



NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY RAGTIME ENSEMBLE

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from Tour of Summer, 1974

Contact: Public Relations
9/23/74
617/262-1120



Quotes of Gunther Schuller and
members of New England Conservatory
Ragtime Ensemble on White House
performance

The invitation of the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble to perform at the White house comes at a most exciting time for the New England Conservatory. Beginning the last two years of its five-year, \$12 million endowment fund raising campaign and having just completed an enormously successful tour of Europe with its Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the New England Conservatory is entering a new phase of activity and import in education.

"I am deeply honored to have been appointed by President Ford to the National Council on the Arts," said Conservatory President Gunther Schuller upon hearing the news. "With the renewed public interest in the Arts, especially in Music, it is important for there to be a greater awareness of our American musical heritage. The New England Conservatory has long been involved in contributing to and enhancing this awareness, and we are pleased to see it gaining a greater momentum throughout the United States.

"The Ragtime music of Scott Joplin is an integral part of the development of that peculiarly American music called Jazz. It is from these roots that Jazz evolved. The invitation by an American President to a group of music students in the form of a Ragtime ensemble is also peculiarly American, and we are all very much excited about being here."

The members of the Ragtime Ensemble itself, having recently returned from their triumphant European debut, are equally excited and honored.

"I think our performing here goes along with the whole new idea of opening up the White House, of making the whole idea of the people being part of the Presidency and government," commented one of the young players.

Said another, "It says a lot for President Ford to be inviting us as music students, as students in the country's oldest music conservatory, as a group of musicians playing Ragtime to perform at the White House. I think Scott Joplin would be especially pleased to know that not only is his music being deemed as respectable, but also that it merited a White House invitation."

And finally, one student seemed to hit it, "I guess President Ford just caught the Ragtime bug like the rest of the country."



New England Conservatory of Music

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PROGRAM by RAGTIME ENSEMBLE FOR
WHITE HOUSE September 25, 1974

Scott Joplin Music

1. The Entertainer - by special request
2. Cascades
3. Wall Street Rag
4. Bethena Waltz
5. Maple Leaf Rag

Jelly Roll Morton Music

6. Grandpa's Spells

The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble
has recorded for Angel Records: 1973 Grammy Award winning
album Scott Joplin: The Red Back Book and their best selling
Golden Crest Recording More Scott Joplin Rags.

9/23/74



New England Conservatory of Music

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NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY RAGTIME ENSEMBLE

The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble made its first appearance at the Romantic Music Festival held at the Conservatory during the Spring of 1972. With the long-thought-lost orchestrated versions of the Ragtime music of Scott Joplin (the Red Back Book collection) made available to Conservatory President Gunther Schuller by Vera Brodsky Lawrence, the Ensemble's world debut at Jordan Hall was a stunning success.

From there, Schuller formed a permanent Ensemble of 12 members, consisting of a flute/piccolo, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba, 2 violins, viola, cello, string bass, piano and percussion. The group was later expanded to include an oboe, bassoon and French horn.

In December, 1972, the group recorded its first and now best-selling album of Joplin tunes, Scott Joplin: The Red Back Book for Angel Records. This recording received the Grammy Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts for the Best Chamber Music Performance of 1973. The album is listed as one of Angel's 6 all-time best sellers.

A year later, in January, 1974, the group recorded its second Ragtime album, this time on the Golden Crest label, More Scott Joplin Rags. Several of the Joplin works on this second album were orchestrated for the Ensemble by Gunther Schuller himself, and of these, many were included in the musical score for the motion picture, The Sting.

As the Ragtime revival in the United States gained momentum, the Ragtime Ensemble became more and more popular, appearing several times on Boston television programs and making concert appearances in other cities. Included in these appearances are those at Lincoln Center in New York City, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. and the White House.

