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ROBERT B. WINANS and ELIAS J. KAUFMAN

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## Minstrel and Classic Banjo: American and English Connections

In the 1840s the minstrel show in the United States popularized what had previously been a black folk instrument with African origins, the banjo. This popularization led to the development of banjo traditions in both folk culture, white as well as black, and popular culture (in the parlor as well as in the theater). In the more familiar folk tradition of five-string banjo playing, folk musicians (mostly rural southern) have continued to maintain the early minstrel style of playing, now called clawhammer or frailing, long after its decline on the stage and in parlor traditions of the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> In England, on the other hand, blackface minstrelsy, though popular, spawned no lasting *folk* tradition of banjo playing. The most likely explanation of this phenomenon is that while the American folk tradition was already an amalgam of Anglo-American and African American music, into which the banjo fit well musically, mid-nineteenth century British folk music was *not* such an amalgam. English banjo traditions have existed primarily at the professional and parlor levels with which this article is mainly concerned.

Almost immediately upon its creation, the American minstrel show carried the five-string banjo to England, in what was probably the first example of a genuinely American musical phenomenon influencing the English musical scene; prior to this time the flow of musical influence between England and America was essentially unidirectional: from

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England to America. The American five-string banjo found a real home in England; although the American influence on English banjo playing remained paramount for a long time, the English developed new forms of the instrument and a distinctive style of banjo music, and the English tradition eventually achieved independence from the American tradition on which it was based. The following article discusses the interplay between American and English popular banjo traditions from the 1840s to the present.

The banjo spread beyond its origins and use as an African American folk instrument primarily through the performances of "Negro impersonators." As Hans Nathan points out in his book on Dan Emmett, the roots of "Negro impersonation" in America are actually in late eighteenth-century English theater and song.<sup>2</sup> Songs about blacks occasionally mentioned the banjo, and a few early nineteenth-century English illustrations also indicate that the English were aware of the banjo as a black folk instrument. English stage performers may have used rudimentary banjo-like instruments, but if so only rarely, and the use of the banjo in English impersonation performances remained very infrequent at best until after the American minstrel shows brought the instrument over. We should note that in America, documentation of banjo playing by whites is very rare prior to the popularization of the minstrel show in the early 1840s. Even the first really famous American Negro impersonator, Thomas D. "Daddy" Rice, who made several trips to England in the 1830s, probably did not include the banjo in his act.<sup>3</sup>

Probably the first American banjoist heard by the English was Joel Walker Sweeney (ca. 1810–60), who was also the first white man in the documentary record to play the five-string banjo in America, having learned the technique from slaves on his father's farm in Virginia in the 1820s.<sup>4</sup> Sweeney traveled on his own and with circuses through the South as a blackface banjo player and singer. He was extremely important in popularizing the banjo in the United States and apparently taught many of the other early minstrel banjo players how to play the instrument.<sup>5</sup> In January 1843, Sweeney went to England with the Sands Great American Circus Company and first performed in London on January 23; he was received well enough in England to stay for about two years.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, the man who first popularized the banjo in the United States also first brought it to the attention of audiences in England.

Just as Sweeney began introducing the banjo to England, a group of musicians in New York City was creating the minstrel show as a full-scale entertainment. This group, the Virginia Minstrels, included two banjo players, Billy Whitlock (1813–78), who had learned from Sweeney,<sup>7</sup> and Dan Emmett (1815–1904), who also played the fiddle.



Figure 1. Joel Sweeney, from a sheet music cover, "Jenny Get Your Hoecake Done" (London, [1843 or 1844]).

After great initial success in this country—success which generated a host of imitators—they sailed for England and opened in Liverpool in late May 1843, giving the first minstrel band performance in Europe. They performed in Manchester in June and then in London in late June and July, where they were finally well received. Their last appearance was July 14. The tour had not been a great financial success. Whitlock immediately returned to New York, but the other members stayed: Emmett and Frank Brower remained until September 1844, and Richard Pelham stayed permanently.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the financial rewards, this group had successfully planted the seeds of minstrelsy and, in particular, the banjo in England.

The English saw Emmett as central to the group, and English illustrations emphasize his banjo playing. When the Virginia Minstrels broke up in England, Emmett performed there alone in circuses for several months as the “Real Old Virginia Negro Banjo Melodist,” singing songs to banjo accompaniment and playing banjo solos.<sup>9</sup> The remaining Virginia Minstrels joined forces one by one with Joel Sweeney. Brower, with his bones, joined Sweeney in his entr’actes in Edinburgh at the end of July. Emmett joined them in the fall in Manchester, and Pelham in the spring of 1844, completing a new Virginia Minstrels, with Sweeney as principal banjoist. They played in Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. After Emmett returned to America in September 1844, Sweeney continued to perform in Great Britain and Ireland until sometime in 1845.<sup>10</sup> Thus, for a period of two years, one or another (and sometimes two in combination) of America’s foremost early minstrel banjo players—Sweeney, Emmett, and Whitlock—performed in England, Ireland, and Scotland and popularized the banjo there. The popularity of Sweeney and Emmett as banjoists is evidenced by the fact that two series of minstrel songs were published in London in 1844, one in each of their names, with illustrations of them playing the banjo on the covers (figs. 1 and 2). One chronicler of Sweeney’s career claims that Sweeney played for Queen Victoria.<sup>11</sup>

W. W. Brewer, a British historian of the banjo, noted that from 1843 to 1870 the story of the banjo in Britain is “almost exclusively a chronicle of ‘negro’ minstrelsy as portrayed by the American minstrel troupes that visited this country.”<sup>12</sup> And Carl Wittke, an American historian of the minstrel show, stated that “almost every minstrel company of any importance toured England during the middle years of the last century.”<sup>13</sup> Wittke’s statement may be an exaggeration, but certainly many troupes went, and the British, both general populace and literati, found them very appealing. Dickens, Gladstone, and Thackeray were all big fans; Thackeray once tried to fathom the minstrel’s appeal, and focused on the banjo, noting that “a vagabond with a corked face and a banjo



Figure 2. Dan Emmett, from a sheet music cover, "Dandy Jim from Caroline" (London, [1844?]).

sings a little song, strikes a wild note, which sets the heart thrilling with happy pity."<sup>14</sup>

Although many American troupes toured Great Britain, only some of the most important or interesting ones will be noted here. The Ethiopian Serenaders, one of the most prominent and polished of the early minstrel companies in America, had a successful run in London, starting in January 1846. This group had two banjoists, G. Harrington (d. 1859) and G. W. White (1816–86). The group was popular enough to appear, collectively and individually, on a set of English sheet music covers published in 1847. This group also performed for Queen Victoria at Arundel Castle.<sup>15</sup>

Even more interesting were the Buckleys, whose troupe was known first as the Congo Melodists and then as Buckley's Serenaders or the New Orleans Serenaders. Extremely successful and influential as an American minstrel troupe, this family of performers was noted especially for their operatic and other musical burlesques and for their virtuosic musical performances. They were, in fact, English. The father, James, and his three sons, George Swayne, R. Bishop, and Frederick, immigrated to America from England in 1839, and, in the craze started by the Virginia Minstrels, began their own minstrel company in 1843.<sup>16</sup> The principal banjoist was George Swayne Buckley (1829–79), whom Sweeney had taken under his wing; in the early 1840s Buckley was in fact billed as "Young Sweeney."<sup>17</sup> Although he apparently continued to play in the Sweeney "stroke" style through the 1840s and early 1850s, he may have been the first banjoist to play in the "guitar" or "finger" style in the late 1850s or early 1860s.<sup>18</sup> In 1846, the Buckleys went back to England and toured for approximately two years before returning to America. They went to England again in 1860, this time featuring a banjo trio.<sup>19</sup> Some of Buckley's banjo pieces, such as "Buckley's Banjo Jig," were published both in one of the earliest American banjo tutors and in one of the earliest English banjo tutors.<sup>20</sup>

Tom Briggs (1824–54), one of the foremost American banjoists of the time, went to England in 1849. *Briggs' Banjo Instructor*, published in 1855, was the second earliest American minstrel banjo tutor, and the first to describe and show clearly the minstrel stroke style of playing.<sup>21</sup> Briggs supposedly invented "thimble playing," which was a version of the stroke style using a "thimble" (that is, a metal finger pick over the nail), a style which became widespread among stage performers.<sup>22</sup>

The first British banjo player to play on a public stage was probably Joseph Arnold Cave (1823–1912), who did so on Whitmonday (June 5) in 1843 in London. He began as an imitator of T. D. Rice and added the banjo to his act after seeing Joel Sweeney, copying Sweeney's songs, his banjo style, and his banjo.<sup>23</sup> Other early English banjoists were Mr. and Mrs. Jack Carroll, billed as "negro banjoists and dancers," who

starred at the Surrey Music Hall in the Southwark Bridge Road, London, in the late 1840s.<sup>24</sup> E. W. Mackney (1825–1909), one of Britain's most famous nineteenth-century minstrel performers, was another early imitator of T. D. Rice, and another "pioneer among British born banjoists,"<sup>25</sup> probably adding the banjo to his many other musical talents some time in the 1840s. He compiled the earliest known English banjo tutor, published about 1863.<sup>26</sup> The instruction part of the original edition of *Mackney's Banjo Tutor* clearly is copied from American tutors, primarily *Briggs' Banjo Instructor*, *Buckley's New Banjo Book*, and, because Buckley copied from Rice, *Rice's Correct Method*.<sup>27</sup> The Mackney, Rice, and Buckley tutors are all in *A notation*.<sup>28</sup> Rice's book was the first to use *A notation*, which became the standard for virtually all American nineteenth-century banjo methods and music.

