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Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments:* Historical and Stylistic Considerations

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Abstract: This is a historical and analytical study of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). From a traditional ragtime stylistic approach (SCHAFER; RIEDEL, 1973. BERLIN, 1980), this study aims to search for evidence of popular elements in the compositional material of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and any influence of ragtime arrangements in Stravinsky's piece. Disregarding historical evidence and statements by the composer himself who claimed to have had contact with instrumental parts of ragtime arrangements brought from America by his friend Ernest Ansermet, this comparative music analysis shows similar musical features between *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and examples from the *High-Class Standard Rags* collection.

Keywords: Musical analysis; Stravinsky; Ragtime; popular element.

***Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, de Stravinsky: considerações históricas e estilísticas**

Resumo: Este artigo é um estudo histórico-analítico da peça *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, de Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). A partir da abordagem estilística do "ragtime tradicional" (SCHAFER; RIEDEL, 1973. BERLIN, 1980), busca investigar indícios em *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* da existência do elemento popular em seu material composicional e da possível influência de arranjos de *ragtime* na peça de Stravinsky. Mesmo desconsiderando as evidências históricas e afirmações de Stravinsky alegando ter tido contato com partes instrumentais de ragtime trazidas dos Estados Unidos por seu amigo Ernest Ansermet, a análise musical comparativa realizada por este trabalho revela características musicais similares entre *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* e exemplos da coleção *High-Class Standard Rags*.

Palavras-chave: Análise musical. Stravinsky. Ragtime. Elemento popular.

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Ragtime for Eleven Instruments by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) was first premiered in a piano version on November 8, 1919 in Lausanne and then in its ensemble version on April 27, 1920 in London (WALSH, 2002: 546). With the help of the Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars, it was published by Editions de La Sirène in 1920 and later negotiated with Chester Publishing (WALSH, 2002: 294), becoming a popular piece among pianists and chamber ensembles. According to Richard Taruskin (1996: 1307), the work was completed on the morning of November 10, 1918 — the day before Germany surrenders from World War I — becoming an important work by Stravinsky in borrowing elements from American popular music and in elaborating the material into a stylized piece.

According to Walsh (2002: 546), *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* was composed between 1917 and 1918 after a series of compositions including *Les Noces* (1914 to 1919), *The Song of the Nightingale* (1917), *The Etude Pour Pianola* (1917), *Berceuse for Voice and Piano* (1917), *Lied ohne Namen for Two Bassoons* (1916-1918), *The Soldier's Tale* (1918); preceding *Three Pieces for Clarinet* (1918), *Four Russian Songs* (1918-1919), *Piano Rag-Music* (1919), and *Pulcinella* (1920). Except for *The Song of the Nightingale* and *Pulcinella*, we may observe the prevalence of solo and chamber works during this period.

Ragtime for Eleven Instruments presents a different concept when compared to the "Ragtime" section of *Three Dances* from *A Soldier's Tale*[1]: if the ragtime elements in *A Soldier's Tale* did not propose a new aesthetic oriented towards American popular music, but rather a break from the Russian orchestral tradition (TARUSKIN, 1996: 1301), Stravinsky uses the American genre in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* as a basis for creating unique and quirky music. According to Taruskin (1996: 1307), Stravinsky borrows Joplinesque clichés[2] in this piece to create a unique musical text. Through the study of this work, we notice clichéd adaptations not only of Scott Joplin's compositions, but also of stylistic features of traditional ragtime.

In *Stravinsky and Ragtime*, Barbara Heyman (1982: 556) claims that, compared to the ragtime of *A Soldier's Tale* and *Piano-Rag Music*, "*Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* appears closest to the spirit and prototype of classic ragtime, particularly with regard to its 'danceability'". Its instrumentation seems to respect the ragtime genre more than *A Soldier's Tale*, which applies uncharacterisitic ragtime instruments such as the bassoon. Stravinsky provides some details about the composition in a conversation with Robert Craft:

> R.C. What were the jazz origins of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments,* and how do you regard this music today? I.S. A jazz influence, the blanket term, can be found throughout my music, for example in the *Bransle de Poitou* and the *Bransle Simple* in *Agon,* and in the *pás d'action* and *pás de deux* (middle section) in *Orpheus.* My *Ebony Concerto* is my contribution to 'blues', and the flute, harp and clarinet music of the slow movement of my *Symphony in Three* is my gift to boogie-woogie, as is the flute and clarinet music in the sarabande of *Persephone* (STRAVINSKY; CRAFT, 2002: 136).

[1] First performed in Lausanne on September 28, 1918
[2] In reference to ragtime composer Scott Joplin.

Despite Stravinsky's sketchiness in regard to *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments,* the composer does talk about his jazz-oriented works in terms of sonority and instrumentation during the "Jazz Business" interview with Robert Craft in *Dialogues and Diary* (1963: 85) referring to *Circus Polka*, *Scherzo à la Russe, Ebony Concerto* and *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*. Except for *Ragtime*, Stravinsky reveals he had to accept these orders since requests for new compositions fell dramatically during the war in Europe. Stravinsky also provides some details about the final makings of this work:

> I began the *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* in October 1918 and finished it on the morning of the Armistice. I remember how, sitting at the cimbalom in my garret in Morges, […] I was aware of a buzzing in my ears that increased until I was afraid I had been stricken like Robert Schumann. I went down to the street and was told that everyone was hearing the same noise, and that it was from cannon along the French frontier announcing the end of the war (STRAVINSKY; CRAFT, 1963: 87).

Also, according to Stravinsky and Craft (1963: 87), in 1918 Ernest Ansermet, returning from a *Ballets Russes* tour in the US, brought him an overview of ragtime music in the form of piano reductions and instrumental parts, which served as a reference for the composition of *Ragtime* in *A Soldier's Tale* and *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*. Stravinsky did not mention which ragtime composers he had before him, nor does he indicate which period these ragtime pieces came from. Heyman introduces this issue by discussing ragtime's dissemination in Europe at the turn of the 20th century. According to Heyman:

> Several factors contributed to this enthusiasm, one of which was the widespread dissemination of sheet music between 1895 and 1915. Ragtime works, sometimes incorporating the word "cakewalk" in their titles, were available in published piano scores and numerous adaptations for instrumental ensembles (HEYMAN, 1982: 544).

Heyman (1982: 544) quotes an article from 1901 published in the *New York Herald*, which reported a ragtime piece of the German-American composer Abe Holzmann (1874–1936) entitled *Hunky-Dory* that was supposed to be "simultaneously produced[3] in England, France and Germany" at the time. Heyman's article also debates general questions about ragtime in Stravinsky's music, proposing to investigate the composer's exposure to ragtime before 1918, ragtime stylistic models and how *Ragtime* from *A Soldier's Tale, Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and *Piano Rag Music* may have incorporated characteristic ragtime prototypes. Despite his analytical efforts, the lack of documentation revealing the aesthetic proposed by Stravinsky impairs Heyman's considerations and becomes evident in our attempt to gather the composer's testimonies on ragtime, whereas the conversations with Robert Craft are only limited source of

[3] It is assumed the word "production" refers to the publication of the piece.

information on Stravinsky's understanding of ragtime. Therefore, a question comes to mind: in which way is ragtime inserted into Stravinsky's piece?

In this paper, I intend to analyze the influence of ragtime elements in Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, aiming to understand the procedures through which Stravinsky may have manipulated ragtime music in his avant-garde music. Comparing *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* with examples of traditional ragtime repertoire, I intend to consider questions such as the musical relationships between Stravinsky's ragtime and ragtime pieces from the same period. I also expect to identify those specific ragtime pieces which Stravinsky could have been exposed to. To achieve this, I will address topics related to the stylistic features of traditional ragtime compared to passages from *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*.

Popular elements in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*

For a fitting investigation on the relationship between Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1918) and American ragtime music of the 1910s, we must define a consistent object for comparative study. In this investigation, the comparative object is related to the choice of significant ragtime examples to then compare them to the musical features found in Stravinsky's composition.

As *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* clearly displays the word "ragtime" in its title, it is assumed that the composer did not intend to address any other genres of popular American music in this specific work, such as spirituals, the cakewalk or jazz (still in its early days in 1918). Therefore, Stravinsky's compositional scope seems to be limited and objective: a composition inspired by popular elements of ragtime performed by eleven instruments. Although it would be relevant to find influences of other genres in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, the main question here revolves around the influence of the ragtime popular element since it is explicit in the very title of the work. Therefore, the search for elements from other popular genres has been excluded, *a priori*.

Having set traditional ragtime as the object for comparative analysis, an important question now comes to mind: had Stravinsky been in contact with ragtime in the form of sheet music in order to draw parallels from traditional ragtime pieces into his own aesthetic of avant-garde music? Stravinsky's words to Robert Craft are revealing:

> In 1918 Ernest Ansermet, returning from an American tour, brought me a bundle of ragtime music in the form of piano reductions and instrumental parts, which I copied out in score. With these pieces before me, I composed the *Ragtime* in *Histoire du Soldat*, and, after completing *Histoire*, the *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY; CRAFT, 1963: 87).