The Ensemble toured the midwestern and eastern United States during the summer of 1974, appearing at several prominent music festivals. Sell-out crowds greeted the Ragtime group at the Blossom, Tanglewood, Ravinia, Wolf Trap and Scott Joplin Festivals as well as those appearances in Newport, Rhode Island; Portland, Maine; and St. Louis, Missouri.

In September, 1974, the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble made its official European debut in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Other European concert appearances took place in Groningen, Haarlem and at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam.

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New England Conservatory of Music

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General Fact Sheet about the New England Conservatory

Oldest independent conservatory of music in the United States; founded in 1867 by Eben Tourjee

Awards Bachelor of Music and diploma in applied music, voice, composition, and Afro-American music as well as B.M. in music education and theory; Master of Music in composition, conducting, theory, music literature, performance of early music, vocal accompaniment, Afro-American music, applied music, voice, and music education: Artist Diploma for post-graduate excellence in performance. First college to grant B.M. in Afro-American music (Jazz)

Faculty includes over 130 distinguished artists, performers, composers and educators including 29 members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Alumni play in every major U.S. symphony orchestra, in top opera companies, ballet orchestras, Broadway show orchestras, leading chamber ensembles and jazz groups; distinguished alumni include Sarah Caldwell, Eleanor Steber, Vaughn Monroe, Leonard Bernstein, Coretta Scott King. NEC has over 4000 living alumni in the world.

Numerous performing organizations include two full symphony orchestras, chorus, two wind ensembles, two jazz bands, chamber ensembles. Students and faculty give over 200 free concerts each year at the famed Jordan Hall which is acclaimed as one of the finest concert halls in the East.

Main building is in the heart of Boston houses concert halls, classrooms, administrative offices, and audio-visual and practice facilities. Neighboring residence halls house 160 students, a cafeteria and lounge. Harriet M. Spaulding library has over 15,000 books, nearly 32,000 scores, 23,000 records and tapes including the Voice of Firestone Collection and the Vaughn Monroe Colle Collection, with appropriate listening and reading areas.

Community service programs include music lessons for disadvantaged children, a preparatory school for qualified young musicians through high school age (enrollment over 1000), a free concert program for the innercity children and a state wide prison music education program.

NEC is currently engaged in a \$12 million development effort to raise endowment and operating funds. Major gifts have been received from the Ford Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and trustees, alumni and friends.

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RECENT EUROPEAN TOUR

Contact: Public Relations Office
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9/23/74

The New England Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Conservatory President Gunther Schuller, and the New England Conservatory Chorus, directed by Lorna Cooke deVaron, returned from a triumphant tour of Switzerland and France on Thursday, September 19.

The 142-member combined ensemble was the only "non-professional" group to ever have been invited to perform at the world renowned Lucerne Music Festival in Lucerne, Switzerland. The reaction of the Swiss to this young group was one of enthusiasm, excitement and astonishment. Said the music critic of the Neue Zurcher Zeitung (Zurich) "... its ability, musicality and technical security is astounding."... and from the Tribune de Geneve (Geneva), "I cannot see in which country on the Old Continent one could find an ensemble comparable in quality to the Symphony Orchestra (which by the way is 25% female) of the New England Conservatory."

From Lucerne, the group traveled to Interlaken, Sion and Ascona, Switzerland where it performed at the Interlaken, Tibor Varga and Ascona music festivals, respectively. The repertoire for these concerts included the Beethoven Mass in C, the Stravinsky Requiem Canticles, Schubert's Symphony No.8, Verdi's Te Deum and Schuller's own 3 Nocturnes.

The group was the only performing organization to appear at the 6-day Bach Festival in Mazamet France. At this time, it performed the entire Bach Christmas Oratorio and a Composite Mass of works by Messiaen, Dufay, Obrecht and Perotin as well as the previously mentioned pieces.

The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble made its official European debut at this time, performing in Rotterdam, Haarlem and Amsterdam, Netherlands.

