Rare collection

possible to glean the subtle, unruly, and almost mystical concept of the jazz spirit, or feeling, or thinking—it is all these things and is so understood by the jazz musician himself. The jazzman has his own way of getting at the center of his music, and thus he formulates his own musical language. Also he converts the musical language into a verbal dialect of his own. In his own set of terms, musical and verbal, he thinks, he feels; he rehearses, he performs; he scores, he improvises; he gets a beat.

To get that elusive beat, a jazzman will do anything. Without it, he cannot do anything. With it, he is playing jazz, and that is a large and satisfying enough accomplishment. When a jazzman picks up a familiar tune, banal or too well-known through much repetition, and alters its rhythmic pattern in favor of a steady if sometimes monotonous beat, and varies its melodies and maybe even changes its chords, he is working freely, easily, and with as much spontaneity as he can bring to his music. That freedom, ease, and spontaneity brought him to jazz; within those determining limits he will find a place for himself or get out, or join one of the bands whose frightening periods of jazz are so often more popular than the real thing. It is by his formal understanding of certain definite values that the jazz musician has conceived, organized, and developed his art. It has been hot; it has become cool. It has jumped and swung; it has sauntered. It has borrowed; it has originated. It has effected a change, a literal transformation; inherited conventions have gradually been restated, reorganized, and ultimately restructured as a new expression. It may be that jazz musicians have simply rediscovered a controlling factor in music, the improvising performer. Without any awareness of what he has done, the jazzman may have gone back to some of the beginnings of music, tapping once more the creative roots which nourished ancient Greek music, the plain chant, the musical baroque and its immediate successors and predecessors. We know that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers were improvisers and that when they brought their scores to other musicians they left the interpretation of parts to the

discretion of the performers, even as an arranger for a jazz band does today.

But the jazz musician has brought more than procedures, composing conceptions, and improvisation to his music. Techniques have been developed that have broadened the resources and intensified the disciplines of certain instruments far beyond their use in other music. Colors have been added to solo instruments and to various combinations and numbers of instruments that are utterly unlike any others in music. New textures have emerged from a conception of tonality and of pitch that is not original but is entirely fresh in its application. The improvising jazz musician has a different and more responsible and rewarding position from that of his counterparts in earlier art and folk music. The rhythmic base of music has been reinterpreted, making the central pulse at once more primitive than it has been before in Western music, and more sophisticated in its variety.

This, then, is how one might define jazz: it is a new music of a certain distinct rhythmic and melodic character, one that constantly involves improvisation—of a minor sort in adjusting accents and phrases of the tune at hand, of a major sort in creating music extemporaneously, on the spot. In the course of creating jazz, a melody or its underlying chords may be altered. The rhythmic valuations of notes may be lengthened or shortened according to a regular scheme, syncopated or not, or there may be no consistent pattern of rhythmic variations so long as a steady beat remains implicit or explicit. The beat is usually four quarter-notes to the bar, serving as a solid rhythmic base for the improvisation of soloists or groups plying eight or twelve measures, or some multiple or dividend thereof.

These things are the means. The ends are the ends of all art, the expression of the universal and the particular, the specific and the indirect and the intangible. In its short history, jazz has generally been restricted to short forms and it has often been directed toward the ephemeral and the trivial, but so too has it looked toward the lasting perception and the meaningful conclusion. Much of the time jazz musicians have sought and obtained an unashamed aphrodisiac effect; they have also worshiped in their music, variously devout before the one God and the unnamed gods. Like poets and painters, they are of all faiths, their doctrines are many; but they are united in one conviction, that they have found a creative form for themselves, for their time, for their place.

At the opening of the *Gradus ad Parnassum*, the dialogue offered as a study of counterpoint by Johann Josef Fux in 1725, the music master Aloysius warns the student Josef: "You must try to remember whether or not you felt a strong natural inclination to this art even in childhood." The student answers: "Yes, most deeply. Even before I could reason, I was overcome by the force of this strange enthusiasm and I turned all my thoughts and feelings to music. And now the burning desire to understand it possesses me, drives me almost against my will, and day and night lovely melodies seem to sound around me. Therefore I think I no longer have reason to doubt my inclination. Nor do the difficulties of the work discourage me, and I hope that with the help of good health I shall be able to master it." Several jazz musicians have read Fux, even as Haydn and Beethoven did, though perhaps with less immediate application. They have, however, echoed the pupil's "strange enthusiasm;" that, these jazzmen said, was their experience, their "burning desire." Following the "inclination," jazz musicians have not had much of the help of good health; some of them have flaunted their doggedly unreasonable living habits and suffered the personal and public consequences of the habits and of the flaunting. All this their music has reflected, and sometimes it is noisy and grotesque as a result. More often it has a fullness and richness of expression. Slowly, clearly, the music is maturing, and, for it and with it and by it, so are the musicians.

Chapter 2

ANCESTORS

According to legend, the beat which is at the center of jazz, as well as a fringe of decorative melody, came over to the Americas from West Africa in the slave ships. This tradition holds that the American Negro shaped jazz by imposing a heavy layer of his native jungle chants and rhythms upon the European materials he found in the land of enforced adoption. For some years now a crew of industrious anthropologists and social scientists has been hard at work trying to make this story stick. It is a seemingly impressive story, buttressed with footnotes, interlarded with quotations from German authorities, generously sprinkled with the commonplaces of academic pretension; it confirms the average man's impression of the Negro as a jungle-formed primitive whose basic expression is inevitably savage; it sits well with the editors and readers of the country's chi-chi magazines, where this conception of jazz finds high favor. From the point of view of jazz musicians themselves, however, the theory distorts the facts out of all resemblance to the true history of the music that has been played as jazz, by jazzmen, since the end of the nineteenth century. Whatever its merits as myth, it doesn't fit with the facts of the music itself. It won't do.

The impetus for this interpretation, it seems to me, lies within the musical tastes of the men who make it. In the case of some writers, a devotion to the music of Jelly Roll Morton, Baby Dodds, Jimmy Yancey, George Lewis,

and their singing and playing contemporaries, clearly informs the detailing of jazz history. But is this kind of writing purely informative, or is it prejudiced, based on personal taste? In the case of anthropologists like Melville J. Herskovits, the highly placed and indefatigable chief spokesman for this line of inquiry, a professional interest in Negro culture governs the approach to jazz. In addition, that taste for an appreciation of the *rècherche*, the remote, which is the inevitable development of a specialized knowledge—in this instance, the specialized knowledge of African music—has been the spur to some questionable activity in the field of jazz history, and to some curious, unmusical identifications in jazz performance. It is vital in understanding the issue to realize the part that the cultural anthropologist plays in our academic life. Coupling his resources with the genuine discoveries of the clinical psychiatrist and the less certain speculations of the amateur psychoanalyst, the cultural anthropologist has made vast attacks upon his own world as well as on the surviving remnants of antecedent societies. One of the results is the concept of an African music lodged in the *unconscious* of American Negroes. "It must be emphasized," Rudi Blesh writes in *Shining Trumpets*, "that Dodds has no first-hand knowledge of African drumming and music. He thinks of himself, on the contrary, as a 'modern' jazz-drummer and evolves all of his effects directly from the unconscious." Much of Herskovits's argument in his book, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, offers eloquent testimony to the stubborn strength and beautiful variety of African culture (however consciously or unconsciously induced), of which the Negro anywhere, as direct inheritor, and the rest of us, as subsidiary heirs, may very well be proud.

Certainly the African background of the first jazz musicians played some part in their music. But one must remember that they were at a considerable remove from "the Dark Continent." The music they fashioned in New Orleans, where jazz began, was an elaborate compound of many folk strains, few of them bearing more than an

echo, a distant one, of Africa. In André Gide's 1927 and 1928 journals, *Travels in the Congo*, one may find a very exciting and surely reliable description of African music as it sounds to the Western ear—in this case an unusually sensitive ear, one trained to a point of high amateur proficiency in music. The jazz Africanists offer him as an exhibit; I should like to do so also.

Gide describes a dance performed by the race of the Massas. He is very impressed by the natives of this country. He finds them "robust, agile, and slender." Watching them dance, he finds that they have nothing in common "with the slow, gloomy circling in which certain colonials pretend to see an imitation of sexual acts, and which, according to them, always ends in an orgy." Nonetheless, the dance, as he describes it, ends in a kind of intensely animated trance:

> In the moonlight it ceased to be lyrical, and became frenzied—demoniac. Some of the women looked possessed. One old woman executed a solo in a corner by herself. She went on like a lunatic, waving her arms and legs in time to the tom-tom, joined the circle for a moment, and then, suddenly giving way to frenzy, went off again to a solitary place, fell down, and went on dancing on her knees. A very young girl almost at the same moment left the circle, like a stone shot from a sling, made three leaps backwards, and rolled in the dust like a sack. I expected spasms and hysterics; but no, she lay a lifeless mass, over which I bent, wondering whether her heart was still beating, for she gave not a sign of breath. A little circle formed around her; two old men bent down and made passes over her, shouting out I know not what strange appeals—to which she made no answer. But the tom-tom seemed to wake her; she dragged herself along, forced herself to dance, and fell down again for the last time on her side, her arms stretched out, her legs half bent, in an exquisite pose—and nothing succeeded in stirring her from it.

This is not the kind of dancing that is done to jazz; whatever frenzy has been present in jazz dancing is much closer to sexual orgy than the African trance. Likewise

the music that Gide describes is vaguely related to jazz, but is by no means the same thing; it has only a general resemblance to many different kinds of primitive music, European as well as American. So, too, the intensity that leads to trance resembles a whole variety of frenzied folk dancing in Western culture—the Italian tarantella, flamenco dances in Spain, the czardas in Hungary, and a whole set of Russian peasant and Cossack dances. Africans have no monopoly on religious ecstasy or secular joy manifested rhythmically. This is not to deny the vitality and beauty of their culture, but rather to give it its own place in the pantheon of Western culture.

Gide attempted to transcribe some of the music of the Massas; the next day, reflecting on his transcription, he had doubts and summed up one of his impressions of African music:

> In thinking it over last night, it seems to me that I transcribed yesterday's tune wrongly and that the intervals are greater than our tones, so that between C and the dominant below there is only one note. It may seem monstrous that I should not be certain of it. But imagine this tune yelled by a hundred persons, not one of whom sings the exact note. It is like trying to distinguish the main line among quantities of little strokes. The effect is prodigious and gives a polyphone impression of harmonic richness. The same need makes them put beads on the wires of their little "pianos"—a horror of the clean sound—a need to confuse and drown its contours.

Superficially, this might appear to be consonant with descriptions of jazz and the experience of listening to it. But there is never anything in jazz, not even at its most primitive, that suggests a tune yelled by a hundred persons; whatever delicacies of pitch and liberities of intonation, there is never a chaotic cacophony such as Gide describes, in which not one of the hundred or so persons sings an exact note. In the same way, the description of beaded piano-wires suggests jazz honky-tonk piano; but the honky-tonk piano was the result of the poor equipment

of brothels and barrelhouses, not of a "need to confuse and drown . . . contours."

A comparative analysis of African and American music does not yield clear parallels. For one thing, jazz is a measured music, the structure of which depends upon fixed beats, occuring in rhythmic patterns as unmistakable and immediately identifiable as the pulse of a metronome. African drumming, submitted to the most painstaking of auditions, simply does not break down into a structured rhythmic music; there are shifts of time and points and counterpoints of rhythm that make accurate notation impossible. As for the melodic qualities and quantities of African music, these too are shaped by a tonal and rhythmic conception entirely outside the Western diatonic tradition. To speak of the blue notes—the flattened third and seventh—as they are inflected against their natural position within a fixed key, or the alterations of pitch of jazz singers or instrumentalists, or their swooping glissandos, as American developments of African music is to talk unlettered nonsense. The basic chordal and melodic and rhythmic structure of the blues and of the jazz that has developed out of the blues is firmly within the orbit of Western folk music. There is far more of the sound of jazz in Middle-European gypsy fiddling than there is in a corps of African drummers.

One cannot and one should not, in the heat of a forensic rage, dismiss the real contribution of African Negroes, whether of the first or third or fifth American generation, upon the music they found around them. One must understand, however, using one's own tutored listening, that the music they found was basic to the music they made. One must know something of the music of the English and Scottish settlers in the Atlantic states in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the Irish and German in the nineteenth, of the French who preceded the Negroes to the Louisiana Territory. All this music, some of it stately and consciously composed according to the dancing customs of the aristocracy, some of it expressing acceptance of class position and some expressing protest, was compounded of a mixture of cultures.

A detailed summary of sources indicates again and again the breadth, the depth, and the grandeur of the ancestry of jazz. One can no more neglect the Protestant hymn tune than the Morris dance, no more underestimate the effect of the spiritual on dozens of vaudeville circuits around the United States than the vestiges of African ceremonial in Congo Square, New Orleans. These evidences, gleaned from listening to the music, make clear that New Orleans was the ineluctable starting-point for a story that is orderly for all its academic confusion, American because of its polyglot origins and development—A tapestry of impressions and expressions that becomes the richly textured history of jazz.

The long reach in time and space of the African slave trade was the first factor in that history. It started in 1442, as best we can assign a date, when the Portuguese voyager Antam Gonsalvez brought ten Africans to Lisbon to save their souls. The trade was reinforced by Columbus a half-century later when he dispatched five hundred Indians from Central America to Spain, suggesting they be sold in the markets of Seville. Voyagers, travelers, admirals, and pirates all supported the trade, helped it expand, made it a vital part of European social and industrial life for three and a half centuries. Both Queen Elizabeth and her Spanish opponent, Philip II, invested in it; the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and Bonnie Prince Charlie added to their riches by means of it. Sir Francis Drake and John Paul Jones, the naval vessels of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland carried cargoes of tightly packed black men, women, and children to be sold as slaves. In 1807 the slave trade was legally prohibited in England and the United States. The Danes had outlawed it in 1802; the Swedes followed suit in 1813, the Dutch in 1814, France under Napoleon in 1815, the Spanish in 1820. But an outlaw trade replaced officially sanctioned commerce in Negroes: Western seas still were the graves of hundreds of slaves who died en route to the Americas; high prices

were still being paid for able hands—$1100 in New Orleans markets, $350 in Cuba, where smugglers had made them plentiful, $25 to $50 worth of rum or gunpowder or cloth on the Guinea coast.

The slaves brought their African melodies and tom-tom beats on the bottoms of tubs and tin kettles. The Puritans brought their emasculated versions of the Italian, Dutch, and English madrigals. During the Civil War in England the Puritans had destroyed organs, in order to remove these Romish traces from the churches and yet prevent taverns from using them for profane purposes. But concerts remained popular under the aegis of Oliver Cromwell himself, and psalm-singing was indulged in with an intensity that approached indecency. In the New England towns of the Puritans church organs were again banned; they were "the devil's bag-pipes." In Plymouth congregations were without musical instruments save the deacon's pitch-pipe, and psalms were sung from memory. Children's noisy contributions to psalmody were silenced with birch rods, but neither statute, religious proscription nor physical punishment could cramp the creative musical spirit. And other assaults on the ascetic service were forthcoming: trumpets and drums were introduced into churches to serve the function of bells, and the jew's-harp was a popular instrument even in church.

In eighteenth-century Boston and Salem, and in similar cities and settlements, the minuet was the music of dancing assemblies and festooned balls. Cotillions were danced to English country tunes. Lower down in the class structure, fancy and fatiguing fiddling accompanied dancing at weddings and in taverns. There were jigs from Ireland and reels from Scotland and a merriness that often went the whole night through. In New York there were long rows of houses of entertainment of all kinds on the Bowery and an ease of musical conscience too, since Dutch Calvinism had made its peace with the things of this world. In Philadelphia the worldly found their weal in the suburbs, where Quaker restrictions did not hold so strongly. In Charleston the Huguenots enacted strict Sunday blue

laws, but dancing and singing remained integral parts of daily life in town and country, at private balls and public taverns, as they also did in Maryland and Virginia and Georgia.

The organ was brought back into church in 1700 in Port Royal, Virginia, and at about that time at the Swedish Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia; in 1713 an organ was installed in the Anglican King's Chapel in Boston. There were able and successful choirs in the mid-eighteenth century in New York (Trinity) and in the Moravian settlement at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (the College of Music). In Charleston too there was a St. Cecilia Society after 1762, which organized an orchestra and sponsored indoor and open-air concerts, and Carolinians saw the first opera performed in the colonies, the English poet laureate Colley Cibber's *Flora, or Hob-in-the-Well*. In Philadelphia Francis Hopkinson, who signed the Declaration of Independence, represented New Jersey in the Continental Congress, and as chairman of the Navy Board probably designed the American flag, became the first known native American composer. His lovely song, "My Days Have Been So Wonderous Free," was a hit in 1759. And two years later Newark-born James Lyon collected psalm tunes for the Presbyterian church of which he was a clergyman, and added some of his own composition. That collection, named *Urania* after the heavenly Venus and muse of astronomy, established Lyon as the second American composer. In all the thirteen colonies part-singing and harpsichord playing were growing in popularity.

A secular spirit joined to patriotism emerged in the new music. "Yankee Doodle," originally a French-and-Indian-War song probably designed as a British gibe at the shabby American soldier, underwent countless variations after it was proudly appropriated by the Revolutionists. In 1778 Francis Hopkinson wrote "The Battle of the Kegs," a satirical song based on an incident in Philadelphia during the Revolution, and there were innumerable songs dealing with the more serious battles, the Boston

Tea Party, and the Revolutionary heroes. After the w
patriotic songs signalized the emotional and intellect
realization of sovereignty. "Hail, Columbia," by Fran
Hopkinson's son Joseph, was written in 1798 to appe
both political factions in the first presidential adminis
tion ("Firm united let us be, Rallying around our L
erty"). "The Star-Spangled Banner," written during
War of 1812 by Francis Scott Key while he was detai
on a British frigate during the night bombardment
Baltimore's Fort McHenry, was inspired by the resista
of the American garrison and the sight of the flag s
unfurled and waving at dawn. "America" ("My Count
'Tis of Thee") was written in 1831 by Samuel Fran
Smith to a tune he had found in a German music bo
—he was unaware that the British had used it for "G
Save the King."

While many art songs have exactly the same characte
istics and similar word-of-mouth histories, it is chiefly
popular song, almost by definition, which endures throu
its quick adoption by the musically illiterate who form
bulk of singing populations. The English ballads we
quickly naturalized in Virginia and neighboring stat
Moving through the Southern mountains, retaining
energetic rhythmic motion, a touching variety of emoti
and sprightly Elizabethan diction, the ballads beca
other things—the blues, spirituals, hillbilly songs. The b
lads "Barbara Allen" and "Chevy Chase" were variou
adopted and adapted, changed, chastened, or made riba
as basic strains in a folk tradition must be. In the sa
way, "Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" moved in
the colonies and stayed with us until it received ultima
canonization as a jazz song, a base for improvisation.

"Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre" is an example of e
port and import trade in music: the tale of this Fren
nursery-song hero goes back to the Middle Ages, can
found in the *chansons de geste,* the verse romances bas
on the deeds of Charlemagne and his paladins, compos
from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and sung
cloisters, châteaux, and marketplaces. In England, M

ouk's tune, which also has medieval antecedents, was
upled with such familiar sets of lyrics as "For he's a
y good fellow" and "We won't go home until morn-
," which in turn became attractive to Americans. In
United States one of the best known of many, many
sions is that hurled about by the voices of Rotary and
wanis members, "The bear went over the mountain"—
d needless to say the tune also filtered through a gen-
ation or more of jazz.

