Strings Attached:
Black Musicians in String-bands in the American South, 1920 – 1950

By

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ABSTRACT

Black musicians in string-bands in the American South during the period 1920–1950 were remarkably resilient to social, political, and cultural forces while also actively creating cultural products. The breadth of their musical activities and networks of interconnectivity expands our knowledge and indicates significant contributions to black cultural productions during this period of time. Their imprint on the fabric of American popular music is indelible, characterized by adaptive, innovative, and creative practices. Centering this discussion on black musicians and their activities in string-bands highlights their diversity as it relates to genre, musicianship, and the navigation of varied performance spaces.

Black musicians who performed in string-bands had highly developed skills on their instruments and were recognized as experts on their instruments and as professionals in the music industry. Those with long music careers had deep networks of connections to and mentorship from other professional musicians, along with a flexible repertoire that would allow them to adapt to any audience in any context, a performative stratagem, an understanding of how to prolong their lives as independent musicians, and the freedom to travel. The early musical career of Gus “Banjo Joe” Cannon from Clarksdale, Mississippi and, later, nearby Memphis, Tennessee is one example

of many who demonstrate the aforementioned qualities and focus this dissertation.

This thesis is an original work by Kathleen A. Danser. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “WITH A SKIFFLE & A SHUFFLE: INTEGRATED MUSICAL EXCHANGES IN PRE-BLUES AMERICA”, Pro00061318, JANUARY 21, 2016.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Black – this term is complex but was commonly accepted and preferred throughout my field and archival research among musicians, academics, and community members in the American South. It refers to a person with black skin who lives i**n** the United States and whose lineage includes being a descendant of African slaves and free immigrants. It appears to be the term of greatest respect despite racial and ethnic complexities that the meaning can hold. Where possible, a musician's ethnic background is discussed as fully as possible. Critical black theorist, Paul Gilroy, is a place to begin further exploration of the complexities of being a black person in America.[1]

Coon Songs – refers to a classification of music that was a part of racial stereotypes that formed the foundation of blackface minstrelsy.[2]

Downhome Blues – denotes rural blues musical styles whereby solo musicians often sang and played a stringed instrument. The performer - often black and male in early rural blues performances – wrote lyrics to song structures that were easily adaptable for improvisation.[3] In my experience as a musician, this term is currently used to delineate between acoustic and

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[1] Paul Gilroy, Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[2] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, Ragged But Right: Black Traveling Shows, Coon Songs, and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).

[3] Jeff Todd Titon. Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), xvi.

Chicago or electric blues styles. This style overlaps with string bands as many downhome blues musicians also played in string bands and adapted their repertoire to that type of ensemble.

Folk music – *Volkslied* meaning *folksong* in German was first coined in the mid-16th century. Initially the term implied a 'communal composition' and an aesthetic of 'dignity.'[4] Through the centuries folk music remains relatively undefined although in the United States, the genre represents songs, song texts, oral and aural transmissions of her people whether they are rural or urban, blue or white collar workers. Folk music at this time in history seems to be that of cultural, sound construction that can be used for political or personal agendas worldwide.[5] Some American ethnomusicologists have indicated that American folk music practices include but are not limited to (and varying greatly depending upon geographical region); gives the appearance of minimal structural and textual changes over time; unknown authorship of songs; disseminated orally and aurally through mentorship; songs that largely contain predictable patterns and short forms; and, songs that are added to the repertoire either directly from commercially driven mediated forms (e.g., radio, sheet music) or created in response to popular music

[4] Carole Pegg, Folk Music, Grove Music Online, 2001. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000009933?rskey=cGS5iQ&result=1.

[5] Ibid.

developments (i.e., a musician hears an old-time country song and adapts the lyrics and melody to an intended audience).[6]

Hillbilly – a term originally coined in print in the late nineteenth century[7] rooted in derogatory stereotypes about poor, rural people in the American South. Early hillbilly styles of music included old-time country, Dixie, mountain, sacred, and country that blended Anglo-American, Irish-American, and African-American folksong. Later, the term came to represent traditional folk music largely from white Appalachia and limited the breadth of regional and cultural variances.[8]

Old-Time – an overarching term that encompasses the broadest musical practices that were primarily performed in the rural communities of the American South and the Ozarks by both black and white musicians during the early part of the twentieth century. Terms such as "old familiar" or "familiar-tunes" are assumed as "old-time" as there seems to be little that separates them in the literature.[9] This term is eventually becomes assumed by the

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[6] Kip Lornell, *Exploring American Folk Music: Ethnic, Grassroots, and Regional Traditions in the United States*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 13-14.

[7] Hillbilly, *The Railroad Trainman's Journal* Vol. ix (1892), Online Etymology Dictionary, https://www.etymonline.com/word/hillbilly.

[8] Archie Green, *Torchin' the Fink: Books and Other Essays on Vernacular* Culture, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 10-11.

[9] Gregory Reisch, "On the Notions of "Old-Time" in Country Music," in *Oxford Handbook of Country Music* edited by Travis Stimeling (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 117-140.

recording companies who developed and defined later markets as country, hillbilly, and bluegrass styles of music performed primarily by white male and female musicians.

Skiffle Instruments – kazoos (also known as *jazz whistles*), washboards, cowbells, saws, jugs, and stovepipes.[10]

Skifflin' (on the street) – is black vernacular from Knoxville, Tennessee meaning for playing music on the street for money.[11]

String-bands – I have defined this term as two or more people playing stringed instruments including guitar, banjo, mandolin, and fiddle. Combinations of the same instruments such as two guitars would, under this definition, constitute a string band but this constellation is rare. It is common to have a guitar play rhythm and a mandolin, banjo, or fiddle play the lead melody. However, there are exceptions. Additional instrumentation such as voice, jug, kazoo, washboard, piano, or accordion added to the string-band soundscape. I determined this definition based on field discussions with academics in the American South and on my close reading of the literature about the role that record companies had and still have in dividing and, in my opinion, diminishing the inventive and inclusive musical practices of black string-band musicians. Black musicians in string-bands played in diverse

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[10] Marshall Wyatt and Bengt Olsson, *Good For What Ails You: Music of the Medicine Shows*, (North Carolina: Old Hat Enterprises, 2005), liner notes.

[11] Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong, "WBIR: Heartland Series, Howard Armstrong," (Knoxville: Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound, 1989), 00m13s.

settings among variant ensembles and were proficient in multiple musical styles that often overlapped in their string-band ensembles. For example, black musicians in string-bands might have a solo or duo downhome blues profile and may have recorded blues songs for blues recording sessions or old-time string-band tunes for string-band recording sessions. Examples of higher profile musicians from this time period who had the skills, profile, and repertoire to be considered both string-band, old-time, jazz, and downhome blues artists included Gus “Banjo Joe” Cannon, McKinley “Muddy Waters” Morganfield, Lonnie Johnson, Howard “Louie Bluie” Armstrong, “Memphis Minnie” McCoy, and Bo Carter.

Vaudeville Blues - Vaudeville blues was a popular form of urban music that incorporated minstrelsy, ragtime, and jazz into its production.[12]

[12] Titon 1977, xvi.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Purpose

The aim of this project is to understand how black musicians in early string-bands (1920-1950) in the Southern United States (Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi) navigated social, political, and musical restrictions surrounding race by adapting traditional black and white folk music with fresh arrangements and the introduction of skiffle instruments (i.e., washboard, kazoo, clay jug) in order to present their music to a wider audience. Racially diverse and inclusive musical exchanges between white and black musicians in string-bands (1920-1950) have been largely overlooked. My research indicates that interconnectivity among musicians prompted the emergence of new styles music and, in the process, became black cultural products. The expansion of stylistic repertoires meant greater access to a variety of performance opportunities that kept their careers relevant. Many black musicians who were recorded in the string-band ensemble made innovative contributions to American folk music and popular music styles that emerged subsequently, including downhome blues, jazz, hillbilly, and old-time country music.

This dissertation seeks to clarify social, cultural, and political complexities early in the twentieth century that affected the ways we

understand American popular music today. There has, rightfully, been a great deal of attention in the literature (i.e., Evans, Oliver, Lomax) about black musicians who were recorded playing downhome blues early in the twentieth century. However, my research lies beyond the limitations of genre and expands the boundaries of our understandings about the breadth of the musical lives of highly skilled and networked black musicians. The music that black musicians contributed to string-bands would be even more obscure if it were not for the entrepreneurial endeavours of early American record companies in the 1920s and 1930s (i.e., OKeh, Gennett, Paramount), American companies during the 1960s folk revival (i.e., Folkways, Rounder, Yazoo) and, European labels during the 1990s old-time music revival (i.e., Document, JSP, Bear Family).

My research will fill a critical gap in the understanding of American popular music from 1920 to 1950, by focusing largely on black, male musicians and singers in string-bands instead of giving cursory mention. The scope of this dissertation identifies significant locations in the American South where black musicians in string-bands were recorded during the height of sound recordings called the *Golden Age* (1927-1930)[13]. Then, parts of the sound and film recording career of one particularly extraordinary musician, Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon, are transcribed and evaluated within their historical context in order

[13] Marshall Wyatt and Bengt Olsson, *Good for What Ails You: Music of the Medicine Shows*, (Raleigh, North Carolina: Old Hat Records, 2005), liner notes.

to offer insights about how black musicians adapted to legally imposed restrictions during the *Jim Crow* era.

By focusing on the black musicians who performed in string-bands, I will highlight accomplishments and contributions that have not been properly recognized. This lack of recognition is part of a longer history of racial oppression. In order to write about black musicians, it is critical to try to understand the social and cultural restrictions of daily life, the political tensions surrounding abolition and emancipation, and the manner by which music reflected their lived realities. Historical documentation offers some clarification about black music practices but this history is limited by time and distance.

My research position is that of a white, female, Canadian, scholar, educator, and accomplished roots and blues musician. The interpretation of this time in history is affected by cognitive biases inherent to geographical distance, limited exposure to the multitude of regional variations, as well as cultural, social, and political nuances. My music has been featured regionally, nationally, and internationally where I am recognized for my commitment to early roots and blues education, song writing, and slide guitar playing. My musical and academic projects have been recognized supported by: the Canada Council for the Arts; Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada; Songwriters Association of Canada; Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada; Alberta Foundation for the Arts; Edmonton Arts Council; Maple Blues Awards Society of Canada, and the University of Alberta - Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research.

My interest in graduate work began after a blues writing and performance residency in the American South in 2008. I completed my Masters of Music at the University of Alberta in 2011 with extensive ethnomusicological research in North Mississippi, United States and Ghana, West Africa where I focused on the roots of black musicians currently performing fife and drum music and the linkages to musical styles in West Africa. The decision to complete a dissertation regarding black musicians in the American South was fuelled by my ongoing musical network with musician and academics that have provided much encouragement for my ideas about some of the early black musicians in popular music.

I am aware, at least in part, of the cognitive biases that I bring to this project and it occurs to me that my network in the American South consists mainly of white academics and black musicians. I completed due diligence by reaching out to black academics through voice and email with limited interest in my topic. However, a black emeritus professor with specialized knowledge in this area was excited to be a part of my examining committee but timing proved problematic. When possible, I present oral, primary source material of black artists, critical race theorists and those with regional expertise first,

followed by publications by white Americans with regional knowledge, and then others with specific knowledge including researchers outside the South and record collectors. My interest in the music of the American South began, like many, with hearing early twentieth century recordings that challenged my Eurocentric notions of time and meaning. I have made efforts to dissect the racially and socially imagined worlds crafted by record companies, academics, and fans. My perspective, position, and critical analysis in this dissertation are the result of my career as a professional musician. I have had opportunities to live in the American South, and receive musical mentorship and education from cultural gatekeepers from black communities. Over the past ten years, I have supplemented the privilege of this degree of trust with ethnographic and archival research in the field, as well as extensive reading and teaching on a broad range of topics about American popular music. My hope is that my archival research and music transcriptions will, in some small way, serve to include more black voices in our understanding of North American history.

1.2 Background

The Great Migration

The abolition of slavery in the United States was a highly contentious movement that divided the nation, north and west from south and east, urban from rural. At the center of this battle was the continued economic control of the bodies of black people – their labour and their cultural

productions.[14] Northern ideologies about slavery were also divided but there was a general belief that forming the Union of states required permanently ending slavery. This led to the American Civil War (1861-1865) and emancipation of black slaves.

The promise of freedom and opportunity among newly freed black slaves in the American South was never fully realized. Emancipation after the *American Civil War* (1861-1865) may have solved the moral dilemma of slavery, but it did not interrupt the subjugation of the black body. Black ex-slaves sought freedom, independence, equality, and exploration of newly possible identities, but these hopes were muted by *Black Code* laws that allowed local law enforcement to imprison African American people for any activities however innocent (e.g., meeting up with each other in public). Imprisonment of black people for vagrancy was a common practice across the South. Essentially, whites needed free labour to function economically and if it was not coming through slavery then it had to come from prisoners.[15]

By 1890, state-by-state *Jim Crow* statutes were enacted by legislators to enforce racial segregation of blacks in matters concerning transportation, housing, health, recreation, and education – giving separate but equal status -

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[14] Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 31-32.

[15] Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 87-101.

to public spaces.[16] The profound impact of these laws on the lives of black people cannot be overstated. By the turn of the century, mass numbers of black and white people migrated from Southern to Northern states in search of employment opportunities. Unfortunately, statistics from the period are skewed as there are only two races designated: southern-born blacks and southern-born whites. Individuals identifying as Native American or Hispanic would likely have been subsumed into the southern-born black category.[17] However, migration patterns generally differed based on race and class. For example, white elites and black professionals left the South along different routes. The trend at that time was that whites migrated west (Oklahoma, California) while blacks migrated northeast (New York, New Jersey) as far as money could take them. Those with fewer financial resources arrived en mass to cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, and Louisville. Between 1890 and 1930, over 3 million white and 2 million blacks had migrated from the South.[18]

The combination of higher pay, greater safety, and access to education was appealing to black musicians migrating to the urban North.

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[16] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History, 3rd Edition*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 221.

[17] James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 330.

[18] Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1870-1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States,* (Population Division Working Papers, 56, 2002), 1-163.

During this time period (1890-1920), urban America bloomed, increasing its population from seventeen to fifty million with a dramatic flux of black migration and European immigration.[19] The dynamic flow of people, increased economic opportunities, new cultural and musical interchanges of folk music styles. These exchanges were part of the formulation of a new identity and the beginning of national reformation.[20] At that time, blacks working in urban centers as musicians or entertainers were financially on par with teachers, police, and fire services.[21]

The possibilities of returning to the Lower South after migration were different for blacks and whites. While they shared the common goal of migrating for financial stability in farming and industry, many of the white migrants exhibited circular migration – they left for many years but were eventually able to return home. That was impossible for blacks, given the lingering dangers of segregation and imprisonment.

Building a Nation

There were dynamic political, social, and cultural tensions surrounding

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[19] Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy" in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface* by James Hatch, Brooks McNamara, and Annemarie Bea, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996) 82.

[20] Steven Tracy, *Hot Music, Ragmentation, and the Bluing of American Literature*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 3.

[21] Gregory 2005, 356.

what it meant to be *American* following the *American Reconstruction* period (1863-1877).[22] It was a period of both opportunity and restriction. Transportation infrastructures such as railroads and roads were being built to facilitate easier access to trade centers. These networks connected previously isolated communities and offered people new opportunities for work and leisure. People were on the move, generating more income, and introduced to new ways to spend it. Technological advances in the printing press and sound recordings had a direct impact on published and performed music and foreshadowed mass consumption early in the twentieth century.[23]

White academics and song collectors fragmented musical outputs into *high* (formal European art or religious music) and *low* (popular and accessible to the masses).[24] For example, opera and classical music performed in theatres was often consumed by white elites who represented upper socio-economic status. Meanwhile, entertainment spaces where ragtime and vaudeville blues were performed were mostly viewed as music befitting the improper and uneducated masses.

The American musical canon, a determination of which musical styles

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[22] Benjamin Filene, *Romanticizing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 25-26.

[23] Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Invention Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 2-5.

[24] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 234.

reflected the morals and ideologies of the nation, was being contested throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The elite classes vying for the authority and power to determine what was, in this case, musically appropriate or inappropriate, was driven by Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideals about morality. Those musical styles that were deemed *high culture* or representative of moral rightness (opera, classical, religious, English ballads) were acceptable. Meanwhile, *low culture* music like blackface minstrelsy, ragtime, downhome blues, and hillbilly were at the lower end of the spectrum, as they were deemed dangerous and immoral.[25]

Intersectional politics of respectability, who is *in* and who is *out*, were overlaid with ideas about socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, and gender.[26] For example, the degrees of acceptable black performance activities were restricted to those of Christian religious music (i.e., Fisk Jubilee Singers) because the music aligned with white, Protestant moral conduct. The Fisk Jubilee Singers were an all-black ensemble of students from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. They formed in 1871 and sang a repertoire consisting of traditional spirituals and popular songs of

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[25] Filene 2000, 26.

[26] Alison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles Over Race and Representation, 1890-1930,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 4.

the time such as songs written by Stephen Foster.[27] Even though the Fisk Jubilee Singers were singing songs from the time of slavery, they were not *acting* like slaves (a reference to blackface minstrelsy) on theatre stages.[28]

The cultural stratification of the American musical canon extended beyond Western art music and religious music into the early study of American folk song tradition. An example of this is English scholar and folklorist, Cecil Sharp (1859-1924), who gathered an extensive collection of British folk songs and folk dances present in Southern Appalachia region of the United States.[29] This collection of British ballads became the center of America's folk music heritage among academics and institutions to the outright exclusion of black musical culture that existed in the area as well.[30]

As a result of the great migrations, increased black urban populations created and sustained new, vibrant communities that wished to express, document, and shed the thick racial representations and negative internalization of their rural *Jim Crow* experiences. The *Harlem Renaissance*

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[27] Tim Brooks and Richard Spottswood, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 192-214.

[28] K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 173-174.

[29] Frank Howes, "Cecil James Sharp," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.25594.

[30] Filene 2000, 15-27.

also known as the *New Negro Movement* that occurred during the 1920s and 1930s[31] was one result of migration. The area of the Harlem in New York City became the epicenter of artistic and intellectual challenges to white dominated political and legal establishments. During this time, black communities embraced the physical distance from an oppressive white American and sought psychological freedom as well. The desire among black people was to develop self-reliant social structures within urban settings. This allowed for stronger racial consciousness and racial solidarity. The results were artistic and cultural expressions in music, literature, art, theatre, dance, and poetry that seemed unbeholden to white America and signified a racial awakening.[32]

Both rural and urban black musicians during the 1920s and 1930s continued to play music in theatres, minstrel troupes or roadshows, clubs, saloons, street corners, juke joints, steamships, or as a part of their community activities that included church, home, or dances.[33] However, black artists living in urban centers began to creatively express political, social, and

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[31] Alain Locke, *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1925.)

[32] Gabriel A. Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 2-5.

[33] Huber 2013, 8.

cultural realities of living in a segregated society.[34] Some thought that literary acts such as poetry, playwriting, and the lyrical text of songs were indicative of the movement[35] while others thought of it as an extension of vibrant black culture that had already existed for centuries but, this time, without the volatility and violence of racial segregation.[36] The effects of the *Harlem Renaissance* as an insular community of artists reached beyond its northern, urban centers affecting musical artists and artistic productions in the Lower South as well. One such example is the movie *Hallelujah* released in 1929. This film is the second all-black musical and among the first *talkies* (sounded motion pictures), was written and produced by white Texan, King Vidor; largely cast with black actors from Harlem; musically directed by Eva Jessye, a black, female composer from New York; shot on location in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi; cast singers, dancers, and extras from Memphis, and highlighted black musician Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon who was regionally renowned for his musical skills on vaudeville stages, recordings with black string-bands, and leadings one of the finest jug bands in Memphis in the 1920s and 1930s. The socio-political context of *Hallelujah* and the music of black

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[34] Briggs 2015, 138.

[35] Wyatt & Olsson 2005, liner notes.

[36] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gene Andrew Jarrett, "Introduction," in *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4-8.

string-band musician, as highlighted in chapter four of this dissertation, may reconstitute understanding about history, race, and region.[37]

Racial Interactions and Racialization of Musical Style

The later part of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century was a period of musical fluidity influenced by expanded travel routes (railway lines, roadways), technological advancements (pressing vinyl, affordable phonographs, wireless telegraphy), and organized musical touring routes (i.e., Theatre Owners Booking Association). These advances led to increased opportunities for musical influences and exchanges. For example, local musicians had opportunity to attend performances by regional and national touring musicians. Radio broadcasts also introduced various performers and musical styles that may have otherwise unknown. For example, radio stations relied less on playing records than on live performances by musicians on show segments that were sponsored by local companies (e.g., brands food products such as flour, local businesses such as hardware stores).

Musical exchanges among black, white, Native American, and Hispanic musicians at the turn of the twentieth century occurred primarily within the vibrant travelling show circuit. Theatre troupes such as vaudeville acts, circus

[37] Briggs, 2015, 21-22.

shows, and rural medicine shows (travelling shows of salespeople and performers sponsored by companies that promoted ointments and elixirs claiming medicinal properties), presented a variety of *Ethiopian blackface* (whites in blackface), blacks in blackface, comedians, musicians, dancers, actors, and jugglers. As a result of these exchanges, new styles of music seemed to form overnight, when in reality they had been in motion for many years among black musicians before being claimed and named by white America.[38] Examples of this type of musical appropriation occurred in many musical styles including ragtime, vaudeville blues, jazz, and old-time.

What became known as *ragtime* or *ragged time* was the result of black folk songs performed on piano in lively syncopated rhythms.[39] Scott Joplin's 1899 classic, *Maple Leaf Rag*[40] was part of a musical style that some in white America considered to be fringe style of black music with inherent dangers such as intellectual, physical, and moral decay. However, white audiences embraced ragtime before white owned business owners saw it as a profitable product.[41]

The creative tour-de-force among black travelling musicians seemed

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[38] LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1963), 66.

[39] Edward Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 24.

[40] Ibid, 66-68.

[41] Ibid, 109.

unstoppable and by 1902, classic blues and jazz was at the forefront of American popular music. Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the "Mother of the Blues," first performed a song called, *The Blues*, in 1902 as part of her vaudeville show after hearing it played by a musician along her tour circuit in the American South.[42] W. C. Handy, "Father of the Blues," who kept meticulous records of his travels and musical encounters, scored and published the *Memphis Blues*, in 1912 reportedly after hearing a black slide guitarist play the blues at a railroad station in Tutwiler, Mississippi.[43]

There was similar racist sentiment about classic jazz and blues as there was about ragtime until the remarkable success of Mamie Smith's *Crazy Blues* in 1920.[44] Record and publishing companies took notice of the changing streams of revenue as it shifted with new technologies (i.e., electrostatic microphone, portable gramophone). The improved sound recordings, mass record pressing, and affordable record players changed how consumers interacted with music: from sheet music notation for the eyes to sounds for the ears.

History of Black String-bands

The dates of the formation of the first black string-bands are uncertain.

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[42] Jones 1963, 89.

[43] John W. Work, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals*, (New York: Bonanza Books, 1940), 32.

[44] Filene 2000, 34.

It is known that black musicians were performing in all-black and black and white string-band ensembles on Southern plantations prior to 1865.[45] Black musicians served as a multi-purpose commodity among plantation owners as they provided free physical labour in the fields by day and musical entertainment by night. The function of black slaves who played fiddle, banjo, mandolin, or guitar was to provide entertainment for formal dance parties in the *main house*. Meanwhile, across the yard in the *slave quarters*, black musicians used music to ease the strain of hard labour in the fields and also for communal celebrations. From the earliest days of slavery, the music of blacks consisted of blending African and European music[46] that incorporated *patting juba* (percussive, rhythmic action where the body becomes a site for drumming), *jig-tunes*, *devil songs*, and *fiddle-songs*.[47] Repertoire performed by musicians was shaped by oral transmission within a family, by shared and *caught* (heard) tunes at musical events, and by mentorship from black or white itinerant musicians who were passing through town.[48] The task of discerning racial or

[45] Southern 1997, 170-172.

[46] W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Dover Publication, 1994 *originally published in 1904), 159.

[47] Lornell 2017, 177-178.

[48] Cecilia Conway, *African American Echoes in Appalachia: A Study of Folk Traditions*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1995), 10-12.

ethnic repertoires remains difficult precisely because of the great deal of interplay among musicians representing a variety of folk traditions.[49]

Coining of term *string-band* is uncertain even though black musicians played stringed instruments in duo, trio, and full band groupings on slave plantations and in travelling music shows. Black musician, George Morrison, a bandleader from Colorado, reported that he performed in a *black string-band* in mining camps and mountain towns as early as 1900 out of necessity because there were no other bands to play for dances.[50] It seems likely that black musicians who played stringed instruments would have been assumed under different performance labels other than *string-band* including being a part of a minstrel or vaudeville troupe, a travelling medicine show, or a tent show (figure 1). These shows employed black and white rural musicians at a time when musical opportunities to perform were sparse.[51]

Early Sound Recording Industry

From 1890 to 1929, early recorded music was commercially released on wax cylinders. This music included dance band music, jazz and blues,

[49] Barry Lee Pearson, *Virginia Piedmont Blues: The Lives and Art of Two Virginia Bluesmen*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 11.

[50] Southern 1997, 340.

[51] Wyatt & Olsson 2005, liner notes.

Figure 1. Black minstrel musicians play instruments outdoors for a group of white soldiers in a camp, during the US Civil War, circa 1863.[52]

vaudeville skits, and other common music.[53] By the early part of the 1920s, sound recording companies sought to define the styles and regional variations of string-band music in general. It proved unstable and complicated to categorize music that crossed gender and racial divides among urban and rural

[52] Getty Images 1863. https://www.gettyimages.ca/license/103000941.

[53] Belfer Cylinder Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, 2011, https://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/b/belfer_cylinders.htm.

people in the American South. The categorical umbrella of this inclusive and diverse system of music makers was called either *old-time* or *old-familiar* but the sounds and ensembles were string-bands. OKeh records first introduced their category as *Old Time Records* and Columbia as *Old Familiar Tunes*.[54]

> These early years saw the release of recordings by solo singers and vocal groups-including men, women, and children performing old-world ballads, native ballads, event songs, parlor songs, comic songs, minstrel songs, cowboy songs, work songs, blues, Hawaiian songs, Tin Pan Alley hits, and gospel hymns. Instrumental solos and ensembles covered a comparably wide range of categories, including hoedowns, breakdowns, reels, hornpipes, jigs, waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, foxtrots, marches, blues, stomps, wobbles, and various programmatic works. The instruments that early country artists used, in seemingly endless combinations, included fiddle, banjo, guitar, cello, piano, mandolin, ukulele, accordion, organ, autoharp, kazoo, jug, harmonica, Jew's harp, and others. Performance styles varied, too, according to the region, skill level, training, and taste of the artists. "Old-time" and "familiar" had the capacity to incorporate all of this while reassuring consumers that the music conformed to their tastes, experiences, and expectations.[55]

Despite not being made explicit, the above description of *old-time* musicians and their practices did include ethnic diversity as well. This is evidenced by record company business strategies in the 1920s that sought to form a market labelled *race records* reflecting, to some degree, the black from white segregationist practices of *Jim Crow* laws in the

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[54] Gregory Reisch, "On the Notions of "Old-Time" in Country Music," in *Oxford Handbook of Country Music* edited by Travis Stimeling (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 117-140.

[55] Reisch 2017, 126-127.

American South as well as an attempt to determine and capitalize on sales markets. In addition, *old-time* in the 1920s was not synonymous with the country music genre necessarily although there were certainly overlapping elements. It was developed and defined over time as with the other forms (e.g., hillbilly categorized as bluegrass).

The diverse ranges of musical styles identified by their colloquial names (e.g., folk, vaudeville blues, hillbilly, old time) were without racial designation for the first two decades of the twentieth century.[56] However, by 1921, OKeh records created the first racially defined genre categories for recorded American folk music (*race records)*; other record companies such as Columbia, Paramount, Vocalion, Brunswick, and Victor established similar racial categories soon after.[57]

As with their urban counterparts, rural black and white musicians in string-bands reflected their social, political, and economic realities through creative outputs. White musicians continued to perform and tour together as did black musicians. They would tour from community to community in the region performing at political events, church gatherings, or community picnics. These bands were not typically racially integrated. However, some exceptions

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[56] Green 2001, 14.

[57] Patrick Huber, "Black Hillbillies: African American Musicians on Old-Time Records, 1924-1932" in *Hidden in the Mix: The African American Presence in Country Music* edited by Diane Pecknold, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 21.

to this norm are known. For example, black fiddler Andrew Baxter (1869-1955) recorded with the *Georgia Yellowhammers*,[58] black guitarist and singer, Mississippi John Hurt (1893-1966), was known to open for and even sit in to replace a member of the white string duo, *Narmour & Smith*,[59] black fiddler, Cuje Bertram (1894-1993) indicated that his father played banjo in a duo with "Jimmy Copely, a white man at Three Forks, he was a wonderful fiddler…. they'd go to dances, he'd play the fiddle and my dad would play the banjo,"[60] and white, female, multi-instrumentalist Willie Sievers-Sharp (1909-1998), from Knoxville, Tennessee stated that she learned the blues from a black family string-band, "the Armstrongs in Knoxville on Jackson and Central….they played acoustic guitars and they had a big bass fiddle….we would go down there and they just had a touch on the blues that you can't get anywhere and we liked it."[61]

Some music was based on solitary reflection (e.g., downhome blues, hillbilly ballads) while others were intended for collective celebrations (i.e.,

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[58] Tony Russell and Charles K. Wolfe, "Hell Broke Loose In Gordon County Georgia," *Old Time Music* 25, Summer 1977, 9-22.

[59] Barry Mazor, "Narmour & Smith," Mississippi Country Music Trail, Nashville: Country Music Hall of Fame, 2018, http://www.mscountrymusictrail.org/markers/narmour-and-smith.

[60] Bobby Fulcher, "Cuje Bertram: Excerpts From An Interview," (*Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* Vol. LIII, No. 2 (1987): 59.)

[61] Willie Sievers-Sharp, "WBIR: Heartland #3," (Knoxville: Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound, 1989), 12m35s.

old-time, country, string- bands). These styles of music reflected individual and community activities and also existed as a form of performance income. Economic realities influenced the types of instruments played, for example, the banjo, fiddle, and acoustic guitar were portable and inexpensive compared to pianos or instruments that required electrification.[62] Stylistically, early black string-bands played in a variety of instrument tunings, highlighted varied aesthetic approaches on their instrument and in their vocals (i.e., ticks, growls, yelps, groans), and improvised melody and structure with regionally based traditional folk songs.[63] Many of the songs were secular, humorous, upbeat, and, sometimes, bawdy, reflecting a diversity of material.[64]

Recordings made of black musicians were initially led by black or white owned record labels. Black owned record businesses included Black Swan (1921-1923) founded in Harlem, New York and partially owned by W. C. Handy "Father of the Blues",[65] Sunshine Label (1921/22-unknown) formed in Los Angeles with a catalogue that only contained three titles,[66] Meritt Records

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[62] Pearson 1990, 14.

