

Blues Ragtime for Fretted Dulcimer: A Historical Journey Explored in Melody and Rhythm

The fretted dulcimer, an enchanting stringed instrument characterized by its trapezoidal shape and delicate sound, has a rich history interwoven with the evolution of blues and ragtime music. This article embarks on a captivating journey, exploring the origins and captivating sounds of blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer, shedding light on its historical significance, captivating techniques, and the artistry that defines it.

Origins of Blues and Ragtime

Blues ragtime emerged at the crossroads of two distinct musical genres: blues and ragtime. Blues, with its poignant melodies and improvisational style, originated in the African-American communities of the Deep South during the late 19th century. Ragtime, on the other hand, developed in the Midwest and East Coast of the United States during the same period, characterized by its syncopated rhythms and lively melodies.

The Fretted Dulcimer's Role

The fretted dulcimer found a natural home within blues ragtime, providing a unique and captivating voice to this musical fusion. Its wire strings, stretched across its trapezoidal soundbox, produced a clear and resonant sound that allowed for both intricate melodies and rhythmic strumming.

Blues & Ragtime for Fretted Dulcimer by Javier Marcó

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

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Early Pioneers

Among the early pioneers of blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer was Reverend Gary Davis, a renowned blues and gospel singer and guitarist. Davis's ingenious fingerpicking style blended bluesy melodies with ragtime-influenced syncopations, creating a captivating and highly personal sound.

Captivating Blues Ragtime Playing Techniques

Blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer is performed using a variety of captivating playing techniques that capture the essence of both blues and ragtime.

- **Hammer-ons and Pull-offs:** These techniques involve striking a string and then quickly "hammering on" or "pulling off" to another note without picking it, creating a smooth and fluid melodic flow.
- **Slide:** The slide technique involves sliding a finger along the string to create a smooth transition between notes, enhancing the expressive nature of blues ragtime.
- **Drone:** The drone technique involves continuously playing a single note or chord in the background, providing a steady rhythmic

foundation for the melody.

Notable Artists and Examples

Over the years, numerous accomplished artists have embraced blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer, each contributing their unique style and interpretation.

- **John McCutcheon:** McCutcheon is widely recognized as a master of contemporary folk and roots music, renowned for his intricate and evocative blues ragtime dulcimer playing.
- **Libba Cotten:** Cotten was an influential folk and blues singer-songwriter whose dulcimer playing captured the essence of rural Southern blues and ragtime traditions.

Listening Guide: "Catfish Blues"

To fully appreciate the captivating nature of blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer, consider listening to "Catfish Blues," an iconic piece by Reverend Gary Davis. The song showcases Davis's ingenious fingerpicking style, blending bluesy melodies with ragtime syncopations, creating a hauntingly evocative atmosphere.

Learning Resources and Workshops

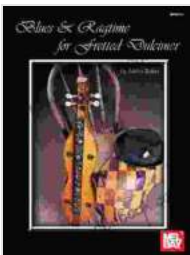
For aspiring dulcimer players eager to explore blues ragtime, numerous resources and workshops are available:

- **Instructional Books:** Books such as "Blues Ragtime Dulcimer" by John McCutcheon and "Ragtime Blues for Dulcimer" by Barry

Mitterhoff provide comprehensive guidance on blues ragtime techniques and repertoire.

- **Online Lessons:** Online platforms offer interactive lessons with expert instructors, allowing students to learn blues ragtime dulcimer at their own pace.
- **Workshops and Retreats:** In-person workshops and retreats provide immersive learning experiences, enabling students to connect with fellow enthusiasts and engage with seasoned blues ragtime dulcimer players.

Blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer is a captivating musical genre that has captured the hearts and imaginations of audiences worldwide. Its blend of bluesy melodies and ragtime rhythms, coupled with the unique sound of the fretted dulcimer, creates a rich and evocative musical experience. As we delve deeper into its origins, techniques, and notable artists, we gain a profound appreciation for the artistry and historical significance of this captivating musical form. Whether listening to the haunting melodies of Reverend Gary Davis or embarking on a journey of learning, blues ragtime for fretted dulcimer continues to enchant and inspire, showcasing the enduring power of music to connect us across time and cultures.



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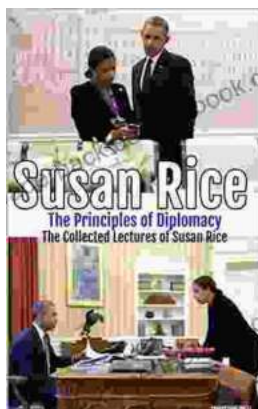
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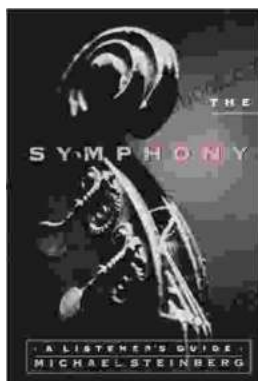
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