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Introduction

Jazz is a musical form integrating African, European, Caribbean and Afro-Hispanic elements. This intermingling has distinguished jazz as one of the most vibrant art forms to emerge in the 20th century. Ironically its birth was grounded in tragedy, as slave traders brought African people to America to be sold as slaves. It was their genius to express the misery of their condition in music of great beauty – courage, humour, pathos and affirmation of life. In time the melting pot of American culture produced an art form that has changed the world of music – be it Western classical, Broadway musicals, rock 'n roll, rhythm & blues, even Bollywood.

The history of Jazz is not about the history of music alone. It is the history of evolution of a people forced out of their homes and sold as slaves to the New World. It is the story of the travails and hardships of these people and their strong desire to express themselves in an alien and oppressive environment. It is the story of the indomitable spirit of these people to rise above their day to day sufferings to create an art form that would rock the World. It is the story of freedom prevailing over slavery and injustice.

Beginnings

Congo Square

An elderly black man sits astride a large cylindrical drum. Using his fingers and the edge of his hand, he jabs repeatedly at the drum head -- which is around a foot in diameter and probably made from an animal skin -- evoking a throbbing pulsation with rapid, sharp strokes. A second drummer, holding his instrument between his knees, joins in, playing with the same staccato attack. A third black man, seated on the ground, plucks at a string instrument, the body of which is roughly fashioned from a calabash. Another calabash has been made into a drum, and a woman beats at it with two short sticks. One voice, then other voices join in. A dance of seeming contradictions accompanies this musical give-and-take, a moving hieroglyph that appears, on the one hand, informal and spontaneous yet, on closer inspection, ritualized and precise. It is a dance of massive proportions. A dense crowd of dark bodies forms into circular groups - perhaps five or six hundred individuals moving in time to the pulsations of the music, some swaying gently, others aggressively stomping their feet. A number of women in the group begin chanting.

Benjamin Latrobe, February 21, 1819

The scene could be Africa. But it is nineteenth-century New Orleans. A description of the dances that took place in the open area then known as **Congo Square** and today as Louis Armstrong Park. Benjamin Latrobe, the noted architect, witnessed one of these collective dances and not only left a vivid written account of the event, but made several sketches of the instruments used.

The dance itself, with its clusters of individuals moving in a circular pattern, are similar to ritual ceremonies of Africa. Ethnographers have noted this rotating, counterclockwise movement in various parts of the continent under many guises. In the Americas, the dance became known as the ring shout, and its appearance in New Orleans is only one of many documented instances. This tradition persisted well into the twentieth century.

The Congo Square dances was not long-lived. Traditional accounts indicate that they continued, except for an interruption during the Civil War, until around 1885. Coincidentally this date is around the time when the first jazz bands appeared in New Orleans. In any event, this transplanted African ritual lived on as part of the collective memory and oral history of the city's black community, even among those too young to have participated in it. These memories shaped, in turn, the jazz performers' self-image, their sense of what it meant to be an African-American musician.

The legendary reed player Sidney Bechet writes in his autobiography, **Treat It Gentle** :

"My grandfather, that's about the furthest I can remember back, Sundays when the slaves would meet -- that was their free day -- he beat out rhythms on the drums at the square -- Congo Square they called it. . . . He was a musician. No one had to explain notes or feeling or rhythm to him. It was all there inside him, something he was always sure of."

Uptown from Congo Square, Buddy Bolden -- whose legend and scattered first-person accounts credit as the earliest jazz musician -- performed with his pioneering band at Globe Hall. By the time Bolden and Bechet began playing jazz, the Americanization of African music had already begun, and with it came the Africanization of American music. Anthropologists call this process

"syncretism" -- the blending together of cultural elements that previously existed separately. This dynamic, so essential to the history of jazz, remains powerful even in the present day.

Early African Influence in Europe

The mixture of African and European culture began long before the slave dances in Congo Square. The North African conquest of the Iberian peninsula in the eighth century left a tangible impact on Europe evident in the distinctive qualities of Spanish architecture, painting, and music. The traces of this early Moorish influence may have contributed to the blossoming of African-American jazz more than a millennium later.

This same commingling of Spanish, French, and African influences was present in New Orleans at the birth of jazz?

Perhaps because of this Moorish legacy, Latin cultures have always seemed receptive to fresh influences from Africa. Indeed, in the area of music alone, the number of successful African and Latin hybrids (including salsa, calypso, samba, and cumbia, to name only a few) is so great that one can only speculate that these two cultures retain a residual magnetic attraction, a lingering affinity due to this original cross-fertilization. Jelly Roll Morton, the pioneering New Orleans jazz musician, asserted that "if you can't manage to put tinges of Spanish in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz." Around the time of Morton's birth, a massive Mexican cavalry band performed daily in free concerts at the Mexican Pavilion as part of the 1884-85 World's Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans. Hart's music store on Canal Street published over eighty Mexican compositions during this period, influencing local instrumentalists and providing one more link in the complex history of interlocking Latin and African-American musical styles. The Latin-Catholic culture, whose influence permeated nineteenth-century New Orleans, benignly fostered the development of jazz music. This culture, which bore its own scars of discrimination, was far more tolerant in accepting unorthodox social hybrids than the English Protestant ethos that prevailed in other parts of the New World. Put simply, the music and dances of Congo Square would not have been allowed in the more Anglicized colonies of the Americas.