In American cities of the early nineteenth century the
ngs were chiefly those fashioned abroad. Dr. Thomas
ne, from whose masque *Alfred* comes the melody of
ule, Britannia," wrote many songs, some operas and
torios (his famous patriotic song made him the butt
Richard Wagner's comment that the whole English
aracter can be expressed in eight notes). In America, as
England, his songs were among the most popular in
decades immediately following his death in 1778—
th his most pallid ballads and his attractive settings of
akespeare lyrics ("Under the greenwood tree," "Blow,
ow, thou winter wind," etc.). "Auld Lang Syne" was
e of many Scottish songs to become popular, along
th "The Bluebells of Scotland," from which hundreds
piano and violin students suffered. From Ireland came
homas Moore's "The Last Rose of Summer"—which
s been fading annually since 1813, but not in popu-
rity—and also his "The Minstrel Boy" and "The Harp
at Once Thro' Tara's Halls," another student "piece"
invidious association. "Silent Night," written for Christ-
s Eve, 1818, in the Austrian village of Arnsdorf by
anz Gruber and Joseph Mohr, was a great seasonal
vorite. The American John Howard Payne's words
d the Englishman Sir Henry Bishop's music made
Home, Sweet Home" an immediate hit, and it, like many
nother popular song in this period, was interpolated in
peras, such as *The Barber of Seville,* where it was sung
the lesson scene. Carl Maria von Weber's "Invitation
the Dance" was a great favorite in the 1820s and sur-
ved long enough in popular affection to appear as Benny

Goodman's theme song, "Let's Dance," in 1935. "The Old Oaken Bucket," written by an American poet and set to a Scottish tune, and "John Peel" ("D'ye ken John Peel?"), over from England, moved from the family parlor to the glee club, where both have long remained.

In the hills and mountains, down on the farm and up on the river, another transformation was taking place, an unconscious naturalization of the European musical inheritance that led to the blues and jazz. In the Southern Appalachians they were singing:

> Blow your horn and call your dog,
> Blow your horn and call your dog,
> We'll go to the back woods and catch a ground hog.
> Rang tang fiddle de day.

In the Southern Highlands they were singing "Frankie and Albert" ("She killed her man, who wouldn't treat her right"); this was to become "Frankie and Johnnie," and later one of Duke Ellington's most persuasive sets of variations on the blues. In Mississippi they were singing a song of hard times:

> Come listen a while, I'll sing you a song
> Concerning the times—it will not be long—
> When everybody is striving to buy
> And cheating each other, I cannot tell why.
> And it's hard, hard times.

There were tales of God and tales of man, tales of lovers who were knotted and more who were not. The themes were clear, the music was all around, to be imitated and absorbed and changed by a new poet, a new singer, the American Negro.

Chapter 3

THE NEGRO SYNTHESIS

Whether slave or free man, the Negro in the nineteenth century was thought of as a child, happy on his feet, facing misery with a joyful chant, a Little Black Sambo whose major interest was in pancakes, not panaceas. But the Negro back in the hills and on the plantations was flashing his music with his own aches and pains, his own unhappiness and his few moments of jubilation, compounded of sensual ecstasy and occasional religious exaltation. First came the work song—not the spiritual, not the joyous song.

The Negro didn't respond to the backbreaking labor of slavery with a jubilant shout. Such music as he created in the cotton fields and in the warehouses and on the levees was at the command of his masters. As Duke Ellington put it, in looking back over the history of the music of which he is such a distinguished representative, "At this point we encounter a myth which must be exploded. Fearful of the silence of these groups of blacks, their masters commanded them to raise their voices in song, so that all opportunity for discontented reflection or plans for retaliation and salvation would be eliminated." The best surviving examples of the work song are not from the plantations but from railroad workers and men in the levee camps and most pitiful of all, the chain gangs. There are hollers of the kind that Huddie Ledbetter (Leadbelly) brought into the night club and the concert hall, such as the "Steel Laying Holler"—"Aw right,

aw right. Ev'rybody get ready. Come on down here, come on boys. Bow down. Aw right, up high, aw right. Thow'ay" There are chants of tie-shuffling and tie-tamping; there are brief epics of wrecks, and of enormous distances encompassed by railroads taking the workers far from home.

From the levee camps came the shack bully holler and the holler of the levee camp—"Cap'n, cap'n, you mus' be cross; six 'clock in hell 'fo' you knock off." In the levee camp too there was talk of getting into town, where a measure of barroom joy and main-street hell-raising was afforded the emancipated Negro after the Civil War. Many of the songs of the seventies and eighties celebrated the good times in town. On the plantation, lyric characterization was given the plant enemy, the boll weevil—"The boll weevil is a little bug f'um Mexico, dey say; he come to try dis Texas soil and thought he'd better stay, a-lookin' for a home, just a lookin' for a home." Later there were songs about the prodigious exploits of Negroes, some of which became the legend of John Henry. There were plaints about the difficulties of Negro life. There were celebrations of animals like the ground-hog and the horse; there were celebrations of drinking exploits, of sexual conquests, and of the interrelation of the two when love came to be like whisky. Simile and metaphor were drawn from the things the Negro saw and heard. All these in later evolutions became the natural material of blues lyrics.

Along with the secular songs grew the Negro spiritual. The more kindly slave masters and overseers, feeling perhaps in some way responsible for the plight of their blacks charges, and themselves of a religious nature, taught the Bible to the oldest and wisest of their slaves. As they had done with the facts of plantation and levee and chain gang life, these slaves, as Duke Ellington says, "studied the Book of Wisdom and set to music words of comfort and hope, which year after year were handed down to their colored brethren." But the setting to music of the Word of God, however fresh the setting may have been

to the Negro doing it, was not always to tunes of his own devising. The long line of music which had developed in America from the days of the Puritans was the Negro's inheritance; he reached unconsciously into the treasure of the white man's music. And while the Negro was building his religious music, so was the white man. A comparison of the so-called white spirituals and the so-called Negro spirituals shows enormous exchanges of melody, rhythm, and lyric. Early in the twentieth century Cecil Sharp, in his collection of some five hundred songs of the Southern Appalachians, demonstrated the broad content of American folk songs and the depth of their British ancestry. But later G. P. Jackson in three books, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1933), *Spiritual Folksongs of Early America* (1937), and *White and Negro Spirituals* (1943), showed the equally large part played by America's own makers—Negro and white—poets, musicians, protesters, accepters, singers of life. In Jackson's books the borrowings of the Negro are made clear; but so too is the extent of his transformation of white materials, and of his own distinctive creations. Especially during and after the Civil War did the Negro fashion a music of his own. Pressed into Southern armies, Negroes had much to worry and complain about and to narrate in their songs. The triangle, famous in the drama and the novel, became a dominant concern: like his master, the Negro often left a wife or a sweetheart at home; like his master, the Negro often lost his wife or sweetheart to another man—here was the material of song. And then there was coming home, a feeling as full, as plagued by doubts, alternately as joyous and grievous as all the other homecomings stretching back to Ulysses.

While the Negro was fashioning his own music, the white man was looking on; and as the Negro had borrowed from him, he borrowed in turn from the Negro. Our first record of the white man's awareness of the Negro's music appears late in the eighteenth century. Letters describe Negroes playing their fiddles in Maryland taverns or strumming their banjos, made of flat gourds

and strung with horsehair, before their cabins. The homemade instruments of the Negro are described in some detail, the tambo, bones, quills, fife, triangle; and so are the Negro rowing songs, among them the few real African strains found in America, most of them transformed into the dialect and diction of Creole, the French-Spanish patois to which Louisiana Negroes added some African inflections. In 1795 a young man named Gottlieb Graupner came to America. He arrived in Charleston from Hanover, Germany, listened to banjo music and Negro songs, and learned. In 1799, donning blackface, he introduced himself as "The Gay Negro Boy" in an interlude between acts at the Federal Street Theatre in Boston. This was the beginning of Negro minstrels and minstrelsy. Though Graupner left his burnt cork behind in 1810 when he organized the Boston Philharmonic Society as a kind of reaction against the "fuguing" tunes of William Billings, which suggested jazz syncopation more than they did classical music, minstrelsy had made a beginning and it was here to stay for quite a while.

Thomas "Jim Crow" Rice, a white man with a sensitive ear, heard an old Negro hostler singing one of the horse songs of his people in a stableyard one day in the early 1830s. From this Negro's repeated refrain, Rice's nickname and a whole tradition arose:

> Wheel about, turn about,
> Do jis' so,
> An 'ebery time I wheel about,
> I jump Jim Crow.

Rice used the song and its refrain as a kind of interlude in *The Rifle*, a play about backwoodsmen. It was immediately successful and was changed from interlude to afterpiece, and other Negro melodies and dances were threaded through the play. In blackface, Rice made popular "The Long-Tailed Blue," a ballad narrating the story of the wearer of the coat, a story of trials and tribulations. Later he added happier variations on the

coat theme. To the hostler's song, with all its lyric broidery, and "The Long-Tailed Blue," Rice added studies of a variety of Negroes—the dandy, the plantation worker, the flatboat man, and the singer. He took his program to London, where he was a huge success. In 1842 the development of the Negro character was still further expanded when Dan Emmett, an Irish backwoodsman with a face that was almost a caricature of the stock Yankee, gathered three other Yankees to play the fiddle, the tambo, the bones, and the banjo, made end men and interlocutors of them and dressed them all up in that long-tailed blue. The full-sized minstrel show was born. To group singing was added a walk-around by the chorus—the minstrel-show equivalent of the Greek choral ode—and some of the rhythms of the Negro spiritual and, later, of the blues began to make their ways into minstrelsy.

Daniel Decatur Emmett, who was the subject of *Dixie*, an engaging Bing Crosby motion picture, was the author of "Dixie's Land," best known as "Dixie," "Written and Composed Expressly for Bryant's Minstrels by Dan D. Emmett, Arranged for the Piano Forte by W. L. Hobbes." The song was first sung in public in 1859. Emmett was a Northerner and didn't intend to write a war anthem. For the South the song became a tearful reminder of the Confederate Army; for the North it evoked distant times and places, the longest trip away from home that many had ever made. "Dixie's Land" was the name originally invented by some Negro slaves sent to Charleston by Johaan Dixie, to describe their original owner's farm on Manhattan Island. "Dixey Land" was an alternate name for Dixie's Line, the Mason and Dixon Line established in 1769 on the basis of the surveying by two English astronomers, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, separating Pennsylvania from Maryland and Virginia. Before the Civil War Dixon's Line came to mean the line that separated the slave states from the free states. But Dixie was also an Americanization of the French word for ten, *dix*, which was printed on New Orleans ten-dollar bills.

All these meanings and overtones of meanings became a part of the single word Dixieland, which from before 1917 to the present has designated a music essentially New Orleans in character.

Before Dan Emmett, and until some years after his death in 1904, minstrelsy was a major form of American entertainment. There were the Virginia Minstrels and the Kentucky Minstrels, the Congo Melodists who became Buckley's New Orleans Serenaders, the Ethiopian Serenaders, the Sable Harmonizers, the Nightingale Serenaders, and the great names that linger on for the quality of their music and their performances, MacIntyre and Heath, Lew Dockstader, and Dan Bryant. Popular among the minstrel singers was a tune that originated in the work of one of the first of the black-faced impressionists, Bob Farrell, although the claim is sometimes made that another early blackface minstrel, George Washington Dixon, composed it. The tune is "Zip Coon," now better known as "Turkey in the Straw." Nobody now alive remembers when "Zip Coon" or "Turkey in the Straw" was not the musical symbol of life on the farm, of the country hick, of animal noises, of everything rural in America. But popular as this and other "coon songs" were and are, much more successful in the nineteenth century were the songs written for E.P. Christie and others by Stephen Collins Foster.

Stephen Foster, born in Pennsylvania, little-traveled in the South, shows the distance a composer of "Negro songs" could get from the Negro. Almost all of Foster's lovely melody seems to be based on the music of minstrelsy. So thoroughly had the antecedents of white and Negro music in America been absorbed by the minstrel composer, so effectively had the Negro's own music been imitated by white composers for blackface singers, that, although most of the music written for minstrel shows seems weak and ineffective beside the Negro's own music, minstrelsy provided an abundant source for the songs of Stephen Foster. Whatever their remove from the Negro

himself, Foster's songs do approach the simple and rhythmic vitality of the Negro's music.

Like W. C. Handy, who sold his "Memphis Blues" right soon after it was composed, Stephen Foster dispo unprofitably of most of his early songs. "Oh! Susan was in effect donated to the Cincinnati publisher W. Peters. "Old Folks at Home" went to the minstrel E. Christie for fifteen dollars, for which sum Christie a bought the right to claim the writing and composing the song, although Foster did receive royalties and cre for it before he died. The tragedy of Stephen Foster's li —and there is sufficient nobility in his music to gra his failure such stature—is not entirely due to his ear unforeseeing disposal of his songs. Some years before h death he was earning a sizable income for a composer i the middle of the nineteenth century. When he died i New York in 1864 he had been long separated from hi wife and family, his habits were dissolute, he was without food or funds and had been perilously ill for quite a while. He died after suffering a cut in his throat when he fainted across the washbasin of his room in the American Hotel on the Bowery. When he died he was six months short of thirty-eight. He had thirty-eight cents in his purse, and a small piece of paper on which he had written the possible title or opening line of a song, "Dear Friends and Gentle Hearts."

For considerably less than the emolument of a Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, or George Gershwin, he left an edifice of song which only such later popular composers could challenge, and even their impressive efforts don't achieve the nearly uniform quality of his almost two hundred songs. Through almost all those songs run the melodic line and rhythmic accent of the American Negro, from whom Kern, Berlin, and Gershwin and all their contemporaries, successors, followers, and imitators borrowed copiously. "Oh! Susanna," "De Camp Town Races," and "Away Down Souf" suggest the lilt and beat of ragtime and much other early jazz. The enduring "Old Folks at Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Old

Black Joe" have a plaintiveness, within an infectiously accented rhythmic frame, which suggests the blues. The ease with which "Old Folks at Home," under its later and more familiar name, "Swanee River," fits the ensemble and solo needs of the Jimmie Lunceford and Tommy Dorsey jazz bands in arrangements by Sy Oliver is not happenstance. The cheer with which arrangers greeted "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair," when that song written by Foster to his wife was available to them during the absence of ASCAP music from the air, indicates some of its relationship to jazz.

Before, during, and after the Civil War there were more songs like those Stephen Foster wrote, but without the quality of his work; however, they do have the warmth of melody and tricks of rhythmic accent that suggest nothing so much as jazz. "The Arkansas Traveler" and "Listen to the Mocking Bird" have been taken up by jazz bands. Septimus Winner, who wrote "Listen to the Mocking Bird," also did "Ten Little Injuns," which later became known as "Ten Little Niggers," to the discomfort of Negroes and many white men. He was one of the many who created new words for "Dixie," beginning with the line, "I'm captain of a darkie band." His long life stretched from 1827 to 1902, and his contributions, published under the pseudonym of Alice Hawthorne, range from "Listen to the Mocking Bird," which was published as a "Sentimental Ethiopian Ballad," to the more exaggerated sentimentality of "Whispering Hope" and "What is Home Without a Mother?" But only his Bird is fit to rank with such masterpieces of the fifties as "Jingle Bells," "Pop Goes the Weasel," and "Skip to My Lou."

The Civil War produced "Maryland, My Maryland" and two versions of the tune earlier known as "Glory Hallelujah"—"John Brown's Body" and Julia Ward Howe's "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." But nothing out of the war, with the possible exception of the partisan version of "Dixie," approached the song by the Irish bandmaster Patrick Gilmore, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." To those whose first inkling of the driving quality of the marching Johnny was Glenn Miller's recorded performance of it, it may come as a great surprise to learn that the song was written in 1863. And although most people who heard Benny Goodman's record of "When You and I Were Young, Maggie" realized that it went back to 1866; its form follows so exactly that of the popular song of the twentieth century that it is hard to place it much before World War I.

The spiritual really came alive in the decade from 1870 to 1880. In 1871 the Fisk Jubilee Singers, out of Nashville's Fisk University, one of the first and still one of the best institutions of higher learning for Negroes, made their first concert tour. Thereafter in their jaunts around America and in the concert tours of other Negro institutions like the Hampton Institute, such songs as "Deep River," "Go Down, Moses," "Heaven," "Little David, Play on Your Harp," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child" were standard parts of a growing repertory. These began to appear in popular song collections, to be sung in parlors, on the concert stage, and in cabarets. The Negro had found a voice all his own; his music challenged in popularity Sir Arthur Sullivan's "The Lost Chord," which first reached the United States in 1877, and the enormously successful songs from *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Mikado*. The Negro spiritual was accepted along with Johann Strauss's waltzes. By the end of the nineteenth century it was even admitted that Negroes sang their own songs as well as or better than whites. Although there was no one individual Negro composer of great public note, Negroes as a whole were granted the high quality of their musical contributions. There was more to come than the minstrel-show version of Negro music; but while the full vigor of his instrumental and vocal performance was still to be heard and accepted, the Negro was now something more than a happy child.

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Chapter 4

THE BLUES

When the spiritual was transformed into the blues, the content shifted some; the emphasis was less on man's relation to God and his future in God's heaven, and more on man's devilish life on earth. All of the musical antecedents of late nineteenth-century song were summed up, however indirectly, in the blues. The spiritual was th dominant strain, but the work song, the patriotic anthem minstrel words and melodies, and all the folk and ar songs sung in America were compounded into the new form.

There is an interesting parallel to the blues in Byzantine music. Like the Byzantine, the music of the blues has its line of identifiable sources. We can show that Byzantine music derives from Syrian, Hebrew, and Greek sources, but, as scholars have come to understand in the twentieth century, it is essentially an independent musical culture. In the same way we can now understand that the blues is a form complete in itself, whatever its clearly marked origins, especially notable for its balance of intense feeling and detachment. This balance is the distinguishing mark of most of the great blues, of the fine blues singers, and of every sensitive jazz performer since the emergence of the blues.

In the popular song, the evolution of which is at least as long as that of the blues, there is no such balance, and the distinction between form and content is easier to make, since the major concern of popular-song composers and

writers has usually been commercial. As one cannot in the blues, one can take for granted the verbal content of the popular song, chiefly a series of approaches to love, happy and unhappy, ecstatic and disastrous, chiefly sentimental, though sometimes, in the hands of rare masters, compassionate.

Most popular songs contain a verse of eight measures, which introduces the working situation, melodically and verbally, and a chorus, which is usually thirty-two measures long. The thirty-two-bar chorus is usually divided into the following simple pattern: the first eight bars state the basic figuration or theme; then these first eight bars are repeated, completing the first half of the song; then follows the eight-bar bridge or release, in which a considerable variation on the theme is effected (here there is usually a change of key, rhythm, and general phrasing); then in the last eight bars there is a return to the original statement, a recapitulation. All of this adds up to a pattern that can be most easily remembered as A-A--A.

The first eight bars of the ordinary thirty-two-bar chorus usually can be broken down into two four-bar phrases in which the second four bars merely repeat the first with a very slight harmonic variation, so that the form can be stated thus: A-A′-A-A′-B-A-A′.

The variations on the basic A-A-B-A pattern of the thirty-two-bar chorus are numerous. There are such obvious but infrequently used variations as the sixteen-bar chorus, usually nothing more than an eight-bar theme and an eight-bar release (A-B); or a twenty-bar chorus (A-B-A); or sometimes a chorus longer than thirty-two bars, as a more complicated content seeks rudimentary form. All of these variations reinforce and redefine the basic thirty-two-bar popular-song chorus.

The basic blues form is a twelve-bar chorus, in which an initial four-bar statement is repeated with slight melodic and harmonic changes in the second four bars and then again with more significant variation in the last four bars. The lyric form of this chorus can be compared, as

Richard Wright has put it, to a man walking around a chair clockwise (the first four bars), then walking around it again counterclockwise (the next four), and then standing aside and giving a full judgment upon it (the last four bars).

