

The Music of Jacob J. Sawyer (1856-1885) and Sawyer's Collaborations with the Hyers Sisters, the Haverly's Colored Minstrels, the Slayton Ideal Company as well as Sam Lucas

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Poster Abstract

The inclusion of one of Sawyer's compositions in James M. Trotter's famous book *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston, 1880) marks Sawyer as an exemplary and well-known composer, despite his young age at the time. His early death from tuberculosis let him sink into oblivion. As reported at a previous conference, the author of this poster recently discovered biographical information and information about Sawyer's work as a musician and composer. This poster will focus on Sawyer's collaborative work with famous African-American musicians of his time and on his leadership in well-known African-American ensembles of the time:

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| 1878-80 | Pianist for the Hyers Sisters |
| 1881 | Musical Director of the Haverly's Colored Minstrels |
| 1883 | Pianist of the Slayton Ideal Company |
| 1884-85 | Musical Director of the Nashville Students |

The Hyers Sisters were well-known singers and pioneers of African-American musical theater, while Haverly's Colored Minstrels was a successful black minstrelsy group owned and managed by Jack H. Haverly (1837-1901). The Slayton Ideal Company was a jubilee troupe by African-American actor and singer Sam Lucas (1840-1916). Lucas had also performed with the Hyers Sisters; it is not yet known whether Sawyer met Lucas through the Hyers Sisters, or vice versa, but Sawyer performed with Lucas throughout his career. Finally, the financially successful and very popular Chicago-based "Original Nashville Students" was managed by the African-American H. B. Thearle; it toured nationally, performing vocal and instrumental music, dance, and comedy.

This poster will provide information about Sawyer's work, his collaborations, and it will start discussing, for the first time, his Minstrel music, specifically his composition *I'm de Captain of the Black Cadets* for voice and piano (1881).