

## BLACK MANHATTAN, VOLUME 2

THE PARAGON RAGTIME ORCHESTRA

RICK BENJAMIN, DIRECTOR

80731-2

1. *Shuffle Along Overture* (1921) (Eubie Blake–Will H. Vodery) 6:30  
Introducing “Opening Chorus,” “Love Will Find a Way,” “Honeysuckle Time,” “If You’ve Never Been Vamped by a Brown-Skin,” “Gypsy Blues,” “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” “I’m Craving for That Kind of Love,” and “Bandanna Days”
2. *Nobody* (1905) (Bert A. Williams) 4:54  
Edward Pleasant, baritone
3. *That’s Got ’Em—Rag* (1919) (Wilbur C. Sweatman) 2:26
4. *Honey Lamb* (ballad, 1914) (Al. Johns) 3:26  
Anita Johnson, soprano
5. *Brazilian Dreams* (tango-intermezzo, 1914) (Will H. Dixon) 3:59
6. *Down in Honky Tonky Town* (one-step, 1916) (Chris Smith) 2:04
7. *Returned: A Negro Ballad* (1902) (Will Marion Cook) 6:23  
Anita Johnson, soprano; Rick Benjamin, piano
8. *The Bell Hop Rag* (1914) (Frederick M. Bryan) 3:28
9. *Black Patti Waltzes* (1896) (Will Accooe) 6:16
10. *Goodnight Angeline* (1919) (James Reese Europe) 3:08  
Robert Mack, tenor
11. *The Castle Walk* (one-step, 1914) (James Reese Europe–Ford T. Dabney) 2:46
12. *Aunt Hagar’s Children Blues* (1921) (W.C. Handy) 2:39  
Linda Thompson Williams, blues singer
13. *Valse Angelique* (1913) (J. Tim Brymn) 3:56
14. *At the Ball, That’s All* (1913) (J. Leubrie Hill) 2:37  
Edward Pleasant, baritone
15. *When the Moon Shines* (from the 1904 revival of *In Dahomey*) (James J. Vaughan) 3:53  
Anita Johnson, soprano
16. *Oh! You Devil* (rag, 1909) (Ford T. Dabney) 3:35
17. *Breath of Autumn* (concert waltz, 1913) (Will H. Dixon) 3:37
18. *Pine Apple Rag Song* (1910) (Scott Joplin) 2:50  
Anita Johnson, soprano
19. *Fizz Water* (one-step, 1914) (Eubie Blake) 2:26

TT: 71:31

## **BLACK MANHATTAN**

### **VOLUME 2**

*Notes by Rick Benjamin*

This is the second volume of the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra's series of recordings paying tribute to the pioneering African-American composers of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New York City. The initial inspiration behind this effort was James Weldon Johnson's fascinating 1930 history book *Black Manhattan*, which described the evolution of New York's black music and theater communities from the 1890s through the 1920s. Through its pages, Johnson (1871–1938) brought to life an amazing group of achievers—musicians, writers, stage performers, and businessmen—whose work profoundly transformed the cultural life of this nation.

*Black Manhattan Vol. 1* centered on music composed by members of the legendary Clef Club. The present volume ranges a bit more widely, offering music from the theater, ballroom, and recital stage. All of the selections heard here are performed from original orchestrations using antique instruments; most have never before been recorded. To twenty-first-century eyes the list of composers may seem curious, with a few recognizable names mingled with the unfamiliar. But early twentieth-century readers would have had an almost completely opposite reaction: for example, many would have never heard of Joplin, but were avid consumers of Williams or Johns songs. With the perspective of a century of hindsight, we can now perhaps better understand the influence of each of them, on each other, and on the development of American music.

## **WILL ACCOOE**

(1874–1904)

Today the unusual name “Will Accooe” is recognized only by a handful of specialists in historic African-American music. But at the end of the nineteenth century on into the dawn of the twentieth, Accooe was a well-known figure of the black theatrical and musical worlds. In his tragically short career, Accooe was a leading conductor of black stage productions, and his compositions inspired widespread predictions that he would rise to become “the greatest colored composer in America.”

Willis J. Accooe was born in Winchester, Virginia in 1874. (His name has been incorrectly listed as “William” in several references.) He was the son of a noted Methodist minister, John Harris Accooe (1852–1920) and his wife Anna (1852–1920). Due to the itinerant nature of his father's calling, young Willis did not have much in the way of formal schooling. But his intense creativity and intelligence seem to have more than compensated for any lack of conventional instruction. The lad was also very musical: at the age of seven he built an imaginary piano out of a shoe-box and began writing out his own “compositions” while sitting at it.

The Rev. Accooe's ministries kept his family on the move, but in time provided Willis with access to something not available to every African-American family of that era—real pianos and organs. The boy learned to play them, gleaning what he could from church musicians he encountered along the way. Soon he became the organist at the historic Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. He also really began to compose.

Accooe continued on this self-made path until the early 1890s, when he encountered Carl Mindt (1858–1902), the founder and director of Philadelphia’s Walnut Street Conservatory of Music. The gifted black teenager deeply impressed Prof. Mindt, who granted the young church organist a scholarship to the Conservatory. There, Accooe filled in the gaps of his musical knowledge and honed his keyboard technique. And an ambition formed: he dreamed of becoming an organist in one of New York City’s large churches. However, in this Accooe was to be disappointed; after playing several auditions in that city, no positions were offered. With the need to earn a living, Accooe abruptly abandoned church music and “. . . went into the theatrical business.”

Because of his race, Will Accooe’s job opportunities were restricted to black companies. He soon found employment as pianist with a “Jubilee” ensemble—Puggsley’s Tennessee Warblers. The Warblers operated from Nashville, but the major black companies were headquartered in New York, the capital of the mightily expanding American entertainment industry. In 1896 Accooe relocated there to become the music director for John W. Isham’s Octoroons company, a successful and innovative touring troupe which specialized in a modernized style of minstrel show. It was also in that year that his compositions first began to appear in print. One of these was the **“Black Patti Waltzes,”** (track 9) dedicated to African-American soprano Sissieretta Jones (c. 1868–1933, the “Black Patti”).

After a brief but triumphant appearance as organ soloist at the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exposition, Will Accooe returned to the grueling life of a touring “theatrical.” Although organized and rehearsed in New York, at that time very few African-American shows actually performed there. Most depended entirely on touring dates flung across the country, played mostly in “second class” theaters. Accooe’s work was especially difficult because it involved an aspect of race relations rarely considered by modern scholars: the interaction of travelling black conductors with local white musicians. At the end of the nineteenth century all of America’s vast network of theaters were owned and operated by whites. Each had a house orchestra of some sort, comprised of local players. These were almost always white, since the “color line” of segregation was very strongly drawn in the band and orchestra fields throughout most of the United States (even in New York). Except for vaudeville, which was conducted by the resident “house leader,” all other kinds of touring attractions carried their own music director/conductor as part of its “company.” The travelling music director knew his show backwards and forwards and arrived at each new playhouse ahead of his company to quickly rehearse with the resident orchestra. Most touring companies were white, and without exception employed white conductors. But whites would not conduct for black theatrical troupes, thus their music directors were always black men. Appallingly, the arrival of one to direct whites often sparked ugly racial incidents. (It should be remembered that at that time, hardly *any* black person in America was in a position to give orders to whites, even in the North.) In this environment, Will Accooe was a rare man indeed, as the *Washington Bee* observed: “It is a note worthy fact that while Mr. Accooe has been a musical director for more than 6 years during which time most of his orchestras have been white, still he has never had any unpleasantness with any of them as they have all recognized his ability and have given him their best support. . . . We predict for Mr. Accooe a brilliant success.”

Will Accooe’s arrival in New York and his work for Isham’s shows quickly brought him to the attention of the small but tightly knit community of African-American theater pioneers. One of the most important of this group was Bob Cole (1868–1911), who in August 1897 signed Accooe to co-compose and conduct his trail-blazing new show, *A Trip to Coontown*. Despite its horrific

name, James Weldon Johnson lauded it in *Black Manhattan* as “. . . the first Negro show to make a complete break from the minstrel pattern, the first that was not a mere potpourri, the first to be written with continuity and to have a real cast of characters working out the story from beginning to end; and therefore, the first Negro musical comedy.”

By 1900 Accooes’s musical compositions were beginning to break other racial barriers. His songs were heard on Broadway as additions to the scores of several successful white productions, including *The Casino Girl* (1901) and *The Liberty Belles* (1901). And Accooe had also been accepted as a full-fledged member of America’s black musical theater elite; he worked with the Johnson brothers on *The Belle of Bridgeport* (1900), and with Will Marion Cook and James Weldon Johnson on the operetta *Cannibal King* (1901; not produced).

1900 was also the year that Williams & Walker—the nation’s leading black stage personalities and producers—engaged Accooe as their musical director. This was the most important post of his career. The young conductor led the company in the musical *Sons of Ham* (1900) and did preliminarily work with them on *In Dahomey* (1902/03). Accooe’s performance was by all accounts exceptional, but he was an eccentric, and his foibles eventually caused the W&W company to begin quietly searching for his replacement.