The Ragtime Revival—A Belated

Ode to Composer Scott Joplin

By JOHN KRONENBERGER

OUTSIDE, it was a languid Sunday evening in Newport the weekend before last, with wisps of fog drifting in on a light breeze off the Atlantic. In the Great Hall of The Breakers, the mammoth Italian Renaissance summer "cottage" Cornelius Vanderbilt put up in 1893, a crowd of some of society's toniest names—including Auchinclosses, Drexels and Countess Szapary, Vanderbilt's granddaughter—moved to their seats through more marble, bronze, gilt, brocade and velvet than most people see in a lifetime. The event was the Patrons' Gala of the elegant Newport Music Festival, held in the town's grandest mansions and ordinarily devoted to chamber music by some of 19th-century Europe's lesser lights. But it was not the strains of Albert Franz Doppler, Josef Holbrooke or August Klughardt that were to titillate the audience. Instead, the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, conducted by Gunther Schuller, launched

into the syncopated sunniness of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag." It was the latest—and perhaps the most refreshing—splash in the ragtime tidal wave currently deluging America.

In years past such a scene would have been most unlikely—indeed, until relatively recently only a small band of ragtime aficionados even knew who Scott (not Janis) Joplin was. Of course, since Marvin Hamlisch's Joplin-based soundtrack for "The Sting" won an Oscar last April, the whole nation has begun to take notice; yet, even before the film was released, the popular rediscovery of Joplin's music was already underway, sparked in large part by a pair of Boston academics—New England Conservatory president Schuller and Joshua Rifkin, an assistant professor of music at Brandeis University, who, working independently, had done the most to resurrect the works of the turn-of-the-century pioneer who dominated what has been called "the first entirely original American music."

Quite clearly, after a half-century of being all but forgotten, Joplin's music, happily, is just about omnipresent these

days. His "The Entertainer"—in its "Sting"-derived, truncated arrangement—reverberates from every jukebox and car radio; companies like Kodak and Ford are using rags—some a little less authentic than others—as background music for their television commercials; ragtime renditions by everybody from Percy Faith to E. Power Biggs (the latter giving his trusty pedal harpsichord a vacation from the works of Bach) crowd together hopefully on record store shelves; facsimile reproductions of Joplin's 70-year-old sheet music are selling out in music stores; and, as at Newport, even the once-sacrosanct groves of the country's most prestigious summer music festivals have been invaded by ragtime performers playing Joplin to respectful, dressy audiences. And the end is, as the expression goes, nowhere in sight.

For the shade of Scott Joplin, the black genius from Texarkana, Texas, who spent most of his relatively short, relatively unhappy life in the years before World War I struggling to move his art from saloon to salon, out of the

(Continued on Page 4)

John Kronenberger, a former editor of *Look* magazine, is on the staff of WGBH, Boston's public TV station.

Ragtime—'The First Entirely Orig

(Continued from Page 1)

bordellos of Sedalia, Mo., into the concert halls of St. Louis and New York, there must be some small satisfaction in all this new-found respectability. It eluded Joplin the first time around.

It was Joplin's unique creative vision that led him to set down on paper the syncopated piano music that he and a host of tenderloin "ticklers" had fashioned out of the "coon songs" and cakewalks of the 1890's. The publication of "Maple Leaf Rag" in 1899 showed an astonished America his distillation of this music into a formal, concise structure: a steady rhythm in the left hand, "ragged time" in the right, with four distinct, repeated themes.

The formula was simple (if, perhaps, not so simple to play) and became an instantly classic form, though only in what today would be the pop music business. Royalties from sheet music sales of "Maple Leaf" and subsequent, if lesser, hits allowed Joplin to devote the rest of his days to composing and teaching. His output was not large (less than four dozen rags in two decades), but his peers recognized him for the dominant figure in the field that he was. Yet, success was blighted by an unhappy first marriage, the death of an infant daughter, and in his last years an obsession with a perhaps over-ambitious attempt at opera called "Treemonisha." Its failure contributed to Joplin's death in a New York City mental institution in 1917, at the age of 49.

