

'Did't they Wander'- some thoughts on the the New Orleans marching band and the birth of jazz.

Early in the 1890's, a New Orleans drayman, Andre Poreé, asked the cornetist Buddy Bolden to form a band for the dances that were taking place on his grazing fields just outside the city. The 'cut down' marching band Bolden formed has been called the first jazz band. Whether or not this band really was the first jazz band, something new started to happen to black music in New Orleans that came to be called jazz. How did this new music arise?

Composer and historian Gunther Schiller understood jazz as arising from a:

"multi-coloured variety of musical traditions, in part from Africa, in part from Europe"

The vitality of jazz comes from the wealth and diversity of its roots, but it is primarily, although never exclusively, an Afro-American music and as Schiller points out, many of its distinguishing features are African derived. Similar developments to what was happening in New Orleans were happening all over the United States, all feeding this new music. What happened in New Orleans was both vital to the new music and gives special insight to its birth. The New Orleans Marching Band in itself is a unique form in itself. This article teases out some aspects of the City, its marching bands and the development of jazz.

Bolden was unlikely to call his music 'jazz', history has named him as one of the originators of that music. Jazz was not a New Orleans invention; similar music was starting to happen all over the South and South West of America. But New Orleans was vital in defining this new music, and the typical New Orleans bands line up: cornet, clarinet, trombone, banjo, bass/tuba and music, derived from the 'brass band' of the time.

"In New Orleans the brass band was a powerful influence on the new jazz... Brass bands gave jazz its instrumentation, its instrumental techniques, its basic repertoire... The influence of the brass bands in early jazz was omnipresent. To understand jazz, we must begin with its roots, and the taproots of the tradition is the nineteenth century brass band"

William J Schaffer. Brass Bands and New Orleans jazz

To understand how this form arose entails unravelling several threads.

- The unique social and musical character of New Orleans.
- The musical environment these new bands arose out of, and the history of

- their musical roots
- The influences of Africa and Europe
- Understanding what this new musical form did with these influences

The New Orleans brass band itself continued to develop and at the end of this piece is an examination of what happened to the form during the twentieth century.

1 The Rise of the New Orleans Marching Band

New Orleans – 'A City full of music.'

The south-eastern port of New Orleans has, along with the rest of Louisiana, a unique history for America. Initially founded by the French early in the eighteenth century, the city passed to Spanish rule in 1763, only finally becoming part of the United States in the 'Louisiana purchase' of 1803. This mixed history resulted in a multi-cultural make-up, of which a major component were the 'Creoles', a mainly middle class social group of mixed black and white ancestry, who were very proud of their French roots. The Creoles were famous for their music making; New Orleans boasted a renowned opera house and symphony orchestra early in the nineteenth century with musicians drawn from the Creole classes. Many Creole families sent their musical offspring to study in Paris.

New Orleans also had a large slave descended black population, who although sharing the culture of Afro-Americans throughout the states, were considerably more urbanised. The city also experienced large influxes of refugees from the Caribbean during the Napoleonic wars.

Following the American Civil war and the subsequent Slave emancipation there was a terrible backlash against black people in the south. In this oppression the Creole and slave descended populations began to merge. Pre 1860 New Orleans was unique in its liberal attitude to the black population, something related to its catholic roots.

" It is in Catholic Louisiana that African style singing and dancing survived"
Harold Cowlander

Unlike its Protestant counterparts, the Catholic Church was not determined to wipe out the African roots of slaves. French colonial rule, while no less savage in its attitude to slavery was more willing to understand the cultures of those it subjugated.

Congo Square in New Orleans was, until the 1860s, the scene of weekly Black festivities, featuring African singing, dancing religious ceremonies. After the repressive 'Jim Crow' race laws of the 1870s these dances gradually re-emerged as the 'picnics', a key feature of black New Orleans life. It was one of these picnics that Buddy Bolden was hired to create a band for. Before the war blacks and whites freely mixed at the 'Quadroon Balls' in a way unthinkable in the rest of the United States.

The traditions of outdoor festivities so much a feature of French and Spanish life readily transposed to New Orleans, mixing then with Afro American

culture: the most notable example being Mardi Gras. New Orleans society was a club society. Recreational and professional 'clubs' organised gala, floats for Mardi Gras and other activities providing much employment for musicians. The 'Funeral Societies' were black organisations secretly continuing African religion. It was at funerals organised by these societies that the famous New Orleans funeral procession evolved, the band playing a slow hymns to the grave, a written dirge at the grave side, and then returning from the grave with wild up tempo interpretations of hymns and spirituals. The 'second line' rhythm used, a syncopated march beat fusing duple and triple time, became the basis for subsequent popular music.

Storeyville, the infamous 'red light' district in uptown New Orleans, added to the city's unique musical richness. The dancehalls and brothels were a vast source of musical employment, in a space artificially loosened from the usual prejudices of race and class. Although the brothels provided little direct employment for the emerging jazz bands, being the exclusive preserve of the 'professors' or house pianists, the associated dance hall and cabarets were one of the main nurturing places for jazz. Contrary to popular myth it was as much the poor pay of these venues that made musicians move north after the First World War as the famous closing down of the district.

New Orleans by the 1890's was ripe to give birth to jazz. From a huge pool of black musicians were drawn the famous brass bands, society dance bands, dance hall bands and river boat bands, groups for the popular middle class lawn parties and the equally popular more exuberant 'picnics'. Bands would also advertise local businesses, play for Mardi Gras, for funerals and for vaudeville and the circus. There were two distinct schools of playing born out of the city's unique history. 'Downtown' music was more formal, classically derived, and score based, associated with the Creole classes. 'Uptown' was looser and more ear based, the sounds of the Storeyville dance halls, and derived from the former slave classes. Most bands seemed to mix these styles and classes, and the best drew from both schools.

2. The Key influences on the New Orleans jazz band.

The new music played by these bands grew from a rich variety of musics already mixtures of white and black influence.

