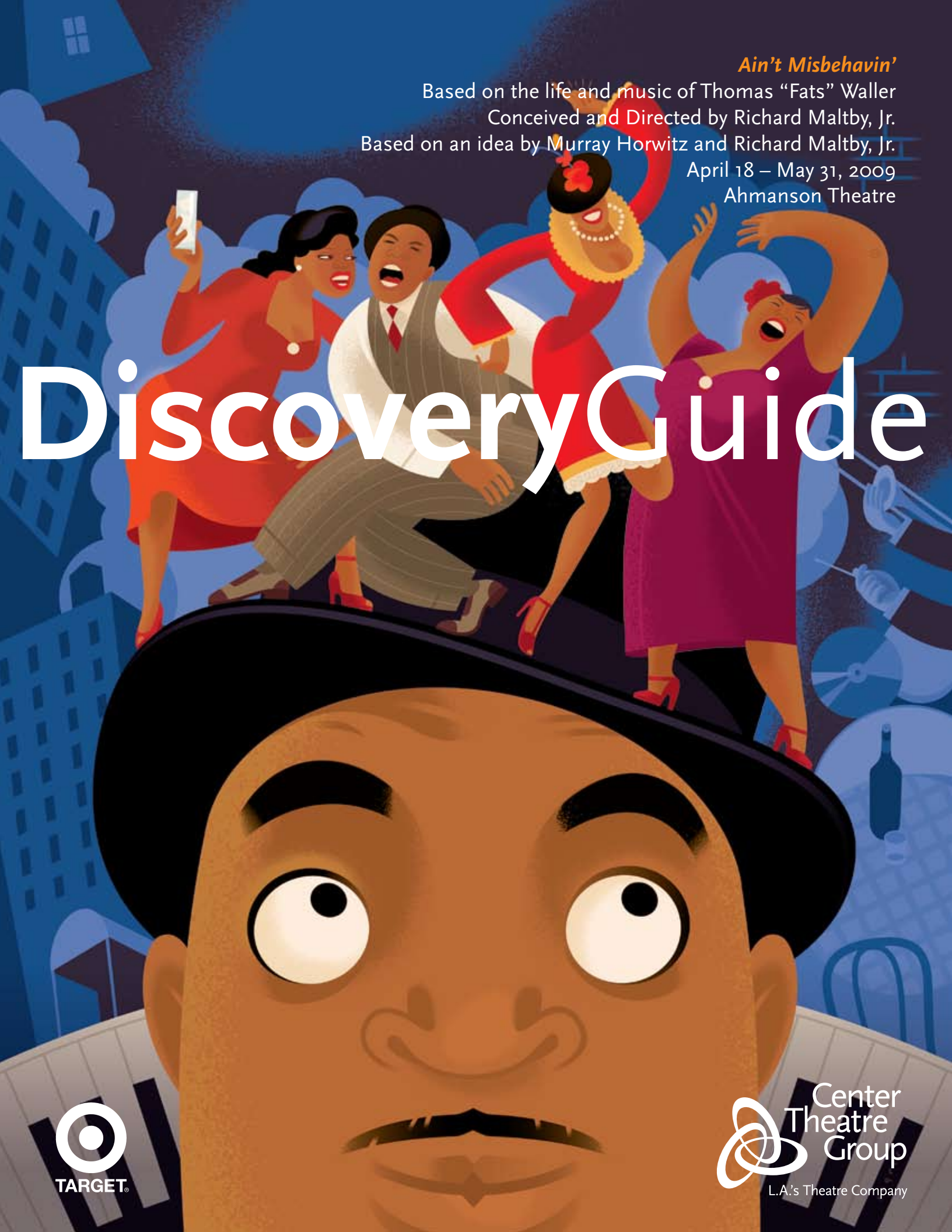

Ain't Misbehavin'
Based on the life and music of Thomas "Fats" Waller
Conceived and Directed by Richard Maltby, Jr.
Based on an idea by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr.
April 18 – May 31, 2009
Ahmanson Theatre

DiscoveryGuide

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Welcome to the fast-paced, thought-provoking, toe-tapping world of Thomas "Fats" Waller.

One of the greatest musicians and composers of the Harlem Renaissance, Waller wrote hundreds of songs and possessed a performing style that was loved throughout the world. As an African American, Waller faced difficult challenges during his career, but his heritage also shaped who he was, the music that he created and how he created it. Waller was a product of his era, but through his musical genius, he in turn helped to shape that era. Waller used his talent to express his hopes and desires and, most importantly, to share his infectious joy of performing. He lived in a time and a place that produced some of the most remarkable jazz artists ever, and it was through their collaborations and competitions that jazz became the intricate music that has been treasured around the world for decades.

Ain't Misbehavin' is a musical revue based on the music and life of Waller. A musical revue is a different type of theatre. Instead of a story, a revue features musical numbers that have a thematic link. In this case, the link is Waller himself. A noted showman of the 1920s through the early 1940s, Waller was wildly energetic and loved combining comic wisecracks with exaggerated facial gestures. He was also a very serious musician, and *Ain't Misbehavin'* celebrates his extraordinary talents as a pianist and composer.

First created by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr. as a nightclub show in 1978, *Ain't Misbehavin'* went on to become a Broadway sensation, earning three Tony Awards and renewing interest in the history of jazz, African-American musicianship and the Harlem Renaissance. The current revival is directed by Maltby, Jr. and features 30 beloved songs composed by Waller or made famous by him through his witty, lively recordings.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE

- ♪ Explore the Harlem Renaissance and what made it such an important period in American history
- ♪ Learn about the roots of jazz and the life of jazz musician and composer Thomas "Fats" Waller
- ♪ Examine how the drive for self-discovery and self-expression shaped the Harlem Renaissance, Waller's career and the formation of jazz music
- ♪ Explore how competition and collaboration together inspire progress
- ♪ Discuss how art reflects social and personal concerns

