A STUDY OF THE COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE OF
SCOTT JOPLIN'S OPERA
TREEMONISKA

DOCUMENT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in Voice in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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* * * *

The Ohio State University
1976

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Advisor
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To my parents
Connie and Lucille Johnson
whose love and understanding
are priceless
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In examining the opera *Treemonisha* by Scott Joplin, several questions arise. Is there a possible correlation between the libretto and the life of Joplin? What was his motivation for vesturing into the realm of opera? What are the primary considerations in evaluating and performing *Treemonisha*? If Joplin attempted in the opera to combine ragtime and folk music in more time-honored forms, as Rudi Blesh says in *They All Played Ragtime*, should the rag choruses not be the cohesive element of the opera?

Joplin was not alone in his desire to write a 'syncopated opera'. Three years after he completed *Treemonisha* (1914), Irving Berlin had the same notion. Berlin was quoted in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*:

Berlin has one dream, other than to always continue writing hits—'If I live long enough...I shall write an opera completely in ragtime. I have not yet fully developed my story but it will of course be laid in the South...The opera will be following out my idea that beautiful thoughts can best be expressed by syncopation. It alone can catch the sorrow—the pathos of humanity. That note in ragtime is almost unexplainable. I call it the waif of the syncopated melody.'

Berlin never accomplished this task, but George Gershwin wrote the jazz opera *Porgy and Bess* in 1935. In 1976 the first uncut version of the Gershwin opera was produced.

When reading biographies on Joplin and later the prologue to the opera, one begins to believe in the possibility that Joplin chose his

2. Ibid., 72.
own background as the basis for Treemonisha. Vera Brodsky Lawrence, who published The Collected Works of Scott Joplin in 1971, has raised this premise in the fact that Joplin commemorated his beloved mother in the character of Monisha, specifically in the arrangement with a white family to do their washing and ironing in exchange for the education of Treemonisha. One must agree with Carmen Moore that, Treemonisha might well be the message to Black America through music and the classical form of opera, dramatizing the need for education. The libretto projects plain and simple lives in need of truth through knowledge. In the same article Moore states that:

If the music would step outside of labels, it would sound like contemporary 1911 American Classical, and it would sound like polished popular show music, and it would sound like old spirituals and work songs. But pervading all would be 'that weird and intoxicating effect intended by the composer' of which Joplin wrote in The School of Ragtime in 1909. Treemonisha would be a large-scale masterpiece. It would exhibit to classical-music snobs and haters of ragtime that the King of Ragtime had both the imagination and the skills (learning-craftsmanship-education) to master the detractor's own most venerated form.\textsuperscript{3}

I. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND EARLY EXPERIENCES

There is some question as to the exact date of Joplin's birth.

Vera B. Lawrence gives it as sometime in or around 1868, but The Collected Works of Scott Joplin, edited by Lawrence with an introduction


\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., xii.
by Nudi Blesh, gives the date as November 24, 1868. His place of birth is Texarkana, Texas, which is situated on the Texas and Arkansas border. His father, Giles Joplin, was an ex-slave, but his mother had been free from birth. Slavery terminated legally five years before Scott Joplin was born. He was brought up in a very musical home. His father was a violinist who had performed as a dance musician during his slavery days. Three other brothers played instruments and sang. Addison W. Reed, who was a Joplin scholar, after interviewing relatives in Texarkana and Marshall, Texas, found little information to substantiate the musical ability of his two sisters.

As a young boy Joplin played the guitar and later blew the bugle, discovering the piano when he was seven years old. After realizing his talent and love for music, his father managed to secure a second-hand piano for him. Joplin was able to improvise extremely well by the age of eleven, and word of his musical genius began to spread through the small community. Upon hearing Joplin, a German music teacher, to whom he was purported to have sent funds in later years, consented to give him lessons in piano, sight reading, and the principles to confirm and extend his natural instinct for harmony.

This teacher is said to have introduced Joplin to the classics and opera. In researching Joplin and interviewing people who knew him, no one has been able to determine the name of the teacher.

At the age of fourteen, when Joplin left home, he submerged himself in the sub-world of the American "honky-tonk" and "red light" districts where pianists, both black and white, were in great demand.
His travels took him from Texas to Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley states—Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas. This region was the cradle of ragtime, and in this atmosphere of self-taught musicians and singers he heard popular, light classical and folk music. It was to be a prime source of melodic inspiration throughout his life. In its primary stages this music was called "jig piano". Later 'jig' became a derogatory term for Blacks, but the original use was an attempt to describe the dancing syncopated rhythms by comparing it with the Irish Jig. The syncopated piano music gradually crystallized into a distinct musical form. Rudi Blesh alludes to the meeting of two cultures, black and white, with the instruments and the elements of key, scale and harmony coming from the white side, and the crucial catalytic polyrhythms coming from the black side. Though melodious, it was the exciting rhythms of the pieces which were so novel and appealing. Joplin was known to have improvised his rags and later transcribed them to paper.

Ragtime had many sounds and moods—cakewalks, folk rags, classical rags, dance rags, novelty rags, vaudeville rags and ragtime rags. The term 'ragtime' was coined in 1897, and the craze lasted from about 1897 to 1917. Joplin is credited with crystallizing ragtime as a classical form, and though universally popular during his lifetime, some musical authorities attacked his music as 'rubbish'.

The American Federation of Musicians passed a resolution to discourage ragtime by designating it as musical 'trash'. But Joplin's partial success and his subsequent neglect before being rediscovered, is not
an uncommon occurrence in the arts. Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), whose works also suffered neglect before receiving acclamation, is only one example.

Joplin's life and career reached a turning point when he was thirty-two years old. He had the good fortune to meet the publisher John Stark who happened to come into the Maple Leaf Club where Joplin was working in Sedalia, Missouri. The two men formed a long-lasting friendship and business relationship which brought good fortune to both of them. The publication of "Maple Leaf Rag" was their first big success, after Joplin entered into a publication agreement with Stark in 1899. In 1900 Joplin, who had recently married, retired from the "sporting world" and followed Stark to St. Louis. There he settled down to teach and compose. When Joplin went into seclusion for the purpose of teaching and composing, rumors began to spread that he was dodging competition. The point of attack was his virtuosity at the piano. Unlike Sedalia, a new cosmopolitan style had emerged in St. Louis. It featured an upbeat tempo with brilliant displays of ornamentation. On the other hand, Joplin's style was a supple, legato, singing manner utilizing moderate tempo. He habitually gave his rags tempo designations, 'Tempo di marcia', 'Slow march tempo', or simply 'Not fast'. Hitchcock has described Joplin's rags as "elegant, varied, often subtle, and as sharply incised as a cameo.... lovely and powerful, infectious and moving". In St. Louis Joplin

was often the center of ridicule. One of the pranks was to entice
him to play his own "Maple Leaf Rag", and then the other musicians
would display their 'variations' at tremendous speed. This ridicule
affected him deeply and the result became evident in the direction his
new compositions took. The change in style is apparent in a drive
for a ragtime classicism that could compare with the seriousness of
the best European music. The classicism of form that in "Original
Rags" and "Maple Leaf Rag" had already lifted the folk melody to a
serious syncopated level, was stimulated vastly by these public
humiliations. For example, Joplin generally adhered to the form
A-A-B-B-C-C-D-D, in "Original Rags" he delays the return of the
first theme. The form thus becomes: Introduction; A-A-B-B-C-C;
modulation; A-D-D-E-E.