It appears, indeed, that Stravinsky had had ragtime sheet music before him. However, the composer did not mention which specific arrangements they were. According to Dr. Ulrich Mosch, a former musicologist in charge of the Stravinsky Collection at the Paul Sacher

Foundation[4] (an institution responsible for the preservation of part of the Stravinsky's personal collection), there is no evidence these transcripts or drafts exist in the Foundation's collection and there is no information regarding the storage of this material, a claim that raises doubts as to its preservation (MOSCH, 2010).

Considering this information, a new question comes to mind: how could one identify the specific arrangement parts and ragtime composers Stravinsky had access to? A possible answer to this question can be outlined by the description of these materials provided by the composer himself: "a bundle of ragtime music in the form of piano reductions and instrumental parts" (STRAVINSKY; CRAFT, 1963). Taruskin's provides an indication as to their probable dates of publication:

> It is usually assumed that the tour from which Ansermet returned was a *Ballets russes* tour, but the Diaghilev company's American tours were made in the spring of 1916 and the winter of 1916-17. Ansermet participated only in the first of these, so if it was indeed he who furnished Stravinsky with his ragtime scores, it would have to have been nearly two years earlier than the composer recalled[5] (TARUSKIN, 1996: 1310).

Considering 1916 as the year of Ansermet's visit to the United States, one can search for publications of repertoire for ragtime ensembles prior to 1916 that match the description given by Stravinsky. From this point of view and for the purposes of this research, it is assumed that a collection called *High-Class Standard Rags* would be the work in question. As we will come to see, there are considerations to justify the choice of this work as the comparative object for Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1918) from a hypertextual analysis developed later in this work.

[4] "The Paul Sacher Foundation was founded in 1973. At first its purpose was to preserve Paul Sacher's musical library. A short while later the holdings began to be systematically expanded, and its purpose started to change. Today, the Foundation is an international research center for the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with some hundred estates and collections from leading composers and performers. The main purpose of the Paul Sacher Foundation resides in the optimum care and study of its source materials. The Foundation also facilitates and supports scholarly research into its archival holdings by granting access to the documents available on its premises." (PAUL SACHER FOUNDATION).

[5] Taruskin also comments on the same passage: "The question of just when and how Stravinsky became acquainted with 'jazz is vexed by his typically sketchy and contradictory recollections. In the *Chroniques* he wrote that his 'passion for jazz… burst into life so suddenly when the war ended,' and that 'at my request, a whole pile of this music was sent to me' (*An Autobiograph,* p. 78). He does not say by whom; but in any case, both *Histoire* and the *Ragtime pour onze instruments* were finished by war's end, so his passion must have burst a bit earlier than he reported on this occasion. […] Whatever the facts may eventually turn out to be, Heyman ('Stravinsky and Ragtime') has argued persuasively that Stravinsky must have heard 'jazz' (whether or not he had seen it considerably before the period of *Histoire*. Her best item of evidence, cited on p. 546, is an extract from an interview with C. Stanley Wise, published in the New York Tribune of 16 January 1916, in which Stravinsky is quoted as saying, 'I know little about American music except that of the music halls… but I consider that unrivalled. It is veritable art and I can never get enough of it to satisfy me'" (TARUSKIN, 1996: 1310).

High-Class Standard Rags

The *High-Class Standard Rags* collection deserves special attention among other ragtime arrangements sold in instrumental parts during the 1910s in the United States. Best known among musicians and enthusiasts as "*The Red Back Book*", it was published by Stark Music Publishing, a John S. Stark company in St. Louis, Missouri. Regarding these scores, Schafer and Riedel (1973) point out that in a historical approach of ragtime arrangements of the time, "the first instrumental transcriptions to consider are the collection commonly called *The Red-Backed Book of Rags* [...] published around 1912 [...]: it was an anthology of fifteen transcriptions for small instrumental ensemble, consisting primarily of classic rags" (SCHAFER; RIEDEL, 1973: 130).

John S. Stark is a significant name in the history of ragtime, an entrepreneur who gained notoriety in the early 20th century publishing ragtime pieces by composers whose works were intimately associated with the genre, such as Scott Joplin, James Scott and Joseph Lamb. One of his greatest sales achievements was his publication of *Maple Leaf Rag* by Scott Joplin in 1899. According to Berlin, "Music publisher John S. Stark played an important part in the Scott Joplin story. Stark believed in ragtime. He recognized an excellence in the best piano rags and proclaimed them the equal of classical music" (BERLIN, 1994: 70)

Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* instant sales success allowed John Stark to open an office in New York City in 1905 and led Joplin to the opportunity of obtaining financial stability through his work as a composer. During the first two decades of the 20thcentury, Stark published and promoted "classic ragtime" through the work of composers such as Scott Joplin (1868-1917), Joseph Lamb (1887-1960), James Scott (1885-1938), Arthur Marshall (1881-1968), Paul Pratt (1890-1948), Artie Matthews (1888-1958), Robert Hampton (1890-1945), J. Russel Robinson (1892-1963) and his son Etilmon J. Stark (1868-1962), becoming the leading publisher in ragtime's history. According to Tichenor (1989: 196), John Stark did not intend to exploit the ragtime market of sheet music like most other publishers did: John Stark was a ragtime enthusiast who used to invest in and demand high quality music compositions for publication, considering the genre a noble art.

Around 1912, Stark Music Company published the *High-Class Standard Rags* collection, which presented fifteen instrumental arrangements as individual instrumental parts, no scores included. The repertoire consisted of Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag, The Cascades, The Easy Winners, The Ragtime Dance, The Entertainer, The Chrysanthemum* and *Sunflower Slow Drag*; James Scott's *Ophelia Rag, Grace and Beauty, Frog Legs Rag* and *Hilarity Rag*; Maurice Kirwin's *African Pas*'; J. Russell Robinson's *The Minstrel Man*; Joseph Lamb's *Sensation,* and Arthur Marshall's *Kinklets*. The collection promptly gained notoriety among musicians, becoming the primary choice of classic ragtime ensemble arrangements. Today, *High Class Standard Rags* continues to be a reference for ragtime arrangements, playing a role as a source of repertoire for several instrumental ensembles and contributing for the revival of traditional ragtime[6].

[6] It has been recorded by many artists and ensembles over the years, such as: JOHNSON, Bunk. 1957. *Last Testament of a great New Orleans jazz man***.** [S.l.]: Columbia Records. CL 829, LP; Peter Bocage With The Love-Jiles Ragtime Orchestra. 1961. *Peter Bocage with the Love-Jiles Ragtime Orchestra***.** New Orleans: Riverside. RLP-379, LP; The New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble. *Scott Joplin - The Red Back Book* - Conducted by Gunther Schuller. [S.l.]: Angel, 1973. S-2-36060, LP; The New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra. *The New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra*. [S.l]: Pearl Records, 1976. PLP-7/8, LP; River Raisin Ragtime Revue. *The Red Back Book: Standard High Class Rags*. [S.l.]: Ragtime Revue, 2005. RR4932, CD.

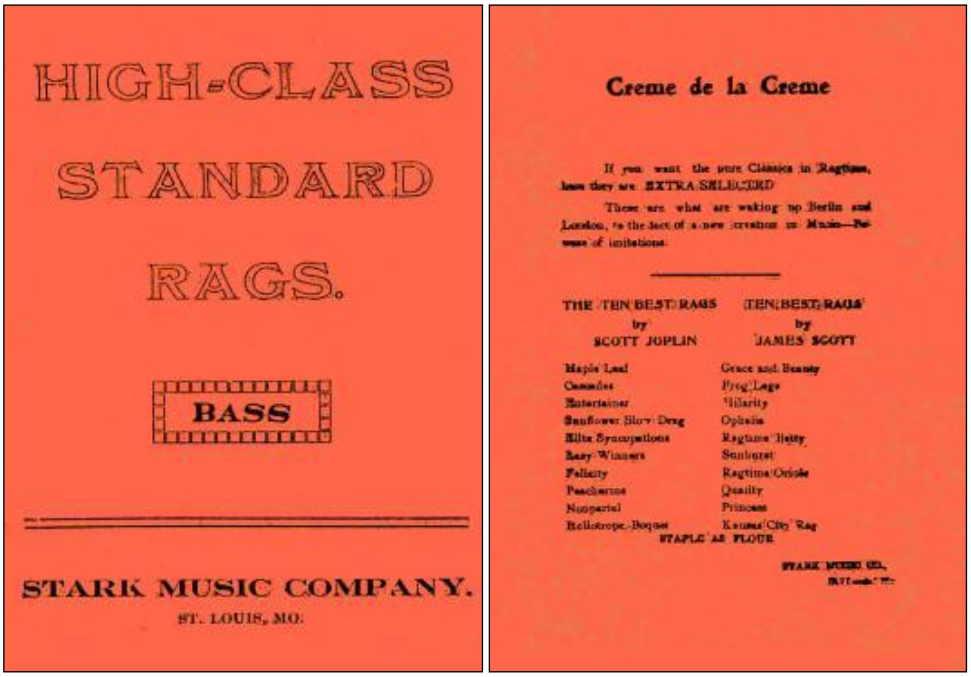

Fig. 1: *High-Class Standard Rags'* cover art – Bass part (STARK, [1912?]).