Harmonically the blues follows a simple chord pattern, that of most Western folk music. The first four bars are usually based upon the chord of the tonic (the first note of the scale); the second four bars are usually based upon the chord of the subdominant (the fourth note of the scale); the last four bars are usually based upon the chord of the dominant (the fifth note of the scale).

The blues melody derives from the blues chords, but it has a tonal concept all its own, based on the blues scale, which consists of the ordinary scale plus a flattened third note and a flattened seventh note, which are known as the "blue notes." Thus, in effect, you have a ten-note scale because both the natural form of the note and its flattened version are retained in the blues. In the key of C major, for example, the blues scale runs C-D-E♭-E-F-G-A-B♭-B-C; the flattened third is E flat and the flattened seventh is B flat.

This tonal content causes jazz's characteristic assault on pitch. From the flattened third and seventh notes of the blues scale, struck against or before or after the natural evaluations of those notes, comes a whole complex of pitch variations. Perhaps the most immediately comprehensible example of what Raymond Scott calls "scooped pitch" can be heard in the playing of alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Johnny does what so many other jazz musicians do, but his meticulous technique makes the practice much more understandable, as he moves from some division of a tone up to a note or by some division of a tone away from it. He may be anywhere from a quarter to say a sixteenth flat in approaching a given note; the same tone divisions may mark his departure from the note, sharpening the note. In the same way jazz singers slide into or away from a note, coming in sharp or flat, departing flat

or sharp. The mastery of these musicians and singers is such that they do not produce glissandos, agonized slides over a series of notes, which obliterate all tonal distinctions. For all the apparent casualness, the seeming hit-or-miss nature of their playing or singing, they know what they are doing, and after a while you come to know too.

Most blues melodies use either the first five notes of the ten-note blues scale, or the second five; that is, again using C major as our demonstration key, a blues tune runs from C to F or from G to C (if it runs from C to F the flattened note is E; if from G to C the flattened note is B).

Typical examples of the blues, the best examples with which to start to become accustomed to the curious harmonic and melodic character of this music, are the records of the early blues singers. It is difficult to get their records today, but some of Bessie Smith's best sides are or will be available on long-playing records. In "Cold in Hand Blues" and "You've Been a Good Old Wagon," you get perfect examples of Bessie's singing an E flat against an E natural in the accompaniment, or a B flat against a B in the accompaniment; the E flat example is on "You've Been a Good Old Wagon," the B flat on "Cold in Hand Blues." And the two individual sides also illustrate the characteristic limited melodic range of the blues; "You've Been a Good Old Wagon" is built on the first five notes of C major, "Cold in Hand Blues" on the second five. (Incidentally, on these sides you get the additional pleasure of listening to Louis Armstrong in 1925 when he was still playing cornet and was at the peak of his early style.)

Variations in the blues form are possible, both in its chord structure and in melodic line. Passing tones (tones out of the immediate harmony, not in the chords at hand) can be used to supplement the five fundamental notes of either half of the blues scale, as the ornaments of a melody or as integral parts of it. Instead of following the conventional division of the twelve bars of the blues into three repetitions four-bar segments or phrases, each division of four bars may vary considerably from the preceding phrase.

The blues may be broken up into two-bar instead of four-bar phrases, so that in one blues chorus there will be six phrases instead of three. You may get two-bar phrases with two-bar fill-ins, as in Duke Ellington's "Jack the Bear," where the piano plays the essential two-bar phrase and the band plays the two-bar fill-in.

From the two- and four-bar phrases of the blues came the riff, which was the outstanding instrumental device of the so-called swing era. The riff is a two- or four-bar phrase repeated with very little melodic variation and almost no harmonic change over the course of any number of blues choruses.

Blues melodies are often exquisitely simple. In Ellington's "C Jam Blues" the four-bar main phrase consists of only two notes, G and C. The first two bars (or riff) are all on G; in the third bar the C is introduced in a slurred pair of eight-notes. "C Jam Blues" is worth careful listening, to hear how ingeniously this seemingly empty pair of notes becomes a fresh, swinging blues.

Generally the blues bass is played in unaccented four-quarter time, the best example of which is the "walking bass." If you listen carefully to the Ellington recording of "C Jam Blues," you will hear a definitive example of the walking bass—1 2 3 4/1 2 3 4/1 2 3 4, over and over again, with brilliant chord or key changes to make room for the progression from tonic chord to subdominant to dominant, from C to F to G seventh over a series of scale-like phrases. Another very effective bass for the blues is the rolling octave bass, which consists of dotted eighths and sixteenths, syncopating up and down octaves.

"Stride piano," the particular pride and joy of Fats Waller and before him, of innumerable ragtime pianists, comes from the blues. The trick in the stride bass is to play a single note for the first and third beats of the bar, and a three- or four-note chord on the second and fourth beats. The effect when the stride bass is poorly played is plodding and corny; but when this kind of piano is played by a Fats Waller or an Art Tatum the result is exhilarating.

The blues is usually played in unaccented four/four time or with stride accents, but it does, in one of its most prominent variations, make a departure from this structure. The variation? Boogie-woogie, of course. Boogie-woogie, contrary to the general impression, is merely a piano blues form which on occasion has been adapted for orchestral use. It goes back to ragtime and hasn't changed very much since its first appearance. It represents nothing more than a jazz conversion of the traditional basso ostinato device, the pedal-point or organ-point reiteration of a basic bass line. In boogie-woogie eight beats to the bar are usually emphasized, with single notes or triplets, following the fundamental harmony of the twelve-bar blues form. More conservative than most blues performers, boogie-woogie pianists almost never depart from the original key and usually play in the key of C. Cleverly orchestrated, the obstinate bass suggests the classical passacaglia form. As boogie-woogie is most often played, by such broad-beamed performers as Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis, it is confined in its ornament to trills and tremolos in the right hand, and constricted rhythmically and harmonically.

Although the blues is the base, harmonically, melodically, and even to a degree rhythmically, of jazz as we know it today, it did not appear on paper under its proper name until 1912. Jazz was on the threshold of its formative years as an art and of its widespread recognition. It was given a considerable push on its way in the first published blues, W. C. Handy's "Memphis Blues," written originally as a campaign song for E. H. Crump, a mayoralty candidate in Memphis in 1909. Though Crump was a reform candidate, William Christopher Handy's "Mister Crump" certainly didn't indicate that; the words were, if anything, a mockery of the candidate's reform promises:

Mister Crump won't 'low no easy riders here;
Mister Crump won't 'low no easy riders here;
I don't care what Mister Crump won't 'low,
I'm gonna bar'l-house anyhow;
Mister Crump can go an' catch himself some air!

"Easy rider" meant, and still does, a lover or pimp who hangs on to his woman parasitically; "barrelhouse" is a rough saloon, literally a house where barrels of liquor are tipped on end; used as a verb, it indicates spending a rough evening or day or life, or—as here—the music that reflects all of that. The tune written for these words in a sixteen-bar form—a cross between the blues and the popular song choruses but essentially the former—became the "Memphis Blues" in 1912. In 1914 Handy published his "St. Louis Blues" with its provocative Tangana rhythm, which is a kind of habanera or tango beat consisting of a dotted quarter, an eighth-note, and two quarter-notes.

All of these—the adroit balance of feeling and detachment in words and music, the formulation of a distinctive melodic line based on its own tonal concept, pliability as instrumental and vocal music—show why the blues has been the most enduring and persuasive of jazz forms.

Contrary to the average conception of the form, the blues claims all creation as its subject, ranging impressively from Mississippi floods to New Orleans *maisons* to the WPA and war and peace and other problems. But the blues is not only a music for melancholia. There is great joy in the blues too, a joy that sometimes retains a strain of nostalgia or carries a thread of yearning for money, for romance, for the moon. The joy is still there, however, and so too is the great cry that identifies these songs as songs of the times. Floods and floozies, unrequited love and unemployment, the blues describes them all.

The twelve-bar form we know as the blues came into its vigorous own in the early years of this century. Up and down the Mississippi—though its major sources were in New Orleans—the blues was sung and played by the Negro musicians of 1910 and 1920 and 1930. To white America, in showboats, in New Orleans and Chicago and New York night clubs, the Negroes brought their tales of weal and woe.

The blues was the base of the early great recordings of Louis Armstrong, whose trumpeting genius formed, in turn, the base for most of the hot jazz that came afterward. His early records are magnificent examples of the blues and the vitality of its composers and lyricists and performers. Unlettered, morally but not musically undisciplined, the wild musicians of Louis's Kid Ory's, and King Oliver's bands created great jazz, great music—"Gully Low Blues," "Wild Man Blues," "Potato Head Blues"—out of the happy chaos of the New Orleans quarter before and during and after World War I. These blues tell you much about the life and times of the fabulous men who made that music.

The chronicle of the blues goes on through the great singers: the five Smiths—Bessie, Clara, Trixie, Mamie, and Laura; Ida Cox, Chippie Hill, Ma Rainey. This impassioned history gives you rough, untrained voices with a majesty and a power that have scarcely been equaled by the finest of Wagnerian singers. These women were sometimes impoverished, rarely comfortable financially. They sang for gin and rent money, and their masterpieces appeared on the so-called "race" labels of the record companies. Their records were thus bought mainly by their own people, and few of these singers reached the tiny affluence which would have given them a fair life. Only Bessie Smith scored financial success, largely because Frank Walker, then Columbia Records' race record director, saved her money for her.

At first you may dislike the harshness of Bessie's voice and the voices of the other Smiths and Ma Rainey. You may be put off by the sometimes monotonous melodies. But, if you listen carefully, you will find a richness of vocal sound and of verbal meaning too. You will discover a touching stoicism in the face of disaster, touching because there are fear and sorrow in the laments of Bessie Smith or Ma Rainey, and passion as well—but all laughed or shouted away. And in the laughter and the holler you may discern the wisdom of the Southern poor Negro or white which puts the facts of nature in their proper place, which refuses to be overwhelmed by physical or mental torture. One feels these things, the blues-singer says, but one can

do nothing about them. And so she communicates the torture, but always with philosophical detachment. This is a vigorous and vital music; it calls a spade a spade, a flood a flood, and unemployment an unpicturesque evil. Along with spades, floods, and unemployment the sexual relations of men and woman are seen as both glorious and inglorious.

The rewards of fealty to the blues have come slowly. W. C. Handy, who wrote the enduring "Memphis Blues" and "St. Louis Blues," was not well off until his near-blind old age, when the stream of royalties from those blues classics began to flow in. Billie Holiday, perhaps the greatest of present-day blues singers, is a moderate night-club success, singing in the boxes and holes and caverns of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and Hollywood. Billie's trueness to the blues is a cornerstone of her greatness. While she sings a pop tune with artistry, shaping a shabby phrase so it gleams as it never did before, she does just as well in the blues, in the basic jazz songs, which she sings with unmistakable conviction. "Fine and Mellow" and "Billie's Blues" are among her best songs, along with the evergreens of jazz, such fine songs as "The Man I Love," "Body and Soul," "Them There Eyes," and "Porgy."

The people who like the way Billie and other blues singers sing will follow them wherever they go, to after-hours joints in Harlem, to squalid little clubs in downtown New York, where the liquor tastes like varnish, where the prices, unlike the decor, are right out of the Waldorf and El Morocco.

Few other singers combine the attractions of Billie Holiday, who is not only a singer with a sumptuous style, but also a remarkably beautiful woman. There are other brilliant blues singers. There is Big Joe Turner, a fabulous fellow from Kansas City, who matches the stature of the men he shouts about in the blues. There is Jimmy Rushing, Count Basie's singer. It was his barrelhouse figure that inspired the song "Mr. Five by Five." Jimmy knows a

thousand old and new blues, to which he has added countless variations of his own. One of the best of these is "Baby, Don't Tell on Me":

Catch me stealin', Baby, don't you tell on me,
If you catch me stealin', Baby, don't you tell on me,
I'll be stealin' back to my old-time used-to-be.

Thought I would write her, but I b'lieve I'll telephone,
Thought I would write her, but I b'lieve I'll telephone,
If I don't do no better, Baby, look for your daddy home.

He ends the blues with the amusing line, "Anybody ask you who was it sang this song, tell 'em little Jimmy Rushing, he been here and gone."

Jack Teagarden, a big burly Texan with an infectious Panhandle accent in his singing, has always been associated with the blues. One of the few white men to attain distinction in the form, he lapses into the twelve-bar chorus of the blues as a matter of course. He is identified irrevocably with W. C. Handy's "Beale Street Blues" and the lovely "I Gotta Right to Sing the Blues," which was the theme song of his big band of short but often distinguished life. He improvises beautifully with his trombone or his delicate baritone voice, making up words to ungainly measures when this is necessary, culling his rolling blues phrases from the cowhand. Such effective syllabifications as "mam-o" for mamma, "fi-o" for fire, and "Fath-o" for Paul Whiteman (known to his familiars as Pops or Father) are Teagardenisms. Coming late to an engagement one night, he jumped onto the bandstand, where his orchestra was already playing. Noting the severe expression on the face of the manager of the place, he improvised this blues:

Comin' through the Palisades I los' my way;
Comin' through the Palisades I los' my way;
Thought I was back on the road, workin' for MCA.

Jack's plaint is at a large remove from the vital central themes of the blues, but it indicates clearly how much a

part of jazz the form had become by the late thirties. It was the blues that the instrumentalists played and the singers shouted and wheeled that sent jazz around the United States and across the world. It was the blues that Louie Armstrong played so persuasively and Bessie Smith sang so movingly that served jazz so well when it came to its Diaspora. There was, after all, something to disperse.

Chapter 5

NEW ORLEANS

Much has been written, colorful and full of enthusiasm, flamboyant and full of condemnation, about Storyville, from 1897 to 1917 the district of New Orleans marked out by statute for licensed prostitution. Like so much that has been written about jazz, a lot of this has been full of half-truths and whole truths out of context. It would be a gross distortion to say that Alderman Story's city within a city reflected nothing but high moral purpose on the part of the New Orleans legislators who founded it. It would be gross injustice to suggest that they were accepting the several filths of flourishing vice as a cheerful necessity. This district represents simply the first and the last attempt to license prostitution in an American city—a Catholic city—following a procedure made famous by many Catholic cities in Europe, most notably Paris, which didn't find it necessary to close its legally recognized brothels until after World War II. Whatever the merits of this solution to the problem of the oldest profession, for sixty years the attractions of Storyville and its antecedent quarters rivaled those of the cemeteries and the restaurants of New Orleans, and for almost half of that period music, side by side with loose ladies, soothed savage breasts.

The ordinance of March 10, 1857, which licensed prostitution, merits some close examination. In the words of the New Orleans Common Council's Ordinance Number 3267, "an Ordinance concerning Lewd and Abandoned Women," the specter of illicit though legalized sex comes

immediately alive, for all the flat phrases and legal dryness. In the first of sixteen sections, the districts in which "it shall not be lawful for any woman or girl, notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, live or sleep in any one-story house or building, or the lower floor of any house or building," were named. In the second section, it was declared "that it shall be the duty of all police officers, policemen and watchmen to arrest any girl found in contravention of the foregoing section," and the punishment, "not less than thirty days' imprisonment," was set forth. The third and fourth sections defined the taxing and licensing system, which gave legalized prostitution budgetary importance; they deserve quotation in their entirety:

No. 1086. (3). That it shall not be lawful for any woman or girl, notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, or live in any house, building or room situated within the limits described in the first section of this ordinance, and not in violation of, or prohibited by the said section, without first paying in to the city treasurer the tax imposed by this ordinance, and procuring from the mayor of this city a license to inhabit or live in or occupy a house, building or room within said limits as aforesaid—nor shall it be lawful for any person to open or keep any house, building, dwelling or room within the limits of this city for the purpose of boarding or lodging lewd and abandoned women, or of renting rooms to such women, without first paying the tax hereinafter levied, and procuring from the mayor a license so to open and keep a house, etc., as aforesaid. Every person failing to comply with the provisions of this section, shall pay a fine of one hundred dollars for each and every contravention, and in default of payment shall be imprisoned not less than thirty days. One half of the fine shall be for the benefit of the informer. Provided, that nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to authorize the issuing of licenses to occupy or inhabit any one-story house or building or the lower floor of any house or building situated within the limits described in the first section of this ordinance.

No. 1087. (4). That an annual license tax of one hundred dollars be and the same is hereby levied upon each and every woman or girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness, occupying, inhabiting, or living in any house, building or room within the limits prescribed in the first section of this ordinance, but not in contravention thereof—and an annual tax of two hundred and fifty dollars upon each and every person keeping any house, room, or dwelling for the purpose of renting to or boarding lewd and abandoned women, which said tax shall be payable in advance of the first day of February of each and every year.

The fifth section authorized the mayor to grant licenses, and the sixth prescribed fines for breaches of the peace by "any woman or girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness, who shall occasion scandal or disturb the tranquility of the neighborhood." In the seventh it was declared "that it shall not be lawful for any lewd woman to frequent any cabaret, or coffee-house, or to drink therein, under the penalty of not less than five dollars for each and every contravention, or of being dealt with as provided by the act concerning vagrants, at the discretion of the recorder before whom she may be brought." The eighth section served to alleviate the fears of those who suspected that sisters under the skin would be little concerned by differences of the skin:

That it shall not be lawful for white women and free women of colour, notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to occupy, inhabit, or live in the same room, house or building; nor for any free person of colour to open or keep any house, building or room, for the purpose of boarding or lodging any white woman or girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness, under the penalty of not less than twenty-five dollars for each and every contravention; in default of payment, the person so contravening shall be imprisoned not less than thirty days. One half of the fine shall be for the benefit of the informer.

Those who rented or hired houses, buildings, or rooms off-limits to prostitutes were ordered to be fined, if a petition signed by three "respectable citizens residing within the vicinity of any house, or building" should state "under oath" that the house, building, or room "is a

nuisance," and that "the occupants thereof are in the habit of disturbing the peace of the neighborhood, or in the habit of committing indecencies by the public exposure of their persons, etc.," and "it shall be the duty of the mayor" to order the ejection of such offenders from the premises.

It was then provided that all such houses, buildings, dwellings, or rooms "shall at all times be subject to the visitation of the police of this city. . . . It shall not be lawful for any woman or girl notoriously abandoned to lewdness, to stand upon the sidewalk in front of the premises occupied by her, or at the alleyway, door or gate of such premises, nor sit upon the steps thereof in an indecent posture, nor accost, call, nor stop any person passing by, nor to walk up and down the sidewalk or banquette, nor stroll about the streets of the city indecently attired, under the penalty of not less than ten dollars for each and every contravention."

The last four sections of this extraordinary ordinance deal with obstructors of this law, the enforcement of it by the police, the date when it was to go into effect (February 2, 1858); and, finally, all laws contrary to this one were repealed.

It was only in 1897, in a new ordinance sponsored by Alderman Story, that a specific district was set up to limit prostitution geographically. The earlier ordinance had restricted only operations, and had actually given the brothels and unaffiliated whores an unmistakably large swathe through the city in which to work. It was, then, from 1897 to 1917 (when the Secretary of the Navy shut down all red-light districts) that tourism descended upon prostitution in New Orleans and jazz came alive.

The district, a sizable chunk of New Orleans, was at first open to Negroes and mulattos, at least in certain sections, and they brought their trade and their music with them. In the last eight months of organized Storyville a restricted Negro district about half the size of Storyville proper was established. But for most of the two important decades Negro and white women, Negro and white musicians, worked side by side. Here in what their owners and residents invariably called palaces, châteaux, and maisons, in what are accurately named honky-tonks, in saloons, and in all the other entertainment places—except perhaps the "cribs," the tiny dwellings of the cheapest prostitutes—jazz was played. The well-placed white man in New Orleans looked down upon Storyville, publicly regarded it as a civic disgrace, whatever his private behavior; but at Carnival time, and especially on the day of Mardi Gras, this Orleanian lost none of his propriety and gained much in warmth by joining with the district in a celebration long since world-famous. The white Carnival had its King Rex, and the Negroes their King Zulu and their music, easily the most distinguished contribution to the jubilant festivities.