Although strongly dependent on American usage, a distinct British banjo-playing tradition was developing by the end of the 1840s. In the 1850s, several events important to the interplay between American and British banjo traditions occurred. Probably the most important was the arrival in 1857 of the Christy Minstrels, who became so popular that minstrel shows forever after in Great Britain were called "Christies" as a generic term. This was not the original Christy Minstrels, which had been America's preeminent minstrel organization for years. E. P. Christy had already retired and that company had disbanded in 1854, without Christy ever having gone to England. The troupe that did go was J. W. Raynor and Earl Pierce's Christy Minstrels, one of the offshoots of the original company. This company continued to perform in Great Britain until 1860, and had three excellent banjoists: Dave Wambold (1836–89), W. P. Collins (ca. 1826–81), and Earl Pierce (1823–59).<sup>29</sup> All of these men, especially Pierce, were also often billed as comedians, which suggests the intimate relationship that existed at the time between the banjo and comedy in the minstrel shows, even more strongly in England than in America.

Pierce died suddenly, however, in mid-1859, providing an opening for the man who would become England's most famous minstrel performer, "Pony" Moore. Born George Washington Moore (1820–1909) in New York City, Moore performed with various minstrel troupes in America in the 1840s and 1850s, and then went to England to replace Pierce as principal comedian and banjo player with Raynor's Christy Minstrels in 1859. When Raynor's company disbanded a year later, Moore joined one of several rival offspring. He eventually led this company in partnership with Frederick Burgess, another American; together they formed Moore and Burgess Minstrels, which was England's premier troupe in the late nineteenth century. Moore apparently published a banjo tutor in England in the mid-1860s (we have been unable to locate a copy of it), and he continued to perform until 1894.<sup>30</sup>

Besides the Christy Minstrels, the other major American troupe (almost as famous as Christy's) to tour Great Britain in the 1850s was Campbell's Minstrels, who arrived in the fall of 1859. Principal banjoist/comedian with this company at the time was Charley Fox (1828–64), although the troupe reportedly also engaged E. W. Mackney as a banjoist while in England.<sup>31</sup>

In the 1860s English minstrelsy became fully established, with increasing numbers of permanent and traveling companies, and therefore increasing numbers of English banjo players. The growing independence of English banjo tradition is demonstrated by the fact that the player who dominated English minstrel banjo playing from the late 1860s to the late 1880s, Walter Howard (1843–1905), was British-born and trained. Howard joined Wilsom and Montague's Christy Minstrels in Liverpool in the mid-1860s, moved to Moore and Burgess's troupe in London in 1870, where he remained for fifteen years, then played for the other principal English troupe, the Mohawk Minstrels, for several years, and finally returned to Moore and Burgess. Howard also published a banjo tutor in the 1870s.<sup>32</sup>

But American influence continued. Another important English-born, but in this case American-trained, banjo player of this period was James Unsworth (1835–75). Born in Liverpool, he came to America when young, got into the minstrel business, and learned banjo playing and comedy. He returned to England in 1861 and played with various companies through 1868, traveled back to the United States for several years, and then again returned to England in 1874, where he performed in Liverpool until his death in 1875.<sup>33</sup> With his travel, he obviously provided a direct link between English and American banjo playing during the period.

American minstrel troupes and banjo players continued to go to England in the 1860s and began introducing some of the new developments occurring in American playing. Up to this time, the style of playing used by both American and English banjo players was the "stroke" style (and the closely related "thimble" style), a somewhat limited technique.<sup>34</sup> By the 1860s, performers in the United States were developing a new style of picking, usually called "guitar" style. The first description of "guitar" style is in a banjo tutor published in 1865 by Frank Converse (1837–1903), who promoted the style and may have been the first to use it, although he suggested that the Buckleys may have been the first. Converse visited England in 1866 and played with Pony Moore's Minstrels; he played, in the new style, "Yankee Doodle" with variations, "Home Sweet Home," and selections from *Il Trovatore*, the last two in a tremolo style that was a remarkable innovation at the time.<sup>35</sup> In the early days of this new style, most of the

pieces were still quite simple compared to what came at the end of the century.

Another American banjoist who apparently brought the new "guitar" style to England in the 1860s was Charles E. Dobson (1839–1910), who joined Sam Hague's Georgia Minstrels in London in 1867, and also toured the provinces. According to one English commentator, he played "magnificent arrangements of 'Home Sweet Home' and 'Carnival of Venice' in the tremolo style and rendered marches, waltzes and hornpipes." His brother, Edward C. Dobson (1858–1919), also went to England, probably not until the 1870s; he played London and the provinces and then maintained a teaching studio in London from 1884 to 1892, spending a total of fifteen years in Great Britain.<sup>36</sup>

This new style ultimately changed the nature of banjo playing in both countries. A whole new repertory developed, including adaptations of classical music. No longer would the banjo be confined to song accompaniments and the jigs, reels, hornpipes, and marches that had been typical, although this repertory and the stroke style did not disappear for a long time. In fact, even as the guitar style began to replace the stroke style, some of the top professional stroke players (most of whom used the thimble<sup>37</sup> in their playing) were apparently raising the old stroke style to new levels of artistic performance. The use of the thimble made it easier to get a louder sound from the banjo, a necessity for the stage performer in the days before electrical amplification. Some (e.g., Dobson) disdained thimble playing as being harsh and unartistic, and in the hands of a mediocre player it probably was. But S. S. Stewart pointed out in 1887 that even as the stroke style was "fast giving way to the guitar style," some thimble players were achieving new heights in the older style: "Thimble playing is not, as many of you may suppose, merely a rough, unmusical hammering of the strings and head; but may be developed by practice, into an artistic and pleasing musical performance . . . [requiring] the same degree of skill . . . [as the] guitar style."<sup>38</sup>

Many of the American banjoists who created a sensation in England in the 1870s and 1880s were thimble stroke players, and it is interesting to speculate about why players using an essentially dying technique could be so impressive and have such an impact. We conjecture that they had truly refined the technique and brought it to new heights; that they brought a new level of musical sophistication to the banjo, which otherwise was largely assuming the role of an accompanying instrument; and that their stage performances and acts were superior to what had become a somewhat stagnant tradition.

The physical structure of the banjo was also changing during this time, becoming less rudimentary and better adapted to playing more elaborate music, though whether the better banjos "allowed" for im-

provements in playing style or the style changes themselves created a demand for better instruments would be hard to say. Clearly, however, a critical interplay between technological and musical developments was occurring. Around 1860 banjo makers began using inlaid fret markers on the fingerboard, and they introduced raised frets in the 1870s. We estimate that by 1885 one-half of all urban banjoists in the United States used frets. By about 1890, the use of frets was almost universal in the popular, parlor/stage tradition (fretless banjos were still common, however, in the folk tradition).

By the 1860s English banjoists were showing some independence from American practice by changing the physical banjo in a way that Americans never adopted. The English added extra bass and thumb strings to create six-, seven-, eight-, and even nine-string banjos. The six- and seven-string versions, which were the most common, added extra bass strings which were said to be helpful in providing lower notes for accompanying singing, although a common practice was to tune a bass string a tone above the regular bass string, producing the "elevated bass" called for in some banjo music. The eight- and nine-string versions added extra short "thumb" strings which assisted in playing other keys. These English extra-string banjos were common by the early 1860s; by the 1890s, however, English professional banjoists definitely considered them outmoded and primarily played five-string banjos.

