



American Sound in Music

The early years of American music were patterned after songs and tunes in Europe. As time went on, other influences started to appear in American music. African multiple rhythms and a new instrument known as the banjo, made by Africans held in slavery, started to have influence. This influence also came from the Caribbean and Latin America and found New Orleans as a perfect breeding ground for a new sound.

Louis Moreau Gottschalk lived in New Orleans, where he heard the slaves playing music in the parks with a mixture of Latin and African sounds. Gottschalk was a French Creole born in 1829, and by the 1840s, he was producing musical mega-events in Central and Latin America.

Gottschalk was considered one of the world's best pianists at the time, and some consider him America's first classical composer. He was popular in America during the American Civil War, for although born in the South, he supported the Union. After the Civil War, he had a scandalous affair that forced him to leave the country.

He continued to tour Latin American and died of a ruptured abscess in his abdomen when he was only 40 years old. He had worked with some of the great composer in Europe and influenced American music. Listen to a recording of Louis Gottschalk's "Le Banjo," in which he makes the piano sound like a banjo, and then listen to Scott Joplin's syncopated rhythms of his ragtime music, and you will hear the seeds of Louis Moreau Gottschalk.

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