During *In Dahomey*’s tryout period James J. Vaughan was given charge of the production, and Accooe was demoted to the “Number 2” road company of *Sons of Ham*. There was no publicly announced breakup, but in April 1903 the *Indianapolis Freeman* reported that Accooe was composing a new, original “comic opera”—*The Volunteers*—for another black comedy team. The composer finished this but fell seriously ill in the fall of 1903; production halted. Tragically, this unspecified illness ended Willis Accooe’s life on April 26, 1904, just weeks after his thirtieth birthday. The *New York Times* reported that “feeling that his end was near,” the musician wrote his own funeral oration which his father, the Rev. Accooe, sorrowfully delivered.

Willis Accooe’s death was a considerable blow to his community. The noted black critic Sylvester Russell penned an affecting tribute in the *Indianapolis Freeman*: “. . . in justice to his ability I may well say that as a composer he gave less service and more promise in his limited amount of work than any composer of his race. . . . If he had lived, he would have been greater than Will Marion Cook, J. Rosamond Johnson and others less known than they. He might have become the greatest colored composer in America.”

## **EUBIE BLAKE**

(1887–1983)

Eubie Blake was a major American musician—a pianist, songwriter, and composer for the black musical stage. His long and eventful life has received extensive attention, including at least one full-length biography. Thus this entry will be limited to commentary on the Blake music presented on this recording.

James Hubert Blake was a Baltimore-born and raised musician, and as such, his style was quite distinct from those of New York, Chicago, Saint Louis, or New Orleans. Blake’s first contribution to Black Manhattan was by mail: in 1914 he submitted his manuscript for “**Fizz Water**” (track 19) to a New York publisher. Its acceptance marked the first of Blake’s nearly seventy years’ worth of publications. “Fizz Water” is a one-step, a type of syncopated dance music written in 2/4 time featuring a melody written in eighth notes with strong tied and over-the-bar accents.

Pitted against this is a powerful alternating bass note-after beat “oompah” accompaniment, also in eighth notes. This combination, played together at a quick tempo results in a hard-charging, highly extroverted sound. The one-step was all the rage in American ballrooms from 1913 to about 1920, and “Fizz Water” is a top-notch example, both of the form and of Blake’s unique style. This is not a rag. But it is not jazz either. The one-step was its own, distinct instrumental genre, and deserves to be appreciated as such.

Blake moved to New York in 1916 and joined James Reese Europe’s new Tempo Club in Harlem. Gaining the older musician’s confidence, he replaced Ford Dabney as Europe’s partner in the society-orchestra business. At that time Europe’s top “strategic initiative” was to put black musicals back on Broadway. But this effort was interrupted by a larger “strategic initiative”—the First World War—and ended by his death not long afterwards.

The fulfillment of Jim Europe’s Broadway dream then fell to Blake and mutual friend Noble Sissle (1889–1975). Their 1921 show—*Shuffle Along*—was a spectacular success, and for many decades has been a glittering chapter in American theater mythology. *Shuffle Along* has been described and lauded in many books and articles; Loften Mitchell even hailed it as the event that launched the Harlem Renaissance. James Weldon Johnson proudly recalled it as a “. . . record-breaking, epoch-making musical comedy. Some of its tunes . . . went round the world. It would be difficult to name another musical comedy with so many hits as *Shuffle Along*.”

Surprisingly, for all of its significance, until now no part of *Shuffle Along*’s original score has ever been recorded. (The dance band records led by Blake in early 1920s did not use the show’s original orchestrations or instrumentation.) So here, for the first time since the show’s last road company fell silent in the autumn of 1923, this truly legendary music blazes back to life.

*Shuffle Along* had an improbable birth: it was literally a Harlem community project; the cast rehearsed for free, the costumes were castoffs, the book was a reworking of a 1906 Pekin Theatre show. Its strongest feature was a stack of terrific new Sissle & Blake songs. But Blake did not have the training to translate these into a full-length orchestra score for a Broadway show. For this an expert was needed and luckily, the best was at hand—Will H. Vodery (1884–1951), the top African-American arranger/orchestrator of that era.

For a shot at Broadway success, every show needed an expert orchestrator to “score” it. This was a critical process, requiring a real pro with powerful technique, long experience, and considerable tact. Orchestrating was not just a matter of picking out which instruments would get which notes from the piano sheets; the orchestrator was a senior member of the creative team, coordinating musical sequences, timings, and effects with the stage director and choreographer. The orchestrator also had to listen to the leads sing their assigned numbers to find suitable keys, while deciding the kind of accompaniment that would fit the character of the song and the quality of the singers’ voices. He also had to compose original music—transitions, “utilities,” the Entr’acte, and, most important—the **Overture** (track 1). All of this was far beyond the best songwriters—even veteran ones with extensive musical training.

It was fortunate then that Will Vodery agreed to take on *Shuffle Along*. He wrote the Overture recorded here using the refrains from seven of the show’s songs (the opening tune is his own). Even their selection required a sure hand: Vodery had to predict in advance which of the show’s many songs might emerge as hits. Then he had to decide in which order to place these selections, choose keys, craft modulations, and compose an Intro and a finale to bridge everything together into a cohesive “composition.”

However, one key decision was not Vodery's to make—the size of the orchestra. That was settled by the show's minuscule budget: it would have to be the small “Eleven & Pno.” type heard in American orchestra pits since the 1870s. Vodery consented, but pressed for and was granted one additional instrument—an oboe.

It was for this slightly superannuated force that Will Vodery crafted a strikingly swinging, Jazz Age Broadway score. It is no wonder that he was idolized by so many, including Gershwin and Duke Ellington. The latter even wrote a chapter about Vodery in his autobiography, which concluded, “Boss musician, Baby!”

### **FREDERICK M. BRYAN**

(1889–1929)

Frederick M. Bryan presents us with the case of a significant artist who published and recorded very little. Without a study of historic black newspapers and magazines, his many contributions are easily overlooked. But Black Manhattan knew Fred Bryan as “The Harmony King”—one of the community's top pianists, organists, conductors, and blues promoters. Early in his career even the imperious Will Marion Cook publicly praised him. Bryan rose to Clef Club leadership, and his keyboard technique was an acknowledged early influence on the legendary James P. Johnson (1895–1955) and other future Harlem “stride” pianists.

Frederick Bryan was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 13, 1889. Both of his parents were North Carolina natives. Nothing is known of his early life, but it could be reasonably assumed that he was educated in Brooklyn's public schools. Young Fred also reportedly worked as a hotel bellhop to support his widowed mother and two siblings. Along the way, he somehow gained a formidable musical training.

Byran was active in Manhattan musical circles as a teenager. He was a founding member of the Clef Club, and he remained one of the organization's stalwarts until the end of his life. Our first glimpse of him occurs in May, 1911: The *New York Age* reported that the twenty-one year old's new piece, “Bamboola: A Samoan Idyl,” was performed by the Clef Club Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Reese Europe in a concert of music by Ford Dabney, Will Marion Cook, Will H. Tyers, and other leading black composers. The following year, the first of Bryan's handful of published works appeared—a pair of raggy pop songs.

Bryan must have been an impressive “young lion” in the Clef Club: when Jim Europe resigned as president in 1914, the twenty-five year old was chosen to replace him as the organization's principal conductor and ensemble organizer. Under Bryan's leadership the Clef Club's large exhibition concert ensembles seemed to thrive, and his name was used as an advertising draw for their performances.

From an artistic standpoint, the pinnacle of Fred Bryan's conducting career may have occurred on April 22, 1918, when he led the Clef Club Symphony Orchestra at the renowned Academy of Music in Philadelphia. The sold-out concert again featured a mix of light classics, pop music, and traditional African-American selections. And a superstar was born that night: accompanied by the “Clefties,” contralto Marian Anderson made her very first appearance in a major concert hall. Of this, black critic Lester Walton wrote, “One of the most enjoyable features of the bill was the singing of Miss Marian Anderson, a Philadelphia girl, who is the most promising contralto the race has to-day. She is only eighteen years old and gives promise of creating a sensation in the musical world if she continues to improve. . . .”

In 1918 something else of great consequence to American music happened: late that summer W.C. Handy left Memphis and permanently relocated to New York. “The Father of the Blues” had decided to bring his publishing firm, Pace & Handy, and its Blues into the national spotlight. Handy chose Frederick M. Bryan to assist with this trailblazing work. How their acquaintance was made is not recorded, but the bluesman clearly viewed Bryan as a successful young professional deeply connected to the New York scene. Their first step together was the founding of a new musical group called the Memphis Blues Band. This was launched in the spring of 1919 with a series of well publicized “all star jazz and blues” concerts at Manhattan’s Selwyn Theatre; Bryan and Handy shared leadership duties as co-conductors (Bryan was billed as the “Jass Sousa”). The MBB’s public activities in New York mirrored those of the Clef and Tempo Clubs—exhibition concerts alternating with elaborate dances at the Manhattan Casino. The Band’s clunky slogan was “You Have to Chain Your Feet to Keep from Dancing at a Handy & Bryan Dance”; judging from its extant 78-rpm recordings, this was not an exaggeration. But the Blues had not yet caught on in Gotham, and so the bulk of the Memphis Blues Band’s work involved touring in Handy’s old stomping ground—the Deep South.

When not performing with the Blues Band or playing solo piano or organ around Manhattan, Fred Bryan spent his days in the offices of Pace & Handy in the Gaiety Theater Building at 1547 Broadway. His main function was to try to drum up interest in the Blues with theater folk. Bryan also acted as a staff arranger, transcribing music for the many player-tunesmiths who were unable to notate their own creations. Pace & Handy also published a few of Bryan’s own efforts, including his “Lonesome Road Blues,” “Allies Triumphant March,” and a somber collaboration with Bert Williams—“The Unbeliever.”