Aside from the specific changes just noted, the general design and construction of banjos had improved immensely by the 1880s; every aspect of the physical structure of the banjo was experimented with and improved, and by the end of the century top-of-the-line banjos had become, in their materials, construction, and decoration, works of art which collectors and players still seek. In general, English players went in less for elaborately decorated, inlaid, and engraved instruments than did their American counterparts.

Horace Weston (1825–90) was about the only American banjoist of note to visit England in the 1870s. Weston was the first African American banjoist to achieve a significant reputation; he worked as a prominent stage banjoist throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Though he could play in the guitar style, his fame was based mainly on his thimble/stroke playing, at which he was generally acknowledged to be unsurpassed. Although Weston often played with minstrel shows, such as Buckley's Serenaders and the Georgia Colored Minstrels, his popularity was enormous, and he helped separate the banjo from the minstrel show. In that regard, he was in the vanguard of a crucial banjo development in the late nineteenth century: the movement of the banjo beyond the venue of the minstrel show into the concert hall and other performance contexts.<sup>39</sup> The most commonly available illustration of

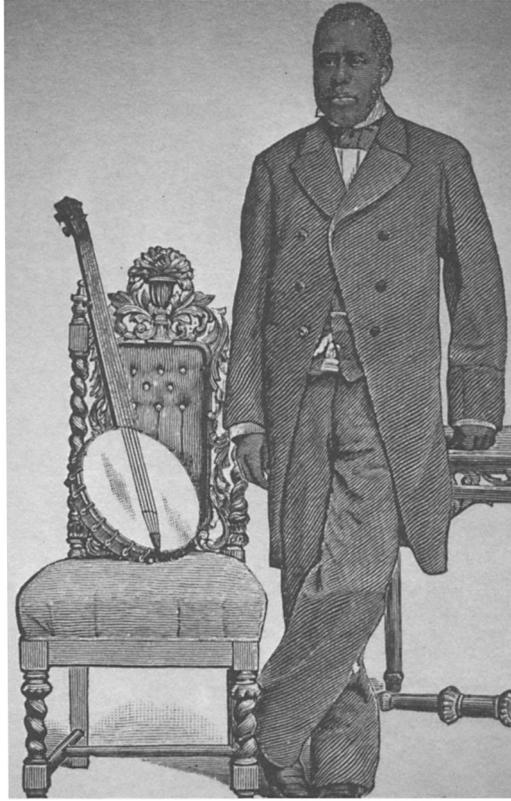


Figure 3. Horace Weston, from S. S. Stewart's *Banjo Catalogue* (Philadelphia, 1896), 37. Note the non-minstrel setting.

Weston shows him in a dignified pose in a Victorian parlor setting rather than in a comic minstrel setting (fig. 3). Weston arrived in England in 1878 with a touring company of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and created a sensation with his banjo playing.<sup>40</sup>

The decade of the 1880s was a momentous one for the continued exchange between the American and British banjo worlds. First of all, this period saw the culmination of a series of changes in the pitch of the banjo. In America, especially, the pitch of the banjo had been on the rise ever since its introduction in the minstrel show. We do not know for certain what pitch minstrel banjoists used in the 1840s, but the earliest instruction book (1850) gave an *F tuning* (cFCEG) as the primary one (for playing in the keys of F and C) and the *G tuning* (dGDF#A—not the modern *G tuning*) as an alternate (for playing in the keys of G and D).<sup>41</sup> In Briggs's 1855 tutor, the music is in *G notation*,

to correspond to the dGDF#A tuning, and several tutors of the late 1850s and early 1860s continued to use this notation and tuning.<sup>42</sup> But this notation and tuning were quickly superseded as standard by the eAEG#B tuning, with the music in the corresponding *A notation* (that is, in the keys of A and E), probably as a result of its adoption in three influential tutors by Rice (1858), Buckley (1860), and Converse (1865), who were probably following the actual practice of the professional players, including themselves.<sup>43</sup> By 1865 at the latest, then, the banjo was being tuned so that what was called its "natural" playing key was A (the bass string being tuned in this instance to A), and this remained the standard for another fifteen years or more. Probably by 1880, and certainly by the early 1880s, it became, in the words of one 1884 tutor, "customary to tune in C Major [gCGBD]. . . . [which] is to be preferred, as it is more brilliant."<sup>44</sup> Another 1884 book stated that gCGBD "is the pitch now used by nearly all Banjoists."<sup>45</sup> This re-pitching of the banjo to C, which occurred in both England and America, is also sometimes attributed to the use of smaller banjos and finer strings.<sup>46</sup> For another twenty or thirty years, however, Americans continued to write their banjo music in *A notation*, while the English wrote virtually all of their banjo music from the early 1880s on in *C notation*.

The assumption has been that America already had a substantial body of banjo music by this time written for the banjo tuned in A, and that Americans therefore continued to write music as though the banjo were still tuned to A, making the banjo (in America) a transposing instrument.<sup>47</sup> In England, on the other hand, with the exception of some easy jigs and reels and the early tutors, the publication of banjo solos or arrangements by British composers really only commenced in the early 1880s, after the pitch change; thus, the English published in what was called *C notation*, as opposed to the American *A notation*.<sup>48</sup>

This explanation, based on the amount of banjo music published in each country, may be misleading. Published sheet music for the banjo before 1878 is extremely rare in both the United States and Great Britain.<sup>49</sup> So neither country had much published banjo literature, other than tutors, before the banjo was re-pitched to C. The earliest English banjo music includes several editions written in *C notation*: a tutor for the banjo (1864), a small book of dances (1865), and a piece of sheet music from 1873.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that tuning up to C may have begun (in England, at least) well before 1880. All of the other known pre-1880 English banjo tutors (1863, ca. 1865, 1872, 1873, 1877) are in *A notation*.<sup>51</sup> It seems, however, that the English may have gone to *C notation* because they had some history of its use. All post-1880 English banjo tutors use *C notation*. This does not leave us with a good explanation of why Americans did not go to *C notation* when the pitch was raised, especially since all previous rises in pitch had been accom-

panied by a corresponding change in the notated music. Perhaps Americans were just more stubborn, with S. S. Stewart, one of the most prominent figures in the American banjo world at the time, leading the way. Stewart published a good quantity of sheet music in *A notation* starting in 1878, and defended the American system against the British.<sup>52</sup> By 1886 he had over two hundred banjo solos in his catalog and by 1892 over five hundred.

Until 1880 the minstrel show was the primary context for the banjo, but it became less so thereafter. One English comment on the impact of the minstrel show can be applied equally to America: through the minstrels "the banjo was brought more prominently before the English concert-going public. Although the banjo was not, of course, the leading feature at these entertainments, still there was a strong current of 'banjoism' running through almost every performance."<sup>53</sup> In the 1880s the banjo was still played in minstrel shows, but it was used more and more as a solo instrument in a strictly musical setting, rather than in plantation scenes, song accompaniments, or comedy routines. It was also played as a solo instrument in music halls, on the concert stage, and in vaudeville. "Society" also adopted the instrument and it became a fixture in fashionable American parlors.<sup>54</sup> A new group of players of both the guitar style and the virtuoso thimble style were responsible for elevating the banjo and taking it to new musical realms. Some of these American banjoists, especially the thimble players, went to England and had a profound impact there.

Three American banjoists who had a major impact in England arrived there in 1881 with Haverly's Colored Minstrels. This company included E. M. Hall and the Bohee brothers. E. M. Hall (1845–1903) began performing in the 1860s and played for many years with Haverly's and other American minstrel troupes. He boasted that he was the first to introduce banjo solos with orchestral accompaniment without blacking his face. He impressed the English with his playing and they credited him with raising the banjo to the status of a solo instrument in England.<sup>55</sup> One historian of English minstrelsy wrote that "Hall was probably the greatest banjo soloist ever heard in this country. His remarkable playing and particularly his variations on 'Home, Sweet Home,' created quite a sensation; nothing like it had been heard before. It set up quite a new standard in banjo playing, and brought about a distinct revival in this instrument."<sup>56</sup> In 1884 Hall published his *New Banjo Tutor* in London. English banjoists of the 1890s frequently commented that hearing him had been a "revelation" that caused them to begin taking the banjo seriously.<sup>57</sup>

