

African-American Entertainers in *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna

Austrian Identity, Viennese Modernism and Black Success¹

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Introduction

According to jazz scholar Howard Rye, when considering public representations of African-American music and those who made it at the turn of the last century, 'the average jazz aficionado, and not a few others, conjures up images of white folks in black face capering about'.² We could extend this to include white minstrels singing so-called 'coon songs', which feature reprehensible racist lyrics set to syncopated rhythms. Traditional representations assign the blacks no role in the public performance of these scurrilous 'identities', which essentially banished them from the literature as participating in careers in the performing arts. As a result of the problems with the representation of blacks in texted music from the turn of the century, historians have tended to write vocal performance out of the pre-history of jazz, in favour of the purely instrumental ragtime. However, recent research reveals that African-American vocal entertainers did take agency over representations of themselves and over their careers, in a space unencumbered by the problematic history of race relationships in the USA. That space was Europe: beginning in the 1870s, and in increasing numbers until the 'Great War', troupes of African-American singers, dancers and comedians travelled to Europe, where they entertained large audiences to great acclaim and gained valuable experience as entrepreneurs, emerging as an important market force in the variety-theatre circuit.³ Above all, they performed the cakewalk, the

¹ This article draws upon sources and insights partially presented in my publications 'Cakewalk in Waltz Time? African-American Music in *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna', in *Reverberations: Representations of Modernity, Tradition and Cultural Value in/between Central Europe and North America*, ed. Susan Ingram, Markus Reisenleitner and Cornelia Szabó-Knotik (Frankfurt, 2002), 17–39 and 'Cakewalk contra Walzer: Negotiating Modernity and Identity on *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna's Dance Floors', in *Musik in der Moderne*, ed. Federico Celestini, Gregor Kokorz and Julian Johnson (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2006).

² Rainer Lotz, *Black People: Entertainers of African Descent in Europe, and Germany* (Bonn, 1997), xii.

³ It is important to note that, while European theatre-goers were not free from racial prejudices, the context of racial relationships in Europe was different from that in the USA. Given the absence of slavery, Europeans had a different and generally more limited set of

late-nineteenth-century dance whose syncopated rhythms and simple form accompanied unnatural, exaggerated dance steps. By introducing Europe to the cakewalk, they prepared audiences for the jazz craze that would sweep through the continent after the war and enabled Europeans to experience the syncopated rhythms and irregular movements whether as dancers or as spectators.

Before turning to Europe, we should consider the American cultural practices that shaped the music of the blacks. We need not rehearse the racial animosities towards American people of colour that solidified after the Civil War and led to such late nineteenth-century forms of entertainment as the 'coon song' and minstrel show as written and performed by white musicians and dancers.⁴ Essential to such representations were stereotypes of African Americans as being inclined toward violence, slovenliness, and – most important for their reception in Vienna – dance. American images of white minstrels in black face usually present a clownishly dressed dancing figure with irregularly skewed limbs, in motion. This topos provides an interesting counterpart to illustrations of black entertainers in Europe, where they are frequently shown in concert dress or – subversively – sport the garb of specific European regions or ethnic groups. Even in turn-of-the-century North America, however, blacks were not merely victims, singing spirituals and plantation songs, but rather entertainers who tried to have agency over images of themselves, not unlike rap musicians of today. It is this aspect of minstrelsy in the USA that has dominated the work of scholars such as Dale Cockrell who have moved beyond merely identifying and deploring the evils of white misappropriation of black culture.

Scholars of African-American entertainers in Europe have investigated the musical *In Dahomey* (London, 1903) that included a cakewalk⁵, but little attention has been given to what entertainers were doing on the Continent. The one exception is German jazz specialist Rainer Lotz, who during the 1980s and early 1990s undertook a series of valuable, detailed studies of selected African-American troupes on tour in pre-jazz Europe.⁶ Lotz's work has provided much useful information for the present essay, but he was more concerned with recording rather than performing activities and did not attempt to draw broader conclusions

experiences with blacks, and as a result, despite the typical desire for gazing and controlling, they may well have evidenced a genuine curiosity over how the blacks looked and sounded.

⁴ This is not to say that minstrelsy did not serve a purpose within the culture of early nineteenth-century America, as established in such valuable studies as Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge, 1997) and W.T. Lhamon Jr, *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge, MA, 1998). Lhamon's chapter 'Dancing for Eels at Catherine Market', in *Raising Cain*, 1–55, for example, goes to great lengths to establish the Irish and working-class foundations for minstrelsy. However, in its attempt to uncover the roots of and justification for the practice of minstrelsy, scholarship of the 1990s seemed to downplay the fact that it still was a hurtful form of entertainment based in racial prejudice.

⁵ Tom Riis has published several valuable studies and collections of documents, above all his monograph *The Experience and Impact of Black Entertainers in England, 1895–1928* (Champaign, IL, 1988) and his edition of Will Marion Cook, *The Music and Scripts of In Dahomey* (Madison, WI, 1996). See also Jeffrey P. Green, 'In Dahomey in London in 1903', *The Black Perspective in Music* 11 (1983): 22–40. Riis made an important contribution to our understanding of the neglected pre-jazz era in general through his study *Just Before Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890–1915* (Washington, DC, 1989).

⁶ The studies were collected by the author and published in the volume *Black People*.

about the social and cultural context of these ensembles. My intention here is to illustrate how the African-American entertainers presented themselves and were received within the European milieu. (For purposes of detail, I will focus on performances in German-speaking Europe, specifically Austria, even though the entertainers appeared on stage in most European countries, including Russia.) One area of inquiry concerns the position occupied by blacks within the cultural politics of the Hapsburg monarchy. I am also interested in the Austrian reception of the dance and music of the cakewalk, as introduced by the travelling troupes in 1903 and swept up on the continent into the maelstrom of modernism and early jazz. In particular, this study will investigate what it meant for the cakewalk to be labelled a 'modern' dance and for the Viennese thus to be experiencing 'modernism' in their bodies when they danced it.

Background: The Fisk Jubilee Singers and their Successors in Europe

The Fisk Jubilee Singers have been traditionally credited as the first African-American performing group to tour Europe, in 1873.⁷ Fisk University was founded in 1866 with the goal of educating former slaves – it was white university treasurer and instructor George White who had the idea of raising much-needed funds through tours of its vocal ensemble, first to northern states and then to Great Britain. In 1882 a member of the ensemble, the black bass singer Frederick J. Loudin, took control of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and led the ensemble on a six-year world tour beginning in 1884. The tour was truly remarkable: it took the ensemble to Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India, Singapore, China, Japan and the American West. What distinguished this group from subsequent black entertainers in Europe was a repertory that included spirituals and other serious songs, as we read in an excerpt from a review of a Stockholm concert: 'The different kinds of songs ... provided a great contrast ranging, as they did, from pietistic religious hymns to cheerful songs with choirs of laughter.'⁸

With Loudin's takeover of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, African Americans entered the world of the entrepreneur in the entertainment 'industry'.⁹ As director of an all-black ensemble, Loudin was well aware of the scrutiny to which they would be subjected, and for that reason he conducted 'background checks' for all new members. Loudin soon learned the price of free enterprise, however: a former member of the singers, Maggie Porter Cole and husband Daniel Cole, started their own Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1884, comprising other singers from the earlier

⁷ A valuable source for detailed information about the early years of the ensemble is Andrew Ward's *Dark Midnight when I Rise: The Story of the Jubilee Singers who Introduced the World to the Music of Black America* (New York, 2000). Ward is interested in making a theological point, even proselytizing through the sacred work of the singers, so their ever-increasing secular offerings in the later years receives very little attention. See also John Graziano, 'The Early Life and Career of the "Black Patti": The Odyssey of an African American Singer in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53/3 (2000): 543–96. Given his knowledge of the European sources, Lotz has served as the primary source for the details about the ensemble's European tours.

