

**CREOLIZATION IN NEW ORLEANS: JAZZ
AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY 1900-1940**

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ABSTRACT

My project builds on existing histories of jazz, theories of creolization, and studies on cultural hybridity. Creolization and hybridity were equal partners in the creation of a societal and musical revolution. As a student and a performer of jazz, I have found that this aspect of jazz history has been neglected and under researched. This thesis attempts to fill in this gap and is guided by four major questions: (1) How did creolization and cultural hybridity influence the development and reception of jazz in the early half of the twentieth century? (2) How did the Creole and Black communities in New Orleans culturally and economically benefit from the merging of their musical practices and experiences? (3) What constituted the relationships between Black, White, and Creole communities? (4) Who were the major players that shaped and profited from the practice and how? These research questions engage with the concepts of cultural hybridity and cultural identity in order to understand how and why creolization was a major process that led to the development of jazz.

Contemporary New Orleans is a result of the forced and voluntary migration of a variety of populations to this unique region and the resulting hybridity continues to define the city as a bastion of diversity. The confluence of cultures in this city during this era showcases a musical, racial, and cultural hybridity that marks the unique city of New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz.

There were several musical styles and practices that emerged in New Orleans during the early twentieth century that contributed to the foundation of jazz. These practices consisted of gospel music, blues, European salon music, such as waltzes and popular dance, folk songs and improvisations that highlighted personal experiences (from hardships to happier occasions). The influx of musicians from Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean all brought their own stylistic elements to the music and culture of New Orleans. The result was one of cultural hybridity. I argue that in New Orleans creolization was one of the major cultural processes that shaped the development of jazz between 1900 to 1940.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My interest in jazz began with the guidance and influence of my brother Bobby, who was a huge jazz fan and eight years my senior, along with my uncle Bobby Hackett, a famous jazz trumpeter. My brother Bobby was not a musician but was very knowledgeable about jazz and was determined to help me become involved in the world of music. My parents were very supportive of my musical interests and my brother gave me my first drum set when I was ten years old in Providence, Rhode Island. It was an instrument that he won in a late-night card game and delivered to me at two o'clock in the morning – a day that will live in infamy! Music was playing constantly in my home during my childhood, mostly jazz of varying styles and eras and recordings by Uncle Bobby. Several incidents stand out in my memory to this day. My uncle came to visit on several occasions, but during one visit, he brought his latest recording to play for all of us and he brought his new trumpet for my family to see. This was the day I realized that jazz music had taken its hold on me. This new recording titled *Coast Concert* was an album of Dixieland standards performed by Mr. Hackett and a group of Los Angeles-based musicians.¹ It was the best thing I had ever heard, and the beauty of this shiny new trumpet in its leather case was just overwhelming for this eight-year-old.² The seeds were now sewn for the beginnings of a lifelong journey.

¹ *Capitol Concert* was recorded in October of 1955 at Capitol Studios in Hollywood, California. The recording was produced for Capitol by Dave Cavanaugh and featured selected musicians from the West Coast, as well as Texas trombonist Jack Teagarden and Texas saxophonist and clarinetist Ernie Caceres.

² Dixieland jazz is a style of small group instrumental music with its roots in and around New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. It is based on the blues and up-tempo swing and featuring virtuoso improvised solos. Usually, these ensembles consisted of five or six musicians with a front line made up of trumpet, clarinet, and trombone.

Another instance occurred at our home when I was ten years old in 1954. Jazz was still on my mind and still a mystery that was calling to me. It was a hot July afternoon when a large, black Cadillac arrived at our front door. My uncle was performing at the famous Newport Jazz Festival that evening and had driven to Providence, Rhode Island from New York with his friend and co-star the great Louis Armstrong. Hackett wanted his mother (my grandmother) to meet Mr. Armstrong, but to everyone's surprise my grandmother would not allow Mr. Armstrong to come inside. She was afraid of what the neighbors might think about a black man coming into her house. I was a young boy, but I knew this was terribly wrong, this was my first exposure to racial prejudice. I didn't realize at that moment that this would be the beginning of a search for the realities of racial discrimination: what part did these tensions play in the development of jazz, what did jazz mean, and where and how did it become a symbol of U.S. American nationalism? The role of race becomes obvious when one considers the division of communities in New Orleans during the early twentieth century. Distinctions between Black music, Creole music and the unique cultural environment of New Orleans were crucial to the development of this hybrid style of musical performance.

Any attempt at understanding jazz will begin with an examination of its origins in the city and suburbs of New Orleans. The essential elements of jazz are of African, specifically West African, sources. These elements include: 1) a form of syncopation rarely heard in western European art music, 2) a specific rhythmic pulse, which in jazz is called swing, which emphasizes beats two and four of each measure, and uses a repeated rhythmic pattern of dotted eighth and sixteenth notes, and 3) the emphasis on improvisation and individual solos (Gioia, 2011, p. 9). It wasn't until these three elements were brought to the United States through gradual processes of acculturation, maritime commerce, immigration, and human trafficking.

These elements fused with western European forms, harmonies, polyphony, and instrumentation such as the music of brass bands, dance bands and even solo pianists. The earliest concepts of this new music came to the attention of Creole and African American musicians and the public. Several musical styles and practices emerged in New Orleans during the early twentieth century that contributed to the foundation of jazz. These practices consisted of gospel music, blues, European salon music, such as waltzes and popular dance, folk songs and improvisations that highlighted personal experiences (from hardships to happier occasions). Charles Hersch (2007) states that the influx of musicians from Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean brought their own stylistic elements to the music and culture of New Orleans (p. 145). The result was one of cultural hybridity.

During the early 1900s, New Orleans was a melting pot of people, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. Néstor García Canclini (1995) writes, “Hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation” (p. xv). García Canclini defines cultural hybridity as the socio-cultural processes that involves two (or more) differing societies, existing separately, to combine and create a new dynamic in order to survive and adapt to their new environment (p. xxv). In other words, a new cultural identity is formed as diverse communities interact with one another. A closer examination of the culture and population of New Orleans reveals a more culturally and ethnically diverse populace that continuously competed with and influenced one another.

Race relations in the United States during this time, especially in New Orleans and the surrounding areas within the Gulf region, were inclusive of Black and White populations, but also included several racial and ethnic categories including Creoles. According to Charles

Stewart (2007), New Orleans comprised a population of multiple ethnic groups (initially believed of African, European, and Caribbean descent) that formed a hybrid culture (p. 17). New Orleans became home to a burgeoning Creole culture, which provided a fruitful and often ignored contribution to the development of jazz. This mixture of communities and cultures forms the basis of my study regarding cultural hybridity and creolization as essential processes that shaped early jazz in the United States. The influx of African, Caribbean, Latin American, French Canadian, and European peoples to the United States carried a new musical synthesis of urban sophistication with folk and religious underpinnings. The musical influences and practices of these various populations were central to the creation of this music called jazz.

Scope of Thesis

The primary purpose of this thesis is to examine the effect of creolization in New Orleans jazz. I argue that creolization, as an example of cultural hybridity, stands as one of the major cultural processes that shaped New Orleans jazz during the first half of the twentieth century, specifically 1900–1940. During this time, New Orleans musicians and their audiences experienced a freewheeling atmosphere centered around a nightlife that emphasized alcohol, dancing, and sex, all of which was conducive to the creation of a new form of music. This specific city was not officially sanctioned for these purposes until the late eighteenth century. The lifestyles exhibited in Storyville allowed for the growth and appreciation of jazz and the musicians who performed it. Such activities existed in the district of Storyville, the area included within the boundaries of the red-light district in the neighborhood of Rampart St. and Perdido. As Donald Marquis (1978) argues, “Although it was never officially enfranchised as ‘Black Storyville’, law officials did not generally interfere with the activities of the prostitutes living there” (p. 50). The year 1897

marked a city ordinance that outlined these boundaries of lewd but permissible behavior. New Orleans served as one of the most cosmopolitan port cities, functioning as a gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America (including the United States). The mixture of Black, White, Creole, Amerindian populations, as well as immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America accentuated the expression of the suffering and frustrations of the population.

My focus on the New Orleans style of jazz is based on the music of the traditional brass band repertoire. It was reconfigured using improvisation and syncopated rhythms. Black musicians as well as Creole musicians located in the area south of Canal Street contributed the fundamental aspects of this music. While it is true that jazz was originally a regional phenomenon, the practitioners of this art form gradually began to feel economic pressures to leave New Orleans. The Storyville district of New Orleans was ordered closed by the United States Navy in November of 1917. Other performance venues were also closed forcing musicians to travel to places such as Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Los Angeles. The exposure of the music in these metropolitan areas initiated the national and international acceptance of this new form of musical entertainment. The turn of the twentieth century was the dawn of the jazz age, and the center for the development and exploration of this music was the city of New Orleans and the growth of creolization. The jazz age of the 1920s saw the popularization of jazz moved from New Orleans to cities such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.

Creolization occurs when communities absorb cultural elements that eventually become included within an inherited culture. A new cultural hybridity is formed through the diasporas of populations and cultural practices, which allows us to gain an understanding of creolization. A new society was established through the interactions of many cultures in what seems to be a small geographical area. The hybridity of musical practices that provided the soundscape of

creolization included African, U.S. American, and Latin American and Caribbean musical styles. Gospel music, Amerindian traditional music, and field hollers of enslaved peoples were all incorporated along with Western European art musical influences.³ The extent to which these factors were influential in the creation of jazz is critical to any examination of this place, this time, and this new musical genre.

Popular performers and composers that were foundational to the impacts of creolization and the birth of jazz include Louis Gottschalk, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Freddy Keppard, and Alphonse Picou. These musicians all had strong ties to the Creole community of New Orleans. Each of these players were raised in Creole families and received concentrated instruction on their instruments. This musical education allowed them to have an impact on the less formally musically educated musicians from the north side of town, creating a vibrant new style of music.

Methodology

Creolization and hybridity were equal partners in the creation of a societal and musical revolution. My project builds on existing histories of jazz, theories of creolization, and studies on cultural hybridity. As a student and a performer of jazz, I have found that this aspect of jazz history has been neglected and under researched. This thesis attempts to fill in this gap and is guided by four major questions: (1) How did creolization and cultural hybridity influence the development and reception of jazz in the early half of the twentieth century? (2) How did the Creole and Black communities in New Orleans culturally and economically benefit from the merging of their musical practices and experiences? (3) What constituted the relationships

³ Field hollers were improvised call and response expressions of what these field workers were feeling or doing at the time.

between Black, White, and Creole communities? (4) Who were the major players that shaped and profited from the practice and how? These research questions engage with the concepts of cultural hybridity and cultural identity in order to understand how and why creolization was a major process that led to the development of jazz.

The study of the geographic and colonial history of New Orleans is a valid way to examine the effects of the Creole population and the beginnings of creolization. Louisiana had three colonial eras. Each of these eras produced not only a change of flag, but new customs, language, and laws. The effects of these changes caused the population of Black New Orleans to develop in different ways. New waves of immigrants brought new layers to the growing African population and culture of the city. From the earliest days of slavery, a diverse personality was shaped by the competition and struggles of international entities.

Lower Louisiana was created by the buildup of silt and mud carried to the area by the forces of the Mississippi River as it flows to the Gulf of Mexico. Geologically, it is the youngest part of the United States (Sublette, 2008, p. 9). A new generation of immigrants began arriving from France and Canada to profit from the rich soil of the region and the availability of international trade. The development of this new population became known as creolization, a word that has its origins in Portugal and Spain (*criar*, meaning to raise) (Stewart, 2007, p. 110). It was the Portuguese who initiated the Atlantic Ocean slave trade (Hall, 2019, p. 149).

To understand the impact and influence of creolization on New Orleans jazz, I discuss what the term means, its links to cultural hybridity in New Orleans, and its changing nature through the course of the early 20th century. The term Creole was first used in the sixteenth century Caribbean to describe people of mixed races, born of European and African parents. Since this early colonial period, the term has been applied to many aspects of culture, including

music, dance, and food. In his book on New Orleans culture during times of colonization, Ned Sublette (2008) points out the label of Creole maintained predominantly racial and ethnic connotations. He states “In Louisiana, the meaning of the word Creole varied with the era. At the time of statehood, the word was used to refer to those who were already present in Louisiana, whether of French, Spanish, or African descent” (p. 79). In her essay “The Formation of Afro-Creole Culture,” Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (1992) agrees with Sublette and adds, “Throughout the Americas, the word Creole has been re-defined over time for social reasons and has many meanings. It derives from the Portuguese word *Crioulo*, meaning a slave of African descent, born in the New World” (pp. 58-87). Through the 19th century, the term has come to signify not just the hybridity of racial and ethnic identities but also cultural identities as well. Charles Stewart (2007) defines Creole as “the interaction all aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements united on the same soil” (p. 19). This combination of cultures and cultural practices resulted in creolization.

Creolization has a long and disputed history, particularly in reference to the population and culture of New Orleans. Initially conceived of as a process of racial and ethnic miscegenation and assimilation, creolization is now defined as a process of adaptation and an example of cultural hybridity. Stewart (2007) further states “Creolization is seen as a process whereby new shared cultural forms, and new possibilities for communication, emerge owing to contact. It highlights the open ended, flexible, and unbounded nature of cultural processes, as opposed to the notion of cultures as bounded, stable systems of communication” (p. 163).

Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Crossé Bell offer an important description of the emergence of Creole peoples and their establishment of an alternative community during the late nineteenth century in New Orleans and Southern Louisiana. A new attitude of confidence and entitlement

was emboldened by the Louisiana Purchase, a treaty that was perceived as a path to equal citizenship in the United States.⁴ However, these feelings of political and cultural entitlements would disappear along with the ongoing Americanization of the city: “The free Black Creoles of the nineteenth century had a special status in New Orleans. They had emerged from French and Spanish rule not only with unusual rights and powers but also with a peculiar assertiveness and self-confidence” (Logsdon and Bell, 1992, p. 204). The study of New Orleans during the turn of the twentieth century must include a discussion of creolization. The Creole population and culture are in fact hybrid, both culturally and ethnically. Paul Gilroy (1993) has labeled this section of the population as the “Black Atlantic,” a formation that involves the interchange of culture, ideas, and people between Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. They were direct examples of inter-racial circulation musically and culturally.

In *Authentic New Orleans*, sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham (2007) explains that during the 19th century, the term Creole initially meant “indigenous to Louisiana” (p. 83). It began as a geographic label, but during the early 1900s, the city of New Orleans racialized the term. White city elites, searching for an influx of tourist dollars, needed to convince travelers that their city was a safe and proper destination for White tourists. The label Creole was then reconfigured to describe a less threatening White identity, which excluded mixed race and Black peoples. During the 1960s, scholars provided a new definition of the term to be more inclusive of non-White populations. This concept, however, did not come to be accepted until the 1990s. The term is still racialized and is used as a means of promoting multiculturalism, similar to other racial designations, such as Latino, Native American, Melungeon, and Cajun. The term Creole has

⁴ Free Black Creoles received unusual rights and powers under French and Spanish rule. The year 1803 found new American officials facing free Black Creoles who felt that the Louisiana Purchase assured their communities of equal status with the Anglo-American population.

gone through several definitions in its short history in the U.S., illustrating the social construction of race and the various ways those concepts adapt to economic and political realities, but never had it been used an empty signifier; the label maintained intimate ties with cultural practices and place.

I argue that in New Orleans, creolization was one of the major cultural processes that shaped the development of jazz between 1900 to 1940.⁵ During this time, New Orleans musicians and their audiences experienced an atmosphere that was a consequence of cultural hybridity and creolization. The biggest draw to New Orleans was a nightlife that emphasized alcohol, dancing, and sex, all of which were conducive to the creation of this new form of music (Gioia, 2011, p. 28). Southern Louisiana was an area that was a major center for international commerce and travel where New Orleans served as one of the most important cosmopolitan port cities, functioning as a gateway to the Caribbean and Latin America (McKinney, 2006, p. 35). Paul Gilroy (1993) argues that music in the Black diaspora, especially jazz, functioned as a marker of their aesthetic sensibilities. Gilroy states, "...jazz finds it's very life in improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazz man must lose his identity even as he finds it..." (p. 79). The New Orleans jazz performer maintained multiple identities through their music. Improvisation embodies one identity while the personal history of the musician and their life experiences create another. The traditions developed by way of cultural hybridity are an unavoidable contribution to the musical development of the jazz performer. The expression of the musicians' ideas, musically and socially, create a duality of individualism. Their musical and technical training

⁵ Trumpeter Buddy Bolden and pianist Jelly Roll Morton first gained recognition during the year 1900. The year 1940 marked the emergence of big bands and the swing era. The popularity of New Orleans style jazz was diminishing.

juxtapose with their personal histories, creating a dichotomy within their identity that mirrors Gilroy's statement.

New Orleans was and is a diverse environment for so many people and cultures, living together and competing against one another. From the mid-nineteenth century forward widespread opportunities for racial interaction and mingling were presented to these divided communities. Segregated oppression was a constant cloud hanging over all of society and enforced by the use of Jim Crow laws.⁶ However, the neighborhoods of New Orleans included a vibrant mixture of Black, White, and Creole peoples, all living in proximity. In his book, *How Musical Is Man*, John Blacking (1973) states, "In order to find out what music is and How Musical Is Man, we need to ask who listens and who plays and sings in any given society and why" (p. 32). The music performed in New Orleans at this time served several purposes. The musicians played music that was both spiritual and secular in nature. The listeners were primarily people of color who needed to be lifted emotionally, socially and even politically from their oppressed existence. Jazz bands and their music fulfilled these needs. They contributed a joyful, positive experience for dances, riverboat rides, political rallies and even funerals. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy (1993) offers a glimpse of the importance of music and musicians to the Black experience: "Black Americans were sustained and healed and nurtured by the translation of their experience into art above all in the music" (p. 78).

Jazz history has typically focused on and consisted of the contributions of Black and White (who appropriated this new musical style) musicians within the genre's development,

⁶ Beginning in the 1870s, Jim Crow laws were mandated to enforce racial segregation within the area of the southern United States. These laws were put into place by White southern democrats and were designed to remove economic and political gains achieved by the Black population during the period of reconstruction. These advances had been realized in the areas of schools, restaurants, public facilities, and transportation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 overturned these laws.

often disregarding the influences and contributions of Creole performers. The Creole community was itself divided by skin color. Thomas Brothers (2006) claims that jealousy and competition existed between Black Creoles and White Creoles (p. 25). The portion of the population that was referred to as White Creoles found less resistance integrating into the hegemonic White population because of their skin color. White Creoles benefitted both economically and socially due to their ability to assimilate. Black Creoles were marginalized and found more adversity in entering the Black community because of their racial and ethnic hybridity (Gioia, 2011, p. 32). The Creole population ultimately did not fit into any binary racial category as the term is a combination of racial and national identities (Hersch, 2007, p. 22). Social and racial hierarchies existed even within these multicultural communities.