Similar comments were made more frequently about the Bohee brothers, James (1844–97) and George (1857–1930), and English banjoists also credited them with reviving interest in the banjo and setting new

standards.<sup>58</sup> Though the Bohees were well-known black banjo players in America, they made more of a reputation for themselves in England. When Haverly's Colored Minstrels returned to the United States, the Bohees remained permanently in England. They played in London, toured the provinces, and also had their own minstrel company. Even more importantly, James opened a studio in London. When the Prince of Wales (soon to become King Edward VII) took lessons from him, the banjo became the craze of high society in England, as it already was in the United States. The Bohees played thimble style on fretless banjos and were very popular in the music halls and at private entertainments.<sup>59</sup> Following James's death in 1897, his obituary in the *Banjo World* (London) stated that "as banjo players [the Bohees] did more to popularize that instrument than any other performers." The writer also noted that the English "Banjo King" when the Bohees first arrived was Walter Howard, but stated that they quickly made Howard seem old-fashioned and he soon retired.<sup>60</sup>

In the late 1880s, the English banjo world embraced a new kind of banjo—a kind that was never adopted in America, but which, ironically, had been brought to England by an American, Alfred Cammeyer (1862–1949), who was born in Brooklyn. Cammeyer was an excellent guitar style player who developed a closed-back banjo with wire first, second, and fifth strings, instead of the regular gut for all strings; it was called the zither-banjo.<sup>61</sup> Cammeyer also developed a playing style that took advantage of the characteristics of this instrument. His playing was very refined with a genteel singing quality, not loud or raucous. In 1888 he brought these developments to England where the sound of the new banjo and his playing technique were so enthusiastically received that zither-banjoes became widely played there. Cammeyer was in great demand in England as a teacher and performer, and he remained there permanently. In the early 1890s, British banjo journals remarked that "the zither-banjo has infused new life into the banjo world," and "it is beyond doubt that [Cammeyer's] style of playing has done more for the banjo in this country than any thing else."<sup>62</sup> Cammeyer claimed that he was encouraged to compose music for the banjo by his friend Arthur Sullivan (of Gilbert and Sullivan), who himself had played the banjo as a young man.<sup>63</sup> Cammeyer, in fact, became a prolific composer for the banjo; his compositions still comprise an important part of the modern repertory of the classic banjo, as the guitar style came to be known in both England and America.

The American banjoists who went to England in the 1880s wrought a significant change there, a change summed up in 1893 by Clifford Essex, a leader of the English banjo world. Comparing the then current popularity of the banjo with a period (fifteen years earlier) of the old twangy "tub" banjos, he wrote: "Nothing in the world could ever have

made *that* apology for an instrument popular, but thanks to such men as E. M. Hall, the Bohee Brothers, E. French and Alfred Cammeyer, who have come over from America and shown us what can be done on a really carefully constructed musical instrument in the shape of the banjo, the case has been quite altered."<sup>64</sup>

Another development of the 1880s was the organization of banjo orchestras and clubs, and the creation of a set of banjo orchestra instruments: the regular banjo, the cello banjo, the banjeaurine, and the piccolo banjo, all five-string banjos of different sizes and pitches. The primary developer and promoter of these instruments was S. S. Stewart of Philadelphia. Some of the clubs and orchestras were strictly banjo, and some were banjo, mandolin, and guitar organizations (fig. 4). Although this development began in the United States, it occurred almost simultaneously in England. By the 1890s, few colleges or medium-sized cities in either England or the United States lacked such an organization.<sup>65</sup>

The late 1880s also saw the advent of yet another technique for playing the banjo: using a plectrum (or pick) rather than fingers to strike the strings. We will probably never know when or where pick playing on the five-string banjo began. It could have been transferred from the mandolin at any time; there were hybrid mandolin banjos before the 1890s to facilitate the transfer. Arthur Tilley, an English five-string banjo player, claimed that he "invented and first brought into use the plectrum style of playing,"<sup>66</sup> apparently in the late 1880s. Players in Tilley's Banjo Band used the technique, as did Essex's Pierrots occasionally. In 1904 an English writer noted that in "America, those favouring this style of playing are called 'fakers,' and are not countenanced as banjo players."<sup>67</sup> One American player of the time who regularly used a plectrum was Clark H. Jones (aka Harry Clark), who advertised himself as "acknowledged to be the greatest BANJO SO-LOIST in the world with PLECTRUM playing."<sup>68</sup> He toured England in 1896 and again in 1904, and claimed to be the first American to play plectrum style in England.<sup>69</sup>

By the 1890s the banjo had really come into its own in England. A large and active fraternity of professional performers and teachers, legions of amateurs at all levels of society, and the birth of five specialty banjo journals all attest to the banjo's popularity.<sup>70</sup> The guitar style, also called finger-style or classic style, prevailed, and was played either on regular banjos or zither-banjos. Although still employed in minstrel shows, the banjo was also well-established outside of that format on the concert stage, in music halls, and at private entertainments.

One particularly English development early in the 1890s helped boost the instrument's popularity and its independence from blackface minstrelsy; it also demonstrates another English effort to take the banjo



Figure 4. The Wolverhampton Banjo Orchestra, from *Banjo World* (London), March 1895, 44. The banjos are all zither-banjos.



Figure 5. Clifford Essex as Pierrot, from *B.M.G.* (London), November 1916, 18.

in directions beyond those established in the United States. Clifford Essex (1858–1946), a leading performer and teacher, started a new kind of entertainment centered on the banjo in 1891: the Pierrots (fig. 5). He took a group of four performers dressed in Pierrot costumes and Pierrot whiteface makeup to the Henley Regatta that year. The Henley already had a tradition of floating, blackface banjo entertainment. Essex wanted to upgrade this and did so. His troupe consisted of two male banjo players, including himself, who played solos, duets, and song accompaniments, a female singer, who also served as piano accompanist, and a male comedian. They succeeded in getting themselves invited to perform for the Prince of Wales and his party, which ensured their success. Essex and his Pierrots became enormously popular in both public performances in the seaside resort areas and at the private entertainments of society, and continued performing for many years. They were also widely imitated, and England soon sported dozens of

banjo-playing Pierrot troupes, all performing the popular music of the day. Essex tirelessly promoted the banjo, through his teaching, regular concerts, and publications, as well as through the Pierrots.<sup>71</sup> The Pierrot format led directly to the English concert party entertainment.

Some of the best English professional banjo players of the 1890s and the early twentieth century performed with Essex's Pierrots. Will Pepper (1864–?), for example, was one of these; he was inspired by the playing of the Americans E. M. Hall and Alfred Cammeyer.<sup>72</sup> Joe Morley (1861–1937) began playing banjo with English minstrel troupes, but established his reputation playing with the Pierrots, with whom he remained for thirteen years. Morley was one of England's greatest banjo players, with a career that lasted into the 1930s (fig. 6).<sup>73</sup> He was also an extremely prolific and gifted composer of banjo music. At the present time his music is more widely played by classic banjoists in England and the United States than that of any other composer; his music is the backbone of the modern repertory.

During the 1890s, another promising English banjoist influenced by Americans was young Olly Oakley (1877–1943), who credited the Bohee brothers with inspiring him to take up the banjo at age twelve. He then studied with Cammeyer and became one of the greatest zither-banjo players in England; like his mentor, he composed for that instrument.<sup>74</sup> Oakley developed a powerful picking style, and his strident, ringing tones, very atypical for a zither-banjo player, made him the most widely recorded English banjoist. He made hundreds of phonograph records from the late 1890s to the 1930s.

Despite coming of age in the 1890s, the British banjo world was still under the influence of the American banjo world. One English commentator noted that through the late 1890s "more than half the Banjos sold [in England] were of American manufacture."<sup>75</sup> The banjo music played in England was also mostly American, though republished in English arrangements in *C notation*. Clifford Essex observed in 1905 that "first and foremost the banjo is American, and that American composers have written the most suitable music for the instrument."<sup>76</sup> Of the eighteen banjo pieces on a 1903 concert program for Essex's Pierrots, twelve were composed by Americans; in a 1904 Pierrot program five of seven banjo instrumentals were composed by Americans.<sup>77</sup> In addition to printing American music, English banjo journals constantly reported on the activities of well-known American banjo players, and printed interviews of these players as often as interviews of English players.

From approximately 1894 to 1905, a parade of excellent American finger-style or classic banjo players visited England, and some of them had as powerful an impact on their English counterparts as did previous American visitors. For instance, Rueben "Ruby" Brooks (1860–1906)



Figure 6. Joe Morley, from the cover of *Morley's Tutor* (London, [1927]), Elias Kaufman Collection.

and Harry M. Denton (1865–1959), a famous American banjo duo, briefly visited England around 1894. Burt Earle, another prominent American player, went to England several times around the turn of the century, stayed for long periods, and was very popular there; he made several English recordings.<sup>78</sup> But these were not the real banjo virtuosos.

