



King of Rags

Eric Bronson

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When music publisher John Stark first heard Scott Joplin play his piano, he knew that ragtime was the music of hope for a new America. "If you are alive to impulse, you felt the ground wave under your feet, and you dropped into sublime reverie," he wrote in 1904. But neither Stark nor anyone else knew that Joplin would never be content with popularity and fame. Inspired by Booker T. Washington and the Dahomeyan defeat in West Africa, Joplin committed himself to racial justice fifty years before his time. But due to this earnest pursuit, he was later ignored by the masses for writing political music, and shunned by a new generation of artists for championing a life in rags. In *King of Rags*, Eric Bronson shines a lyrical light on the tragic life of Scott Joplin and his fellow ragtime musicians throughout their frantic transformation of the seedy and segregated underbelly of comedians, conmen and prostitutes who called America's most vibrant cities home.

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