’t Misbehavin’*. His *Honeysuckle Rose*, *If It Ain’t Love*, *Numb Fumblin*, *Bond Street*, *Concentratin (on you)* and several others are part of the Beinecke collection.

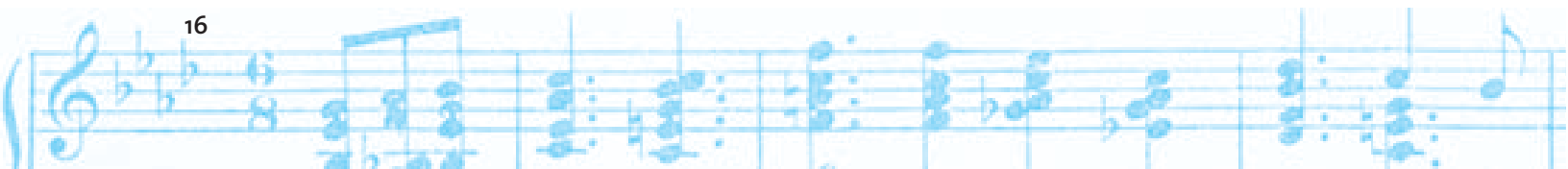


The Stride Pianists were artistic mentors to the next generation of jazz musicians. Jazz big bands came into vogue, and swing music was born. According to Eileen Southern, jazz pianists “fall into two categories: those who played with orchestras and those who were soloists or who played with small combos (i.e. instrumental trios or quartets)”. The most famous of the orchestral jazz musicians were Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

The first “big band” was formed in 1923 in New York.⁵³ The movement was led by pianist Fletcher Henderson (1897-1952) and saxophonist Donald “Don” Redman (1900-1964). In 1932, Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington (1899-1974) redefined this era with his song *It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing*. *It Don’t Mean a Thing* “provided a label for a new style of jazz developing among big bands during the 1930s.”⁵⁴ In addition to Waller, Smith and Johnson, Ellington’s musical influences were Will Vodery and Will Marion Cook. Ellington wrote his first song, *Soda Fountain Rag*, at the age of fourteen and organized his first band a few years later. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, awarded the President’s Gold Medal by Lyndon Johnson in 1966, and received a plethora of honorary doctoral degrees. His band, the Duke Ellington Band, played at the Cotton Club in Harlem for five years. He left over three-thousand compositions; few rival his prominence in the history of jazz music. The collection of Ellington sheet music in the Beinecke spans his “pre-swing” work (*Flaming Youth*, 1929) through his 1947 song *On the Wrong Side of the Railroad Track* from his musical *Beggar’s Holiday*. Classics including *Azure*, *Caravan*, *High Life*, *Sophisticated Lady* and *In A Sentimental Mood* along with about twenty other Duke Ellington compositions and several songs by his son, Mercer Ellington, are part of the Collection.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection also includes more than twenty compositions by William “Count” Basie (1904-1984), who, like Ellington, was a towering giant as a big band leader and jazz pianist. Unlike Ellington’s, Basie’s achievement as a band leader and preminent pianist surpassed his accomplishments as a composer. He studied the great “stride pianists” in Harlem and studied informally with Thomas “Fats” Waller. He began playing in Kansas City in 1927, which was steadily becoming a magnet for black musicians. The rich musical scene gave birth to the “Kaycee School” of jazz, which was a formative model for many jazz greats, instrumentalists and singers alike. The Basie band was tremendously influential, and surpassed all other orchestras in its performance of the blues. The band achieved international fame after it moved to Fifty-second Street, Manhattan. Basie’s compositions in the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection include: *Blue and Sentimental*, *One O’clock Jump*, *Harvard Blues*, *Bugle Blues*, *Café Society Blues*, *Way Back Blues*, *Blues Boogie*, *Blue Room Jump*, *You Can’t Get Around (Blues)*, *Kansas City Keys*, *Basie Boogie*, *Basie Blues*, *Goin’ to Chicago Blues*, *Roseland Shuffle*, *Royal Flush*, *Jive at Five*, and *Blues in the Dark*.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection holds sheet music for compositions by a number of other jazz legends including Charlie Parker, Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong. Ella Fitzgerald’s *You Showed Me The Way* (with Bud Green, Teddy McCrae and Chick Web) and *Shiny Stockings* with lyricist Frank B. Foster are also part of the collection.

