

## Early jazz piano

April 01, 2006

Last weekend's edition of the **Music in the Park** series offered something special, a jazz concert titled "The American Piano: The Black Virtuoso Tradition" played by two white virtuosos, **Steven Mayer** and **Anthony de Mare**. Their cleverly constructed program took us on a time journey all the way from Gottschalk's pre-jazz "The Banjo" of 1855 to Dick Hyman's hip-hop-influenced "Rap III" of 2000 and Paul Schoenfield's rambunctious "Kvetching and Boogie" (1983), the program's only duet, which shook the pews of St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ. This fine series has been held there for more than a quarter-century.

Mayer is a specialist in early jazz piano, as his recent recording of Art Tatum solos amply testifies. He played some Tatum in this concert -- amazingly, getting not only all the notes, but capturing Tatum's playfulness and wit -- along with some Fats Waller and a lovely James P. Johnson number, "Blueberry Rhyme." De Mare shined in some of the newer pieces, such as Fred Rzewski's amazing "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues." Couldn't these guys be asked back every year?

*-Mike Anthony*