In his book *Subversive Sounds*, Charles Hersch (2007) describes jazz as a transgressive music that resisted racial segregation and tried to break down racial barriers (p. 6). The realization that this music provided increased opportunities for musical employment all over New Orleans encouraged both the social and artistic interaction of musicians. The Creole, Black, and White populations sought a better life for their families and new ways of expressing themselves musically. The development of jazz in New Orleans was an intercultural exchange of musical identities. Musicians of all ethnicities were drawing upon the same sources for inspiration and developed an atmosphere of mutual respect that enabled the exchange of musical ideas and social interaction. The walls of segregation still existed, but cracks began to develop. Samuel Charters (2008) states, “Each of the musical worlds in New Orleans needed the others to create the city’s distinctive musical style” (p. 7). The Creole and Black communities intermingled because each of these populations had something to offer to their neighbors. Musically, Creole musicians realized that they could provide a new sophistication to the music

written and performed by Black musicians (Hersch, 2007, p. 37). They came to understand a need for musicians who could read music and play their instruments at a higher technical level existed. The ability of Creoles to compose and arrange was a valuable contribution to the music performed by Black musicians. This combination of skills led to a professional environment that offered better economic conditions for both Black and Creole performers (Peretti, 1961, p. 203).

The participation and contributions of the New Orleans Creoles to jazz remains one of the most misrepresented and least understood issues in the history of this music (Gioia, 2011, p. 32). In his study of jazz in American culture, Burton Peretti (1961) builds a case for cultural hybridity in jazz, highlighting the contributions and careers of the most prominent players of this period stating that “social change was the engine driving the creation of jazz” (p. 2). Peretti examines the intercultural relationships between Black, Creole, and White communities, and explores creolization and what it means for New Orleans. He states:

By 1917, New Orleans jazz signified, among other things, a conjunction of rural and urban culture. Africa and Europe, individual skill and communal fraternizing, Protestant and Creole sensibilities, and the violent past and the encouraging future. Jazz’s meaning as the art of the urbanizing African American world become even more significant as large numbers of southern Blacks moved north, during the great migration of the coming decade. (p. 38)

The influence of creolization and the first notions of jazz can be seen and heard in the career of pianist and composer Louis Gottschalk (1864–1934). He was a major influence on the compositions of Jelly Roll Morton years later. The rhythmic and technical devices, such as those used in his piano pieces *Bamboula* (1848), *La Savane: ballade creole* (1846), *Souvenir de Porto Rico* (*Souvenir of Puerto Rico*, 1857), were incorporated into the development of ragtime music

and early jazz. Gottschalk was born Creole in New Orleans and later relocated to Europe. During his lifetime, Gottschalk became defined as a cosmopolitan composer, being one of the first composers from the U.S. to travel to the Caribbean and South America. As a result of his travels, he incorporated several stylistic elements that he had learned abroad, but the impact of New Orleans Creole culture played a dominant role in his music. For example, his compositions *Bamboula* (1848), *La Savane* (1846) *Le Bananier* (*The Banana Trees*, 1846) and *Le Mancenillier* (1848) reflect on his musical memories of his youth spent in Louisiana.⁷ These pieces exemplify Gottschalk's earliest remembrances of Creole musical culture (Sublette, 2008, p. 125). His music also included some of the earliest elements of jazz through the incorporation of Afro-Caribbean rhythms such as the habanera and tresillo and arranged Creole melodies from his youth. His compositions are considered to be one of the major influences on early jazz and ragtime, both closely related.⁸

I discuss those musics and popular entertainments and musical cultural practices that synthesized to help develop jazz in New Orleans. As previously mentioned, New Orleans has been a site for cultural and ethnic hybridity since the nineteenth century. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, English-speaking Anglo and African Americans flooded into New Orleans.⁹ Cultural tensions caused a division between these groups and the city. The demographics of New

⁷ Author S. Frederick Starr (1995) said Gottschalk composed several pieces that were reflections on the music he was exposed to as a youth in New Orleans. This collection is referred to as *Four Louisiana Creole Pieces*. 1.) *Bamboula* – based on Creole folk song “Quań Patatek Lacuite”; 2) *La Savane*-based on Creole folk song “Le Belle Lolotte”; 3) *Le Mancenillier* – based on Creole folk song “Chanson de Lizette”; and 4) *Le Bananier* – based on Creole folk song “En Avań Grenadie” (p. 39).

⁸ A forerunner of jazz, ragtime's most famous feature was syncopation. Most notably superimposing syncopated rhythms above the duple pulse of standard marching compositions. This genre came to prominence in the 1890s. Pianist Scott Joplin (1868–1917) was considered the King of Ragtime. His composition, *Maple Leaf Rag*, is considered the archetypical rag (Hersch, 2007, p. 17).

⁹ The Louisiana Purchase resulted in the United States acquiring the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. An area that stretched from New Orleans to the Great Lakes and northwest to Montana. Suddenly the United States had doubled its size (Sublette, 2008, p. 200).

Orleans by the turn of the twentieth century consisted of White, Black, Creole, French, and Amerindian populations, as well as immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean islands. Sections of the city were divided by Canal Street, a geographical line in New Orleans that separated uptown and downtown and isolated Black and Creole communities. Black musicians that lived in the area north of Canal Street, such as Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, and Buddy Bolden, contributed the fundamental aspects of this music (rhythm and improvisation) and Creole musicians, such as Sidney Bechet, Alphonse Picou, and Jelly Roll Morton, who lived south of Canal Street added a more sophisticated approach that included reading musical notation and playing intricate harmonizations. Slowly, a realization within these musical communities developed that those attributes of the other would be beneficial both artistically and economically. The result was a blurring of racial and cultural differences in defiance of 1890s Jim Crow laws, which were imposed throughout the South by Southern Democrat-dominated state legislatures as a reflection of prevailing segregationist attitudes (Brothers, 2006, p. 280). Newcomers, such as rural migrants and performers Kid Ory, Willy Hightower, and Pops Foster, began settling upriver from Canal Street and the crowded French Quarter. This division created the “uptown” sector that was set apart from the older Creole section that was known as “downtown.” The arrival of Black peoples, first as enslaved peoples and then later as free people was responsible for the inclusion of blues and gospel musical traditions. New dances and new rhythms inspired the musicians of both Black and Creole communities (Hersch, 2007, p. 108).

While cultural hybridity was evident in the daily lives of the diverse communities in New Orleans, it could also be heard in the music of other hybrid musical genres, such as jazz, blues, gospel, and the music of Latin America and the Caribbean Islands. The “Latin Tinge” is an important feature in the music of Creole jazz musician Jelly Roll Morton. Once called the

“Spanish Tinge” by Morton in an interview with ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax (2001), the Latin Tinge features the presence of the habanera rhythm played on the piano predominantly by the left hand (p. 62). Musicologist Charles Hiroshi Garrett (2008) states that “It may prove more productive in future studies to conceive of the Latin Tinge not as a single entity but as a multifaceted, variable array of influences, not as a singular tinge, but as a collective set of Latin tinges that color the history of American music” (p. 56). According to John Storm Roberts, the habanera, a rhythmic pattern, which is the root of the Argentinian tango, affected jazz directly. The music of Louis Gottschalk and later Jelly Roll Morton features evidence of this influence.

Another early contribution of Latin rhythms was the music performed by the Eighth Regiment of Mexican Cavalry Band. Their visit to New Orleans during the Cotton Exposition of 1884 had a major impact on musicians in terms of rhythm, form, and instrumentation (Roberts, 1999, p. 442). This military band, directed by Encarnación Payén, popularized the music of the danza and the Latin rhythms of the habanera and tresillo. It is interesting to note that Payén is not remembered for his directorial abilities. His son in law was Juventino Rosas, the concertmaster. Rosas is perhaps the most important Mexican musician of the nineteenth century (Madrid and Moore, 2013, p. 217). Their performances became influential within the community of early jazz musicians because of their reliance on improvisation and virtuoso soloists. For Gottschalk, Morton, and other early jazz performers, the incorporation and performance of the habanera as an effective rhythmic cell for jazz was an example of cultural hybridity.

The descriptions of the city and its suburbs during this period all seem to agree that a mixture of cultures and races that could easily be defined as a gumbo of social alliances. By examining the role and function of creolization in New Orleans, we can understand jazz as a cultural hybrid, a musical practice with several continents, cultural practices, and ethnicities

represented under one musical umbrella. I discuss the music of Creole jazz performers to highlight the impact of creolization on the development of this new musical genre. The methods I have employed in this thesis are based on my readings of respected authors and journalists combined with a lifetime of interacting with musicians who perform and performed in these jazz styles. I have attempted to capture these performance practices in my own playing and have combined these experiences with research into the geographical, cultural, and historical journey of this most unique city of New Orleans, its music, its people, and its cultural diversity.

Literature Review

Prominent jazz history books all seem to focus on the vibrant personalities, virtuoso musicianship, and psychological problems associated with the lifestyle and the constant competition that faced musicians of this era. Creolization and hybridity were equal partners in the creation of a societal and musical revolution. Paul Gilroy (1993) examines the concept of regionality and its relationship to his concept of *The Black Atlantic*. He states “The musics of the Black Atlantic world were the primary expressions of cultural distinctiveness which this population seized upon and adapted to its new circumstances” (Gilroy, 1993, p. 82). Gilroy discusses the history of African, U.S. American, British, and Caribbean cultures as a means of defining racial authenticity. The music performed and practiced within the Black Atlantic is used to uphold notions of ethnic particularity. These notions were brought to this country directly from Africa, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic during this dark period of slavery and human bondage. The concept of the Black Atlantic encompasses the vital role of travel, location, and politics. It is the development of this trans-national character that allows for the discussions of racial authenticity. Gilroy discusses that when taken together, diaspora consciousness and the

memory of slavery are components of the shifting perceptions and quality of Black identity when used as a political strategy in the modern world. Central themes in the author's analysis are travel and politics of location and the role of Black Atlantic music in the creation, articulation, and reproductions of this counter-culture. It is important to realize that music helps to keep the terrors of slavery alive and cultivated in social forms through the performances of early African hand drumming, field hollers, blues, minstrelsy, brass bands all the way to contemporary hip-hop and rap performances.

In *The History of Jazz*, Ted Gioia (2011) recounts stories of the early performers of jazz and the melting pot that was New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. This proves to be a valuable look into the lives, professions, and turmoil that surrounded these early jazz musicians as they traveled from the bawdy houses of New Orleans and northward along the Mississippi Delta, to the rent parties of Harlem and the speakeasies of Chicago during prohibition (1920–1933). Gioia not only follows the development of the music but the culture and socioeconomic conditions that influenced and supported the struggles of people of color. This information has been central to the focus of this thesis. The resistance of the upper classes to changes in the social structure occurring during this period are shown to be examples of the struggle for equality and the acceptance of this new genre of music. This is a valuable resource in determining what brought about this revolutionary new music and what factors within society nourished and encouraged its growth. Gioia focuses on legendary players of all nationalities, races and places of origin. He points out that in the United States, especially in New Orleans, music was the first area of social interaction where racial barriers were delineated, challenged, and overturned. These were sometimes small intermediate steps, but they did represent progress. He states, “The role of these New Orleans Creoles in the development of jazz remains one of the

least understood and most commonly misrepresented issues in the history of this music” (Gioia, 2011, p. 32).

Gioia moves rather quickly to the exodus of musicians from New Orleans and the emergence of big bands as early as 1914 and the importance of Fletcher Henderson in the 1920s. Between the years 1914 and 1916 more than one million African Americans left the South in search of a more tolerant and inclusive lifestyle. This Great Migration, as it has become known, enveloped the entire range of Black society from musicians, doctors, lawyers, clergy, and craftsman (Gioia, 2011, p. 43). The early 1920s began a shift in the center of the jazz world, northward. Chicago has by this time become the new center of the jazz universe. The author points to the irony of the fact that so much of the history of New Orleans jazz happened in Chicago. The majority of these travelers never returned to their native state except for brief visits. This Great Migration was motivated by a search for a better life (work, family, and personal freedom).¹⁰

Another noteworthy historical source is Burton Peretti’s *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America*. Peretti presents an important socio-cultural study on jazz during the period 1900–1940. This book provides a differing perspective from Gioia’s approach on the emergence of jazz, claiming that this urban music was created between 1915 and 1930 when Southern Black musicians migrated north to places like Kansas City and Chicago. Peretti argues that race and culture created the music, life, and business of jazz. Jazz is an urban music

¹⁰ Many of these developments in musical style were a result of the popularity of new dances and changes in American musical tastes. Now a new generation, searching for a new identity during the late 1930s and early 1940s that was able to dictate the musical preferences of the nation. Swing music was the chosen vehicle to communicate this new lifestyle and feelings of rebellion. The big bands were the preferred medium to represent this cultural change (Gioia, 2011, p.137). Discussions continue with regard to the importance of popular music and dance in influencing the public interest in the emergence of big bands. Technology is highlighted as an important tool in spreading the music through recordings, publications, radio broadcasts and the development of the player piano as a means of bringing jazz to the parlors of all levels of society.

shaped through the mixture of an urban city along with urban social functions. Peretti asserts that jazz was shaped by urbanization, the great migration of Southern Blacks to the North between 1915–1930 and it was this period that allowed musicians to become more socially relevant and musically expressive within the context of Northern urban nightlife. He proposes that Black musicians used jazz as a means of fighting back against minstrelsy by using its unique cultural and intellectual properties such as European harmonies, polytonality, African rhythms, and improvisation. Peretti discusses the development of jazz within a social context, to the extent that he portrays the jazz image as it relates to styles of dress, the use of drugs, and its unique jargon.

Peretti claims that jazz acquired the status of a cultural triumph with its reception in larger cities such as Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and New York. In shaping his historical narrative, Peretti relies on oral history and newspaper accounts of music in that era. He discusses the differences between jazz and blues, the influence of White European classical music and White musicians, racial relations, economics and male dominance and the burdens of being true pioneers not only within the music but within a culture that was founded upon racial segregation and oppression of these new hybrid cultures. Jazz and blues are musical cousins. Both of these genres featured specific pitch, tonalities, harmonies, and a focus on improvisation. Each of these styles did, however, communicate in different ways to various segments of society. The traditions of rural folk music were broken, and both of these forms were moving to become more urban as opposed to the rural roots of Delta blues.¹¹ The changes in these styles were brought about by the diversity of the audiences and the desire of the musicians to grow musically and

¹¹ Delta Blues (ex: Robert Johnson, Ma Rainey, Howling Wolf). One of the earliest styles of blues music. Originating in the region that includes Memphis, TN in the north to Vicksburg, Mississippi in the south. Primary features are the twelve-bar blues structure, male vocals with accompaniment of guitar and harmonica. The vocal styles used can be introspective, soulful, and passionate. This was the first guitar oriented Black music to be recorded in the 1920s (Gioia, 2011, 14-16).

connect with each audience on a personal and creative level. The development of this music also represented a form of non-violent protest against the status quo. This book is considered the first comprehensive analysis of the place that jazz occupied in its earliest years and development. Peretti presents an in-depth study of how the racial, cultural, and socio-economic make-up of American cities dictated the creation of this music.

While Gioia and Peretti structure a history of jazz that revolves around the main performers, not enough attention is given to the important space that New Orleans played in its development. This history and cultural discussion are pieced together through sources that present varying perspectives and discussions of cultural histories. In *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square*, Ned Sublette (2008) focuses on New Orleans unique cultural diversity and presents a narrative on the political, cultural, and musical development within the city. He discusses the origins of jazz and the many diverse musical influences that existed in New Orleans during the early twentieth century, emphasizing that New Orleans was a product of the interaction and competition of international forces. This book was an important source of information that focused on the significance of the contributing factors outside of the musical environment that shaped the city. In the early nineteenth century, New Orleans was the center of commerce and societal interaction that encompassed Mississippi Delta, the Gulf Rim, the Caribbean Region, Western Europe, and significant portions of West and Central Africa. All of this resulted in the unique cultural hybridity of this region. Sublette makes clear that the imperial struggles of France, Spain, and England all contributed to New Orleans unique culture. New Orleans was at this time a globalized city that was the result of immigration, geography and international commerce. Sublette defines New Orleans as the result of interplay between French and Spanish approaches to slavery and colonization. He portrays New Orleans

as being dominated by the majority Black population and their surviving African cultures, along with periods of large immigrations from Cuba and Saint Dominique (Sublette, 2008, p. 113).

As early as 1799, the music performed in Congo Square exemplified a diversity of rhythms, styles, costumes, dance, and African drumming. The tradition behind African drumming is representative of the surrounding community and consists of that community's history, culture, and the outpouring of joy, sadness, fear, and hope for the future. From this early period on, New Orleans developed a musical style that was different than anywhere else. Further, as Sublette emphasizes, "Books about history end, but history doesn't ever come to a stop. Much is missing: Anglo-American slavery was designed to erase African American history, but African Americans made their own history, and in New Orleans history parades down the street" (Sublette, 2008, p. 288).

The concentration of the Creole community and creolization within New Orleans is the focus of the edited volume *Creole New Orleans, Race and Americanization*. Editors Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon present a collection of essays regarding race relations and ethnicity in New Orleans. Each of these essays highlight the development of a French and African culture, and the ways that this culture was shaped by the arrival of immigrants from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The authors contribute an important understanding of New Orleans urban development and the roles of ethnicity and racial dynamics within that development. In her essay "The Formation of African Creole Culture," Gwendolyn Midlo Hall discusses the origins of New Orleans free Black peoples and Creoles of color. Hall (1992) argues, "The Latin American elite born in the Americas was called the Creole elite and was accused of being incapable of self-rule, in part because of its mixed heritage" (p. 60). Jerah Johnson explores the motives and objectives of the French founders. Johnson focuses on the

development of Franco-African culture in an essay entitled “Colonial New Orleans: A Fragment of the Eighteenth Century French Ethos” and once it became established, how it was allowed to resist change and develop a culture that would last until the nineteenth century. Paul F. LaChance’s “The Foreign French” features a study on the challenge of incorporating New Orleans into the United States. This process of Americanization was slowed by the influence of the Creole culture. This analysis highlights the strength of White Creoles who made allowances to accommodate United States political leaders. Arnold Hirsch describes themes such as “The One Drop Rule,” the establishment of Jim Crow laws, and the effects of the Louisiana Purchase that made significant changes to New Orleans racial politics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Overall, this is an important examination of urbanization, ethnicity, and race relations. According to the author, New Orleans as a city remains unique in comparison to other American cities (Hirsch, 1992, p. ix-xi).

Perhaps the most comprehensive account to date on the role of Creole culture in jazz comes in Charles Hersch’s *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans*. Hersch (2007) provides a survey of the rise of jazz in New Orleans with special attention to race and class. This book has proven to be a valuable resource for understanding the interconnectedness of race, place, and cultural values. Hersch rejects the notion of this city as a melting pot or a microcosm of the United States that produced jazz, instead offering the theory that this music represented a cultural circulation. This circulation did bridge racial boundaries by the movement of musicians throughout the various venues available to them, performing for audiences of different races and different social classes. Hersch focuses on a wide historical spectrum, from the late 1800s to the 1920s and occasionally reaching as far back as the eighteenth century.

