

Brass Bands and the Early Jazz Tradition

I. Brass Bands

- 1) Generally all brass ensembles. But, many variations existed.
- 2) Primarily, they served as civic ensembles and met the needs of local communities.
- 3) There were Black brass bands in towns like New Orleans, where Black musicians were trained to read and march in military step.
- 4) John Phillip Sousa led the greatest Brass band in the 20th century. The cornet was the predominant instrument at the beginning.
- 5) Brass bands have a long history in both in the US and England.
- 6) There was much borrowing of musical styles performed in Brass bands, as Sousa's band played marches, rag to popular melodies of his time.
- 7) There was an improvisatory tradition in New Orleans of Brass bands as seen in New Orleans funerals.
- 8) Jazz emerged at the height of popularity of the brass band movement in the US.
- 9) The concept of Brass band still emerges today in the circus acts of Barnum and Bailey to professional bands in both the US and England.
- 10) Had a definite impact on the evolution of the Jazz Band and the roles which then developed within the Jazz Band.
- 11) Brass Bands (Black Bands) also incorporated improvising practices and may have been a catalyst for the numerous funeral street bands. (quote from Edmond Hall, a leader of a Brass Band in New Orleans at the early part of the century) These ensembles (street bands) were directly involved with the formation of the dixieland jazz band,

II. New Orleans and the Early Traditions.

ORIGINS of the naming of a music:

- 1) "Jas, Jass, Jasz or Jascz was spelled variously. The word is African in origin. It is common on the Gold Coast and in the hinterland of Cape Coast castle.....Jazz is based on savage musician's wonderful gift for progressive retarding and acceleration guided by his sense of swing." (Robert Farris Thompson "Kongo Influences on African-American Artistic Culture", pp.149-150)
- 2) Was used as a derogatory comment in a New York Times review in regards to an Original Dixieland Jazz Band performance. It was believed this term was a substitute for sexual intercourse.

3) Waters mentions in his text that a new name for Black-American syncopated music was attempted. But as history has shown, nothing else has stuck.

III. New Orleans and the birth of a new music.

WHY NEW ORLEANS?

- a) Port city and one of the biggest ports in it's day. All kinds of people from various backgrounds were there.
- b) A unique social climate with a lot of racial diversity allowed for much cultural interchange.
- c) A broad base of economic diverse people who wanted a lot of different types of entertainment.
- d) A city that supported opera houses, a full-time orchestra, brass bands, and a variety of improvising musicians. Keep in mind, a lot of exchange and practices took place and influenced one another.

New Orleans

Considered the Birthplace of Jazz

History – The Creoles of Color of New Orleans by James Haskins (Crowell, 1975)

1718- France began building New Orleans

1719- 147 black slaves were brought

1722- Free blacks began to appear

1763- France gave the territory of Louisiana back to Spain

1801-Spain gave Louisiana back to France. But Spain continued to rule the territory until the United States bought it in 1803

Sociological History

- . Marriage between the different ethnic groups in Louisiana occurred frequently
 - . The Spanish freed many slaves, Black-Americans could earn freedom from Spanish.
 - . The number of free blacks increased to 1, 147 by 1789
 - . Under Spanish rule, free people of color began to be regarded as a class that was separate from the Whites and Slaves. Their status was closer to that of whites
 - . Many light skinned women of color became mistresses to white men and were set up as second families to the men in separate houses. The children from some of these unions were called Creoles of Color (part African and part French). This distinguished them from the White Creoles whose background was Spanish and French
 - . Creoles of Color were never referred to as Negro. The term Negro was reserved for blacks that had little or no white ancestry.
- 1810 - Free people of color living in New Orleans had increased to 5,000.

- The small American white population reacted with fear.
- Laws were enacted that eroded the favored status of Creoles of color
- Eventually Creoles of color were forced into the same social strata as that of the oppressed Negroes.

-A sharp separation existed between the two groups of New Orleans residents who had African ancestry.

-Creoles became very influential in New Orleans and began to control a significant amount of business interests. They had their own opera House, Symphony Orchestra and had a strong love for theater.

-A sharp divide between Creoles and old established families of the south. The white families would eventually gain control of the political climate in new Orleans.

-In 1894, restrictive racial laws were enacted segregating the African-American and Creoles to the same side of the tracks.

-Both Black-American and Creoles were then forced to live with one another and more cultural exchange happened between these two racial groups. Therefore musicians were effected and new musical practices were achieved.

