

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

National Historical Park
New Orleans, LA



A painting taken from a (circa) 1905 photograph of the Imperial Orchestra. Photograph is from the Al Rose Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans.

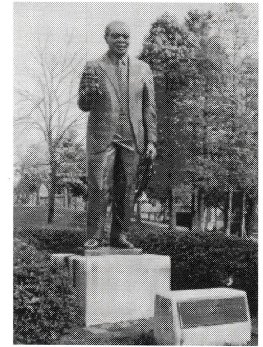
MUSICAL INFLUENCES - EARLY HISTORY

New Orleans, founded in 1718 as the center of the French Louisiana colony, increased significantly in ethnic diversity following the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. In addition to the Catholic and French-speaking Creole culture, German, Irish and Italian immigrants, along with Spanish, Caribbean and African people created a unique environment for the development of early jazz. The city has become famous for its festivals, foods, and its music.

A well-known example of an early influence to the origins of jazz is the African dance and drumming tradition. By the mid-18th century, people of Caribbean and African descent gathered on Sundays at a city commons outside the former ramparts, later known as Congo Square.

Following the Civil War, syncopated popular musical forms proliferated throughout the United States and the Caribbean. African-American folk music traditions influenced these popular music styles that included minstrels, which gave birth to vaudeville burlesque and musical comedies, and cakewalks. By the 1890's, the syncopated piano compositions called ragtime created a popular music sensation. In New Orleans, brass bands began supplementing the standard march repertoire with ragtime pieces. "Jass", the original name for jazz, evolved from African-American musical forms such as ragtime and

At the turn of the century New Orleans was thriving as a major port and center. Legitimate theater, vaudeville, music publishing houses and instrument stores employed musicians in the central business district, while other establishments flourished in and around the "red light" district near Canal and Rampart streets. On the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, bands competed for audiences at amusement parks and resorts. Street parades were common in the neighborhoods, while community social halls and corner saloons held dances almost nightly. After the Civil War, African-American neighborhood organizations known as social aid and pleasure clubs began to spring up in the city. Similar in orientation to the mutual aid and benevolent societies, their purpose was to provide a social outlet for its members, provide community service, and parade as an expression of community pride. Parading provided dependable work for musicians and became an important training ground for young musical talent.



Armstrong Statue

NEW ORLEANS INFLUENCE TRAVELS

New Orleans jazz began to spread to other cities as the city's musicians joined riverboat bands and vaudeville, minstrel, and other show tours. Jelly Roll Morton, an innovative piano stylist and composer, began his odyssey outside of New Orleans as early as 1907.

The original Creole Orchestra organized in Los Angeles by bassist, Bill Johnson, (and later featuring Freddie Keppard), was an important early group that left New Orleans and toured the Orpheum Theater circuit with gigs in Chicago and New York. Chicago and New York became the main markets for New Orleans jazz. Trombonist Tom Brown took his band from Dixieland to Chicago in 1915. Nick LaRocca and other members of the Original Dixieland Jazz band headed there in 1916. In 1917, the Original Dixieland Jazz band cut the first commercial jazz recording at Victor in New York City. Suddenly New Orleans jazz was a national craze.

Perhaps the most notable departure from New Orleans was in 1922, when King Oliver (his mentor) summoned Louis Armstrong to Chicago. His brilliant playing led a revolution in jazz that replaced the polyphonic ensemble style of New Orleans with the development of the soloist's art. Technical improvement and popularity of phonograph records helped spread Armstrong's instrumental and vocal innovations, making him internationally famous.

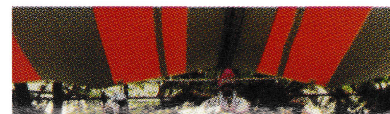


MODERN INFLUENCES

New Orleans musicians and musical styles continued to influence jazz nationally as the music went through a rapid series of stylistic changes. Swing, a jazz derivative, became the unchallenged popular music of America during the 1930's and 40's. Later innovations, such as bebop in the 1940's and avant-garde in the 1960's, departed further from the New Orleans tradition.

The roots of jazz are in live performance. Technological development after 1900 made it possible to preserve and transmit music to audiences far removed from the performer. Player pianos, phonograph recordings, radio, and film brought the sound and sight of jazz musicians to audiences of millions. Clubs, cabarets, and ballrooms enlarged the audience and allowed audience-performer interactions.

When the small-band New Orleans style fell out of fashion, attempts were immediately made to revive it. 1930s jazz enthusiasts turned back to New Orleans because many New Orleans musicians were still actively playing traditional jazz. During the 1970's, audi-



once support for an jazz was low. Many artists turned to fusion jazz and reached a new level of recognition in the 1980's. Today, the United States Government recognizes jazz as an American art form.



Jazz Concert at Congo Square

RECENT LEGISLATION

United States Congress Resolution 57 of 1987 designated jazz as “a rare and valuable national American treasure.” The United States Senate added, “to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated.”

In 1990, Public Law 101-499 authorized and directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to conduct a study of the suitability and feasibility of preserving and interpreting the origins of jazz in New Orleans.



Interpretive Program on Amtrak

On October 31, 1994, the findings of that study resulted in the U.S. Congress passing Public Law 103-433, which created New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. The purpose of the park is to: “preserve the origins, early history, development and progression of jazz; provide visitors with opportunities to experience the sights, sounds and places where jazz evolved; implement innovative ways of establishing jazz educational partnerships; assist in the preservation, education, and interpretation of jazz as it has evolved in New Orleans; provide technical assistance to organizations involved in jazz, and its history.”

PLANNING FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

There are currently no facilities available at the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park. The National Park Service is developing a General Management Plan, which will provide general guidance for the management, administration, and operations of this new park area. For additional park information, please write: Superintendent, New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, 365 Canal Street, Suite 2400, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130-1142, or telephone (504) 589-4806.