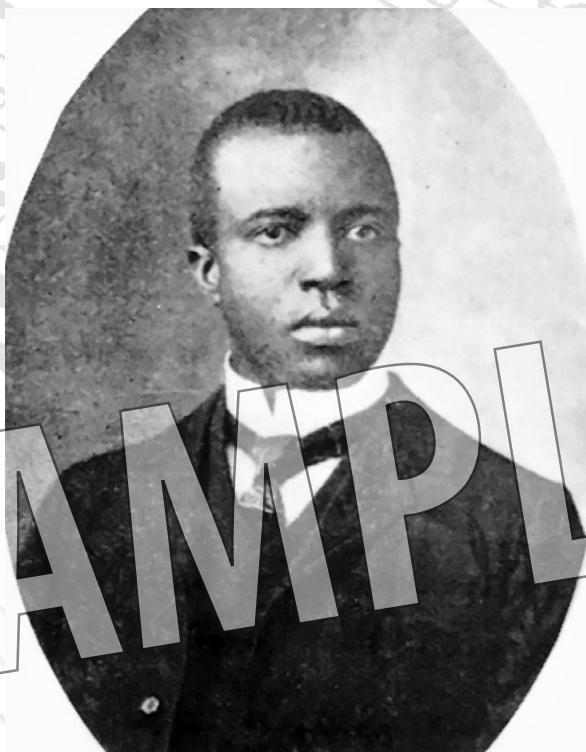


*Simply Charlotte Mason presents*

# Music Study With the Masters

*by Rebekah Carlson*



# joplin

*“Let the young people hear good music as often as possible,  
... let them study occasionally the works of a single great master  
until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style.”*

—Charlotte Mason

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**Charlotte Mason**

Scott Joplin  
(1868–1917)

*by Rebekah Carlson*

Excerpts from Charlotte Mason's Original Home Schooling Series are surrounded by quotation marks and accompanied by a reference to which book in the series they came from.

Vol. 1: Home Education

Vol. 2: Parents and Children

Vol. 3: School Education

Vol. 4: Ourselves

Vol. 5: Formation of Character

Vol. 6: A Philosophy of Education

Music Study with the Masters: Scott Joplin

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## *Charlotte Mason on Music Study*

“Let the young people hear good music as often as possible, and that *under instruction*. It is a pity we like our music, as our pictures and our poetry, mixed, so that there are few opportunities of going through, as a listener, a course of the works of a single composer. But this is to be aimed at for the young people; let them study occasionally the works of a single great master until they have received some of his teaching, and know his style.” (*Formation of Character*, p. 235)





# How to Use Music Study with the Masters

1. Play the music recordings often and mention the composer's name when you do. You can play them as background music during a meal, while running errands in the car, at nap time or bedtime, or while your students work on some handwork. (Try not to keep them playing all day or during noisy times when other sounds or conversation would distract.) Encourage the students to describe what the various pieces make them think of, to “draw the music” with art, or to move to the music. Allow them to form their own relations with it.
2. Read the A Day in the Life biography to the students and ask them to narrate. Enter this composer in your Book of Centuries. You can assign the The Story of Scott Joplin expanded biography to older students for independent reading during the weeks you linger with this composer. Other For Further Study resources are listed if you would like to learn more.
3. Once every week or so, give focused listening to a particular piece. Use the Listen and Learn ideas in the back of this book to guide your listening and discussion.

As opportunity presents itself, go to a concert that features the music of this composer so the students can listen to a live performance.



# A Day in the Life of Joplin

By Rebekah Carlson

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## *Note to Parents*

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The following account, while containing many facts, is fictitious, portraying the way Scott Joplin might have convinced John Stark to publish “Maple Leaf Rag.” I decided to make Arthur Marshall a part of this story, though there is no evidence that he (or anyone else, for that matter!) was the one to play “Maple Leaf” for Stark. Marshall was an important figure throughout Joplin’s life, and I wanted our readers to get to know him a bit better.

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A rooster crowed in the distance, and Scott Joplin opened his eyes, resting them on the worn, open notebook on his bedside table. He was tired. At 2 A.M., he had woken with a melody ringing in his ears and had spent the next hour and a half writing every single note into his composition book. He stretched, swung his feet to the floor, and took the book in his hands, humming out the syncopated tune and tapping his foot to the beat on the wooden floorboards. It was good, he thought, but it needed more work before it was fit for publication. He sighed and shook his head—being a perfectionist was no joke.