CHART SIGNIFYING SOME MUSICAL DIFFERENCES:

Creoles Of Color/White Creoles	Negroes or nonwhite ancestry
<p><u>(DOWNTOWN) –Waters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -well educated -successful-businessman -doctors, landowners, skilled craftsmen, -spoke French, owned slaves -received high quality musical training -some even traveled to Paris for conservatory -maintained a resident symphony orchestra of -supported an opera house -wholeheartedly favored European music -music was soft and sweet 	<p><u>(UPTOWN)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> worked primarily as house servants unskilled laborers Generally less refined than Creoles learned on the stand vocal music contained new blends Embraced local and rural Black American practices music was more earthy and honest

-In 1897, the City council passed an ordinance -that all prostitutes and their brothels be restrained to a 38-block area which became known as Storyville. Many musicians worked in this area, and it has been said much improvisatory music was practiced here.

- New Orleans was a vast city where musicians were able to work in many different settings. Here are just a few of the settings they could work:

- 1) Lake Pochartian

2) Lawn parties, funerals, private parties.

3) Many number of Brass Bands which played a variety of functions from civic to entertainment venues.

4) Numerous dance halls.

5) Storyville

-With all of the variety of needs for musicians, there is no wonder an improvising tradition was created here. Plus the fact, Black-American culture practices dominated the stylistic parameters of many of the musics performed.

New Orleans- a city that had three opera houses, Symphony Orchestra, many wind bands, far more than any other American city of comparable size

New Orleans was a center for black culture in North America.

Early New Orleans Bands

1. Street or Marching Bands
2. Small Jazz Bands or Combos of Storyville
3. Society Bands
4. Dance Bands (or organized bands)
5. Brass Bands.

Early leaders Buddy Bolden, King Oliver, Bunk Johnson and Kid Ory
Both black and white groups
Usually led by cornet

Early Jazz Characteristics contrasting from ragtime, blues and brass band roots:

1. Each performance was highly improvised.
2. Rhythmic feeling was looser and more relaxed.
3. It generated much of its own repertory of compositions.
4. Collective improvisation created a more complex musical product than was typical in ragtime, blues, or marching band music.(Gridley)

Collective improvisation – All group members improvising at the same time. It was a common feature of New Orleans Jazz.

Combo jazz began in New Orleans. The city contributed several very important musicians. The best known were trumpeter Louis Armstrong and composer-arranger Jelly Roll Morton.

ODJB (Original Dixieland Jazz Band) – “Dixie Jazz Band One-Step (1917)

-All white ensemble and the first ensemble to record New Orleans Jazz.

- Poor improvisers but tried to imitate the sounds of the black New Orleans bands.
- People believe they were important, because it gave historians an idea how early New Orleans bands sounded, primary instrumentation etc. But in reality, they may not have. Listen to Armstrong's Hot 5's and hot 7's, and Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers from this general era, and definite difference in swing feel, improvising skill and overall sense of swing was evident with Armstrong and Morton. Many believe LaRocca's group actually read music, which is a sharp defining difference between these skilled versus unskilled groups.
- Worldwide sales of the record are said to have reached about a million copies by the late 1930s. This helped the popularity of Jazz to grow. Once Armstrong was established, no one brought up LaRocca and his group. This author believes racism effected the early credits for this music. Furthermore, people like Freddie Keppard were to have said they did not wish to record for they did not want their music stolen or imitated.

Typical New Orleans Style Combo:

Trumpet-Clarinet (or sax in some cases)-Trombone front line

Banjo-piano and or guitar-tuba or bass- percussion back line

Piano Tradition and Chicago Jazz + Early Influential Musicians

1. Early Influential musicians:

a) Dee Chandler (percussion and drums)

Important that he was a key figure in adding the foot activated bass drum pedal-he developed a purely percussive instrument operable by one person.

b) Sidney Bechet

Popularized the use of the soprano sax. Was used often as a replacement for clarinet in many early ensembles. One of the early great improvisers. He had a unique and authentic style which was captivated by his use of vibrato and sizzling improvisational melodies. He was one of the first Black musicians to be recognized by the so-called musical establishment in both Europe and in America.

c) Buddy Bolden

A legendary trumpet master from New Orleans. No recording exist of him. He led and contracted bands throughout the city and legend states he could be heard from great distances. He was an early influence on Louis Armstrong, Joe Oliver and many others.

d) Freddie Keppard

Was known to be more of a “cool” improviser. Shied away from recordings for the fear he would get copied. Landed in LA, California and influenced many early Jazz artists.