A. The Music of Nineteenth Century America

Brass and Marching Bands

Alphonse Picou, a leading New Orleans clarinet player, said of the early jazz bands;

"They played nothing but marches"

The town marching band tradition in the United States was a strong one, dating from the militia bands of the revolutionary army, copies of their British

counterparts. The Moravian church continued the high-baroque traditions of brass playing in church. Every town and village had a mixed wind and brass band that doubled for outdoor celebrations and indoor parties. The lead brass instrument in these ensembles was the keyed bugle. Brass bands replaced fife and drum bands in the army by the Mexican War. These bands drew their repertoire from the military marches and from the dances of the day, initially direct imports from Britain. These dances included the 'quadrille', then the polka, waltz and schottische, by the time of the Civil War dancing was in couples to 2 steps or military marches unlike the folk tunes used for the quadrille. These new dances had come both continental Europe either via Britain or directly by the growing continental immigration.

The latest musical and technical innovations were quickly absorbed by these bands; the arrival of valve instruments in the 1840s meant many soon became exclusively brass as opposed to mixed wind and brass. The entrepreneur Allen Dodworth formed a band to advertise the new valve instruments and by the 1850's the saxhorn family with their backward facing bells was the standard brass band instrument.

The Civil War further disseminated bands through America and following the war former army band masters like Patrick Gilmore and Claudio Grafulla led civilian bands of great virtuosity. Throughout the last third of the century developments continued the saxhorns were replaced by instruments with forward facing bells, trombones were added and the new woodwind developments meant that winds again came to be used. Piston valves replaced the older string rotary valves. In the 1870s and were often brass but by the turn of the century they had reverted to mixed brass and woodwind.

The often high standard of these bands can be seen in the life of George Ives, father of Charles, the first great and uniquely American composer. George Ives had a considerable musical education and had a national reputation for his band and religious music. He preferred to work his small New England town, loving the traditions of strong outdoor music making and conducting his own remarkable experiments in what constituted music, exploring non-diatonic, microtonal and polytonal music, teaching his children to sing in several keys at once. From such a background the highly individual and distinctly American music of his son can be understood and the importance of that determinedly individual democratic and self exploratory New English tradition they like Thoreau arose from, and behind that the west gallery/artisan/levelling traditions of rural and radical England that fled to and flourished in the new World. By the turn of the century village and flourished across America.

"Every village had its silver cornet band and bandstand in the square, Brass bands played for circuses, carnivals, minstrel and medicine shows, political rallies, churches, picnics, dances, athletic contests, holiday gatherings. The Salvation Army employed the small brass band... and politicians and

pitchmen of every stamp used brass bands for Bally Hoo. Every military troop, drill team, volunteer fire squad, lodge or social club had its auxiliary band to swell holiday pageantry"

William J Schaffer. Brass bands and New Orleans Jazz.

With the work of Edward Souza this marching band tradition reached its apotheosis. Souza's grounding was in the U.S Marines, where he led their fifty piece band playing classical pieces as well as marches. In the 1890s Souza left the marines forming his world famous commercial bands, showing off his own compositions taking the brass band to new peaks of virtuosity. During the Civil War both northern and southern bands were quartered in the city and held concerts and parades. After the war instruments and teachers were readily available and the climate and French/Spanish influence meant public ceremony, parades, excursions and picnics were abundant. By the 1880s the resort area called West End, north of the city on lake Pontchartrain, was a platform for band music through the summer, featuring famous northern bands like Phillip Sousa's and local bands. The outdoor concert and picnic became a vital American tradition. In 1893, Jules Levy, the leading cornet virtuoso of the time appeared with 'Prof. Paoletti's Celebrated West End Band'. TP Brooke brought his Chicago Marine band at the turn of the century and then opened his own music hall, 'Brookes Winter Gardens' The repertoire of these bands included by the 1890s cakewalks and 'Coon Songs', 'Plantation songs and synthetic 'slave ditties' and the various wind band imitations of these genres, the 'patrols'. Sousa and his trombonist arranger Arthur Prior and TP Brook, the 'popular music king all featured these 'ragtime' arrangements, essentially Tin Pan Alley versions of ragtime

Interaction between the music of the white Europeans and Black Africans stretched back to the beginnings of slavery. In face of the determined onslaught on their own music by the slave owners, the slaves created new forms and also found employment as musicians. The main dance instrument of the eighteenth and early eighteenth century was the violin/fiddle. There were many famous black violinists during the eighteenth century and a distinct new form, the 'African jig' mixing European folk playing and African influences, was a feature of social dances by the 1820s Reports of the same musicians playing for black dances not surprisingly emphasise a more African music.

The first black marching band was formed in 1820 by Frank Johnson and the tradition was continued in the many Black army units formed after the 1860s. By the 1890's black marching bands from New Orleans were winning national competitions.

New Orleans Black marching Bands

The first mention of black brass bands in New Orleans comes in a report from 1878

"New Orleans has several fine brass bands among its coloured population.

'Kellys Band' and the 'St Bernard' deserve particular mention here"
James M Trotter. Music and Some highly Musical People

The Excelsior Brass Band appeared at the formal opening of the 'Colored Peoples Exhibit' at the New Orleans Cotton States Exposition in 1885 and had already toured the North.

The 'Reconstruction Period' after the civil war offered great hope for Black peoples' political and social aspirations, just as the Black brass band tradition was beginning. With its educated Black classes New Orleans was prominent in this optimism. Governor PBS Pinchbeck encouraged these aspirations and new 'Benevolent Societies' and political clubs started up to further the cause of Black freedom. These clubs also needed music, one band 'Charley Jaegers Band is recorded as a favourite in Pinchbecks processions and rallies

The Magnolia Plantation was founded the infamous 'carpetbagger' governor of Louisiana, Henry Clay in 1874 after he retired and he hired James Humphrey to tutor the plantations brass bands. Many famous New Orleans musicians learnt at the plantation, which in William J Schaffer's words 'became a seedbed for jazz'. Several black brass bands played at the funeral of President James A. Garfield on September 27th 1881. The New Orleans brass band tradition was then from its beginnings part of the fight for Black rights and its music would have reflected this surge in pride and hope following emancipation.

There was also a tradition of self-taught country black brass bands. Frederic Ramsey JR recorded some of these bands in the 1950s and noted of them:

"The essential point... in connection with all the Negro brass bands formed shortly after Emancipation, is that they played without instruction, and picked up tunes by ear. "Well, I tell you how it was... you take a fellow, he'll set down, if he hearin' 'bout a sing, hymn... or anything like that. Well prompt in his mind, then he'll pick up his horn. Then he'll try to play it, you see...

