Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" as an Archetype

A Thesis

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Samuel Moffett

Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Michael Jude Schiano, Associate Professor of Music Theory

Readers:

Dr. Michael Jude Schiano, Associate Professor of Music Theory

Dr. Cameron Logan, Associate Professor of Music Theory

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"Syncopations are no indication of light or trashy music, and to shy bricks at 'hateful ragtime' no longer passes for musical culture"

- *Scott Joplin*

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INDEX OF ANALYTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

Formal Terms

2-2 Period – A group of phrases consisting of two antecedent phrases (**A1** and **A2**) and two consequent phrases (**C1** and **C2**). Likewise, a 1-1 period would consist of one antecedent phrase and one consequent phrase.

1-1 Phrase Group – A group of phrases consisting of one initial phrase (**I1**) and one subsequent phrase (**Q1**). Likewise, a 2-2 phrase group would consist of two initial phrases and two consequent phrases.

Cadence Types

PAC – Perfect authentic cadence

IAC – Imperfect authentic cadence

HC – Half cadence

L – Linked (to the next phrase)

E – Elided (with the next phrase)

NE – Non-elided (with the next phrase)

INTRODUCTION

Background

During the decades of 1840 to 1920, the most popular form of entertainment in America was minstrel shows. These were theatrical performances that were most often meant to portray people of African descent in a satirical fashion; invoking crude caricatures and stereotypes, undermining the race of people that had been brought to America in chains and treated as subhuman, forced to partake in labor without compensation. Minstrel shows were designed to continue undermining this race of people, in order to justify subhuman treatment of them.

The music for these minstrel shows was march, a style of music deriving from war and made most popular in America by John Philip Sousa (1854 – 1932). Smaller bands would play this style of music to accompany the stage production of minstrel shows. After the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) black Americans began to develop their own musical genres in an effort to claim their freedom and move further away from the period of American Slavery. During this time, two major musical genres were developed: Blues, and Ragtime.

Ragtime was a genre that developed a few decades after emancipation, around the early 1890s. It was popular in America from c. 1895 – 1919. Ragtime was characterized by the fusion of march music with added African polyrhythms. In this way, the genre represented a reclamation of a music that was used often to berate and malign black Americans (and, at the time of Ragtime's popularity, minstrel shows were still the most popular form of entertainment in the United States).

Being that venues for ragtime were typically saloons, brothels and living rooms, rags were composed almost exclusively for the piano. Rags were later orchestrated for larger groups

such as in Marvin Hamlisch's score for the 1973 movie *The Sting* (for which he orchestrated Joplin rags exclusively) or by Gunther Schuller for New England Ragtime Ensemble (at New England Conservatory) but during Ragtime's popularity, they were composed solely for piano. This may also contextualize the genre's popularity, as it was common for American middle-class homes to have a piano, typically played by young women of the household.

The most prominent Ragtime composer was Scott Joplin (1868 – 1917) who, during his brief career, wrote over 100 original rags and was dubbed the "King of Ragtime." Though he has an extensive catalogue of music given his brief time as a composer (writing songs and a few operas in addition to his rags) Joplin only had one great success in his "Maple Leaf Rag" (1899). This was far and away Joplin's most popular work, and sales of this rag gave him steady, though not vast, income for the rest of his life.

Purpose

Although "Maple Leaf Rag" was the one great success that came at a very early point in his compositional career, it is possible that Joplin made attempts to create additional music that would result in similar success, by taking musical elements of "Maple Leaf Rag" and applying it to a few of his subsequent rags. The purpose of this paper is to prove, through theoretical analysis, that Joplin attempted to create rags that would garner similar success to the Maple Leaf by applying similar musical elements to subsequent rags. In addition to analyzing the Maple Leaf, I will be comparing it to Joplin's "Gladiolus Rag" (1907) and his "Sugar Cane" (1908).

I will begin this paper by introducing general music theoretical elements of Ragtime that pertain to its use of rhythm, harmony and form. I will then conduct a thorough analysis of "Maple Leaf Rag," starting with an overview, and continuing by analyzing different theoretical

elements of each section of the piece. After this, I will conduct side-by-side comparisons of each section of each rag, during which I will point out parallels and significant differences between the three rags. I will then conclude my paper with general findings pertaining to my thesis, given the analyses I have conducted.

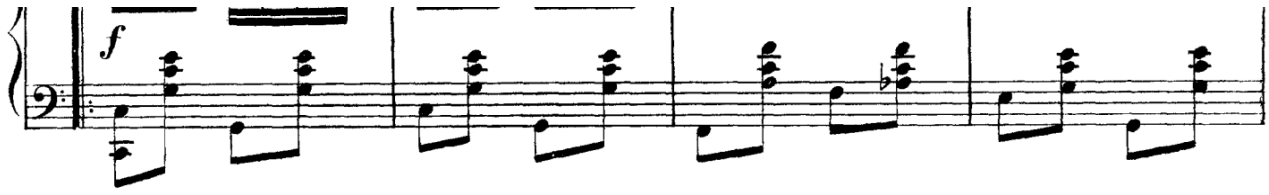
CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL ELEMENTS OF RAGTIME

I will begin this paper by introducing music theoretical elements that are present throughout Ragtime, in order to lay contextual groundwork for the pieces I will then analyze. I will elaborate on elements of rhythm, harmony and form.

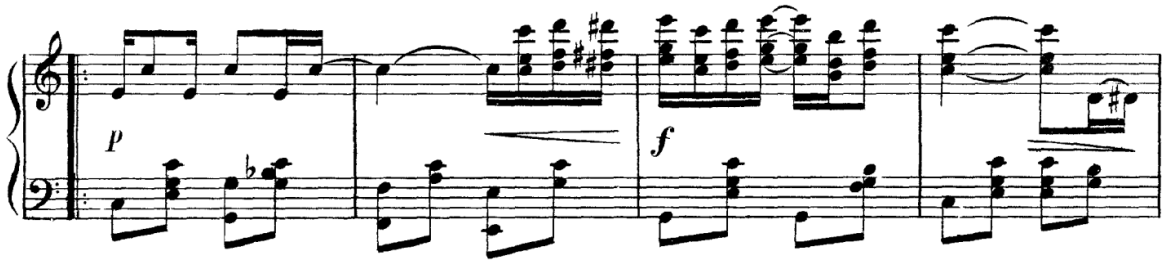
Rhythm

Ragtime is the genre of music that bridges march (where emphasis is on beats 1 and 3 in the context of common time) and swing music (where emphasis is on beats 2 and 4). To bridge these different time feels, the most important element of Ragtime is its rhythmic syncopation. As Ragtime precedes march music, the beat emphasis was still generally kept on beats 1 and 3 (in the common time context) or 1 and 2 (in the $\frac{2}{4}$ context). In a piano rag in $\frac{2}{4}$ time, a bass note was typically struck on beats 1 and 2, while chords, relatively higher in register, were struck on the offbeat. An example of this typical practice is shown below, the left hand of the first four bars of the B section of Joplin's "The Entertainer":



Although the left hand could be syncopated sometimes, it was normally the right hand that enacted these syncopations. The most common rhythmic syncopation was a sixteenth note followed by an eighth note followed by another sixteenth note, a figure so common that it later

became known colloquially as the "jazz rhythm." An example of this rhythm is shown below in the right hand of the A section of Joplin's "The Entertainer." The aforementioned "jazz rhythm" begins the first theme:



An additional syncopation can be seen in the third measure of the above example, with the accented melodic note occurring immediately before beat 2 and tying into it. An example of left-hand syncopation is also seen in the fourth measure, where beat three is carrying a high chord as opposed to its usual bass note.

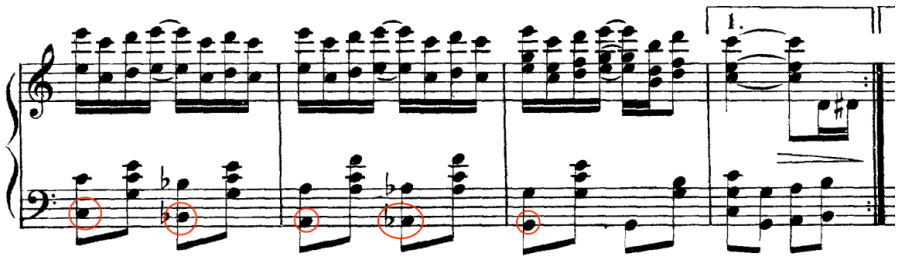
The main rhythmic element that set Ragtime from march music was syncopation, namely accenting notes that are not on strong beats within each measure. When comparing the three rags, a key element will be the parallel syncopations used between them in any given section of the piece.

Harmony

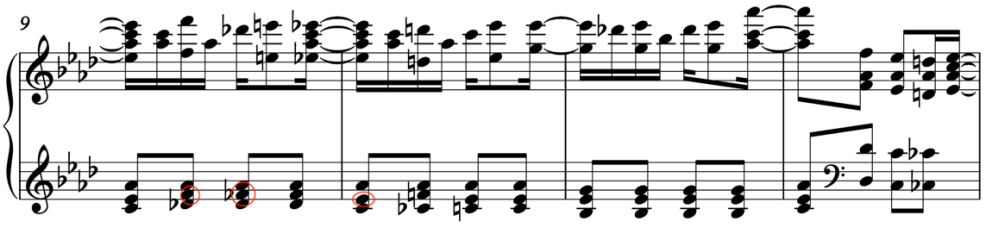
Rags were almost always composed in major keys. This likely is a result of the key schemes and upbeat nature of march music from which Ragtime is based.

Rags often used the progression of I – V and vice versa, like much of tonal music that precedes it. Different sections of rags often opened with a I – V or V – I progression, which were further elaborated or prolonged later in the section. Rags were also prone to a IV – I progression at times, such as in the opening to the D section of the "Maple Leaf Rag."

Consequent phrases in sections of the rag were often harmonically comprised of some kind of descending line within. This line typically had chromatic tendencies. In the case of the consequent phrase in the A section of "The Entertainer," that descending line was in the bass.



However, the descending line in the consequent phrase of the A section of Joplin's "Sugar Cane" buries the descending line in a middle voice:



Secondary harmony was also often used, particularly the related dominant chords of II, IV and V. Common-tone diminished chords were often used as a transition to the I chord, and mode mixture chords (such as bVI in the A section of "Maple Leaf Rag") were used sparingly.

Form

Rags typically came in three forms. They are:

- AABBACCC
- AABBACCDD
- AABBCCA

Each section of any given rag is repeated once, and in each iteration of a rags form, a third repetition of the A section occurs sometime after the initial two. The A and B sections are played in the tonic key, while the C and D sections modulate to the subdominant. Sometimes the D section will modulate back to the tonic key, cases that will occur in two of the rags analyzed in this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

SCOTT JOPLIN'S "MAPLE LEAF RAG": AN ANALYSIS

In order to conduct a proper analysis of comparative elements between the three rags, it is important to first conduct a full analysis of the proposed archetype. My analysis of "Maple Leaf Rag" will consist of five sections: Piece form, phrase form, harmony, melody/rhythm and texture.

Piece Form

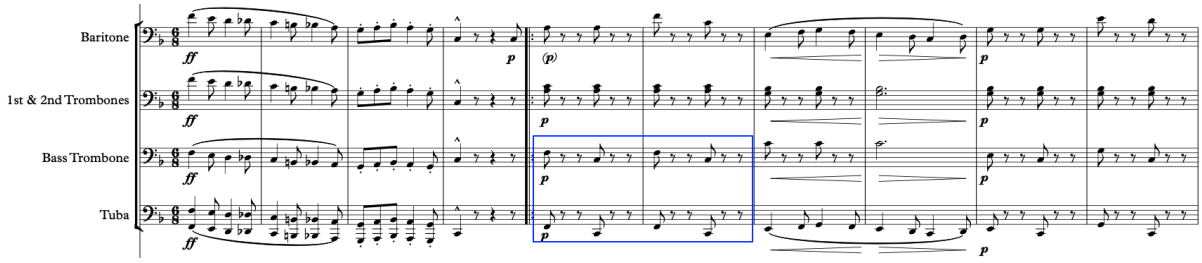
"Maple Leaf Rag" is written in the key of A-flat major and has four distinct sections (which will herein be labeled A, B, C and D respectively), each consisting of eight measures. Sections A and B are each played twice, followed by a repetition of section A. Sections C and D are then played twice each. Therefore, the piece has an overall form of AABBACCDD. At the C section of the piece, Joplin is in the key of D-flat major, but returns to the tonic for the D section. Because the modulation to the subdominant is such a striking event, the greater structure of the piece could be looked at as being in two halves: AABB and CCDD, with both halves being separated by a single iteration of the A section.

The repeated sections do not contain different music by any element of melody, harmony, rhythm or timbre from when they are originally played; that is to say, each section is repeated exactly. The only difference between the repeated sections and their initial iterations is that the final measure of each repeated section is different, in order to facilitate proper links to subsequent sections of the piece, or in the case of section D, to end the piece. Joplin does this by creating first and second endings for each repeated section.

Harmony

The basic outline of Joplin's use of harmony in each section of "Maple Leaf Rag" is ultimately to get from I to V and V to I. Although this is extremely common in tonal music as it is the basis of Heinrich Schenker's analytical philosophy[1], it is perhaps and especially important factor when considering ragtime's origins.

Ragtime's basis is the march music of American composers such as John Phillip Sousa. One striking element of march music is the two-beat "oompah" of bass instruments such as tuba, fluctuating between scale degrees 1 and 5. Such an example of this can be seen below, in a segment of a score to John Philip Sousa's "Liberty Bell"; the fluctuations between scale degrees 1 and 5 are highlighted by the blue box.



Although Joplin has this same kind of bass fluctuation in the piano left hand at a micro-level within each section of "Maple Leaf Rag," his expansion of the gesture to the overall harmony of the piece is notable.

Of course, even though I and V are the main structural chords of "Maple Leaf Rag," they are not the only harmonies Joplin displays within the piece. As will be revealed in the analysis of the piece's phrase form and in its comparisons to his other rags, Joplin often makes use of modal interchange chords to highlight important moments in the piece.

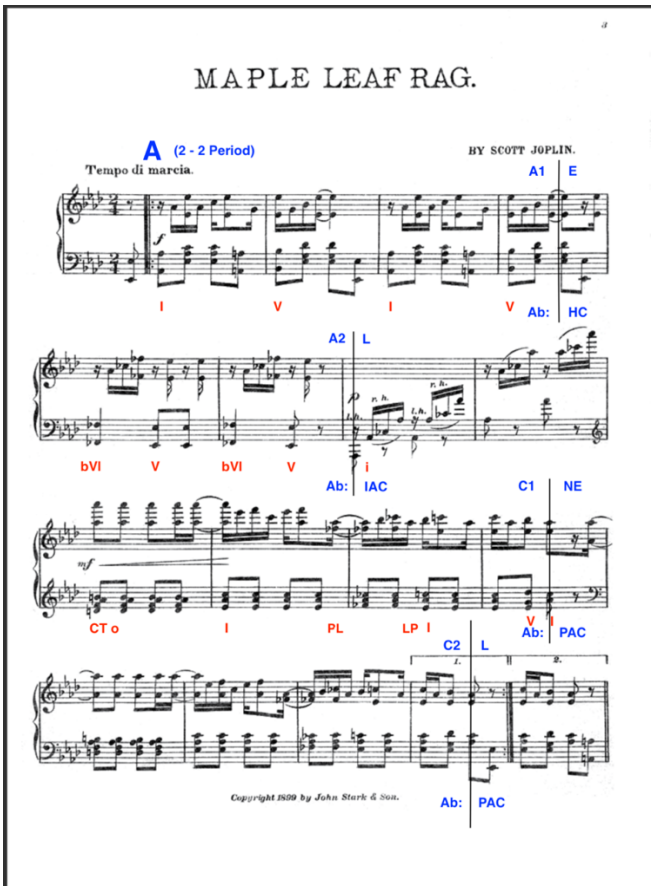
[1] Allen Forte & Steven E. Gilbert. *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1982), 105.

Phrase Form

Phrase form will be an important basis for comparisons between "Maple Leaf" and the other two rags that will be discussed in this paper. Since I am setting to prove that Joplin attempted to pattern certain rags off of "Maple Leaf," phrase form is a significant factor in the organization of the music which made listeners so fond of it. As such, I will conduct a short analysis of the phrase forms for each section of "Maple Leaf Rag," to be compared to the others in subsequent chapters.

Section "A" Phrase Form

Below is my analysis of the harmony and phrase form of Maple Leaf Rag's "A" section. The harmony is in red and the phrase form analysis is in blue. I chose not to include any inversions of chords as I did not think of it as important to include in the harmonic structure of the piece, although it might be interesting to note how in the case of these rags, the chord often functions tonically as opposed to dominantly. I also did not show a harmonic analysis of the second consequent phrase, as it is a repetition of the first consequent phrase down an octave. The F-flat major chord in measure 11 can best be harmonically analyzed by its triadic relation to A-flat major (the chord that both precedes and follows it), using the Neo-Riemannian transformations PL and LP. Since F-flat major in measure 11 did not precede the V chord as it does in measure 5, I chose not to analyze it as bVI:



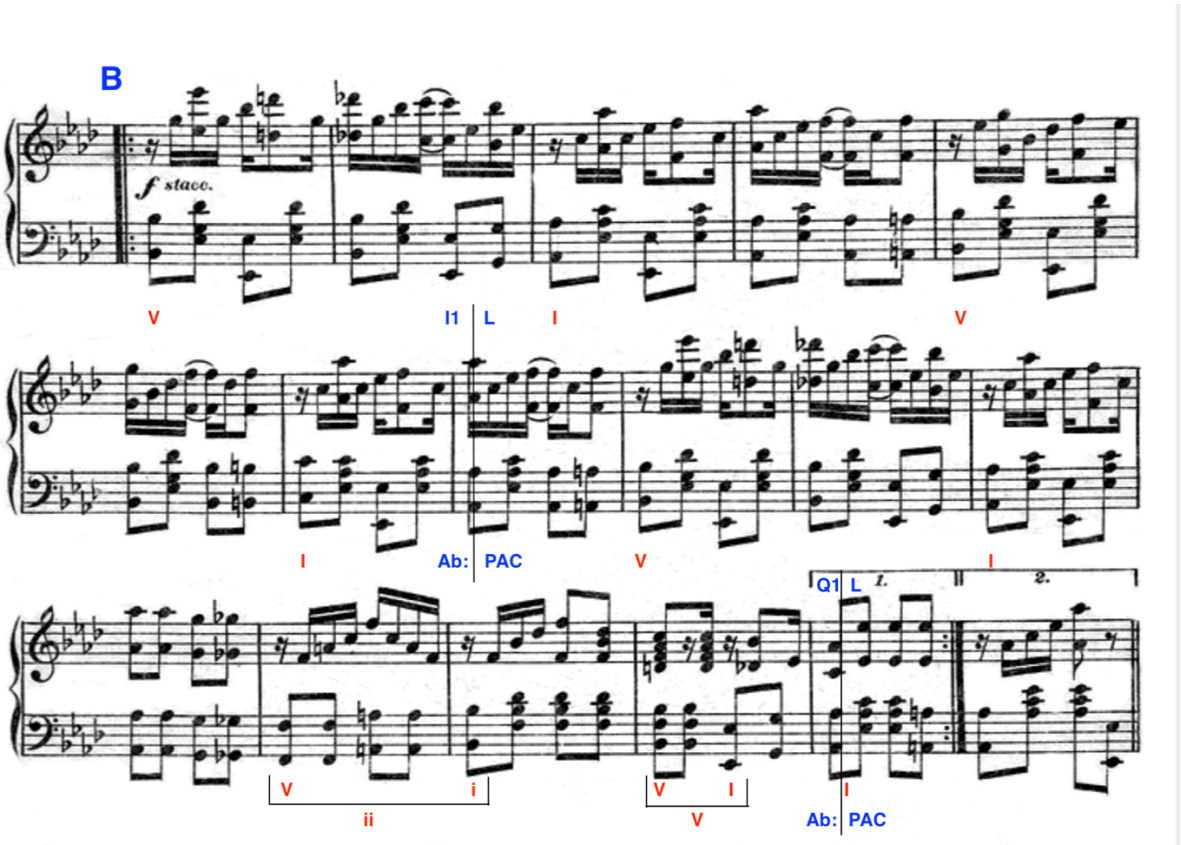
The "A" section of "Maple Leaf Rag" is a 2 - 2 period, with each phrase consisting of four measures. The first antecedent phrase has a harmonic structure of I – V – I – V, ending with an elided half-cadence in A-flat. Joplin notably marks the beginning of the second antecedent phrase with the modal interchange chord bVI, and its cadence with the modal interchange chord i (minor). (As the fundamental bass of this cadence was still V – I, I chose to analyze this cadence as imperfect authentic as opposed to deceptive, even though the chord was not I-major.) The second antecedent phrase has a two-measure link to the second half of this 2 – 2 period, during which Joplin arpeggiates the i-minor chord.

The second half of the period is introduced with a common-tone diminished chord containing the tonic note Ab, which subsequently moves to the tonic chord. The first consequent phrase ends with a perfect authentic cadence in A-flat major. The second consequent phrase is

notably a repetition of the first, except that it is stated an octave lower than the first. As a result, it has the same harmonic and phrase structure.

Modal interchange chords were used to identify significant moments within the 2 – 2 period; bVI was used to begin the second half of the antecedent, while the i minor chord was used to defy the antecedent's cadence. Similarly, a common-tone diminished chord was used to mark the beginning of the consequent. The second ending of the A section uses the chromatic approach note "A-natural" in the left hand, in order to link the A section to the B section.

Section "B" Phrase Form



Although the B section of the piece has the same number of measures as the A section, Joplin changes the phrase form significantly. Though a case could be made that it is another 2 – 2 period, it is difficult for me to analyze it as such. This is because of the similar nature of the

two eight-measure halves of the B section. Unlike the A section of the piece, the two halves of the B section start the exact same way in terms of melody and harmony, and therefore it would not be accurate to analyze this B section as anything but two eight-measure phrases that are both symmetrical and parallel.

Since each phrase ends with a perfect authentic cadence in A-flat, it is also difficult for me to analyze this section as a period, for that would imply that there is some kind of antecedent-consequent relationship between the two phrases. Therefore, I chose to analyze this section as a 1 – 1 phrase group, with one eight-measure initial phrase (I1) and one eight-measure subsequent phrase (Q1).