The five-string banjo in America reached its peak in the playing of five turn-of-the-century American players: Parke Hunter, Vess Ossman, Alfred Farland, Fred Van Eps, and Fred Bacon.<sup>79</sup> Hunter, Ossman, and Farland visited England in the 1890s and 1900s. Parke Hunter (1876–1912) was the first of these great American banjo virtuosos to visit England. Hunter arrived in London with his partner Cadwallader Mays (1873–1903/4) early in 1897, and they became the hit of the season on the London stage.<sup>80</sup> The *Banjo World* wrote: “In the past week every paper, of whatever rank in the metropolitan scale, has published appreciative notices of the excellent performance of Mays and Hunter at the Alhambra,” where their program included “King Cotton March,” an imitation of a mandolin duet, Overture to *William Tell*, “Second Hungarian Rhapsodie,” and “Washington Post March.” The journal also noted that “nothing . . . has happened of such great importance as the visit to the old country of Messrs. Mays and Hunter since the arrival in London of Mr. A. D. Cammeyer.”<sup>81</sup> Their repertory also included three Liszt rhapsodies, the *Zampa* Overture, *Poet and Peasant*

Overture, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, Schubert's *Serenade*, and works by Moszkowzki, Wagner, Bach, and Chopin, as well as unidentified ragtime pieces.

Hunter commented on those ragtime pieces in an interview following his English debut performance: "In England we are going to introduce the genuine work of the 'Darkies of the South,' which is written in what for lack of a better name, is called 'Rag Time.' It is all in syn-copation, and the musical judges cannot yet arrange it lucidly for orchestra."<sup>82</sup> The first full-fledged ragtime pieces were published in 1897, and ragtime was just beginning to be recorded in the United States. Thus, Mays and Hunter were probably the first to present ragtime music to English audiences.<sup>83</sup>

Hunter was best known for spectacular renditions of light classics. One of his most spectacular arrangements was the Finale from the Overture to *William Tell*, which he recorded in England in 1902. This performance "is regarded in many British circles as the finest exhibition of technique ever given by a finger-style banjoist."<sup>84</sup> Clifford Essex asserted in 1932 that "to hear Parke Hunter play the 'Finale to the Overture to William Tell' was a liberal education in rapid finger playing."<sup>85</sup>

Hunter maintained his English connections. He went back to England alone in 1901 and again in 1902 (engaged by Cammeyer), and several times thereafter. Most of his banjo compositions, as well as his advanced tutor (1903), were published in England between 1898 and 1911, and he made many recordings there.<sup>86</sup>

The second great turn-of-the-century American banjo virtuoso to go to England was Vess Ossman (1868–1923), who made two trips (1900 and 1903), and also recorded there. An English interviewer mentioned in 1903 "the debt English banjoists owe[d] to America," and claimed that Ossman's name was "a household word to musicians on both sides of the Atlantic."<sup>87</sup> The interviewer also noted that in Ossman's first concert appearance in England in June 1900, he brought down the house with his "Rag Time Medley," Moszkowski's "Bolero," "Whistling Rufus," and "Smokey Mokes"; the last two as a consequence became "two of the most popular melodies of the day." Ossman's forte was ragtime, for which he had a better touch than any other banjo player.<sup>88</sup> Around 1893 or 1894, he began making recordings which were very popular and widely heard in England as well as the United States; during his career he made thousands of recordings of more than three hundred different titles. In the 1903 interview he claimed that he made five thousand dollars a year from the record company, and another five thousand dollars from concert appearances, which was a substantial income for the time.

These facts point to important connections between ragtime and the banjo. Not only did both come out of African American culture in the

United States, but the syncopation of ragtime was anticipated in some of the early minstrel banjo tunes, as Hans Nathan has demonstrated.<sup>89</sup> In addition, although ragtime is an American piano idiom, the earliest recordings of the genre were made either by military bands or solo banjoists accompanied by band or piano, allegedly because the early recording equipment could not effectively record the piano as a solo instrument.<sup>90</sup> Much of the spread of popularity of ragtime was due to band and banjo recordings; the general populace associated the banjo with ragtime.<sup>91</sup>

From the mid-1890s, ragtime had a profound influence on the whole banjo repertory. Fewer of the old style compositions (e.g., waltzes, schottishes, polkas, marches, and set pieces with titles like Romance in C or Ballade in E-flat) were written, and ragtime-influenced compositions became dominant. This also occurred in England, though a little later and not quite so thoroughly. But Joe Morley, for instance, changed radically, according to Essex in 1904: "Since Ossman first visited this country, some four years since, and showed us the latest vein of American banjo composition and rendition, Morley has completely altered his style and adopted this latest American mode."<sup>92</sup> So well did he do this that his compositions are now an essential part of the modern American classic banjo repertory.

The final American virtuoso banjoist to visit England around the turn of the century was Alfred A. Farland (1864–1954), but he did not have as much impact as might have been expected. Farland, who was sometimes called the "Beethoven of the Banjo" or the "Paderewski of the Banjo," championed the playing of classical music on the instrument.<sup>93</sup> Whether classical music could or should be played on the banjo was hotly debated in both American and English banjo circles from the 1880s on.<sup>94</sup> Farland mastered the difficult techniques required for playing classical works better than anyone else, but his performances did not convince the rest of the banjo world to play much classical music. One English reviewer wrote of Farland's visit that he

has given classical music on the banjo a severe blow in England. For all his fine playing, his performance at St. James's Hall was a disappointment. . . . He must have devoted years of patient practice to his technique, and his execution was at times wonderful, yet the high aim plainly soared over the head of the banjo. That instrument has its own characteristic music, which no other can play so well. But advocates of classical music for the banjo received a defeat from the rendition of their avowed *virtuoso*. We have heard the acknowledged master of their craft, and it has convinced us contrariwise. The popular and characteristic style rules victorious henceforth. The banjo has its limitations, and they should be respected.<sup>95</sup>

Farland's prodigious technique, however, impressed and influenced many English banjo players.

Another turn-of-the-century American virtuoso, Fred Van Eps (1878–1960), did not travel to England until 1954, but he exerted some influence on English playing through his many recordings, mostly of ragtime, beginning in 1897. Recordings became an important medium for disseminating banjo music and playing technique. Van Eps, for instance, first became proficient on the banjo by learning Vess Ossman's solos from Ossman's recordings in the mid-1890s.<sup>96</sup>

In the late 1890s a young English banjo prodigy was doing the same thing. The English banjoist Charlie Rogers acquired Ossman's technique by listening to all of his cylinder recordings and learning the solos. He then took lessons from Morley; by 1903, at age seventeen, he had played two years with Essex's Pierrots and was considered the most promising player in England.<sup>97</sup> Rogers's repertory included many of Ossman's pieces.

Up through the first decade of the new century, the flow of banjo influence had been essentially one way, from America to England, and most developments in England had been precipitated by visits from Americans. The top English banjo players did not come to America, nor did Americans play English music or the English zither-banjo. But American influence in England tapered off. By the middle teens, English banjo concert programs were overwhelmingly devoted to English composers, such as Joe Morley, Emile Grimshaw, Sydney Turner (the "English Ossman"), Olly Oakley, and Alfred Cammeyer (who by this time should be considered English), though they also list a few American composers.<sup>98</sup>

The flow of influence changed about 1930. Frank Bradbury, a leading American performer and teacher, insisted that the English music was the best and that American players should send for it. So Americans began playing English music, and pieces by Cammeyer, Grimshaw, and, especially, Morley are now as important a part of American classic banjo repertory as American pieces.

Since about 1920, interest in and performance of classic banjo has been declining. This has occurred much more gradually in England than in the United States, and the tradition is in some ways stronger there at present. The British banjo clubs and magazines seem to have had the effect of preserving finger-style, five-string banjo playing, while Americans more readily went with the changing tide of popular banjo playing, that is, to the plectrum and, especially, tenor banjos.

Today the best finger-style banjoists are English rather than American. Reversing the turn-of-the-century procedure, two of these British virtuosos have been recorded on an American record label: William Ball (from Bristol) and Derek Lillywhite (from London), the star pupil

of Cammeyer's star pupil, Bernard Sheaff.<sup>99</sup> Ball plays a regular banjo and Lillywhite plays both regular and zither-banjo; all but one or two pieces on their American records are by English composers.<sup>100</sup> Chris Sands, a young English banjoist from the Lake District, is also establishing a reputation, although he has not yet recorded for an American label. His early recordings featured ragtime and the arrangements of Vess Ossman; his more recent recordings move away from this and more toward his own arrangements of popular tunes.<sup>101</sup> All three of these English banjo players have come to the United States and participated in one or more of the Tennessee Banjo Institutes (1988, 1990, 1992).<sup>102</sup> The Institutes have been major events in American five-string banjo circles, bringing together prominent, highly regarded players of old-time, bluegrass, classic, and minstrel banjo to perform and conduct the equivalent of "master classes" for aspiring players. Thus, Sands, Ball, and Lillywhite have had an impact not only on American classic banjo players, but also on players of other styles of five-string banjo music.