[63] Lornell 2012, 19.

[64] Wyatt & Olsson 2005, liner notes.

[65] David Suisman, Black Swan, Grove Music Online, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusic online.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002282225?rskey=Z478ui&result=2.

[66] Howard Rye, Sunshine, *Grove Music Online* 2002,http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000435300?rskey=3gXeXG&result=2.

(1925-1929) of Kansas City founded by music store owner, Winston M. W. Holmes[67] and the very short lived, Black Patti Records (1927-1927) owned by the Chicago Record Company with recordings made in Gennett studios and eventually subsumed under the Gennett catalogue and subsidiary labels.[68] White owned independent record companies included: OKeh (1918-1926) founded in New York by General Phonograph (later, acquired by Columbia) set up a race series called the *Colored Catalog* from 1921-1923;[69] Vocalion (1916-1925), a division of the Aeolian Company based in New York;[70] Paramount (1917-1932) from Port Washington, Wisconsin produced race series recordings in 1922 and, over the course of next ten years, had released an excess of one thousand recordings by some of the finest music stars including Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Fletcher Henderson, and King Oliver;[71] Gennett (1917-1947/48) located

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[67] Howard Rye, Meritt (i), Grove Music Online, 2002,http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000298100?rskey=614a7T&result=5.

[68] Howard Rye, Black Patti (ii), *Grove Music Online*, 2002, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000045400?rskey=r1byLJ&result=1.

[69] Howard Rye, OKeh, *Grove Music Online*, 2001, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000048934?rskey=9Bejbo&result=2.

[70] Howard Rye, Vocalion, *Grove Music Online*, 2002, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000468700?rskey=ObVXL8&result=2.

[71] Howard Rye and Barry Kernfeld, Paramount, *Grove Music Online*, 2001, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000048936?rskey=0f6kwx&result=1.

in Richmond, Indiana was responsible for producing many seminal recordings such as those by Bix Beiderbecke, Vernon Dalhart, and Jelly Roll Morton;[72] Ajax (1921-1925) founded by the Campo Company of Lachine, Canada and distributed through its subsidiary in Chicago,[73] and Pathé (1922-1938) founded in France.[74] Eventually, large record companies, such as Columbia (1887-1929) and Victor (1901-1929), entered the marketplace seeking to capitalize on the music of black musicians once continued demand and sales revenues were substantiated.[75]

It was, however, a turbulent ride for record businesses throughout the 1920s. For example, Black Swan reported sales revenues of $100,000 in 1921, but three years later, they were closed. Many labels followed suit as the popularity of regionally specific, business sponsored commercial radio emerged. Commercial radio offered programs sponsored by local businesses and broadcast live, in-studio performances by musicians in addition to playing

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[72] Ian Brookes, Gennett, *Grove Music Online*, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002282966?rskey=dyewe5&result=1.

[73] Howard Rye, Ajax, *Grove Music Online*, 2002, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000004600?rskey=fK6vRQ&result=1.

[74] Howard Rye, Pathe, Grove Music Online, 2002, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000347500?rskey=O2zk3s&result=3.

[75] William Barlow, *"Looking Up at Down:" The Emergence of Blues Culture*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 129.

recorded music. As the economy slowed so too did in the purchase of records especially when you could hear a favourite regional musician for free on the radio. The issue for independent labels, black or white owned, was their ability to advertise their products beyond various regional record sales markets in the American South. The larger companies such as Columbia, Paramount, and OKeh weathered the financial woes that befell other companies and continued to develop the record sales marketplace for black music nationally.[76]

By 1922, the dominant record companies were attempting to categorize music by black musicians. OKeh talent scout, Ralph Peer, is credited with creating the first designation of black music called the *8000 Series* or *race records*. This category included vaudeville blues, jazz, and gospel music. Other record companies soon followed suit.[77]

The most successful record companies employed often white, but sometimes black, *A&R men* (artist & repertoire) to scout for talent in key sales markets for black music such as Chicago, Memphis, Jackson, Mississippi, New York, and, Atlanta. These talent scouts came from a variety of business backgrounds. For example, Clarence Williams (1893-1965), one of OKeh's black A&R men, was a minstrel show musician for the great Bessie Smith (1894-1937), a booking agent for theatres, dance halls, and saloons as well as talent scout.

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[76] Ibid., 128-129.

[77] Ibid.

He moved frequently and often resided in musical hot spots such as New Orleans, Chicago, and New York over the span of his career.[78]

It was common practice for A&R men to act as artists' agents of sorts, negotiating contracts on their behalf with major record companies. Williams acted in this capacity for Bessie Smith (1894-1937), during her recordings with Columbia Records in 1923. Prominent, urban, artists like Smith received $125 per side for the recording while publishing companies would own copyright on the recording entitling them to royalty fees.[79] In the case of Bessie Smith, some of her greatest hits would sell 750,000 copies in the first six months after release. It is estimated that she sold in excess of six million albums over the course of her career and never received any royalties.[80]

Black musicians in the Southern rural areas who played old-time, country, string-band, or downhome blues either travelled to record for record companies in large urban centers such as (Chicago, New York, Atlanta), were transported by train from smaller (Memphis) to larger centers (Chicago) to record,[81] or were recorded during remote recording sessions in hotel rooms (or other informal spaces) in smaller urban centers (Knoxville, Memphis, Jackson).

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[78] Roy Carr, A Century of Jazz, (Da Capo Press: New York, 1997), 18-35.

[79] Chris Albertson, *Bessie*, 2nd ed., (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 46.

[80] Levine 1988, 478.

[81] Don Flemons, "Can You Blame Gus Cannon?," (*Oxford American: A Magazine of the South*, 83, 2013: online).

A&R men such as Ralph Peer (1892-1960) from OKeh relied on a network of regional talent scouts who owned local businesses, often sponsored on-air radio performances, and, in the case of H. C. Speir (1895-1972) from Jackson, Mississippi, vetted the talent in advance and forwarded the information to *A&R* executives. They were taken advantage of under much the same business model as their urban counterparts but in a more egregious fashion. For example, it was commonplace for white A&R men to ply black musicians with free alcohol during recording sessions and pay a substantially lower fee per side ($15-$20). Signatures obtained on legal paperwork regarding copyright and royalties were collected while the musician was under the influence of alcohol and unable to make an informed decision.[82]

The peak of race record sales was in 1927 when they were in excess of $100 million but by 1933 sales were dismal in the midst of the *Great Depression* (1929-1939).[83] Consequently, race record releases were drastically cut back, field recording ventures into the South were discontinued, the labels manufactured fewer and fewer copies of each title, and records prices fell from seventy-five to thirty-five centers a disc. Whereas the average race record on the market sold approximately ten thousand copies in the mid-twenties, it plummeted to two thousand in 1930, and bottomed out at four

[82] Barlow 1989, 131-133.

[83] Ibid., 133.

hundred in 1932.[84] The smaller labels were gradually forced out of business while the major record companies with large catalogues that went into debt were purchased by more prosperous media corporations based in radio and film. The record companies with race catalogues that totally succumbed to the economic downturn were Paramount, OKeh, and Gennett.[85]

Rural string-band musicians sustained their craft through the 1930s on radio programs and live performances despite the problems with the recording industry. Their performance networks developed during the latter part of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century because of touring opportunities in travelling shows and medicine shows. Medicine show businesses, in particular, experienced growth during the great depression (1929-1939) selling pseudo medicinal products (figures 2-5) in travelling medicine shows that employed musicians, comedians, actors, and singers. Black and white musicians who played instruments that could stand up to the rigors of the road (e.g., guitar, banjo, mandolin, brass horns) toured with these shows, formed racially integrated performance ensembles, and were also part of the photographic and radio sponsored company advertisements.

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[84] Ibid., 133.

[85] Ibid.

Figure 2. Traveling medicine staging a minstrel show outside the Lumpkin County Courthouse, Dahlonega, Georgia, circa 1942.[86]

Black string-band musicians such as Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon and Jim Jackson (figure 5) became veterans on the medicine show circuit were able to

[86] Bernard Hoffman, "Traveling Medicine Staging a Minstrel Show Outside the Lumpkin County Courthouse, Dahlonega, Georgia," (*LIFE*: TimeLife_Image_571004, 1942), photograph. https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/-/FAEGnxW914osew.

Figure 3. Memphis Medicine Show, circa 1920.[87]

adapt their music to help sell medicinal products to radio audiences. This new form of publicity assisted in record sales, offered another performance opportunity, provided publicity for upcoming live shows, and promoted the musician to consumers who perhaps could not afford a record but could afford a nickel to play a song on the jukebox located in places of business such as

[87] Baid Nixon, "Medicine Shows," (MusicMemphis: A History of the Memphis Music Scene, 2011), https://musicmemphis.wordpress.com/2011/01/09/medicine-shows/.

Figure 4. Farmers listening to sales talk of patent medicine vendor in warehouse during tobacco auctions, Durham, North Carolina, circa 1939.[88]

restaurants, diners, or bars and lounges.[89]

By the early 1940s, Nashville's Fisk University, established by the American Missionary Association in 1866 as a college for freed slaves,[90] identified the need to record black, rural musicians in the American South.

[88] Marion Post Wolcott, "Farmers Listening to Sales Talk of Patent Medicine Vendor in Warehouse During Tobacco Auctions, Durham, North Carolina," (Washington: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, 1939), http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection /fsa/item/2017802041.

[89] Wyatt & Olsson 2005, liner notes.

Figure 5: Doctor Franklin Streets' Washaw Indian Medicine Company from Kansas City Missouri. In blackface, Jim Jackson (left) and Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon (right) both recording artists and longtime med-show veterans.[91]

Professor John Work III (1901-1967) led the project for Fisk University around the same time that the Library of Congress was supporting Alan Lomax (1915-2002) to do a similar project. Both Work and Lomax made recordings of black musicians on location using portable recording devices that were transported by car to the home of the musician. This allowed for a breadth of socio-cultural context that accompanied non-commercial audio recordings. The importance of

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[90] Sandra Jean Graham, "Jubilee Singers [Fisk Jubilee Singers]," *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002249936?rskey=QtJJdd&result=2.

[91] Ibid.

the Work and Lomax audio recordings of black musicians, some of whom played in string bands, was as important for their field notes about the musicians in their socio-cultural contexts as it was for the recordings themselves.[92] Until this point, the social, political, or cultural lives of black musicians were not the focus of audio recordings. The focal point for record companies before this point in history was product consumption based on the musical recording, artist or band name, and their staged photographs. That is not to say that Work or Lomax and other field workers who accompanied their projects as assistants did not have a commercial or professional interests in their subjects but their focus was different from that of commercial record companies. Their recorded works, liner notes, fieldwork records, and fieldwork photographs were foundational in placing the human life at least on par with the music and musical practices musicians'. These observations and primary source interviews often contained in the liner notes for their albums provide historical record that remain integral in American folk and roots music today.[93] The two seminal albums as it relates to this project included Work's *John Wesley Work III: Recording Black Culture* (1938) and Lomax's *Deep River of Song* (1999).

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[92] Alan & John Lomax, "*Deep River of Song: Black Appalachia String Bands, Songsters and Hoedowns,*" (Cambridge: Rounder Records, 1999), CD. Bruce Nemerov, "John Wesley Work III: Field Recordings of Southern Black Folk Music, 1935-1942," in *A Tennessee Folklore Sampler: Selections from the Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin (1935-2009)* edited by Ted Olson, Anthony P. Cavender, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 315-335.

[93] Dr. Gregory Reisch (Director of the Centre for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee), in-person discussions May 1-13, 2017.

John Wesley Work III (1901-1967) was a black scholar, composer, performer, and teacher of music and black culture at Fisk University from 1933-1966. He made significant contributions to the study black American folk music publishing key works including the book, *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1940), [94] and *John Wesley Work III: Recording Black Culture* (1938).[95] The field recordings released as part of that publication are divided into six headings: social songs, the quartets, work song, congregational singing, blues, and coloured sacred harp. The transcript from his Robinson lecture (1938) regarding black secular music indicated that he observed and recorded was that the "music was produced by small groups – from one player with a guitar, mandolin, piano and less orthodox instruments."[96] The exact year of each recording remains debatable but sometime between 1938 and 1941, Work completed twenty-four field recordings of forty-one folk musicians[97] and recorded two songs, *Poor Black Sheep* and *Texas Traveler* by Nashville black

[94] William Burres Garcia and Willie Strong, Work Family: John Wesley Work (ii), *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000030571?result=1&rskey=qHUVHn#omo-9781561592630-e-0000030571-div1-0000030571.1.

[95] John Wesley Work, III, Bruce Nemerov, and Evan Hatch. "John Work, III: Recording Black Culture," (*RILM Abstracts of Music Literature*, 1938.)

[96] Ibid.

[97] Bruce Nemerov, "John Wesley Work III: Field Recordings of Southern Black Folk Music, 1935-1942," (*Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*, Vol. LIII, No. 3 (1987):88).

string-band musicians, Nathan Frazier (banjo) and Frank Patterson (fiddle).[98] In March of 1942, Work recorded Frazier and Patterson again in Nashville recording *Dan Tucker*, *Old Crow Died*, *Bile Them Cabbage Down*, *Po Black Sheep*, *Eighth of January*, *Corrinne*, and a repeat of *Texas Traveler*[99] (appendix B).

Deep River of Song credits field recordings and notes to Alan Lomax (1933 & 1942), Harold Spivacke (1934), John A. Lomax (1933 & 1934) as well as Robert Stuart Jamieson, Margot Mayo, and Freyda Simon in 1946. The original introduction in the liner notes was written by Alan Lomax and revised based on continued research by Stephen Wade.[100] There are twenty-two recordings recorded from 1933 to 1946. The liner notes include information about the artist names and the instrument they are playing, location and date of the recording, a brief background about the known origins of the song, and song lyrics. The tracks that are of specific to black musicians in string-bands include tracks by: Murphy Gribble (banjo), John Lusk (fiddle), and Albert York (guitar) from Virginia; the Nashville Washboard Band – James Kelly (banjo-mandolin),

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Charles K. Wolfe and Bob Carlin, *Altamont: Black Stringband Music from the Library of Congress*, (Cambridge: Rounder Records, 1989, LP).

[100] Stephen Wade, *The Beautiful Music All Around Us: Field Recordings and the American Experience*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

Figure 6. North Mississippi multi-instrumentalist, Sid Hemphill (fiddle) and Lucius Smith (banjo).

Theopolis Stokes (washboard), Thomas Carrol (tin-can bull fiddle), and Frank Dalton (guitar) from Nashville; Sid Hemphill (fiddle, vocal), Lucius Smith (banjo), Will Head (bass drum), and Alec Askew (guitar) from Mississippi and, Blind Pete (fiddle) and George Ryan (guitar) from Arkansas (figure 5) (appendix B).[101]

There are differences between commercial and non-commercial releases as it pertains to black musicians in string-bands. Commercial record companies, as evident in the following chapter, tended to record in one location in a larger

[101] Alan, Lomax and Stephen Wade, *Deep River of Song: Black Appalachia String Bands, Songsters and Hoedowns*, (Cambridge: Rounder Records, 1999, LP).

populated center. There was an audition prior to the date of recording and multiple tracks of various black and white string-bands would be recorded over the course of a day or two. They determined the best takes from the day and sent them to major city centers (i.e., Chicago, New York) for further vetting. Corporate executives decided which bands and which songs were released to radio stations and consumers.[102] The greatest number of released recordings did not necessarily indicate sales success or regional popularity as there is

Figure 7. Clifford Hayes & the Dixieland Jug Blowers.[103]

[102] Reisch 2017.

[103] Cox, Fred and Robert Armstrong, *Clifford Hayes & The Dixieland Jug Blowers*, (Yazoo Records, 1991). Photograph.

limited data in both cases. However, commercial record companies tended toward larger string-band ensembles with a well-known bandleader. Some examples include: the *Memphis Jug Band* with bandleader, Will "Son Brimmer" Shade; the *Mississippi Sheiks* with bandleader, Bo Chatman; the *Dixieland Jug Blowers* and the *Louisville Stompers* (figure 7) with their bandleader, Clifford Hayes; *Cannon's Jug Stompers* with bandleader, Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon; Joshua *"Peg Leg"* Barnes *Howell & His Gang*, and, the *Dallas String Band* with bandleader, Coley Jones.

By comparison, non-commercial recordings were collected by representatives of academically oriented institutions (i.e., Fisk University) or nationally sanctioned institutions (i.e., Library of Congress). These collectors of songs and stories tended to record individual, duo, and band ensembles in smaller, rural communities by way of recommendations from other musicians or people in the community and a parallel musical canon developed as a result. Some examples include: *Hayes & Prater*; *Gribble, Lusk, & York*, and the *Tennessee Chocolate Drops*. The prevalence of black musicians who played in old-time bands consisting of stringed instruments is limited by historical record. In spite of this limitation, commercially released recordings by Smithsonian/Folkways accounts for the large majority of these artefacts.

The challenge in creating a list of black musicians recorded in string-bands from 1920-1950 is that the majority were recorded as individual tracks

and not as full length albums. In addition, white musicians in string-bands were the primary focus of the commercial recording sessions and, as such, black string-bands were likely underrepresented. These days, original master recordings have a plethora thematically compiled releases on boutique record labels often characterized by region, genre, and instrument (i.e., *Black Banjo Songsters of North Carolina and Virginia*) (appendix A). The accompanying liner notes are of varied quality and academic rigor. I have taken a critical stance with the liner notes that often accompany these compilations by cross referencing sources and researching the credentials of the authors given that very few, if any, cite their sources of information. I am careful to cite authors who are highly regarded in this area and, where possible, I seek to confirm their information. However, I have noted that, at times, song titles and artist names are spelled incorrectly. I have encountered a few incidents where the date, recording location, or instruments played have been incorrect and have highlighted the discrepancies for further research and clarification.

Commercial and non-commercial recordings from 1920-1950 capture audio samples at a point in time in the careers of black musicians in string-bands. These artefacts form the foundation for developing a broader narrative about regional styles, adaptability, and the creation of black cultural products. They allow us, through transcription and analysis, to understand the concerns, techniques, and nuances of the artist.

CHAPTER 2: "GROOVE 'EM SIDES BOYS!:" EARLY STRING-BAND RECORDINGS

2.1 Overview

The earliest known recordings of black musician in old-time string-band ensembles occur in 1924[104] although it is possible that there were earlier recordings that have not been located. Meanwhile, black musicians in New Orleans jazz string-bands occur prior to 1920.[105] There were a broad range of repertoire, style, ensembles, and combination of instruments in an ensemble among the first recordings of black musicians playing stringed instruments. Most often, the names or artists (i.e., Gribble, Lusk, & York) or band names (i.e., Tennessee Chocolate Drops) were used rather than the term *string-band* or *stringband*. These terms seem to reflect the instruments played – acoustic and stringed – rather than a formalized record company category. Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong (Tennessee Chocolate Drops, Tennessee Trio, Martin, Bogan, & Armstrong) summed up the perspective of the performing musician at the time:

> Skifflin'…two or three of us had a fiddle or guitar or whatever we could play and we gonna go and pass the hat. We'd knock on the door and if they didn't throw a cuss word at you…'we

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[104] Howard Rye, Buford "Whistler" Threlkeld, (Grove Music Online, 2003, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000724000?rskey=WXxthF&result=1).

[105] Dan Kildare, *The Earliest Black String Bands – Volumes 1-3*, (Austria: Document Records, 1997), CD.

> gonna play you some music' (and they'd reply)..'ah, you can't play the music we want'…(and we'd say)…'oh yes we can'… (and they'd say)…'come on, let's see'…and we knocked them off their rocker many times. I had old Bogan singing songs in German and Chines and everything else. They'd say, "oh my God, whoever saw a black Deutchman before?"[106]

Bands like the *Memphis Jug Band*, for example, consisted of a core group of musicians who played guitar, banjo, fiddle, banjo, and bass instruments. Additional instrumentation such as voice, jug, kazoo, washboard, horns, piano, or accordion adds to the soundscape and the inventiveness of the performance but does not define the output. In most cases, black musicians in string-bands played a varied repertoire of old-time, jazz, rags, country, or blues. Sometimes they were recorded solely as a jug band and, at other times, they backed well-known blues or jazz headline acts such as vocalist Sara Martin or guitar great, Memphis Minnie McCoy. There were a multitude of musical influences on black musicians in each region and these influences were revealed in the songs they played, the ensembles of which they were a part, and the region in which they were performing. I broadly sketch regional areas to offer a brief overview of the breadth of talented black musicians who spent, at least part of the time, playing music in string-bands.

The American South is a historically complex and culturally rich region of the United States. For the purpose of this discussion, the American South is

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[106] Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong, "WBIR: Heartland Series Howard Armstrong #2," (Knoxville: Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound, 1989), 00m13s.

considered to be the division of North versus South as determined prior to the *American Civil War 1861-1865*. Its geographical division is determined by the *Ohio River* (figure 8). Those states above the *Ohio River* were North and those below, South. The states south of the *Ohio River* were *Slave states*.[107]

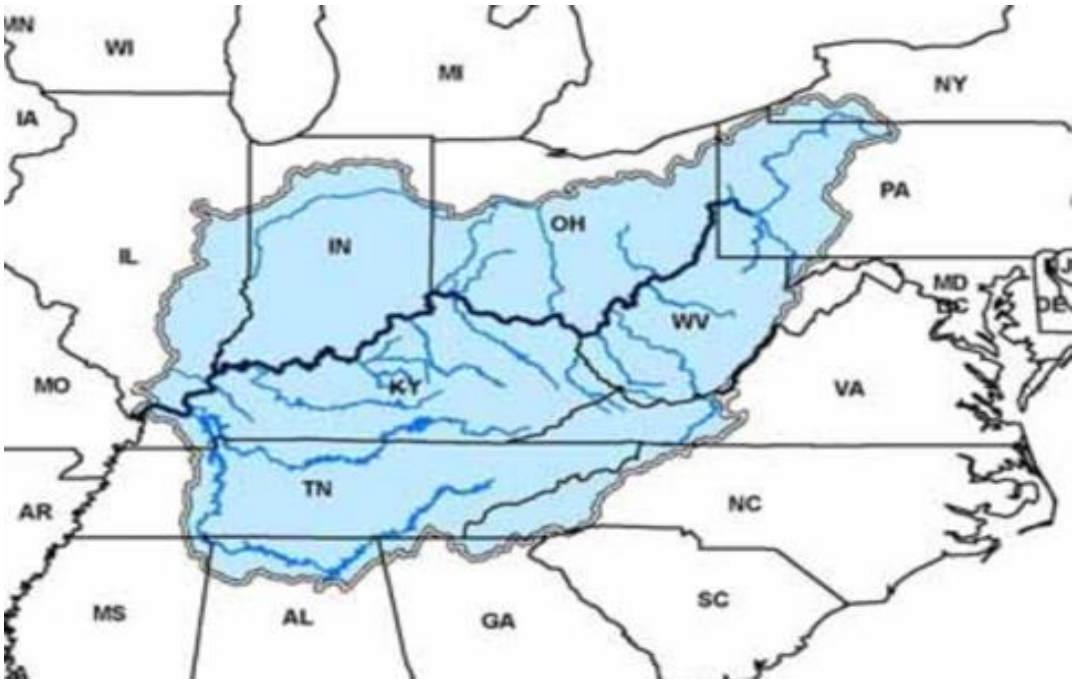

Figure 8. Ohio River.[108]

[107] Ohio River, (*New World Encyclopedia*, 2018), http://www.newworld encyclopedia.org/entry/Ohio_River.

[108] The Ohio River Facts, (*The Ohio River Online*, 2018, http://theohioriver.com/ohio-river-facts/).

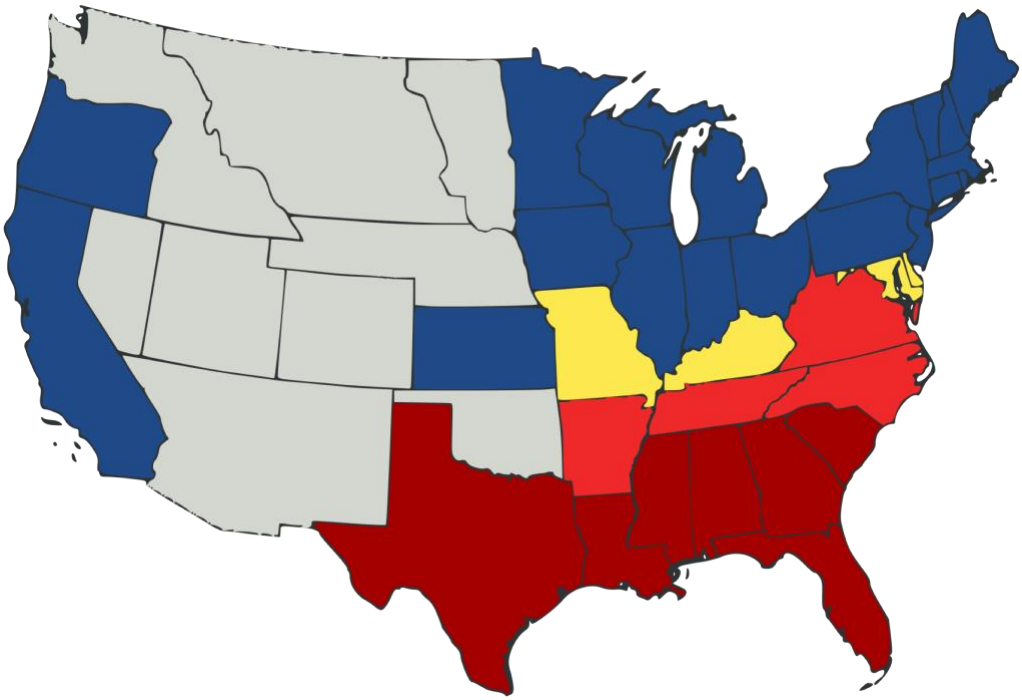

Figure 9. Map of the American South.[109]

There are two general regions in the American South – Upper South and Lower South. The Upper South states are in bright red and yellow while the Lower South is represented by dark red (figure 9). The Upper South states (west to east) are Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware (yellow) and Arkansas, Tennessee, West Virginia, and North Carolina (bright red). States that are considered to be the Lower South include Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida (deep red). Both Upper and Lower South regions have key rivers, railway lines, and roads that acted as avenues for black migrants during the *Great Migration* (1916-1930) (figure 10).

[109] Júlio Reis, Image: Secession Map of the United States, 1861. https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1710095.

Figure 10. Map of Migration Routes followed by African Americans during the Great Migration.[110]

The geographical parameters determined for this project are based primarily on key cities where recordings of black musicians in string-bands occurred in the American South. This is not an exhaustive list of all recording centers but, rather, the locations that tended to attract the greatest number of black musician in the 'old-timey' string-band tradition.

[110] Michael Siegel, "The Great Migration, 1916-1930," (*Rutgers Cartography*, New York: The Graduate Center of City University of New York, 2005), https://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/files/original/migration-map_5687edec2a.jpg.

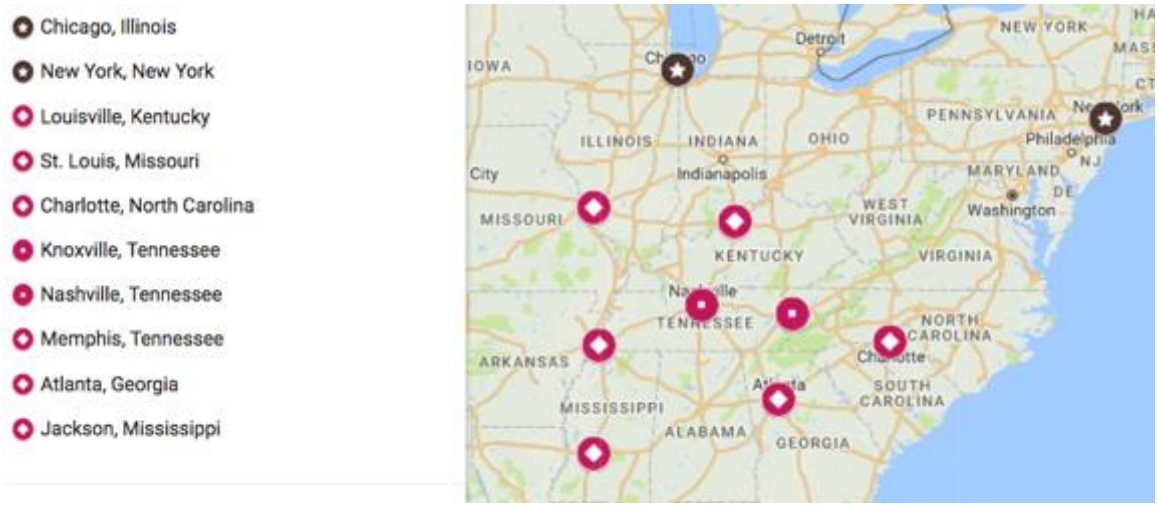

Figure 11. Map of Key Recording Locations (Danser 2018).

2.2 Key Recording Centers

Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville, Kentucky is a river port town along the Ohio River and, as such, received a constant stream of black people migrating from Alabama and Tennessee during the *Great Migration* (1916-1930). By 1914, a third of the state's black population lived and worked in Louisville. The Louisville arts scene was strong and vibrant and black musicians in string bands were an integral part of city life. At times, jug bands were arrested due to community complaints that they were still playing late at night (figure 11).

Black and white musicians and rural jug bands shared performance spaces in nightclubs, parks, and streets no doubt influencing each other.[111] Jug

[111] Barlow 1989, 272-274.

"JUG BAND" ARRESTED ON COMPLAINTS AGAINST NOISE

Negroes composing the "jug band" were "jugged" last night on a complaint of residents of Market street, between First and Second, that the music they produced from jugs and other instruments kept them awake after midnight.

Ben Colvin, who played a guitar; John Smith, mandolinist, and Earl McDonald, who produced harmony by blowing into a jug, were arrested by Patrolman John Kiley, charged with disorderly conduct.

Figure 12. "Jug Band" Arrested Noise Complaints.[112]

band ensembles pioneered in Louisville and they performed dance tunes, spirituals, blues, marches, and ragtime music (appendix B). Often, these ensembles combined stringed instruments as well a variety of other attention grabbing instruments such as saxophones, washboards, clarinets, kazoos, flutes, jugs, spoons, and cornets.[113] Four musicians who became central to the black string-band scene and jug band traditions were Lloyd Buford "Whistler" Threlkeld, Earl MacDonald, Clifford Hayes, and Jim Booker.

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[112] ""Jug Band" Arrested on Complaints Against Noise," (*Courier-Journal (1869-1922)*, Oct 20, 3). http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/1023591221?accountid=14474.

[113] Ibid., 274.