⁸ Article in *Svensk Musiktidning* 15 (1 Oct. 1895), trans. Lars Berggren and cited in Lotz, *Black People*, 166.

⁹ See Ward, *Dark Midnight*, 389.

ensemble. Some time in the late 1880s, white singer Charles Mumford took over leadership and arranged for the eight-member troupe to tour Europe between 1894 and 1895, under the name 'Original American Jubilee Singers'. As Lotz reports, 'during the summer holidays of 1896 the German impresario [Martin] Stein [of Altona near Hamburg] concluded a contract to bring back a male vocal quartet consisting of former members of Maggie Cole's 'Fisk Jubilee Singers'.¹⁰ The new group started a two-year European tour under the name 'The American Troubadours', eventually billing themselves as the 'Black Troubadours' and performing throughout Europe until 1914.¹¹

Typical of the early African-American groups in Europe (before 1900), the Black Troubadours – initially Charles Lewis (tenor), Charles Payne (tenor), Charles Johnston (bass), Jefferson Caldwell (bass), and Charles Sumner Byron (pianist) – had to make the repertoire transition from spirituals and sacred songs for church performance to a programme of 'coon', plantation and humorous songs for variety theatres. For example, when a smaller collection of former Fisk Jubilee members (a male quartet) visited Hamburg in 1896, promoter Martin Stein insisted on a livelier programme for the *Weltstadt*,¹² as well as a new alternate name ('The Jubilee Singers, called the Coloured Meisters'). Significantly, an advertisement for the group in the German trade journal *Der Artist* reports on their change of repertory to 'Negro burlesques, ... a description of American Negro life which is not only exotic but also amusing'.¹³ Still, Stein's advertisement for the group in the same issue of *Der Artist* establishes it as a high-class act ('only for first-class establishments, Variétés, theatres and concert halls').¹⁴

The reviews establish the success with which such talented African-American individual performers and troupes as Seth Weeks, Belle Davis, Edgar Jones, Will Garland, Arabella Fields, The Black Troubadours, The Louisiana Troupe and The 4 Black Diamonds plied the stages of Europe. The musicians, singers and dancers normally started their tour in England and then travelled eastward, through Paris and eventually splitting either to the north (Berlin and St Petersburg) or the south (Vienna and Budapest).¹⁵ Demand and success ensured that they were in Europe for several years – in fact, they often did not want to go home. Harry Martinett reported in 1899 that the quartet The American Troubadours 'have just returned to London from the continent. All the boys seem to like this side of the water and not many speak of returning [to America]'.¹⁶ And a 1911 promotional ad for The Darktown Aristocrats notes how, 'after five years of most successful touring

¹⁰ Lotz, *Black People*, 165.

¹¹ This ensemble appeared under a variety of names in Europe, including 'The Four Black Troubadours' (central Europe), 'The Colored Meisters' (England) and 'Das schwarze Udel-Quartett' (Germany and Austria). See *ibid.*, 172–84.

¹² *Ibid.*, 167.

¹³ Advertisement in *Der Artist* 611 (25 Oct. 1896), trans. Lotz and cited, *ibid.*

¹⁴ 'Nur für Etablissements ersten Ranges, Variétés, Theater und Concertsäle'. *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁵ Of course, there was great variation within these routes, especially for groups who were resident in Europe for more than one season or year. A parallel is evident in the American tours of Theodore Thomas and his orchestra during the late nineteenth century. See Deaville, "'Westwärts zieht die Kunstgeschichte": Liszt's Symphonic Poems in the New World', in *Identität – Kultur – Raum: Kulturelle Praktiken und die Ausbildung von Imagined Communities in Nordamerika und Zentraleuropa*, ed. Susan Ingram, Markus Reisenleitner and Cornelia Szabó-Knotik (Vienna, 2001), 238.

¹⁶ Lotz, *Black People*, 170.

through France, Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland, Austria and Italy, on Dec. 1st [they will be undertaking their first] Tour North-America'.¹⁷

Black Entertainers in a Viennese Context

My intention here is to illustrate how African-American music and dance practically, historically and politically worked its way into Austrian – specifically Viennese – culture, having an impact, albeit brief, upon various levels of society. I will focus on *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna, that city of modernist, internationalist diversity where local and imported popular forms of song and dance (such as the waltz and the csárdás) co-existed with those of the African Americans. Like other large urban areas, it was a place where dominant and marginal cultures touched each other, whether in disparate elements in a co-existence or in the sense of Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact zone'¹⁸ and Homi K. Bhabha's 'third space'.¹⁹ Perhaps the most important legacy of the blacks was the cakewalk, which proved to be particularly popular in Vienna between 1903 and 1905 and thus deserving of special consideration here.

The African Americans appeared in Vienna at a critical time in Austrian history, when under the pressure from its increasingly nationalistic East Central European constituent political entities, the Hapsburg Empire was trying to uphold reforms enacted in 1867, which sought for it to evolve into a federation with equal rights for all nationalities. As the literature of the times amply attests, the official policy of the Hapsburgs was to maintain a pluralistic state, to cultivate tolerance towards other peoples. Given this multi-cultural climate of the Hapsburg monarchy (which gradually fell apart by 1914), it is no coincidence that cultural historian Peter Stachel should identify the origins of contemporary sociology in the 'context of the ethnic-cultural pluralism ... within the *Vielvölkerstaat* in the last decades of the 19th century'.²⁰ And it should also not be surprising that Viennese Modernism, as an internationalist movement that stressed tolerance of otherness and difference,²¹ would emerge against this social and cultural backdrop.

The official policy did encounter resistance, as evidenced by the riots following the Badeni Language Act of 1897, which had authorized the use of the Czech language in certain official capacities within that region of the Empire.²² A small number of Pan-Germans in Austria also opposed the introduction of Hungarian culture, whereby tensions between constituent nationalities within Austro-Hungary played themselves out on the concert and dance floors.²³ As we shall

¹⁷ Original English text in *Das Programm* 500 (5 Nov. 1911).

¹⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), especially 6–7.

¹⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), especially 208–9.

²⁰ '[I]m] ... Kontext des ethnisch-kulturellen Pluralismus ... innerhalb des Vielvölkerstaates in den letzten Jahrzehnten des 19. Jahrhunderts.' Stachel, Peter, 'Mehrsprachige, Fremde, Marginal Men: Zur transatlantischen Geschichte eines Forschungsansatzes', in *Identität – Kultur – Raum*, ed. Ingram, Reisenleitner and Szabó-Knotik, 199.

²¹ See, for example, Peter Berner, Emil Brix and Wolfgang Mantl, eds, *Wien um 1900. Aufbruch in die Moderne ...*, (Vienna, 1986), 144–5, for an expression of this widely accepted concept of Viennese Modernism.

²² Friedrich Heer, *Der Kampf um die österreichische Identität* (Vienna, 1981), 288.

²³ For a discussion of the Austrian Pan-German movement as it manifested itself in music, see the present author's 'Die Wacht an der Donau'?!? The Wiener akademischer

see, staged and danced manifestations of African-American musical culture similarly aroused resistance on the part of certain Austrians, particularly the aforementioned Pan-Germans, who opposed official Hapsburg policies of tolerance and co-existence among ethnic groups.

