



# THE ROSEBUD MARCH

Second Section  
6th to D

Comp: Joplin  
Arr: James

0 0 8 7 5 7 7 7  
10 10 7 10 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 7 8 0 0 8 10 13  
5 7 10 10 7 10 0 0 11 0

HM12 HM12 0 4 P0 0 3 4 0 6 0  
5 7 10 10 7 10 0 0 11 0

4 7 8 P7 5 0  
5 5 5 5 5 12 11  
2 6 0 11 9

10 9 10 12 7 5 3  
7 8 6 7 4 5 P2 5 P2  
0 0 0 5 5 5

# THE ROSEBUD MARCH

Comp. Scott Joplin,  
arr. J. James

[6 to D]

System 1: Treble clef, 6/8 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. TAB: 12, 10, 12, 10, 10, 10.

System 2: Treble clef, 6/8 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. TAB: 10, 10, 9, 11, 8, 8, 10, 10, 13, 8, 10, 8, 10.

System 3: Treble clef, 6/8 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. TAB: 8, 9, 10, 11, 0, 6, 7, 15, 10, 8, 12, 10, 12, 10, 10.

System 4: Treble clef, 6/8 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. TAB: 7, 7, 10, 12, 13, 8, 7, 10, 10, 10, 10, 7, 5, 5, 5.

System 5: Treble clef, 6/8 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. TAB: 7, 0, 3, 0, 5, 3, 3, 0, 0, 0, 0, 2, 0, 0, 0, 2.





# RAGTIME GUITAR



by

JOHN JAMES

## Introduction

*"Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music, and to shy bricks at 'hateful ragtime' no longer passes for musical culture."*

*Scott Joplin (The School of Ragtime 1908)*

In this new series on Ragtime Guitar, I will be looking at the "light" and "heavy" music of the ragtime era, but if you don't mind I will leave out the trash to be collected in the usual way!

During this series I will look at classic piano rags, jazz band rags, waltzes, popular ragtime songs, folk rags and even a march with perhaps a cakewalk thrown in for good measure!

Not only will we be looking at the pieces of music and examining the difficulties of transcribing for guitar and thus the techniques needed to be mastered to enable the composition to be 'converted to guitar music' in its own right, but also we will look at the history and background of the music itself — where did it come from? When? Who played it? — from the legendary Blind Boone and pioneering ragtime guitarists Rev. Gary Davis and Blind Boy Fuller, to the revivalist scholarly approach of Joshua Rifkin.

A system of notation has been chosen with a view to please all. It is a kind of staff-notation-cum-tablature similar to the notation used by Peter Jackson in his excellent "Traditional Folk Guitar" series. The time and left hand fingering are on the staff, while strings and fret positions can be read off the tablature.

## History

Volumes have been written on the history of ragtime and many on Scott Joplin in particular, and not wishing to over-burden you with a pile of facts and figures, I will, instead, unfold it slowly and painlessly each month alongside an appropriate piece of music.

But initially a brief outline is essential: The time is the turn of this century, the place America, notably the Southern States — Texas, Mississippi and Missouri. A time of poverty and deprivation, a place of mixed races and cultures. The black workers who lived and worked on the cotton plantations, made their own music which had a very strong rhythmical basis, derived from their African roots. The "educated" white musicians heard this music and adapted it and adopted it. The new music found its way into the homes of America via the Vaudeville theatres, travelling shows and the piano-roll! It was the syncopated rhythm rather than the harmonic or lyrical content that the public found so irresistible.

It was this fusion of the syncopated folk-song melodies played within the constraints of a European classical tradition that formed the basis of piano ragtime, which was to sweep across the whole U.S. nation — and the rest of the world too. But more of this later.

## Ragtime Guitar Pioneers

Originally the ragtime minstrel's favourite instrument was the banjo. Apart from its 'plunky' sound, which well suited the syncopated rhythms, in this time before public address systems — it was LOUD! But with the advent of microphones and recordings the subtle more intimate strains of the guitar took over. Among the first ragtime guitarists to record in the 1920's were Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Blake, Rev. Gary Davis and later Blind Boy Fuller. These early blues singers-cum-songsters played six-string, round hole, flat top guitars, or the all steel resonator guitars much favoured by the slide and bottleneck blues guitarists such as Bukka White and Son House.

Now I should point out here that the guitar ragtimers were not playing note-for-note transcriptions of piano ragtime, but simulated guitar picking versions of the more popular rags and extracts from the classic rags, e.g. Rev. Gary Davis' *Slow Drag*, from Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* which became *Cincinnati Flow Drag*, etc. Also, playing in the key of A may have been a simple task for Scott Joplin but on the guitar C.G. and E. ruled — O.K.!

