

## GMT Podcast

(Intro. Music)

“Welcome to the ‘General Music Today’ or /GMT’ podcast. Today we will begin looking at American Pop Music: Past, and Present. Today’s session will cover the beginning of American pop music through blues. The musical styles that we will discuss will be the minstrelsy and blues styles. We will also hear performances of two blues artists one from each of the two blues periods. Let’s get started.”

“One of the earliest well-known composers of American popular music was Stephen Collins Foster, who was born on July 4, 1826. Stephen Foster composed music that was very sentimental and was of a style that was popular before the Civil War. The music of minstrel shows was another important style of music that was popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. Stephen Foster came into contact with the leader of a well-known troupe of minstrels known as the Christy Minstrels. The minstrel shows were usually sung by white musicians in black face (make-up to make them look black) who depicted African-Americans and utilized their dialect in songs. These minstrel shows continued to be popular from about 1850 to the end of the nineteenth century. After that they lost their appeal and were replaced by musical reviews, vaudeville, and early American musical theater. It had taken some time for Americans to achieve any kind of individuality in their music since many of the early settlers of America wanted to recreate the music of Europe. However, thanks to Stephen Foster and other composers America began to develop its own style of music.”

“After minstrelsy, blues was the next big style of American Pop music. Blues has its origin in African music tradition and slave songs there were two blues periods. The first began at the end of the nineteenth century and lasted until 1930. There were two important performers from this period. The first was teddy Ledbetter or Ledbelly. The second was Bessie Smith. Bessie Smith was the most famous woman blues singer of this period. Let’s listen to a little of her singing.”

(Bessie Smith clip)

The second blues period began in 1930 and has come to the present. In this period, blues performers were considered either singers or instrumentalists. One important performer from this period is Joe Turner. He is considered a blues singer. A second important performer from this period is Louis Armstrong. He is considered an instrumentalist. He also sang. We will hear him do both as we listen to our last selection of the day. Here is Louis Armstrong singing and playing, “Hello Dolly.”

(“Hello Dolly” clip)

(Exit w/ music)

“Thank you for visiting the GMT podcast. I hope that you found it informative and enjoyable. The next session will present the next two style periods in American pop music: Ragtime and New Orleans Dixieland Jazz. See you then!”

Resources:

American Popular Music, Mark Ammons, D.M.A © 1996 Mark Twain Media, Inc.