Bryan stayed active with the Clef Club almost to the end of its existence, and led the effort to keep the organization in the public eye. In 1924 Bryan and the “Clefties” embraced the new technology—radio—performing broadcasts on NBC’s New York flagship station, WEAJ. As the ’20s roared on and musical tastes changed, the gentler, notated styles of syncopation that had formed the aesthetic core of Bryan’s generation had given way to the brasher, improvised (and non-conducted), jazz. Piano playing was changing too, and competition in New York became far keener with the rise of the next generation of hot “ticklers” like James P. Johnson, “Luckey” Roberts, Willie Smith (1897–1973), and “Fats” Waller (1904–1943).

Bryan continued to write music; in the late ’20s the *New York Age* referred to him as “. . . a prolific composer of the lighter forms. . . .” But by this time composing had probably become more of a pastime than a serious part of his professional life. However, Bryan did make news in 1927, when he won a Wannamaker Prize for Composition, awarded by the National Association of Negro Musicians. But Bryan was not to long enjoy this welcome acclaim: a short while later he developed diabetes and, after a period of considerable suffering, passed away just weeks before his fortieth birthday.

It is regrettable that very little of Bryan’s musical legacy has survived; he made no solo piano recordings, his manuscripts are lost, and only a handful of his compositions were ever published. Luckily, one of these was the delightful “**Bell Hop Rag**” (track 8). Although an early effort, it is a gem. Suave, whimsical, and harmonically advanced, it shows the expanding boundaries of ragtime and was the cutting edge of 1910s American pop music.

Codetta: In March 2009, opera star Jessye Norman added Frederick M. Bryan to Carnegie Hall’s official “List of Honor” when she curated *Celebration of the African American Cultural Legacy*.

## J. TIM BRYMN

(1881–1946)

A full biography of Brymn appears in *Black Manhattan Vol. 1*. His 1913 **“Valse Angelique”** (track 13) was deservedly one of his most celebrated compositions. The orchestration of it heard here was made by another famous black New York musician, Will H. Tyers (1870–1924), whose original works can be found on *Vol. 1*. Also, Tim Brymn was not widely known as a lyricist, so it sheds further light to see him collaborating in that role with W.C. Handy on **“Aunt Hagar’s Children Blues”** (track 12). A side note: Brymn was the only composer in *Vol. 1* for whom a photograph could not be found. Happily, one of the purposes of these recordings—to inspire further research—bore fruit in this instance. Brymn’s grandson found a copy of *Vol. 1* and made contact, kindly providing the photo reproduced here.

## WILL MARION COOK

(1869–1944)

A legendary “Founding Father” of black theater and concert music in America, Will Marion Cook’s biography appears in *Vol. 1*, which includes the world-premiere recordings of his *Overture to “In Dahomey”* and the orchestra version of *Swing Along!*

Cook’s beautiful 1902 song **“Returned: A Negro Ballad”** (track 7) represents part of his close association with Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), the great African-American poet, novelist, playwright, and lyricist. It brings into the open a harsh historical reality: the fact that the vast black exodus from the “Jim Crow” South to Northern cities ended largely in ghettoization and grim new forms of oppression. This disturbing subject has been probed many times over the last century, but finally a definitive study has appeared—Marcy S. Sacks’s *Before Harlem: The Black Experience in New York City Before World War I*. The bitter conclusion reached by all of these sources is that this African-American mass migration, thought by many of the participants to be their ticket to a better life, instead marked the beginning of *new* struggles for basic civil and economic rights.

The plight of newly arrived urban blacks was much in the news at the turn of the twentieth century. Their increasing numbers were a source of growing racial tensions, as older immigrant groups vied for living space and jobs. In New York, a full-scale race riot erupted on August 15, 1900, when a white mob attacked the West Side African-American district. There were several deaths, dozens of injuries, and widespread destruction of property. Several Black Manhattan figures survived this horror, including James Weldon Johnson, who later wrote about it in *Along This Way*. Against this background, many African-Americans who had abandoned their homes in the South began to wonder if they had mistakenly exchanged one set of evils for another. This dilemma was the main theme of Paul Laurence Dunbar’s 1902 novel *The Sport of the Gods*, and his collaboration that same year with Will Cook on the “Negro Ballad” “Returned” was an outgrowth of that literary work. Shimmering and provocative, “Returned” was performed in recitals by the famous black soprano Abbie Mitchell, who sang it for black and white audiences. A hundred years later it is still worth listening to—and contemplating.



## **FORD T. DABNEY**

(1883–1958)

A full biography of Dabney appears in *Vol. 1*. Research conducted subsequently in the pages of Dabney's hometown newspapers has revealed further insights into his classical training and aspirations. We now know that Dabney gave piano recitals and was accompanist for Joseph Douglass (1871–1935), the first great African-American concert violinist.

Ford Dabney brought these refining inclinations to the pop music he earned his living creating. His **“Oh! You Devil—Rag”** (track 16) is a case in point. This is ragtime of a higher class; delicate and swingy. There is poise and understated confidence here—not to mention several delicious ninth chords. Dabney wrote the piece as a quasi-ballet number for Aida Overton Walker as part of his 1909 one-act operetta, *The King's Quest*. Later, it was a favorite of the Clef Club Symphony Orchestra.

This performance of “Oh! You Devil” uses Will Tyers' original orchestration scored for the standard the “Eleven & Pno.” type orchestra, the instrumentation the composer used for his own noted ensemble, Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra, a longtime fixture of Florenz Ziegfeld's “Midnight Frolic” atop the New Amsterdam Theatre. (To hear that music, refer to the PRO album *Midnight Frolic*, New World Records 80707-2).

## **WILL H. DIXON**

(1879–1917)

Some of the most hauntingly beautiful music heard on this recording flowed from the pen of a long-lost genius named Will Dixon. An artist of large and diverse talents, contemporary critics acclaimed him as a singer, pianist, conductor, composer (of both classical and popular music), actor, comedian, and playwright. Dixon was one of the central “players” in the Black Manhattan story. And very unfortunately for the course of African-American music, he followed the mournful path of many of his associates by dying young.

William H. Dixon was born on August 29, 1879 in Wheeling, West Virginia. His father, John Dixon (1848–?), was a railroad brakeman from Maryland. His mother, Mary (*nee* Putnam) was born in Ohio in 1854. The couple married in Wheeling in 1872, and their four children were all born there.

There is no information about Will Dixon's childhood or education. In the early 1890s John and Mary Dixon moved their family to Chicago, which was becoming an attractive city of wider opportunity for African-Americans. Will's teenage years in Chicago surely must have included very fine instruction in piano, music theory, and voice. Simultaneously he developed a keen interest in the popular theater. In 1900 Will, age twenty-one, left home to try making a living using his talents. Like nearly all African-Americans of his generation, his entrée to “the show business” was minstrelsy; Dixon's first job was singing with Phil R. Miller's “Hottest Coon in Dixie Company.” By November 1901 Dixon had moved on to Rusco & Holland's Big Minstrel Festival Co., where his fine tenor voice and engaging stage presence won a featured spot singing sentimental ballads in the coveted minstrel “First Part” of the show.

Will Dixon's exceptional talents quickly caught and held the attention of the African-American press. By 1902 he was viewed as a man to watch in the theater community, singing, acting, and

writing plays and songs. He was also composing musical comedies with a partner—Chicago’s noted black lyricist Alfred Anderson (1868–1942). In the spring of 1904 white America also started to pay attention. One of the country’s foremost music publishers, the New York–based M. Witmark & Sons, bought and published several Dixon/Anderson songs. This acknowledgement may have been the spark that convinced him to try the Big Time. In June 1904, *The Appeal* reported that “Messrs. T.A. Anderson and William Dixon will leave for New York on the 15th inst., to submit two of their three-act comedies to Williams & Walker and DeWolf Hopper.”

Anderson and Dixon could not have had an easy time on their arrival in Manhattan. They may have met with Williams & Walker and Hopper (1858–1935; a major white Broadway performer/producer), but their projects were never brought to the stage. The duo also tried to sell songs that Witmark had previously declined. But the publisher they turned to next cheated them out of their work. Anderson returned to Chicago. Yet Dixon hung on, in time becoming familiar enough with the movers and shakers of Black Manhattan to be invited to their gatherings at the renowned Marshall Hotel.

In May 1905 Dixon received his first important engagement from one of these leaders—Ernest Hogan (1865–1909). The famous black comedian-impresario was just then organizing a whole new kind of large-scale vaudeville act. Hogan’s idea was to surround himself with an all-star company of black instrumentalists, singers, and dancers; Will Marion Cook was engaged as composer and off-stage “Musical Supervisor.” Dixon was the group’s on-stage conductor, soprano Abbie Mitchell (1884–1960) was given a leading role, and new Manhattan arrival James Reese Europe was hired as a singing instrumentalist. Hogan named his twenty-member troupe “The Nashville Students” (although they were neither). The Students debuted in the summer of 1905 at Proctor’s Twenty-third Street Theatre, where their many novel “effects” delighted white audiences. Years later James Weldon Johnson praised them as “the first modern jazz band ever heard on a New York stage.” “Will Dixon, himself a composer of note, conducted the band. . . .” Johnson continued, “All through the number he would keep his men together by dancing out the rhythm generally in graceful, sometimes in grotesque, steps. Often an easy shuffle would take him across the whole front of the band. This style of directing not only got the fullest possible response from the men, but kept them in the right humour for the sort of music they were playing.”