They first start playing spirituals... got them in church"

"The music played by members of these early plantation bands was based on song - they blew singing horns. Their repertoire came not from the white man's stock of patriotic sheet music, but from church and secular songs. From the church side they played spirituals, jubilees and possibly some early chants... From everyday life they adapted rags, reels, blues and ballads"

The country bands used loose polyphony, wide vocal vibrato and had a raw energy. The city bands although musically more sophisticated drew on the same sources and employed the same techniques as their rougher country cousins.

Marching bands became an essential part of new Orleans Black life. A large quantity of popular scores were available to buy. Charles 'Sunny, Henry described the way James Humphreys instructed his thirteen piece Eclipse

Brass Band in the 1890's

"The first way he'd do, he would get the band on its feet, you see, then he'd commence with his trumpet, and then he'd get 'em all straight first. But the first thing he would do, that battery (Fr battre – drum) – that's the first thing he would get first, that battery... that's the bass and the trombone and the drum and everything – after he'd get all that straight first, and then he'd jump on the trumpets, you see, and he'd get them. Because that battery, that's the foundation of the band... I gone tell you, the way he taught the boys, I think it was the right way"

Henry describes them practicing twice a week for three or four hours. The band had four cornets, two clarinets, one baritone horn, one trombone, one tuba, and bass and snare drum. Humphrey also wrote score for the band, arranged popular marches, songs and hymns and taught his players music reading and instrumental technique.

By the 1900' black bands were performing 'head' music or 'ratty' playing, improvised syncopated music often based on standard tunes like 'High Society' or 'My Maryland'. They also borrowed music from the music reading bands like 'Our Director' or 'National Emblem'. The bands mixed improvised and music reading, the older bandsmen preferring reading or 'heavy' music. Peter Bocage, who played with brass bands from the Excelsior in the 1920s through to the Eureka in the 1960s, described the impact of improvisational music at the turn of the century

"Well, I attribute it to Bolden, you know: I mean cause – the simple fact... he didn't know a note as big as this house... whatever they played they caught(learned by ear) or made up, you see? Say – they made their own music and they played it their way, you understand. So that's that way jazz started, you understand/ - just through the feeling of the man"

This tension between reading and 'routine' musicians continued and, although Bocage preferred playing the older written music he played in brass bands all his life, valued for his reading skills which continued to be needed for music like the difficult dirge parts in funeral procession with their trumpet features.

Minstrel Shows, Circus shows and Vaudeville

Charles Hann, the first American music historian, regarded the 'minstrel show' as the "first distinctly American musical genre", an ironic honour given the racial parody of the form. The minstrel show originated in the North and West of the United States, purporting to show the life and music of the Southern slaves. In fact it bore little relation to their lives, relying on racial caricature and the traditions of the English comic opera. 'Black faced' white performers rendered stereotypical depiction of Black life to adaptations of white folk music. Hann notes;

" None of the music performed on the minstrel stage before the civil war had any connection with the music of the southern slaves"

The typical instruments were the violin, banjo and tambourine and many typical American folk songs, like 'Turkey in the Straw' originate in the minstrel show. Following the Civil War the first Black minstrel shows appeared, initially copies of, but then increasingly independent of the Northern shows.

From these shows then grew the traditions of circus and vaudeville, both featuring a wider range of entertainment, the one traveling the other fixed, as the show became more sophisticated so did the music, featuring small wind bands. Famous across the country were troupes like the 'Louisiana Slave Troupe and Brass Band' and 'Smallwood's Great Contraband Minstrels and Brass Band

" Although dominated by the plantation and religious songs, black minstrelsy also evolved other distinctive features, particularly the uniformed black marching unit which began as just another act that Black and White minstrels shared. In 1875-76 Callenders Minstrels closed the first part of their show with a 'ludicrous military burlesque'. Such lampoons of black soldiers had been occasional; minstrel features since the Civil War, but this skit proved so popular that it became the standard finale for the first part of the black minstrel show"

Robert C Toll

One of the most famous Black minstrels was Billy Kersands, and his marching band led the Mardi Gras parade in 1886 The Circus had begun in England the late eighteenth century, founded by Astley.

In addition to the white repertoire of marches and dances, and popular songs by the likes of Stephen Foster, the Black circus and vaudeville bands played their own popular music, including blues and spirituals. These new forms of entertainment were important sources of employment for Black musicians. By the late nineteenth century a new dance form, the 'cakewalk', with a distinct syncopated rhythm had developed, popular throughout the states and then crossing to Europe, where composers like Debussy used the form. The rhythm originated from attempts of white minstrels to copy black rhythms, and became one of the basis of ragtime

Ragtime

The piano was the popular musical instrument of the mid to late nineteenth century. As the 'cakewalk' became popular, so piano pieces based on that rhythm began to appear. The 'patrol', a march based piano form using the syncopated cakewalk rhythm, gradually building and dying away can be traced back to the 1860s. In 1897 William Knell wrote 'Mississippi Rag', defining the new form that would become hugely popular over the next 30

years.

Ragtime is now generally known as a written piano form based on Afro-American rhythms, however its roots lie in improvisation. Its most famous practitioner Scott Joplin, began his musical life as a piano player in Black bars in St Louis improvising on popular tunes of the day while studying at music college and composing sentimental songs, waltzes and marches (21). 'Maple Street Rag' published in 1899 fused the two aspects of his music. 'Ragging' was the process of syncopating an existing tune; 'Ragged time' was the description of New Orleans funeral marches. 'Ragging' also implied improvising on the tune.

Although based on the marches AABB 16 measure 2/4 form, Joplin's Rags displayed increasing sophistication, using classical forms like the minuet and trio (22). Gunther Schuller has traced additive 2 and 3 beat groupings as found in African music, syncopations beyond the simple syncopation of the 'cakewalk'.

Ragtime became the basis of the 'Foxtrot' dance craze centred around New York, where the black dance orchestras formed by musicians like Jim Europe began, another source in the development of jazz and the swing bands that began in the late 1920s. Band that featured highly arranged written scores.

B. African roots

Two remaining wellsprings of jazz are the Afro-American song forms, Spirituals and their secular counterparts, the blues, forms only understood if we look at their African roots.