At the present, classic, finger-style banjo is kept alive in both England and America mainly through clubs. In the United States the torch is carried by the American Banjo Fraternity, which was founded in 1948 by amateurs and the few remaining professional players.<sup>103</sup> It meets for "rallies" in the spring and fall of every year; the Fraternity has many English members, and occasionally one of them attends a rally. In England, the finger-style banjo society is the London Banjo Circle, formerly the Associated Banjo Circle. The other all-banjo society is the Ashton Banjo Club, founded before 1900; it currently features primarily plectrum playing, but still has some finger-style players. The British Federation of Banjoists, Mandolinists, and Guitarists also has some finger-style banjo players, as does the Fretted Instrument Guild of America.

The five-string banjo and the minstrel music with which it was first associated were probably the first American musical influences on England. The English wholeheartedly embraced this American instrument and its music, ultimately making it their own. English banjo tradition evolved some distinctive features, but it remained largely dependent on American developments until about the turn of the century. In the twentieth century, American finger-style banjo tradition has in turn become influenced by British banjo music and players.

A broader view of developments involving the banjo in both America and England suggests that radical changes took place in relatively short periods. In 1820 the banjo was strictly an African American folk instrument played by slaves in the southeastern United States; fifty years later it was being played by whites from all levels of American society, from southern mountaineer to the most fashionable New Yorker, in all

areas of this country. By that time, or a few years more, the banjo also was being played throughout England at all levels of society, including royalty. From the rudimentary folk and early minstrel instrument of the mid-nineteenth century, on which a limited kind of music was played in a very simple style, the banjo progressed in both England and America in the short span of fifty years to a finely designed and built instrument on which virtually any kind of music was played in a very complex style. And then, in another fifty years, that popular, finger-style banjo tradition had almost faded away, a fate it does not deserve.<sup>104</sup>

## NOTES

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A shorter version of this article was presented by Robert Winans at the Sonneck Society/ University of Keele Conference on British-American Interactions at the University of Keele, July 2-5, 1983.

1. Folk banjoists also adopted newer playing styles as they came along.
2. Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 3-31.
3. Rice's first stay in England began on July 9, 1836, and lasted "well into 1837"; he appeared there again in 1838 and for a last time in 1843 (Harry Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories: The Story of Burnt Cork Minstrelsy in Great Britain from 1836 to 1927* [London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1928], 76-78). There is a slight possibility that Rice played the banjo, although probably not at the beginning of his career. The historian G. A. Keeler remarked that Rice was "mentioned by contemporaries as an occasional player of the banjo" (see "The Romance of Banjo Research—II," *B.M.G.* [London], Feb. 1935, 116). An illustration on a British edition of "Lucy Long . . . sung by Mr. Rice" (dating probably from his last visit in 1843) shows a male blackface performer playing a banjo; but it would be rash to take this as proof of his playing the instrument.

W. B., in an 1898 article entitled "Early Banjoism in England: A Retrospect" in the English journal *The Troubadour*, wrote that "the first person who publicly played the banjo in England was Rice, the celebrated 'Jump Jim Crow.' I saw him myself, as a child, in the early 'forties,' I think it was 1845, at the Bath Theatre Royal when he played a few American airs on an extremely primitive instrument. . . . Rice sang and played in an interlude between the second and third acts of *Macbeth*" (reprinted in *The Major* [Saginaw, Michigan] 1, no. 3 [Jan. 1899]: 49). The accuracy of this reminiscence is very questionable in light of Reynolds's and others' more detailed and documented minstrel accounts. It gives some credence, however, to the idea that Rice, "adapting" to the newly developing minstrel/banjo association forming in the public mind, may have learned to play the banjo. In any case, it was never his forte, and he was rarely associated with the instrument.

4. Arthur Woodward, "Joel Sweeney and the First Banjo," *Los Angeles County Museum Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1949): 7; Robert B. Winans, "The Folk, the Stage, and the Five-String Banjo in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (Oct.-Dec. 1976): 417-18. Sweeney is often credited with "inventing" the five-string banjo by adding the short "fifth" (or "thumb") string, but documentary evidence shows that the short "thumb" string predates Sweeney. Some evidence suggests that he may have added the fourth (bass) string. Whether or not this was his invention, he was the most

significant early popularizer of the five-string banjo and was thought of by his contemporaries as a banjo pioneer, both of the instrument and its characteristic early style of playing.

5. Sweeney taught, for instance, Billy Whitlock and George Swayne Buckley, who are discussed below.

6. W. W. Brewer, "The Banjo in America," *B.M.G.*, Apr. 1953, 169 (this article was serialized in several issues of *B.M.G.*); Edward LeRoy Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy* (New York: Kenny, 1911), 22; Reynolds states that "Joe Sweeney was the first to introduce the banjo into this country" (*Minstrel Memories*, 78).

7. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 115; Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Jan. 1953, 102. See Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, for the full story of the origins of the minstrel show.

8. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 135–39; Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 12, 14; Carl Wittke, *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1930), 46; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 84.

9. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 139. See "Part Two" (427–91) for a large selection of early minstrel banjo tunes by Emmett and others.

10. *Ibid.*, 139–42; W. W. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," *B.M.G.*, May 1953, 190 (this article was serialized in several issues of *B.M.G.*).

11. Woodward, "Joel Sweeney," 8.

12. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," 190.

13. Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 52–53.

14. Brander Matthews, "The Rise and Fall of Negro-Minstrelsy," *Scribner's Magazine* 57 (June 1915): 759; quoted in Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 53 n. 25, and Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 51.

15. Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 55; Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," 190; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 88–89.

16. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 15; Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Aug. 1952, 266.

17. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 18; Norman Howard, "The Banjo and Its Players," 29 (unpublished typescript, 1957, New York Public Library).

18. In the "stroke" style of playing (later called the "banjo" style, and in the folk tradition called the "frailing" or "clawhammer" style), the right hand moves downward and the back of the index finger (actually the finger nail) strikes a string; this is followed by the thumb, the front of which strikes either the short fifth string or a lower string. In the "guitar" or "finger" style (later called the "classic" style), the right hand stays more or less stationary over the strings, using two or three fingers to pluck upward on strings while the thumb plucks downward (similar to the finger style of guitar playing, hence its earliest name).

19. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 15–16; Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," 190; Howard, "The Banjo and Its Players," 29; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 85–87.

20. Philip Rice, *Phil. Rice's Correct Method for the Banjo* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1858), 25; *Smith's Celebrated Breakdowns, Jigs, and Hornpipes for the Banjo* (London: G. E. Smith [ca. late 1860s]), 9.

21. Briggs's tutor, published posthumously, may actually have been written by Frank Converse. A. Bauer stated: "Frank Converse told me many years ago that he wrote this method" ("Reminiscences of a Banjo Player," *S. S. Stewart's Banjo and Guitar Journal*, Dec. 1891–Jan. 1892, 5). *Briggs' Banjo Instructor* was reprinted in 1992 by Tuckahoe Music, P. O. Box 146, Bremono Bluff, Va., 23022.

22. Brewer, "The Banjo in America," July 1952, 242; Thomas F. Briggs, *Briggs' Banjo Instructor* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, [1855]).

23. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," July 1953, 246; Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Mar. 1953, 150. Cave's banjo was a copy of Sweeney's.

24. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," May 1953, 191.
25. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 46; Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," June 1953, 218; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 10-13.
26. E. W. Mackney, *Mackney's Banjo Tutor* (London: The Music-Publishing Company). The copy in the British Library has a date of acquisition stamp of Sept. 18, 1863. About 1890, J. Williams reprinted this tutor in London, adding three pages of music. A. P. Sharpe claimed that Chas. Sheard & Co. (London) also issued a reprint. After 1900 Herman Darewski Music Publishing Co. of London (successors to Chas. Sheard & Co.) published the "Up-to-Date Edition" of *Mackney's Banjo Tutor* in C notation. This edition omits much of the original's text. Surprisingly it gives all seven examples of minstrel strikes from *Rice's Correct Method* (1858), although the music (none of which is from the original edition of Mackney) is all in the classic banjo style.
27. Mackney used Briggs's illustration of the banjo and five "movements" (patterns of right-hand minstrel stroke style playing). Much of the rest of the five pages in Mackney that are devoted to information about the banjo (including directions for constructing, fretting, stringing, tuning, holding, fingering, and playing, as well as the rudiments of music) is clearly copied or closely paraphrased from *Buckley's New Banjo Book* by James Buckley (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1860). Some of this is similar or identical to the material in Rice, notably the examples about how to make a "strike" and a "strike and a half," because Buckley copied some of Rice's text and music. All twelve of the instrumental selections in Mackney, as well as nine of the twelve songs, are copied from Buckley. Some of the changes made by Mackney are of interest. He suggests a banjo with a twelve-inch head and ten brackets rather than Buckley's fourteen-inch diameter head with fourteen brackets. Mackney notes that "the Banjo, as used in England, is very seldom fretted, but for those who prefer frets the following directions are given."
28. A notation means that tunes and songs were written only in the keys of A and E, which were considered the natural keys of the banjo during the time (i.e., the mid-1850s to early 1880s) the banjo was tuned eAEG#B (fifth to first strings). In order to play in other keys, one retuned every string up or down the same degree but continued left-hand fingering as though still in the banjo's natural keys.
29. Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 91-92.
30. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 31-32; Wittke, *Tambo and Bones*, 220; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 98-134; G. W. ("Pony") Moore's *Banjo Tutor* (London, [ca. 1865]).
31. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," June 1953, 217; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 92-93.
32. Willoughby Maycock, "Bygone Banjoists and Their Ballads," *B.M.G.*, Oct. 1903, 6, and Nov. 1903, 29; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 98-112, 134; *Walter Howard's Banjo Tutor and Banjo Songs* (London, n.d.).
33. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 107-8; Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," June 1953, 217; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 25.
34. See n. 18 for descriptions of the "stroke" and "guitar" styles. Tremolo or sostenuto playing is a right-hand technique in which the index finger is wiggled rapidly back and forth across the first string, while the thumb picks out harmony or a counter melody on the lower strings. This produces a two-voice effect. The index finger also can rapidly strum chords.
35. Howard, "The Banjo and Its Players," 33-34.
36. Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 132; Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Aug. 1952, 266.
37. The thimble was a special fingerpick that covered the nail. In stroke or thimble playing (as with modern "frailing") the performer strikes down on the string with the back of the index or middle finger.
38. S. S. Stewart, "The Banjo Philosophically," appended to *The Complete American Banjo School* (Philadelphia: Stewart, 1887), 7.

39. Elias Kaufman, "Horace Weston," *The Five-Stringer*, no. 115 (Fall 1974), 1. Weston did not always play, however, in high-class places. Clarence L. Partee recalled going to hear Weston play every night during a three-week engagement "in a local 'concert hall.' These concert halls (so-called) were nothing more nor less than public drinking houses on a large scale" ("Thirty Years of the Banjo in America, 1879-1909," *B.M.G.*, Feb. 1910, 77). About the illustration of Weston, we should note that Stewart portrayed Weston as more dignified in the engraving than in the photograph on which the engraving was based. The photograph shows Weston dressed in a "loud" stage-style plaid suit.

40. Maycock, "Bygone Banjoists and Their Ballads," Dec. 1903, 44.

41. Elias Howe, Jr., *The Complete Preceptor for the Banjo . . . by Gumbo Chaff* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, [1850]), [2].

42. Thomas F. Briggs, *Briggs' Banjo Instructor*, 9. The last instructor to use *G notation* was Septimus Winner. See *Winner's New Primer for the Banjo* (New York: W. A. Pond, 1864).

43. Philip Rice, *Phil. Rice's Correct Method for the Banjo*; James Buckley, *Buckley's New Banjo Book* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, [1860]); and Frank Converse, *Frank B. Converse's New and Complete Method for the Banjo* (New York: S. T. Gordon and Son, 1865). It should be noted that most of the tutors using the eAEG#B tuning also gave dGDF#A as an alternative.

44. A. Bauer, *Complete Method for the Banjo* (New York: W. A. Pond, 1884), 12.

45. George L. Lansing, *Banjo Songs* (Boston: E. F. Delano, 1884), 4. S. S. Stewart also referred, much less succinctly, to this change in pitch in *The Complete American Banjo School* (Philadelphia: Stewart, 1883), 3.

46. Stewart, *The Complete American Banjo School* (1883), 3. For additional comments on the effects that the supposedly "very long necks" of early banjos had upon their tuning, see Richard M. Tyrrell, *New Standard System for Banjo, C or English Notation* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1892), 3. Though this was the first American *C notation* tutor, it did not start a trend in the United States.

47. S. S. Stewart helped establish this assumption with the following statement: "The basis of this notation having been established already in America as A, and banjo music having been written on that basis, it became an act of the most unwarranted assumption to set up and seek to establish another key as the basis of notation for the instrument in opposition to one already established" ("Notation and Pitch," *Stewart's Banjo and Guitar Journal*, Aug.-Sept. 1892, 21). He defends *A notation* almost as a matter of national pride.

48. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," May 1954, 195.

49. Although over twenty banjo tutors were published prior to this date, we have been unable to find any American banjo sheet music published before 1878, the year S. S. Stewart began publishing banjo sheet music. However, George C. Dobson's twelve-page catalog of 1876 included an advertisement for twelve "New Banjo Songs, with Nicely and Easily Arranged Accompaniments," each costing twenty-five cents, and three separate "Instrumental Pieces for the Banjo," also twenty-five cents each. A. Bauer discussed the lack of published music for the banjo in the 1860s and early 1870s, noting that a few professionals, including himself and Frank Converse, tried to fill that void by selling hand-copied manuscript music ("Reminiscences of a Banjo Player," 5).

50. E. Panormo, *A Banjo Tutor for 5, 6, or 7 Strings* (London: Panormo, [1864]); Panormo, *Breakdowns, Dances, Hornpipes, &c, Arranged for the Banjo* (London: Panormo, [1865]); and T. Ricardel Mason and Alfred Moul, *The Cocoa Nut Dance Duet, for Banjo & Pianoforte* (London: T. R. Mason, [1873]). Copies of these editions are located in the British Library.

51. Mackney, *Mackney's Banjo Tutor*; Moore, *Moore's Banjo Tutor*; H. Spratt, *Banjo Tutor* (London: Spratt, [1872]); Sinclair, *Sinclair's Self Instructor for the Banjo* (London: J. Bath, [1873]); and H. Spratt, *Banjo Melodist* (London: Spratt, [1877]).

52. For an extended defense of *A notation*, see Stewart's "Notation and Pitch."
53. *B.M.G.*, May 1904, 117.
54. For a full discussion of the banjo as a "society instrument in America," see Karen Linn, "The 'Elevation' of the Banjo in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *American Music* 8 (Winter 1990): 441–64. Linn's article also serves as the first chapter of her book, *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), which is reviewed in this issue on pages 98–100.
55. *Banjo World* (London), Mar. 1898, 37; Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Feb. 1952, 121.
56. Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 120.
57. For example, *Banjo World*, Nov. 1894, 3; Sept. 1894, 89; and Jan. 1895, 25.
58. See, for instance, *Banjo World*, Dec. 1896, 19; June 1897, 125; Mar. 1898, 39; and July 1898, 105.
59. Maycock, "Bygone Banjoists and Their Ballads," Dec. 1903, 44; J. McNaghten, notes to LP record album *Banjo Highlights by William J. Ball*, Great Western Records (Bristol, Eng., n.d.), DM-017; Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories*, 201–3, 207.
60. *Banjo World*, Jan. 1898, 15.
61. An interesting feature of the zither-banjo is that the fifth-string was tunneled up to the peg-head rather than terminated at a peg placed on the side of the neck at the fifth fret. The closed back was not new. The British maker William Temlett supposedly made a closed-back banjo as early as 1869 (Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Mar. 1952, 144), and Henry C. Dobson had been making them in New York since the early 1870s. The wire strings, however, were new.
62. *Banjo World*, July 1894, 69; "Portraits.—No. 2. A. D. Cammeyer," *Banjo World*, Jan. 1894, 22.
63. Alfred Cammeyer, *My Adventurous Banjo* (London: Cammeyer, 1934), 195–202. The information that Sullivan had once played the banjo was conveyed to us in a letter, May 15, 1983, from J. McNaghten, the last editor of *B.M.G.*
64. *Banjo World*, Nov. 1893, 15. Edwin French was another American who played in England with the Moore and Burgess Minstrels in the mid-1880s (Brewer, "The Banjo in America," July 1952, 243).
65. Some American clubs toured England. For instance, the Amherst College Banjo and Glee clubs, the banjo clubs of Yale and Harvard universities, and Cornell University's Glee and Mandoline clubs toured there in 1894 or 1895 (*Banjo World*, Sept. 1894, 90; June 1895, 60; and July 1895, 74).
66. *Banjo World*, Sept. 1894, 89.
67. *B.M.G.*, Feb. 1904, 65–66.
68. Elias Kaufman, notes to cassette tape *Banjo Rarities*, Merritt Sound Recording (Buffalo, N.Y., 1984).
69. "Portrait No. 5—Mr. Harry Clark," *B.M.G.*, Feb. 1904), 68. Recordings made by Jones prior to 1900 show him to have had a prodigious technique; his plectrum playing on the banjo was decades ahead of its time. It should be emphasized that the early plectrum playing noted here was on the five-string banjo. The style did not really come into its own until it was used on four-string plectrum and tenor banjos (developed in the first decade of the twentieth century) that were employed in jazz and dance bands in the second and third decades of the new century. In the twenties, plectrum-played four-string banjos brought about the eclipse of the finger-style, five-string banjo (Kaufman, notes to cassette tape *Banjo Rarities*).
70. These journals were essentially "house organs" for instrument and music dealers. The five banjo journals and their sponsors were as follows: *Banjo World*, Cammeyer and Essex (1893–1929); *The 'Jo*, later *The Troubadour*, Barnes and Mullin (1894–1915?); *The Banjo Mandolin and Guitar News*, William Temlett (1897–1902?); *B.M.G.*, Clifford Essex