Hersch (2007) also discusses the complex racial rules (Jim Crow laws) that forced musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Nick LaRocca, and Jelly Roll Morton to invent ways to connect with audiences as well as other musicians. They were required to make use of varied musical traditions and ethnic sources such as minstrelsy, ragtime, the blues, brass bands, society bands, polka bands, etc. Included with these styles are the polyrhythms of Africa and the use of improvisation and Western harmonization. These influences changed the way they played and modified their own racial identities. These adjustments were the means to undermine the movements for racial purity. Hersch investigates race, politics, and the societal structure of early New Orleans. Hersch provides valuable information regarding the ways Black musicians tapped into ideas and realities that few White musicians could grasp. Fundamental to the work of Hersch is his sweeping, yet indefensible declarations about the city, the musicians and the cultural makeup of this entire area and the rejection of European influences to this new genre of music. This is an interesting assemblage of information that has been previously unavailable and unpublished.

Sources detailing the lives of Creole jazz musicians provides another avenue for understanding the impacts of creolization in New Orleans. In *Mister Jelly Roll*, Alan Lomax examines the life of Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton using interviews conducted at The Library of Congress. These conversations included Morton’s bibliography, his discography, and examinations of his scores. The interviews begin with Morton’s family history and his early days in New Orleans. The subject’s early years in New Orleans, his important teachers, and the lessons learned on the streets and in the houses of prostitution, provide insight into the formative years of this iconic musician. These interviews were conducted over a period in the 1930s in Washington, D.C. This work constitutes a complete overview of Morton from his childhood, to

the successes and stardom that he achieved, and then to his sad final days.¹² Lomax's conclusions and the connections with Morton's life can be difficult to follow. However, the discussions of voodoo, New Orleans, Creole culture, and racial divisions make for important readings. The whiskey that Lomax gave Morton for each interview had a serious effect on the braggadocio and voracity of what Morton was discussing. Lomax was not a jazz fan and had preconceived stereotypes regarding Black peoples and jazz musicians, which were mostly negative. During the course of these sessions Morton seems to grow more abrasive, and unreliable as the alcohol and long interviews seem to take their toll. Unfortunately, Lomax seemed disinterested in the more detailed musical questions regarding Morton's stylistic and compositional achievements.

Treat It Gentle by Sidney Bechet (1975) is an autobiography of the controversial musician, a man with deep seated insecurities who always dominated any musical setting. This was a man who confronted racial indignities throughout his life. Bechet was not shy about expressing his opinions on music and his fellow musicians. This is a book filled with Bechet's emotional recollections and personal philosophy. Joan Reid was a long-time personal friend and was the very first to record taped interviews with Bechet. The next step was to organize these recordings into book form. This process was performed by Bechet's friend Desmond Flower with Bechet having final approval (Bechet, 1960, p. v). Bechet discusses memories that he had of ancestors he never met. These were highly subjective reflections on family, his childhood (as a child prodigy), and fame. Bechet's feelings of being unappreciated are apparent throughout the

¹² From being wildly successful, Morton eventually became forgotten and did not receive the recognition he deserved. He passed away after a period of long suffering with asthma and heart disease at the age of 50 in Los Angeles. His arrogance and his, at times, hostile personality offended many musicians through the years. His stabbing on a Washington, D.C. street was poorly treated because of segregated Whites-only hospitals within the city. He was eventually transported to a Black hospital, but his recovery was incomplete and led to his continuing health problems.

book. Allowances need to be made due to the fact that Bechet was not really a writer and dictated this material to a friend. The inner turmoil of Bechet and the acceptance he and his music found in Europe can be understood as a reflection on the lives of so many jazz musicians. Faced with bigotry, isolation, segregation, and the predicament of being a person of color in the early twentieth century, Bechet found freedom, acceptance, and commercial success in Europe.

Thesis Contents

In Chapter Two, I examine cultural currents that shaped New Orleans as a space of cultural hybridity. French and Spanish colonial heritage in combination with an Afro Creole culture became the building blocks for New Orleans's multiple identities. A description of race relations and the distinctive structure of a tri-level society is at the forefront of my study of New Orleans as a center for the cross fertilization of multi-national cultures. Contributions from African, Caribbean, Latin, and European immigrants can be identified long before the establishment of a jazz culture within the city of New Orleans. I trace the historical importance of the social, cultural, and political changes of New Orleans first as a colonial port city then as a space where creolization takes place, setting the stage for the development of jazz.

In Chapter Three, I explore the impact of creolization in New Orleans and the development of early jazz. I argue that a direct relationship developed between the local and global representations that identified New Orleans as a unique and culturally diverse center. This chapter examines the intermingling of communities and the adaptations of diverse musical practices, political realities, racial divisions, and the gathering places that were the center of a new and rebellious attitude for a generation. I argue that jazz is the consequence of multiple forms of racial and cultural hybridity that were a result of the turbulent events and the cultural

upheaval that took place during the 19th century. I would define jazz simply as an expression of cultural and racial pride that has been translated into a musical form. Verbal and non-verbal jazz presentations represent a desire to be lifted emotionally and spiritually. These properties are the cornerstones of jazz and a reflection of life in the city of New Orleans during the early 1900s. I have included descriptions of the importance of racially driven performances in gathering places such as Congo Square, nightclubs, brothels, Mardi Gras, religious ceremonies, and the music of brass bands as examples of the diversity of the New Orleans musical community. These are reflections of the contributions of diverse yet integrated communities. New Orleans will be described as a unique musical environment that continues to this day.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the lives and musical contributions of four prominent Creole musicians that are identified as being symbolic of the jazz tradition that had roots in the music of early New Orleans. I have identified the commonalities of their early years, familial relationships, street performances, earliest professional opportunities, and their involvement with the musical diaspora that spread from New Orleans, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Each of these performers chose artistic growth over the temptations of larger paydays. I have included transcriptions of the most well-known compositions of Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Freddie Keppard and Alphonse Picou as a means of describing their musical personalities, influences, differences and similarities.

The need for this study is a matter of documenting the history and contributions of musicians and the cultural environment of the city of New Orleans. Researching the racial dichotomy as the foundation for this unique city and the abundance of artistic achievements that were representative of the culture and the spirit of the entire area have been under appreciated and are worthy of further study and documentation. I have found that only fragments have been

published regarding the musical and societal history of New Orleans, creating a lack of information regarding the importance of cultural hybridity and Creolization. It is my desire to join these elements and the importance they played in the creation of early jazz. I consider the racial divisions within these communities as being the building blocks of a culture that gave rise to the development of jazz and embodied the concept of hybridity.

CONCLUSION

Jazz defied the dominant western musical art tradition of following the direction of a conductor. Instead, jazz valued and emphasized a feeling or emotion that was a personal reflection of the individual player, who became both composer and performer. This was an attempt to convey musically a story of sadness, joy, or hope. This is, of course the essence of what jazz represents. In an episode of *Jazz*, a documentary film by Ken Burns, Wynton Marsalis explains to Burns, “The real power of jazz is that a group of people can come together and create improvised art and negotiate their agendas. . .and that negotiation is the art. Jazz music objectifies America, it’s an art form that can give us a painless way of understanding ourselves” (Burns, 2001, 00:00-01:13).

Contemporary New Orleans is a result of the forced and voluntary migration of a variety of populations to this unique region and the resulting hybridity continues to define the city as a bastion of diversity. Currently, the work of Wynton Marsalis is perhaps the most visible example of the legacy that was left as a result of the collective creative influence of Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Buddy Bolden, and Jelly Roll Morton. Jazz has become a consequence or a reflection of the juxtaposition of culture, music, space, and place. It can be considered a conduit for diversity within both musical and social environments. The confluence of cultures in this city

during this era showcases a musical and cultural hybridity that marks New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz.

This research/work is important because it has not received the attention it deserves in presentations of jazz histories in the classroom, in movies, or theatrical productions. This project reveals that this musical form showcases the importance of hybridity and Creolization as foundational to the creation of this interconnected music and to the international acceptance of this genre throughout the years. Some people say jazz is America's only true art form. Within the context of a mixed diasporic culture jazz was created here. The creation of jazz originated with the combination of European classical musical traditions and the history and culture of Africa. Scholars, critics, musicians, and aficionados of this music have recognized the important historical and cultural contributions of jazz as a true measure of the possibilities for the advancement of international understanding of the culture, art, and spiritual contributions that this music represents. The earliest beginnings of jazz identified this music as America's musical ambassador to the world. The international acceptance of jazz as an American art form is a symbol of America's cultural hybridity and diversity.

CHAPTER TWO

NEW ORLEANS: A CITY OF CULTURAL HYBRIDITY

This chapter examines the racial divisions and cultural hybridity that have shaped New Orleans into a multicultural center at the turn of the twentieth century. Through centuries of colonial take over and the influx of populations, New Orleans has been constructed as a city boasting multiple identities that fused the colonial with the modern. The physical and cultural contributions to the building of New Orleans were realized during each era of occupation by the French, Spanish, and ultimately by U.S. American acquisition.

Louisiana had experienced three colonial eras in quick succession: French, Spanish, and U.S. American. Each of these eras brought new laws and customs. New Orleans evolved according to the possibilities afforded to the populations during these colonial periods. Prior to the signing of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, most people in New Orleans identified as Creole. Louisiana Creole refers to native-born peoples of various racial backgrounds who are descended from the colonial French and Spanish settlers of early French Louisiana. The label does not refer to one's race (Hersch, 2007, p. 20). Creoles did not fit into a binary system of racial categories. The concept of creolization combined race and nationality within a circulation of ideas, culture, and people with roots in Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean Islands. This concept changed with the signing of the Louisiana Purchase. The increase of Americans from the north (New England) and the south created a cultural war that was ignited due to linguistic differences, religious differences, and the traditions of enslaved peoples. Ned Sublette (2008) explains how colonial influences have shaped New Orleans. He describes the effects of the political and economic struggles between France, Spain, and Great Britain for dominance over the territory.

Each new wave of immigrants had to fit into and become part of the cosmopolitan African culture of New Orleans, which from the earliest days of slavery in Louisiana had its own identity (Sublette, 2008, p. 4). The mixing of populations was directly tied to the city's economy as the growth of immigration changed this economic structure. Each new wave of immigrants had to adapt to the new laws and customs they encountered in the developing city of New Orleans and the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this expanding culture.

Gradually after 1830, a new social order was constructed with the Creole populations maintaining a higher social and economic status. The assets that were important to the maintenance of their position included property, enslaved peoples, horses, and small businesses such as restaurants, construction, shipping, and fishing. These possessions placed them on the tax rolls of the territory and gave them the rights of suffrage. By the 1870s, primarily due to the Americanization of the area and the arrival of immigrants from the northern states, Creoles of French or Spanish heritage became the minority. The city became more industrialized with the advent of railroads and the use of steamboats on the Mississippi River. As a result, reliance on agriculture and cotton industries was diminished. The Creole population became less influential as neighborhoods became more diverse with the arrival of immigrants from distant countries and different regions of the United States.

Racism was the most critical aspect of the cultural development of Southern Louisiana. Scholars, musicians, and political leaders have commented on the ability of Black and Creole populations to overcome the obstacles of segregation and the lack of employment. In her book, *Globalization and the Post Creole Imagination*, Michaeline A. Crichlow (2009) argues that both the Black and Creole populations acclimated to the changing social and economic conditions of the Gulf Region. She states, "While they resisted some encirclement, their lack of, and desire for,

economic options drew them into larger systems of domination and promise and led them to adopt and adapt various strategies in their quest for citizeness” (p. 79). These strategies included voting privileges gained through military service and political recognition. Ownership of property and loyalty to the United States were also used as reasons for gaining these privileges. The Creole population expanded the structure of civil liberties for all races with these rights.

During the nineteenth century, a three-tiered structure of societal organization was created that consisted of the White population, multiracial peoples, and the African American and Black populace. The White community was the dominant group that would establish itself as the top tier of New Orleans society. This group consisted of politicians, bankers, plantation owners, railroad executives, and leaders of the Catholic Church, as well as owners and operators of the riverboats that worked the Mississippi River. The next level was occupied by Louisiana Creoles, a group that was comprised of descendants of the unions between French and Spanish colonizers and enslaved peoples. The lowest group within this segregated city was the Black and African American populations. Creoles continued to use the French-based vernacular language and French cultural practices and maintained a strong allegiance to the Catholic Church. These elements set them apart from other social and ethnic groups within the city.

In this chapter, I explore the historical, social, and cultural currents that shaped New Orleans as a multicultural and multiethnic space and how this combination resulted in a cultural hybridity that was unique to the region. This environment became conducive for the collaborations of populations and was incremental to the development of a unique Creole culture and the creation of jazz at the turn of the twentieth century.

Identity in Flux in Colonial New Orleans and Louisiana

During the early 1900s, New Orleans was a mix of people, religious beliefs, and cultural practices that led to cultural hybridity. In his book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, Néstor García Canclini (1995) writes “Hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation” (p. xv). García Canclini defines cultural hybridity as the socio-cultural processes that involve two (or more) differing societies, existing separately, to combine and create a new dynamic in order to survive and adapt to their new environment (p. xxv). In other words, a new cultural identity is formed as diverse communities interact with one another. A closer examination of the culture and population of New Orleans reveals a more culturally and ethnically diverse populace that continuously competed with and influenced one another.

New Orleans is situated at the mouth of the Mississippi River delta and the Gulf of Mexico. This unique city is bordered by the Mississippi River to the West and Lake Pontchartrain to the East. Miles of waterfront stretches in three directions, defining a peninsular geography. The city of New Orleans extends along the curve of the Mississippi River, which led to the nickname of the “Crescent City.” This location was an important part of defining the cultural character of this city, but also allowed for the blending of U.S. American commerce with the commercial opportunities provided by the Caribbean islands and Mexico (Sublette, 2008, p. 8-10). It is a city that has experienced several changes of power since the 18th century, which has had a significant impact on its cultural make up.

In 1718, the French erected the city of New Orleans, but soon realized the city was unprofitable because of civil unrest. The population residing in New Orleans was also not happy

with the French monarchy. At this time, France was governed by the Regent, Philippe II, the Duke of Orléans, which later became the namesake of the Louisiana colonial capital. The French colony was later ceded to the Spanish Empire in 1763¹ through the Treaty of Paris after the French defeat by Great Britain in the Seven Year's War. This armed struggle was essentially between France and Great Britain and had global implications. *Nueva Orleans* (New Orleans) maintained its power as a port city and gateway to the Atlantic world under Spanish Imperial rule.

During these turbulent decades, New Orleans and the territory of Louisiana experienced struggles and conflicts with several Amerindian populations. Many Creoles have claimed Amerindians as their biological ancestors and greatly admired the accomplishments of previous Amerindian societies such as the Incas and the Aztecs.² However, in colonial Spanish-America, these same populations were victims of racist attitudes and genocide. When the Creole population demeaned any of the contemporary Indigenous people, it was directed toward the lower societal levels of these communities, not the elite populations of past history. They were perceived as elite because of their contributions in the areas of art, politics, and architecture. Creoles claimed for themselves a monopoly over the interpretation of the Amerindian past (Stewart, 2007, p. 35). They were doubtful of the credibility of foreign authors, mestizos (a person of mixed Spanish and Amerindian heritage), and Indian commoners. The representatives of the clergy were considered to be the most privileged and credible authorities on this subject. When Spanish-American Creoles dismissed the accomplishments of the Amerindians, they were

¹ Under the rule of Charles the Third who was the King of Spain from 1716 to 1788, known as the Spanish Monarchy, this was one of the largest empires in history. From the late fifteenth century through the nineteenth century Spain ruled territories in the New World, Southeast Asia, and territories in Europe, Africa, and Oceania.

² The historiography of these societies was studied by the Creoles and aspects such as religion, religious idolatry, and the societal structure of their communities were embraced by the Creoles (Stewart, 2007, p. 35).

only referring to lower-class mestizos who were perceived as unproductive and degenerate. Creoles greatly admired the mobility, grandeur, and accomplishments of past Amerindian civilizations, yet thought of contemporary Indigenous populations as not representative of their ancestors' past accomplishments.

In 1762 and 1763, France signed treaties delivering Louisiana to Spanish rule. Forty years of Spanish dominance witnessed the beginning of trade with Cuba and Mexico, and the adoption of Spanish racial laws that created a class of free People of Color (Sublette, 2008, p. 124). The Spanish had a difficult time governing the territory because of its diverse population of French, Spanish, and Africans (both free settlers and enslaved peoples). Their time in charge of this region was made difficult by armed uprisings and a poor relationship between the governor and the citizens of the region. The governor at this time was Esteban Miró, the first governor of the provinces of Louisiana and Florida. He was a Spanish army officer appointed to this position in 1785 by the government of Spain.³ Less than forty years later, tired of ruling a troublesome colony and threatened by the French military leader Napoleon Bonaparte, Spain returned the territory and New Orleans back to France under the secret treaty of San Ildefonso in 1800.⁴

In 1803, Napoleon Bonaparte, soon to be crowned Emperor of France, sold the Louisiana territory to the United States.⁵ Now part of the United States, New Orleans quickly grew and

³ Some of his more notorious rulings forbade slaves from renting their own quarters, and proprietors from renting to them. Enslaved peoples were not allowed to have guns (if caught they were subject to three years imprisonment at hard labor) (Sublette, 2008, p. 126). Miró also initiated the "Tignon Law," a law that forced women of color to identify as Black. This was accomplished by the wearing of colorful head coverings and clothing that was linked to African traditions.

⁴ A secretly negotiated treaty between France and Spain, resulting in the return of the Louisiana Territory from Spain to France. Napoleon disregarded this treaty in 1803 and sold Louisiana to the United States. Spain agreed to return the North American colony of Louisiana for territories in Tuscany. The United States was upset because Napoleon maintained control of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans (Sublette, 2008, p. 195).

⁵ This was a long-term goal of Thomas Jefferson, and Napoleon agreed to do it because of his military losses in Saint-Domingue in the Caribbean (due to the uprising of enslaved peoples) and the armed struggle with Great Britain. The United States government paid \$15,000,000 for the territory extending from the Rocky Mountains and Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico. The territory included the western part of the Mississippi Valley and lands that were inhabited by several Amerindian populations as well as Mexicans and Spanish immigrants.

expanded into an urban center. Many travelers compared New Orleans to other European capitals because of the architectural designs, unique food, music, and language that reflected French and Spanish influences. Even today, buildings as diverse as the Old Ursuline Convent and the wrought-iron balconies of the French Quarter give the city a look reminiscent of Paris or Amsterdam. New Orleans became the product of cultural identities through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that included France, Spain, Anglo-American, as well as the immigrant populations of Africans, Italians, Haitians, Native Americans, and Latin Americans. In recognition of these cultural identities, Brent Ostendorf (2013) points out that “. . .New Orleans is not so much the Southernmost North American city, but the northernmost city of the Caribbean. New Orleans is part of an urban archipelago that connects Vera Cruz, Havana, Port Au Prince, Port of Spain and Kingston, and in that historical setting is also one of the first cosmopolitan cities of early modernity” (p. 17).