By then ragtime had been passed by, its special strengths sapped by Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths who called just about anything a rag (Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band," for instance, was a bastardization of the "ragged meter" that leaned heavily on a march rhythm and simulated bugle calls). Besides, something called "jazz" was beginning to crowd it as well. Ragtime soon lapsed into legend as an anachronism reminiscent of derby hats and sleeve garters.

In the intervening decades, performers like Max Morath and scholars like Rudi Blesh and Vera Brodsky Lawrence

that kept the classic ragtime faith, but its current popularity began with an unpretentious album of Joplin piano scores that Joshua Rifkin made for Nonesuch Records in the fall of 1970, about the time he left the New York music scene for Brandeis. As a graduate student at N.Y.U. and Princeton, Rifkin had worked out an enviable apprenticeship with Nonesuch and its parent company Elektra, during which he transformed Beatles tunes into quasi-baroque music, orchestrated Judy Collins LP's and conducted recordings of various music spanning four centuries.

Now, an old passing interest in Joplin—whom he had played as a precocious pre-



Nonesuch Records

Joshua Rifkin

teenager hooked on New Orleans jazz—was reawakened through such friends as composers William Bolcum and Eric Salzman. "I had the freedom at Nonesuch to record pretty much anything that I felt like doing," says Rifkin, sitting in a cramped Brandeis office where he will prepare next fall's graduate seminar on Josquin Des Prés motets. "There was no problem convincing people that this was music that should be presented on our label. I just went and did it. We all sort of regarded it as a project of which we were very fond but still, fundamentally, a record like any other."

"Piano Rags by Scott Joplin" surprised a lot of listeners. Rifkin took the original

of honky-tonk flash and jazz mannerisms. He gave special attention to Joplin's surprinted injunction ("Notice: Do not play this piece fast. Ragtime is never to be played fast.") and produced something that was unquestionably syncopated but in a legato, fluid, graceful (even classical) fashion worlds removed from the prevailing conceptions of ragtime. It received little or no air play; yet it gradually became a world-of-mouth sensation. It was a record that could be played over and over, virtually indefinitely, without losing its warming, joyful (and occasionally bitter-sweet) appeal.

"The result was really totally unexpected," Rifkin recalls. "The record sold very strongly; by the end of a year it had gone over a hundred thousand copies, which for a classical record company is an incredible number. By then it had been for some time on top of the Billboard classical charts. Because the demand was so persistent, I had to go back and make a second one." For small, innovative Nonesuch, a pioneer in budget-priced records, these two albums were (and are) a gold mine.

By the spring of 1972, when Rifkin made his second album, Gunther Schuller was planning a festival of American music at the New England Conservatory. Schuller had become head of the venerable, deficit-plagued institution five years earlier, after a career that began in 1943 (at age 17) as first horn in the Cincinnati Symphony. He later joined the Metropolitan Opera in a similar capacity, then quit in 1959 to compose (works commissioned and played by the New York Philharmonic, the Hamburg Opera, the Modern Jazz Quartet, the Chicago Symphony and saxophonist Ornette Coleman), to teach (at Yale and the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood), and to write. It was typical of him that for the proposed festival he would conduct his students in music of Ives, MacDowell, an obscure 19th-century Philadelphia named Gilchrist and excerpts from Joplin's opera "Treemonisha."

form his rags," says Schuller, in Lenox, Mass., where he spends his summers as artistic director of the Berkshire Music Center. "I'm not a pianist, and the only thing anybody knew about the anonymous instrumental scorings of them that had been made in Joplin's day—the legendary arrangements of eight rags known as the 'Red Back Book'—was that the collection had been lost and would probably never be found. I called up Vera Lawrence in New York because bits of the opera had been performed elsewhere and I'd found out that she had something to do with the rights to it. She told me "Treemonisha" was not available at that time because



Scott Joplin

It was in copyright litigation, but that she could, however, send me something quite unusual, something called the 'Red Back Book.'