DiscoveryGuide

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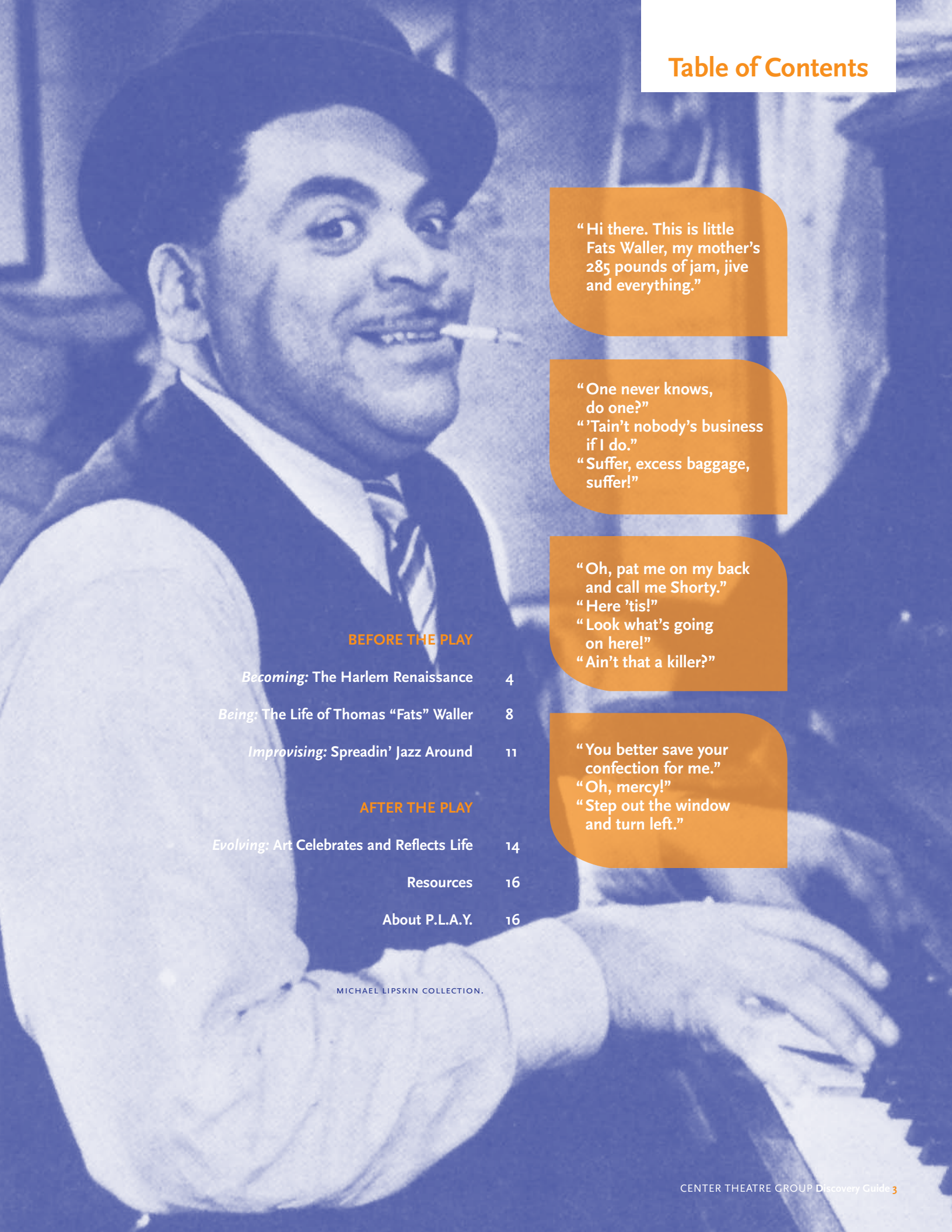


"Hi there. This is little Fats Waller, my mother's 285 pounds of jam, jive and everything."

"One never knows, do one?"
"'Tain't nobody's business if I do."
"Suffer, excess baggage, suffer!"

"Oh, pat me on my back and call me Shorty."
"Here 'tis!"
"Look what's going on here!"
"Ain't that a killer?"

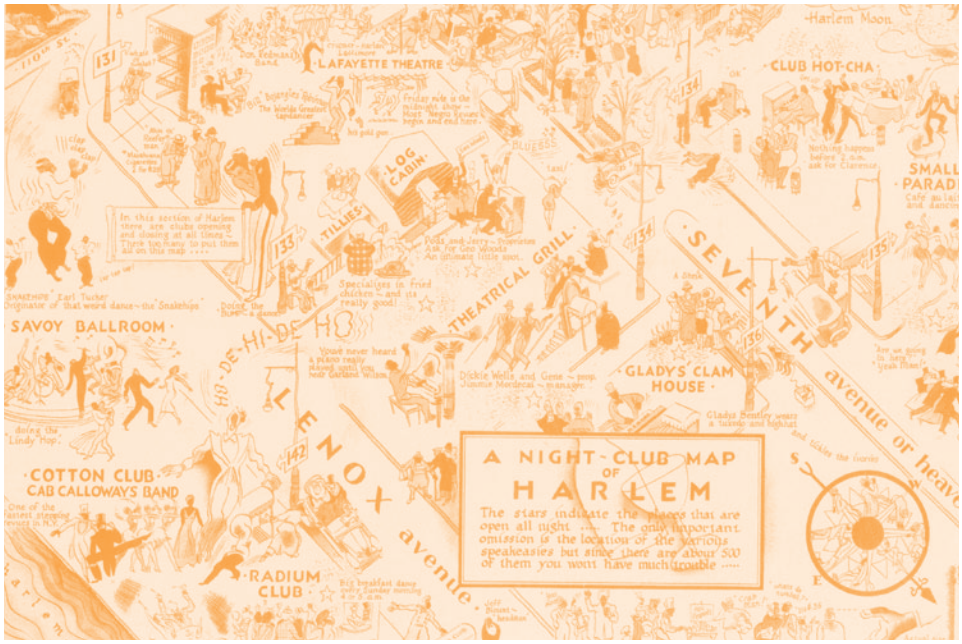
"You better save your confection for me."
"Oh, mercy!"
"Step out the window and turn left."

