

daily nebraskan entertainment

Rifkin concert to include Joplin's piano rags

Joshua Rifkin has been described by Alan Rich of the *New Yorker* magazine as "that rare combination of brainy scholar and lively performer."

The university community will have the opportunity to judge Rifkin's talents in person today and Thursday. While on campus, Rifkin will perform the piano rags made famous by ragtime master Scott Joplin.

Rifkin is probably best known for his work in reviving ragtime music. He has made two albums, *Piano Rags By Scott Joplin Vol. 1 and 2*, which together have sold over a quarter of a million copies. Since they were released they have been on *Billboard* magazine's classical LP bestseller list. Rifkin's image has been further strengthened by his occasional concerts as a performer of jazz and rag music.

Many people are familiar with Rifkin because of other contributions he has made to music. Last year he was a visiting lecturer at Harvard University. He has a reputation as a music historian and scholar specializing in the Renaissance and baroque periods.

Rifkin's recording debut was with Elektra Records as a member of the Even Dozen Jug Band. Some of his other recordings for Elektra include *The Baroque Beatles Book* and his accompaniment of Judy Collins.

Part of his other experience in the recording industry has been with Nonesuch Records as their musical director.

Rifkin was born in New York City in 1944, and

showed an early interest in music. This youthful sign of talent was further encouraged by his teachers.

By the age of 10, Rifkin had already begun to play ragtime and classical jazz. His first encounter with Joplin's ragtime music was at the age of 11, and he has been fascinated with it ever since. Before he was 13 Rifkin's prowess on the piano had won him the admiration of many of the survivors of the early jazz worlds of New Orleans and Chicago.

He is on the faculty of Brandeis University. Besides his teaching duties and his concert tour this year, he hopes to be able to study the music manuscripts in the Vatican Library.

The ragtime music which Rifkin has studied became a craze in America in the 1890s. It evolved from many musical origins: marching band music, European-American dances such as the polka, sentimental songs, salon music and rhythmic black music. The style was popularized by traveling black pianists in the Midwest.

The Midwest in the 1890s was still a frontier environment, and it provided these ragtime pioneers with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in such places as saloons and red light districts. It also gave these pianists the vehicle to elevate their rags to serious music. No one did more to make ragtime an art form than Scott Joplin.

Joplin was born in Texarkana, Texas, in 1868. His father bought an old piano and Joplin taught himself

to play it. Word of his talents soon spread to the white community, and an old German music teacher made him his pupil.

When he was in his teens, Joplin left home to make his name in music. During the next ten years he traveled around the Midwest playing in many groups. During this time he wrote his first compositions.

Joplin finally settled in Sedalia, Mo. and began to study music at George Smith College. While in school, he translated ragtime music into musical notation. His composition *Maple Leaf Rag* achieved instant popularity in Sedalia, but no one wanted to publish it at first.

Music publisher Joseph Stark finally agreed to publish the *Maple Leaf Rag*. Joplin once had told a friend of his that the *Maple Leaf Rag* would make him the king of ragtime composers. He was right. Soon after the piece was published, it and Joplin became as popular nationwide as they had been in Sedalia.

Rifkin will be playing Joplin's piano rags in an informal session tonight at 7:30 p.m. in the Abel Lounge. This session is free and open to the public. Rifkin's second session will be a concert in Kimball Recital Hall Thursday at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$1 and are available at the Union South Desk and Westbrook Music Building. Rifkin's visit is being sponsored by the Nebraska Union Performing Fine Arts Committee.

Cather concert tickets on sale

Tickets for the Menuhin family concert December 7 in honor of Willa Cather's birthday will go on sale Thursday at Westbrook Music Bldg. Student tickets are \$3.

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