Scott dressed, taking care to starch his collar and press his dress slacks. Today was an important day, and he wanted to look his very best. Earlier that spring, while taking one of his brisk walks around Sedalia, Missouri, a ragtime melody came to him that he recognized as a sure hit. Under the shade of a maple tree, Scott had written furiously in his composition book, thankful that he had formed the habit of always carrying it with him to capture these increasingly common moments of inspiration. Now, as he looked into the mirror and straightened his vest, a frown came over his handsome face, remembering how the publishers in Kansas City had rejected his rag, calling

it “unplayable” and “entirely too complex.” *Today*, he thought, *it is going to be different.*

Scott walked into the kitchen and fried some bacon, then took his breakfast to the front room of his small house so he could watch the sun rise. The town of Sedalia was waking up—he heard his newspaper, *The Sedalia Times*, thump onto his porch as the paperboy ran by, and smells from the neighborhood bakery down the street wafted through his open window as he munched on the cornbread he’d picked up there the day before. Scott walked to his porch to retrieve the newspaper, lifting his hand in an understated wave to the milkman. The paper, published by his friend, Mr. Carter, was filled with events taking place in Sedalia’s African American community: a lecture at George R. Smith College, a fundraiser for the Black 400 Club’s library, and a ragtime contest slated for that evening at the Maple Leaf Club. Scott smiled at the tagline: “Come and see if you can beat Sedalia’s own ragtime champion—Mr. Scott Joplin, the Entertainer.” He loved playing these contests but wished the performers would pay attention to their technique; the younger players were sacrificing precision for the sake of playing at a breakneck speed. Scott’s smile disappeared as he envisioned how much harder it would be for ragtime to be accepted by the classical music establishment if it was presented in such a careless manner.

A knock on the door jolted Scott from his thoughts—his first student of the day had arrived. He opened the door, giving a small smile and a welcome to the ten-year-old girl who eagerly clutched her music to her chest. Nettie streaked across the front room, unleashing a torrent of words as she settled onto the piano bench.

“Oh Mr. Joplin, I just loved the Bach Two-Part Invention that you gave me last week, but the left hand in measure 5 is really giving me fits, and I forgot to practice my etudes, but I did my ragtime exercises just like you said, every day, 10 times slowly, because I am 10 years old. And I really think that I am

# The Story of Joplin

By Rebekah Carlson

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## *Author's Note*

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In the following biography, I have done my best to accurately represent the details of Scott Joplin's extraordinary life. However, I want to note that biographical accounts vary wildly. The absence of birth records, a heavy reliance on oral narration, flawed documents, and his itinerant lifestyle all contribute to the general haziness around many aspects of Joplin's life. I have relied on two biographies: Edward A. Berlin's exhaustive *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* and Janet Hubbard-Brown's *Scott Joplin: Composer* from the Black Americans of Achievement series. Though these two accounts still contradict each other from time to time, I found them to be more similar than different, and I have chosen to write about aspects of Joplin's life that are corroborated in multiple biographies. I have used the terms "African American" and "Black" interchangeably, as biographers have done before me. "Western art music" and "classical music" are both used, though I prefer the former, as Classical is also a period of music that includes Haydn and Mozart—an era long past by the time we are introduced to Joplin.

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### *Part 1—“He just got his music out of the air.”*

When someone asks you, “When is your birthday?” do you know the answer? Of course you do! Everyone knows their birthday . . . right? Well, if you were able to travel back in time, you would discover that many people never knew when they were born. Our composer, Scott Joplin, did not have a birth certificate; in fact, we are not even sure of his birth year! Most of Joplin's life is a bit like a musical “Where's Waldo”—we don't know many exact details, but by finding concert programs, publishing records, and material from interviews, we can piece together the exciting trail that he left behind. So let's go for a

# Listen and Learn

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## “Great Crush Collision March”

*(Disc 2, Track 9; approx. 5 minutes)*

In the summer of 1896, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad had a problem: they had recently upgraded their fleet of engines, and their railyard was now crowded with the old trains. Inspired by similar events in northern states, the railroad staged a publicity stunt, billed as “Crash at Crush.” Along the railway just outside Waco, Texas, the company erected a temporary city named Crush, complete with a grandstand, a borrowed circus tent from Ringling Brothers, and four miles of a straight, disconnected track. The plan was to run two old, unoccupied engines at each other, crashing them in front of a paying audience. The marketing must have been spectacular, because a crowd of 40,000 people bought “discounted” train tickets to the event, which was on September 15, 1896. To great fanfare, the trains rushed at each other at a high rate of speed (estimated to have been between 45 and 60 miles per hour); tragically, despite reassurances of safety from the railway engineers, the boilers from both engines exploded upon impact. The blast sent shrapnel into the audience, killing three people and wounding several dozen more.

