



Ray Simien

“Scott Joplin: King of Ragtime”

Grades: 3-8

Assembly Performance

Performance Length: 45 minutes

Audience Limit: 100

About the Artist

Mr. Simien is a graduate of Lamar University, where he studied music theory, composition, and song-writing. Putting his skills to work, Mr. Simien has written a number of original scores, many of which he performs. He also is a firefighter for the City of Beaumont and the father of two.

Before the performance:

- Ask if any of your students are musicians. What instruments do they play?
- Ask if any of your students have heard of Scott Joplin or ragtime music.

After the performance:

- Watch portions of the movie “The Sting” and listen for Joplin’s ragtime music in the soundtrack.

About the Program

Scott Joplin was born in Linden, Texas, in 1868. Mr. Simien’s portrayal exposes students to Joplin’s music as well as the trials of an African-American musician in the early 1900’s when ragtime and jazz were emerging forms of American music.

Performance Set-up Requirements:

A performance area of at least 10’ x 10’, and a simple PA system with microphone. Students may be seated on the floor or in rows of chairs.

Please note: a tuned piano is required for this performance.

Classroom Management

Please note that Young Audiences' policy mandates that the classroom teacher is to be present during the entire program or residency. Should the teacher leave, the artist is instructed to leave also. The teacher is responsible for managing classroom behavior during the program or residency.

Music in the Classroom:

Ragtime was a syncopated music. Experiment in creating syncopation. Work with a partner. You will need a "drum" (the top of your desk will do) and a "drumstick" (a pencil should work). Count one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three. Have your partner strike the "drum" on the count of one. You strike the "drum" on two-three. Work with others in your class to create different syncopated rhythms. Create drums and other rhythm instruments to make different sounds.

Word List

Syncopated: rhythm where the emphasis is on a beat that is usually not emphasized

Ragtime: music with a steady bass and a syncopated ("ragged") melody

Opera: a play set to music (the actors sing, rather than speak, their lines)

Sheet Music: unbound paper on which a musical composition is printed or written

Piano Rolls: rolls of paper with holes matching the notes of a musical composition; used to operate a player piano

Pulitzer Prize: annual prize given to the best in American music, literature, journalism, and drama

Thank you for allowing Young Audiences of Northeast Texas to share these artists and performances with your students. The students' written thank you notes may be sent to:

Young Audiences of Northeast Texas
200 East Amherst
Tyler, Texas 75701

Classroom Connections

Reading and Language Arts:

Research and discuss the people who influenced Joplin's music. Write a paragraph about a person or people who have influenced your life.

Geography:

Use a map of the United States to locate places that were important in Joplin's life: Linden, Texas; Texarkana, Texas; Sedalia, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; New York, New York. Discuss methods of transportation Joplin might have used to travel between these places in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Writing:

- If you were designing an exhibit about Scott Joplin for a museum, what sorts of things would you like to have included? Write a letter to a museum to suggest the kind of exhibit they might want to have about Scott Joplin.
- Work with your class to make up a list of questions to ask a grandparent or other older adult about how they listened to and learned about the music of their day. Interview a grandparent or older adult in your neighborhood and report back to the class. Make a class list of all the ways people have listened to and learned music through the years.

Critical Thinking:

Watch a portion of a video movie that has music in the background. Watch the same portion without sound. How does music influence the way you feel about the characters and the action of a movie? Some of Joplin's rags were used for the sound track a movie called "The Sting". Why do you think Scott Joplin's music was a good choice for a movie?