MICHAEL LIPSKIN COLLECTION.

Becoming: The Harlem Renaissance

"I can never put on paper the thrill of the underground ride to Harlem. I went up the steps and out into the bright September sunlight. Harlem! I stood there, dropped my bags, took a deep breath and felt happy again."

—Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967), African-American writer, upon arriving in Harlem for the first time in 1921



ELEIZABETH CAMPBELL ROLLINS COLLECTION.

A **renaissance** is a revival of art and learning. One of the most intriguing renaissance periods was the Harlem Renaissance. It took place in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem, mostly between 1919 and 1935, and its wide-ranging effects touched the lives of Americans of all races and colors, as well as people around the world.

The history of African Americans is filled with racism and deprivation, but also with astonishing determination, creativity and talent. After struggling under the yoke of slavery for generations, African Americans were freed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 and began the journey to establish their identity as a people and as individuals. Like all other Americans, they believed that they had the right to be accepted and respected for who they were, not for how others saw them or wanted them to be. Part of that evolution happened during the 1920s, when African Americans from all over the United States, and blacks from around the world, traveled to Harlem to develop and celebrate their unique talents.

The neighborhood of Harlem was built in the late part of the 19th century as a luxurious district for white residents that could be easily reached using newly built mass transportation. The development grew too large, too quickly, however, and by the early 20th century, many apartment buildings and homes were still empty. Desperate to make their money back, the mostly white landlords agreed to rent to black tenants or to sell their properties to African-American realtors. In 1904, Philip A. Payton, Jr. (1876 – 1917) established the Afro-American Realty Company, the first black real estate agency, and began advertising heavily. Tenants of other black neighborhoods in New York flocked to Harlem, which offered lower rents and was clean and new. Along with blacks already living in New York, immigrants from other countries and African Americans from the South settled in Harlem, helping the community to thrive. Harlem soon became the largest black neighborhood in the United States.

There were two different points of view on how African Americans should found their cultural identity. One group, including **intellectual** W. E. B. Du Bois (1868 – 1963), believed that the most educated, cultured and prosperous African Americans should establish the institutions to make the black community equal to white society. Others declared that it should be all African Americans, not just the privileged few, who determined how black culture and values would be expressed. Although there were many debates over how advancement should be accomplished, and by

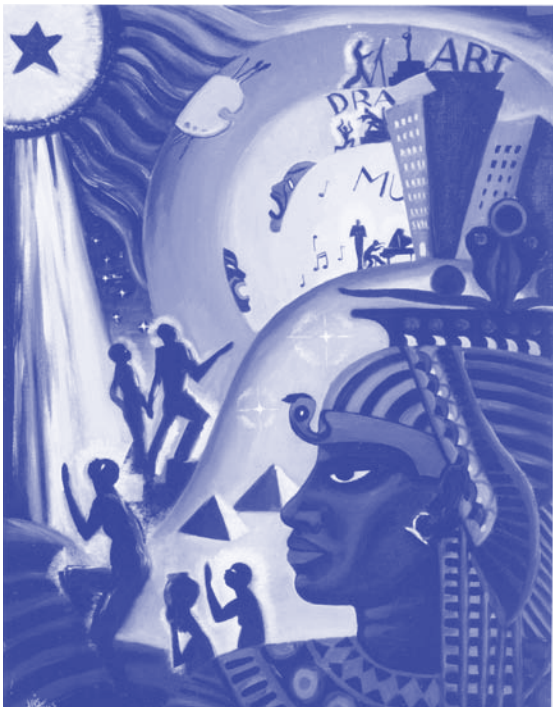
KEYSTONE/GAMMA

"I believe that the Negro's advantages and opportunities are greater in Harlem than in any other place in the country, and that Harlem will become the intellectual, the cultural and the financial center for Negroes of the United States, and will exert a vital influence upon all Negro peoples."

—James Weldon Johnson (1871 – 1938), African-American writer, from an essay on Harlem published in 1925

whom, the Harlem Renaissance inspired black people to take pride in themselves and their history. "Black is beautiful," a chant that would be part of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, was first heard during the Harlem Renaissance. The idea of a people collectively feeling that they were beautiful and should be accepted for their positive qualities was a very powerful one.

Although there had been earlier African-American artists who wrote, painted or composed music, the Harlem Renaissance brought groups of them together in the same place for the first time. Also, there were efforts to help them to achieve even more. In order to encourage blacks to write, numerous literary magazines that offered contests with cash prizes were started in Harlem. One of the most important voices of the Harlem Renaissance belonged to poet Langston Hughes (1902 – 1967). He won the first poetry contest sponsored by *Opportunity* magazine, and soon after, published his first volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues*.



"Ascent of Ethopia" by Lois Mailou Jones, 1932.
MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM.

Important figures of the Harlem Renaissance came from various disciplines. Paul Robeson (1898 – 1976) was significant in the theatre, creating interest in African-American performers from audiences of all races. Despite being the third black graduate in the history of Columbia law school, Robeson pursued an acting career and performed in such landmark shows as *Emperor Jones* (1925), *Porgy* (1928) and *Show Boat* (1928). The multi-talented Robeson also had a dynamic movie career and was a prominent political activist.

Popular writer Zora Neale Hurston (1891 – 1960) collected black folktales from around the United States and the world. She believed that black culture should be valued exactly as it was, rather than trying to shape it to conform to white ideals. Painter Aaron Douglas (1899 – 1979), whose colorful portraits depicted African Americans as strong and beautiful, became one of the most important visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Yet another **charismatic** Harlem resident was heiress A'Lelia Walker (1885—1931), who supported the artistic movement by hosting parties at her mansion. Walker's home saw integrated gatherings of blacks and whites who socialized and discussed using the arts to bring about change.

Harlem's lively arts scene helped give self-worth to a people who had been told for generations that they were not as good as others. Harlemites proudly saw their neighborhood become a shining beacon to **disenfranchised** people around the world.