A Guest of Honor

This was also the period when Joplin completed his first opera.

A Guest of Honor was performed in St. Louis in 1903. Joplin described
it as 'a ragtime opera'. The fate of the score is not known. Joplin
was prone to destroy his music during periods of depression. Roy
Carew, who was an early and ardent Joplinophile, discovered in the
U. S. Copyright Office in Washington, D. C., a card dated February 18,
1903. The card carries the title: A Guest of Honor, a ragtime opera,
words and composition by Scott Joplin, published by John Stark and Son,

6. Blesh, op. cit., 66
copyright 1903 by Scott Joplin. The opera was never published, and
a later notation on the same card reads: "Copies never received".
There has been a great deal of conjecture about the fate of the opera.
Stark descendants have related to interviewers that the opera was
a family topic for years and was a project which was planned and
postponed again and again.

Arthur Marshall, who was Joplin's classmate at the George Smith
College for Negros (operated by the Methodist Church), says of the
opera:

"...as for the Regime Opera, A Quest of Honor
was performed once in St. Louis, in a large hall
where they often gave dances. It was a test-out or
dress rehearsal to get the idea of the public
sentiment. It was taken quite well and I think
[Joplin] was about to get Haviland of Majestic
Producers to handle or finance the play, also
book it. I can't say just how far it got—as I
was very eager for greater money, I left St.
Louis for Chicago."?

The work was never performed again, but as late as the early 1950's
there were people still alive who remembered it as beautiful 'raggy'
music. Joplin's wife, Lottie Stokes Joplin, whom he met and married
in New York in 1909, had no knowledge of the fate of the score. In
1949 she did venture the tentative opinion that it might possibly
have been left in a trunk somewhere in a theatrical roominghouse
in Pittsburgh where Joplin had to leave it against an unpaid bill.
The trunk also contained clothing, unpublished music, letters and
family photographs. The trunk was never reclaimed, and Mrs. Joplin

had no idea of the address of the roominghouse.

II. TEACHING AND COMPOSING: TREMONISHA

After making New York his home, Joplin again devoted himself to teaching and endless meticulous work on manuscripts. The most prominent undertaking was the three act opera Tremonisha. He was a natural teacher, and though many studios opened, proclaiming to teach ragtime in as few as ten easy lessons, he was extremely serious in his endeavours. The most successful of the new entrepreneurs was Axel Christensen, whose schools became a chain and operated in twenty-five cities, including Honolulu. These courses led to 'diplomas', and helped to further stereotype ragtime as a frivolous popular fad. But Joplin disliked slogans and these evident misconceptions, and prefaced his exercises as follows:

That real ragtime of the higher class is rather difficult to play is a painful truth which most pianists have discovered. Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music, and to shy brinks at 'hateful ragtime' no longer passes for musical culture. 8

The first one and a half decades of the 20th Century was a critical age for the new art of ragtime. Its merit and value were lost in so much noise, because the music was ignored or attacked, despite its recognition and praise by such prominent composers as Debussy and Dvorak. The list of classical composers influenced by ragtime as well as jazz is an impressive one; for example, Debussy's

"Children's Corner Suite", Milhaud's "Three Rag Caprices", Satie's "Harlequin", and Stravinsky's "Ragtime for Eleven Instruments".

1909 was a notable year in Joplin's life for the quality, quantity, and diversity of the works he wrote and had published. It was also significant because he had fully launched Treemonisha. He was forty-one years old, hopeful and determined, inspired and full of energy due in great part to his happy marriage. It was his second. He seemed not to be aware of the precarious future of either his career or the music he championed, symbolized and so deeply believed in.

Yet after many years of struggle he was finally in a position where creative work was his primary concern. He was thinking at first in terms of utilizing larger forms in Treemonisha. During the last seven years of his life, Joplin would publish only five more rags. He had already become the foremost master of the classic rag's short form (AABB). With this further developed, he attempted to supplement his spotty early training through intensive study on his own. A copy of the new edition of Jadassohn's 1891 book, A Manual of Simple, Double, Triple, and Quadruple Counterpoint had been purchased by Joplin when he was in St. Louis in 1904. Its thorough use is evident from both the well-thumbed and marginally-noted condition and the contrapuntal devices that began to enter his music.

Nothing in Joplin's earlier training had prepared him for composing in extended forms, and Treemonisha's overture and three acts would test his training and natural aptitude. The world he had grown up in offered no continuity or interrelationships, especially shuttling
from town to town, and struggling to survive as a musician in a world of 'red-light' districts. He did have the determination and incentive to flee it all eventually, but his formative years had been spent in these surroundings.

*Treemonisha* received Joplin's nearly total concentration in 1910, for there were only two publications from that year, the song 'Pineapple Rag', which was a 1908 piano rag set to words, and 'Stoptime Rag', which captures as no other Joplin rag the 'salty' prodigies of 19th century American folk dance. The term 'stoptime' refers to tacets or the 'stopping of time' in the accompaniment, whether played by banjos, rustic fiddle or ragtime piano. These tacets were filled by dancers using their feet to accent some of the same beats. The foot sounds could be sliding, especially on sand. The 'slow drag' in *Treemonisha*, for example, was a variation of the 'slide'. This stoptime dance is an essential element in tap dance.

*Treemonisha* was completed in May of 1911, but was refused by all of the publishers to whom he submitted it, including John Stark. Stark refused to publish the work, primarily because of a financial loss when he published Joplin's long composition "Ragtime Dance". Long compositions were always risky to publish, and Stark's refusal caused their friendship to be severed. In his determination to achieve publication, Joplin published the opera in 1911 at his own expense under the imprint of the Scott Joplin Music Publishing Company. He began to undergo personality changes after the break with Stark. It was not known at the time, but he was suffering from the beginnings of an organic brain disease which eventually took his life. As the
disease progressed he became moody, depressed and suspicious. This state of mind however, did not deter him in his determination to have the opera produced. He was not satisfied with merely having it published. There is no documentation as to whether he published the piano-vocal or an orchestrated score. The present piano-vocal score does indicate some instrumental entrances. He did initially write the instrumental parts by working incessantly with the assistance of Sam Patterson. Patterson was a younger St. Louis ragtimer and a friend of the pianist Louis Chauvin. Unable to get backers after the completion of the orchestration, he turned his efforts toward arranging a trial performance on his own. He had hopes that this would generate interest and financial support. The venture was quickly usurping his funds, and to compensate, he took on more students and composed other music in order to raise the necessary money.

