

History Context

When:

Ragtime music started in the late 1800's . However, it did not become popular until the 1900's. In fact, it was most popular from 1897 to 1918. Although after 1917, its popularity began to be replaced by Jazz, in early 1940s, Jazz musicians started to include some ragtime music in their repertoire. Even though ragtime music is still being composed now, the most significant revivals of popular interest in ragtime music happened in the 1950s and the 1970s.

Where:

Ragtime music originated from America. It descended from the jigs and marches played by African-Americans. Ragtime was first played Louisville by Ben Harney in 1895. One year later, it began to gain popularity in New York City and got more and more popular later on. Nevertheless, Missouri was considered to be the 'heartland' of ragtime music. According to two well-known music historians David Jasen and Gene, 'There were more rags--and more good rags--from Missouri than anywhere else.'

Who:

Some famous Ragtime composers were: Jelly Roll Morton, Eubie Blake, Charles L. Johnson, Tom Turpin, George Botsford, Zez Confrey, Luckey Roberts, Paul Sarebresole, Wilbur Sweatman, Scott Joplin, Joseph Lamb and James Scott. Among these, the three most talented ones, according to wikipedia, were Scott Joplin, Joseph Lamb and James Scott, with Scott Joplin being the most sophisticated. Scott Joplin was the composer of the famous 'The Entertainer'. Some modern Ragtime composers include: William Bolcom, Tom Brier, Trebor Tichenor, Reginald R. Robinson, David Thomas Roberts.

The Roots of Ragtime-The Blues

What:

The Blues is a kind of folksong used to express a feeling of depression. It is often used to show troubles in life, bad lucks, hardships of being a slave, losing family, gender roles and relationships. It usually has twelve bars and uses the AAB form, meaning that the first two lines are similar and the last line is to be improvised. Another special feature of the Blues is syncopation. Additionally, it has a call-and-response section, in which one person sings something and the others sing something back as a response to what he just sang.

The instruments used in the Blues include: electronic guitars, harmonicas, drums, trumpets, saxophones, bass, organs, vocals and trombones.

Where:

The Blues originated from the South of North America. It started in the Mississippi Delta and then expanded to other places in the southern parts of the US, such as New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis and many other areas where African American culture grew. This is because the Blues are generally performed by black Americans, whose ancestors were slaves that had been brought from Africa. There are also more Blues musicians in coastal parts of the South of North America because these were where slaves were brought to by ships.

Who:

Most Blues musicians are African-Americans. Some of the famous Blues musicians in the 1920s were Bessie Smith, Lonnie Johnson, WC Handy, Ma Rainey and Willie Johnson. In the 1930s, there was Robert Johnson. Some other well-known Blues musicians were Muddy Waters, Holin' Wolf, Charlie Patton, Albert King, John Lee Hooker and Jimi Hendrix.

Ragtime versus Blues and Jazz

Ragtime vs Blues - similarities and differences:

To begin with, the first similarity between Ragtime and Blues is that they both have syncopation being the most recognisable feature. Additionally, they both have call-and-response melodies. Thirdly, they both have sections which are repeated throughout the pieces.

However, there seems to be a lot more differences between Blues and Ragtime than similarities. Firstly, Ragtime uses piano only, while Blues uses a small band including: a singer, drums, trumpets, guitars,.. Secondly, while Ragtime has a weak beat, Blues has a emphasised and strong one. Moreover, Ragtime uses chromatic melodies, in which the notes ascend or the descend by semitones, whereas Blues uses the 12 bars blues. Additionally, Ragtime has dancelike, cheerful music which a generally fast tempo while Blues is used to tell stories and has a slow tempo. Another difference is that the signature of Ragtime is 2/4 while of Blues is 4/4. Last but not least, while Ragtime musicians perform using written music sheets, Blues includes some improvisation in which the musicians have to make up a phrase or phrases while performing.

Ragtime vs Jazz - similarities and differences:

Firstly, the similarities between Ragtime and Jazz include the followings: they both use syncopation, they both have a quite fast tempo, they both have a dancelike, happy music, they mainly use chromatic melodies, they have an oom-cha rhythm and a Jazz piece has some parts which use only piano, sounding exactly like a Ragtime piece.

However, there are some differences between Jazz and Ragtime as well. The first difference is that Jazz uses various musical instruments in a piece whilst Ragtime uses only piano. Also, Ragtime came before Jazz, is often thought of as Classical and follows the classical theory more strictly than Jazz while in Jazz, there is not as much classical theory involved. Finally, a piece of Jazz has some improvisation parts in it while a Ragtime piece is played out of written material.

Instrumentation, Texture, Timbre and Rhythm of Jazz

Instrumentation and Timbre:

The most commonly used instruments in traditional Jazz are: trumpet, trombone, clarinet, tuba, string bass, banjo, piano and drums. They work together to provide a rhythmic and harmonic foundation. However, it's either a tuba or a bass to be played in a group but not both. The rhythmic foundation would be produced by the banjo, piano, tuba/bass and drums while the melody would be provided by other wind instruments. Those instruments work together to create a harmonic foundation. There is also a wide range of pitch, with the lowest notes from the tuba and the highest notes from the clarinet or trumpet. Moreover, the players would improvise a melody at the same time at this simultaneous improvisation would make it more interesting and give the music a fuller sound.

Texture:

There are three main types of textures in Jazz:

- +**Homophony:** In Jazz, it is an improvised solo part which is accompanied by a rhythm section.
- +**Monophony:** It is when a single melody has no pitched accompaniment. In Jazz, when a monophonic texture interrupts the usual texture, it is called a break.
- +**Polyphony:** It is when two or more melodies are played at the same time and none of those melodies sounds like the main melody.

Rhythm:

The main feature of the rhythm of Jazz is that it uses syncopation, meaning that the rhythm doesn't follow the beat. As Jazz developed from Ragtime, it shares the common feature of syncopation with Ragtime as well. Also, Jazz uses swing, which is the length of eighth notes. Swing in Jazz creates a momentum which makes you want to dance to the music. The final rhythmic feature of Jazz is counterpoint. Counterpoint is when several instruments are playing melodic lines at once, each with a different rhythm.