Visitors to the city, coming into the Southern Railroad Station on Canal Street, saw as much of Storyville as those who arrive in New York by way of One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street see of uptown Manhattan. The view, just before arriving at the station, was of honky-tonks and cribs and palaces. Not far from the station one could visit the main saloon, the Arlington Annex, of the unofficial mayor of Storyville, Tom Anderson, who made this barroom, adjoining his Arlington Palace, his city hall. Anderson was the boss of the district, a member of the state legislature, the owner of a chain of saloons, and the head of an oil company. He was also the main instigator of that group of worthy Storyville citizens who pooled their resources and produced the official directory and guidebook of Storyville, *The Blue Book,* which could be bought for twenty-five cents at the Arlington Annex after 1895.

The Blue Book was not the first of the guides to the bordellos, their madams and working personnel. In the 1880s and 1890s there was a weekly paper, the *Mascot,* which in its "society" column provided a sort of unofficial directory to what it called the "dames de joie." This was surely one of the strangest columns ever to appear in a newspaper. Some examples of its news items are:

Miss Josephine Icebox has been presented with a pair of garters and a belt made out of the skin of the cobra di cappello that escaped from the Wombwell menagerie, and

was killed by a street car. The present was made to Miss Josephine by her lover in gratitude for having been saved from seeing snakes.

It is confidentially asserted that an heir is expected by her most gracious majesty, Queen Gertie. It is conjectured that the prince will have red hair. . . .

Mrs. Madeline Theurer has gone out of business on Barracks and Rampart streets. Mrs. Theurer enjoyed the good wishes of the ladies in the social swim. Although the lady has deemed it advisable to close her Barrack street chateau, still she will not abandon the profession entirely, but intends, in the near future, opening up in new quarters. It is safe to say that Mrs. Theurer can brag of more innocent young girls having been ruined in her house than there were in any other six houses in the city. . . .

In 1895 the *Mascot* reported in this column that "the society ladies of the city can now boast that they have a directory." It went on to explain:

In no other city in the Union can the dames de joie make a similar boast. Within the past week a little book, styled "The Green Book, or Gentlemen's Guide to New Orleans," has been freely distributed. In it are all the principal mansions de joie in the city (white and colored). The names of the madames of the house are given, as also are those of all the angels, nymphs and fairies. The color and nationality of the darlings are stated. Twenty thousand copies of the guide will be distributed during Mardi Gras. The price is twenty-five cents. The publisher's name does not appear.

It's colorful. It's amusing. It is also a picture of depravity, in which humans are reduced to inanimate things for sheer pleasure. Some jazzmen succumbed to the several lures of their surroundings; most didn't. Some became pimps, increasing their income from music by their industrious procuring; most were content to be paid for playing the music they loved. It cannot fairly be concluded that jazz must live in such an atmosphere. At times jazz has thrived on vice—and vice has lived luxuriously upon

it. Music has always accompanied debauches; it has not necessarily reflected or condoned them.

Jazz musicians on the whole would probably prefer to live in a healthier environment than Storyville provided. Their wholesale departure from New Orleans after World War I was perhaps an attempt to find such an environment, as well as a search for new employment. The former was much less successful than the latter, but the struggle of sensitive jazzmen to achieve dignity has never ceased, and it has succeeded more often than the legends and the newspaper chronicles have ever suggested.

In 1895 or 1896 the first *Blue Book* appeared, and, shortly after, *The Lid, Hell-o,* and *The Sporting Guide* "of the Tenderloin-District, of New Orleans, La., where the four hundred can be found." *The Lid* explained itself: "No doubt you have read all about the 'lid' so it will be useless for one to further describe it. This little booklet is gotten up expressly for those who belong to that order of 'lid destroyers' who believe in making life as strenuous as one possibly can without injury to himself or pocket." *Hell-o,* through Tom Anderson, writing under an apposite pseudonym, stated:

To keep my friends from saying mean things while trying to get a connection with their girls—that is to say a telephone one, I have compiled this little book entitled "Hell-O"—please don't misconstrue the name and read it backwards.

Thanking you for your patience, I remain,

Yours,

"LITTLE SALTY"

The Sporting Guide explained: "This volume is published for the benefit of the upper 'Four Hundred' who desire to visit the Tenderloin District with safety and obtain the desired pleasure accruing from beauty and pleasure, which can be accomplished by following this guide."

But the most famous of the guides was *The Blue Book,* which was published regularly until 1915. In *The Blue Book* appeared advertisements for Tom Anderson's Annex, Cafe and Restaurant ("never closed, noted the

states over for being the best conducted cafe in America, private dining rooms for the fair sex, all the latest musical selections nightly, rendered by a typical Southern darkie orchestra"), cigars, glassware and crockery, an attorney, a drugstore, a taxi company ("If you want to learn all the live places, while making the rounds, call up . . ."), beers and sparkling waters, Turkish baths, candies, an electric piano, the "king of piano tuners," all kinds of whisky, gin, wines, and a laundry.

The opening pages of several editions of *The Blue Book* set the tone of what is called the "Queer Zone":

PREFACE
"Honi Soit Qui Mal y Pense"

This Directory and Guide of the Sporting District has been before the people on many occasions, and has proven its authority as to what is doing in the "Queer Zone."

Anyone who knows to-day from yesterday will say that the Blue Book is the right book for the right people.

WHY NEW ORLEANS SHOULD
HAVE THIS DIRECTORY

Because it is the only district of its kind in the States set aside for the fast women by law.

Because it puts the stranger on a proper and safe path as to where he may go and be free from "Hold-ups," and other games usually practiced upon the stranger.

It regulates the women so that they may live in one district to themselves instead of being scattered over the city and filling our thoroughfares with street walkers.

It also gives the names of women entertainers employed in the Dance Halls and Cabarets in the District.

There is a certain wry humor about the quotation from the escutcheon of the British Royal Family, "Evil be to him who evil thinks." But the third page, opposite the advertisement for Tom Anderson's Annex, gets right down to "Facts"!

THIS BOOK MUST NOT BE MAILED

To know the right from the wrong, to be sure of yourself, go through this little book and read it carefully, and then when you visit Storyville you will know the best places to spend your money and time, as all the BEST houses are advertised. Read all the "ads."

This book contains nothing but Facts, and is of the greatest value to strangers when in this part of the city. The names of the residents will be found in this Directory, alphabetically arranged, under the headings "White" and "Colored," from alpha to omega. The names in capitals are landladies only.

You will find the boundary of the Tenderloin District, or Storyville: North side Iberville Street to south side of St. Louis, and east side North Basin to west side North Robertson Street.

This is the boundary in which the women are compelled to live, according to law.

Thereafter the promises of the third page are fulfilled. First there is an alphabetical list of white prostitutes; then two pages of "Forty-five Late Arrivals"; then a page devoted to octoroons (only nine of these), with the two great landladies of the jazz era, Countess Willie Piazza and Miss Lulu White, in capitals; then an alphabetical list of two hundred and thirty-four colored prostitutes; finally a list of nine cabarets, with their dames de joie.

The dead seriousness of the neatly molded simple declarative sentences of *The Blue Book* makes quotation an almost irresistible temptation. Several examples, however, suffice to give the flavor of the advertisements for Storyville's landladies, the madams whose maternal interest in jazz surrounded its early musicians with a comfortable and sympathetic atmosphere and audience. Miss Lulu White's independently issued four-page "souvenir" booklet, published for her "multitudes of friends," and Countess Willie Piazza's ad in the sixth edition of *The Blue Book* are especially important for jazz. Lulu White, who ran the Mahogany Hall, a four-story house with tower and weathervane, found immortality in Louis

Armstrong's "Mahogany Hall Stomp." She offered details of the hall's construction:

THE NEW Mahogany Hall,

A picture of which appears on the cover of this souvenir was erected specially for Miss Lulu White at a cost of $40,000. The house is built of marble and is four story; containing five parlors, all handsomely furnished, and fifteen bedrooms. Each room has a bath with hot and cold water and extension closets.

The elevator, which was built for two, is of the latest style. The entire house is steam heated and is the handsomest house of its kind. It is the only one where you can get three shots for your money—

The shot upstairs,
The shot downstairs,
And the shot in the room.

She also included her autobiography:

This famous West Indian octoroon first saw the light of day thirty-one years ago. Arriving in this country at a rather tender age, and having been fortunately gifted with a good education it did not take long for her to find out what the other sex were in search of.

In describing Miss Lulu, as she is most familiarly called, it would not be amiss to say that besides possessing an elegant form she has beautiful black hair and blue eyes, which have justly gained for her the title of the "Queen of the Demi-Monde."

Her establishment, which is situated in the central part of the city, is unquestionably the most elaborately furnished house in the city of New Orleans, and without a doubt one of the most elegant places in this or any other country.

She has made a feature of boarding none but the fairest of girls—those gifted with nature's best charms, and would, under no circumstances, have any but that class in her house.

As an entertainer Miss Lulu stands foremost, having made a life-long study of music and literature. She is well read and

one that can interest anybody and make a visit to her place a continued round of pleasure.

She said that, "in presenting this souvenir" to her "friends," it was her "earnest desire" to "avoid any and all egotism," and added, "While deeming it unnecessary to give the history of my boarders from their birth, which would no doubt, prove reading of the highest grade, I trust that what I have mentioned will not be misconstrued, and will be read in the same light as it was written." Finally she mentioned the fact that all her boarders "are born and bred Louisiana girls," and signed her words: "Yours very socially, LULU WHITE."

Countess Willie offered entertainment.

COUNTESS WILLIE PIAZZA

Is one place in the Tenderloin District you can't very well afford to miss. The Countess Piazza has made it a study to try and make everyone jovial who visits her house. If you have the "blues," the Countess and her girls can cure them. She has, without doubt, the most handsome and intelligent octoroons in the United States. You should see them; they are all entertainers.

If there is anything new in the singing and dancing line that you would like to see while in Storyville, Piazza's is the place to visit, especially when one is out hopping with friends—the women in particular.

The Countess wishes it to be known that while her mansion is peerless in every respect, she only serves the "amber fluid."

"Just ask for Willie Piazza."
PHONE 4832 MAIN
317 N. Basin

The Countess apparently was the first to hire a pianist, and there is a story, perhaps apocryphal, that his name, self-adopted or conferred by the customers ("club boys"), was John the Baptist. Another of the Countess's pianists was Tony Jackson, a showmanly musician who brought vaudeville into the brothel, and after 1908 became an established name in New York. He will be forever asso-

ciated with his song, "I've Got Elgin Movements in My Hips with Twenty Years' Guarantee." Lulu White could also boast some fine pianists, notably Richard M. Jones, who died during the 1940s in Chicago, and Clarence Williams, who when he came to New York probably brought more of New Orleans with him than any other man, in his song-writing, record-making, and public performances. The most famous of the Anderson Annex pianists was Ferdinand Joseph (Jelly Roll) Morton, the Gulfport, Mississippi, musician, who will be remembered as long for his spoken jazz narratives as for his piano-playing and composing.

Lulu White's Mahogany Hall and adjoining saloon, at the corner of Bienville and Basin Streets, makes a good starting point for a tour of the area where jazz flourished from the late 1880s to 1917. Right before us, as we face south, is the Southern Railroad, a stretch of tracks leading along Basin Street to the terminal on Canal. A block east, on Ibeville, is Tom Anderson's Annex, and back of it, on Franklin Street, the 101 Ranch, which had changed by 1910 from a kind of waterfront saloon, though some distance from the river, into one of the most impressive of the jazz hangouts, where King Oliver and Sidney Bechet and Pops Foster and Emanuel Perez played some of their strong early notes. Billy Phillips, owner of the 101, opened the Tuxedo Dance Hall diagonally across from the Ranch. The Tuxedo was the scene of many police raids and ultimately of Phillips's killing. Freddie Keppard played his driving cornet at the Tuxedo, and later Johnny Dodds was the featured clarinetist and Oscar Celestin led the band named after the hall, the Tuxedo Band, which in a later edition was still playing on Bourbon Street in New Orleans in 1951. Two blocks away from Lulu White's, at Liberty and Bienville, was the Poodle Dog Cafe—a name used in city after city; it was popular from 1910 through the early twenties as far north as Washington, D.C., where a café of the same name was the scene of Duke Ellington's first piano-playing job. North one block and east another, on Iberville, was Pete Lala's Cafe, much

patronized for the music as well as the barrels of liquor, and where, at one time or another, Kid Ory and King Oliver and Louis Armstrong led bands. Lala also owned "The 25" club, a block down from the Tuxedo, another of the sometime jazz places.

Down the railroad tracks, as one goes away from the center of town on Basin Street, are cemeteries. Up Iberville and Bienville and Conti, going north, are cemeteries. If you follow the tracks, past the cemeteries, past St. Louis Street and Lafitte Avenue, you reach what is now called Beauregard Square, where now squats the Municipal Auditorium, graced with flowers and grass shrubbery. Now, in season, there are band concerts and rallies and public events of all sorts here. In 1803, Fort St. Ferdinand, built by the Spaniards on this spot, was destroyed in an attempt to wipe out yellow fever, thought to be caused by the stagnant water of the moats and the abundant filth of the city's ramparts. The park which replaced the fort was at first used as a circus ground, then enclosed with an iron fence and made into a Sunday-afternoon promenade ground and pleasance for Orleanians. For the city's Negro slaves, granted a half-holiday every Sunday, the new park was a wonderful gathering-place. Named Congo Square, the great open area was used by the Negroes for games, for singing to the accompaniment of tom-toms, for Voodoo ritual and ceremony. Here such of Africa as remained passed into Negro Creole life in America. Here were uttered the strange chants, the curious sounds, the ancient cries of the tribes, transformed, subtly but unmistakably, by French and Spanish culture: *"Pov piti Lolotte à mouin"*—softly, not clearly; *"Pov piti Lolotte à mouin"*—more firmly now, and clearer to the ear, repeated like the first line of the blues; then, twice, *"Li gagnin bobo, bobo,"* the second time with a variation, *"Li gagnin doulè"*; then, again, the first line, sung twice; and finally, *"Li gagnin bobo, Li gagnin doulè."* The hypnotic effect must have been irresistible. The affinity with the remaining traces of Voodoo in Haiti, and in the rites of the Camdomblé in Brazil is unmistakable—music, in-

exhilarating words, and dancing. The dancing, before the half-holiday celebrations ceased during the Civil War, attracted its share of tourists to sway and be moved in spite of themselves by the hypnotic beat.

The bamboulas, huge tom-toms made of cowhide and casks, were the bass drums, pummeled with long beef-bones. Bamboo tubes produced a skeletal melody. Staccato accents were made by the snapping together of bones —the castanets. An ass's jawbone was rattled; the instrument is still used in Latin-American music and is known as the *guajira*, a word that means "rude" or "boorish," "rustic" or "rural" in present-day Cuban Spanish. Many Negro instruments, rhythms, and dances came to be used in Central and South America, leading eventually to the rhumba and the conga, the samba and the mambo, in Cuba, Argentina, and Brazil, where, as in New Orleans, music developed in numbers of Congo Squares, half-holiday games and chants and dances. The effects of Congo Square was twice felt in jazz; once directly, as it filtered through the tonks and the barrelhouses, the Storyville parlors and ballrooms; again indirectly, when bebop musicians went to Cuba to reclaim their earlier heritage.

By the end of the 1880s New Orleans Negro musicians were no longer playing jawbones, hide-covered casks, or bamboo tubes. As they grew more interested in the meaning and mechanics of music, they became more interested in the white man's instruments, which offered broader, fuller expression. These men, like many members of the American Federation of Musicians today, were part-time instrumentalists, who by day cut hair or served food or lifted bales or ran errands, but by night or on Saturdays or Sundays, for special or ordinary celebrations, played the instruments of the white man. The instrumentation of jazz at the end of the nineteenth century was in a sense conventional, although it was not the dance-music instrumentation familiar to most Orleanians. For the string trio (heard even in brothels) and the larger polite organization of bows and gut, Negro musicians substituted brass-band horns, cornet and clarinet and trombone, with

an occasional roughening contributed by a tuba. Rhythm came, naturally enough, from drums and the string bass (more often than the tuba), and sometimes from the piano. These were the logical instruments, for the first large contribution to the new music was made by marching bands.

They marched (without the bass and piano) to wakes and from them in Negro New Orleans. They marched for weddings and for political rallies, when they were summoned away from their ghetto precincts. They marched again and again, just to march, for the pleasure of the members of the fraternal organizations and the secret orders with which their culture abounded. There were always plenty of other parades too—for the Fourth of July and Labor Day and Jackson Day and Carnival, for funerals and during election campaigns. And when the bands got going and the beat became irresistible, the followers, chiefly youngsters, fell in, dancing behind the musicians and keeping up the friendly, informal infernality. The bands played all the standard hymns, such as "Rock of Ages" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and they made some of them immortal jazz compositions, lifted forever from the parade or the funeral to the night club and the recording studio and the concert hall. And such a transfiguration as they turned out of "When the Saints Go Marching In" deserved the larger audience it finally found for its humors, at once delicate and assaulting, satirical and deeply religious. There were the "Saints" and the "Rock" and the "Soldiers" to move the deceased nearer to his God as he was brought to his resting place in the special section of the cemetery reserved for Negroes. Once he was interred, the music changed. "Didn't He Ramble?" the bandsmen asked rhetorically and followed the tale of a rambling townsman with their freely improvised, booming, blasting choruses, one after another, leading from the "Ramble" to Alphonse Picou's polka-like "High Society" and Jelly Roll Morton's tribute to a fellow Mississippian pianist, King Porter, after whom "King Porter

Stomp" was named. Maybe they'd finish off with a rag, Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf" perhaps, or the most famous of all, "Tiger Rag," fashioned from an old French quadrille. Whatever they played, the bands blew a mighty sound along the streets and through the alleys and into the squares of New Orleans. And when they were finished with parades they played for dances, little and big, and they brought with them into the makeshift and the more solidly constructed ballrooms and into the parks all the atmosphere of the marching band. Their dances looked and sounded almost like the big ballroom blowouts of the twenties and thirties in Harlem at the Savoy or the Renaissance, or in Chicago or St. Louis or any other town where Negroes gathered to listen and to dance to their music.

Jazz was absorbed into Negro New Orleans and passed on to interested whites. It was taken up with that mixture of casual acceptance and rabid enthusiasm that is always found when an art form becomes an integrated part of a culture. Whole bands were hired to advertise excursions on the river, picnics by the lake, prize fights, and dances; whole bands were lifted onto furniture wagons, bass, guitar, cornet, clarinet, and drums, with the trombonist's slide hanging behind as he sat on the back edge, feet hanging down, slide hanging down, forming the "tailgate" of the wagon. Music was everywhere in the last years of Storyville and the first years of jazz.

Chapter 6

FIGURES OF LEGEND AND LIFE

They marched right up the streets, all the streets, and marched right down again. In the course of their spectacular strolls, New Orleans marching bands built a large and imposing repertory of music, much of which is still with us. For the music there had to be musicians; there were many, all kinds, all qualities, some of them personalities. Inevitably, it's the personalities who stick out, whose reputations remain, whose performances thread their way through the memories of men old enough to have heard them. But even in the memory borderland of fact and fancy, some musicians stand out for good reasons and must be accepted as the first vital figures of jazz. Others remained vigorous long enough between the two world wars to be heard and judged by a later generation. From these two sources—other men's memories and our own listening—emerges a large impression of the first jazzmen, one that has both logic and continuity.

