

transcript.

Well hey there! Welcome to Episode 23 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music-loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano and I'm so happy you're joining me today for musical discoveries.

June is African American Music Appreciation month, so I thought it would be appropriate to close out the month of June by celebrating the King of Ragtime, Scott Joplin.

Scott Joplin was born in the 1860s and grew up in Texarkana, which is a town along the border of Texas and Arkansas. Joplin's father was formerly enslaved in North Carolina and his mother was a freeborn African American from Kentucky. In Texarkana, his father worked for the railroad and his mother was employed as a domestic worker, doing cleaning and laundry.

Many schools in the Southern United States during Joplin's life didn't allow for African Americans to attend them, and so Joplin wasn't able to go to school until age 10. His mother begged her white employer to let her son practice piano at their home while she did housework for them. Joplin's father was a violinist and his mother was a banjo player, so music was an important part of their family life. When Scott began school, he continued to practice after school, and a local music teacher gave him piano instruction at no cost. Joplin was so grateful for this piano teacher that when he reached the height of his fame, he showed his appreciation by sending her gifts and money, continuing to do so until her death.

Joplin left home as a teenager and began to work as a travelling musician. He learned that there were few opportunities for black pianists in America during this time and performed in places like saloons, cafes and brothels. He took up residence in Chicago around the time of the Chicago World's Fair, which gave him more performance opportunities. It was also during this time that a new kind of music called RAGTIME music, began to gain popularity and become a bit of a national craze

transcript.

Ragtime music was a forerunner of jazz music. The name ragtime comes from the words “ragged time” which describes the lively, rhythmically broken up rhythms and melodies of the music. It was a combination of the classical European style and African syncopation. The piece you’re hearing now is called “Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin. It was published in 1899 and was a huge hit. It also took ragtime to a new level, because it had more depth and complexity than earlier ragtime music. Recording wasn’t widely available during this time to record performances of ragtime music, but many ragtime composers wrote their music down and published sheet music.

Most ragtime was composed for piano, because the music was so fast and used a huge range of notes, and the piano was the best instrument best suited for those things. But drums, acoustic guitars and the banjo were also used in ragtime music. (fade music) While Scott Joplin is known as the King of Ragtime because of his many contributions to ragtime music -- he wrote over 100 piano rags -- he wrote marches and waltzes as well. He also wrote an opera called *Treemonisha*.

Treemonisha is sometimes referred to as a ragtime opera, though it uses many more styles than just ragtime. The setting for the opera is in a rural black community of Arkansas, and the score celebrates African-American music and culture. The opera contains elements of black folk songs and dances, spirituals and even a call-and-response style scene featuring a preacher and congregation.

Joplin self-published *Treemonisha* in 1911 with the goal of seeing it as a full scale, staged performance. However, he never was able to get enough money or support to achieve this dream, and only managed a couple of partial performances, which was highly disappointing for him.

transcript.

In 1972, well after Joplin's death in 1917, the opera was finally staged and performed in its entirety and performed on Broadway a few years later. In 1976, Scott Joplin received a Pulitzer Prize for his contributions to American music.

Head over to my website at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/23 for this episode's listening calendar, which include links to performances of Scott Joplin's works for you to enjoy throughout the next two weeks until a brand new episode airs. I'll also share links to other music appreciation resources for African American Music Appreciation month. Again, you'll find all that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/23

I hope you enjoyed learning a little more about Scott Joplin with me today, and I'll see you again in 2 weeks for more musical discoveries on the Busy Kids Love Music Podcast!