Racial attitudes in New Orleans differed from other regions in the country during the 19th century due to its rich history of imperial takeovers and cross-cultural heritage. Laws that set the tone for the racial climate originated from France’s participation in the Atlantic slave trade, which was then ceded to the French colony in the 18th century. One of the major slave laws that would impact the later Antebellum period includes the *Code Noir* (Black Code), a decree passed by France’s King Louis XIV in 1685. This decree defined the conditions of slavery in the French Colonial Empire, restricting the activities of free Black peoples, forbidding the exercise of any religion except Catholicism, and ordering all Jewish people out of the French colonies. It was applied to enslaved peoples in Louisiana in 1724 by the colonial governor (Sublette, 2008, p. 31). Hersch states, “The Code Noir of 1724 prohibited interracial marriages but also guaranteed freed slaves the same rights, privileges, and immunities which are enjoyed by free-born persons.

When the Spanish took over in 1762, they freed many slaves, resulting in an increase in the Creole of Color population” (p. 19).

In 1806, the *Code Noir* was replaced with the more restrictive Black Code, which established the framework that set up the racial dynamics in New Orleans. These laws were passed by the state legislature of Louisiana and were strictly enforced. It placed into law that “Free people of color ought never to insult or strike White people, nor presume to conceive themselves equal to the Whites; but on the contrary that they ought to yield to them in every occasion, and never to speak or answer to them but with respect, under the penalty of imprisonment” (Acts Passed at the First Session of the First Legislature of the Trinity of Orleans, Sec. 40 188, 19).

Most Southern regions forced enslaved peoples to discard their connections with Africa and acclimate to the practices of Western society, including religion, education, the English language, and the dominance of Anglo-American culture generally. The geographical location of New Orleans as a port city in the Gulf region, however, was the gateway to the Caribbean and South America, where the slave trade continued well into the 19th century. The population of New Orleans was nearly half Black, consisting of both free and enslaved peoples, yet prior to the Civil War, French, German, and Irish peoples were the dominant groups that immigrated to New Orleans. In 1860, the city become important as an immigrant port. The constant influx of Spaniards, Latin Americans, Greeks, Chinese, Filipinos, and Italians helped the city become an important commercial center (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 96).

The boundaries of the city are formed by the Mississippi River and Jefferson Parish to the west and Lake Pontchartrain to the North. The city is divided by the Mississippi and the principal center is located on the eastern bank. Within these boundaries are seventeen wards, subdivided

into precincts. The city was reorganized in 1852 and changed from three separate municipalities into one centralized government. Areas that had previously been designated as U.S. American or Creole were no longer useful as demographic locales and were replaced with labels for geographic locations. The diverse population created the most cosmopolitan city of America's south.

Prior to the beginning of the Civil War (1861–1865), Creoles had managed to obtain middle-class status and liberties. However, this elevated status would be removed following reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow laws.⁶ This change was a result of the instigation of the one drop rule and the rise of segregation.⁷ Creoles struggled to maintain their position in the societal structure. They had consistently tried to distance themselves from what they perceived to be the lower levels of society to create a perception of upward mobility. The Creole population

...evolved into a significant social group that was accorded many social and legal liberties. By 1860 they had acquired civic power and are thought to have owned about \$15 million in New Orleans property. Some even participated in the slave trade. Most Creoles had French surnames, spoke French as well as English, attended Catholic Churches, enjoyed a decent education and worked at skilled trades—cigar making, cobbling, carpentry—that Creoles, as a group, had virtually monopolized. (Giddins, De Veaux, 2009, p. 78)

⁶ In the 1890s a series of Jim Crow laws was enacted as a means of preserving the purity of the White race. This was a collection of lawful statutes in the late 1800s and early 1900s which codified the practice of discrimination against Black people. This practice lasted for almost 75 years and was a form of apartheid similar to the separation of races as found in South Africa (Giddins and DeVeaux, 2009, 78).

⁷ The One Drop Rule: An individual with ancestry that includes even one person of Sub-Saharan heritage is considered Black. This was used as a social and legal principle of racial classification. First considered during the 19th century and eventually codified into law in the 20th century (Winthrop, 2014, 99).

Race relations in New Orleans clearly focus on the social leadership and cultural assimilation that shaped them. The changes to these structures were brought about by immigration and the Civil War: “The Americanization of New Orleans was more than just a struggle between Americans and Creoles. It also involved, for nearly a century, the curious co-existence of a three-tiered Caribbean racial structure alongside its two-tiered American counterpart in an ethnically divided city” (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 189). New Orleans is considered a connecting point between two inter-racial societies within the Western Hemisphere during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The city of New Orleans was ethnically divided until the huge European immigration and the outbreak of the civil war. These events initiated the destruction of the city’s prevalent racial structure. This was a time of racial and social restructuring that continues to influence the lives of residents to this day.

Struggle for political power was a constant source of uneasy relations between neighboring communities. Tensions grew between the White Creole elite (the ruling class at this time) and the Anglo-Americans that migrated to Louisiana since 1812. Ethnic stress and the desire for political power between these communities led to the establishment of three semi-autonomous sectors that lasted from 1836 until 1852. “This arrangement allowed each group to do business, pass regulations, and establish school systems to perpetuate its culture and language” (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 93). Two of these municipalities were under French-Creole control but with mixed populations while the third became the American sector (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 93; Tregle, 1992, p. 156-157).

The history of the Louisiana territory and the intermingling of people from these diversified communities led to the creation of a society that embraced a multi-cultural environment. This led to the construction of a cultural and musical creolization and the eventual

acceptance of hybridity and diversity. This divergent cultural identity has continued to be recognized as one of the distinctive features of this Creole state.

Creolization in New Orleans at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

During the mid-nineteenth century, cultural hybridity gave rise to something different and novel. New Orleans became a space that permitted the coexistence of several communities and diverse populations. The Black community made up the largest population in the city and maintained an authoritative voice in the political and economic arenas. In his book *Subversive Sounds*, Charles Hersch (2007) describes the racial and ethnic interconnections and animosities prevalent in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. He states:

Racial identity was malleable in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. The city was known for its large mixed race population composed of Whites, blacks, Haitians, and Italians, yet classifications based on race were in a state of flux, with the One-Drop Rule overshadowing a system based on national origin...Relative tolerance in certain neighborhoods was in contrast to the violent racism and was an undeniable part of the city's culture. (p. 9)

From its earliest years, New Orleans was famous for its interracial encounters that challenged the strong boundaries set by law. The imposition of Jim Crow laws pushed the city toward classifying areas according to race and skin color, creating a collection of urban villages. These villages became known as parishes similar to what we call a county today. These parishes were semi-autonomous, allowing an alternative culture to flourish. For the Black population, the Catholic church served as the major institution that promoted cultural unification. This was accomplished through charitable work, construction of new schools, and the inclusion of free

People of Color. This institution was central to the lives of the Black and African-American communities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It represented a public that was separate and distinct while in conflict with the dominant White social and racial structure.

It was through music and religion that the Black population celebrated their identity while, at the same time, being dismissed and at times feeling oppressed by the White community. Music and religion provided the Black population a means of celebrating and reaffirming their identity. This sense of their culture and their history was dismissed by the dominant majority and the fear of extermination was ever present on the part of People of Color. By 1900, any advantages the Black population and the Creole population had enjoyed over their urban counterparts had disappeared. An atmosphere of racism, encouraged by Jim Crow laws, and the acceptance of racial difference was crumbling. Between the years 1897 and 1900, the Black community's voting population decreased from 44% to only 4% and in 1910 the total voting population included only .06% of the African-American community. Discrimination, unemployment, and poverty increased tensions between the Black and White communities. The resulting poverty increased these feelings of exclusion (Hersch, 2007, p. 24).

At this time, the growing Creole community gained more notoriety in the political and social spheres, pushing the Black populace not necessarily to the margins, but farther away from the top tier of the cultural hierarchy. Culturally, the Black community held an influential role in the city while developing its cultural dynamics, which included music, dance, and popular entertainments. This was not without struggle, however, as clashes between Black, Creole, and White communities often led to the subjugation of the Black population to the growing European, Anglo, and Creole populace. The Black population adopted a binary identity to maintain their status within this changing socio-cultural climate. According to Paul Gilroy

(1993), a Black individual living in a European-based culture was confronted with a “double consciousness which struggles with ethnic absolutism” (p. 75). This process of double consciousness began with the arrival of the first enslaved peoples in 1791. W.E.B. DuBois (1993) describes the internal conflict experienced by subordinated groups in oppressive societies in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (p. 162). This is considered to be a psychological challenge the Black and African-American populations experienced, looking at one’s self through the eyes of a racist White society. For DuBois, it meant reconciling his African heritage while being brought up in a European-dominated society. Many in the Black and African-American populations experienced this state of mind: “In New Orleans there continues to be an on-going re-alignment of their cultural memory” (Ostendorf, 2013, p. 83). In other words, while a continual process of creolization existed, many shifts in racial allegiances resulting in either rejection or affirmation of cultural traditions remained prevalent. There is a divisive history within the process of creolization that is overshadowed by the fictionalized multi-cultural identity of the creolized cultural hybridity. In each of the ethnic groups represented in New Orleans, a constant process of renegotiating their cultural past existed. There is not a dependable history of New Orleans Creole culture that has been accepted by all factions of this community: “Creole as a concept was found useful in domesticating diversity, in making pluralism lose its otherness, and go native” (Ostendorf, 2013, p. 80). Creolization can be understood as a mental state that requires multiple narratives and the maintenance of a mindset for keeping interpretations of this process open. Charles Stewart (2007) declares that “this process is still very much alive today in the post-colonial world, where so many people reside far from their original homelands. National identities and loyalties are constantly stretched, contradicted, re-embraced, or neglected altogether” (p. 12).

As previously stated, the Creole community was a burgeoning population in New Orleans, and by extension Louisiana. This identifier, however, has changed through colonization and immigration to encapsulate a variety of peoples that share not just racial and ethnic heritage, but also cultural practices. As a population, the label of Creole has gone through several iterations to reflect the diversity of the state. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (2008) asserts that the term Creole “has been re-defined over time for social reasons and has many meanings,” particularly in the Americas. She states: “It derives from the Portuguese word *Crioulo*, meaning a slave of African descent, born in the New World” (p. 60). Ned Sublette (2008) affirms the racial and ethnic diversity of the term, asserting that “In Louisiana, the meaning of the word Creole varied with the era. At the time of statehood, the word was used to refer to those who were already present in Louisiana, whether of French, Spanish, or African descent” (p. 79). Charles Stewart (2007) builds on this definition and expands its meaning to include an approach that concentrates on cultural practice. He defines Creoles as “the interaction of all aggregates of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements united on the same soil” (p. 19).

Hersch (2007) provides a more in-depth explanation that focuses on the Caribbean as a major location for the creation of Creole culture. Labeled as “the third race,” a new mixed-race class developed in response to the 1804 revolution in Saint-Domingue (creating the Republic of Haiti), which allowed the Creole, Black, and White populations to relocate in New Orleans, claiming that by 1815, half the urban population hailed from the West Indies. He further states “The vast majority of New Orleans Creoles had roots in Saint-Domingue; refugees from that country were ‘responsible for the cultural flowering of New Orleans’ and ‘for introducing a Gallic-African pattern into the United States’” (p. 20). The Creoles of Color enjoyed the transatlantic ties between France and the Caribbean and often sought economic and educational

opportunities in France due to the racism they encountered in the United States. Other Creoles of Color represented different ethnic identities. Hersch (2007) states that “Creole was in fact a catch-all term for those of mixed race, as long as the White part of the mixture was not ‘American’” (p. 20-21). This synthesis of cultural practices within one space has led to the conception of creolization.

Creolization is a historical and social concept, describing the many instances of contact, acculturation, and cross-fertilization shared between cultures. Gilroy (1993) argues against the theory of ethnic “absolutism” and suggests that the theorization of “Creolisation, métissage, and mestizaje, and hybridity ... would be a litany of pollution and impurity” (p. 2). These terms are rather unsatisfactory ways of naming the processes of cultural mutation and restless discontinuity that exceed racial discourse and avoid capture by its agents. Creolization as a cultural concept began as a study of languages dating back to the seventeenth century in Portugal and then came to be regarded as a process of racial and ethnic assimilation.⁸ Creolization is now defined as a process of adaptation and an example of cultural hybridity: “Creolization is seen as a process whereby new shared cultural forms, and new possibilities for communication, emerge owing to contact. It highlights the open ended, flexible, and unbounded nature of cultural processes, as opposed to the notion of cultures as bounded, stable systems of communication” (Stewart, 2007, p. 163). By the twentieth century, creolization was understood as the consequence of the cultural practices of the Creole communities and New Orleans functioned as one of the major locations where this phenomenon and practice took place. According to Hersch (2007), “Creoles in fact produced ‘a syncretic and mercurial culture, one whose overt expression could have only been possible during such a time of social transformation. The presence of Creoles simply meant an

⁸ All Creole languages result from major restructuring. They are new languages that differ from the languages of colonists in phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary (Stewart, 2007, p. 102).

expansion of the number of races from two to three—it blurred racial categories in general” (p. 21).

The geography of New Orleans had a profound impact on how class and race were divided. According to Hirsch and Logsdon (1992), New Orleans had a dividing line as the legacies of slavery and segregation remained in place as the city became more Americanized: “There remained an uptown versus a downtown, American versus Creole split that stamped an indelible mark on twentieth century racial and political relationships” (p.197). Ethnic cultural divisions within the city of New Orleans were evident during the First and Second Reconstruction. The legacies of slavery and segregation were exaggerated by physical changes of the city and its surroundings. These developments seemed to encourage racial divisions and polarization. Well into the twentieth century, overcrowded interracial neighborhoods continued to define urban communities throughout Louisiana. It was the boundaries of the Mississippi River that dictated areas where people could live with a minimum amount of fear of the river overflowing. Technology was developed during the 1920s that altered the geography. Giant drainage canals were constructed at the turn of the twentieth century and used pumping stations to move water through the canals to the end of the line, where it was forced into Lake Borgne or Lake Pontchartrain. The new pumping system made it possible for the city to thrive and expand into areas that previously had not been habitable. This pumping technology drained the low-lying swampland located between the city’s riverside crescent and Lake Pontchartrain. Residents could now live below sea level, and the affluent White population found new homes away from the city in desirable new locations. The intimidating lakeshore that would stop growth and development within the city was rapidly disappearing. The city became segregated by racial

lines with the White population in the manufactured suburbs and the Black, African American, and Creole communities closer to the city centers (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 198).

CONCLUSION

Creolization and hybridity were a multi-layered process that outlined the exchanges and cross-fertilization of these diverse communities. The blending of these cultures socially, culturally, and musically allowed jazz to exist and thrive. The Creoles of Louisiana have for centuries claimed that their cultural identity expressed itself through language, religion, cuisine, occupations, and especially music. The Creole population of New Orleans was able to attack racism by attacking race. These were primarily individuals of mixed-race ancestry with roots in Europe and Africa. A group of activists led by Homer Plessy developed an arsenal of legal challenges to the status quo of a binary racial system. The adoption of the term Creole has succeeded in blurring the dividing lines between these racial categories. These were the earliest civil rights activists and defined themselves not by color, but by culture. The emergence of music, specifically jazz, offered a way to cross the racial and ethnic boundaries in New Orleans.⁹

⁹ Homer Plessy (1863–1925) An American shoemaker in New Orleans was the plaintiff in the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Plessy lost his court battle, and this decision imposed the establishment of Jim Crow laws, effectively legalizing apartheid in the United States. This case challenged the doctrine of separate but equal that became the standard for all segregation related cases for the next fifty years (Hirsch and Logsdon, 1992, p. 263).

CHAPTER 3

NEW ORLEANS JAZZ: BEGINNINGS TO 1940

Many musical cultures coexisted in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. These cultures and practices were interconnected and informed one another because of the rich cultural and racial hybridity of the region. The performers were influenced musically by what they heard emanating from these surrounding communities. As John Blacking (1973) states, “Music is a synthesis of cognitive processes which are present in culture and in the human body: the forms it takes, and the effects it has on people, are generated by social experiences of human bodies in different cultural environments. Because music is humanly organized it expresses aspects of the experience of individuals in society” (p. 89). Jazz can be understood as a product of this hybridity as a new musical genre and practice representing cultural exchange and challenging the musical and societal status quo.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the development of an Indigenous, African American folk music that combined elements of African, European, and American musical styles. Other forms inspired by plantation and minstrel songs, blues, ragtime, spirituals and field hollers were also major contributors. In his study on jazz, Marc Myers (2013) points out that “By adhering closely to the blues, syncopation, and eventually Tin Pan Alley, jazz was able to remain in vogue without dropping the musical characteristics that made it special and exciting to listeners and dancers” (p. 3). The blues had a non-European sound realized primarily through the use of the blues scale and functioned in a way for African Americans to express themselves in ways that were personal and expressed their culture. The history of African-American struggles,

victories, and personal relationships are documented within this musical genre. The roots of this genre were firmly planted in the pain of slavery, segregation, and lack of opportunity.

The blues was performed by rural singer/guitarists and was different from European musical traditions because of their three-line stanzas and harmonic and melodic phrases. West African contributions of music, dance, and spirituality survived the years following emancipation and were signposts of pride and perseverance for the Black community. These musicians were oriented in the traditions of music played in the Delta Region, the area near the Mississippi River between Memphis and New Orleans. The blues and ragtime were closely related to early jazz. Each of these genres featured harmonic and pitch characteristics (known as blues harmony) and the inclusion of improvisation. Segments of society that identified themselves as church-going individuals recognized this music as a non-religious version of the music that was familiar to them. Baptists and Methodists became aware of a relationship between secular and traditional religious music that was performed in their churches and this new genre of music was called jazz. The emotions that were expressed non-verbally by the musicians and the rhythmic pulsations generated emotional and physical responses. Segments of these religious communities recognized the spirituality that was being presented in a new and different way.