African music and blues, spirituals and worksongs

Gunther Schuller, in 'early Jazz', dismisses the view of jazz as a mixture of European melody and harmony and African rhythm. Jazz arose out of uniquely American musics forged from the cultural mix of that continent. Much of this music had its roots in African musical practice. This section takes a broad look at the music of West Africa, the part of the continent from which American slaves were taken, tracing what might have happened to that music in the States during and after slavery, and comparing those musical practices with the blues, spirituals, worksongs and jazz.

West African Music

"A nation of dancers, musicians and poets... every great event or cause for public rejoicing is celebrated in public dances, accompanied with music and song suitable for the occasion"

The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano 1791

"Music and life are inseparable, for there is music for many of the activities of everyday life, as well as music whose verbal texts express the Africans attitude to life and fears, his thoughts and beliefs"

There are many forms and uses for music in Africa, and it is often

inseparable from the rest of life. Forms range through the griots, the poet/historian/praise singer of Mali and Senegal to the processional trumpeters of Nigeria. John Miller Chernoff in 'African Rhythm and Sensibility' talks of every age and social grouping in a Northern Nigerian village having its own distinctive musical genres and traditions. The classic West African musical ensemble, before the rise of electric bands in the '60s and '70s, is the drum, percussion and vocal ensemble for dances and celebration. Dance, as Chernoff observes, is of great social significance, articulating, expressing and cohering social relationships. Chernoff emphasises the notion of 'coolness', of self-discipline and controlled expression in dancing.

Rhythm

"West African music has concentrated its efforts essentially on the architecture of rhythmic and colouristic patterns"

Ernest Bornema

"Rhythm is as music a part of expression in African music as pitch or timbre"
Gunther Schuller

The classic African drum ensemble of say Ghana or Nigeria has a structure alien to western musical thinking.

" The African musician conceives his polyrhythms on an extended basis where phrases rarely co-incide vertically. In fact his overriding interest is in cross rhythm"

Syncopation does not exist in this music, which in western terms is conceived in quaver grouping of 2 and 3. Much African music is of course far simpler than the complexities of the drum ensemble, but all displays the often simultaneous use of these 2 and 3 beat quaver groups, music in which individual lines only make sense in relationship to each other. Non drumming example of this complexity are the various marimba or balaphon styles of West Africa.

The rhythms of the early jazz bands and marching bands were a long way from these complexities, but the regular emphasis on the 'weak' beats of the bar and the music central quaver pulse can be heard of as the result of an African sensibility working with the march time pulse. Gunther Schuller sees similarities between the rhythmic counterpoint of West African drumming determined by the lead drummer and improvised melodic counterpoint of the classic New Orleans line up lead by the lead cornet or trumpet. Contemporary accounts of slave music emphasise the survival of 'African' musical sensibilities. Fanny Kemble, in the 1870's, published 'Slave Songs of the United States' apologising for the approximations of her transcriptions

" The best we can do will convey but a faint shadow over the original. The intonation and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper. Some of the measures are in 2/8, some in 3/8, some in 3/4"

Melody

Typical West African melody

"Revolves around a mean tonal centre that correlates closely with the melodic tonal centres of African speech. In usual practice this segment may be followed by another whose mean centre shifts to a higher or lower position. But in which the melody is consistently faithful to speech" (29)

This description could also apply to classic blues practice shifting the melody over the root, fourth and fifth tonal centres. Language and melody are here closely related. West African scales are typically pentatonic often with 'flattened' 3rds and 7ths, the classic 'blue' notes central to jazz's melodic practice. It should also be remembered that West Africa has a large Muslim population and via that has much influence from Arabic musical traditions. Harmony generally is 'diadic' running parallel intervals, as in organum. These intervals can be major or minor thirds, fourths, fifths or octaves. These harmonic and melodic practices were then in no way incompatible with west European practice, especially that of the various folk musics' also featuring pentatonic scales, parallel harmony and a melody that often incorporated flattened thirds and sevenths. Out of this compatibility arose the new Black American song forms.

Form

The musical structure of the drum ensemble is dictated by the dances it accompanies, the lead drummer changing and elaborating set dance rhythms, as he thinks fit.

Other typical forms include 'call and response' patterns and 'riffing' sequences where the lead singer or drummer improvises over repeated, melodic and rhythmic patterns. Call and response formed an important part of eighteenth century church music, particularly in Psalm singing and this shared form and many other aspects of the church singing of the time, especially the 'shape note' practices of open, strong and rhythmic singing fed into the development from the spiritual. 'Shape note' singing traditions are still strong in Southern Black (and white) churches.

The device of soloing over a 'riff' was pioneered by the early New Orleans pianist, bandleader and self-styled founder of jazz, Jelly Roll Morton and became a central feature of jazz practice.

Inflexion and timbre

The relationship between melody and speech in West Africa has been noted, Gunther Schuller emphasises this:

"The languages and dialects of the African are in themselves a form of music... certain syllables possess specific intensities, duration, and pitch levels"

Like the tabla players of North Indian Classical music, African drummers have

their own drum 'languages', often related to local dialects. John Miller Chernoff emphasises *that "African music is derived from language"* and

" a drum is not just a rhythmic instrument, it plays a melody. By using two drums or by striking a drum indifferent ways, a drummer can duplicate the speech patterns of his language"

As noted West African songs often emphasise thirds and sevenths flattened outside the classical western scale, a feature also noted by an early American song collector;

"Tones are often employed which have no musical character to represent. Such for example is that for which I have indicated as nearly as possible the flat 7th"

It should be remembered that similar non diatonic notes occur in all folk musics include English and also that the western classical scale had only been 'diatonic' for just over a hundred years when the first slave songs began to be collected.

Jazz also featured an highly inflexive, vocal melodic style with much use of expressively flattened thirds and sevenths (and fifths), it is this as music as its rhythmic uniqueness that distinguished it from other early twentieth century music. The vocal approach to melody as featured in Duke Ellington's early trombone sections and lead trumpet players, the use of the mute to copy speech and the remarkable 'talking' duets between Mingus's bass and Eric Dolphy's bass clarinet are prime examples. Mingus commented on their playing together

*" We used to really talk and say words with our instruments...
We had different conversations ,
we'd discuss our fears and our life"*

Eric Dolphy's style, in which the most complex melodic, harmonic and tonal variations are couched in such a vocal and expressive way, is a classic example of why jazz can be such a special musical genre. This instrumental vocal tradition culminates in the 'speaking in tongues' of free jazz saxophonist Albert Ayler, an approach he himself related back to the marching bands of New Orleans.

