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**Banjo as a Symbol of American Culture**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis deals with the cultural-historical development of a string musical instrument called the banjo which was brought to the United States of America by African slaves. The modern banjo playing on stages today varies greatly from the primitive banjo made by black slaves of plantations. Therefore, the structure and usage of the banjo have changed through the history always depending on the cultural background of its players and builders.

## **Keywords**

banjo; American culture; black slaves; music; minstrelsy

## **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá kulturně-historickým vývojem strunného hudebního nástroje, který se nazývá banjo. Banjo bylo přivezeno do Spojených států amerických černošskými otroky z Afriky. Současné banjo se velmi liší od primitivního černošského nástroje postaveného africkými otroky. V průběhu svého vývoje tedy banjo změnilo svůj vzhled i využití, které vždy vycházelo z kulturního prostředí a potřeb hráčů a výrobců nástroje.

## **Klíčová slova**

banjo; americká kultura; černošští otroci; hudba; minstrelsy

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# 1 Introduction

“Just smash your piano, and invoke the glory-beaming banjo!”

Mark Twain, 1865

The following diploma paper focuses on the cultural-historical development of a stringed musical instrument called the banjo which was brought to the United States of America by African slaves in the mid 1600s. As will be further discussed, the modern shiny banjo performing on stages today has experienced more than a four hundred year journey from the plain protobanjo made of a gourd by African slaves on plantations. The structure and usage of the banjo have changed through the history according to the cultural background of its builders and players. Furthermore, the banjo will be considered within the context of American culture; however, the term 'American culture' is not specifically defined due to its complexity and diversity.

The introductory chapter will therefore briefly comment on the most significant changes in the physical development of the banjo, notably during the nineteenth and twentieth century, as well as various sub-types of the banjo used in a different musical context. Similarly, names of the banjo predecessor varied always depending on the language of its players; however, apparently the names had something in common as they originated in the culture of black slaves. Hence, the chapter concentrating on the early development of the banjo will give essential insight into the living conditions of black slaves and their social status within the American society. Consequently, the need of enslaved Africans to stay connected with their homeland justifies the choice of the banjo as a characteristic black slave instrument even though the banjo is not a traditional musical instrument in African culture. By the eighteenth century the banjo became familiar among white people on the east coast, especially in Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia. However, white people still associated the banjo with black slaves using it as a typical feature of black slave culture.



The musical interaction between black Africans and white Americans flourished during the nineteenth century. Therefore, the chapter focusing on the musical exchange of blacks and whites will consider a completely new phenomenon called minstrelsy. The blackface minstrelsy represents a new social context for the banjo; a white man improves the physical form of the banjo, blackens his face to imitate black singers and derives from black slave cultural heritage. Moreover, immediately after the establishment of minstrelsy in America, minstrel shows traveled to Europe carrying the banjo with them. During several tours of American minstrel musicians in England, the banjo evolved new sub-types and playing techniques independently on American tradition.

Furthermore, in the pre-Civil War era minstrel shows were popular; however, the audience responded differently. Some believed that minstrel shows openly appropriated from African culture portraying blacks as ridiculous people happily serving to their masters; on the contrary, some perceived minstrel shows as one of the reasons for maintaining the Southern slavery system. To demonstrate the expansion of minstrelsy, the analysis of popular theatre adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will be provided. It is vital to point out that the thesis does not concentrate on the analysis of the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* itself; however, deals with the impact of the novel in terms of influencing perception of slavery, notably in the North. Moreover, all stage adaptations of Stowe's novel employed the banjo to stereotypically emphasize black slave culture even though Stowe never mentioned the banjo in her novel. Similarly, the banjo appears in later film adaptations of the Stowe's story; therefore, one of them will complete the analysis.

In addition, the Civil War also participated on the evolution of the banjo; both Northern and Southern soldiers carried the banjo into the war because it was not only popular but also transportable. Therefore, the story of a white banjo player amusing the Confederate general with popular banjo tunes will be depicted. Although the Civil War divided the country into two opposite lands, particular Southern regions did not completely approve of the Confederate policy. The Charles Frazier's novel *Cold Mountain* will be used as an example of the story portraying the society disrupted by the war. What is more, both the novel and the film adaptations include the banjo as an instrument sounding on the Civil War background.

Since the late nineteenth century banjo was connected with people of lower social status, a new generation of banjoists decided to elevate it. In order to promote new ideas, the banjo is commercially manufactured and supported by upper class women. In the same way, the banjo appears in clubs and college orchestras.

During the early twentieth century jazz music emerged and the banjo established its position in jazz ensembles. Therefore, it is important to describe the evolution of jazz music and analyze the importance of the four-string banjo in jazz orchestras, as well as the consequences of the recording technology development.

In the 1940s the banjo considerably changed; it was no longer connected with the black sentimental culture; however, the banjo represented a white mountain instrument. The cultural context of mountain settlers will be then discussed together with prominent banjoists and their influential playing techniques.

## 2 Banjo as an Instrument

“A musical instrument is more than wood, wires and glue; the essence of the object lies in the meanings the culture has assigned to it” (Linn 1994, xi).

The banjo as a musical instrument has developed over more than two hundred years since its first record in African culture. The following chapter will discuss the main changes in the physical appearance of the banjo and its use since the middle of the seventeenth century.

The banjo is defined as a stringed musical instrument consisting of a drum-like membrane or sometimes called a head which “comprises the resonating surface” (Adler 2003, 408). The head of the banjo is mostly circular and it is supported by a body which might be “completely closed, as in the prototypical gourd construction, or which may be open-backed wooden or metal hoop” (ibid.). There is a bridge standing on the head over which strings, usually four or five, pass to the tuning pegs over the neck (ibid.). This is a regular definition of the contemporary banjo. However, as mentioned above, it took a certain time for the banjo to develop and improve into the today’s form and shape.

Even though the descriptions of the physical appearance of the banjo were not always clear and sufficient, as will be proved in the next chapter, the very first illustrations of the banjo depict the instrument as “a gourd body, opened along side and scraped clean to create a bowl, over the flat edge of which is stretched a tanned skin” (Webb 1996, 4). Obviously, the construction methods differed usually except for the length of the neck or the number of the strings. Other details were made according to a maker’s individual decision. The size of the banjo depended on the size of the gourd and the materials for the skin and strings also varied. Preferred materials seemed to be the groundhog or woodchuck. Webb also believes that the methods of preparation have not changed since then (ibid.).

As will be further shown, during the eighteenth century the banjo was no longer provided with any specific description; the audience already seemed to be familiar with the instrument. Still, the body of the banjo was made of a calabash or a gourd and as Conway states, the banjo was “sometimes decorated, always significant, and usually symbolic of home” (Conway 1995, 165). Mentioning the strings, Conway believes that materials for making the strings also varied and always depended on the maker’s

possibilities. Some makers used silk strings, violin gut strings, dried birdgut strings or wire-wound strings. Also the membrane covering the head was made from the skin of an animal which was available at home; snake, sheep, lizard, groundhog, cat, cow, etc., (Conway 1995, 169-170).

In the nineteenth century the banjo experienced a few significant changes in terms of construction development and physical transformation generally. Linn states the main changes; the wooden hoop replaced the gourd and standardization of the five-string setup (Linn 1994, 2). She also points out, as many other authors contributing to the development of the banjo, that the story about a minstrel player Joel Walker Sweeney and his inventing and adding the fifth string might be misleading and lacking the evidence (ibid.). Hence, this issue is closely connected with the cultural context; further details will be provided in the chapter dedicated to the period of the minstrel banjo and this famous early minstrel banjoist, as well the details about specifications of banjo manufacturing in the United States and in England.

However, the standardization of the five-string setup was very influential in terms of various banjo sub-types, argues Conway. The number, positions and type of the strings defined exactly the type of the instrument. The shorter fifth string is placed nearest to the thumb and it is used as a droning string played with the thumb. The use of the fifth string “as a drone is indispensable to all banjo-playing styles reported prior to the twentieth century” (Conway 2003, 186).

The banjo modification in the late nineteenth century concerned as well necks which, according to Gura and Bollman, varied very much; specifically in their length and the number of the strings. By the 1850s some banjos had already raised frets or inlaid marks on the fingerboard to indicate finger positions (Gura, Bollman 1999, 53-55). Regarding the raised frets, Linn believes that adding them was not fully accepted by all banjo players; some of them refused this new invention because they thought “it not only looked inartistic but also led to inartistic playing” (Linn 1994, 17). Furthermore, banjoist believed that raised frets might also cause the deformation of the neck which would lead to intonation difficulties. However, proving that the neck would stay straight with the raised frets, the improvement finally succeed and moreover helped most banjoist “to play in tune” (ibid.).

Nevertheless, according to Conway, fretless banjos preserved to the twentieth century. Fretless banjos were required for traditional folk music and its traditional playing style; the smooth fingerboard was more proper for “bending and sliding notes that is an integral part of their traditional style” (Conway 2003, 185).

According to Linn, manufacturers building on the innovations from the nineteenth century improved the mechanical qualities of the instrument. The main banjo modernization during the twentieth century concerned two things; adding a resonator and one string subtraction, even though five-string banjos were still kept being produced. A resonator is defined as “a sort of dish that attaches to the back of the banjo, covering the back for the purpose of projecting the sound forward and away from the body of the payer, creating a more powerful sound” (Linn 1994, 82-83). Moreover, the resonator offered another space for ornamentation and therefore decorated fancy banjos became more fashioned and popular than banjos without the resonator. Another change worth drawing one’s attention is the change of the strings. So far all the used materials, as mentioned above, included any kinds of animal skins. Nevertheless, the need for more volume, especially for banjo players performing professionally in theatres, made banjoist switch to metal strings (Linn 1994, 83).

In addition, the banjo developed “several physical sub-types” (Adler 2003, 409). Each of them was supposed to be more convenient to various music rhythms and music groups. As an example Adler lists “the British zither-banjo and the four-string ‘tenor’ and ‘plectrum’ varieties with both open backs and enclosed ‘resonators’ backs - all typically played with a single flatpick held in the right hand” (ibid.). Intriguingly, Winans points out that the zither-banjo was never fully adapted in the United States even though it was developed by an American guitar player Cammeyer who brought it to England. The zither-banjo was “a closed-back banjo with the wire first and, second and fifth strings, instead of gut for all strings”. Together with the instrument also a unique style of playing was created based on the physical shape of the banjo; Cammeyer’s style of playing and singing was described as less noisy and harsh. In the 1890s the zither-banjo was received in England extremely well (Winans 1994, 14).

However, the further influence of the resonator enhancement and the reason for withdrawal of one string will be both discussed together with the cultural background of

orchestras and the development of the recording technology in the chapter about the banjo in the 1920s.

Obviously, the twentieth century transformed the banjo the most, not only from the physical appearance point of view but also culturally. As will be further shown, due to the radio broadcast and the phonograph the banjo received new players and many listeners; therefore, the interest in the instrument rose enormously.

To conclude this chapter about the banjo as an instrument and its modernization during past two centuries, it is important to point out that together with the physical development of the banjo also the playing styles changed greatly; from the indigenous style of playing used by enslaved black people in the early seventeenth century to the modern three-finger style of the bluegrass banjo player Earl Scruggs and many others. The playing styles reflect not only the physical appearance of the banjo but also the personality of a particular player and their cultural background; and thus, will be noted directly in the following chapters concerning specific time periods in the historical-cultural development of the banjo.

### **3 Black Banjo from Africa**

The banjo as we know it today developed from an African instrument which was traced in the seventeenth century during the slave trade. Dena J. Epstein claims that it is difficult to follow the first steps of the banjo or its predecessor in America because there are many legends mixed together with the facts about the banjo. Firstly, we must consider the fact that authors describing the banjo were not musicians nor people interested in the instrument, therefore the descriptions are often unsatisfactory or incomplete. Secondly, the literature mentioning the banjo was influenced by stereotyped view of black slave culture as “happy, carefree slave dancing and strumming on the old plantation” (Epstein 1975, 347). Epstein also points out that musical talent was regarded as “a symbol of all the weaknesses attributed to the blacks in attempt to justify their enslavement” (ibid.). English pro-slavery writers supported these ideas about slave music in many of their literary output; on the contrary abolitionists did not contribute to the portrayal of secular black music or the banjo much. Lastly, an issue to respect during the mid-eighteenth century in America was the power of Evangelical religious sects. Music was believed to be sinful and so the music instruments such as the banjo and the fiddle, the most connected with the secular black music. Both of them were banned for being considered the devil’s instruments by pious white and black people (Epstein 1975, 347-348).

Furthermore, Cecilia Conway speaks about certain social pressure caused by white people’s opinions and attitudes towards black people trying to maintain their homeland traditions. In contrast to black people who “considered their own traditions a hindrance to integration and upward mobility, and thus backward, often opposed the retention of their musical heritage” (Conway 1995, 75). Conway also agrees that the banjo and the fiddle were considered the devil’s instruments in the middle of the eighteenth century by evangelical sects; she depicts a few young musicians affected by learning and playing the banjo or the fiddle. And even today, a lot of rural musicians “associate the banjo and the fiddle with stories of the devil” (Conway 1995, 77).

