SCHOOL OF RAGTIME

BY

SCOTT JOPLIN

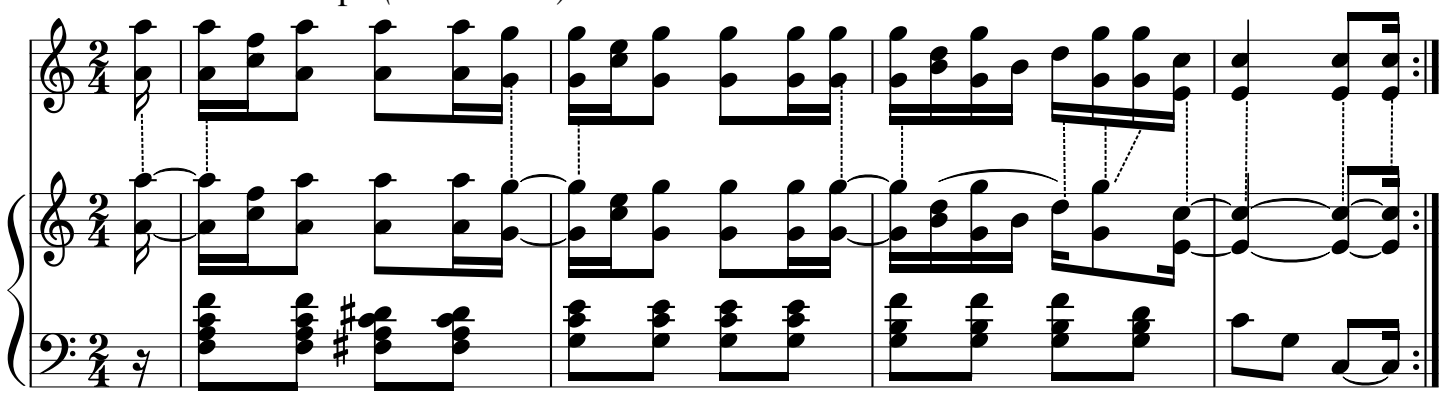
Composer of “Maple Leaf Rag.”

REMARKS- What is scurrilously called ragtime is an invention that is here to stay. That is now conceded by all classes of musicians. That all publications masquerading under the name of ragtime are not the genuine article will be better known when these exercises are studied. That real ragtime of the higher class is rather difficult to play is a painful truth which most pianists have discovered. Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music, and to shy bricks at “hateful ragtime” no longer passes for musical culture. To assist amateur players in giving the “Joplin Rags” that weird and intoxicating effect intended by the composer is the object of this work.

Exercise No.1.

It is evident that, by giving each note its proper time and by scrupulously observing the ties, you will get the effect. So many are careless in these respects that we will specify each feature. In this number, strike the first note and hold it through the time belonging to the second note. The upper staff is not syncopated, and is not to be played. The perpendicular dotted lines running from the syncopated note below to the two notes above will show exactly its duration. Play slowly until you catch the swing, and never play ragtime fast at any time.

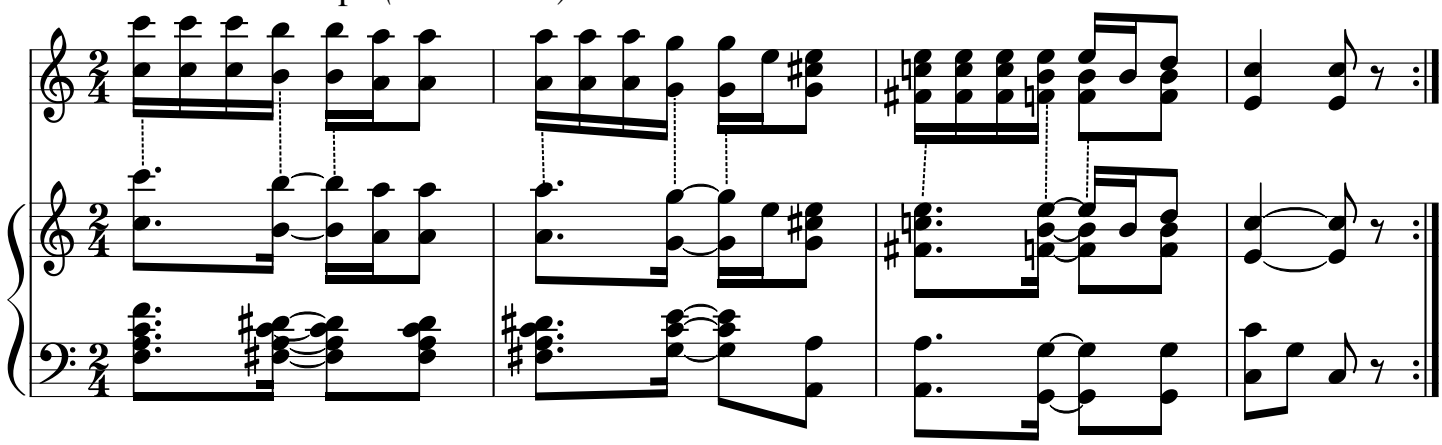
Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*



Exercise No.2.