One of the early names given to this new music was “Ratty,” referring to the ragged and un-schooled sounds that were created. It also referred to the clientele of the brothels and the music that was played for them (Bushell, 1988, p. 13). According to Burton Peretti (1992), another common name used to describe this genre was “Jass,” a reference to the jasmine perfume that was a favorite of the sex workers that circulated the brothels in the Storyville district, an important location for performances of early jazz at the turn of the twentieth century. Eventually the name “Jazz” became the accepted name for this music (p. 133). It was not until 1917 that the

term jazz was introduced by the White press. Writers, critics, and columnists could only speculate about the true origin of this term. In fact, it was also a slang term for sex and as early as 1860 an African-American slang term “Jasm” meaning to perform with vim and vigor or high energy had become part of this vocabulary. The New Orleans Times Picayune newspaper was the first publication to reference the term “Jas Bands” on November 14, 1916. Lawrence Gushee (2005) states, “To be kept in mind is that the great majority of older New Orleans musicians born prior to the turn of the twentieth century agree that the word wasn’t applied to music in their native city and they didn’t hear it so used until they came north” (p. 299). New Orleans jazz was loud, boisterous, rhythmic (syncopated), cheerful, jubilant, and danceable. This new genre was a by-product of a unique cultural, racial, and sociological environment during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Peretti (1992) concludes, “Jazz was essentially an urban music that grew out of various city stimuli and fulfilled uniquely urban social functions” (p. 7). These gatherings were essential escape valve to the social, economic, and racial oppression that most of this population felt. Jazz was able to expose the relationship between culture and political reality (Hersch, 2007, p. 209). Musicians had to adapt to the musical traditions of other communities and cultures. These performers found ways to cross the boundaries that were in place as a consequence of segregation and bigotry. Jazz circulated throughout society and musicians were able to interact with different racial groups and gradually became part of the mainstream culture. The demands for so-called racial purity were being challenged.

This music was able to flourish in various venues throughout the city. Audiences of different races and of different social strata were attracted to these new and exciting gatherings. New music, new rhythms, and new dances allowed for individuals of uniquely different backgrounds to merge. Audiences for this new genre played a significant role in the development

and growth of jazz in New Orleans; they, in fact, were co-creators of early jazz and shaped this hybrid form of expression. Their responses were physical and emotional. The audiences felt where the roots of this music originated and were able to develop connections with the music and the performers. Ensembles that provided these musical services ranged in size from small family bands to mid-size brass bands, seven to eight-member dance bands, and large bands that might include seventeen or eighteen musicians. The solo pianist also had many opportunities to play this new “ratty” music, especially in brothels and barrooms where the salaries and tips made these venues desirable performance spaces. This new culture was capable of remaining ahead of politics and the laws of segregation. Black and White musicians saw themselves as workers in a similar creative enterprise and developed personal and professional bonds. The integration of musicians was helped along by a number of White managers, radio broadcasts, and record producers. These individuals discounted the color line. During the 1920s and 1930s, musicians and theatrical performers began to change the strictly segregated way of life. By the late 1930s, many musicians sensed that jazz could serve as a weapon against prevailing Jim Crow laws (Peretti, 1992, p. 200-205). The world was becoming stretched socially and culturally as individuals were becoming aware of and accepting of the world of other populations and cultures.

In this chapter, I explore the beginnings of jazz in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century and how this musical genre developed through cultural exchanges and collaborations. I argue that jazz is the consequence of multiple forms of cultural and racial hybridity resulting from the turbulent historical events and processes of the colonialism and social upheaval that took place during the nineteenth century. As an American musical genre, New Orleans jazz represents not just a musical collaboration across races and ethnicities, but also

a cultural form that highlights the rich and vibrant hybridity of the region. The major contributors to this hybridity were the Creole population and the traditions of the Black community. In its most simple form jazz is an expression of culture translated into music. The historical study of jazz and the cultural environment that produced this new musical genre can contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the cultural traditions of people as they developed personal friendships along with professional and social interactions that included artistic, religious, and even political identities.

Place, Space, and Music Making

Up until the 1800s, it was the Creoles who lived in the Vieux Carré district. Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, a large influx of other populations came to New Orleans via the Mississippi River. Americans from Kentucky and the Midwest moved in and settled uptown (McKinney, 2006, p. 18). A diversity of cultures and traditions within New Orleans continues to this day. Between these two cultures the construction of a canal was planned, but never built. The navigation company that was to dig the canal went bankrupt and lost its contract to engineer the project. The street that took the place of the canal was named Canal Street and the median that divided it was called Neutral Ground, acknowledging the cultural divide. In New Orleans today, all street medians are called Neutral Grounds. Canal Street runs East and West and serves as a dividing line for cross-streets running North and South (McKinney, 2006, p. 162).

Historically, New Orleans has had less middle-class economic structure than most American cities and does not encompass sprawling middle-class suburbs. Originally it was Canal Street that was the primary dividing line between Black, White, and Creole areas that consisted of downtown and uptown communities. The traditional and historic divisions of New Orleans dating from the nineteenth century can still be referred to in casual conversation but do not

correspond to designations outlined by today's city planning commission. Neighborhoods that have historical significance for New Orleans include the Garden District, Frenchman Street, Lower Ninth Ward, Decatur Street, the Warehouse District, Tremé, and Storyville District. These districts to this day are points of interest for scholars and tourists.

As discussed in the previous chapter, New Orleans was a thriving port city at the turn of the twentieth century. It was a center for international trade and a transportation hub using the Mississippi river and railroads and the advantage of being a port city on the Gulf of Mexico. These attributes led to the immigration of millions of people from Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and areas of the northern United States. It became inevitable that the city would become divided, with those divisions based on race and class. It was the Black and Creole populations that defined the Uptown and Downtown districts. According to Hirsch and Logsdon (1992), "The ethnocultural divide within New Orleans Black community could be detected in the second reconstruction as well as the first. New Orleans remained an Uptown and a Downtown, American versus Creole, a split that stamped an indelible mark on twentieth century racial and political relationships" (pp. 197-198). The Black community was located in the Uptown district north of Canal Street and the Creoles were located within the Downtown area. Major changes to these divisions were brought about by the construction of levees, sea walls and the drainage of swamp lands that began in the 1890s, then enlarged and expanded in 1931 and 1932. Suddenly, new, safer, residential areas were primarily available to the wealthy White population and were located on higher ground and considered immune from the flooding that previously had been a concern for all residents, especially those living below sea level.

The Catholic and Protestant clergy, the print media, and private social clubs (both Black and White) played important roles in the political structure of New Orleans. Across the United

States democracy was still in its infancy. The electoral process in the southern states was controlled by the upper-class White (primarily slave owners) population. The infamous Grandfather Clause was enacted in 1898 and by 1900 African Americans were reduced to four percent of the total registered voters. During this period a direct popular election of regional electors did not exist and periodicals maintained an important social political, and cultural role:

Newspapers, such as the New Orleans Times Picayune were highly partisan and played an essential role in the politics of the day; in the south they were also an essential part of commerce that involved slaves. Slave owners exerted a disproportionate control over American politics, as they would up through the civil war. (Sublette, 2008, p. 193)

Slave owners were allowed extra votes in relation to their wealth (a large part of this wealth was determined by the number of enslaved people that a person owned). Politically, New Orleans was representative of other cities throughout the southern United States. This young dynamic country was very far from what today would be considered a democracy.

The growing musical environment within the city at this time was a concern for local politicians. New laws were created that specified what spaces would be allocated for music, dance, and social interaction. The primary area for the performances and musical intermingling was the Tremé District, located in the heart of the French Quarter. The influences of “foreign musics” have continued to be extremely important as a means of locating and tracing how the Caribbean and Latin American rhythmic devices continue to be influential in jazz through the first hundred and twenty years of this music (Hersch, 2007, p. 209). The most famous of these spaces was Congo Square, consisting of sixteen acres adjoining the French Quarter. Congo Square is considered to be the musical heart of New Orleans. Under U.S. law, the majority of enslaved African people brought to Louisiana and those that resided in New Orleans were of

Kongo and Angolan heritage. These sections of Western Africa (today, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo) were the source of most of the enslaved peoples coming to the United States. The label of Congo Square refers to the supposed place of origin of these people (Evans, 2011, p. 48). In 1817, the mayor of New Orleans issued an ordinance restricting the congregating of enslaved people to the back of the downtown district. Eventually this area became the center of the French Quarter, and the city of New Orleans grew around it. The unofficial name for this gathering place was Congo Square. Following the Civil War (1861–1865), it was renamed Beauregard Square. This new name was a tribute to confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard and was meant to reinforce White supremacy.¹ Most people continued to call it Congo Square despite efforts to suppress gatherings of Africans and free People of Color.

The history of the Square dates to the eighteenth century, during the French Colonial period. In 1724, the Code Noir of Louisiana established Sundays as a no-work day for all inhabitants of the colony. Historically for Christians, Sunday is a day of rest, worship, and family. It was not until 1817 when a city ordinance confined these gatherings to one specific area, a location known as Congo Square. These gatherings could not legally be prevented by slave owners and this area became a place for slaves and Free People of color to sing, dance, and play instruments that connected them to their African homeland. Economically, the Square became a Sunday marketplace that provided slaves with an opportunity to benefit financially by selling their own hand-made goods. These Sunday gatherings were a place to release the fears and sadness of slavery.

¹ Beauregard was a Confederate war hero, idolized as the southern states first “mega hero.” A statue with him on horseback was erected in 1915 and lasted until 2016 when it was removed from the City Park along with other figures that celebrated the Confederacy (Williams, 1955, p. 1-2).

Enslaved peoples and other people of color were allowed to gather on Sundays for the purpose of selling their wares, dancing, singing, and social mingling. The sound of African drumming contributed to the spirit and significance of these once per week gatherings. The playing of instruments of African origin such as hand drums, bells, rattles, and even some string instruments (such as banjos) contributed to the soundscape that would influence generations. It is important to point out that the banjo and the African griots who played it helped African Americans preserve their African identity, cultural hybridity, and community (Conway, 1995, p. 83-87). These gatherings continued until 1917 when Congo Square was closed by the city government at the request of the United States Navy and government buildings were constructed on that location almost immediately. Hersch states, “Some have argued that by bringing together African, French, Spanish and Native American influences, Congo Square was a critical site for the creation and preservation of the culture that eventually produced jazz” (Hersch, 2007, p. 397). It was not until 2011 when the New Orleans city council officially accepted the name Congo Square. This section of the city is considered to be a symbol of African contributions to the history of jazz and is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Evans, 2016, p. 119). The historic location for Congo Square is now within Louis Armstrong Park,² the site of the present- day New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

In addition to Congo Square, additional performance spaces contributed to the development of a jazz culture and a growing racism in New Orleans during this time. Hersch (2007) states, “The relationship between free spaces and permissive legal and social racism lies at the center of jazz’s emergence” (p. 209). A short list would include bars, cabarets, clubs,

² In the 1920s, the New Orleans Municipal Auditorium was constructed adjacent to the square, displacing a large part of the Tremé community. It wasn’t until the 1960s that an urban renewal project destroyed much of the historic property that included Congo Square. Debate that lasted until 1970 when the city council decided to rename the area as Louis Armstrong Park with a section preserved as Congo Square.

brothels, debutante balls, popular theater, minstrel shows, and private social and pleasure clubs (which provided marching bands for Mardi Gras celebrations). The trumpet player Buddy Bolden was one of the early contributors to jazz and was famous for his ability to give audiences and dancers what they wanted: his band had a large repertoire that included styles that represented ballads, blues, up-tempo swing, and Latin selections. The competing orchestra of John Robichaux was known for being more conservative and catering to the upper classes.³ This competition between the orchestras created a perceived “class rivalry.” Robichaux was the refined Creole musician and Bolden the ratty playing Black musician, yet both could present an image of middle-class professionalism when appropriate. This was the popular and historical perception of both of these ensembles.

In his book *Louis Armstrong His Life and Times*, Mike Pinfold (1987) quotes Louis Armstrong discussing Bolden’s style. He states “Bolden was the first of the hot cornet kings. ‘Old King Bolden’ played the music the Negro public liked” (p. 17). Bolden and his band were able to adapt themselves and their music to different situations and fascinated listeners. The type of music the band performed depended on the occasion and the clientele. For dances, they would perform waltzes, mazurkas, schottisches, and even marches and spirituals for funeral processions. Fast and “ratty” were late night crowd favorites (Marquis, 1978, p. 107). The music was exciting, new, loud, and Bolden’s personality was charismatic. For the most part, the music was upbeat, however Bolden was capable of playing romantic ballads in order to balance his presentation. Important performance areas for Bolden and his band were Lincoln and Johnson Parks, gathering places that were used for dancing and social functions. Many times, competing

³ John Robichaux was a left-handed violinist and led the John Robichaux Creole Orchestra in the late nineteenth century that exemplified Creole respectability and played written, “legitimate” music. He was competitor of Buddy Bolden and his musical opposite (Hersch, 2007, p. 123).

bands would play opposite one another and within hearing distance of their competition. This was the perfect setting for Bolden and his men to musically challenge the other bands.

John Robichaux and his orchestra would frequently perform in one park while Bolden would perform in the other. Robichaux featured polite and gentle music aimed at rather sophisticated dancers. Distances of not more than seventy-five yards separating the park made it convenient to move from one orchestras' music to another. Marquis notes, "Dancers frequently abandoned the smoother stylings of the Robichaux band to hear Bolden produce a newer and more raggedy, more exciting sound that stirred their dancing fancy" (1978, p. 62-63). Bolden and his band reached their peak between 1900 and 1907, always featuring danceable rhythms and melodies that created excitement because they were something new and different. Unfortunately, recordings that document any of his performances do not exist. According to Bolden's trombonist Willie Cornish, the only recording of Bolden was created on a fragile wax cylinder before 1898 and has not survived through the years or been preserved by collectors.

Several of the most famous gathering places for dancing and music were Pete Lala's Saloon in Storyville, Economy Hall in the Tremé District, and Funky Butt Hall (doubling as a church). The music performed here was designed for dancing. Younger audiences wanted more excitement and the music of this period offered greater freedom of expression, fun, and spontaneity for the musicians and the dancers. During the nineteenth century, music was presented in a polite manner, dominated by string ensembles that were led by violinists. Their rather staid repertoire featured waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and schottisches. The twentieth century marked a turning point in the sound of New Orleans jazz, a music that was filled with emotion: it was rollicking, rough, and participatory. All these venues provided performance opportunities and salaried positions for musicians and areas that enabled social interaction

between the entertainers and the development of an appreciative audience. This interaction provided the foundation for musical development, racial integration, and an increase in employment opportunities.

Musical Hybridity & Creolization

This period saw a creative collaboration between Black, Creole, and some White musicians. This musical intermingling presented a challenge to segregation and a source of political unrest. The gains and challenges faced by these communities were brought into clear focus by the efforts of musicians and performers searching for a music that encompassed their desires for a new form of musical expression. These concepts would allow for the political and artistic explorations that would improve the racial and cultural understanding of entire populations. Peretti (1992) states:

The creation of jazz is a story of expanding creative alternatives, energized by new educational resources, profit making opportunities, and social connections in urban America: but it also is a story of individual and group aspirations stymied and sometimes crushed, by a partially undemocratic society that upheld policies of exclusion, unbridled economic competition, and atomizing individualism. (p. 1)

The beginnings of jazz were marked by presentations of musical traditions based on the rhythms and dances of Africa as performed in Congo Square. The religious ceremonies of Black churches, European traditions of composition, the ragtime piano heard in bars and brothels, and the street music of brass bands playing for parades, Mardi Gras, and funerals were all incorporated into the soundscape of New Orleans during the early twentieth century. Even the music of the vaudeville and circus performances inserted the use of smears and slides by trombonists and clarinetists. Many New Orleans musicians found employment within these productions (Hersch, 2007, p. 180). Musicians made use of novelty effects, such as simulating

animal sounds, a trombone player moving the slide with his foot, or incorporating tin cans as mutes for various instruments. All of these techniques were originally used in vaudeville and in minstrel shows. These traditions were gradually expanded with the inclusions of Latin American rhythms, harmonies, musical form, and instrumentations. The Cuban, Mexican, Spanish, and Caribbean influences all contributed aspects of their folk, popular, and vernacular musics, introducing what is known as the Spanish Tinge or Latin Tinge to the performances of New Orleans musicians.

The use of the term Latin Tinge is merely used as an expansion of the term Spanish Tinge. In study on the Latin Tinge and Jelly Roll Morton, Charles Hiroshi Garrett (2008) remarks that “John Storm Roberts chose to recast the term Spanish Tinge to Latin Tinge in 1979, using the term as a catch phrase to identify the contributions of Spanish, Caribbean, and Latin American musical characteristics” (p. 750). Guitarist Danny Barker (a Creole of the Barbarin family) talked of times when “the rhythm would play that mixture of African and Spanish syncopation with a beat – and just the rhythm going. Here Spanish almost certainly has to mean Latin” (Roberts, 1999, p. 475). It is interesting to note that Danny Barker was the nephew of Paul Barbarin, one of the top drummers in New Orleans. The Barbarin family not only boasted Danny as their nephew, but Paul Barbarin had four sons who were all highly respected professional musicians influenced by their Creole backgrounds.

When Jelly Roll Morton used the term “Spanish Tinge,” he was referring to the music and the musicians he had become familiar with in New Orleans. These players were primarily from Cuba and Mexico and had gained Morton’s interest by incorporating the habanera and tresillo rhythms in their playing. Morton made it very clear to ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax by stating: “If one can’t manage to put these tinges of Spanish in their tunes, they’ll never be able to

get the right season[ing], I may call it, for jazz music” (Lomax, 2001, p. 62). This new style grew in popularity and gradually became more refined. Scholars and journalists realized that a more appropriate name for these expanded influences would be the “Latin Tinge.”

The contributions of the Latin Tinge began with the introduction of new dances in New Orleans, such as danzón, bolero, son, rumba, cha cha cha, and tango, through maritime commerce and traveling musical troupes. Alejandro Madrid and Robin Moore point out that “In the 1850s touring Cuban musicians and exiles of the War of Independence brought the music and dance to Merida, Veracruz, Mexico City, New Orleans and other cities in the circum-Caribbean region” (Madrid and Moore, 2013, p. 4). Rhythmic devices, such as habanera patterns and syncopation, helped the music move away from the strict 2/4-time signatures of the music of the brass bands and marching bands. Equally important to this more modern style was the application of the clave and the inclusion of woodwind and brass instruments. In his work on Latin jazz, Christopher J. Washburne (2020) makes note of these transnational and cultural exchanges:

At the same time an intercultural space was created, and a dialogue of musical and cultural influences began to emerge. A fundamentally dialogic nature of the relationship between Africa on the one hand and the Americas and the Caribbean on the other, stating that these places have been and remain in a state of constant exchange, rooted in real contacts by people and their artifacts operating within a living reciprocal relationship. (p. 22)

One of the most influential dances to the development of jazz was the danzón. The danzón has enjoyed popularity for generations within distinct social and cultural contexts. The popularity of this dance spans a time period that includes the mid-nineteenth century and post-

World War II periods, especially in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Mexico. The increasing success of this new genre gradually caught the interest of musicians and dancers in the New Orleans area. Danzones and the musical forms found in North and South America are examples of influences that mark transnational developments. These musical forms are partners in the adaptation of cultural and musical traditions shared by European, African, and Latin American societies. As Madrid and Moore (2013) argue, “The history of the danzón is intimately linked to the Atlantic slave trade through particular melodic/rhythmic figures, instruments, and or styles of performance” (p. 7).