Within the technical limitations of these players a definite style developed and grew to where the term 'ragtime guitar' came to mean a style of guitar playing made up of the techniques needed to simulate the piano players' music, even though the music being played was not Joplineseque ragtime.

Definite guitar idiosyncracies such as 'hammering-on', 'slides', 'pull offs', 'string bends', 'harmonics', 'string damping' and 're-tuning' were all used to great effect, though sometimes to excess and a guitar instrumental would be just an exploitation of the techniques acquired and not music from the composer's 'inner-ear'.

## The Rose-bud March

We start with a Scott Joplin piece composed in 1905. Obviously this was influenced by the popularity at the time of Sousa's brass band military style marches. The title is that of a café owned by Tom Turpin where apparently the ragtime piano players used to hang out! I have written out the first section of the three part composition.

The sixth string drops to D, the tab reads top line — top string and so on down. P. stands for pull off, H. for hammer on. The thumb accents the bass line on the on-beats, that is the one and four in a six-count bar. A simple piece to begin — the finger busters will come later.

Next month some syncopated right hand techniques and more fascinating facts about those ol' ragtimers. Good luck!

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In this series so far the trend has been to study the first or second section only of a piece which was chosen to illustrate certain aspects of transcription or arrangement and the guitar techniques involved. Unfortunately, this has left you with a repertoire comprising of unfinished pieces. To make amends, I intend during the coming months to feature the remaining sections of some of these rags, therefore presenting you with a handful of finger-busters to amaze and delight your friends.

This issue we are going to go back to the *Rosebud March* a Scott Joplin composition featured at the start of this series in August 1983. It is a tricky piece to play being in 6/8 time rather than the more common 2/4. Strictly speaking then, it is not a 'rag' by definition, but nevertheless is an excellent example of the kind of music that was the forerunner of ragtime, therefore an essential addition to your music folio.

There were, of course, many contributory factors to the development of ragtime, not the least of which was the studying, by the ragtime players, of the European pianistic tradition; nevertheless the brass band military style marches of John Philip Sousa (1856-1932) helped shape the form, the melody and the rhythms of early ragtime as this 1905 composition of Joplin clearly shows.

It is also my intention, during the coming months, to concentrate on 'classic ragtime'. This is in preference to 'folk ragtime' or the two and a half minute foot tappers churned out by the bucket full down Tin Pan Alley. Classic ragtime was a concert music . . . and still is. It was a music fully notated as we regard 'classical music' to be, and required an accomplished piano technique to play it correctly. There were, however, simplified editions issued for commercial reasons. Classic ragtime, apart from the emotional appeal, offers appreciation at an intellectual level also as our studies will show. Sadly Joplin, James Scott, Louis Chauvin and many others never saw their music played in a legitimate concert setting with the 'House Full' sign displayed outside. The mortality rate of piano players frequenting the sporting houses was alarmingly high; they have had to be content with posthumous recognition.

The 'golden era' of classic ragtime spanned the years 1885 to 1917. This pre-dates the publication of the first rag by a couple of years and ends with the year of Joplin's death. Arguably, though, it can be said to have ended sooner, for by 1917 the assembly line of Tin Pan Alley had started to roll. It is interesting to note here that apparently Joplin did not like his music to be labelled as 'ragtime'. The term to him, no doubt, conjured up images of minstrel shows, coonband contests and performers in 'black-face' plunking banjos. With the passing of time the term he so disliked has achieved a certain degree of sophistication and legitimacy. This legitimacy has been gained from the acceptance of ragtime as being a totally premeditated music and therefore fully notated; differing from jazz because of the absence of improvisation. It is, however, hard to imagine such musical geniuses as Joplin, Joseph Lamb, or James Scott

not extemporising on their compositions during performance as did Mozart and Haydn before them.

Composers of this stature heard their melodies in the 'inner ear', and either transcribed their creations direct to notation or refined their melodies on the instrument of their choosing. Thus the idiosyncracies of a particular instrument were employed to emphasise the dynamics of a piece. If all the 'outer ear' listens to is music of one particular instrument, that is to say, when a piano player only listens to piano music, then inevitably the 'inner ear' only hears piano. It is therefore possible for a composer with sufficient genius to transcribe direct from the 'inner ear' to paper and produce perfect pianistic music.