This style is rather more difficult, especially for those who are careless with the left hand, and are prone to vamp. The first note should be given the full length of three sixteenths, and no more. The second note is struck in its proper place and the third note is not struck but is joined with the second as though they were one note. This treatment is continued to the end of the exercise.

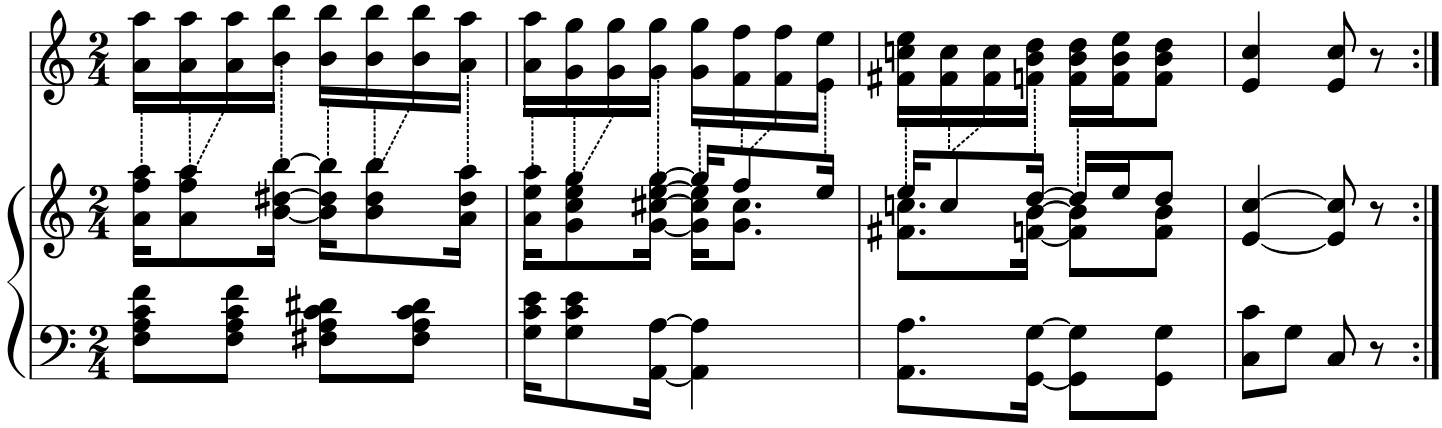
Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*



Exercise No.3.

This style is very effective when neatly played. If you have observed the object of the dotted lines they will lead you to a proper rendering of this number and you will find it interesting.

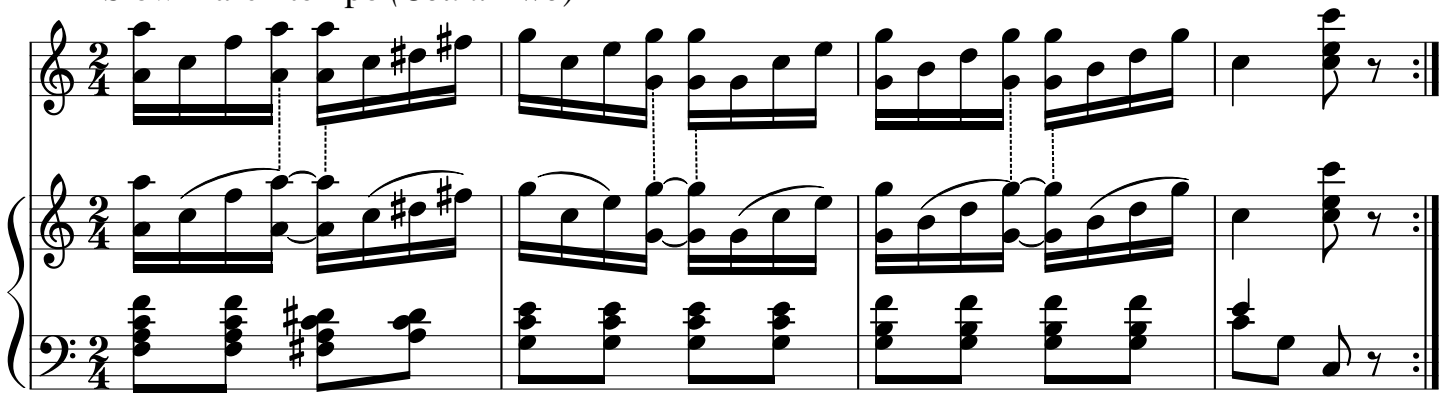
Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*



Exercise No.4.

