

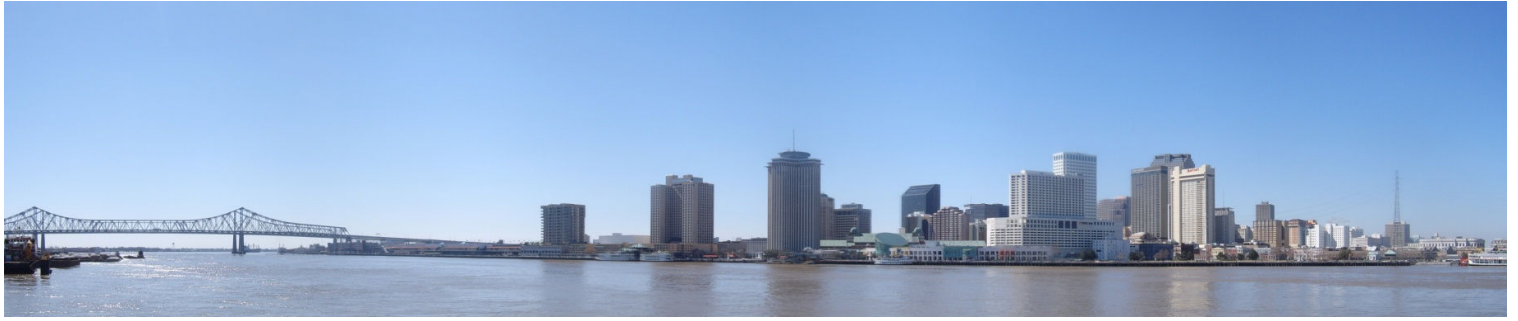
Liceul Teoretic "CALLATIS", Mangalia

New Orleans: The birthplace of Jazz

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The birthplace of Jazz*



Table of contents

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
New Orleans Jazz	5
Early Roots	8
The Beginnings	10
Important Figures	13
Buddy “King” Bolden	13
Sidney Bechet	16
Louis Armstrong	18
Conclusions	21
Bibliography	22
Appendix 1: Jazz entertainment program by the “Negroes”	23

Abstract

I have always been astonished by the way music influences our daily lives, especially by the way how it completely integrates into our society as it was always part of it. Music gives notion to every one of us. It enhances our characters and gives us the strength to carry our lives on in an unimaginable fantastic manner. It helps us go through many of our daily problems and, notably, it helps us get over many strange moods we might me in.

Starting from the soft pop music up to rock 'n roll, the well known house music genres up to country music or any other genres that please our ears in nowadays society, what has been more than a mystery to me was the amount of difficulty one has to encounter when actually reproducing such a genre.

After studying multiple genres and listening to many artists, I have always encountered a problem that I would never come to solve: where is the roots of their music? If I was to study this I would probably have to go back in time around the XI century to ask the very person that is claimed to have first composed a musical piece, namely *Hildegard of Bingen*, having known his religious chants have been counted as the first of their origin in time, but this would not give me the answers I am seeking.

It all begins when the band starts to increase the tempo, they start using variations, the guitarists and the piano men start improvising, they start creating music. Mixing dominant chords with harmonic arpeggios and delightfully sounding piano scale progressions that never get out of hand, the amazing rhythm of the drums whilst synchronized with the bassist – that's what makes a band, especially a Jazz band. Studying Jazz in order to play can become exhaustive to one, especially when one discovers that Jazz does not only require them to know how to play a specific instrument or have a considerable amount of knowledge in music theory. No, of course not, Jazz is about senses, it's about expressing human thoughts and feelings through a musical instrument. It is astonishing how advanced can such a genre be, more astonishing is the fact that you never know when it starts and you'll never guess when it ended. But we all know where it begins, and I took the liberty to make a study in order to have it well presented to the entire world – Jazz, how it started, where it started, and how it became a phenomenon

Introduction

Pre-history of Jazz and the Africanization of the American Music

“An elderly black man sits astride a large cylindrical drum. Using his fingers and the edge of his hand, he jabs repeatedly at the drum head — which is around a foot in diameter and probably made from an animal skin — evoking a throbbing pulsation with rapid, sharp strokes. A second drummer, holding his instrument between his knees, joins in, playing with the same staccato attack. A third black man, seated on the ground, plucks at a string instrument, the body of which is roughly fashioned from a calabash. Another calabash has been made into a drum, and a woman beats at it with two short sticks. One voice, then other voices join in.”¹ This is how Jazz started out, the scene may at first be happening in Africa, but, in fact, it is happening in the nineteenth century of New Orleans. It all took place in the open area then known as Congo Square – today Louis Armstrong Park which stands on the same ground. More of these collective dances were witnessed by Benjamin Latrobe, the noted architect, the named event was witnessed on February 21, 1819, there were not only notes of



¹ “The History of Jazz” - Ted Gioia (1997)

such dances but also drawings that provide as material of several sketches of the instruments used. Therefore, as a confirmation of the fact that musicians of the Congo Square, circa 1819, were playing percussion and string instruments identical to those characteristic of indigenous African music several drawings were evidenced.