"I paint what us Negroes, colored people, us Americans know. We're a brand-new race, raised and manufactured in the United States. I do like to paint what they did."

—Palmer C. Hayden (1890-1973), African-American painter

Exercise

What Makes a Neighborhood Unique?

There are many things that make a neighborhood unique: the people who live there, the businesses and public institutions like parks, schools and churches. Harlem, like many neighborhoods throughout the U.S., was made up primarily of one race (in this case, African American). It was particularly well-known for the entertainment it offered, with some of its nightclubs becoming world famous. On the map of Harlem, you can see some of its landmarks. Make a map of the neighborhood around your school and fill in some of its important spots, such as businesses, churches, parks or other schools. What makes your neighborhood special? Is it mostly one race or ethnic group? How does that affect the businesses there? What is your favorite place in the neighborhood? Why? Write a paragraph about what makes your neighborhood unique and share it with the class.

Exercise

Figures of the Harlem Renaissance

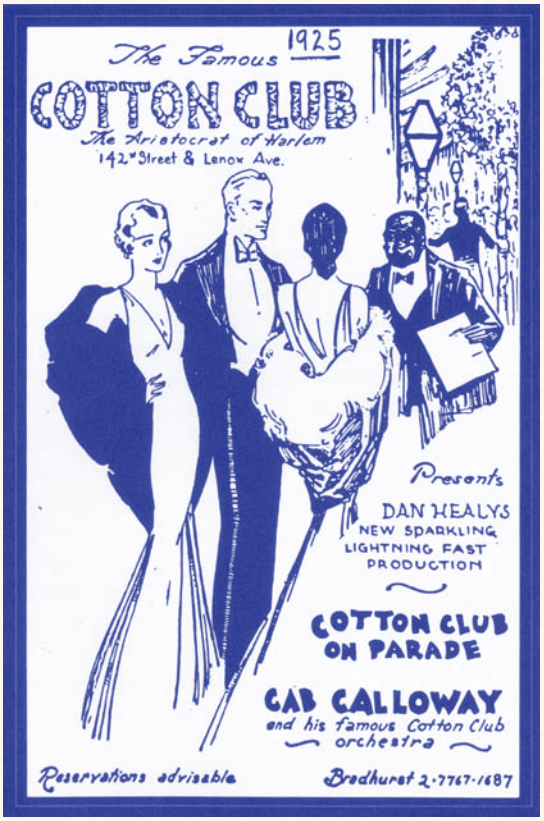
Research one person who contributed to the Harlem Renaissance and write a monologue in his/her voice to share with the class. Think about how your figure might speak: is there a rhythm to the language? Does s/he use formal speech or a simpler and more direct vocabulary? Does s/he tell stories or list facts? Be sure to answer the questions below:

Who is your figure and when did s/he live? _____

What did this person do? _____

What was this person's greatest achievement? _____

What would this person like the class to know about his/her life, work, time period? _____



SCHOMBURG CENTER, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, COLLECTION OF GORDON ANDERSON.

The Cotton Club

One of the most well-known landmarks in Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s was the Cotton Club, a fancy nightclub serving white patrons. It featured exclusively African-American entertainers, including such stars as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Josephine Baker and Ethel Waters. The Cotton Club, like many Harlem clubs, benefited from Prohibition, the common name for the Volstead Act, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution that prohibited the sale of liquor. Although it was illegal to sell alcohol, many nightclubs did so anyway. As they traveled to unfamiliar neighborhoods to find a drink, white people discovered the nightclubs of Harlem. When wealthy celebrities patronized the Cotton Club, it became more famous and attracted more high-profile entertainers. Eventually a nightly radio show was broadcast from the club, allowing average white Americans across the country to experience African-American music and perceive it as glamorous. Although African-American musicians and dancers were the only performers, blacks were not allowed to attend as audience members, and even entertainers as famous as Ellington had to enter through the club's rear door rather than the front. The Cotton Club did admit black patrons, eventually – long before integration was routine. It closed in 1940.

"It isn't necessary to mix with colored people if you don't feel like it. You have your own party and keep to yourself. But it's worth seeing. How they step!"
—Jimmy Durante (1893 – 1980), actor and comedian

"There was integration to a certain extent. We were there; the performers could go. Even if whites come to see blacks perform, you still have integration. If you had to depend solely on the attendance of a Negro audience, one hundred per-cent, you'd never make it. I think that we were doing something that had to be done, when we were performing, when we were making it possible for the people to come see us. The Cotton Club wasn't a segregated club, it was a club where you had to be somebody to get in there."
—Cab Calloway (1907 – 1994), African-American band leader, composer and performer

Vocabulary

Charismatic: *adj.* Having a very pleasing personality that draws other people
Disenfranchised: *adj.* Denied the same rights and privileges that other people have; usually applied to a group
Intellectual: *n.* A person who is smart, well-educated and values learning
Renaissance: *n.* A period of time when the arts – visual, written and performing – are pursued with special energy; the changes that occur during a renaissance leave a lasting impact on people for generations to come

Being: The Life of Thomas "Fats" Waller

"Some little people have music in them, but Fats, he was all music, and you know how big he was."
—James P. Johnson (1894 – 1955), jazz pianist and mentor to Waller

"I have written songs with many writers, but I have never found one to equal Fats Waller as an all-around composer of all types of music. Music seemed to flow from his fingertips like water from a fountain."
—Andy Razaf (1895 – 1973), frequent Fats Waller lyricist

FRANK DRIGGS COLLECTION

Thomas "Fats" Waller was born on May 21, 1904, in New York City to Edward and Adeline Waller. The Wallers had 11 children, only five of whom survived to adulthood. As a result, Adeline was fiercely protective of her surviving children and kept a close eye on her tight-knit family. Waller adored his family and his earliest attempts to entertain came from playing with his siblings, and from accompanying his deeply religious parents while they preached on street corners.