The first four measures of both the initial phrase and the subsequent phrase are almost identical (the subsequent phrase's fourth measure changes to facilitate a link to the differing second half of the phrase). The nature of the second half of each of the two phrases is where they most significantly differ. The following is a mapping of the harmonic structure of each phrase, with the first half of the phrase in red and the second half in blue:

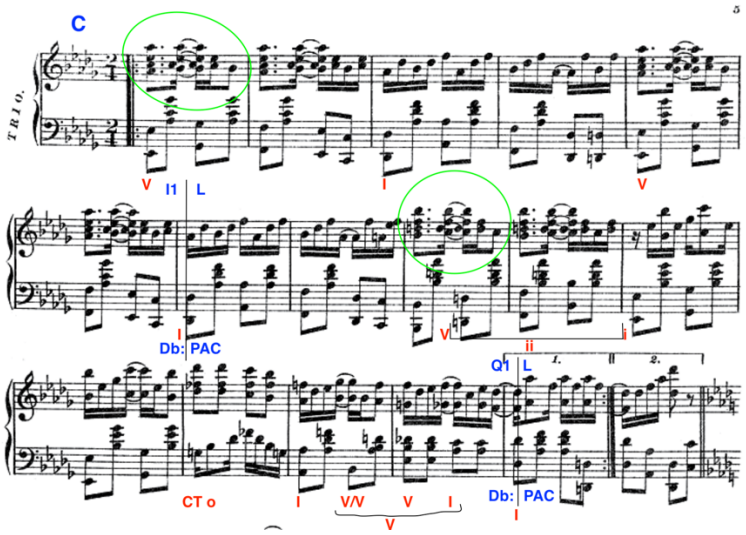
I1: V – I – V – I

Q1: V – I – V – i – V – I – I

ii **V**

Although both phrases end with a perfect authentic cadence, Joplin uses a ii – V – I progression in the second half of the subsequent phrase to further solidify the I chord at the end of section B. It is a significant breakaway from the V – I pattern that is present throughout the rest of the section.

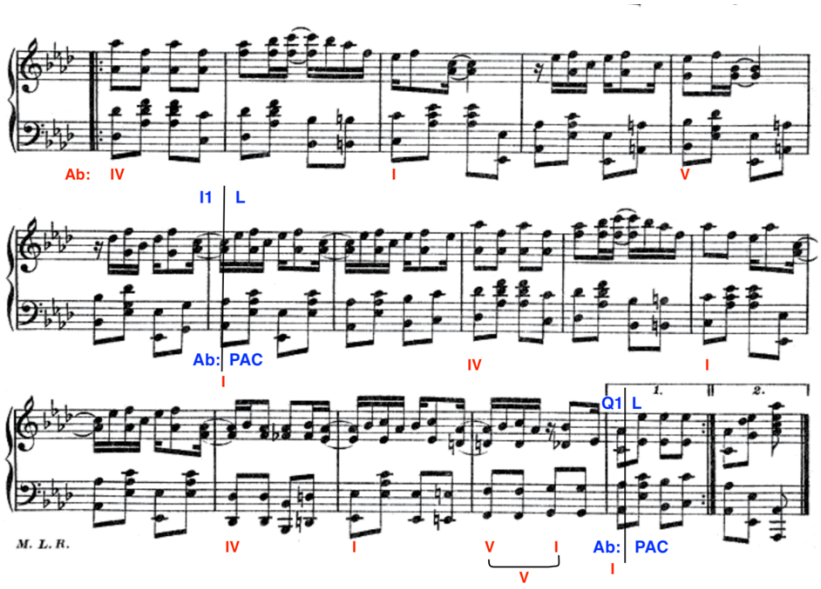
Section "C" Phrase Form



As in the B section, it was difficult to analyze this section as a 2 – 2 period, because of the similar nature of each half of the section. However, there was an added difficulty in analyzing this section of the piece in that, contrary to the B section, the two halves of the C section are not similar harmonically – but melodically and rhythmically. The first and second half of the C section both begin with a dotted eighth note to a sixteenth, tied to another sixteenth and followed by a sixteenth and an eighth. As is made evident within the green circles in the excerpt above, they also have similar melodic contour, although they are not the same notes.

Similar to the B section of the piece, both eight-measure phrases of this section end with a perfect authentic cadence. Therefore, I once again analyzed this section as a 1 – 1 phrase group as opposed to a 1 – 1 period. Although the initial phrase carries the harmonic pattern of V – I – V – I as in the initial phrase of the B section, C's subsequent phrase begins significantly with the tonicization of the ii chord and ends with a prolongation of the V chord through secondary harmony before returning to I.

Section "D" Phrase Form



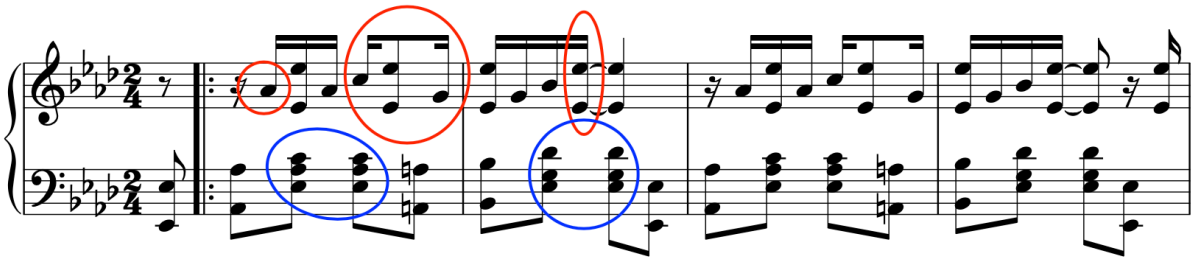
As in the previous two sections of the piece, the similarity of the two halves of the section and the difficulty not to hear eight measures as being part of the same phrase has my analysis of this section as being two phrases. Also, like the two previous sections, both phrases end with a perfect authentic cadence, making this another 1 – 1 phrase group. Additionally, both phrases begin with the same melody, and are most significantly differentiated by their respective second halves. At this point, it may be important to the comparisons with the other rags to point out that in Maple Leaf, the A section is where Joplin employs the most diversity in terms of harmony, melody and phrase structure. It is both the most diverse section and the only section that is stated three times within with piece.

Unlike the previous two sections, which begin with a V – I – V – I harmonic structure, this section begins with IV – I – V – I. So why did Joplin decide to begin this section on IV instead of V? My theory is that, because this section also signifies the returning modulation from the subdominant back to the tonic, Joplin employed the D-flat chord so that the listener first hears it as the tonic chord. As we are going to find when we look at other rags, rags that

modulated to the subdominant were subject to stay in the subdominant for the remainder of the piece, rather than revert back to the tonic. With that in mind, a first-time listener of "Maple Leaf Rag" will most likely hear that D-flat chord as the tonic and assume that the piece is still in the subdominant key, as many other rags within the repertoire will do so. It is not until the third, or perhaps even the sixth measure (as its dominant chord precedes it) of the D section that the A-flat chord is solidified as the tonic.

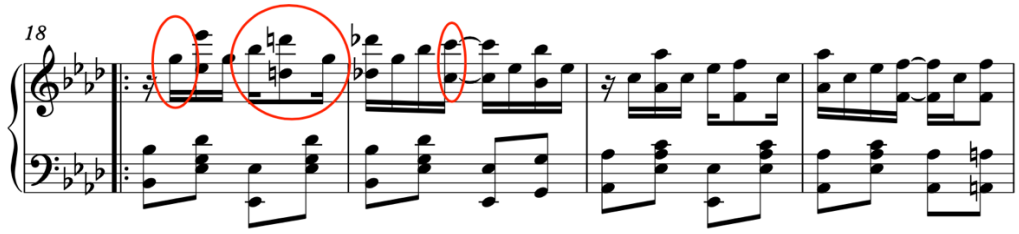
Melody/Rhythm

In this section, I will be analyzing thematic elements throughout Maple Leaf that pertain to its melody and rhythm, with a particular focus on melodic contour and rhythmic syncopations. Below are the opening four measures of the A section. In red, I have circled rhythmic syncopations in the right hand and in blue I have circled syncopations of the left hand:



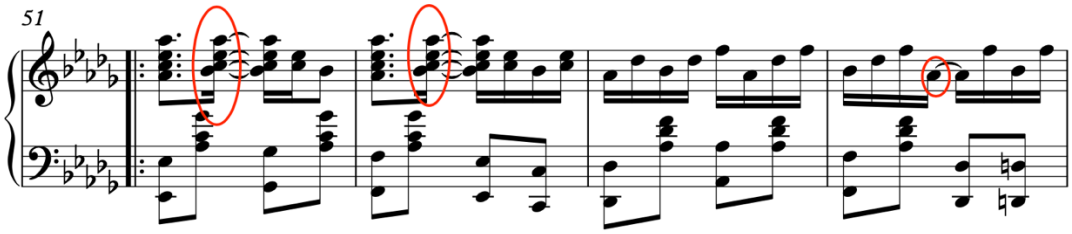
Joplin begins the main theme of the piece with a syncopation in the melody, by beginning the melody on the second sixteenth-note of the measure. On beat 2 of the first measure, he invokes the jazz rhythm, a rhythmic theme that will be present throughout the piece. Notably, Joplin also begins the piece with a syncopation of the left hand, breaking up the bass-chord-bass-chord pattern that is typically present in rags. Melodically, Joplin's opening theme is very static; the melody is made up of two arpeggiated chords, A-flat major and E-flat major, which are both arpeggiated between Eb4 and Eb5.

Below are the opening four measures to Maple Leaf's B section:



In this section, Joplin breaks up the left-hand syncopation from the A section and moves to a familiar bass-chord-bass-chord. Rhythmically, Joplin uses the same syncopations in the right hand as in the A section, even though the melody is not the same (starting the phrase on the second sixteenth note of the measure and using the jazz rhythm on the second beat, and an accent on the fourth sixteenth note of the second measure). Melodically, the contour of the first two measures is less static, outlining a descending line of Eb-D-Db-C-Bb, though still outlining the notes by means of arpeggiating figures. The second two measures move back to a more static contour, similarly to the A section.

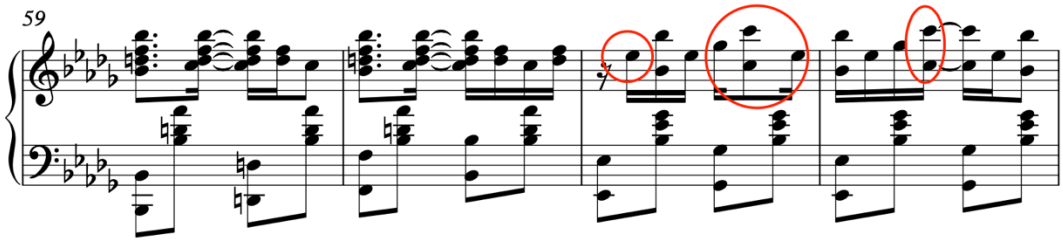
The C section introduces melodies with different kinds of syncopations and melodic contour to the first two sections of the piece:



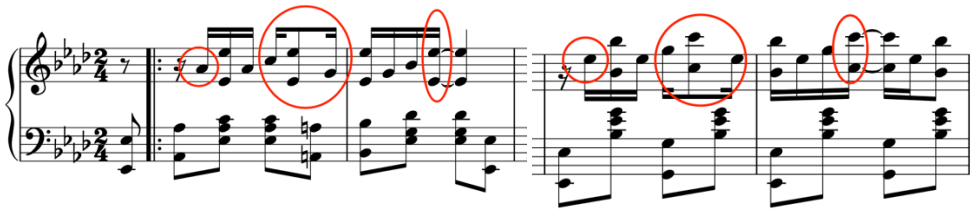
Unlike the previous two sections, the melody begins on beat one. The only syncopation in this theme occurs on the fourth sixteenth note of the measure. Like the previous sections, the melody remains somewhat static, being centered around Ab5 in the first two measures, and F5 in

the second two measures. Additionally, the second two measures contain arpeggiations as a means of thematic material, as in the previous two sections.

In the second half of the C section, however, the melody refers back to the A section of the piece:

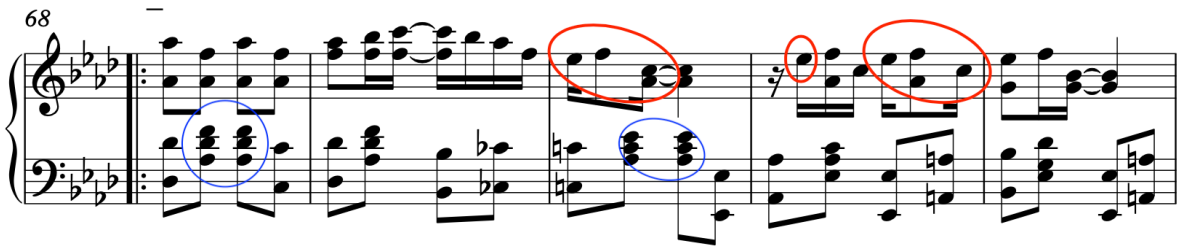


The right hand in the second two measures contains the same rhythm and similar contour of the opening theme of piece. To better see the comparison of the two sections, I will lay them out, side-by-side below:

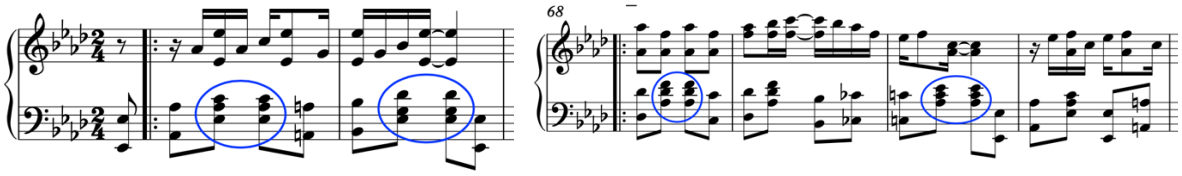


A section **C section**

The D section presents a more diverse melodic contour, but keeps similar rhythmic themes to preceding sections:



The melody uses similar rhythmic syncopations as the A section in that it invokes the jazz rhythm, and that a syncopation occurs on the second sixteenth note (in this case, the third measure of the theme). The left hand contains a similar syncopation to what occurred in the opening theme of the piece, using the pattern bass-chord-chord-bass as opposed to bass-chord-bass-chord:



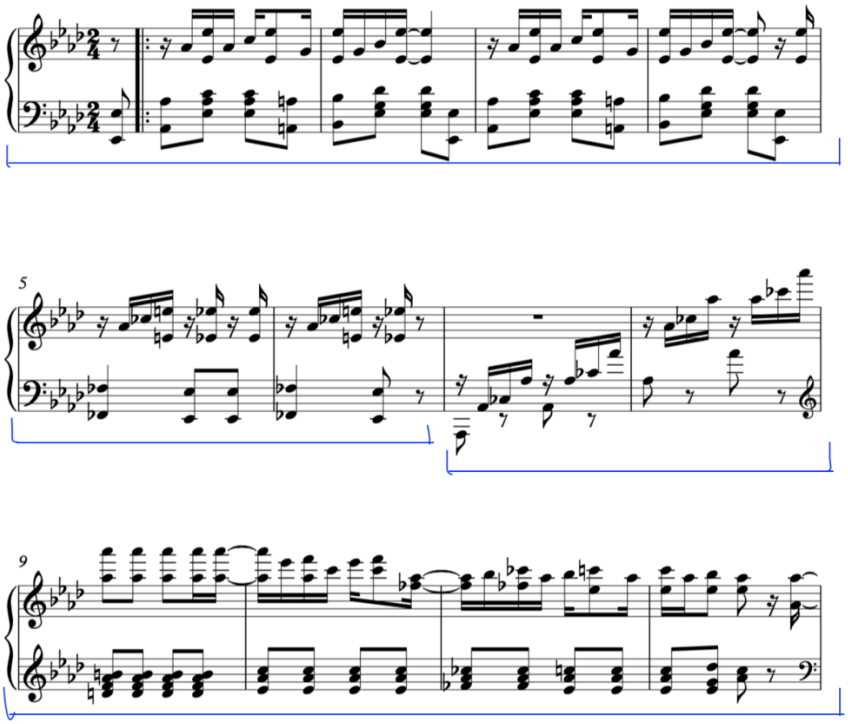
A section **D section**

The melody in the first two measures is less static, particularly in the second measure where the contour goes up to down.

Texture

Throughout Maple Leaf, Joplin uses changes in texture for musical effect. In this section, I will be highlighting different instances of his use of these musical elements. The first significant use of textural change occurs in the A section, following the opening statement of the theme. For the purposes of comparing textures within the A section, I am going to provide

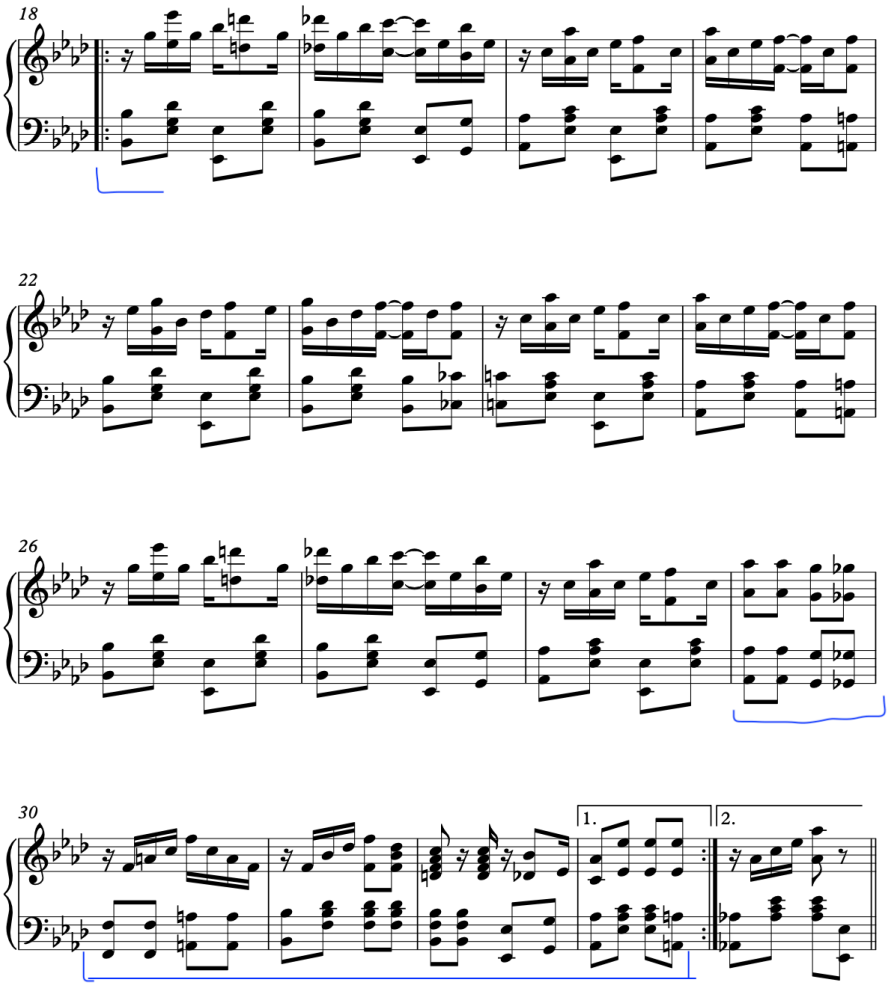
almost the entire section below, (omitting the last four measures as they are a clone of the previous four but played an octave down):



Joplin opens the piece with a thicker texture, then gradually makes it thinner, until his thinnest texture occurs notably on the first Ab cadence in measure 7. The notable mode mixture chord of bVI in measure 5 is emphasized by the first semblance of Joplin thinning out the texture. Once he reaches his first Ab cadence in measure 7, the texture has completely thinned out to one melodic line, arpeggiating an Ab minor triad (though omitting the fifth) across four registers. When Joplin reaches measure 9, the two-hand texture is similar to the beginning of the piece, with the right hand carrying the rhythmically diverse melody while the left hand plays

eighth notes. However, the left hand is now playing mostly static chords as opposed to bass notes and chords, rendering a different, bouncier texture.