West African music has a distinctive sense of timbre, not unrelated to this vocal/melodic complex. The rattles attached to the Senegalese Kora and the spiders webs attached to the tops of the resonators of the balaphon add an 'edgy roughness' to what to western ears would be considered 'pure' sounding instruments.

This aesthetic can be found in the instrumental approach of many jazz musicians, witness the variety of domestic objects used as mutes by the early jazz brass players and how by the 1970,s some forms of jazz and

related improvised music had begun to concentrate on texture and sound for its own sake, a development parallels in the concentration on timbre of western classical music from Mahler through Webern to Stockhausen.

The Blues and Spirituals

The spiritual and its secular counterpart, the blues, were, together with various worksongs, the classic songforms of the late nineteenth century Afro-American. Charles Hann sees the two forms arising out of plantation worksongs, the only music officially allowed; the spiritual form the 'call and response' forms, the blues from the field holler, a slow pentatonic worksong, often vocalising the drudgery and pain of slave life. The growing ground of these two forms will of been far more diverse, hymns and shape note, European folk song, African songs and American popular song are all part of the source of these two new forms, the singing of Ali Farke Toure from Mali shows how 'African' the blues probably is.

Europeans comment on the strength of slave singing in church in the 1740's. The offering of the 'consolation' of religion to slaves was a subject of great controversy in the eighteenth century and it was not until the great revival movements of the early nineteenth that Christianity made any great impact on slave life. The Protestant message of a personal god offered dignity and self respect to anyone who believed, biblical texts dealing with the 'promised land', with the exile and slavery of 'Israel' in Egypt and Babylon naturally resonated strongly with Black slaves, as did the evangelical power and excitement of the 'revival', with its vast outdoor meetings and singing. The 'spiritual' quickly developed, generally but not always to biblical texts. Initially very 'African' in form it soon took on European musical influences in structure and harmony.

The spiritual was brought to the attention to the rest of America by the tours of the 'Fisk University Singers', seeking to raise money for their beleaguered Black University. With this attention and respectability came stronger western musical influence, and the spirituals were quickly gathered in song books for wide dissemination and inevitably became 'westernised' in the process, the same was happening to the English folk song in Victorian Britain. By the 1880's spirituals had entered the repertoire of the minstrel shows.

The impact of the new Black Christianity can be seen in the new Southern churches, with their hymn singing, dancing and especially the improvised sermon and its 'musical' form and audience interaction. How much of this was also influenced by the practises of white churches drawing on shape note traditions and the more inclusive and 'enthusiastic' practices of radical English Protestants who fled their home country is impossible to gauge, the two forms continued and continue to cross fertilise.

The growth of the blues was parallel to the spiritual, although without the danger of respectability. A rural song from the blues rose from the mingling of worksongs and shouts, African song and European folk song. Early blues were open ended, perhaps drawing on ballad forms or the long praise songs of West Africa. The texts to these songs dealt with the trials of everyday life.

The classic twelve bar form did not arrive until the 'race record' boom of the 1920's but we have already noted the prevalence of songforms in West Africa with melodic shapes shifting a fourth or fifth. The instrumental form of the blues became popular in the late nineteenth century, adapting the melody and rhythms of the sung form for dancing and then influencing new sung forms. The boom in recording 'country' blues only dates from the 1920's and rural blues were only properly collected in the 30's. One can hear echoes of the past in the long song structures of Blind Lemon Jefferson, of the influence of Hymns in Willie Johnson and of the field holler in the music of Leadbelly

3. The New Orleans jazz band

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a wealth of music derived from the mixing of African and European influences and already distinctly American. Since the Civil War there were also strong traditions of Black American music ranging from choirs to minstrel bands to marching bands and dance bands. In New Orleans these musical traditions were unusually strong. The flood of brass and wind instruments from former army bands after the Spanish-American wars of the 1880s and 90s gave economically deprived Black Americans there unprecedented access to instruments and instrumental music making, which coupled with the high demand for music laid the foundations for both jazz and the New Orleans Marching band.

What was this new style?

The new music was not called jazz. Alphonse Picou, a leading clarinetist of the 1920's and 30's, said of the new bands

" They played nothing but marches"

Sidney Bechet, the great New Orleans born clarinetist and soprano saxophone player, called his music 'ragtime' throughout his long career. The new music in a sense soon left New Orleans, jazz went on to develop in the North, and the New Orleans Marching Band has a separate history related and intermingled with jazz.

The new music was improvised. The Black 'uptown' musicians of the 1890's prided themselves on not reading music. Alphonse Picou emphasised their improvisation

" Now there's the thing that made them the first to play jazz. It was because they could not read at all"

George Lewis, another New Orleans clarinet player, commented;

" I never had a music lesson in my life, and still can't read music"

Sidney Bechet, despite persistent truancy from school so he could practise and get lessons from the finest 'straight' musicians in town, preferred not to read music.

Improvisation is not unique to jazz. Much of the music being made in America was improvised and played by ear. Improvisation was not yet a dead art in Western art music. What distinguished Buddy Boldens playing was its intensity. Pops Foster, the bass player, said of Bolden,s playing;

"He played nothing but blues and he played it loud"

Bunk Johnson, who took on Boldens mantle as 'King of New Orleans', was famous for his blues playing. Sidney Bechet said of Johnson's band , the 'Eagles';

" The Eagles band was more of a barrelhouse band, a lowdown band that played the blues and those slow tempos"

Bechet is referring to the dance hall of Storeyville and the 'slow drag', a highly charged erotic dance accompanied by a slow blues. This new music mixed the new Black American song and dance forms with marchtime and the new 'ragtime' syncopation's

The 'cutdown' marching band playing this new music moved away from the strict 2/4 of marchtime and the rhythm section moved away from it's simple time keeping role, now emphasising the 'weak' off beats. As the music developed the rhythm section changed to substitute double bass for tube, and include banjo and piano. These instruments would have also been in the dance hall bands, the marching band was not the only source of the new Music and

As the music developed the two schools of New Orleans Black music making merged, Lious Armstrong, the first great jazz soloist, combined the strengths of the two.

