

Composer: Koji Kondo

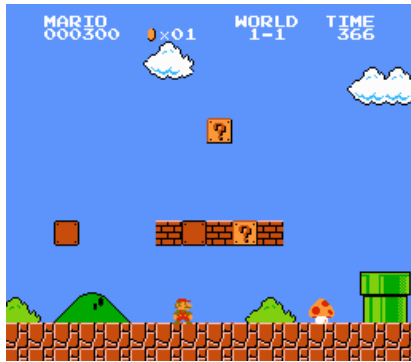
Name of Piece: The Athlete's Rag from *Super Mario World*

Video Game System: SNES (Super Nintendo)

Sounds Created by: MIDI

Genre: Ragtime

Additional Info: Kondo is paying homage to **Scott Joplin**, the king of **Ragtime**. More specifically, this piece pays tribute to **The Maple Leaf Rag**.



Left: Scene from *Super Mario Bros.* (NES). **Right:** Scene from *Super Mario World* (SNES). Notice the drastic change in visual scenery. The average NES cartridge contained a maximum of about 1 megabyte of data, while the SNES cartridges could hold up to 6 mb of data, allowing for better visual graphics and better (and longer) music.

Koji Kondo was born in 1961 and is most famous for composing the scores to the Super Mario along with the Legend of Zelda franchise for Nintendo Entertainment System (NES). **Super Mario World** was composed for the **Super Nintendo system (SNES)**. Due to the limited space on the game cartridges, composers needed to use archaic electronic sounds using **MIDI**. **MIDI is an acronym that stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface**. As time progressed and video game cartridges were able to store more and more space, composers were able to use better sounding MIDI effects on the video games.

Super Mario World contains many different levels, each with their own theme song in the background. The word we use for background music is **Incidental Music**. Kondo uses the same melody for every level, but he changes certain aspects of the *presentation of the melody*---but not the melody itself. He may change the instruments, the tempo, the meter, or even the key, but the notes of the melody remain intact. This is a process called **Thematic Transformation**---similar to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*.

The **Athlete's Rag** is the version of the main melody we hear when Mario is running in a dangerous platform level. The composer turns the melody **into the style of ragtime**. Ragtime is a style of piano that was **popularized by Scott Joplin** in the 1890s. It consists of the **left hand playing a stride bass pattern** while the **right hand has a syncopated melody**.

The piece that Kondo is specifically quoting is the **Maple Leaf Rag**, written by **Scott Joplin**. The opening rhythm of **Athlete's Rag** is the same rhythm that begins the **Maple Leaf Rag**.