This proves the fact that African culture has made its appearance in an American style, therefore, the Congo Square is the living testimonial of the early scenes of Jazz music held upon the mainframe in the center of New Orleans. The dances are told to have been held until sometime before 1870, at least publicly, in the Congo Square, but afterwards they have continued being held in amongst private gatherings.

From another perspective, one might claim that there's no single African or European culture, of course, having it generalized becoming useful. Historically, African musicians are claimed to be pioneers² in the field of complex rhythms, whilst Europeans were told to have taken the lead in developing harmony – the manipulation of chords³ (making combinations of three or more notes which, when sounded together for Western listeners to hear as one complex sound). Jazz is told to be drawn heavily⁴ on both heritages, but boundaries blur.

The occurrences of the African-European elements mix are told to have been mixing for millennia, and this not only happening only in America, but, America, especially New Orleans, represents the very place where Jazz took intensified forms and has managed to become part of the American culture whereas it was merely sustained in its genesis period, simply due to the fact that there were *slaves* involved in the process of musical creation, which was not easily accepted at that time by the ones governing, but, throughout time, Jazz has managed to prove that everyone should be treated equally for the sole fact that there are talented people on any side of the world, ignoring their appearance or background, nevertheless the place where they were born.



² "Why Jazz?" – Kevin Whitehead

³ A chord is established when the 1st, 3rd and 5th note from its scale are played together, by combining different notes from the same scale or from adjacent chord scales then different harmonized sounds would appear

⁴ African-rooted rhythms have been Europeanized and European harmonies have been influenced by African American blues ("Why Jazz"- Jazz from Its Origins to 1940: Roots, early Jazz, the Swing Era)

New Orleans Jazz

“Though last, not least”- William Shakespeare

The culture of its colored citizens

Before the late war, the city of New Orleans was often styled “the Paris of America”. The providence of Louisiana, originally settled by the French, and until 1812, when it became a State of the American Union, contained a population with remarkable characteristics similar to those of the people of French. It is well known that the Frenchman has for a long time been proverbially a devotee of the fine arts and remarked by fine culture and love for creation.

By comparing New Orleans to the famous capital of France and noting the fact that the love for divine arts is the main concept that succeeded enlarging the culture of this musical-loving area, it is notable that a series of events that have occurred in past had a strong benefit on the development and growth of New Orleans’ popularity.

Everything that is noted to sustain the musical development and love for divine arts is said to apply to the colored people of New Orleans as well, almost, as to the others. Natural lovers of the “art divine”, and naturally capable of musical expression – whereas knowing that they had less advantages for culture than the others, *have with voice and instrument, and even as composers, helped to form the throng of harmonists, playing no mean part in the same*⁵. Colored people of New Orleans have long been remarked for their great passions for arts, especially for their love of and proficiency in music. However, as for the exhibition of this ambitious musical spirit, there still was a specific yearning for a higher education and a higher life, such people often exceeded those of fairer complexions, whereas many of their sons and daughters managing to attain to a surpassing degree of proficiency in music, while they were noticed for that ease and polish of manners, and, of course, that specific real refinement of living – which ever mark the true lady or gentleman.

Merely accepted, the Africans were always known as strong people even though they might not appear to be so. They would often struggle and resist much oppression that was meant to have them understand that they are not to be treated as the rest of the people, especially as compared to a high-class citizen, an African

⁵ “Music and Some Highly Musical People” – James M. Trotter, 2009

person would often be ignored or treated with extremely bad manners, nevertheless those doing so forgetting that every human being must be treated equally regardless of their wealth or skin color.

However, having known that many of the talented colored citizens were forced to move, here is a quote from a paper prepared by a cultured gentleman of that city (himself a fine musician) – with the following retrospective comment on some of the former residents there:

"For want of avenues in which to work their way in life, and for many reasons which are easily understood, our best artists [colored] removed to other countries in search of their rights, and of proper channels in which to achieve success in the world. Among these were Eugène Warburg, since distinguished in Italy as a sculptor; Victor Séjour, in Paris, as a poet, and composer of tragedy; Caraby, in France, as a lawyer; Dubuclet, in Bordeaux, as a physician and musician; and many others."

