

Nathaniel Cleophas Davis (1888-1972)

African American trombonist, composer, and band leader **Nathaniel Cleophas Davis** (also known as Nathan Davis) was born in Tennessee on August 14, 1888. By 1908, he had moved to Nashville where he directed the band at the Tennessee School for the Blind. Along with his brothers, Otis B. and Clarence M. Davis, he established a music publishing business and a music school, variously known as the Traveling Conservatory of Music and the Davis Band and Orchestra School. He described himself as a self-employed band organizer and school teacher on his military service registration card, completed on June 4, 1917. Among his musical compositions were five trombone features for band in ragtime style which included **Oh, Slip It Man** (1916), **Mr. Trombonology** (1917) and **Miss Trombonism** (1918). He served as a musician with the U. S. Army's 368th Infantry Regiment, part of the 92nd Infantry Division, during World War I. He began basic training at Fort Meade, Maryland and the Regiment was shipped to France on June 7, 1918 where it trained under French military leaders. Comprised of black enlisted men and junior officers, the 368th's regimental and divisional officers were all white. The 368th suffered heavy casualties in September, 1918, in a battle near Binarville, France, shortly before the Armistice on November 11, 1918. The Regiment was shipped back to the United States in February, 1919 where it was demobilized in New York City on March 7, 1919.

Upon returning from France, Nathaniel Davis continued writing ragtime trombone features including **Master Trombone** (1919) and a tribute to his wartime service in France, **Trombone Francais** (1921). His trombone features were published by his own company as well as C. G. Conn and Carl Fischer. In 1920, Nathaniel Davis began playing with P. G. Lowery's Band which was the first all-black band to play for the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey's Circus sideshows. His composition, **Mr. Trombonology**, was a featured work in the band's performances. Davis married Edith Rose Bonner in December, 1926 and in 1949, he wrote music to a song, **Our Lady of Liberty**, with lyrics by Bernice Stokes; it was published by W. E. Goldsberry & Co., Los Angeles.

Nathaniel Davis died in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 19, 1972 at the age of 84 and is buried in South View Cemetery, Atlanta.

Douglas Yeo
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Oh Slip It Man

Score

1916

Trombone Novelty

Nathaniel C. Davis
Arranged by Aaron Hettinga

The musical score is written for Trombone and Piano in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The tempo is marked "Not too fast" with a quarter note equal to 92 beats per minute. The score is divided into four systems, each with a measure number (1, 6, 12, 18) at the beginning of the first staff.

System 1 (Measures 1-4): The Trombone part features a melodic line with triplets and sixteenth-note patterns, starting with a *ff* dynamic and moving to *mf*. The Piano accompaniment consists of chords and eighth-note patterns, starting with a *ff* dynamic and moving to *mf*.

System 2 (Measures 5-8): The Trombone part continues with similar melodic motifs, alternating between *ff* and *mf*. The Piano accompaniment features a more active eighth-note bass line, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *mf*.

System 3 (Measures 9-12): The Trombone part includes a triplet of sixteenth notes marked with a trill symbol (T1) and a dynamic of *ff*, followed by *mf* passages. The Piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics of *mf* and *f*.

System 4 (Measures 13-16): The Trombone part concludes with a melodic phrase that includes a first and second ending. The Piano accompaniment provides harmonic support, ending with a final chord.

Miss Trombonism

1918
A Slippery Tune

Nathaniel C. Davis
Arranged by Aaron Hettinga

Allegro ♩ = 126

Trombone

Piano

7

13

19

1. 2.

1. 2.

Master Trombone

1919

Another Characteristic Trombone Smear

Nathaniel C. Davis
Arranged by Aaron Hettinga

Tempo di Rag

Trombone

Piano

7

14

21

ff, *mf*, *f*

1, 2, 3, 6

3

1.

2.

Score

Trombone Francais

1921
Trombone Novelty

Nathaniel C. Davis
Arranged by Aaron Hettinga

Tempo di Rag $\text{♩} = 88$

Trombone

Piano

6

12

ff *ff* *f* *mf* *mf* *f* *ff* *f* *f* *mf* *mf* *ff* *mf*

rit. *rit.*