When he was about six years old, Waller heard a neighbor playing a piano and found his passion. Although his father wanted him to become a minister, and his mother believed that his older sister Naomi would become the family musician, they allowed him to go with Naomi to her piano lessons. Waller would listen to anyone who played and then carefully try to replicate the tunes. As he grew up, his skills increased, as did his intense love of all music. Waller's cheerful nature made him a favorite in the neighborhood and as he grew taller and gained weight, his friends dubbed him "Fats," a nickname that stuck for life even though his family always called him Thomas. As an adult, Waller was almost six feet tall and weighed around 285 pounds.

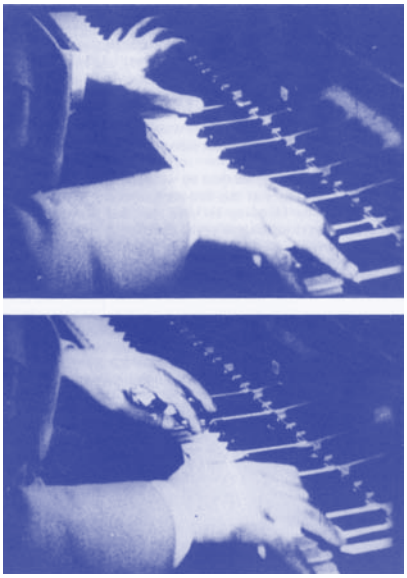
Waller played both the piano and organ in church, and in his early teens, went frequently to the Lincoln movie palace, which had both an enormous pipe organ and a piano. Mazie Mullins, the theatre's pianist, noticed the boy and allowed him to sit with her while she played. Waller quickly picked it up, and Mazie let him take over while she was on break. On Mazie's recommendation, the Lincoln's owner hired Waller to fill in for the regular organists. At age 15, Waller had his first paying job as a professional musician. Waller's father disapproved of his son playing in a movie theatre and even more so of his interest in popular music. Although Edward continued to hope that Waller would go into the ministry or become a classical musician, Adeline recognized that his true love was popular music, and she encouraged him to pursue his dreams. Sadly, Adeline died when Waller was only 16, a loss that would devastate him and prompt him to attempt to build a strong family of his own when he was an adult. Tension increased between Waller and his father as the determined boy did anything he could to learn more about music. Despite being nervous, he obtained an introduction to James P. Johnson (1894 – 1955), the "father of stride piano." Impressed by Waller's talent, Johnson took the youngster under his wing, even allowing him to move in when he was on bad terms with his father, who was furious that he continued to play "music from the devil's workshop." Under Johnson's guidance, Waller's techniques were sharpened and he met the great musicians of Harlem, including Willie "The Lion" Smith, whose appraisal of Waller – "He'll do" – was considered high praise. He continued to study many musicians, from Bach, his favorite classical composer, to his contemporaries, such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie, whom he helped when they were learning stride piano. By the time he was 19, Waller had published his first song and recorded several **piano rolls**. He became a staple on the Harlem nightclub circuit and a radio star.

Waller was a composer of music, and therefore he collaborated with numerous lyricists who supplied the words to his tunes. He also was an accomplished arranger who could take other people's songs and add his own jazzy flavor to turn them into hits. Waller recorded many, many songs, and it was through his records and radio broadcasts that he became famous throughout the world. Waller toured Europe twice, in 1938 and 1939. His concerts were sold-out smashes, although as in the U.S., some critics paid more attention to his wisecracks and forceful personality than to his flawless musicianship. Inspired by a desire to be taken more seriously, Waller composed *London Suite*, a collection of instrumental numbers, while in England.

Back in the U.S., in 1942, he gave a well-received concert at the famed Carnegie Hall in New York, and soon after he performed in the all-black movie musical *Stormy Weather*. Waller continued to be plagued by racism, however. In 1943, even though he was an international star, a hotel in Boston refused to honor his reservation because he was black. Waller died soon after at the young age of 39, but his legacy of hundreds of recordings and varied compositions has enriched generations of musicians and listeners.

Striding Along the Keyboard

Stride piano, which is a type of jazz, is very difficult to play, and few pianists have become true masters of it. When playing the piano, the player uses his/her right hand to pick out the melody, and the left hand plays the bass and the rhythm. In stride, the left hand is more important than in other types of jazz because it is the anchor and focal point. Some musicians describe stride as two separate hands playing against each other in competition rather than one supporting the other. It was probably called stride because the left hand would move a great distance as it played, making it look like it was taking giant steps, or strides, along the keyboard. Due to the fact that stride was so difficult to master, there were not many songs published in the stride technique until the later 1920s, and it was almost impossible for an amateur pianist to play stride without extensive training. The fact that Waller began to teach himself to play stride by listening to piano rolls as a teenager was one of the things that impressed James P. Johnson about him. Waller had very large hands and could reach farther across the keys than other pianists. This allowed him to be very expressive when he played. He was also extremely quick, which is important when playing stride, and had the abilities to focus intently on what he was playing and improvise effortlessly.



ALYN SHIPTON COLLECTION.

Competition and Collaboration: The Building Blocks of Success

James P. Johnson, the father of stride piano, wrote a famous instrumental song called "Carolina Shout," which was so complex that only the finest pianists could play it successfully. It became Johnson's trademark song. The way that young Fats Waller caught Johnson's attention was by playing "Carolina Shout."

"Carolina Shout" and other intricate stride tunes were used by pianists in what were called "cutting contests," during which each player would attempt to outdo the others by playing in difficult keys, adding unique embellishments and playing faster and longer. Because rent in Harlem increased rapidly during the 1920s, residents sometimes would raise money by hosting "rent parties," to which they would charge admission. In addition to selling refreshments, hosts of rent parties supplied entertainment in the form of two or more pianists. The pianists began to use the parties as a way to compete with one another and build their reputations. During a party, the pianists would challenge each other to cutting contests, and as they tried to outdo the other player, each musician would create new tunes and hone his skills. The parties could last all night, with each musician playing for hours.