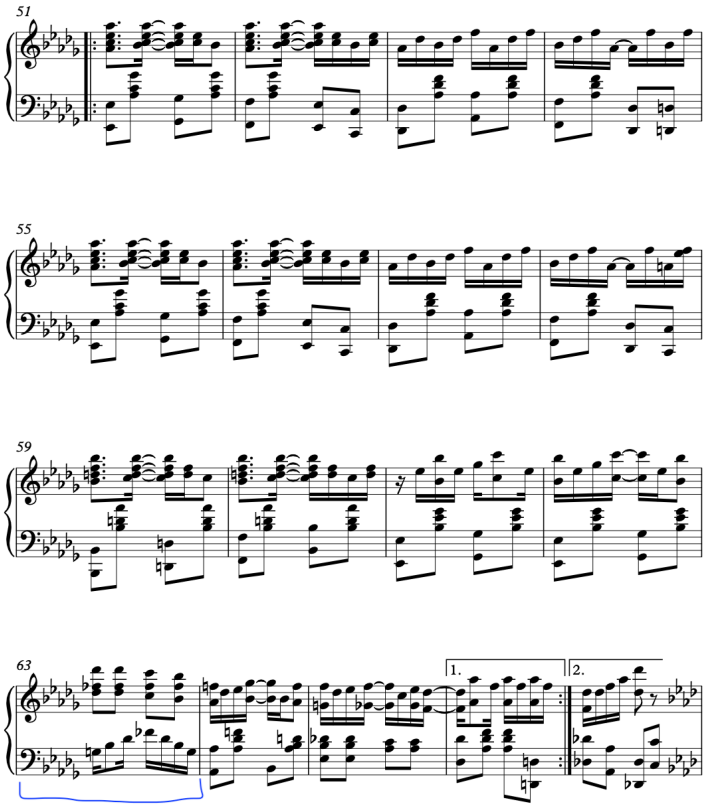
The B section has less variety of texture than the A section, but changes within it still come at important points in the piece:



As discussed earlier, the melodic rhythm of this section is very similar to the opening of the A section, which likely contributes to the overall texture being so similar. It is different in the sense that the left hand now resumes a typical ragtime pattern of bass-chord-bass-chord. Unlike the A section, this texture remains for quite some time, and does not very until the final five

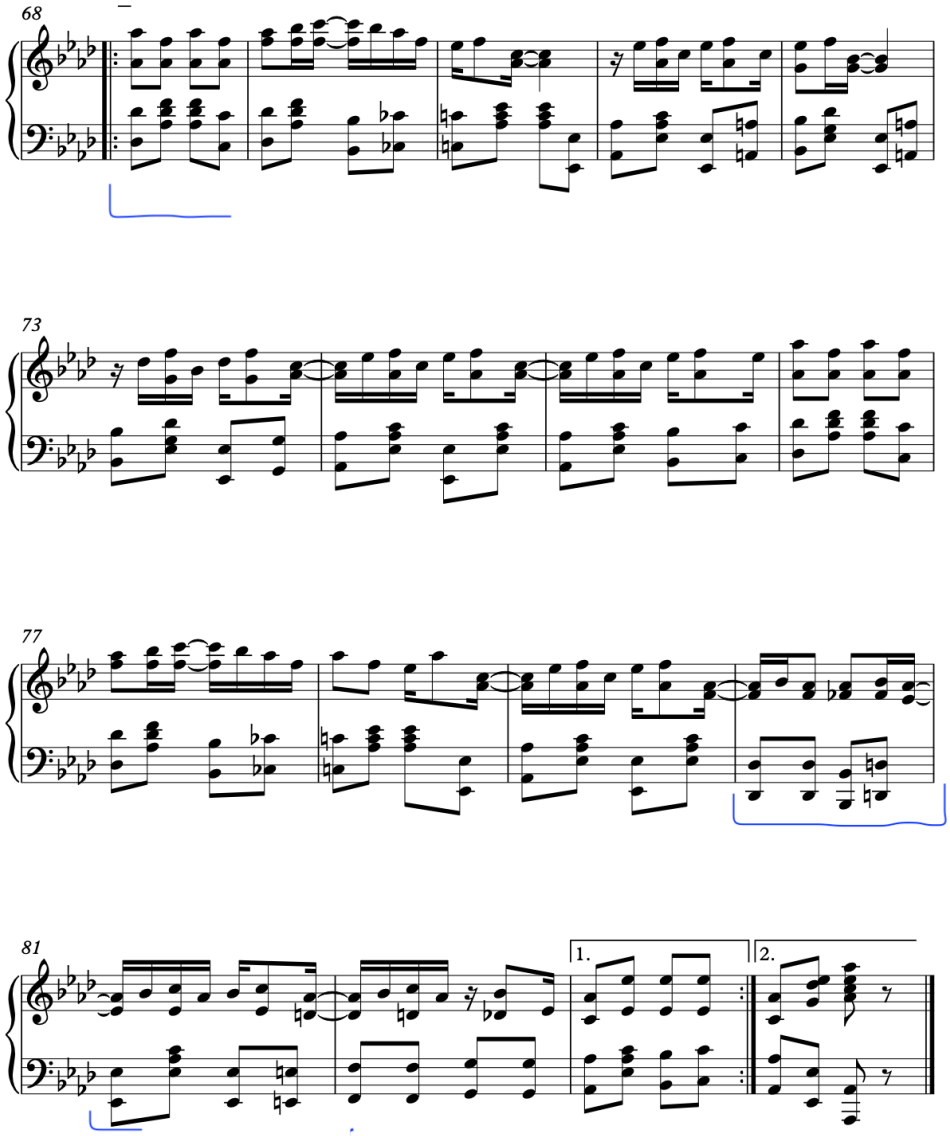
measures of the section. In measure 29, the texture immediately thins to just eighth notes, played in rhythmic unison by both hands. This measure acts as a bridge to the final phrase of the section. The final four bars also take on a different texture than the rest of the section before it; The melody is less static in contour, and the left hand moves away from the bass-chord-bass-chord pattern, creating a similarly bouncy texture to the final four bars in the A section.

The C section has much less variety of texture:



It carries a much similar texture to the B section throughout, although the melodic rhythm and syncopations are different. The only place the texture varies in this section is in measure 63, where the left and right hands switch rhythmic responsibilities. After this measure, the texture immediately returns. Perhaps it is because of the modulation and syncopation differences in this section that Joplin didn't feel the need to add further interest by changing the texture more.

The D section of Maple Leaf has a very similar texture scheme to the B section in terms of activity:



Like the B section, this keeps a similarly active and dense texture throughout, until Joplin reaches measure 80, where the bass moves away from the bass-chord texture and moves to the final four bars, where it keeps a register-static eighth note texture to close the piece

CHAPTER THREE

COMPARING THE RAGS: AN OVERVIEW

From this point in this thesis onward, and for the purposes of comparing the rags, I am going to display transposed examples of "Sugar Cane" (originally in B-flat major) to match the keys of "Maple Leaf" and "Gladiolus," as they are both in A-flat major. This way, it will be easier to see the similarities between the three rags, especially in terms of harmony and melody.

Form

As was stated in chapter one, rags typically come in three possible forms. As has been shown in the previous analysis, "Maple Leaf" has a form of AABBACCDD. In the case of both "Gladiolus" and "Sugar Cane," they fall in line with "Maple Leaf," both coming in an AABBACCDD form. In this way, it will be easier to compare the three rags as they all contain the same number of sections and the same measures.

Harmony

Like in the Maple Leaf, the Gladiolus and Sugar Cane use similar harmonic structures. The outlining of I – V and V – I will be most present, and often will be prolonged using predominant harmony, secondary harmony, mode mixture chords and common-tone diminished chords. In the following chapters, when comparing the three rags in terms of their phrase forms, it will be noted where certain harmonic tools are used and whether or not those harmonic events are in the same musical places across the rags.

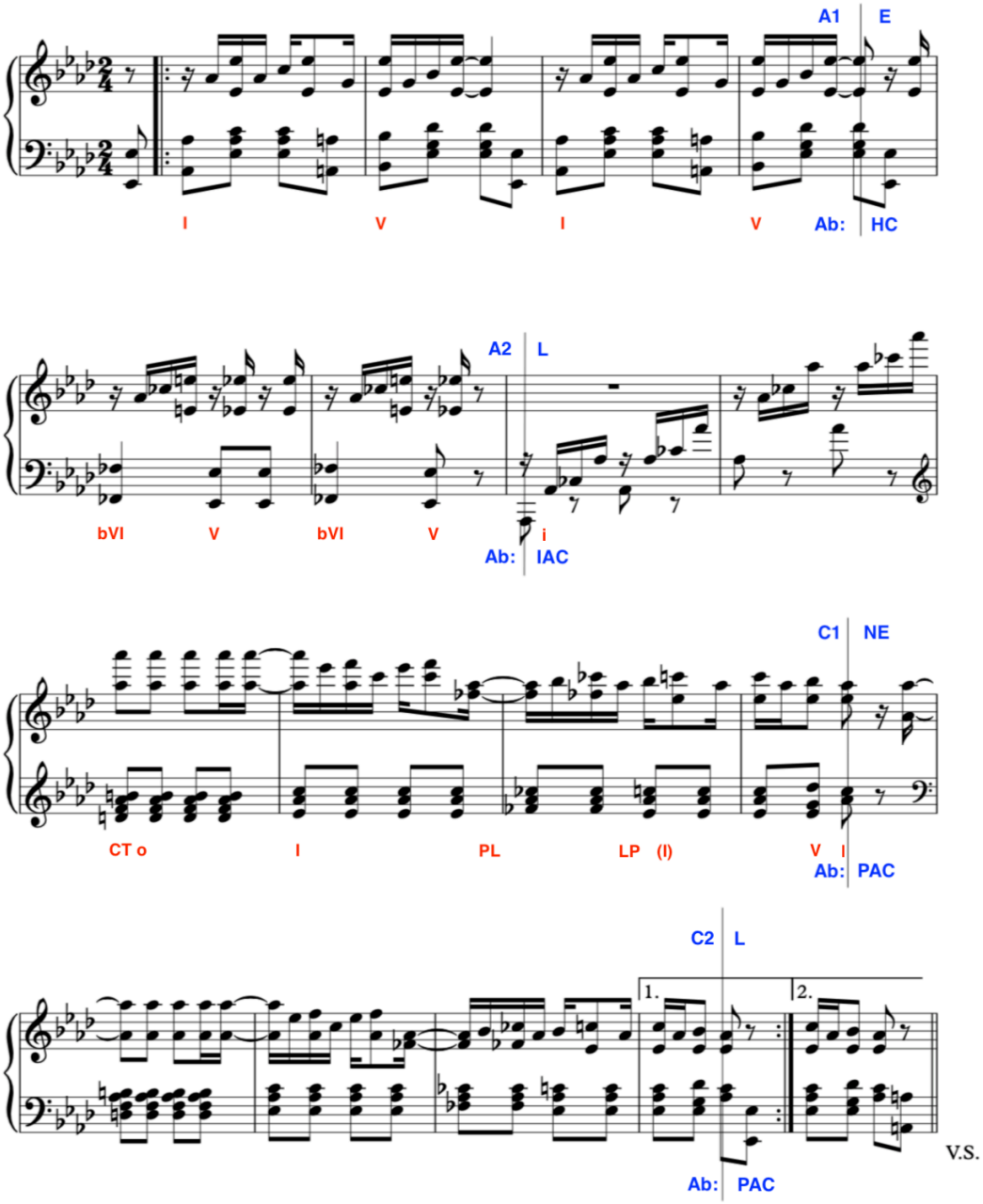
In the following chapters, I am going to be comparing the three rags, organizing the content by formal parts, beginning with the respective sections “A” and ending with sections “D.” Much like chapter one in which I conducted a thorough analysis of the “Maple Leaf Rag,” I am going to compare each of these rags in terms of their elements of phrase form, melody, rhythm and orchestration.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARING THE "A" SECTIONS

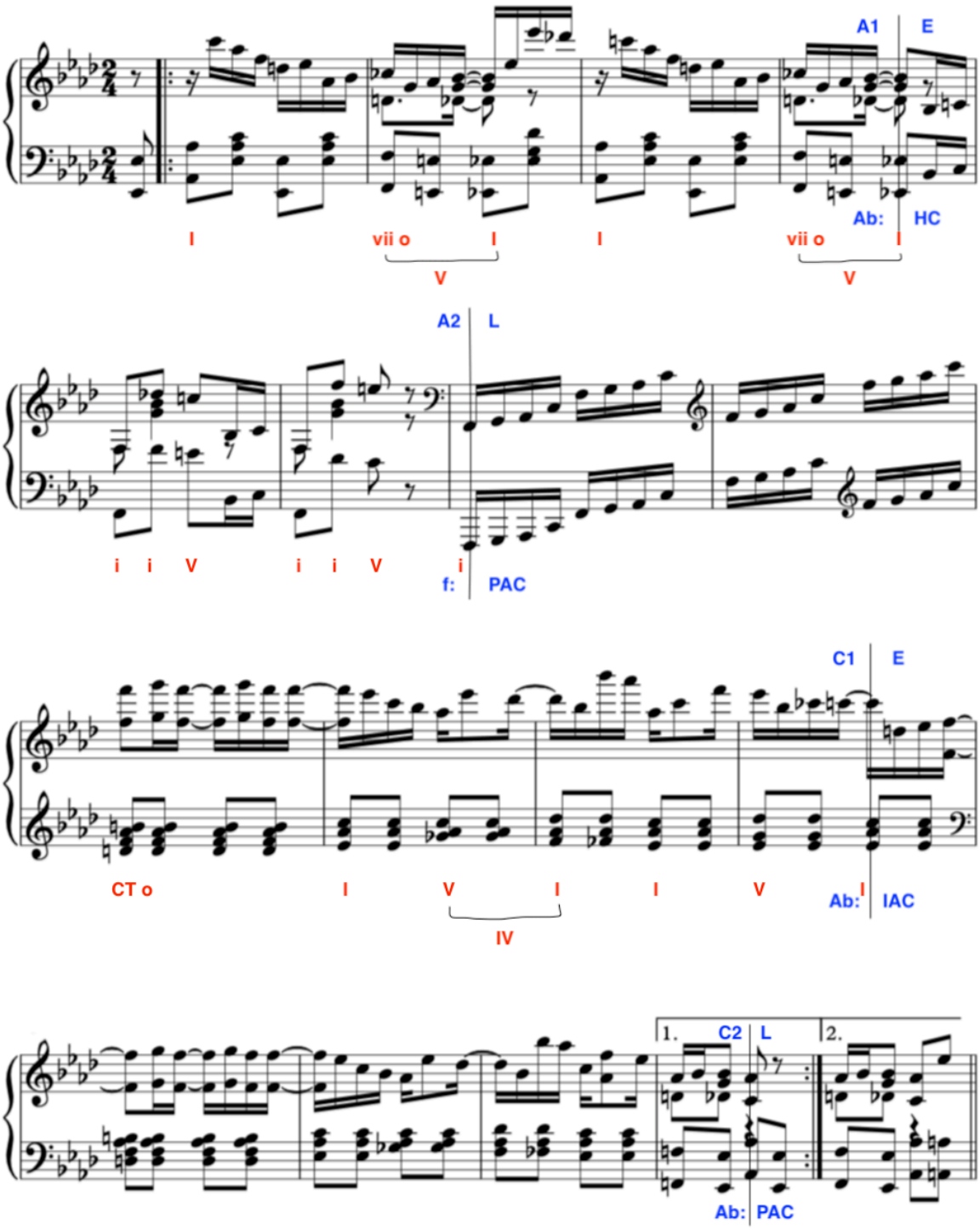
Phrase form

Maple Leaf:

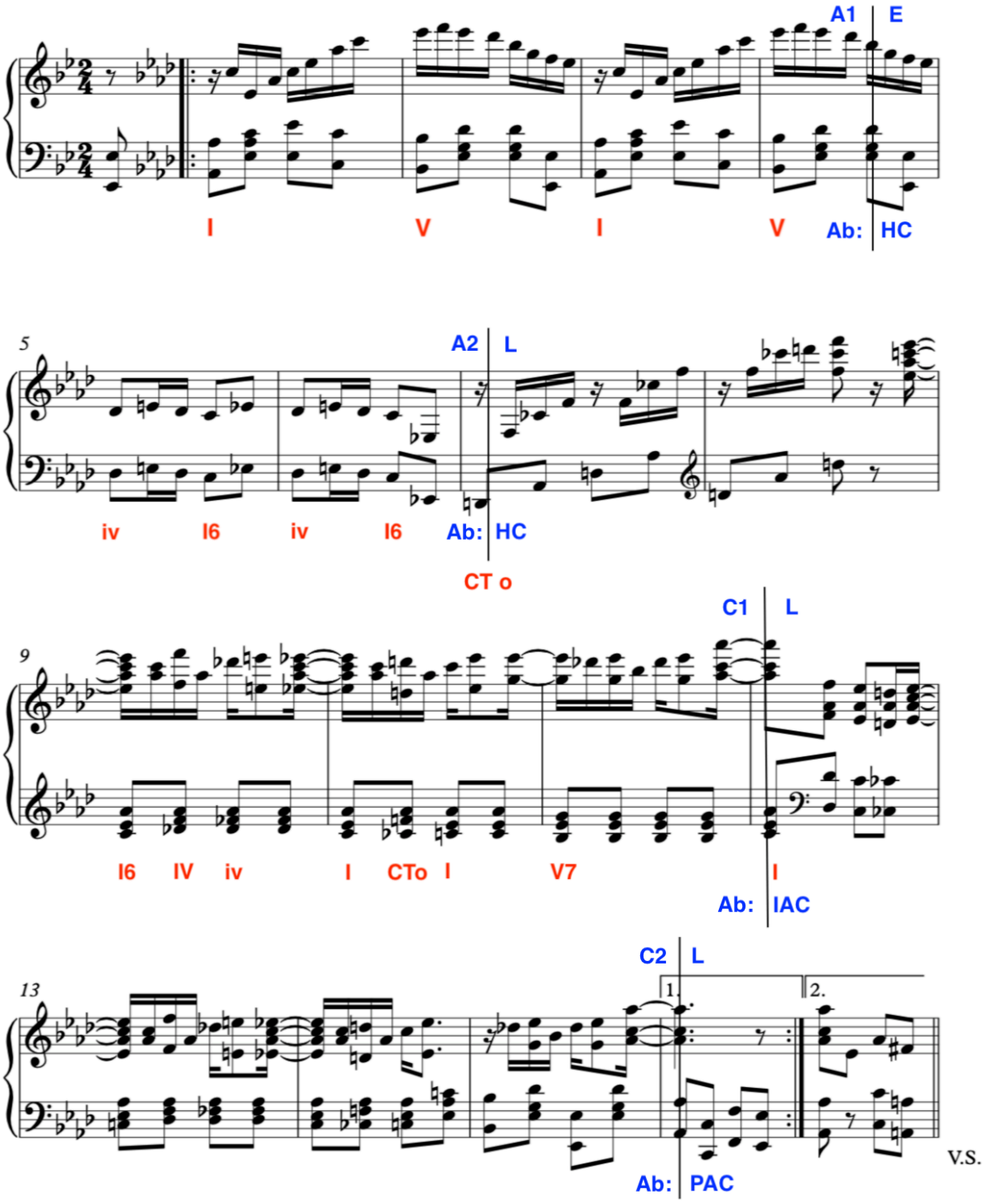


V.S.

Gladiolus:


A1
E
I
vii o
I
V
I
vii o
I
V
Ab:
HC
A2
L
i
i
V
i
i
V
i
f:
PAC
C1
E
CT o
I
V
I
IV
I
V
I
Ab:
IAC
1.
C2
L
2.
Ab:
PAC
V.S.

Sugar Cane:

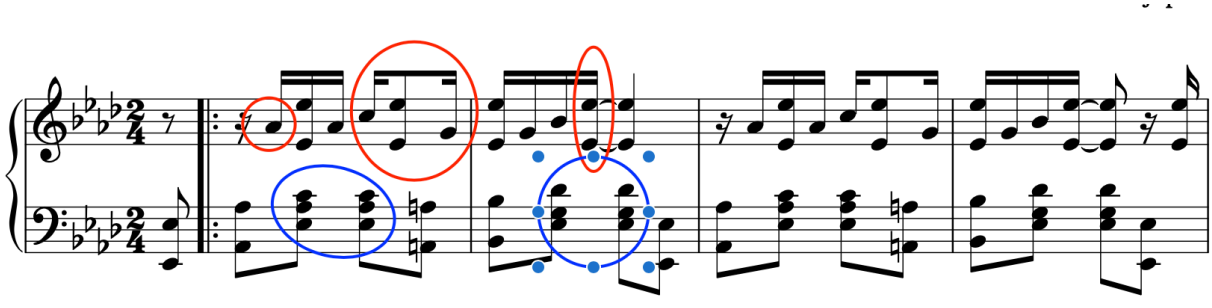

A1
E
I
V
I
V
Ab: HC
5
A2
L
iv
I6
iv
I6
Ab: HC
CT o
C1
L
9
I6
IV
iv
I
CTo
I
V7
I
Ab: IAC
C2
L
13
1.
2.
Ab: PAC
V.S.

Overall, all three rags carry a similar phrase form. The A section for each rag is a 2 – 2 period, but the ways in which the periods manifest differ slightly in each rag. Maple leaf's two antecedent phrases contain a half cadence and an imperfect authentic cadence, each in the key of A-flat, with the latter being in A-flat minor. Likewise, the first antecedent phrase for Gladiolus is a half cadence in A-flat, but the second is a perfect authentic cadence in F minor (tonicization). Sugar Cane's antecedent phrases are two half cadences in A-flat. For all three rags, the consequent phrases are two authentic cadences in the key of A-flat.

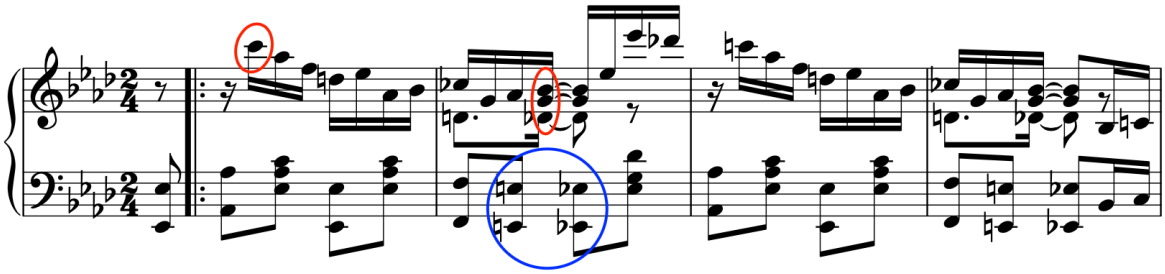
Harmonically, all three rags begin with the progression of I – V – I – V. Measure 5 marks a significant harmonic moment in each rag, where Joplin is moving away from the opening themes. As discussed in the Maple Leaf analysis in chapter two, he uses the mode mixture chord bVI. At the same point in the music, the other two rags use similarly "alien" chords. In the case of Gladiolus, Joplin uses that instance to tonicize F-minor, while in Sugar Cane, he uses the iv minor chord. The second half of the period uses common-tone diminished chords and secondary harmony to prolong a I – V – I progression.

Melodic/Rhythmic Elements

For context, this is the aforementioned analysis of the rhythmic syncopations in Maple Leaf's opening theme:

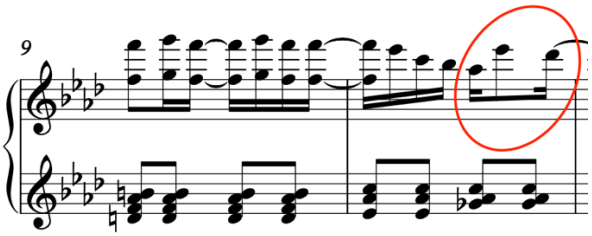


Here are the corresponding measures in the Gladiolus:



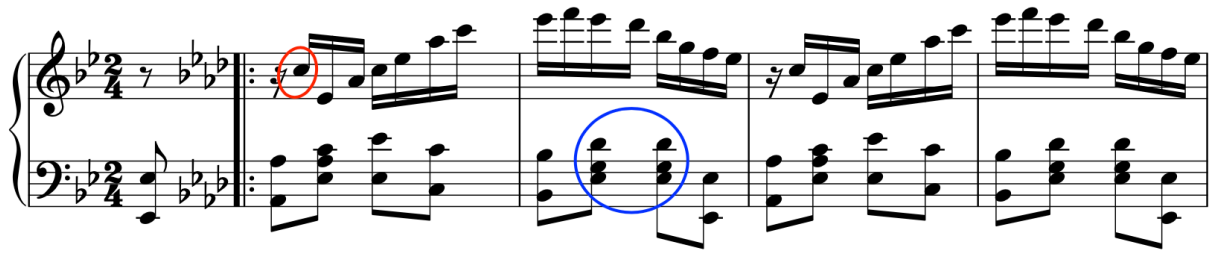
Although the melodic content is very different, the syncopations are very similar. Both Maple Leaf and Gladiolus begin the melody on the second sixteenth-note, and both rags also accent the fourth sixteenth-note of the second measure. Gladiolus also contains a bass syncopation similar to the ones displayed in Maple Leaf.