Apparently, banjo predecessors had something in common; however, the names differed with locations and people who made and played them. The very first record of a banjo-like instrument, according to Gura and Bollman, was noted among African

instruments, such as “the *kissar*, very much like the banjo” (Gura, Bollman 1999, 12) which was played by “Nubians” and “the negroes of Eastern Africa, the *nanaa*, a five-stringed instrument with head of wood and skin” (Gura, Bollman 1999, 12). Furthermore, West African natives had “the *omlic* with eight strings, the *boulou* with ten strings, and in Senegambia the *bania*, which it is sometimes claimed was imported to the United States by the negro slaves, and became the banjo” (ibid.).

Even though there is a discussion about the banjo’s origins among the musicologists, as Gura and Bollman argue, it is rather believed that the banjo comes from West African instruments and it was brought to the United States by slaves from Africa. Early reports of the banjo written by various travelers who visited Africa in the 1620s refer to an instrument, played by “Aethiopians” (Gura, Bollman 1999, 12), which was made of a gourd, with long neck and not more than six strings. This instrument was supposed to be similar to a known string instrument called bandora. In 1689, a physician who was interested in Jamaica’s music wrote that “island’s Africans have *'strum-strum'*” which was an instrument created of a gourd fitted with the neck and catgut (Gura, Bollman 1999, 11-12).

According to Epstein, an early report from West Indies comes from the Martinique in 1678, when the Conseil Souverain forbade gatherings of black people who were dancing to the sound of an instrument called *banza*. The *banza* was probably the most common instrument of Africans living in America; however Epstein poses an interesting question about “enormous popularity of the banjo in the New World among Africans and their descendants” (Epstein 1975, 351). The traditional and favorite African instruments were lutes and stringed instruments generally; nevertheless, they were not as popular as drums and wind instruments there. The reason for later popularity of the banjo was obvious; music instruments such as drums and wind instruments were banned by law both in America and West Indies because they could be used as a tool to signal a revolt. Furthermore, Epstein maintains that:

Deprived of these louder instruments, the enslaved Africans found at hand the materials to make instruments with a softer and hence (to their master) less objectionable sound-instruments they had known in Africa, but which probably had not occupied a central position in their musical life there. (Epstein 1975, 351-352)



It was vital for African slaves to stay connected with the traditions from their homeland. Anthony B. Mitchell in his essay argues that enslaved Africans, especially in the South, were treated in an inhuman manner by American society that “sought to strip them of all elements of their African heritage, ethnic identity, and culture (family, kinship, languages, religions, and customs)” (Mitchell 2008, 79). Mitchell also points out that to own a slave referred to a certain achievement of every European male despite his being wealthy or poor. The “plantation ideology” (Mitchell 2008, 80) was believed to be a reasonable economic system which was created by landowners from Europe so they could enlarge labor force of African slaves (Mitchell 2008, 79-80).

The black slave culture and relationships within a black slave family were thus strongly influenced by American slave owners. According to Gorman, the slaveholders allowed their slaves to get married; however, after months, years or decades the masters also had the power to dissolve the family without divorce, just with selling one of the partners away. As Gorman states:

The weddings of slaves in the American South were bittersweet affairs. Even when held in the house of the slaveowner, they still had no status in law and lacked one phrase of fundamental importance: ‘Till death do you part.’ (Gorman 1976, 19)

As hinted above, African slaves were used as labor force only therefore all members of a black slave family could have been sold away. There were many cases when a father was sold to a neighbor plantation and slave children grew up only with their mothers and grandmothers. Slave children were also compelled to work on plantations. They started with small duties in the household and later when they were able to work outside, they were moved to the fields.

A former slave Frederick Douglass who authored *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave* describes his life during his childhood spent on several plantations in the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in Baltimore. Douglass gives a true picture about enslaved families whose members, especially children at a very young age, were often separated and sold to other slave owners. Slaves were forced to work very hard in farms and they received only small amount of food and money for their work. Nevertheless, Douglass precisely remembered the allowance of food and

yearly clothing which slaves received. He also described the living conditions as intolerable; the houses where slaves stayed were often dark, wet and “there were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these” (Douglass 1845, 16).

After Douglass escaped from the plantation and came to the north, he encountered confusion spread among white people and their perception of black slave culture; singing among the slaves was considered as “evidence of their contentment and happiness” (Douglass 1845, 18) which, in Douglass’s opinion, could lead to a huge mistake:

Slaves sing most when unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery (Douglass 1845, 12-18).

Yet, it is not the only slave narrative mentioning the misunderstanding of black slave singing and black slave music in general. Epstein refers to this issue which was debated during the eighteenth century and supports her thoughts by the narrative of a slave named Aaron, writing in 1827. He explains that slaves wanted to ease their minds with songs, dancing and laugh, not to prove that they were happy which was misinterpreted very often (Epstein 1975, 348).

So far the banjo appeared mainly in colonies; however the question when it came to the mainland is at hand. According to Conway, a famous Thomas Jefferson’s remark about his own African slaves playing the banjo: “The instrument proper to them is the Banjar, which they brought hither from Africa” (Jefferson, cited in Conway 2003, 58), refers to proto-banjos prior 1830. Conway also believes that the banjo arrived to Maryland and Virginia around 1744 and that Africans introduced their music and culture to white settlers when they travelled across the mountains and saw Africans dancing and playing. Africans were already familiar with one stringed fiddle but they were inspired to learn to play the popular fiddle brought by immigrants, mostly Scottish and Irish, who were, on the other hand, influenced by African banjo and they learnt to play the instrument (Conway 2003, 151-153).

The popularity of the banjo among white people started to spread very quickly; thus by the mid-eighteenth century the banjo became famed in the most of the north mainland colonies in America. As Gura and Bollman claims, the description of the banjo was no longer needed; it seemed to be obvious to both black and white people. Hence, the authors mention a case when a slave named Tony was accused of a slave conspiracy in 1749 in South Carolina and he was asked about a slave meeting which Tony described as a gathering where slaves played the banjo the whole night. In 1766, in Charleston, South Carolina the newspaper published a request to return a wallet which was stolen to “the sufferer as he passed through a crowd of Negroes assembled at the lower end of Elliot-street, with a banjer playing” (Gura, Bollman 1975, 14). Many escaped slaves, later in the eighteenth century, were depicted as having and playing the banjo while on the run. In 1778, a lot of advertisements were announced in the newspapers either asking to return escaped slaves described as banjo players or to return belongings stolen by slaves playing this instrument (Gura, Bollman 1999, 13-14).

The sources confirming black people playing the banjo in the mainland, primarily in the state of Virginia and Maryland, up to the 1800s are credible, states Winans. What is more, he gathered a record of 660 escaped black musicians described in newspapers in the eighteenth century as playing either the fiddle or the banjo. Most of escaped slaves come from the states Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Delaware. Winans mentions that runaway ads in newspapers were common both in the south as in the north (Winans 1993).

After explaining all the sources mentioned above, it is now obvious that the banjo comes originally from Africa brought by enslaved African people to the United States of America during the seventeenth century. As Winans argues, the tradition of white people watching and listening to black people playing the banjo later set the background for a completely new way of entertainment, and as well as the development of the banjo, during the nineteenth century – the minstrel show (Winans, 1993).

## 4 Minstrelsy

### 4.1 Banjo Popular among White People

By the 1800s the banjo was already fully established in America. Carlin believes that its main purpose was plainly to entertain people; during the horse racing and essentially during the slave dances. He also points out that the composition of musical instruments while entertaining white audience quite differed from slave dances for black people only; white audience mostly heard fiddles and tambourines, on the other hand, black people amused themselves with the banjo in combination with other musical instruments (Carlin 2007, 4).

As mentioned above, it was typical for the banjo to be used as an accompanying instrument rather than a solo instrument at this time. Thus, main instruments possible to hear together with the banjo were, according to Conway, for example drums or fiddles. Even though drums were outlawed in many colonies by slaveholders because of the potential risk of calling together and revolt, drums and the banjo were a quite ordinary combination. Consequently, another relevant choice for African Americans was the fiddle. Early sources; however, do not confirm this combination as frequent as one might assume. African Americans already played one-string fiddle which they had learnt to play in Africa and due to European influence they learnt to play European fiddle. Conway claims:

The fiddle provided an opportunity for blacks to explore Celtic-American culture. Whites also encouraged black fiddling from the first, for many whites had no fear of the familiar European instrument, and some appreciate it (Conway 1995, 70-75).

This is how the black and white musical interaction started. Whites learnt from blacks and vice versa. However, the question, who the very first white banjo player was, is obvious. According to Carlin, who dedicated his book *The Birth of the Banjo: Joel Walker Sweeney and Early Minstrels* to the beginnings of one of the most influential period of time in terms of banjo cultural development, a banjoist called Joel Walker Sweeney belonged among the first white musicians who started to play the banjo. It is hard to prove that Sweeney was the very first one; nevertheless, he had a significant role

in music history, as will be further discussed, and was believed to be the Elvis Presley of his time and as Carlin proposes Sweeney “served a parallel role in the 1840s to Jimmie Rodgers in the 1920s, Bill Monroe in the 1940s and to Hank Williams or Elvis in the 1950s”. A white banjo player born in Virginia, who is claimed to learn playing the banjo from slaves living on nearby plantations, introduced the banjo to a wide audience, and as will be further shown, not only the American audience (Carlin 2007, 1-5).

Furthermore, the reason why Sweeney is associated with the modernization of the banjo is that he is supposed to be the inventor of the fifth short string ending half way up the neck. There have been a lot of essays published about his contribution to the banjo development; however, later sources disprove that Sweeney invented the fifth string. According to Gura and Bollman, early banjo illustrations from the seventeenth century confirm the idea of contemplating the fifth string already. A colored photograph of an instrument called the African Xalam published in the Gura and Bollman’s book is believed to be the antecedent of the American banjo. The authors confirm:

As is evident in this illustration, the instrument usually has an octave string, comparable to the banjo’s fifth string, tied off farther up the fingerboard (Gura and Bollman 1999, Plate 1-1).

According to Winans, further evidence about the banjo with the short string is a famed painting called “The Old Plantation” which is assumed to be created during 1777 and 1800. The illustration depicts a black man playing the banjo for black dancers. When closely observing the banjo, one might see that the instrument has four strings; three regular long strings and one short; and thus, it is clear that the conception of the short thumb string already existed before Sweeney was born in 1810 (Winans 1993).

In addition, Carlin’s assumptions also support the statement about Sweeney not inventing the fifth string. Carlin lists several reports assuring that the short fifth string originates in African instruments very similar to today’s banjos. He concludes that Sweeney “may have used and refined these concepts before carrying them into the mainstream, but he definitely did not invent them” (Carlin 2007, 130).

## 4.2 Minstrel Shows

During the 1820s and 1830s a new way of amusement emerged in the United States of America: the minstrel show. According to the *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, the minstrel show is defined as:

[S]tage entertainment featuring comic dialogue, song, and dance in highly conventionalized patterns, performed by a troupe of actors in blackface comprising an interlocutor, two end men, and a chorus: developed in the U.S. in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary)

Furthermore, according to *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture* the minstrel show is defined as:

[A] show in which white entertainers used to wear black make-up to look like Negroes and perform songs and music in the style of Negro songs and music. In Britain a television show of this kind, the Black and White Minstrels, was popular for many years. Such shows no longer exist because they are now considered to be insulting to black people.

Searching for the roots of American minstrelsy, Carlin presents the evidence to prove that we might date back to the famous William Shakespeare's character, *Othello*. Later then followed by other plays such as *Oronoko* by Thomas Southerne or even later *Paddlock* written by Charles Dibdin. All of these characters were played by white actors "in blackface makeup transferred effortlessly to the nascent American theater" (Carlin 2007, 6).

In the 1830s the first minstrel impersonator of black slave music; and thus, called the father of the minstrelsy, was Thomas Dartmouth Rice. He became famous performing with his character called Jim Crow and his "vitality, realism, and novelty of his act were the qualities that triggered the unexpected and overwhelming audience response" claims Conway. His popular song "Jim Crow" became a trademark of minstrel shows and it was later accompanied by the banjo (Conway 1995, 91).

Nonetheless, the key early minstrel banjoist was previously mentioned Joel Walker Sweeney who travelled across the country and introduced the banjo to the southern audience. Winans claims that Sweeney became simply a hit with his black

singing style and playing. Consequently, in 1840 he became a “national celebrity” when he started to play with circuses and in the North. Sweeney encouraged a lot of new musicians to play the banjo. Later in 1843 he joined the famous band called The Virginia Minstrels (Winans 1993).

One might be wondering how the banjo sounded like at the beginning of the minstrel show era regarding its modernization and whether and to what extent the style of playing changed since the seventeenth century. Winans argues that according to available music literature and music instructions published in the mid-nineteenth century, the banjo was still a fretless instrument with strings made of gut or wire-wound silk, often borrowed from the violin or the guitar. The early minstrel style of playing was characterized as a striking style involving two fingers hitting the strings; the thumb and the first finger. This style of banjo playing corresponds with the style which is today called clawhammer or frailing. It is believed that banjoists such as Sweeney, T. D. Rice and many others played in this style (Winans 1976, 408-415).