But in the fall, controversy overtook the Students: Will Cook wanted to take the group abroad, but proprietor Ernest Hogan objected. So the volatile Cook staged a “coup” and took control of the organization. Hogan sued and won an injunction. Ignoring this, Cook renamed the group the “Tennessee Students” (and still later, the “Memphis Students”) and put them on a steamer bound for England. There the troupe began an exciting tour performing in the principal music halls of “all the important cities of Europe.”

According to Will Dixon’s passport documents, he intended to stay overseas for “a year or two.” Like many African-Americans of that era, he must have deeply enjoyed the racial freedoms of life in Britain and on the Continent. There, for the first time in his life, he would have experienced, if not total racial equality, something much closer to it. And he used this rare opportunity to study European music and culture: subsequent Dixon musical compositions are of a decidedly higher quality and reflect a fascinating French tint.

Despite whatever further grand plans Cook may have laid, sometime in the early spring of 1906 the Students, now known as “Abbie Mitchell Cook and her Memphis Student Company” had

returned to New York. Oddly, Dixon did not remain in the city. Instead he headed for Chicago, where it seems he attempted to reestablish himself—perhaps his disloyalty to the esteemed Ernest Hogan had affected his employability in Manhattan. In any case, Dixon quickly found work in the Windy City, where exciting things were happening. The Pekin Theatre—America’s first major black playhouse—had just opened. Dixon reportedly became a cast member with the Pekin Theatre Stock Company, and assisting the resident music director/composer, Joe Jordan, co-composing the score of the Pekin’s production of *A Count of No Account*. (To hear Joe Jordan’s amazing music for the Pekin Theatre, refer to PRO recording *Barrelhouse to Broadway*, New World Records 80649-2)

In 1907, Dixon was back in New York, entering the music publishing business. In May a firm bearing his name opened its doors in the Theatre Exchange Building at 1431 Broadway. But this business interest did not seem to slow down his multifaceted artistic growth. He was, as the *New York Age* later put it, “chock full of ambition.” By 1909 he was clearly regarded as a full-fledged celebrity actor/singer in the African-American theater. In April the great black theater star Aida Overton Walker (1880–1914) featured Dixon in her annual All-Star Benefit. He was also soon to be inducted into The Frogs—the most prestigious black theatrical club—whose dozen members formed the “who’s who” of black show business. And as a composer, Dixon’s standing is shown with a very interesting article on ragtime music in the *New York Age*: famous bandmaster/composer John Philip Sousa had publicly stated that ragtime was no longer popular. Intrigued, the *Age*’s Lester A. Walton asked for reactions from five of the city’s top black composers. His expert panel included James Reese Europe, J. Tim Brymn, Chris Smith, Thomas Lemonier, and Will Dixon. (Curiously Scott Joplin, a New York resident of almost two years, was not heard from).

Will Dixon was a founding member of the Clef Club, and a key leader within the organization. He served on several Club committees and was stage director of their October 1910 exhibition concert. Dixon also performed on many of the Clef Club’s large public concerts, and was one of the ten-member piano “section” of the Clef Club Symphony Orchestra’s now-legendary 1912 Carnegie Hall debut. Dixon remained an influential Club leader for the rest of his life; his name would even be used as a selling point in its newspaper advertising. (“*Will Dixon will be there with a new number, and will direct Swing Along as he did with the Memphis Students.*”)

Today the only surviving artifacts of Will Dixon’s career are a scant handful of published scores. Most of these are pop songs, and while these are professionally constructed, they do not hint at greatness. But with his instrumental pieces, particularly four of his 1913–14 light classic instrumental works—“*Ardente Ivresse*” (published in Paris by Ricordi), “*Delizioso*,” “*Brazilian Dreams*,” and “*Breath of Autumn*,” we see Dixon’s amazing potential. And we read in the *Age* that “His chief aim in recent years was to secure the production of an opera to which he had written both the libretto and score.”

Subtitled a “tango-intermezzo,” “**Brazilian Dreams**” (track 5 ) was probably Dixon’s most famous creation; it was adopted by the celebrated ballroom exhibition dancers Irene and Vernon Castle, heard in the 1916 touring edition of the famous Ziegfeld *Follies*, and was recorded by both the Victor and Edison phonograph companies. His “**Breath of Autumn**” (track 17) is even more extraordinary. A true concert waltz, its bold Introduction is drawn directly from the Negro Spiritual tradition. But the piece then unfolds with a slow, tragic waltz of a richly Impressionistic caste. Brightening, it returns at last, defiantly, exaltedly, to its minor-keyed opening theme.

Dixon's lovely music did not provide him with a living. For that he still depended on his work as a stage performer. After the disappearance of the major black companies, he trouped with the smaller second-tier outfits. One of the better of these was Salem Tutt Whitney's Smart Set Company, which Dixon joined in 1910 and stayed with for the next six years.

In 1916, at the close of a thirty-seven week tour with the Smart Set's *George Washington Bullion Abroad*, long-simmering disaster finally overtook Will Dixon: the tall, elegant man began to manifest the symptoms of what was euphemistically called "mental trouble"—final-stage syphilis. He continued on with his show, perhaps not realizing what was happening, or refusing to face the terrible truth. Health failing, Dixon found his way back to Chicago to be cared for by his mother. The thirty-eight year old died there on May 14, 1917. Just a few months previously, the *Chicago Defender's* upbeat article "Will H. Dixon, Composer" proved to be his heartbreaking eulogy: "Gentlemanly, courteous, and affable, ever ready to give a helping hand to the fellow farther down, is it to be wondered at that his friends are numbered by the hundreds, and those who have not had the rare good fortune to know him personally have enjoyed the fruits of his efforts in a musical way. For Mr. Dixon is a composer whose fame has spread over both continents."

## **JAMES REESE EUROPE**

(1880–1919)

A biography of James Reese Europe appears in *Vol. 1*. The music included on the present recording represents two phases of Europe's all-too-short career. "**The Castle Walk**" (track 11) was co-written with Ford Dabney early in 1914 for the famous exhibition dancers Irene and Vernon Castle. It was part of a remarkable series of eleven Castle "specials" which appeared during Europe's tenure as the team's music director. Eight of these lively dance numbers were Europe-Dabney collaborations. The "who wrote what" aspect can probably never be unraveled, since they were likely the jotted-down results of the duo's freewheeling four-hand piano improvisations. The "Castle Walk" became nationally famous, and was used to accompany the Castle's proprietary one-step of the same name. In our performance, we have re-created the rousing rudimental "traps" solo that Europe's legendary drummer, Buddie Gilmore (c.1880–?), regularly unleashed to "rattle the crystal" in the opulent ballrooms of Edwardian New York.

Our second Europe selection, "**Good Night Angeline**" (track 10), is a vestige of Europe's great, unfulfilled ambition to bring black musical theater back to Broadway. His efforts in this direction were interrupted by World War I overseas military service. But ever efficient, Lieut. Europe used his rare quiet moments "Over There" to compose theater music. His co-worker in this project was lyricist Noble Sissle, the close New York associate who was also a member of Europe's Army unit. Together, the two lieutenants created a small portfolio of songs, seven of which eventually saw print. Although each bears a tripartite credit line—"Europe-Sissle-Blake"—it should be noted that the music was written by Europe and the lyrics by Sissle. "Now I didn't have nothin' to do with those tunes." Eubie Blake affirmed in the 1970s, "I did not write any part of them. But they put my name on 'em right alongside theirs, because that's the kind of partners they were."

"Good Night Angeline," is one of James Reese Europe's final works. It is a poignant ode to romance and the dreams of a golden post-war future. And it proved to be a fine show tune as well, when heard in Act 2 of *Shuffle Along*.

## **W.C. HANDY**

(1873–1958)

W.C. Handy's life and career have been well documented in dozens of articles and several full-length biographies. And unlike virtually any other African-American musician of his generation, Handy wrote an autobiography—the engaging *Father of the Blues* (1941). The Blues was a very isolated and little-known black folk music of the Deep South, and Handy was indeed the man who brought it to a wider audience. Astonishingly, even Handy himself—born in 1873 in an Alabama log cabin (and afterwards a widely-traveled professional minstrel)—did not know of the Blues until he was nearly thirty years old. His first encounter took place in Tutwiler, Mississippi, where he observed a black man singing and accompanying himself on guitar. Handy recalled it as “. . . the weirdest music I had ever heard.” Enthralled, he decided to make it his life's mission to find a way to bring the Blues to the general public.

Handy's motivation was not entirely artistic: he was an entrepreneur, and understood that the music had great commercial potential. His first effort advancing this idea, “Memphis Blues,” was written in 1909. Handy sold it outright to a publisher three years later, and although not the first Blues to break into print, it was the first to receive strong national distribution, introducing the Blues to millions of people. Viewing this success, Handy deeply regretted selling his copyright, and founded his own firm, Pace & Handy, to market his subsequent Blues creations. After a few modestly successful years, in 1918 Handy moved the company from Memphis to Manhattan.

New York did not welcome W.C. Handy and his new sounds. The Blues simply did not sell well when placed in direct competition with the available Tin Pan Alley offerings. Most of the men controlling the music, theater, and entertainment industries were quite content with the many pop styles already in use, and the Blues seemed too rustic and crude to interest urban audiences. But after World War I, as black migration up from the South accelerated, interest in Handy and his Blues music began its powerful rise. **“Aunt Hagar's Children Blues”** (track 12) appeared just as the 1920s “Blues Rush” was finally taking off.