Less than a half century after the city's founding, in 1764, New Orleans was ceded by France to Spain. In 1800, Napoleon succeeded in forcing its return from Spain, but this renewed French control lasted only three years before possession passed to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase. As a result, French and Spanish settlers played a decisive role in shaping the distinctive ambiance of New Orleans during the early nineteenth century, but settlers from Germany, Italy, England, Ireland, and Scotland also made substantial contributions to the local culture. The city's black inhabitants were equally diverse: many were brought directly from various parts of Africa, some were native-born Americans, still others came to the United States via the Caribbean. Civil unrest in Hispaniola was an especially powerful force in bringing new immigrants, both black and white, to New Orleans: in 1808 alone, as many as six thousand refugees fleeing the Haitian revolution arrived in the city, after being forced to leave Cuba. The resulting amalgam -- an exotic mixture of European, Caribbean, African, and American elements - - made Louisiana into perhaps the most seething ethnic melting pot that the nineteenth century world could produce. This melting pot would serve as breeding ground for many of the great hybrid musics of modern times; not just jazz, but also cajun, zydeco, blues, and other new styles flourished as a result of this laissez-faire environment. In this warm, moist atmosphere, sharp delineations between cultures gradually softened and ultimately disappeared. Today, New Orleans residents of Irish descent celebrate St. Patrick's Day by parading in a traditional African-American "second line" -- and none of the locals are at all surprised. The masquerades of Mardi Gras are a fitting symbol for this city, where the most familiar cultural artifacts appear in the strangest garb.

The role of slave labor in the production of African-American song makes for an especially sad chapter. By 1807, some 400,000 Africans had been brought to America, mostly from West Africa. Forcibly taken away from their home and deprived of their freedom these transplanted Americans

clung to those elements of their culture that they could carry with them from Africa - music and folk tales.

In this context, the decision of the New Orleans City Council, in 1817, to establish an official site for slave dances stands out as an exemplary degree of tolerance. In other locales, African elements in the slaves' music were discouraged or explicitly suppressed. During the Stono Rebellion of 1739, drums had been used to signal an attack on the white population. South Carolina banned any use of drums by slaves. The Georgia slave code went even further in prohibiting not only drums, but also horns or loud instruments.

The work song, another frequently cited predecessor to jazz, is more purely African in nature. This ritualized vocalizing of black American workers, with its proud disregard for Western systems of notation and scales, comes in many variants: field hollers, levee camp hollers, prison work songs, street cries, and the like. This entire category of singing has all but disappeared in our day, yet the few recordings extant reveal a powerful, evocative, and comparatively undiluted form of African music in the Americas.

Generalizations about African music are tricky at best. Many different cultures contribute to the traditions of West Africa. However, a few shared characteristics stand out, amid this plurality, in any study of African music -- with many of these same elements reappearing, in a somewhat different guise, in jazz. For example, call-and-response forms that predominate in African music figure as well in the work song, the blues, jazz, and other Americanized strains of African music. In its original African form, the call and-response format reflects a culture in which the fundamental Western separation of audience from performers is transcended. This brings us to a second unifying element of African musical traditions: the integration of performance into the social fabric. In this light, African music takes on an aura of functionality, one that defies any "pure" aesthetic attempting to separate art from social needs. Yet, since these functions are often tied to rituals and other liminal experiences, music never falls into the mundane type of functionality -- background music in the dentist's office, accompaniment to a television commercial, and so on - that one sees increasingly in the West. Integrated into ritual occasions, music retains its otherworldliness for the African, its ability to transcend the here and now. The cross-fertilization between music and dance is a third unifying theme in the traditional African cultures -- so deeply ingrained that scholar John Miller Chernoff remarks that, for an African, "understanding" a certain type of music means, in its most fundamental sense, knowing what dance it accompanies. A fourth predominant feature of African music is the use of instruments to emulate the human voice; this technique, which also plays a key role in jazz music, even extends to percussion instruments, most notably in the kalangu, the remarkable talking drum of West Africa. An emphasis on improvisation and spontaneity is a further shared trait of different African musical cultures, and these too have figured prominently in -- and, to some extent, have come to define -- the later jazz tradition.

However, the most prominent characteristic, the core element of African music, is its extraordinary richness of rhythmic content. It is here one discovers the essence of the African musical heritage, as well as the key to unlocking the mystery of its tremendous influence on so many disparate schools of twentieth-century Western music. The first Western scholars who attempted to come to grips with this rhythmic vitality, whether in its African or Americanized form, struggled merely to find a vocabulary and notational method to encompass it. Henry Edward Krehbiel, author of an early study of African-American folk songs, conveys the frustration of these endeavors in describing the African musicians he encountered at the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893:

The players showed the most remarkable rhythmical sense and skill that ever came under my notice. Berlioz in his supremest effort with his army of drummers produced nothing to compare in artistic interest with the harmonious drumming of these savages. The fundamental effect was a combination of double and triple

time, the former kept by the singers, the latter by the drummers, but it is impossible to convey the idea of the wealth of detail achieved by the drummers by means of the exchange of the rhythms, syncopations of both simultaneously, and dynamic devices.

