

Starr-Waterman

American Popular Music

Chapter 2: "After the Ball": Popular Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Key People

Charles K. Harris (1867–1930): A self-taught banjo player from Wisconsin who could not literally write music; instead, he dictated his songs to a professional musician. He was offered \$10,000 for all rights to his song, "After the Ball," which he turned down to self-publish, and soon cleared around \$25,000 a month, proving that popular music could be a lucrative business and encouraged young entrepreneurs to set up their own publishing firms.

George Washington Dixon (180?–1861): The first white performer to establish a wide reputation as a "blackface" entertainer.

Harry von Tilzer (1872–1946): A successful turn-of-the-century songwriter sometimes referred to as the "Daddy of Popular Song." His big hits included "A Bird in a Gilded Cage" (1900) and "I Want a Girl (Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad)" (1911).

James A. Bland (1854–1911): Successful black songwriter and one of the best-known and most successful composers of plantation songs. Bland wrote some seven hundred songs, including "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" (1878) and "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers" (1879).

John Philip Sousa (1854–1932): The most popular bandleader from the 1890s through World War I.

Paul Dresser (1857–1906): One of the most popular composers of the early Tin Pan Alley period who wrote a series of sentimental and nostalgic songs, including "The Letter That Never Came" (1885) and "On the Banks of the Wabash, Far Away" (1899).

Scott Joplin (1868–1917): An African American composer and pianist who became the best-known composer of ragtime music.

Stephen Collins Foster (1826–1864): Composed around two hundred songs during the 1840s, 1850s, and early 1860s and is regarded as the first important composer of American popular song.

Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808–1860): A white actor born into a poor family in New York's Seventh Ward who demonstrated the potential popularity (and profitability) of minstrelsy with the song "Jim Crow" (1829), which became the first international American song hit.