The fourth and fifth notes here form one tone, and also in the middle of the second measure and so to the end. You will observe that it is a syncopation only when the tied notes are on the same degree of the staff. Slurs indicate a legato movement.

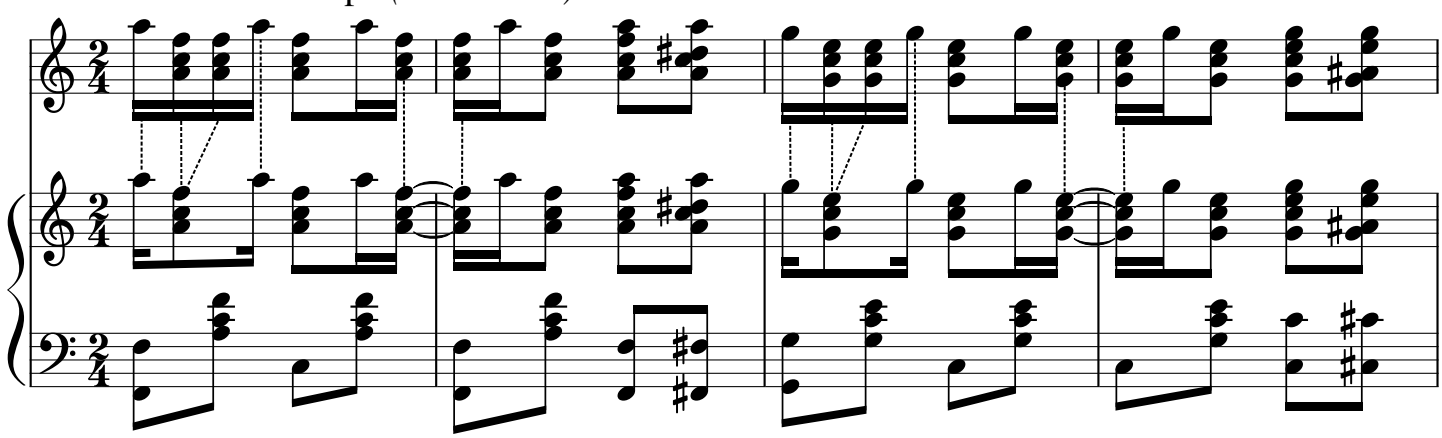
Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*

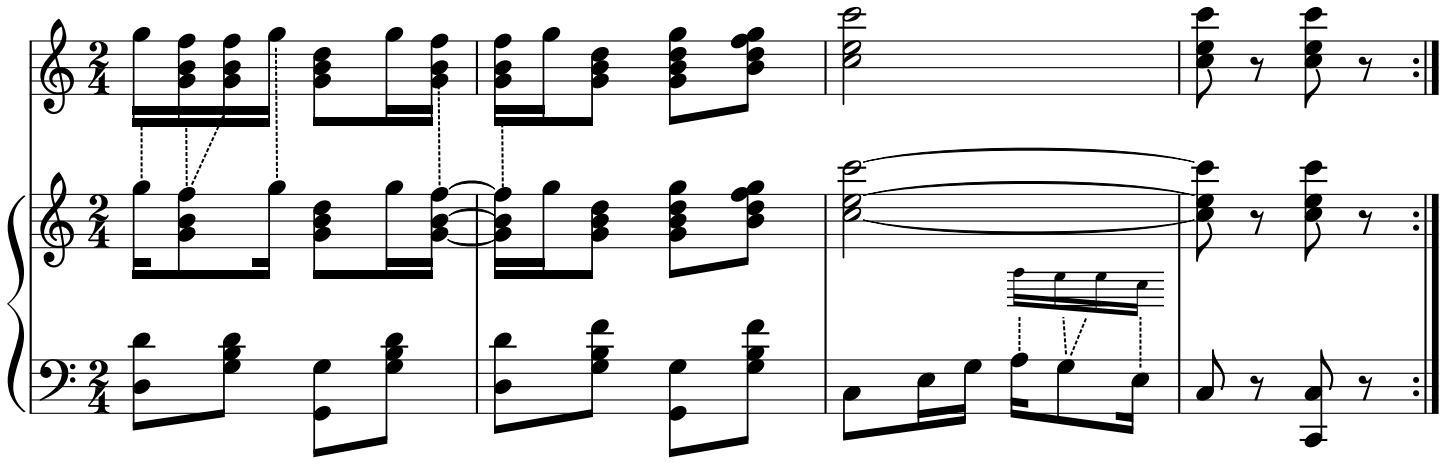


Exercise No.5.