### **4.3 Minstrel Journey: from America to Europe**

Enormous popularity of minstrel shows in America brought the banjo to Europe, to England. Depicting the way how American music and the banjo specifically influenced English traditional musical scene, Winans and Kaufman claim that even though American influence on English banjo playing was immense, English players developed a new style of music and moreover new forms of the instrument. Consequently, “the English tradition eventually achieved independence from the American tradition on which it was based” (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 2).

Carlin states that the first American banjoist who visited England was Joel Walker Sweeney. Although minstrel show performers had visited England before so the English audience was familiar with American blackface minstrelsy, Sweeney was the first who presented the banjo; therefore, he became extremely popular and unique during his tour in England. Sweeney travelled to England together with the Sands Circus in 1842 and their reviews were immensely positive, especially Sweeney received excellent critiques. He was praised for his instrumentation and “his self-possession, while the house was convulsed with laughter at his ‘niggerism’, was irresistibly comic”

(Carlin 2007, 35). During his British tour, Sweeney performed in Liverpool, London and the British music publishers D'Almaine and Company published three of Sweeney's songs. Carlin suggests that the cover illustrations "are surprisingly realistic for the time" (Carlin 2007, 39); however, it was a common thing for British music not to cover copyright so the unauthorized editions were obvious (Carlin 2007, 34-39).

In the 1850s the British minstrelsy, even though still dependent on American usage, it developed its own banjo playing tradition, maintain Winans and Kaufman. During this time a lot of minstrel performers visited England and helped to establish British minstrel shows there. Hence, this growing independence increased number of British banjo players and travel companies. Moreover, a lot of American banjo players travelled to England, stayed for a couple of years performing, returned back home and then returned back to England again. In the 1860s many of them introduced some new playing techniques to the British audience. Yet, the style of playing the banjo was so called "stroke" style which was quite "limited technique" (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 8). Winans and Kaufman claim that American players developed a new style of playing called "guitar style" and later brought it to England. It was believed that this new style completely changed the character of banjo playing both in the United States and England:

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. (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 7-9)

Furthermore, English banjo players were quite innovative; and thus, more independent on the American tradition and added "extra bass and thumb strings to create six-, seven-, eight-, and even nine-stringed banjos" (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 10); however, later these types of banjos stopped being used in the 1860s and they were considered out-fashioned by professional players and returned to playing the five-stringed banjos. Apart from these changes, the construction of the banjo changed a lot; musicians and builders experimented in terms of materials, decorations and as Winans and Kaufman believe "English players went in less for elaborately decorated, inlaid, and engraved instruments than did their American counterparts" (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 9-10).



Obviously, early minstrel shows touring through both the United States of America and Europe extended the banjo usage to other entertainment genres; mainly circuses and later medicine shows. Winans believes that these two kinds of show represented the primary amusement for people not living in metropolitan areas in America. In another words, the nation was simply swept away with the minstrel mania; thus, circuses, minstrel or medicine shows were the only public places where people could entertain themselves. To rural areas shows managed to travel overland and also by steamboats; steamboats specifically built for theatre purposes. They usually carried musicians with their instruments down the Ohio, Mississippi and Cumberland River and stopped in two or three towns a day. This way tours reached most of the cities in West Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky (Winans 1976, 420-423).

#### **4.4 *Uncle Tom's Cabin and Tom Shows***

During the years approaching the Civil War a question why minstrel shows were so popular in America might arise; Conway believes that minstrel shows popularized its African roots and even though they were sometimes not very authentic but rather crude, they changed white people's attitudes towards black culture from perceiving it as something rude and barbaric, as it was in the early mid-eighteenth century. The reason why white banjoists and white audience were more and more interested in black musical traditions is quite evident; people were searching for a free opportunity and democracy; therefore:

[T]he minstrel show could appeal to the displaced city workers who were separated from their traditional communities and rural life patterns. Thus, minstrelsy symbolically asserted the economic opportunities and democratic distinctiveness of the nation (Conway 1995, 117).

Furthermore, discussing why American society chose a black slave to represent a typical American man, Conway offers the explanation again: popularity of the minstrelsy coincides with the public interest about African slaves and their position within the American society. Apparently, minstrel shows offer a way how to deal with the feelings concerning this controversial issue (ibid.).

In 1852 when an American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe published her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly*, the nation, which was not long time ago united, was already separated again; the society was sharply divided into those who believed and supported slavery and those who perceived slavery as something undignified, not human and evil. Together with her family Stowe supported abolitionism and decided to contribute to the anti-slavery movement, as many other writers, by newsletter articles and pamphlets. Hedrick argues that as one of the starting points for Stowe to write the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* it is considered the passing of the Slave Fugitive Act in 1850 declaring a requirement for citizens to “assist the sheriff in catching runaway slaves, stipulating fines and imprisonment for those who refused” (Hendrick 2007).

Stowe fully disagreed with the law and kept helping escaped slaves and encouraged other people to do so. According to Winship, when Stowe decided to publish her story, it was uneasy to find a publisher who would distribute a book with this theme, some of the publishing houses refused. However, at the day of publishing 5,000 copies were sold and the book simply became a hit. Moreover, during the following year 300,000 copies in different editions were published and sold (Winship 2007).

Even though Northern people were amazed by the story, they were, on the other hand, outraged by reading about cruel treatment of slaves working in inhuman conditions on plantations. On the contrary, the South felt offended and found the book untruthful and deceiving. Blight argues that:

What was white South especially upset about was the depiction both in the narratives and in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of owners like Simon Legree, the famous character that Harriet Beecher Stowe created. They just could not abide, allowing the North to believe that slave holders were like Simon Legree (Blight 1995-2011).

Therefore, directly after the first edition of the *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a response and protest, Southern writers published pro-slavery texts depicting slaves happily singing and working on plantations.

Although the issue of slavery had been discussed for a long time in the United States, it was believed that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* contributed to fan emotions and political-cultural opinions between the liberal North and the conservative and pro-slavery South. In 1862 when Stowe met the president Abraham Lincoln in the White House in Washington, D.C., Lincoln received her with his famous quote: "So this is the little lady who started this great war" (Wheeler 2007).

After the major impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the public, theatres started performing the story of Uncle Tom as a theatre play or a musical. According to Linn, the first dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was in the same year as the book publishing and continued being popular until the Civil War broke out. The show became immensely popular and it was reproduced many times because the public required the story about a pious black slave Tom almost continuously. A morality play with "some of the most unforgettable characters in American literature, characters that have since served as cultural archetypes" (Linn 1994, 57) repeatedly delivered a certain moral message to the audience. In addition, there were hundreds of theater companies touring the country with various versions of the Stowe's novel depicting the life on a southern plantation. Linn believes that:

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its various interpretations created basic ideas about the South for many non-Southerners. The shows frequently employed banjo players, connecting once again the idea of the banjo to Southern black plantation workers, but here in a generally more sentimental and nostalgic idiom than that of the minstrel theater (Linn 1994, 57).

Comparing the Stowe's novel and its theatrical interpretations; however, one might find that play writers did not completely follow the story. According to Frick, play writers put emphasis on the different scenes than Stowe did in her book; some of the minor scenes in the book gained new importance in the theatre production. Besides, Frick claims that theatrical interpretations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "modified its position on slavery." Audiences were not quite like Stowe's readers; they usually came from urban areas, belonged to working class and they were less influenced by abolitionism (Frick 2007).

Furthermore, Linn points out dissimilarity between the book and theater shows; even though Stowe did not mention the banjo in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, characters in the shows were frequently depicted playing the banjo because the banjo was considered to be an instrument of black slaves. As a typical example of using the banjo in the play, Linn provides the part where Topsy, however usually played by adult woman, sings and dances at the stage and is accompanied by the banjo and guitar and the whole scene is set on a plantation (Linn 1994, 58).

It seemed obvious that black minstrelsy influenced “Tom shows” in terms of racial politics. Frick asserts that nearly every show moved “the story further from Mrs. Stowe’s abolitionist text” with including “conventions and devices appropriated from minstrel shows”. In another words, playwrights integrated songs with Southern themes and stereotypical ideas of black people; and thus, changed the moral message of the Stowe’s story. Later when one of the most famous minstrel banjoist, T. D. Rice performed Uncle Tom on the stage and “danced Jim Crow, the two most prominent performance traditions of the antebellum era – Uncle Tom and minstrelsy – were forever linked in the popular mind” (Frick 2007).

The popularization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* attracted attention not only of theater and minstrel shows but later also movie companies. According to Railton, the very first film adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a fifteen minute silent film made in 1903 by Edison Company. Further, in 1927 the Universal Pictures Company followed with “a big-budget” adaptation with a soundtrack. Between those two versions several other were made; however, some of them totally either disappeared or only parts were preserved (Railton 2007).

One of the well done film adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a 54 minute silent version from 1914, produced by World Corporation and directed by William Robert Daly. Railton points out that this was the first time when a black actor was hired to perform the character of Uncle Tom as previous versions always employed a white actor with blackened face (Railton 2007). The film opens with a scene where in the background black slave children are wildly dancing and happily clapping their hands; however, the banjo is not clearly possible to see so one might only assume that the slaves were dancing accompanied by the banjo according to slave stereotypes already mentioned. Railton further provides about the scene setting:

[T]he group of dancing slaves that typically would have been center stage when the curtain went up on Act. 1. The audience's point of view, however, that of Aunt Chloe, the motionless woman in the foreground, and from her point of view the most visible image is not the happily dancing darkies, but Tom, making his way toward a cabin in his obvious pain, whose bent body here does not suggest cringing servility but instead the way slavery has used him up (Railton 2007).

Moreover, since silent movies were usually accompanied by live music, usually piano playing, Railton poses an interesting question about the type of music that would have been used to this opening scene; whether a quick minstrel song was suiting the black slaves dancing or a solemn piece of music following Tom walking to the cabin (Railton 2007).

Further, contrasting the banjo usage in the World Corporation version from 1914 to Universal Pictures version from 1927, one might notice that in the Universal Pictures adaptation there are as well scenes with the banjo. The banjo is used in a similar way, it means, it is played by black slaves for the white audience and the banjo is mainly played by male banjo players. According to Linn, the banjo appearing on the Shelby's plantation is a proof of American society accepting the social class division when white rich people were usually perceived as aristocrats while black and poor white people were depicted having nothing else then the banjo and old clothes. Therefore, people playing the banjo definitely associated the lower social class. However, this division seemed to be completely suitable for the American society. Linn concludes: "All is right with the social world; the black man – barefoot and in ragged clothes – is content playing the banjo while the white woman sits upon her pony" (Linn 1994, 58).

#### **4.5 Civil War and *Cold Mountain***

The following subchapter will discuss the Civil War as a participant in the evolution of the banjo together with the novel *Cold Mountain* written by Charles Frazier; hence, the progress of the white Appalachian mountain banjo tradition will be considered essential for depicting further development of the banjo in the next chapters.

In the period leading up to the Civil War, the music interaction between blacks and whites grew strongly. There are several reports confirming or, on the other hand, disproving how exactly the white music banjo tradition developed. As suggested before, some scholars believe that the minstrelsy was the key factor of spreading the knowledge about the banjo among white people. For instance, Winans argues that the style of playing, previously described, supports the hypothesis that mountain white people, as people from other different parts of the country, learnt to play the banjo from minstrel players travelling through the United States (Winans 1976, 16).

On the contrary, Conway opposes Winans with the statement that white mountain musicians acquired playing the banjo directly from black people. Moreover, Conway calls Winans's theory unnecessary pointing out that the clawhammer banjo has been familiar in the South already for more than a century exactly because of the black-white interaction. In addition, Civil War photographs and illustrations confirm the banjo transmission between blacks and whites as soldiers carried the banjo with them to the war (Conway 1995, 120-121).

To prove the participation of the Civil War in the banjo development, the story of Sam Sweeney is more than suitable. Sam Sweeney was an accomplished banjoist as well as his older brother Joel Walker Sweeney. According to Carlin, Sam's talent was soon celebrated enough to attract the attention of James Ewell Brown Stuart, a cavalry general of Confederacy. Stuart already had his own stringed band consisting of a few staff members playing for him or his troops' entertainment when he hired Sam Sweeney to play the banjo. Based on several accounts of war correspondents, one might have a quite complete picture of soldier amusement in the war; Sam Sweeney was amusing other soldiers by playing his famous banjo tunes when some black people reportedly joined with their dancing. Moreover, Sam Sweeney was requested to play for the general Stuart in any occasion; either to perform as a Stuart's personal balladeer when accompanying him while the general was visiting a lady or just to play in the Stuart's tent while the general was carrying his official duties. Carlin claims:

Sampson Sweeney was the most famous banjoist on either side of the War for Southern Independence. This was due in no small part to his association with the flamboyant J.E.B. Stuart, although, being an acclaimed minstrel performer certainly added to his reputation (Carlin 2007, 154-156, 158).

In addition, Carlin argues that except for writing letters, music was the only distraction for soldiers in the army and many of them were professional banjo players. While travelling with the Confederacy, Sam Sweeney spread the banjo knowledge together with popular banjo tunes and songs; the sources suggest mainly reaching the regions in Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina (Carlin 2007, 158).