Krehbiel engaged the services of John C. Fillmore, an expert in Indian music, in an attempt to notate the playing of these musicians, but eventually they gave up in despair. "I was forced to the conclusion," Krehbiel later recalled, in an account in which irritation and awe are present in equal doses, "that in their command of the [rhythmic] element, which in the musical art of the ancient Greeks stood higher than either melody or harmony, the best composers of today were the veriest tyros compared with these black savages."

In the 1930s the Federal Writers' Project undertook a comprehensive program of recording the memoirs of former slaves. This collection, housed today at the Archive of Folksong at the Library of Congress, provides telling insight into this distinctive African-American ability to extract music from the detritus of day-to-day life. "There wasn't no music instruments," reads the oral history of former slave Wash Wilson. Drums were fashioned out of a variety of discarded items: "pieces of sheep's rib or cow's jaw or a piece of iron, with an old kettle, or a hollow gourd and some horsehairs."

Sometimes they'd get a piece of tree trunk and hollow it out and stretch a goat's or sheep's skin over it for the drum. They'd be one to four foot high and a foot up to six foot across. . . . They'd take the buffalo horn and scrape it out to make the flute. That sho' be heard a long ways off. Then they'd take a mule's jawbone and rattle the stick across its teeth. They'd take a barrel and stretch an ox's hide across one end and a man sat astride the barrel and beat on that hide with his hands and his feet and if he got to feel the music in his bones, he'd beat on that barrel with his head. Another man beat on wooden sides with sticks.

In African music, in both its original and its various Americanized forms, different beats are frequently superimposed, creating powerful polyrhythms that are perhaps the most striking and moving element of African music. An African ensemble would construct layer upon layer of rhythmic patterns, forging a counterpoint of time signatures, a polyphony of percussion. We will encounter this multiplicity of rhythm again and again in Jazz, from the lilting syncopations of ragtime, to the diverse offbeat accents of the bebop drummer, to the jarring cross-rhythms of the jazz avant-garde.

The celebration of labor, inherent in the African-American work song, must otherwise seem strangely out of place coming from an oppressed race consigned to the indignities of slavery. But as soon as one sees the song of work as part of an inherently African approach to day-to-day life, one that integrates music into the occupations of here and now, this paradox disappears entirely.

If the work song reflects rhythm as a source of discipline, the blues represents the other side of African rhythms, the Dionysian side that offered release. More than any of the other forms of early African-American music, the blues allowed the performer to present an individual statement of pain, oppression, poverty, longing, and desire. Yet it achieved all this without falling into self-pity and recriminations. Instead the idiom offered a catharsis, an idealization of the individual's plight, and, in some strange way, an uplifting sense of mastery over the melancholy circumstances recounted in the context of the blues song. In this regard, the blues offers us a psychological enigma as profound as any posed by classical tragedy.

Jazz Begins

If something of the West African musical influence survived secretly in *vodun* and surfaced at Congo Square, how then did it contribute to the birth of jazz? Two factors aided this evolution: the tremendous popularity of the military band and the gradual adoption of European instruments. Beneath it all, of course, was the powerful and constant desire of the Afro-American to make his mark, to belong, to participate effectively in a predominantly white culture. And music was one of the few avenues to fame and fortune.

The popularity of the military band reached its peak in the France of Napoleon. Parades and concerts soon became one of America's favorite outdoor sports. The Afro-Americans had their bands, too. "House slaves" generally formed these bands. The field-slave working on the plantation had no such opportunity until after the Civil War. When the opportunity arrived he brought less diluted West African influences with him and it made a decided difference. As a former colony, New Orleans followed the French fashion in military bands closely and became justly famous for them. (Much later, in 1891, according to clarinetist Ed Hall, whose father was a member, the Onward Brass Band, composed of blacks from New Orleans, won contests in New York.) Bands were employed on almost all occasions, parades, picnics, concerts, riverboat excursions, dances, funerals -- and they were a sure-fire attraction. In 1871, no fewer than thirteen Negro organizations in New Orleans were represented by their own bands at the funeral ceremonies for President Garfield.

What is the explanation for the pre-eminence and frequency of Negro bands in New Orleans? In addition to the close ties with France and the general popularity of brass bands, New Orleans had a special kind of organization to give them employment and an unusual tradition that welcomed their presence on a wide range of occasions. This combination helped to produce the first bands that began to swing.

The special kind of organization was the secret society. Black life in New Orleans was honeycombed with them. Perhaps no phase of their life,' writes H. W. Odum, 'is so characteristic of the race and had developed so rapidly as that which centers around secret societies and fraternal orders.' They pay 'burial expenses, sick benefits, and small amounts to beneficiaries of deceased members.' They also, adds W. E. B. Du Bois, 'furnish pastime from the monotony of work, a field of ambition and intrigue, a chance for parade, and insurance against misfortune.'