All the named persons were forced to leave New Orleans, their native city, because of the prejudice that prevailed against them on account of their color. Having left to other countries where love for fine arts and artist recognition was put first before everything, these aspiring artists arose and have received high distinction in their chosen callings.

Of those who remained in New Orleans in spite of all the repressions *the Lambert Family*⁶ has become remarkable, consisting of seven persons, each of its members possessing great musical talent, supplemented by most careful cultivation. *Richard Lambert*, the father, has long been highly esteemed as a teacher of music. Many of his pupils have attained to a fine degree of proficiency as performers of music, and some of them are to-day composers.

Lucien Lambert, very early in life, attracted attention by his ardent devotion to the study of music. He practiced up to six hours per day, thus becoming a pianist of rare ability. With a style of performance really exquisite, he has always excited the admiration, and sometimes the wonder of his auditors, by easy triumphs over all piano difficulties. He soon became a composer of great merit. Known as a man of high soul, he also, ere long, grew restive under the restraints that, on account of his complexion, were thrown around him in New Orleans. He always longed to breathe the air of a free country, where he might have an equal chance with all others to develop his

⁶ "Music and Some Highly Musical People" – James M. Trotter, 2009

powers. After several years he went to French in order to continue his studies in Paris under the best masters of the art, he then managed to attain a great skill in performance and in composition.

There are countless self-taught and talented colored artists native from New Orleans that should be presented, but the most important fact is that most of them managed to held concerts (although claimed as “concerts by amateur musicians of the colored race”), the grand concert programme (*Appendix 1*) proves that they were well organized and that everything they accomplish was for the love of fine arts.



King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, 1921

Early Roots

Historians have always been tempted to simplify their work by dividing time into clearly marked periods. The major weakness of this system becomes apparent as soon as one thinks of the way in which the limits are confused by events that unavoidably overlap different epochs. It may seem even trickier *to attempt a division of jazz into three, four or five periods*⁷ since it has covered scarcely half a century. Since the career of a musician sometimes lasts much longer than the historical period to which it belongs, it is easy to imagine the confusion to which such a procedure can lead. However, jazz has been characterized at given times by important movements. It may be easy for one to synthesize the modern or classic terms into a phrase, but, obviously, the pros and cons of this subject are pretty well balanced.

It may seem easy to name a year or the beginning of the career of a well-known jazz artist, for example given that 1947 was the great year of Charlie Parker's modern recording but it also represented an year notable for excellent works that were classical or even older in spirit. Independently of the date, Louis Armstrong's work can be identified either with oldtime jazz or with classical jazz. It seems reasonable to divide the history of jazz into periods that correspond to a more or less pronounced preponderance of one school over the others.

New Orleans Jazz Epoch

First, there is the epoch of primitive jazz. It is said to run from the birth of jazz, to which it is impossible to fix a precise date (generally situated around 1900), to the great migration that followed the closing down of Storyville⁸ (in 1917), there is not much information regardless to this period when Jazz was at the roots of its evolution, as there were no recording found dated to that period.

The second period, namely "advanced New Orleans" or "oldtime" jazz, is easy to be defined as the year 1917 saw not only the migration but also the oldest known recording in which it is possible to recognize a work of Jazz, however weak it may be:

⁷ "Jazz: Its evolution and essence" – André Hodeir, 1956

⁸ Storyville, "forbidden quarter" of New Orleans, was closed down by municipal order soon after the United States entered the war. This was an extremely hard blow to the musicians employed by its cabarets, brothels and gambling houses

“DIXIE JASS BAND ONE-STEP / LIVERY STABLE BLUES” by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The value of the recordings, along with its importance, would be hard to overestimate from that point on. Anyhow, thanks to the records, the collective language of jazz in the twenties could be somewhat described, as well with the slow development of an individualistic style that brought with its triumph the division and scattering of the New Orleans school.

The so-called era stability of the jazz can be easily mistaken as around 1927 (a period of stability in which collectivistic and individualistic tendencies would be harmoniously fused) as this equilibrium, as it appears in Armstrong’s 1927-1928 recordings, turned out to be precarious. It was, therefore, at the very moment when it was turning out its most beautiful works that the New Orleans school lost the lead. It slipped very quickly into an almost complete oblivion, from which it was drawn only by the miracle of the “New Orleans Revival” ten years later. The jazz of this period (1917-1926) shall be called “oldtime” to distinguish it from primitive jazz as we conjecture it must have been formed before 1917.