In the Blue Ridge Mountain region in North Carolina there is a setting of the Charles Frazier's story called *Cold Mountain* which is an apposite example of a Civil War portrayal including the banjo both in the novel and in the film. However, literary reviewers are not united in labeling *Cold Mountain* in a particular genre; some define it as a Civil War novel, a picaresque novel, a historic novel, a tragedy, a love story, and many more. Critics also often compare the novel to other literary pieces, mainly to Homer's *Odyssey*. Gibson claims that all of these genres are considered according to ways they "shed light on the different aspects of the story" (Gibson 2006, 415). Furthermore, Gibson asserts that *Cold Mountain* is best to define as a narrative of spiritual quest. The story gradually progresses when both protagonists Inman and Ada undergo their separate journeys; Inman his physical, faith and redemption searching journey back to Cold Mountain after deserting the Confederate army and Ada's psychological inner transformation while waiting for her lover to come back to her (Gibson 2006, 416).

According to Inge, Frazier's purpose was not to write a story glorifying the Civil War but rather to depict the impact of the war on ordinary people; thus, the main protagonists were white people "seeking to find some values by which to live, some principles in which to believe, something to give their lives meaning in these turbulent times" (Inge 2010, 21). What Frazier had in mind was the clash between two economic systems; a black slavery system of the South and a white capitalist industrial system in the North. Hence, many people joined the war only because they wanted to protect their homeland; and thus, Frazier states that a lot of common people in the South and the North were just caught in the crossfire of the Civil War and "[m]any of them died fighting somebody else's battle" (Interview with Charles Frazier, 1997-2011).

Even though Inman entered the Confederate army, he approves neither of the Civil War nor slavery. Moreover, Inman refuses that he or anyone he knew would ever

own slaves. When meeting the old woman on his way back to Cold Mountain, Inman explains that justifying slavery was not the true reason for joining the army. He clarifies:

I reckon many of us fought to drive off invaders. One man I knew had been north to the big cities, and he said it was every feature of such places that we were fighting to prevent. All I know is anyone thinking the Federals are willing to die to set loose slaves has got an overly merciful view of mankind (Frazier 1998, 275).

To understand the historical background of *Cold Mountain*, it is essential to be aware of the fact that in the southwestern part of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina were only a few slaves and slave owners comparing to other Southern regions. Therefore, Piacentino claims that people did not support widely the North Carolina's secession from the Union in 1861. They became aware of potential risks in case the war broke out; the shortage of food, farms would be left without the male labor and Federal military raids (Piacentino 2001-02, 101).

Similarly, Conway maintains that mountain regions had never been rich areas with slaveholders; hence, people expressed certain kindness towards black people and escaped slaves, for instance runaway slaves were allowed to stay in mountain regions. Moreover, two of the mountains were named after African Americans; Nigger Mountain which is now called Mount Jefferson and Mulatto (Conway 1995, 144).

In the novel *Cold Mountain* black people were characterized as nice and amiable, notably when a black man helps Inman after he was shot and wounded by the Home Guard. In the novel the black slave is called "the yellow man"; however, when the slave feeds Inman and offers him a shelter, it is clear that the relationship between those two gradually changes. When Inman leaves the slave and begins his journey again, he calls the slave only "the man". According Bryant, the progression expresses the mutual respect that Inman and the slave developed during the time spent together. Furthermore, the black slave is depicted as a guide to Inman in terms of providing him not only with food and shelter but also worthwhile advice which way to go to avoid the Home Guard (Bryant 2009, 595-596). Inman is given a map created by the slave who is capable of reading and writing because he "[g]ot a crazy man for a master. That law don't mean a thing to him" (Frazier 1998, 233). Apparently, Frazier portrays black slaves as human beings with the ability to learn, sympathize and help which is not



typical for the perception of slaves in the nineteenth century. Piacento claims that the moment when Inman is refused to pay for the slave's hospitality is considered to be an act of basic human decency from a person, whose race has been oppressed and dehumanized for so long, to a person in need, regardless his color or political affiliation (Piacentino 2001-02, 110).

Comparing the depiction of black slaves in the book to the film adaptation of *Cold Mountain*, one might see that slaves are predictably portrayed working in the plantations in front of the hospital or another scene depicts Inman meeting a black slave family on the run when they refused to share food with him and later they are shot by the Home Guard. Grant claims that since *Cold Mountain* is a film depicting the Civil War, slavery is not mentioned much except for these two prominent scenes described above. Therefore, in this respect lack of depiction enslaved blacks in other than "clichéd scenes" makes the film poor and odd (Grant 2003, 37).

Music became a part of the ordinary life during the Civil War; and thus, it was important not only to soldiers but also to civilians. It was quite typical for a nineteenth century home to possess a musical instrument. A lot of songs were printed but most songs were spread orally among people, in another words, people learnt just by hearing them. Moseley claims that "[n]o genteel home was complete without music" (Moseley 1984, 4). Therefore, the music in *Cold Mountain* was present under various occasions; nevertheless, the music was designed to be an integral part of the story and not only the film specifically. Intriguingly, Frazier states that when searching for the narrative voice of the story, he tried to depict the rhythm of the old mountain speech which is supposed to have "a very musical kind of rhythm and variety in volume; it was a very beautiful and also could be a very harsh-sounding language too" (Ketchin 2000).

The music in *Cold Mountain* has a unique meaning to each of the characters. For instance, the lead female character Ada Monroe, a well educated young lady from Charleston who moved to Cold Mountain with her father, plays the piano which seemed to be a proper skill for white young ladies from the middle class. The party hosted by Ada's father, reverend Monroe, is held in the Charleston soirée style; the gathered company of white people listening to Ada's playing a classical music piece on the piano. According to Nathan, during the Civil War period people met regularly at soirées, balls, Italian operas and many other occasions in big cities despite of

subconsciously trying to banish the guilty thoughts they might have about their happy and free social life contrasted to the Civil War raging down in the South (Nathan 1943, 242).

However, the day when Ada's father dies means moving down the social ladder for her; she is forced to sell her piano and there are no more noble musical soirées in their house. Later when Ada's friend Ruby reconciles with her father Stobrod, who is a self-taught fiddle player, the music is present in her home again. Nevertheless, this time it is mountain old-time music represented by the fiddle and the banjo. The character of Stobrod is depicted as a lonely outsider who is redeemed through music. Frazier claims:

As for Stobrod, I just always felt that his life had been so wasted, so lacking any kind of pattern or form or discipline of any kind, that the thing that had attracted him—because of his sorryness, that he could go play a few tunes and dance and get a drink for free—became a thing that, once he took it seriously, had the potential to save him (Ketchin 2000).

When Stobrod returns to his daughter Ruby, whom he abandoned a few years ago, he comes back with his friend Pangle who admires and follows Stobrod for his musical abilities. Pangle is described as a boy who “had no talent in the world but his recently discovered ability to play the banjo” (Frazier 1998, 332-333). Stobrod tells a story how he stole the banjo during a raid against a cruel slave owner together with other people; however, the banjo was the only loot from this raid for Stobrod. He described the banjo found in the slaveowner's house as “somewhat ugly, lacking as it did the expected symmetry in its round parts, but the head was of cat skin and the strings of gut, and it had a fine mellow tone” (Frazier 1998, 335). Afterwards, he gave the banjo to Pangle who was able to develop his own playing style and accompany Stobrod playing the fiddle. Since that moment, they did nothing else than played their music and wandered through North Carolina together.

In the same way, the music in the film adaptation of *Cold Mountain* has a significant role; one might even suggest that the music becomes another film character. The songs and tunes are performed in the old-time music style, namely, the banjo in the combination with the fiddle accompanied by the mandolin, guitar and bass. The music in the film as well varied depending on the scene setting; whether one might witness the noble soirée at Monroe's house or modest Christmas celebration when Ada and Ruby

are dancing to a joyful banjo-fiddle reel. For example, a song called “Wayfaring Stranger”, which appears both in the film and its lyrics in the novel, has a significant meaning. The lyrics open with:

I am a poor wayfaring stranger  
Traveling through this world alone  
There is no sickness, toil nor danger  
In that fair land to which I go  
I'm going home  
To see my mother  
I'm going home  
No more to roam I am just going over Jordan  
I am just going over home

McCarron and Knoke believe that the lyrics reflect Inman’s traveling more than properly because it depicts not only his physical journey from Virginia to North Carolina but also the travel to Heaven after the death (McCarron and Knoke 2010).

The song “Wayfaring Stranger” is so called “traditional”, as most of old-time songs and tunes; it means that the author was unknown; therefore, what musicians did quite often was to add extra versions or change the melody of the song. Stobrod experienced the same process. When Ada asks Ruby whether Stobrod is the author of a particular song, Ruby believes that it is unlikely because “[a] song went around from fiddler to fiddler and each one added something and took something away” (Frazier 1998, 380).

As mentioned before, the banjo and fiddle combination emerged in the mountain music and became eventually more popular than the earlier combination of the banjo and drums. Conway implies that popularity of banjo-fiddle ensembles increased during the Civil War era and particularly after the Civil War in the regions of North Carolina and Virginia (Conway 1995, 78-79).

Stobrod played various songs on his fiddle accompanied by Pangle on the banjo, for instance “Ladies of Richmond”, “Six Nights Drunk”, “Tavern Fight” or “Drunk Neggar”. In the nineteenth century a lot of songs carried the word 'neggar' or 'nigger' in their names. According to Moseley, the music during the Civil War era was mostly written by white people for white people again; moreover, songs did not reveal any kind of interest in black people or in their emancipation. As the following lyrics prove, songs were heavily biased towards black people: “We’ll have a farm in Dixie, boys, and put

some niggers on it ... And then we'll simmer down" (Moseley 1984, 3). Furthermore, expressions related to blackness were obviously meant as an insult. Even though the word 'nigger' was widely used among blacks as well; however, only white people used the word with pejorative connotation. Concerning abolitionist songs, they certainly disagreed with slavery; nevertheless, understanding for blacks was not much contained in abolitionist songs as one would expect (Moseley 1984, 6-14).

#### **4.6 Last Days of Minstrel Shows**

Attitudes towards black people during the Civil War and specifically in the post-war era gradually changed together with the main character of minstrel shows. In the 1840s early minstrel shows popularized origins of black people and their musical heritage; however, during the 1870s minstrelsy shifted towards ridiculous depiction of black people. Linn argues that minstrelsy penetrated the commercial popular culture, to put it another way, when hearing the word minstrelsy most people imagined a black-faced entertainer dressed in exaggerated clothes, wearing big shoes, playing the banjo and basically functioning as a clown. The late nineteenth minstrelsy changed the consciousness about black people. Linn claims:

Although minstrels emphasized nonthreatening characterizations of blacks (creating a sense of social stability), the format and size of the late nineteenth-century minstrel show revealed a destabilization (Linn 1994, 49).

Furthermore, postbellum America suffered from the social disruption and uncertain future. Moseley points out that abolitionist texts issued before the Civil War did not strongly mention any emancipation projects for slaves, in terms of education or further integration, except for blacks continuing their working on farms. In fact, one might suggest that the abolition of slavery meant the end of the way rather than the beginning for a lot of freedmen (Moseley 1984, 7-9).

Summarizing the evolution of black minstrelsy, it is obvious that minstrel shows experienced significant changes from its inception. Herring lists that minstrelsy dates back to initial performances of a solo impersonator T. D. Rice and his character of Jim

Crow shifting in the 1840s from a single performer show to a group of three or four musicians entertaining audience with songs and stories. In the 1850s minstrel shows changed again with popular theatre stage adaptations of Uncle Tom's Cabin and later again after the Civil War. Even though the clarification of minstrel show development seems to be comprehensible retrospectively; nevertheless, the minstrel era combined, borrowed and overlapped all of the mentioned features. Moreover, the most complex issue concerns various audience's responses during the minstrel era. Herring believes that minstrel shows appropriated from black culture and created false stereotypes about black slaves; therefore, the audience acquired these stereotypes as a true picture about black culture and slavery (Herring 1997, 4-5).

Finally, even though minstrel shows almost disappeared from main theatre scenes in the late nineteenth century, one should not conclude that racial issues and the post-war American society caused the dusk of minstrel shows. According to Linn, at the end of the nineteenth century, minstrel shows plainly became outdated and exceeded by modern ways of entertainment, such as vaudeville and moving pictures (Linn 1994, 50).

## 5 Classic Era

### 5.1 Culture Reflection of Social Status

After the Civil War the American society was going through the changes which were reflected in the culture of the late nineteenth century. According to Linn, the years of 1890s were remarkably racist and a new type of songs emerged; “coon songs” which contented stereotyped issues about black people in their lyrics. Furthermore, it seemed obvious that at the end of the century the white American society gradually diverted from traditional Victorian values to create a new cultural style based on African-American traditions; however, trying to portray it ridiculously and as an insult (Linn 1994, 53).