Claiborne Williams was a cornetist and an entrepreneur. He was available for all occasions. Under his leadership were musicians who could play cotillion music for those Negroes who wanted to imitate white dances. But under his leadership too, cornetists, trombonists, clarinetists, drummers, and bass players marched and played the music of marching jazz. Constituting itself the St. Joseph Brass Band, this second and more important of the Claiborne Williams organizations offered one skillful jazz cor-

netist, William Daley, an impressive all-around drive, and the fine reliable sound of its leader's cornet.

The Williams bands flourished in the 1880s; so did those of John Robechaux. Robechaux was a drummer and, like Williams, a leader of several outfits. He booked his sweet band as he found demand. In the Excelsior Band, of which he was simply a part, there were two renowned clarinetists, the brothers Louis and Lorenzo Tio, who taught the music they played. At the turn of the century the Excelsior featured two of the outstanding musicians of this era, clarinetist Alphonse Picou and cornetist Emanuel Perez.

The St. Joseph and Excelsior bands, two of the best of the 1880 crews, were close enough in time to the twentieth century to leave an identifiable mark. It must not be supposed, however, that these were the first or the only bands to march the New Orleans streets before 1900. These men followed others, whom they surely would have acknowledged if they had lived long enough to document their era. It is unfortunate that George Cable and Lafcadio Hearn, whose writing captured so much of New Orleans Creole life in the 1870s and 1880s, were not more interested in music, but the suggestion of its existence is always implicit and sometimes explicit in their books and articles.

In the years after Cable's and Hearn's era, from about 1895 to 1907, Buddy Bolden's Ragtime Band set the style. To begin with, he had Woody Warner on clarinet, Willie Cornish on valve trombone, Jimmie Johnson on bass, Brock Mumford on guitar, Louis Ray on drums, and himself on cornet. For the proper occasions he even sported a violinist, Tom Adams. They all were loud musicians, and they were vigorous, but they could play a pretty tune. Most important of all, they sported a brilliant cornet, the heroic voice of jazz, and to play it they had a leader fully armored in the personality that fitted the instrument.

Buddy Bolden's band fixed New Orleans instrumentation, the combination of one or two cornets, clarinet,

trombone, bass, guitar, and drums, which was to set the sound patterns for jazz for years to come. Bolden, known as "the Kid" and "the King," was the early version of that indefatigable character so well known to later musicians who have grown up on their instruments through Saturday night functions and occasional midweek balls: he was an organizer, a man who always knew where a "gig," a one-night job, could be found. He played for picnics and for dances, for carnival crowds, for the strollers in the parks. When work was scarce for his own little band, he would move his three horns and three rhythm instruments into a bigger band with less permanent personnel and play with them for a night or a week, as the job demanded. The story persists that his lungs were so powerful that when he sat himself by an open window and barreled notes through his cornet his music could be heard for miles along the river. He was variously gifted: cornetist, barber, editor and publisher of *The Cricket*, a gossip-mongering paper. His personality left an unmistakable imprint on the music that followed his; wherever he played in New Orleans, at the *Tintype* or *Economy* or *Love and Charity*, *Big Easy* or *Come Clean* dance halls, at picnic or parade, he drove his band through its paces and into the heads of musicians listening to him. In 1907 or 1908 he drove himself insane, as the word-of-mouth history has it, running wild at a parade. He was committed to an asylum and died there in 1931 or 1932 at the age of about seventy.

Buddy Bolden's band set the instruments and perhaps the harmonic and melodic order as well. To the cornet was assigned the lead part, the line identified as the melody; the trombone, particularly after the slide instrument replaced the valve horn about 1900, was a languorous counter-voice, punctuating the melody with characteristic smears and oozes; the clarinet, in vigorous contrast to the sustained trombone slides, maintained a hopping, skipping position, embroidering decorative runs about the other lines. The rhythm instruments—drums, bass, and guitar—made up the engine that powered the

jazz machine: their function was to keep the syncopated beat going in regular almost inflexible alternations of weak and strong accents.

All of this added up to what has been described as polyphony, something of a misnomer for the crude counterpoint of New Orleans jazz, since polyphony requires the simultaneous combination of several voices, each of a clear individuality, and the music which Bolden, his contemporaries, and his successors played was generally a sturdy mixture of the simplest variations on the key melodies, each man only tentatively for himself, and the end product dependent upon the chords to such an extent that the texture was more dominantly harmonic than melodic. What they did do, and apparently with great contagious gusto, was to administer just that touch of brashness, just that breath of spontaneity, just that drive, which together were to convert minstrelsy and worksongs, Congo Square blasts and cotillion refinements, into jazz. Early jazz had something less than polyphony or counterpoint, as we understand those terms in their original context—something less and something different—but on at least one level it had something more too.

Polyphonic music is a music of melodic lines played against each other; it moves from simple canonic forms, best illustrated by rounds—such as "Three Blind Mice" or "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"—to the enormously complicated and sophisticated maneuvers of eight-part double fugues. In every case this music is conceived horizontally. While its great baroque exponents, such as Bach or Buxtehude, worked well within a harmonic frame, their linear thinking determined the shape and substance of their music. None of this can be said for the so-called New Orleans polyphonists. However much their present-day admirers may wish to confer contrapuntal glory upon their favorites, the music of New Orleans at its pre-1917 best appears to have been conceived harmonically, executed harmonically, and to have proceeded from the same concern for chords which, in a far more informed

and organized fashion, has dominated the music of swing and bop.

What appears to be a kind of rough polyphony in early jazz is an improvised voicing of cornet, clarinet, and trombone not very different from the scoring of two altos, two tenors, and a baritone in the present-day dance band, although the sonorities may be coarser in New Orleans jazz, the over-all texture thinner and tougher, the harmonic freedom considerably less. The linear concept in the jazz of Storyville and environs was contained in the polyrhythms, the rich, ingenious pitting of one time against another in the two hands of the piano or in two or more instruments. But New Orleans jazzmen did, and their imitators and leftovers continue to, pull most of their melodies out of the blues chords and a small stockpile of related standard tunes. Whether they are playing a solo with organ harmony in the background, or pushing a ride-out chorus to its obstreperous end, their harmonic thinking is vertical, and their notes follow a chord pattern. When, upon occasion, they may seem to those of their critical supporters who are also enthusiasts for atonal music to have scooped pitch and moved away from the confines of key and modulation, it is probably nothing but the clumsiness of a performer with an insufficient knowledge of his instrument.

Freddie Keppard is a musician to place beside Buddy Bolden. Here we have a figure more of life than of legend, although the performances that gained him his early reputation were all before jazz was recorded. When he got to Chicago he did record, in 1923, 1926, and 1927. In the 1926 records, with Jimmy Blythe's Ragamuffins and his own Jazz Cardinals—in the first case backing Trixie Smith and in the second with Papa Charlie Jackson as vocalist—one can gather what he sounded like and perhaps some of the quality of Buddy Bolden's playing too. Through something less than high fidelity recording come the thrust and the exuberance, the rough tone, the rhythmic lift that pushed jazz into exultant being. Keppard dropped the violin for the cornet because he never learned

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to read music, but he had that grasp of the cornet that makes so much of the early music impressive. It would be silly to say, as some have of jazz musicians of this kind, that because he was unlettered he was a better musician, but there is no denying that some of the dramatic colors of jazz entered the music because of the lack of formal discipline in men like Freddie Keppard.

Freddie Keppard was the cornet mainstay of the great Olympia Band. Through most of its years, from its founding in 1900 to 1911, Keppard's cornet kicked the Olympia Band into powerful life. Beside him sat Alphonse Picou, embroidering clarinet lines around the cornet and trombone, Picou who made the clarinet part of "High Society" such a classic that thereafter it was played unchanged even by the most free-swinging improvising clarinetists. Picou is a fine example of the continuity of New Orleans jazz. His teacher was Lorenzo Tio, and, like Tio, he sometimes played clarinet in performances of French opera. His successor in the Olympia's clarinet chair was Louis de Lisle Nelson, known as Big Eye. Some of the tunes that Picou wrote, such as "Alligator Hop" and, the most famous of them all, "Muskrat Ramble," were later played by Nelson, and together they set the style that was to be expanded and embellished and carried across the country by Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds, and Jimmy Noone.

The valve trombone in the band was played by Joseph Petit, who was also the manager of the Olympia, a sizable saloon on Elks Place across Canal Street from the railroad terminal. He was later replaced by Zue Robertson, a relative of Buddy Bolden's and enough of a musical personality to influence many of his successors on his instrument, the slide trombone. The two most notable drummers of the Olympia, John Vean, known as Ratty, and Louis Cottrell, known as Old Man, introduced, one the first four-beat bass drum part, the other a more technical understanding of drums and drumming.

The journeys of Freddie Keppard take us to two of the other very important bands that thrived before the

closing of Storyville. In 1911 the bass player Bill Johnson organized the Original Creole Band, with Keppard and other Olympia musicians for its beginning. By 1913 the Original Creole Band had extended its vaudeville tours to cross-country proportions; for five years the band toured, reaching a substantial majority of the forty-eight states, going as far west as California, as far north and east as Maine. The band was notable for its cornet player, the redoubtable Keppard, and for a succession of clarinetists, starting with George Baquet, the only man in the band in his time who could read music. Baquet's skill was especially notable in the lower register, in which he carried the brunt of melodic responsibility. Keppard, a man with a large drinking and eating capacity, was a bustling showman on the stage; he could match Baquet's low notes on the cornet and then began the first of many attacks on the high register which culminated in those screeching passages for dogs' ears played by Duke Ellington's trumpeter Cat Anderson and Stan Kenton's Maynard Ferguson. Baquet later was replaced by Big Eye Louis Nelson and Jimmy Noone, the last of whom was perhaps the most impressive not only of this trio of clarinetists but of all the New Orleans performers on that instrument. Keppard, in the course of his years with the Original Creoles, reported in to New Orleans from time to time. On some of those trips he would sit in with the Eagle Band, with which he appeared off and on from 1907 until about 1915. It was the most important of his New Orleans attachments, outside of the Olympians and the Creoles, although he was also heard to advantage in his occasional appearances with other bands around town and during his longer employment with the pianist Richard M. Jones at George Fewclothes' Cabaret and with his own band at Pete Lala's Cafe in 1915.

In its time, the Eagle Band made room for many of the most persuasive of New Orleans jazz voices. Its clarinetists included the talented son of Picou's teacher, Lorenzo Tio, Jr., Big Eye Louis Nelson, and, best of all, Sidney Bechet. Its cornetists, in addition to Keppard,

included at various times Mutt Carey and Bunk Johnson. Bunk, whose immediate earlier work was with the Superior Band, from 1905 to 1912, led his musicians through the full range of jazz jobs. When they played a dance they advertised, "The Eagle Boys fly high," and indeed they did, at Saturday night dances at the Masonic Hall, in their weekday and Sunday marches, and out of town at such places as Milneburg on Lake Pontchartrain, where there were good times out of doors, some of which were caught musically in the famous "Milneburg Joys." Never did the Eagle Band expand its size for its marching engagements; always you could hear the dancing lines of Lorenzo's or Sidney's clarinet, of Mutt's or Bunk's cornet, of Jack Carey's or Frankie Duson's trombone. Of them all, the men who established the firmest reputations were Sidney Bechet and, in recent years especially, Bunk Johnson. Bunk was rediscovered in 1938, when Louis Armstrong suggested hat one of the writers for that invaluable symposium, *Jazzmen*, look him up to find out more than was known about early New Orleans jazz. William Russell found him in New Iberia, a small town near New Orleans, with his *Jazzmen* colleagues bought Bunk a new set of teeth, and listened long and sympathetically to his stories. In the next few years Bunk recorded, appeared on the West and East Coasts, and made a successful run at the Stuyvesant Casino in New York in the fall of 1945 and the winter of 1945-1946.

Known as "Bunk" long before the extravagant estimates of his prowess began to appear in the women's fashion magazines, and before the editors of *Jazzmen* bought him a lien on posterity along with his new teeth, William Geary Johnson had joined King Bolden at the age of sixteen. He brought a second cornet into play in the jazz ensemble and, if his mid-forties appearances can be trusted, a variety of restrained brass sounds. He was born in 1879, and his career extended from 1895 to 1931, with a revival from 1942 until 1947, when he died. In his earlier days he toured the South, the West, and the Atlantic States with minstrel shows and circus bands,

played in several New Orleans outfits, and undoubtedly had some influence on most of the cornetists coming up in the Crescent City from the beginning of this century until the red-light district was shut down in November 1917. It is questionable that Louis Armstrong was his proud student, as has been claimed; not until Louis had been asked many times did he credit Bunk with even a mild tutorial interest in his blowing. Louis, always an agreeable questionee, was satisfied with what he regarded as the facts until interrogated to a standstill by Johnson editors. For him, as he always said, it was Joe Oliver. "That was my only teacher; the one and only Joe Oliver."

Bunk's return to performance in 1942 brought listeners at least some quality of the music of which he had been an important part in his youth. It also served the enthusiasm of listeners who had inevitable limitations of age and place, who promptly linked Bunk and Buddy Bolden in a cornet pairing of equal importance with that of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong. As Morroe Berger cautions in his article on "Jazz Pre-History—and Bunk Johnson," "It is difficult to find ample justification for such categorical pronouncements." Berger goes on, in a discerning analysis of the size of Johnson's contribution, to point out that "in emphasizing Bunk's position in jazz history, the members of Bunk's admiration society naturally ignore that of early jazzmen who have some claims of their own." It must be remembered that Bunk Johnson was an old man when he reappeared on the jazz scene. It must also be remembered that Bunk had some glittering cornet contemporaries, not only Louis Armstrong but Freddie Keppard, Emanuel Perez, King Oliver, and Oscar Celestin. King Oliver we have been able to hear on records, and Oscar Celestin not only on records but in person—he was still playing in New Orleans in 1950.

Joseph Oliver was born in 1885. In 1900 he was a capable cornetist and was prominently featured in a children's brass band. On one of its tours he got into a nasty fight which left him with a scar on his face for life. The little brass band with which young Joe played

made fair money, because in those days the interest in novelty bands was large in New Orleans and the nearby South. The way for novelty outfits had been opened by Emile Auguste Lacoume, Sr., better known as Stale Bread, who was a zither player. Stale Bread played with the Brunies Brothers and Rappolo, and in the late years of the last century he led a "Spasm Band," so called after the sound of its toy and improvised instruments: the harmonica, the zither, a bass formed out of half a barrel with clothesline wire for strings and a cypress stick for a bow, a banjo with four strings constructed from a cheesebox, a soapbox cut down to make a guitar, and anything from tin cans to barrels for drums. In 1903 Stale Bread had to leave the legitimate riverboat band he was then leading (which featured Lawrence Vega on cornet) because of an eye infection that blinded him.

After the early brass-band years Joe worked as a butler and doubled as a cornetist with marching outfits like the Eagle and Onward brass bands, in the second of which he shared solo cornet honors with Emanuel Perez. When he worked with these bands he paid a substitute to buttle for him.

Sometime after 1910 Joe made his way into Storyville and played with a variety of bands. One night he stood on Iberville Street, pointed across the street to Pete Lala's Cafe, where Freddie Keppard was playing, and farther down the street to the spot where Perez was entrenched, and blue the blues. Loud and true he blew and loud and clear he shouted, "There! That'll show them!" This exhibit of lung power and daring established Joe Oliver's majesty, and from then on he was "the King." King Oliver moved into Lala's with a band that featured Lorenzo Tio on clarinet, Zue Robertson on trombone, Buddy Christian on piano, and Zino on drums. By 1918 King Oliver was a major name in New Orleans jazz, and shortly after that he brought the name and the music for which it stood to Chicago; it was one of the most important moves in jazz history.

Oscar Celestin has, like Bunk Johnson, benefited from

his longevity. As a cornetist he has been content with simple straightforward melodic lines, which demonstrate nothing like the invention of a Louis Armstrong or a King Oliver, none of the drive of a Freddie Keppard or Mutt Carey. Nonetheless, in the records he made on trumpet from 1924 to 1928, and again in his recent work, there has been a sufficient command of the sweetness of his two horns, trumpet and cornet, and an ease with jazz accents which make his long leadership of the band at the Tuxedo Cafe in Storyville quite understandable. With that band at various times were the clarinetists Lorenzo Tio, Jr., Sam Dutrey, Johnny Dodds, and Jimmy Noone; Johnny St. Cyr, the guitarist who later worked with Louis Armstrong, and the pianist Richard M. Jones. Armand J. Piron, an indifferent fiddler, was also a sometime violinist with the Tuxedo Band. More distinguished than Piron himself was the personnel he recorded with in 1923 and 1924 in New York, such able New Orleans musicians as the Junior Tio, the trumpeter Peter Bocage, the trombonist John Lindsay, and the drummer Louis Cottrell.

Of the remaining Negro cornetists of this period, two deserve more than passing mention. Thomas Carey, known as Papa Mutt or simply Mutt—no compliment to his visage—had a lasting association with the Eagle Band and played with various small combinations around Storyville. In eight record sides made with the trombonist Kid Ory for Rudi Blesh, from 1944 to 1946, Carey shows some vitality, if a limited invention, entirely understandable in a man whose playing years go back to the beginning of this century. Emanuel Perez played cornet with the Onward Brass Band, which goes back to 1892 according to most estimates. He also played with the Imperial Band, which was in existence during the last four years of the Onward Band, from 1909 to 1912, and in 1900 he sat beside Picou in the Excelsior Band. Those who heard him said that his playing demonstrated the evolution of jazz out of the first formal marching bands, that though he was essentially a traditional brass-

band cornetist, he evinced considerable jazz feeling in his placing of accents. Of the generation before Louis Armstrong's, he apparently contributed much to the development of jazz styles on cornet.

Edward Ory, known as "Kid" for as long as he has been playing professionally, is singularly famous among New Orleans trombonists, and deservedly so. He made his jazz beginnings as an eleven-year-old member of a kids' "string band" in La Place, Louisiana, where he was born on Christmas Day, 1889. Later, when the child musicians were able to buy instruments to replace their homemade ones, the Kid was a professional and a distinguished one. On trips to New Orleans after 1905, he sat in from time to time with the Buddy Bolden band until Bolden was committed to the asylum. An eager student, Ory pursued his music formally and informally, studying with private teachers, hanging around New Orleans's best musicians, jumping in with both feet in 1911 when he brought some of his La Place colleagues with him to stay in the big city. In 1915 he took over the band at Pete Lala's Cafe and, with the important cooperation of his musicians, made it perhaps the finest small crew in the city. Joe Oliver was his cornetist, and Sidney Bechet played clarinet for him; Henry Morton was on drums, and Louis Keppard on guitar. When Joe left for Chicago he was replaced by Louis Armstrong. When Sidney Bechet left to go on tour, Johnny Dodds took his place. The standards were high. They stayed high until Ory left for California in 1919, following the Original Creoles' drummer, Dink Johnson, who had established his Louisiana Six out there. Ory's band, by then known as Kid Ory's Brown-Skinned Jazz Band, did well enough around Los Angeles until 1924, but it didn't receive half the acclaim that the Kid's groups did after 1942, first playing under Barney Bigard, then with Bunk Johnson, earning a radio contract on Orson Welles's West Coast show of 1944, ultimately alternating between Los Angeles and San Francisco, where he became a jazz fixture.