By 1913 Joplin had migrated uptown to Harlem and Treemonisha by this time had become a mono-mania. He brought out revisions of "A Real Slow Drag" and the "Prelude to Act III". In 1915 he published the revised version of "Frolic of the Bears". In his recollection of helping Joplin prepare the orchestration for Treemonisha Sam Patterson accounts that, he and Joplin would work all day in the basement apartment of his house, Patterson copying parts from the pages of the orchestral master score as Joplin finished them.9 He also spoke of Joplin's drive for perfection and 'how he

worked like a dog' rehearsing the cast and the fact that the opera was very poorly received:

Without scenery, costumes, lighting, or orchestral backing, the drama seemed thin and unconvincing, little better than a rehearsal, and its special quality, in any event, would surely have been lost on the typical Harlem audience that attended...sophisticated enough to reject their folk past but not sufficiently so to relish a return to it in art.\(^10\)

After assembling a cast in 1915, Joplin presented Treemonisha in a private hall in Harlem. Not able to secure an orchestra, he played the parts himself at the piano. This audience, unlike the one in St. Louis that heard A Guest of Honor, was not impressed. Thus his most ambitious project had failed. Treemonisha was not to be presented again until more than fifty years after his death, as the culmination of an Afro-American Music Workshop sponsored by Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1972. It is now felt by many to be his greatest composition.

From the time of Treemonisha's disastrous premiere performance, Joplin's mental and physical health rapidly began to deteriorate. He was beginning to suffer from a lack of coordination and periods of depression which grew increasingly longer. Finally in 1916, his wife Lottie realized how serious his illness was and had him admitted to the Manhattan State Hospital. He still tried composing during his lucid moments, but was too ill to work productively. Joplin died April 1, 1917. The cause of death as stated on the death certificate

\(^{10}\) Blesh and Janis, ibid., 249.
was: "Dementia Paralytica—cerebral", and the contributing cause: "Syphilis".

He was buried in St. Michael's Cemetery in Astoria, Queens, Long Island, in an unmarked grave. In the summer of 1974, fifty-seven years later, the Native New Yorkers Historical Association held a simple ceremony at the gravesite, calling attention to its poor condition. The American Society of Composers and Publishers placed a bronze plaque on the site and arranged for its permanent upkeep in October 1974. The plaque reads: "Scott Joplin, American composer".

The Preface

Blesh calls *Treemonisha* an Afro-American folk opera, and though it may or be grand opera in the conventional sense, with all its libretto shortcomings, it is a glorious compendium of beautiful Afro-American music, authentic and pure. Shortcomings in the libretto do not make the work any less conventional than any other grand opera libretto. Zeno and Metastatio in their reforms of the opera libretto separated the comic elements from the serious. Nineteenth century grand opera in its original stage was distinguished from opera comique by the recitative which connected numbers as opposed to spoken dialogue. The adjective 'grand' had other implications as the form progressed and developed. These works were on serious subjects of a heroic nature and were treated in pompous fashion, utilizing the utmost resources of singing, orchestral music, and staging. Other aspects favored in grand opera were actions of violence. In *Treemonisha*, the heroine's death has been planned, but she is rescued by Ned unharmed
The opera contains twenty seven complete musical numbers. Even though at least one of the numbers (A Real Slow Drag) is in the ragtime tradition, Joplin did not classify the opera as a 'ragtime opera'.

As originally planned it calls for eleven voices and piano accompaniment. The opera contains the usual arias, recitatives, choruses, ensembles, dances and is characterized by exciting use of the diminished 7th chord. Some reviewers feel that Joplin utilized the 7th chord to excess.

The story is a black fable with the intent of a parable. The music is more faithful to the folk idiom than the piano rags, where similar material is created with greater sophistication. Blech says that for reasons of this fidelity to source, which must have been a compelling motivation, "Tsamomihia" is both naïve and sophisticated, innocent and philosophical, trite in spots and yet gripping. He then concludes that it is the work of a genius, whatever the naïvete. His analysis of the work grants that Joplin may not be so accomplished a writer as Joel Chandler Harris, because Joplin was a real and not a surrogate spokesman for his race as was Harris and his semifictional "Uncle Remus".

The 130-page score of Joplin contains the following preface, written by him:
TREEMONISHA

Opera in Three Acts

Words and Music By

Scott Joplin

(Story Fictitious)

Act I—I——Morning  Act II—I——Afternoon  Act III—I——Evening

**************

Preface

The scene of the Opera is laid on a plantation somewhere in the State of Arkansas, Northeast of the Town of Texarkana and three or four miles from the Red River. The plantation being surrounded by a dense forest.

There are several Negro families living on the plantation and other families back in the woods.

In order that the reader may better comprehend the story, I will give a few details regarding the Negroes of the plantation from the year 1866 to the year 1884.

The year 1866 finds them in dense ignorance, with no one to guide them, as the white folks had moved away shortly after the Negroes were set free and had left the plantation in charge of a trustworthy Negro servant named Ned.

All of the Negroes but Ned and his wife Monisha were superstitious, and believed in conjuring. Monisha, being a woman, was at times
impressed by what the more expert conjurors would say.

Ned and Monisha had no children, and they had often prayed that their cabin might one day be brightened by a child that would be a companion for Monisha when Ned was away from home. They had dreams too, of educating the child so that when it grew up it could teach the people around them to aspire to something better and higher than superstition and conjuring.

The prayers of Ned and Monisha were answered in a remarkable manner. One morning in the middle of September 1866, Monisha found a baby under a tree that grew in front of her cabin. It proved to be a light-skinned girl about two days old. Monisha took the baby into the cabin, and Ned and she adopted it as their own.

They wanted the child, while growing up, to love them as it would have loved its real parents, so they decided to keep it in ignorance of the manner in which it came to them until old enough to understand. They realized, too, that if the neighbors knew the facts, they would someday tell the child, so, to deceive them, Ned hitched up his mules and, with Monisha and the child, drove over to a family of old friends who lived twenty miles away and whom they had not seen for three years. They told their friends that the child was just a week old.

Ned gave these people six bushels of corn and forty pounds of meat to allow Monisha and the child to stay with them for eight weeks, which Ned thought would benefit the health of Monisha. The friends willingly consented to have her stay with them for that length of time.
Ned went back alone to the plantation and told his old neighbors that Monisha, while visiting some old friends had become mother of a girl baby.

The neighbors were, of course, greatly surprised, but were compelled to believe that Ned's story was true.

