

Russian Rag

Interpolating Rachmaninoff's Famous 'Prelude'
Harlem Hellfighters Style!

Composed by George L Cobb
Arranged by Sandy Coffin

James Reese Europe and The Harlem Hellfighters Band



The US Army 369th Regiment, made up largely of African-Americans from New York, became known as *the Harlem Hellfighters* because of the heroic reputation which accrued to them during the actions they engaged in during the First World War in Europe.

James Reese Europe was one of the most active African-American composer/musical directors in the pre-war American music scene.

The legendary *Harlem Hellfighters Band*, which he assembled in 1917 from African-American and Puerto Rican musicians, came at an important transitional point in musical history. A new form of music called jazz was emerging from Ragtime and the performing style of Europe's band was immersed in the flow of this new direction.

Europe's *Harlem Hellfighters* influenced and inspired everyone who heard them, including the welcoming crowd when they disembarked in France, bowled over by their swinging rendition of *La Marseillaise*. Reese Europe became a war hero, commanding a machine-gun unit as well as the band.



On return from War in 1919 the band led a ticker-tape parade along Fifth Avenue in New York and soon made about 30 shellac recordings. These recordings display some of the fingerprints of their performing style: ragging, improvising, muting,



wailing, smearing (their word for glissando) - and from the evidence of their recordings they took the printed page as a blueprint for individuality.

In May 1919 during the *Hellfighters'* triumphant coast-to-coast tour after their return, James Reese Europe was tragically murdered, bringing to premature close, at the age of 39, the work of a great musical innovator.

Russian Rag

Harlem Hellfighters Style!

This arrangement of *Russian Rag* has been crafted by Sandy Coffin through close listening of the available recordings of the *Harlem Hellfighters Band*.



Note the cheeky virtuosity and rubato!

Eye-witness accounts refer to the 369th band 'dancing' rather than 'marching'. Above all, in modern performance, finding a 'dancing beat' is crucial to a successful performance of this Ragtime march in order to do justice to the great pioneering work of *James Reese Europe*.

Performance Notes

The ideal tempo should be about $q=100$. It should be more fast and virtuosic than stately, but not so fast as to sacrifice clarity.

Articulations should be *marcato*, with hard tonguing throughout.

The unison opening grace notes should be quick and before the beat, as a triplet.

The dynamic swells should be slightly exaggerated. The crescendos and decrescendos are marked even under rests to give a sense of the overall dynamic shape and direction of the line. All players should aim to fit into that contour.

Percussion:

The cymbal should be either closed hi-hat, or opened-closed with the foot pedal, whichever is more practical for the player, but the sound should be choked and fairly short to fit with the *marcato*.

The snare drum should be played snares off throughout; a standard mounted tom can be substituted if preferred; a floor tom is generally a bit too resonant.

At rehearsal D:

The *p delicato* section should still have very clear articulations in the semiquaver lines.

The wood block should try to imitate the inflection of the melody line in this section. A slight accent on the highest notated pitch will help with this effect.

At rehearsal H:

The high register is to achieve a sense of tension or excitement in the soprano cornet, flugelhorn, solo horn, and euphonium lines. However, clarity of the line is important, so the *optional 8ba* may be used if the upper register is impractical for certain players. The xylophone should play in the highest octave as needed to reinforce the effect.

Each repetition of the chorus (even beginning at letter **F**) can become a bit more exuberant; the register changes add to this effect.

The **CODA** should be somewhat comic in effect. The phrases are provided in multiple parts, and may be doubled for security, or played as solos at the discretion of the ensemble. The trombone should use a slight glissando effect; the others may aim for that feeling as well.

The final measure of the piece should be played with strength and definition in all parts.

Other arrangements by Sandy Coffin from the Harlem Hellfighters' distinctive style of repertoire include *That Moaning Trombone* and *The St Louis Blues*, also available from www.TheMusicCompanyShop.com.

Commissioned by and dedicated to John Wallace and the Tullis Russell Mills Band

Russian Rag

Interpolating the world famous "Prelude" by Rachmaninoff

George L. Cobb
Arranged for Brass Band by Sandy Coffin

Moderato ♩=100 **A**

Soprano Cornet
Solo Cornet
Repiano Cornet
2nd Cornet
3rd Cornet
Flugel
Solo Horn
1st Horn
2nd Horn
Baritone
1st Trombone
2nd Trombone
Bass Trombone
Euphonium
Eb Bass
Bb Bass
Drum Kit
Percussion 1
Percussion 2
Xylophone

Moderato ♩=100 **A**

Moderato ♩=100 **A**

11

Sop. Cor. *mf*

Solo Cor. *mf*

Rep. Cor. *mf*

2nd Cor. *mf*

3rd Cor. *mf*

Flug. *mf*

Solo Hn. *mf*

1st Hn. *mf*

2nd Hn. *mf*

1st Bar. *mf*

1st Tbn. *mf*

2nd Tbn. *mf*

B. Tbn. *mf*

Euph. *mf*

E♭ Bass *mf*

B♭ Bass *mf*

Dr. *mf*

Perc. 1 *mf*

Perc. 2 *mf*

Xyl. *mf*

2nd Tbn. Play

2nd Tbn. Play

Play

Play

20

1. 2. **B**

Sop. Cor. *mf* *f* *f*

Solo Cor. *mf* *f* *f*

Rep. Cor. *mf* *f* *f*

2nd Cor. *mf* *mf* *mf*

3rd Cor. *mf* *mf* *mf*

Flug. *fz* *f* *f*

Solo Hn. *fz* *f* *f*

1st Hn. *fz* *f marcato*

2nd Hn. *fz* *f marcato*

1st Bar. *f*

1st Tbn. *f* *f*

2nd Tbn. *f*

B. Tbn. *mf* *f*

Euph. *fz* *f*

E♭ Bass *f* *f*

B♭ Bass *f*

Dr. 1. 2. **B**

Perc. 1 *f* *f*

Perc. 2 *f* *f*

Xyl. *fz* *f* *f*

This musical score page includes the following parts and markings:

- Sop. Cor.**: Soprano Cornet part, starting with a rest and then playing a melodic line with *f* dynamics.
- Solo Cor.**: Solo Cornet part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Rep. Cor.**: Repetitive Cornet part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- 2nd Cor.**: Second Cornet part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- 3rd Cor.**: Third Cornet part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Flug.**: Flugelhorn part, playing a melodic line with *f* dynamics.
- Solo Hn.**: Solo Horn part, playing a melodic line with *f* dynamics.
- 1st Hn.**: First Horn part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- 2nd Hn.**: Second Horn part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- 1st Bar.**: First Baritone part, playing a melodic line with *f* dynamics.
- 1st Tbn.**: First Trombone part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- 2nd Tbn.**: Second Trombone part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- B. Tbn.**: Bass Trombone part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment with *mf* dynamics.
- Euph.**: Euphonium part, playing a melodic line with *f* dynamics.
- E♭ Bass**: E-flat Bass part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment with *f* dynamics.
- B♭ Bass**: B-flat Bass part, playing a rhythmic accompaniment with *f* dynamics.
- Dr.**: Drum part, playing a complex rhythmic pattern.
- Perc. 1**: Percussion 1 part, playing a rhythmic pattern.
- Perc. 2**: Percussion 2 part, playing a rhythmic pattern.
- Xyl.**: Xylophone part, playing a melodic line.

Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score features various musical notations such as rests, beams, and slurs.

SAMPLE SCORE
FOR ASSESSMENT ONLY
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82 **F**

Sop. Cor. *ff marcato*

Solo Cor. *ff marcato*

Rep. Cor. *ff marcato*

2nd Cor. *ff marcato*

3rd Cor. *ff marcato*

Flug. *ff marcato*

Solo Hn. *ff marcato*

1st Hn. *ff marcato*

2nd Hn. *ff marcato*

1st Bar. *ff marcato*

1st Tbn. *ff marcato*

2nd Tbn. *ff marcato*

B. Tbn. *ff marcato*

Euph. *ff marcato*

E♭ Bass *ff marcato*

B♭ Bass *ff marcato*

F

Dr. *f marcato*

Perc. 1 *f marcato*

Perc. 2 *f marcato*

Xyl. *ff marcato*

G

87

Sop. Cor. *fz* *f*

Solo Cor. *fz* *f*

Rep. Cor. *fz* *f*

2nd Cor. *fz* *f*

3rd Cor. *fz* *f*

Flug. *fz* *f*

Solo Hn. *fz* *f*

1st Hn. *fz* *f* *mf*

2nd Hn. *fz* *f* *mf*

1st Bar. *f*

1st Tbn. *f*

2nd Tbn. *f*

B. Tbn. *f* *Play*

Euph. *fz* *f*

E♭ Bass *f*

B♭ Bass *f*

Dr. *f*

Perc. 1 *f*

Perc. 2 *f*

Xyl. *fz*

The musical score for page 11, section G, is arranged in a multi-staff format. The instruments listed from top to bottom are: Sopranos and Solos (Sop. Cor., Solo Cor., Rep. Cor.), Horns (2nd Cor., 3rd Cor., Solo Hn., 1st Hn., 2nd Hn.), Trumpets (1st Bar., 1st Tbn., 2nd Tbn.), Trombones (B. Tbn.), Euphonium (Euph.), Basses (E♭ Bass, B♭ Bass), Drums (Dr.), Percussion (Perc. 1, Perc. 2), and Xylophone (Xyl.). The score begins at measure 87 and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes two endings for the first ending of the woodwinds and horns. Dynamic markings such as fortissimo (fz), forte (f), and mezzo-forte (mf) are used throughout. A 'Play' instruction is present for the Bass Trombone in the second ending. A large diagonal watermark 'SAMPLE SCORE ONLY' is overlaid on the page.

SAMPLE SCORE
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106

Sop. Cor.

Solo Cor.

Rep. Cor.

2nd Cor.

3rd Cor.

Flug.

Solo Hn.

1st Hn.

2nd Hn.

1st Bar.

1st Tbn.

2nd Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Euph.

E♭ Bass

B♭ Bass

Dr.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Xyl.

110 1. 2. CODA

Sop. Cor. *fz* *ff*

Solo Cor. *ff*

Rep. Cor. *fz* *ff*

2nd Cor. *fz* *ff*

3rd Cor. *fz* *ff*

Flug. *fz* *ff*

Solo Hn. *fz* *ff*

1st Hn. *fz* *ff*

2nd Hn. *fz* *ff*

1st Bar. *ff*

1st Tbn. *ff*

2nd Tbn. *ff*

B. Tbn. *ff*

Euph. *fz* *ff*

E♭ Bass *ff*

B♭ Bass *ff*

Dr. *fz* *ff*

Perc. 1 *ff*

Perc. 2 *ff*

Xyl. *fz* *ff*