A month afterward, Scott Joplin, then a newly-published composer, obtained a copyright for “Great Crush Collision March.” Was Joplin at the event? It seems likely, given that he was touring in that area, but we cannot be sure. His march vividly depicts the trains rushing at each other and crashing. Underneath the notes, Joplin wrote instructions to help the performer play with extra expression. Music written to depict something specific, like this train crash, is called “programmatic music,” and Joplin’s genius is on full display in this piano solo.

The introduction of “Great Crush Collision March” is dramatic and foreboding, with descending patterns in a minor key.\* The music following the intro pictures the lighthearted atmosphere before the crash—other than a few low and threatening rumblings, the music seems increasingly happy and dance-like. How would you move to this music? Raise your hand when you hear the mood change to something more serious (3:08). We hear some minor chords as the trains start their engines (3:20), and, under rumbling chromatic\*\* runs, we have Scott Joplin’s first description: “The noise of the trains while running at the rate of sixty miles per hour.” Two measures later (3:23), under the pounding dissonant chords, he penned, “Whistling for the crossing.” The return of chromatic runs (3:25) signals the “Noise of the train,” followed by the “Whistle before the collision” (3:28). “The collision” (3:30) is marked by a crashing chord in the lower register of the piano. Does it sound like two objects hitting each other? Interestingly, the music then returns to the lighthearted theme that we heard preceding the crash. The crash scene repeats once more, followed again by the lighter theme. Why do you think Joplin wanted to end the piece on a happy note? Perhaps he wanted to express hope and optimism after the tragedy? How would you have ended this piece?

*\*Minor key: a specific order of notes that often evokes a mood of sadness, foreboding, or anger.*

*\*\*Chromatic passage: a set of notes comprised entirely of half steps (a fancy way of saying “playing notes in a row”—“Flight of the Bumblebee” is a famous example).*

Music Study with the Masters: Joplin

# Complete Track Listing

*All music courtesy of Naxos of America, Inc.*

## Disc 1

1. “Maple Leaf Rag” (3:10)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
2. “Heliotrope Bouquet: A Slow Drag Two-Step” (4:29)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
3. “Pine Apple Rag” (3:43)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
4. “Solace: A Mexican Serenade” (6:56)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
5. “Paragon Rag” (3:59)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
6. “Pleasant Moments: Ragtime Waltz” (4:05)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
7. “Elite Syncopations” (3:58)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
8. “Original Rag” (4:33)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
9. “Fig Leaf: A High-Class Rag” (4:35)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
10. “The Entertainer: A Ragtime Two-Step” (4:42)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
11. “The Easy Winners” (4:12)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
12. “Country Club Rag” (4:00)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
13. “The Strenuous Life” (5:17)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov
14. “Bethena: A Concert Waltz” (7:50)  
Performed by Alexander Peskanov



## Disc 2

1. "The Ragtime Dance: A Stop-Time Two-Step" (3:06)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
2. "A Breeze from Alabama: March and Two Step" (4:17)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
3. "The Chrysanthemum: An Afro-American Intermezzo" (4:43)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
4. "Peacherine Rag" (3:47)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
5. "The Cascades, A Rag" (3:16)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
6. "Weeping Willow, A Rag Time Two Step" (4:23)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
7. "Gladiolus Rag" (4:24)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
8. "Eugenia" (4:42)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
9. "Great Collision March: The Crush Collision March" (4:51)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
10. "Reflection Rag, Syncopated Musings" (4:52)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
11. "Magnetic Rag" (5:20)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
12. "Swipesy Cake Walk" (3:22)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
13. "Scott Joplin's New Rag" (4:30)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
14. "Rose Leaf Rag, A Ragtime Two- Step" (4:04)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
15. "Rosebud: The Rosebud March" (2:50)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
16. "Stoptime Rag" (2:29)  
Performed by Benjamin Loeb
17. *Treemonisha*: Overture (9:36)  
Performed by Marco Fumo