Between the first Ory excursion on the Coast and the second, there were several notable engagements. In 1924 Kid Ory joined Louis Armstrong in Chicago for a short stay and some distinguished records, the justly famous Hot Five and Hot Seven sides of 1925 to 1927. The list of Ory's and Armstrong's collaborations is a list of the most significant records of the years encompassed. "Wild Man Blues," "Potato Head Blues," "Gully Low Blues," "Ory's Creole Trombone," "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," "Hotter Than That," and "Savoy Blues"—to scoop up a 1927 handful—demonstrate the ease of the soloists and the staying power of the New Orleans forms. There were refinements, and these are evident in the very first records of Louis and Ory together in 1925 and 1926, "Gut Bucket Blues" and "Come Back, Sweet Papa"; there are longer, better sustained solos; the texture of the ensemble has changed, moving from a concerted grouping to more of a background for solos; but the essential pull of cornet, trombone, and clarinet is there, handsomely taken up by Louis, Ory, and Johnny Dodds. Ory left Louis to play with King Oliver, Dave Peyton, Clarence Black, and the Chicago Vagabonds, in that order, but neither in those appearances nor with his own bands in the forties, after he left retirement, does he show the cumulative power his solos always had with Louis. What he's never lost is the definitive slide—notes clearly out of a trombone—which the instrument had to have in New Orleans jazz, and the neatly filed short melodic phrases copied by a whole generation of trombonists.

Ory's clarinet confrere in the Armstrong days in Chicago was Johnny Dodds, to some the finest clarinetist in jazz, to others anathema. A native of New Orleans, a veteran of the Eagle, Tuxedo, and Ory bands there, he started his recording activity in 1923 with King Oliver. It reached an early peak with Louis, and was extended until June 1940, two months before he died, with various combinations of musicians under his own leadership. One of his best known couplings, "Wild Man Blues" and "Melancholy," shows off one of his most able devices,

the alternation of rows of skipping notes and long sustained tones. Both tunes appeared again on Decca, eleven years after the first recording, which was made for Brunswick in 1927 with Louis, Earl Hines, and other Armstrong musicians. The 1938 sides, separately issued, were made with three members of the John Kirby band (trumpeter Charlie Shavers, drummer O'Neil Spencer, Kirby himself on bass), with Louis's ex-wife Lil Armstrong on piano, and Teddy Bunn on guitar. It may be heresy to Dodds enthusiasts to say so, but there is a striking advance in the second recordings over the first. Dodds plumbs his chalumeau register, the lower range of the clarinet, with a touching melancholy, and moves his two-beat accents in beside the four-beat mastery of Shavers with no loss of style and a considerable gain of beat. He was forty-six when he made these sides and obviously capable of further development.

When it was that Sidney Bechet ceased development it would be hard to say, but unless one has an addiction for his jazz rather than an affinity, it must be admitted that at some point there was an end to his musical growth, and possibly at an early point. Perhaps his very early blossoming as a soloist accounts for the fixing of his style and ideas and playing patterns and sound at some midpoint in his career. He was a sometime guest with Freddie Keppard's band in his native New Orleans when he was eight, and a year later became a protégé of the clarinetist George Baquet. When he was thirteen he was playing with his brother's band and at seventeen he joined the Eagle Band, A year later he toured Texas with Clarence Williams and returned to New Orleans to join the Olympia Band under King Oliver. Chicago was next, in the summer of 1917, and it provided a series of jobs, with Freddie Keppard at the De Luxe Cabaret and with Tony Jackson at the Pekin. He went to Europe with Will Marion Cook's mammoth concert orchestra in 1919, stayed three years, then after three years around New York he returned to the Continent to stay until 1930. In Europe he led the orchestra at different times in three editions

of *The Black Revue*, and toured Russia with a band that included the New Orleans trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. From 1928 on he was in and out of the Noble Sissle orchestra, in the United States and in Europe, until the end of 1938. Afterward, renowned as a clarinetist and soprano saxophonist, he played with his own little bands and made a variety of records for a variety of minor and major labels, but he certainly did not offer a variety of ideas.

No such repetition constricts his early records. With Clarence Williams' Blue Five from 1923 to 1925, Bechet played something approaching a long melodic line, scooping pitch on his two instruments in the way that Johnny Hodges later polished. Some of Bechet's best work appears on the Clarence Williams records that featured Louis Armstrong on cornet and Charlie Irvis, who later joined Duke Ellington, on trombone. There is some persuasive reed blowing on "Mandy Make Up Your Mind" and "I'm a Little Blackbird Looking for a Bluebird," some of it on soprano and some of it on the sarrusophone, an instrument of the oboe family named after the French bandmaster Sarrus, who introduced it into the military band, where, except for such occasions as this one, it fortunately has remained.

Perhaps the most famous of Sidney Bechet's many records are those he made in 1932 with a band he called the New Orleans Feetwarmers. He and Tommy Ladnier match styles and tremolos effectively in the "Maple Leaf Rag," "Shag," and "I Found a New Baby." Teddy Nixon's trombone fits, and the rhythm section gets an apposite beat on these and the other three sides. Here, for some of us, Bechet's contribution to jazz ceases, and thereafter his quivering course through blues and the standard tunes of the jazz repertory becomes difficult listening. For others —a fair-sized audience in the United States and a majority of jazz listeners in Europe—his mastery was never more evident than in the years after World War II when his vibrato bounced careeningly through every performance. But it is no reflection on his appreciable contribution to

reed styles to report that his latter-day oscillations set some people's teeth on edge, never so much as in his One Man Band record, in which he played clarinet, soprano and tenor saxes, piano, bass, and drums through "The Sheik" and "Blues of Bechet" for Victor.

Last of the clarinet masters of the first two decades of the twentieth century, and possibly the best, is Jimmy Noone. Born on a farm outside New Orleans, he came to his instrument later than Bechet, but early enough, at the age of fifteen, to develop a considerable skill by 1913, when he was nineteen. His teachers were Sidney Bechet and the Tio brothers, all of whom he replaced in different bands as he came of playing age and they moved around, in and out of New Orleans. He was in the Tuxedo Band for a while and played with Richard M. Jones at Fewclothes'. He played with Armand Piron's polite orchestra in the war years of 1917-1918, when Storyville had closed down, but earlier he had got his full playing experience in that quarter with the bands already mentioned, with Kid Ory, and with his own band at Frank Early's cabaret, where he shared leadership with the cornetist Buddy Petit. He toured briefly with the Original Creoles and was one of the first of the important Orleanians to settle in Chicago, where he joined King Oliver in 1918, Freddie Keppard briefly in 1919, and then Doc Cook's Dreamland Orchestra. In the fall of 1926 Jimmy took his own band into the Apex Club, earlier known as The Nest, in this year a club of some social distinction. While there he made twelve sides with Earl Hines on piano, Joe Poston on alto saxophone, Bud Scott on banjo, and Johnny Wells on drums. Eight of these fine 1928 performances have been reissued in the Brunswick Collectors Series and offered as "a perfect insight to an important period in American music—*Chicago style*." Technically these are Chicago records—they were made there; they use Chicago musicians by adoption, such as Earl Hines; they include saxophone, unheard of in New Orleans and proscribed after the Diaspora in so-called New Orleans combinations, not by the musicians themselves but by their critics.

Actually these records are among the best presentations of the abiding procedures and playing atmosphere of New Orleans jazz. Without any brass, the clarinet and alto combination, with a decisive rhythm-section beat behind it, leads bright ensemble figures ("Apex Blues," "I Know that You Know," "Four or Five Times," "Monday Date"). Jimmy weaves his clarinet around his ensemble, in and out of alto statements of the theme, in and out of the ensemble ("Sweet Lorraine," "I Know that You Know," "Every Evening"). On several of the sides, notably "I Know that You Know," he puts down a series of fast runs, scalar ascents and descents, rehearsing the same figure over and over but with little changes of chord or key and larger changes of register, all of which suggest the Picou of "High Society," the Dodds and Bechet of innumerable performances; but he never fails in invention or technique as other players do. Like Johnny Dodds, Jimmy Noone recorded off and on through the twenties and thirties, made some sides with Louis Armstrong (accompanying the blues singer Lillie Delk Christian), and some with modern musicians in Chicago for Decca. Like Johnny Dodds, Jimmy Noone had the adaptability to fit with Charlie Shavers' trumpet and Pete Brown's alto; his new versions of the "Apex Blues" (called "Bump It" in 1937), "I Know that You Know," and "Four or Five Times" have all the cohesion of the old ones made nine years earlier, and a new drive that came in with swing as well. In November 1943, five months and three days before he died, he made four sides for Capitol in one of the recording director Dave Dexter's impressive attempts to catch the fine older men of jazz before it was too late. Working with Jack Teagarden on trombone, Billy May on trumpet, Dave Matthews on tenor saxophone, and a rhythm section of Joe Sullivan, Dave Barbour, Artie Shapiro, and Zutty Singleton, in up-tempo and ballad performances, Jimmy showed still the big, pure, and lovely tone, the controlled vibrato, neither too fast nor too slow, the same facility over all the clarinet's range. No wonder he had such hordes of imitators, from Frank Teschemacher

and Benny Goodman to Woody Herman, Joe Marsala, and Pee Wee Russell.

There were few pianists in New Orleans jazz of the quality of Keppard, Oliver, Armstrong, or Noone. There were, as a matter of fact, few pianists. The marching bands and the bands who played the advertising wagons couldn't use a pianist; the cabaret bands didn't want one very often. The major contributions of keyboard artists were made first in the bordellos and later wherever ragtime performances were in favor. Of the latter, more must be said in the history of the New Orleans migrations. From the bordellos a few men emerged: Richard M. Jones, who also led his own band at Fewclothes' but made his larger impression later on in Chicago; Tony Jackson, who found his place as a singer and pianist in New York; the first boogie-woogie crew, who must have influenced the second wave of C-major tremolists, the famous Chicagoans; and Ferdinand Joseph (Jelly Roll) Morton, who talked at least as well as he played piano and talked himself into a major role in jazz history.

The words and the music, the legend and the life of Jelly Roll fill a compendious series of Library of Congress records—now transferred to Circle long-playing records as *The Saga of Mister Jelly Lord*—and a book taken from them—Alan Lomax's *Mister Jelly Roll*. As the notes for the records have it, "the composite length of *The Saga of Mister Jelly Lord* is over seven hours—the length of three grand operas, five full-scale musical concerts, or fifteen complete symphonies—and it consists entirely of the talking, piano-playing, and singing of one man. . . . This would seem to signify that this one man was one of wide and varied genius, a man of towering stature in his field." It would rather, and it seems to me that it does, signify that Jelly Roll Morton was around a long time, played some, learned some, and talked more. He is an important exhibit; through his talking and playing much of our knowledge of Storyville life and musical times is substantiated, broadened, put to rights. He was something less than a great pianist; we can't even be sure he was

an original one, so much of what he claimed as his own was obviously public domain in jazz or other men's doing. There was, for example, that famous 1938 article in *Downbeat*, in which he pre-empted the whole field for himself. It began: "It is evidently known, beyond contradiction, that New Orleans is the cradle of *jazz*, and I, myself, happened to be the creator in the year 1901, many years before the Dixieland Band organized." He went on to explain that the first stomp was his, "written in 1906, namely 'King Porter Stomp.' " When he "happened to be in Texas" in 1912, and one of his "fellow musicians" brought him a copy of the "Memphis Blues," he discovered that "the first strain is a Black Butts strain all dressed up," that is, the "strictly *blues*" of "a Boogie-Woogie player," and that the second strain was his ("I practically assembled the tune").

Jelly Roll's extravagances and exaggerations need no examination, or very little. They tell us more about the man than the music, show some of his humor and more of his pathos. But sandwiched in between the wild personal history and the overworked claims are much of the color of jazz and the mutual impact of jazz and Jelly Roll Morton. He was, as the Germans who have taken to writing about jazz would say, *echt* New Orleans, a real live Storyville piano player. He was born in New Orleans in 1885, brought up in Gulfport, Mississippi, and early turned to music—at seven, he said, working out on the guitar, and right afterward studying and playing the piano, "then considered the female instrument," Jelly Roll explained. With a certain diffidence he admitted that he was "always called a freak of a pianist" but hastened to add that he "always managed to pull the crowd any place I played." From him comes documentary evidence of the conscious use of French and Spanish materials, the shaping of an old French quadrille, much played in the Vieux Carré, into the rag known as "Tiger," the "mixture of Spanish with Negro ragtime," which, he said, "sounded great it seemed to the world, because when I played I was almost mobbed, people trying to get a peek at me."

Where he played was Gulfport at first, then, on his return to New Orleans in 1909, wherever his two immediate mentors, Richard M. Jones and the St. Joseph Brass Band cornetist Sullivan Spraul, could find a job for him. In the year of his return he became the solo pianist at Tom Anderson's Annex and stayed, with side trips to Alabama, Georgia, and points north of New Orleans, some as far away as Chicago and Seattle, until 1915, when he moved to California. He stayed on the Coast until 1923, then spent five years in Chicago and seven in New York. He ran his own night club in Washington from 1936 to 1938. He returned to Los Angeles in 1938, to remain until his death in the summer of 1941.

Jelly Roll recorded off and on from 1922 to 1940. He made his epochal Library of Congress records in May 1938—epochal in the precise sense of the word: they recorded an epoch of jazz in which Jelly Roll's part was at first important. He saluted the Gulfport pianist King Porter in the "King Porter Stomp," which, in one form or another, had staying power in jazz until the forties, quickly and brilliantly adopted as it was by the first swing bands—Benny Goodman's, for example, and later Harry James's. He transformed the "Miserere" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* into a workable jazz piano piece, perhaps the first conscious attempt to "jazz the classics." He set an Indian song to jazz, and many a French and Cajun tune was rolled off his keys. Playing cards were "jazzed" in his "Georgia Skin Game," and innumerable blues and rag variations were named and catalogued as his compositions—such tunes as "The Pearls," "Turtle Twist," and "Red Hot Pepper"; the latter, pluralized, named his most famous recording combinations from 1926 to 1930.

As a pianist he offered revealing insights into Storyville keyboard practice. The much discussed polyrhythms of ragtime found effective expression in his hands—three beats against four, dotted eighths and quarters against quarter-note accents, triplets against an even four or a syncopated two. One encounters enough uncertainty in identifying these rhythms in traditional terms to make

clear the subtleties of the style; these are only suggestions of the contrasts in time. With this considerable rhythmic skill, however, went something less engaging, a plunking insistence on the beat, a reiterative melodic line that sometimes ragged rather than sparked a phrase, and a very limited harmonic imagination. If Jelly Roll Morton's understanding of jazz had obtained, and no other had developed, as his most ardent admirers seem to wish, jazz would have remained in a tight vise, of which the most striking example would be the ragged riffing of the least inventive swing musicians whose simple-minded recitals of two- and four-bar clichés helped to bring their own era to an untimely end.

Other men must be included in this group of sturdy Negro musicians. There is the trombonist George Filhe, whose first appearances go back at least to 1892, when he was twenty, who played with the Onward Brass Band, the Peerless, and the Imperial, and got to Chicago early, in 1915. In Chicago Filhe had his own band for a while, worked with such men as Emanuel Perez, Bechet, and the junior Tio, and contrasted his low-register looping and smearing with Bab Frank, who played the instrument for which "High Society" was originally designed, when it was a straightforward marching piece—the piccolo—and played it hot. Filhe made all the logical New Orleans connections—Carroll Dickerson, Dave Peyton, and King Oliver—then retired when jazz retired from prominence, along with so much else, in 1929.

A trombonist to go along with Filhe is Zue Robertson, who retired a year later, in 1930, after a wonderfully varied career. Zue, christened Alvin, was born in 1891, started on piano, switched to trombone at thirteen, did about a year on the road with Kit Carson's Wild West Show in 1910, and played with most of the New Orleans jazzmen—in the Olympia Band and with the touring Original Creoles, with his own band in Storyville, with Freddie Keppard, Bab Frank, the perky piccoloist, and Jelly Roll Morton in Chicago, and with King Oliver and Dave Peyton. From 1926 to 1929 Zue played piano again,

and organ, at Harlem's distinguished theaters, the Lincoln and the Lafayette.

Two men used with special distinction the horn or tortoise-shell plectrum to pluck banjo and guitar strings in New Orleans jazz—Johnny St. Cyr and Bud Scott. St. Cyr is the redoubtable rhythm man who kept such a fine beat going for Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers and Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Seven; he proved then, as Allan Reuss and Billy Bauer did later with Benny Goodman and Woody Herman, that the plectrum beat is fundamental to a jazz rhythm section for sound, for evenness of accent, and to draw the other rhythm instruments together. Bud Scott, like Zue Robertson, did a lot of traveling on the road, was an important member of Kid Ory's first California band, and reaches back to the legendary music—to Buddy Bolden, with whom he played when he was in his teens, in about 1906, to the Olympia Band, Freddie Keppard, and Jelly Roll. In Chicago he was with King Oliver and recorded with Jimmy Noone. In California he was an important part of the sporadic jazz revivals of the forties.

There have been lots of bass players, but none so famous as Pops Foster on what used to be called the string bass to distinguish it from the wind bass, the tuba, and sousaphone, which at first were used more frequently than the stringed instrument outside New Orleans. George Foster was born in 1892 and early learned to play the bass from his sister Elizabeth, after starting to play the cello. He was much in demand for advertising wagons, marching bands, and cabaret outfits; he put in time with the Eagle and Magnolia bands, Freddie Keppard, and Kid Ory, whom he later joined in California. Pops was one of the riverboat musicians who brought New Orleans music north, a sometime St. Louis musician, and for many years —with Luis Russell's band, which became Louis Armstrong's after 1935—the recognized leader of his profession. In the swing era too he was much on call for records with other men who were in demand at recording studios: he was reliable, he put down a good walking beat, he had learned to read music.

Pops's opposite number on drums, a popular recording musician much in demand in the thirties, is Zutty Singleton, who has long forgotten the Arthur James that originally preceded his surname. Zutty's genial qualities, his unfailing good humor, his big bass drum boom, paraded through a hundred sides or more, with Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Red Allen, Mildred Bailey, Roy Eldridge, and his own recording band in 1935, 1940, and 1944. Born in 1898 in Bunkie, near New Orleans, Zutty began to play around the big town after the big time was over, but he played with some of the big men, with Big Eye Louis Nelson and John Robechaux's band, with the Tuxedo Band and the most famous of the riverboat leaders, Fate Marable. In Chicago he was with Jimmy Noone and Louis Armstrong among others, and with Roy Eldridge's memorable little band at the Three Deuces in 1935 and the next year. In New York he played with Fats Waller in 1931, with Vernon Andrade's popular Harlem band, and with Bobby Hackett downtown at Nick's. In Los Angeles Zutty has played with everybody who wanted to set a two-beat syncopation on the snare drums beside the bass drum four, and with more modern jazz musicians as well. He has again and again opened his capacious memory to part-time and full-time jazz historians and kept alive all-night sessions, scheduled and impromptu, as much with his good New Orleans humor as his good New Orleans time. He has no inflated opinion of the New Orleans music he has listened to and played, nor does he put it disparagingly in its place. He is one of the few direct links with the great city and its early great jazzmen who realizes that a beginning is a beginning, that this was an unusually good beginning, but that what came after was often good too—and sometimes better.

There is some of the same graciousness and perspicacity in the other famous New Orleans drummer who began in and went out from Storyville—Warren Dodds, Johnny's

younger brother, best known as Baby because of that familial connection. Baby Dodds is older than Zutty by two years and closer to the first important bands by perhaps a decade. His playing experience before the 1917 closing order included stints with Willie Hightower's band, with Papa Oscar Celestin's band at the 101 Ranch, and a quartet at Fewclothes' Cabaret. His associates were some of the brilliant musicians and more of the less striking, whose skills must have been fair, judging by the work of one of them, Kid Shots Madison, a cornetist who came to prominence in the thirties and forties when a generation of young enthusiasts began once more to listen to New Orleans jazz on the spot. Baby Dodds was in the Eagle Band in its late years, worked the boats with Marable and Chicago with King Oliver, and during the last twelve years of his brother Johnny's life was with him most of the time. He played with Louis's wife Lil's band, with Louis and Kid Ory and Bud Scott, with Jimmy Noone, and with his own band. His recording activity has been large and full and, on the whole, impressive in the tradition that sets rim shots and gourd and bell noises on a par with the regular beat and sees perhaps as much comedy as drive in the central member of the rhythm section. In 1947, as a member of Rudi Blesh's broadcasting band, he played in a two-part radio battle of bands opposite a group that I organized. He listened with interest when he wasn't playing, and asked serious and probing questions of the finest of bebop drummers, Max Roach. He complimented not only Max but Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Lennie Tristano, and Billy Bauer. Much of the time that the modern musicians were playing he just looked up and across the studio at them with a smile on his face and a warm expression in his eyes, as if to say what he later almost put into words, that he was proud to be a musician in the same music, that there were no terrifying differences between the old and the new, that good jazz was good jazz.