These secret societies, far more numerous than similar white organizations, laid the economic foundation for the Negro brass bands by offering intermittent but frequent employment for musicians. Why were they so numerous? There was a powerful precedent in West Africa. Describing the *gbě* in Dahomey, Herskovits writes:

With elected membership and with ritual secrets in the manner of American lodges, such groups often have large followings and persist over long periods of time. Their primary purpose is to provide their members with adequate financial assistance so that at the funeral of a member's relative . . . he can make a showing in competitive giving that will bring prestige to himself and to his group. Each member must swear a blood oath on joining, and there are adequate controls over the treasurer. Each society has its banner, and indulges in public display of its power and resources in its processions, especially when it goes as a body to the funeral rituals.

Similar societies exist wherever the African landed in the New World. In Trinidad, for example, they are known as 'susu,' from the 'esusu' of the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria.

When Major Adolphe J. Osey, a member of more than twenty secret societies, died in 1937, the editors of *Gumbo Ya-Ya* report that he was 'waked' for five days and nights and a thirteen-piece band accompanied his coffin to the cemetery. Sister Johnson explains the great importance and the intense appeal of the secret societies in the same book:

A woman's got to belong to at least seven secret societies if she 'spects to get buried with any style . . . And the more lodges you belongs to, the more music you gits when you goes to meet your Maker. I belongs to enough now to have shoes on my feets. I knows right now what I'm gonna have at my wake. I already done checked off chicken salad and coffee.

I'm sure lookin' forward to my wake. They is wakin' me for four nights and I is gonna have the biggest funeral the church ever had. That's why everything I makes goes to the church and them societies.

The drive beneath this explanation, transposed and disguised, seems to be based on the powerful West African custom of ancestor-worship -- the spirit of the departed is still very active and must, above all, be appeased.

More particularly, there was a tradition that led to the employment of brass bands at Black funerals. With the mild exception of the Irish wake, there is nothing in the United States like a New Orleans funeral. But Jelly Roll Morton, born and bred in the Crescent City, saw nothing unusual about it. 'Everybody in the City of New Orleans was always organization minded . . . and a dead man always belonged to several organizations, secret orders . . . We would often wonder where a dead person was located . . . we knew we had plenty of good food that night.'

Describing the funeral of Sister Cordelia, the editors of *Gumbo Ya-Ya* report:

The wake was anything but dull. One of the sisters de. scribed it, 'We had solos and duets and hymn-singin' all night long. The womens was passin' out right and left. A doctor was kept busy and the smellin' salts was more popular than the food.'

The husband and two daughters made a most spectacular entrance at the funeral, coming up the stairs and into the room, screaming and moaning, alternately. The daughter who hadn't seen her mother for nine years made the most noise . . . She fell to her knees, rocked back and forth, tearing at her hair with her hands. . . .

The church service was just as eventful. After the preaching and the praying and the psalm-singing, members of the various societies circled the casket. Some of them would shout and scream hysterically, finally fainting and having to be carried out. One huge woman taxed the strength of five men. Other sisters just kept walking up and down, releasing screams periodically. This is called the 'walkin' spirits.' One immense sister almost tore down the church when she had a sudden attack of the 'runnin' spirits.' Some of the women trucked, others shook all over, one kept knocking off as many hats as she could possibly reach. . . .

Marching to the cemetery is a mournful and sad affair, but it's an important kind of mournfulness and an impressive kind of sadness . . . they marched with solemnity, with dignity, and gusto . . . The organization banner was red-lined in silver and bore the words 'Young and True Friends' in huge letters of gold. . . .

The ceremonies at the grave were short and simple, but everybody stayed until the last clod of dirt was put on the casket. A sister of the deceased waited until everyone else reached the grave before she began a slow march forward, the crowd parting to let her through; she was supported on each side by a woman, in a condition of semi-prostration, and moaned over and over again, 'I can't stand it!' . . . As she reached the hole in the ground, her knees buckled under her and she collapsed completely.

But when the procession was half a block from the cemetery, en route home, the band burst into 'Just Stay a Little While,' and all the True Friends performed individual and various dances, and the sister, but lately unconscious with grief, was soon trucking with the rest of them.

From the point of view of a jazzman, the best part of a funeral took place after the burial. Trumpeter Bunk Johnson's description of the ceremony, recorded by Bill Russell, is unsurpassed:

On the way to the cemetery with an Odd Fellow or a Mason -- they always buried with music you see-we would always use slow, slow numbers such as ' Nearer My God to Thee,' ' Flee as a Bird to the Mountains,' ' Come Thee Disconsolate.' We would use most any 4/4, played very slow; they walked very slow behind the body.

After we would get to the cemetery, and after that particular person were put away, the band would come on to the front, out of the graveyard. Then the lodge would come out . . . and they called roll-fall in line, and then we'd march away from the cemetery by the snare drum only, until we got about a block or two blocks from the cemetery. Then we'd go right on into ragtime -- what the people call today swing -- ragtime. We would play ' Didn't He Ramble,' or we'd take all those spiritual hymns and turn them into ragtime -- 2/4 movements, you know, step lively everybody. ' Didn't He Ramble,' ' When the Saints Go Marching In,' that good old piece ' Ain't Gonna Study War No More,' and several others we would have and we'd play them just for that effect.