Therefore, the culture organization was closely connected with the social status and social class division. Traube strongly implies that American popular culture emphasized the separation from high culture to low culture. In another words, white social elite established private foundations, clubs, urban orchestras and similar cultural institutions. Consequently, working class was excluded from participation not only because of high prices of admission but also because of “the escalating cultural resources [...] required to appropriate what was displayed” (Traube 1996, 137). Furthermore, the commercial popular culture split into two prominent fields; middle class preferably entertained themselves in domestic environment with serious theatre, magazines and sentimental fiction; whereas, industrial working class appreciated minstrelsy, reading dime novels and melodramatic theatre occurring in public areas (Traube 1996, 138).

The culture division created a few new adjectives denoting various types of culture depending on the position in a social hierarchy of the target audience. According to Levine, culture categories are defined as High, Low, Highbrow, Lowbrow and Popular. The terms are not always specific and apt to describe a certain type of culture, for instance a term Popular Culture does not necessarily mean that the culture must be certainly favorite among people. “Popular” in this case means to be at least aesthetical; therefore, the culture classification was “aesthetic and judgmental rather than descriptive” (Levine 1989, 7).

Even though minstrel shows were gradually disregarded, still there were other forms explaining the fantasy about Old South which appealed to white working class. Linn argues that sentimental portrayals of black slaves playing the banjo appeared in popular songs, illustrations or advertisements. The interpretations were alike; black slaves were contrasted to English factory workers to prove that slaves playing the banjo and singing on plantation the whole day have a better life than white English workers in factories. The society still distinguished between the North and the South even after the Civil War. The North represented modern white civilization with work opportunities; while the South was perceived as sentimental, primitive and black field with leisure activities such as playing the banjo. Thus, a banjo player has been stereotypically depicted as an old black man set in the plantation playing his gourd banjo, devotedly serving to his master (Linn 1994, 61-65).

Moreover, according to Saxton it was believed that black slaves belonged naturally to the South. They were associated with the sentimental surroundings where the plantation society was closely connected with the nature in the South. Saxton claims that minstrels perceived slave music rather as natural music than African music. Therefore, white Southerners argued that adopting musical ideas from slave music is another reason to maintain slavery. Slaves represented “everlasting part of nature rather than a figure in history” (Saxton 1975, 14).

## **5.2 Elevation of Banjo: from Plantations to Parlors**

So far the banjo represented African-American culture of black slaves; and therefore, it was mainly connected with people of lower social status. However, in the late nineteenth century the banjo experienced a change both in the physical modernization and cultural shift so banjoists and manufacturers believed that the banjo should expand to other music genres. It was assumed that the banjo should be introduced to people from higher social classes; and thus, to sound not only as an accompanying instrument during minstrel shows but also as a solo instrument in concert halls and parlors.

According to Linn, it was a new generation of banjoists who decided to “elevate” the banjo in consonance with the artistic belief in the nineteenth century emphasizing that the arts should raise one’s soul not only intellectually but also

spiritually. Hence, the banjo should be elevated both intellectually and morally. Banjoists then broadened their music repertory from minstrel songs to popular music allowing the audience to hear the banjo in totally different music context (Linn 1994, 7).

At the turn of the century, main banjo manufacturers resided mainly in big cities in the North. Therefore, their location enabled them to address potential banjo players from higher social class. Many of them published journals advertising the banjo as a proper instrument for white middle and upper class people. According to Gura and Bollman, one of them was Samuel Swaim Stewart, a manufacturer from Philadelphia, who devoted his career to producing quality and respectable banjos. Stewart popularized the banjo by smart advertisements deliberately directed at people who wished to “mark and display their cultural sophistication” (Gura and Bollman 1999, 138). Furthermore, Stewart succeeded in the manufacture industry; he established a large company producing thousands of fine instruments satisfying his customer’s needs (Gura and Bollman 1999, 139).

Nevertheless, to support his manufactory and spread the idea of the elevation of the banjo, Stewart proved as an excellent businessman. Gura and Bollman state that Stewart was not afraid to advertise his banjos in various catalogues, promotional brochures and journals. His famous journal *S. S. Stewart’s Banjo and Guitar Journal* was dedicated to display his instruments and address prospective musicians in terms of offering his tutorials, articles and essays about the banjo and pieces of music in every issue. For instance, Stewart highlighted that an accomplished banjoist is capable of reading notes as it is an essential skill for a banjo player who wishes to have an adequate repertoire, in another words, Stewart hinted that the banjo is not an instrument of lower class anymore (Gura and Bollman 1999, 139-146). In order to demonstrate strong determination to raise the banjo to better surroundings, manufacturers decided that the banjo needed also a new name. Linn states that promoters tried to make the word sound more European; therefore, they re-spelled the name to “banjeaux”; nevertheless, this innovation did not meet with acceptance of the public; hence, the instrument preserved its original name (Linn 1994, 10).

Together with the progressively changing social status of the banjo, playing style experienced a shift too. So far banjoists had preferred the stroke style or clawhammer style within the framework of minstrelsy; however, a new home of the banjo in official



culture developed so called “guitar style” or “finger style” achieved by using two fingers and a thumb. Winans argues that this new modern style replaced the old stroking style on concert stages and also in upper class homes; however, mountain musicians continued preferring playing in the stroke style (Winans 1999).

### **5.3 Young Women with Fancy Ribboned Banjos**

Due to the massive Stewart’s banjo promotion, as well as effort of many other manufacturers, the banjo successfully extended its usage to other genres. Linn claims that banjoists boasted with the repertory containing classical music pieces such as Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Rossini. It was believed that the more genteel repertory, the more genteel teacher; therefore, banjoists often emphasized the social status of their learners in order to gain respectable social credit in musical circles, in particular, when the banjo attracted the attention of upper-class women. So far the banjo had been depicted exclusively in hands of a man; however, in the 1880s the banjo came into fashion among women. Even though male players were afraid that women could “hurt the public image of the banjo by not taking the studies seriously” (Linn 1994, 23), women continued promoting the banjo, stressing that the banjo is more suitable for them than the guitar because the guitar forced women “to sit in unfeminine position and banjo strings were less likely to hurt delicate fingers than guitar strings” (Linn 1994, 19-23).

Generally, women in the late nineteenth century were given the credit for supporting music. Whitesitt argues that women were principal promoters of music made in America since the end of the Civil War. Owing to their effort, patronage and help, many professional musicians were able to develop their musical careers. Women were closely connected with musical activities such as organizing clubs, founding festivals or supporting groups studying music (Whitesitt 1989, 159-160).

Women were also responsible for a new picture of the banjo. They were photographed with their ribbon decorated banjos sitting in a typical Victorian home guided by a male banjo teacher. According to Hamessley, playing the banjo became a hit among upper class women in the 1890s. In addition, it was suggested that women might be even better in studying the banjo because of “their superior musical literacy”

(Hamessley 2007, 153). Therefore, banjo promoters turned their attention to women to advertise the banjo. It was assumed that upper class women would introduce the banjo to a better class of people which would provide the banjo the proper elevation; hence, women became equal elevators of the banjo as men. Accordingly, manufacturers quickly reacted to the new demand and started building suitable sizes of banjos specifically for women. Even though, women were seriously advertising the banjo, some male banjo promoters were afraid of the banjo becoming entirely connected with women and female players. What is more, a newly developed guitar style of playing was often considered effeminate (Hamessley 2007, 152-154).

Trying to establish in official culture, the banjo found its way to orchestras and universities. According to Linn, banjo orchestras usually comprised about twenty musicians, not only banjo players. Mandolin and guitar players were included too. Various types of banjos, for instance the piccolo banjo or banjeaurine, allowed orchestras to perform classical pieces in urban clubs formed usually by teachers and their pupils. Banjo orchestras performing in clubs were part of college entertainment even though not taken as serious music, they were popular and both male colleges and female colleges supported playing the banjo (Linn 1994, 24).

In the 1890s music clubs were not only men's domain anymore. Women established their own music clubs, many of them were run by a woman as a chief promoter of culture. Whitesitt claims that a typical woman belonging to a music club was a middle-aged married woman who enthusiastically supported musicians, musical events or was herself an active musician. Furthermore, most of musical clubs aimed at the same goal: to help talented members in their careers and to encourage musical background in their hometowns. Consequently, female music clubs were assumed as influential financial sponsors for American music and European musicians performing in the United States of America (Whitesitt 1989, 161).

Hence, it is now apparent that women were equal supporters of music generally as well as promoters of the banjo specifically. Linn claims that the American society no longer observed the banjo as an instrument associated with a black man set in plantation or a blackface minstrel player but also as a proper instrument for women. To explain this cultural shift one must be aware of the fact that both black people and women were perceived as emotional, irrational artistic souls; therefore, the banjo appeared to be

suitable for women too. Furthermore, devoted banjo promoters put a lot of effort into their intention to elevate the banjo and include it among other attributes of the official culture. Consequently, the elevation process achieved acceptance of the banjo in more genteel surroundings. However, deeply rooted views of the banjo as a traditional southern instrument prevailed in popular minds of American nation (Linn 1994, 36).

## **6 Importance of the Banjo in Jazz Music**

### **6.1 Black and White Musical Interaction**

Even though the black minstrelsy gradually disappeared from theatre scenes, it was still performed. As mentioned before, at the end of the nineteenth century, the banjo usage in music split into two domains. Linn argues that the two directions were totally opposite; popular music including syncopated rhythms and melodies of cakewalks, coon songs, walkarounds and progressively arising ragtime contrasted with classical music pieces played on the banjo (Linn 1994, 19). Since the elevated banjo music has already been discussed, this chapter will focus on popular music such as ragtime and jazz, both using the banjo as a significant instrument.

Despite the American culture experienced social class division in the nineteenth century, the banjo addressed people from various social backgrounds. Nevertheless, still reminding the idea of the Old South and providing a sentimental escape from ambitious white working background in North cities. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, people left rural areas for cities searching for better work opportunities and better living conditions. Together with changing lifestyle attitudes towards black people and black culture gradually changed again. Linn claims that the change was however rather negative and “resulted in a general avoidance of African-American images in the popular culture including images of black banjo players” (Linn 1994, 72).

Nonetheless, the cultural, notably musical interaction between black and white people continued irrespective of the race segregation. According to Otto and Burns, there is sufficient evidence based on comparing musical sources, such as lyrics and recordings, both proving that black music borrowed and adopted ideas from white music and vice versa. Although one might observe that musical instruments used on recordings may depend on the popularity of each instrument, recording companies mostly decided which instruments will be used. Therefore, white music was preferably recorded by string instrument bands playing guitars, violins, mandolins and banjos. On the contrary, black musicians rather recorded solo instruments or duets, string bands seemed to be infrequent. Furthermore, apparently both blacks and whites were

influenced by the same musical instrumental resources, including vocal styles and singing techniques (Otto and Burns 1974, 408-409).

Even though the musical influence flowed both ways, some scholars accused white musicians of gaining more from black music than black musicians from their white culture counterparts. Linn clarifies that the American society refused particular Victorian values at the beginning of the twentieth century demonstrating adoption of African traditional music and arts; therefore, one might understand the musical influence rather as unequal stating that “black entertainment has served white needs”. Nevertheless, the process of exchanging musical experience should be hence perceived as a process “within a framework of social class and American racial ideology” (Linn 1994, 82) even though the exchange was not probably balanced for both participants evenly, it was possible for them to share. Moreover, Linn argues that the banjo connected American and African culture more than any other musical instrument; therefore, the banjo had a certain role “in the expressions of American fears, ambivalence, and excitement about the new music and culture of the twentieth century” (Linn 1994, 82).

## **6.2 Banjo and Jazz Music**

At the end of the nineteenth century, the banjo music was influenced by a quite new style called ragtime. Gushee believes that ragtime originated already in the minstrel era when banjoists played syncopated songs with pentatonic melody usually learnt by ear rather than possible to find in written form (Gushee 2002, 158). Similarly, Gura and Bollman believe that relations between minstrel music from the 1850s and ragtime melodies are very close. Some minstrel tunes were written with specific rhythmic patterns which played on the piano later evolved the ragtime rhythm (Gura, Bollman 1999, 246).

Furthermore, Linn claims that the modern banjo with its technical modernization slowly diverged from old tunes questioning the Old South sentimental banjo and moving to big cities with fresh musical ideas. At the beginning of the twentieth century the banjo was particularly associated with jazz and jazz orchestras (Linn 1994, 82).

As mentioned above, syncopated melodies from the nineteenth century are assumed to precede jazz music. In another words, jazz music is based on syncopated melodies. Levine defines jazz “a new product of a new age” and describes the music with adjectives such as “raucous” or “discordant”; however, “accessible, spontaneous” emphasizing that the boundary between musicians and the audience was often unclear because the audience very often accompanied musicians by clapping their hands, stomping and dancing; therefore, for the jazz music the audience was very important. Moreover, Levin theorizes that jazz obliterated contemporary standards or rules about the official culture. Obviously, until jazz emerged, the culture had developed sharp boundaries between musicians, actors and the audience claiming that the audience’s primary role was to listen, watch and not to interrupt “the creations of true artists” (Levine 1989, 7).