How the early bands sounded can only be guessed. The first recordings of Black New Orleans Bands were not made until the 1920's, 30 years after the birth of these new bands, and there were no recording s of New Orleans marching bands proper until the 1940s. Contemporaries of Buddy Bolden speak of him embellishing the melodies of blues and ragtime as opposed to the full blown soloing of Armstrong. The key feature of the New Orleans jazz band was its collective as opposed to individual soloing/improvising. This was the key feature of King Oliver's Bands of the early 1920s. As music and musicians moved North so individual soloing became more important.

Oliver used a line up of two cornets (himself and the young Armstrong), clarinet, trombone, piano, bass and drums. The bands style is primarily contrapuntal, the cornets playing lead melody, the clarinet providing a descant over the top and the trombone filling out counter melodies and harmonies. Piano and bass provide a solid rhythmic and harmonic framework, derived from march 2/4 styles, the drums then adding a 4/4 feel emphasizing the 2nd and 4th beats. This contrapuntal weaving of melody instruments was by then highly formalised;

"The each instrument had a clearly defined role, and while it is true the

musicians improvised, players in this tradition understood the nature of what their particular instrument was supposed to play and had mastered typical phrases and motifs"

A style that evolved slowly from years of improvising on the source repertoire of blues, spirituals, ragtime and marches in countless dancehall and parade gigs.

By the 1920's the focus for jazz had moved North, but the New Orleans musical traditions continued to develop, the marching bands and other genres all had a separate but intimate relationship with jazz, the early jazz revival of the late 1940's and the early 1940's rediscovered New Orleans jazz and its traditions.

The Instruments of the New Orleans Jazz Band

Cornet

The lead instruments of the New Orleans jazz band was the cornet and the music's three most influential figures all played that instrument. Legend has it that Buddy Bolden's sound was so huge it could be heard all over the city. The cornet came from the marching bands, where most players got their musical training. It was not until the migration Northwards and the merging with the Northern dance bands, that the trumpet took over. Today only Texan teacher and musician Bobby Bradford can be considered an important jazz cornettist.

Clarinet.

While most cornet players came from the descendants of slaves, the clarinet was a traditional 'Creole' instrument. The classically based 'Creole' music tradition was at the turn of the century personified by the Tio family. Most jazz players were more inspired by the earthier 'uptown' styles of early players like 'Big Eye' Lious Nelson. Sidney Bechet commented "Some musicians played the tune pretty, but I liked the playing that made me want to dance"

During a lesson Bechet was berated by Lorenzo Tio

"No, no, no, we do not bark like a dog or meow like a cat"

By 1910 however, Lorenzo was a noted member of several important jazz groups. That Bechet had sought lesson with Tio shows how important the 'Creole' tradition was, and all great New Orleans clarinetists learnt from both camps. The great Jimmy Hamilton, for years Duke Ellington's clarinet player personifies the union of the two traditions, essentially the same dialectic between 'hot' and 'cool' playing continued throughout the history of jazz. The favoured instrument was the B flat 'Albert' system, a slightly improved simple system, that slightly predates the Boehm system, and often had a larger bore than the newer Boehm. It was the predominant marching band instrument and continues to be used in folk music. Leading clarinet players included Lious Nelson, Alphonse Picou and George Baquet in the first wave of players. Sidney Bechet, Johnny Dodds and Barney Bigard in the second. Bechet went on to make some of the finest small group recordings of the

20s and 30s, Dodds was clarinettist in King Oliver and Louis Armstrongs bands and Bigard joined Duke Ellingtons Cotton Club Orchestra. George Lewis, another clarinet player of that generation became famous during the early jazz revival.

The saxophone was not a key instrument in the first New Orleans bands, being more common in dance and vaudeville bands, during the twenties it appeared more and more in jazz bands as they and the dance bands interacted and its rise to jazz prominence came in the late 20's with the pioneering playing on Coleman Hawkins and Johnny Hodges in the swing bands. Bechet took up soprano sax in later life. The saxophone later became an important instrument in the marching bands of New Orleans

Parallel 'vocal' expressive styles of clarinet playing can be heard in Klezmer, the Jewish dance music that was developing in New York around the same time. Contemporary clarinettist Alan Hacker has also suggested links with Greek style of clarinet playing.

Trombone

Like the cornet, the trombone came from the marching band. Early jazz trombonists seem to have filled out harmonies, but by the 20s a fully fledged style of melodic counterpoint had developed coupled with a range of brass effects and the kinds of inflexions particularly suited to the slide trombone, with its infinite variety of tonal variation. The new style was known as 'tailgating', when playing on wagons trombonists had to sit at the back by the tailgate to avoid hitting their fellow musicians. Leading trombonists included Kid Ory and Charlie Green. The trombone also became a prominent instrument in the 'shout bands' of 'The United House of Prayer for all People, the Church of the Rock of the Apostolic Faith' founded in 1903 and popular in parts of the south (see 'shout bands' article)

Banjo and guitar

These were primarily chordal and rhythmic instruments with the occasional solo 'break'. The banjo was the only 'African' instrument to survive slavery. By the '20s the banjo was being replaced by the guitar, a popular New Orleans instrument due to the city's Spanish heritage. The guitar was also popular amongst rural blues singers. The principle New Orleans jazz guitarist of the time was Johnny Cyr, Cyr was in Armstrong's 'Hot Five' and 'Hot Seven'. The guitar had to wait until the advent of amplification and the pioneering work of Charlie Christian to become a melody and soloing instrument

There seems to have been little influence of blues guitar playing in early jazz, there are soon echoes in the playing of Joe Cupero. In Texas during the late twenties a hybrid of blues, country music and jazz, called 'Western Swing' developed.

Piano

The initial New Orleans jazz band was an outdoor marching band, the rise of New Orleans piano playing was a separate if related phenomena. As the music moved north and indoors the piano became established as a regular

instrument in the jazz band. The key figure in jazz piano development was Jelly Roll Morton, the leading piano 'professor', who, from 1915 led his own bands, shaping the improvised counterpoint of early jazz with his writing and arranging skills. Morton claimed to be the inventor of jazz, and he and the New Orleans certainly was vital in shaping the music. In the twenties there began a tradition of wind and piano duets in which one can hear the early jazz tradition of piano playing, notably in the duets of Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines and Johnny Dodds and Jelly Roll Morton.

New Orleans piano playing continued to develop, figures like Fats Domino, Professor Long Hair, and Doctor John carried on this distinctive fusion of jazz, blues and popular music and the 'second line' 12/8 feel.