We would have a second line there that was 'most equivalent to King Rex parade-Mardi Gras Carnival parade. The police were unable to keep the second line back-all in the street, all on the sidewalks, in front of the band, and behind the lodge, in front of the lodge. We'd have some immense crowds following. They would follow the funeral up to the cemetery just to get this ragtime music comin' back. Some of the women would have beer cans on their arm. They'd stop and get a half can of beer and drink that to freshen up and follow the band for miles-in the dust, in the dirt, in the street, on the sidewalk, and the Law was trying not to gang the thoroughfare, but just let them have their way. There wouldn't be any fight or anything of that kind; it would just be dancin' in the street. Even police horse-mounted police -their horse would prance. Music done them all the good in the world. That's the class of music we used on funerals.

Bunk mentions the second line, or dancing followers recruited from the crowd, and many a New Orleans jazzman as a youngster went to school in the second line.

Is there any precedent in the customs of West Africa for the Negro funeral in New Orleans? Indeed there is. Describing a funeral in Dahomey, Herskovits reports:

When the grave is finished, it is left with a mat over its opening. Every morning thereafter, until the body is buried, the children and wives of the deceased enter

the house of the dead, fall across the body and weep . . . [after the funeral] Throughout the night, and until an hour or two before dawn, there is drinking and dancing and singing. Tales are recounted dealing with themes of the broadest sexual innuendo, for the native view is that this is the time to amuse the dead, for to moralize to a dead person is both indelicate and senseless.

Talbot makes a similar point about the Sudanese of Southern Nigeria, Leonard about the Ibos of the lower Niger, and Rattray about the Ashanti. Funerals were a high point in West African life.

As time goes on and New Orleans becomes more like any other American city, the Negro funeral is disappearing. At the funeral of trumpeter 'Papa' Celestin Ebony magazine reports (March 1955) that no jazz was played out of respect for Papa.' The Catholic Church frowns upon the custom with some reason. Who ever heard of such 'carryings on' over a corpse? A deep-rooted tradition from West Africa is being modified.

In 1874, the White League was organized to throw out the Yankee carpetbaggers and keep the Negro in his place. 'Discrimination came in 1889,' said Bunk Johnson flatly. The Creoles of Color were hard hit. Bit by bit, they were pushed out of any job a white man could use, and they lost their place in the downtown parade. 'Quite naturally,' says drummer Baby Dodds 'the colored fellows didn't get any of the better jobs.' Eventually and against their will, they went uptown and 'sat in' with their darker brothers. They could play European instruments correctly and they could read music. But, at first, they couldn't play jazz.

Where did the Creoles of Color come from? The Black Code of 1724 made provision for the freeing of slaves. Children shared the status of their mother. When a white aristocrat died, according to Asbury, his will frequently provided that his part-African mistress and slave should be freed. His children by the same woman were automatically free. A class known as Creoles of Color grew up with French and Spanish as well as African blood in their veins.

Sometimes the part-African children of wealthy planters were given all the advantages that the family could provide. Charles Gayarré writes:

By 1830, some of these gens de couleur had arrived at such a degree of wealth as to own cotton and sugar plantations with numerous slaves. They educated their children, as they had been educated, in France. Those who chose to remain there, attained, many of them, distinction in scientific and literary circles. In New Orleans they became musicians, merchants, and money and real estate brokers. The humbler classes were mechanics; they monopolized the trade of shoemakers, a trade for which, even to this day, they have a special vocation; they were barbers, tailors, carpenters, upholsterers. They were notably successful hunters and supplied the city with game. As tailors, they were almost exclusively patronized by the élite, so much so that the Legoasters', the Dumas', the Clovis', the Lacroix', acquired individually fortunes of several hundred thousands of dollars. . . . At the Orleans theatre they attended their mothers, wives, and sisters in the second tier reserved exclusively for them, and where no white person of either sex would have been permitted to intrude.

The Creoles of Color, Asbury adds, 'in the Southern phrase, knew their places,' although their role in the strict caste system was precarious. Cable's novel, *The Grandissimes*, deals with the tragedy of the darker brother caught in this inter-racial no-man's-land.

The fall of the Creoles of Color was gradual but complete. As Lomax demonstrates in *Mister Jelly Roll*, the ancestry of Morton is a case in point. His grandfather was a member of the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1868, his father (according to Morton) was a small business man,

and Morton himself worked as a manual laborer in a barrel factory before he escaped to the red-light district of Storyville. His Creole grandmother immediately disowned him but Morton was making big money. A familiarity with light classical music and European technique was part of his Creole background and helped him to contribute new elements to jazz.