The word jazz itself was a frequent subject of several studies as the origins of the word appear to be uncertain. According to Osgood, the word jazz is not related to any word in English language; however, it is believed that the word probably comes from Africa, as well as the music origins, with various spelling alternatives, for example *jas*, *jass*, *jaz*. Concerning the exact meaning of the word, Osgood quotes an explanatory story from plantation times when slaves used the phrase 'jaz her up' to experience “fast and furious fun”. Even nowadays, performers in vaudevilles use a similar phrase 'put in jazz' when a performance needs to “go to high speed and accelerate comedy spark” (Osgood 1926, 514-515).

To describe basic musical characteristics of jazz, one should become aware of the fact which instruments are typical for jazz and where the music comes from. The jazz music is known to be born in New Orleans, one might observe it as common knowledge that New Orleans is often called “cradle of jazz”. Furthermore, Ostransky believes that jazz was played not only in New Orleans but also in other big cities, such as Oklahoma City, Memphis, St. Louis and Chicago; however, jazz music in New Orleans flourished, collected musicians and built new repertoire. Therefore, New Orleans carries its nickname legitimately. According to Ostransky, one of the characteristic jazz features is improvisation; jazz musicians improvised on a given melody and afterwards with greater musical experience they formed set harmonies. Ostransky claims:

Jazz performers built up their own extended, improvised solos, beginning with little or no variation on the agreed-upon tune and moved on to more elaborate and ornate melodic variations as the fancy struck them until the melody was completely abandoned for variations on the fixed, established, accompanying chords or, as jazzmen frequently call them, changes (Ostransky 1978, 36).

In addition, jazz bands usually comprised of a melody and rhythmic section. Ostransky further states that the lead melody and harmonies were frequently played by the cornet, trumpet, clarinet or trombone; whereas, instruments such as the piano, drums, bass, tuba, guitar and the banjo provided the rhythmic part. Sometimes jazz bands or orchestras varied the instruments depending on whether playing inside or outside (Ostransky 1978, 34-36).

Even though the five-string banjo, usually connected with popular tunes, minstrel shows or the Old South, was still manufactured and played in the 1920s; however, the banjo in jazz music was different. The banjo played in jazz bands and orchestras reflected the changes in the physical appearance made in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

As hinted before, the main changes in the physical development of the banjo were addition of the resonator and withdrawal of one string. Linn claims that the four-string banjo now dominated musical stages while the five-string banjo obtained respectful “grandfatherly status”. Furthermore, banjoists playing professionally developed a new playing technique; using a plectrum or a pick. Due to this technique, banjoists achieved louder sound needed in theatres and vaudevilles. Consequently, when using a plectrum, the fifth string with the droning function became inactive and redundant; therefore, banjoists removed it. Hence, new versions of banjo-like instruments were made; manufacturers experimented with combinations of the banjo and mandolin, the banjo and guitar or ukulele. It seems that the uke banjo was rather a private instrument used during small sessions of amateur character nevertheless very popular among banjoists. In addition, a new type of the four-string banjo called the tenor banjo or plectrum banjo was used in jazz music. Linn also points out that some scholars, notably those who do not play the banjo, might define tenor and plectrum banjos as one instrument; nevertheless, there are significant differences. Both banjos have four strings but the tenor banjo has a shorter neck, usually nineteen frets only;

whereas, the plectrum banjo was developed from the five-string banjo with the same technical design. Therefore, five-string banjo players preferred playing the plectrum banjo rather than the tenor banjo (Linn 1994, 82-85).

The tenor banjo and plectrum banjo both served new musical needs better; therefore, the five-string banjo stayed associated with old tunes played in the stroke style or ragtime melodies. According to Gura and Bollman, jazz music did not use the finger style technique of playing but rather “rapid chording and the strong rhythmic emphases that the plectrum instruments allowed”; and thus, the four-string banjo prevailed in jazz orchestras; whereas, the five-string banjo “became increasingly rare” (Gura, Bollman 1999, 249).

At the beginning of the twentieth century music clubs continued their tradition from the elevation banjo era in advertising and playing the banjo. Linn argues that musical college clubs might have changed their forms but they still accepted the banjo as a key instrument even though some banjo clubs disappeared at the end of nineteenth century. However, by the 1920s most of clubs did not play the five-string banjo anymore, the tenor and plectrum banjos were preferable. Besides tenor and plectrum banjos orchestras also included mandolins, guitars, ukuleles, drums or Hawaiian guitar. As mentioned above, the four-string banjo belonged to the rhythmical part of the orchestra even though some banjoists tried to evolve the banjo as a solo instrument (Linn 1994, 88-91).

During the elevation era a typical banjoist was a male player; later women joined and proceeded successfully with promoting the banjo. According to Linn, in the twentieth century a banjo player was associated with a male, specifically a young male. Popular dances and newly emerged jazz music were described as a matter of young audience and young people. The 1920s in America were considered as a period of cultural changes. For instance, upper class women playing the banjo in the nineteenth century were now expressing their freedom with drinking, dancing and entertaining themselves with various leisure activities. The society rejected some traditional Victorian cultural values emphasizing new lifestyle and freedom. Jazz music was one of the features expressing new cultural ideas. What is more, jazz did not exactly follow the cultural standards which had been established before. Linn claims:



For most of the moral critics, the threat of jazz or ragtime was not the music as an abstract sound object, it was the music as event and as a symbol of a lifestyle that threatened civilized society (Linn 1994, 98-100).

Criticizing voices sounded strongly claiming that jazz could not be an equivalent part of the official culture because it did not correspond with the official music standards. Levine maintains that jazz was condemned because of its characteristic musical features. Moreover, jazz was denoted as a style not melodic enough, often combining dissonant tones and expressive lyrics. Even though critiques on jazz seemed to be rather negative, young musicians, both black and white, found jazz music appealing in terms of their own musical and personal freedom and an opportunity to express themselves artistically. Levine concludes that “the striking thing about jazz is the extent to which it symbolized revolt whenever it became established” (Levine 1989, 12-15).

### **6.3 Recording Technology Brings Banjo to American Homes**

Changing behavior of American society was, apart from other things, supported by the technological development in the twentieth century. The invention of the phonograph enabled people to listen to music not only at concert halls and musical clubs but also comfortably at home. According to Katz, the American society had limited opportunity to listen to music before the invention of the phonograph when contrasting to Europe for instance; therefore, due to phonograph recordings music became easily accessible for all people disregarding the race, social status or the location. Katze further states that music, particularly classical music in the 1920s in America represented “a powerful cultural and moral force” so American listeners “sadly lacked access to it”. What is more, it was also believed that classical music of European composers was the best quality music, raising good morals, as well as classical music was able to “steer young people clear from the temptation of popular music”, such as ragtime and jazz (Katz 1998, 449-450).

Undoubtedly, recordings from the early twentieth century now provide not only evidence about music and social background but also they emphasize racial relationships. As mentioned above, the musical influence and communication between

black and white musicians continued despite the race segregation. Otto and Burns, focusing on blues and hillbilly records, believe that there were almost no recordings explicitly stating the race differences between blacks and whites due to recording companies' policy and "self-imposed censorship". However, a social aspect worth mentioning was the color differentiation between Afro-Americans. There are a lot of lyrics addressing the skin color distinguishing among "yellow, brown and black" people. Obviously, in the post World War I era light-skinned Afro-Americans were considered advantaged in terms of job opportunities and social interaction. Therefore, Otto and Burns speak about a "color snobbery among Afro-Americans; lighter-skinned blacks frequently congregated in their own churches and social clubs" (Otto, Burns 1972, 346).

However, according to Linn, the development of sound recording although not of prime quality created suitable conditions for the banjo to spread popular music among wider range of listeners. In the period of phonograph boom, the banjo was again associated with popular jazz and ragtime music. Consequently, there is sufficient evidence of banjo ragtime recordings, for instance cakewalks, coon songs or syncopated marches. Therefore, Linn claims:

Recording technology not only helped reshape public ideas of the banjo, it molded performance practice and musical learning of many subsequent banjoists (Linn 1994, 86).

In the same way, Winans and Kaufman point out that banjoists could easily learn from banjo records new playing styles and melodies, as well as they could sell their own records while touring the country and Europe. Hence, recordings became "an important medium for disseminating banjo music and playing technique" (Winans, Kaufman 1994, 22).

As mentioned before, the banjo had an important rhythmical role in jazz orchestras and due to its technical qualities surpassed other instruments. Linn asserts that the banjo was praised for its loud volume and "percussive punch" particularly when played during dances or in recording studios. However, in the 1930s jazz music transformed from noisy and rough melodies of the 1920s to gentle and tuneful music. Consequently, the banjo lost its dominant position to the Spanish guitar which suited the

new style better. Linn aptly states that this change one must not view as “a failure for the banjo, but as a success for the guitar” (Linn 1994, 94).

## **7 White Banjo from Appalachia**

### **7.1 Banjo Ringing in the Mountains**

After the period of the Great Depression in the 1930s and World War II when jazz music affirmed its position and gained considerable status, the four-string banjo left its prominent role in the jazz orchestra and was associated with the sentimental culture again, as well as the five-string banjo. Linn argues that even though the five-string banjo still represented the “ol’ banjo”, it was no longer perceived as a black instrument but as a white mountain instrument. The connections between black slave plantations and the banjo faded by the 1950s; therefore, the banjo was reborn with new intentions to “revive an old instrument in the national popular culture” (Linn 1994, 118).

The banjo in the late twentieth century was linked with the Appalachian region in North Carolina, more than with any other part of the United States of America, where white rural mountaineers played home made instruments in a frequent banjo and fiddle combination. According to Langrall, Appalachian folk traditions rooted in immediate family gatherings when ballads were sung, long tales and adventures were told, etc. Appalachian musicians usually played during these sessions; they rarely performed publicly on stages. One of the typical features of the Appalachian folk music was the style of singing; musicians sang in a “high, lonesome” style when a tender solo voice sung ballads or church songs (Langrall 1986, 38). As mentioned before, white mountaineers living in the Appalachian region were in a regular contact with black musicians working on the railroads. Therefore, black musicians could share their musical experience with them. Langrall also believes that black railroad workers brought the guitar and the banjo and interacted with white rural people living in the Appalachian Mountains (ibid.).

Traditional folk music was a part of American folklore which comprises of particular elements. Parker defines the folklore as “traditional knowledge, beliefs, superstitions, customs and legends of the common people”. He also points out that due to “rapid settlement and development” of American citizens, mixed with immigrants from Europe, only some parts of America preserved a “distinctive folk-lore.” The Appalachian region is one of them. Folk traditions have their origins in traditions of white Scottish and Irish middle class immigrants who were supposed to be the first

settlers in the mountains. Due to mountainous landscape it was hard to travel there; hence, the mountaineers were somewhat isolated. Parker claims:

[T]hese people were little influenced by the outside world or by books, and they preserved and transmitted, with slight change, that mass of common knowledge and popular beliefs and customs which they inherited, and which we speak as of folk-lore (Parker 1907, 241).

People living in the Appalachian region were viewed different by the rest of the country. It might have been because of the location of the region in the mountains or rather because of their different way of life. Linn suggests that Appalachian mountaineers lived different lives contrasted to lives people led in urban areas. The society felt the need to integrate Appalachians into the modern urban life and bring them “into mainstream American culture.” Therefore, some people perceived Appalachians as a white economical source possible to integrate but some people; on the other hand, saw Appalachians only as a group of immigrants bringing with them “strange customs and dangerous political ideas”. Consequently, false stereotypes were created about Appalachian mountaineers stressing the poverty, ignorance and hostility or violence within families (Linn 1994, 122-123).

The Appalachian folk music involved playing the banjo as its traditional element during the black and white musical interaction notably since the post Civil War period. On the contrary, Linn poses an interesting question why the banjo was included in the stereotypes created about white Appalachian mountaineers in the twentieth century in the same way as the banjo was stereotyped within the culture of black Americans in the nineteenth century. Apparently, these two cultures had something in common; people from both cultures were poor, they lived in cabins and both were “suppressed by the wealthy elite of the plantation South” (Linn 1994, 126).

Despite the Appalachian otherness the white folk banjo spread its influence through the mountains. The most frequent combination for the banjo to play with was the fiddle. One might notice that a term 'fiddle' is rather used when describing rural folk music than the word 'violin' which; on the other hand, associated classical music. According to Feintuch and Allen, the fiddle seems to have been neglected in terms of writing an accomplished study about this instrument even though the fiddle has always

been one of the dominant elements of American folk music. However, the first fiddle appeared on folk recordings around the 1920s and since then there have been plenty of records with fiddle playing traditional music, fiddle on commercial recordings, etc. Nevertheless, collected fiddle recordings prove that fiddles still belong among essential folk instruments (Feintuch, Allen 1982, 493).

## **7.2 Earl Scruggs and *The Beverly Hillbillies***

Together with the development of phonograph, recordings with another style of music expanded; the style called 'hillbilly' originating already in the 1920s. The hillbilly music is often denoted as a predecessor of country music. The etymology of the word hillbilly is not quite known. According to Green, it might be of Scottish origin, referring to Scottish rebels. Another version says that *billie* represents a synonym for a fellow or companion in Scottish dialect approximately from 1505. However, the reputation of hillbilly music was rather supported by the negative picture assigned by the media. Therefore, people listening or playing hillbilly music, were humorously portrayed as primitive, drinking alcohol and feuding mountaineers (Green 1965, 204-205).