A SUMMING UP OF THE EVOLUTION OF JAZZ				
AGES (or PERIODS)	DATES	PRINCIPAL CENTERS	PREDOMINANT AND SECONDARY TENDENCIES	LEADERS
Primitive	c. 1900 (?) - 1917	New Orleans	original New Orleans style	Buddy Bolden, Bunk Johnson, Em. Perez, etc.
Oldtime	1917-1926	Chicago	advanced New Orleans style	King Oliver, Jelly Roll Mor- ton, Louis Armstrong
Pre-Classical	1927-1934	New York	big band; piano	F. Henderson, J. P. Johnson
		New York	swing style in gestation	Armstrong, Hawkins, Hines, Bix
		Kansas City	growth of the big band	F. Henderson, Ellington, Ben- nie Moten
Classical	1935-1945	Chicago	vestiges of New Orleans	Noone, Morton, etc.
		New York	swing style	Eldridge, Wells, Hawkins, Young, Fats, Wilson, Ta- tum, Webb, Cole, Hamp- ton, Goodman
			peak of the big band New Orleans Revival (begin- ning 1938-1940)	Ellington, Lunceford, Basie Armstrong, Bechet, Morton, Ory, B. Johnson
Modern	1945-...	New York	bebop style	Gillespie, Parker
			cool style	Davis, Konitz, Mulligan
			holdovers: swing style	Young, Tatum, Garner
(Picture 2) ⁹			New Orleans big band	Armstrong, Bechet Ellington, Hampton
		West Coast	progressive	Kenton, Brubeck

⁹ “Jazz: Its evolution and essence” – André Hodeir, 1956 – A distinguished table synthesizing the evolution of jazz through specific periods of time with their representative figures

Jazz through time

*“There was a time when it was believed that the original jazz was intristically superior to everything that came later.”*¹⁰ Therefore, jazz and the mix-up of different musical genres was just a step through time in order to achieve a greater purpose – the development of an individually-intriguing style that was to be followed many years later, however, “everything that got away from the New Orleans traditions was considered a deviation” – the whole philosophy of jazz was subordinated to this idea, which has been accepted as a *credo*, without discussion. New Orleans jazz was pure, other styles were less pure – this was self-evident.

*A new form of musical expression*¹¹ is no more capable than a living thing of being the result of spontaneous generation. It is the reflection of a civilization; and one civilization that owes its existence to others. An artistic movement – once born – may be strong enough to develop without external help.

The Beginnings

“Though last, not least”- William Shakespeare

Jazz music was, ultimately, the product of New Orleans’ melting pot. At the turn of the century, blues music, ragtime and the native brass-band fanfares would dominate the musical New Orleans. The latter¹² had a great importance on the development of Jazz music. Therefore, there were many “Brass Bands” that would then be formed (the *Excelsion Brass Band – formed in 1880, raised the Creole drummer John Robichaux and the Creole clarinetist Alphonse Pico, and many more*). However, notably missing from this mix was religious music, therefore it had not played that much of a role in the development of jazz music. Also missing was white popular music – this would define the “commercial” format of jazz music, but not its core technical characteristics.

¹⁰ “Jazz: Its evolution and essence” – André Hodeir, 1956, Chapter III – “Blues and Military Marches”

¹¹ “Huit jours avec Sidney Béchet” – M. Saury, in *Jazz-Hot*, November, 1949

¹² Used both in the Mardi Gras parades and in funerals, boasted a vast repertoire of styles, from military marches to “rags” – The History of Jazz Music by Piero Scaruffi

All the New Orleans' brass bands would eventually spread in the saloons and dancehalls of *Storyville*¹³. These bands, *Jack "Papa" Laine's Reliance Brass Band*,¹⁴, *John Robichaux's band*, *Buddy Bolden's band*, *Alphose Picou's Columbia Brass Band*, *Manuel Perez's Imperial Orchestra*, would probably be considered to have played a mixture of blues, ragtime and traditional dance music.

Jazz's main characteristics (improvisation, syncopation) would be taken up by some performers who shared a passion for them – those were either brass bands (cornet or trumpet for the melody, clarinet for counterpoint, trombone or tuba or percussion for rhythm), that very often were marching bands, or solo pianists, who very often were ragtime pianists.

In 1898 the United States defeated Spain (gaining Puerto Rico and "liberating" Cuba). The U.S. troops that were coming back from the Caribbean front landed in New Orleans with European brass instruments that were sold for a cheap price on the black market. Within a few years, every neighborhood in New Orleans boasted a brass band. The influence of blues music could be heard in the way these instruments were played, mainly because they imitated the vocal styles of blues music (often on a syncopated rhythm borrowed from ragtime).

