

American Popular Music

# Camptown Races

# How do we define Popular Music?

- Positioned between Classical Music and Folk Music
- Classical- upper class
  - wealthy
- Popular- middle class
  - the masses
- Folk- lower class
  - Rural, working

# Defining Popular Music

- Music that appeals to a mass audience
  - Large number of Americans listen
- *Intended* to have wide appeal
  - mass produced, disseminated via mass media
- Has a sound and style distinct from classical or folk music.

# Ways to Talk About Music

- Elements of Popular Music
  - Instrumentation
  - Dynamics
  - Form/Structure
  - Rhythm
    - Beat, Syncopation, Tempo
  - Melody, Harmony
  - Scales, Chords
  - Lyrics
  - Historical/Cultural context

# European American Stream

- British Isle emigrants brought musical traditions to America
- Lower class in isolated, rural areas
- “Barbry Allen”
  - **Ballad**- simple song with lyrics that tell story
  - Pentatonic scale (5 note)
  - **Strophic**- several stanzas sung to same melody

# Barbry Allen

0:00 *All in the merry month of May  
When the green buds they were swellin',  
Young William Green on his deathbed lay  
For the love of Barbary Allen.*

0:23 *He sent his servant to the town  
To the place where she was dwellin'  
Sayin', "Master's sick and he sends for you  
If your name be Barbary Allen."*

0:49 *So slow-lie [slowly], slow-lie she got up  
And slow-lie she came a-nigh [near] him  
And all she said when she got there  
"Young man, I believe you're dyin'."*

1:12 *"Oh yes, I'm low, I'm very low,  
And death is on me dwellin'  
No better, no better I'll never be  
If I can't get Barbary Allen."*

1:37 *"Oh yes, you're low and very low,  
And death is on you dwellin'  
No better, no better you'll never be  
For you can't get Barbary Allen.*

2:00 *For don't you remember in yonder's town  
In yonder's town a-drinkin'  
You passed your glass all around and around  
And you slighted Barbary Allen."*

2:27 *"Oh yes, I remember in yonder's town  
In yonder's town a-drinkin'  
I gave my health to the ladies all around  
But my heart to Barbary Allen."*

2:52 *He turned his pale face to the wall  
For death was on him dwellin'  
"Adieu, adieu, you good neighbors all  
Adieu, sweet Barbary Allen."*

3:17 *As she was goin' across the fields  
She heard those death bells a-knellin' [ringing]  
And every stroke the deathbell give  
Hard hearted Barbary Allen.*

3:44 *"Oh Mother, oh Mother, go make my bed,  
Go make it both long and narrow  
Young William's died for me today  
And I'll die for him tomorrow."*

4:09 *Oh she was buried 'neath the old church tower  
And he was buried a-nigh [near] her  
And out of his bosom grew a red, red rose,  
Out of Barbary's grew a green briar.*

4:35 *They grew and they grew up the old church tower,  
Until they could grow no higher  
They locked and tied in a true lover's knot,  
Red rose wrapped around the green briar.*

# African American Stream

- Slaves brought to America 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> ce.
- Black Spiritual- most impressive and extensive repertory created by slaves
  - Conversion to evangelical Christianity
  - Call and response singing
  - Improvisation
  - Clapping, dancing
  - Polyrhythms- many rhythms, textures
  - Syncopation

# Rosie

- Alan Lomax (1947)
  - Mississippi State Penitentiary
- “Rosie” - 1947
  - Time the song to work at hand



## ACTIVE LISTENING 4.3

### “Rosie”—Excerpt from First Verse with Call-and-Response

COUNTER NUMBER	COMMENTARY	LYRICS
0:01	Axes sound, call (leader).	Be my woman, gal I'll
0:04	Axes sound, response (leader and group).	Be your man.
0:07	Axes sound, call (again).	Be my woman, gal, I'll
0:11	Axes sound, response (again).	Be your man.



# African American Streams

- Banjo
  - Evidence of West African traditions in U.S.
  - Slaves played prototype of banjo
  - Rural musicians adopted
  - Associated with bluegrass music



# Latin American Stream

- Caribbean, South American and Mexican influences
  - Cuban *Son*, Brazilian *Samba*, Mexican *Mariachi*, Colombian *Cumbia*
- Cuban *Contradanza*- African influenced variation of French country dance
  - Known as *Habanera* in Europe
    - influenced ragtime, blues and jazz in U.S.

# L.A. Stream

- “Tu”- Eduardo Sanchez
  - Considered first Cuban hit song
  - *Habanera* rhythm
  - Syncopated bass rhythm

# Stephen Foster

- Father of American Music
- Parlor Songs
  - "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair"
- Minstrel Songs
  - "Camptown Races" - 1850
  - "Oh Susanna" - 1848

# Minstrel Show

- Loosely Structured
- No plot or storyline
- At least 3 Minstrels
  - Interlocutor
  - 2 endmen: Tambo and Bones
  - Zip Coon and Jim Crow
  - Rest of troupe filled the gaps

# Blackface Minstrelsy



# Al Jolson



- “Camptown Races”
  - or “Gwine to Run All Night”
  - Perpetuates a false African American National identity

# Who is Missing?

- Women!
- Men cross-dress in Minstrel performances
- Target of sexist and misogynist jokes
  - “Who was that lady I saw you with last night? That was no lady, that was my wife”



# Who is Missing?

- “Kneed ‘Em”
  - -Mr. Cleveland, why are men like dough?
    - - Because they are apt to rise?
  - - No, sah.
    - - Then because some are light, and some are heavy?
  - - No *sah*.
    - - Then why *are* men like dough?
  - - Because de women (k) need ‘em

# The Irony

- Blackface serves as a *mask* for white males
  - Gender Performance
  - Identity expression
  - Political/social commentary/critique
- Al Jolson
  - Some questioned sexual orientation
  - Mask for true self expression?

# Post Civil War

- Blacks perform in blackface
  - Self parody
  - Reinforcing stereotypes
  - Reclaiming stereotypes
  - Empowered through employment
- More irony
  - Blackface as a mask for blacks to poke fun at whites poking fun at blacks

# Appropriation of Black Music

- Cultural appropriation: the act of taking or using elements from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture.

# Appropriation

- To go further...
- The community that adopts cultural elements **benefits**, while the community from which these elements are borrowed, does not.
- In what ways does appropriation exist today?