Listening to “Aunt Hagar's” in the context of its own time (that is, with all the other music on this album), gives one a very clear idea of just how exotic this music originally seemed. It was as joyfully rough and jolting as the bootleg liquor that was also beginning to make the '20s roar. Modern Blues fans may be puzzled by our authentic performance of Handy's 1921 score: for a long time it has been assumed that the Blues is “supposed to be” slow and mournful. But that was not Prof. Handy's conception at all. As he told a reporter in 1918, “The sorrowful songs of the slaves we called ‘jubilee melodies.’ The happy-go-lucky, joyous songs of the Southern Negro I call ‘Blues.’”

## **J. LEUBRIE HILL**

(1873–1916)

It would not be too much of an exaggeration to regard J. Leubrie Hill as the George M. Cohan of the African-American theater. Like his household-name counterpart, Hill could “do it all”—sing, dance, act, compose music, write lyrics, write librettos, direct, choreograph, and build a company to perform his own shows. Hill's music—far more sophisticated than Cohan's—included a number of nationwide hits. Unfortunately Hill's heyday was far shorter—only from 1912 to 1916. But for those spirited few years he was the shining hope of the black theater.

A complete account of Hill's career appeared in the September 7, 1916 edition of the *New York Age* written by that paper's respected critic, Lester A. Walton. He was a close friend and colleague of Hill's, thus his own words are valuable primary source material:

“JOHN LEUBRIE HILL is no more, and in his passing the footlights have lost a most original and fertile-brained student of stagecraft and the race loses a most versatile and valuable member. To refer to John Hill, as he was known to many, as ‘a talented colored producer’ would be an incomplete and improper estimate of his status in the theatrical world. By unceasing effort and great sacrifice he succeeded in recent years in attracting the attention of Broadway managers, who from a standpoint of ability, ceased to look upon him merely as a colored producer. And how many white composers or stage directors can boast of an ‘At the Ball, That’s All,’ a song and dance which proved to be an international hit.

“In the past five years John Leubrie Hill made himself the most talked-of colored personality on the stage among his own people. . . .

“John Leubrie Hill was born in Memphis, Tenn., in 1873. He was the son of John W. and Rachel Hill. The latter died only a short time ago and her death greatly affected the son, who was ill at the time and unable to attend the funeral rites. The father died years ago.

“Before coming East the deceased gained a reputation throughout the South as an entertainer. He was a good singer, a piano player above the average, and his services were very much in demand. . . . In 1896 [*sic*, 1897], after filling a successful engagement at the Centennial Exposition, held at Nashville, he went to Cincinnati, where he worked as an entertainer until the following year, when he came East and formed a partnership with Shepard N. Edmonds. They secured a position at Sontag’s and were pioneers along that line of entertainment.

“In 1902 John Leubrie Hill became a member of the Williams & Walker company, with which organization he was identified during the seasons of 1902–05. . . . He made a trip to England with the company in 1903, appearing with this famous aggregation before the late King Edward at Buckingham Palace on June 23, 1903.

“During the season of 1905–06 he was prominent in the cast of the late Ernest Hogan’s ‘Rufus Rastus’ company, and the following season remained in New York entertaining and writing songs. In 1907 he again joined the Williams & Walker company, and was one of the laughing bits in the corporation scene of ‘Bandanna Land’ as *Sandy Turner*. After playing two seasons in ‘Bandanna Land,’ John Leubrie Hill went out with the Bert A. Williams company in ‘Mr. Lode of Koal,’ playing one of the leading roles. . . .

“This energetic member of the theatrical profession was next heard of organizing a company of his own—‘My Friend From Kentucky’—which was put on the road after playing several months in Newark, N.J. In 1912 the much talked-of ‘Darktown Follies’ were organized in New York. Opening at the Lafayette Theatre, the production made an instantaneous hit, the musical numbers ‘At the Ball, That’s All,’ ‘Night Time is the Right Time,’ and ‘Rock Me in the Cradle of

Love' being among some of the notable musical gems. The show played at the Lafayette Theatre for six weeks with big success. . . .

“John Leubrie Hill possessed the knack of rehearsing from sixty to seventy people for months at a time without advancing them a cent. He did not have it to advance. I have seen him rehearse people night and day for four months, and although some were sleeping on their trunks in the hall where rehearsals were being held and were not eating regularly, not a word of protest was heard, and a spirit of optimism pervaded the entire galaxy of actor folk. . . .”

J. Leubrie Hill's most successful song was **“At the Ball, That's All”** (track 14). It was created in 1912 for a musical comedy that he was writing as a starring vehicle for himself—*My Friend From Kentucky*. While designed for black audiences, the show made a huge impression on white New Yorkers as well. Its drawing power made Harlem a voguish “tourist attraction” luring well-to-do white Manhattanites seeking “exotic” theater and nightclub entertainment. A huge part of the success of Hill's show was his sparkling score—and especially “At the Ball.” This was a fabulous theater number, with an intriguing tune, quirky bass, and an insanely catchy, off-kilter, rap-like lyric. The final masterstroke was Hill's brilliant staging of it, as James Weldon Johnson explained:

The finale of the first act of *Darktown Follies* was one of those miracles of originality which occasionally come to pass in the world of musical comedy. Its title was ‘At the Ball,’ the tune was the sort of melody that, once heard, is unforgettable, and the words and music were combined into one very clever piece of syncopation. . . . The whole company formed an endless chain that passed before the footlights and behind the scenes, round and round, singing and executing a movement from a dance called ‘ballin’ the jack,’ one of those Negro dances which periodically come along and sweep the country.

The Lafayette Theatre's patrons were ecstatic. Among them, taking careful note of everything was an illustrious white visitor from downtown—Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. The great showman had come to investigate a rival production trading on the word “Follies,” which he regarded as the trademark of his lavish annual revues. But instead of suing, Ziegfeld was so impressed with the music that he bought stage rights to several of Hill's songs. The following year, another *Follies*—Ziegfeld's—featured Hill's “At the Ball, That's All” and “Rock Me in the Cradle of Love.” This immense “plug” rocketed both numbers into smash-hit status, confirming once again the abiding allure of authentic black music.

## **AL. JOHNS**

(1879–1928)

Al. Johns was another fine musical son of Washington, D.C. who discovered fame and fortune in Black Manhattan. But to Johns should go the credit as the brilliant pathfinder who arrived there first to establish the critical contacts with the white music and theater worlds that his fellow Washingtonians (Cook, Europe, and Dabney) would later enjoy. Johns was a pianist, composer, lyricist, and all-around “entertainer.” As a songwriter he was among the first to bring ragtime to Tin Pan Alley. Yet he preferred to pen lovely art songs: Henry Tyrrell, critic of the *New York World*, pronounced him “the greatest American balladist.” During his career more than eighty of

Johns's compositions were published, most by top firms. He was also musical director for Broadway superstar May Irwin, making him one of the first black men to hold a leadership position on the "Great White Way." Later, Johns was a Clef Club founding member and Master of Ceremonies for several of their celebrated large-scale concerts. Finally, he spent the 1920s in the storied Afro-American district of Paris where, along with Sidney Bechet and Josephine Baker, Al. Johns brought authentic African-American music to the Continent.

Alphonzo Johns was born in Washington, D.C. on June 4, 1879. His mother, Mary, was a singer and a member of the choir at Washington's Metropolitan Baptist Church. Nothing can be found regarding Johns's early life other than the fact he had no formal musical training.

Al. (as he preferred to see it written, and not "Albert," which was often mistakenly assumed) arrived in New York at an extremely young age—fourteen or fifteen years old. He put down roots immediately on West Thirty-Second Street, in what was becoming Manhattan's newest African-American neighborhood. Johns also established himself as one of New York's first real ragtime piano players, bringing this fascinating new sound to the city's saloons, cafes, and "resorts." (He was also one of the first black musicians there who did not have to work at a menial "day job" to support himself. An 1890s white reporter marveled that Johns was ". . . a composer and pianist by profession and devotes himself entirely to work of that kind.") Soon Johns had also established himself with many of New York's music publishers; at nineteen his first songs began to roll off the presses. These early creations were not close to Johns's heart: he preferred serious, warmly harmonized ballads. But his publishers demanded jangly "coon songs." Johns obliged, penning dozens of these, and some, like "Go Way Back and Sit Down," sold well and were widely adopted by white stage performers.

By 1899 Al. Johns was well known in both black and white New York. Such was his reputation that in an effort to explain the newfangled ragtime music to its readers, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* sought him out for his expert views. The resulting article reveals that Johns, like many African-American musicians of his time, could not read or write musical notation. But he had two amazing gifts that helped him around this shortcoming—absolute pitch and a "photographic" memory. He would invent a new piece and then play it repeatedly on the piano for a note-reading musician to transcribe. The *Eagle's* reporter was astounded by the twenty-year-old's acuity:

Not the least remarkable phase of Johns' musical genius is the unusual retentiveness of his memory for music. Almost anybody of ordinary musical temperament can repeat, either by whistling or singing, or perhaps with the aid of a piano, a hitherto unfamiliar air after having heard it three or four times. Al. goes a good deal further than that. The writer has heard him reproduce instantly, and after having heard it played on the piano but once, not only a strange air, but the accompaniment played with it. This, in fact, was done with two different compositions and without any hesitation.

