

















Arguably one of the most beautiful ragtime pieces ever written, the first two strains of this rag are one of only three compositions (the other two are songs) still existing by a young musical genius from St. Louis, Missouri by the name of Lois Chauvin. It can only be considered a great tragedy that Chauvin died in 1908, of syphilis and excessive use of alcohol and opium, at the age of only 24 years.

Chauvin, reputedly a prolific composer, apparently never learned to write music. The only thing definite is that the original drafts of

all three compositions were trnscribed by the same hand, probably that of another ragtimer named Sam Patterson. While visiting Arthur Marshall in Sedalia, Missouri, in 1906, Scott Joplin found Chauvin playing around with a couple of beautiful themes which, in 1907, became the first two strains of "Heliotrope Bouquet". Joplin then added two more strains of his own to complete the piece. Despite the fact that these two, additional, strains are very well matched to the earlier ones, the differences in style are quite clear.

THe most important thing to remember is that the first two strains should be played "molto legato", that is to say very smoothly, one might even say romantically. Take liberties with the tempo. I play it slightly differently each time, slowing down and speeding up (slightly) to add accents to the music. The last two strains are more "straight" ragtime.

Tom THomason April, 1998

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