Apart from the Maple Leaf, Gladiolus is missing the jazz rhythm from its opening theme. However, the jazz rhythm does appear in the consequent later in the section:



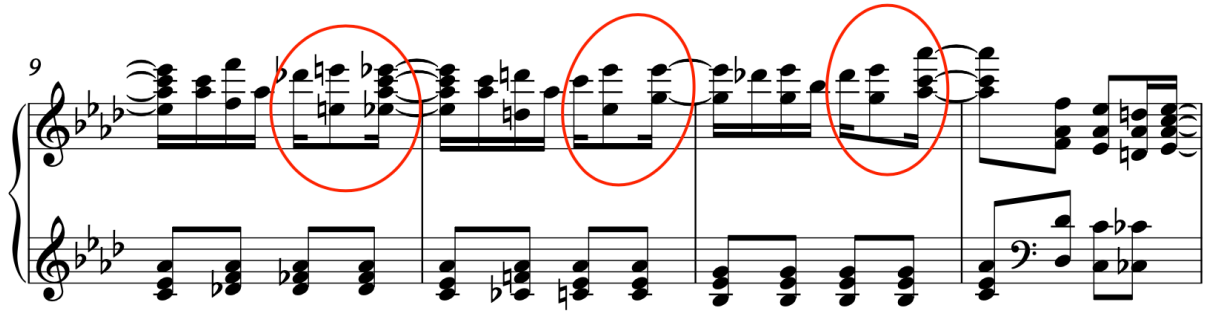
Although the jazz rhythm does not occur in the same places within the rags, both rags contain this significant thematic rhythm.

Sugar Cane's syncopations deviate slightly from both Maple Leaf and Gladiolus:



Like Maple Leaf and Gladiolus, Sugar Cane begins its melody on the second sixteenth-note of the measure. A big difference between this rag and the former two is that Sugar Cane does not accent the fourth sixteenth-note of the second measure, thereby creating a less-syncopated texture. However, the left hand in the second measure contains a similar syncopation away from the bass-chord-bass-chord that Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane also contain.

Like Gladiolus, the opening theme to Sugar Cane does not contain the jazz rhythm. However, also like Gladiolus, the rhythm appears in the consequent:



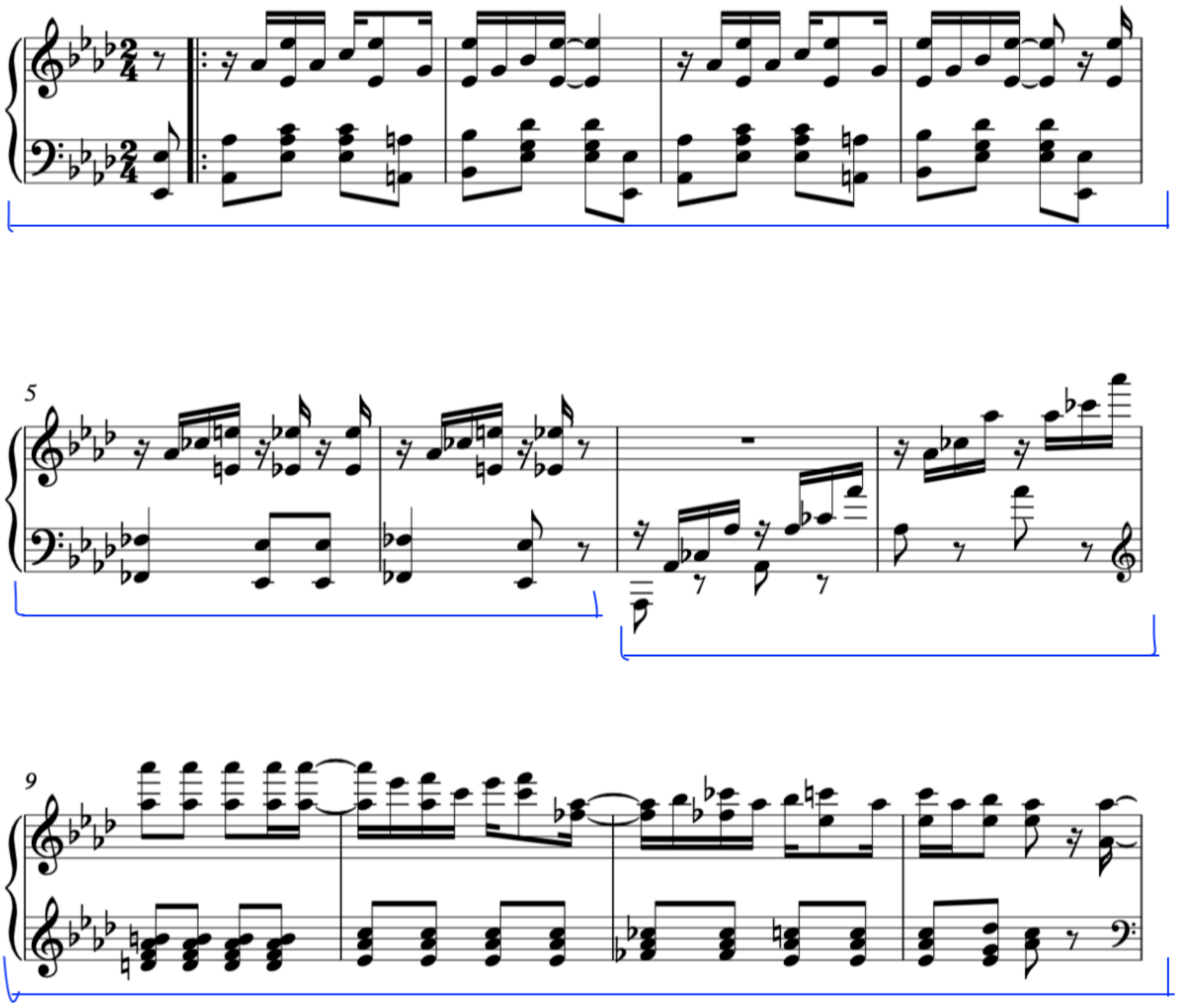
In the case of Sugar Cane, the jazz rhythm becomes a much more prominent motivic figure in the antecedent, occurring three times in the repeated figure.

The Melodic contour of the three rags differ heavily from one another. While Maple Leaf's melodic contour in its opening theme is very static, the themes to Gladiolus and Sugar Cane have a lot more movement, with Gladiolus starting in a descending motion and then ascending, while Sugar Cane begins with ascending motion and then descends.

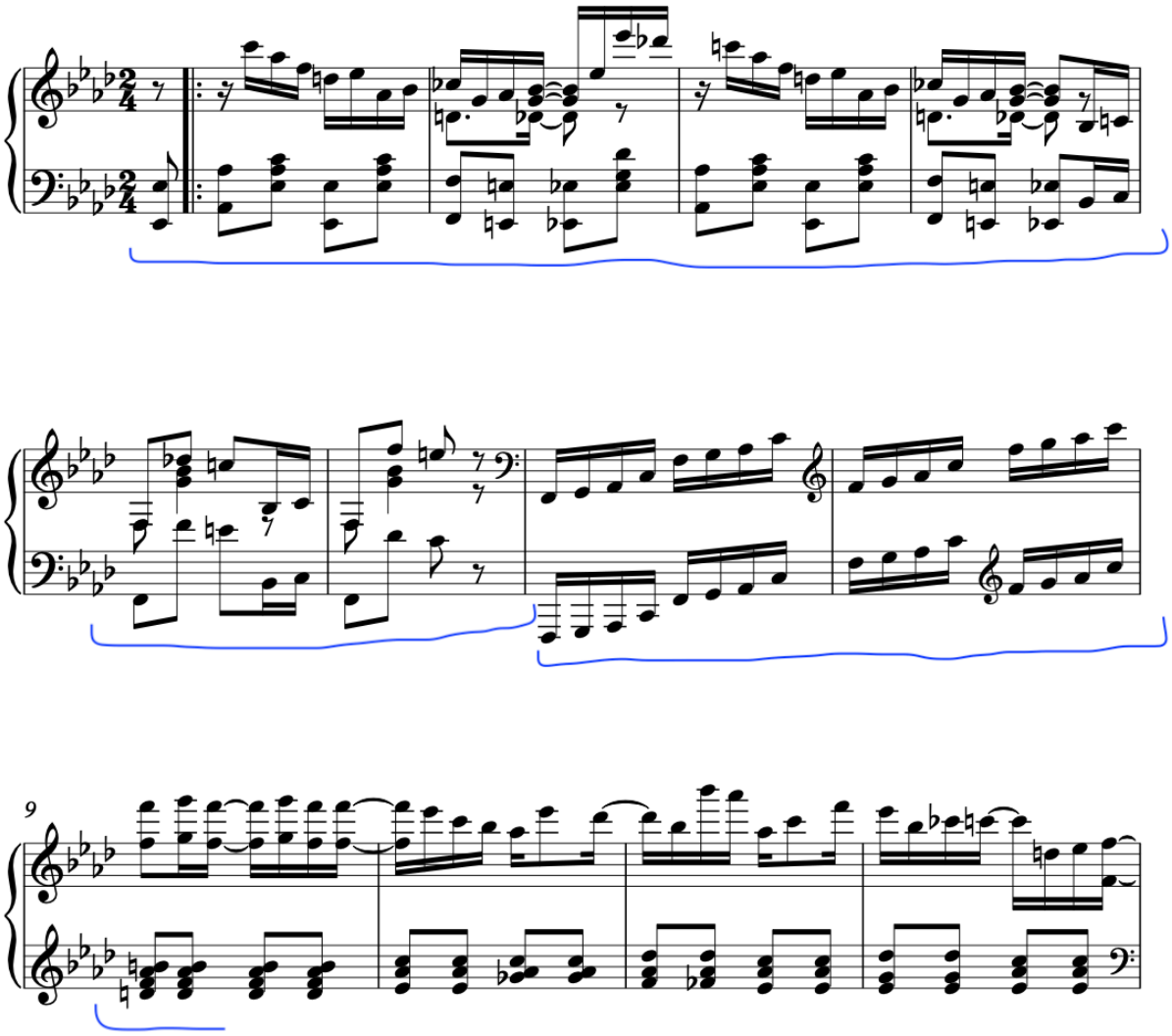
Textural elements

For this section (as well as corresponding sections in future chapters) I will be re-presenting my textural analysis of the Maple Leaf and immediately presenting textural analyses for Gladiolus and Sugar Cane. I will then elaborate on similarities and differences between the three rags in terms of their textural analyses.

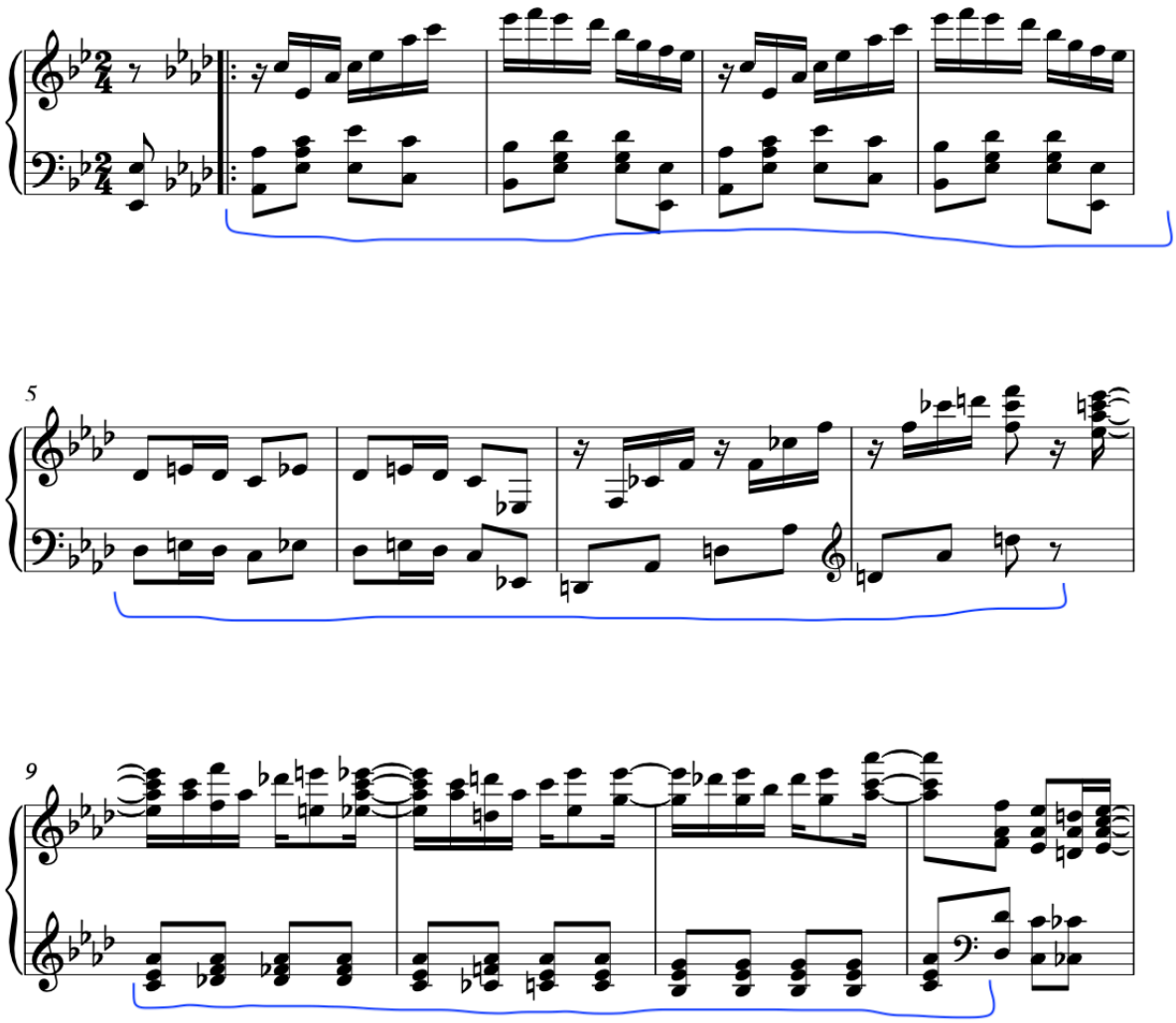
To begin, here is the textural analysis of the Maple Leaf A section once more:



Gladiolus A section, textural analysis:



Sugar Cane A section, textural analysis:



The three rags contain a very similar texture scheme in their A sections. Joplin begins all three with their relatively thickest texture, and then employs a significant reduction in texture in measure 5 across all of them (once each piece hits its “alien” chord). As previously mentioned, Measures 7 – 8 of Maple Leaf employ a one-line texture of an ascending arpeggiation in four registers. The same is true of Gladiolus Rag, which arpeggiates the line F-G-Ab-C across four registers (in each hand). Sugar Cane is slightly different in that it arpeggiates an ascending chord,

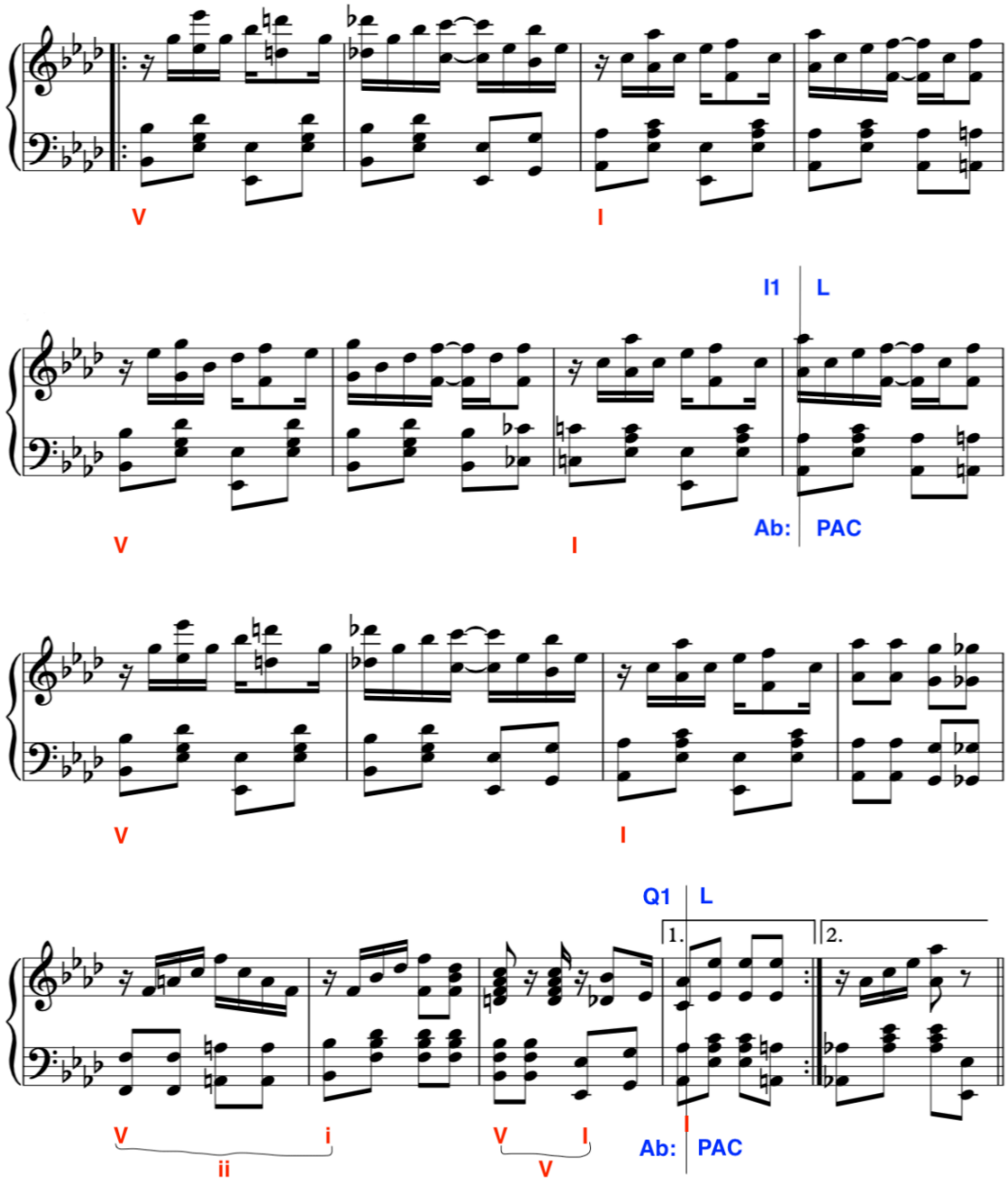
but there are two parts together simultaneously as opposed to one, and the arpeggiation spans only three registers.