Given comments in *Der Artist* and in other German-language periodical sources, it seems that exoticism was the operational word for the attraction exerted by the African Americans, a concept that the work of Ralph Locke has traced throughout the nineteenth century in French and Italian contexts.²⁴ Even though, as Lotz reports, over 100 black performers inhabited German stages in 1896,²⁵ the German-speaking world had had little contact with people of colour up to that point since the African colonies in Germany had first been acquired in 1883 and the Hapsburgs possessed no overseas territory. Black performers therefore evoked much curiosity among the populace; the so-called *Völkerschauen* (exhibition of a native village) became a staple of amusement parks and exhibition grounds in the 1890s.²⁶ As argued in the work of Klaus Scherpe, these *Völkerschauen*, such as the *Somali-Dorf* of 1897 in the amusement park Venedig in Wien,²⁷ were no harmless entertainment, but rather drew upon our tendency to colonize.²⁸ Still, racial sexual taboos seem to have fallen thanks to the Aschanti Village, as was less likely to happen in the USA of the time. In a reminiscence of this very popular attraction, Gabor Steiner wrote:

Poor man and rich man, commoner and nobleman, everyone streamed into the zoo to look at the black group ... Some Viennese women ... went crazy over the 'black gentlemen', whom they showered with money and gifts ... It is also maintained that the following winter, many a girl [gave birth to] black-white [offspring].²⁹

Even though the illustration in Fig. 1 is intended to satirize the Somali-mania of the time, there was truth behind this striking image of an interracial relationship.

Wagner-Verein, Wiener Moderne and Pan-Germanism', in: *Wien 1897: Kulturgeschichtliches Profil eines Epochenjahres*, ed. Christian Glanz (Frankfurt, 1999), 49–84.

²⁴ See, among others, Locke's 'Constructing the Oriental "Other": Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3/3 (1991): 261–302; 'Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theater', *The Opera Quarterly* 10/1 (1993): 48–64; and 'Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East', *19th Century Music* 22 (1998): 20–53. Locke's contribution to this special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* also centres on issues of racial otherness.

²⁵ Lotz, *Black People*, 162.

²⁶ For more about the *Völkerschauen*, see Gabi Eissenberger, *Entführt, Verspottet und Gestorben: Lateinamerikanische Völkerschauen in deutschen Zoos* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996); Balthasar Staehelin, *Völkerschauen im Zoologischen Garten Basel, 1879-1935* (Basel, 1993); and Hilke Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeckschen Völkerschauen* (Frankfurt, 1989).

²⁷ For a detailed and nicely illustrated history of the quite successful Viennese amusement park called Venedig in Wien, see Norbert Rubey and Peter Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien: Theater- und Vergnügungsstadt der Jahrhundertwende* (Vienna, 1996).

²⁸ Klaus Scherpe, 'Die Gewalt des Fremden: Über Repräsentation', in *Vom Schein des Schönen und seinen Schatten*, ed. Hans-Richard Brittnacher and Fabian Störmer (Bielefeld, 2000), 366–79.

²⁹ 'Arm und reich, Volk und Adel, alles strömte in den Tiergarten, um sich die schwarze Gesellschaft anzusehen ... Ein Teil der Wienerinnen war ... geradezu toll nach den "schwarzen Gesellen", die mit Geld und Geschenken von der Damenwelt überhäuft worden ... Man behauptet auch, daß "Schwarz-Weiß" im darauffolgenden Winter mancher Maid nachgewiesen worden sei!' Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, 69–70.

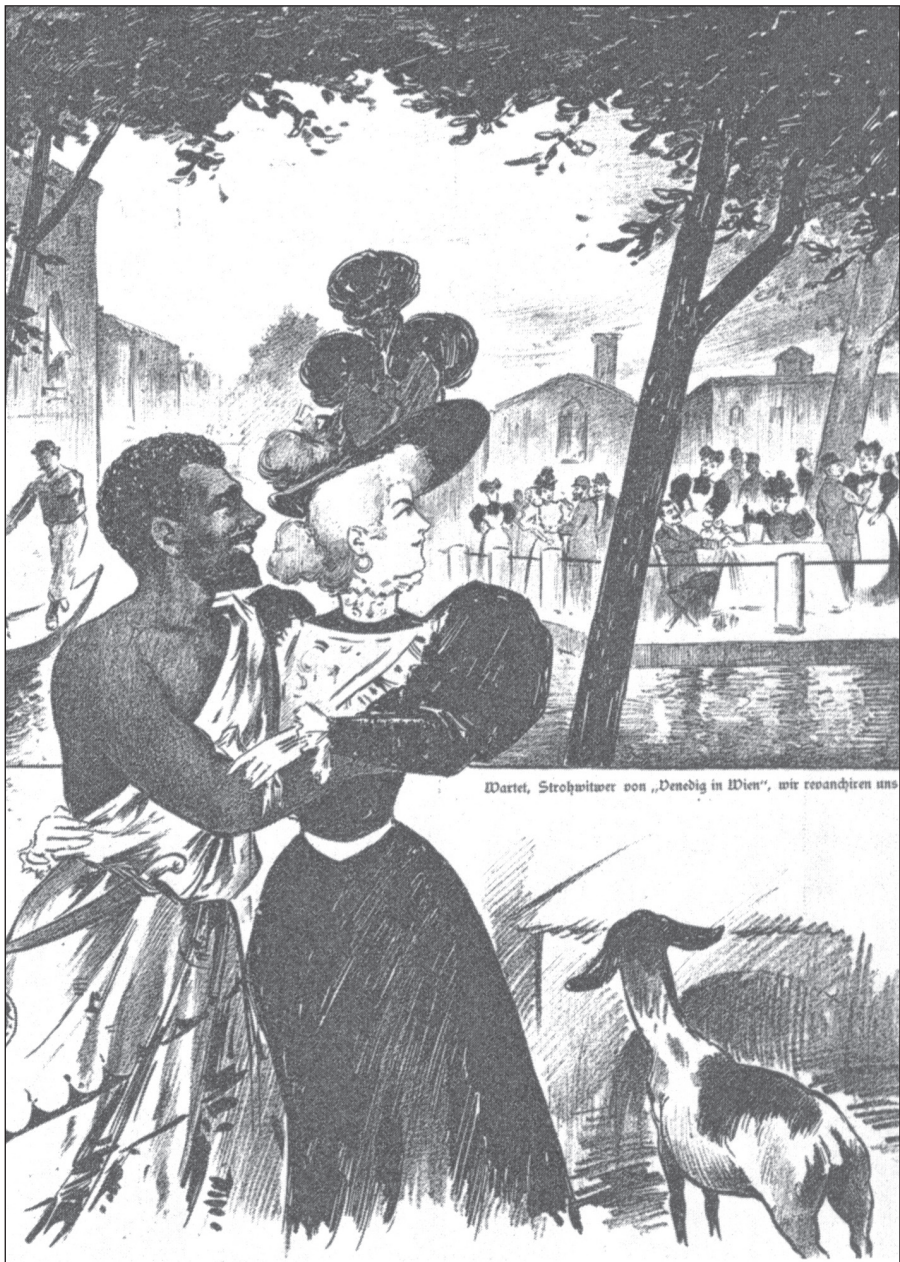


Fig. 1 'Revanche der Strohwitwen: "Wartet, Strohwitwer von 'Venedig in Wien', wir revanchiren uns!'", *Humoristische Blätter* (18 Apr. 1897), reproduced in Rubey and Schoenwald, *Venedig in Wien*, p. 71

One could also argue that the 'looking' behind the *Völkerschauen*, that the 'seeing is believing' mind-set of the nineteenth century, as so strongly affirmed by the work of Richard Leppert,³⁰ is not just a colonizing act, but also an essential component of constructing a 'contact zone' or 'third space'. People wanted to see the Other to form their own opinion, and the Hapsburg monarchy in Vienna encouraged such public representations of the supposed tolerance towards difference in their *Vielvölkerstadt*.