It is likely that Stravinsky had had contact with this very collection before composing *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, and arguments are presented to justify this affirmation. After its publication, around 1912, *High-Class Standard Rags* rapidly obtained notoriety among ragtime enthusiasts, becoming an essential repertoire item of instrumental arrangements. The repertoire of the collection includes successes by canonic ragtime composers, such as Scott Joplin, James Scott and Joseph Lamb, and it is likely that Ansermet had delivered scores of representative names of the genre to Stravinsky. Also, the chronological interval of six years between 1912 (the approximate date of publication of *High-Class Standard Rags* presented by ragtime scholars Schafer and Riedel) and 1916 (when Ansermet returned from his US trip) would be sufficient for the collection to have acquired enough notoriety in the American music scene in order to lead Ansermet to get some of these instrumental parts to Stravinsky.

Through an analytical perspective, we can establish at least two initial evident correlations between Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and arrangements from *High-Class Standard Rags*: first, the *High-Class* orchestration requires eleven instruments as does Stravinsky's *Ragtime*; and second, of the eleven instruments in *High-Class Standard Rags*, nine of them are common to *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*. Chart 1 shows how closely Stravinsky's instrumentation correlates to that used in the arrangements of *High-Class Standard Rags*.

***High-Class Standard Rags* [1912?]**	**Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1918)**
Piccolo	(---------)
Flute	Flute
Clarinet	Clarinet
(---------)	French Horn
Trumpet	Trumpet
Trombone	Trombone
Drum Set (snare and bass drum)	Drum Set (snare, bass drum and cymbals)
I Violin	I Violin
II Violin	II Violin
Violoncello	Violoncello
Contrabass	Contrabass
Piano	Cimbalom

Chart 1: Instrumentation proximity between *High-Class Standard Rags* and Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*.

Although the piano is not foreseen in the instrumentation of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, Stravinsky employs a corresponding chordophone instrument. The piano, *that primarily* performs harmonic and melodic support in *High-Class*, is replaced by a cimbalom in Stravinsky's *Ragtime*. Regarding Stravinsky's relationship with this instrument, David Kettlewell comments that:

> Stravinsky's interest in the cimbalom dates from the time of his friendship with the famous Hungarian virtuoso Aladár Rácz (1886–1958), whom he met in Geneva in 1914 and who later (1954) became professor of the concert cimbalom at the Budapest Academy and made a number of remarkable recordings. Stravinsky purchased a cimbalom during his residence in Switzerland in World War I. He composed *Renard* (1915–16) on it, in the same way as he normally composed on a piano, and included it in the score of *Ragtime* (1918) as well as in *Renard*; he also planned to use it in an early scoring of *The Wedding* (composed 1914–17) and then began another version whose instrumentation included two cimbaloms (KETTLEWELL, 2001: 689).

Considering the presumed relationship between *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and *High-Class Standard Rags*, Stravinsky might have had replaced the piccolo by a french horn, which provides a more balanced woodwind-brass orchestration. The french horn, which historically acts between the woodwinds and brass registers (ADLER, 2002: 312), serves as an "amalgam", making the orchestration more classical-oriented than *High-Class*. In Stravinsky's *Ragtime*, the woodwind quintet (consisting of flute, clarinet, horn in F, trumpet and trombone) contributes to a middle register formation in contrast to the *High-Class* upper register woodwind section (with piccolo, flute, clarinet, trumpet and trombone). This provides more possibilities of dialogue in the middle register, while the arrangements of *High-Class* highlights the melodic lines (especially through the

flute-piccolo doubling octave, instruments which are played through the same instrumental part). It is relevant to notice the woodwinds in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* perform five distinct parts in several passages, while a four woodwind-voiced writing is observed in *High-Class Rags* (notably due to the choice of the flute-piccolo doubling arrangement).

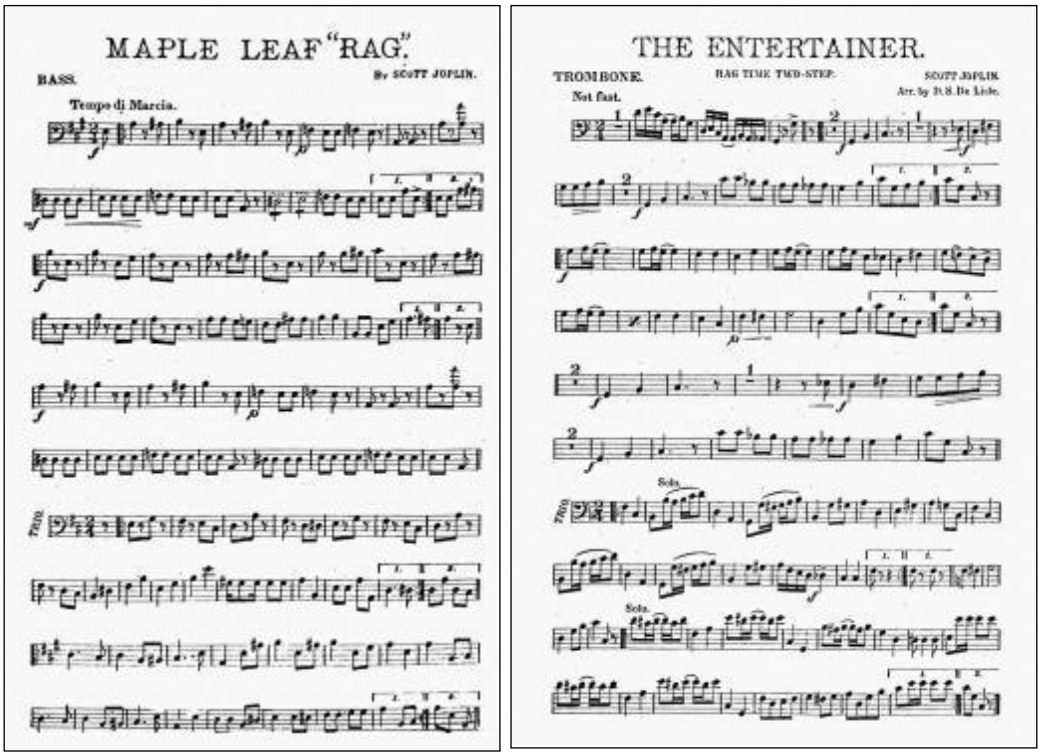

Fig. 2: *High-Class Standard Rags* instrumental parts (STARK, [1912?]).

Aiming to reinforce our study of the popular elements in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, the following analysis intends to verify whether the stylistic aspects described by ragtime scholars could be identified in both the *High-Class Standard Rags* repertoire and Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*.

Hypertextual considerations on the relationship between traditional ragtime and Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (1918)

Ragtime, the most visited genre in Stravinsky's borrowings from American music, is described by Berlin as:

> a style of popular music, chiefly American, that flourished from about 1896 to 1918. Its main identifying trait is its ragged or syncopated rhythm. While today it is most commonly thought of as a piano style, during the ragtime period the term also referred to other instrumental music, to vocal music and to dance. The best instrumental ragtime pieces manifested sophisticated musical thought and demanded considerable technical facility of a performer for their fullest realization. Ragtime songs, on the other hand, were generally less concerned with musical values, designed as they were to reach a large and undiscriminating audience (BERLIN, 2001: 756).

Ragtime adapted classical concepts of form and harmony from European ballroom dances to African American rhythms. Despite having been born in black culture, ragtime has developed within interracial environments such as bars and cabarets, promptly reaching popular prominence (SCHAFER; RIEDEL, 1973). Critics condemned the genre at the time (perhaps because of its connection to cabarets and its black roots), but in Europe, it gained status as Modernist Art through the work of avant-garde composers of the time, such as Debussy and Stravinsky.

We will look for stylistic elements of traditional ragtime within Stravinsky's composition, employing concepts brought by ragtime scholars (BERLIN, 1980. SCHAFER; RIEDEL, 1973) like syncopation figurations, formal aspects, bass and accompaniment, secondary ragtime, intervallic support through tied syncopations, measure thirteen conventions, breaks, cadential gestures, and dotted rhythms. In order to consider its effects on *Stravinsky's Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, all traditional ragtime examples provided here are extracted from the aforementioned *High-Class Standard Rags* music literature.

Hypertextual transpositions

In *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (1980), Edward Berlin proposes a classification of ragtime syncopation. According to the author, syncopation "is most often present in the treble melody, against a metrically accented march-accompaniment bass" (1980: 82). Berlin divides ragtime syncopation into three categories: untied, tied and augmented syncopation. Although crossing beats of a 2/4 meter, augmented syncopation is a derivative of untied syncopation through an augmentation process (as described by SCHOENBERG, 1967: 9); whereas untied syncopation occurs during a beat and tied syncopation would be articulated over two beats (Fig. 3). Another feature of augmented syncopation is the 1:1 relation established with the harmonic accompaniment, a peculiarity that differs it from tied and untied syncopation. As reported by Berlin (1980: 83), syncopation characterizes the main differences between the early published rags and marches.