At the end of eight weeks Ned took Monisha and the child home and received the congratulations of his neighbors and friends and was delighted to find that his scheme had worked so well.

Monisha, at first, gave the child her own name; but, when the child was three years old, she was so fond of playing under the tree where she was found that Monisha gave her the name of Tree-Monisha.

When Treemonisha was seven years old Monisha arranged with a white family that she would do their washing and ironing and Ned would chop their wood if the lady of the house would give Treemonisha an education, the schoolhouse being too far away for the child to attend. The lady consented and as a result Treemonisha was the only educated person in the neighborhood, the other children being still in ignorance on account of their inability to travel so far to school.

Zodetrick, Luddud and Simon, three very old men, earned their living by going about the neighborhood practicing conjuring, selling little luck-bags and rabbits' feet, and confirming the people in their superstition.
This strain of music is the principal strain in the Opera and represents the happiness of the people when they feel free from the conjurors and their spells of superstition.

The Opera begins in September 1884. Treemonisha, being eighteen years old, now starts upon her career as a teacher and leader.

SCOTT JOPLIN

Major Elements

"Treemonisha" contains all of the major elements of grand opera with the exception of overt violence, though the conjuror's ultimate goal is to have the heroine thrown into a hornet's nest. "The Frolic of the Bears" is the ballet of the opera. Several of the musical numbers are short transitions. It is a numbers opera, with each of the pieces being separately titled and numbered. Joplin's handling and control of the flow of the recitatives is quite impressive. Many are in the arioso form. They are well-written and as interesting as any
of the arias.

Peter Gammond says of Treemonisha: "It appears to be a modest work, of not undue length, with Joplin's own libretto entirely in keeping with the music's mixture of genuine ragtime, minstrel song and American drawing-room ballad style. It avoids being a pastiche (sic) of Italian opera."11

The music, especially the choruses, is beautifully infectious. Gammond's meaning when he says that in the 'whiter' songs, which never actually desert their black quality, there could be an intensely moving performance if sung by someone committed enough to overcome their occasional verbal naivety, is not readily understood. One cannot be sure whether he is referring to the ability to switch from dialectical speech to standard English or vice-versa, or the need for a style of singing other than the Italian operatic style. Even so the singer must be as faithful as possible to what Joplin has written and not attempt to 'correct' the pronunciation of words.

There is greater depth in the role of Treemonisha than merely the act of leading the people to freedom and equality by way of education. The subject, then as it is now, is Black America, and its creator (Joplin) was very capable of outlining an early program for black action, though his vehicle was opera. Treemonisha, as the female leader, also reinforces again the fact that women's liberation is definitely not a revelation of the seventies.

The abduction of Treemonisha by the conjurors, her rescue by Remus, and her acceptance by the community as leader, is a simple folk tale, just as are the tales of "Uncle Remus". As stated earlier, the subject of the plot is the black race. The moral is that blacks, like any other group or minority, must rise above their superstition and ignorance, to achieve, in order to be fully accepted and exercise their gifts. In the opera Joplin has contrasted the superstitions of the conjuror and the lust for revenge on his band by those he has wronged, with the charitable reasoning of Treemonisha who asks that they be forgiven rather than punished. The following verse from Act I illustrates the fear aroused in the people by the voodoo man.

Sweep not de dust from yo' cabins at night,
For some of yo' neighbors surely will fight.

If yo' nose should itch while you sit in yo' room,
An unwelcome neighbor will visit you soon.

If you eatin' food wid ease,
And drawin' pleasant Breath,
Be careful you do not sneeze,
Because 'tis sign of death.

In reply to this kind of situation, after her rescue, Treemonisha sings in Act III:

There's need of some good leader,
And there's not much time to wait,
To lead us in the right way,
Before it is too late.
For ignorance is criminal,
In this enlightened day;
So let us all get busy,
When once we've found the way.

The contrast in verbal style is evident in the quoted verses. Pure dialectical speech runs through the lines of Zodetrick and his band of conjurors. Ned's speech is a mixture of dialect and more conventional English. These examples indicate that Joplin may have encountered difficulty in trying to recapture the black dialect of the South.

The choruses in the opera clearly indicate that Joplin's memories of choral staging are of spirituals. The treatment of Nos. 3 and 4 of "The Cornhuskers" with the ring dance "We're Goin' Around", is derived from the tradition in old unaccompanied hymns of the call-and-responses, and this is further extended in the sermon and responses of Parson Alltalk with the congregation in No. 9. The words to No. 9 are not very different in effect from the sentiments of those in No. 22, Remus' "Wrong is Never Right" lecture. Carmen Moore considers this to be, in part, Joplin's weakness as lyricist-librettist, and his unwillingness to write ungracious choral music also tends to blur his bad-good opposition here, rendering the two sections equally cared-for musically.

"Confusion", No. 10, which is scored for soprano (Lucy) and an eight-part chorus, is based on Black heritage. Beginning on page 92 to 94 of the piano-vocal score the chorus moves into complicated and intricate Afro-Latin type rhythms. These rhythmic calisthenics take
place over a very simple, primarily chordal, accompaniment. On page 99 of the same number, Joplin makes use of avant-garde notation with the women's cries and the men speaking in rhythmic crying tones. His instructions here are that, "Crying should start on a high pitch each time and the sound should gradually diminish..." and "Women crying,... the crying need not be in strict time, but the accompaniment must be."

Up to this time notation of this kind had not been employed. Carmen Moore raises the question of a possible need to write an authentic black-sounding wall; or perhaps the dramatic need to utilize for a moment the jazz impulse to intensify emotions by stretching loose lines over strict-time accompaniment. This accompaniment is a chromatic one, with the treble lines moving in oblique motion, beginning at the octave (C²), and voices crossing to the octave (Ab¹), back up again, in 16th and 32nd notes. In the bass, the vertical interval of the major 6th moves upward in parallel motion, in 16th notes. This section is first stated in the overture in Larghetto tempo. The notation for the walls of the women makes use of the 64th note stem. These are not actual note indications, though these particular indications begin on the second line of each staff (see figure 2).
Moore says in the article "Notes on Treemonisha", that MacDowell's puzzlement over the significance of the "Negro melodies" was understandable because Black musical aesthetics do not begin with tunes at all but with sound, texture and the musical act as a thing useful to daily life. The taste for complexity-rhythmic, timbral, phrase structure, melody, inflectional speech and harmony—is at the heart of this aesthetic. The harmonic complexity is an integral element in Joplin's work. Ragtime becomes the showcase where the conventional harmony in the bass utilizes strong regular movement, and the treble and rhythms move freely in cross-rhythms and syncopations and in many different directions.

Treemonisha abounds in Black elements, yet they make it no less an opera. And though it is not a ragtime opera, ragtime is very evident in some portions of No. 2 "The Bag of Luck", No. 4 "We're Goin' Around", in much of No. 18, "Aunt Dinah Has Blowed De Horn", and most especially in "A Real Slow Drag".