Lloyd Buford "Whistler" Threlkeld (1893-1934) began his career as a nose whistle and guitar player busker on the streets of Louisville. From 1914-1932, he became the leader of one of the best traditional, rag, and pop jug bands in the region with his band, *Whistler and His Jug Band*.[114] They toured the North and Midwest, played at the racetrack, on the streets, and for parties.[115] He was the first to release a string-band recording in the Louisville region (appendix B). Remarkably, there is black and white film footage of *Whistler and His Jug Band* playing *Foldin' Bed* (figure 13).[116] This footage was part of a newsreel for *Fox-Movietone* that was unused. However, an edited version appears on the 1992 release of *Things Ain't What They Used To Be: Early Rural and Popular American Music from Rare Original Film Masters (1928-1935)*.[117]

Earl MacDonald (1885-1949) was a regionally renowned banjo and jug musician as well as a sharp businessperson. He learned the banjo from B. D. Tite (1870-1935)—a busking banjo playing from Kentucky—who teamed up with fellow banjo player, Dan "Black Daddy" Smith, to busk throughout the 1890s

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[114] Don Kent and Fred Cox, *Rikus Juice & Chitlins: The Great Jug Bands - Classic Recordings of the 1920s and 30s, Volume 2*, (New Jersey: Yazoo Records, 1998), liner notes.

[115] Howard Rye, "Whistler," (Grove Music Online, 2003), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000724000?rskey=RJYKqX&result=1.

[116] Weido Video, "*Whistler & His Jug Band: Foldin' Bed – 1929-1930*," (YouTube Video Online, 2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph26RQstazY.

[117] Rye 2003.

Figure 13. Whistler & His Jug Band - Fox-Movietone Footage - *Foldin' Bed*.[118]

and into the early 1900s. Smith and Tite reported during an interview that in the later part of the 1890s they saw someone in in the southwestern Appalachian region of Virginia playing the clay jug as a bass instrument.[119] Eventually, MacDonald formed a band that had headlined clubs in Chicago and New York before 1913.[120] Together with fiddler Clifford Hayes (1893-1955) MacDonald formed the Old Southern Jug Band (appendix B). The *Old Southern Jug Band* recorded in the late fall of 1924 after recording as a session band for blues

[118] Weido Video, "*Whistler & His Jug Band: Foldin' Bed – 1929-1930,*" (YouTube Video Online, 2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph26RQstazY.

[119] Kent & Cox 1994, liner notes.

[120] Ibid.

singer, Sara Martin, in New York that same year.[121] Eventually, Hayes and MacDonald joined forces with other local musicians to create a jazz-jug band super group called the *Dixieland Jug Blowers* (1926-1927).[122]

In 1924, black fiddler Jim Booker was not the most recorded artist of the exciting Louisville music scene but his career is exceptional nonetheless. Booker travelled as a solo artist to record for Gennett records in Richmond, Indiana with the all-white band, *Taylor's Kentucky Boys*. The recordings of *Forked Deer* and *Grey Eagle* are extraordinary occurrences and, quite possibly, some of the first racially integrated recordings.[123] These recordings were marketed to white audiences under the Gennett label and sold 800 – 1000 copies.[124]

St. Louis, Missouri

Prior to 1920, St. Louis became home to virtuoso musician, Lonnie Johnson. Originally from New Orleans, Johnson moved to St. Louis and was first recorded playing *Five O'Clock Blues*, *Johnson Trio Stomp*, and, his originals,

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Paul Oliver and Art Menius, "Jug Band," (Grove Music Online, 2013), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002241933?rskey=NxMQDC&result=2.

[123] Charlie Dahan, "April 26 in Gennett History, 1927: Taylor's Kentucky Boys Recorded "Forked Deer,"" (*Gennett Records Discography Online*, 2016); Marshall Wyatt, *Violin, Sing the Blues for Me: African-American Fiddlers 1926-1949*, (North Carolina: Old Hat Records, 1999), liner notes; Jones 2018.

[124] Dahan 2016.

Lonesome Jail Blues and *Nile of Genago* in 1926 by the OKeh label in New York[125] after winning a fiddling competition sponsored by them. Johnson became a successful blues artist and session musician recording 130 sides[126] over sixteen years playing violin, piano, banjo, and guitar.[127] He formed *The Johnson Boys*: Lonnie Johnson (fiddle), Matthew Prater (mandolin), and Nap Hayes (guitar). They recorded and released *Violin Blues* under the OKeh label in 1928 (appendix B).

St. Louis, Missouri was also home to some of the earliest recordings of black string-bands. Musicians from nearby Kansas City, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky travelled to record there for the OKeh record label. Among those recorded were *Whistler & His Jug Band*, *Sam "Stovepipe No. 1" Jones and David Crockett*, and the *Kansas City Blues Strummers*.[128]

Charlotte, North Carolina

The Southern city of Charlotte, North Carolina was outside the scope of archival research trips for this dissertation. However, consultations with archival staff have indicated that there is scant information about black

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[125] Scott Alexander, "A History of Jazz Before 1930," (*The Red Hot Jazz Archive Online*, 2018), http://www.redhotjazz.com/info.html.

[126] Alexander 2018.

[127] Barlow 1989, 259-260.

[128] Slaven 2007.

musicians in string bands in the area.[129] What is known is that it had a robust music and recording scene as it attracted musicians as far away as southern Georgia including *Andrew and Jim Baxter*. Jim Baxter was a mixed race (African and Cherokee) fiddler from Gordon County, Georgia. His son, Andrew, was also a fiddler, guitarist, and vocalist. In 1927, they travelled northeast by train with their friends and collaborators, the all-white string-band, the *Georgia Yellow Hammers*, from Georgia to Charlotte to record for the Victor record label. Andrew Baxter played fiddle with the *Georgia Yellow Hammers* on *G Rag* and this became one of the two integrated recordings that year (appendix B).[130]

The *Georgia Yellow Hammers* recorded for Columbia before recording for the Victor Talking Machine Company *hillbilly record catalogue* in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1927.[131] It was perhaps their experiences with Columbia that helped their spokesperson, Phil Reeve, to negotiate the Victor contract (appendix C). The contract collected by ethnomusicologist Charles K. Wolfe and located at the Centre for Popular Music in Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee is a unique and rare document.

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[129] Aaron Smithers, "Black Musicians in String-bands in North Carolina," (Southern Folklife Collection, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, email communication April 13, 2017.)

[130] Wyatt 1999.

[131] Russell 2007, 53.

The contract is between white A&R man, Ralph Peer, of New York, representing the Victor Talking Machine Company and the *Georgia Yellow Hammers* guitarist, Phil Reeve, who was representing the band as well as *Jim and Andrew Baxter*. Although the recording of *G Rag* occurred in 1927, this particular contract was dated in 1929. This is due to the fact that record companies would renew contracts every one or two years if the sales of a person or group met or exceeded sales projections.[132] In effect, this contract was a renewal of the 1927 recording sessions in Charlotte, North Carolina indicating that the *Georgia Yellow Hammers* and, possibly, *the Baxters* were profitable at least in their first two years after the original recording sessions. Under the agreements section listed on page one of the contract, the Baxters were promised a minimum of six sides at thirty-five dollars per side. On the second page is the signature of *Yellow Hammer* guitarist and band negotiator, Phil Reeve, who signed for the *Artist – A. & J. Baxter*. Royalty percentages are detailed on the third page with no mention of *the Baxters* royalty arrangements.[133] In fact, the Hammers' banjo player, Bud Landress, indicated to the Atlanta Journal and Constitution in 1953 that: "I received about $400 every three months from royalties alone…and that was back when a dollar looked as

[132] Reisch 2017, interview.

[133] "Andrew & Jim Baxter and the Georgia Yellow Hammers 1929 Contract with Victor Talking Machine Company," (Charles K. Wolfe Collection: Middle Tennessee State University, 2017).

big as a wagon wheel."[134] We are left to assume that the Baxters were either represented by Reeve given their close friendship or that they were not privy to the agreement at all. Certainly, any original songs recorded by the Baxters were not copyright protected as part of the contract and, thus, part of a royalty scheme. It is unknown if the Baxter's were paid for their recordings or if all six recordings occurred. Much information is speculative at best as it is lost to time.

Knoxville, Tennessee

Over the Great Smoky Mountains about three hundred kilometers east of Charlotte, North Carolina is the city of Knoxville, Tennessee. Historical preservation initiatives of the city have documented the breadth of musical talent in the area: from virtuoso, white, female musician Willie Sievers (1909-1998) plying her trade in as a pianist in vaudeville era theatres to Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong (1909-2003) jamming on the mandolin on ragtime songs, to eight year old Dolly Parton, singing on the local radio show.[135] The artists, genres, and musical interchanges of music were diverse and are worthy of a much deeper exploration.

Although it was not a recording center for black musicians in string-bands, the city was host to the 1930 St. James Hotel recordings for the

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[134] Russell 2007, 54.

[135] Jack Neely, "Musical History of Knoxville, Tennessee," (Interview and old-city tour conducted on May 7, 2017).

Brunswick-Vocalion sessions. These recording sessions hosted both black and white musicians in string-bands. Among them were black musicians, Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong (fiddle), Roland Martin (guitar), and his half-brother, Carl Martin (bowed double-bass) who were originally known as the *Tennessee Trio*.[136] As the *Tennessee Trio*, their music was marketed to white consumers. However, for these recordings, Armstrong changed their name to the *Tennessee Chocolate Drops* in order to market their music to the label's race record series as well.[137] A black string-band navigating the color line between label series' white and black consumers was an exceptional occurrence. The *Tennessee Chocolate Drops* are credited with recording *Knox County Stomp* and, a version of the black folk melody, the *Vine Street Rag* during the session. The trio also worked under the name, *The Four Keys*, and, eventually, Armstrong and Martin were joined by Ted Bogan to form Martin, Armstrong, and Bogan. They toured and recorded extensively from West Virginia to Illinois.[138]

Nashville, Tennessee

West from Knoxville approximately three hours and the halfway point toward Memphis, is the city of Nashville, center for American country music

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[136] Wyatt 1999, liner notes.

[137] Neely 2017, interview [where did he get this info? Can you cite a primary source here? It's an important story that cuts to the heart of your thesis].

[138] Wyatt 1999, liner notes.

and bluegrass. Like Knoxville, it was not a hotbed of recordings of black musicians or black string-bands but the surrounding area certainly had its share of black musicians in string-bands. Ethnomusicologist, Charles K. Wolfe, completed extensive field research including primary source interviews and geographical mapping of black musicians in string-bands in Middle Tennessee. He determined that between 1910 and 1920 there were at least twenty active musicians and family bands. Among them was country music legend, DeFord Baily, with his family band and string-band duo, *Ned Frazier and Frank Patterson*.[139] As highlighted in the previous chapter, field recordings in the Nashville by John Work III included *Frazier & Patterson* and Library of Congress recordings by the Alan Lomax team also recorded some black musicians in string-bands as well in Nashville and surrounding area (appendix B).

Memphis, Tennessee

The vibrancy and interconnectivity among musicians in the Memphis music scene was equally vibrant as that of Louisville. Black musicians in Memphis were influenced by Louisville jug bands but distinct from them and perhaps more blues oriented than jazz.[140] There was a minimum of eight black

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[139] Charles K. Wolfe, Black String Bands Locator, (Charles K. Wolfe Collection: Middle Tennessee State University, 2017), map and legend.

[140] Barlow 1989, 210-214.

string-bands working in Memphis during the latter part of the 1920s.[141] The *Memphis Jug Band* (appendix B) was at the epicenter of the scene recording dance tunes, minstrel songs, ragtime, and downhome blues.

Will "Son Brimmer" Shade anchored the band as bandleader, guitarist, and harmonica player. Over a four-year period (1927-1931), the *Memphis Jug Band* hosted fifteen musicians and recorded fifty-seven sides for the Victor record label. Seven tracks were recorded in Atlanta, Georgia with the vast majority having been recorded in Memphis, Tennessee.[142] In fact, they are one of very few black string-bands to record with black, female musicians namely Memphis Minnie, Hattie Hart, Minnie Wallace, and Jenny Mae Clayton.[143] Ben Ramey (kazoo, vocals), Charlie Burse (guitar, vocals), Vol Stevens (banjo, mandolin, guitar), Jab Jones (piano, jug, vocals) and Milton Robie (violin) rounded out the core group of musicians.[144] The *Memphis Jug Band* was the hub of black string-band music in Memphis and a brilliant musical network developed around them (appendix B). Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon, Jack Kelly, and Frank Stokes were among those who benefited from their musical approach and business opportunities.

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[141] Kent & Fox 1998, liner notes.

[142] Neil Slaven, *Memphis Jug Band: Volumes 1-3*, (London: JSP Records, 2005), liner notes.

[143] Barlow 1989, 210-214.

[144] Slaven 2005, liner notes.

Gus “Banjo Joe” Cannon (1883-1979), the focus of this dissertation in the following chapters, formed *Cannon’s Jug Stompers* in 1927 after the recording success of the *Memphis Jug Band*. Victor Talking Machine Company A&R man, Ralph Peer, returned to Memphis from New York to cut more sides with other Memphis string-bands. Cannon had prior recording experience, having cut six sides with Arthur “Blind” Blake for Paramount in Chicago earlier that year. He formed *Cannon’s Jug Stompers* and they recorded twenty-six sides for Victor in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1929, Cannon and his string-band played together with different names including *The Beale Street Boys* and recorded during a Brunswick recording session in Chicago (appendix B).[145]

Guitarist Frank Stokes was another of the spectrum of black musicians who formed the backbone of the Memphis scene. He had a vast repertoire of rags, plantation breakdowns, downhome blues, minstrel songs, early country melodies, and post-bellum songs.[146] In 1927 and 1929, Stokes recorded with the well-known blues guitarist and songwriter, Dan Sane, as the *Beale Street Sheiks* for Paramount Records.[147] Prior to the aforementioned recordings, Stokes and Sane teamed up with Will Batts (fiddle) and Jack Kelly (guitar) in 1925 under

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[145] John Tefteller, “John Tefteller’s Museum 78’s, by Label,” (Oregon: Blues Images Online, 2018).

[146] Don Kent, *Memphis Masters: Early American Blues Classics 1927-1934*, (New Jersey: Yazoo Records, 1994), liner notes page 2.

[147] Kent 1994, liner notes pages 3-4.

the interchangeable names: *South Memphis Jug Band*, *Jack Kelly's Jug Busters*, or *Jack Kelly & His South Memphis Jug Band*.[148] Eventually, *Jack Kelly & His South Memphis Jug Band* recorded twenty-four sides for the American Record Company, Banner, and Vocalion between 1932-1939 when recording contracts were sparse due to the *Great Depression* (appendix B).[149]

Atlanta, Georgia

The city of Atlanta, Georgia was home to many old-time roots musicians, who recorded for Columbia records. Their white *A&R man*, Frank B. Walker, specialized in Southern music and traveled a circuit of cities to audition talent and to determine remote recording locations.[150] A noteworthy black musician who worked with a string-band was slide guitar player and singer, Joshua Barnes "Peg Leg" Howell. From 1926-1929, *Peg Leg Howell & His Gang* recorded seven sides for the Columbia record label (appendix B) in addition to various ensemble combinations. There were various recordings that stemmed from this original ensemble that was not unlike other major city centers recording. Some of these included the duo of Williams and Anthony from *His Gang*, collaborations between Anthony, Tampa Joe, and Macon Ed, as

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Joslyn Layne, "Jack Kelly & His South Memphis Jug Band," (AllMusic Online, 2018).

[150] Mike Seeger, "Frank Walker: Columbia Records Old-Time Music Talent Scout," (*Old Time Party: An Archive of Mostly southern American Vernacular Music* Online, 1962).

well as visiting musicians Blind Willie McTell and Walter Vinson.[151]

Jackson, Mississippi

The *Mississippi Sheiks* were a very popular black string-band from Jackson, Mississippi. The Chatman brothers, Armenter (known as Bo Carter or Bo Chatman), Sam, Harry, and Lonnie were four of the many children born to slave fiddler Henderson Chatman.[152] They were joined by Walter Vinson to form the band. They first recorded twenty sides for the OKeh record company in Shreveport, Louisiana early in 1930 and, later that year, in San Antonio, Texas. Walter (Jacobs) Vinson (guitar, vocals) and Lonnie Chapman (fiddle) formed the core of the Sheiks while Bo (Carter) Chatman (guitar, vocals), Sam Chatman (guitar, vocals), and Charles "Papa Charlie" McCoy (guitar, mandolin) joined some of the Sheiks recording sessions while also pursuing solo and other collaborative projects. From 1930 through 1936, the *Mississippi Sheiks* and their various pseudo names - *Mississippi Mud Steppers*, *Mississippi Hot Footers*, and *Blacksnakes* - recorded more than a hundred sides on OKeh, Paramount, and Bluebird record companies in various locations including Jackson, Atlanta, Chicago, Grafton, and New Orleans (appendix B).[153]

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[151] Ibid.

[152] Chris Smith, *Mississippi Sheiks & Chatman Brothers: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order - Volume 4: March 26, 1924 - October 15, 1936,* (Austria: Document Records, 1991), CD.

[153] Smith 1991, track listings.

Discussion

It is evident, even from this preliminary database evaluation, that, in many cases, black musicians in string-bands travelled great distances to record their music for commercial record labels (see figure 11 and appendix B). The primary form of travel was via train, either at the musician's expense or paid for by record companies. Many high profile musicians such as Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon, Lonnie Johnson, or Whistler Threlkeld cut sides for various record labels who set up their recording studios in local, regional, or out-of-region city centers far from the home base of a musician. Still, the record consumers remained largely in smaller centers where the performers had established their musical reputations.

Black musicians in string-bands had strong interconnections that existed prior to their commercial recording careers. They worked together in what would have been a flexible and interchangeable manner forming many ensembles under different names with guest musicians in addition to the core musicians (appendix B). There was also a network of significance among black and white musicians in string-bands. A prime example of this relates to black musicians, *Jim and Andrew Baxter* and their recording in Charlotte, North Carolina with the all-white band, the *Georgia Yellow Hammers*. There must have been a degree of comradery and trust to record together and for *the Baxters* to entrust the contract negotiation to a member of the *Georgia*

Yellow Hammers who even signs the contract on their behalf.

Commercial record companies and non-commercial field recordings established a strategic approach to capitalize the recordings of black musicians. Commercial labels were focused on generating profitable recordings while ethnomusicological fieldwork recordings efforts were supported by federal and state initiatives that gathered information about the lives of the musician beyond the music they performed. The recordings that I had access to indicate that black musicians in string-bands were often multi-instrumentalists and composers who were able to play various styles of music including blues, rags, old-time, folk, and early jazz. A prime example of these qualities is Tennessee black musician, Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon. A close examination of some of his musical works will focus the remainder of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3: AMERICA'S 'CANNONS' ON RECORD

3.1 Career Overview

Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon (1883–1979) had a long and illustrious career in American popular music (figure 14). He was a self-taught multi-instrumentalist, learning fiddle from W. C. Handy's fiddler, Jim Turner, and slide guitar from Alex Lee. He became proficient at the banjo, guitar, and fiddle. Most notably, he learned to use a knife blade on the banjo strings to create sounds associated with early blues music in Clarksdale, Mississippi.[154] In an interview with ethnomusicologist Paul Oliver, Cannon indicated that his repertoire was initially learned from musicians in his hometown and were traditional or *old time* songs.

> *I made my first banjo out of a guitar neck and a tin pan Mama used to make biscuits in. And the first thing I learned on that was "Old John Booker, You Call That Gone." I worked for Doctor Benson, I worked for a "code" (sic) name and a "minute doctor" or Stokee. I worked with a man out of Louisville, Kentucky. I worked through Alabama. I worked through Mobile.*
>
> *I worked through "Apora" (sic), been St Louis. I used to play "Wop Bang," I used to play "John Henry." I used to play all them things. Well, I'm old time.*[155]

He was born and raised in two rich musical communities in the

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[154] Ibid., 214.

[155] Paul Oliver and Gus Cannon, *Broadcasting the Blues: Black Blues in the Segregation Era*, (Scotland: Document Records, 2005), 1h05m27s – 1h10m27s.

Mississippi Delta: Red Banks, Mississippi and Clarksdale, Mississippi.[156] Here, he was exposed to various musical styles and instruments that influenced his musical development. By 1907, Cannon left Clarksdale to work as a roustabout on the Mississippi River[157] where he was undoubtedly influenced by various musicians, repertoires, and songs while riding the rivers and performing on barges and steamers. Eventually, Cannon settled near Memphis and developed his craft by playing on the street, at dances, and in juke joints while supplementing his income with work at odd jobs.[158] This was a time of rich musical interchanges between friends, acquaintances, locals, and touring musicians (figure 14).

A few years later, in 1914, Cannon joined a regional medicine show circuit where he adopted the name "Banjo Joe."[159] Over his fifteen years in travelling shows, Cannon became known for an extensive repertoire of original songs, ragtime, blues, and folk music he performed on banjo. He was also proficient at comedy routines that he performed in blackface for black and white audiences in medicine shows and, later, as a way to keep his musical career

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[156] Barlow 1989, 54.

[157] Barlow 1989, 214.

[158] Keith Briggs, *Cannon's Jug Stompers with Noah Lewis, Hosea Woods & Elijah Avery 1928, Disc D,* (London: JSP Records, 2017), liner notes.

[159] Barlow 1989, 215.

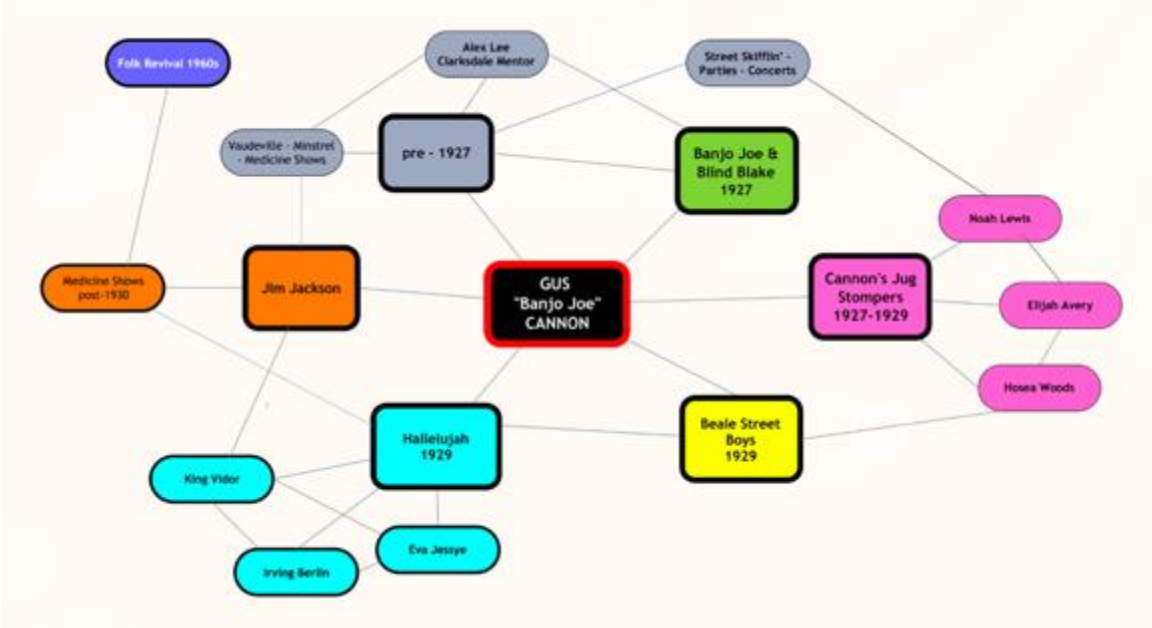

Figure 14. Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon Musical Network (Danser 2018).

progressing through the Great Depression (figure 15).[160] Cannon was also an adept songwriter and lyricist who was able to offer sharp criticism and political commentary without offending either black or white audiences. In addition to the nickname, Cannon created a unique performance strategy to draw attention to his music—a frame to wear around his neck to which he affixed a kazoo and a jug that allowed him to play these instruments in addition to singing and playing banjo.[161]

While on tour with *Doc Benson's Medicine Show*, Cannon was introduced

[160] Centre for Popular Music Archives, (Tennessee: Middle Tennessee State University, 2017).

[161] Briggs 2017, liner notes.

"Medicine Show, Huntington, Tennessee, 1935" by Ben Shahn. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Figure 15. Gus Cannon in Blackface, circa 1935.[162]

to Paramount Records A&R in Chicago and entered the early recording era of black musicians in string-bands. He joined forces under his nickname of "Banjo Joe," with Piedmont blues, ragtime, and country blues artist, Arthur "Blind" Blake.[163] Together, they recorded six sides for Paramount Records in 1927 (appendix B).

The Memphis music scene was thriving with the Memphis Jug Band and its commercial successes. Ralph Peer, Victor A&R man, was seeking to

[162] Centre for Popular Music Archives, (Tennessee: Middle Tennessee State University, 2017).

[163] Wyatt and Olson 2005, liner notes.

capitalize on the string-band market with other prominent musicians in the area. Theatre owner Charlie Williamson recommended Gus Cannon, and *Cannon's Jug Stompers* (figure 16) were formed to record for Victor's January 1928 sessions.[164]

Later in 1928, *Cannon's Jug Stompers* recorded an additional twenty-one sides for Victor in the Memphis sessions. The original group of three became a group of four and recorded in various constellations. *Cannon's Jug Stompers* completed their final recordings in 1930 and remained one of the most popular bands in Memphis throughout the 1930s.[165]

Figure 16. Cannon's Jug Stompers, circa 1928.[166]

[164] Briggs 2017, liner notes.

[165] Barlow 1989, 217.

Gus “Banjo Joe” Cannon and Hosea “Hosie” Woods recorded together in 1928 under the name *The Beale Street Boys* (not to be confused with *Beale Street Boys* or the *Beale Street Sheiks*) or *Cannon & Woods* for the Brunswick label in Chicago, Illinois (appendix B).[167]

3.2 *Can You Blame the Colored Man?*

Gus “Banjo Joe” Cannon recorded *Can You Blame the Colored Man*?[168] with Arthur “Blind” Blake for Paramount records in Chicago, Illinois in 1927. Cannon said that he learned this song from one of his mentors, Alex Lee, in Clarksdale, Mississippi prior to leaving in 1907.[169] This song, unlike others in Cannon’s repertoire, is recorded only on this one occasion and does not appear to be recorded under any other name or collaboration of which Cannon was a part throughout his career. The song title stands out among his recordings and among other string-band recordings reviewed for this project because of its racial identifiers and its rather direct satirical social commentary about controversial subject matter.

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[166] Centre for Popular Music Archives (Tennessee: Middle Tennessee State University, 2017).

[167] Cannon & Lewis 1990, track list.

[168] RagtimeDorianHenry, “’Can You Blame The Colored Man’ GUS CANNON (1927) Banjo Blues Legend,” (YouTube, 2009), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyx0aBWGyAU.

[169] Barlow 1989, 215.

The lyrics of this song center around a highly controversial meeting on October 16, 1901, between then newly elected President Theodore Roosevelt and black educator, politician, and social activist, Booker T. Washington. Roosevelt invited Washington to the White House for dinner after the two were unable to meet in Tuskagee at Washington's initial invitation.[170] Roosevelt's move to honour their meeting served to inflame smoldering racial issues with the American South. It came at a time when the recently negotiated *Atlanta Compromise of 1895*, spearheaded by Washington, succeeded in prioritizing black education while choosing to suppress systemic racial issues regarding justice, integration, and civil rights.

The Roosevelt–Washington dinner inspired reactions ranging from increased pride among blacks, to self-adulation among liberal whites, and violent rage to those in the South who were entrenched in profoundly racist attitudes. Mississippi Governor, James Vardaman, is quoted as saying that "the White House is so saturated with the odor of the nigger that the rats have taken refuge in the stable."[171] It also revealed a deep division among black social activists. On one hand, Washington was known to accommodate to make political progress and, on the other, thinkers such as W. E. B. DuBois

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[170] Dom Flemons 2013. "Can You Blame Gus Cannon?," (*Oxford American: A Magazine of the South*, 83, 2013: online).

[171] David H. Jackson, Jr., "Guest of Honor: Booker T. Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, and the White House Dinner that Shocked a Nation," (*Presidential Studies Quarterly* 46, 3, 2016), 727-728.

encouraged identifying civil right issues facing black Americans and struggling toward their full resolution.[172] The Roosevelt-Washington dinner became the focus of the 1903 opera, *Guest of Honor*, composed by black pianist and ragtime pioneer, Scott Joplin (1867/68 – 1914)[173] and also influenced lyrical content for Cannon's recording of *Can You Blame the Colored Man?*

Scott Joplin was a published composer and popular ragtime pianist especially after the 1899 release of his composition, *Maple Leaf Rag*.[174] His popularity was reinforced with the publications: *Sunflower Slow Drag* with Scott Hayden and *The Easy Winners* in 1901 and *The Strenuous Life* and *The Entertainer* in 1902.[175] Joplin's interest in theatre led to his operatic composition and subsequent tour of *Guest of Honor*. He applied to copyright the opera in 1903 but never received publication and has never been found.[176]

The lyrical structure of *Can You Blame the Colored Man?*[177] is in strophic form, which means that all verse and chorus sections adhere to the same

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[172] Paul Croce, "Accommodation Versus Struggle," in *W. E. B. DuBois: An Encyclopedia* edited by Gerald Horne and Mary E. Young, (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 1-3.

[173] Edward A. Berlin, "Joplin, Scott," (Grove Music Online, 2013), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002253061?rskey=BzK6gG&result=1.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Gus Cannon and Blind Blake, *Masters of Memphis Blues, CD B: Banjo Joe (Gus Cannon) 1927-1929*, (London: JSP Records, 2004), Track 24.

melodic pattern repeatedly. The first two lines of each verse rhyme while the third is a stand-alone, commonly referred to as AAB. Meanwhile, the chorus consists of two rhyming lines and a non-rhyming repeating line (AAB). Cannon sets the context with two opening verses. The first verse sets the scene of Booker T.'s demeanour in preparation for going to meet Roosevelt.

> *(Now) Booker T., he left Tuskegee, to the White House he went one day*
> *He was goin' to call on the President in a quiet and a sociable way*
> *He was in his car, was feelin' fine.*

In the next of the back-to-back verses, Cannon sings about Booker T.'s arrival and comments on his mood and change in skin color when the President welcomes him into the White House. The change in skin color is suggestive of a change from black to pale or white. This is a commentary about selling out to the white establishment for greater socio-economic power.

> *(Now) When Booker knocked on the President's door, old Booker he begin to grin*
> *Now, he almost changed his color, when Roosevelt says, "A-come in*
> *We'll have some dinner in a little while."*

The chorus section is repeated twice in the song, once after verse two and again after verse three. It is unchanged lyrically between both instances. It appears to be a shift from Booker T.'s emotional mindset before and at the meeting and makes a strong satirical commentary about how Cannon either interpreted or had the opinion that Booker T. was a sympathetic black representative of black Americans in general who were living in impoverished

conditions with limited basic necessities of life. But, the stinger arrives in the repeated line that places extra emphasis on phrase "*goo-goo eyes*."

