

WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME

P. G. Lowery (1869-1942) Elected 1996

Perry George Lowery was born in 1869 in Kentucky, and died in Cleveland, Ohio on December 15, 1942. He was the first African-American to graduate from Boston's New England Conservatory of Music. A brilliant cornetist, he spent his entire career performing with and leading sideshow and other bands, in the days when segregation prohibited black performers from working alongside whites. Merle Evans greatly admired Lowery, and engaged him to lead the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey sideshow band from 1920 to 1931. Lowery was associated with several other circuses, and was highly regarded throughout the music community.

For more information on P. G. Lowery, read the book "Showman," reviewed in this issue of Circus Fanfare (p. 19)



This photo shows the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey sideshow band in 1920, P. G. Lowery, bandmaster. Lowery is seen in the top row, 5th from left.



This photo was given by Merle Evans to Doug MacLeod and is now in the Doug MacLeod archives at the C. L. Barnhouse Co. On the back of the photo in Merle's handwriting (written in green ink, as was Merle's custom) it is labeled "P. G. Lowery Band." Lowery is in the front row, 4th from left. It is likely the RBB&B sideshow band in the late 1920's, given the size of the band.

A BREEZE FROM ALABAMA



DEDICATED TO
P. G. LOWERY
WORLD'S CHALLENGING COLORED
CORNETIST AND BANDMASTER



A RAGTIME TWO STEP
BY
SCOTT JOPLIN

50¢



COMPOSER OF
MAPLE LEAF RAG
SUNFLOWER SLOW DRAG
PEACHERINE RAG
SWIPSEY CAKE WALK
THE ENTERTAINER
THE RAG TIME DANCE
AUGUSTAN CLUB WALTZ

P. G. Lowery was well respected by many in the music world, including several famous musicians.

Pianist and ragtime composer Scott Joplin (below) and Lowery became acquainted around 1901, while Lowery was leading the Forepaugh and Sells sideshow band, and programming Joplin music. Joplin reciprocated by dedicating his rag "A Breeze From Alabama" to Lowery, whose photo was featured on the cover of the piano edition.



GALOP. "PRINCE OF DECORAH"

(To my Friend B.O. Marsh)

SOLO B♭ CORNET.

P. G. LOWERY.

Musical score for 'Galop. Prince of Decorah' featuring a Solo B♭ Cornet and a Trio. The score is in 2/4 time and includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *fz*, *f*, *ff*, *p*, *cres*, and *f*. It also contains performance instructions like *B.D.*, *CYM*, *D.S. al*, and *TRIO D.S. al*. The score is divided into sections for the Solo B♭ Cornet and the Trio.

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FULL BAND 50.CENTS.

Solo B♭ Cornet
(Conductor)

High and Mighty

MARCH
To P. G. Lowery

FRED JEWELL

Musical score for 'High and Mighty' featuring a Solo B♭ Cornet. The score is in 2/4 time and includes various dynamics such as *ff*, *f*, and *ff*. It contains performance instructions like *1*, *2*, *last*, and *D. S. al*. The score is divided into sections for the Solo B♭ Cornet.

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Benjamin O. Marsh (1862-1938) was a military musician turned music publisher located at 110 Winnebago Street in Decorah, Iowa. He and Lowery became acquainted at some point, and in 1905 Marsh's firm released Lowery's sole published work, "Prince of Decorah" Galop.

Fred Jewell was a prolific composer and highly respected circus musician and bandmaster, with stints as band leader with both Barnum and Bailey and Hagenbeck Wallace. An off-told story tells of Jewell hearing a band with an astonishing brilliant solo cornetist, and without being able to see who was performing, Jewell exclaimed that it could only be P. G. Lowery - and in fact, he was right. Jewell dedicated the aptly-named "High and Mighty" March to Lowery in 1917.