PIANO TRADITION:

A) Jelly Roll Morton

One of the few composers, arrangers, master pianists (especially in the Rag. style) in the Jazz idiom.

4 chief innovations:

1) 1st important Jazz Composer.

2) Helped to bridge Jazz and Ragtime styles (as modernists know it) Ragging and improvising were synonymous in his day. What he did was help conceptualize a “Swing” feel.

3) Well organized piano solos.

- 4) A master in composition and performance, mostly in the collective and rag styles. (or early riff styles)
- 5) Claimed to be the inventor of the Jazz idiom.

B) James Johnson (pianist)

* Considered by many to be the father of stride piano.

Influential east coast pianist. Like Morton, help to bridge Rag and Jazz styles. His playing had a less technical left hand and more chording was introduced. His famous composition was entitled "Carolina Shout".

C) Earl "Fatha" Hines (pianist)

Long active career which expanded into the 1970's. Learned from Armstrong the importance of single right hand piano improvisations. He had a beautiful "swing" feel in his playing and opened pianists to the idea that they did not have to do it all on the piano. The piano then could produce single-line improvisations like horn player masters.

Hines Innovations:

- 1) Left much rhythmic work to drums, bass and began to emphasize harmonies.(comping)
- 2) Major contribution was the fact he played single-note improvisations and turned the piano into a front-line instrument.

D) Meade Lux Lewis (pianist)

* Major influence was piano great Pete Johnson. Lewis, Johnson and Jimmy Yancey were major players in developing Boogie-woogie style.

Boogie-Woogie characteristics:

- 1) Blues based.
- 2) Generally for dancers.
- 3) Solo gigs for piano.
- 4) Like ragtime, not a lot of melodic variation. Rhythmic based music.
- 5) 12/8 or triplets over 4/4 time.

Lewis innovations:

- 1) Known for riff oriented music.
- 2) "12" over "4", he played as if he was in 12/8, emphasizing triplets over quarter notes.
- 3) Rhythmic virtuoso.
- 4) Master of playing the ostinato bass in left hand.

E) Art Tatum (pianist)

One of the premier soloists of the Swing era. Known for brilliant technique and incredible swing feel. Considered the “Rubinstien” of Jazz pianists.

Tatum innovations:

- 1) Virtuostic technique showed the Jazz world just what could be accomplished on the instrument.
- 2) Exploration of European harmony showed many Jazz musicians how much more could be done in this area as well.
- 3) Heavily influenced by earlier styles and he then modernized them. His recordings sound amazingly fresh today, nearly 75 years after the fact.

CHICAGO JAZZ

* Transitional period to Swing period.

* New Orleans musicians were prominent in formulating an already strong existing musical scene in Chicago.

Some notable Chicago Jazz musicians in the late 20's and early 30's”
“Muggsy” Spanier, Frankie Trumbauer, Benny Goodman, “Bix” Beiderbecke, Gene Kruppa and the Dorsey Brothers.

Some prominent Black musicians and some who migrated from New Orleans and had immediate impact:

Joe “King” Oliver, Lil Hardin, Louie Armstrong, Freddie Keppard, Kid Ory, Baby Dodds and many others.

Characteristics of Chicago Jazz:

- 1) Cornet-led improvisations, with a more hard driving rhythm sections.
- 2) Rhythm sections begin to get more formalized-piano, bass, guitar, drums.
- 3) more written arrangements begin to appear, and written ensemble passages become expected.
- 4) More use of dynamics, solo breaks, maturity in musicianship is heard.
- 5) Improvisations still simple in nature due the fact the music is still geared for dancers.
* noting, simple harmonically, does not mean the improvisations were very simple to play or execute. Many trumpeters from all era's fumble when trying to recreate a Louie Armstrong solo from this or any period.

- 6) Typical instrumentation of a Chicago based group--two cornets, clarinet, trombone, piano, banjo and drums.
- 7) Hot style from New Orleans the classic sound.
- 8) Driving 4/4 meter at extremely fast tempos at times.
- 9) Simple rhythm section parts with all the instruments articulating the quarter note beat.
- 10) Ensembles in Chicago encouraged the development of individual improvisational skill.