> *(Now) Could you blame the colored man for makin' them goo-goo eyes?*
> *And when he sat down at the President's table he began to smile*
> *Eatin' lamb, ham, chicken roast, chicken, turkey, quail on toast*
> *Could you blame the colored man for makin' them goo-goo eyes?*

The etymology of "*goo-goo eyes*" can be located in the latter half of the nineteenth century when it had explicit double meanings as an amorous gesture as well as a "naïve political reformer."[178] It does not seem accidental that the emphasis is placed here in the melodic and lyrical deliver where Cannon seems to use tongue-in-cheek phrasing to poke fun at Booker T. as a guileless black activist loving the table full of fine foods. In fact, this phrase is also a reference to a popular American song of the early 1900s called, *Just Because She Made Them Goo-Goo Eyes*.[179] Other than the phrase itself, the lyrics of this song do not relate to Cannon's. However, there is an intertextual link of its melodic and structural influences that will be discussed in depth in the next section.

Finally, the third verse relates a satisfied, relaxed, and intoxicated Booker T. post visit.

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[178] Douglas Harper, "Goo-Goo Eyes," (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2018.)

[179] Flemons 2013.

(Now) Booker was so delighted at the social that was given to him
Well, he hired him a horse and carriage and he taken the whole town in
He's drunk on wine, was a-feelin' fine.

It also completes the social commentary of Booker T. as *Zip Coon*—a character created by white minstrel theatre artist, George Dixon, who enacted his racist imaginings of a free black man while painted in blackface—with bug eyes, urban dress, and, ultimately, a lack of intellect or dignity.[180] There is also an overall feeling in this song that Booker T.'s visit is viewed as an extension of the *house Negro*[181] culture from the days of slavery when a black slave had overall better working conditions in the plantation house and, thus, a desire to uphold the system of power established by white plantation owners.[182]

The lyrics of *Can You Blame a Colored Man?*, whether written by Cannon or not, is a story with a pointed message, that Booker T. was a sell out to the white establishment. By the time this song was recorded, the *Atlanta Riots of 1906*[183] (when armed, white masses attacked blacks over a period of two days) had occurred, sealing Booker T. Washington's place in history as an ineffective

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[180] Ken Padgett, "Blackface!," (*Black-Face Online*, 2018).

[181] Malcolm Little, "Message to the Grass Roots," in Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements edited by George Breitman, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), 10-12.

[182] Ibid., 10-12.

[183] Gregory Mixon and Clifford Kuhn, "Atlanta Race Riots of 1906," (*New Georgia Encyclopedia*, University of Georgia Press, 2005).

and out-of-touch social activist. Cannon's lyrical text, on the surface, makes the topic of the Roosevelt-Washington dinner a fun-loving and humorous depiction of a black man who is in awe of his surroundings, good fortune, and privilege. An in-depth analysis reveals the superficial façade in order to view this song as an act of resistance with profoundly encoded messages about the realities of black life in America.

My transcription of *Can You Blame the Colored Man?* (appendix D) is taken from the reissue of Cannon and Blake's 1927 recording for Paramount Records in Chicago.[184] It is two minutes and forty-four seconds in length and it is not transparent what engineering treatments were given to the original album for release on compact disc. The song is officially credited to Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon one could argue that Arthur "Blind" Blake should also be credited for at least his portion of his interesting accompaniment. It is likely that this is a traditional song that was passed down to Cannon from W. C. Handy's guitarist, Alex Lee, whom he met in Clarksdale, Mississippi before 1907.[185]

There are three parts to this song: vocal, 5-string banjo, and acoustic guitar. Cannon provides all the vocals and plays his 5-string banjo in a GCGBD

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[184] Gus Cannon and Arthur "Blind" Blake, "Can You Blame the Colored Man?," in *Masters of the Memphis Blues, CD B: Banjo Joe (Gus Cannon) 1927-1929*, (London: JSP Records, 2004), track 24.

[185] Barlow 1989, 214-217.

tuning – tuned in pitches (called "Standard C"[186] tuning among old-time musicians). The melody is in the key of C in 4/4 time swung in 8ths at a metronome speed of 140. The melodic structure of the verses revolve around a twelve bar progression while the choruses are structured as a sixteen bar progression.

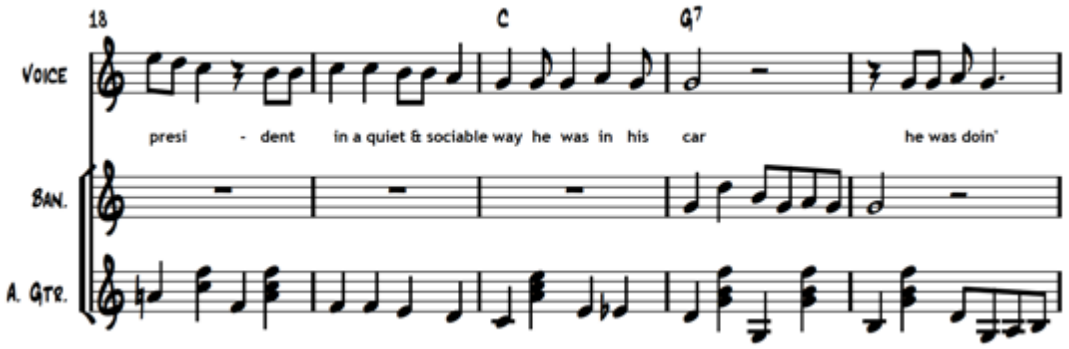
The verse structure ("A Section") is introduced to the listener in its complete progression during the instrumental introduction. It begins with three bars of the tonic (C) followed by one bar of the tonic (C7) seventh. Then, there are three bars of the subdominant (F), one bar of the tonic (C), two bars of the dominant (G7) seventh and a two bar turnaround on the tonic (C). The first verse is sung when this progression is repeated. The chorus ("B Section") is a 16-bar progression beginning with five bars of the tonic (C), one bar of supertonic (D7) seventh, four bars of the dominant (G7) seventh ending with six bars of the tonic (C). For the purpose of musical analysis, the sections are divided and transcribed (appendix D) accordingly and they are also referenced according to bar number:

A	⇒	introduction	⇒	bars 1-12
A1	⇒	verse 1	⇒	bars 13-24
A2	⇒	verse 2	⇒	bars 25-36
B	⇒	chorus	⇒	bars 37-52
B1	⇒	solo section	⇒	bars 53-68
A3	⇒	verse 3	⇒	bars 69-80
B2	⇒	chorus	⇒	bars 81-96
B3	⇒	ending/outro	⇒	bars 97-112

[186] Anita Kermode, "5-String Banjo Tunings," (*Zepp Music Online*, 2018).

The introduction (A) consists of the 12-bar structure and chordal progression of each of the following verses. The acoustic guitar played by "Blind" Blake keeps rhythmic time over quarter notes while the banjo played by "Banjo Joe" swings in eighths. There are no vocals or vocal sounds over the A section. It ends with a turnaround on bar 12 with synchronized strums on both instruments over the tonic (C) for two beats and over the minor sixth (Am) for two beats. This makes it directly clear when the vocals begin entering into A1.

The first verse (A1) begins with the acoustic guitar keeping quarter time rhythm while Cannon's vocals deliver the lyrical melody beginning on the last beat of the preceding bar over the word "*now*" referred to among musicians as a vocal pick-up note. Over the first eight bars (13-20), Cannon does not play his banjo. In fact, the acoustic guitar at bars 19-20 begins to suggest a musical change. In bar 19, Blake plays a descending line beginning on F and ending on C on the first beat of bar 20. He then ends bar 20 on an E-flat sixth that would be

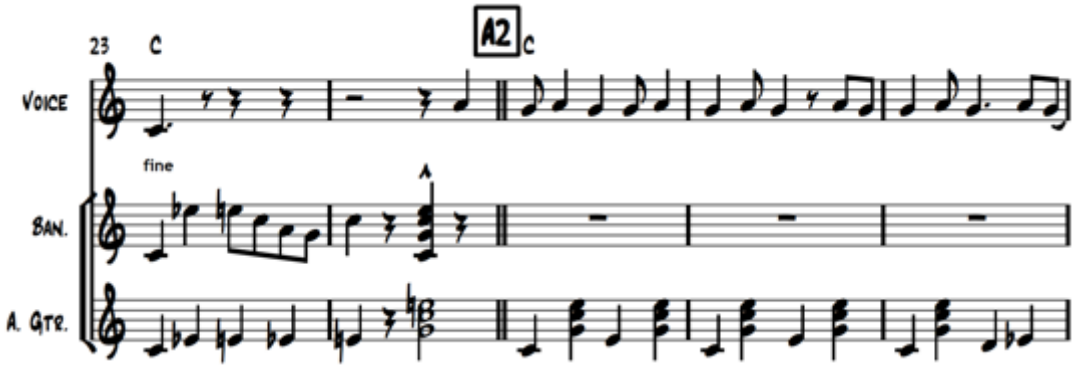


considered a passing note. This melodic descent aligns with the lyrics *"quiet and a sociable way"* and resolves with *"he was in his car and he was doin' fine."* On bars 21-24, Cannon delivers two banjo hooks on bars 21 and 23. Bar 21 resolves Blake's blue notes in bar 20 with a return to the melodic major notes on the banjo while the guitar plays rhythm.

Cannon's banjo hook in bar 23 is an E-flat or flat-third blue note on beats two and four underneath Cannon's delivery of the word "*fine*." Bar 24 resolves the blue notes on beats one and three with banjo and guitar strumming in unison over a C chord before the end of the verse. The banjo strum technique is a unique motion and is different from the guitar in that Cannon is playing different strings with his fingers and his thumb that can best be described as a "fast broken chord" or "flourish."[187]

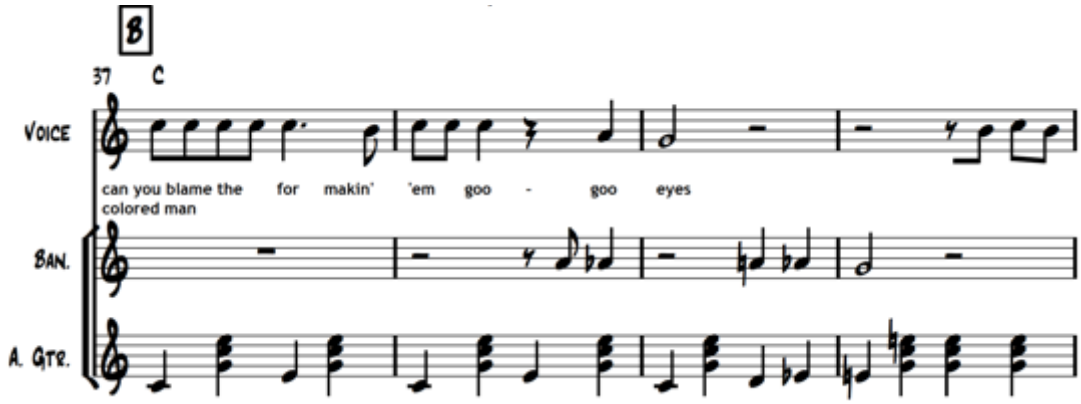
Verses 2 (A2) and 3 (A3) follow the same 12 bar progression with almost identical notes a vocal delivery. A key difference between the verse vocals is Cannon's emphasis. As noted above in bar 18, the word "*president*" is delivered with intonation that makes it sound surprising with a questioning quality. This vocal emphasis is placed again in in the second verse (A2) at bar 30 but this time the word is "*colored*." Cannon's vocal inflection one would expect in the third verse (A3) at bar 74 over "*horse and carriage*." Instead, the

[187] Koulack 2018.



vocal emphasis occurs over the word "*whole*" one bar over on bar 75 with the lyric, "*he's takin' the whole town in*." There is no change melodically.

As already mentioned, the first three B Sections (B, B1, B2, B3) utilize a 16-bar progression. The identical lyrical chorus occurs over the melody and



structure in B and B2. Meanwhile, B1 is Cannon's banjo solo section with Blake continuing his role as rhythmic backup. B3 is the outro ending that is essentially the solo section with the banjo signalling the end of the song at bars 111-112. There are four unique characteristics of the musical text in the chorus including vocal and instrument synchronization that stresses the vocal hook or lyrical emphasis; a vocal call and an instrumental response; an invisible

melodic vocalization common in early downhome blues; and its structural reclamation of a published, proto-blues, popular, minstrel tune *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes*.[188]

The first chorus (B) section technically begins at bar 36 with a vocal pick-up on the word "*now*." The chorus structural progression begins at bar 37 and continues through bar 52. The mirroring between vocal and banjo striking tension between the vocal melody on the *A* note with the banjo striking an A-flat underneath the second "*goo*" only to resolve on the tonic over the word "*eyes*" in a half step clash. The vocal sustains the dominant note over bar 39 while the banjo seems to mimic what has just occurred by playing the melodic hook of "*goo-goo eyes*" again. This might also be considered a response to the vocal banjo lyric call in the bar 38. A clearer example of Cannon's call and response occurs again between bars 42-44. The vocal melody is sung over Blake's guitar and once it ends on the "*g*," Cannon follows up with four, quarter note fractured chords as a response to the vocal call.

Finally, at bar 50, a highly nuanced call and response occurs within the bar encouraging the listener to sing the words even though the words are not vocalized on beats three and four. The effect is that the listener actually fills in the lyric based on the melody that is voiced by the banjo.

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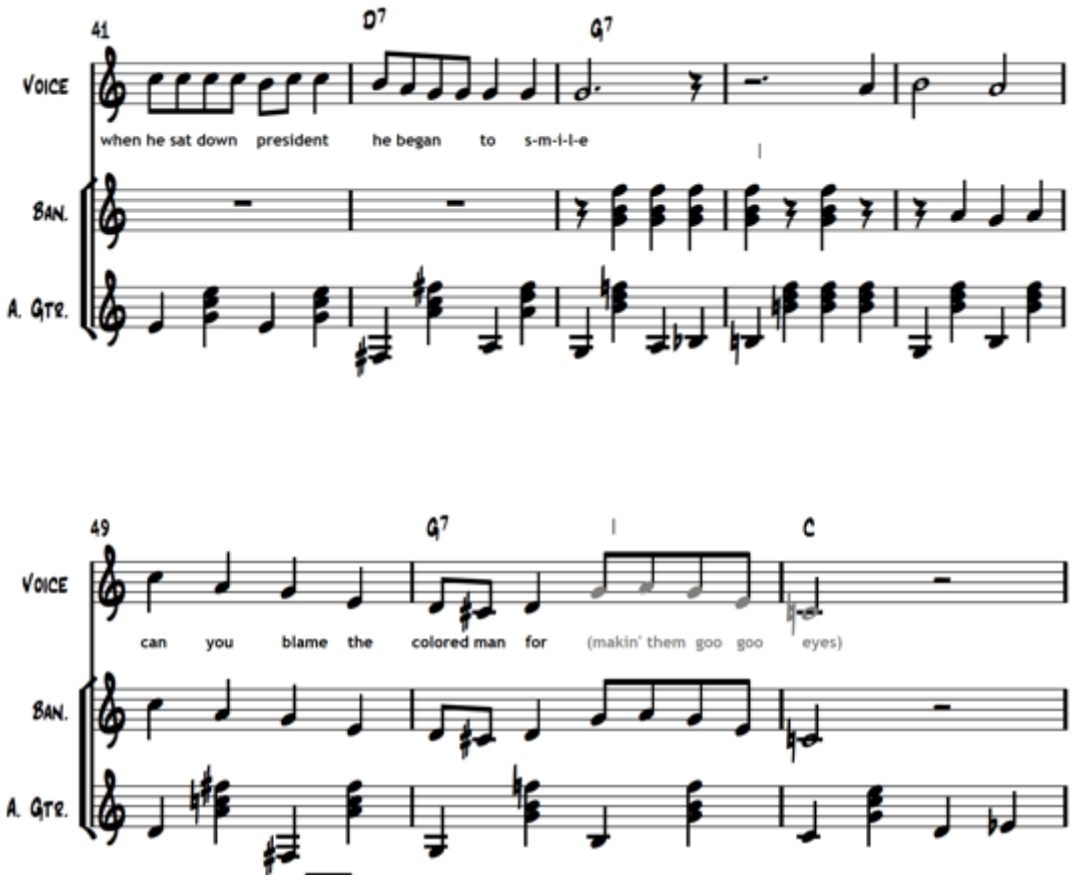
[188] Hugo Cannon and John Queen, "*Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes*," (Frances G. Spencer Collection of Popular Sheet Music, New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1900).



3.3 *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes*

Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes, is a vaudeville minstrel song composed by white, ragtime pianist, Hugo "Hughie" Cannon (1877-1912) and by a female who entices him with one look. This song, the first known proto-blues, was the ninth best-selling song of the year and was a major commercial success.[189]

[189] Ibid.

Figure 17. Columbia Record Label, circa 1902.[190]

My transcription of *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes* (appendix E) was taken from an audio posting on YouTube with the static visual consisting of the record label record label holding the visual place (figure 17). This audio recording seems to closely resemble Hughie Cannon's original composition (figure 18) and was the best sound quality that could be located. The Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and London issued the song as a *coon song*, number 86, with a tenor solo vocalist who is introduced as Will F. Denny at the beginning of the song. The pianist is not identified.

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[190] Onkel Greifenklau, "*Will F. Denny sings 'Just Because She Made Dem Goo Goo Eyes' on Columbia 86, recorded 1902*," (YouTube Online, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlJXbgGoMa8.

Figure 18. *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes* – Cover of Sheet Music.[191]

Denny's vocal version of this song is in the key of C common time. This song is an strophic verse-verse-chorus progression. There are a total of four verses and three choruses – verse 1, verse 2, chorus, verse 3, verse 4, chorus, chorus. Each verse contains 12-bars with a chordal progression of four bars of the tonic (G), three bars of the subdominant (C), one bar of the tonic (G), two bars of the dominant (D) seventh, and a two bar turnaround over the tonic (G). Meanwhile, the chorus consists of a 16-bar progression of six bars of the tonic

[191] Hughey Cannon and John Queen, *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes*, (The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection, Johns Hopkins Sheridan Libraries & University Museums, New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1900), http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/collection/147/161.

(G), four bars of the dominant (D) seventh, three bars of the tonic (G), one bar of the dominant (D), and a two bar turnaround over the tonic (G).

There are marked differences in the lyrical text between Gus Cannon and Hughie Cannon's song. *Just Because She Made Dem Goo Goo Eyes* has a playful lyrical approach that is punctuated by Denny's vocal approach and the ragtime piano that makes this song sound like a vaudeville or minstrel show tune. *Can You Blame A Colored Man?* was rooted in an historical event and Cannon has a satirical point to make that is veiled in humour. The stringed accompaniments on banjo and guitar enlist a downhome, folk feel. However, even with these important differences, their 12-bar verses and sixteen bar choruses with a predetermined chord progression seem to strongly suggest that Gus Cannon's version drew on Hughey Cannon's as it was already popular before Alex Lee taught it to Gus Cannon and the use of the sixth degrees musically is evident. In both cases, black musical traditions such as blues and ragtime influence the outcomes.

Discussion

Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon is an example of a black musician who developed his skills over decades of varied performance activities in diverse environments. His experiences as a black performer in blackface as part of *skifflin' on the street* or as part of the minstrel travelling shows meant that he had to routinely navigate issues of racial segregation. He had to learn how to

continually honour music traditions as he had learned them from childhood, learn popular songs, and maintain an old-time repertoire in order to accommodate audience tastes. These skills are beyond the music itself as they require sensitivity and nuanced abilities to convey his message regardless.

Can You Blame The Colored Man? is an example of ironic and subversive action by a black musician who manages to adapt a popular, white song to present social commentary. Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon and Arthur "Blind" Blake's recording likely borrows from the earlier, *Just Because She Made Dem Goo-Goo Eyes*. In doing so, they manage a degree of reclamation of black blues structure appropriated by urban, white, vaudeville composers.

Themes of reciprocal shaping in American popular music predate the *American Civil War*. The development of *Ethiopian Minstrelsy* or whites in blackface began as early as the 1820s and reached its peak from 1850-1870.[192] Dan Emmett, E. P. Christy, Stephen Foster, and Thomas Rice pioneered blackface theatre. These men were white, urban, middle class Protestants from the North who sought to break into the life of theatre acting. The content of their creativity relied on travel experiences they had in the Lower South. They staged their interpretation of black plantation life by blackening their faces with burnt cork and impersonating the northern freeman and the southern

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[192] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History, 3rd Edition*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 89.

slave in dance, jokes, and music.[193] The reinforcement of systemic racism and commodification of black culture was at the heart of blackface minstrelsy.[194]

After the *American Civil War* (1861-1865), black musicians embraced some of the freedoms to travel and played music in theatres, minstrel troupes or road shows, clubs, saloons, street corners, juke joints, steamships, or as a part of their community activities that included church, home, or dances.[195] Among black musicians, musical activities continued to mark new experiences, reflect trying conditions, inform an aural historical continuity, and, in doing so, challenged racial stereotypes perpetuated by whites-in-blackface. Many black performers – singers, dancers, and composers – brought vitality and subtle messages that represented black culture past and present.[196]

Cannon's recording of *Can You Blame A Colored Man*? is a literary and musical work of art. At first reading, it may appear that Cannon is telling the listener a humorous story about an imagined event.[197] The reality, however, is

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[193] Alexander Saxton, "Blackface Minstrelsy" in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface* by James Hatch, Brooks McNamara, and Annemarie Bean, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 79-80.

[194] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

[195] Patrick Huber, "Black Hillbillies: African American Musicians on Old-Time Records, 1924-1932" in *Hidden in the Mix: The African American Presence in Country Music* edited by Diane Pecknold, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 8.

[196] Henry T. Sampson, *Blacks in Blackface: A Sourcebook on Early Black Musical Shows, 2nd Edition*, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press: 2014), 1-15.

[197] Neil Slaven, *Masters of Memphis Blues, CD B: Banjo Joe (Gus Cannon) 1927-1929*, (London: JSP Records, 2004), liner notes.

quite the contrary. Close lyrical analysis indicates a masterful satirical commentary about a current event at the time and is an oral, literary, historical artefact that can be viewed as a stand-alone work of art. It is a significant example of black literary and musical traditions that seek to signify through the combination of form and poetic insight.[198] It defied the white owned capitalist conventions of the recording industry that sought to filter out black musicians who failed to please white business owners at the local level. Cannon, even under the watchful eyes of white supremacy, was able to embed black cultural commentary as well as black musical call and response techniques between his voice and his instrument, all the while veiling it as though it was a harmless comedy one might see on the minstrel stage. It is the very recording industry itself that concretizes this event in a commercial recording that can be analyzed decades later.

It is reasonable that Gus Cannon, who had an established career as a vaudeville and minstrel performer in blackface and otherwise, is part of this black cultural resurgence early in the twentieth century. He adds to the structure of *Can You Blame The Colored Man?* with subtle traditional black blues call and response additives between the vocals and the banjo. His lyrics indicate sharp criticism among some black people of what was a significant

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[198] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Figures in Black: Word, Signs, and "Racial" Self, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 31.

political moment between a prominent black activist and the president of the United States. It is a social commentary on systemic racism and about black politicians simultaneously. By recording this song, Cannon creates needed space for black perspectives and the continuation of black cultural expression.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, Cannon found himself in positions to reclaim parts of black cultural life by using opportunities that presented themselves (i.e. record company sessions). He had the capacity to accommodate the dynamics of technological change and white record ownership while preserving Black culture as handed down to him from previous generations.[199] Perhaps even more brilliant is the realization that Cannon did all this as a conscious act of (re) appropriation from white, urban composers who sought to capitalize on black music by publishing songs and form long considered part of black folk music repertoire.[200]

Gus Cannon's career began before string-band recordings of the 1920s and 1930s and extended well into the 1960s folk revival. His longevity allowed for interviews[201] that assisted in understanding how he learned, developed, and professionalized his musical art form. Cannon received the support he needed in his family and within the black community to explore sounds and to learn the

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[199] Deborah G. Plant, *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics Of Zora Neale Hurston*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[200] Stacy I. Morgan, *Race, Gender, and the Work of African American Folklore in 1930s America*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 7.

[201] Paul Oliver, 2005.

songs that held importance. This type of aural and oral transmission was critical to his development as a musical member of both black and white communities. Musical members of his family, the community, and black touring musicians nurtured this sense of belonging through mentorship.

CHAPTER 4: "HALLELU', THERE'S BANJO JOE"

4.1 *Hallelujah* (1929): Background

The film *Hallelujah* (1929) received recognition from the *Library of Congress* in 2008 as a film of historical, cultural and aesthetic significance, considered a critical artefact of black culture.[202] Many black actors and musicians are credited in the film with the exception of Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon who appears in two scenes performing both a folk dance tune and a song written by Irving Berlin. The identification of Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon in *Hallelujah* has scarcely been a topic of conversation among historians of American popular music. However, he deserves to have his contributions noted and analyzed as a matter of historical record and for the information that his performance offers our understanding of black culture from that era.

The film *Hallelujah* was released in 1929 to critical acclaim, receiving numerous honours, including the *Best Picture of 1929* by the National Board of Review, an Academy Award nomination of white director, King Vidor, for *Best Director* (1930) and the *Top 10 Best Films of the Year* by *The New York Times* and *Film Daily*.[203] It was recognized for many ground breaking accomplishments

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[202] Fibla 2017, 395.

[203] Greg Akers, *King Vidor's "Hallelujah:" Eighty-Five Years Ago, Memphis's First Major Hollywood Production Came to Town*, (Memphis: The City Magazine, 2014).

including becoming the first Hollywood film with an all-black cast; having an interracial team of directors; shooting on location in the American South with an interracial cast and crew during the *Jim Crow* era; being among the first *talkies* where film and sound were synchronized; establishing a new standard in sound having recorded on location and editing the sound into the final studio release; and being banned by the racist *Southern Theatre Federation* despite initial successes in important target markets.[204]

The public perception of Hallelujah ranged from a glossy overview of the film and its historical impact to a critical analysis on race relations. In 1930, a review for the *Daily Boston Globe* summarized the experience:

> In this case it was a picture of happy, industrious Negro cotton pickers, with their baskets filled with huge cotton bolls, wending their way back to their cottages. A background of fields and trees brought out the figures in the foreground, while one heard their half sad, half merry melodies….during the picture several Negro songs and spirituals are sung which add greatly to the effectiveness of the film. Music and dancing enters into the daily existence of the Southern Negro, even in the most solemn moments of death and baptism. Consequently Vidor has emphasized these dances and songs which express the emotions of the race as do no other medium.[205]

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[204] Ackers 2014 and Enrique Fibla, "Hallelujah (1929)," in *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions that Shaped a Nation* edited by Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green, (Gale Virtual Reference Library, 2017), 394-396.

[205] ""Hallelujah" At Symphony Hall, Daily Boston Globe (1928-1960), April 08, 1930, page 12. http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/758145935?accountid=14474.

Meanwhile, the same year, the *Chicago Defender* contrasted the Globe's review:

> The picture had all the earmarks of a resounding success….The South, the hypocritical, Race-conscious South, is turning a cold shoulder on the picture. The exhibitors don't want it and are frank to say so….Mr. Vidor is a southerner by birth. He certainly knows about the race problem through his own experience. He knows about the South, for he even wrote the story of "Hallelujah" himself. But he failed to gauge accurately the tortuous ramifications of the mind of the white South….Perhaps Mr. Vidor figured that if he included no white persons so that there could be no comparisons between white and dark actors, one objection would be removed. Again he probably figured that if he tried to show how much progress the Race was making, or how well they imitated the white man there would be dissatisfaction among southern whites, so there was none of that…."Hallelujah" shows Race folk doing things that are generally conceded to be indigenous to them; such as picking cotton, singing spirituals, living in cabins, shooting craps, seeking God in churches with much loud shouting…. if the picture had depicted some of the real activities of the Race, such as conducting banks, driving expensive motors, wearing evening dress at swanky parties or going to college, one could well understand why the southern exhibitors said "No!" None of these are shown, but their antitheses are, and with decided emphasis….It seems to me that the one very big reason why white Dixie doesn't want the film is because it likes to think that members of the dark race could not possibly be important enough to have their lowly lives flung broadcast before the world but such an important medium as the screen, and the talking screen, at that.[206]

Music director, Eva Jessye, weighed in on the public perception of the film countering negative critiques from prominent black artists such

[206] "Dixie's Attitude Toward "Hallelujah" may Affect Future of Race Films," The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967), January 11, 1930, page 6. http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/492309026?accountid=14474.

as popular black actor and singer, Paul Robson, who, according to film historian Scott Eyman, is said to have "loathed" it.[207]

> It is quite natural that the coming of this, the first conceived All-Negro moving picture, would be awaited with great apprehension on the part of the race from which the elements have been drawn. I say "apprehension" because a person once or constantly slipped involuntarily dodges the motion of that hand, and is slow to believing the gesture one of friendliness. Heretofore the only part played by a Negro, as such, in a motion picture has been that of a joker, comedian, servant, fool, the inference being that he is peculiarly fitted by nature for the mediocre roles. This attitude toward the Negro is naturally resented by the intelligent and those who recognize the histrionic gifts of the black man: so there is widespread dogging on the part of the public at this move in the cinema world….There are nearly forty singing sequences running the gamut of expression from tender lullaby to "blues." Folksongs all but lost to music history….How much farther along are we than ten years ago! We have the art among a few and it is spreading daily to greater numbers. The material with which that art has to work is the thing giving us so much concern, but it is growing finer and bigger and will soon break its narrow confines. Just you race writers get to work and let's have something original and vital, something that burns with the fire of inspiration; but remember that it must be fed with the fuel of knowledge of your people, the theatre and the times.[208]

Indeed, King Vidor was raised in Texas – the American South – and he was aware, to a certain degree, of racial tensions. After all, the film

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[207] Daniel Eagan, *America's Film Legacy: The Authoritative Guide to the Landmark Movies in the National Film Registry*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 159-160. http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMzQ0MTc5X19BTg2?nobk=y&sid=1afa5fcf-2ec8-4d26-aa94-0f790bbfcc80@sessionmgr4008&vid=3&format=EB&rid=1.

[208] Eva Jessye, ""Hallelujah" is Singing Rather Than Talking Movie," Afro-American (1803-1988), March 02, 1929, page 9, http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/530741212?accountid=1447.

industry was driven by box office returns and trade papers based on racial homeostasis.[209] However, his vision for the portrayal of black culture in the Lower South remains that of a white man with representational biases.

> I used to watch the negroes in the South, which was my home. I studied their music, and I used to wonder at the pent-up romance in them….A negro is a natural actor, singer and a born mimic. Any group of them naturally can sing and dance in harmony. They are born that way….When Stephen Foster produced his so-called negro melodies he probably took the most civilized of these spirituals - the nearest approach to our hymns - and again civilized them. And, as the negro music, already tinged with German compositions or English ecclesiastical music, was further civilized, the tiny vestige of the tom-tom influence was completely lost….Compare 'My Old Kentucky Home' with 'I Hear the Voice of My Porkchops Blues,' which is a direct descendent of the tom-toms, and you will see the difference at once.[210]

Eva Jessye and King Vidor worked together on the soundtrack for the film and he seemed to develop some insight about black traditional music.