Al. Johns's ragtime songs advanced his career from the café and vaudeville hall to the grander realm of musical comedy. His worth there was first recognized by the creative team behind the 1902/03 Williams & Walker musical *In Dahomey*, who interpolated one of Johns's vocal numbers into Will Marion Cook's score. At around that same time, M. Witmark & Sons, one of the nation's top music publishers (and specialists in Broadway show tunes) engaged Al. Johns as a



member of its “keyboard staff.” His job at the brand new Witmark Building was to demonstrate the firm’s catalog to prospective buyers and to teach new Witmark products to professional performers.

Johns’s position at Witmark brought him into personal contact with some of the foremost white stage personalities of the day. One of these was the hugely popular actress-singer-comedienne May Irwin (1863–1938), who took a shine to the gifted young black pianist-composer. The hefty Miss Irwin was an early white exponent of ragtime, and had become famous for her loud, lusty renditions of syncopated songs—a style that was to become known as “coon shouting.” She had worked with many of the top songwriters of Black Manhattan. But of them all, Irwin chose Al. Johns as her personal accompanist and musical director. She even had some of her shows scripted to feature him playing on stage. In the summer of 1904 Irwin assigned Johns a bigger job—to compose the songs and incidental music for her new comic play *Mrs. Black is Back*.

Al. Johns stayed with May Irwin for a few years longer. But his musical interests were centering more on serious music. In 1904 he spent time back in Washington, D.C. with the black classical violinist Clarence Cameron White (1880–1960). That city’s *Colored American* newspaper observed that, “While Rosamond Johnson, the scholarly musician, writes rag time, Johns the natural musician, goes in for the classical. His reputation rests mostly on ballads like ‘The Afterwhile’ and ‘The Meaning of My Dreams.’ Once, needing some money, he burst into ragtime and made more money than he ever got from all his ballads. . . .”

May Irwin’s semi-retirement in 1907 allowed Johns to put his store of theatrical know-how to a different use—that of “private entertainer” for the parties and receptions of wealthy white New Yorkers. This was a newly opening field that was providing much opportunity for black performers. It also provided an outlet for Al. Johns’s classical aspirations: for banquets he played his own pieces along with selections by the masters (Schumann was a favorite); after dinner he swung into current pop hits “by request.” Johns’s artistry and versatility made him very sought-after, and his clients included the most illustrious New York families.

Al. Johns’s experiences as a black performer in the mansions of white millionaires must have offered him some unusual and even painful insights into America’s racial and social problems. However in-demand, most of Johns’s employers would have viewed him as a skilled servant; the era’s inherent racism would have further lowered this status, subjecting him to injustices of all kinds. James Reese Europe was also working in this field, and his experiences drove him to create the Clef Club—a professional organization to represent black performers working in these settings. Al. Johns was all for this idea, and signed on as one of the Club’s founding members. In May 1910 he was assistant conductor for its first public event—a “Musical Melange and Dance Fest”—held at the Manhattan Casino. Johns continued to be a prominent Clef Club member until the early 1920s.

Al. Johns’s **“Honey Lamb”** (track 4) is an excellent late example of his best work as a composer. The score’s dignified cover proclaims it one of his six “Artists Edition of Celebrated Songs,” set to texts by the black poet/singer Henry Troy. “Honey Lamb” is a “dialect” art song of love and yearning. It would have been extraordinary in 1914 for no other reason than its serious, sympathetic portrayal of African-American romance. (This was still a cultural taboo in the United States: in print or on stage, black love *had* to be caricatured.) Musically, “Honey Lamb” is a beautiful creation of extraordinary coloring and nuance. It is an astounding to realize that Johns’s ballads are not a standard part of the vocal repertoire.

Al. Johns was one of the first black musicians to relocate to Harlem from “Black Bohemia”—the West Side’s “Tenderloin” district. He made the move in 1907, and within a few years was followed by most of New York’s other leading black professionals. Johns’s friend James Reese Europe became a Harlem neighbor, and their relationship remained close. When Europe returned from Army service in World War I, he engaged Johns as a soloist for his “Hellfighters” 369th Infantry Band’s triumphant homecoming tour. Johns served as the band’s Master of Ceremonies and was featured in a segment called “Pianologue.” On May 9, 1919, it was in his former capacity that he reluctantly took to the stage in Boston to announce that Europe had “taken ill” during intermission of the band’s concert. But Johns knew the horrible truth—his friend had been knifed backstage by one of his own musicians.

The racial equality African-Americans enjoyed when visiting France had long been a subject of conversation and envy within the black community. For years touring performers had told of their marvelous experiences in France, and thousands of returning black servicemen burnished this enticing reputation. Ragtime music had a strong French following, and Jim Europe’s Hellfighters had created an appetite for the new American “Jass.” Thus, post-war France exerted a particularly strong pull on African-American musicians, Al. Johns among them. Sometime around 1923 he made the momentous decision to move to France. He took up residence in the Montmartre section of Paris, where he played the piano in a nightclub on the Rue Pigalle. When Josephine Baker arrived there a bit later, the street would become world famous as the “Great Black Way.” Al. Johns loved his new life in Paris but did not have long to enjoy it; he died there unexpectedly on June 16, 1928.

## **SCOTT JOPLIN**

(c. 1867–1917)

Along with W.C. Handy, Scott Joplin’s is probably the only other name on this album familiar today. Indeed, as the central figure of the 1970s Ragtime revival, his music is still well known and his well-deserved position as a major American composer quite secure. However, much of Joplin’s life remains enigmatic, including the final decade of it spent in New York. Joplin lived in the same neighborhoods as many of the city’s leading African-American musicians and composers. Yet he did not seem to interact with any of them. He was not a part of the Black Manhattan community described by James Weldon Johnson (indeed, Joplin is not even mentioned in Johnson’s extensive writings on the period). Nor did Joplin join the Clef Club or the later Tempo Club. He was seldom mentioned in the detailed coverage that the city’s black paper, the *New York Age*, gave to theatrical, musical, and social matters. (Joplin was active in the Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Association, but this group encompassed a different circle of men, many of them Midwesterners.) What was Joplin doing, then? I suspect that he was concentrating so much on his classical projects—especially his new opera *Treemonisha*—that he remained aloof from the black musical scene in New York.

Scott Joplin did, however, have a keen interest in connecting with New York’s music publishing industry, and is known to have made the rounds to try to “place” his exceptional rags, waltzes, and marches. Unfortunately, Gotham’s publishers showed little interest. Joplin had his best luck with Seminary Music, a small startup outfit that became his principal publisher. Seminary issued eight superb Joplin pieces; its offering for October 1908 was the composer’s “Pine Apple Rag.” However, the fledgling firm was learning a basic Tin Pan Alley truth: songs sold much better than instrumental pieces. And so a year and a half after “Pine Apple Rag”’s release, a new version

appeared—a “vocal” simply called the **“Pine Apple Rag Song”** (track 18). This “follow-up” was quite unusual in a marketplace flooded with cheap song manuscripts, which suggests that this conversion was a Joplin-initiated project, rather than a random Seminary experiment. Also, the rewrite itself would have been a somewhat delicate process, involving considerably shortening the rag to put it into standard pop song form, and the reconfiguring of its florid melodies to render them more negotiable for the human voice. All of this would again point to Joplin’s involvement. The lyrics, by one Joe Snyder, seem to have been fitted to the music afterwards, with more of an eye to the fitting and less to their actual meaning! Nevertheless, “Pine Apple Rag Song” is a delightful “patter” song, and its inclusion within the framework of this album provides a very unusual opportunity to compare Scott Joplin’s songwriting prowess with that of several of his Black Manhattan contemporaries.

### **CHRIS SMITH**

(1879–1949)

A complete biography of Chris Smith appears in *Vol. 1*. His **“Down in Honky Tonky Town,”** heard here on track 6, was one of his later successes, appearing in 1916. Nearly all of his published songs show a refreshing individuality, and were a cut above the usual Tin Pan Alley offerings. A few of Smith’s numbers—especially his 1914 “Ballin’ the Jack”—brought him well-deserved recognition. But his up-tempo one-step “Honky Tonky” contains the most *intriguing* music Smith ever penned—the incredibly modern-sounding hot “jungle” music with which it opens. This thrilled 1916 America and made the number a coast-to-coast sensation.

### **WILBUR C. SWEATMAN**

(1882–1961)

Wilbur Sweatman was a once-famed African-American musician of spectacular versatility and accomplishment. He was a clarinet virtuoso, circus bandsman, composer and songwriter, pianist, minstrel man, theater orchestra conductor, vaudeville star, pioneer jazz performer, pioneer black recording artist, ’20s dance-band leader, radio musician, publisher, and all-around musical entrepreneur. Indeed, his career was of such consequence that it has finally been documented in a new full-length biography, Mark Berresford’s *That’s Got ‘Em!: The Life and Music of Wilbur C. Sweatman*. Since almost none of the other composers presented on this recording have a complete book devoted to them (yet!), space constraints here compel a limitation to basic commentary on Sweatman’s music.