Some important reasons why Chicago became a hot-bed for music in the 20's:

- 1) The Great Migration--blacks could make more money by moving north. (for ie-Henry Ford offered a wage of \$5.00/a day to build his model T's)
- 2) Prohibition had little to no effect on alcoholic sales in a thriving nightclub scene in Chicago. (strong organized crime)
- 3) Chicago was more open than the south, and whites could here blacks and vice-versa. More musical exchange was acceptable and expected. (for ie-it was noted Goodman heard Armstrong with Fate Marable many times and Beiderbecke would frequent nightclubs of many black musicians including Armstrong)
- 4) Chicago offered New Orleans musicians and others many opportunities to perform in nightclubs, cabarets, dance halls and ballrooms. It was a center of business and the need to employ musicians was great. Furthermore, the "Hot" sound was popular in Chicago, and businessmen would hire Joe Oliver and others to entertain. Oliver made great money in these days.
- 5) Chicago's bands were known for playing up-tempo music which required a higher virtuosity from musicians. This attracted great musicians who could play this difficult music.

New York-A Thriving Jazz Scene in the 1920's

Some notable New Musicians:

Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and many, many others.

* The New York Jazz scene was very much influenced by the writing and arranging of Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington. Also, the great stride pianists of Johnson, Waller and the like.

HARLEM RENAISSANCE:

The Harlem Renaissance was a movement that stemmed from Harlem in the 1920's. Harlem at this time was becoming a center for black artists, musicians, and writer and was considered a place that produced a lot of self-esteem in a high powered black artistic consciousness. As Samuel Floyd suggests in his book Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance, the primary shapers of this movement "aspired to high culture as opposed to that of the common man, which they hoped to mine for plays, novels, and symphonies". This was evident by the migration of intellectuals like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston (writers), Aaron Douglas (painter), and the composer William Grant Still.

KEY EVENTS OF HARLEM RENAISSANCE:

- 1) Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's show "Shuffle Along", opened in 1921, ran 504 performances. (many cite this as the beginning of the movement)
- 2) Shows soon followed. These included Maceo Pinkard's "Liza" and James P. Johnson's "Runnin' Wild".
- 3) Concert Stage opened to such notables as Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson. Prominent Black-American operatic-gospel legends.
- 4) Will Marion Cook was able to network his Ragtime Orchestra, the "Southern Syncopated Orchestra" to play concerts in England and Europe. This orchestra included the legendary Sidney Bechet.
- 5) William Grant Still began to incorporate black-american musical idioms into larger classical forms. (A call of Dvorak some 30 years before)

These events had a tremendous affect on Ellington and Johnson as they influenced many aspiring Jazz musicians of the day.

HARLEM STRIDE PIANO

Stride Piano-may be best defined by Waters and Martin as playing up and down the piano with the left hand, with a bass note or octave played on the first and third beats of the 4/4 measure.

Stride was an East coast phenomenon. however it should be noted that all of the pianists influenced one another, especially with the migration to NYC by many prominent midwestern pianists. (Art Tatum, for ie) Styles would overlap and exchange took place. However this style grew from need as pianists would play apartment parties where the pianist had to take the role of a full ensemble. People could dance, listen and be entertained by a single player who with proper repertoire could entertain audiences for hours.

Prominent NY Pianists:

Fats Waller, James P. Johnson and Eubie Blake.

Eubie Blake- (1893-1983)-one of his greatest achievements may have been his recording on a piano roll of his infamous “Charleston Rag”. Blake an improvising musician in general claimed he wrote this piece in 1899. Along with Noble Sissle he wrote one of the most successful black musical’s of his day “Shuffle Along”.

Piano Roll-were cylinders of paper punched with holes. When fed properly, a piano could read these and play back piano pieces recorded with this technology. It is important to note, although these served as a note to note authentication of piano pieces of this time, they could not play dynamics and interpret phrasing in the manner of a live performance.

James P. Johnson-(Mentioned before).....it is important to note he was a product of Harlem’s Renaissance. In addition to his innovative piano work, he produced the Broadway musical “Runnin’ Wild” in 1923. This ran for 213 performances. He continued to compose for the stage until 1947. he also extended his musical talent to writing larger works for the concert stage. “Yamekraw” was written for piano and orchestra; “Harlem Symphony” was written in 1932 for orchestra; a piano concerto “Jasmine”; and recorded up[to his stroke in 1951 which left him unable to perform again. His final recording in 1950 was made with Sidney Bechet.