The Creoles of Color had much to learn about jazz which their academic training could not give them. The light-skinned Creole clarinetist, Alphonse Picou, who was seventy-three years old in 1953 could still remember the difficulties he had. 'When I was very young,' he says, 'I took lessons from the flute player at the French Opera House. He made me practice fingering for six months before I was permitted to play a note.' While still in his teens, Picou was invited to play in the jazz orchestra of his friend; the trombone player Bouboul Augustat. Picou was shocked when he discovered that they had no written music. He was expected to improvise. 'Bouboul told me, "Just listen," and I sat there not knowing what to do. After a while I caught on and started playing two or three notes for one.'

It was Picou who first adapted the piccolo part from the march version of 'High Society' to jazz -- a technical but not very creative feat. It has become a standard solo for jazz clarinet whenever the tune is played, and modern jazz musicians such as Charlie Parker have quoted parts of it in the course of their improvising. Picou's eyes light up as he remembers the first time. 'I just happened to think of playing it that way one night and the crowd went wild. They kept requesting it over and over and wouldn't let me stop.' To this day, Picou retains a semi-legitimate tone and style without the vitality of a Johnny Dodds.

The Creole violinist, Paul Dominguez, explained to Alan Lomax how his friends had to compete with the darker Negroes uptown:

See, us Downtown people, we didn't think so much of this rough Uptown jazz until we couldn't make a living otherwise . . . they made a fiddler out of a violinist-me, I'm talking about. A fiddler is not a violinist but a violinist can be a fiddler. If I wanted to make a living, I had to be rowdy like the other group. I had to jazz it or rag it or any other damn. thing . . . Bolden cause all that. He cause these younger Creoles, men like Bechet and Keppard, to have a different style altogether from the old heads like Tio and Perez. I don't know how they do it. But goddam, they'll do it. Can't tell you what's there on the paper, but just play the hell out of it.

Dominguez had been left stranded with his Creole prejudices. And yet the chronicles of jazz are crowded with the names of Creoles of Color who made the jump to jazz successfully: Ory, Bechet, Bigard, Celestin, Dutrey, Picou, Robichaux, Simeon, St. Cyr, and so forth.

They brought their knowledge of European instruments and technique with them and merged with the darker pioneers who thought of any instrument simply as an extension of the human voice. 'If you can't sing it,' says New Orleans trumpeter Mutt Carey in Hear Me Talkin' to Ya, 'you can't play it. When I'm improvising, I'm singing in my mind. I sing what I feel and then try to reproduce it on the horn.' And all of it blended with the thriving brass bands employed by the fraternal societies. The result was a competently played march music that had also begun to swing, an elementary kind of jazz that would still be recognizable as such today.

The Growth of Jazz

Buddy Bolden

Battles of music, once known as 'carving contests,' have occurred frequently in the history of jazz. In early New Orleans days, it was Armstrong versus Kid Rena, or Red Allen versus Guy Kelly, or King Joe Oliver versus Freddie Keppard. 'if you couldn't blow a man down with your horn,' declares trumpeter Mutt Carey in *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya*, 'at least you could use it to hit him alongside the head.' In the 'thirties in Kansas City it was saxophonist Coleman Hawkins versus Lester Young, while in New York it was trombonist Big Green versus Jimmy Harrison. (At the Bandbox in 1953 it was the entire bands of Count Basie and Duke Ellington.) In a free-wheeling music such as jazz, a musician is judged by his capacity for sustained and swinging improvisation.

The first and archetypical legend in jazz is the life of Charles 'Buddy' Bolden, who never lost a carving contest. He was almost eight years old before the dances at Congo Square came to an end, and he probably knew all about *vodun* and attended his share of secret meetings. He grew up in the midst of the brass-band craze and he mastered a European instrument, the cornet. As a child, he was a part of a shouting congregation in church. He was heir to all the musical influences that survived in and around New Orleans. And the sounds that burst from his cornet helped to establish a new music.

Bolden was born in 1868 in the rough-and-ready uptown section of New Orleans. He ran a barber shop, edited a scandal sheet called 'The Cricket,' and around 1897 organized the first out-and-out jazz band. He was the first jazzman to earn the title 'King' by popular acclaim. For seven years he was the undisputed champ. Then, at the age of twenty-nine, he ran amuck during a parade and was committed to the State Hospital at Angola on 5 June 1907. He died twenty-four years later. Six years before his death, Bolden was given a routine examination by Dr. S. B. Hays:

Accessible and answers fairly well. Paranoid delusions, also grandiosed. Auditory hallucinations and visual. Talks to self. Much reaction. Picks things off the wall. Tears his clothes. Insight and judgment lacking. Looks deteriorated but memory is good. . . . Has a string of talk that is incoherent. Hears the voices of people that bothered him before he came here. History of one month in House of Detention on account of alcohol. Diagnosis: Dementia praecox, paranoid type.

In the official records there is no inkling of the fact that women once fought for the privilege of carrying Buddy's cornet.