CHAPTER FIVE

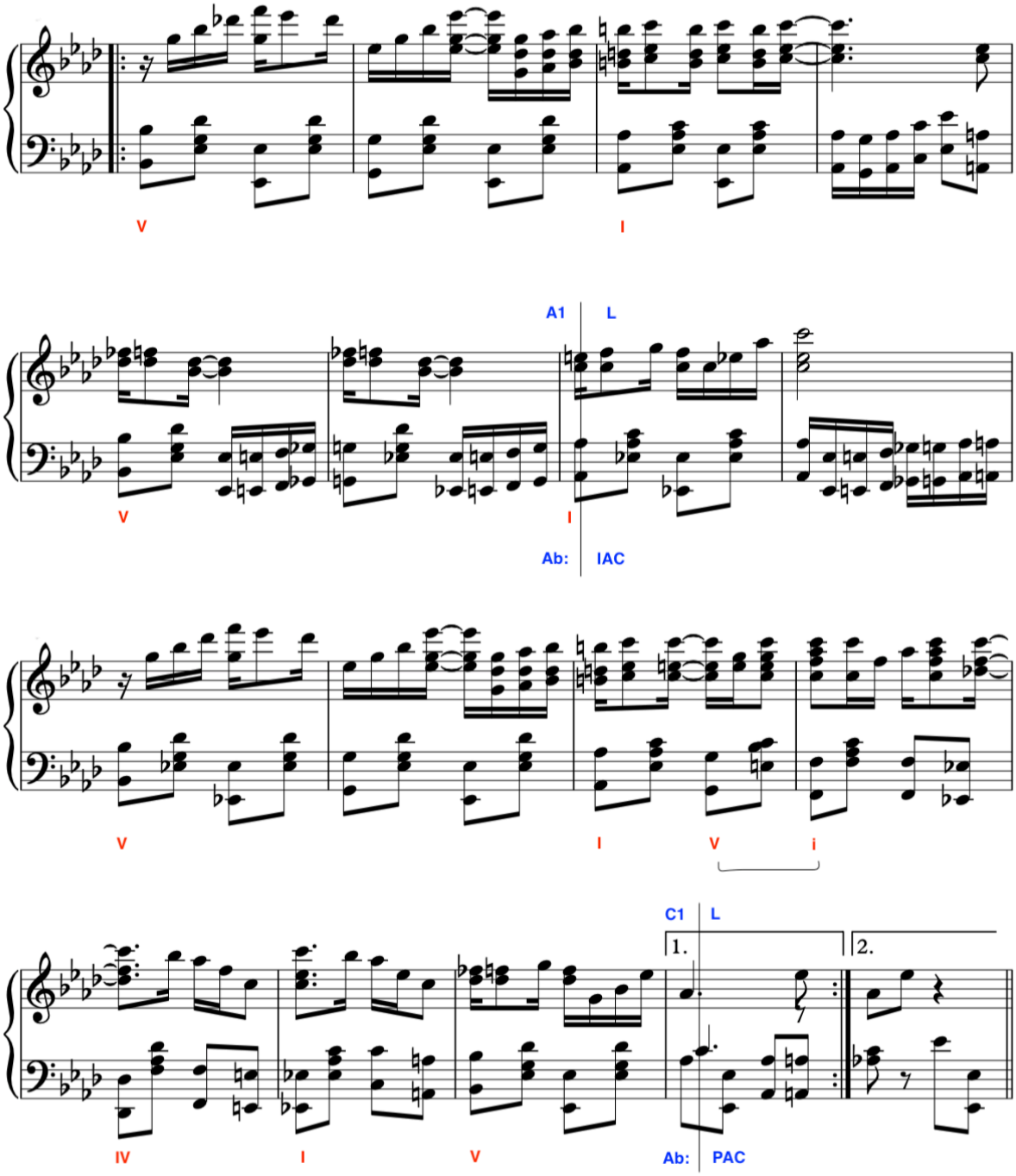
COMPARING THE "B" SECTIONS

Phrase form

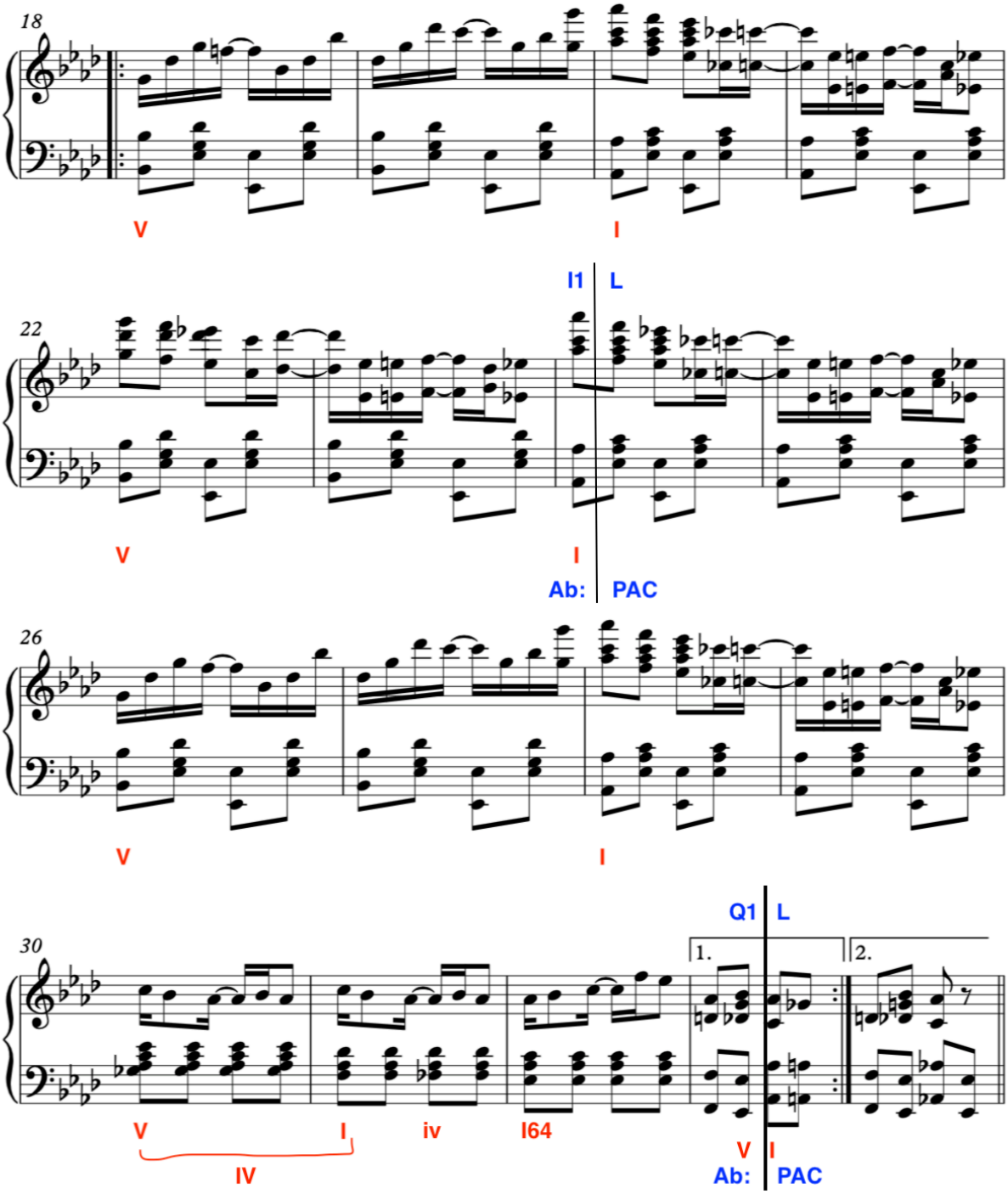
Maple Leaf:



Gladiolus:



Sugar Cane:

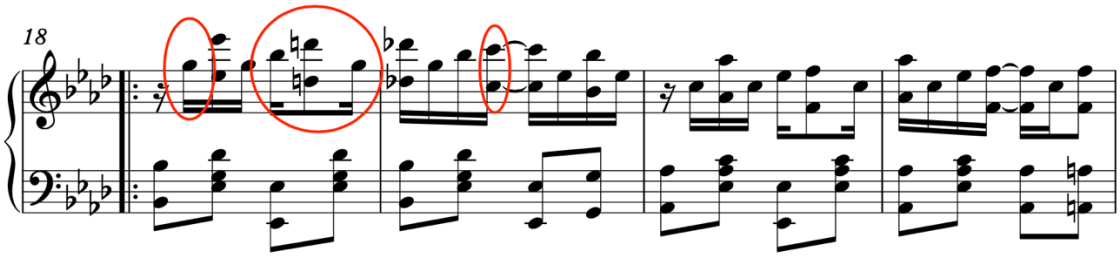


The phrase forms of the B sections are much different than the A sections. As opposed to having four phrases in the A sections, each rag has two phrases in the B section. Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane employ a 1 – 1 phrase group, with Perfect Authentic cadences concluding each phrase. Gladiolus is almost the same way, except that the first phrase ends in an Imperfect Authentic cadence. Because of this, I considered the two phrases of Gladiolus to have an antecedent-consequent feel, and thus analyzed it as a 1 – 1 period.

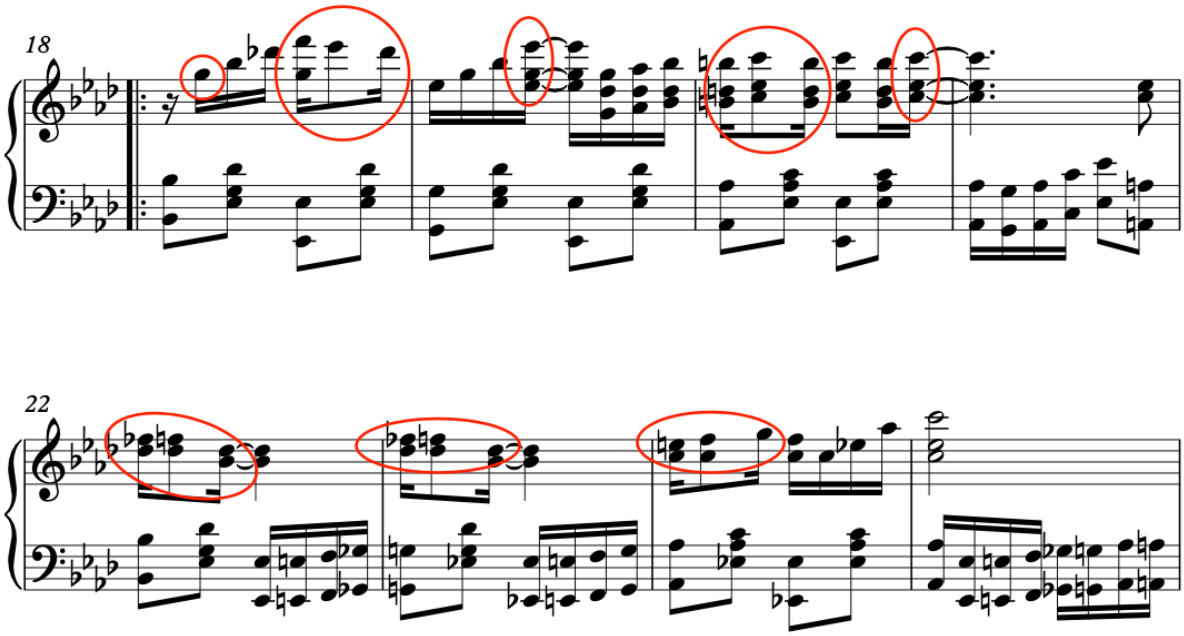
What is perhaps more significant in these phrase form analyses is the harmonic similarities between the three rags. The first twelve measures of the B section have a harmonic scheme of V – I – V – I – V – I across all of them. The turnaround of the final four measures of the section is where the harmony differs and becomes more interesting in each rag; Maple Leaf tonicizes ii and V, Gladiolus tonicizes vi and Sugar Cane tonicizes IV, in their efforts to turn around to the final I chord in the section in measure 33.

Melodic/Rhythmic Elements

For context, here is the earlier analysis of the first four measures of Maple Leaf's B section:

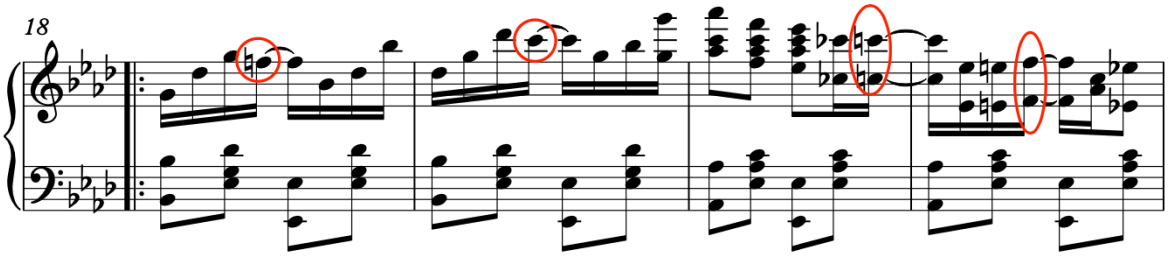


I placed particular emphasis on the melodic syncopations and the use of the jazz rhythm throughout the piece. Gladiolus has similar figures, and places greater emphasis on the use of the jazz rhythm:



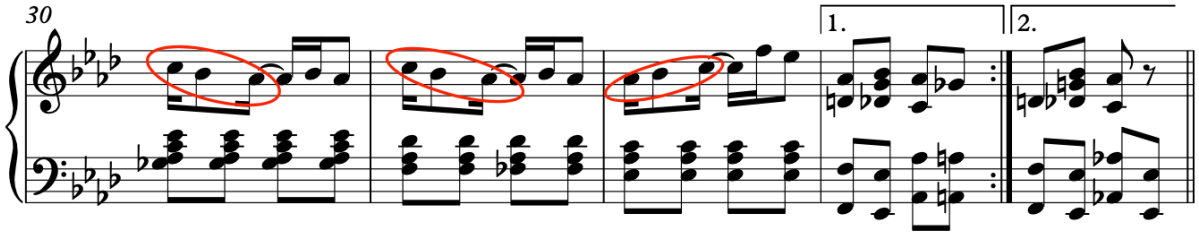
Like Maple Leaf's B section, Gladiolus syncopates by accenting the second sixteenth-note of the first measure and the fourth sixteenth note of the second measure. In the second four measures of the B section, Gladiolus elaborates on the use of the jazz rhythm, circled in red in measures 22 – 24.

Sugar Cane, on the other hand, shares less similarities in syncopations and use of the jazz rhythm; some of the similarities, however, are still present:



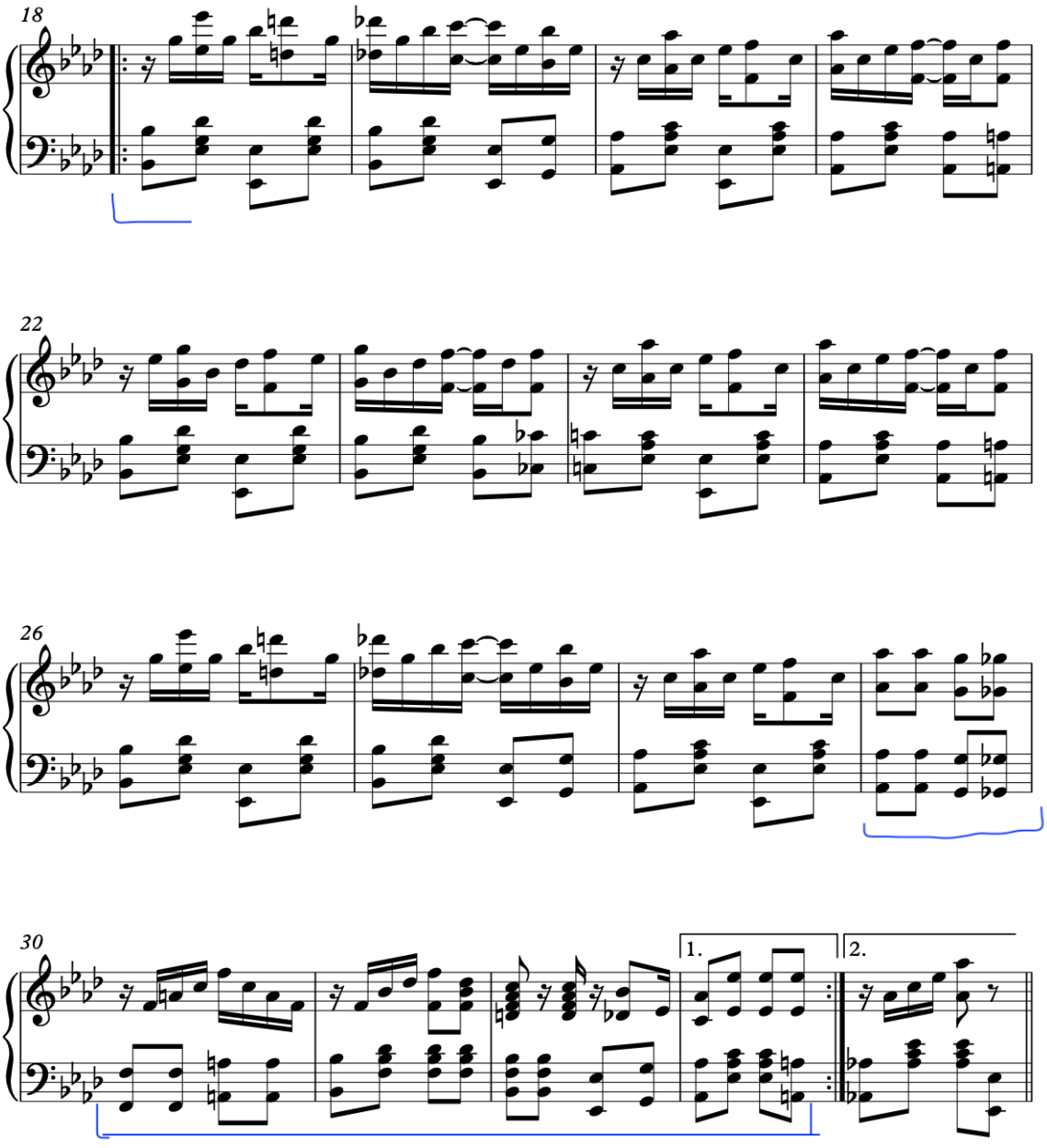
Unlike Maple Leaf and Gladiolus, Sugar Cane's B section does not begin on the second sixteenth-note of the measure. However, the emphasis on the fourth sixteenth-note is more elaborate in Sugar Cane's B theme.

Although Sugar Cane does not employ the jazz rhythm in the opening four measures of the B section as Maple Leaf and Gladiolus do, it does employ it in the last four measures of the section (mm. 30 – 33):

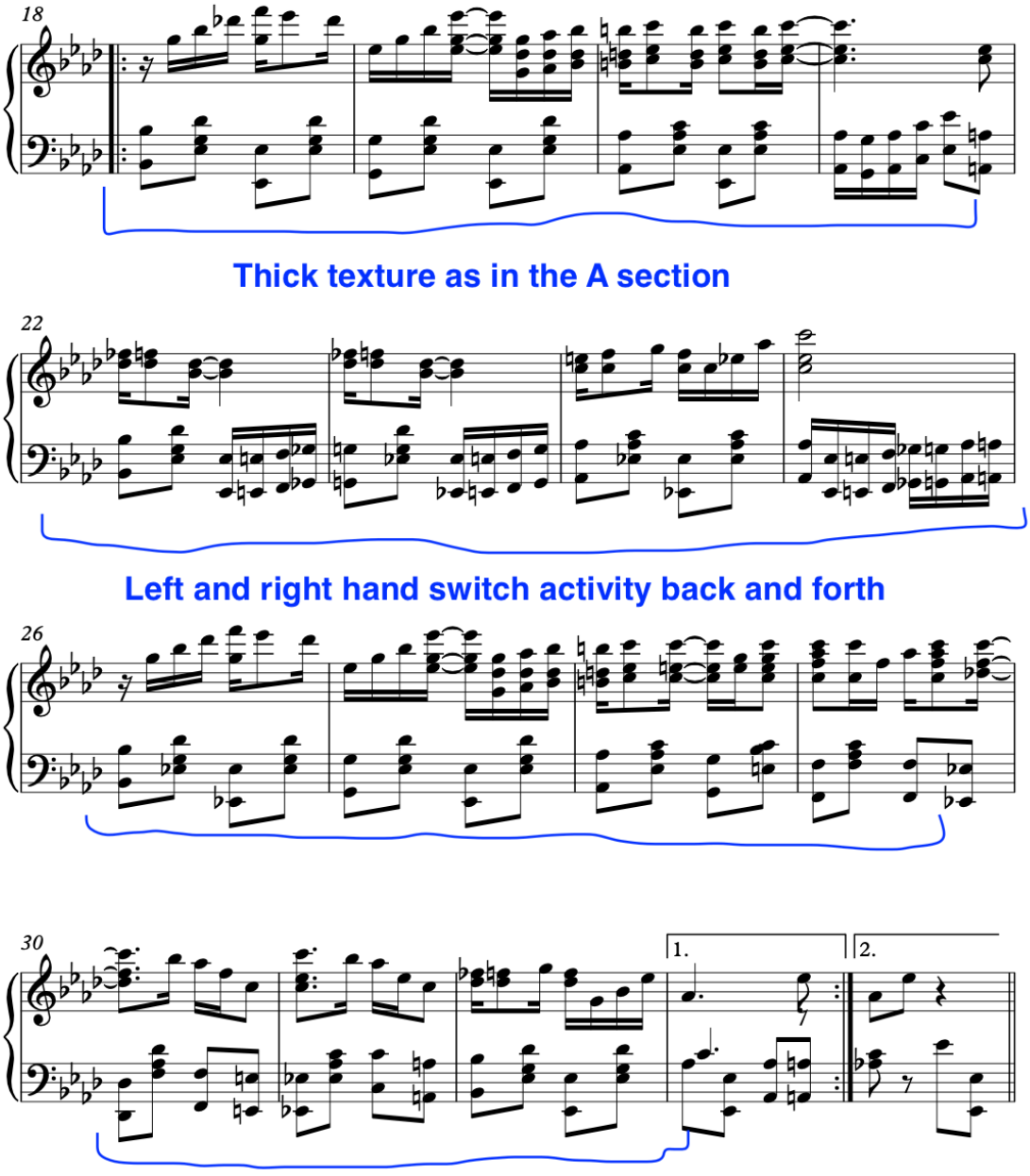


Textural elements

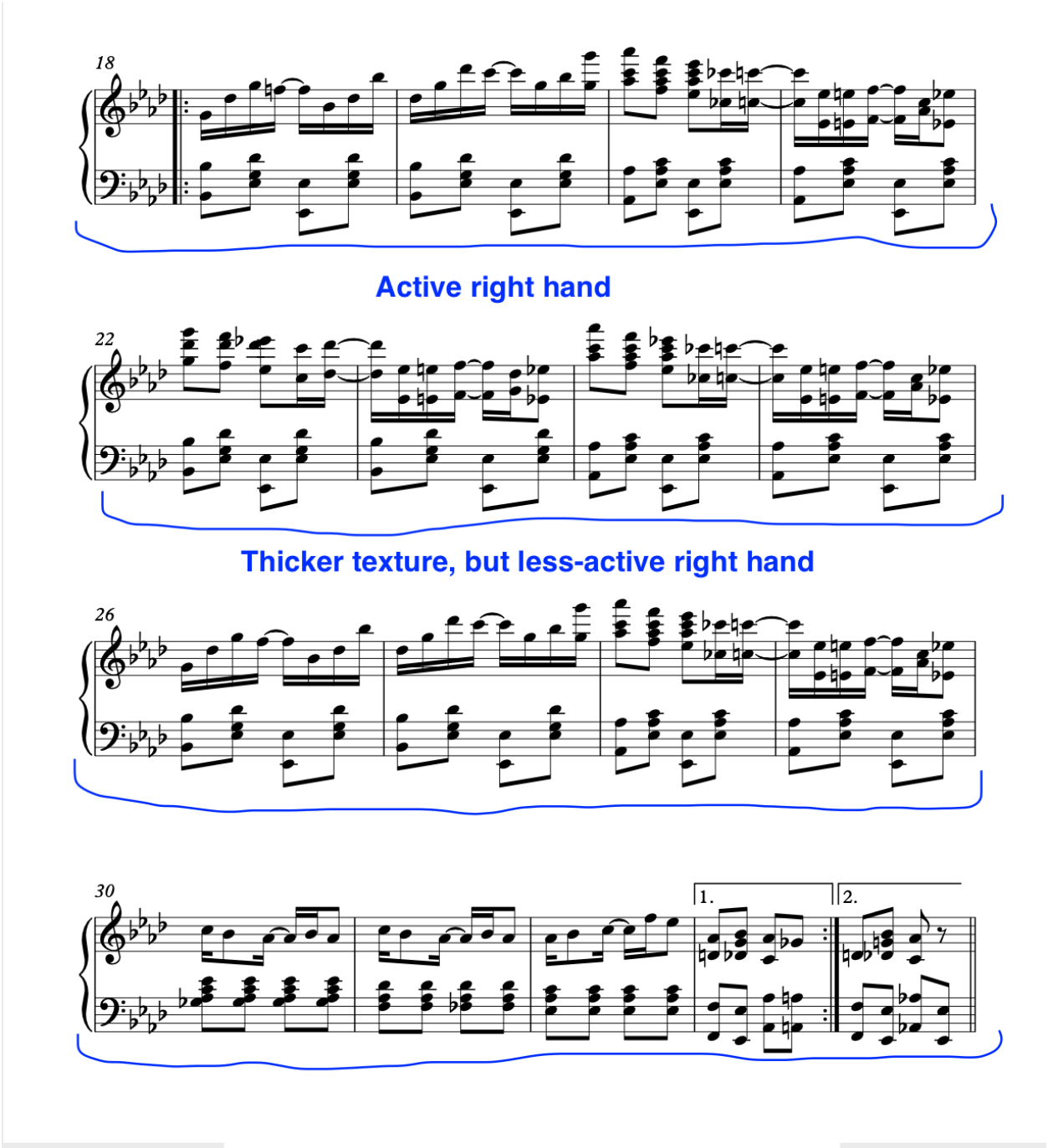
For context, here are my three textural analyses of the B sections, beginning with the re-statement of Maple Leaf's:



Gladiolus B section texture:



Sugar Cane B section texture:



All three rags share the common bond of beginning the B section with a texture that is similar to the beginning of the A section. Maple Leaf keeps that texture for the first twelve

measures. At the fifth measure of the section for Gladiolus and Sugar Cane, however, the texture changes. Gladiolus takes a thinner texture, and the left and right hands switch levels of activity. Sugar Cane begins with an active right hand as in its A section but with a thinner texture. The second four measures of the section employ a thicker texture with the use of block chords, but the right hand is less active.