*"During the first decade of the 20th century, these bands would compete in public contests that highlighted the virtuosi. As an example, Charles "Buddy" Bolden's trumpet playing became legendary, as did his arrangements (brass instruments playing blues music), as did his division of instrumental roles (the cornet leading the melody, the trombone providing a bass counterpoint and the clarinet dancing around the melody in higher tone) as did his repertory (Make me a Pallet on the Floor, The House Got ready, Bucket's Got a Hole In It, Buddy Bolden's Blues), but he was locked into a mental hospital in 1907 before he could record any of his music."*¹⁵

Therefore, Buddy Bolden's band is considered to be probably the first New Orleans band to truly emphasize improvisation. His style was the epitome of "hot jazz", as opposed to the "downtown style" of the Creoles. As well as other jazz founding brass bands, many of them had their time of fortune and their time of bad luck, but, as it always happens, they always manage to gain a place in the great

¹³ The red-light district created by a city ordinance in 1897 - *The History of Jazz Music* by Piero Scaruffi

¹⁴ First major white band, formed in 1892

¹⁵ *The History of Jazz Music* – Piero Scaruffi

history of jazz, as seen in the late century of New Orleans' streets. Fortunately for them, they managed to make a respectful name even though they didn't have so many resources as other may have had.

However, the most popular orchestras emphasized the cornet/trumpet (the main melodic instrument) and the clarinet (the counter-melody), while the trombone provided the bass counterpoint and the other instruments (drums, banjo, guitar, contrabass, piano) provided the rhythm section.

In 1911, Bill Johnson, a New Orleans bass player, moved to California and eventually managed to get his orchestra to follow him. From 1913 till 1917 the Original Creole Band was the first black orchestra to tour outside New Orleans.

Unlike blues music, that was exclusively performed by blacks, jazz music was as inter-racial as the melting pot of New Orleans. Blacks were not the only ones who played jazz. Jazz groups were formed by Italians, Creoles and all sorts of European immigrants. The "African" roots of the music may or may not have been obvious to the practitioners, but clearly it did not stop them from adopting it.



Important Figures



Buddy “King” Bolden

Charles “Buddy” Bolden, born on September 6th, 1877, deceased on November 4th, 1931, was an African American cornetist¹⁶ and is regarded by contemporaries as a key figure in the development of a New Orleans style of rag-time music which later came to be known as jazz.

Life

He was known as King Bolden, and his band was a top draw in New Orleans (the city where he was born) from about 1900 up to 1907, when he was incapacitated by schizophrenia (then called dementia praecox). He left no known surviving recording, but he was known for his very loud sound and constant improvisation. It is also told that he was a barber by trade or that he published a scandal sheet called *The Cricket* but, still, there is no strong proof to bring truth to either of them, nonetheless, his father was a teamster.

Bolden suffered an episode of acute alcoholic psychosis in 1907 at the age of 30. With a full diagnosis of dementia praecox, he was admitted to the Louisiana State Insane Asylum at Jackson, a mental institution, where he spent the rest of his life. Bolden was buried in an unmarked grave in Holt Cemetery, a pauper’s graveyard in New Orleans. In 1998 a monument to Bolden was erected in Holt Cemetery, but his exact gravesite remains unknown.

Jazz Life

Many early jazz musicians credited Bolden and the members of his band with being the originators of what came to be known as “jazz”, though the term was not yet

¹⁶ www.wikipedia.org

in common musical use until after the era of Bolden's prominence. At least one writer labeled him as the father of jazz.¹⁷

Therefore, although Bolden is often cited as the first jazz musician, he may well be the most enigmatic figure the music has ever produced. He does not manage to leave any recordings, despite the rumored existence of a cylinder recording from the turn of the century – and no mention of his music appeared in print until 1933, two years after his death, and some three decades after Bolden contributed to the revolutionary birth of a new style of American music. For many years, the only thing known about Bolden was – barely a sketch of a biography – a biography that placed Bolden as a barber and editor of a local scandal sheet, both facts ultimately proven to be untrue.