Here is a typical review of one troupe's performance and appearance:

The Black Udel Quartet excites great enthusiasm every evening as one of the most original and best variety numbers that has ever been offered ... The public is moved to true storms of applause by the excellent vocal achievements of the blacks who appear in elegant salon dress. The musical circles of Vienna also go to the Colosseum, and the boxes reveal the same social cross-section as [we would find at] an important concert premiere.³¹

Authenticity became the watchword in the Viennese press: time and again promotional advertisements referred to an artist as 'wirklicher Schwarzer' ('truly black')³² or to dances and groups as 'original'.³³ We also read the following announcement from the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* of 1 March 1903 regarding one group's performance of the cakewalk: 'The Seven Florida Girls, which execute a rich number of amusing dances and evolutions, can fully claim the right of absolute originality and true-to-home rendition for their cakewalk.'³⁴ Here is a passage from a review one week later:

The London *Globe* has determined that Florida is the home of the cakewalk. This gives the production of the Seven Florida Creole Girls at Ronacher heightened interest, since the viewers have the assurance of seeing the *eccentric* [my emphasis] dance just like the way it is danced in its homeland.³⁵

³⁰ See above all Leppert's 'Cultural Contradiction, Idolatry, and the Piano Virtuoso: Franz Liszt', in: *Piano Roles: One Hundred Years of Life with the Piano*, ed. James Parakilas (New Haven, CT, 1999), 255–7 ('Modernity as Looking').

³¹ 'Das schwarze Udel-Quartett erregt allabendlich als eine der originellsten und besten Variéténummern, die bisher geboten wurden, das größte Aufsehen ... Das Publicum wird durch die trefflichen Gesangsleistungen der in eleganter Salontoilette auftretenden Neger zu wahren Beifallstürmen hingerissen. Auch die musikalischen Kreise Wiens finden sich jetzt im Colosseum ein, und die Logen zeigen das gesellschaftliche Bild einer großen Wiener Concertpremiere.' 'Das schwarze Udel-Quartett', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 94 (6 Apr. 1900): 7. It should be noted that here and throughout the citations from German-language sources, the use of the word 'Neger' is not pejorative, but rather one of neutral observation, much like the term 'Negro' in English-language usage of the 1960s.

³² Ironically, the various troupes' formal dress distinguished the 'authentic' black performers from white minstrels in blackface.

³³ Thus we find the following advertisement for the Viennese Orpheum in the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 257 (17 Sep. 1905): 17: 'The Jetnoys. Origin. amerik. Song dance. Original Cake Walkes. Neger-Truppe.'

³⁴ 'Die Seven Florida Girls, die eine reiche Zahl amusanter Tänze und Evolutionen executiren, können jedenfalls für ihren Cake Walk das Recht absoluter Originalität und heimatlich treuer Wiedergabe reclamiren.' 'Programmwechsel bei Ronacher', *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 59 (1 Mar. 1903): 31.

³⁵ 'Der Londoner "Globe" hat festgestellt, daß die Heimat des Cake Walk Florida ist. Dies gibt der Production der Seven Florida Creole Girls bei Ronacher erhöhtes Interesse,

Again, *seeing* is the operative sense: 'everyone wants to see the cakewalk, moreover performed by those who have brought it over from its southern home in Florida with all of its native *Drastik*.'³⁶ At the same time, the newspapers do not report at all on blackface minstrel attractions, which – probably regarded as unauthentic – seem to have aroused little interest, at least once blacks themselves regularly performed on Viennese stages after 1895 or so.

In Vienna, as in many other European cities, the African Americans performed largely in what we might generically call the Variété and the Circus.³⁷ Variety theatres were places of entertainment for the masses, where audiences sat and ate at tables while watching programmes that ranged from one-act operettas (or their generic equivalents) to *manèges* of animal and human acts that would include trained animals, acrobats, comedians and exotic musical ensembles. Circuses offered similar acts but without the possibility of dining; also, circus acts relied less upon the spoken and sung word. The cabaret tended to be more intimate than the variety theatre and featured fewer of the animal and physical acts. Performers in these theatres were collectively known as 'artists', or *Artisten* in German. Specific venues in Vienna included the K.K. Gartenbau, Etablissement Ronacher, Colosseum, Orpheum, Apollo, Moulin Rouge, Circus Schumann (some of which still exist today). Table 1 lists dates and locales for selected African-American touring artists and entertainers in Vienna through to 1914, and Fig. 2 shows what the *Ronacher* looked like in 1905.

Viennese friends and foes of the African-American entertainers seem to be of one voice in recognizing their unqualified popular success on the Variété stages, above all other acts at the time. The titles the troupes used in Vienna (Table 2) reveal the black artists either relying upon their personal names, identifying themselves by place of origin or re-appropriating American stereotypes. Documents show that the acts themselves consisted of jokes, singing and dancing, with 'coon songs' playing a lesser role than in white minstrel shows (although they were still available to and used by the black entertainers). And if the 'blackface' elements were featured, they often had a more or less parodying function, such as when black entertainer Louis Douglas appeared in blackface in the 1920s, with Josephine Baker.³⁸ In this reversal of roles, he could be interpreted as defusing and thus controlling the image of the white minstrel in blackface by appropriating it for himself.

African-American entertainers likewise scored some of their greatest vocal successes in Vienna by taking on a regional identity, with adaptations of dress and

da die Zuschauer die Gewähr haben, den Excentriquetanz genau so zu sehen, wie er in seiner Heimat getanzt wird.' 'Der Florida-Cake Walk bei Ronacher', *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 66 (8 Mar. 1903): 18.

³⁶ 'Jeder will den Cake Walk sehen und von obendrein von Jenen, die ihn mit all' seiner urwüchsigen *Drastik* aus seiner südlichen Heimat in Florida herübergebracht haben.' 'Etablissement Ronacher', *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 73 (15 Mar. 1903): 20.

³⁷ Here is an interesting description of the ambience of the variety theatre, occasioned by the change in venue at Danzer's Orpheum: 'The tables have disappeared, and the truly Viennese "gemütlich" smoky theatre has become a real stage, for which the directors have set a literary programme.' 'Die Tische sind verschwunden und aus dem einstigen echt wienerisches zurechtgelegt gemütlichen Rauchtheater ist eine veritable Bühne geworden, deren Leiter sich ein literarisches Programm gestellt haben.' 'Das Ende von Danzers Orpheum', *Das Organ* 2 (1908): 9.

³⁸ Lotz, *Black People*, 297–389, provides a detailed history of the European activities of Douglas.

Table 1 Dates and Locales for Selected African-American Touring Artists and Entertainers in Vienna to 1914