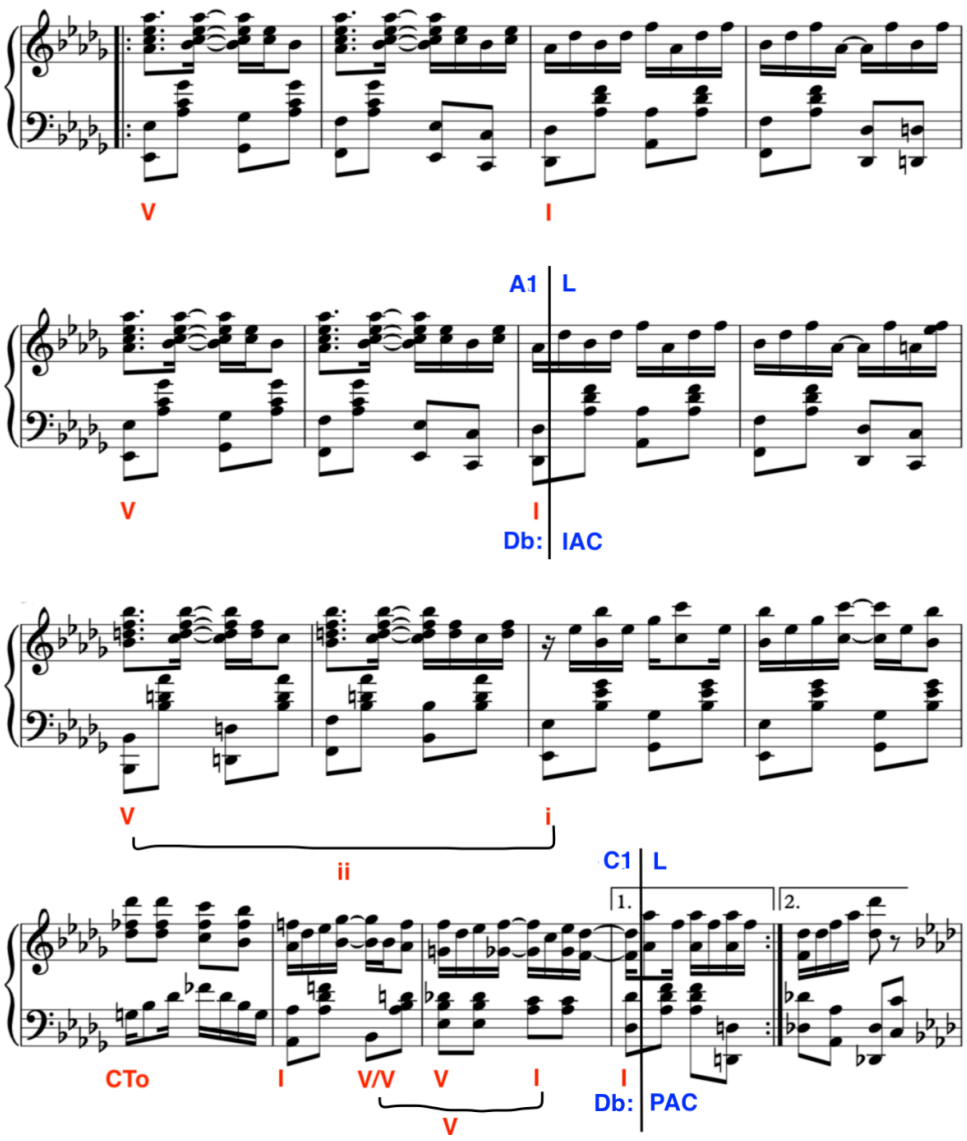
In the final four measures of the B section, all three rags take on a thinner texture, corresponding with their harmonic changes. Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane employ a bouncier texture through the use of static chords in eighth-notes in the left hand, as in the antecedent phrases of their A sections.

CHAPTER SIX

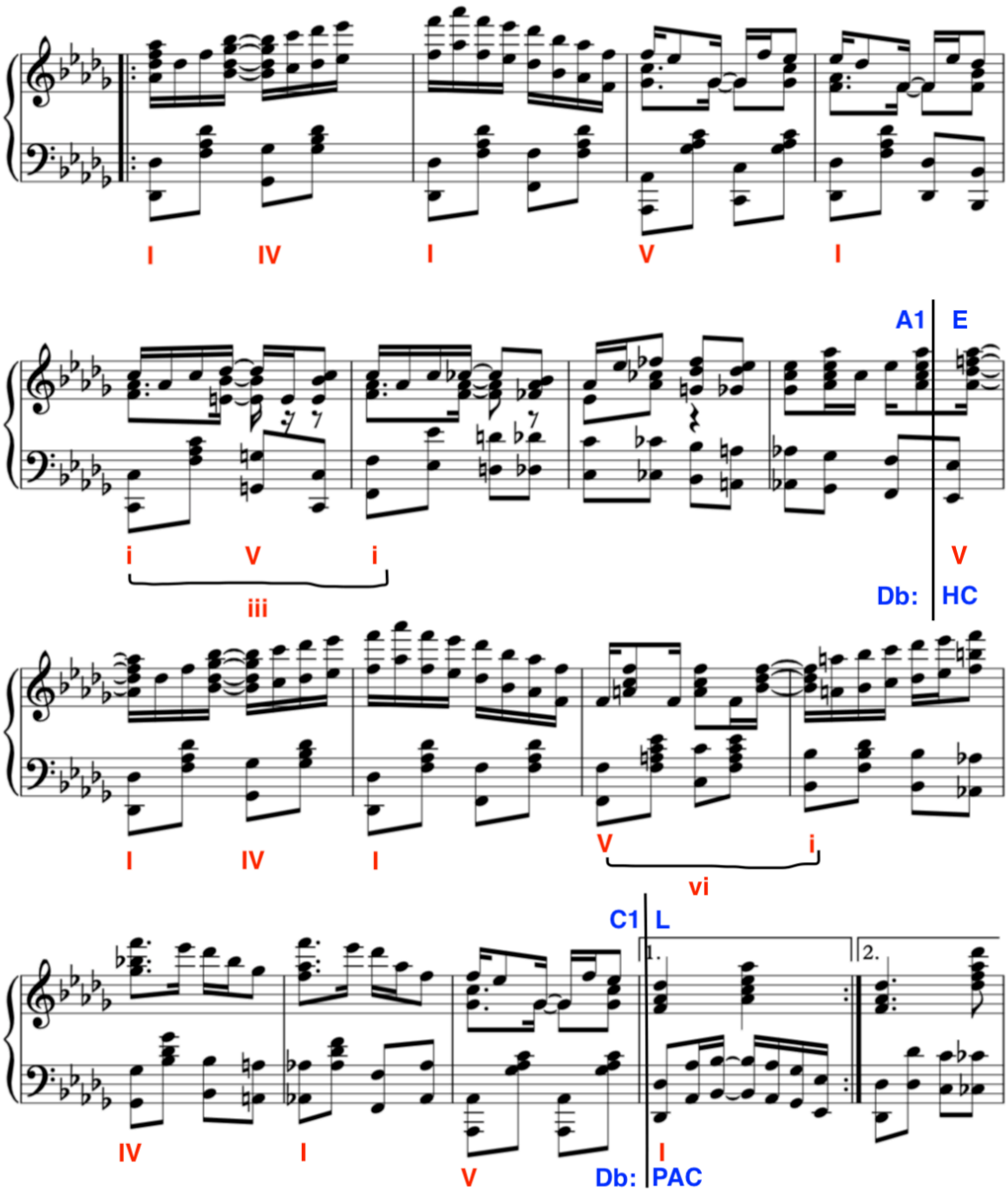
COMPARING THE "C" SECTIONS

Phrase form

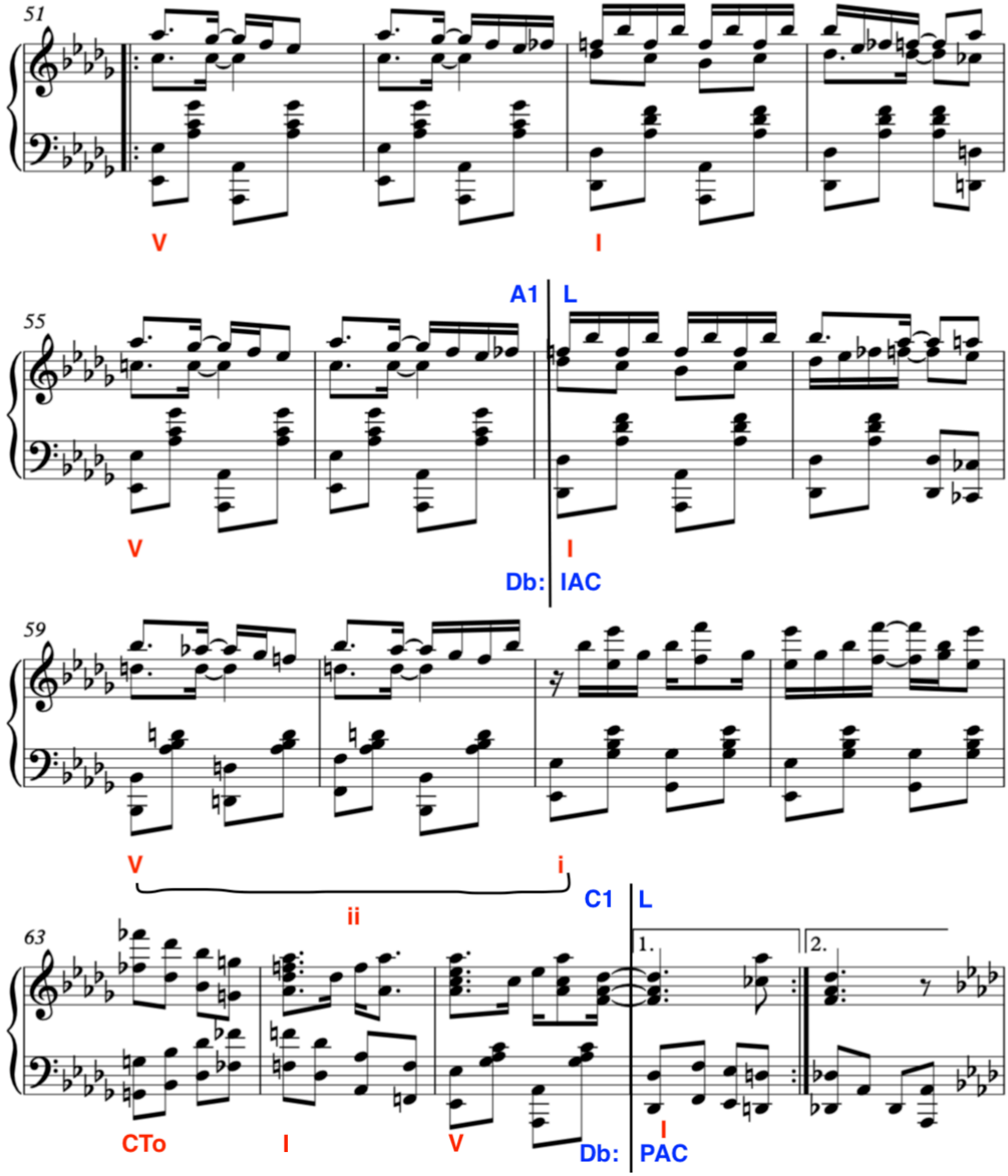
Maple Leaf:



Gladiolus:



Sugar Cane:



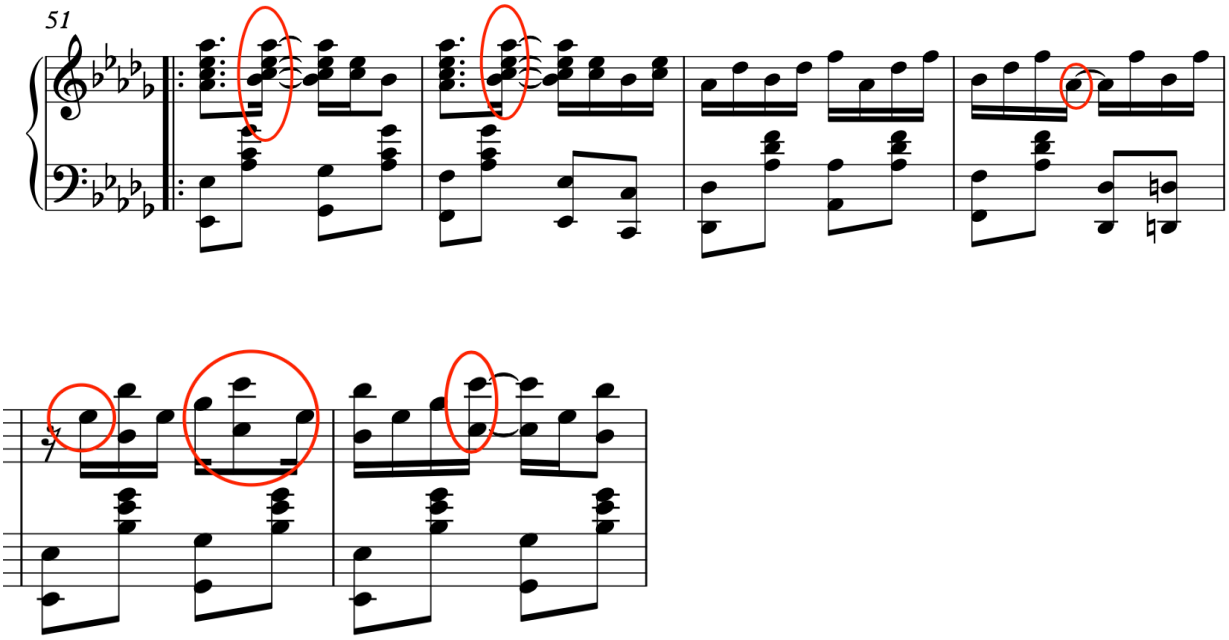
In the case of the C section, all three rags have the same phrase form. There are two phrases of sixteen measures that make up a 1 – 1 period, with the first phrase ending in an imperfect authentic cadence in D-flat major and the second phrase ending in a perfect authentic cadence in D-flat major.

More significant is the harmonic similarities and differences between the three rags. The first phrase of both the Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane is a harmonic progression of V – I – V – I, and the first half of the second phrase in both rags contains a tonicization of ii, and the second half of the second phrase both contain a harmonic progression of CTo – I – V – I (though Maple Leaf's is slightly more intricate in that it contains a tonicization of V).

Up until this point, it seems that there have been more similarities between Maple Leaf and Gladiolus than between Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane. However, the harmonic (and textural) scheme of the C section is where Gladiolus really stands out on its own. Instead of beginning with a V – I – V – I progression as the other rags do, Gladiolus begins its C section with the tonic, as part of a I – IV – I – V – I progression in the first half of the first phrase. The second half of the first phrase begins by tonicizing iii, then moving to a bass motion of Eb – D – Db – C – Cb – Bb – A – Ab – G – F – Eb, ending the phrase on the V chord (with the fifth in the bass), a half cadence in D-flat major. While the last four measures of the section had a harmonic progression of CTo – I – V – I for Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane, Gladiolus was slightly different with IV – I – V – I.

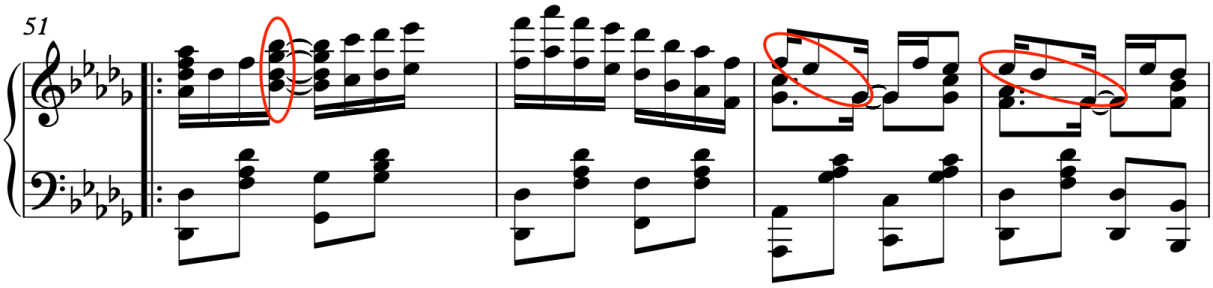
Melodic/Rhythmic Elements

In my analysis of Maple Leaf, I focused on two melodic and rhythmic fragments in this section occurring in measures 51 – 54 and measures 61 – 62:

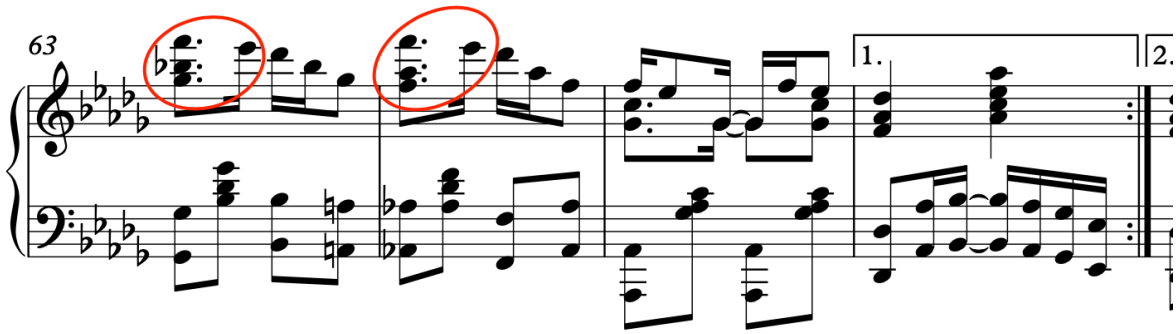


The former example contains a new syncopated rhythm in the dotted-eighth to sixteenth, while the later contains the rhythm and similar contour to the opening theme of the Maple Leaf.

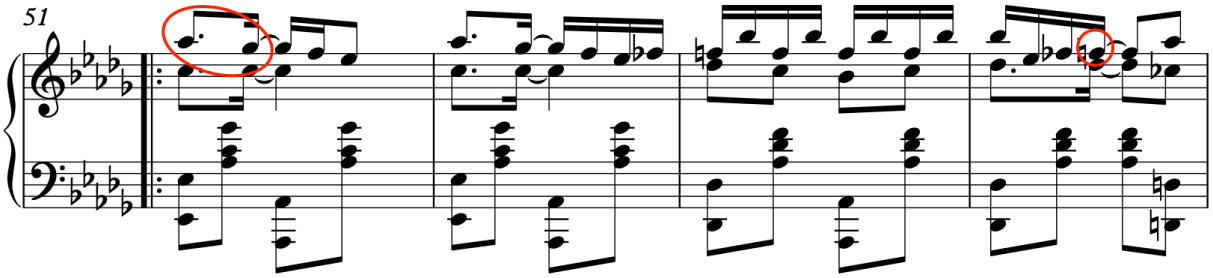
The opening measures to the C section of the Gladiolus does not contain similar figures to Maple Leaf, but it does contain familiar material:



The familiar accenting of the fourth sixteenth note in the measure is present in measure 51. Measures 53 and 54 contain iterations of the jazz rhythm. Gladiolus does contain Maple Leaf's "new" syncopation later in the C section, in measures 63 and 64:

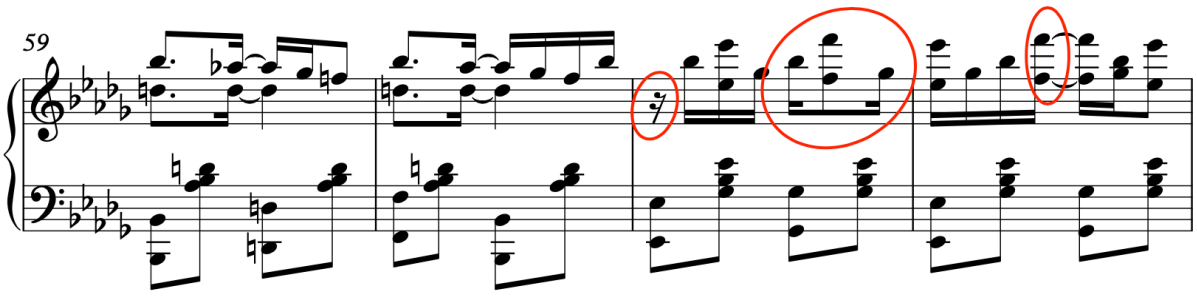


Like Maple Leaf, Sugar Cane contains the “new” syncopation in the opening theme of the C section:



Additionally, the familiar practice of accenting the fourth sixteenth-note of the measure is present in measure 54.