The musicians in Harlem also fostered collaboration with one another. Not only did they compose songs and shows together, they also helped one another get jobs and introduced their friends to music publishers and recording companies. Collaboration made their music and friendships stronger, and helped them deal with difficult issues like racism. The same tension of collaboration and competition exists in music today, with West Coast and East Coast rappers having modern-day versions of cutting contests by challenging one another in their songs. You've probably seen similar types of competitions between street dancers and poppers, who will execute a move, then challenge the other dancers with them to do something better. Taking turns playing a song or dancing helps everyone to learn and improve.

Competition and collaboration are important parts of many other fields, such as athletics and science. At the 2008 Olympics, athletes from around the world who trained together competed against each other, and it was their friendly rivalries that spurred them on to greater achievements. Scientists often work in a similar atmosphere. Although they sometimes share their research, it is through their drive to be the first to make a discovery that breakthroughs are achieved.

Exercise

Cutting Up in Class

Try having your own cutting contest in class, but use words instead of music. Divide your class into small groups and have someone come up with an idea for a poem. It doesn't have to rhyme or make sense right away, just play around with the words. Have one person write a line, then the next person write one, and switch back and forth. Use the idea the first person came up with and add your own flavor to it with your own words. See if the new ideas take you to a different ending place than you had originally expected. Discuss how each person's ideas and way of phrasing things influenced the final outcome and describe it to the class. Try writing a poem with the whole class. Is it easier or harder to collaborate with a large group? Do you feel more or less competitive this way?

Exercise

Using Your Influence

James P. Johnson was probably the single most influential musician in Fats Waller's life, while his mother Adeline was a major influence in how he treated other people. In turn, Waller influenced many other musicians, inspiring them to do their best work. Think about the people who have influenced you and answer the following questions:

Who has influenced you the most in your life? _____

How specifically has this person influenced you? _____

What was this person's greatest achievement? _____

Whom would you like to influence? A younger sibling? A classmate? Why and how do you hope to influence him/her?

In what specific ways could you be a good influence on someone else?

James P. Johnson, FRANK DRIGGS COLLECTION.

Vocabulary

Piano roll: *n.* A stiff paper scroll with a pattern of holes which, when inserted into a player piano, plays a song; one makes the player piano work by sitting in front of the keyboard and pumping the pedals with one's feet, which pumped air into the mechanism and made the desired keys move – no hands required – based on the positions of the holes in the piano roll.

Exercise

Reading: The Lyrics of "Black and Blue"

On the right are the words to a very popular song composed in 1929 by Fats Waller and Harry Brooks, with lyrics by Andy Razaf. According to music historian Alyn Shipton, "Black and Blue" was "the first high-profile protest song" to deal with the question of race. Read the lyrics and analyze them as if they were a poem, paying special attention to how they make you feel. What do you think the song said about the African-American experience at the time it was written? Is it still relevant today?

Lyrics to "Black and Blue"

Cold empty bed, springs hard as lead
Pains in my head, feel like old Ned
What did I do
To be so black and blue?

No joys for me, no company,
Even the mouse ran from my house
All through my life
I've been so black and blue.
I'm white inside
But that don't help my case.
Cause I can't hide what is on my face

I'm so forlorn, life's just a thorn.
My heart is torn
Why was I born?
What did I do
To be so black and blue?

Improvising: Spreadin' Jazz Around

"Jazz is a good barometer of freedom."
—Duke Ellington (1899 – 1974), African-American composer, band leader and pianist

What exactly distinguishes jazz from other types of music, like gospel, the blues or rock and roll? Although it is difficult to describe in words – you know it when you hear it – jazz depends upon an intricate, peppy beat and **syncopation**. As Langston Hughes explained, syncopation is what makes "listeners want to move, nod heads, clap hands or dance." The important thing to remember about jazz is that it is improvisational in nature. Jazz musicians **improvise** as they play, and the essence of a good jazz tune rarely can be written down. It needs to be heard to be truly appreciated.

The exact origins of jazz music are difficult to pinpoint. The snappy, American-born music largely came from the songs and rhythms brought to America by black slaves, combined with the music they were exposed to in the U.S. They absorbed songs they heard sung by French and Spanish plantation owners, sailors and laborers in New Orleans, Irish reels and tunes of various nationalities all over America. Another important contribution to the evolution of jazz happened when slaves from different parts of Africa and the West Indies (now better known as the Caribbean) met in America and absorbed one another's cultures. The different rhythms and beats that people were hearing led them to explore and create new ones.

One of the new sounds created from this melting pot of cultures was ragtime, a type of piano music popularized by African-American composer Scott Joplin (1868 – 1917), which swept through the country in the late part of the 19th century. Jazz, and particularly stride piano, evolved mostly from ragtime, which also has a very particular beat, although its style is more formal and can be written down, or notated, more easily. Musicians of all races were fascinated by ragtime, and as both professionals and amateurs began to experiment and write their own "rags," new types of music evolved. Musicians who knew ragtime often accompanied blues singers in performances, and by combining the structures of ragtime and the blues, they helped to create jazz. Most of the prominent ragtime and blues musicians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were African-American, and they drew from elements of their history and culture when composing both the music and lyrics of new songs.

The accessibility of early jazz influenced how it was created. Ragtime sheet music was published and amateur musicians could learn how to play the songs. Blues and gospel were heard live at traveling shows and in church. Piano rolls helped amateur musicians learn how to play jazz songs, because they could slow down the rolls and follow the fingering on the piano keyboard. When record albums became popular, it was easy for people around the world to listen to different kinds of music and add the parts they liked to their own songs. The most significant **innovation** was radio, which made listening to music affordable for almost everyone.

An important event that helped to spread jazz and African-American culture throughout the world was World War I (1914 – 1918). When the United States joined the fighting in 1917, many patriotic Americans joined the military. Among the most celebrated was the 369th regiment, composed entirely of black soldiers, the majority of whom were from Harlem. These soldiers, who were not allowed to fight alongside the white soldiers, became known as "The Harlem Hellfighters" due to their courage and skill. The Hellfighters had a regimental band that became internationally famous and helped to ignite the European passion for American jazz. It was Europeans, not Americans, who first took jazz seriously as an art form. There was racism in Europe, but it was not as deep-seated as in America, and the black soldiers and musicians were surprised at how well they were treated. During the 1920s and beyond, entertainers like Josephine Baker (1906 – 1975), who had danced at the Cotton Club, moved to France and became huge stars, while back home in the U.S., blacks were still subjected to segregation and discrimination.