Chapter 7

LOUIS

In the second and third decades of this century musicians arose in New Orleans who transformed patterns, enlivened chords, extended the length of the melodic line, and intensified the central rhythmic drive of jazz. At least one of them, Louis Armstrong, demonstrated the individual splendor available to a sufficient talent in a restricted music. It is as a background for Louis and his successors that early New Orleans jazz has its most lasting interest.

It is not to disparage the achievement of the generations of Buddy Bolden, Bunk Johnson, and Freddie Keppard that I praise Louis Armstrong. His contribution is such, however, that it eclipsed the performances of his predecessors for many years. Without granting Louis the stature of William Shakespeare, it could be suggested that he arose from his background and learned from his predecessors as Shakespeare picked up the threads of Tudor drama. One can go too far with such analogies, but here there is a clear parallel. Individual greatness is not entirely self-generated. To understand Louis and appreciate his music, one must understand and appreciate the men who preceded and taught him.

Louis Armstrong's first big noise as a public performer was made on New Year's Eve in 1913 when he shot a pistol into the air in celebration of the coming year, which was to mark the opening not only of the First World War but of the career of the first major figure in jazz history. Louis's coming-out party was held at the New Orleans

Waifs' Home, where he was sent for shooting off the pistol.

Louis's dates are easy to remember; they all coincide with major events. He was born on July 4, 1900; he was incarcerated in 1914; he led his first band in 1917, the year the United States entered the war and also the year that the New Orleans red-light district was shut up by order of the Secretary of the Navy. Like George M. Cohan before him, Louis was a Yankee Doodle Dandy, born on Independence Day. Cohan exploited his birthday for all it was worth—and it was worth a great deal in his illustrious career as musical chronicler of American patriotism. Louis has never paused in public to think over the significance of his birthday, but the date is a happy coincidence, and it is still more significant that that particular July Fourth was in the year 1900. For at the turn of the century jazz was rising slowly, laboriously, from its mangy manger, the sporting houses and muddy streets of New Orleans.

When young Armstrong burst upon the scene with a bang from his pistol, twelve and a half years later, he wanted to make a bigger noise than anybody else. It's questionable whether he did that night, but certainly he did when he began playing cornet in New Orleans bands a few years later. He made the biggest noise any single instrumentalist ever made in jazz; he made almost all the noises and riffs and tunes and tone progressions that shaped jazz and made it a legitimate art form instead of just parlor entertainment in New Orleans houses of joy.

At the city's Waifs' Home, Professor Peter Davis taught him to play the bugle for the Home's formal occasions, and then the cornet in the Home's brass band. And so, barely in his teens, Louis did just what all the adult jazzmen incubating jazz in New Orleans did. With his musical colleagues at the Home, Louis joined in performing a juvenile version of basic New Orleans jazz. He played for funerals and for basket parties; he marched up and down the city's streets and parks, "taking up," as he says, "all kinds of collections," matching the beat of the clinking

coins with two and four to the bar. The Boldens and Johnsons and Olivers played for a living; Louis played for a penance, but it finally earned him a better living.

Sitting in his comfortable parlor in his home in Queens, New York, years later, Louis looked back over this part of his life and laughed. With very little solemnity and considerable humility he reviewed the basic facts, stated some vital opinions, and cleared up some myths and legends.

"Yes," he said, "it was Professor Davis taught me to blow cornet. I used to hang around Bunk and the other guys, but they were too busy to pay much attention to me. I never took a lesson from any of them."

He learned the lines and planes of jazz from the first king of jazz, Joe Oliver. "Joe Oliver taught me more than anyone—he took up his time with me. If there's anybody who should get any credit—that is, *if* there is any—please give it to the great master of the olden days—Joseph King Oliver. . . . Yass Lawd. . . . There's the man that's responsible for my everything in the world of Swing-Jazz-Hot-Ragtime or any kind of music you might call it. . . . Joe used to call himself my stepfather, because I was like a son to him, he said. He sure acted like a father to me." Joe lived up to his self-assigned role with an enlightened musical paternalism for which jazzmen ever since have had cause to be thankful.

What was Louis's first professional job?

"If you count them honky-tonks, then it was Madranga's, at Franklin and Perdido Streets, a real honky-tonk, with Boogers on piano and Sonny Gobee on drums."

"It was all honky-tonks, one after another," until 1917, when a drummer "who was also a good businessman," Joe Lindsay, organized a little band with Louis. "We got all of King Oliver's extra work; Joe was looking out for his boy."

Then Joe left town, journeyed up the river to Chicago on the trip that jazz historians regard as epochal, the trip that started jazz on its way from the Crescent City to all the other cities of the United States. Louis took his place

with the band that Oliver had led and left behind, the band that had been the King's and trombonist Kid Ory's. "It was kicks," Louis says. "Playing Joe Oliver's cornet parts made me feel important."

Louis Armstrong was important, then as later. Most of musical New Orleans was aware of his size as a jazz musician, greatly appreciative of the strength and clarity of his tone, the drive of his beat, and the resourcefulness of his melodic invention. He carried all these jumping assets from band to band: a year with Ory; another in Fate Marable's crew, playing the riverboats; then the Jaz-E-Saz Band with Picou and Sam Dutrey and Pops Foster and Baby Dodds; many months at the Orchard Cabaret in the French Quarter with Zutty Singleton's band ("I was the leader," Zutty says, "but Pops was teaching us all"); a year with Luis Russell and Albert Nicholas and Barney Bigard, among others, at The Real Thing, a cabaret on Rampart Street ("The music was almost as much fun as Ory's cooking," Barney says, extending Louis a compliment just short of the ultimate). Then Louis was ready for his own hegira up the Mississippi to Chicago. Joe Oliver sent for him to play in his band. Louis felt that he was ready.

"In those early years none of us bothered about reading; a good ear was enough. But by the time I got to Joe's band I could see those notes; "I was advancing," Louis recalls with pride. He joined the King Oliver band in Chicago at the Lincoln Gardens Cafe in July 1922, playing with Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Honore Dutrey on trombone, Bill Johnson clunking the banjo, Lil Hardin on piano, and Baby Dodds paradiddling and doodling on the drums. Louis himself played second cornet to Joe Oliver's first. Word got back to Louis's mother, Mary Ann Armstrong, that Louis was sick and didn't have a very good job. She rushed up to Chicago to see for herself. "One night I was sitting on the stand, blowing, when who should I see, coming through the jitterbugs, but Mary Ann. When she saw what a fine job I had and how big and fat and happy and healthy I was, she cried. She spent the rest of

the night right on the stand with us and we all missed cues and muffed stuff, we were so happy."

In 1923 Louis recorded many sides with the Oliver band, playing the blues ("Sobbin'," "Riverside," "Canal Street," "Weather Bird," "Camp Meeting," "Working Man," "Krooked," and "Dippermouth"), and the stomps ("New Orleans," "Southern," "Chattanooga"), and the rags ("Snake," "High Society"). On the "Sobbin' Blues" he even got to play slide whistle; on the others he usually played second cornet back of Oliver's lead, an alternately delicate assist and blasting support.

Like the proverbial second fiddler, however, Louis began to feel a little out of things with King Oliver, even with the solos he got upon occasion. He was glad to accept Fletcher Henderson's offer in 1924. "I had my own part for a change. I enjoyed it. It was fine." Louis really rolls off that "finnnnnnnne" when he recalls joining Smack. He left Chicago gleefully for New York and stayed with Smack for much of 1924 and most of 1925, adding a voice of such authority to the illustrious Henderson band that the records made during his tenure have properly come to be known as Fletcher's Louis Armstrong Period. Three of the best of some forty sides he recorded with Fletcher are in the Columbia album of Henderson reissues—"Sugar Foot Stomp," "What-Cha-Call-Em Blues," and "Money Blues." There you can hear the lusty Louis who sat and blew beside Don Redman, Coleman Hawkins, Buster Bailey, and Big Green—a powerful sound for the time, a handsome suggestion of things to come.

"When them cats [the Henderson musicians] commenced getting careless with their music, fooling around all night, I was dragged, man. I went back to Chicago." Four more years of Chicago, four hectic, hurried years of Windy jazz. He went back to a band at the Dreamland Cafe and to studying music with renewed interest and vigor and attachment. The interest and vigor and attachment were due partly to the leader of the band, Lil Hardin, with whom he studied and whom he married. His earlier marriage, to smart little Daisy Parker in New Orleans,

had been short-lived, although he still sees Daisy on trips back home.

From 1925 to 1929 Louis was a very busy man in Chicago. He was a recording name now. His sides with Smack and a batch with blues singers Bessie and Clara and Trixie Smith and Ma Rainey and Coot Grant and Maggie Jones and Sippie Wallace and Josephine Beatty and Eva Taylor and Virginia Liston, his work with Clarence Williams' Blue Five and the Red Onion Jazz Babies had made him a name. He was entitled to his own recording band. First the band was Lil's, Lil's Hot Shots: then it was Louis Armstrong's Hot Five in 1925 and 1926. It had the same personnel: Louis and Lil, Johnny Dodds, Kid Ory, and Johnny St. Cyr. It became the Hot Seven in 1927, with Pete Briggs on tuba and Baby Dodds added. It was the Hot Five again later in '27, and in '28 it reached its peak as a quintet, with Earl Hines and Zutty Singleton.

In '26 and '27 Louis played a lot of trumpet. He was a part-time sideman with the large orchestra at the Vendome Theatre which Erskine Tate led, and with Ollie Powers, and then, in the spring of 1926, he joined Carroll Dickerson's equally big band at the Sunset Cafe at Thirty-fifth and Calumet, which Joe Glaser owned. Earl Hines was on piano, and this is where he and Louis and Zutty formed their close musical and social partnership, a lasting association of sounds and ideas. It was at the Sunset too that they formed the business partnership with Joe Glaser which eventually made them all a lot of money. Louis took over the band at the Sunset when Dickerson left. Then he had a short try with his own Hot Six at the Usonia, where "We went in business; we went out of business." The attempt to buck the newly opened and successful Savoy Ballroom started on Thanksgiving Day of 1927; it flopped—his Hot Six died a cold death. Louis capitulated to the Savoy and Carroll Dickerson, rejoining the latter at the former. While he had unquestionably lost some *cachet* in reassuming his status as somebody else's featured soloist, his records were in such demand, there

was such a commanding quality to his obbligatos for blues singers and choruses alone, that he was always on call for special jobs. He made numerous side-trips on Sundays to St. Louis, for a couple of days at a time to New York's Savoy Ballroom and to other places, to make extra money as an "Extra-Special Attraction—One Night Only—the Great Louis Armstrong!"

In the spring of 1929 Louis—or Pops or Satchmo or Gatemouth or Dippermouth, as he was variously called, depending on the juniority of the speaker or the degree of admiration for the cornetist's capacious lips—and a number of the boys decided to cash in. They elected Louis leader and cut out for New York in a caravan of battered cars, Louis's Ford with glistening yellow wire wheels leading the procession. They arrived in time to greet the stock market crash.

When they got to the big city the only work they could find at first was a job substituting for Duke Ellington at the Auburn Theatre in the Bronx. Duke's bass man, Wellman Braud, set that. But they didn't have to struggle. Shortly afterward, with a band hastily enlarged, came an engagement at Connie's Inn uptown, where they played through the first months of the depression. Then on to California—Louis's first trip West—to front Eddie Elkins' band, with Lawrence Brown on trombone, and "a little kid, a seventeen-year-old cat named Lionel Hampton, on drums."

The next year, 1931, Louis made his first trip back to New Orleans since leaving in 1922, with "a great band, a bunch of cats I picked up in Chicago on my way back from the Coast." They played the Suburban Gardens, an aptly named spot on the outskirts of town. ("I did my own radio announcing and everything!") He hit New York, played some dates as a single, recorded with Chick Webb's band for Victor. Then back to the Coast to take over the band led by alto saxophonist Les Hite, the same one Elkins had led, at the Los Angeles Cotton Club.

This was 1932. In the summer of that year Louis went to Europe for the first time, then came back to New York

after four months to do some more work as a single out of Chicago and New York. The next summer he went back to Europe with his third wife, Alpha, to stay until January 1935. Europe was a success, with one sad experience—at the Holborn Empire Theatre in London, where Louis split his lip and played through one whole show, his shirt front covered with blood. "Mmmmmmmm, my chops was beat." He left behind at least one record he wants to hear again, his two-sided "On the Sunny Side of the Street." During the Nazi occupation of France Louis heard that Hugues Panassié had buried a large number of records as a precaution; he said, "That cat'd better unbury that record. If I tried a million times, I'd never make a 'Sunny Side' as good as *that* one."

Leonard Feather, reminiscing years later about Louis's trips to Europe, wrote:

There are few musicians in jazz history who owe more of their fame to Europe than Louis Armstrong. Though Louis was a big name in his own country for many years before his first transatlantic trip, nothing that had happened to him over here could compare with the wild acclaim that greeted him when he first poked his personable head around the edge of the curtain on a memorable first night at the London Palladium in the summer of 1932. . . . Nobody knew what kind of a band Louis would have with him. All they knew was that this almost mythical American figure, whose voice and horn had enlivened a Parlophone record every month or so, was coming miraculously to life. As it turned out, the band assembled for Louis was nothing and nowhere. Later on he toured with two other combinations, one an all-white group which included most of the clique of Scottish musicians, many of whom for some mysterious reason were hipper than the Englishmen. Louis and Alpha were lionized wherever they went. . . .

Louis's success in Great Britain was not entirely unqualified [however]. One noted and dyspeptic critic, Hannen Swaffer, wrote a bitter diatribe in a London daily describing how the "veins in Armstrong's neck stuck out like a gorged python" while he played, and failed to understand how people could consider that his performance of "Tiger Rag" was music. . . .

Louis did a lot more through his visits than merely play a couple of successful tours. He paved the way for the other great American Negro musicians who came over in the following five years; he stimulated the interest and raised the standards of English musicians who need their encouragement at first hand rather than through records. He made countless friends and made the same impression on everyone he met, that here was a man who, not blessed with the educational qualifications of the more fortunate, made his way in life through a combination of great artistry and a heart of unalloyed gold.

When he got back to the States Louis picked up Luis Russell's orchestra and for the next ten years, with one or another variation of the original personnel, he toured America from coast to coast, from the downtown Connie's Inn in New York to the California Cotton Club. In various sojourns on the West Coast he was featured in several movies, including Mae West's film *Every Day's a Holiday, Going Places, Pennies from Heaven* with Bing Crosby, *Cabin in the Sky, Atlantic City,* and *New Orleans.* Orson Welles, an ardent Louis fan, once had an idea for a film biography of Louis, but it never materialized.

He made many records for Decca after 1935, most of them good. His band has been everything from awful to good, but he himself has almost always been wonderful, a musician's musician of taste and extraordinary skill, whose exquisite trumpet tone, easy melodic variations on the melodies at hand, and marvelous gravel-throated singing style remain the identification of a large and original jazz personality. Occasionally, for one reason or another, Louis has not sounded absolutely right. At one point it was because he was kicking away sixty-five pounds and, in coming down from 230 to 165, he suffered pain and a resultant lack of physical control. At another time it was "beat-up chops" again. At one memorable point, the 1944 *Esquire* concert, it was poor matching of musical styles—his against Roy Eldridge's, Art Tatum's, and Coleman Hawkins'—and poor physical condition. But even at that concert, as records will attest, there were Armstrong moments. There will always be, as long as

that inspired Satchel- or Dipper- or Gatemouth wraps itself around a horn.

And there will always be warm friendships in his life, deep family loyalty, and a close attachment to those who have been good to him. Two Joes retain his greatest respect and admiration: Joe Oliver, who sponsored him musically, sponsored and fostered and fathered him; and Joe Glaser, his employer of the Sunset Cafe days in Chicago in 1926 and 1927 and from 1935 on his manager and one of his closest friends. "I can confide in him," says Louis; "I can trust him. He was a wonderful employer twenty years ago; he's a great manager today." The feeling is mutual; Glaser swears by Louis; he would do just about anything for him, a kind of dedication that most people who get to know Louis well sooner or later feel toward him.

Good friends, good food, easy living—these simple but not always easily attainable comforts command Louis's life, and over them all looms music. He loves playing it and singing it. And he loves talking about it, running over his own experiences and discussing all kinds of music with infectious enthusiasm in his rumbling, syllable-crumbling bass voice, with rich diction and ready laugh. But Louis is loath to choose an all-star band, not at all sure that there are "bests" on any horn. "I'm not drastic, like some of the critics," he says. "Each of the cats has his style, and there are lots of wonderful ones, lotsa styles that send me." He likes Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter on alto; Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins on tenor; Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Prince Robinson (a "fine cat from the old school") on clarinet; with Carney ("of course") on baritone; Teagarden and George Washington on trombone; Tatum and Wilson and Earl Hines ("Pops") on piano; Al Casey and Lawrence Lucie on guitar ("that's all I've heard"), and Pettiford ("a very good man") on bass. On drums, "there's a million."

Trumpet? "You know what King Oliver said to me? 'You gotta play that lead sometimes. Play the melody, play the lead, and learn.' And that's what I like to hear, sometimes anyway. Some of that fantastic stuff, when they

tear out from the first note and you ask yourself 'What the hell's he playing?'—that's not for me. Personally, I wouldn't play that kinda horn if I played a hundred years; you don't have to worry about my stealing those riffs. So you see, I like a trumpeter like Shelton Hemphill, with Duke. He takes his music serious. He's the best first man of our race, best we have. Then there's Red Allen. And, because I believe in going ahead, all right, there's Roy [Eldridge]. I really give Roy credit; he's trying to lead 'em all."

What about the musicians Louis played with when he first started? How would they stand up today? How *do* they stand up today? "Most of us," Louis says, "the musicians of that time, couldn't stand the gaff today—the pace is too fast for 'em today. They wouldn't hold your interest now the way they did then. You can't go back thirty years, man. It's all right for a novelty. But missing notes and not caring nothin', not a damn, about 'em, you can't play music like that nowadays. Take me back thirty years—I could play that stuff with one finger! Why, I'd live forever! But why should I go back? I want to stay up with the times. Every once in a while I lay an old-fashioned phrase on 'em, but music's better now than it used to be, it's better played now. Whether it's arranged or improvised, the music of today is way ahead of what it used to be. We've advanced a lot since the early days. Music should be played all kinds of ways, anyway. Symphonic stuff, beautiful things, everything goes. If there are people who want to omit arrangements, omit scored backgrounds, omit any kind of music, you tell 'em I said, 'Omit those people!' "

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Chapter 8

ACROSS THE TRACKS

When you hear a battered old upright piano clanking away in a bar-room scene in a Western motion picture, you're probably listening to ragtime. This is the music so long thought to be directly responsible, all by itself, for jazz. This is the music that was actually a part of jazz. This is the music that Jelly Roll Morton and all the piano professors played in Storyville. This is the music that Buddy Bolden played and that another one of the fathers of New Orleans jazz, Papa Jack Laine, picked up and shaped into a tradition all its own.