Hillbilly music was perceived as American white folk music; however, Linn argues that some parts of the repertory were of African-American origins but recording companies wished to distinguish between the genres. Therefore, they published separately blues as “black” music and hillbilly as “white” Anglo-Saxon music. Hence, black stringed ensembles were rarely recorded, somewhat neglected. Hillbilly music employed particularly string instruments such as the guitar, mandolin, fiddle and naturally the banjo. Linn believes that the banjo was however rarely used as a solo instrument accompanying the ensemble where the fiddle usually played the lead melody. Furthermore, with the growing popularity of hillbilly music and hence losing its regional character, musicians did not use the five-string banjo so often (Linn 1994, 139).

Hillbilly recordings gained enormous popularity on the national level in the 1940s. As Wilgus suggests, hillbilly records were successful principally due to the radio and phonograph development, otherwise they would probably disappear later. Some of early hillbilly musicians performed hillbilly music live during the shows in vaudevilles

(Wilgus 1970, 161). Furthermore, according to Linn banjoists such as Charlie Poole and Dave Macon were typical hillbilly five-string banjoists who brought old-time tunes to the commercial sphere. Linn claims that hillbilly banjoists appeared during vaudeville shows, usually together with orchestras, and were supposed to entertain the audience in the similar way as the nineteenth century minstrel banjoists. Therefore, they were dressed in funny costumes wearing big shoes reconnecting with the “old-fashioned musical values” (Linn 1994, 140).

Growing popularity hillbilly music seemed to appear almost anywhere. People could hear it from the radio, phonograph, vaudeville shows and later also in the film. The popular situation comedy called *The Beverly Hillbillies* broadcasted in 1962 – 1971 included the five-string banjo in its 200 episodes. According to Cullum, *The Beverly Hillbillies* were one of the most favorite series in the television history. The main character Jed Clampett, whose name coincides with the title song “The Ballad of Jed Clampett”, moves with his family to Beverly Hills after discovering oil under his mountain cabin and consequently becoming rich. Cullum believes that protagonists “managed to bolster its credibility among its core audience with a kind of hillbilly authenticity” (Cullum 2011).

The theme song, written by the producer of the situation comedy Paul Henning, is played by a phenomenal five-string banjoist Earl Scruggs and a guitarist Lester Flatt. Earl Scruggs comes from North Carolina and his name is firmly associated with the five-string banjo in not only American minds but also through the world. Bailey claims that the musical world before the appearance of Earl Scruggs in 1945 was not musically attractive for the five-string banjo. However, Scruggs developed a unique three-finger style which was derived from “older styles of a smooth continuity of delivery with improved accenting of the melody notes” (Bailey 1972, 64).

Furthermore, Scruggs’s three-finger style using thumb, index and middle finger changed completely the role of the banjo. Linn claims that Scruggs “took professional banjo playing out of the minstrel tradition” in terms of not inclining to old traditional comedian style of minstrel shows including exaggerated clothes and shoes, telling funny stories and jokes. Even though, such style was still performed during shows of hillbilly string bands or early bluegrass bands. Scruggs rejected the role of a comic minstrel banjoist and “created new musical territory for the instrument.” Moreover, Scruggs’s

playing technique involved playing with the three metal picks which allowed him to achieve greater speed and volume. The bright and loud tones in the syncopated rhythm attracted the attention of many other banjoists. Linn claims:

Scruggs's new technique dramatically increased the banjo's musical capabilities and allowed it soloist stature within the group. And for many (most?) subsequent bluegrass bands, the banjo player became the lead soloist of the ensemble (Linn 1994, 141-142).

In addition, according to Romanoski, Scruggs's first noticeable performance held on the stage of famous Grand Ole Opry in Nashville in 1946 when performing with Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys may represent the turning point for American music. Romanoski further hints that Scruggs with his progressive ringing banjo might have assumed the position of the banjo player in Monroe's ensemble to another accomplished banjoist Don Reno who attended Monroe's audition too. However, when Reno was inducted into the army and thus rejected Monroe's offer, Scruggs accepted and became "an integral part of the bluegrass history" (Romanoski 2007, 53). What is more, Monroe soon recognized that Scruggs's banjo would become the prominent element of his shows; therefore, he moved the banjo from its traditional position in the rhythm section to the solo instrument place (Romanoski 2007, 54).

During his career with Monroe's bluegrass band Scruggs composed a number of popular bluegrass tunes and songs. However, together with his musical partner and guitarist Lester Flatt they established their own ensemble called Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs and Foggy Mountain Boys after they both left Bill Monroe in 1948. Scruggs continued writing music, for instance during the period of Foggy Mountain Boys he wrote one of his most famous instrumental tune, which will be discussed later, called "Foggy Mountain Breakdown".

As indicated, banjoists immediately followed and copied Scruggs's style of playing on the five-string banjo. Earl Scruggs quickly became a musical icon for bluegrass banjoists and performers. According to an excellent banjo player Tony Trischka, Scruggs's style is based on the three-finger style of parlor banjoists from the 1800s, such as Charlie Pool or Snuffy Jenkins; however, it was Scruggs who refined the style, composed new tunes which later became bluegrass standards. Furthermore,



Trischka states that Scruggs is a “great believer in syncopation” which attracts the listener’s attention and provides more intense experience. Trischka explains:

There’s something about the way Earl plays that feels so good in your fingers. I always recommend working up his solos note-for-note. You’ll always learn something new, and it’ll definitely refresh your chops (Trischka 2007, 58).

Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt became more and more popular within the scope of American culture. They regularly appeared on radio shows, folk and bluegrass music festivals and television. According to Romanoski, the previously mentioned television series *The Beverly Hillbillies* brought an opportunity for Flatt and Scruggs to introduce bluegrass music to a wide audience. Their recording the theme song “The Ballad of Jed Clampett”, which was placed as number one in American charts in 1963, influenced the popularity of *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Therefore, the Scruggs’s banjo was possible to hear “in living rooms around the country.” Nevertheless, Romanoski further argues that Scruggs hesitated with his participation on the show with apparently hillbilly stereotypes; therefore, he agreed to record the theme song only after seeing the pilot episode. Finally, Scruggs observed that the situation comedy did not content the features of characters were “really down-to-earth southern folk placed in a comedy situation” (Romanoski 2007, 56).

Moreover, not only recorded Flatt and Scruggs the theme song but also they appeared in one of the episodes. Flatt and Scruggs represented the cousins of the Clampett family. Linn points out that their characters were depicted as less hillbilly than the other family members. The music on the show was supposed to demonstrate instrumental skills of the musicians rather than to picture amusing moments of the show; however, *The Beverly Hillbillies* associated “the sound of bluegrass music and bluegrass banjo to hillbilly stereotypes for millions of Americans” (Linn 1994, 142).

Nevertheless, Flatt and Scruggs’s music complement on *The Beverly Hillbillies* was not their only film experience. Scruggs’s phenomenal instrumental piece called “Foggy Mountain Breakdown”, which encouraged many banjoists to learn playing the five-string banjo, sounded in the film *Bonnie and Clyde*. The 1967 film starring Hollywood movie actors Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway depicts a romantic

relationship between two people trying to escape from harsh times during the period of the Great Depression. Romanoski claims that the famous banjo piece used during the car race when Bonnie and Clyde are chased by the police emphasizes rural setting and notably the “odd mixture of violence and romance wrapped around car scenes that epitomized the film.” Furthermore, the film was completed by the soundtrack featuring Flatt and Scruggs with Foggy Mountain Boys playing their masterpiece “Foggy Mountain Breakdown” and other songs related to the film (Romanoski 2007, 56).

Flatt and Scruggs were awarded many times for their contribution to American music and bluegrass music in particular. In 1985 Flatt and Scruggs were elected in to the Country Music Hall of Fame and later in 2007 they were also inducted to the Songwriters Hall of Fame in Nashville.

### **7.3 Bluegrass Movement and Five-String Banjo**

Even though the most influential banjoist Earl Scruggs and his contribution to the development of the five-string banjo and bluegrass music have already been mentioned in the previous subchapter, it is necessary to discuss bluegrass music as a crucial background for the five-string banjo usage in the late twentieth century in America.

Bluegrass music is described as American traditional acoustic music developed mainly in the states of Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee. Smith argues that the word 'bluegrass' was first used by radio disc jockeys to characterize music usually played by instruments such as the five-string banjo, mandolin, guitar, fiddle and bass. Bluegrass music is based on folk, hillbilly and other Southern musical traditions; however, differing in particular features. For instance, bluegrass music is played by professional or semi-professional white musicians who can sing in up to four harmonies. Regarding the singing style, bluegrass singers sing in a high-pitched and tensed voice, the high notes are usually sung in a head-voice or falsetto. Moreover, typical bluegrass singing feature is singing in harmony when two or three harmony voices complete the lead voice. In addition, contrasted to hillbilly bluegrass music is not intended to be used as dance music. To complete the definition of bluegrass music Smith claims that bluegrass band instruments “function in three well defined roles, and each instrument changes roles according to predictable patterns” (Smith 1965, 245).

The pioneer of bluegrass music, frequently called the Father of Bluegrass, was a Kentucky mandolin player Bill Monroe. According to Rosenberg, Bill Monroe and his brother Charlie represented one of the most popular and influential hillbilly bands in the 1930s. In 1939 Bill Monroe separated from his brother and established his own bluegrass ensemble called the Blue Grass Boys. Monroe and his new band were regular members of the Grand Ole Opry shows in Nashville. Monroe's singing in harmony with his guitarist Lester Flatt was later completed with excellent banjo music of Earl Scruggs. The repertoire of Monroe's bluegrass band mostly comprised of blues in slow or medium pace, religious gospels, waltzes, love songs and quick breakdowns. Describing Monroe's immense popularity Rosenberg claims:

The Blue Grass traveled extensively, and Monroe's technique of presenting shows added to his popularity; he carried a large circus tent, which was set up in small towns and drew tremendous crowds (Rosenberg 1967, 144-145).

After single bluegrass banjo pieces in the situation comedy *The Beverly Hillbillies* and the gangster movie *Bonnie and Clyde* bluegrass music presents another hit among the bluegrass community; the Coen's brothers with their *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* based on the novella *A Dozen Tough Jobs* written by Howard Waldrop. The film is set in the period of the Great Depression when three white fugitives experience series of humorous adventures. According to Scott, the film refers to Homer's *Odyssey*; however, the Coen's brothers excellently gain from the Southern folk traditions, behavior and notably music; therefore, the story is completed by bluegrass, country, folk and gospel music. The main protagonist Ulysses Everett McGill played by a Hollywood star George Clooney and his two friends record a song "Man of Constant Sorrow" which seems to provide the film with "an emotional resonance that would otherwise be missing." Scott further believes that the music is essential to understand the "film's peculiar blend of fantasy, humor and pathos" (Scott 2000).

The film music was recorded by respectable folk and bluegrass musicians; for instance, the song "Man of Constant Sorrow" was performed by Dan Tyminski from the bluegrass band Union Station. Prominent female folk, country and bluegrass vocalists

such as Gillian Welch, Emmylou Harris or Alison Krauss also contributed to the film music under the supervision of a music producer T-Bone Burnett.

Obviously folk and bluegrass music revives and reminds the Southern sentimental culture. Except for recordings, radio shows and film appearance, folk, old time music and bluegrass were shared mainly on musical festivals. Linn believes that the main purpose of festivals is not only to perform music by professional musicians but also to create both musical and social community of people with the same interest. Linn states:

Musicians create a sense of community by sharing in a highly coherent musical style and placing value on participation. It is revealing that they come together in festival situations, forming an actual community for a weekend (Linn 1994, 152).

To conclude, bluegrass music in the twentieth century drawing upon folk and hillbilly styles connects musicians and listeners not only within the North American continent but also reaches to Europe. Bluegrass bands established in Europe adequately extend American musical and cultural heritage.

## 8 Conclusion: Role of the Banjo in Contemporary Culture

In the twenty-first century the banjo is usually associated with American folk traditional music, assuming that white American musicians completely invented and developed the concept of the banjo. However, after examining relevant sources, it is now clear that banjo predecessors originated in African culture. Early reports proved that the banjo developed from African musical instruments which were brought to the United States of America as a personal attachment by enslaved Africans.

Since the first account mentioning the banjo in colonies in the mid 1600s, the banjo has experienced a four hundred year journey to the modern stylish banjo which is played on popular American and European stages today. The banjo has changed through the history according to language and cultural background of its players and manufacturers. The first steps of the banjo on the mainland are associated with black slaves and their initial input in the development of the banjo. Black slaves introduced the plain gourd instrument to white people who gradually established its position within American culture.

During the eighteenth century the musical interaction between black slaves and white middle class people increased; therefore, the banjo became the key element in the new phenomenon of minstrelsy. White musicians with blackened faces imitated black singers with their characteristic style of playing and singing. This appropriation however pointed out to the unequal cultural relationship between blacks and whites. To understand the evolution of minstrelsy, one must be aware of the fact that the theme of minstrelsy expressed the attitude of American society towards black slaves and race ideology generally. Therefore, minstrel shows allowed American society to deal with feelings concerning the issue of slavery.