Harlem Hellfighters Band.
NATIONAL ARCHIVE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Most early jazz musicians were men, but many female singers helped to make jazz popular. Early African-American singers included Mamie Smith (1883 – 1946), the first female blues singer to make a record (1920), and Bessie Smith (1895 – 1937), whose soulful voice introduced white audiences to African-American blues songs. An important collaboration between Bessie Smith and James P. Johnson resulted in many popular songs. Female singers became important to the success of big bands, headed by male musicians such as Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington.

Ella Fitzgerald. BROWN BROTHERS

Two of the most influential female jazz artists were Billie Holiday (1915 – 1959) and Ella Fitzgerald (1917 – 1996). Holiday was loved for her emotional renderings of songs. Her 1939 recording of the song "Strange Fruit," which is about lynching, was an important statement about race relations. Fitzgerald, who began her professional singing career at just 17, perfected a type of jazz known as "scat-singing." Because jazz is primarily an instrumental type of music, singers developed scat so that they could jam with the band just like any other instrument. In scat, the singer uses his/her voice as an instrument and improvises wordless melodies with meaningless syllables and sounds (do wah diddy wah wah do diddy, for example). Fitzgerald was renowned for her scat-singing and was able to harmonize with the most talented instrumentalists. The most prolific of the 20th century jazz singers, Fitzgerald sold more than 40 million albums and won 13 Grammy Awards. Holiday and Fitzgerald helped jazz to evolve as an art form because they had "crossover appeal" – that is, they appealed to both black and white audiences and artists. Fitzgerald in particular attracted composers, musicians and producers of all races who wanted to work with her.

Because jazz is such a fluid type of music, it is always evolving and can be transformed by a musician's individual taste and talent. From ragtime and Dixieland, stride and swing, bebop and fusion, jazz has evolved over the decades to incorporate current trends in different music styles. *Ain't Misbehavin'* is an example of the fact that music is constantly evolving and changing. In the 1970s, when Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr. decided to create this musical revue, they added lyrics to some of Waller's instrumental works and modernized the words a bit to some of his other songs. For example, "A Handful of Keys," one of Waller's rollicking instrumental songs, was given lyrics by the producers to help explain what stride piano is.

Work songs, call-and-response chants, church hymns, dance music from dozens of countries – these became the basis for ragtime, jazz and the blues, which transformed into stride, swing, boogie woogie, bebop and rhythm and blues. Rock and roll came along, and eventually so did reggae, hip-hop, fusion jazz and rap. Modern American rap and hip-hop artists have gone on to influence musicians and culture in Africa, the home of the slaves who founded African-American culture. The circle of influence connects everyone.

Exercise

Listening to Jazz

Your teacher will play for you a CD of different jazz songs, some by Waller and some by other composers and performers. Listen very carefully to the songs, to the way the music moves and to the way the instruments sound. Try to pick out each instrument, such as the piano, drums, clarinet and trumpet, and listen to the way they interact with one another. Is there a vocal? How does the singer interact with the other instruments? Discuss what makes the songs unique and different from other types of music. Write down your feelings about the music. Does it make you want to dance? How does it make you feel? Happy? Sad? Does the music make you think of a story or an image? What do you think it would be like to play jazz? Would it be different than playing other types of music? How so?

Vocabulary

Improvise: *v.* To create something in the moment, spontaneously
Innovation: *n.* Something new or different; could be an invention of a new thing, like a car, or a new way of doing something, like popping
Syncopation: n. The placement of rhythmic accents on weak beats or weak portions of the beats

"[Ella Fitzgerald] could use her exquisite, very human voice just like a saxophone, sometimes like a violin, sometimes like a trumpet."
—Quincy Jones (1933-), producer, composer

Exercise

Listening: The Music and Lyrics of "Black and Blue"

Listen carefully to the 1978 original Broadway cast recording of "Black and Blue" from the musical *Ain't Misbehavin'* and answer the following questions:

Does the song sound like you thought it would?

How is it different or similar to what you imagined?

How does the music make you feel about the lyrics?

Exercise

"If you got to ask, you ain't got it!" —Fats Waller

Think about the types of music you enjoy and how they differ from or are similar to jazz.

What is your favorite song and who wrote it?

What style of music is it? Jazz? Rock and roll? Emo? Rap? Country?

What is the song about? Is there a theme common to many of this artist's songs?

What about the song appeals to you? Is it the way the music is played? The singer? The lyrics? Why?

If your song is not a jazz song, how do you think it would sound if it were played in a jazz style? How would it be different?

What do you think were the musical influences on the composer of your song? For example, Waller loved Bach and studied under James P. Johnson. Whom does your composer admire and why?

How does your composer influence you? If you got the chance to meet him/her what would you like to tell him/her?

Write some song lyrics influenced by your composer – what do you want to say and how will you say it?

Evolving: Art Celebrates and Reflects Life

Note on Commercial Theatre by Langston Hughes

You've taken my blues and gone—
You sing 'em on Broadway
And you sing 'em in Hollywood Bowl,
And you mixed 'em up with symphonies
And you fixed 'em
So they don't sound like me.
Yep, you done taken my blues and gone.

You also took my spirituals and gone.
You put me in *Macbeth* and *Carmen Jones*
And all kinds of *Swing Mikados*
And in everything but what's about me—
But someday somebody'll
Stand up and talk about me,
And write about me—
Black and beautiful—
And sing about me,
And put on plays about me!
I reckon it'll be
Me myself!

Yes, it'll be me.