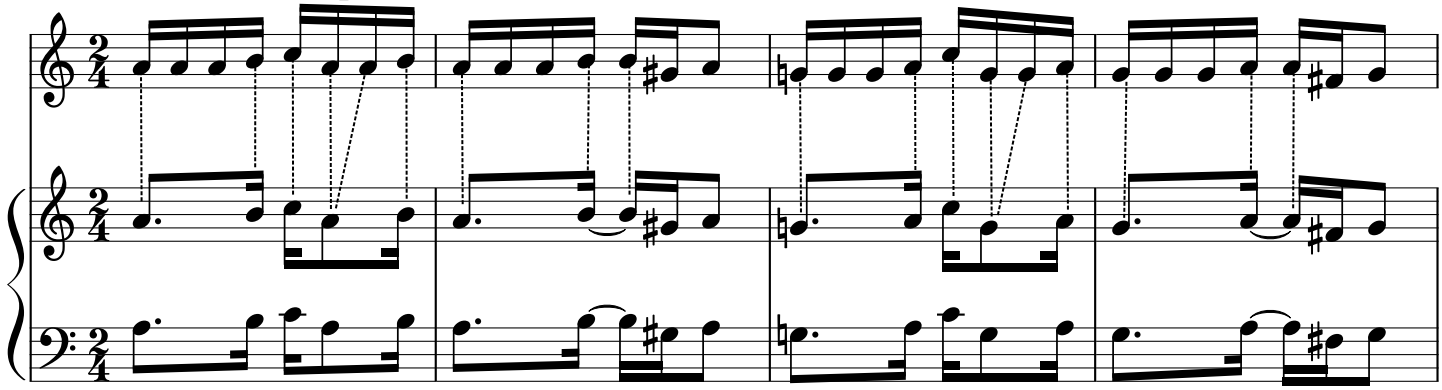
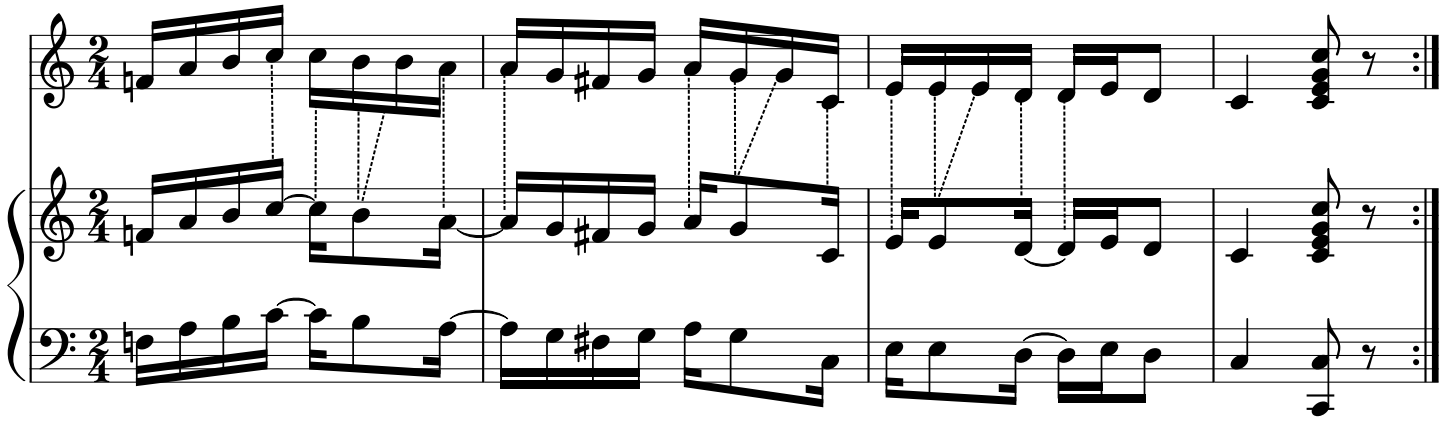
The first ragtime effect here is the second note, right hand, but, instead of a tie, it is an eighth note : rather than two sixteenths with tie. In the last part of this measure, the tie is used because the tone is carried across the bar. This is a pretty style and not as difficult as it seems on first trial.

Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*





Exercise No.6.

The instructions given, together with the dotted lines, will enable you to interpret this variety which has very pleasing effects. We wish to say here, that the “Joplin ragtime” is destroyed by careless or imperfect rendering, and very often good players lose the effect entirely, by playing too fast. They are harmonized with the supposition that each note will be played as it is written, as it takes this and also the proper time divisions to complete the sense intended.

Slow march tempo *(Count Two)*