> Our research into negro music was most interesting…Eva Jessye, colored composer, who has spent a lifetime collecting old negro melodies and setting them down on paper, worked with me, and we had the Dixie Jubilee Singers and negro choruses….'My Old Kentucky Home,' 'Massa's in the Cold, Cold Groun' and 'Swanee River' were written with words in the negro dialect, and for years were supposed to be songs of the negro race. As a matter of fact,

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[209] Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: Negro in American Film, 1900-42*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 98.

[210] "Another Negro Film: King Vidor Realizes Ambition By Making "Hallelujah," an Audible Picture," (New York: New York Times, June 2, 1929). URL: http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/104798675?accountid=14474.

> however, they were written by white men, and taught to the negros by whites. At that time none of the negro chants and songs was in written form, but were learned by ear, and handed down that way from generation to generation….While Stephen Foster and others were inspired by hearing negro songs on the levees, their music was not at all of the negro type. It has the distinct finish and technique of European music, possibly of German origin. The real negro music is found in such spirituals as 'Sweet Chariot," and 'Old-Time Religion" and so on.[211]

The casting for *Hallelujah* included many black actors from Harlem as well as regional musicians, dancers, and extras who auditioned for their parts. The auditions reflected something other than respect for the black cast. Vidor was quoted saying that main character, Nina Mae McKinney got the role of "Chick" when he asked her to "start singing jubilee to make these converts happy….And we started singing, and Nina Mae broke down and got happy, that is how she got the job."[212] This is contrasted with an account by Dixie Jubilee singer, Miss Burwell, that "several people got happy (working through tears) in that scene and fainted ….Nina Mae fainted….It was mostly from the heat….Anyhow, several people fell out and there was a nurse on set and several people got trampled."[213] Nina Mae confirmed that "(i)t was awful hot and we

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Ibid.

[213] Ibid.

worked awful hard."[214]

The storyline of *Hallelujah* occurs in three main parts that I have named: 1) Harvesting Cotton, 2) Perils of Selling Cotton, and 3) Return & Redemption. The main actor, "Zeke" (Daniel L. Haynes) is a black cotton farmer whose quest to sell the harvested cotton crop is met with a series of temptations and consequences at the hands of a beautiful dancer, "Chick" (Nina Mae McKinney). Ultimately, Zeke returns home as preacher "Brother Zekiel" who is both humbled by his experiences and offering salvation to others.[215] As the title of the film suggest, *Hallelujah* is largely about salvation of the human spirit and black religious music is at the center of this musical. There is an antithetical theme of sin in the form of sexual impulses that fuels emotional tensions in the script.

Prior to *Hallelujah*, roles for black actors were extremely limited and were confined to stereotypical parts. In fact, whites in blackface played many black parts in film.[216] The *Central Casting Bureau* found it difficult to recruit enough black actors in Memphis, Tennessee – the central filming location – and filled positions with actors and extras from Chicago and New York in part

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[214] Ibid.

[215] David Steele, Hallelujah (1929) Plot, (*International Movie Database*, 2018).

[216] Akers 2014, 4-5.

because the actors needed to be black and be able to sing or dance as well.[217]

4.2 *Hallelujah* (1929): Soundtrack

The musical direction for *Hallelujah* is credited to internationally recognized black American choral conductor, Eva Jessye.[218] She conducted the famous New York based, *Original Dixie Jubilee Singers*, later renamed the *Eva Jessye Choir*.[219] They were a world-renowned choir with a repertoire that included ragtime, jazz, work songs, spirituals, and ballads. Dr. Jessye was a part of the *Harlem Renaissance* (1910-1935)[220] and was chosen by George Gershwin to be the music director of *Porgy and Bess*, his 1935 folk-opera.[221] She writes that *Hallelujah* represents "the first time in the history of theatre that a Negro has been appointed musical director of an entire picture."[222] Her intention as musical director was to use:

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[217] Ibid.

[218] Hallelujah (1929): Full Cast & Crew, (International Movie Database, *IMDb Online*, 2018), https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0019959/fullcredits.

[219] *Dixie Jubilee Singers: Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (1924-1928)*, (Austria: Document Records, 1996), CD.

[220] *Harlem Renaissance*, (History.com, 2009).

[221] *The Eva Jessye Collection*, (Leonard H. Axe Library, Pittsburg: Pittsburg State University, 2018).

[222] Eva Jessye, Musical Director for Newest Sound Film, (Afro-American (1893-1988), February 16, 1929, page 7), http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/docview/530730222?accountid=14474.

> (E)very type of Negro music….beginning from the screening where a sort of fantasia of Negro themes will include African strains…brief passages of familiar songs in symphonic vocal arrangement, severely classic but modulating to simpler form with the flash of the opening scenes on the screen. It is very beautiful and inspiring.[223]

It seems that Dr. Jessye's influence was perhaps not what she thought it could be as the soundtrack credits include traditional black spirituals, *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*, and *Go Down Moses (Let My People Go)* sharply contrasted white minstrel composer, Stephen Foster's composition, *Swanee River* (1851) (also known as *Old Folks at Home*), and Richard Wagner's composition, *Bridal Chorus* (1850) from Lohengrin. The score written expressly for the film is Irving Berlin's composition of *Waiting at the End of the Road* (1929).[224]

As aforementioned, *Hallelujah* was filmed on location in the American South states of Arkansas and Tennessee. The home base for the cast and crew was the nearby city of Memphis, Tennessee.[225] This was a hotbed for musicians, singers, and dancers known to record company *A&R men* and fans of the Memphis music scene. Local auditions were held for roles in the film that would be best filled by black dancer, musicians, and singers.[226] Memphis locals

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[223] Ibid.

[224] "*Hallelujah (1929) Soundtracks*," (International Movie Data Base (IMDB), 2018).

[225] Ackers 2014, 7.

[226] Ibid.

Figure 19. Cast and Singers of Hallelujah![227]

eventually credited for their musical and dance roles include Georgia Woodruff (singer), Walter Tait (dancer), Robert Couch (dancer), and Milton Dickerson (dancer) (figure 19).[228]

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[227] Rubye Woodruff Carter, *Cast and Singers of Hallelujah!, Circa 1928-9,* (Hallelujah! Collection, The Digital Archive of Memphis Public Libraries: Memphis and Shelby County Room, 2014), https://memphislibrary.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ p16108coll9/id/118/ rec/24.

[228] "*Hallelujah (1929) Full Cast & Crew*," (International Movie Data Base (IMDB), 2018).

4.3 The Unnamed Banjo Player: Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon

There are many reasons that Cannon can be identified as the banjo player in the movie. 1) He is seen clearly in the film in multiple scenes. 2) He was a fixture in the Memphis, Tennessee music scene for twenty years prior to filming and it is confirmed that the cast and crew used Memphis as their home base during shooting (figure 20 and 21).[229] 3) The majority of the film's audio and visual recording is confirmed to have occurred on location in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Memphis is located at the border of western Tennessee, eastern Arkansas, and northwestern Mississippi.[230] 3) It is the same black, banjo musician identified at what I have called the "Cotton Harvest Frolic" and at the "Cotton Gin Baling" in the film (figures 22, 23, and 24). The two songs played on the banjo include a black folk children's song with buck dancing and a *Tin Pan Alley*, vaudeville-style song written by Irving Berlin. This suggests a musician with a broad repertoire, an adaptable skill set, and music reading ability. 5) Cannon was a well-known and established multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and songwriter having completed the recordings of twenty-one sides in four different string-band ensembles for three record companies (Paramount, Victor, and Brunswick) in two different states

[229] Ackers 2014, 7.

[230] Fibla 2017, 394.

Figure 20. Cast Member Playing the Banjo.[231]

[231] Rubye Woodruff Carter, *Cast Member Playing the Banjo*, (Hallelujah! Collection, The Digital Archive of Memphis Public Libraries: Memphis and Shelby County Room, 2014), https://memphislibrary.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/ p16108coll9/id/118/ rec/24.

Figure 21. Cast Member Playing the Banjo (enlarged).[232]

(Tennessee and Illinois) by 1929. It is likely that record company *A&R men* (i.e., Ralph Peer) may have been part of the recruitment for Memphis based musicians but it is more likely that Cannon was recommended to King Vidor by Jim Jackson (figure 25) who was his long-standing friend and fellow musician on the medicine show and vaudeville circuits. 6) Folklorist Robert Vee completed two unnamed interviews in the American South with part of Cannon's extensive network of fellow musicians. They confirmed, after watching *Hallelujah*, that

[232] Ibid.

Figure 22. Gus Cannon at the Cotton Harvest Frolic.[233]

it was Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon in the film.[234]

Cannon appeared at two points in part one of the film playing the *Buck Dance Tune* (5m19s to 9m23s) (appendix F) and *Waiting at the End of the Road* (figure 26) (appendix G) during a wedding ceremony (16m25s – 18m08s).

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[233] King Vidor, *Hallelujah (1929)*, (California: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1929), 5m39s, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFMokYj4Ed8.

[234] Bob Boslaugh, *"Hallelujah?" Updates…Gus Cannon Verified? Frankie Jaxon Nixed?*, (Vernacular Shellac, 2011), https://vernacularshellac.com/2011/12/16/hallelujah-updates-gus-cannon-verified-frankie-jaxon-nixed/.

Figure 23. Gus Cannon & Young Dancer.[235]

Figure 24. Gus Cannon & Unidentified Jug Players.[236]

[235] Ibid., 7m57s.

Figure 25. Jim Jackson & King Vidor.

4.3.1 "Buck Dance Tune"

The scene begins when Cannon, carrying his four string banjo, joins the Johnson family in front of their log cabin in their yard where they are eating around a picnic table. Cannon is dressed in coveralls and is wearing a black hat that separates his from the other three men in the scene. He has a few lines where he explains that he was telling his banjo that he was tired of telling time by the sun. Cannon pulls out a shiny pocket watch and it is passed around the picnic table. When "Zeke" asks him what time it says, Cannon does not know how to read the time and there is laughter. Cannon then proceeds to invite the

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[236] Ibid., 17m06s.

Figure 26. Sheet Music Cover of Waiting At The End Of The Road.[237]

young kids to dance and he begins to play the *Buck Dance Tune*. The adults, led by New York blues singer Victoria Spivey, sing simple and repetitive vocalizations that sound like "*e-i-o*" while "Zeke" claps in quarter-note time. The three youngest male children begin dancing. A child solos first on the

[237] Irving Berlin, *Waiting At The End Of The Road: Theme Song of "Hallelujah" Produced by King Vidor* (New York: Irving Berlin Inc. Music Publishers, 1929).

cleared, wooden picnic table then another child solos on a wooden wagon bed before he hops onto a wooden chair. Finally, the scene returns to the picnic table where two children are dancing, *patting juba*, and winging before a sudden ending when the dog begins to bark.

The style of dance is called *buck dancing* or *buck and wing*.[238] It is a black folk dance style, usually performed solo, whereby the dancer performs specific and improvisational dance steps to string-band music. It requires the dancer to have a relatively still upper body while the lower body emphasizes rhythmical tapping.[239] The dance is part of both rural black and white dance traditions and often occurred after a hard day's work when music accompanied plentiful food and drink.[240] This dance style in black culture in the nineteenth century was bound up in the racially derisive white minstrelsy where white comedians in blackface would exaggerate their impressions of black physical dance gestures reinforcing gross racial stereotypes. An example of this in early film is Dave Fleischer's *Busting the Show* (1920) whose blackface character acted out *The Grate Nigger Bucking Wing Dancer*.[241] This era in Hollywood films

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[238] William S. Powell, Buck Dancing, (Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 2006). [page? Be sure you give page numbers for all books/articles]

[239] Ibid.

[240] Mike Seeger, *Talking Feet*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1987), Fris Holoway, Durham North Carolina, 39m46s – 52m07s.

[241] Cripps 1977, 119.

consistently siloed roles for black actors as exotic or as servants despite attempts by white writers to challenge black stereotypes.[242]

This song has an unknown title and an unknown author. I have named for the reference to the dance style that accompanies Cannon's performance. He plays a percussive rhythm in D major behind the melodic vocalizations that works perfectly for both the vocal and dance objectives. The singing occurs in a three-bar (A) section and a two-bar (B) section. This is repeated throughout the performance. The words are not entirely audible in the *call* over the A section but the *response* of the B section is "*e-i-o*" repeated until the end of the structure.[243] The melody may be recognizable to those with specific knowledge of children's games or children's songs. Rhythmic textures on the banjo remain constant during both A and B sections: two eighths, four sixteenths, followed by two eighths, one eighth held, and a sixteenth. The syncopation of the banjo lends itself to buck dance footwork but does not stray from the rhythm due to having only one musician and a person hand clapping in quarter time. In most cases, buck dancing occurs with a full old-time string-band ensemble.[244]

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[242] Ibid,.

[243] Phil Jamison, *Interview & Discussion of Buck Dancing and Children's Songs*, (Folkways Alive!, Canada: University of Alberta, 2013).

[244] Ibid.

4.3.2 “Waiting at the End of the Road”

The musical scene opens with five black men walking down a rural road. The man on the left is holding and playing a banjo as they walk. The sound-track is faint but you can hear the strum of the banjo and a choir singing. “Zeke” and his friend who are tying up cotton for the cotton bale hear the music in the distance and they recognize the song. Cannon is recognizable as he enters the scene (16m47s) wearing the same black felt hat and coveralls from the frolic. He is walking with his banjo in front of a wooden wagon that carries two black men – one lying on a cotton bale. “Zeke” begins singing after Cannon plays a descending set of chords. A group of men continue to gather in front of the wagon and the scene cuts back and forth between “Zeke” who is singing the lyrics while acting and Cannon who is, by this time, joined by three jug players, as he sits on a chair acting with a smile. The majority of the men are wearing coveralls, old felt hats, and plaid shirts and appear to take of the roles of “extras” in the film. Cannon and the jug players continue to play alongside the lead singer and choir while scenes of cotton ginning pass by. At the end of the cotton baling, the scene switches back to the group gathered with Cannon and they are now singing the choir section of the song. The scene ends after the song when “Zeke” waves and says, “*you sure can sing good fellas*” (19m08s).

The lyrical text, as suggested in the title of the song, uses the road and its end as a metaphor for the journey of a hard life with the promise of relief.

Weary of roaming on, yearning to see the dawn
Counting the hours till I can lay down my load
Weary but I don't mind, knowing that soon I'll find
Peace and contentment at the end of the road

The song continues by identifying that there are certain things required though before that relief can be realized.

The way is long, the night is dark
But I don't mind 'cause a happy lark
Will be singing at the end of the road

I can't go wrong, I must go right
I'll find my way 'cause a guiding light
Will be shining at the end of the road

This sentiment continues over the next few stanzas where Berlin uses a rose and its thorns as a metaphor for the trials of life. There is also the message to "grin and bear" the trials because the promise to those who are faithful and pleasant is that they will meet their loved ones again.

There may be thorns in my path
But I'll wear a smile
'Cause in a little while
My path will be roses

The rain may fall from up above
But I won't stop 'cause the ones I love
Will be waiting at the end of the road

The final two stanzas are the most open to interpretation and take a detour from the "*road*" to the "*field*." The "*field*," in this case, is "*snowy*

white" which could be a reference to a cotton field or that the "*field*" is the "*road*" bathed in the light of promised salvation in a life that is otherwise without sound and dark. The banjo produces the sound in the silence that eventually leads to a cabin where "*mammy's*" love awaits.

I seem to roam through a field
That is snowy white
And through the silent night
A banjo is strumming
Come back, I roam no more
A mammy's heart and a cabin door
Will be open at the end of the road

The choice to reference pure white ("*snowy white*") as the path of illumination that eventually results in the arrival of the racially stereotyped archetype of the subservient southern black woman who nursed and raised white children ("*mammy*").[245] More than the others before it, this stanza reinforces the need to question underlying racial attitudes, representations, and messages of the time augmented by the fact that the composer is a northern, urban, white man.

Finally, the song resolves with the direction that the righteous path will have temptations but that, if one believes in God and remains "*good*" then His kingdom "*Golden Stairs*" will provide the salvation and ease from life's suffering.

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[245] David Pilgrim, "Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia: The Mammy Caricature," (*Imagine More*: Ferris State University, 2012).

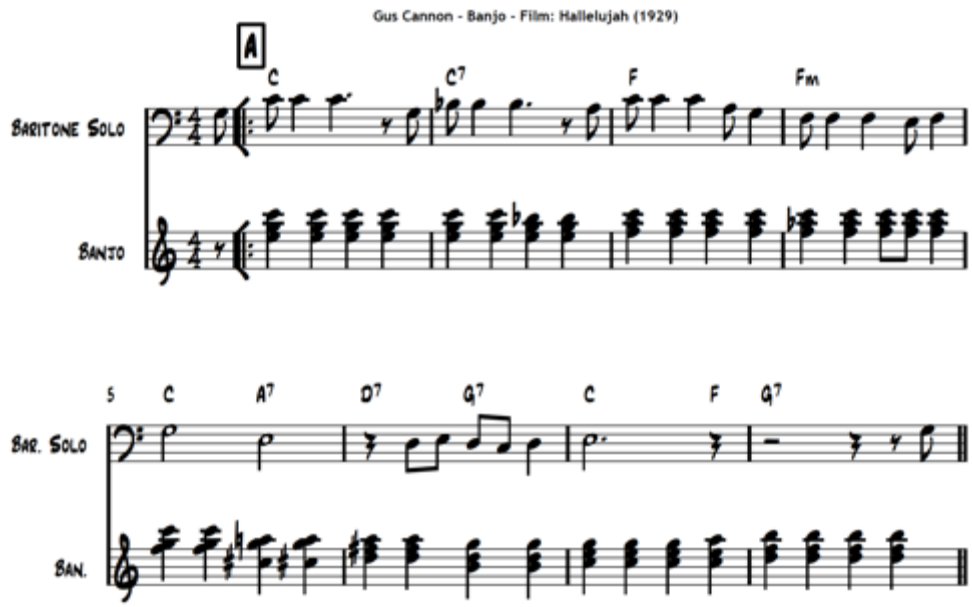
You'll hear that old Devil say
"Come on down below"
But you just let him know
You're heading for Heaven
Come on and climb the Golden Stairs
And all your troubles and all your cares
Will be over at the end of the road

The transcription of *Waiting on the End of the Road* (appendix H) is based on the movie soundtrack that has been isolated from the moving images. It is two minutes and thirty-eight seconds in length and is credited to Tin Pan Alley composer, Irving Berlin. There are three parts to this song: a baritone solo vocalist (Daniel Hayes), 4-string banjo (Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon) playing the score as written by Berlin, and a choir of voices (*Dixie Jubilee Singers*). The melody is in the key of C in 4/4 time at a tempo of 105.

The melodic structure relies on an eight-bar progression: one bar of the tonic (C), one bar of the tonic (C7) seventh, a bar of the subdominant (F), one bar of a minor subdominant (Fm), half bar of the tonic with the major sixth (A7) making up the other two beats of bar, the major second (D7) for the first half of the next bar followed by the dominant (G7) seventh, followed by a two bar turnaround on the tonic (C) and dominant (G7) seventh. This progression follows the circle of fourths.[246]

[246] Benward and Saker 2009, 389.

Waiting at the End of the Road is indicative of an early jazz (1920s and 1930s)[247] tune because of the structure, chord progression, and swing feel. An eight bar progression length—one of the most common blues chord progressions in early blues music—centers on the root note and a pentatonic scale.[248] However, when it comes to the first forms of jazz, those eight bars center the pitch near the fourth or fifth of a scale with the one becoming the key center.[249] In this song, this shifting of the key center occurs in the chordal



[247] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 63.

[248] Steve James, *Inside Blues Guitar*, (California: String Letter Publishing, 2001),18.

[249] Schuller 1968, 49.

progression on the third bar of the A section where the F chord begins (F, Fm, C, A7, D7, G7, C). The first forms of jazz relied on the accent and inflection of the notes as sung by the vocalist and played by the musician. This was a joining of singular notes that provided a feeling of cohesion and forward motion.[250]

The B sections alter the A pattern by setting out a progression that begins with one bar of the relative minor (Am), a bar of the mediant (E7) seventh, a return to the relative minor (Am), a bar of the submediant (A7), two bars of the major second (d7) seventh, ending with two bars of the dominant (G7) seventh as a bridge back to the root note (C). Again, the circle of fourths was used to create chordal progressions commonly associated with early jazz music.[251]

Cannon plays the banjo in a steady quarter time rhythm using a plectrum to strum the strings that adds volume to the instrument. There are four points in the song where he represents his personal musicality departing from Berlin's score. The two techniques are tremolo glissando—an advanced technique on the banjo that creates a trembling effect —and staccato melodic fills.[252]

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[250] Ibid., 7.

[251] Daniel Koulak, "*Interview and Discussion of Banjo Techniques*," (email communications, May 1-18, 2018).

[252] Michael & Christian Moll, "Banjo," (*Folkworld* #49, 2012); Koulack 2018.

For ease, the sections are divided and transcribed (appendix G)[253] accordingly and they are also referenced according to bar number:

A	⇒	introduction	⇒	bars 1-8
A	⇒	verse 1	⇒	bars 1-8
A1	⇒	verse 2	⇒	bars 9-16
B	⇒	variation	⇒	bars 17-24
A3	⇒	verse 3	⇒	bars 25-32
A4	⇒	verse 4	⇒	bars 33-40
B1	⇒	variation	⇒	bars 41-48
A6	⇒	verse 5	⇒	bars 49-56

There are five key bar locations that drew my attention because I have heard Cannon play similar riffs on his string-band recordings with Cannon's Jug Stompers (i.e., *Can You Blame The Colored Man?*, *Bring It With Me When You Come*, *Wolf River Blues*, *Madison Street Rag*, *Money Never Runs Out*, *Big Road Blues*). Cannon plays his banjo using the tremolo glissando technique in the A to B section transition bars. This occurs twice from the A1 section to the B section at bars 16-17 and again from the A4 section to the B1 section at bars 48–49. There is also a more pronounced trill at bar 55. The next are two locations of the melodic, staccato fills at bars 25-26 (A2) and again, quite unexpectedly, at bar 47 (A4).

The use of tremolo on the banjo has the effect of clearly indicating a change in the mood and message of the song. It is unknown if this was an expectation on the part of Berlin in the score or if this was Cannon's musical

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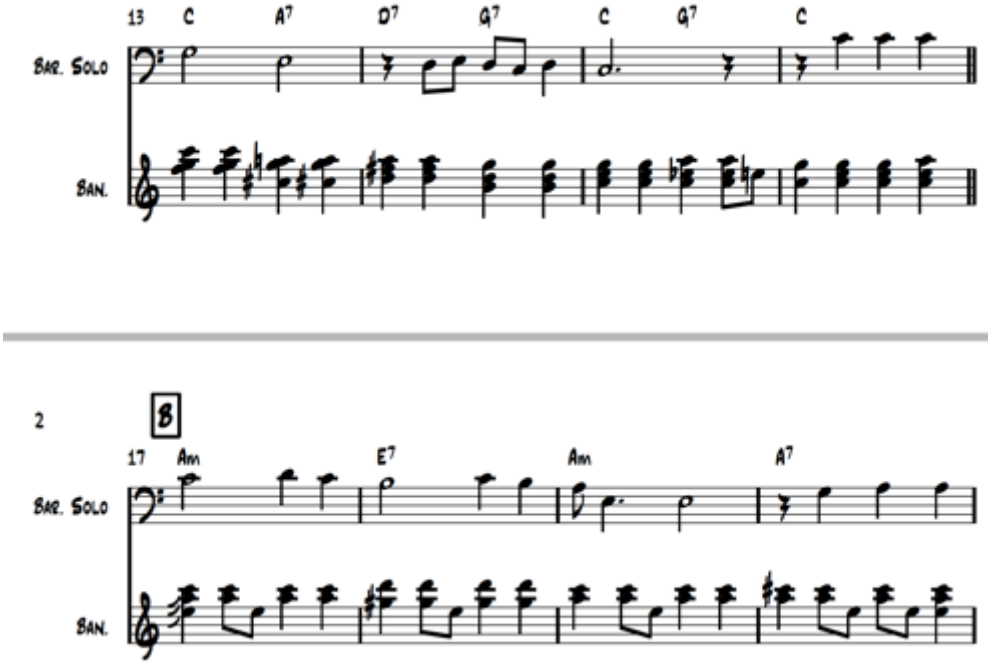
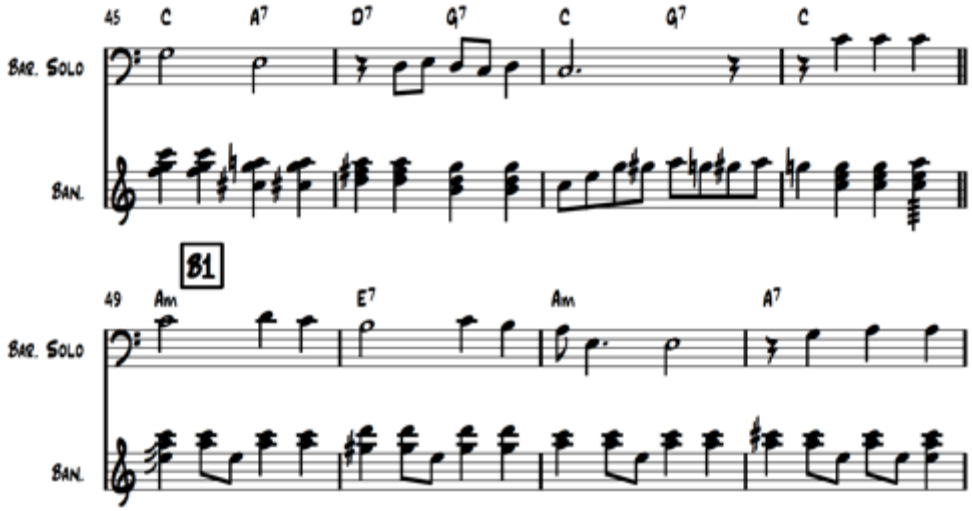
[253] King Vidor, *Hallelujah (1929)*, (California: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1929), 16m27s-19m01s, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFMokYj4Ed8.

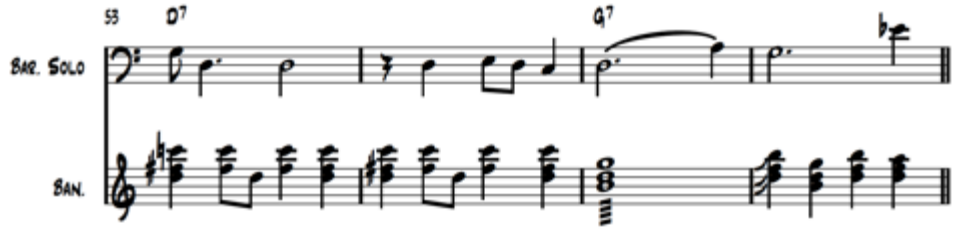
Bars 16-17: Tremelo Glissando



Bars 48-49: Tremelo Glissando

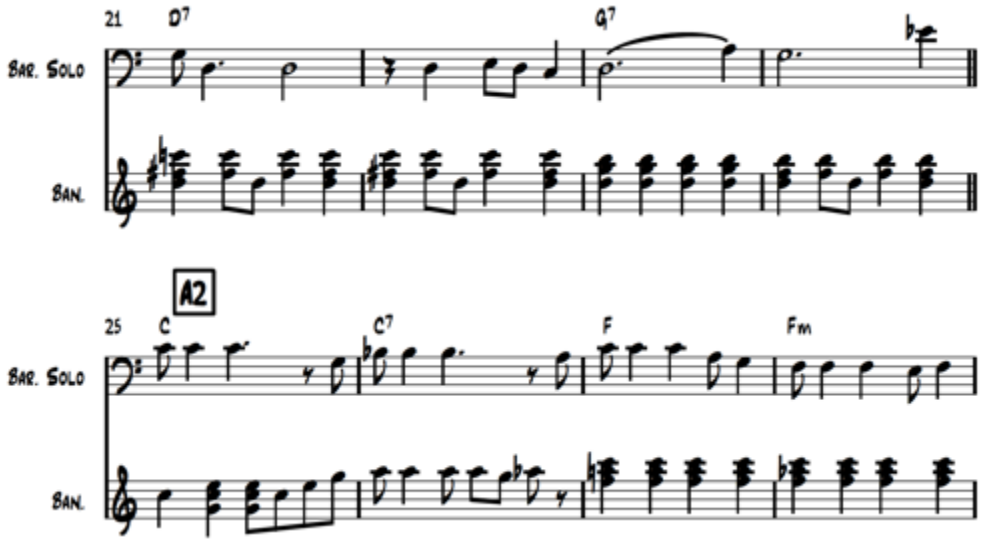


Bar 55: Extended Tremolo Glissando

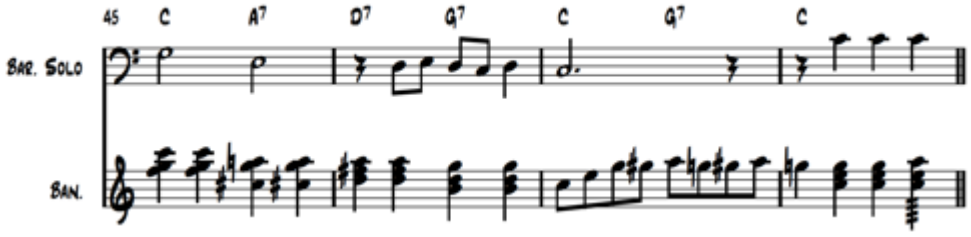


experience leading the way. It seems likely that this is Cannon's stylistic addition that may have been discussed with music director, Dr. Jessye, although there I have not located evidence where she discusses the soundtrack performers beyond her choir. These are pronounced transition points in the

Bars 25-26: Melodic Fill



Bar 47: Melodic Fill



overall arch of the song and it seems likely that both Berlin's craft as a professional songwriter on *Tin Pan Alley* and Cannon's musical sensibilities synthesize under the direction of Eva Jessye, for a powerful vocal performance from Daniel Haynes and the *Dixie Jubilee Singers*.

The advent of technology that supported talking and sounded motion pictures offered spaces to hear and to see largely white representations of black culture in action.

Discussion

The *Buck Dance Tune* and *Waitin' for the End of the Road* offer information about white stereotypes of black Southerners with visual and musical significance. Rural characters are portrayed as poor, simple, hard-working, unintelligent, and naïve. The absence of white proprietorship or involvement particularly with the cotton harvest is insular and unrealistic for the time period. However, the scene when the *Buck Dance Tune* is played and performed is a celebration or frolic at the completion of the cotton-picking

phase of fieldwork. The timing of the frolic, dancing, repetitive and child-friendly singing, and musical rhythms are congruent with first-hand accounts like that of Cuje Bertram[254] of how events of this nature occurred. The only difference is that there would have been a string-band accompanying the dance instead of lone banjo indicating a transformation of music from real life into the world of film.