It is because of this fact that jazz players tend not to listen to other players of the same instrument, for fear of picking up the 'cliches' of that player. Therefore it is quite common for guitarists to listen to saxophone players, saxophonists to piano, players, and so on. In this way the technique of the player will be tested to accommodate melodic phrases and chord shapes that otherwise he may not have attempted. The most obvious example is to play a phrase a semitone up. On the guitar, providing there are no open strings involved, there should be no problem, but to shift chromatically on the saxophone is not so simple because of the complicated fingering. I remember tenor saxophonist Dick Heckstall-Smith drawing my attention to a recording of Stan Getz playing a 12-bar blues where he changed key, up a semitone, every chorus.

"Waoow!", said Dick. "Listen to that, man." I was not very impressed for all Stan Getz was doing was sliding up a fret every time round, probably using a capo or something. Boy! Did he have news for me.

Next month we will complete the *Rosebud March*, by standing the third and final section.

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# RAGTIME GUITAR



by

JOHN JAMES

This month, as promised, we are featuring the third and final section of Scott Joplin's *Rosebud March*. If you have studied the previous two sections — published in the August 1983 and August 1984 issues of this magazine — you will no doubt agree that it is a tricky piece, but once the initial problems of learning the positions and any technical stumbling blocks have been overcome, it should all fit together to make a very attractive guitar instrumental.

Though composed as a dance tune and described as a two step, on the original manuscript it stated . . . "Respectfully dedicated to my friend Tom Turpin". Now Tom Turpin . . . no relation to Dick . . . was the proprietor of the Rosebud Cafe in St. Louis, Missouri — hence the title of the tune. He also had the distinction of being the composer of the first rag to be published in sheet music form, namely *The Harlem Rag* in 1897. Thomas Million Turpin was one of ragtime's larger than life characters. He was the uncrowned king of St. Louis ragtime. His father Honest John Turpin, fought under the name of Old Man Jack and was the Missouri State champion, and I'm not talking about boxing but the noble art of head-butting! It has been related "John never fought a man — he would just grab your wrist and butt you in the head — just kiss your wrist goodbye — you'd be blind for a week".

Honest John kept the Silver Dollar Saloon in St. Louis and it was in this bar that the 'cutting contests' would take place. A musician would play some fast and complicated rag then challenge another piano player to take it up and carry on the variations. Whoever played the most melodious, the most harmonious or simply the fastest and the loudest was the winner! Later, son Tom opened the Rosebud on Market Street and the ragtime scene took up residence there.

It was here then, at the Rosebud, that Tom Turpin wrote his rags. They are considered to be some of the finest examples of early folk ragtime. The *Bowery Buck* (1899), *A Ragtime Nightmare* (1900), *St. Louis Rag* (1903) *Buffalo Rag* (1904). His later rags, however, reflect the influence of the more sophisticated 'modern' ragtime that was being played in the Rosebud at the time. The provider of these 'Euphonic Sounds' was no less a personage than Scott Joplin, who had moved to St. Louis in the later 1880's. In fact it was at the Rosebud that Joplin met Louis Chauvin, who was considered to be the most gifted of the young player/composers. Tragically Chauvin died when still very young and left an unfinished composition. Joplin completed it and the result remains one of the most beautiful of all the classic rags, the *Heliotrope Bouquet*. I hope to be featuring this wonderful composition later on in this series.

Another joint composition at this time was the also very wonderful *Sunflower Slow Drag*. On this Joplin collaborated with Scott Hayden, the brother of Joplin's first wife, Belle. That champion of the ragtime cause, publisher John Stark, wrote "This piece came to light during the high temperature of Scott Joplins courtship, and while he was touching the

ground only in the highest places his geese were all swans and Mississippi water tasted like honey-dew . . . if ever there was a song without words . . . this is that article. Hold your ear close to the ground while someone plays it, and you can hear Scott Joplin's heartbeat . . ."

Well I cannot guarantee that the *Rosebud March* will set any pulses racing, but it may earn you a few shillings, as this quote from Artie Matthews — who later became the Principal of the Cosmopolitan Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati — claims. He was of the opinion that playing the ragtime guitar in 1907 was more lucrative than the piano, and continued, "If you just needed a dollar, you have to wait for a piano job — you could take a guitar and a camp stool and sit on the side-walk outside the hotel (Rosebud) and make it in half an hour". What more incentive do you need for playing classic ragtime? So, before I leave you to it, a few words on some technical points. The sixth string should be tuned down to 'D', making it an octave below the fourth. The natural sign at the beginning of the section, signifies the change of key from the previous section. Therefore it is a modulation from 'G' to 'C' major — the natural cancels out the 'F' sharp.

I have shown some left hand fingering on the staff notation, which at times will jump around, but this brings out the 'swing' of the piece, it actually exaggerates the effect of march time. Barre positions are shown on the chord diagrams and as usual the string positions can be read off the tabulature.

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