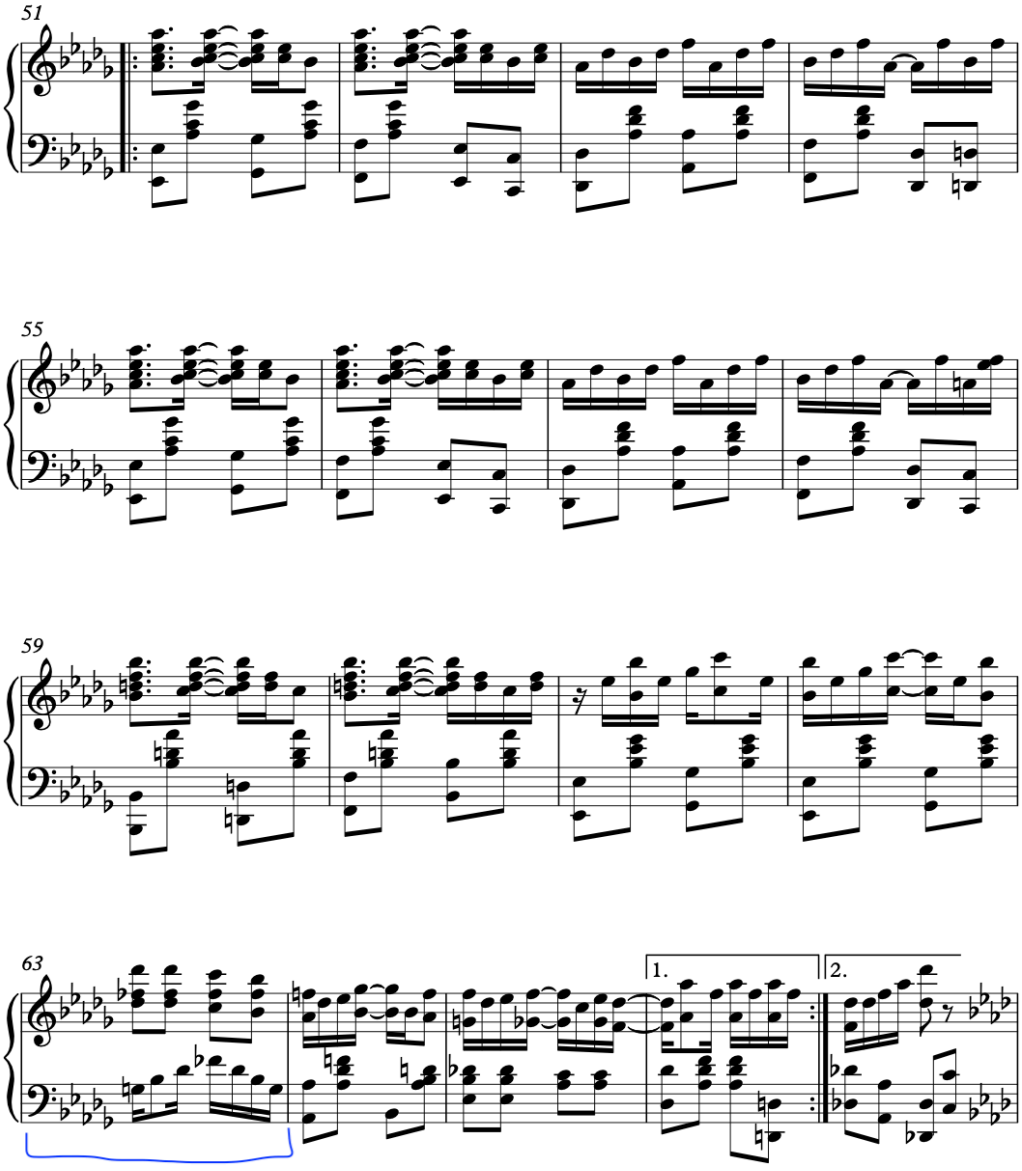
Significantly, akin to Maple Leaf, Sugar Cane contains the opening rhythm and contour of Maple Leaf Rag in its own measures 61 and 62:



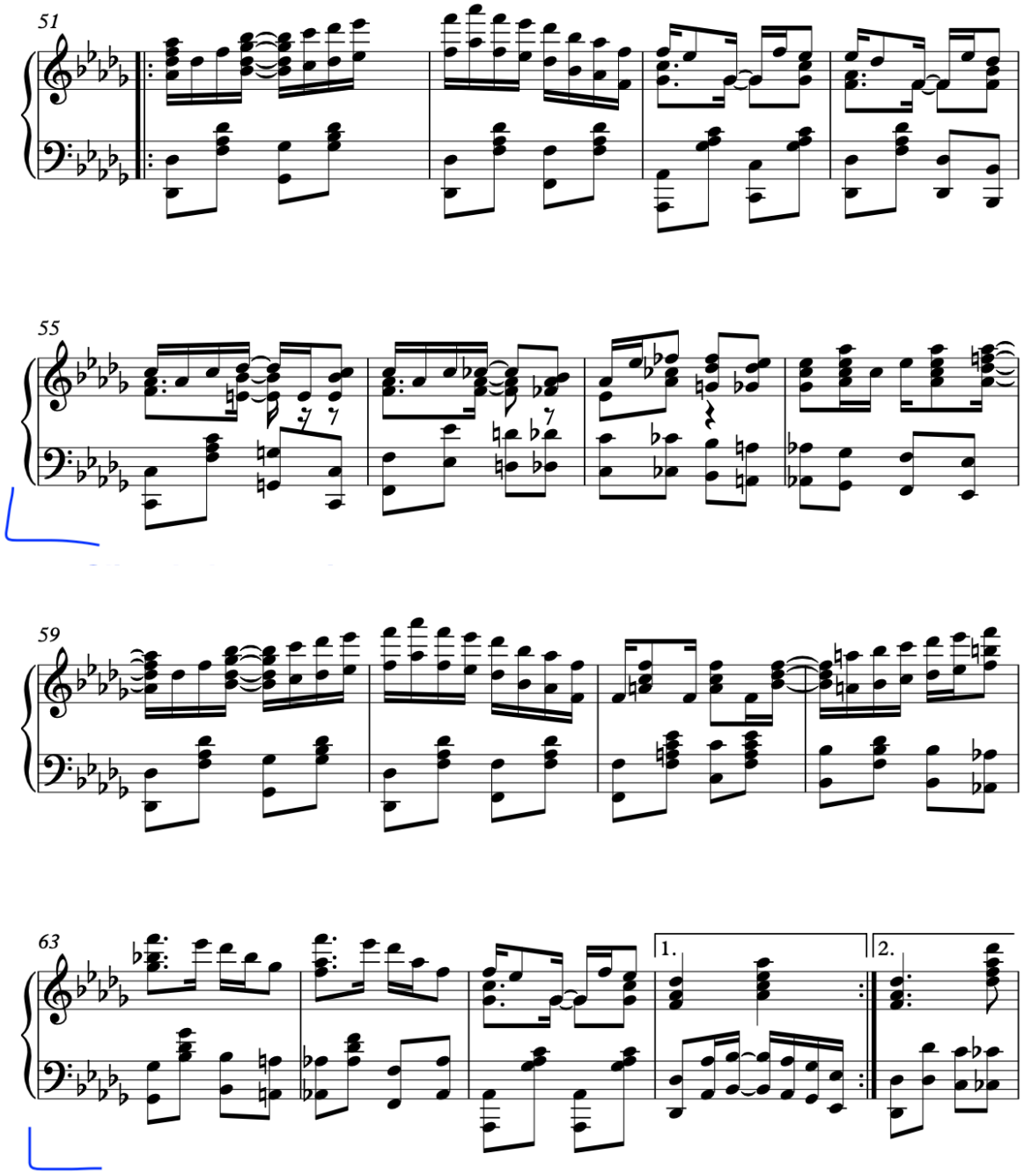
Coupled with the previous analyses of the C sections' phrase forms and harmonic progressions, this supports that in the case of the C section, Sugar Cane is more similar to Maple Leaf than Gladiolus is.

Textural elements

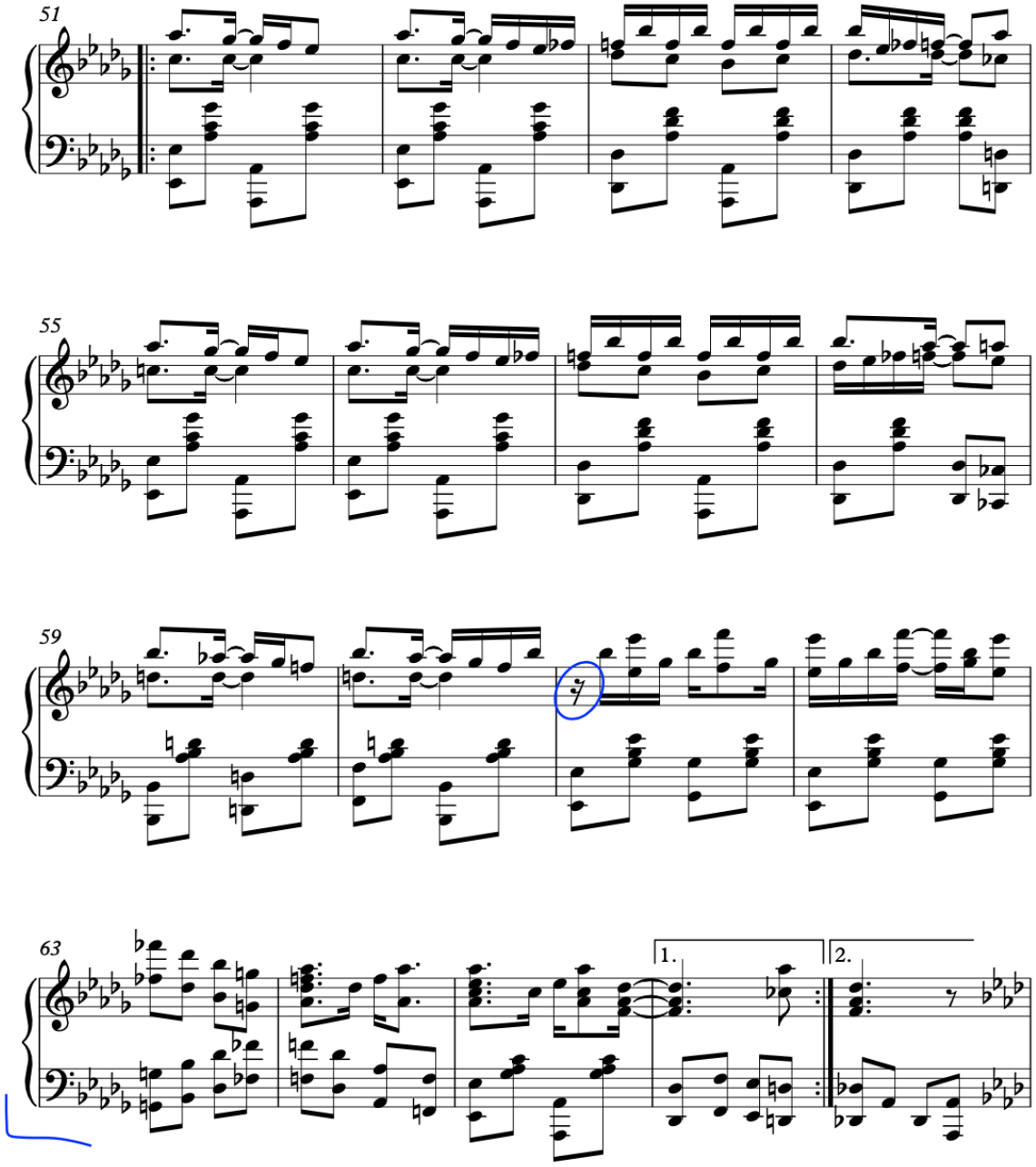
Maple Leaf:



Gladiolus:



Sugar Cane:



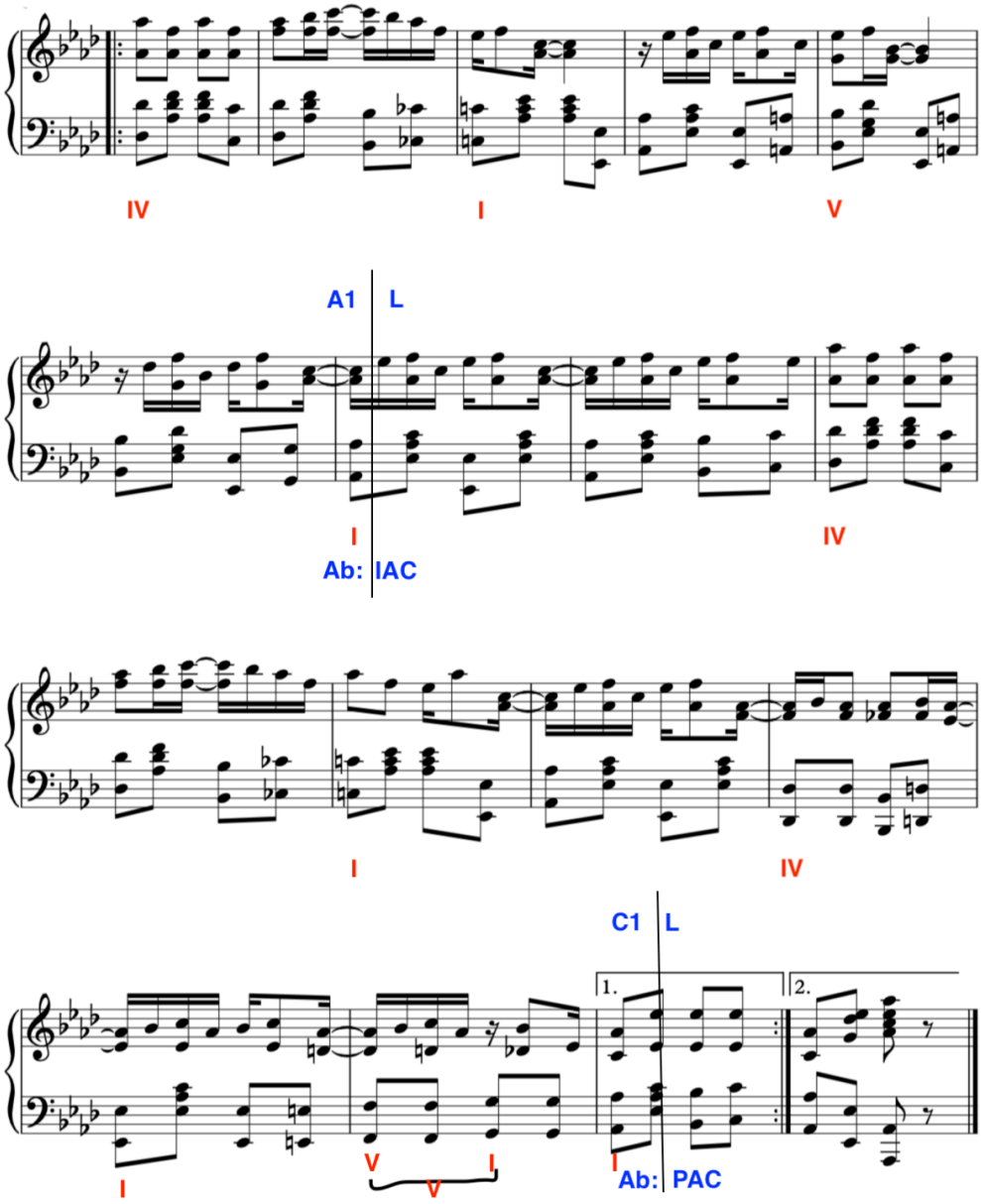
Like the Maple Leaf Rag, Joplin puts much less emphasis on textural changes in this section. As speculated in the analysis of the Maple Leaf, it might be because of the modulation. Now that thorough harmonic analysis has been done in this section, it is also possible that the intricate harmonic structure, particularly of the Gladiolus, was given way in lieu of textural interest. It might however be worth noting that the similarities for this section lie once again between the Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane, as their textures remain similar until the last four measures of the section, whereas the Gladiolus varies in the middle of the section.

CHAPTER SEVEN

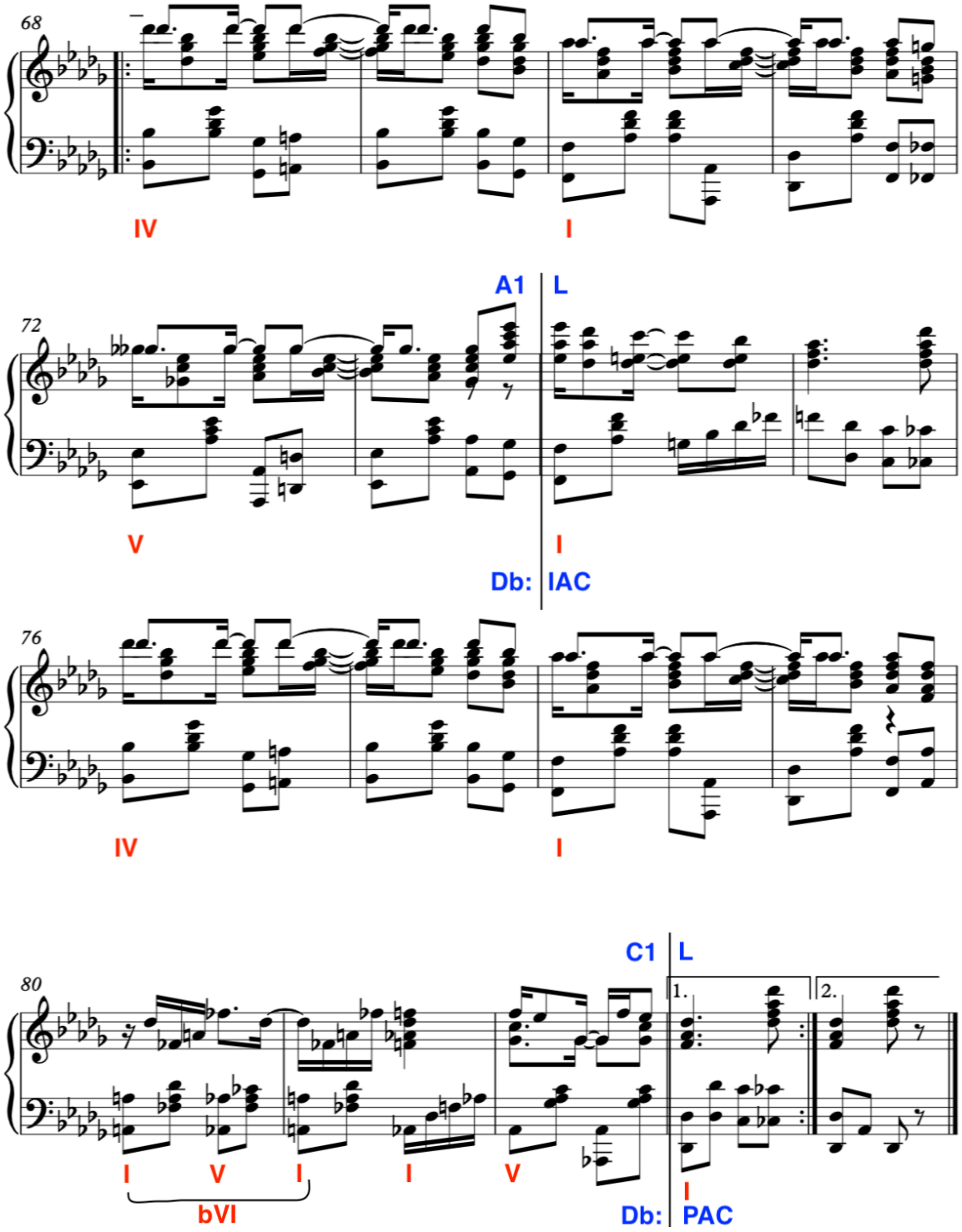
COMPARING THE "D" SECTIONS

Phrase form

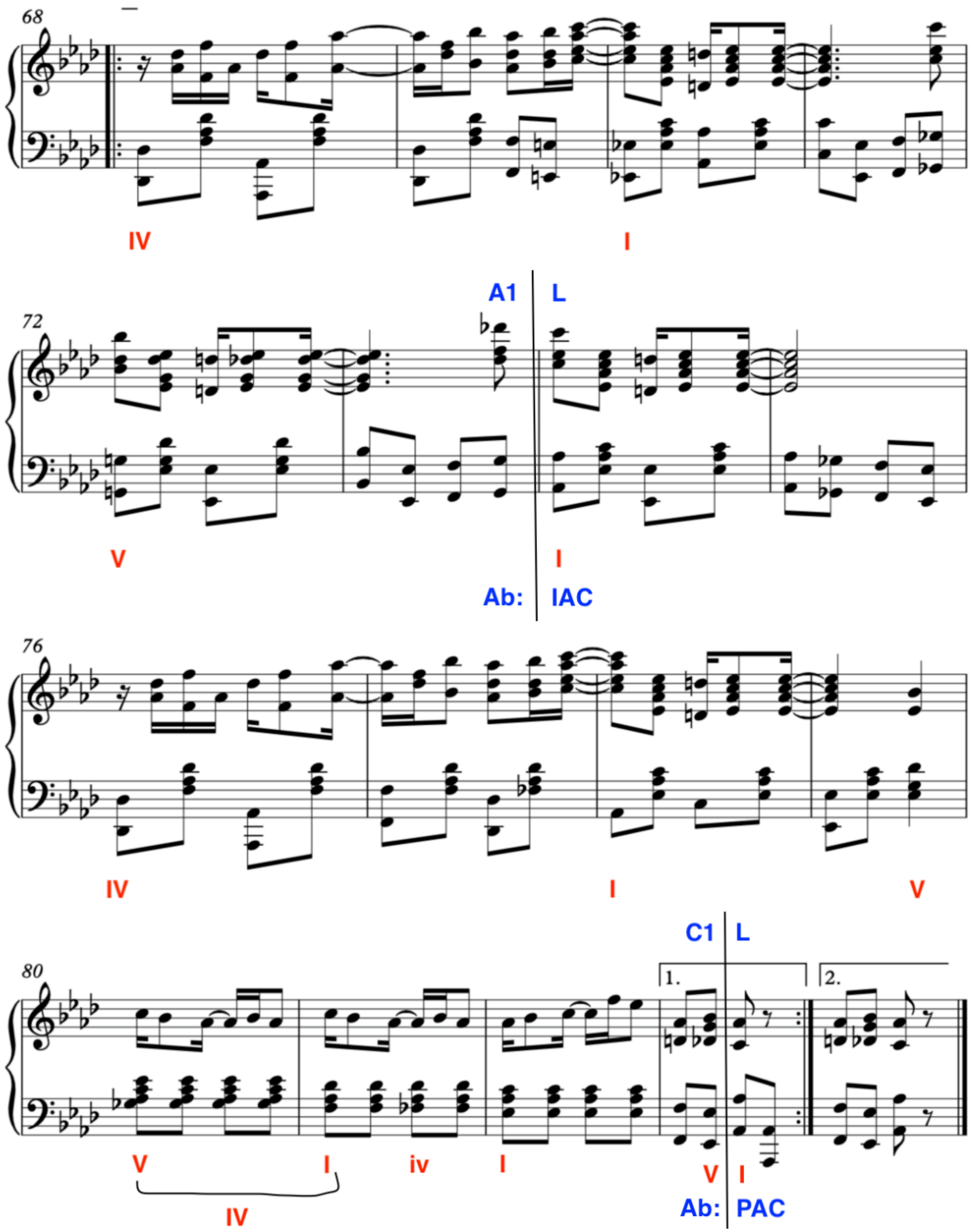
Maple Leaf:



Gladiolus:



Sugar Cane:

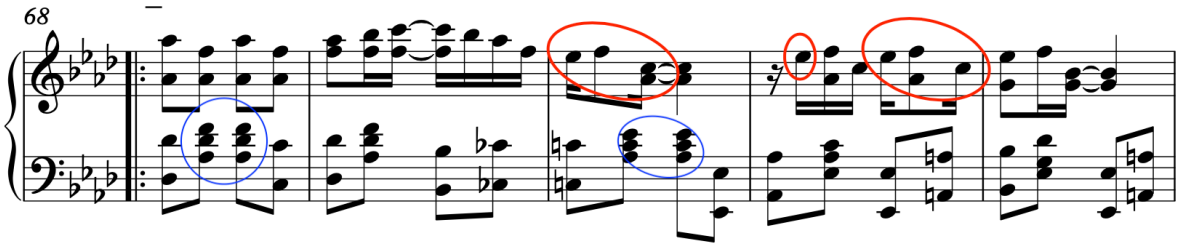


Like in the C section, the three rags all carry the same phrase forms. Unlike the C sections, they all contain similar harmonic schemes, opening with a progression of IV – I – V – I, and continuing with IV – I, before diverting in the final four measures of the piece. Most significant of these diversions is in Gladiolus, which tonicizes the bVI chord before returning abruptly to the I chord. It is possible that the bVI chord in this case is a callback to the very first mode mixture chord used in Maple Leaf Rag (measure 5) and that Joplin is choosing to end Sugar Cane (the last of these rags chronologically) in a similar way to how he began the Maple Leaf.