Anyhow, the following story depicts how Bolden managed to gather his band behind his shop in Franklin Street. He is described as cutting hair and shaving beards by the day – and by night blowing his horn at dances. *“Soon his talents as improviser and instrumentalist made him a celebrity, and there was a great demand for the services of his five-piece band, which included Willy Cornish on valve trombone, Jimmy Johnson on string bass, Brock Mumford on Guitar, and Willy Werner or Frank Lewis on clarinet.”*¹⁸, Bolden is barely presented as a father figure of Jazz, as described below, he and his fellow companions succeed in making a reputation in New Orleans as one of the greatest bands (pioneering bands as well) of that time – it is also known that there were huge requests of bands for picnics to different celebrations. Buddy Bolden is also told that he is made out to be “an epochal figure”, at the time when he and his band were starting out, his importance in the history of jazz seeming to be overwhelming, therefore, legends are woven about his person: *“he was somewhat of a scoundrel and sot, he never paid his musicians, he delighted in regaling or shocking his audience by singing obscene couplets, his instrumental talents and his powers of improvisation earned him the sobriquet of “King” Bolden; he used to place himself near the open window and blow his horn like a maniac, he could be heard miles away across the river, and all within range, attracted as if by a magnet by this clarion call, would flock around the great cornetist”*.

Whatever be the actual truth of manner, King Bolden was indisputably the greatest trumpet of the Delta City. He was told to be the idol of all the children from

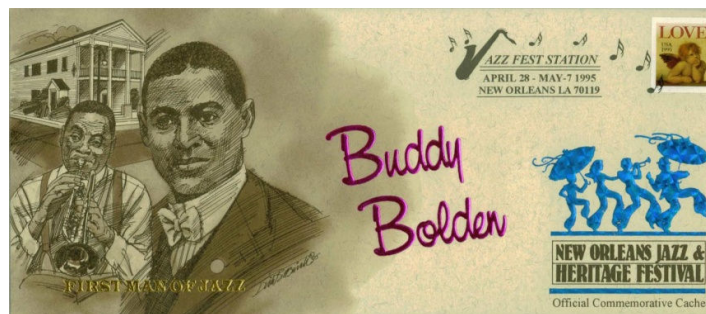
¹⁷ The History of Jazz – Ted Gioia

¹⁸ Jazz: “From the Congo to the Metropolitan”- Robert Goffin

Perdilo to Rampart and from Franklin to Basin Street. King of the rag and the ramble, he was adored by countless women who carried his paraphernalia and gave him presents. When two of the musical advertising wagons met him in the street and locked wheels for a “cutting contest”, woe betide the band that dared to contest the sway of King Bolden.

However, besides legends and rumors, detailed research conducted by Donald Marquis, which culminated in his 1978 book “In search of Buddy Bolden, First Man of Jazz”, put to rest the many misconceptions and brings us probably as close as we will ever get to Bolden and his music.

After King Bolden was put away in an institution his former band was re-formed as the *Eagle Band* with Bunk Johnson on cornet. They always owed Buddy Bolden the inspiration and the importance that he gave to improvisation and the new styles that made them famous in the first place.





Sidney Bechet

Sideney Bechet, born on May 14th, deceased on May 14th, 1959, was an American jazz saxophonist, clarinetist and composer.

He was one of the first important soloists in jazz (beating cornetist and trumpeter Lous Armstrong to the recording studio by several months and later playing duets with Armstrong), and was perhaps the first notable jazz saxophonist. He had a forceful

delivery, well-constructed improvisation and a distinctive, wide vibrato that characterized Bechet's playing.

Life

Bechet (pronounced BAH-shay by the family, most commonly pronounced buh-SHAY) was born in New Orleans to a middle-class Creole of Color family.¹⁹ Sidney's older brother Leonard Bechet (1877 – 1952) was a part time trombonist and bandleader. Sidney Bechet was a self-taught artist, he quickly learned to play several musical instruments kept around the house – he soon decided to focus on clarinet. At age six, Sidney started playing along with his brother's band at a family birthday party, debuting his talents to acclaim.

Later in his youth, Bechet studied with such renowned Creole clarinetists as Lorenzo Tio, "Big Eye" Louis Nelson Delisle, and George Baquet. Soon after, Bechet would be found playing in many New Orleans ensembles, improvising with what was "acceptable" for jazz at that time (obligatos, with scales and arpeggios, and "varying" the melody). These ensembles included parade work with Henry Allen's celebrated Brass Band, the Olympia Orchestra, and John Robichaux's "genteel" dance orchestra. In 1911-1912, he performed with Bunk Johnson in the Eagle Band of New Orleans, and in 1913-1914 with King Oliver in the Olympia Band.



¹⁹ www.wikipedia.org

Jazz background

In 1919, Sidney Bechet bought a soprano sax, fatter and louder than the woody clarinet but with similar range.²⁰ Bechet played it in the fluid piccolo/clarinet tradition, but with the first-among-equals authority appropriate to an instrument made of brass, like a trumpet. His signature was quick, pulsating tremolo (rapid fluctuations in air flow and pitch), an electrifying sound.