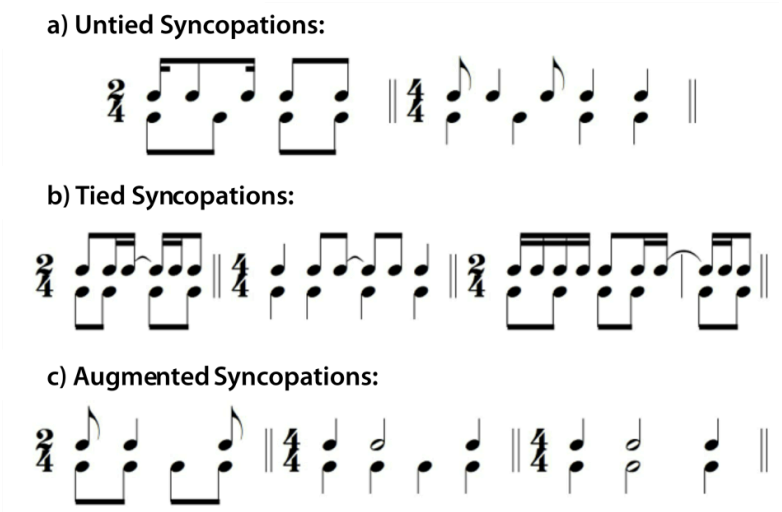

Fig. 3: Ragtime syncopations (BERLIN, 1980: 83).

After completing a survey of many pieces of ragtime piano, Berlin correlates historical periods of the genre to a predominant syncopation profile. According to Berlin (1980: 84), the rags exclusively presenting untied syncopation (Fig. 4) constitute a majority during the first phase of the genre from about 1895 through 1901. The author reports that the prevalence of untied syncopations is lost after the beginning of the 20th century when tied syncopations (Fig. 5) become more frequent. Also, according to the author, ragtime composers never showed interest in using augmented syncopation (Fig. 6) as an exclusive or predominant type, however one can identify several passages in the repertoire that exhibit this type of syncopation, especially in trio sections.

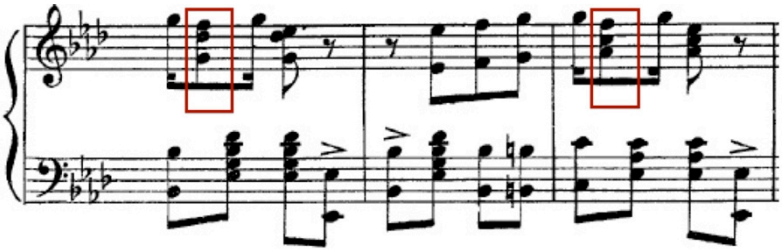

Fig. 4: Untied syncopation – measures 5-7 of *Hilarity Rag* by James Scott (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

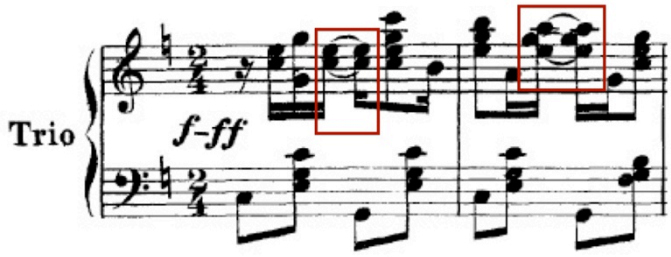

Fig. 5: Tied syncopation – *Sensation*, by Joseph Lamb (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

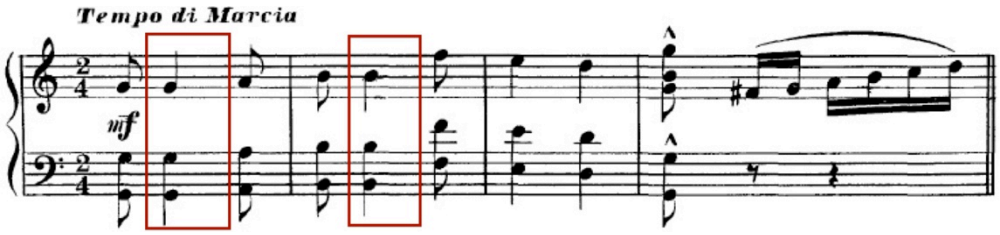

Fig. 6: Augmented syncopations – *The Cascades*, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

One can observe all three syncopation types described by Berlin in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*. Already presented in the beginning measures of the introduction, syncopation in Stravinsky's piece is perhaps the first stylistic reference that guides our listening towards the traditional ragtime repertoire. Syncopation is perceived in musical motifs and materials throughout the unfolding of musical events.

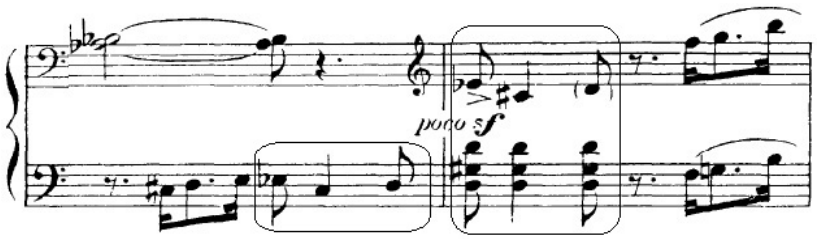

Fig. 7: Untied syncopations – measures 81-82 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

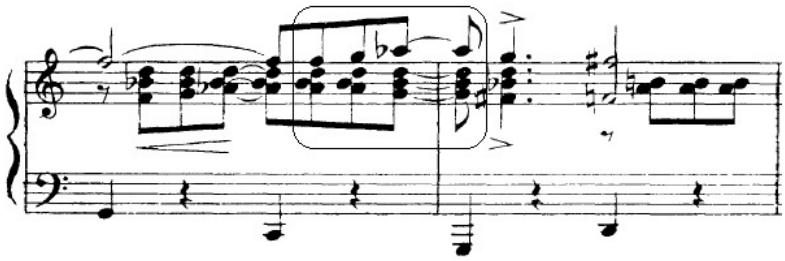

Fig. 8: Tied syncopation – measures 86-87 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

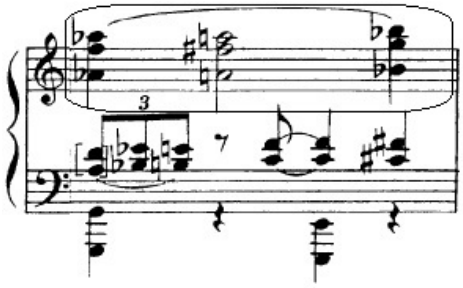

Fig. 9: Augmented syncopation – measure 67 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

Introductions, often four-bar measured, are present in 88% of rags studied by Berlin. In most cases, the introduction is not thematically linked to the rest of the music (64%); those related to one of the main themes are usually based on the opening phrase or the last phrase of the A section. A few more than half of all the introductions studied by Berlin (1980: 91) presents at least two non-harmonized measures, especially in textural passages of parallel octaves. With the examples of *Kinklets*, *Ophelia Rag* and *Sun Flower Slow Drag*, one may observe the texture of parallel octaves. These pieces show similar melodic contours: the introduction presents its highest pitches during the first measures and descends to some harmonic reference pitch in the lower register[7]:

[7] Most of the introductions of *High Standard Class Rags* conclude on the dominant.

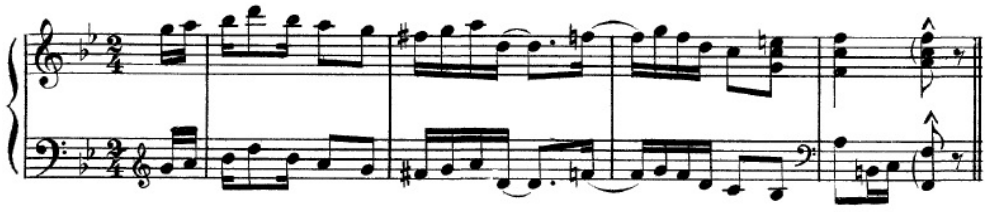

Fig. 10: *Kinklets* introduction, by Arthur Marshall (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

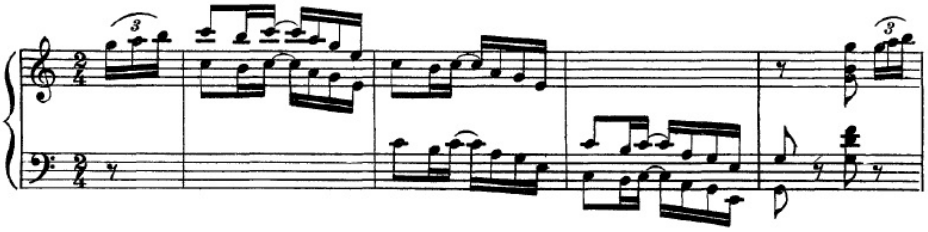

Fig. 11: *Ophelia Rag* introduction, by James Scott (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

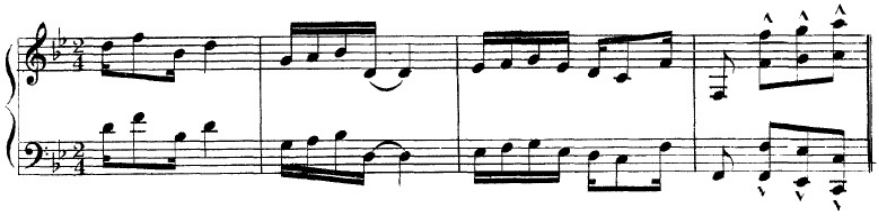

Fig. 12: *Sun Flower Slow Drag* introduction, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

Stravinsky's *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* presents the same texture of parallel octaves identified in several traditional rags studied by Berlin. In addition to the parallel octaves, it exhibits a similar melodic contour to the examples mentioned above, in which, after an initial ascendance, the phrase takes a contrary motion towards the C note in the lower register.