Ragtime isn't very difficult to understand, though sometimes it is difficult listening for ears trained to another kind of jazz. Basically, it's a series of syncopations, syncopations on the off beats, the weak second and fourth beats of the bar, by the right hand against syncopations emphasizing the strong beats, the first and third of the four in the bar, in the left hand, syncopations that don't stop, that keep going and changing and moving ahead from the first bar of a ragtime performance to the last. Ragtime is essentially a piano music. It was picked up by all the other instruments and moved around to all the voices of the jazz band, but it started on the piano, and it achieved its greatest distinction as piano music.

The genesis of ragtime is the same as the beginning of all of jazz—in hymns and hunting songs, spirituals and coon songs, minstrelsy and marches. But the place in which it had its most significant early impetus was not New

Orleans; it was played in the "tenderloin," the red-light district, the "sporting men's" home of another town. The town was Sedalia, Missouri, a Western town by Eastern standards, with a main street that was convertible from agricultural commerce by day to sporting life by night. The man who more than any other was responsible for the quality and success of ragtime was Scott Joplin.

Scott Joplin, who settled in Sedalia in 1896, published more than fifty ragtime compositions, but he is best known, now as during his lifetime, by the second to reach print, his "Maple Leaf Rag." Both this and the first to be published, "Original Rags," came out in 1899. Joplin wrote a variety of music—songs that suggest Stephen Foster's ballads, waltzes, what he called a "Mexican Serenade," and music for the slow drag, the dance evolved by Negroes to be done to ragtime—as well as an instruction book called *School of Ragtime*. An intelligent man and proud of his heritage, he called one of his rags, "The Chrysanthemum, an Afro-American Intermezzo." In 1903 his first opera was performed in St. Louis. Called *A Guest of Honor,* it was described by its composer as "A Ragtime Opera." In 1911 his unperformed opera, *Treemonisha,* was published by John Stark, his publisher and patron and good friend. A three-act opera, it retains the Aristotelian unities: it takes place during the morning, afternoon, and evening of one day; all of it is laid on a plantation in Arkansas; and it has one story line. The narrative, which Joplin identified in parentheses on the title page as a Story Fictitious, is of a Negro couple named Ned and Monisha, who deal intelligently with their freedom after the Civil War. The title refers to a baby found by Monisha under a tree before her cabin, named after herself and the tree, who is educated and grows up to be a leader of her people.

Scott Joplin died in 1917, the year Storyville was closed and ragtime lost its following, a year pivotal in the large and the small for the American people. In the years before Joplin's death in the Manhattan State Hospital in New York, a generation of able ragtime pianists grew up: Tom

Turpin, Louis Chavuin, Ben Harney, Scott Hayden, James Scott, and Luckey Roberts, the flashy ragtimer Duke Ellington imitated so successfully that traces of the imitation still remain in his playing and gestures. Jelly Roll Morton and Tony Jackson, who figured in other aspects of the jazz story, were essentially adept ragtime pianists. James P. Johnson, the New Jersey boy who grew up to be a considerable jazz pianist and Fats Waller's teacher, is entirely in the ragtime tradition. The list is long and impressive, and the music these men wrote and the way they played other men's music are still part of jazz, at this point so subtly interwoven with the music of the modern players who did not grow up as ragtimers that it can be identified only as contrasting rhythms, one of the abiding graces of jazz form.

There were special places that ragtime pianists made their playing homes; two were the Maple Leaf Club in Sedalia and the Rosebud in St. Louis. As the Royal Gardens Cafe in Chicago was immortalized in the "Royal Garden Blues," and as the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem was immortalized in Edgar Sampson's "Stompin' at the Savoy," so Scott Joplin made the Sedalia club famous in the "Maple Leaf Rag" and the St. Louis cafe famous in his "Rosebud March." In these places and others ragtime players fashioned their repertory, one that was played and made a permanent part of jazz by white musicians. Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" and Joseph Lamb's "Sensation Rag" are two of the most famous rags still played by Dixieland musicians. Eubie Blake, one of the most talented of the musicians to be influenced by Joplin and Lamb and the other ragtime composers, wrote the score for the enormously successful all-Negro musical of 1921, *Shuffle Along*. Noble Sissle, later famous as a band leader, constructed a superb ragtime lyric for one of the songs in that show, "I'm Just Wild About Harry," which has the lilt and drive of the great rags.

The first distinguished white band in New Orleans, the direct predecessor of the more famous Original Dixieland Jazz Band, was Jack Laine's Ragtime Band, which was

gathering musical ideas and skill and an audience at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, at the same time the music after which it was named was maturing. Laine, who was born in 1873, and his son Alfred enlisted at one time or another up through the First World War the talents of just about all the white jazzmen in New Orleans and environs. His Reliance Brass Band, and later his Ragtime Band, played carnivals, marches, just about all the functions a band that could keep you dancing or marching could play. Two Negroes, Dave Perkins and Achille Baquet, wandered into the Laine band for long periods, but were apparently so white of skin and so blue of eye that they passed unnoticed except as musicians. It was with Laine's band that the famous Dixieland tune, "The Livery Stable Blues," emerged; then it was known as "Meatball Blues." They also played the ragged quadrille called "Tiger Rag"; they called it "Praline," after the famous New Orleans sweet and bumpy raggy candy. It was Laine's outfit that got most of the "advertising-wagon" work; its ragtime accents, its blary sound, told all New Orleans about a forthcoming prize fight, about a restaurant, about a dance, about a Sunday night social, about some new kind of food or furniture. And the "tailgate" trombonist was always on the back seat of the advertising wagon, tossing his slide out behind the other musicians so he wouldn't hack their necks or spear their eyes in the cramped quarters behind him.

Papa Laine, in 1951 a handsome white-haired man in his seventies, still remembers his hectic, happy life of four and five decades ago. He was a kind of small-town Meyer Davis, leading some bands, contracting others. At one time he had two or three brass bands going for him and several outfits that played for dancing. He ran a minstrel show at times and played music for the circus. He himself was a drummer; Lawrence Vega was his cornetist, Achille Baquet his clarinetist, Dave Perkins his trombonist; Morton Abraham played the guitar, and Willie Guitar played the bass. In his Reliance Band he had the famous

clarinetist Alcide Nunez, known as "Yellow" to his intimates—because of his complexion, not his character. These musicians are remembered with affection by Laine, their leader, and by others who heard them: Vega for his felicity of phrase, sweetness of tone, and drive; Baquet for his punchy staccato playing; Perkins for that brash style which came to be known as barrelhouse or gutbucket; Abraham for his poignancy, possibly out of his Mexican background; Guitar for his wit, on and off the bass, some of which may have been coincidental, such as the fact that he lived on Music Street. In 1951 Nunez was still known around Chicago, where he had come in 1914, for his blues and ragtime skill on the clarinet.

A band which consisted largely of ex-Laine musicians and which preceded the Original Dixielanders to Chicago was Brown's Dixieland Jass band; as early as 1915 it played at the Lambs' Cafe in the Windy City. This band was a direct outgrowth of an outfit that backed the old vaudeville act of Frisco and McDermott; it was Frisco who sold the Brown band to Chicago cafe owners. In Tom Browne's outfit Larry Shields made his first Northern appearance and demonstrated some of the wooden-toned clarinet authority that later became quite famous with the Original Dixieland group. The six-piece band, in addition to the clarinet (first Gus Mueller, then Shields) and the leader's trombone, consisted of Ray Lopez on cornet, Arnold Loyocano, who doubled on bass and piano, and the drummer Bill Lambert. Most important, it was with this band that "jazz" emerged as a term to describe the semi-raucous, always rhythmic, and quite infectious music these men played. When the band came to Chicago, directly from New Orleans, the word "jass" had a semi-sordid sexual connotation. Chicago Musicians Union officials decided that the competition was neither necessary nor tolerable. They thought that labeling this group a jass or jazz band would be a very successful smear. But their attempt to disparage the Brown band failed; the term caught on, and Brown's Dixieland Band became Brown's Dixieland Jass Band, an exciting purveyor of a new kind

of music with a new name as virile as the sounds it described.

When Yellow Nunez came up to Chicago in 1916 he brought up most of the future members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band: Dominick James (Nick) LaRocca on cornet, Eddie (Daddy) Edwards on trombone, Henry Ragas on piano, and Anton Lada on drums. The band played briefly at the Casino Gardens in Chicago, and during this engagement Nunez and Lada left the band because of a disagreement over money, and perhaps because they thought they were better suited to a band entirely their own.

Lada and Nunez sent to New Orleans for a trombonist (Charlie Panelli), a banjo player (Karl Kalberger), and a pianist (Joe Cawley). They took their new musicians with them to the Athenia Cafe, where they ran at least half a year in 1915, then came to New York to play at Bustanoby's Restaurant, at Thirty-ninth Street and Broadway. In New York they took the name of the Louisiana Five and made a series of records for the Columbia, Emerson, and Edison companies. Some were in the laughing tradition, "Be-Hap-E" and "Clarinet Squawk"; some were closer to sorrow, "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me" and "Weary Blues." The Louisiana Five boasted an able clarinetist in Nunez and an unusually well-equipped drummer in Lada. After the Five disbanded, in 1924, Lada went on to write some fine Dixieland songs, to spend five years in Hollywood as musical director of two radio stations, and then to settle down as a songwriter and reminiscent musician.

When Shields joined up in place of Nunez, the Dixieland Jass Band, first at the Schiller Cafe, then at the DeLobbie Cafe, was all set except for an exchange of drummers, Tony Sbarbaro (Spargo) for Johnny Stein, who had been the first replacement for Lada. With Daddy Edwards as manager and Nick LaRocca as musical guiding hand, the ODJB made off for New York and the glamorous Reisenweber's just off Columbus Circle, replacing the Brown band, which was first offered the job.

The ODJB was an immediate success. Dancers found its music infectious, party givers found jass to their liking as a noisy background for noisy drinking and talking. The Victor and Aeolian companies both recorded the band.

Its first two Victor record sides, made in February, 1917, summed up the band's music: there were the inevitable "Livery Stable Blues" (née "Meatball") and "Dixie Jass Band One-Step." A few days later, the band had the date at which its best-known recording, Nick LaRocca's "Tiger Rag," was made. There were also the "Ostrich Walk," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Sensation Rag," and "Skeleton Jangle," all classics today, all still played wherever musicians indulge in Dixieland. At later record sessions in 1918, before it went to Europe, the band originated its famous "Clarinet Marmalade," "Fidgety Feet," and "Barnyard Blues." No other tunes that came out of its members' heads ever hit again like these. It had only one other record side that was quite such an epoch-making affair, and that was some years later when the declining band recorded "Margie," with "Palesteena" overleaf.

There were changes in this band before it left for Europe. Pianist Henry Ragas, who was, in one of the unfortunate jazz traditions, an enormous drinker, died in his hotel room in February 1919, and was replaced by several men, who in turn made way for J. Russell Robinson. Daddy Edwards had no eyes for Europe, so Emil Christian took over his trombone role.

The band got to England in March 1919, and was featured in the musical *Joy Bells,* which was otherwise noteworthy only for its most successful song, "The Bells of St. Mary's." The band played at places like Rector's and the 400 Club and became something of a pet diversion of London society.

When it came back to New York after nearly two years of England and Paris, the band began to struggle some and to make a few changes of style and personnel. At last the saxophone made its appearance, played by Benny

Krueger, who doubled on alto and tenor saxes. The Dixielanders went commercial in the most invidious sense; they were soon a "true fox trot band." They played what was popular and what was successful, and by the time they got to the Balconades on Columbus Avenue at Sixty-sixth Street in 1923 they were more distinguished for their old tunes, which they still played, though with little of the old energy—"Tiger Rag," "At the Jazz Band Ball," "Jazz Me Blues" and of course the "Livery Stable Blues"—than they were for the actual quality of their performance. Frank Signorelli, who figured in bands of some jazz importance for the next ten years, replaced Russell Robinson on piano; Larry Shields and Nick LaRocca went South, where they found Robinson on the police force, and Daddy Edwards followed them shortly after and wound up coaching various athletic teams at the New Orleans YMCA. Just before the Dixielanders broke up, Bix Beiderbecke wandered into the Balconades and heard them play the tunes that he was to play and reinvigorate in the following years.

The Original Dixieland Band had not been a great success in its home town, New Orleans, which is why it assumed the "Dixieland" tag rather than the name of its home town. This name has ever since been associated with music that is more or less a direct product of their performances. What they played was often deliberately funny, imitating animal sounds in the "Barnyard Blues," human sounds in most of the other pieces. Theirs was a kind of comedy drama without dialogue, but full of amusing, identifiable sound, marked for farcical conflict and belly-laugh climax. It is today a good deal less contrapuntal in its structure, and it has lost its drive because the greater jazzmen who followed discovered that playing a straight unaccented four-to-the-bar gets a much better beat than the weak-and-strong playing, the so-called two-beat, of the Dixie musicians. With the exception of the Lunceford two-beat, which wasn't even vaguely Dixieland but depended on dotted strong beats—anticipations, as they are called—for its drive, two-beat jazz has lost its

fire. It sustained musicians for about ten or twelve years after the dissolution of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and then collapsed of its own inherent rhythmic weakness.

But today, if one listens to the records of the Original Dixieland Band without prejudice, it is almost impossible to deny the extraordinary vitality and the linear strength of the music that went along with the comedy. Regarded only historically, the records are exciting. They reflect the contagious conviction of the five musicians; the skill of a facile clarinetist, Larry Shields, in the Picou tradition, with surer technique and larger musicianship; and above all, close attention to the oldest business in music, that of setting melodic line against melodic line. With none of the sophistication and very few of the resources of the baroque masters who created their intricate counterpoint out of the heritage of the Gregorian chant, the New Orleans boys nonetheless understood the essential strength of linear writing. When, through the din of pre-electric recording, you hear LaRocca's cornet play the melody lead, Shields echo it an octave higher, Edwards underscore it an octave lower, and the piano give it a kind of ground bass, you feel the essential strength, the musical trueness of this form. Relying on trite melodies, the Dixielanders were fortunate in having the blue notes of the blues and the intense steadiness of rhythm that has always characterized good jazz. These things, expressed in a rough counterpoint, make the Original Dixieland Jazz Band still hearable today, in spite of the crudities of such originals as the "Tiger Rag" and the inanities of "At the Jazz Band Ball" and "Jazz Me Blues."

The New Orleans Rhythm Kings came up to Chicago four years after the Original Dixielanders. They differed very little from the Original Dixieland Jazz Band; their music was much the same, their ensemble drive was much less, but two of their soloists were more gifted than any of the Dixielanders. Paul Mares was the leader of the band, which opened in 1921 at Friars' Inn on the near-north side of Chicago, a couple of blocks away from Michigan Avenue and the Art Institute. Mares was the

leader, but no star. His outstanding men were Leon Rappolo, the clarinetist, and George Brunies, the trombonist. Mares played trumpet, Jack Pettis played the saxophones —chiefly C-melody—Elmer Schoebel was the pianist and arranged such of the numbers as were arranged, Lew Black played banjo, Steve Brown bass, and Frank Snyder drums. The band played at Friars' Inn for more than two years, and before it was finished as an organization it had the distinction of bringing Ben Pollack into the band picture as its drummer and offering numerous examples in each of its instrumentalists to the distinguished jazz musicians who grew up in Chicago in the next decade. Today the Rhythm Kings' records offer little but Rappolo's clarinet and Brunies' trombone; the ensemble sounds weak and the inspiration lags. When you realize that these musicians played together for four years after the last vigorous performances of the Original Dixieland group, it is no compliment to them to mark the lack of originality. Remaining members may take great pride, however, in the fact that they nurtured Leon Rappolo and played with Brunies when he was at his best.

Leon Joseph Rappolo was born in New Orleans on March 16, 1902, the son of a concert artist, the grandson of a clarinetist, and from the very beginning a character about whom legends inevitably grow. He started as a violinist and switched to clarinet in emulation of his grandfather; he took some lesons and at fourteen decided he was good enough to play in a pit band. He ran away from home to prove his professional stature, and joined the band that was playing for Bea Palmer's act on the Orpheum Circuit; she was one of the big names of 1916 vaudeville, and her husband-pianist, Al Siegel, has since been associated with a large number of successful popular singers only vaguely related to jazz. Rappolo was found by the police of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and, in accordance with his parents' orders, brought back to New Orleans. There, a few years later, he played at the Halfway House with Albert Brunies' band, which trained one Brunies brother after another—but none of brother

George's quality—on various jazz instruments. In this band Leon started and, after his trip to Chicago, ended. With the Halfway House orchestra he played some guitar and snare drum as well as clarinet, and he quickly won the admiration of all the musicians he played with and many he didn't. Just before the New Orleans Rhythm Kings opened at Friars' Inn they persuaded Rappolo to join them, and he stayed with them a couple of years until, sick in mind and wandering in responsibility, he went back to New Orleans to join the Halfway House orchestra of Albert Brunies again. After a brief stay, it was obvious that a mental hospital was the only safe place for Rappolo, and he was incarcerated in one until his death in 1941.

The legends about Rappolo are numerous and just about all unproven. The best known is about his performance on telephone wires while a friend listened, his ear on one of the poles, applauding each well-tuned telephone-wire phrase. From stories like this and from Rappolo's unquestionable clarinet authority, engendered by a large tone and a sense of phrasing, came an enormous reputation. Fortunately we have some recorded proof of Rappolo's skill to sustain it.

We don't have anything but a few oldsters' words for the alleged brilliance of Emmett Hardy, the trumpeter and cornetist who played briefly with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings at Friars' Inn, and on riverboats, where they say he was Bix Beiderbecke's strongest and most direct influence. The influence apparently lay in Hardy's preciseness and sweetness of tone and soft attack—all qualities of Bix's playing.

George Clarence Brunies, who was born two years before Rappolo in New Orleans, also came of a musical family. He joined the New Orleans Rhythm Kings when the band started in 1919, and stayed with them through their most important years, leaving them in 1923, two years before the last records of this group were made. From the very beginning his style was molded by an enormous tone, made burly by his pulverizing slide technique

and his cheek-contorting blowing. For twelve years, from 1923 to 1935, Brunies languished in the Ted Lewis band, never, even at its best, a jazz orchestra of any distinction. Finally, with the success of the hit song "The Music Goes Round and Round" at Christmastime in 1935 and the subsequent sensation that Benny Goodman caused, ushering in the big-band "swing" craze, there were jobs again for the New Orleans tailgate artist in legitimate jazz bands. With the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, at the beginning of his career, as later, Brunies made funny noises with his horn and topped the infectious caterwaul with a clown act in which he slid the trombone over its various positions with his foot, lying on the floor to do it and thereby performing a feat that was as amusing, and as successful musically, as Joe Venuti's nimble bowing of the four strings of the fiddle at once. In later years, guided by a numerologist, Brunies changed the spelling of his first name, dropping the final e, and removed the e in his second name, to end up with the name of Georg Brunis. His playing remained unchanged, blowzy as ever, funny as ever, and just as strongly dependent upon a two-beat rhythm.

The line between the humor of these Dixieland musicians—the ODJB's animal imitations or George Brunies' clowning—and pure corn is a very thin one. To the undiscriminating ear it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between the clumsy, grossly syncopated excesses of the clarinetists Boyd Center and Fess Williams and the trumpeter Clyde McCoy, on the one hand, and the dramatic, sometimes touching, sometimes amusing two-beat cadences of Shields, Rappolo, or Brunies. There are two kinds of music, however, of which the pseudo-Dixieland, really corny musicians are entirely incapable. None of them can ever achieve the poignancy, the searing pathos of a first-rate Dixieland ballad or blues, the kind of torch that in later years was carried by Jack Teagarden on trombone and Bobby Hackett on cornet and trumpet. None of them, not even Spike Jones, who knows better and is satirizing rather than imitating Dixie-