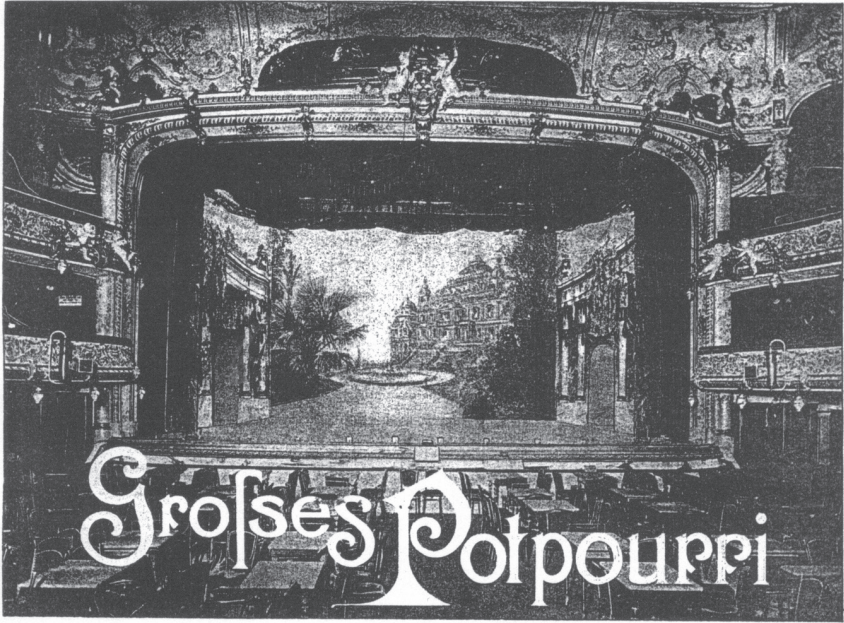
Edgar Jones	
21 September 1896–October 1896	Ronacher
November 1898	Danzer's Orpheum
The [4] Black Diamonds	
12 October–15 November 1900	Colosseum
1–15 January 1901	Ronacher
1–30 November 1906	Apollo
16–31 July 1910	Weigl's Dreherpark
16–30 May 1912	Etablissement Kaisergarten
16–31 August 1913	Moulin Rouge
The Louisiana Amazon Guards	
1–30 September 1901	Colosseum
The 7 Florida Creole Girls	
March 1903	Ronacher
Belle Davis and her Piccaninnies	
16–31 March 1904	Danzer's Orpheum
6 December 1906–15 January 1907	Apollo
1–31 October 1910	Apollo
The Black Troubadours	
1 April 1904	Colosseum
12 October 1905	Apollo
1–15 October 1913	Circus Schumann
Hampton & Bowman	
1–15 September 1905	Colosseum
January 1911	Ronacher
1–15 October 1912	Circus Busch
Louis Douglas	
16–30 June 1909	Reklame
16–31 October 1909	Parisien
1912	Venedig in Wien
16–31 July 1912	Kaisergarten
1–15 August 1912	Moulin Rouge
16–31 August 1912	Wintergarten
Arabella Fields	
November 1909	Budapester Variété
1 May–15 June 1910	Apollo
1–31 December 1910	Gartenbau
16–19 February 1912	Neues Orpheum

songs from the Austrian Alps. In a remarkably bold move, The 4 Black Diamonds, visiting Vienna eight times between 1906 and 1913, each time sang Tyrolean folk songs in 'authentic' Tyrolean dress (Fig. 3). By all indications, the audiences were in full appreciation. Also, the highly talented Arabella Fields, the so-called 'Australian Nightingale', had the same extraordinary success in Vienna between 1909 and 1912 (she appeared there in ten long-term engagements over three years), above all as a yodeller: 'The black yodeller has prepared a Viennese programme

VI. Jahrgang № 21. MUSIK-BLÄTTER WIEN, I. 1905

Mc 3291

Ein Abend im „Ronacher“



Grosses Polpourri

für Klavier von Alex. Zellner
Kapellmeister im Etablissement „Ronacher“

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Leopold Kury
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Musikalien u. Leihbibliothek

Fig. 2 Etablissement Ronacher, 1905

and will present the popular yodel songs of our local female singers. This will be a special treat, since the exotic beauty is an excellent yodeller.³⁹

³⁹ 'Die schwarze Jodlerin hat sich ein wienerliches zurechtgelegt und wird die populären Jodlieder unserer heimischen Sängerinnen vortragen. Es wird dies ein besonderer Genuß sein, da die exotische Schönheit eine vorzügliche Jodlerin ist.' 'Pfungsvorstellungen im Etablissement Ronacher', *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 132 (15 May 1910): 21.

Table 2 Titles of American-African Touring Groups in Europe

 Personal Names

Edgar Jones

Seth Weeks

Belle Davis

Hampton & Bowman

Will Garland

Arabella Fields

Places of Origin

The 7 Florida Creole Girls

The 'Louisiana Troupes'

Stereotypes

A Trip to Coontown

4 Darktown Entertainers

Fig. 3 The 4 Black Diamonds in Tyrolean *Tracht*

What particularly amazed the Viennese audiences was the singing of the black troupes, whether in serious or popular repertoires. The *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* declared in 1900 that 'the Negro quartet Black Troubadours, black singers, is sensational – they have excellent training and their serious and humoristic contributions have an irresistible effect'.⁴⁰ The *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* of 1905

⁴⁰ 'Sensationell ist das Negerquartett Black Troubadours, schwarze Sänger, von ausgezeichneter Schulung, und unwiderstehlicher Wirkung ihrer ernsten und humoristischen Vorträge.' 'Vergnügungsanzeiger', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 89 (1 Apr. 1900): 3.

stated that the vocal quartet The 4 Darktown Entertainers was characterized by its 'wonderful ensemble', 'resonant voices', and 'strong timbre', as well as its members' versatility in adapting to differing moods, whether the melancholy of their serious songs or the high spirits of their humorous songs:

The 4 Darktown Entertainers ... distinguish themselves above all through [their] wonderful ensemble ... They all possess resonant voices, but the tenor and baritone especially contribute to that through their strong timbre. Their [serious] songs are characterized by an unusual melancholy tone, while you have to recognize their humour and art of performance in their comic songs.⁴¹

This type of unaccompanied vocal ensemble, which combined serious and comic repertoires and cultivated an individual and ensemble virtuosity, did not exist in Vienna at the time, which gave the African-American groups a further *Anziehungskraft*.

The Cakewalk, Austrian Identity and Viennese Modernism

One of the most important moments in the pre-war intersection of African-American and European cultures came in early 1903, when black touring groups introduced the cakewalk on European stages – as possibly the first American dance, and certainly the first African-American dance to be imported into Europe, the event takes on special significance, even though its direct influence did not last long. The cakewalk immediately became a sensation when it was first introduced to Vienna in early March 1903 by The 7 Florida Creole Girls. However, upon arrival, the 'modern' cakewalk encountered the waltz, the dance traditionally associated with Vienna, and also by its inhabitants. For at least the next two years, the dances would vie for the feet, ears and hearts of the public in a struggle that mirrored the unrest within the Hapsburg Empire of the time.

The cakewalk originated in the American South during the 1850s as the 'chalk line walk', but by 1889 its evolution had stabilized as the dance form practised for the next thirty years.⁴² It featured a couple promenading in an excessively dignified manner, high stepping and kicking, mimicking high society, thus enacting an inversion ritual, in the terms of Victor Turner.⁴³ Along the way, the cakewalk had

⁴¹ 'The 4 Darktown Entertainers ... zeichnen sich vor Allem durch das wunderbare Zusammenspiel aus ... Sie verfügen sämtlich über klangvolle Stimmen, aber der Tenor und der Baryton ragen durch den starken Timbre ihres Glockenorgans besonders hervor. Ihre Lieder sind durch einen seltsam melancholischen Anstrich charakterisirt, während man in den heiteren Piècen ihren Humor und ihre Gestaltungskunst anerkennen muß.' 'Ein schwarzes Quartett', *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt* 252 (12 Sep. 1905): 10.

⁴² The literature about the cakewalk remains quite limited for a variety of reasons, including its musical simplicity in comparison with its successors ragtime and jazz, and its embodied performance (dance music has traditionally occupied a problematic position within the canons of Western music). Moreover, the racially problematic titles, images and texts associated with the cakewalk have undoubtedly discouraged musicologists from dealing with this repertory. *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889–1895* by Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff (Jackson, MI, 2002) provides numerous press sources that document the practice of cakewalk performance in the USA during the early 1890s.

⁴³ See Victor and Edith Turner, 'Religious Celebrations', in *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, ed. Victor Turner (Washington, DC, 1982), 201–11.

acquired special movements (bending the body back and dropping hands at the wrists) that authorities have traced back to African dance.⁴⁴ (Ironically, blackface minstrels of the late nineteenth century themselves parodied the cakewalk in their walkabouts!) With parody at the core of the cakewalk, there was precious little in the dance that was regular, graceful or even natural, at least in comparison with the waltz. This applies to the music as well, which accompanied the irregular steps through its prominent syncopations. Above all, the movements and music of the cakewalk seemed nervous to its Viennese audiences and participants, which made it a quintessentially modern dance.⁴⁵

The waltz already had had to defend its position from a 'foreign' dance, the Hungarian csárdás, which had entered Austrian cultural space during the course of the nineteenth century, before the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary was established in 1867.⁴⁶ Thus Vienna became a nexus for the meeting of dances from West and East, and it was there that the cakewalk and csárdás were first regarded as kindred dance types, their duple metre, syncopations and untamed, inelegant character in stark contrast to the typically elegant, triple-metre waltz.