Waitin' on the End of the Road was written specifically for the movie and is an odd choice for a song during the cotton gin mill scenes. It interrupts the flow of the film from an integration of music and story to an interjection of performance style one could expect to see in a theatre. The placement of a jazz song that is more representative of urban black culture in the middle of an obvious rural activity is incongruent. In addition, the choice to have a white composer from Tin Pan Alley instead of popular black composers (i.e., Scott Joplin or W. C. Handy) is suspect given Dr. Eva Jessye's support of and advocacy for black musical artists. Initially, I wondered if the music director, Eve Jessye, with her connections in New York and her extensive training, may have selected the song. However, in an interview, King Vidor indicated that the movie studio executives made the decision to incorporate the song into the movie as it would be pleasing to white audiences.[255]

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[254] Fulcher 1988, 58-70.

[255] Nancy Dowd and David Shepherd, *King Vidor: A Director's Guild of America Oral History*, (New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1988), 281.

From the outset, MGM was inconsistent in their financial support of *Hallelujah*. King Vidor's altruistic vision for the film was challenged by political, social and financial realities. One of Vidor's concessions was the song, *Waiting for the End of the Road*. Irving Thalbert, head of MGM, had decided that the song should be the primary musical piece of the movie because it would appeal to white audiences. For good reason, Vidor is quoted as saying "even today, if I watch Hallelujah and see the Irving Berlin song in it…I feel like getting down on the floor and hiding my face because it didn't belong in the picture."[256] If anything, Thalbert's decision gives some indication of the power of black music and its potential threat to white audience sensibilities. Underneath, these frames are artefacts of black culture in the rural South and provide some insights into the role of joke telling, the buck dance tradition, the way that a stringed instrument was syncopated to accompany buck dancers, and the adaptability of a perfectly positioned musician to play an early jazz piano composition *Tin Pan Alley* style on a four-stringed tenor banjo.

Cannon's performance on the banjo grounds the scene even though he is never seen in the same frame as the singer. His ability to chord jazz progressions up the neck on the banjo,[257] the use of melodic fills, and the tremolo glissandos are evidence of the depth of his musical experience and

[256] Ibid.

[257] Koulack 2018.

adaptable skill set. The jug band musicians, although unidentified, add to the overall feel of the rural set and also add musical dimension. Their appearance is indicative of string-bands that incorporated jugs as instruments. However, the choir vocals of the Dixie Jubilee singers would not be expected in a string-band ensemble. They are participants in the song solely because they support the spiritual aspect of the lyrics.

The exclusion of Cannon and his jug band from credit in the film is perplexing. Other black directors, cast members, and dancers are credited so it seems unlikely that this oversight is evidence of racial bias alone. It is possible that this exclusion speaks to the perceived *low culture* of the musical style and the instruments played. Even worse, Cannon's script reinforces stereotypes of low culture—rural blacks as uneducated, unsophisticated, and childlike.[258]

Both the banjo and the jug had some presence among black musicians in urban centers such as those with New York jazz oriented string bands (i.e., Kildare's *Joan Sawyer's Persian Garden Orchestra*) and among Louisville jazz influenced string-bands (i.e., *Dixieland Jug Blowers*). Even musical director, Dr. Eva Jessye, does not mention black folk or old-time music in her report on the film's musical content. It seems that musical selections that she states are representative of a cross section of black musical styles are in alignment with the comfort of white audiences at the time who were more accepting of black

[258] Fibla 2017, 395.

spirituals and black choirs (i.e., *Fisk Jubilee Singers*). There is also the possibility that local black music in Memphis at the time was not as familiar to Jessye or to Vidor. Maybe it is an example of the urban-rural divide or classist bias – Jessye, a trained composer in European traditions, and Cannon, a self-taught and community mentored travelling minstrel show performer and, a rather obscure black *old-time* string-band musician at least to more cosmopolitan audiences?

Hallelujah is one example where even altruistic approaches by the directors change our understandings of traditional black music. Vidor wrote the scenes based on the perspective of a white, male believing that because he grew up in the American South that made him more aware than his peers outside the region. His decisions to highlight white, minstrel composer Stephen Foster and embrace Irving Berlin's composition with its racially stereotyped lyrics lack the awareness of his own racial biases and reinforces the systemic racism of film and in sound. The buck dancing scenes do not represent a post-harvest frolic as it would not have been limited to one family and a single musician. Frolics were community celebrations with multiple musicians playing a variety of instruments to a stylistically varied repertoire. Even more odd was the role of Cannon as primary instrumentalist and banjo player on a jazz oriented song that backs a choir. I did not find any evidence that black old-time string-bands consisted of one string player and three jug player

ensembles. In fact, in a vast majority of cases there are multiple stringed instruments with usually one and sometimes more than one jug player. Still, Gus Cannon found opportunities to be musically creative within the parts he was given.

So, how then can *Hallelujah* be viewed with historical distance? It seems that Hollywood, Metro-Goldwyn, was ready to take some financial risks support Vidor's script and sound approaches given the success of *The Jazz Singer*. Vidor was so committed to his vision that, even when Southern theatre owners banned the film, he funded the remaining releases himself. Certainly, *Hallelujah* offered black actors from larger urban centers (Chicago, New York) opportunities to represent characters beyond prior limited and stereotypical roles as servant or slave. It also offered artistic opportunities and income to the impoverished city of Memphis and centered on a script that sought to represent the black working farm families in the Lower South who depended on cotton farming as livelihood. The music in the film was a blend of European and African cultural streams that lies at the roots of American popular music. Finally, all music and dance numbers were performed by black people who were, at least in part, representing black culture in as far as agency would allow.

The trade off, however, is the representation of a white producer's idea of black life in the South. Vidor was born and raised in Texas not the Lower

South of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi. His ideas about black labour, cotton farming, and sales are isolated from actual practices where white business owners and buyers controlled the market. In fact, the commitment to an all-black cast is a fantasy of black life in the American South as it ignores the serious racial power issues and stress of life for black people under oppressive *Jim Crow* laws. The characterizations of rural black farmers, urban black people, the piety of black church folk, and black servitude vis-à-vis the *mammy* role and its reinforcement in Berlin's song reinforces deep and enduring racial stereotypes about black people in the South.

The position of black composer and choir director Eva Jessye as musical director of the film seems deceptive. It is clear in her published article that she was proud of and happy to be a part of the film. It is also clear that she did not appear to have much control over the songs that underscored the script especially Metro-Goldwyn's decision to have Irving Berlin's tune as the highlighted song of the film. However, perhaps even the inclusion of some black old-time, choir, and gospel songs was significant enough for that time period as Jessye indicated. It still remains that the songs and associated contexts are misaligned and represent Vidor's vision rather than how black old-time string-band or frolic music would have occurred. It is easy as a viewer to be seduced by sights and sounds of this film and deem it an *authentic* product rather than one of flawed representations.

Gus Cannon's appearances in *Hallelujah* are worth the wade through complicated discourses as it is extremely rare to see a black musician from the South on film in the 1920s. The performances are subsequently open to analysis and interpretation because of his inclusion in the film. Even more rare are the filmic frames that include three jug blowers. Yet, how is it that Cannon and the jug blowers are not given credit for their work when even the young dancing children are credited? Could it mean the presence of a hierarchy among black artists (i.e., dancers are considered worthy artists above a rural banjo player)?

Hallelujah is a product of its time and I think it is better to have it than the alternative. There are no easy answers about whether it benefited or harmed black actors, singers, and musicians or whether it reinforced or challenged racial stereotypes of black Southerners. What I am certain of is that *Hallelujah* deserves broader analysis and academic attention.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The cultural productions by black musicians in string-bands from 1920 to 1950 adds to our understanding of black culture even though they may have not been intending to reconstitute perceptions of blackness[259]. Their musical lives were subversive and courageous acts during the serious socio-political tensions of the *Jim Crow* era. Black musicians who were a part of recordings reveal that they were masters of invention, skill, and adaptability. Those recordings provide names and sounds to those who would have otherwise been lost. They give us an opportunity to further investigate the lives of those musicians before and after the surge of early recordings.

It is critical to view black musicians in string-bands as a small part of an overarching network of black communities in the South. Black people in the American South were not merely resilient but they thrived in the face of *Jim Crow* laws that sought to continue to subjugate black people. In fact, by the early twentieth-century, there was a strong resurgence of self-determination in black communities as evidenced by control of their cultural institutions, churches, social organizations, and schools.[260] They were also interconnected with other urban and rural black and white communities.

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[259] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of Black," (*Representations*, 24, 1988: 129-155).

[260] V. P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination*, (Connecticut: Lawrence Hill Books, 1984), 143.

Black musicians and actors representing varied regions and cultural practices toured in black minstrel shows, medicine shows, vaudeville theatre, and choral ensembles. Their performances were spaces where communities of people gathered to witness and participate in cultural productions. In fact, these platforms were not merely leisure-oriented activities – they conveyed important information about other black communities along the tour route as well as shared concerns among black people nationwide. The active black cultural productions of music, literature, comedy, and art[261] during the early part of the twentieth century connected disenfranchised black communities in ways that we are still trying to understand.

The longevity of black musicians who were recorded in string-band ensembles relied on deep networks of connections to other musicians, talent buyers, and their regional communities. They were adept at recognizing the racial, ethnic, and linguistic composition of their consumers and adapted their repertoire accordingly. Their music was unique and distinct whether playing tunes that were familiar to black people or tunes that were shared with those from other cultural streams. Black musicians like their white counterparts, used performance strategies that drew attention to their musical works with the intention of not being easily forgotten but getting easily paid.

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[261] Robinson 2012, 145.

Other worthwhile research on this topic could include developing, detailing, and analyzing black musicians in string-bands as a set matrix—a smaller network within broader social and overlapping structures.[262] For example, research should identify black fiddlers in string-bands who can form the foundation for analysis of repertoire, style, and unique performative qualities.[263] Set matrices could also be researched based on genre (i.e., downhome blues, country, and old-time jazz) recordings of that era and understanding the variances and similarities among not just black fiddlers alone but, also, banjo, or guitar players.

One of the most obvious and baffling aspects of studying black musicians in string-bands is the absence of black female musicians. This is quite contrary to white musicians in string-bands where there are plethoras of photographic and musical evidence of female participation. White women in string-bands were both instrumentalists as well as singers whereas there are only four examples on recordings where black women are included as guests not as band members. I think there are issues of *respectability* and responsibility that black women in the South were facing. Black women in this era were primarily in caregiver roles for their own families and as well as domestic servitude outside the home as a caregiver and housekeeper for wealthier white families.

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[262] Patterson 2015, 44.

[263] Jacqueline Cogdell Djedje, "The (Mis)Representations of African American Music: The Role of the Fiddle," (*Journal of the Society for American Music* 10, 1 (2016): 1-32.

There are likely issues of class and the freedom to travel at the root of some of this research. An additional layer that research may uncover is that black women were relegated to the role of vocalist by the white, male-dominated music industry. For example, even an accomplished musician, songwriter, and singer like Chicago's Sister Rosetta Tharpe was isolated from her songs and her guitar while playing theatres in New York in the 1940s.

The early recordings list of early recordings of black musicians in string-bands and the close study of Gus Cannon's career trajectory offer the basis for future research initiatives. One such project should center on identifying key performers by region (i.e., Lower South East, Lower South West, Upper South East, Upper South West). Musicians to focus on for this kind of research include Lloyd Buford "Whistler" Thredkeld, Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong, Will "Son Brimmer" Shade, and Bo Carter. The method of song identification, transcription analysis, and historical ethnographic archival research would serve to highlight regional variances and to continue the discourse about the significance of these musicians and their musical styles in the developments of American popular music.

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APPENDIX A: **LIST OF CD RELEASES OF BLACK MUSICIANS IN STRING-BANDS 1920 – 1950, AUDIO TRACKS AND LINER NOTES CONSULTED FOR THIS DISSERTATION**

Band	Album	Year	Record Company
Beale Street Sheiks (Frank Stokes & Dan Sane)	Songs: Beale Town Bound, Blues in "D", Mr. Crump Don't Like It, and Downtown Blues	1927	Paramount
"Brownsville" Son Bonds and Charlie Pickett	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order (1934-1941)	1991	Wolf Records
Butch Cage & Willie B. Thomas	Old Time Black Southern String Band Music	2006	Arhoolie Records
Cannon's Jug Stompers	The Best of Cannon's Jug Stompers	2001	Yazoo
Cannon's Jug Stompers	The Complete Works in Chronological Order 1927-1930 including Gus Cannon as Banjo Joe	1975	Herwin
Cannon's Jug Stompers	The Legendary 1928-1930 Recordings	1994	JSP Records
Carl Martin (including Tennessee Chocolate Drops and Louie Bluie and Ted Bogan)	Carl Martin/Willie "61" Blackwell – Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order	1994	Document Records
Cats and the Fiddle	Killin' Jive: 1939-1940, Complete Recordings, Volume 1	2000	Dee-Jay Jamboree
Chicago String Band (The)	Chicago String Band	1994	Testament Records
Clifford Hayes & the Louisville Jug Bands	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Vol. 2 (1926-1927)	1994	RST Records
Clifford Hayes & the Louisville Jug Bands	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order, Vol. 4 1929-1931	1994	RST Records
Coley Jones & The Dallas String Band	Coley Jones & The Dallas String Band: Complete Recordings in Chronological Order (1927-1929)	1983	Matchbox Records
Dan Kildare	The Earliest Black String Bands – Volume 1 – in Chronological Order 1914-1917	1999	Document
Dan Kildare	The Earliest Black String Bands – Volume 2 – in Chronological Order 1917-1919	1998	Document
DeFord Bailey	The Legendary DeFord Bailey	1998	Tennessee Folklore Society
Elizabeth Cotton	Freight Train and Other North Carolina Folk Songs and Tunes	1958	Folkways Records
Gus "Banjo Joe" Cannon	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order: Volume 1 (November 1927 to September 1928)	1990	Document
Gus Cannon	Broadcasting the Blues: Black Blues in the Segregation Era (Gus Cannon	2005	Document Records

	Interview)		
Henry Thomas	Texas Worried Blues: Complete Recorded Works 1927-1929	1989	Yazoo
Howard “Louie Bluie” Armstrong	Louie Bluie	1995	Blue Suit Records
Howard Armstrong	Out Of The Blue	2008	Louie Blue
Howard Armstrong	Louie Bluie Film Soundtrack	1998	Arhoolie Records
Joe Thompson	Family Tradition	1999	New Rounder
Martin, Bogan & Armstrong	Barnyard Dance	2003	Rounder Records
Memphis Jug Band	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order 1932-1934	1990	RST Records
Memphis Jug Band	Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 2 (1928-1929)	1990	Document Records
Memphis Jug Band	Complete Recorded Works, Vol. 3 (1930)	1990	Document Records
Mississippi Sheiks	Complete Recorded Works Presented in Chronological Order, Volume 1	1991	Third Man Records/Document Records
Mississippi Sheiks & Chatmon Brothers	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order Volume 4: 26 March 1934 to 15 October 1936	1991	Document Records
Mississippi Sheiks & Chatmon Brothers	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order Volume 3: 25 October 1931 to 26 March 1934	1991	Document Records
Mississippi Sheiks & Chatmon Brothers	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order Volume 2: 15 December 1930 to 24 October 1931	1991	Document Records
Mississippi Sheiks & Chatmon Brothers	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order Volume 1: 17 February to 12 June 1930	1991	Document Records
Peg Leg Howell & Eddie Anthony	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order: Volume 1 (8 November 1926 to 13 August 1928)	1993	Document Records
Peg Leg Howell & Eddie Anthony	Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order: Volume 2 (13 August 1928 to 9 December 1930)	2005	Document Records
Spirits of Rhythm	The Spirits of Rhythm 1932-34	1958	JSP Records
Tampa Red & Georgia Tom	Making Music in Chicago 1928-1935	2012	JSP Records
Tommie Bradley – James Cole Groups	1928-32 Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order	1983	Matchbox Records
Various	African American Old-Time String Band Music: A Selective Discography	2008	ProjectMUSE
Various	Altamont: Black Stringband Music from the Library of Congress	1989	Rounder Records
Various	Alabama: Black Country Dance Bands – Complete Recorded Works 1924-1949	1993	Document Records

Various	American Skiffle Bands	2003	Folkways
Various	Black Banjo Songsters	1998	Smithsonian Folkways
Various	Black Fiddlers: The Remaining Titles of Andrew & Jim Baxter, Nathan Frazier & Frank Patterson. The Complete Recorded Works of Cuje Bertram (1929-1970)	1999	Document Records
Various	Before the Blues: Early American Black Musicians as Captured on Classic Recordings from the 1920s and 30s – Volumes 1-3	1996	Yazoo Records
Various	Classic Appalachian Blues	1999	Smithsonian Folkways
Various	Blues Classics (Charles Wolfe Manuscript)	Accessed 2015	Middle Tennessee State University
Various	Country Negro Jam Sessioin: Butch Cage, Willie B. Thomas and Others	1959-1962	Arhoolie Records
Various	Deep River of Song: Black Appalachia String Bands, Songsters and Hoedowns	1999	Rounder
Various	Free Hill – A Sound Portrait of a Rural Afro-American Community: Traditional Song, Narrative, and Sacred Speech from Tennessee	1985	The Tennessee Folklore Society
Various	Good for What Ails You: Music of the Medicine Shows	2005	Old Hat Enterprises
Various	John Work, III: Recording Black Culture	2007	Spring Fed Records
Various	Louisville Stomp: The Complete Sessions	1995	Frog Records
Various	Masters of Memphis Blues, CD B: 1927-1929	2004	JSP Records
Various	Music Down Home: An Introduction to Negro Folk Music, U. S. A.	1965	Folkways Records
Various	Rags, Breakdowns, Stomps and Blues: Vintage Mandolin Music (1927-1946)	2007	Document Records
Various	Rikus Juice & Chitlins: The Great Jug Bands – Classic Recordings of the 1920s and 30s, Vol. 1 & 2	1998	Yazoo Records
Various	String Bands (1926-1929)	1993	Document Records
Various	String Bands 1926-1931: The Complete Recordings Of: Kansas City Blues Strummers, Old Pal Smoke Shop Four, Nap Hayes & Matthew Prater, T.C. Johnson & "Blue Coat" Tom Nelson, The Too Bad Boys, Alabama Sheiks	1990	Old Tramp
Various	The Blues 1923-1933	1988	BBC Records and Tapes
Various	Traditional Country Classics 1927-1929	1968	Historical Records
Various	Violin, Sing The Blues For Me: African-American Fiddlers 1929-1949	1999	Old Hat Records
Various	Virginia Traditions: Non-Blues Secular	2015	B.R.I./ Smithsonian

	Black Music		Folkways

APPENDIX B: **SELECTED RECORDINGS OF EARLY BLACK STRING-BANDS**

*presented in order of reference in the main text
**all listings cross referenced where possible
***conflicts highlighted where noted

Sources:

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Band	Musician	Instrument	Song Title	Recording Yr. Company Location
Frazier & Patterson	Nathan Frazier Frank Patterson	banjo fiddle	Poor Black Sheep Texas Traveller Dan Tucker Old Cow Died Bile Them Cabbage Down Po' Black Sheep Eighth of January Corrinne Texas Traveller	1938-1941 Fisk University Nashville, TN. 1942 Fisk University Nashville, TN.
Gribble, Lusk, & York	Murphy Gribble John Lusk Albert York	banjo fiddle guitar	Christmas Eve Give The Fiddler A Dram Eighth of January Rolling River Old Sage Friend Apple Blossom Paterroler'll Catch You Across the Sea Cincinnati Altamont	1946 Library of Congress Campaign, TN. 1946-1949 Library of Congress Rocky Island, TN.
Nashville Washboard Band	James Kelly Theopolis Stokes Thomas Carrol Frank Dalton Unknown	banjo, mandolin washboard tin-can bull fiddle guitar vocals	Soldier's Joy Old Joe	1942 Library of Congress Nashville, TN.
Dixieland Jug Blowers	Clifford Hayes Earl MacDonald Lucien Brown Henry Clifford Johnny Dodds Johnny Gatewood Hess Grundy Curtis Hayes Prince LaVaughn Lockwood Lewis Emmett Perkins Cal Smith Elizabeth Washington	fiddle banjo, jug saxophone jugs clarinet piano trombone banjo vocals saxophone banjo banjo vocals	Banjoreno Boodle-Am Shake Carpet Alley Breakdown Don't Give All The Lard Away Florida Blues Garden of Joy Blues Hen Party Blues House Rent Rag I Never Did Want You If You Can't Make It Easy Get A Job and Go To Work Louisville Stomp Love Blues Memphis Shake National Blues Only Mother Cares For Me Skip, Skat,Doodle-Do Southern Shout When I Stopped	1926-1927 Victor Chicago, IL.

			Runnin' I Was At Home You'd Better Leave Me Alone Sweet Papa	
Jim Booker (*Taylor's Kentucky Boys)	Jim Booker Willie Young Marion Underwood	fiddle guitar banjo	Forked Deer Grey Eagle	1924 Gennett Richmond, IN.
Booker Orchestra	Jim Booker Robert Steele Joe Booker John Booker	fiddle kazoo fiddle guitar	Salty Dog Camp Nelson Blues	1924 Gennett Richmond, IN.
The Johnson Boys	Lonnie Johnson Matthew Prater Nap Hayes	fiddle, vocals mandolin guitar	Violin Blues	1928 OKeh Memphis, TN.
Jones & Crockett	Sam "Stovepipe No. 1" Jones David Crockett	guitar, vocals stovepipe guitar, vocals	A Chicken Can Waltz The Gravy Around	1927 Columbia St. Louis, MO.
Kansas City Blues Strummers	Unknown	violin, guitar, banjo,vocal, violincello	Stringband Blues	1926 Vocalion St. Louis, MO.
Old Pal Smoke Shop Four	John Chapman Unknown	vocal guitar, mandolin, 2 banjos, bass	Black Cat Blues	1926 Vocalion St. Louis, MO.
Andrew Baxter (*The Georgia Yellowhammers)	Andrew Baxter Phil Reeve Bud Landress Charles Moody, Jr.	fiddle, vocals guitar banjo guitar	G Rag	1927 Victor Charlotte, NC.
The Baxters	Jim Baxter Andrew Baxter	fiddle fiddle	Bamalong Blues K. C. Railroad Blues The Moore (or Mogul) Girl	1927 Victor Charlotte, NC.
Tennessee Chocolate Drops / Tennessee Trio	Howard "Louie Bluie" Armstrong Carl Martin Roland Martin	fiddle guitar bowed double bass	Vine Street Rag Knoxville Stomp	1930 Brunswick-Vocalion Knoxville, TN.

Memphis Jug Band	Will “Son Brimmer” Shade	guitar, harmonica, vocal	Son Brimmer’s Blues Stingy Woman Blues Memphis Jug Blues	1927 Victor Memphis, TN.
	Ben Ramey	kazoo, vocal	Newport News Blues	
	Charlie Burse	guitar, vocal		
	Vol Stevens	banjo, guitar, mandolin	Sometimes I Think I Love You	1927 Victor
		piano, jug,	Sushine Blues	Chicago, IL.
	Jab Jones	vocal violin	Memphis Boy Blues I’m Looking For The Bully Of The Town	
	Milton Robe	jug		
	Charlie Polk			
			I Packed My Suitcase, Started To The Train	1927 Victor Atlanta, GA.
			State of Tennessee Blues Bob Lee Junior Blues Beale Street Mess Around I’ll See You In The Spring, When The Birds Begin To Sing Turpentine Blues Hitch Me To Your Buggy and Drive Me Like A Mule Vol Stevens Blues Baby Got The Rickets (Mama’s Got The Mobile Blues)	
			Snitchin’ Gambler Blues	1928 Victor
			Lindberg Hop Evergreen Money Blues Coal Oil Blues Papa Long Blues Peaches In The Springtime She Stays Out All Night Long Sugar Pudding A Black Woman Is A Black Snake On The Road Again Whitehouse Station Blues Stealin’, Stealin’ Jug Band Waltz Mississippi River Waltz	Memphis, TN.
			I Can’t Stand It	1929
		vocal	What’s The Matter?	Victor
	*guest: Minnie Wallace	vocal	Dirty Butter	Memphis, TN.
	*guest: Minnie Wallace	vocal	The Old Folks Started It	
	*guest: Hattie Hart	vocal	Won’t You Be Kind To Me?	
	*guest: Hattie Hart		You Wouldn’t Would You Papa?	

			Feed Your Friend With a Long Handled Spoon	
			I Can Beat You Plenty	
			Taking Your Place	
			Tired of You Driving Me	
			Memphis Yo Yo Blues	
			K. C. Moan	
			I Whipped My Woman With a Single Tree	
			Oh Ambulance Man	1930
			Everybody's Talking About Sadie Green	Victor
		vocal	Cocaine Habit Blues	Memphis, TN.
	*guest: Hattie Hart		Fourth Street Mess	
		vocal	It Won't Act Right	
	*guest: Hattie Hart		Bumble Bee Blues	
		guitar, vocal	Meningitis Blues	
	*guest: Memphis Minnie	guitar, vocal	Aunt Caroline Dyer Blues	
	*guest: Memphis Minnie		Stonewall Blues	
			Spider's Nest Blues	
		vocal	Papa's Got Your	
	*guest: Hattie Hart	vocal	Water On	
	*guest: Hattie Hart		Going Back To Memphis	
			He's In The Jailhouse Now	
			Got A Letter From My Darlin'	
			Round and Round	
			You May Leave, But This Will Bring You Back	
			Move That Thing	
			You Got Me Rollin'	
Noah Lewis Jug Band	Noah Lewis	harmonica	Ticket Agent Blues	1930
	"Sleepy" John Estes	guitar	Selling That Jelly	Victor
	Yank Rachelle	mandolin	New Minglewood Blues	Memphis, TN.
			Back Luck's My Buddy	
Banjo Joe & Blind Blake	Gus Cannon	banjo, vocal	Jonestown Blues	1927
	Blind Blake	guitar	Poor Boy Long Ways From Home	Paramount
			Madison Street Rag	Chicago, IL.
			Jazz Gypsy Blues	
			Can You Blame The Colored Man?	
			My Money Never Run Out	
Cannon's Jug Stompers	Gus Cannon	banjo, vocal, jug	Minglewood Blues	1928
			Madison Street Rag	Victor
	Noah Lewis	harmonica	Big Road Blues	Memphis, TN
	*guest: Ashley Thompson	guitar, vocal		
	Elijah Avery	banjo, guitar, kazoo	Springdale Blues	1928
			Ripley Blues	Victor
			Pig Ankle Strut	Memphis, TN.
			Hollywood Rag	

			Feather Bed Noah's Blues	
	*guest: Hosea Woods	kazoo	Bugle Call Rag Viola Lee Blues Cairo Rag	1928 Victor Memphis, TN.
Cannon & Woods / The Beale Street Boys	Gus Cannon	banjo, vocal, jug	Last Chance Blues	1929
	Hosea Woods	banjo, vocal	Fourth and Beale	Brunswick Chicago, IL.
Cannon's Jug Stompers	Gus Cannon	banjo, vocal, jug	Last Chance Blues	1929
	Noah Lewis	harmonica, vocal	Tired Chicken Blues Going To Germany	Victor Memphis, TN.
	Hosea Woods	banjo, vocal, kazoo	Walk Right In Mule Get Up In The Alley The Rooster's Crowing Blues Jonestown Blues Pretty Mama Blues Bring It With You When You Come Wolf River Blues Prison Wall Blues	
Beale Street Sheiks	Frank Stokes Dan Sane	guitar guitar	Ain't Goin' To Do Like I Used To Beale Town Bound Blues in D Chicken You Can Roost Behind The Moon Fillin' In Blues Half Cup Of Tea How Long Hunting Blues I Got Mine I'm Going Away Blues It's A Good Thing Jazzin' The Blues Jumpin' On The Hill Last Go Round Mistreatin' Blues Mr.Crump Don't Like It Old Sometime Blues Rockin' On The Hill Blues Sweet Mama Wasn't That Doggin' Me You Shall	1927-1929 Paramount Memphis, TN
			Downtown Blues (Take 1) Downtown Blues (Take 2) Bedtime Blues What's The Matter Blues Mistreatin' Blues	1928-1929 Victor Memphis, TN.

			It Won't Be Long Now (Part 1) It Won't Be Long Now (Part 2) Nehi Mama Blues I Got Mine 'Tain't Nobody's Bisiness If I Do (Part 1) 'Tain't Nobody's Bisiness If I Do (Part 2) 'Tain't Nobody's Bisiness If I Do (Part 3) Take Me Back How Long? South Memphis Blues Bunker Hill Blues Right Now Blues Shiney Town Blues Frank Stokes' Dream Memphis Rounders Blues	
South Memphis Jug Band / Jack Kelly's Jug Busters / Jack Kelly & His South Memphis Jug Band	Frank Stokes Dan Sane Will Batts Jack Kelly D. M. "Doctor" Higgs	guitar guitar fiddle guitar, vocal accordion	Highway 61 Blues Highway 61 Blues No. 2 Red Ripe Tomatoes Believe I'll Go Home Country Woman Cheatin' Woman Kokomo Blues Cold Iron Bed R. F. C. Blues Policy Rag President Blues Cadillac Baby Doctor Medicine Lightnin' Blues Betty Sue Blues Flower Blues Joe Louis Special High Behind Blues You Done Done It Diamond Buyer Blues World Wandering Blues Neck Bone Blues Men Fooler Blues	1933-1939 American Record Co. / Banner / Vocalion
Peg Leg Howell & His Gang	Joshua "Peg Leg" Barnes Eddie Anthony Henry Williams Jim Hill	slide guitar fiddle guitar mandolin	Fo' Day Blues New Prison Blues Sadie Lee Blues Papa Stobb Blues Monkey Man Blues Chittlin' Supper	1926 Columbia Altanta, GA.

