

OUR-ACHIEVEMENTS IN MUSICAL WORLD

Encouraging Signs of Promise For the Future of the Race In This Artistic Field

INSPIRATION TO THE YOUNG

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Everybody who has taken the trouble to investigate the matter knows that one of the most beautiful songs ever written, "Listen to the Mocking Bird," was composed by a wandering Negro street minstrel, George Milburn of Philadelphia, over fifty years ago. It was set to music by a white man, Septimus Winner, who got all the credit for it and whatever financial profit there was in it. Milburn got something like a dozen copies of the song after it was published, and many people told him he was a genius.

But Milburn was not the only Negro in Philadelphia who could compose sweet tunes. He was, perhaps, the only one among his brethren in the musical firmament who could not write a musical score. Of those who could give full expression to their ideas as composers of music may be mentioned James Hemmenway, who wrote a sentimental song entitled, "That Rest So Sweet Like Bliss Above," which attained wide popularity in Philadelphia and elsewhere.

It was published in Atkinson's Casket, a musical journal, to which he was a contributor in October, 1829. Mr. Hemmenway wrote also "The Philadelphia Grand Entree March," "Washington Gray's Grand March," "Washington Gray's Bugle Call" and "Hunter and Hop Waltzes," which were published by Willig, and the "Philadelphia Hop Waltz," published by Lee & Walker.

Another Philadelphian, A. J. Conner, wrote and dedicated to Miss Matilda Cornish, a popular and beautiful young lady of color, a song entitled "My Cherished Hopes, My Fondest Dreams," which was published in the Anglo-African Magazine in January, 1857. He also wrote the "Evergreen Polka," published by Oliver Ditson in Boston, 1850; "American Polka Quadrilles," 1846; "New York Polka Waltz," published by A. Flot in Philadelphia, 1846; "General Taylor's Galop," published by J. G. Osborn, 1846; "Philadelphia Polka Waltz;" "L. O. of O. F. Quadrille," published by Lee & Walker, 1846; "Chestnut Street Promenade Quadrille," published by S. T. Gordon, New York, 1850.

Robert Murray of Baltimore wrote the "Furioso Galop," published by Boswell & Bartlett, and the "Tedesco Polka," published by George Willig. I have not been able to fix the dates of these publications, however. J. W. Postlewaite of St. Louis in 1852 wrote and published the "St. Louis Grays' Quickstep" and the "Dewdrop Schottish" in 1851. They were published by Balmer & Weber, St. Louis.

The famous Negro bandmaster of Philadelphia and leader of Frank Johnson's band, the only organization of its kind (of which we have any knowledge) to tour Europe in a series of band concerts and which was commanded to play before Queen Victoria, was the author of more than three score musical compositions—dirges, marches, quadrilles, cotillions, polkas, patriotic songs, quicksteps, etc.

"The Victoria Galop," in honor of the queen of England, and "General Cadwallader's March," gained considerable popularity in their day. Both were published by Willig at Philadelphia, as were most of his other productions. The Society For Historical Research has quite an extensive list of these early Negro musical composers. That the Negro is highly musical is attested by the many creditable evidences of his genius as a composer which have been handed down to us by a past generation. These are hopeful signs of promise for the future of the Negro in music and should furnish inspiration to the rising generation.