Originally a European contradanza, the danzón was formed in Cuba by Haitian and French colonists. This dance form grew to become the danza, which developed into the danzón. The danzón was based on the habanera, a creolized Cuban form of dance. The music for the danzón is the root of most Cuban music and is important to the musical cultures of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and New Orleans. The danzón was popularized in Veracruz, Mexico, in the early twentieth century, but by the 1960s, the danzón had become passé and its popularity was overshadowed by the cha-cha-cha, mambo and even rock and roll. During the same period, Cuba’s revolutionary government passed legislation that formalized the danzón as Cuba’s national dance (Madrid and Moore, 2013, p. 156). In their study on the history and cultural politics of the danzón, Madrid and Moore (2013) assert that the “Early use of ‘danzón’ thus referenced dancing rather than music, specifically a variant of the same figure dances that had been in vogue for decades but one that emerged in the Black community involving large spectacles intended for theaters or carnival” (p. 34). Direct relationships within the style, form, and rhythm can be found in the earliest jazz performances in New Orleans in the 1880s. The earliest recordings of the danzón date from 1905. Instrumentally, the final “hot” sections

(partially improvised) are similar in their use of the clarinet, trumpet, trombone front line of Dixieland bands from this period. The danzón style ties jazz to broader regional developments and prove that Latin American music and the music of North America are historically intertwined.

Improvisation plays an extremely important role in the danzón. The impact of the danzón on New Orleans musicians was most clearly represented in the improvisatory danzón performance practice and was most obvious in the performance of Latin American cornet players. Emmanuel Perez (1871–1946) was an influential early jazz cornetist in New Orleans who had direct ties to Latin America. Perez was born in 1871 and was a Creole of Color, boasting Mexican and French Creole ancestries. Sidney Bechet described Perez as a demanding band leader of “The Onward Band” whose orchestra could play any type of music. It was a brass band that could also play for dancers and could adjust their repertoire depending on the audience and the occasion. Although Latin American performers were prominent within New Orleans’s musical community, they were a small percentage of the population in the early 1900s (Bechet 1975, p. 64, 216).

Currently very little academic research on the danzón and its relationship to jazz. has been completed.⁴ The few existing sources focus on a small portion regarding its history and practice. Danzón, however, has strongly influenced other forms of music and dance such as Cuban son, bolero, cha-cha, mambo and, especially, early jazz: the similarities and relationships

⁴ Danzones share a number of common musical features with ragtime, one of the principal antecedent forms of jazz... The danzón might be viewed as occupying an intermediate position between ragtime and early jazz: its formal structure and pre-composed melodies conform more closely to ragtime music of the period, yet its use of polyphonic texture and the allowance for simultaneous improvisation in particular sections aligns it with New Orleans jazz (Madrid and Moore, 2013, p. 120-121).

between the danzón and ragtime, an early antecedent of jazz, presented comparisons in structure and pre-composed melodic lines.

The use of polyphony allowed for improvisations and solo opportunities and were major contributions to the emerging jazz genre. As a predecessor to early jazz, ragtime rivaled the influence of the blues. As Ted Gioia (2011) makes clear, “These two terms (ragtime and jazz) were often used interchangeably well into the era of swing music and large ensembles” (p. 20). Early ragtime pianists Jelly Roll Morton, W.C. Handy, and Scott Joplin are the earliest examples of the rivalry between this style of performing and the popularity of blues and the beginning of jazz. The best way to understand the similarities and differences between these idioms is to think of ragtime as a style of primarily piano performance. The insistent four beats to the bar in the left hand and rhythmic syncopations in the right hand resulted in a full-blown piano sound that did not need any other accompaniment. The name for this style became known as “ragging” which led to the name ragtime, a name that was derived from the phrase ragged time, a colorful description of African-American polyrhythm (Giddins & Deveaux, 2009, p. 67). The incorporation of Latin rhythms from Cuba and Mexico, such as the habanera, were important aspects of the performances and compositions of the ragtime style. European influence of the contra dance and the Latin-inspired danza were important building blocks of the ragtime vocabulary. This Latin Tinge was well established in New Orleans decades before jazz became synonymous with the city.

The music of Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1830–1870) is an early example of the hybridity and creolization taking place in New Orleans. His works convey the synthesis of Latin American musics and ragtime during the mid-nineteenth century but presented through a western art music filter. Traveling extensively throughout Europe and Latin America (especially Cuba) as an adult,

the sounds and rhythms of his younger days in New Orleans became huge influences in his piano performances and in his compositions *La Bamboula* and *Ojos Criollos (Dance Cubaine)*. The latter piece sounds much like ragtime even though it was written thirty-five years before the ragtime boom.

Gottschalk, as a White Haitian Creole, was able to draw upon the culture of the Creole community in New Orleans during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, however most of his career was spent outside of the United States. More than a half century before Jelly Roll Morton incorporated Latin stylistic and rhythmic elements into his compositions, Gottschalk was making use of Afro-Caribbean rhythmic cells, such as the habanera and the tresillo in many of his 19th century piano compositions (Sublette, 2008, p. 125). S. Frederick Starr (1995) asserts that these works represent the early use of harmonic and rhythmic explorations that would later become important aspects of early ragtime and jazz (p. 265). Compositions written by Gottschalk during his time in Latin America (specifically the Antilles), such as *Souvenir de Porto Rico*, *Danza*, and *Répond a Moi* are considered to be important forerunners of ragtime and jazz at the turn of the twentieth century. Each of these pieces feature evocative titles. For example, *Souvenir* was meant to be a tribute to those that farm the land in Puerto Rico and is based on a Puerto Rican folk song from 1854. The *danza* features the use of habanera, tresillo, and cinquillo rhythms to drive left hand African rhythm patterns. *Répond a Moi* perfigures the music of Scott Joplin and demonstrates his contributions to early jazz techniques. The first two pieces were composed during his stay in Plazuela, Puerto Rico yet reflected the music that he had been exposed to as a child in New Orleans (Starr, 1995, p. 265).

Gottschalk was praised as a musical ambassador of the new world. He spent the largest part of his life performing and traveling throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, Puerto

Rico, Guadalupe, Cuba, Martinique, Peru, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil. Several compositions written during his travels in the Antilles are easily recognizable as having a major influence on early jazz and ragtime. Gottschalk had the ability to unify classical sensibilities from the musical styles of French composers combined with the ethnic Creole and African-American music that was so prevalent in New Orleans during his childhood years (Starr, 1995, p. 38).

While in San Francisco in 1865, Gottschalk was in high demand for parties, balls, and private dinner gatherings. He was the toast of the town. One evening after a successful solo concert, the composer and a friend encountered two underage schoolgirls who had secretly left their boarding school. There has never been a detailed account of this encounter and eventually San Francisco newspapers admitted Gottschalk was likely guilty of nothing more than poor judgment (Jackson, 1989, p. 366). He left San Francisco in the middle of the night aboard a steamship bound for Latin America. This was the beginning of his self-imposed exile from the United States. He never returned. Gottschalk spent the last four years of his life traveling and performing throughout South America. He died in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on December 18, 1870 at the age of forty, three weeks after collapsing during one of his performances. More than half a century before Morton made popular his use of the “Latin Tinge,” Gottschalk played the same Afro-Caribbean rhythms (the habanera and tresillo) in his piano pieces from the mid-nineteenth century. These rhythms became examples of rhythmic and harmonic devices that were an important feature of ragtime and early jazz (Washburne, 2020, p. 46). Both Gottschalk and Morton contributed new rhythms and opportunities for changes to the structure and form of jazz.

Other genres and practices aided in the development of jazz. These included ragtime, blues, spirituals, and vaudeville. Early jazz musicians adopted spirituals as part of their repertoire as a result of so many ragtime / jazz performers performing for funerals with brass bands. The

traditional “jazz funeral” is associated with the growth, history and popularity of this music.⁵ The traditional jazz funeral had its origins in West Africa. The procession to the grave usually begins with mourners loudly proclaiming their sorrow but at the end of the ceremony there is laughing and celebrating their loved one’s ascension to heaven.

These processions begin as somber affairs and the band plays slow Christian hymns. Following the service there is dancing and celebrating the deceased being “cut loose” from worldly problems. There is a parade through the streets with up-beat music provided by a brass band. Everyone is invited to join in. The importance of brass bands is ingrained in the culture of New Orleans. Musicians were inspired by the music performed by military bands. Matt Sakakeeny (2013) states “There is much to celebrate here in the way these young men use tradition to provide people with a sense of community through music.” The success of these ensembles reconfigure tradition to align with experiences found in contemporary society (p. xv). The various types of musics were constantly interpreted within different and competing formats. The growth of jazz was an inspiration for the musicians performing in such diverse ensembles as military bands and society dance bands. The musical traditions of military marches led to performances of brass bands, second line funeral processions, and festive gatherings throughout the city of New Orleans. Other contributors to the music of New Orleans during the early 1900s consisted of church music (gospels and hymns), African American art songs (spirituals), Western European art music (salon music) and Creole folk songs as well as the infusion of vernacular music (field hollers), vendors street cries and of course the blues. Dances including danzones, contradances, and quadrilles also influenced musicians during this period (Madrid and Moore,

⁵ The history of the jazz funeral is part of the Kongo tradition of the funeral ceremony. The deceased is to be sent off with music to prevent them from being sad in the other world. Otherwise, they may come back to haunt you (Sublette, 2008, 109).

2013, p. 122). What they all have in common is their passionate, emotional music, it was an essential ingredient to the soundscape of New Orleans. The perfect showcase for this musical gumbo was the yearly celebration of Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras

One of the major cultural events that takes place in New Orleans is Mardi Gras. New Orleanians call Mardi Gras the “greatest free show on earth.” The actual origins of this celebration in New Orleans were found in 1699 when a report of these festivities was sent to the Spanish colonial governing body (Schindler, 1997, p. 14). Historians trace the first Mardi Gras celebrations to medieval Europe, beginning in Rome, and Venice, before expanding to France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the 1830s, the Perseverance, Benevolent and Mutual Aid Association was the first social club and carnival organization that was established in New Orleans. It was at this time that the city held processions of maskers, carriages, and horseback riders. The celebrations were not limited to street parades but an abundance of masked balls, hosted by various private, secret organizations (known as Krewes, whose members were always anonymous). In 1873, Mardi Gras floats began to be constructed in New Orleans as opposed to France. The many connections between Creole New Orleans and France had lasted many decades and remained positive and strong during each celebration of Carnival.

Mardi is the French word for Tuesday, and Gras translates to fat. Fat Tuesday refers to the day of indulgence of fatty foods, the consumption of alcohol, and general revelry, before several weeks of fasting and self-denial. The celebration of Mardi Gras begins on “Fat Tuesday,” the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. In many communities this celebration has evolved into a week-long celebration (A&E Television Network, 2010). In New Orleans, it was the secret societies known as Krewes that established the parade traditions of wild costumes,

decorative floats, masked participants, the throwing of trinkets and beads to the celebrants and the consumption of King Cake. Brass bands formed their own social clubs, and money earned from their performances was used for charitable contributions to members needing help with medical expenses or funeral costs.

The music of Mardi Gras has contributed to the atmosphere of these parades and parties. Jazz has played a major role in the pageantry surrounding these activities beginning with the music of brass bands, second line parades, street corner musicians, Dixieland bands, and even marching bands. The traditional music of the Crescent City is the thread that ties together the parades, dances, competing social clubs and outrageous celebratory atmosphere of Mardi Gras. These activities continue today and are considered mainstays for tourism and a growing economy.

The musical elements that are traditional to the atmosphere that surrounds Mardi Gras are representative of all the various cultures that have set this city apart from all others. Performances are presented that contain aspects of Caribbean, African, Spanish, French, and Native American musical practices. Carnival music is representative of a time to celebrate and as the New Orleanians say, “Do Whatcha Wanna.” This is a party, a celebration of life and freedom that overflows from homes, backyards, bar rooms, and overcrowded streets.

CONCLUSION

New Orleans was and remains a unique musical environment. The remnants of French and Spanish colonialism, along with African influences, Native American culture, and the influx of European immigrants combined to create a multi-cultural hybridity. The creation of a distinctly American art form was invented and refined by a diverse immigrant population. John Blacking

(1973) states, “Music is a synthesis of cognitive processes which are present in culture and in the human body: the forms it takes, and the effects it has on people, are generated by the social experiences of human bodies in different cultural environments” (p. 89). White musicians gained from these collaborations as well; they were able to realize opportunities for employment and a new understanding of improvisation, syncopation and the importance of featured soloists.

Individuals of diverse racial backgrounds mixed freely in New Orleans from the mid-nineteenth century forward. The music that was created during this period had a clear racial meaning that was derivative of the history and culture of Black, Creole, and Latin American communities. These performances provided opportunity for the mingling and interaction socially and musically of musicians and their audiences. Unfortunately linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries presented themselves and were obstacles to the forward momentum of this developing art form. Neighborhoods of New Orleans included a vibrant mixture of Black, White, and Creole peoples all living in close proximity. “Creoles were hybrid, encompassing what Gilroy has called the Black Atlantic, a cultural system or formation, involving the circulation of culture, ideas, and persons between Europe, Africa and the Caribbean as living embodiments of race mixing, they were direct agents of race circulation, musically and otherwise” (Hersch, 2007, p. 23). New Orleans was a unique American city during this time period and was more reminiscent of a Mediterranean port city because of the importance of international trade and the abundance of exotic cuisine and a vibrant night life. Evidence of hybridity can be found not only in the music of New Orleans, but in local customs, food, architecture, language and even the spirituality of the people. This collision of cultures is present even in contemporary New Orleans and is a result of both forced and voluntary migration to this unique region. The resulting

mixture of cultural identities continues to exhibit a proudly ambiguous stronghold of America's true diversity.

Immigrant musicians were excited to explore this new world of jazz and became familiar with European traditions within the city of New Orleans. Musicians began to absorb the influences and realize that they were true artists in the Western European style. New Orleans jazz represented a mixture of rural and urban culture. There were combined influences of African and European musical techniques. Communal intermingling was also an important signifier of this new music. All these influences combined to create a spirit of individuality and creative thought. International friendships, both musical and social, were successful in overcoming racist separations and producing a multi-cultural artistic environment. Musicians of different backgrounds began to find themselves incorporating the styles and techniques of musicians from other communities, as well as other countries, as a means of improving their opportunities for employment, developing new repertoire, and expanding their musical abilities.

Many performers benefited from this cultural and racial hybridity as well as the performance spaces that were spread throughout the city. Early jazz was remarkable due to the arrival of musicians who were adamant in expressing their individuality and their wish to set themselves apart from others who desired to remain focused on previous forms of their folk cultures. Musicians of this new genre accepted the central ideology of European art music, individuality, and an appreciation of the need to distance themselves from the mainstream of musical practice at that time. The following chapter will focus on four Creole musicians who pushed the boundaries of early twentieth century musical traditions and the performance spaces that provided the exposure, the audiences, and the opportunities for financial gain.

CHAPTER 4

FOUR CREOLE MUSICIANS

This chapter highlights the contributions of four key figures of early jazz and their backgrounds. Who were these Creole musicians and how did they rise to the stature of pioneers in the creation of jazz? The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was the timeframe for the birth of jazz in New Orleans. These years represented a period of racial and cultural upheaval, as neighborhoods attempted to preserve and identify their history and heritage. Racial and cultural divisions within Southern Louisiana and especially the area surrounding the city of New Orleans presented obstacles for a successful unification of these communities. White, Black, and Creole populations were all struggling to achieve their place within this southern postbellum society. The racial, economic, cultural, and geographic divisions between these communities were clear cut and yet the musical traditions of all three brought together musicians and audiences that appreciated the contributions of each.

The performers discussed in this chapter are all survivors, each one was able to overcome the barriers that were established in a society built upon the segregationist ideologies, White hegemony, bigotry and the belief in the superiority of the White race and culture over Black, Creole, and Latino communities. Christopher Washburne (2020) writes that “Conceiving of New Orleans as a creolized space and jazz as a creolized mode of expression, two distinct yet related relatives of the Black Atlantic are conjoined, that of the Black Caribbean and that of Black America (North, Central, South). New Orleans is the key historical link between the two...” (p. 9). The Creole community of New Orleans presented its own form of segregation. The division between Black Creoles and White Creoles was representative of larger racial problems that were

to be found in the rest of the southern United States at this time. Cracks began to appear in these walls of racial animosity. The individuals that were most responsible for disrupting the status quo of separation, distrust, and jealousy were musicians.

Black and Creole communities experienced a deep racial divide that was compounded by the geography of New Orleans and the surrounding area. Canal Street served as the line of separation between Uptown and Downtown. The Black community resided Uptown, and the Downtown section was populated by Creoles. The musicians discussed in this chapter were products of this divided city. During this period, musicians struggled to find their individual identities, both musically and socially. It was these struggles that affected the creation of jazz. Many musicians attempted to pass as members of another race as a means of gaining better employment opportunities and a higher social status. Because of the continuing battle in the fight against racism and segregation, many Creoles opted to pass as either Black or White, depending on their skin tone: “Sharp racial divisions generally ensured that bands of specific skin tones could only perform before specific audiences” (Peretti, 1992, p.31). This was the atmosphere that produced the first generation of jazz musicians. Better employment meant better paying jobs. The opportunities for moving up socially and musically required that musicians to learn from one another. The Creoles would study the rough and “ratty” music of the African American players and the African Americans would adapt the reading skills and techniques of the Creoles. The development of this new musical genre consisted of alliances formed between performing artists, composers, improvising soloists, and journalists, creating dependence on the contributions of all these individuals. The Uptown Black population and the Downtown Creoles were the first to realize the importance of learning from one another and incorporating the strong points of the other’s musical output such as improvisation, the blues, and the ability to read musical notation.

Creole musicians realized the contributions of Black musicians when Creole brass bands allowed Uptown players to join their ranks and make the blues a part of their style.

For this chapter, I have selected four musicians of Creole ancestry—Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Freddie Keppard, and Alphonse Picou—that best represent the musical output of their community and their city. They have created a lasting impact on the jazz forms of this period. Christopher Washburne (2020) writes that “Conceiving of New Orleans as a creolized space and jazz as a creolized mode of expression, two distinct yet related relatives of the Black Atlantic are conjoined, that of the Black Caribbean and that of Black America (North, Central, and South). New Orleans is the key historical link between the two...” (p. 9). These musicians did not work together, but all embodied that New Orleans jazz sound in a variety of ways. Author Charles O’Neil (1973) writes “They shared neither the privileges of the master class nor the degradation of the slave. They stood between – or rather apart – sharing the cultivated tastes of the upper caste and the painful humiliation attached to the race of the enslaved” (p. ix).

Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941)

“For Jelly Roll Morton jazz was not just music, it was Creole New Orleans; it was house and family; it was security and acceptance; it was the path to wealth and glory; it was power” (Lomax, 2001, p. 68).

Ferdinand Joseph LaMothe was also known as Jelly Roll Morton. During this period, the term “Jelly Roll” was used as a sexual slang term regarding the male organ (Reich and Gaines 2003, p. 32). He adopted the last name of Morton as a stage name thinking that it would be easier to remember than LaMothe. This musical icon was a product of a tight-knit Creole family and was raised in the Faubourg Marigny community of New Orleans by his grandmother. He grew

up in a strict Creole-Catholic environment that made every attempt to avoid assimilation into the city's Black population. He became very close to being disowned by his family when he began to be involved in the world of jazz.