Another example of the expressive way that Joplin handles the flow of the recitatives is in No. 8, "Treemonisha's Bringing Up", sung by Mamisha. Here again Joplin makes use of a sensitive and economical accompaniment, setting an appropriate mood for the revelation of very serious facts. "Confusion", which was mentioned earlier, includes very powerful recitatives interspersed between choral sections.

No mention has been made of the fate of Joplin's orchestration for Treemonisha in any source. The only mention is of the original 230-page yellow-bound piano score. In the piano vocal score Joplin does insert a few instrumental entrances. On page 12 in measure 8,
just before the 'Largo con espressione' section, there is an indication for kettle drum, and one for trombone in measure 10. The kettle drum is indicated again on page 19, in measure 7. In Act 1, No. 2 there is an indication for cello and violin in measure 6 and 8, and a TUTTI marking on page 27.

"We Will Rest Awhile" No. 16, is a barber-shop quartet with banjo accompaniment. Shirley Fleming, in her review of the opera, states that the quartet has no meaning to the plot or setting, but this style of singing is not unknown in black music. This is one of the elements she considers to be a part of Joplin's patchwork of styles. Upon closer examination she would have found that black music in its growth and development is in a sense, a patchwork of African, Latin and Anglo elements. This kind of patchwork was necessitated by the new and different surroundings the African slaves found themselves in, and the ultimate need for a secret means of communication. Lerone Bennett, Jr., the prominent Black historian, says that "slaves...used music as a medium of communication where the cries and hollers and field calls contained secret messages and code words. In truth, double meanings permeated the whole fabric of its music....One song, for example, used Jesus' name to mask an open and obvious invitation to the slaves to steal away to freedom."

Steal away, steal away to Jesus,
Steal away, steal away home.
I ain't got long to stay here.
The Overture

The Overture is a very descriptive and revealing piece. Joplin employs themes which occur in the opera itself. For example the principal theme, which can be called a leitmotif recalls the happiness of the people each time it occurs. The form of the Overture appears to be seven-part rondo. It is actually an extension of Joplin's earlier sixteen-bar themes which evolved into an A-B-A-C-D form and is related to the rondo, quadrille and the military march. It is extended by repetition of themes and transition sections and a return to the first theme. Some of the transitions are as lengthy as the themes themselves while others are only a few measures long.

Joplin's characteristic piano rag form usually combined four sixteen-measure themes in 2/4 or 4/4 meter. The form followed the pattern: Introduction; A-A-B-B-A; transition; C-C-D-D; codetta. The introduction is often present but the short transition is rare and generally modulatory with the codetta, or 'tag', as it was called, seldom used.

In the Overture to Treemonisha Joplin has taken this form, which became basic for his later rags, and deleted the introduction, extended the usually short transition which is still modulatory, and eliminated the codetta. He did not repeat the C and D themes. The Overture states each of the major themes that appear throughout the opera. This was a characteristic of the French opera overture. The relationship of Joplin's procedure to Berlioz' idee fixe and Wagner's leitmotif has already been discussed earlier in this paper. It is more closely related to the leitmotif than to the idee fixe because the themes identify animate and inanimate objects, as well as the community's
state of mind.

The following is the key and theme layout for the Overture. The chord indications show that each phrase begins on the one six-four chord, except the theme in b minor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme A</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>Theme A</th>
<th>Trans</th>
<th>Theme B</th>
<th>Trans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B\textsuperscript{b}: I 6/4</td>
<td>f: i 6/4</td>
<td>C: I 6/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme B</th>
<th>Trans</th>
<th>Theme A</th>
<th>or Dev.</th>
<th>Theme C</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C: I 6/4</td>
<td>D: I 6/4</td>
<td>b: I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme D</th>
<th>Trans</th>
<th>Theme A</th>
<th>Trans</th>
<th>Theme A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modulatory</td>
<td>B\textsuperscript{b}: I 6/4</td>
<td>B\textsuperscript{b}: I 6/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next illustration is the general key arrangement for the three acts of the opera.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT I</th>
<th>p. 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zodzezick.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the course of recit., becomes modulatory until Monisha enters, p. 25 back in G:1.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F:1 6/4 Med. moves into arioso sections. At this point the key changes with entrance of each character, and mood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zodzezick. G:1 6/3 before Treemonisha moves into modulates to d:i at Zodzezick's entrance, and to G:1 as Treemonisha speaks to him again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 31</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G:1 Remus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 53</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G:1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 56</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monisha's Aria in C:16.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recit. Treemonisha &amp; Cho. in a:i. p. 71 in Monisha's aria in F:I to C:I and ends in C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY CHART OF ACTS ONE THROUGH THREE OF TREEONISHA

Act I (cont'd)

p. 79
began on tonic
min. g:i for two
meas. then to g:i. C:i Monisha and Cho.
Entire song in C
except when middle
repeats tonic min.
for one meas. The
aria though with
cho. to be in three
part song form. using
that needed contrast.

p. 90
becomes extremely
chromatic and rhythmically
intricate but does
not modulate to any ex-
tended degree. Final
modulation p. 105 ends
in c:i.

Act II
p. 107
F:I Interlude
modulates to
Ab: as Cho. &
Solo begins.

p. 116
C:i
Treemonisha
in peril. Begins
use of augmentation
on p. 123
mea. 2.

p. 124
G:
Ballet

p. 133
C: as in overture
modulates to a: at
the end.

p. 137
Recits. are transi-
tional though
theme I which accen-
tuates the meaning.
Treemonisha is in
C: up to meas. 11.
Ends in C:
# KEY CHART OF ACTS ONE THROUGH THREE OF TREEMONISHA

## ACT II (cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 140</th>
<th>p. 143</th>
<th>p. 146</th>
<th>p. 152</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\flat$ Barbershop Quartet Banjo Acc.</td>
<td>Recit. chromatic. Signature for $\flat$: which is finally established p. 144 mea. 2. Last two measures end in $e$ min.</td>
<td>Chorus in $\flat$ indicated in Joplin's score but Schuller repeats entire chorus.</td>
<td>Prelude to act 3 begins in D and modulates to $\flat$; at p. 153 and to C: at top of p. 154 as it becomes modulatory. Back to G: at Tempo I p. 155.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ACT III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p. 156</th>
<th>p. 160</th>
<th>p. 172</th>
<th>p. 183</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
KEY CHART OF ACTS ONE THROUGH THREE OF TREEMONISHA

ACT III (cont'd) p. 186
D: g\textsuperscript{b};
Ned's Lecture Very chromatic.