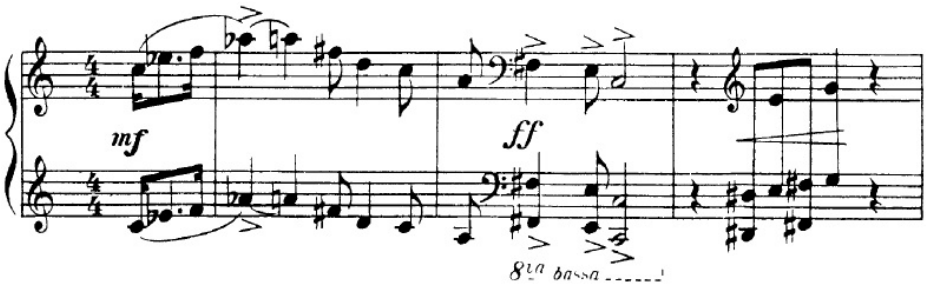

Fig. 13: Introduction of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

Bass lines and harmonic accompaniment are characteristic features of ragtime. According to Schafer and Riedel (1973: 67), the tension in ragtime polarity arises from two basic ingredients: the continuous bass in the lower register—also informally called by enthusiast as "boom-chick" or "oom-pah" pattern—and a melodic-syncopated counterpart in the upper register. The "boom-chick" bass distributes a characteristic eight-note pattern between low and mid registers within

the constraints of binary ragtime measures, establishing a low-mid-low-mid continuous sequence. Fig. 14 illustrates the bass lines and harmonic accompaniment in ragtime, where the pianist's left hand executes the typical pattern of triadic pitches in downbeats and the chord of the moment in the counter-beats.

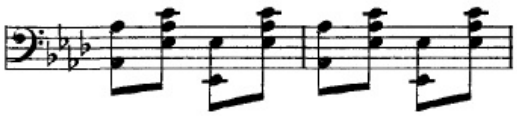

Fig. 14: Bass and accompaniment in *Maple Leaf Rag*, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

Stravinsky preserves that rhythmic pattern in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* but presents it with some variation. In Stravinsky's ragtime, bass lines and typical rhythmic patterns of ragtime are associated with contrapuntal passages in the upper voices (as in measures 5-11, 16-28, 94-104, 132-137, 142-154), in which the traditional ragtime accompaniment is modified by abandoning the triadic chords on the upbeats towards the use of dismembered notes of a harmonic collection or a specific pitch-class set.

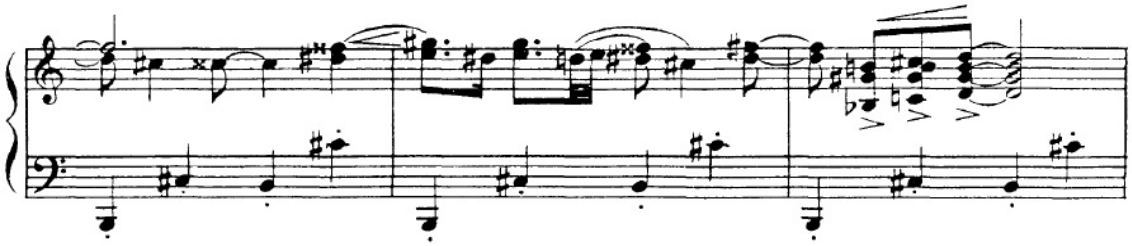

Fig. 15: Bass lines in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

Berlin (1980: 130) nominates "secondary ragtime" as another stylistic rhythmic pattern characterized by motif-grouping of three sixteen-note in the treble register over the regular ragtime accompaniment in the bass and middle registers. Berlin warns his readers that this pattern should not be confused with triplets against a binary meter, since the idea of secondary ragtime of "three" against "two" represents rhythmic displacement of the sixteenth notes in the upper register, not the inclusion of triplets. According to the author, the three-note group always indicates the same direction of movement (upwards or downwards), and is four-times repeated in most cases (less or more repetitions may occur in repertoire examples).

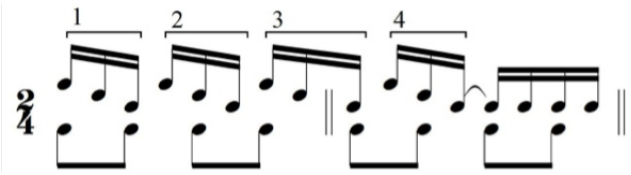

Fig. 16: "Secondary ragtime" (BERLIN, 1980: 131).

Berlin points out that the recurrence of this pattern and its variant forms demonstrate the composer's attraction to secondary ragtime as a stylistic feature. The author also argues that "one important variant reduces the three-note group to two notes while retaining the three-unit rhythmic pattern" (1980: 132):

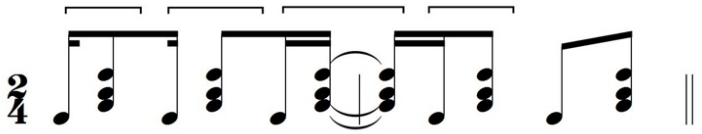

Fig. 17: Variation of the "secondary ragtime" (BERLIN, 1980: 132).

Fig. 18 shows another variation of secondary ragtime. We see three sixteenth-eighth rhythmic groups (rectangles 1, 2 and 3) and a last group in which rhythmic values are permutated into eighth and sixteenth-note groupings (rectangle 4).

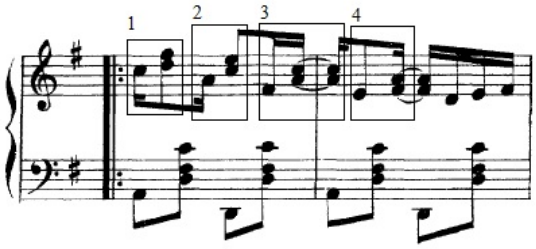

Fig. 18: "Secondary ragtime" (mm. 17-18 of *Sensation*, by Joseph Lamb).

This pattern also can be found in *The Entertainer's* first motif:

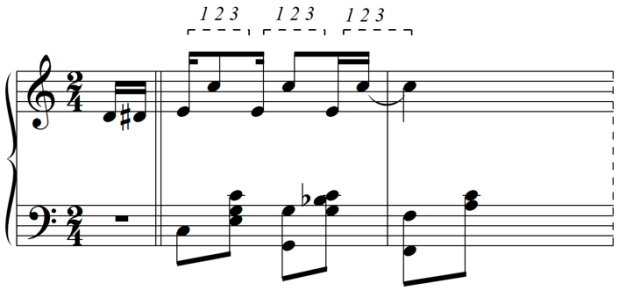

Fig. 19: "Secondary ragtime" (mm. 5-6 of *The Entertainer*, by Scott Joplin).

A variation of "secondary ragtime" can be identified in a passage of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (mm. 34-35) in which three groups of three eighth notes in length (dotted quarter notes) reinforced by accent marks suggest a modification in the texture of the secondary traditional ragtime by interrupting the binary rhythmic support. The regular ragtime bass line texture is abandoned in this passage – instead, the lower register is displaced horizontally to the

first note of each group in the treble register. In the following example, one may notice that the last rhythmic group in measure 35 brings back a binary reference, interrupting the main character of the "secondary ragtime" variation.