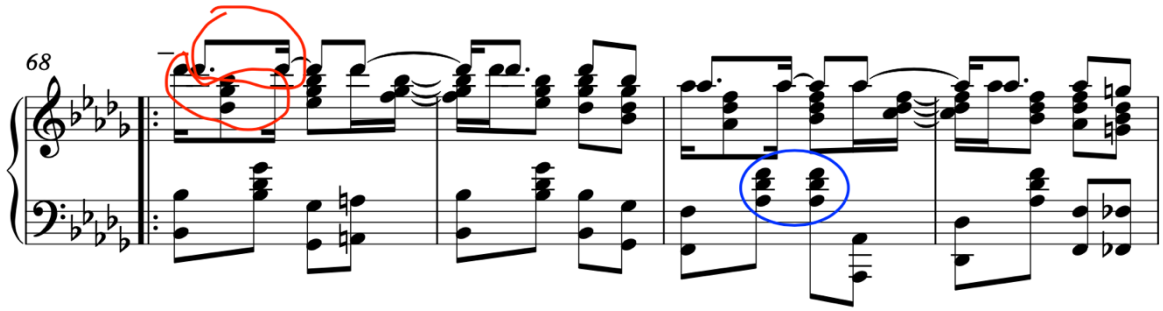
A significant difference in these rags is that, while Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane modulate back to the tonic key in this section, Gladiolus stays in the subdominant key. This could be part of a case as to why the Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane are closer related to one another in the second half of each rag than the Maple Leaf and Gladiolus. However, these modulations change the context of the opening IV chord in the D section. For Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane, a first-time listener is likely to hear the chord as a I chord, given that Joplin was previously in the subdominant key. It will not be known until a few measures into the section that the opening chord was IV. On the other hand, Gladiolus stays in the subdominant key, so the opening IV chord will be heard as such immediately.

Melodic/Rhythmic Elements

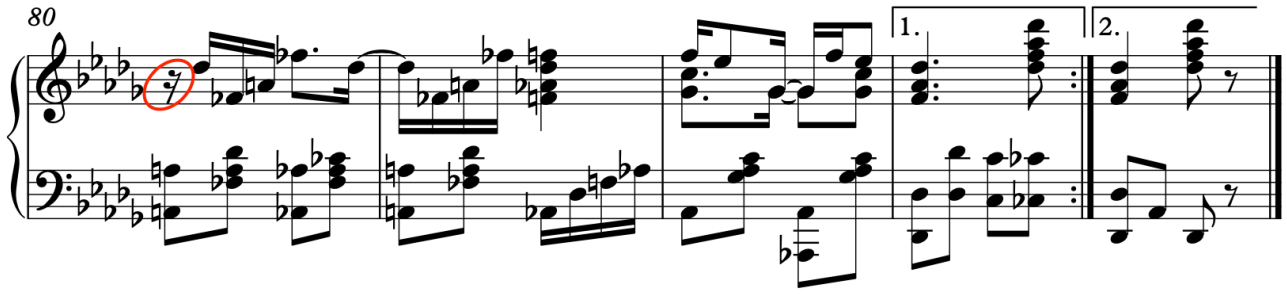
In my analysis of Maple Leaf Rag, I highlighted uses of the jazz rhythm as well as left-hand syncopations using the example from measures 68 – 71:



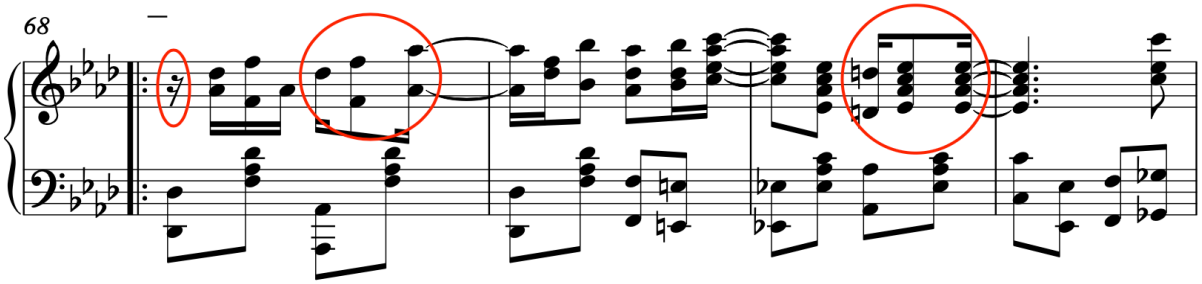
The left-hand syncopations are a callback to section A, the last section of this piece where said syncopations were significantly used. Measures 70 – 71 also contain a rhythm similar to the opening of the A section. Gladiolus also utilizes similar left-hand syncopations within the same grouping of measures:



Additionally, marked in red above, Joplin utilizes two thematic rhythms Joplin has employed thus far: the jazz rhythm and the "new" syncopation discussed in the C section (chapter six). Gladiolus also uses the thematic syncopation of starting a line on the second sixteenth-note of the measure in the final four measures of the piece:



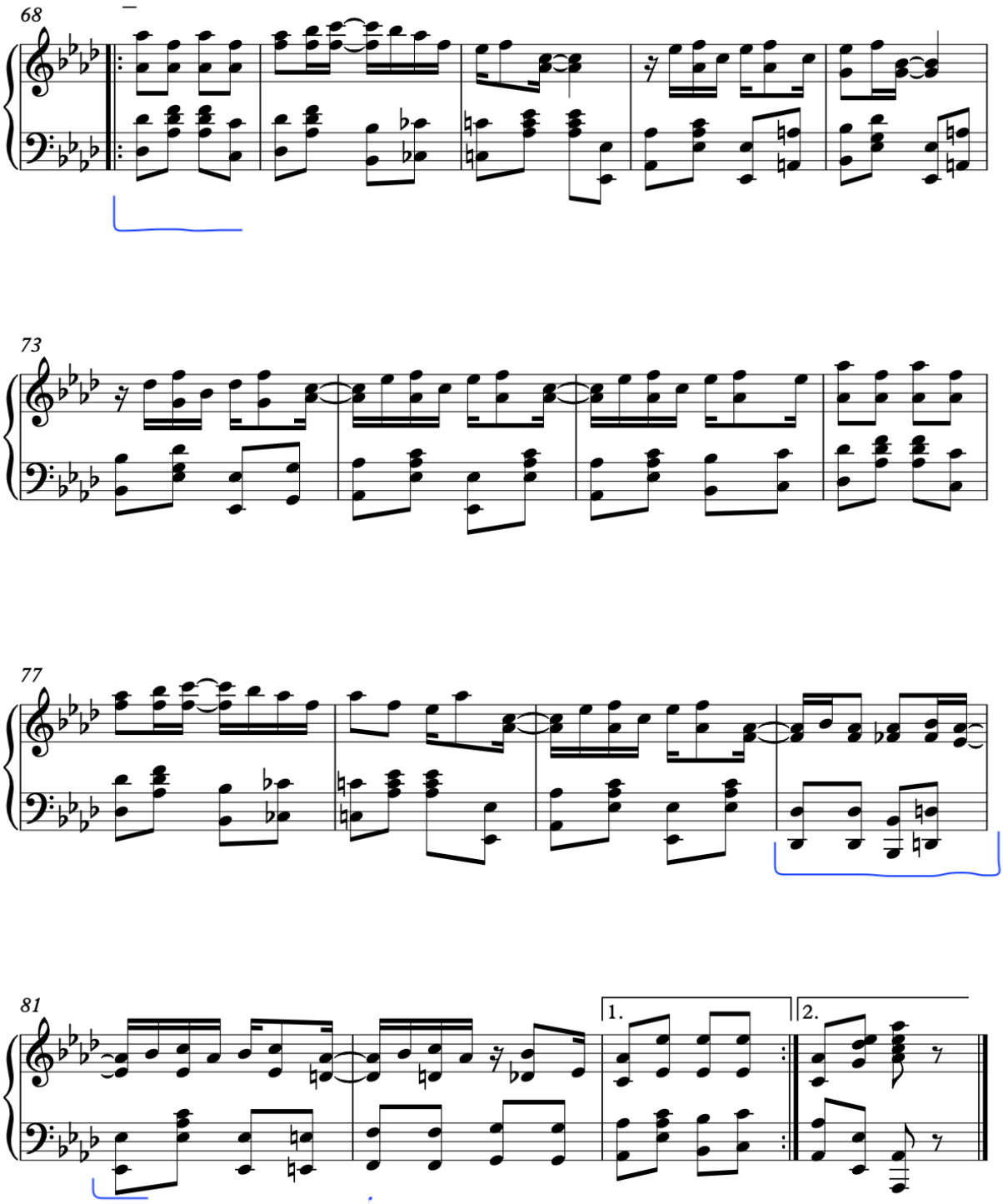
Sugar Cane makes a more direct callback to the first theme of the Maple Leaf Rag with its uses of rhythm and contour, and in doing so, also employs the jazz rhythm:



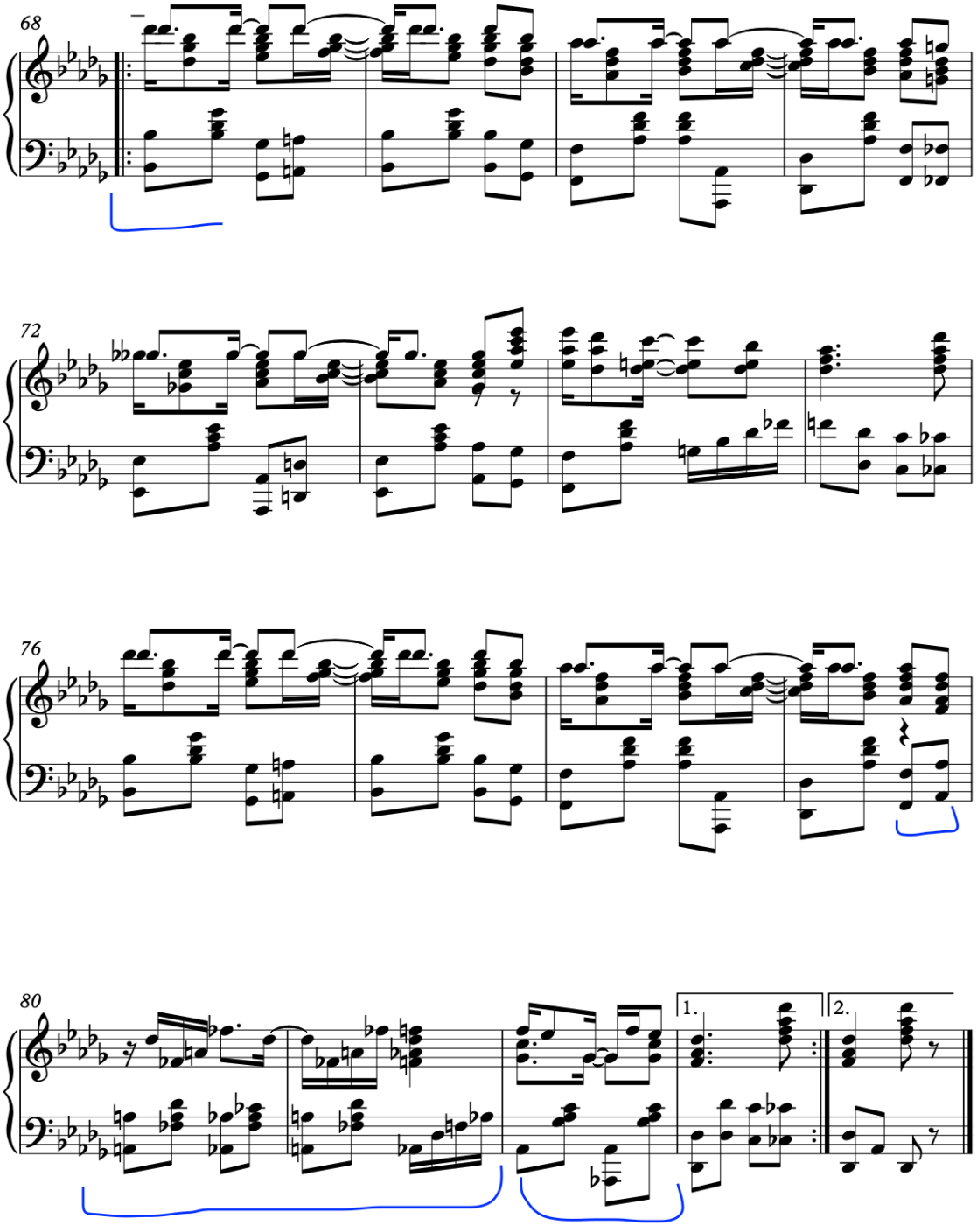
The rhythmic themes in this particular section do not line up so obviously across the rags. In this conclusive section of the piece, the themes refer back to one another, and to other themes throughout the pieces.

Textural elements

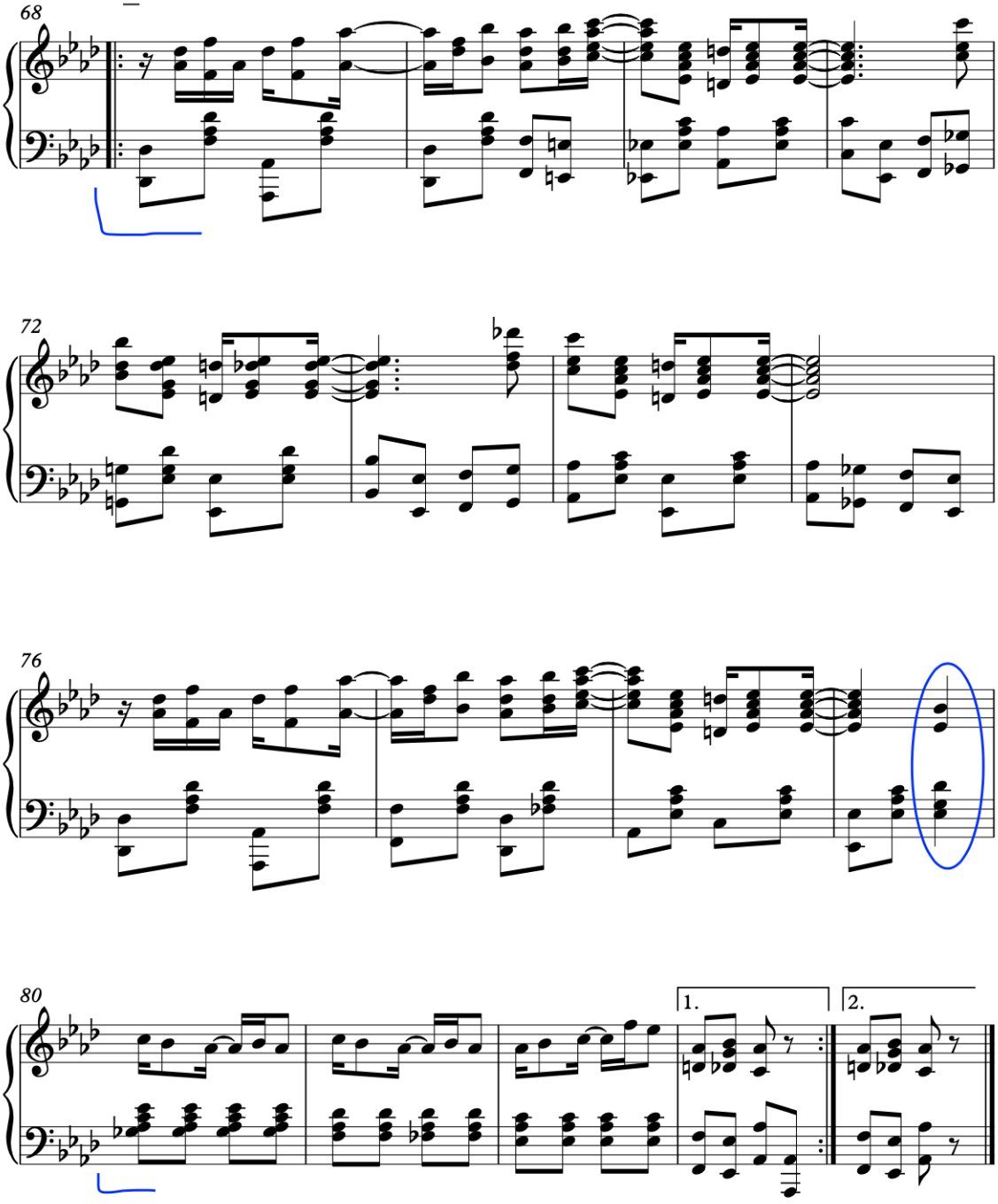
Maple Leaf:



Gladiolus:



Sugar Cane:



In this final section of the piece, the three rags carry similar texture schemes. They all contain the thickest part of their texture within this section in the first eleven measures. In measure 80, all three rags undergo a significant change to shift to the less-dense texture of the final four measures of the piece; in Maple Leaf, that change is the straight and register-static eighth-notes in the left hand; in Gladiolus, the change is in the second beat, where both left and right hand play straight eighth-notes; in Sugar Cane, that change is in a big quartet-note chord on the second beat.

The final four measures feature a less dense texture in all three rags. Maple Leaf and Sugar Cane act similarly, using the static eighth-notes to create a similar bouncy texture that manifests at the end of the A section in the Maple Leaf, perhaps in an attempt to conclude the pieces in a similar manner to which the opening sections were concluded. Gladiolus, however, employs a less bouncy texture but is significantly thinner than the twelve measures that preceded it. Significantly, this reduction of texture occurs during Joplin's surprising tonicization of bVI.

CONCLUSION

Restatement of Purpose

When I began pursuing a Masters of Music Theory, I knew I wanted my thesis to be on an American composer. Having first learned music by studying jazz then shifting to the study of classical music, Scott Joplin immediately caught my attention; I believed that he, the King of Ragtime, was one of the quintessential pioneers who bridged the gap between the two vast genres of music in America.

In researching Joplin's background, I was dismayed to discover that he only had one great success in his life in the "Maple Leaf Rag." It was not as if he was short of material; his catalogue includes over 100 original rags, some songs, and a formidable, yet sadly underplayed, opera (or at least, only one opera that is not considered lost). Noticing that the Maple Leaf, his great success, was so early in his career (1899) I figured that he must have tried many more times to create a piece that would garner similar success. If we know anything about successful products, it's that the maker can either do something totally new, or build on their product that was so successful. My thesis sought to create a case that Joplin attempted the latter, using the Maple Leaf as an archetype for future rags. In this paper, I set out to compare musical elements between the Maple Leaf and two of his later rags, "Gladiolus" (1907) and "Sugar Cane" (1908). I did this by conducting through analyses of each rag in terms of the phrase form, harmony, melody, rhythm and texture.

Findings

A significant conclusion I began to draw as my analyses of the three rags were taking place was that the Gladiolus was more similar to Maple Leaf in the A and B sections, while the Sugar Cane was more similar to Maple Leaf in the C and D sections. Even though each rag has another A section between the B and C sections, I found it significant in my findings to divide the pieces into two halves, AB and CD. The first half of the Maple Leaf was more of an archetype for Gladiolus, while the second half of Maple Leaf was more of an archetype for Sugar Cane.

I find that it is more significant to my conclusion to point to the similarities of syncopations, rhythmic figures and texture between the pieces rather than the melodic content or even the harmonic content. I think about this because of what Ragtime was played for; this was not music you would expect to hear in a concert hall or a church. This was music most heard in saloons, brothels or living rooms. In other words, this music was going to be played where there would likely be dancing. Even though I was able to point to melodic and harmonic similarities and differences between the three rags, it may be less significant than rhythmic and textural content. With these findings in mind, my questions going forward are: What lead to Maple Leaf's success? Was it that pianists liked to play the melodies more? Or was it more likely that it was a tune that people liked to dance to? How much of an impact does melody and harmony make on someone's enjoyment of a dance piece?

In this paper, I sought to make a case that Scott Joplin used "Maple Leaf Rag" as an archetype for future rags. Given the striking similarities I found between elements of rhythm, texture and harmony between the three rags, I believe I have made a strong case in favor of the Maple Leaf Rag as an archetype.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Forte, Allen & Gilbert, Steven E. *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1982.

I used Forte and Gilbert's book in order to support my claim that Schenker believed the tonic and dominant chords to be the primary chords in a piece of music. The work states that the tonic and dominant are the primary chords of a diatonic key, while other diatonic chords function in relation to them as substitutes.