"I nearly jumped through my office ceiling. I said, 'Vera, that can't be; I thought it was lost.' She said, 'No, one copy has turned up, and I'll send you Xerox copies.' Like all commercial arrangements, they were published with a lot of heavy doublings of parts so they could be played by almost any combination of instruments; if you played them as printed, you'd get rather thickish sounding music. I didn't change a note anywhere, but I did trim them down, so sometimes it's woodwinds, sometimes it's strings alone, various things like that. And

inal American Music'

Conservatory orchestra, I conducted four of the rags at the concert. My faculty, many of whom had never even heard of Joplin, were saying things like, 'My gosh, he writes melodies like Schubert!'

"We make tapes of every concert we do, and the word got around. Angel said they'd like to make a recording in New York; they wanted me to get my best jazz friends for it, but I said, 'Nothing doing. You liked what you heard on that tape—either I do it with my kids here or I'm not going to do it.' So up they came and we made the recording in early 1973 at the Conservatory." That album, "The Red Back Book," achieved a double success: it displaced Dennis Brain's Mozart horn concertos as Angel's all-time best seller, and earlier this year won a Grammy award as "the best chamber music recording of 1973." Some of Schuller's edited arrangements—microscopically credited, but paid for—later turned up in the Oscar-winning soundtrack that Marvin Hamlisch orchestrated for "The Sting." (As it happened, the film's director, George Roy Hill, had approached both Schuller and Rifkin separately to score the film; each declined the opportunity for lack of time.)

Of late, Schuller and the students in the Conservatory's Ragtime Ensemble have found themselves in demand as concert artists. This summer, with a repertory greatly expanded from the eight original "Red Back Book" rags to include more Joplin, the works of other ragtime composers like James Scott and Joseph Lamb and some inspired choices like Debussy's "Golliwog's Cakewalk," they are barnstorming such high-brow cultural enclaves as Wolf Trap, Ambler, Blossom and Tanglewood, and frequently playing to standing room only.

In the meantime Rifkin has also taken to the concert stage. Indeed, he went on sabbatical this past academic year to be able to cope with the demands of the ragtime revival. "I did a tour last fall," he says, "and I've done various other concerts since then, including two in Lon-



Dan McCoy

Gunther Schuller

don—there's a big ragtime craze in England as well—and made something like ten appearances on BBC television this spring. My first concert was in New York in 1972, and we pretty much filled Alice Tully Hall. But to give you an idea of the way things are going now, this past May I gave a concert in London's Royal Festival Hall, which seats about 3,200 people, and it was sold out within four days of the tickets' going on sale.

"Let's face it—the big factor here is the score for 'The Sting,' which is a direct stylistic lift from two sources, the 'Red Back Book' on the one hand and my records on the other. In fact, it's quite amusing, because Gunther's style of performance is completely different from mine, and what you get in the movie is piano solos played exactly like mine and the orchestral arrangements done exactly like his. The soundtrack version of 'The Enter-

tainer'—that sudden speeding up of tempi and so on—is exactly what a tape editor could do by cross-cutting sections from our two records."

Rifkin admits to being a bit weary. "I'm probably going to make a third record this fall," he says. "But this will pretty much end my involvement, other than some concerts I'm playing next spring for contractual reasons. I am by no means not going to do other performing, particularly conducting. It's just that for my own preservation I have got to give up playing Joplin. My composing has been on the back burner for a couple of years, and I have overdue deadlines on articles for Grove's Dictionary going back even longer. The royalties have made it easier to support my research trips"—for his doctoral dissertation, which concerns musical manuscripts of the Medici popes—"but I am in fact rushing to retirement from the ragtime business."

Schuller is more bullish, notwithstanding the automatic departures from his Ensemble every year at graduation. "I give the craze another year or so, at least," he says. "It may taper off a little then. But we have enough talent in the school so that I can always populate the group very well." Meanwhile, in his continuing quest to exhume America's musical past, he has organized yet another subgroup from the school orchestra to play note-for-note re-creations he has made from early Duke Ellington records, the scores for which had long since vanished. The New England Conservatory Ellington Ensemble may record later this year, but Schuller doesn't expect lightning to strike twice.