p. 195

p. 199
C: Treemoshina Modulated to D: at
begins in C: p. 220, to F: at p. 221
and chorus and to B\textsuperscript{b}: at p. 225. Back
enters on p. 201 to F: at p. 229 and ends
in A: p. 203 & in F.
212 uses series
of dim. 7ths.
p. 204
Treemoshina in
C: Choral
section p. 206
modulatory.
Signature for
C: Back in A:
p. 217
The Overture (Allegretto) begins in B flat Major with what Joplin identifies in the prologue or Preface as the main theme. This theme is taken from Joplin's *School of Ragtime* (1908), which contains six exercises for piano. The first measure of exercise six forms the basis for the main theme. This particular measure is also rhythmically employed in the Trio of "Paragon Rag", which was composed in 1909. This and all succeeding themes in the overture, with the exception of theme C, begins in inverted triadic form. Each theme begins on the I 6/4 chord. Theme A is stated first in the right hand. In measure 17, it is shifted to the left hand with the accompaniment on top. The transition or bridge begins on page 10, measure 3. The return of Theme A occurs on page 11, measure 10 in the dominant minor. This section becomes chromatic and modulatory before moving into Theme B (Largo con espressione), page 12, measure 11. This theme is the "Wasp's Nest" ensemble, number 14, and begins in C Major on the I 6/4. The next statement on page 15 again is in C Major and again begins on the I 6/4. Joplin's use of the inverted chord was possibly to strengthen and highlight these themes. Following a very short bridge, at measure 13, page 16, Theme A returns, this time in D Major, but again on the I 6/4 chord.

The next section, the Adagio on page 18, has been labeled the development. This section could also be an extended transition. It is a syncopated section with only a very slight hint of the Ballet in the bass parts. The section tapers off on page 19 and moves into Theme C, No. 27, "A Real Slow Drag". The Adagio on page 20, measure 3 to 6, is a short modulatory bridge to Theme D at measure 7, which is
the extremely chromatic and fast moving "Confusion", No. 10. There is no established key in this section, though the signature indicated C Major. Here, in the right hand, Joplin employs the ascending and descending chromatic scales together. The descending scale appears in thirty-second notes and the ascending scale in sixteenth notes. Against this, in the left hand, Joplin employs a chromatic scale in oblique motion to the right hand movement. Theme A recurs a third time in measure 11, page 21, followed by a bridge and repeat of the theme. On page 23, measure 5, in the left hand, Joplin takes the first measure of the theme and treats it rhythmically and quite dramatically before the final statement.

The Music

The curtain to Act I rises as Zodzetrick enters and speaks to Monisha. In this Quintet, "The Bag of Luck", Zodzetrick is trying to convince Monisha that his bag of luck will keep enemies away and stop Ned from drinking. The part of Zodzetrick is a very interesting one. It is a parallel to Sportin' Life in Porgy and Bess, though Joplin does not give Zodzetrick an aria on the powerful level of Sportin' Life's "It Ain't Necessarily So". Zodzetrick employs speech song in the manner of musical comedy, and is the only character which uses this style of singing in the opera.

This act contains Monisha's aria "The Sacred Tree", where she explains to Treemonisha why she must not take a leaf from the tree. It is the tree under which she was discovered as a baby. This aria, just as those that follow, has no dramatic ending. The climaxes appear
within the body of the songs and never at the ending cadences, except when solo and chorus are involved. No. 9 "Good Advice", with Parson Alltalk and Chorus, is the only aria to indicate the three part song form, employing a contrasting middle section.

Act II begins with an instrumental transitional section, which changes the scene to the woods, where the conjurors and their followers meet to carry out Treemonisha's punishment. The curtain rises to the singing of the "Superstition" chorus, No. 11, which has already been discussed.

In No. 12, page 118, Joplin uses the descending chromatic scale rather than the earlier spoken cries with no pitch or rhythm indications. On page 123 of the same chorus he makes use of augmentation rather than a ritard.

"The Frolic of the Bears", No. 13 is Joplin's ballet. In this number the bears utter only one word, '00-ar, 00-ar'. Joplin does not include this section in the Overture. He uses running eighth notes in the vocal parts to portray the clumsy movements of the bears. Rudi Blesh, in They All Played Ragtime, says that to hear the eight bears singing '00-ar, 00-ar' and to visualize their clumsy frolic in the Ozark forest is to be transported back to the fairy world of animal legends which Uncle Remus borrowed from Africa.

"The Wasp-Nest" ensemble No. 14 has been anticipated in the Overture. The sixteenth-note passages depict the movement of the wasps. Because the mood of the people portrays a happy occasion in "The Rescue", No. 15, the main theme is the accompaniment for the beginning of
Treemonisha's recitative with Remus. This theme occurs again and again, almost as Berlioz' idée fixe in "Symphony Fantastique".

"Aunt Linah Has Blowed De Horn" shows the influence of the upbeat revival hymns and songs of jubilee, and also the present-day gospel chorus, which in the seventies evolved into rock gospel. The Prelude to Act III, No. 19, makes use of fragmentation, particularly on page 153, using the main theme. No. 21, "Treemonisha's Return", causes a joyful return to the main theme again.

Fragments of Remus' "Wrong is Never Right" lecture are found in the overture. This is a lovely ballad, but tends to be boring because of its unvaried repetition. There is no effective contrasting section. No. 24, which is Ned's lecture "When Villains Ramble Far and Near", suffers from the same lack of contrast and variety. It is here that Carmen Moore believes Joplin refused to make the sacrifice for more dramatic intensity. Ned's aria, too, does not quite fall into the category of the 19th century ballad. Joplin does employ 12/8 time and makes use of the triplet figure which Schubert so effectively uses in "The Erl-King" and Moussorgsky in "The Song of the Flea" and "The Field Marshal". The form appears to be binary, rather than ternary. Its structure is similar to his early rags.

Choral parts in No. 26, "We Will Trust You as Our Leader", with Treemonisha and chorus, are written in beautiful close harmony in chorale form. The unaccompanied sections on page 205 are accompanied when they are repeated on page 206.

No. 27 is the haunting "A Real Slow Drag". The 'stop-time' dance was discussed at the beginning of this paper. In New Orleans, which
was the center for Dixieland and Tin Pan Alley, a prancing high-stepping
dance evolved which is akin to both the 'stop-time' and 'cakewalk'.
It is a dance unique to this region, and became an integral part of the
funeral processions of musicians. The "Slow Drag" melody is first
heard in the Overture. Joplin heads the number with directions for the
dance.

1. The Slow Drag must begin on the first beat of each
   measure.

2. When moving forward, drag the left foot; when moving
   backward, drag the right foot.

3. When moving sideways to right, drag left foot; when
   moving sideways to left, drag right foot.

4. When prancing, your steps must come on each beat of
   the measure.

5. When marching and when sliding, your steps must come
   on the first and the third beat of each measure.

6. Hop and skip on second beat of measure. Double the
   Schottische step to fit the slow music.

Joplin also gives further directions within the chorus. As a matter
of fact, directions in the entire score are quite explicit. Rudi
Blesh in They All Played Ragtime, calls this chorus "the Negro's own
ragtime dance, and the Negro who is in Joplin's own words:

Marching onward, marching onward,
Marching to the lovely tune;
Marching onward, marching onward,
Happy as a bird in June.