Folk heroes of jazz have often been celebrated for enormous appetites of all kinds, and Bolden set a pattern that has been followed by many young men with horns. He lived hard and he 'died' young. Old-timer Albert Glennie remembers Bolden as a 'good dresser,' while Jelly Roll Morton says that 'he drink all the whiskey he could find. . . always having a ball.' Above all, Bolden was a ladies' man, and in the words of the Belgian author Robert Goffin, 'Il doit encore rendre les femmes rouges-chaudes!' Bolden probably never recorded, although the wishful thought of ancient Edison cylinders keeps circulating, but we know that at one time his band consisted of cornet, clarinet, trombone, violin, guitar, string bass, and drums. They played at saloons, dance halls, parades, picnics, lawn parties, carnivals, and parks. (When the band came through Plaquemine, Louisiana, on an excursion sometime before 1906, thirteen-year-old Clarence Williams ran away from home to New Orleans. 'I had never heard anything like that before in my whole life.') Tin Type Hall on Liberty Street in uptown New Orleans was the band's favorite location. And they played polkas, quadrilles, ragtime tunes, and blues-all by ear.

But Bolden's specialty was the blues. An uptown dance at Tin Type Hall is described in *Jazzmen*:

In the daytime, Tin Type Hall was used as a sort of morgue, for here the hustlers and roustabouts were always laid out when they were killed. The hustlers, gamblers, and race track followers were often hard-working musicians in their off seasons, or when luck turned and they needed a little ready cash. At night, however, the Tin Type trembled with life and activity, especially when Bolden was 'socking it out.' The 'high class' or 'dicty' people didn't go to such lowdown affairs as the Tin Type dances. At about twelve o'clock, when the ball was getting right, the more respectable Negroes who did attend went home. Then Bolden played a number called Don't Go Away Nobody, and the dancing got rough. When the orchestra settled down to the slow blues, the music was mean and dirty, as Tin Type roared full blast.

On slow blues, such as 'Careless Love' and '2: 19 Took My Baby Away,' Bolden was at his best. 'Bolden went to church,' Bud Scott claims, 'and that's where he got his idea of jazz music. Negro religious music and blues were always closely related.'

All the musicians who heard Bolden agree on two things: Buddy couldn't read a note and he played the most powerful horn of all time. Louis Armstrong (who was seven years old when Bolden ran amuck and therefore a not too reliable witness) speaks of Bolden's style as 'a little too rough,' while Morton says:

Buddy Bolden was the most powerful trumpet in ' history. I remember we'd be hanging around some corner, wouldn't know that there was going to be a dance out at Lincoln Park. Then we'd hear old Buddy's trumpet coming on and we'd all start. Any time it was a quiet night at Lincoln Park because maybe the affair hadn't been so well publicized, Buddy Bolden would publicize it He'd turn his big trumpet around toward the city and blow his blues, calling his children home, as he used to say. The whole town would know Buddy Bolden was Lat the Park, ten or twelve miles from the center of town. He was the blowingest man ever lived since Gabriel.

Albert Glenny, who once played bass with Bolden, estimates that 'Buddy was louder than Louis Armstrong with the microphone turned on.' Thus, Fred Ramsey suggests that the term 'loud,' so frequently used to describe Bolden's playing by those who actually heard him, may be a way of saying that the music as a whole was rough and unfamiliar-with 'hoarseness, a notable lack of harmony, and a high level of heterophony' (voices close to but not quite in unison) -- in other words, a way of describing a *new manner of playing*. This interesting speculation makes excellent sense in connection with the very early brass band music Ramsey located in the Southern countryside.

Did Bolden play ragtime or jazz? Would he sound old-fashioned or modern today? Glenny says that he was 'the best for ragtime,' but Bunk Johnson insisted that Bolden 'could step out right today, play his own style, and be called "hot."' Wallace Collins, who played tuba with Bolden, told Rudi Blesh that Buddy would 'take one note and put two or three to it.' That sounds like ragtime. But then, trombonist Willy Cornish, speaking of the rhythms, says, 'when we got going good, they'd cross three times at once.' That sounds like jazz. The truth is that Bolden probably played a transitional style that could be either 'raggy' or 'hot.' When he played a ragtime tune such as 'Maple Leaf Rag' by Scott Joplin, which he memorized, he followed a syncopated melody which gave the music a 'raggy' sound. When he played the blues, however, he probably used blue tonality and the flowing rhythms that crossed 'three times at once.'

Before Buddy Bolden was put away in 1907, New Orleans saw the rise of many other jazzmen. They were using European instruments without benefit of orthodox instruction, and they were playing European tunes. But their conception of how these instruments and tunes should be

played was influenced by their West African heritage. The tunes were a point of departure for endless variations, instruments were an extension of the human voice, and both were welded together by a propulsive march rhythm.

In Bolden's day, playing jazz was usually an avocation, a part-time job, integrated with the everyday life of the Negro community. 'Most of the musicians had day jobs,' says Zutty Singleton. It was a folk music and the distinction between performer and audience was shadowy. But with the opening of Storyville, the official red-light district, in 1897, things began to change. Playing jazz became a full-time profession for some, and the occupational hazards of working while others enjoyed themselves became more or less standardized.

