

SCOTT JOPLIN

American Ragtime Pianist and Composer (1867 or 1868 - 1917)



Scott Joplin was born in Texarkana, Texas around 1868, and was one of six kids. Texas is the home of long horn steer, BBQ, and everything big!

Both of Scott Joplin's parents were musicians. His father played the violin at parties in North Carolina and his mother sang and played the banjo. His parents gave Scott a basic musical education, and at seven years old he began teaching himself to play the piano while his mother cleaned houses.

As a boy Joplin loved to play the piano and practiced every day after school. Several local teachers helped him, but most of his musical education was guided by Julius Weiss, a German music professor who had immigrated to Texas in the late 1860's.

It wasn't too long before Joplin was performing as a pianist and singing in a quartet with three boys that lived in his hometown of Texarkana.

In the late 1880's Joplin left home to become a traveling musician. He found steady work in churches and saloons.

In 1893, Joplin was invited to perform at the Chicago World's Fair. The fair was attended by twenty-seven million visitors. Joplin's ragtime music was popular with the visitors and by 1897 ragtime had become a national craze.

In 1895 Joplin was given his first opportunity to publish his own compositions. Four years later he published, "Maple Leaf Rag." The song quickly grew in popularity and people began referring to Joplin as the "King of Ragtime."

Joplin moved to St. Louis, the hotbed of ragtime music, in early 1900. It was there that he wrote many of his best known rags, including, "The Entertainer."

In 1907, Joplin moved to New York City, to produce his opera, Treemonisha. It tells the story of a young woman named Treemonisha who grew up in a community where few people went to school. Treemonisha learns to read, and then provides hope and freedom for her community from people who wanted to take advantage of them.

In spite of his efforts, his opera was a failure and closed after one performance. However, Treemonisha was staged again in 1972, and Joplin's opera received the recognition it deserved. Four years later Joplin was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for music.

Scott Joplin is to this day the best-known ragtime composer and performer of all-time.