Sliding onward, sliding onward,
Listen to that rag.

Hop and skip,
Now do that slow--do that slow frag.

Dance slowly, prance slowly,
While you hear that pretty rag.
Just as "The Green Pastures", "God's Trombone", and many spirituals were pictures of a God who was Black and a heaven made for the dark of skin, Treemonisha is the ideal legend of a Black Eden or Camelot.

III. JOPLIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In Treemonisha Joplin wanted to combine both ragtime and folk music into a classical form. This speaks for the significance of those ragtime characteristics which reviewers have singled out as being the only elements which hold the work together. As a dramatic operatic vehicle, Treemonisha is difficult to judge, but the score does reveal beautiful music and the fact that Joplin knew what he wanted to do. It is not the musical score of a musician who decided to step into a world where he did not belong. He indeed belongs there. He, just as other composers who wanted to write opera, needed time for growth and development. Schubert's operas were not performed and Schumann wrote only one, but they are recognized for their endeavours in vocal and other forms of instrumental music.

Samuel B. Charters wrote in Jazz: A History of the New York Scene:

'The tragedy for Joplin was that the Negro musicians with whom he associated in New York rejected him even more completely than the white audience did....They felt that ragtime music was low-class, and as members of an insecure middle class (i.e. successful musicians like J. Rosamond Johnson, Chris Smith and James Reese Europe) they seemed to be afraid to associate with the music in any more than a very superficial manner.'

Maud Conley-Hare, who was a pianist, lecturer and music historian, and author of Negro Musicians and Their Music, published by DaCapo Press, did not even mention Scott Joplin's name in her anthology.
Though *Treemonisha* was rejected during its Harlem premiere, it was not totally ignored. The *American Musician* on June 14, 1911, ventured to say that Joplin had 'created an entirely new phase of musical art and has produced a thoroughly American opera.' Peter Gammond in *Scott Joplin and the Jazz Era*, states that if Joplin, in writing *Treemonisha*, intended to show the musical hierarchy like Edward MacDowell, who was very strongly denying that Black American music had anything to offer American music as a whole, that ragtime could indeed sustain an opera, he also lacked support from his own people. And had he aimed at the sphere where ragtime more naturally belonged—the musical comedy stage—he might have had a roaring success on his hands. One tends not to totally agree with Gammond's assessment. First of all, one must realize that Joplin's designation of the work as grand opera adheres primarily to what grand opera in its early stages constituted. Had he desired to do so, there was sufficient material to portray a bloody and gory insurrection. Why not express in musical terms the growth and development that is possible for a race to achieve? Gammond says further that even Gershwin, with his added sophistication and musical ingenuity, only just succeeded in writing an opera in the jazz idiom which the 'serious' world of music could accept.

There is an interesting parallel between Joplin and Edward MacDowell. MacDowell, who helped organize an American school of music and founded the Department of Music at Columbia University in 1896, lived his final years in a situation similar to Joplin. His music, though very well accepted while he was alive, since he was considered in his time to be
a man of genuine talent and thorough professional equipment, is not
very popular now. He resigned his position at Columbia in 1904 after
a disagreement with the school president, the subject of much unpleasant
publicity, which led to a mental collapse and eventually a recession
to infantilism from which he never recovered. He died in 1908.
Joplin's most prized work was rejected in his time and is being revived.
Both men died in rejection, of mental disorders, though Joplin's
steamed from physical causes.

Scott Joplin could very well be called the first Black American
nationalist composer, though he was not the first Black composer to
write an opera. Harry Lawrence Freeman was the first Black composer
to write grand opera.

While considering the rejection of Treemonisha by Joplin's Harlem
audience, one must ask the question, why was A Guest of Honor so well
received in St. Louis? Its failure to be published was said to be
because of revisions that John Stark, Joplin's publisher, wanted him
to make in the score, which he never got around to doing. Without the
score, to A Guest of Honor and more adequate documentation of Scott
Joplin and this work, it is extremely difficult to judge him properly
as a serious classical (opera) composer. This is especially true when
much of the information about Joplin came from relatives and musicians
who knew him primarily as a composer of rags. Research on Joplin by
prominent writers is not widely dispersed, and it becomes necessary
to consult many fragmented sources to get a complete assessment of
his place in the history of music, if this is possible.
IV. PERFORMANCE OF TREEMONISHA

In 1972 a production of Treemonisha orchestrated by William Bolcom, was presented at Morehouse College in Atlanta. Robert Shaw conducted the Atlanta Symphony for this production. The opera was later produced at Wolftrap Farm near Washington, D.C.

A new version of Treemonisha was presented by the Houston Grand Opera in 1975. This time Gunther Schuller was the orchestrator and conductor, Frank Corsaro was stage director, Louis Johnson was choreographer, and Vera Lawrence was artistic supervisor. The same production then moved to the Kennedy Center, and after a musicians' strike it played at the Palace Theater on Broadway.

The Houston Grand Opera gave the first professional staging of the opera at the outdoor Miller Theater in Hermann Park. This cast is also the one used for the Deutsche Grammaphon recording. Schuller used the Red Back Book, which is a book of rag instrumentations by Joplin and published by John Stark around 1905, to get an idea of the correct orchestration. He also consulted turn-of-the-century theater-orchestra style as a model for his orchestration. In analyzing the problems of orchestrating Treemonisha, Schuller considered the opera to be the result of a three-way cross-breeding of elements—mid-nineteenth century European opera, Afro-American dance forms, and turn-of-the-century American popular or semi-classical idioms. To him Treemonisha is a curious mixture of musical style and conceptions which would certainly have failed in the hands of a lesser talent than Joplin's.

As a period piece, he stresses that the "philosophy" underlying an
orchestration must pay equal respect to these three elements, and that no updating of the work should be permitted.

The Red Back Book furnished very good clues for the eventual orchestration: a mini-symphony orchestra containing four woodwind instruments (flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon), the four brass instruments (trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba), a small string section and a rhythm section which rarely contained banjos or guitars, though Schuller does use banjo accompaniment for the barbershop quartet. From this example Schuller chose an orchestra of about thirty-five.

In his interview of the opera, Eric Salzman believes that the performance problems were more serious in the theater than on the recording. He considered Frank Corsaro's direction and Franco Colavecchia's sets and costumes to be pseudo-childlike, 'campy' and even patronizing. Much more impressive to him were the arrangements and musical direction of Schuller and the choreography of Louis Johnson. From notes and sketches one tends to agree with Salzman. Colavecchia gives detailed analysis of how he arrived at his final designs.