Bass

As the music moved away from its marching band roots so the 'blown bass' sousaphone or tuba was replaced by double bass. Sousaphone can still be heard on early Louis Armstrong records and in the style of early bass players can be heard the influence of the bass lines of the early jazz marching bands and their rhythmic as much as harmonic role. To match the volume of the sousaphone the bass players developed the 'slap' technique. By the twenties bass players began taking solo breaks. One of the finest new Orleans bass players was Bob Johnson who led the first new Orleans band to tour outside the city in 1912 and later played in King Oliver's, Louis Armstrong and Johnny Dodds band.

Drums

The New Orleans jazz trap drummers inherited percussive tradition from both Europe and Africa and of the unique fusions between the two already developing in the nineteenth century. The rich polyrhythmic style of West Africa had been long suppressed by the start of the twentieth century so the rhythmic vitality of the new music came from flexibility with which the drummers used the standard metres of march time and from the legacy of slow blues.

The early New Orleans drum kit comprised snare, bass and tom drum, high hat, cymbals, wood blocks and cow bells. A kit that condensed the marching bands kit down to one person and included elements of dance band drum kits.

The limitations of early recording technology meant that drummers could not play fully, often restricting themselves to wood block and cymbal. The full drum style of the early jazz bands and the marching bands is unheard.

New Orleans drumming has since become famous for its second line triplet or 12/8 feel, centring on the snare accents. Whether or not this was part of the early jazz style we will never know.

Towards a definition of jazz

Early musicians in 1900 in New Orleans used the term 'ragtime' for the new music, they also used the term 'ratty', meaning lowdown, or illegitimate.

Other terms, like 'barrelhouse', 'In the Alley', 'Faking', and 'head music' are used. All refer to the same unscored, improvised Afro American music. Jazz

as a style emerged in New Orleans from 1890 and 1915.

4. The New Orleans Marching Band

"Ragtime music was all made up stuff....didn't have no ragtime written. Had marches, polkas, schottische, quadrille – all that was marches, you see. Well all bands played that" Willie Parker

Although the first jazz bands arose out of the marching bands of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they soon took on a life of their own. In the mean time the New Orleans marching band continued to develop. The bands had a life that included jazz but also they also continued to play written music and have an important role in the life of their community.

The Eukeka Band which flourished from the 1920s to the 1950s played written scores like 'Our Director' and the funeral dirge 'Fallen Heroes' and also freely developed 'head' arrangements (with solos, section work, duo, trio and quartet improvisations against ensemble counterpoint) of jazz numbers like 'Panama', 'Whoopin Blues' and 'Lady be Good'. Many of the older musicians like trumpeter Peter Brocage preferred the written 'heavy' music to the improvised 'routine' music, but continued to play in the bands valued for their ability to play the lyrical and virtuoso dirges that were an important part of the New Orleans funeral. Other noted trumpet players were Manuel Perez and Willie Pajaud. Brocage inherited the leadership of the Excelsior Brass band from George Moret in the early twenties, and at that time the bands repertoire widened:

"We played a lot of marches, too, and we mixed up a little jazz in there, see. But now the brass bands of today, practically most – it seems like the public wants it, and that's they're giving them is mostly all jazz, you see? – outside of funeral marches you know... But years ago it was different, you know? – The people wanted marches, and nice, and the band sounded so much nicer when you're playing good, standard music... And you take say ten or twelve piece brass band, and everybody playing their parts; it's wonderful."(ibid)

The Brass bands developed their own way of street playing related to early jazz practice. In arranged marches each instrument had its own part three trumpets swapping lead, clarinet (often E flat) playing counter lead, alto and baritone horns playing rhythmic accents (an 'oompah' or 'peckhorn' effect) and harmonizing countermelody, trombones harmonising a counterpart and rums and tuba holding down the 2/4 rhythm. In freer 'head' arrangements a looser polyphony prevailed with some lines colliding and some counter lines incomplete. Three trumpets played a mixture of lead and second cornet harmony. One of the solo lead trumpets could then rest.

"Picou's (Eflat clarinet) part could always be heard above band, usually he played rather staccato, and alternated between a couple notes and also repeated notes, somewhat in the 'Tesch'(Frank Teschemacher) style"

The cornets played somewhat in harmony, but frequently they would cut loose in soloistic style...

The two trombones... stuck pretty close together, apparently at times trying to play in unison. Even when they didn't, rhythmically they played similar parts. In general it was the traditional brass band style of counter figures, mixed in with bass parts.

The drums did nothing fancy but were very good and were wonderfully solid together. The bass drummer, with drum strapped around neck played the cym(bal) also with a wire beater in left hand"

William Russells notes, 1945 in William Ransom Hogan Jazz archive.

The black New Orleans brass band had:

"a characteristic out-door playing style that utilized a hoarse and 'crying' tone, and a peculiar instrumental attack not heard in jazz and dance bands... There is a tendency for different instrumental parts to clash"

William J Schaffer

Schaffer notes that musicians deliberately adopted this way of playing when playing marching band music, changing to another tone, attack and style when playing jazz (Schaffer)

"The hymns, dirges and marches are intoned quite loosely – emphasising vibrato, a crying tone quality and much freer rhythmic patterns than in jazz band numbers. The brass band ensemble is radically different from the jazz-band format: there is no tight piano-bass-banjo focus for harmonic and rhythmic patterns, only relationships between choirs of wind instruments and the bass drum-snare drum rhythmic cadence. Thus more 'holes' appear in the texture of the music, through which different voices emerge for different emphasises"

William J Schaffer

The repertoire of these bands included.

- Marches like 'High Society' and 'My Maryland' and tunes adapted for funeral dirges like the sextet from 'Lucia', recalling the French Operatic influence. Marches were constructed from popular music of the day, WH Tyers tango 'Panama' for example.