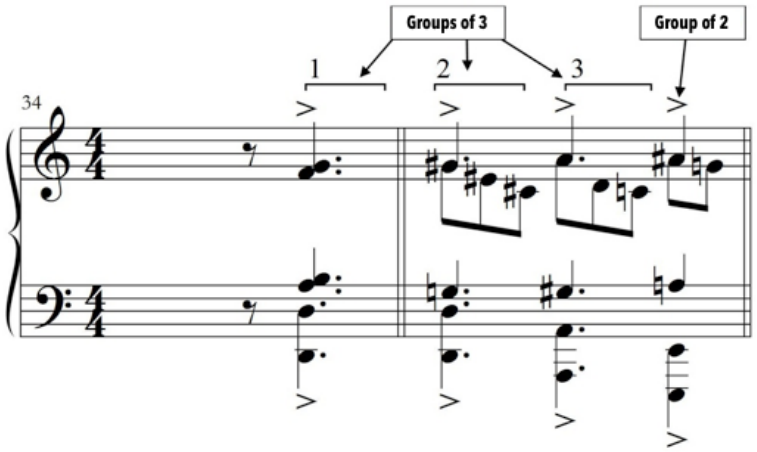

Fig. 20: "Secondary ragtime" (mm. 34-35 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*).

Berlin (1980: 128) points out that a substantial feature related to tied syncopations (but not limited to them) is the textural emphasis of certain agogic accent figurations. Untied syncopations often display invariant texture (as a simple melody without a harmonic spreading of the middle), while tied syncopations tend to show more complex, simultaneous interval density as the lower notes enhance the effect of the syncopation. Fig. 21 illustrates both regular tied syncopation (m. 2) and tied syncopation with intervallic support (mm. 1 and 3). Joplin uses harmonic intervallic support to fill in missing harmony notes, especially those in passages where the bass line performs a contrapuntal role through double-octave texture.

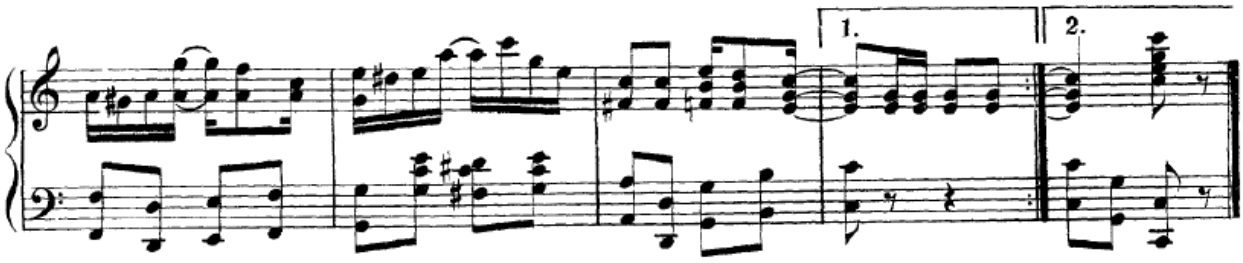

Fig. 21: Tied syncopations intervallic support in *The Entertainer*, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

Besides its post-tonal character, *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* also presents the element of intervallic support. Extracted from a passage where the bass and the melodic accompaniment express the typical ragtime accompaniment, the following example exhibits the intervallic support of the upper G syncopation (doubled by G in the lower octave and filled by D) against a F – B♭ cadential gesture on the bass.

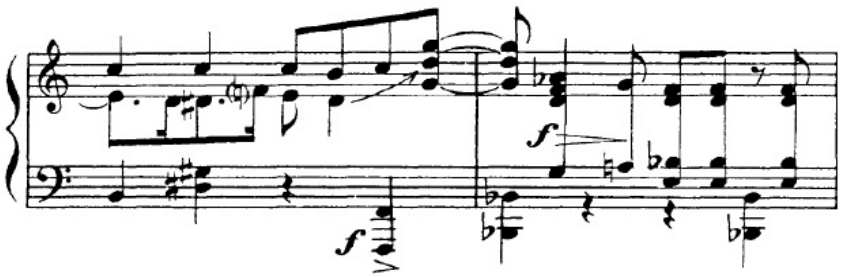

Fig. 22: Tied syncopations intervallic support – (mm. 28-29 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*).

Berlin (1980: 140) argues that measure thirteen conventions were stylistic possibilities for changing the predominant texture of the "strains"[8]. Measure 13 would be a strategic point for textural changes, for instance the inclusion of octaves, parallel sixths and tenths or the momentary abandonment of the typical ragtime accompaniment, as wells as for the inclusion of more "sophisticated" chords (such as the diminished seventh, the Neapolitan and the Augmented sixth). One may notice in the following examples, the dissolution of the "oom-pah" accompaniment in *Grace and Beauty* by James Scott, and *The Easy Winners* by Scott Joplin. In Joplin's example, one can also observe the adoption of a texture of parallel sixths. In both cases, the texture change occurs in measure 13 of the strains, which, according to Berlin (1980: 140), is common in ragtime compositions.

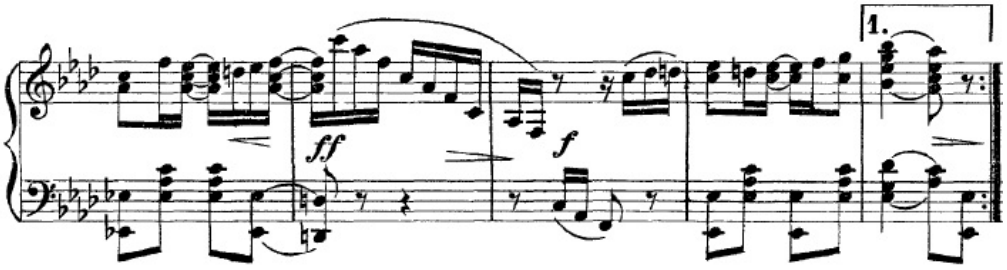

Fig. 23: Measure 13 conventions - mm. 12-16 of *Grace and Beauty*, by James Scott (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

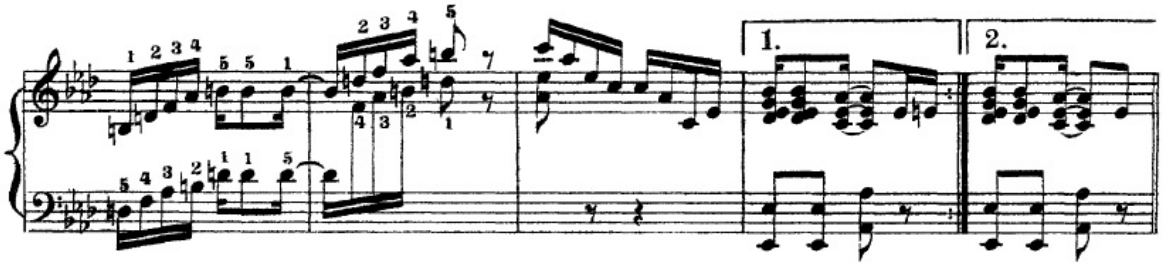

Fig. 24: Measure 13 conventions - mm. 13-16b of *The Easy Winners'* second strain, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

[8] Ragtime's main sections made up of sixteen measures.

Ragtime for Eleven Instruments presents a very similar idea to ragtime's measure thirteen conventions. One can identify certain musical gestures in the music by Stravinsky that disrupt the predominant texture of the passage (i.e., mm. 12-15). In Fig. 25 we notice a syncopated gesture (m. 13) followed by a variation of the introduction material in the parallel-octave texture (mm. 14-15), interrupting the polyphonic texture and the bass ostinato from the previous passage (mm. 5-11):

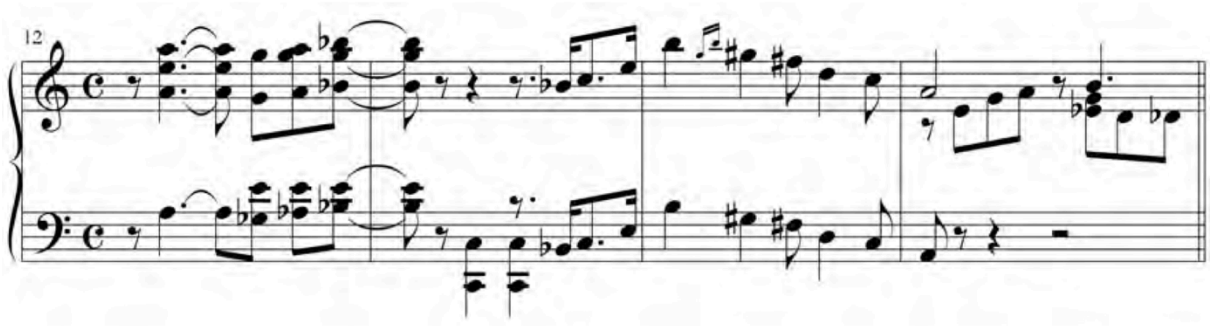

Fig. 25: mm.12-15 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

Breaks (also known as interludes) are short passages that may occur, eventually linking strains (sections) of a rag. Breaks are often identified by a short or irregular duration of four, eight, ten or twelve measures (although breaks of sixteen measures are also possible), and one of its main features is the prolongation of the dominant harmony of the following passages (BERLIN, 1980: 91). Although breaks frequently maintain the predominant texture, as in *The Entertainer* by Scott Joplin, in some cases they may have the precedent musical texture altered (as in *Frog Legs Rag* that acquire a parallel octave texture after mm. 53):