When Sweatman moved to New York in 1913 he was primarily a vaudeville performer whose act consisted of virtuoso clarinet playing. But in retrospect, we could view his arrival in the city as the herald of changes that would soon transform American music. Hailing from Brunswick, Missouri, Sweatman’s own musical personality was thoroughly grounded in Midwestern ragtime. Yet he was an assimilator whose long career on the road in a wide variety of settings made him a virtual compendium of black musical styles. He was aware of all the old minstrel music and the regional forms of ragtime. Sweatman could also play the blues. And although a note-reading musician, he was able to improvise in a manner that would soon be called “jazz.” This all combined to make him a major figure of the late 1910s transition from ragtime to jazz.

Sweatman apparently did not compose much, but what did appear was exciting and widely distributed, both in print (piano sheets and orchestrations) and via phonograph recordings. A

very idiomatic example of Sweatman's writing is **"That's Got 'Em—Rag"** (track 3). This is a very late (1919) use of the term "rag," and a loosening of its definition: swingy "dotted" rhythms, tricky shifting harmonies, looser counterpoint, the dominance of repetitive "riffs," and a smattering of short "breaks" for solo interjections were all outside the rag tradition. Correctly speaking, "That's Got 'Em—Rag," is an example of Novelty music, a species of composed proto-jazz that thrived from around 1915 into the early 20s. Novelty represented a real aesthetic change in American pop music, where melody had reigned supreme. With Novelty music, melody was subservient to "surprise," hokum, loud percussive effects, "individuality," dissonance, and a generally aggressive attitude. Novelty's brief, noisy appearance signaled not only the end of the ragtime era, but also the final fading of the Victorian sensibilities that had formed it.

## **JAMES J. VAUGHAN** (1874–?)

Highly respected in Black Manhattan as one of its most accomplished musicians, James J. Vaughan's name is frequently found in the theatrical columns of early 1900s African-American newspapers. He was the conductor and co-composer for four major black Broadway shows, including *In Dahomey*. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Vaughan's original stage music received glowing notices as well. Yet he did not pursue publication, and therefore little tangible evidence remains of his many important contributions.

James Joseph Jefferson Vaughan came into the world on April 23, 1874 in Boston, Massachusetts. He was the son of former slaves from Petersburg, Virginia—Wiley D. Vaughan (1847–?) and Isabella A. White (1853–?). Mr. Vaughan, an upholsterer, had brought his young wife to New England shortly after the Civil War. The couple lived in Boston for some years, but eventually relocated to nearby Cambridge. There, the Vaughan family grew to include James and three younger sisters.

James Vaughan manifested an unusual interest in and aptitude for music early in life. He attended Cambridge public schools, which, unlike their counterparts in New York or Washington, D.C., were not segregated. Music was also part of the regular curriculum. In grammar school James became popular playing fife and ocarina solos for school assemblies. In 1890 he started his secondary education at Cambridge's brand new Rindge Technical School. There, he was star right tackle of its championship football team and also a member of the school's fife-and-drum corps. But most importantly, at Rindge Tech James was able to avail himself of more advanced courses in music.

While still in school Vaughan played the piano and appeared in amateur theatricals around Cambridge. His tastes were wide-ranging, from minstrels (where in most instances he was the only person of color on the stage) to vaudeville, "church social" type operetta, and once, a grand cantata as a member of a two-hundred-voice chorus. In 1900 Vaughan landed his first professional job—music director for Graham's "Blackville Society." Although a minstrel show, this was no jerkwater company; it toured major New England cities and was led by true minstrel royalty—Sam Lucas (1850–1916), the black pioneer whom James Weldon Johnson celebrated as the "Grand Old Man of the Negro Stage."

Vaughan left the Graham company after a year or so of trouping. He settled in Boston, working nights in a café playing ragtime piano. In 1901 we first hear of Vaughan as a composer: he entered into partnership with the brilliant African-American lyric writer Alex Rogers (1876–

1930), and the two wrote a musical comedy called *The Sultan of Zulu*. George Walker, ever on the lookout for vehicles for his comic partnership with Bert Williams, was impressed with their show and purchased it. But the perceptive Walker, also taken with the young pianist/composer/conductor, formed another idea: he was just then considering replacing Williams & Walker's current music director (Willis Accooe), and Vaughan seemed ideal for the job.

In late 1902 Williams & Walker summoned James Vaughan to New York. Work had already begun on their latest production, *In Dahomey*, with composer Will Marion Cook. Vaughan was engaged as the famous duo's new music director, a position of considerable responsibility for the twenty-eight-year-old. When *In Dahomey* opened at the New York Theatre on February 18, 1903—the first black show to play a major Broadway house—white critics and first-nighters also focused their attention on the first black conductor bold enough to appear in one: “The footlights drew a sharp color line, and will doubtless continue to do so.” reported the *New York Times*. “Mr. James Vaughan, the musical director of the show, who led the permanent orchestra of the house, and the boys who peddled water in the aisles were the only persons of color on the floor or in the barnacle-like proscenium boxes.” Fortunately, the premiere was well received, and *In Dahomey* turned out to be a substantial hit, not so much on Broadway (where it played for only fifty-three nights), but in London and on tour across the British Isles. Buoyed by these triumphs, *In Dahomey* steamed back to Broadway for a revival in August 1904. It was decided that it was time to update the score, a task falling to James Vaughan. He came through with several new numbers, including “When the Moon Shines.”

James Vaughan directed the music and contributed to the scores of both the subsequent Williams & Walker Broadway musicals, *Abyssinia* (1906) and *Bandanna Land* (1908). He also conducted for Bert Williams's solo vehicle, *Mr. Lode of Koal* (1909), which was produced after George Walker's unexpected “retirement” (he was actually dying of syphilis). Once again, the fine work of the conductor came in for more than the usual amount of press. The *Indianapolis Freeman* for example, reported, “Well, they're off. Jas. J. Vaughan looks the part as the musical director, and he is delivering the goods as only Jas. Vaughan can deliver them, and right from the start of the overture, Jas. Vaughan is evident, as the Majestic Orchestra is putting on airs tonight, and I've never heard their music sound sweeter. Oh, you past master orchestra director, Jas. J. Vaughan.”

But the end of the first great period of black musical comedy was at hand. Bert Williams decided he could not alone sustain an entire show, and withdrew to be one of the many stars in the Ziegfeld *Follies* galaxy. George Walker died in 1911. With the demise of the Williams & Walker Co., black musicals disappeared from major Broadway venues.

James Vaughan was now “At Liberty.” His subsequent patchwork career gives us some idea of the diminished opportunities in the African-American theater in the post-1910 period. From 1910 to 1913 he served as music director for the rising showman J. Leubrie Hill. Following a brief stint conducting for silent movies in Washington, D.C., Vaughan signed on to lead one of the final editions of the Black Patti Troubadours. But by June 1914, he was back with Hill's outfit, now called the Darktown Follies Co., conducting Hill's three-act musical comedy *My Friend from Kentucky*. A year later, Vaughan was with Salem Tutt Whitney's Smart Set company, for which he composed the score for the musical comedy *George Washington Bullion Abroad*.

Tired of touring, in the spring of 1916 Vaughan tried to break in to the Chicago theater scene. He took the position leading the vaudeville orchestra at the De Luxe Theatre on State Street.

The *Chicago Defender* proclaimed his arrival: “It looks very much like New York City to have such a brilliant musician to grace a platform. . . .” But by 1918 he was back on the road, first with a carnival, and then again with the Smart Set (now billed as the “Smarter Set”). For the latter Vaughan composed a new musical comedy on “race consciousness” called *Children of the Sun*, in which “the black man is strikingly set forth as the pioneer of civilization.” Staying on the cutting edge, the following year he composed for them *Bamboula*, a two-act, ten-scene “Jazzonian Operetta.”

In the wake of the success of Sissle & Blake’s *Shuffle Along*, James Vaughan attempted his own return to Broadway with a revue called *Jump Steady* (1922). Although the *New York Times* announced the show’s imminent opening, it never did. Vaughan then turned away from full-scale theater into the more affordably produced nightclub “floorshow” business. He experimented with this new field in Albany, New York, but by 1926 was in Harlem leading a floorshow at the Savoy club. A bit later he returned to the Lafayette Theatre, leading his Royal Flush Jazz Band for the *Royal Flush Revue*.

But the Jazz Age and James Vaughan were not compatible. The 1930 census found him as a “music teacher” back in Cambridge, living with his eighty-three-year-old father in the family home. He was still remembered, though: in 1936 black concert-pianist/historian Maude Cuney-Hare profiled him as a musical comedy pioneer in her groundbreaking book *Negro Musicians and Their Music*. That is the last mention of this important artist; after an exhaustive search, no obituary or photograph could be found.

Estimating from the amount of music listed in old programs and newspaper items, James J. Vaughan composed around two hundred works during the period 1901–1929. Yet, all were created for specific shows and almost nothing was published. The frustrating result is that virtually none of his music has survived. However, in preparation for this recording, I found in a crate of uncatalogued material in my barn the score for **“When the Moon Shines”** (track 15), an artifact from the short-lived 1904 Broadway revival of *In Dahomey*. It is a waltz-song, that staple of the American stage. But “Moon Shines” is something far above the ordinary. Its questioning intro and eccentric “vamp” are the first signs of a superior musical mind, and rest of Vaughan’s song is just as inspired. This is worthy music, and hopefully more of it will come to light.

## **BERT WILLIAMS**

(1874–1922)

A biography of Bert Williams appears in *Vol. 1*. In addition, there are numerous texts about him, including at least three complete books. Here it must suffice to say that Williams was America’s first black superstar; his artistry was beloved by millions and transcended race. This great comedian/singer wrote many of the songs that brought him his fame and fortune. Seventy-six of these were eventually published, making Williams one of the most prolific African-American songwriters of that era.