(1903–76); and *Keynotes*, John Alvey Turner (1907–14, 1925–29). These English journals were preceded by a couple of American banjo journals (also house organs), namely *Stewart's Banjo and Guitar Journal* (Philadelphia), S. S. Stewart (1882–1902), and *Gatcomb's Musical Gazette* (Boston), L. B. Gatcomb (1887–99?). The 1890s and 1900s saw the birth of several additional American journals that gave extensive coverage to the banjo—e.g., *The Cadenza* (1894–1924); *The Major*, published at Saginaw, Michigan, and Philadelphia (1894–1902); *The Musical Tempo* of Philadelphia (1896–1904?); and *The Crescendo* (1908–34).

71. Clifford Essex, "How I Began," a series of essays published in *B.M.G.*, Dec. 1916–Sept. 1917; "Portraits.—No. 1. Mr. Clifford Essex," *Banjo World*, Nov. 1893, 3–4.

72. *Banjo World*, Jan. 1895, 25–26.

73. Brewer, "The Banjo in Britain," Nov. 1953, 34; Dec. 1953, 59.

74. "Interviews with Celebrities (3): Mr. Olly Oakley," *Keynotes* (London), Mar. 1926, 349; "Portraits.—No. 31. Mr. Olly Oakley," *Banjo World*, June 1897, 125.

75. *B.M.G.*, Mar. 1916, 11.

76. "Portraits.—No. 17. Mr. Clifford Essex," *B.M.G.*, Feb. 1905, 69.

77. *B.M.G.*, Dec. 1903, 35; Feb. 1904, 75. Some American banjo composers were particularly popular in England. "Geo. L. Lansing [of Boston (1861–1923)] is undoubtedly the best known and most popular American writer for the banjo, so far as Great Britain is concerned, and a programme seldom reaches us that does not contain at least one of his clever compositions" (*B.M.G.*, Dec. 1903, 48).

78. "Portrait No. 3—Mr. Burt Earle," *B.M.G.*, Dec. 1903, 36–38, calls him "a rattling good player, a public favourite." See also, *B.M.G.*, Mar. 1905, 89.

79. See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980) for brief articles by Robert B. Winans on all of these banjo players, with the exception of Hunter.

80. Elias Kaufman and Madeleine Kaufman, "Parke Hunter," *The Five-Stringer*, no. 118 (Summer 1975), 3.

81. *Banjo World*, Mar. 1897, 73.

82. "Portraits.—No. 28. Messrs. Mays and Hunter," *Banjo World*, Mar. 1897, 76–78.

83. Kaufman, "Parke Hunter," 2.

84. Brewer, "The Banjo in America," July 1951, 216.

85. Clifford Essex, "Banjo Enthusiasts I Have Met.—V," *B.M.G.*, Mar. 1932, 137.

86. Brewer, "The Banjo in America," Jan. 1952, 95. Kaufman, "Parke Hunter," 2–3. Although Hunter was the real virtuoso, his partner Mays was the "entertainer" who added greatly to their act; without him Hunter was never again as successful on the vaudeville stage.

87. "Portrait No. 1—Mr. Vess Ossman," *B.M.G.*, Oct. 1903, 3. Ossman saw a "boom" in banjo playing in England. As for the instrument's popularity in America, he claimed that "half the women and a quarter of the men in all grades of society can play the banjo." *B.M.G.* also began regular publication of Ossman's music.

88. Howard, "The Banjo and Its Players," 67.

89. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 189–213.

90. David A. Jansen, notes to LP record album *Those Ragtime Banjos*, Folkways, 1979, RBF 40.

91. For a discussion of the connections between the banjo and ragtime, see Lowell H. Schreyer, "The Banjo in Ragtime," in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 54–69.

92. *B.M.G.*, Aug. 1904, 163. Another commentator noted: "Since the introduction of Rag-time music from our friends in America—the charm of which and suitability for the banjo so soon became apparent to our players—very little to my knowledge has been written about this quaint musical effect" (Fred Shewring, "Rag-time Music," *B.M.G.*, Nov. 1903, 21). Actually, ragtime and the banjo had been discussed in the May, Aug., and Sept. 1899 issues of *Banjo World*.

93. For a full account of Farland's career, see Elias Kaufman and Madeleine Kaufman, "Alfred A. Farland," *The Five-Stringer*, no. 140 (Winter 1980), 1, 12–20.

94. See, for instance, comments on this subject by Clifford Essex in *B.M.G.*, Jan. 1904, 61–62.

95. *B.M.G.* (Oct. 1903): 16. One should take this harsh comment perhaps with a grain of salt, since it seems to have been at least partially the product of professional rivalries in England. Clifford Essex and Alfred Cammeyer had once been partners, but had split up and become bitter rivals by this time. *B.M.G.*, in which the negative comment appeared, was Essex's publication; Farland had been brought over and championed by Cammeyer.

96. J. McNaghten, "Banjo and Zither-Banjo Causerie," *B.M.G.*, July 1954, 242.

97. J. McNaghten, notes to LP record album *They All Played Ragtime: The Golden Years of the Banjo*, Retrieval Records (London), n.d., FG-403; Rogers's recording of "Honolulu Cakewalk" (an Ossman-recorded piece) and other English banjo recordings from 1900–15 can be heard on this album. "Portrait No. 2—Mr. Charlie Rogers," *B.M.G.*, Nov. 1903, 20–21.

98. American composers of banjo music who were popular in England included George Lansing, Parke Hunter, Paul Eno, and Vess Ossman; Ossman was more popular as an arranger than as a composer.

99. Elias Kaufman, "Banjo on Record," *The Five-Stringer*, no. 116 (Winter 1974), 1; *ibid.*, no. 142 (Summer 1981), 1.

100. *A Banjo Galaxy: The Classic Banjo of William J. Ball*, Rounder Records (Somerville, Mass., 1975), 3005; *Banjo Reminiscences: Derek Lillywhite*, Rounder Records (Somerville, Mass., 1980), 0095.

101. The recordings about which these comments are made were all produced in England. They include: *A Bunch of Rags*, Linden Sounds (L.S. 014); *Tell Me Pretty Maiden*, cassette on private label, available from "Fellcroft" (North Road, Ambleside); *By Popular Request*, private label; *Chris Sands and Patrick Sykes at the Theatre in the Forest*, cassette by W. S. Music Productions (Beckermet, The Hoo Lane, Windermere, Cumbria, 1990).

102. Lillywhite attended the 1988 Tennessee Banjo Institute; Ball participated in 1990; and Sands has been to all three events.

103. Elias Kaufman and Madeleine Kaufman, "A Brief History of the American Banjo Fraternity," *The Five-Stringer*, no. 132 (Winter 1978), 1, 4, 11, 13, 16; "The American Banjo Fraternity," *Mugwumps*, June 1983, 16–18.

104. American folk banjo playing, on the other hand, has gone through a significant revival of interest as part of the urban folksong revival movement of the last three decades; and bluegrass banjo playing, which first developed in the 1940s, is still on the roll.