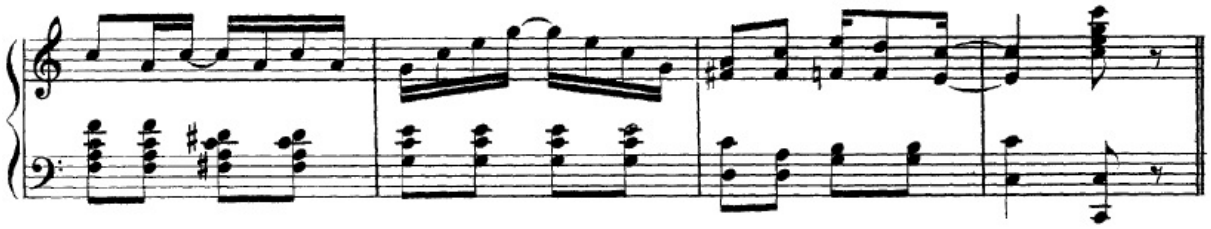

Fig. 26: Break in mm. 73-76 of *The Entertainer*, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

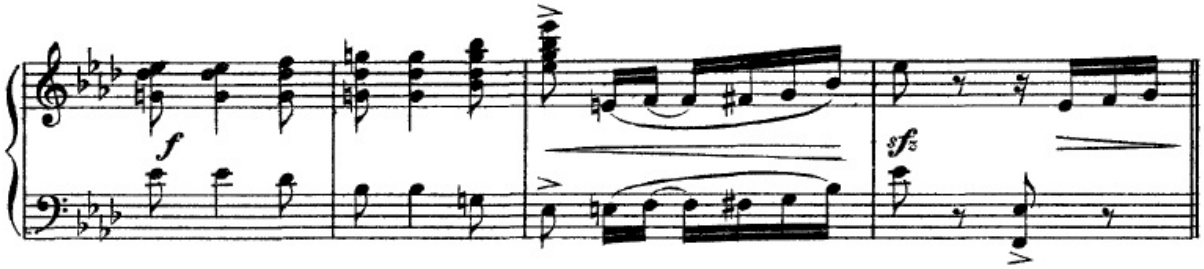

Fig. 27: Break in mm. 51-54 of *Frog Legs Rag*, by James Scott (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

During measures 13-15 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, we notice Stravinsky's ambiguous reference to typical ragtime elements: the measure thirteen convention, which modifies the texture of the passage by interrupting the previous texture; and the *break*, which detach two passages with the same texture (mm. 5-12 and 16-23) as in traditional ragtime repertoire.

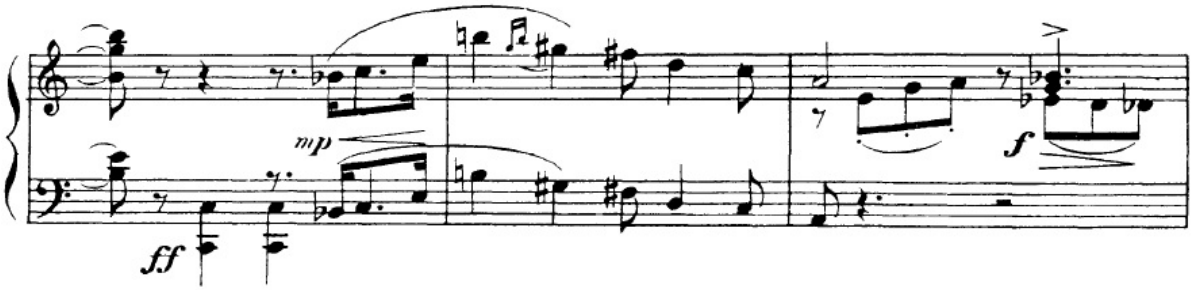

Fig. 28: Break in mm. 13-15 of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

Due to the tonal content, it is common in examples of traditional ragtime to find a reinforcement of the predominant key with a dominant-tonic cadence. These cadences, in most cases, produce a bass line movement of an ascending perfect fourth or descending perfect fifth, which emphasizes the idea of conclusion at the end of a strain or section (such as tuba lines in a marching band, for example).

Fig. 29, from *African Pas*', shows the cadential gesture where the dominant on the second beat of the first measure moves to the root of the key on the next measure. *The Entertainer* also presents an example of this practice.

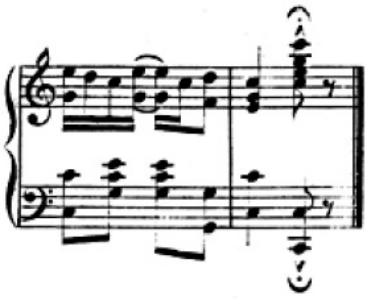

Fig. 29: *African Pas'* final cadence, by Maurice Kirwin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

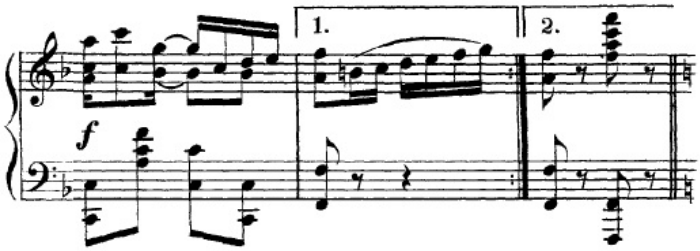

Fig. 30: Cadential V – I -*The Entertainer*, by Scott Joplin (AMERICAN CONCERT PIANO MUSIC, 2002).

The cadential gesture is also identified in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, (mm. 4, 28-29, 93, 109, 111-112, 116, 154-155 and 178). However, Stravinsky applies this gesture within a post-tonal context, preserving its conclusive purpose for styling the compositional material. Fig. 31 illustrates the occurrence of the V-I gesture in measure 4.

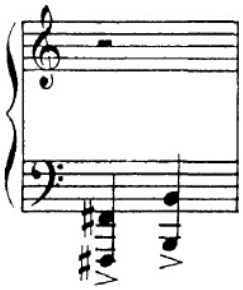

Fig. 31: V – I cadencial gesture – mm. 4 – *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (STRAVINSKY, 1999).

According to Berlin, the most noticeable shift in ragtime of the 1910s is related to the increased use of dotted rhythms. Berlin poins out that dotted rhythms were "rarely more than incidental" during the first decade of the twentieth century, however there was a sudden increase in their use by composers in the following decade. Dotted rhythms and ragtime syncopations may commonly occur during the same passage, however punctuated figures themselves are usually unsyncopated (1980: 147). Berlin speculates the reasons for the new prominence of dotted rhythms as a shift in notation reflecting the musical practice of the time, new rhythmic combinations and ragtime's merge with dances of the time, such as the fox trot and the turkey trot (1980: 149).

The Chrysanthemum, by Scott Joplin, is a rag example of dotted rhythms appearance during the 1910s.

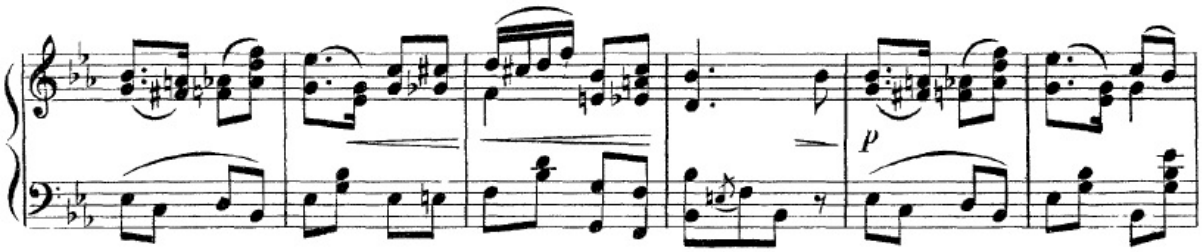

Fig. 32: Dotted rhythms (mm. 93-98 *The Chrysanthemum*, by Scott Joplin).

Stravinsky applies dotted rhythms in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* in several ways: as the initial impulse of a sentence (introduction), as an initial impulse of a theme (m. 5), such as a rhythmic profile of contrasting materials (mm. 10-11, 36, 39, 70-71), counterpoint (m. 24), and variation (mm. 94-102 and 119-137). In specific moments, dotted rhythms of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* contrast typical ragtime syncopations (mm. 38-39).