In 1910, there were 'almost two hundred houses of pleasure,' according to *Jazzmen*, as well as 'nine cabarets, many "dance schools," innumerable honky-tonks, barrelhouses, and gambling joints.' The 101 Ranch, a cabaret which employed many jazzbands, was particularly famous, and it was there that trombonist Preston Jackson recalls seeing the white kids who later became world-famous as the Original Dixieland jazz Band, hanging around and listening open-mouthed to the music. The changes of personnel and location were endless, but Storyville kept a dozen or so bands working every night.

'Jazz wasn't born in Storyville,' said old-time school teacher and trumpeter Johnny Wiggs in an interview, 'it came long before that.' Storyville helped to establish a special kind of jazzman: the solo pianist. He made more money than an entire jazzband. Jelly Roll Morton took in fifteen or eighteen dollars a night at Lulu White's, while the band musicians got from one to two-and-a-half dollars apiece at the cabarets. (It was poetic justice of a sort because the New Orleans jazzbands, with their marching band tradition, did not use a piano in the early days.) 'You never had to [could] figure on getting work in the District,' says guitarist Danny Barker, 'so it wasn't so important when it closed in 1917. Very few jazzmen ever played in a brothel out of choice.

At the same time, the solo pianists of Storyville were assimilating the rolling rhythms of the brass bands. In so doing they went a step beyond the ragtime style of the day. A transitional figure in this sense, Morton helped to spread the newer style in the course of his endless travels, while the band rhythms made him the victor in 'carving contests' all over the country. By 1917, Storyville was closed, New Orleans was sunk in a business depression, and jazzmen were looking north for employment.

From around 1900, a music that we should probably recognize today as jazz began to be played in New Orleans. We have been stressing the West African elements in the blend, since they determined the unique character of the music, but what were the European influences? Echoes of almost any Old World music can be found in New Orleans jazz. Bit by bit, the Protestant folk manner of singing psalms and hymns, with its free embellishments, lining-out form, and non-harmonic horizontal feeling made itself felt in and around Latin-Catholic New Orleans-especially in revival singing-and dove-tailed neatly with the overall development. The American Negro did not need to borrow any rhythms, but rather adapted and limited himself to the European march beat, building upon it. He cheerfully borrowed European melodies and transformed them by improvisation. Above all, he gradually mastered European harmony - an element which was not entirely new to him-and proceeded to color it with blue tonality.

Tracing specific European melodies in jazz is a thankless task. British ballads, for example, were no doubt played by jazzmen, but the emphasis was upon the manner of playing while the tunes themselves were quickly transformed into something else. Spanish melodies were more hardy, frequently because they had already blended with West African influences in the West Indies. A large borrowing consisted of Afro-Spanish rhythms such as the tango and rhumba, which Jelly Roll Morton called the 'Spanish tinge.' By 1914, when W. C. Handy composed 'St. Louis Blues,' he used a *tangana* rhythm in the verse. By then, however, the tango had been the craze for some time in New York City.

As might be expected, the French influence is perhaps the greatest European influence on New Orleans jazz. It merged with rumba rhythms to produce Creole songs, some of which were published as early as 1867 in *Slave Songs of the United States*. (Eighty years later, the rumba became a Tin-Pan Alley commodity.) Jelly Roll Morton demonstrates how a French quadrille was adapted to the jazz idiom (Circle JM 1-2). The name of the quadrille was 'La Marseillaise' (not the French national anthem), and the contrasting time signatures of its five sections were changed to duple rhythm-with appropriate embellishments.

The fortunes of this quadrille in New Orleans are legendary. Originally called 'Praline' -- a ragged kind of candy-it was known in Storyville as 'Get Out of Here and Go Home.' Later, it was entitled 'Jack Carey' and then 'Number Two Rag' when the Dixieland Five played it around 1914. The Original Dixieland Jass (sic) Band, a white group from New Orleans, made the first recording of it in 1917 under the name of 'Tiger Rag,' and the title stuck.

Confirmation of the French origin of 'Tiger Rag' comes from an unexpected source. The Belgian author, Robert Goffin, identifies the number as 'the distorted theme of the second tableau of a quadrille I used to hear as a boy, at all the balls of Walloon, Belgium.' Further, he adds that the military bands of every French village played two marches that can be easily identified as the New Orleans jazz standards, 'Panama' and 'High Society.' In these rare cases, the actual melody was retained, probably because it was so well known, although in actual performance the variations were -- and still are-practically endless.

Finally, if we had to choose a date when the over-all direction switched from European elements *dominating* African elements to European elements *being influenced* by a new combination dominated by African elements, it would be around 1900. It is a question of the general trend. European and African music continued to blend, of course, but something unusual had occurred. From the previous blending, a music had evolved in New Orleans with a distinct character of its own. It struck the public, and quite rightly, as something entirely new, and it began to spread, grow, and influence all American popular music.

The general style later became known as 'Dixieland,' especially when played by white musicians, and it spread fan-wise to the North until it became the rage of the Jazz Age. In the meantime, the Great Awakening, minstrelsy, the spiritual, and ragtime had evolved outside of New Orleans. They all borrowed certain African elements in turn and paved the way for the acceptance of jazz. They were a little more European in feeling, however, while jazz was something else again-a new music.