"Joplin is a very special case," he concludes. "A unique combination of inventiveness and musical imagination, plus simplicity, naiveté and charm. When all of this started, I thought, my God, they're going to kill this music with over-commercialization. I've heard the most atrocious recordings, somebody playing some cheap theater organ that sounds like a calliope. I'm sure we're going to have synthesized Joplin very soon." (Indeed, it's here already: an album called "Gatsby's World—Turned-on Joplin"—which has to be the lamest attempt in years to cover all bases.) "But now I'm quite certain that the music is strong enough to survive such treatment. The quality is so high that it'll have a greater longevity than average pop material. Audiences will continue to hear it as a fresh experience."

Rifkin is similarly optimistic. "The ragtime craze, the faddish thing, will obviously die down," he says, "but Joplin will have his position secure in American music history. I can't say precisely what that position will be, but he will never again be so completely forgotten, known only to a few aficionados. He was a literate musician and, no, he was not doing it by accident. He worked, as far as we can tell, for what he got. That part of it all will be lasting. He is a very treasurable composer."

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, Friday, August 2, 1974

In Review

Joplin's ragtime got crowd rollin'

By PETER PRICHARD
D&C Staff Writer

Once you get a Scott Joplin tune into your head it's almost impossible to get it out. Not that you would want to. The syncopated rhythms keep bouncing about, forever coming back on themselves, just like the piano rolls that were America's phonographs 70 years ago.

Last night at the Eastman Theater, the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble played enough Joplin rags to replace the Carrol's Crunchy Country Chicken jingle in the minds of Rochesterians for at least six months, and we're all grateful.

Joplin rags are rollicking, good-time tunes that roll on and on, a frothy stream of bouncing notes and skipping rhythms. One of the attractive, likable young musicians said last night that Joplin's music was originally played in brothels and saloons. It must have made everyone feel better.

Joplin, born in Texarkana, Tex., in the late 19th century, became the "King of the ragtime composers." His biggest hit, "Maple Leaf Rag," sold a million copies of sheet music at 10 cents a sheet. The Joplin revival in the 1970s was spurred, of course, by the score of the motion picture "The Sting," which relied on several Joplin rags. The movie's influence has been pervasive: when I hear the music, today, somewhere in the back of my

mind Newman and Redford are clowning around in those silly hats.

As a change of pace, the Ensemble played rags by James Scott and Joseph Lamb, and also a rousing Jelly Roll Morton tune, "Grandpa Spells." Myron Romanoff made the piano sound like a waterfall on that one.

In fact, a lot of Joplin's music should have been titled using water imagery. One rag, "The Cascades," uses the curling, flowing rush of a fast stream as a title, and, usually, most of the rags are cascades: series of waterfalls splashing back on themselves. The ensemble is an attractive, talented group. The men wore white pants, striped jackets and bow ties; the women long dresses. Joplin wouldn't be Joplin if the rhythms were the least bit sloppy, and these students were professionally precise. To add to the audience's enjoyment, the musicians bounced and rolled with the music, even stamping time and clapping hands on "Ragtime Dance."

There were some words written with "Wall Street Rag," and they seem appropriate. "Panic on Wall Street, brokers are feeling melancholy," the song says. "Good times are coming, good times have come. Listen to the strains of genuine ragtime — brokers forget their fears."

Ragtime is alive and well, and care-

Miami Herald 6/24/74

'Dirty' Ragtime Returns Classic

By DANIEL WEBSTER
Knight Newspapers Writer

PHILADELPHIA — The ragtime revival moves like wildfire, sweeping the country with the memory of music that was dirty when it was written, classic when it returns. The latest outbreak came recently to the Temple University Music Festival, when the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble played authentic orchestrations of Scott Joplin's rags. The young ensemble was led by Gunther Schuller, president of the conservatory, composer and jazz historian.