Mississippi Sheiks /	Bo (Carter) Chatman	guitar, vocal	Driving That Thing	1930
Mississippi Mud Steppers /	Walter (Jacobs) Vinson	guitar, vocal	Alberta Blues	OKeh
Mississippi Hot Footers /	Sam Chatman	guitar, vocal	Winter Time Blues	Shreveport, LA.
Blacksnakes	Charles “Papa Charlie” McCoy	guitar, mandolin	The Sheik Waltz	
	Lonnie Chapman	fiddle	The Jazz Fiddler	
			Sitting On Top Of The World	
			Stop and Listen Blues	
			Lonely One In This Town	
			We Are Both Feeling Good Right Now	1930
			Cracking Them Things	OKeh
			Grinding Old Fool	San Antonio, TX.
			Jake Leg Blues	
			Back To Mississippi	
			West Jackson Blues	
			Jail Bird Love Song	
			Yodeling Fiddling Blues	
			Baby Keeps Stealin’ Lovin’ On Me	
			River Bottom Blues	
			Bootleggers’ Blues	
			Loose Like That	
			Sitting On Top Of The World No. 2	1930
			Your Good Man Caught The Train And Gone	OKeh
			Times Done Got Hard	Jackson, MS.
			Unhappy Blues	
			Still I’m Travelin’ On	
			Honey Babe Let The Deal Go Down	
			She Ain’t No Good	
			Ramrod Blues	
			Stop And Listen Blues No. 2	
			Church Bell Blues	
			Please Don’t Wake It Up	**Year conflict**
			The World Is Going Wrong	1931 or 1933
			Kind Treatment	Columbia
				Atlanta, GA
			Please Baby	
			Things About Comin’ My Way	**Year conflict**
			She’s A Bad Girl	1931 or 1933
			Tell Me What The Cats Fight About	OKeh
			Livin’ In A Strain	Atlanta, GA.
			Lazy Lazy River	
			Too Long	
			Shake Hands And Tell Me Goodbye	
			Bed Spring Poker	
			When You’re Sick With The Blues	
			I’ve Got Blood In My	

			Eyes For You	
			Shooting High Dice	
			Isn't A Pain To Me	***Year & Location Conflict**
			She's Crazy About Her Lovin'	1932
			Tell Me To Do Right	Paramount
			The New Stop And Listen Blues	Grafton, WI.
			Go 'Way Woman	
			New Shake That Thing	
			The New Sittin' On Top Of The World	
			He Calls That Religion	
			Don't Wake It Up	
			Please Baby	
			I'll Be Gone, Long Gone	
			Kitty Cat Blues	1933
			Show Me What You Got	OKeh
				Chicago, IL.
			Hitting The Numbers	1934
			It's Done Got Wet	Bluebird
			Pencil Won't Write No More	San Antonio, TX.
			I Am The Devil	
			Baby, Please Make A Change	
			She's Got Something Crazy	
			You'll Work Down To Me Someday	
			Somebody's Got To Help Me	
			Good Morning Blues	
			Blues On My Mind	
			Lonesome Grave Took My Baby	
			Pop Skull Blues	
			Sweet Maggie	
			Sales Tax	
			It's Backfiring Now	1935
			Lean To One Woman	Bluebird
			I Can't Go Wrong	New Orleans, LA.
			Dead Wagon Blues	
			She's Going To Her Lonesome Grave	
			Fingering With Your Fingers	
				1936
			If You Don't Want Me	Bluebird
			Please Don't Dog Me 'Round	New Orleans, LA.
			Wake Me Just Before Day	
			Old Grey Mule, You Ain't What You Used To Be	
			What's The Name Of That Thing?	

			Stir It Now Jumping Out Blues Radio Blues Please Don't Give My Love Away	

APPENDIX C: **BAXTER / GEORGIA YELLOW HAMMERS (1929 Contract)**

Charles Wolfe Collection. Courtesy of The Centre for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, 2017.

AN AGREEMENT entered into this day by and between Ralph S. Peer of New York, N.Y. hereinafter referred to as "Manager" and A. & J. Baxter of Calhoun, Ga. hereinafter referred to as "ARTIST".

In consideration of the several provisions hereinafter contained, it is hereby agreed between the parties hereto as follows:

(1)- The Manager agrees to book the artist to make phonograph recordings, and the artist agrees to make said recordings at such places and at such times as the Manager may direct.

(2)- The Manager agrees to book the Artist to record not less than six (6) selections during the period of this contract, but the Artist agrees to record as many additional selections as the Manager may direct.

(3)- The Artist agrees at any and all times during the period of this agreement, or during an extension of such period, not to make, and not to permit to be made a sound record, or other like sound re-production of any performance of said Artist for any person, party, or concern, except as directed and booked by the Manager. The Artist further agrees that during the period of this agreement, or any extension thereof, the Manager shall have the sole and exclusive right to authorize any person, party or concern to make use of the Artist's name or photograph in con-

AN AGREEMENT entered into this day by and between Ralph S. Peer of New York, N.Y. hereinafter referred to as "Manager" and A. & J. Baxter of Calhoun, Ga. hereinafter referred to as "ARTIST".

In consideration of the several provisions hereinafter contained, it is hereby agreed between the parties hereto as follows:

(1)- The Manager agrees to book the artist to make phonograph recordings, and the artist agrees to make said recordings at such places and at such times as the Manager may direct.

(2)- The Manager agrees to book the Artist to record not less than six (6) selections during the period of this contract, but the Artist agrees to record as many additional selections as the Manager may direct.

(3)- The Artist agrees at any and all times during the period of this agreement, or during an extension of such period, not to make, and not to permit to be made a sound record, or other like sound re-production of any performance of said Artist for any person, party, or concern, except as directed and booked by the Manager. The Artist further agrees that during the period of this agreement, or any extension thereof, the Manager shall have the sole and exclusive right to authorize any person, party or concern to make use of the Artist's name or photograph in connection with the making, advertising, or marketing of any talking machines, or records therefor.

(4)- The Manager agrees that within ten days after each selection recorded by the Artist has been approved he will pay to the Artist thirty-five ($35.00) dollars per selection.

(5)- This agreement is made for the period November 27th, 1929 to November 26th, 1930but the Manager shall have the privilege and option to continue and extend this agreement for a further period, equal to the length of the period of this contract, by giving to the Artist notice in writing of his exercise of such option. Upon the giving of such notice this agreement shall be continued and extended for such further period, upon the same terms as those above set forth.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have hereunto set their hands and seals. This 27th day of November, 1929.

at Atlanta, Georgia.

A. & J. Baxter

ARTIST

ARTIST

ARTIST

R. S. Peer

MANAGER
5 W. 44th St.
New York, N.Y.

Calhoun, Ga, Nov 23,1929

AGREEMENT

Agreement between C.P.Reeve,C E Moody and Bill Chitwood(known as the Georgia Yellow Hammers,Victor recording Artist)

Agreement as follows,

C.P.Reeve to be business manager for Ga Yellow Hammers,to book all engagements,look after all recordings,royalities etc, and to receive one forth of all monies paid for the recording of all numbers and one third of the royalities on all numbers that draw royality,

Agreement also that C E Moody receive one fourth of all monies paid for recording of any numbers and he to furnish one third of the numbers put on by the Ga Yellow Hammers and to receive the two thirds of the royality on his numbers,

Agreement also that Bill Chitwood receive one half of all monies received for recording of all numbers and he to furnish two thirds of the numbers put on by the Ga Yellow Hammers and to receive two thirds of the royalities on his numbers, it is further agreed that Bill Chitwood furnish the fourth man if needed in this organization and to pay him out of his part of the recording monies, he may use any one that he sees that can put on the needed part and pay him what ever he wishes,so long as it is paid out of his(Bill Chitwoods) part of the recording monies.

It is further agreed that each of the three mentioned men who compose the organization'The Georgia Yellow Hammers' will help put on any number that the other members should have to put on,and to co-operate in every way to make all recordings that are made to be put on in the very best way possible,

This agreement to hold good as long as the Georgia Yellow Hammers make records for the Victor Talking Machine Company,

Signed this 23 day of Nov 1929

Signed C P Reeve

Witness

Signed W H Chitwood

C. B. Hooper

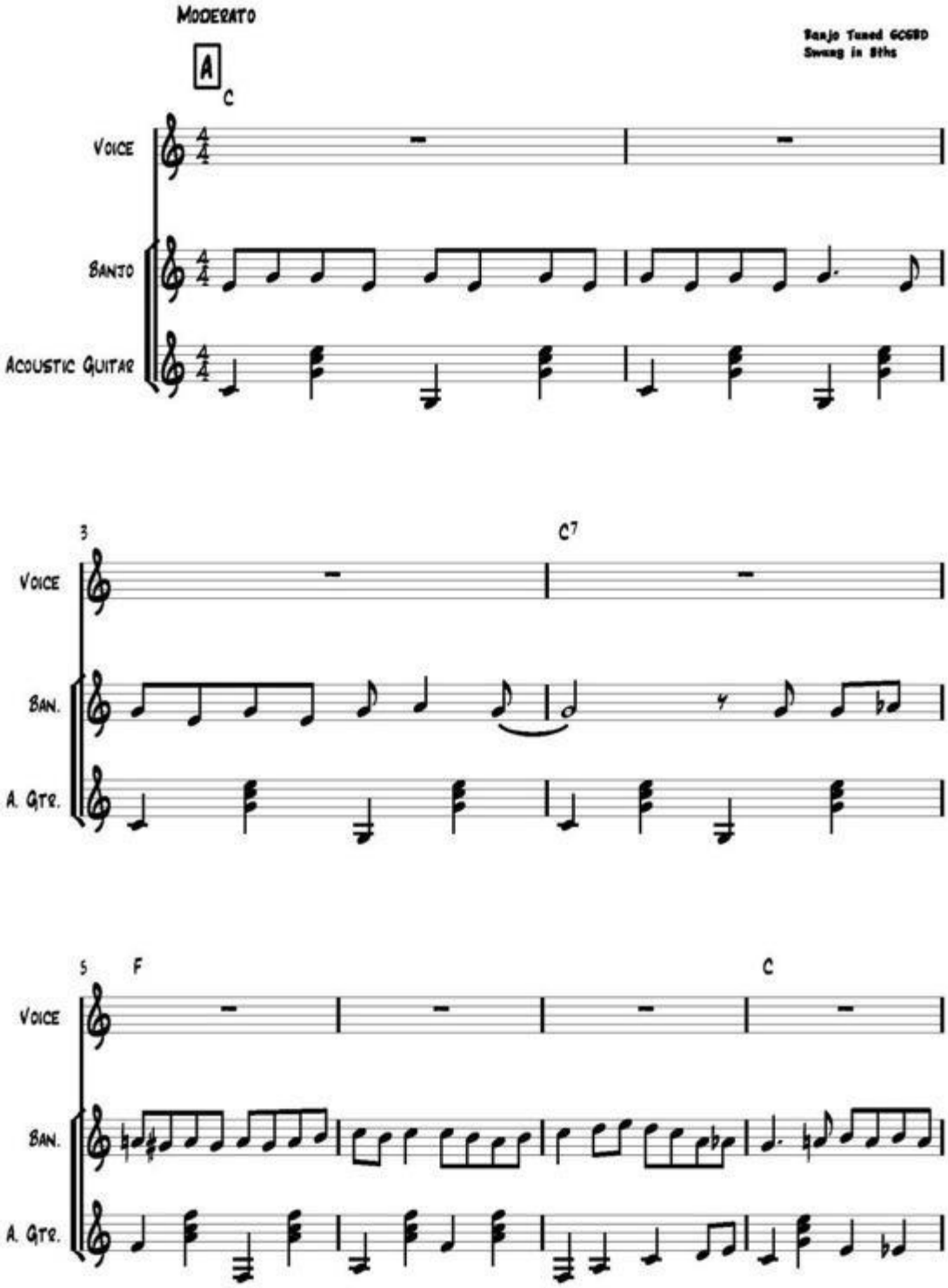
Signed Chas E Moody

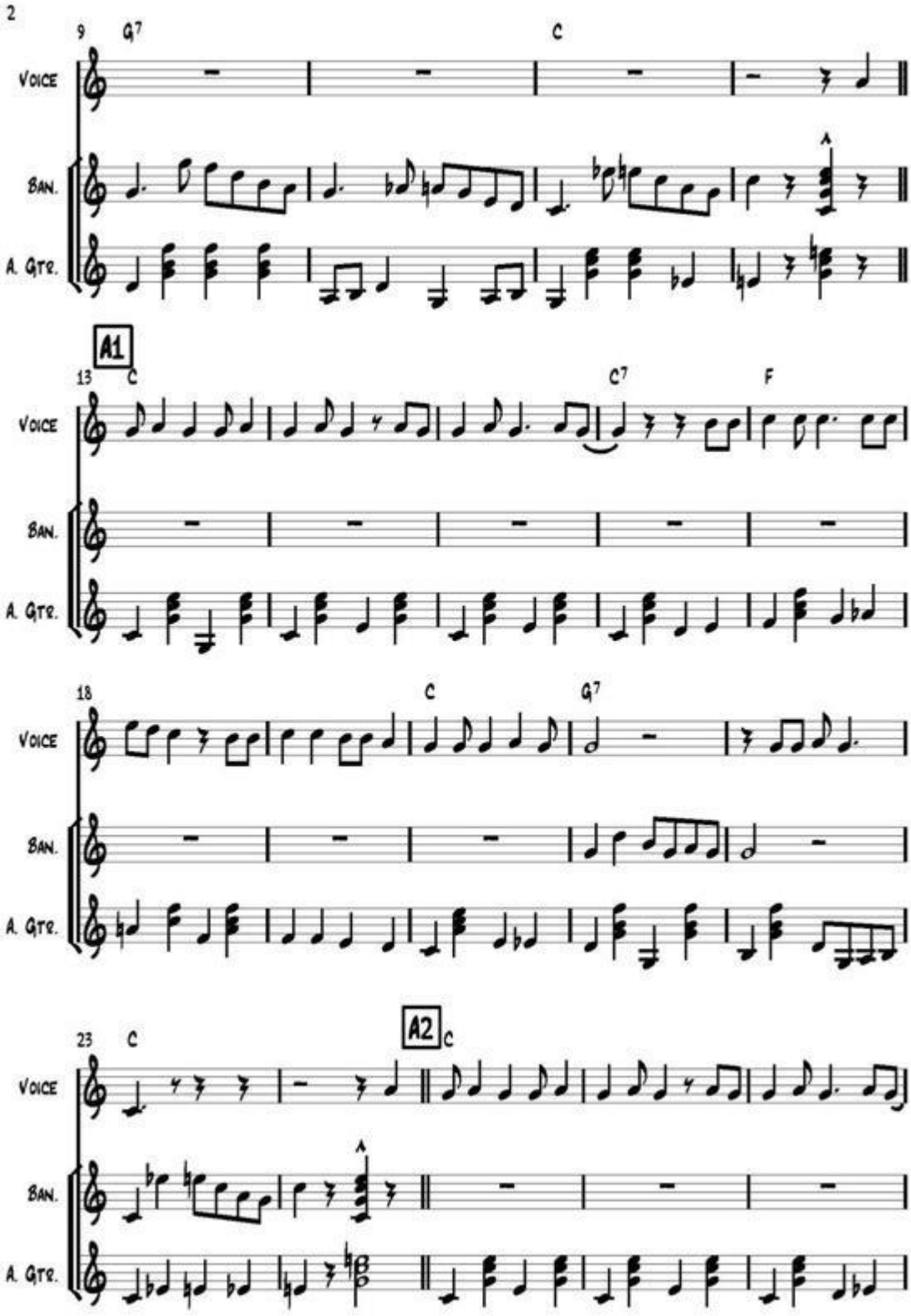
Notary Public State at Large

APPENDIX D: *CAN YOU BLAME THE COLORED MAN?* **(Transcription)**

Can You Blame The Colored Man?

(c) 1927 Gus Cannon

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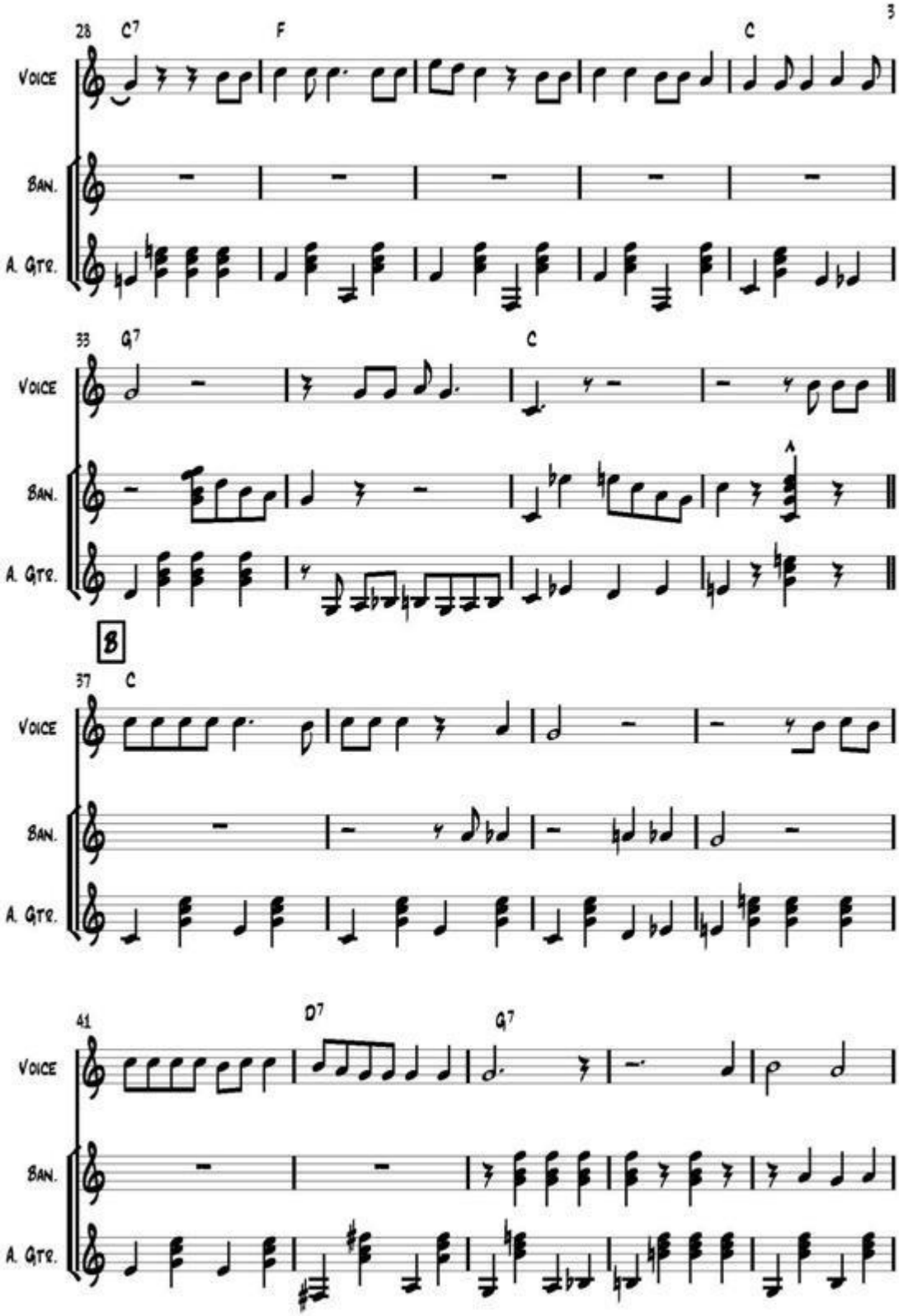
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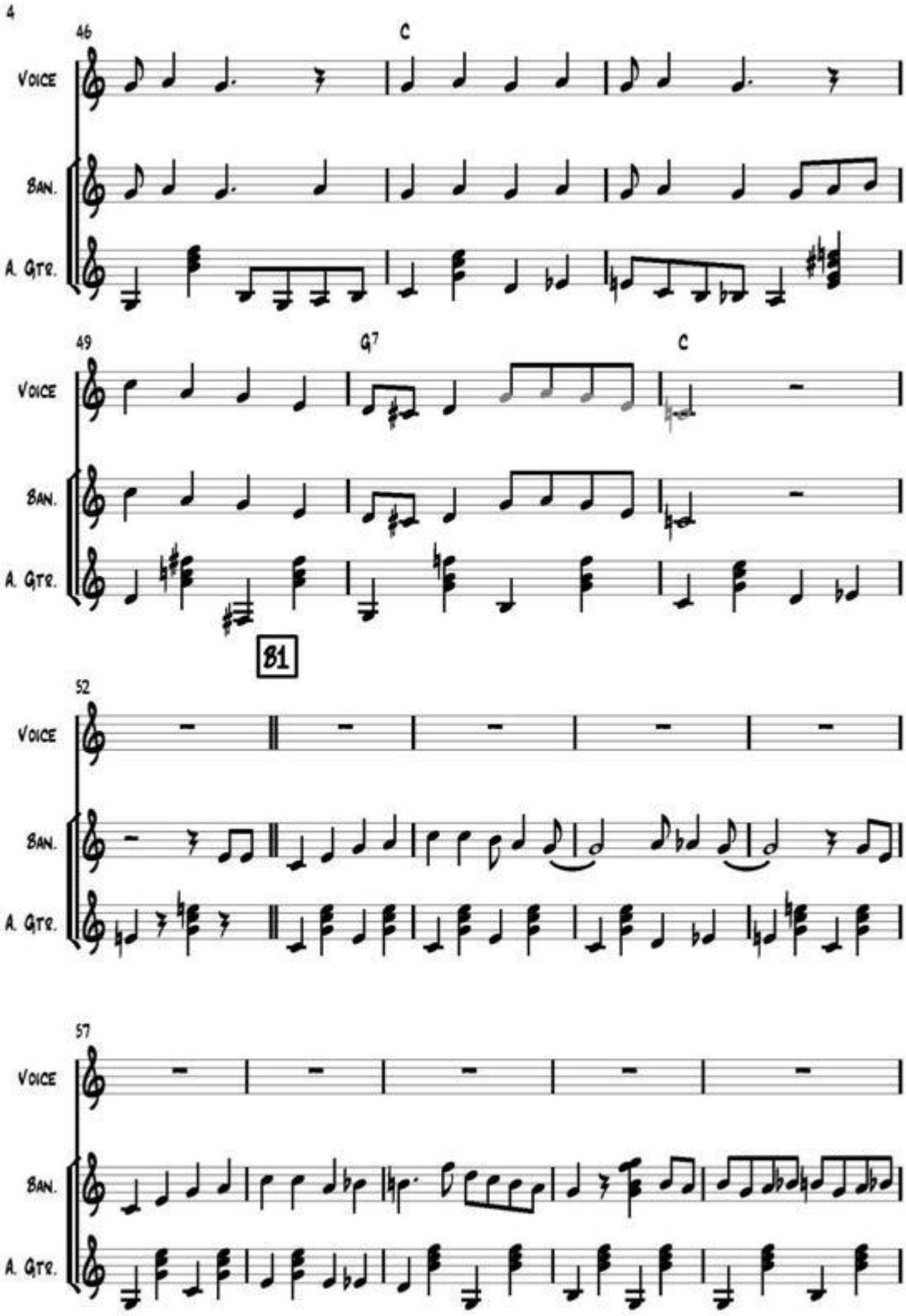
A. Gtr.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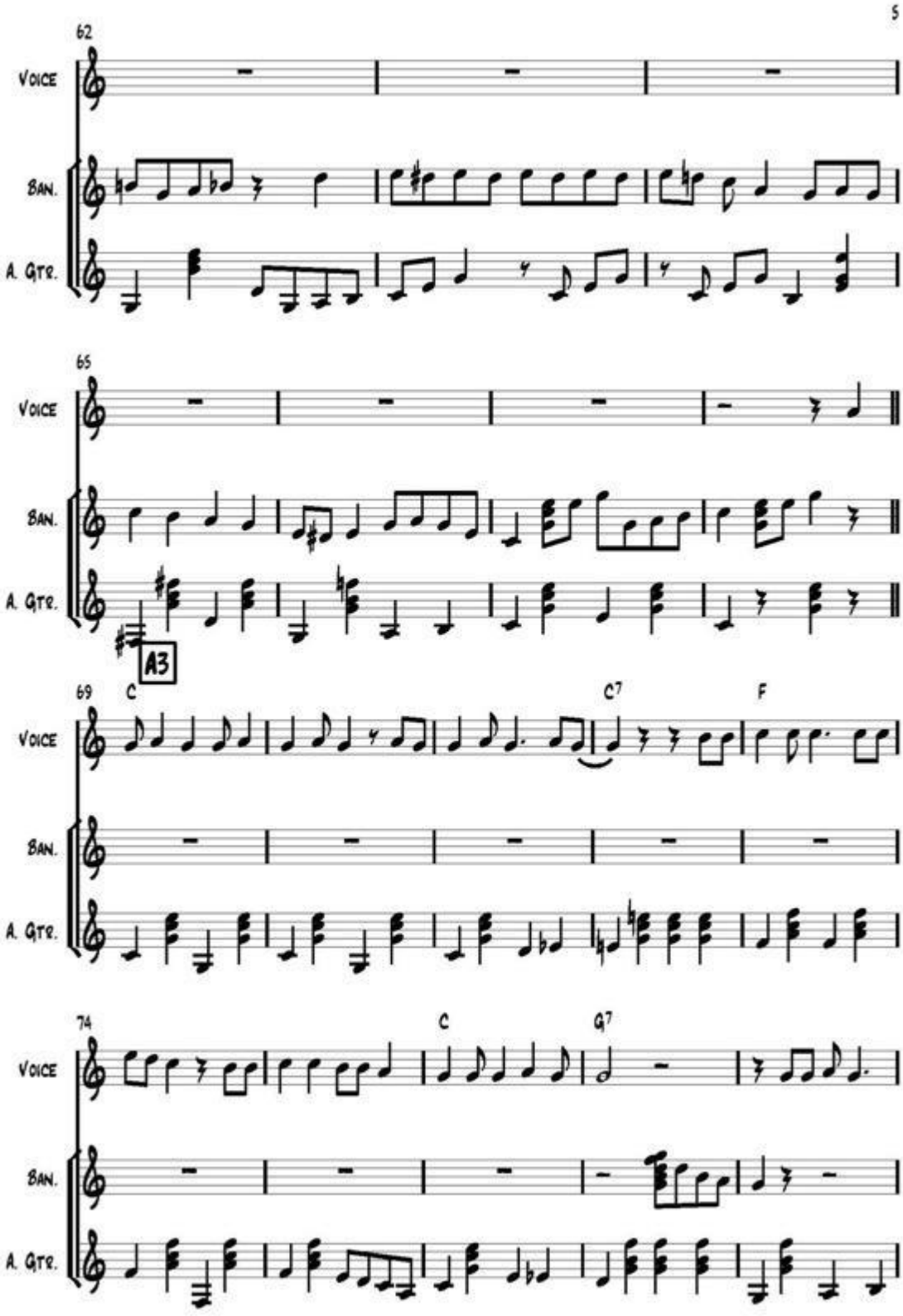
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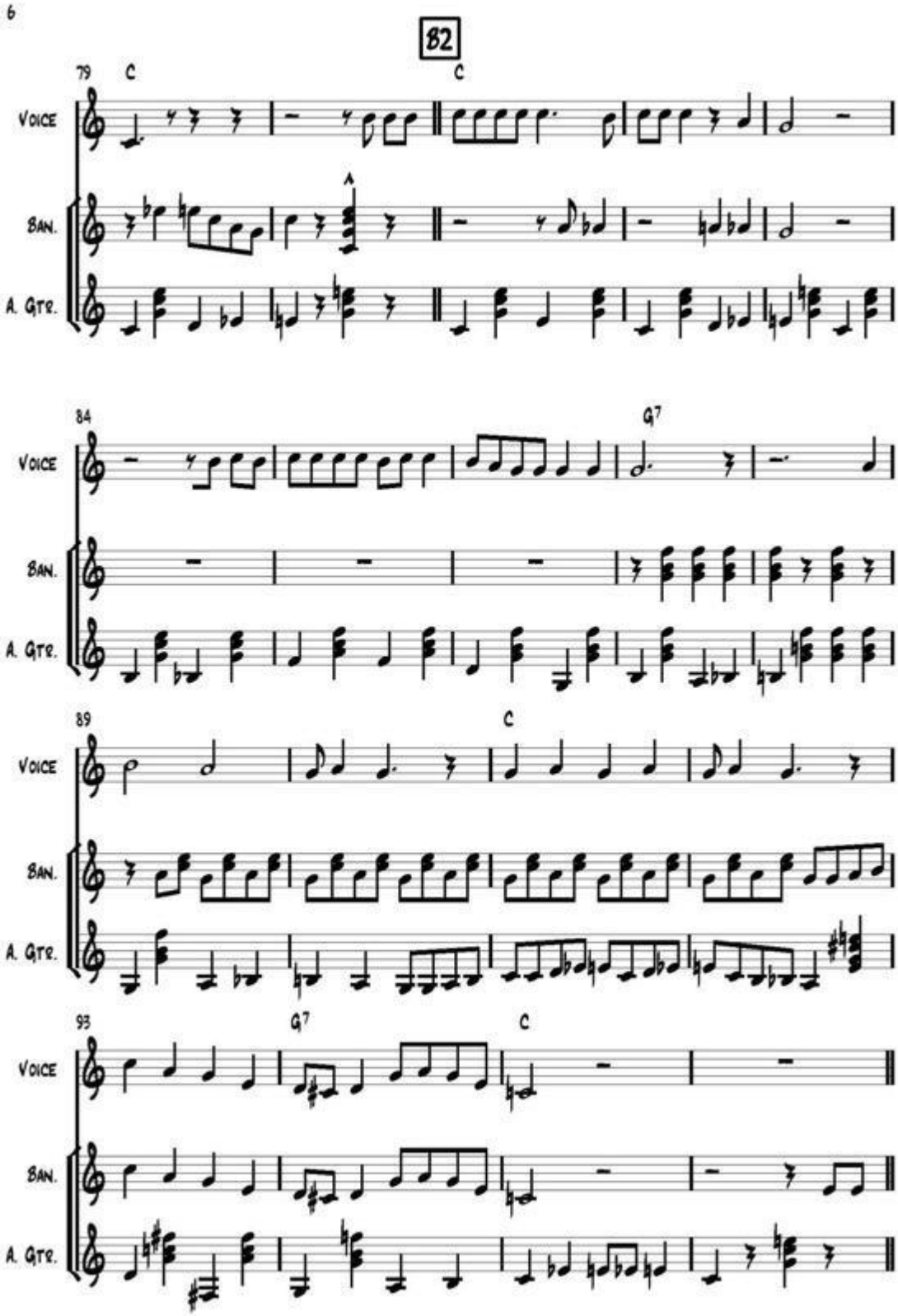
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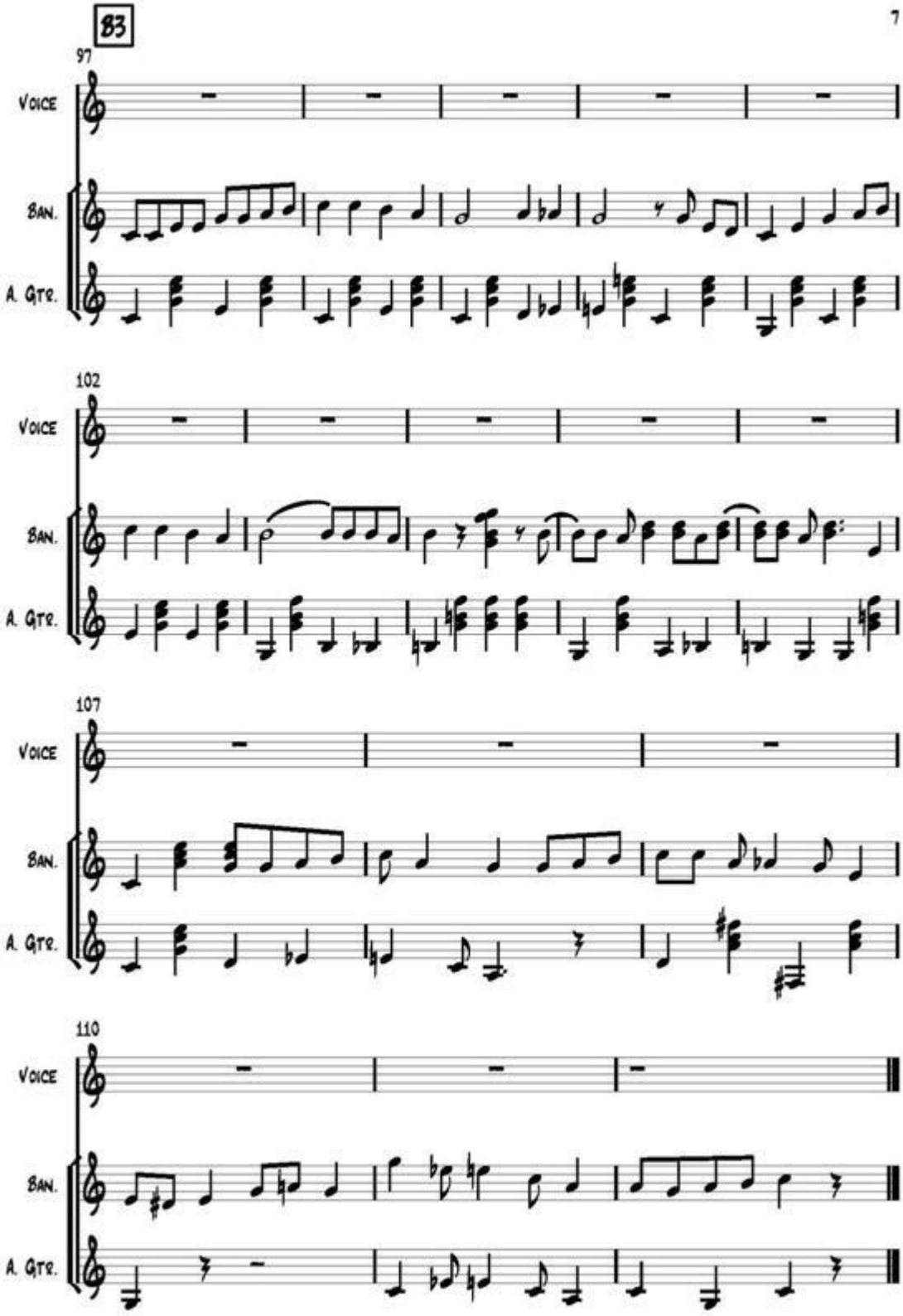
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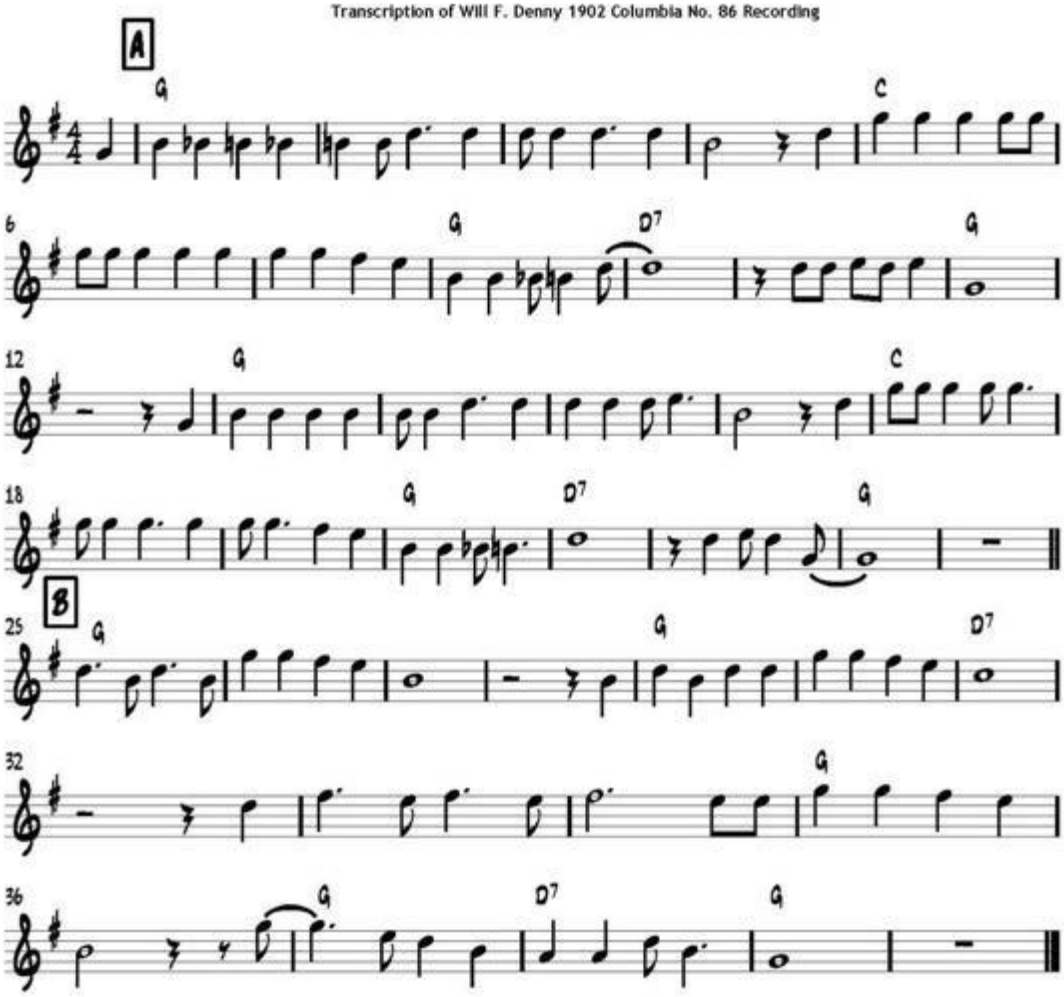
San.
A. Gtr.