The cakewalk attained overnight popularity, as reflected in the promotional rhetoric printed with the 1903 Austrian publication of the music to 'Die lustigen Neger' by Webster, that it was 'the sensation of Parisian and London balls' and that it had 'found entry into the most fashionable salons', or that 'young and old learn the cakewalk with ardour and every dance instructor has adopted it in his instruction'. Indeed, 'the success of the new dance cakewalk grows from day to day; it is already danced everywhere'.⁴⁷ Perhaps the most interesting feature of the publication is the title illustration (Fig. 4), which in this German-language re-publication features a high-class, elegantly dressed white couple dancing the unnatural cakewalk in front of a distinguished social circle. The cover should have dispelled all lingering questions about the genre's appropriateness in the most fashionable salons, despite (or perhaps because of) the social inversion involved. It is interesting to note that, although the ad calls it 'a new dance', they write about a 'classical cakewalk', as if a standard had already been established, which lends even further legitimacy.⁴⁸ The dance instructions on the last page of the music reveal the publisher's intention to capitalize on the genre's popularity by making the sheet music a necessary

⁴⁴ Thus the StreetSwing's Dance History Archives notes the gestural similarities between the cakewalk and dances of certain tribes of the African Kaffir. 'Cakewalk', *StreetSwing's Dance History Archives* <www.streetswing.com/histmain/z3cake1.htm> (accessed 27 Oct. 2005).

⁴⁵ The connection between modernism and nervousness is well established by Kay Knittel in "'Ein hypermoderner Dirigent": Mahler and Anti-Semitism in fin-de-Siècle Vienna', *19th Century Music* 18/3 (1995): 256–76. See also Michael Worbs, *Nervenkunst: Literatur und Psychoanalyse im Wien der Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

⁴⁶ About the origins of the csárdás and its role in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, see for example Bálint Sárosi, *Zigeunermusik* (Budapest, 1977).


⁴⁷ 'Ein neuer Tanz! Der "Cake-Walk" (Kuchen-Tanz). Die Sensation der Pariser und Londoner Bälle ... Jung und Alt lernt nun den "Cake-Walk" mit Feuereifer und jeder Tanzmeister hat ihn in sein Programm aufgenommen ... Der Erfolg des neuen Tanzes "Cake-Walk" wächst von Tag zu Tag. Man tanzt ihn bereits überall.' From Harry Webster, 'Die lustigen Neger' (Vienna, 1903).

⁴⁸ 'Ebenso wie bei dem "Pas de quatre" gibt es auch hier einen mustergiltigen classischen "Cake-Walk" ...' Ibid.

Sensations Erfolg in London und Paris!

DIE LUSTIGEN NEGER

(Coontown Chimes) ORIGINAL CAKE-WALK



Musik
von Harry S. Webster.

For Clavier & Piano Pr. M. 1.50
- Gesang mit Clavierbegleitung Pr. M. 1.50

Aufführungsrecht vorbehalten
Eigentum des Verlegers für alle Länder
Einschreiben in das Verzeichn. d. Aut. Mit Verbandsrat der Arrangements
JOSEF WEINBERGER
Wien LEIPZIG Paris
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Copyright 1902 by W. Witmark & Sons, London New-York San Francisco

Fig. 4 Title-page illustration for the Cake-walk, published with 'Die lustigen Neger' by Webster (Vienna: Josef Weinberger, 1903)

Budapest of a Charles Brown dance called cakewalk, with different steps (see Fig. 5)! By no means do the various illustrations reveal natural body positions: it should be no surprise that the dance is called 'grotesque' in several sources.⁵⁰ Is it possible that the Viennese were experiencing modernism in their bodies for the first time through this Ur-American, nervous, unnatural, and hence subversive dance of the decidedly modern 'Neger'?

The cakewalk certainly gave the evolving discipline of psychology, often considered to be a congruent 'movement' with modernism, fodder for its analysis.⁵¹ As observed by psychologist Hermann Swoboda, who was one of the first proponents of biorhythms, a woman attended a cakewalk performance and eighteen hours later she spontaneously danced a cakewalk on the platform of the Stadtbahn in Vienna.⁵² For Swoboda, she had suppressed the desire to dance at the performance, and the 'suppressed motor impulses' ('unterdrueckten motorischen Impulse') manifested themselves quite spontaneously a day later.

However, the translations of the texted cakewalk and the other songs performed by the entertainers most clearly reflect the cultural work accomplished by African-American entertainment in *Jahrhundertwende* Vienna. When we look at the words of the cakewalk 'Die lustigen Neger' and of other songs that were reworked from the American for German publication, we cannot help but observe also how new, less racially charged meanings have been assigned to them. This is evident in the following fragment from 'Ma Tiger Lily' by A.B. Sloane, in an edition by Josef Weinberger from c. 1903:

English:	Fur she's ma Lily, my Tiger Lily, She draws de niggers like a crowd of flies.
German:	Ja meine Lily, die süsse Lily, das Mädchen meiner Wahl liebt mich allein. (My Lily, sweet Lily, the girl of my choice, loves me alone')

Not only is the improper, parodying dialect ('Fur she's ma' and 'de') removed, but the whole text phrase changes meaning from racist derision ('She draws de niggers like a crowd of flies') to sensitive emotion ('The girl of my choice, loves me alone'). The same applies to the 'Lach- und Tanz-Couplet' by Oscar Dienzl, entitled 'Niggersong' and published in 1904 by Franz Bárd & Bruder: the

while they keep their knees as high as possible. This is the rule that is to be maintained for all of the other figures as well.'

'Beschreibung des Tanzes ... Die Hauptbedingungen sind: 1. Den Körper sehr stark zurückbeugen. 2. Die beiden Arme horizontal ausgestreckt halten. 3. Die Knie bei jedem Schritt sehr hochheben und die Beine nach vorwärts schwingen ... Figur 1. (Mit Abbildung). Der Herr und die Dame, einer neben dem anderen, den Körper zurückgebeugt, die Arme nach vorn ausgestreckt, tanzen, indem sie die Knie so hoch wie möglich heben. Dies ist die Regel, welche auch für alle anderen Figuren festzuhalten ist ...'

⁵⁰ For example, the anonymous author of 'Aus guter Gesellschaft' calls the dance a 'grotesque social game' (Fred., 'Feuilleton: Aus guter Gesellschaft', *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 71 (13 Mar. 1903)): 2. See also Ingeborg Harer, "'Lustige Neger": Verbreitung und Nachahmung der Musik der Afro-Amerikaner in Österreich um 1900', *jazzforschung/jazzresearch* 30 (1998): 182.

⁵¹ See Mark S. Micale ed., *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940* (Stanford, CA, 2004).

⁵² Hermann Swoboda, *Studien zur Grundlegung der Psychologie* (Leipzig and Vienna, 1905), 51.

interlinear German and Hungarian translations telling quite different, racially inoffensive stories:

American:

(Verse 1)

Way down in Alabama

Dwells a Jap from Jokohama ...

(Verse 2)

But the nigger had no money

And she says to him 'my honey ...'

German:

(Verse 1)

Es ist zu dumm, wie oft ich seh',
Dass d'Leut' vor Zorn geh'n in die Höh ...

It is so dumb, how often I see
That people get angry ...