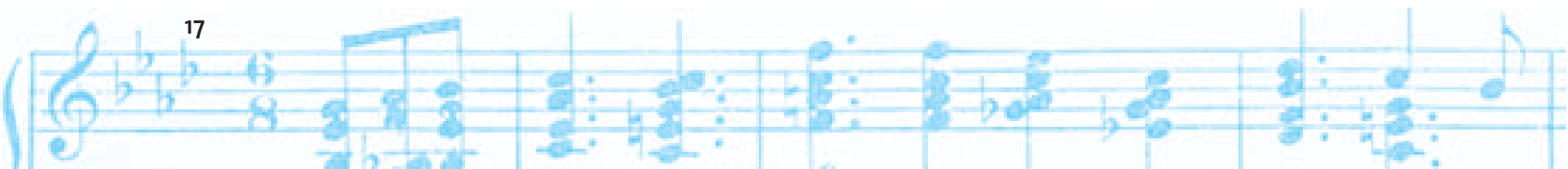


RHYTHM AND BLUES *The Ink Spots and Beyond*

On June 25, 1949, *Billboard Magazine* introduced the term rhythm ‘n’ blues to refer to black popular music intended for distribution in black communities, formerly known as “race records”.⁵⁵ By the late forties, R&B was considered by most musicians and audiences as a distinct music with particular features: technically, it consisted of a vocal unit (solo or group), rhythm unit (electric guitar and/or string bass, piano, drums) and a supplementary unit (saxophone and other winds). Stylistically, R&B followed in the performance tradition of blues improvisation, call and response between soloist and group, and earthy lyrics. Often, these lyrics, as well as the music, were written by the vocalists. In 1956, for instance, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers reached the Top Ten on both the Rhythm ‘n’ Blues and Pop charts with a song that he wrote at age thirteen, *Why Do Fools Fall in Love*. The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection includes several compositions recorded by pop quartets (The Ink Spots and Mills Brothers) and soloists (Billy Eckstein, Lena Horne, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Nat “King” Cole) during the 1940s and 1950s. Also of note in the collection are autographed copies of *And That Reminds Me* and *My Heart Reminds Me*, recorded by Della Reese.

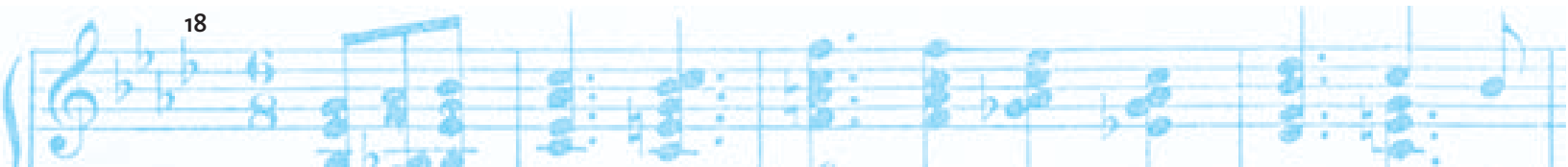
As rhythm and blues evolved, 1960s soul and 1970s funk musics surged to critical political and cultural importance. The Beinecke’s collection of sheet music includes a smattering of compositions written and recorded by artists that defined these eras: Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, Diana Ross, Nina Simone and Stevie Wonder.

The James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of sheet music traces both Johnson’s own trajectory of black musical influences, and a broader history of musical trends, and genres. With lyrical contributions of Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Countee Cullen, as well as James Weldon Johnson, the collection of sheet music engages the broader literary and historical texts of the James Weldon Johnson and American Literature collections.



Notes

- 1 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930, 93.
- 2 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans: A History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 91.
- 3 Eric Lott. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 38.
- 4 *Op. Cit.*
- 5 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 41.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 171.
- 9 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 259. See also, Jessie Carney Smith and Joseph M. Palmisano eds. *The African American Almanac, 8th Ed.* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2000).
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- 11 Errol G. Hill and James V. Hatch. *A History of African American Theater*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 107.
- 12 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 113.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 113.
- 14 James Weldon Johnson. *Along This Way*. New York: The Viking Press, 1933, 152.
- 15 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 224.
- 16 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 319.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 320.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 323.
- 19 Allen Woll. *Black Musical Theater: From Coontown to Dreamgirls*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989, 2.
- 20 David Krasner. "Parody and Double Consciousness in the Language of Early Black Musical Theater." *African American Review*. Summer 1995.
- 21 cited from "Pioneers of the Stage Memoirs of William Foster." *The Official Theatrical World of Colored Artists: National Director and Guide 1.1 (1928)*: 48 in David Krasner's "Parody and Double Consciousness in the Language of Early Black Musical Theater." *African American Review*, Summer 1995.
- 22 *Op. Cit.*
- 23 James Weldon Johnson. *Along This Way*, 175.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 173.
- 25 *Op. Cit.*
- 26 Allen Woll. *Dictionary of the Black Theater: Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Selected Harlem Theater*. CT: Greenwood Press, 1983, 135.
- 27 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 115.
- 28 James Weldon Johnson. *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*. New York: The Viking Press, 1925, 48.
- 29 Alain Locke. "The New Negro." in Alain Locke ed. *The New Negro*. (1925), 2.
- 30 James Weldon Johnson. *Along This Way*, 173.
- 31 Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans*, 271.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 295.
- 33 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 427.
- 34 Allen Woll. *Black Musical Theater: From Coontown to Dreamgirls*, 50-51.
- 35 James Weldon Johnson. *Along This Way*, 273.



- 36 *Ibid.*, 176.
- 37 Allen Woll. *Black Musical Theater: From Coontown to Dreamgirls*, 40-41.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 39 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 228.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 369.
- 41 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 125. (James Weldon Johnson's italics)
- 42 *Ibid.*, 332.
- 43 W.C. Handy. *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*. New York: The Mcmillan Company, 1941, 216.
- 44 James Weldon Johnson. *Black Manhattan*, 124.
- 45 Thomas L. Morgan and William Barlow. *From Cakewalks to Concert Halls: An Illustrated History of African American Popular Music From 1895-1930*. Washington, D.C: Elliot & Clark Publishers, 1992, 95.
- 46 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 397.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 368.
- 48 Arnold Shaw. *Black Popular Music in America: From the Spirituals, Minstrels and Ragtime to Soul, Disco, and Hip-Hop*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1986, 129.
- 49 Albert J. McCarthy. "The Re-emergence of Traditional Jazz." in Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy eds., *Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World's Most Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars*. New York: A Da Capo Paperback, 1959, 305.
- 50 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 358.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 378.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 389.
- 53 Eileen Southern. *The Music of Black Americans*, 384.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 385.
- 55 Arnold Shaw. *Black Popular Music in America*, 165.