APPENDIX E: ***JUST BECAUSE SHE MADE DEM GOO-GOO EYES*** **(Transcription)**

"Just Because She Made Dem Goo Goo Eyes"

(c) 1900 Hugo "Hughie" Cannon

Transcription of Will F. Denny 1902 Columbia No. 86 Recording



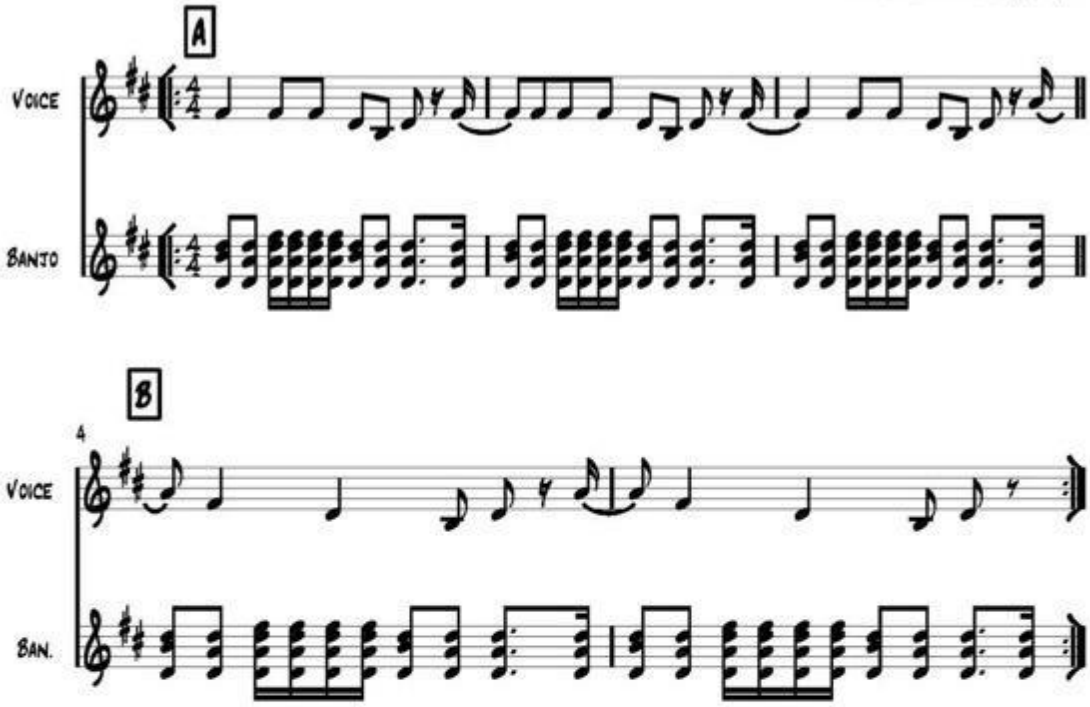
APPENDIX F: *BUCK DANCE TUNE* (Transcription)

"Buck Dance Tune"

African-American Traditional

Gus Cannon (Banjo) - Film: Hallelujah (1929)

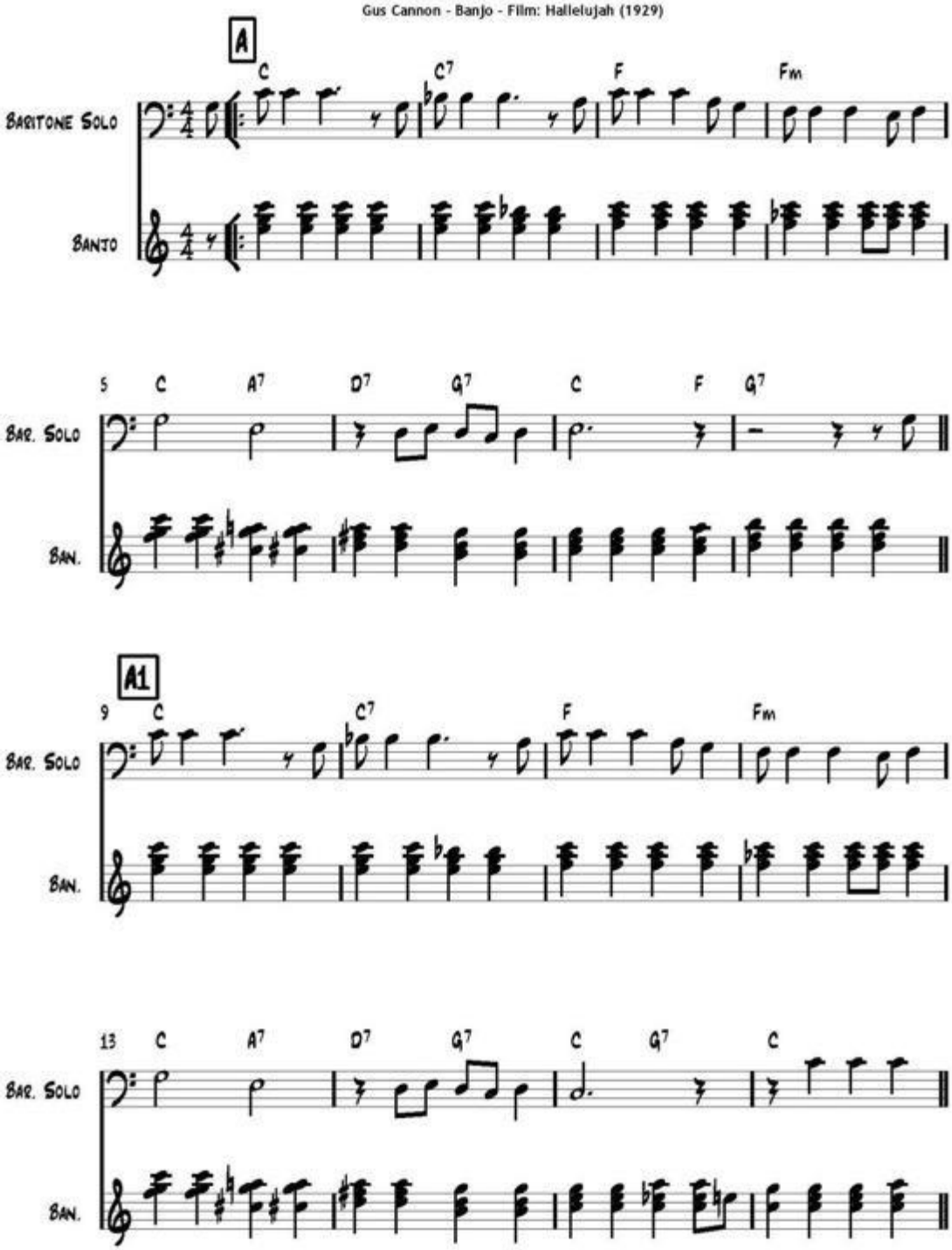
BANJO IN "C TUNING" gCGCD

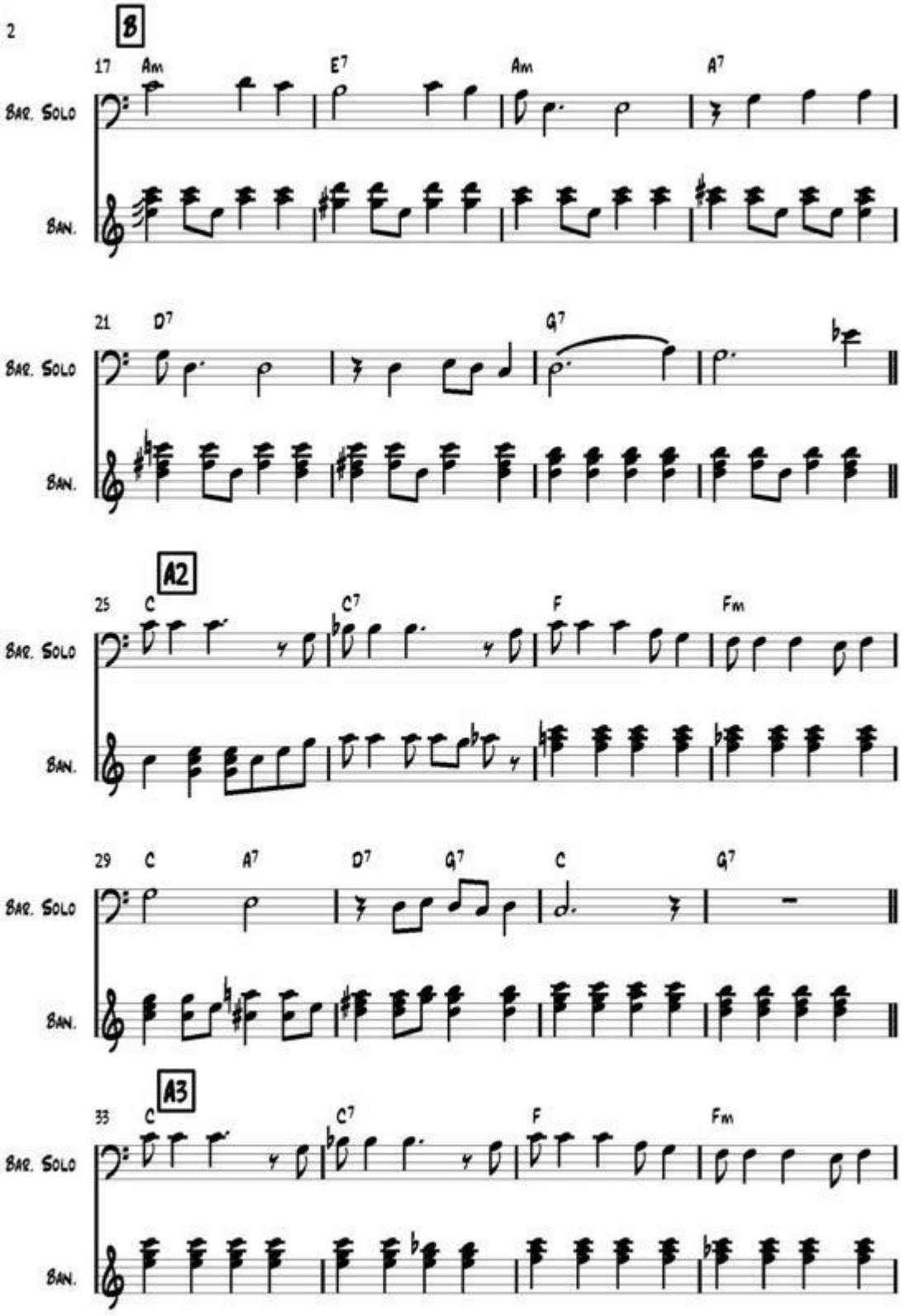


APPENDIX G: ***WAITIN' AT THE END OF THE ROAD*** **(Transcription)**

"Waitin' At The End Of The Road"

Gus Cannon - Banjo - Film: Hallelujah (1929)

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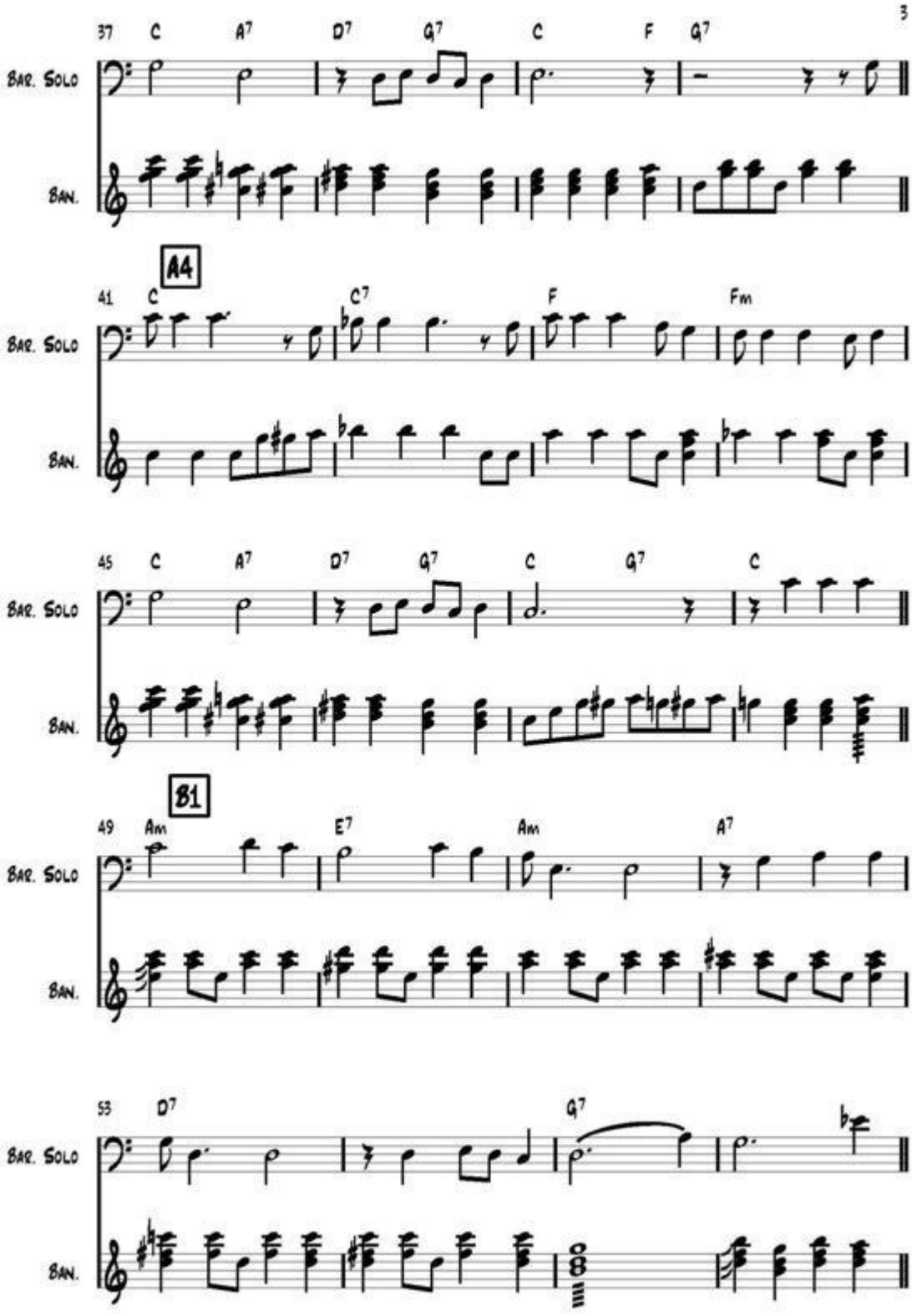
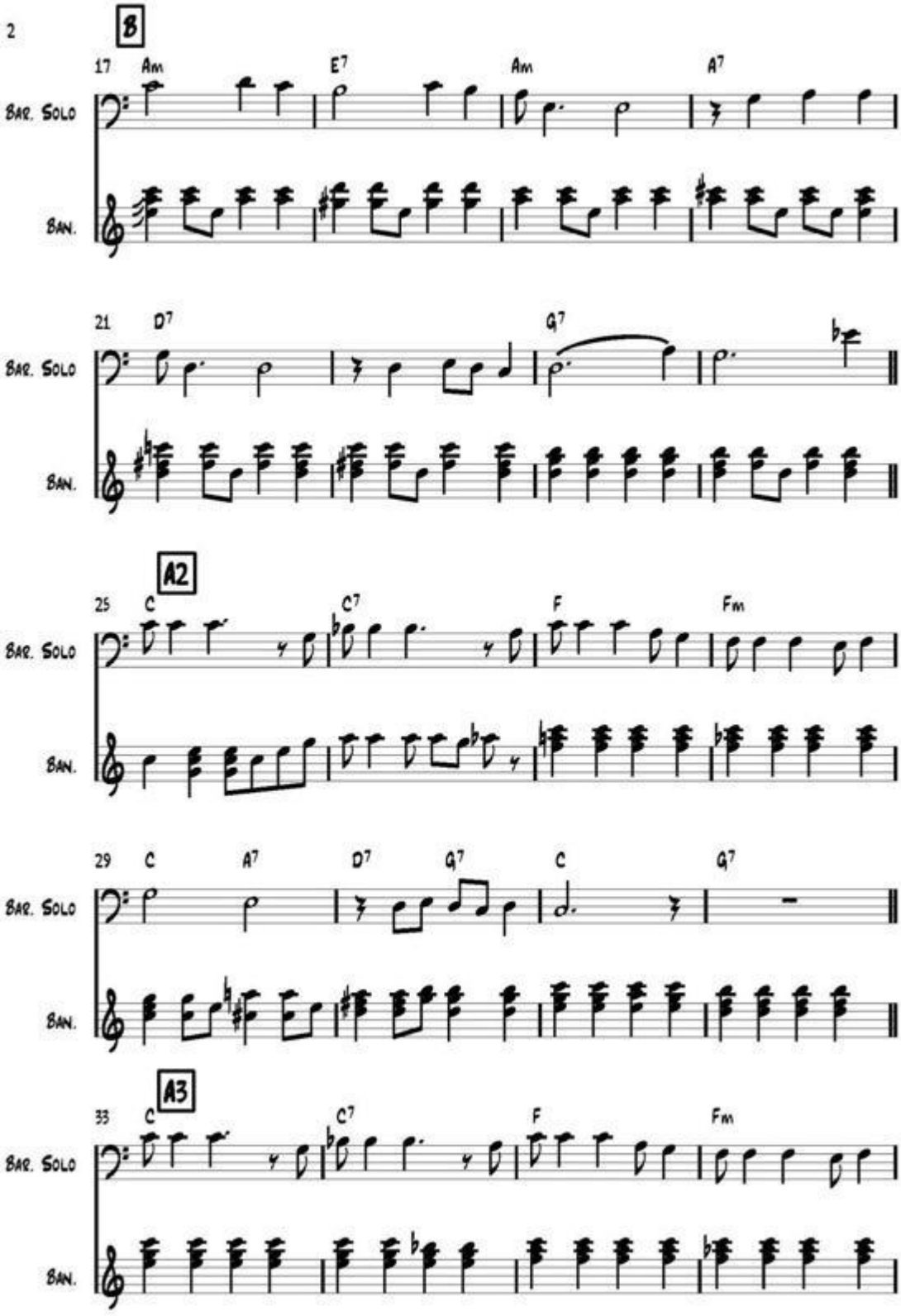
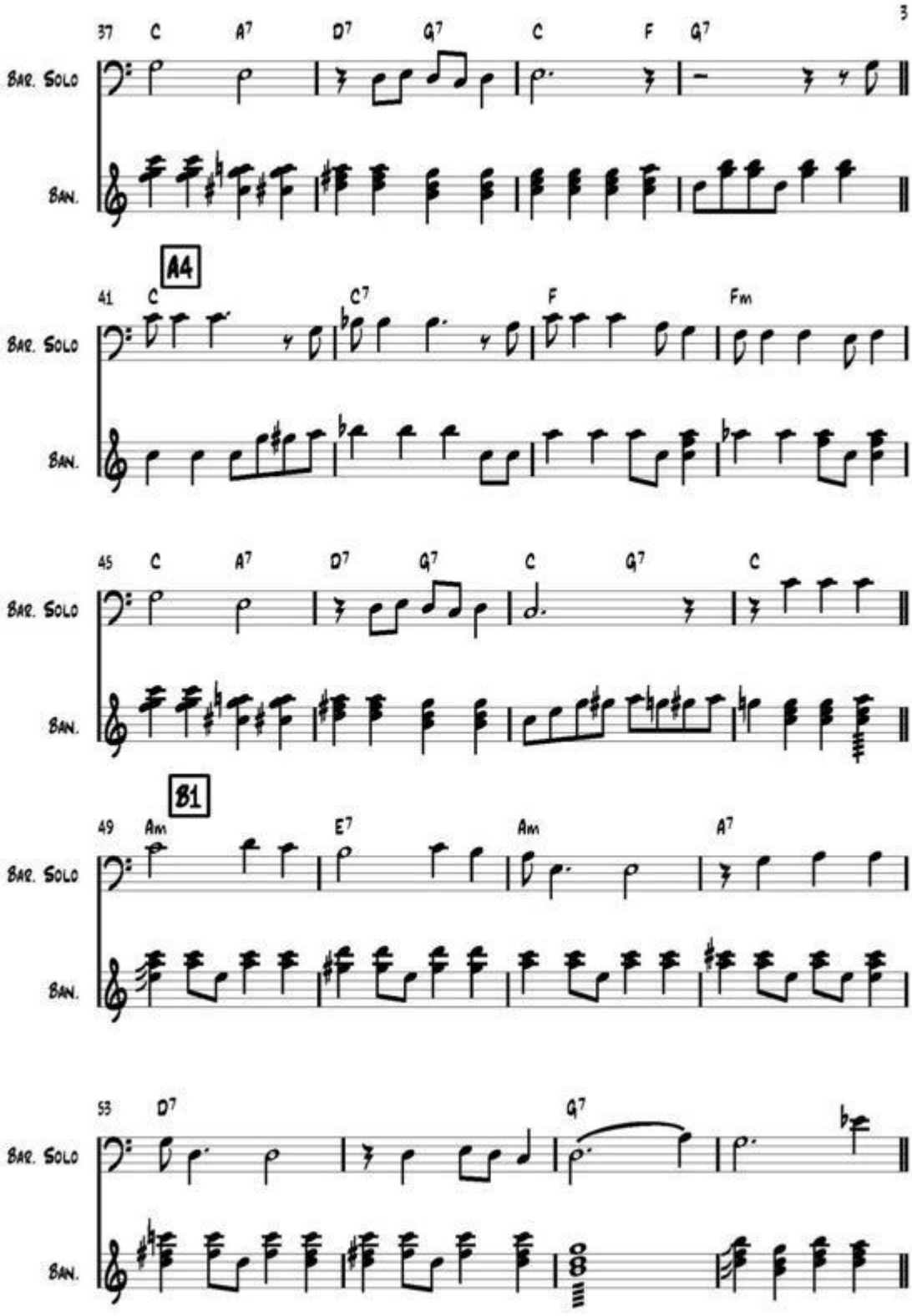
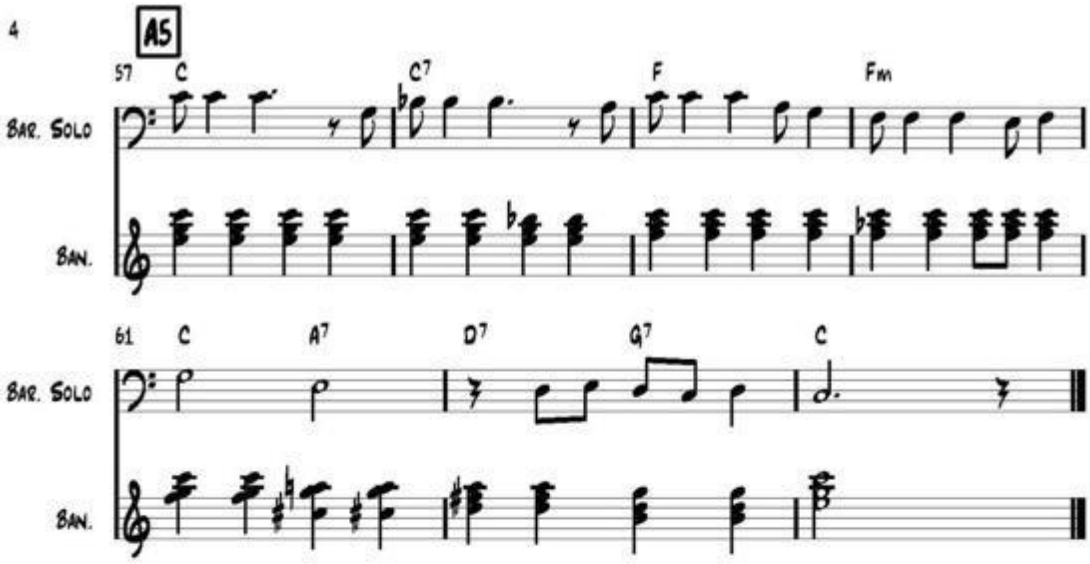
Ban.


37 C A7 D7 G7 C F G7
3
Bar. Solo
Ban.
A4
41 C C7 F Fm
Bar. Solo
Ban.
45 C A7 D7 G7 C G7 C
Bar. Solo
Ban.
B1
49 Am E7 Am A7
Bar. Solo
Ban.
53 D7 G7
Bar. Solo
Ban.


2
B
17
Am
E7
Am
A7
Bar. Solo
Ban.
21
D7
G7
A2
25
C
C7
F
Fm
29
C
A7
D7
G7
C
G7
A3
33


37 C A7 D7 G7 C F G7
Bar. Solo
Ban.
A4
41 C C7 F Fm
Bar. Solo
Ban.
45 C A7 D7 G7 C G7 C
Bar. Solo
Ban.
B1
49 Am E7 Am A7
Bar. Solo
Ban.
53 D7 G7
Bar. Solo
Ban.


4
A5
57
C
C7
F
Fm
Bar. Solo
Ban.
61
C
A7
D7
G7
C
Bar. Solo
Ban.