As demonstrated, the Civil War participated on the evolution of the banjo and spread its usage and popularity to further areas. The analysis of the Civil War story *Cold Mountain* proved that ordinary middle class people included the banjo and traditional folk music as an integral part of their culture.

A new generation of banjoists determined the further development of the banjo, nevertheless still connected with people of lower social status. Therefore, the banjo changed its structure to meet the requirements of upper class people. Banjoists

advertised the banjo as a new product suitable for young modern males and females. Moreover, it was believed that women and young musicians from universities would uplift the social status of the banjo when introducing it to higher cultural and musical circles. However, the idea of sentimental Old South banjo remained in minds of most American people.

The 1920s represented a period of changes in the United States of America. When jazz music emerged, the banjo established its position within jazz orchestras. During this era the banjo changed its structure to suit better musical needs of jazz ensembles. Jazz music was generally perceived as revolting music of young generation progressively rejecting established musical conventions.

After the periods of the Great Depression and World War II the banjo reaffirmed its position within American culture. As thesis points out, the banjo helped to gain respectable status of jazz music and when jazz music culminated the banjo was not a part of jazz ensembles anymore. However, the five-string banjo continued its tradition in mountain white music. Therefore, the twentieth century no longer associated the banjo with black culture. Appalachian folk music employing the banjo laid foundations for bluegrass music which flourished during the 1940s. The phenomenal five-string banjoist Earl Scruggs established a completely new background for the five-string banjo. His contribution to American music has been awarded by many respectable awards.

The banjo within contemporary American music influenced many other music genres throughout the world. Moreover, to some extent, the banjo reflects the history of American nation. Hence, the banjo symbolized the vehicle for developing relationships between blacks and whites during the initial period of the banjo evolution or later during the minstrel age, as well as in the jazz era. Therefore, one might conclude that the banjo is an integral part of American culture

## Resumé

Předložená diplomová práce se zabývá kulturně historickým vývojem hudebního nástroje, který se nazývá banjo. Neznalost hudebního a kulturního kontextu tohoto nástroje svádí k domněnce, že banjo vzniklo přímo na území Spojených států Amerických a tedy je nástrojem ryze americkým, nicméně z doložené analýzy sekundárních zdrojů vyplývá, že banjo bylo do Ameriky přivezeno černošskými otroky z Afriky v rozmezí šestnáctého až sedmnáctého století. Historicko-kulturní analýza pracuje s pojmem 'americká kultura'. Tento pojem není přesně vymezen vzhledem k rozmanitosti a struktuře způsobu amerického života.

V průběhu čtyř století vývoje, změnilo banjo svůj fyzický vzhled, který vždy vycházel z kulturního zázemí a potřeb hráčů a výrobců nástroje. Tato práce je tedy zaměřena na nejvýraznější změny v konstrukci banja, zejména pak v období devatenáctého a dvacátého století. Stejně tak jako nástroj i název 'banjo' prošel určitým vývojem, nicméně se lze domnívat, že uvedené názvy označující předchůdce banja rovněž pochází z africké kultury. Pro přesnější dokreslení kultury afrických otroků a jejich životních podmínek v Americe, práce konzultuje životní příběh černošského otroka Fredericka Douglassa, který popisuje a hodnotí postavení otroků v americké společnosti. Dále, zajímavým faktem nicméně zůstává důvod, proč si afričtí otroci zvolili banjo jako svůj typický nástroj, i přesto že banjo nepatří mezi tradiční africké nástroje. Američtí otrokáři v obavě z revolty otroků zakázali některé hudební nástroje, např. bubny. Toto omezení přinutilo otroky k upřednostnění jiného hudebního nástroje, a tím se stalo banjo.

Během osmnáctého století se úspěšně rozvíjelo hudební propojení mezi bělochy a černochoy. Přestože banjo bylo stále vnímáno jako černošský hudební nástroj, díky novému fenoménu zvanému minstrelsy se tak dostalo do širšího povědomí americké veřejnosti. Minstrelové, bělošští hudebníci se začerněným obličejem, zpívali za doprovodu banja černošské písně a bezostyšně tak těžili z afrického kulturního dědictví. Jedním z nejvýraznějších hudebníků imitujících černošský folklór, byl beze sporu banjista Joel Walker Sweeney, který výrazným způsobem ovlivnil vývoj banja. Jak práce zmiňuje, Sweeneymu jsou připisovány signifikantní změny v konstrukci banja, např. přidání krátké páté struny. Nicméně na základě prostudovaných materiálů je

evidentní, že Sweeney danou změnu převzal od černošských hudebníků a ztotožnil se s ní natolik, že je mu přisuzována jako autorská.

Minstrelská hudba uchvátila americkou společnost do té míry, že se nadšení amerického publika přesunulo do Evropy, kde dosáhlo více než vřelého přijetí. Tato skutečnost byla podhoubím pro vznik nových typů a provedení banjí, např. zither-banjo a dalších variant vícestrunných banjí. Díky těmto inovátorským počínům se nově založená anglická tradice minstrelské hudby na čas odpoutala od tradice americké.

Většina minstrelských vystoupení parodovala reálný život otroků, čímž částečně degradovala odpovídající vliv banja na vývoj americké kultury. V období, které následně vedlo k Občanské válce, se americká společnost rozdělila na dvě části. Část Spojených států podporovala zachování otrokářského systému, který panoval na Jihu, oproti tomu Sever pohlížel na otroctví jako na kruté a nelidské zacházení s lidmi. Spisovatelka Harriet Beecher Stowe podporovala zrušení otroctví, stejně jako ostatní abolicionisté svými články v novinách, nicméně k velkému kroku ji přimělo ustanovení Zákona o uprchlých otrocích. V roce 1852 vydala svůj román *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, který měl velký vliv na veřejné mínění americké společnosti, jak na Severu, tak na Jihu. Diplomová práce se nesoustředí na literární analýzu románu jako takového, ale na vliv zlidovělých adaptací, zejména pak divadelních a filmových, na americkou kulturu.

Minstrelská hudba byla v období před Občanskou válkou velmi populární, přesto však byla určitou částí publika přijímána rozporuplně. Někteří lidé vnímali minstrelská představení jako parodii života afrických otroků, kteří byli komicky zobrazováni jako šťastní lidé oddaně sloužící svému pánu a hrající celý den na banjo. Práce dále rozebírá vliv románu *Uncle Tom's Cabin* na rozšíření povědomí o minstrelské hudbě. Téměř ihned po vydání románu, divadelní společnosti zařadily příběh strýčka Toma do svého repertoáru. K dokreslení atmosféry otrokářského prostředí, divadelní tvůrci použili banjo jako symbol černošské folklórní hudby, ačkoliv sama Stowe banjo nikdy ve svém románu nezmínila. Nespočet divadelních adaptací tohoto románu však posunulo morální poselství, které původní příběh nese. Předložená práce dále porovnává filmové adaptace románu, které vznikly během dvacátého století.

Občanská válka se významně podílela na evoluci banja. Vzhledem k oblíbě tohoto hudebního nástroje se tak banjo dostalo do dalších oblastí Spojených států. Konfederační vojáci, stejně tak jako příslušníci Unie, často putovali s banjem, jehož



hudba se tak stala, kromě osobní korespondence, jediným rozptýlením ve válce. Příběh banjisty Sama Sweeneyho, bratra slavnějšího hráče na banjo Joela Walkera Sweeneyho, je toho vhodným příkladem.

Průběh a vliv Občanské války je zachycen v románu *Cold Mountain* spisovatele Charlese Frazier. Děj, který je situovaný do prostředí Severní Karolíny, zobrazuje vliv Občanské války na obyčejně lidi z několika sociálních vrstev. Frazier, který sám pobýval v Severní Karolíně, ve svém románu precizně zachytil rozpor mezi agrárně orientovaným Jihem a industriálním Severem. Stejně tak více než vhodně začlenil charakteristickou hudbu této oblasti, která využívá banja. Banjo zde představuje spojení s kulturou obyčejných lidí, kteří žili na venkově, a hudba byla nedílnou součástí jejich života. Práce se zaměřuje na využití banja nejenom v románu, ale i jeho pozdější filmové adaptaci.

Banjo bylo doposud spojováno výlučně s lidmi nižší sociální třídy. Nová generace banjistu se však rozhodla pozvednout morální status banja a představit ho v lepších hudebních a sociálních kruzích, stejně tak prezentovat banjo v novém repertoáru. Další etapou ve vývoji banja byla fáze, která přinesla nové prvky v provedení a konstrukci nástroje, jeho prezentaci na veřejnosti, např. ženský princip hraní na banjo, který vyvolal smíšené pocity zejména u mužských hráčů. Banjisté se domnívali, že banjo by se mohlo v rukou žen stát výlučně ženským hudebním nástrojem, což by mohlo zapříčinit pokles jeho oblíbenosti. Banjo se dále začalo objevovat v klubových vystoupeních a uplatňovalo se i v klasických skladbách během veřejných vystoupení v koncertních sálech. Fenomén venkovského banja fascinoval městské vrstvy amerického obyvatelstva, které ho přijalo za své zejména díky propagaci mladých lidí a studentů z univerzit. Mladým lidem banjo evokovalo revoltující pocity. Tuto společenskou situaci dokreslovala skutečnost, že hlavní výrobci banjí sídlili ve velkých městech a jejich produkce tak byla lehce dostupná pro všechny potenciální hráče z lepších sociálních vrstev.

Na začátku dvacátého století bylo banjo jako hudební nástroj spojováno s jazzovou hudbou. Jednalo se o čtyřstrunné banjo, které mělo v orchestru rytmickou úlohu a jen výjimečně plnilo funkci sólového nástroje. V tomto období vývoje banja došlo k dalším změnám. Aby se banjo vyrovnalo hlasitosti dechové sekce jazzového orchestru, bylo třeba hrát trsátkem na čtyřech strunách tenorového banja. Dvacátá léta

byla v Americe spojována zejména s hudebním žánrem jazz, který byl všeobecně vnímán jako nástup mladé hudební generace, která smazávala hranice dosud zavedené hudební kultury. Např. banjista byl mladý hudebně vzdělaný muž.

Rozvoj gramofonového průmyslu a pořizování nahrávek vytvořil prostor pro banjo jako nástroj další možnosti rozšíření do podvědomí americké společnosti, a tak mohl inspirovat další následovníky. Vzhledem ke svým hudebním kvalitám, zvuk, tón a hlasitost, se banjo dostalo do popředí širší hudební veřejnosti, nejen hudebníků a aranžérů, ale i posluchačů.

Po druhé světové válce nahradila funkci banja v jazzovém orchestru kytara. Banjo jako takové dále přežívalo v horalských oblastech v pětistrunném provedení, na které hráli bělošští hudebníci. Zejména oblast Apalačských hor zachovala svoji folklórní tradici v důsledku své geografické polohy. Do skalnatého terénu bylo obtížné se dostat, proto apalačtí horalové setrvali v jakési izolaci, která na druhou stranu umožnila zachování vlastní autonomie včetně vlastních folklórních tradic. Svérázný způsob života horalů u většiny americké společnosti evokoval pocit, že se jedná o společensky obtížně adaptabilní komunitu.

Pokračováním ve vývoji banja byla hudba hillbilly, folková hudba bělošských hudebníků, kterou zachytily gramofonové společnosti jako nový jev americké hudby. Popularita žánru hillbilly oslovila televizní tvůrce do té míry, že tato hudba byla použita v seriálu *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Celý seriál těží z horalského způsobu života a jejich vztahu k hudbě. Titulní píseň seriálu, "The Ballad of Jed Clampett", nahrál fenomenální pětistrunný banjista Earl Scruggs, který svým způsobem hry zařadil banjo mezi sólové nástroje, a bylo tak důstojným partnerem ostatním nástrojům v souboru. Scruggs odmítl dosavadní roli banjisty-baviče a rozvinul svůj způsob hry tak, že se stal vzorem pro tisíce následovníků ovládnutí tohoto nástroje. Otec bluegrassu Bill Monroe si záhy povšimnul přínosu jeho hry, a dal mu tak příležitost pro realizaci ve své kapele. Od té doby se zvuk pětistrunného banja stal ústředním a příznačným rysem pro hudební žánr zvaný bluegrass. Během své kariéry Scruggs vytvořil spoustu charakteristických hudebních postupů, ze kterých dodnes vycházejí všichni hráči na pětistrunné banjo. Např. skladba "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" hluboce ovlivnila nespočet obdivovatelů tohoto nástroje tak, že se na něj začali učit hrát. Tato skladba byla tak populární, že zazněla jako soundtrack k filmu *Bonnie and Clyde*, čímž si vysloužila získání ocenění

Grammy v roce 1969. Bluegrassová hudba vycházející z tradic horalské hudby ovlivnila americkou veřejnost natolik, že se objevila jako soundtrack i v dalších filmových zpracováních.

Fenomén banja v americké kultuře je významný tím, že se nesmazatelně zapsal do vývoje americké hudby, jehož prostřednictvím se kultura a americký způsob života rozšířil po celém světě. Dokladem nesporného vlivu bluegrassové hudby a potažmo banja, je prezidentské ocenění z roku 1984 Billu Monroeovi za přínos americké kultuře.

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