In his book *Mr. Jelly Roll*, Alan Lomax (2001) presents a collection of interviews with Morton that has led to the establishment of the jazz archives, now housed at Tulane University in New Orleans and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University was established in 1958, and followed the precedent set by Lomax in his Library of Congress interviews with Morton in 1938. These interviews constitute an oral history of Morton and his connection with the birth of jazz in the early 1900s. Lomax (2001) describes these interviews in the introduction of his book: "Jelly Roll's life story spans the whole of the jazz age, from the street bands of New Orleans to the sweet bands of New York" (p. xxi).

Throughout his life, he denied any connection to his African roots, a result of his Creole surroundings as a youth and a strict resistance within the Creole community to assimilation into the Black population. Hersch (2007) states "The hybridity of Creoles uniquely equip them to cross the color line, embodying racial mixing in their very person, and Jim Crow increasingly pressured them to do so" (p. 99). Societal pressures to eliminate hybridity helped bring the Black and Creole communities together, however not all Creole musicians would accept Black music, but those that did became important figures in the world of jazz. Morton was Creole; both of his parents traced their Creole ancestry back four generations to the eighteenth century. He states,

As I can understand, my folks were in the city of New Orleans long before the Louisiana Purchase, and all my folks came directly from the shores of France, that is across the world in the other world, and they landed in the new world years ago. (p. 3)

Morton preferred to be thought of as a Creole of European ancestry and not a person of Black heritage. All of Morton's relatives had ties towards the French tradition, not African. Evidence of African ancestry has not been found in the first four generations of his family's history.

Morton's early years sound as though they were pages from a Hollywood movie script. He spoke only French as a child. The French opera was a popular institution in New Orleans during the late nineteenth century, and the Morton family attended these performances regularly.¹ By 1904, he was already deeply involved in the musical culture of New Orleans. He became fascinated by parades and brass bands and was eager for the one dollar he would earn as a drummer in one of those parade bands. Openings for anyone that could bang on a drum were plentiful. Morton studied guitar, trombone, and violin before gravitating to the piano at age ten. Originally, he thought of the piano as a feminine instrument and was afraid of being thought of as effeminate. His musical apprenticeship began in 1902 when he was hired as a pianist in several White bordellos of the Storyville District. Morton claimed being born in 1885, other records indicate 1890 as his date of birth. He also told Lomax that he was playing in bordellos from 1902-1903 (Lomax 2001, p. 42). These were houses where very few jazz players were welcome, primarily because dancing was considered a distraction from the drinking and sexual activities of the patrons. The young Jelly Roll was able to earn additional income during this time as a pimp, pool shark, and as a comedian (Gioia 2011). The entire late-night lifestyle intrigued the young Morton. He paid strict attention to piano players who would dress in the finest clothes, and who associated with wealthy, influential, and independent women. Keyboard

¹ The French Opera House was a landmark in the city of New Orleans from the time it opened in 1859 until it was destroyed by fire in 1919. During this period, it was the center of artistic and social activity. In addition to opera performances, benefits, carnival balls, and receptions of all kinds were held here. It was famous for presenting American operatic premieres that featured troupes from all over Europe. Major works by European masters had their American premiere at this concert hall. It was the center of the dwindling Creole society.

players were quick to gain the respect of their peers and became pampered by the house madams in the Storyville District. The pay for these musicians was also more than he could have ever imagined.

Morton's family was not impressed with this late-night forbidden world or the type of music he was performing. At this time, Morton was living with his godmother and his aunt. When both of his caretakers realized the source of his income, he was evicted from their home. These jobs were lucrative, and the lifestyle was too alluring for Morton to give up his pursuit of fame (Reich and Gaines, 2003, 13).

Morton began to develop his style of upbeat rhythms and syncopated melodies in the right hand while the left hand outlined the chordal structure of his compositions. He maintained a unique repertoire that included New Orleans cakewalks and ragtime variations. Morton was careful in the construction of his pieces. Each was developed using almost band-like arrangements for solo piano. This concept was inspired by his knowledge of other instruments and his exposure to brass bands.

Chicago became Jelly Roll's second home in 1926 and initiated his most productive period. More than one hundred recordings were completed, all of these contained his own compositions. During this time, Morton organized his most famous band "The Red Hot Peppers." This was a group of musicians that Jelly recruited from New Orleans. They obtained a higher level of artistry than any other New Orleans style ensemble up until that time. Ted Gioia (2011) states, "The music of this group is still held in the highest regard by jazz historians and critics. They were masters of musical interaction, primarily because of the leadership and guidance of Jelly Roll" (p. 39). Morton's style and the music of the Red Hot Peppers became outdated during the years of the Great Depression. This was the beginning of the swing era,

where emphasis was placed on large ensembles and featured soloists. Morton's arrangements for the Red Hot Peppers were structured to feature tight ensemble playing and a collectivist approach to their performances. Lomax (2001) labels Morton as an aggressive organizer and a self-promoter. "Jazz men often disliked him personally, but always respected his talent professionally" (p. 68).

Following the death of his godmother in 1940, Jelly Roll left Chicago and drove across the United States. His cross-country travels included stops in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Tijuana. He settled in California and continued to perform sporadically. During his time in Southern California and Mexico, Morton was inspired to make use of Latin and Mexican musical concepts in his compositions. Jelly Roll wrote a series of "Latin Tinge" pieces. Three of the compositions in this series were *Habanera*, *The Crave*, and *La Paloma*.

Morton became ill from complications of asthma and died on July 10, 1941, in Los Angeles County General Hospital. The true legacy of Jelly Roll Morton are his compositions, recordings, and his oral reminiscences of his life story from his early years in New Orleans, his contributions to the genre of jazz, and his many stories regarding his travels, adventures, and his fellow musicians. In his Morton interviews, Lomax (2001) thought of Morton as one of the most maligned yet thoughtful and accurate sources of information on early jazz.

Figure 4.1 is an example of Jelly Roll Morton's ragtime piano styling from his early years playing in the bordellos of New Orleans. This is unique because he didn't always compose blues compositions. This piece serves as an example of his early writings from his New Orleans days, and it became a regular part of this repertoire. This composition has been widely accepted as the first published jazz tune. It was composed by Morton in 1905 and first published in 1915.

The blues had its origins in the deep south of the United States during the 1860s but can be traced back to the music of Africa. The sound of suffering and repression can still be heard within this form today. Foundations of early jazz consisted of syncopated rhythms, the use of specific chords, form, blue notes (such as the flat fifth, third, and seventh degree of a scale), call and response and specific chord progressions. These elements were employed in most of Morton's compositions and represent the first notated examples of this new musical genre. It proved that a genre rooted in improvisation could retain its essential characteristics when notated. This can be seen as an accomplishment of his Creole musical training. It is also a reflection on the contributions of Black spirituals and field hollers. *Jelly Roll Blues* is an example of these influences being reconfigured in the urban area of New Orleans, and noteworthy because of the influences of international musical concepts. *Jelly Roll Blues* is an example of early jazz reaching a very high level of musical development with a combination of composed and improvised sections that also reflected the contributions of Latin American tango-like rhythms.

The Crave is an example of Morton's inclusion of a Latin rhythm that is considered part of the Latin Tinge. This piece brings together elements of traditional stride piano and the Latin rhythms of the habanera. It was first published in 1925. The cultural hybridity of New Orleans during this period is referenced in the fusion of Spanish and French musical influences. *The Crave* is taken from a collection of pieces that cover all the stylistic genres of Morton's professional life. This piece was composed primarily as a dance piece.

Musical score for "The Rose Tree" (Le Roseau) in G-flat major, Op. 10, No. 15 by Frédéric Chopin. The score is for piano and includes a vocal line with lyrics in French. The music is in 3/4 time and consists of 15 measures. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a melody in the right hand. The vocal line enters in measure 10. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

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80

King Porter Stomp is an example of his more raucous dance-hall oriented compositions. It was composed in 1924. Morton recorded very little during the 1930s. His notoriety was maintained during this period as the composer of *The King Porter Stomp* (see Figure 4.2). This piece gained national popularity because of the arrangements, performances and recordings of Fletcher Henderson and Benny Goodman that met the standards of swing era audiences.

Sidney Bechet (1897–1959)

The music of Sidney Bechet had fallen out of prominence for some time. Recently a renewed interest in his contributions to the art form of traditional jazz has created a resurgence of appreciation for his body of work, thanks in no small part to his former student Bob Wilbur and

Bechet was born into a mixed Creole family of middle-class status. The family included seven children who were all encouraged to study music and choose one of the instruments that were kept in their home such as cornet, trombone, guitar and clarinet. The preference within this

Black Creole household was for mainstream classical European music. As a boy, Bechet was determined to be a musician, even though his parents wanted him to learn a respectable trade, like masonry, shoe making, or carpentry. These were trades that were customary in most Creole households. Bechet managed to stay away from school as much as possible so that he could practice the clarinet. Bechet quit school at the age of twelve and lived and slept on the streets where he was the local bully and begged for money to buy alcohol. Eventually Sidney became accepted throughout New Orleans because of his sheer talent (Brothers, 2006, p. 195). As a teenager, he performed in the Red Light District of Storyville with the Eagle Band and was sitting in with the most popular bands in New Orleans. His peers were all older musicians who quickly realized that he was playing at a very high level.

KING PORTER STOMP

Vocalstyle Piano Roll 50480 recorded early June 1924

By Ferd "Jelly Roll" Morton

♩ = 190

4

8

11

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Figure 4.2. *King Porter Stomp*. Edwin H. Morris & Company, A division of MPL Communications, Inc. 1924, 1925.

Recognition of Sidney's talent happened at a house party in the Bechet home. In attendance was the cornetist, Freddie Keppard. Sounds of a clarinet being played in another room surprised Keppard and others, it was ten-year-old Sidney playing along with the other musicians. Keppard was quick to introduce the young talent to his clarinetist George Baquet, who became Bechet's first teacher. In the words of Sidney Bechet (1960) "The following years brought other teachers such as Lorenzo Tio, Jr. and Louis "Big Eye" Nelson (DeLille). While his former lessons were taken seriously his passion was for the art of improvisation" (p. 79).

Beginning at the age of six Bechet's earliest years were spent performing with his older brother Leonard's band. During this period, he concentrated on clarinet exclusively. Even at this early age he realized his personality, and his soul was revealed through the sound of this instrument. Ted Gioia (2011) states "Bechet played the most prominent role in developing the clarinet as a mature solo voice in jazz" (p. 55). He was able to lead the way in establishing an increasingly melodic and linear oriented conception for the clarinet. This style of performance began a career that spanned five centuries and two continents.

Between 1914 and 1917, Bechet's experienced his exposure outside of New Orleans. These engagements included Chicago, New York, and eventually his European tour with violinist and ragtime composer Will Marion Cook in 1919 (Bechet, 1975, p. 125). The reception these musicians received all across Europe was extremely positive. The reviews and audience responses to Bechet in particular were glowing and it did not take long for him to become a major star on the continent. These endorsements were noteworthy because jazz was not taken seriously in classical music circles.

While on tour in London, Bechet purchased his first straight soprano saxophone. He was the first jazz musician to use the soprano extensively and is regarded as a pioneer and innovator

in developing the early traditions and the sound of New Orleans musical history. Bechet soon realized his sound on this instrument was large, bold, and suited his reckless and emotional style. It was on this instrument that his contributions were realized in the style of traditional jazz and in later years even into the world of the avant-garde. The style that he created made use of a wide vibrato that was either loved or hated. This vibrato compensated for the inherent intonation problems of the soprano saxophone. His use of vibrato became part of his signature sound along with his use of a strong rhythmic attack. The soprano once considered a novelty became an extension of his personality. His sound was described by critics as a melancholy seriousness. Jazz to Bechet was not spirituals, blues, or ragtime but everything all at once (Bechet, 1975, p. 8). He soon established himself as a pioneer of improvisation. These skills were documented in a recording session in 1923 that featured two of his compositions, *Wildcat Blues* performed in ragtime style and featured four sixteen bar themes. The second composition was a twelve-bar blues entitled *Kansas City Man Blues*.

Bechet sought to be the dominant voice in any band he performed with, which led to frequent problems especially with trumpet players and other musicians. Bechet was a powerful player, preferring to have the trumpet player play a simple melodic lead so that he could improvise complicated counter melodies around him. It is interesting to note that during this period he had the opportunity to work briefly with Duke Ellington's Orchestra in the early 1920s. Ellington (1973) states, "I have never forgotten the power and imagination with which he played" (p. 47). Bechet left Ellington to return to his New Orleans small ensemble roots. However, from 1925 until 1929 he had returned to Europe performing in Paris, London, and later Russia.

Gradually, Bechet gained notoriety across the continent as a debonair, man-about-town, but carrying with him a personality that could be warm and charming or that could display a fiery and unpredictable temper. He was always tortured by various suspicions that would border on paranoia. He always had a gun in his possession. It was that gun that he used to fire shots on a Paris street, wounding one bystander. This incident led to a prison sentence of eleven months and eventually, deportation back to the United States. In his autobiography, Bechet (1975) has written, “Oh I can be mean – I know that. But not to the music. That’s a thing you gotta trust. You gotta mean it, and you gotta treat it gentle” (p. 5). Bechet returned to New York in the early 1930s and opened a tailor shop in Harlem along with his friend and trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. Many musicians were falling on hard times during these depression years and this shop became a gathering place for musicians to hold jam sessions and exchange phone numbers in the back room.

Bechet’s autobiography *Treat it Gentle* has been described by those who knew him as full of embellishments and largely exaggerated claims and inaccuracies. This book was dictated to Al Rose, a New York record producer and radio personality. Rose went on to author another book entitled *I Remember Jazz: Six Decades Among the Great Jazzmen* (Rose, 1987, p. 60-65). He describes Bechet’s dark side “The one I knew was self-centered, cold, and capable of the most atrocious cruelty, especially towards women” (p. 60). It was this temperament that led to the delay of Bechet reaching worldwide acceptance until the late 1940s. The eccentric personality and his fierce temper created an approach that was far outside the norm for this period.

Despite these imperfections, Bechet remained in complete command of his instruments and maintained his dominance over any would-be competitors. He eventually became one of the most loved and respected musicians in all of Europe, especially France. His last decade was

spent recording and performing concerts throughout Europe, and he was able to make infrequent visits back to the United States. Many of these early Bechet recordings are currently available on compact disc. Bechet returned to Paris in 1949 and gained his status as a national hero and celebrity but was practically unknown in the United States. He remained in Paris until his death in 1959 of lung cancer.

Petite Fleur (see Figure 4.3) is a piece written and recorded in 1952 by Bechet while living in Paris and is a reflection of his most popular and commercially successful work (Bechet 1952). The composition is a dance piece, in which the melody is the hook, played initially by a clarinet. It is this arrangement that showcases his New Orleans roots and European influences including his knowledge of opera and European repertoire. This piece is an example of Bechet's Parisienne collection – very different from his more jazz oriented explorations. *Si Tu Vois Ma Mère* (Figure 4.4) is a Bechet composition that was composed and recorded in his later years. (Bechet 2004) This is a love song written in the style of easy listening jazz and blues. It is interesting to point out that this piece was used throughout Woody Allen's film, *Midnight in Paris* (2011). It is designed to be sweet but not overpowering. It displays the romantic side of Bechet and his love for Paris. It is melodically expressive and lacks the aggressive, improvisational style of his performances in New Orleans and New York. Bechet was one of the most significant soloists in early jazz. He beat Louis Armstrong into the recording studio by several months but would eventually record duets with the trumpet master.

Freddie Keppard (1889–1993)

Always in the shadow of Buddy Bolden, King Joe Oliver, and Louis Armstrong, Freddie Keppard was the senior member of this group. He managed to achieve popularity in New

PETITE FLEUR

(Little Flower)

By SIDNEY BECHET

Moderately

Chords and notation in the score:

- System 1: D7, Gm, Gm/F
- System 2: Am7b5/Eb, D7#5, D7, Gm, Eb7, D7, N.C.
- System 3: D7, Gm, Gm/F
- System 4: A7/E, A7, D7, G#dim7, D7, N.C., D7
- System 5: F7, Bb, Bdim7, Cm, Cm/Bb, Am7b5, F7

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Low resolution sample

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Figure 4.3. *Petite Fleur*. Les Editions 23. Unichapell Music, Inc. 1952

Si Tu Vois Ma Mère

Lonesome -or- I Remember When (literally: "If You See My Mother")

Music by Sydney Bechet

Chord symbols: $E\flat m^6$, $B\flat m^6$, Gm^7 , Cm^7 , $Cm^{7(b9)}$, F^7 , $B\flat m^6$, $B\flat maj^7$, $B\flat m^6$, $B\flat^7$, $E\flat^6$, $E\flat m^6$, $B\flat/D$, F^7/C , $B\flat$, $Am^{7(b9)}$, D^7 , $Am^{7(b9)}$, D^7 , Gm , Gm^7 , C^7 , Cm^7 , F^7 , Cm^7 , F^7 , $B\flat m^6$, $B\flat maj^7$, $B\flat m^6$, $B\flat^9$, $E\flat^6$, $E\flat m^6$, $Dm^{7(b9)}$, $A\flat^9$, G^7 , $Cm^{7(b9)}$, $B\flat$, Dm^7 , G^7 , $Cm^{7(b9)}$, C^9 , F^7 , $B\flat$, $C\dim^7$, Cm^7 , F^7 , C^9 , F^7 , $B\flat$, $E\flat maj^7$, Dm^7 , Cm^7 , $B\flat maj^7$.

Figure 4.4. Bechet, Sidney. *Si Tu Vois Ma Mère*. Warner Chappell Music France.

Orleans by forming his own band, The Olympia Orchestra, in 1906. Keppard became part of the migration of Creole musicians in the first two decades of the twentieth century that brought the sound of New Orleans jazz to the west coast of the United States. Despite achieving success nationally, he would refuse offers to record, fearing people would “steal his stuff.” These attempts at keeping his musical secrets also led him to use a handkerchief to cover the valves of his cornet (Peretti, 1961, p. 103). He was responsible for exporting early jazz from New Orleans to Los Angeles in 1911. Keppard was born into the Creole of Color community of New Orleans to a musical family. Louis Keppard, Sr. worked as a cook at the Vieux Café and Keppard’s mother, Emily Peterson Keppard, was the head of the household and made sure that the home environment was filled with music and always instruments in the home for the boys to experiment with (Gushee, 2005, p. 317).