Williams’s most famous song by far was **“Nobody”** (track 2), with lyrics by Alex Rogers (1876–1930). Written in 1905, almost overnight it became Williams’s signature number. He performed “Nobody” thousands of times and made several recordings of it. “Nobody” was so good that Williams spent the rest of his career trying to come up with a worthy sequel. He never quite succeeded.

Carefully listening to “Nobody” reveals just how fine and complex a work it really is. Presumably a trivial “comic song,” it is far deeper, exposing much about the conflicted society that shaped it. Absent is the usual bouncy set-up. Instead, Williams’s music is dignified, almost religious. The comedic elements are injected by the orchestration (attributed to Will Vodery), and in particular, the wailing and moaning of the slide trombone. This is obviously funny, but there is further meaning lost on modern listeners: the trombone was a stereotypic late nineteenth-century minstrel band instrument, used for joyful ballyhoo. “Nobody” turns its expected ebullience into hysteric misery. Williams’s audiences, intimately familiar with the trappings of minstrelsy, would have understood subversive irony in a “sad” trombone. Similarly, Rogers’s poem also presents obvious humor and subtle complexities. To white audiences it was a droll tale about the “bad luck” of a sad Negro man. Their laughter would have been sympathetic, but to some extent rooted in their belief that the black man’s problems were of his own making. On the other hand, African-American listeners would have interpreted “Nobody” quite differently: the man’s problems were not random misfortune, but hostile acts deliberately aimed at him. *Their* laughter would have been more experiential and cathartic. Yet the result from both perspectives—laughter—was ultimately unifying and humanizing. And this was Williams’s goal. As the great educator Booker T. Washington concluded, “Bert Williams has done more for our race than I have. He has smiled his way into people's hearts. I have been obliged to fight my way.”

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Based in historic Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra** is the world’s only year-round, professional ensemble specializing in the authentic re-creation of “America’s Original Music”—the sounds of early musical theater, silent cinema, and vintage ballroom dancing. PRO came into being as the result of Rick Benjamin’s 1985 discovery of thousands of early 1900s orchestra scores of the Victor recording star Arthur Pryor. In 1988 the Orchestra made its formal debut at Alice Tully Hall—the first concert ever presented at Lincoln Center by such an ensemble. Since then PRO has appeared at hundreds of leading arts venues, including the Ravinia Festival, the Smithsonian Institution, Chautauqua, Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center, the Brucknerhaus (Austria), and in New York’s 92nd Street Y and City Center. PRO’s music inspired master choreographer Paul Taylor’s dance *Oh, You Kid!*, which was premiered at The Kennedy Center jointly by the Paul Taylor Dance Company and the Paragon and has since toured the world. In late 2003 the Orchestra premiered Rick Benjamin’s reconstruction of Scott Joplin’s 1911 opera *Treemonisha* to acclaim at San Francisco’s Stern Grove Festival. More recently, PRO had the honor of twice appearing as special guests of the Minnesota Orchestra in Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis.

In addition to its worldwide concert hall, university, and festival appearances, PRO has acquired a considerable following both here and abroad through its radio programs on the *New York Times*’s WQXR, WWFM Classical, National Public Radio, the British Broadcasting Corp., and the *Voice of America* networks. Since 1989 the Walt Disney Company has relied on the Orchestra for the recorded theme music heard on *Main Street, U.S.A.* at Disneyland, Disney World, and Disneyland Paris, and in 1992 PRO proudly served as “Ambassador of Goodwill” for the United States at the World’s Fair in Seville, Spain. Over the past twenty-six years the Orchestra has been heard on the soundtracks of several feature films and television programs for PBS, HBO, and Turner Classic Movies, and its audio and video recordings have been widely praised and considered instrumental in rekindling interest in the rich history and tradition of the American theater orchestra. [www.paragonragtime.com](http://www.paragonragtime.com)

Conductor **Rick Benjamin** has built a career upon the discovery and performance of American music from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is the founder and director of the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, which uses his extraordinary 14,000-title collection of historic American orchestra music (c. 1870–1925) as the basis of its repertoire. In addition to his work with Paragon, Mr. Benjamin maintains active careers as a pianist, arranger, and tubist. As a conductor he leads many notable ensembles, including the National Orchestra of Ireland (Dublin), the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, the Aalborg and Aarhus Symfoniorkester in Denmark, the Olympia Symphony (Washington State), the National Orchestra of Iceland, the Erie Philharmonic, and the Virginia Symphony. Mr. Benjamin is also a leading researcher in the field of silent film music; he has unearthed the original orchestral accompaniments to many great motion pictures of the 1900s, '10s and '20s, and has conducted for more than six hundred screenings across North America and Europe. His articles on historic music appear in several publications, and lecture tours have taken him to more than a hundred colleges and universities throughout North America. He is continuing work on his books *The American Theater Orchestra* and *Encyclopedia of Arrangers & Orchestrators: 1875–1925*. Rick Benjamin was educated at The Juilliard School in New York City. [www.rickbenjamin.com](http://www.rickbenjamin.com)

Soprano and music educator **Anita Johnson** has had the honor of performing at the White House for President Obama and the joy of performing with Stevie Wonder at the Greek Theater in Los Angeles. She has also performed at the Metropolitan Opera and with other prominent opera companies and symphony orchestras across America, Germany and Italy. She has educated audiences through her one-woman shows *Black Roots of Song* and *ABCs: American Black Composers' Contributions to Our Musical Heritage*. She created, directed, produced, and performed the concert event *He's Got the Whole World in His Hand* and has visited universities and colleges as a guest artist, giving recitals and master classes in Performance Excellence. Ms. Johnson has a B.M. from the University of Southern California and an M.M. and K-12 Music Certification from the University of Michigan. She is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She sings the title role in the recent New World recording of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*. [www.anitadiva.com](http://www.anitadiva.com)

**Robert Mack** has received excellent reviews for his powerful but sweet lyric tenor voice throughout the United States and Europe. He has performed principal roles with such noted opera companies as New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Carolina, Opera Bastille (Paris), and Teatro Real in Spain, as well as in the Metropolitan Opera's productions of *La Fanciulla del West* and *The Nose*. He toured with the nationally acclaimed Three Mo' Tenors and recorded the role of Sportin' Life from *Porgy and Bess* with the Nashville Symphony and can be heard as Andy on the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra's recording of *Treemonisha*. He co-founded and is the general manager of Opera Noire of New York.

Baritone **Edward Pleasant**, a native of Midland, Texas, has distinguished himself as a versatile performer and as a gifted actor in opera and musical theater. Career highlights include his appearance in the role of Jake in New York City Opera's production of *Porgy and Bess*. He was also seen in that production's historic Emmy-nominated Live from Lincoln Center telecast on PBS. He has frequently performed at Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall, and he has also sung in other prominent venues such as the Texas State Capitol and the White House. Mr. Pleasant's discography includes *The Seven Last Words of Christ* for Gothic Records, Kurt Weill's



*The Flight of Lindbergh* for Voices International, and a special 250th-anniversary edition of *The Music of Mozart* for the Madacy label. He can also be heard on *Black Manhattan* and as Zodzetrick in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, both with the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra (New World Records).

Contralto **Linda Thompson Williams** has performed with The Metropolitan Opera in *Porgy and Bess* and John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, with Houston Grand Opera in *Porgy and Bess* and Noa Ain's *The Outcast*, and with Nashville Opera in Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*. She has also appeared on the Nashville Symphony Orchestra's recording of *Porgy and Bess* on Decca. She has been a judge for the NAACP ACT-SO Vocal Competition and her television appearances include *Boardwalk Empire*, *Law & Order SVU*, *Law & Order Criminal Intent*, *The Sopranos* and *The Chris Rock Show*.

### **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra**

Rick Benjamin, conductor

Caroline Chin, first violin and concertmaster

Bryony Stroud-Watson, second violin

Thomas Rosenthal, viola

Alistair MacRae, cello

Mat Fieldes, bass

Leslie Cullen, flute and piccolo

Alicia Lee, clarinet

Paul Murphy, cornet

Nathan Botts, cornet

Tim Albright, trombone

Mike Dobson, drums, bells & mallets [tracks 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18]

James Musto III, drums, bells & mallets [tracks 2, 3, 4, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19]

Diane Scott, piano

### **Additional player for *Shuffle Along Overture***

Arthur Sato, oboe

### **Soloists**

Anita Johnson, soprano

Edward Pleasant, baritone

Robert Mack, tenor

Linda Thompson Williams, Blues singer

### **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

#### **The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra on New World Records**

*Black Manhattan: Theater and Dance Music of James Reese Europe, Will Marion Cook, and Members of the Legendary Clef Club*. New World Records 80611-2.

*From Barrelhouse to Broadway: The Musical Odyssey of Joe Jordan*. New World Records 80649-2.

*Midnight Frolic: The Broadway Theater Music of Louis A. Hirsch (1881–1924)*. New World Records 80707-2.

*Scott Joplin: Treemonisha*. New World Records 80720-2 [2 CDs].

*You're a Grand Old Rag: The Music of George M. Cohan*. New World Records 80685-2.

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The *Chicago Defender*  
*The Colored American*  
The *Indianapolis Freeman*  
The *New York Age*  
*The Washington Bee*

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**Dedicated to Max Morath—“The Ragtime Man”**

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