- The dance band repertoire of the late nineteenth century fed the bands music, many of the brass band players had played in the dance bands, playing waltzes, mazurkas, polkas, two steps, schottisches and quadrilles. The highly diverse root of American society meant there were many dance traditions: Irish, Creole, Italian, German, West Indian etc. Jelly Roll Morton described how 'Tiger Rag' was based on the quadrille form as danced by black New Orleanians C1900 (Lomax Mr Jelly Roll)

- Popular tunes from 'lady be Good' to 1950's rhythm and blues hits like 'it

feels so good' were always worked into the bands playing. The single biggest source of music for the brass bands was the Hymnals of the Baptist and Methodist churches and the many sects that flourished in the south. Hymns and spirituals like 'Bye and Bye', 'Over in Gloryland' and 'Lord, lord, Lord'. The first recorded example was by Sam Morgans Jazz Band in 1927, a revolutionary moment, it had been preciously thought sac religious to play and record such music outside church. Louis Armstrong recorded 'When the Saints Go Marching In' in 1938 and the tune subsequently became synomonous with 'trad' jazz.

Many of the older tunes were in 6/8 and, although the bands adopted the duple metre of jazz, the triplet feel remained strong in New Orleans brass bands and led to the characteristic 12/8 feel of New Orleans popular music. The term 'second line' that came to refer to the triplet rhythmic feel of the music referred to the line of dancer running parallel to the band on the sidewalk. Most brass band players were amateur non-union musicians, often confined to a specific neighbourhood.

The Depression and then World War 11 changed much of the brass band traditions and the community that they came from. Bands disbanded although the Works Progress Administration (WPA) concert band directed by Pinchbeck Touro and Luois Dumaine attempted to give bandsman work. Manuel Perez stopped playing.

The New Orleans Jazz revival brought new interest in the bands. William Russell organised a recording of Bunk Johnson with a pick up brass band in 1945 featuring George Lewis, Baby Dodds, Jim Robinson, Lawrence Marrero, 'Kids Shots' Madison, Red Clarke, Isoder Barbarin and Adolphe Alexander. Kid Howard led a brass band that was recorded in 1946. Bands like the Eureka Brass Band had continued and in 1951 they were recorded by Alden Ashforth and David Wycoff, the first recording of a genuine New Orleans brass band. Samuel Charters recorded the Eureka again in 1956 and '58 for Folkways, and Atlantic recorded the Young Tuxedo Brass Band in 1958. By then the bands were playing popular R/B tunes as well as hymns, funeral dirges and 'Panama'. The band were also using 'swing' band and R/B band devices like saxophone section work, riffing saxes, screaming trumpets and call and response work. Saxophones had replaced the alto/baritone horn section

In the 1960's there was a revival of early jazz and brass band music bases around the 'Kitty Hall', the most famous being Preservation Hall. Among the bands revives were the Onward Brass Band and Harold Dejan's Olympia Brass Band. The bands were no longer an integral part of their community. In the 1980's, another wave of 'marching' bands emerged, both deeply aware of their tradition and intent on a contemporary approach, bands like the 'Dirty Dozen' and the 'Rebirth Brass Band'.

The New Orleans Funeral

"After the sermons over, they'd take the body to the cemetery with the band playing the funeral marches – maybe 'Nearer My God to Me'.

Them old-time drummers, they just put a handkerchief under the snare on their drums and it go tunk-a, tunk-a, like a tom-tom effect. And when that 'body's in the ground, man, tighten up on them snares and he rolls that drum and everybody gets together and they march back to their hall playing 'when the Saints' or 'Didn't He Ramble'. They usually have a keg of beer back there and they rejoice, you know, for the dead"

Louis Armstrong, quoted in Richard Meryman 'Louis Armstrong - a Self Portrait'.

The classic New Orleans black funeral was a highly formalised affair. Benevolent or burial association provided burial insurance and other forms of assistance and social help.

Ceremonial wind music was a strong feature in French Culture, and part of other immigrant communities' life like the German and Italian. The formula was established before 1900 and white communities also practised to some extent a similar ceremony. The up-tempo ending was part showing 'death is swallowed up in victory" and relates to the many 'wake' tradition

The basic form was

1. Assembly at the lodge hall of the burial association, where a procession formed with lodge standard bearers and a marshal at the head.
2. The band played a hymn
3. The procession moved off in march tempo to the funeral home, church or home where the body resided, playing hymns and marches and took the body to the funeral service
4. The band played a hymn at the church and then waited for the service to end
5. A dirge was played as the body was put in the hearse
6. The procession reformed and played 4/4 hymns and dirges to the cemetery
7. The band formed a processional double rank to allow the hearse through while the drummer played a long roll for 'turning the body loose'
8. the band might play a hymn and the preacher give another sermon or lead hymn singing. The trumpeter might play 'taps'
9. Outside the cemetery the snare drummer tightened his drum played a cadence at a bright cadence and the band departed.
10. Once it was at a respectful distance the band played popular tunes and marches

During the twentieth century the playing of written dirges fell away.

*"The ordinary brass band
consists of 9 men:
trombone, tuba
baritone, alto
sometimes 1 trumpet
sometimes 2*

*E-flat clarinet
Snare drum and bass drum*

*You have the cymbal attached
To the top of the bass drum.*

...

*And the snare drummer ...
Well he had work to do
Cause he had to keep up
And to play what the band
Was playin.*

*And then when the band
Was stopped he'd have to march
And that meant he kept the cadence going*

...

*Now, about a funeral
That's the snare drummer's job -
He carries the whole responsibility
On his shoulders,
For the simple reason
That he beats the time
For them to walk*

*And he's got to break the time
Cause you don't walk as slow
After you get through playin
As when you're playin'.*

*After you're walking
At a certain brisk pace
You break that down
To a very slow walk'
Then the bass drum
Gives the last slow beat.
Then you keep the beat
On through the funeral number
That you're playin'.
After you get through with that-
It's very slow -
Then the snare drummer's
Supposed to pick it up
To a marching time.
Not too fast
But just fast enough
For a guy not to
Burn himself out*

When they put the body

*In the ground and say
'ashes to ashes'
well, that's the drummer cue
right there
telling him
to get out of there.
And the snare drummer alone
Goes out in to the middle
Of the street
And he'd start to roll.
And he rolled load
And you can hear that roll
Within a block of where you are...
And you could see guys
Jumpin over the graves
And comin' out of peoples houses
And out of bar rooms
And oh just flying...
Oh it was a lot of fun
Then they all line up
Line up from the drummer"*

*"The jazz played after New Orleans funerals didn't show any lack of respect
for the person being buried. It rather showed their people we wanted them
to be happy"*

Baby Dodds from the William Ransom Hogan Jazz archive.