Duke Ellington and his orchestra. BROWN BROTHERS

"I think what I hope to symbolize and demonstrate is the important role that arts and literature can play in this moment when the country is thinking so keenly about moving forward and coming together."
—Poet Elizabeth Alexander (1962-), on writing and reciting the poem "Praise Song for the Day" to celebrate the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama

Art connects us with the artist and each other, makes us feel and think and helps us to grow as individuals and as a community. Just as a song like "Black and Blue" helps us confront our feelings about racism, all kinds of visual and performing arts express dreams, fears and truths that might be ignored or silenced if addressed more directly. For example, if, in the early 1930s, Fats Waller had said to a mostly white audience, "Hey, I don't see why I should be treated so unfairly just because I was born with black skin," he might have been booed off the stage. Because he could use his talents to express himself in song, "Black and Blue" got across his message in a way that was more acceptable and accessible to a wider audience.

Ain't Misbehavin' was created at an anxious time in American history. By listening to the music of Fats Waller, people of that era could experience the carefree joy of stride piano and jazz, but also listen to expressions of concern about racism and financial difficulties. It reminded people that Americans of all races had faced tough times before and pulled through by using their creativity and determination. This is true now, too, in 2009, when people are again facing tough times.

During the campaign and election of Barack Obama to the U.S. presidency, Los Angeles artist Shepard Fairey created the now-famous "hope" portrait of Obama. The red, white and blue portrait of a thoughtful Obama became a symbol of the campaign. Various composers have written songs about Obama and his impact on them, including popular hip-hop artist will.i.am. His song "It's a New Day," written the day of the 2008 election, celebrates many leaders in African-American history. The song is a personal statement about will.i.am's joy at the election of an African-American president, yet its optimism is something that everyone, regardless of their political affiliation or race, can relate to.

As they create art, musicians, writers, painters and performers remind us how important it is for each of us to express our own points of view. We all have something unique to contribute, and our creations can appeal to other people and inspire them to express their own feelings. Art expands horizons, allowing people to share their joy of performing (like Fats Waller's songs did for him), their worries about racism (like many of Langston Hughes' poems) and their hopes for a better future (like the poetry of Elizabeth Alexander). The passion of an artist is his/her greatest gift and most important tool, and the legacy of someone like Fats Waller shows us that no matter what your circumstances, you can use your passion to make the world a better place.

Exercise

Performing: "Black and Blue" All Over

Now that you have seen *Ain't Misbehavin'*, you should have a feel for what jazz sounds like and how it impacts the way a song is perceived. Think again about "Black and Blue," which was the last song before the finale and was sung by the entire company.

How did you feel while the song was being performed in the theatre? _____

Do you think the costumes, choreography and performances were right for the song? _____

Did seeing it performed change your perceptions of the song, as opposed to reading it or listening to it? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Are there any modern singers/musicians you would like to see perform "Black and Blue"? Who, and why do you think that artist would be a good choice?

Exercise

Your Turn

Create a musical revue using favorite songs, poems and original works of your own. First you'll need a theme. Think about what's important to you and what you'd like to express to the world. It could be something personal – about who you are and where you fit – or it could global – about the environment, war or immigration, for example. You might devise a tribute to your mentor or advice for your little brother. Next you'll need to pick material that expresses your point of view and place it in a sensible order. Think about the order of the songs in *Ain't Misbehavin'* and try to vary the tempo and type of your materials too.

Theme: _____

Songs, poems, etc:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Create a playlist, video or CD of your revue. Play it for the class and discuss your theme and what you wanted to express. Did your song selections have the desired effect? Did some songs mean very different things to different people? What was it about certain songs that impacted everyone the same way?

Art by Shepard Fairey.

"Barack Obama represents a profound moral breakthrough in history as well as in human attitudes in America. He is proof that what seemed almost unthinkable yesterday is now possible."

—Elie Wiesel (1928-), Holocaust survivor, author, humanitarian

"What I think is that the African-American community is much more familiar with some of the darker aspects of American life and American history. I think that they understand America much less as a marching band playing John Philip Sousa. They understand America much more as a jazz composition with blue notes."

—Barack Obama (1961-), President of the United States, in a 2008 interview about race relations in America

Books:

Harlem Stomp! by Laban Carrick Hill (Little, Brown and Company, 2003)
A cultural history of the Harlem Renaissance, packed with photos and illustrations

Defining Moments: The Harlem Renaissance by Kevin Hillstrom (Omnigraphics, 2008)
Another overview of one of the most important periods in American history, with biographies of notable individuals

The First Book of Jazz by Langston Hughes (The Ecco Press, 1955)
An introductory guide to jazz history and musicians

Fats Waller by Maurice Waller and Anthony Calabrese (Schirmer Books, 1977)
An affectionate biography of the jazz master, co-written by his second son

Up Close: Ella Fitzgerald by Tanya Lee Stone (Viking, 2008)
A biography of the most successful female jazz singer ever

Film:

Stormy Weather directed by Andrew Stone (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1943)
An all-black cast stars in this musical from Hollywood's "Golden Age." Featured are performances by Fats Waller, Lena Horne, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Cab Calloway and the Nicholas Brothers.

It's Black Entertainment! directed by Stan Lathan (Showtime Entertainment, 2000)
A celebration of contributions to the arts by African-American performers, with commentaries by contemporary stars

Websites:

http://newarkwww.rutgers.edu/ijs/fw/fatsmain.htm
The online exhibit "Fats Waller Forever" in the series of Jazz Greats Digital Exhibits from the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University

www.ellafitzgeraldfoundation.org/
This site supports the charitable foundation established by Ella Fitzgerald and offers biographical information about her, as well as personal stories about her from her friends.

www.jazzandblues.org
Radio station KJAZZ 88.1 FM from Cal State, Long Beach

www.smithsonianjazz.org/jam/jam_start.asp
Information about Jazz Appreciation Month (JAM) in April; celebrate with great music!

www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99464506
will.i.am talks about being inspired by Barack Obama.

www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/20545
Elizabeth Alexander's poem "Praise Song for the Day"

Recordings:

The Very Best of Fats Waller (Collector's Choice Music CD, Released 2000)
Twenty-four songs representing an overview of Waller's career, with both instrumental and vocal selections

Gold by Ella Fitzgerald (Verve CD, Released 2007) A two-disc set featuring many of Fitzgerald's greatest hits

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