Bechet was the rare early horn player strong enough to challenge Louis Armstrong. In 1924's "Cake-Walking Babies From Home" by the ad hoc Red Onion Jazz Babies, they battle for the lead, with pianist Lil Hardin Armstrong and singer Alberta Hunter. Bechet plays rings around Armstrong's cornet in thrilling collective improvisations. But Bechet spent much of the 1920s in Europe, and he recorded little during that decade.

Sidney Bechet is told to be the man who remained on the top for thirty years.²¹ He also confessed that "there are layers and layers of quality between his earliest style and the way he plays today". Each epoch has its own standards of judgment and points of reference. His saxophone style was exuberant, eloquent and even torrential²², claimed to be the musician who tamed the soprano saxophone for jazz music. After performing in Will-Marion Cook's orchestra during its legendary European tour of 1919, cutting a handful of tracks in 1923-1924, including his first tour de force in Clarence Williams' *Kansas City Man Blues* (August 1923), recording with Louis Armstrong and Alberta Hunter in the *Red Onion Jazz Babies* (1924), and accompanying Josephine Baker in Paris (1925-1929), Bechet recorded sparingly, although his style was reaching maturity, as proven by his *Lay Your Racket* (September 1932) and *I want you tonight* (same session), and especially by Joe Jordan's *Shag* (same session), that features his most momentous playing (all of them with the seven-piece *New Orleans Feetwarmers*). In November 1938 his career was reborn thanks to his *Chant In The Night* and *What A Dream* (recorded by an "orchestra" of soprano sax, baritone sax, piano, guitar, drums, bass). He pioneered overdubbing when he played six instruments (clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, piano, bass, drums) on *Seik of Araby* (April 1941).

²⁰ Why Jazz – Kevin Whitehead

²¹ Jazz: From Congo to the Metropolitan by Robert Goffin

²² A history of Jazz Music – Piero Scaruffi



Louis Armstrong

Born on August 4th, in New Orleans, Louisiana and deceased on July 6th, New York City, also known as “Satchmo”, Louis Armstrong was a trumpet player and a jazz singer, being one of the representatives of the “New Orleans style” in jazz music executed in Chicago around 1920-1930.

Life and Jazz History

Armstrong, born in New Orleans, Louisiana, did not have a restless childhood, on the contrary, his parents split up at an early time after his birth. He was put into the care of a aunt, Josephine, whilst his mother was most likely to be prostituting.

He tried nameless jobs, from carriage driver, milkman, and salesman. He was attracted by music from his early teens; he used to sing around the corners with improvised groups, although not having the possibility or the force to play a blowing instrument, which would satisfy his desire. Due to the fact that he was regularly active in all those gatherings (singing constantly) he developed an optimum intonation and a considerably sense of improvisation, one of the essential characteristics of jazz which helped him into the further development of his musical career.

At the early age of 7 Armstrong sang amongst the street of his native city with a group of children, whereas at the age of 13 he studied the cornet and conducted the correction school’s orchestra (where he was sent to after shooting a fire in the sky in the New Year’s Eve). After being liberated, he marches the streets of New Orleans with a small orchestra group that was sympathized by the population of the city, executing, amongst others, the musical piece “When the Saint Go Marchin’in”, which, later on, would become one of his most interpreted musical pieces. During the marching, Armstrong meets Joe Oliver, considered to be one of the best cornet player from New Orleans, also known as “King Oliver”, he would later give Armstrong trumpet lessons and accept him in his band when, one night, Armstrong successfully

replaces the trumpet player of the orchestra, Kid Ory (who was also a local celebrity). Only in November 1918, stimulated by his performances from “riverboats”²³, he then starts to learn the musical notes and to decipher tablatures, thus becoming a complete professional musician.

In 1922 Armstrong moves to Chicago (this area would then be known as the center of jazz music, in a growing development) where, during this period of his musical maturity, he is preoccupied with the polyphonic rigors of musical lines, tending to offer the lead singer a role that would make him the leader but being also integrated in the musical texture. Armstrong is then employed by “King Oliver” (who has come to Chicago as well) in the “Creole Jazz Band”, where he has the possibility as a solo trumpet player to empower all the virtuosity gathered throughout time. In 1924 Armstrong leaves Oliver’s band and joins Fletcher Henderson’s New York “Big Band”, a great band at that time, considered one of the greatest and displaying one of the best orchestras available at that time. He then has the chance to make recordings with well-known celebrities such as Sidney Bechet, Bessie Smith and many others. He decides to dedicate himself to the singer career and joins “Hot Fives and Hot Sevens”, transforming jazz into one of the highest expressions of music, with brilliant and clear sound of his trumpet and of his hoarse-sounding voice. As a follow-up, Armstrong becomes very successful and, due to his charismatic presence, he contributes to the removal of any racial barrier, becoming one of the first colored “stars” in the American musical industry.