Hungarian:

(Verse 1)

Minap Kamerun felöl,

A hajó orrán elöl ...

Each day, in the direction of
Cameroun,
The ship's bow ahead/The man's
nose ahead ...⁵³

(Verse 2)

Hirtelen körül tekint
Szemé vel magához int ...

Suddenly (he) looks around,
Winking his eye at you...

And Leopold Sprowacker's newly written German words for 'Die lustigen Neger' – as texted cakewalk, a rarity – are about the cakewalk in higher society, replete with references to Jewish balls (Levison, Kohn, Rosa des Levi Töchterlein) and with alternative trio verses for Berlin and Vienna:

Lustige Negerlein, Negerlein,

Tanzen recht zierlich fein, zierlich fein,

Cakewalk ja, Cakewalk hei

Wie da Alles springt.

Hüpfen rein wie verrückt, wie verrückt,

Sind dabei hoch entzückt, hoch entzückt,

Heissa, juch heissa,
Die Musik feurig klingt.

Cakewalk ist Mode auf jedem Balle,

Cakewalk man tanzet in jedem Saale

Merry little black
men, little black men
Dance gracefully fine,
gracefully fine.
Cakewalk, hey
cakewalk,
How everyone leaps!

Pure jumping like
crazy, like crazy,
Do it with great
delight, great delight,
Hurrah, hurrah,
The music sounds
fiery.

Cakewalk is the
fashion at every ball,
People dance
cakewalk in every hall,

⁵³ The original Hungarian allows for the possibility of both meanings presented in the translation.

Nicht mehr im Kreise nach alter Weise,	No longer in a circle like of old,
Paarweis' nur springen s' 'rum, zu dumm.	Only jumping around in pairs, so dumb.
Am Ball bei Levison, Levison,	At the ball of Levison, Levison,
Zeigt ihn der lange Kohn, lange Kohn,	He is done by tall Kohn, tall Kohn,
Tanzt fein mit Rosa,	Dances fine with Rosa,
Des Levi Töchterlein.	The little daughter of Levi.
Zylinder im Genick, im Genick,	Top hat on his neck, on his neck,
Kopf biegt er weit zurück, weit zurück,	He bends his head far back, far back,
Hebt steif die Beine,	He stiffly raises his legs,
Als hätt' er's Zipperlein.	As if he had the gout.
Trio: Berlin Text: Otto, der Elegante, am Maskenball	Otto, the elegant one at the masked ball,
Tanzt ihn voll Schneid' mit seinem blonden Ideal.	Dances it sharply with his blond ideal,
Steif spreizt er seine Arm, dabei er komisch zuckt,	He stiffly extends his arm and twitches strangely,
Als hätt' er am Buffet 'nen Reg'nschirm g'schluckt.	As if he ate an umbrella at the buffet.
Viennese Text: Schani, der Fürig'spritzte, beim grünen Thor,	Johnny, the dandy at the green gate,
Tanzt voll Grandezza ihn der Emilie vor.	Dances it to Emilie, full of grandezza,
Steif spreizt er seine Händ', steif mit dem Kopf er nickt,	He stiffly extends his hands, stiffly bows his head,
Als hätt' zum Nachtmahl er ein' Reg'nschirm g'schlickt.	As if he ate an umbrella for his supper.

The association of African American and Jew in the text is striking yet not extraordinary, given European anti-Semitic traditions of visually representing Jews as a dark-skinned race.⁵⁴ The verses merit closer study: suffice it to say that

⁵⁴ Philip Bohlman has observed, in personal communication, how the body and hand positions of cakewalk dancers in illustrations resemble those of Jews in representations from Europe of the late nineteenth century. The connections between these racial representations in central Europe of the period merit closer study. In a study of race in the film *The Jazz Singer* (1927), Michael Rogin helps to explain how blacks and Jews were

the words, music and dance have been appropriated by the Europeans, with only the first verse to remind us that this was at one time a 'coon song'.

However, since the cakewalk was an instrumental form, we must confront the music itself. The characteristic rhythm is simple: in 2/4 time, a syncopated measure (short-long-short) is followed by a regular measure, which is followed by a syncopated measure, and so forth: syncopated measures alternating with regular measures. This basic rhythm is simple (and not unlike that heard in Gottschalk's 'Bamboula'), but one has to keep in mind that this dance is the first jazz (or pre-jazz) that the Europeans heard, and the novel, modern-sounding syncopations may well account for some of the enthusiasm it received. The prominence of the syncopations meant that the cakewalk lacked the smoothness and elegance of the waltz – in fact, the irregularity and angularity of line anticipated the melodic and rhythmic vitality of ragtime and other jazz forms. In Vienna in particular, the dance occasioned interesting observations regarding national dance forms and fashion, at a time when tensions between Austria and Hungary seemed to play themselves out on the dance floor: csárdás or waltz?

An early report in Vienna – dating from 22 February 1903 and published in the *Wiener Frauen-Zeitung* – significantly calls it the 'Cake-Walzer' and brings it into connection with both the csárdás and the waltz: 'It is a two-step dance, similar to the csárdás, and is easy to bring into combination with the two-step waltz. It permits total freedom of movement and when performed by good dancers, it proves to be quite diverting.'⁵⁵ The connection with the csárdás is particularly interesting, and not only from a musical viewpoint: both the gypsies and the blacks were victims of marginalization, if not repression. And perhaps not coincidentally, after performances of The 7 Florida Creole Girls, Ronacher offered the tired dancers *Zigeunermusik* at 5 a.m. The cakewalk could never supplant the dances cultivated in Vienna, and – unlike Ingeborg Harer's contention – did not really leave a musical mark on those indigenous forms.⁵⁶ Yet for a period of at least two years it was accepted next to the waltz, providing black entertainers with credibility, acceptance and audience, a space that they would not have found in the USA despite the popularity of the cakewalk there.

Further evidence of the cakewalk's acceptance into the mainstream of Viennese popular music was the role it almost immediately acquired as couplet within operetta between 1903 and 1905.⁵⁷ For example, in 1903, Franz Léhar's *Der*

positioned relative to each other in America of the 1920s; see his essay 'Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice', in *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 71–120.

⁵⁵ 'Es ist ein Zweitrittanz, ähnlich dem Csardas, und leicht in Kombination zu bringen mit dem Zweitrittwalzer. Er gestattet vollkommene Bewegungsfreiheit und gestaltet sich daher, von guten Tänzern ausgeführt, sehr abwechslungsreich.' 'Mode und Gesellschaft: Neue Tänze und Gesellschaftspiele', *Wiener Frauen-Zeitung* in *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 52 (22 Feb. 1903): 28.

⁵⁶ See Ingeborg Harer, "'Dieses böse Etwas, der Jazz': Varianten der Jazz-Rezeption in Österreich von der Jahrhundertwende bis zu den 1920er Jahren', in *Fremdheit in der Moderne*, ed. Rudolf Flotzinger (Vienna, 1999), 138–72. Beyond documenting the activities of the African-Americans in Vienna, Harer wished to establish lasting influences from the cakewalk and other early syncopated music upon Austrian musical composition, which did not appear to be the case after the cakewalk began to lose its popularity circa 1905. The long-term influence was upon the public, not the composers.

⁵⁷ Regarding couplets (*Einlagen*) in operetta, see among others Moritz Csáky, *Ideologie der Operette und Wiener Moderne: Ein kunsthistorischer Essay*, second edition (Vienna, 1998).