Fats Waller- A prolific composer who people find in and around many different aspects of the music business in his day. Known as a crafty business man, pimp, entertainer, musician, composer Waller had a magnifying personality which made him a popular figure at this time. Waller was the first jazz musician who recorded on the pipe organ. He wrote many memorable compositions (see below) and as well as writing the music for the Broadway Stage in shows such as “Hot Chocolates” and “Keep Shufflin’”. Waller’s stellar technique has influenced a number of great pianists for many generations.

Waller compositions:

“Honeysuckle Rose”, “Ain’t MisBehavin’”, “Black and Blue”, “Also Like Johnson”.

Waller Piano Compositions:

“Handful of Keys”, “Smashing Thirds”, “Numb Fumblin’”, “Valentine Stomp” and “Alligator Crawl”.

New York also marked a time when historians see the beginnings of the big-bands. This phenomenon was showing in other parts of the country as dancing grew more popular. But, New York had the likes of Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson.

Ellington will be discussed in the bio. section of this outline.

FLETCHER HENDERSON

-arrived in NY in 1920. Although he had a degree in chemistry, he started working as a song plugger for the Pace-Handy co..(one of the most successful black companies in this era)

-Left Handy to join the new Pace co. Black Swan Records. Here he contracted bands as well as played piano on important early sessions. This experience was invaluable for he knew all of the best players in NY and had the ability to put them to work. At this time he toured with many great blues singers including Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey and Ethel Waters.

-- Formed his own band in and around 1924 and was hired to play in the infamous Roseland Ballroom. This was successful for the following reasons:

- 1) Hired Don Redman as musical director, arranger, and reed player. He was one of the most prominent arrangers in the pre-swing era.
- 2) Later hired Louis Armstrong to play 3rd trumpet to be a “hot” soloist for the band.
- 3) Roseland offered Black musicians stature that the white bands had been allowed to play only. Henderson hired some of the best and most prominent players to give these musicians exposure and lasting effect.
- 4) Developed a key arranging style by alternating hot soloists (Joe Smith, cornet (later Armstrong) and Redmond +Coleman Hawkins) and had them play in and around interesting ensemble passages. Once again showing the world that this was an art that was about a unique improvisational style.

Key Figures which had affiliation with Fletcher Henderson:

1) Don Redmond, considered by most the greatest early arranger in jazz history. Redmond created techniques that bands would follow for years to come. He also improved stock arrangements in which Henderson already owned. One of the highlights of Redmans work was his skillful use of scoring brass and reeds in many uses of call and response between sections. He was especially effective in creating riff sections behinds skilled soloists.

“Copenhagen” written by Redman in 1924, was one of his early highlights.

It features:

- 1 Call and response between reeds and brass
- 2) alternating sections of trumpet trio, full band soli's and clarinet trio's
- 3) While Louis Armstrong solo's, you hear collective New Orleans improvisational sections. Once again showing an ability to score to players strengths.
- 4) A forward looking r-section of drums, piano and tuba (instead of upright bass =banjo)
- 5) A forward sounding piece while still paying homage to Jazz past. In summary, incorporated the stylings of Armstrong rhythmic innovations, which becomes the basis of 'swing' feel, while incorporating the antiphonal call & response between horn sections and combined these techniques as vehicles and techniques to create one of the most imitated writing styles in the history of Jazz.
- 6) Coleman Hawkins-Possibly the leading tenor soloist of the day. Would become even a bigger force in the "Swing era" which was a time when soloists became even more prominent. (see bio in Swing era)
- 7) Rex Stewart-A key figure connecting Louie Armstrong's style and Swing improvisers. Later toured with many other top big bands, including Ellington and Kruppa.

Ironically, Henderson became more popular after Benny Goodman bought his book and hired him on as staff arranger for the band. Was not a good businessman and his bands had a reputation for drinking and partying too heavily. This ultimately led to the demise of his outfit in the 30's. After working for Goodman in 1940-41, he came back to lead his own groups until 1950 when he died.

* The Fletcher Henderson band will always be considered one of the key bands linking New Orleans and the Swing era. It hosted some of the finest soloists of its day and featured one of the great early writers in Don Redman.

Duke Ellington was a crucial link in this time as well and will be covered in length in his bio. connected with these notes.