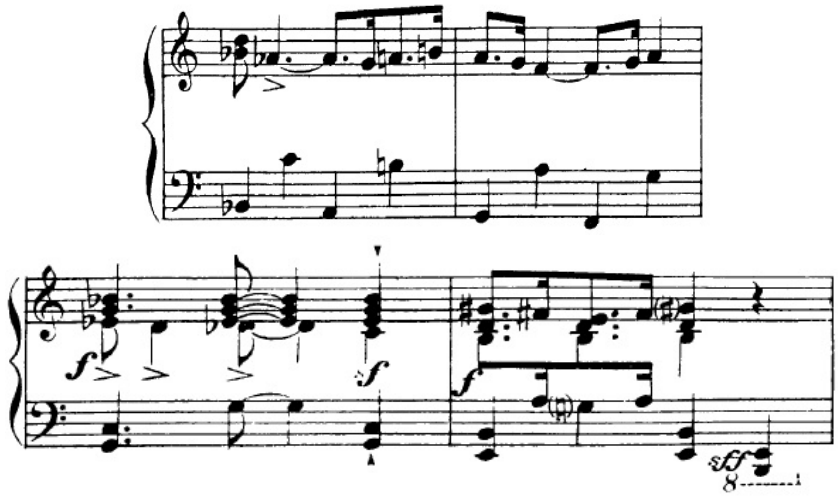

Fig. 33: Dotted rhythms (mm 10-11 and 38-39 - *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*).

Ragtime music is commonly associated with accompanied melody textures, which implies that counterpoint happens primarily between the bass and the upper melody. Rare are the passages in which counterpoint occurs between the main melody and inner voices. The upper and middle register dialogue in *The Entertainer* is an exceptional example of this:

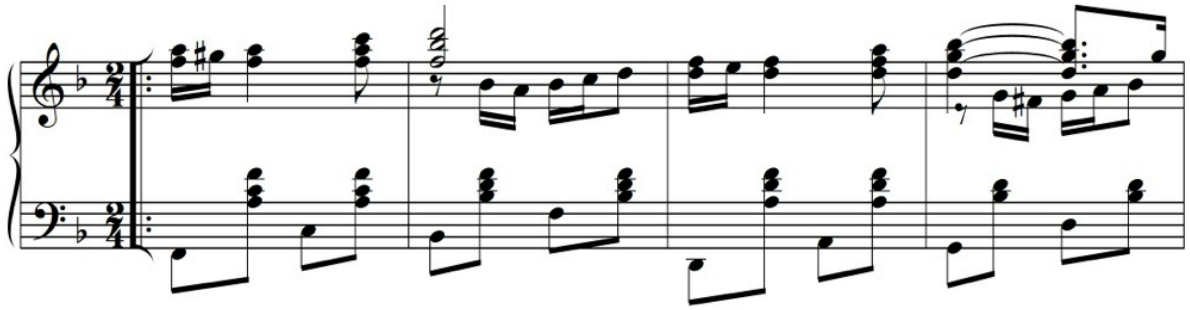

Fig. 34: Exceptional use of contrapuntal inner voices (*The Entertainer's* Trio).

Assuming a predominant polyphonic texture, the idea of the occasional use of internal voices as a counterpoint is inverted in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* in relation to traditional ragtime. In Stravinsky's composition, the use of internal voices as a counterpoint is not casual, as it is in traditional ragtime repertoire, but almost constant. In some passages, the inner voice does not only fulfill the polyphonic texture, but also performs a leading melodic activity. Fig. 35, from *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* (mm. 4-6), is illustrative.

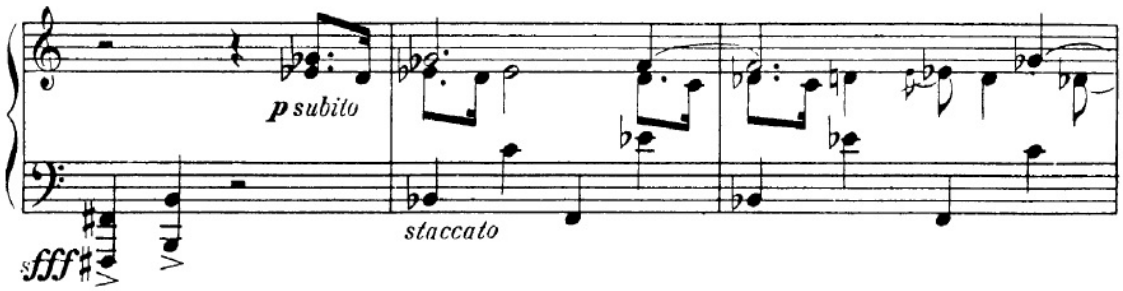

Fig. 35: Occasional use of contrapuntal inner voices (*Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*).

The occurrence of triplets in ragtime's traditional repertoire is sporadic. Its appearance in certain examples can be justified by Berlin's assumptions about the stylistic change ragtime experienced during the first two decades of the 20th century: as compositional variations of ragtime's typical rhythms with the inclusion of new rhythms, or as a change in notation reflecting the musical practice of the time (1980: 149). The shuffle pattern—found in popular genres that gained popularity after the decline of the ragtime era, such as jazz, boogie-woogie and blues—is derived from the triplets.

Fig. 36, from *Ophelia Rag*, shows an exceptional presence of a triplet figuration within ragtime's traditional repertoire:

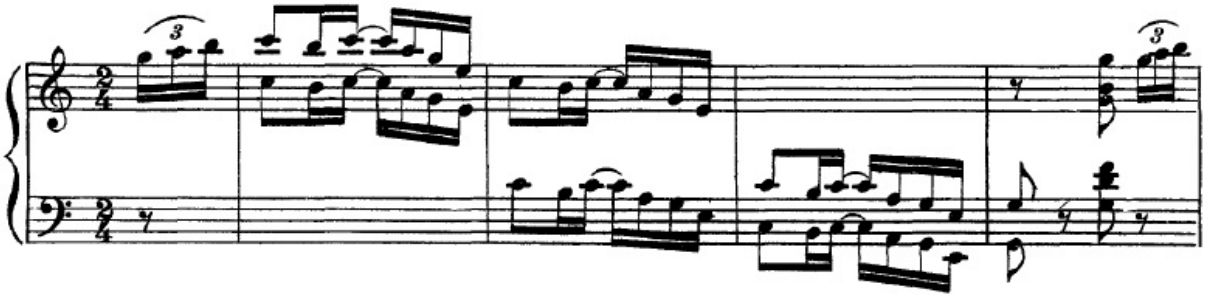

Fig. 36: Triplets - Introduction of *Ophelia Rag*, by James Scott.

Triplet figurations are seen in some passages of *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments,* such as during a cadential gesture in the introduction and in the inner register counterpoint, as shown in Fig. 37:

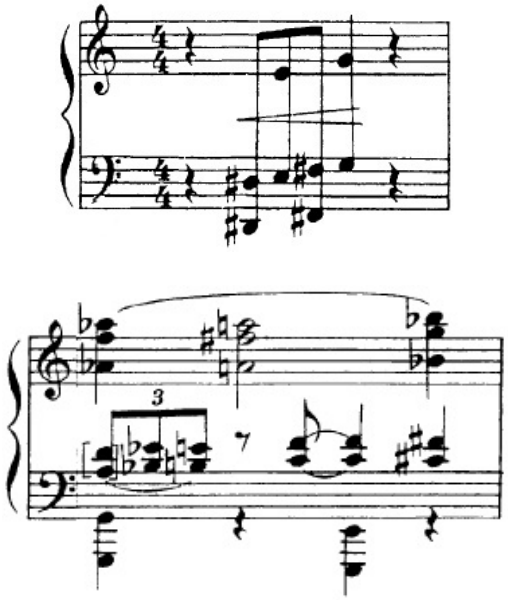

Fig. 37: Triplets in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* – m. 3 (introduction) and m. 67.

Final considerations

In *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments,* Stravinsky appropriates some stylistic elements of traditional ragtime. Regarding original stylistic aspects that are barely changed and remain virtually "untouched" in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*, we highlight a pattern of regular rhythmic pulse, cadential gestures and typtical ragtime syncopations. These traditional elements support post-tonal articulations established during the composition, which in turn allows the development of the aesthetic plan proposed by the composer.

Although the original material is not completely distorted, stylistic features are transformed in some passages, such as bass lines and accompaniment, standard secondary ragtime features and formal aspects (including introductions, measure thirteen conventions and breaks). While referencing the original materials of ragtime, those variations allow the development of the musical discourse as a personal reinterpretation of traditional practices.

Ragtime for Eleven Instruments addresses and emphasizes musical aspects considered rare in traditional ragtime literature, such as the use of internal voices as a counterpoint and the inclusion of triplets. The integration of these elements shows that the search for an aesthetic not only turned to stylistic features of ragtime's repertoire, but also directed the compositional and individual intentions of the composer. Stravinsky conducts a dialogue between stylistic elements of ragtime and his own creative individuality.

Therefore, traditional ragtime elements in *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* are presented under three conditions: as appropriations of the original material (regular pulse, typical syncopation, dotted rhythms, introduction, measure thirteen convention, break and formal aspects); as a variation of the original material (bass and accompaniment, secondary ragtime); and as a reverse aspect of the original idea (middle register counterpoint and triplets).

The comparative identification of these stylistic features through musical examples of *High-Class Standard Rags* supports the argument that Stravinsky may have had contact with this collection. Even disregarding the historical evidence and statements by the composer himself claiming to have had contact with instrumental parts of ragtime arrangements brought from America by Ansermet, musical analysis shows similar musical features between *Ragtime for Eleven Instruments* and examples of the *High-Class Standard Rags* collection.

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