



# What is ragtime?

**Ragtime** is a genre of music that became popular in the late 1800's. It combines the steady bass rhythms often found in European musical styles, like the waltz, with more syncopated rhythms in the melody line, like those that were common in African-American music at that time. The “ragged,” off-the-beat rhythms used in the melody line are what give “ragtime” its name.

One of the earliest written ragtime pieces to gain fame was Scott Joplin's “Maple Leaf Rag,” which was published in 1899 and cemented Joplin's reputation as “The King of Ragtime.”

“Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin



Although ragtime decreased in popularity after Scott Joplin's death in 1917, elements of ragtime were used by later composers to develop jazz styles such as stride and swing. Most music historians consider ragtime to be instrumental to the development of jazz music, and it is a style that continues to be enjoyed and performed widely today.

## Listening Examples:

The Entertainer (Scott Joplin)

Frog Legs Rag (James Scott)

The Charleston Rag (Eubie Blake)

Graceful Ghost Rag (William Bolcom)