SCHULLER TURNED THIS concert into a survey of Joplin's clear-eyed music, but set it in historical perspective by including music by Louis Moreau Gottschalk — a forerunner — and Jelly Roll Morton, the man who turned ragtime into jazz.

As Schuller spoke of Joplin's life and his death in poverty, listeners were reminded of Mozart. And, indeed, there is something of Mozart's virtues in Joplin's music. Joplin had the similar gift of refinement and clarity that let him write disarmingly simple music that refuses to give away all secrets even with frequent replaying.

Ragtime had severe limitations of style. The left hand had to keep a steady unhurried pulse while the right played syncopated melodies against it. For Joplin's followers the formula encouraged trite music, for Joplin it challenged his inventive, playful imagination. Each of the pieces, in his "Red Back Book" has its four distinct melodies, its uncomplicated melodies and its unshakable charm.

SCHULLER NOTED THE happy music Joplin wrote. It is happy, witty and unpredictable, wry and sunny music that makes feet bob. Because it preceded jazz and rock, it makes audiences feel it is an old friend, an almost forgotten companion from a cheerful youth.

These 15 young players made it seem like a lark. Joplin warned every rag player not to hurry, and Schuller let this music move at its own easy tread. The rhythmic fun was preserved intact by a drummer capable of playing opposing meters at once, by a flashy piccolo player and a core of brass players who could lean to the respectable or the earthy.

They caught the feeling of the saloons and hotel ball-rooms where this music sometimes thrived, and they enjoyed the musicians' jokes that Joplin included when they played the soft phrases before the big brash cadences.

The playing showed that Joplin's writing was consciously formed and accessible to anyone who had been listening to this country's pulse.

GLOBE (M)
BOSTON, MASS.
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New
England
Newsclip

Tanglewood went ragtime over the weekend as Gunther Schuller and the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble performed the wonderful Scott Joplin rags. They really ought to call the musical outfit Gunther's Ragtime Band with apologies to Irving Berlin.

RAVINIA MUSIC
FESTIVAL

Scott Joplin's Red Back Book
performed by
The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble
whose recording of this
music is a top-seller on the
charts.



The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble
Performing the Music from the Academy Award Winning Film, "The Sting"

NEW YORK magazine critic Alan Rich called their first record "a dizzying delight" and STEREO REVIEW called their playing "a dazzling blend of softshoe grace and Stravinskian precision." The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, formed by the Conservatory's president, Gunther Schuller, in the spring of 1972 as part of a Romantic American Music Festival at the Conservatory, has now grown into a nationally-renowned musical group with universal acclaim, a Grammy Award, and a place atop sales charts to its credit.

The original performance, conducted by Gunther Schuller himself, was intended simply as a modest effort to acquaint the Festival audience with the work of a unique American composer, but a tape of the performance began to circulate, record companies perked up their ears, and requests for engagements began to come in. Since then, offers of concerts and tours have been a strong temptation to the Ensemble's members to devote the rest of their lives exclusively to ragtime! Their repertory has now expanded from the eight pieces first recorded to some 40 compositions, including the works of

other ragtime masters, like James Scott and Joseph Lamb, and predecessors of Joplin like Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Debussy, Ives, Stravinsky, and Jelly Roll Morton.

The members of the Ensemble have become remarkably caught up in this music, which was a revelation to them when they first encountered it. Many of them have long since become real students of ragtime, and Joplin's genius has become as much a musical reality for them as most of the classical masters for whose sake they came to the Conservatory.

But it is not, the performers say, just a matter of playing the music. In addition to their profound respect for Joplin, they find it great fun. It is, after all, an extraordinary happy, positive music, exuding a blissful naivete that may not return to music in our lifetime. To see the smiles spread to the players' faces while doing Magnetic Rag for the 50th time, or to hear the enthusiasm of the audiences responding to the wondrous swing of Gladiolus Rag is to experience ourselves the joyous lift to the spirits which this remarkable music engenders.