His brother Louis who was two years older was also a musician and played piano and tuba at an early age. Keppard was ten years old at this time and played mandolin with his brother. Neither brother received any formal training, and the younger sibling was most likely a non-reader who learned his parts by ear because of his natural abilities and was able to improvise and create his own parts. The cornet became his primary instrument when he was sixteen years old. Both brothers became band leaders and were successful within the competitive New Orleans jazz scene. In 1907, Keppard began playing mandolin, violin, and accordion and finally settled on cornet. The two brothers would disguise their age by putting on long pants. They thought this would help them to avoid being questioned by police. Both brothers worked as shoe shines on Basin Street for a nickel per customer. They had hoped to use this area as an opportunity to

The two brothers would disguise their age by putting on long pants. They thought this would

help them to avoid being questioned by police. Both brothers worked as shoe shines on Basin Street for a nickel per customer. They had hoped to use this area as an opportunity to speak with older musicians, hoping for free advice, and free lessons. The younger Keppard realized that switching from string instruments to brass instruments was a way of getting jobs in brass bands and marching in parades.

Freddie became well known in New Orleans at the age of sixteen when he formed the Olympia Orchestra, an ensemble that performed throughout New Orleans and the surrounding area (Bechet, 1960, p. 115). Keppard also worked on the riverboats sailing the Mississippi River at an early age. During this time, he formed a lifelong friendship with trombonist “Kid Ory.” Freddie’s brother Louis formed the Magnolia Orchestra and worked consistently on Iberville in The District. This band featured Joe Oliver on cornet who at a later time became “King” Oliver after defeating Keppard in a cutting contest (musical competition). During this time Keppard became aware of the racial divisions that were present in so many bands within the New Orleans area. The most glaring examples of these divisions were present even in the bands of Keppard who hired lighter-skinned musicians and King Oliver’s band that featured darker-skinned musicians (Peretti, 1992, p. 60).

Keppard was a proficient player and improviser but was not a unique player. He was always surrounded by players such as Louis Armstrong, Buddy Bolden, and King Oliver. Keppard’s importance lies in his impact in bringing New Orleans jazz to the rest of the country and in setting an example for other musicians including Jelly Roll Morton. His reputation was that of a powerful player but one also capable of producing a sweet and pleasant sound. Keppard also made popular the use of mutes and several techniques such as flutter tonguing and half-valving. Louis Armstrong, a friend and mentor referred to his playing as “fancy” on several

occasions (Gushee, 2005, p. 51). His playing featured a gruff and snarling attack along with a rapid vibrato, that suited his brusque and staccato style (Giddins and DeVeaux, 2009, p. 88).

Keppard moved to Los Angeles at the request of Bill Johnson, a New Orleans Creole who had formed The Original Creole Orchestra. Keppard became part of this ensemble that traveled across the United States performing as part of a vaudeville production. Between the years 1915 and 1917, Keppard toured with the orchestra across the United States. The popularity of this orchestra was in part due to the use of the word Creole which seems to have offered a degree of musical stature (Gushee, 2005, p. 293). Newspaper reviews called their music ragged and commented on the comedic effects of the clarinet player. These articles made it evident that the general public was unaware of the “hot” style of New Orleans jazz. The band continued touring until 1918 and had become so popular in the Chicago area that every talent agency wanted them to sign performance contracts.

The rise in Keppard’s popularity resulted in an offer from the Victor Recording Machine Company to be the first to record this new jazz sound in 1915. He refused the offer, saying he was afraid that other musicians would imitate his style and techniques. The first generation of New Orleans jazz players were reluctant to record or take advantage of the importance of the new developments in the technology of recording and broadcasting. Because of his refusal to record, the honor of making the first jazz recording went to a White New Orleans group – The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (Peretti 1961, p. 152).

Eventually the orchestra arrived on Broadway and created a huge sensation all over New York. Unfortunately, the orchestra disbanded in 1918 because of dissatisfaction among the band members regarding Keppard’s drinking, unreliability, the death of several key players, and poor management (Gushee, 2005, p. 213). Of all the members of the Creole orchestra Keppard was

the only player to establish himself in jazz history, in spite of the relatively few recordings that were made under his own name in the later years of his career. These recordings had become available in his later years when he was suffering the effects of alcoholism and tuberculosis. He became part of jazz mythology based on his comparison to other trumpet standouts such as Buddy Bolden, Joe “King” Oliver and Louis Armstrong, however he was always in their shadow despite being several years their senior (Gushee, 2005, p. 255).

Keppard returned to Chicago and settled in that city. Because of his notoriety, he was able to work continuously with many bands throughout the Chicago area. His performances during this period exerted a strong influence on young cornetists in the Chicago area primarily because of the prominence, individuality, and overall power of his abilities. It is interesting to note the differences in the style of Keppard and Louis Armstrong. The Armstrong approach was based on a lazy triplet feel and a delay in delivery of his melodic concepts. The opposite can be said of Keppard, who is usually heard playing on top of the beat with phrasing that is tense and exciting. Each of these players used vibrato as part of their signature sounds. Armstrong developed a slow, but dominant vibrato to articulate the ending of his phrases. Keppard used his vibrato in a more rapid fashion as an ornament that could be placed anywhere within a musical phrase. Armstrong used four and eight bar structures within his solos while Keppard preferred the use of shorter lines underscored by his rapid vibrato (Keppard 1999).

Many of the critiques of Keppard’s playing during his years in Chicago were defined by his physical decline and were not representative of his lifelong contributions to the development of jazz. It is unfortunate that he stopped performing in December of 1932 due to ill health. He died in Chicago in 1933, largely forgotten and underappreciated.

In September of 1926 Keppard entered a studio as leader of a group under his own name. The name of the band at this time was Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals, and this was the one time his name was featured on the recording. The instrumental *Stockyard Strut* is significant in Keppard's career since it was during this recording, he made the decision to perform this piece on trumpet rather than cornet. Keppard was able to perform with authority and perfection that he never again achieved.

Alphonse Floristan Picou (1878–1961)

Alphonse Picou was one of the first creators of jazz within the hybrid culture of the city of New Orleans in the late nineteenth century. He was born into a prosperous Creole of Color family and was raised in the Tremé District of New Orleans. His first musical instrument was the guitar, which he began playing at the age of fourteen. In the following year, his interest turned to the clarinet. Picou, like other Creole musicians, understood the importance of becoming musically literate. He insisted that a student should learn to read music first or would otherwise become limited in pursuing musical opportunities and advancement. Early jazz musicians made use of both African and European musical ideologies and developed their own stylistic tendencies. New Orleans offered a mixture of musical experiences and the exposure to these opportunities was most evident within the Creole community.

He secretly had his first lessons with a Creole flute player from the French Opera House Orchestra. He took lessons for about eighteen months from this person. It was not until he was invited to join the Bloom Symphony, a Creole classical group, that Picou began to consider himself a musician with professional stature. By the time he was seventeen, he was performing with the John Robichaux Orchestra and the Manuel Perez band. These were the most popular bands in New Orleans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

STOCK YARD STRUT

$\text{♩} = 195$

A A^b A^b B^b7 B^b7 E^b7

6 E^b7 A^b7 G^7 A^b E^b7

11 A^b A^b7 B^b7 B^b7

15 E^b7 E^b7 A^b A^b

19 **B** A^b A^b A^b A^b A^b

24 A^b E^b7 E^b7 E^b7 E^b7

29 E^b7 E^b7 E^b7 E^b7 A^b BREAK

34 A^b A^b A^b A^b

39 A^b7 A^b7 D^b D^b D^b DIM

15

Figure 4.5. Yeates, Kevin. The Creole Jazz Band Fake Book One, Ver. 11, Pre 1923.

At the age of fourteen, he went to work and learned the trade of being a tinsmith. He assured his father that he would take care of the family financially. This was a family that included mother, a housewife, his father, a cigar maker, and seven children. Along with his work as a tinsmith, he added another skill that included plumbing. Sidney Bechet, the author of *Treat It Gentle* describes Picou as a great musician, but a character that enjoyed life to its fullest. According to Bechet “He was a ladies’ man, and was married two or three times, yet still wanted to be married again. Alphonse was cutting up, carrying on, drinking, and everything there was. He was always smiling, and there was just no trouble big enough for him to take notice of it for long” (Bechet, 1960, p. 87).

Picou was most closely associated with his famous solo on *High Society* (supposedly originally performed by George Baquet). It was during the 1960s while living in New Orleans, Picou was the owner of a bar and convenience store over which he resided. Occasionally, the clarinetist would emerge to play and march with the Eureka Band in the streets of the city. A list of some of the bands he played with would include Keppard’s Olympia Band, Bunk Johnson, Emmanuel Perez, Dave Peyton, and Wooden Joe Nicholas. During World War I, Picou moved to Chicago and played with many jazz groups in that area.

In 1932 he retired from the music business and returned to being a plumber until the Dixieland revival of the 1940s. This was the time he returned to performing as the leader of his own small groups in New Orleans throughout the 1950s. During this period, Picou also performed and recorded with the bands of Papa Celestin, Kid Rena, and the Eureka Band.

His initial popularity was gained by working with the band of Buddy Bolden and other dance-oriented ensembles. His most important contribution to jazz was his famous clarinet solo that was originally a piccolo solo within a marching band piece. The title of Picou’s arrangement

Picou

HIGH SOCIETY

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By Porter Steele
 and Walter Melrose

Moderately
 G7#5 C G7#5 C G7#5 C F C C#dim7 G7/D D#dim7 C/E Am7

We're gon - na be in High So - ci - e - ty. We'll strut on down to the

D7 Dm7 G7 G7#5 C G7#5 C G7#5 C F C C7

fin - est part of town, I don't have rings and all those fan - cy things, but as

F6 F#dim7 C/G E7/G# A7 D7 G7 To Coda C Dm7 D#dim7 C/E Gm7 C7

long as you love me I'm in High So - ci - e - ty! While you go get your hat, I'll put

FM7 F6 Gm7 C7 FM7 F6 Am7 D7

pow - der on my nose. While I let in the cat, there's some win - dows you can close. The bed can stay that way; put the

GM7 G6 Am7 D7 Am7 D7 G G7#5 D.S. al Coda CODA C F C

dish - es in the sink. Leave the ash - es in the tray, I'll be read - y in a wink. We're ty!

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Figure 4.6. *High Society*. Edwin H. Morris & Company, A division of MPL Communications, Inc. 1924, 1925

was *High Society*.” (Figure 4.6) This solo became one of the most influential solo pieces of early jazz. He told one interviewer that he had not heard “the word jazz” until he listened to singer Mamie Smith’s recordings of popular blues melodies that were released in 1920. Black musicians in the early nineteen hundreds did not use “jazz” in their names for fear of losing both Black and White audiences. Sidney Bechet proclaimed that the word was used by White people as a means of making light of the contributions of Black musicians (Peretti, 1961, p. 71). Picou began playing professionally as early as 1894. He became comfortable working with reading bands and those that featured improvisation. He was also comfortable writing and arranging music in various styles including big bands and smaller ensembles.

At the age of forty, Picou followed his fellow musicians northward to Chicago and briefly to New York. He claimed he did not enjoy life in these large cities. The majority of his career was spent in his home city of New Orleans. Picou was capable of continuing his professional performances until the time of his death at age eighty-two. He had become the oldest living Creole clarinetist. He was considered the last link to the music of trumpeter Buddy Bolden. Picou’s funeral in 1961 was the largest ever seen in New Orleans up to that time. Brass bands and individual musicians gathered to play and provide a proper send off for this legendary clarinetist.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have discussed the musical contributions of New Orleans musicians Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, Freddie Keppard, and Alphonse Picou. All four composers and musicians were intimately tied to their Creole culture and struggled with the identity politics of New Orleans during their formative years. While at times seeming to push against or deny

their Creole roots, these musicians ultimately communicated some connection—in performance practice and/or in their compositions—to the Creole community and the impact of creolization. Morton, Bechet, Keppard, and Picou have influenced Creole culture and impacted the approach jazz musicians used to develop an appreciation for formal and informal musical education. Contributions of Black performers were absorbed into this new style. Creole communities were open and accepting to the music being performed on the other side of town. Formally trained Creole elites were exposed to a mixture of African and European musical culture and developed their own techniques and literacy.

It is important to note that early jazz musicians were not simple “folk musicians” expressing the realities of Black life in the south. The development of jazz was not a natural, serendipitous, joyful, merging of the downtown Creole musicians with the uptown Black improvisers, leading to a unified African-American art form. The reality is that individuals from two very different communities had to endure moments that found musicians who were already at a low level of the social structure, engaging cultural ideals and musical principals that were far removed from their familial identities.

FINAL CONCLUSION

This research identifies the effects of creolization and hybridity on the development of jazz within the area of the city of New Orleans and Southern Louisiana. The focus of this project is to highlight the contributions of community, race, family, and musical environment that encouraged the pursuit of a new form of musical expression. Jazz was created in the United States within the context of a diasporic culture. The worldwide acceptance of this music as an American art form can be seen as a symbol of America's cultural hybridity and diversity. These cultures became intertwined and supported and encouraged the growth and acceptance of jazz.

The Creoles, the Creoles of color, and the African American community were among the earliest civil rights activists, challenging the status quo of racism and segregation. They were able to discover the commonalities of their hopes for a better future. Major contributors to this growing world of a new musical genre consisted of immigrants from Africa, Europe, South America, and Native Americans. Each of these populations were living near one another and learning to accept and appreciate the contributions of these other communities.

New Orleans was not your typical U.S. American city at the turn of the twentieth century. What remained of French and Spanish colonialism was combined with African, European, and Native American elements, a mixture that formulated a uniquely American art form that was diverse immigrant population. People of different races and ethnicities mixed freely in New Orleans, more than in any other American city. From the mid-nineteenth century forward, widespread opportunities for racial interaction and mingling were available despite the segregated oppression that was an ever-present cloud hanging over all of society. However, the neighborhoods of this particular city included a vibrant mixture of Black, White, and Creole communities, all living in close proximity. The political powers controlling the city at that time

attempted to regulate this interaction by allowing venues for the congregating of freed enslaved peoples to make music, dance, and even worship. The primary area for these gatherings was Congo Square, which is now part of Louis Armstrong Park near the French Quarter. This area offered Africans and free enslaved peoples a gathering place for music and dance from 1817–1835 and at the present time is home to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

New Orleans is considered a melting pot of racial and ethnic identities. Charles Hersch (2007) states:

“A relatively recent understanding of racial dynamics in culture that goes beyond the melting pot is creolization. Creolization emphasizes the continuous quality of interactions between the races, calling into question the idea of pure cultures of any sort . . .

Creolization can thus liberate us from a notion of fixed or finished products of culture to a focus on cultures in transition, allowing us to grasp the in-between, the ambiguous spaces, where cultural boundaries blur and disappear as hierarchical categories into each other.” (p. 8)

New Orleans has always had a significant Creole population alongside White, Black and Latino communities, but the various races interacted and were separated by struggles for power and economic superiority. These boundaries were socially constructed rather than fixed. The racial identity of one individual could change depending on the context of his or her environment. Racial identity was in a state of flux during the early years of jazz’s formation. This confluence of racial perceptions and identities is an important part of what made the creation of this new music possible. New Orleans musicians were conscientious in using African musical devices to re-arrange European forms or change the style of music they performed to

cater to a specific audience. Racial, social, and economic considerations all combine to give jazz its' unique and diverse character.

Without the influence of Creole culture and the socioeconomic circumstance existing within the city of New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century, jazz would never have emerged as the musical voice of a population that was existing at the lowest level of American society. Creole culture is a necessary and inseparable component to the development of jazz in New Orleans. The history of Creole musicians reminds us that jazz, during its' formative years in New Orleans, consisted of conflicting cultural interactions that eventually shaped and explored all areas of individual and communal identity within and beyond jazz.

Ongoing cultural ambiguity confronts both individuals and communities in New Orleans to this day. The binary racial opposition of Black and White is not a natural one; it is socially and culturally constructed. Many jazz histories depict the jazz genre in terms of these categories. The use of this methodology misses the primary responsibility of historical writing, that is, to help us understand how things got to be the way they are and by exploring how things once were (Raeburn, 2009, p. 260). There have been and continue to be many incarnations of jazz. This music moved from the Mississippi Delta to Harlem rent parties, and on to Chicago, New York, Kansas City and Los Angeles. The musicians traveling these circuits all had one thing in common: they wanted to bring the spirit of New Orleans music to audiences that were curious and receptive to their performances.

The music we call jazz today sounds quite different from the music that was performed in New Orleans during the early twentieth century. The primary ingredients are still present. The blues, syncopated rhythms, and musicians continue to exemplify the struggles and victories of minorities and immigrants. The examples set by the Creole musicians of the past and the

processes of creolization continue to influence and enlighten new generations of musicians. The embodiment of the history and culture of New Orleans can be appreciated in the music of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (b. 1960), a native of the city. Marsalis grew up in a musical family that consisted of a father, mother, and seven siblings, four of whom are currently involved with jazz on a very high level. Wynton's father was Ellis Marsalis, Jr., a well-respected pianist, and jazz educator in New Orleans. His four sons are Wynton (trumpet), Branford (woodwinds), Delfeao (trombone), and Jason (percussion) are versatile performers, well-educated and recording professionals in the jazz world. Wynton especially is highly regarded within both the classical and jazz idioms. The successes musically of this family can be traced to a home environment with roots in the Catholic and Creole neighborhoods of their childhood.

Wynton Marsalis was the first jazz musician to win the Pulitzer Prize in music in 1997 for his oratorio *Blood on the Fields* (Gioia, 2011, p. 353). His current position is leader of The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra which has influenced and encouraged high school and collegiate musical ensembles to introduce the jazz repertoire in their programs. The orchestra has been successful in raising funds for these programs throughout the country. The orchestra under Marsalis's leadership has promoted jazz and jazz history by using concerts, educational programs, and master classes to educate and entertain all age groups worldwide.

The formative years of jazz in New Orleans included conflicted cultural interactions. Despite these struggles, the tri-level structure of New Orleans society at this time was used to shape and express new concepts of personal and community identity. The world of jazz and the global community continue to receive the benefits of the confluence of races, cultures, and historiographies in this still changing musical gumbo.

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VITA

Originally from Rhode Island, F. Dennis Dow grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. Following graduation from LaSalle Academy he was employed as a quality control inspector for the Speidel Corporation. The desire to perform as a professional musician led to opportunities for employment with several bands and orchestras that were employed consistently throughout New England and the entire East Coast of the United States. He attended the College of William and Mary and Hampton Institute during his military service with the U.S. Air Force. His enlistment in an Air Force band was completed in 1970 and a decision was made to re-locate to the Los Angeles area of Southern California. The reasons for this move were both professional and educational. During this period, he attended El Camino College and California State University Northridge, as a jazz majors. Several years of private teaching and touring followed before a decision was made to relocate once again, this time to Tennessee. He enrolled at the University of Tennessee to continue to pursue his undergraduate degree. Upon completing his Bachelor of Arts degree, he was accepted into the Department of Musicology as a candidate for the master's degree. He maintains an active performance and teaching schedule while pursuing research in the area of jazz history and the culture of New Orleans. He is grateful for the support of his wife and family and the guidance of so many faculty members at the University of Tennessee.