He was first influenced by the collages of Romare Bearden, and Darius Milhaud's "The Peaceable Kingdom", as well as books on Haiti, Africa and Jamaica. At one point he even considered the idea of putting the entire opera inside a ragtime saloon. He next considered a more mythical setting. With this idea in mind, works of pastoral scenes dominated his attention: for example, "Conjur Woman", "Blue Snake", "Junction" and "Conjunction", and particularly "Ritual Rayou" which depict landscapes with birds wings, snakes, butterflies, moths
moons and peering faces and eyes. These suggested voodoo scenes to
him. There were also picture books of the South which he studied.
When the production was delayed for a time, and upon returning to
work, he discarded all of these ideas and began to use his own. It
was at this point that he decided to have the characters hold the
scenery. From this point he began to draw each of the figures on stage
either holding props or standing in groups. In his collages, the
clothing evolved from the pictures he drew. Colavecchia put the chorus
in a scheme of brown and blue stripes and gingham.

In distinguishing the leading characters he used a collage of
strong fabric designs and lots of white. He decided that the people
were not to be put in animal suits, so small essential elements for
the animals were done with the scenery.

His reasoning for this approach was the fact that in paring down
the designs to an essential, direct and strong, yet naive, statement,
he would come near to what Scott Joplin would have wanted for the opera.
He felt that Treemonisha's innocence and charm needed the most direct
visual statement possible. With this as his goal, after a year-and-a-
half, he had put together two cloths and front gauze, with a surrounding
arch of slatted trees and numerous hand-held pieces.

As far as Corsaro was concerned, his primary task was to preserve
Treemonisha's innocence and avoid the shoals of convention and the
abuses of chauvinisms, past and present. He placed the story in the
domain of the Grimm fairy tale and felt that this was where Joplin's
power to charm and horrify was evident. Therefore, the hornet's nest
became transmogrified into a huge voodoo mask, over 12 feet high, encrusted with deadly hornets.

The magic tree, under which Treemonisha was found as a baby, was achieved with a series of sculptured forms, which were hand held by members of the cast. This was to create a dreamlike mosaic. Only the practical objects of the wash, cotton sacks, corn bushels and chains on an old slave block were realistically fashioned. The costumes were a colorful amalgam of myth and fantasy-poverty showing a clean vibrant simplicity. Every detail of scenery was hand-manipulated, including the final rainbow.

Louis Johnson's task appeared to be a little more simple. He had already choreographed some of Joplin's rags for his own dance company in Washington, D.C. Here, he had the task of capturing the classical quality of the music in the dances. For the dance in Act I, "Goin Around", Johnson invented a big partner-dance with a swinging, going-around style.

In the ballet, "The Frolic of the Bears", Treemonisha is bound and placed on a tree stump in a woody swamp area. As the bears enter they dance around her, inciting fear. Birds are flying, alligators swimming, trees moving. For this, Johnson employed different styles; the birds are ballet, the alligators modern dance. In the midst of all this activity Treemonisha collapses, in turn frightening all of the animals away. Thus both fear and humor are created in this ballet.

Johnson's depiction of the people in "Aunt Dinah Has Blowed De Horn" is in freer form. One man jumps up and starts dancing when he
hears the horn and then the entire cast is in a frenzy-leaping, whirling, throwing cotton sacks in the air, clapping hands in rhythm and utterly enjoying themselves. It ends with a big chorus-line falling backwards like a high pile of dominoes.

The situation is just the reverse in "A Real Slow Drag". Johnson's task here was merely an interpretative one, Joplin provided his own directions for the dance, and he wanted it to be a stately and humble dance with all the beauty of the colored people. Treemonisha begins the dance and is joined by Semus, with all of the principles joining in. The chorus does big, slow cakewalk steps and high kicks. As the dance progresses, the entire cast fans out over the stage, culminating in the triumphant dance and the fact that peace and harmony are restored.

In Treemonisha Joplin has left a legacy which America and especially Black America can ill afford to ignore any longer. In 1911, Black classical and particularly European trained musicians practiced a snobism which could well have destroyed an integral element of music history. Vera Brodsky Lawrence in assembling the Collected Works of Scott Joplin and the movie "The Sting" with musical arrangements by Marvin Hamlisch, have given the works of Joplin new life. No one has taken more time to try to do justice to true classical performances of the rags than the classical pianist Joshua Rifkin.

V. CONCLUSION

There will always be speculation as to where Joplin received his strong desire to write opera, what models he used, and whether he had actually attended live grand opera performances. We know that he
studied Jadassohn's harmony book, but did he study song forms, instrumental forms, or the large-scale works of other composers? It is known that he attended college, but did he graduate and what kind of courses did he take? All of these are vital questions which will possibly never be completely answered. Nevertheless, there is the music itself that one need only take the time to listen to and evaluate in the proper perspective. For example, writers have tended to question the validity of Treemonisha as grand opera. The basic requirement of grand opera is continuous music, which Joplin adheres to. The prospect of being tossed into a wasp's nest can be nothing short of horrifying which satisfies the need for tension and at least the intent for violence. This violent act is thwarted by a device which had its beginnings in the play of "Robin and Marion" and which developed in the nineteenth century into the 'rescue opera'. The opera follows further the procedure of the recitative carrying the action of the story, including choral recitatives of which the "Confusion" ensemble is a perfect example.

What Joplin did was take the most serious, grandiose operatic form and write a serious, moving, simple and relevant fable. It becomes even more relevant in this presidential election year when many Americans are voicing sentiments similar to those sung by Treemonisha and chorus in Act III of the opera. It was a strong and perceptive statement then as it is today, and as it will be in any future democratic society.
Theme A (Principal theme)

![Music notation](image)

**Figure 1**

This theme recurs each time the people feel free of the influence of the conjurors. It is the leitmotif of the opera.

"Confusion" Ensemble

![Music notation](image)

**Figure 2**

Figure 2 illustrates the cries of the women in the chorus. They begin on a high note and descend in no strict time, as they are not notes to be sung. This method predates Schönberg's Sprechstimme.
Theme B "Wasp's Nest Ensemble"

Figure 3

Theme B depicts the movement of the wasps. It accompanies Simun's description of how they will deal with Treemcoisha for talking against their voodoo practices.
Figure 4

The Grand Finale. Joplin wrote his own directions for this dance which includes the Slow Drag, prancing, marching, and the Schottische step.
This example is the accompaniment to the cries and wails of the community when they learn that Tresmonisha has been kidnapped.
Treemonisha Revisions

Figure 6

In the original score the revisions occur on pages 166 and 167, and are in Joplin's own hand. The third example in this figure is a correction in the piano accompaniment.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


DISCOGRAPHY