In his latest years of life, Louis Armstrong personifies jazz at the highest level and becomes, with the “All Stars” band, the worldwide ambassador of jazz.

Louis Armstrong, also nicknamed “The King of Jazz”, is diagnosed with throat cancer, in his late years. Although his doctor advises him to give up the trumpet, Armstrong does not do that and, eventually, dies on the 6th of July, 1971, in his house from New York.

The next story depicts how Louis Armstrong used to improvise during a recording: *“Follow-up recording dates for Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five find the bandleader even more in command. The clearest indication of this comes in the February 26th session of the following year, where Armstrong the vocalist takes charge, not only revealing his highly personal manner of interpreting a song, but also*

²³ www.wikipedia.org – little ships that navigated on the Mississippi

“inventing” – at least according to legend – scat singing in the process. Armstrong later described how, in the middle of recording “Heebie Jeebies” he had dropped the lyric sheet to the tune and was forced to improvise horn-like lines, built on wordless syllables, with his voice”²⁴



²⁴ The History of Jazz – Ted Gioia

Conclusions

“Music is passion and intense feelings.”

While analyzing every fact regarding Jazz’s music expressivity and course of creation, every single root of this remarkable genre leads to the fact that Jazz is one of the most expressive musical genre. It is easy to say that Jazz started up in the “New Orleans Congo” or its period goes somewhere during the war period of that time. Nonetheless, Jazz still remains one of the most important styles so far.

Each one of its representative artists have a vast musical background that lead to their actual position in Jazz’s timeline, therefore proving the fact that human aptitudes lead to the sole creation of one musical genre, in our case, Buddy Bolden’s talent, along with Armstrong’s strong voice and charisma having strongly set up a stable foundation for Jazz and a real definition in the history books.

Anyhow, New Orleans remains the melt pot of Jazz. This area still consists of an important Jazz Heritage territory, New Orleans even providing numerous Jazz festivals such as Mardi Grass, which take place early with the main purpose of memorizing every aspect of Jazz’s history as one of the most important facts in the development of New Orleans.

The music of the “Negroes” or not, Jazz is widely-known by everyone, worldwide. Jazz, at least in the past decades, has become a growing phenomenon. Talented artists still tend to follow Armstrong’s steps in order to keep the Jazz spirit alive. Jazz will never grow old, Armstrong’s song, “It’s a beautiful world”, being the most relevant proof of this fact, this song being broadcasted on the radio regularly and being interpreted by various well-known artists!

In conclusion, Jazz remains untouchable, with its birthplace in New Orleans, no matter what other historians might have to say in regard to this fact.

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GRAND
Vocal and Instrumental Concert,
ON OCTOBER 14, 1877,
IN
Masonic Hall, cor. of St. Peter and Claude Streets,
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
LOUIS MARTIN, ASSISTED BY HIS AMATEUR FRIENDS.

PROGRAMME.

Part First.

1. OVERTURE. — "La Muette de Portici".....ORCHESTRA.
2. THE FAVORITE. — "Prière." — *Donizetti*.... Miss Mc—.
3. LE BOHÉMIEN. — *Samuel Snaer*¹.....Mr. O. P.
4. SYMPHONY. — For Two Violins and Piano, { L. M., J. M.,
and Miss A. F.
5. MY SUNDAY DRESS. — Song.....Jos. L., Jun.

Intermission. — Part Second.

6. OVERTURE. — "Sémiramis".....ORCHESTRA.
7. JUDITH. — *Concone*.....Miss R. F.
8. THE ENCHANTRESS. — Fantasia for Violin.....L. M.
9. L'EXTASE. — Valse brillante. — *L'Arditi*.....Miss F.
10. FORTUNIO'S SONG. — "Alsacian Dream"....Jos. L., Jun.

Intermission. — Part Third.

11. OVERTURE. — "La Dame Blanche".....ORCHESTRA.
12. CONSTANTINOPLE. — *A. Loyd*.....Miss R. F.
13. UNE DRÔLE DE SOIRÉE. — Scène Humoristique,

J. A. COLLIN.

Miss A. F. will preside at the Piano.

The Orchestra under direction of Mr. LOUIS MARTIN.

DOORS OPEN AT 6. - - - CONCERT TO BEGIN AT 7 PRECISELY.