Rastelbinder and *Wiener Frauen* featured cakewalks, as did *Die lustige Witwe* of 1905 and Jean Gilbert's *Der Prinzregent* of 1903. Even in London, the African-American operetta *In Dahomey* (premiered in May 1903) had to incorporate a cakewalk because of popular demand.⁵⁸ One of the most interesting examples was the cakewalk in the very popular operetta *Frühlingsluft* from 1903, which Ernst Reiterer based on themes by Josef Strauss.⁵⁹ The cakewalk is strategically placed towards the end of the third and final act, between the chorus 'Der kranke Nilpferd' and the obligatory Walzer-Ensemble, which in turn leads directly to the closing ballet. The music itself is not itself pretentious, yet in a slightly later piano score of the operetta – exact dates are hard to determine – the familiar music from the cakewalk has become the first theme of the overture. The illustration used for the individual publication of the cakewalk from *Frühlingsluft* (Fig. 6) appears in no other sheet music for the operetta and may involve a cakewalk step: significantly, these characters are white, in Viennese *Tracht*, which again reflects the assimilation of the dance into Viennese culture. In Vienna the cakewalk co-existed with the waltz and *csárdás*, among other dances, forming a musical mosaic rather than a melting pot. For a short time it enjoyed a pre-eminence over other forms of entertainment, as seen in the wild success of the touring groups of African Americans, and even in the relative type size in advertisements.⁶⁰

As mentioned earlier, not all voices welcomed the arrival of this 'Niggertanz' or other manifestations of African-American culture. One particularly illuminating commentary from the *Feuilleton* section of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* of March 1903, called 'Aus guter Gesellschaft', cuts to the heart of the point to be made, albeit from the opposing perspective:

Suddenly the united snobs of the continent take this Variété dance [i.e. the cakewalk] from a race, with whose movements and feelings they do not have the least experience, and you can no longer attend a party without experiencing timid attempts to be ungraceful.⁶¹

The author dismisses the dance as the work of an inferior race, and implies that good Austrians should know better. That did not happen, however, since people streamed to the Variété and dance locales.

One final example of the assimilation of this music brought to Vienna by the black entertainers is provided by Kerry Mills' famous cakewalk 'Whistling Rufus', from 1899.⁶² In an edition published around 1900, an unidentified Austrian publisher translated the title to 'Rufus, das Pfeifgigerl', whereby the black

⁵⁸ Regarding *In Dahomey*, see note 5.

⁵⁹ See Rubey and Schoenfeld, *Venedig in Wien*, 132–4, for a history of the work.

⁶⁰ In an ad for cakewalk sheet music in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 45 (15 Feb. 1903): 53, for example, the words 'Cake-Walk' dwarf the reference to L  har's latest operetta hit.

⁶¹ 'Pl  tzlich nehmen die vereinigten Snobs des Kontinents diesen Tanz, mit dem sie der Rasse, den Bewegungen und Stimmungen nach nicht das geringste zu tun haben, vom Vari  t  , und man kann in keine Gesellschaft gehen, ohne sch  chterne Versuche, im Cake-Walk ungrazi  s zu sein, mitzuerleben.' Fred., 'Feuilleton: Aus guter Gesellschaft', 2.

⁶² Published by F.A. Mills in Chicago. On the cover of the sheet music, 'Whistling Rufus' is called a 'characteristic march', but the publisher adds that it 'can be used effectively as a two-step, polka or cakewalk'. The first page of the music (p. 3 of the edition) gives the history of the piece: 'No cake walk given in the Black Belt District in Alabama was considered worth while attending unless "Whistling Rufus" was engaged to furnish the music. Unlike other musicians Rufus always performed alone, playing an accompaniment

Coke Walk -
Wien: A. S. P. Tausl

CAKE-WALK



aus der
Operette
„FRÜHLINGSLUFT“
nach Motiven von
JOSEF STRAUSS
zusammengestellt von Ernst Reiterer.

Abdrucksrecht vorbehalten. Eigentum des Verlegers für alle Länder.
Eingetragen in das Vereins-Archiv. Mit Vorbehalt aller Arrangements.
WIEN LUDWIG DOBLINGER
(Bernhard Herzmannsky)
Dorotheergasse 10. London, East Side Hall
Leipzig K. F. Köhler
VERLAG u. EIGENTUM FÜR RUSSLAND: BIELSKER, RIGA.

Für Clever zu zwei Händen K 1.50
 „grosses Orchester“ K 3.—
 „kleines“ K 1.50
 M 1.50

Fig. 6 Title-page Illustration for the Cake-walk from *Frühlingsluft* by Ernst Reiterer, based on themes by Josef Strauss (Vienna: Doblinger, 1903)

American vagabond has been transformed into a high-society dandy, which draws upon the *Gigerl* tradition in Austrian cultural history.⁶³ The music itself allows for

to his whistling on an old guitar.' The work was phenomenally popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁶³ Writing in 1895, Georg Simmel noted the following about the *Gigerl*: 'Das Gigerl treibt die Tendenz der Mode über das sonst innegehaltene Maß hinaus ... Das Individuelle, das er vorstellt, besteht in quantitativer Steigerung von Elementen, die ihrem Quale nach eben Gemeingut der Menge sind.' Simmel, 'Zur Psychologie der Mode: Soziologische

an 'Austrification', since rhythmically it is more a march than a cakewalk, despite the typical alternation of syncopated and 'regular' rhythms in the introduction. Thereby the circle is complete: Austrians made the cakewalk their own.

Perhaps the best summation of the relative positions of cakewalk and waltz in Viennese society in 1903 is ironically provided in a source from Berlin.⁶⁴ The closing song to the *Posse* 'Cakewalk in Berlin' from February 1903 ends with the words 'Cakewalk, der Zukunftstanz', which we could consider prophetic, given the coming jazz craze. Here is the text:⁶⁵

Schlussgesang	Closing Song
Cakewalk der heute	The cakewalk, which delights
Alle erfreute	Everyone today
Kam aus der Ferne	Came to us from afar
Und jetzt moderne	And is now modern,
Cakewalk, Geschwofe	Cakewalk, high stepping,
Ritter und Zofe	Gentleman and servant
Selbst schon am Hofe	And even at court,
Cakewalk man tanzt	You dance the cakewalk.
Geht man zum Balle	If you go to the ball
Rufen jetzt Alle	Everyone will cry out,
Walzer ist schöne	The waltz is pretty
Polka ist bene	The polka is good,
Aber das Beste	But the guests
Sagen die Gäste	Say that the best,
Fest auf die Weste	Grab your vest,
Cakewalk, der Zukunftstanz.	Is the cakewalk, The dance of the future.

In that short poem, the cakewalk is similarly called 'modern', distinguishing it from the waltz that is merely 'pretty', which undeniably positions the dance squarely within the leading cultural movement of the day.

In fact, I would argue that through their openness to the blacks and their cakewalk, the Viennese were enacting their own brand of modernism, one distinguished by internationalism, a willingness to engage with difference and an emphasis on the Other. By labelling the cakewalk itself a 'modern' dance and by dancing it, they were experiencing 'modernism' in their bodies, which musically and physically prepared the Viennese for the next waves of 'modern' American imports, first ragtime and then jazz. In all of this, we have seen both how marginalized African Americans found a space where they could take agency over representations of their culture, and how the dominant local culture received those representations with openness and appreciation. Here we have a specific historical example of a space where cultures met, to the advantage of both.

Studie', *Die Zeit: Wiener Wochenschrift für Politik, Volkswirtschaft, Wissenschaft und Kunst* 5/54 (1895): 23. As his op. 150, J.F. Wagner composed a piano march entitled 'Gigerl' (Vienna, n.d.), on the cover of which are portrayed two dandies, whose excessive dress certainly calls to mind American caricatures of the blacks.

⁶⁴ The one-act work, dating from late February 1903, is by Leopold Ely and is preserved in the censorship files of the Berlin Landesmuseum, no. 648.

⁶⁵ The text is not of high quality, and some of the grammatical constructions are colloquial, inaccurate or incomplete, all of which would suit the quasi-improvised, popular theatrical entertainment called *Posse*.

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