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COLOR LINE AND JAZZ

BACHELOR WORK

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SEGREGACE A JAZZ

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Pavel Smutný

Abstract

The bachelor work deals with the relationship between jazz and color line in the USA, mainly during the 1920s and 1930s. Color line played an important role in the creation of jazz and for a long period of time it continued to influence the music as well as the lives of black jazz musicians and composers. While seeking for employment, in the night clubs, on tours, in the studios—almost everywhere, black jazzmen were reminded of the limitations imposed on them by the legal system and interracial relations in the USA. However, jazz proved to be an effective weapon against the racial discrimination and a rare field where by the end of the 1930s it was possible for members of white and black communities to collaborate and admire one another's creativity.

Abstrakt

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je vztah jazzu a segregace v USA, a to především v průběhu dvacátých a třicátých let dvacátého století. Segregace sehrála důležitou úlohu při vzniku jazzu a ještě dlouho poté ovlivňovala tento druh hudby i životy černošských jazzových hudebníků a skladatelů. Během hledání zaměstnání, v nočních klubech, na turné, ve studiu—téměř všude byla černošským jazzmanům připomínána omezení pramenící ze stavu legislativy a mezirasových vztahů v USA. Jazz se nicméně ukázal jako účinná zbraň proti rasové diskriminaci a na konci 30. let 20. století též představoval jednu z mála oblastí, jež členům černošské i bělošské komunity umožňovala spolupracovat a vzájemně se obdivovat individuální tvořivosti.

Outline

1. Introduction

Jazz music emerged approximately at the beginning of the twentieth century, which was about the same time the constitutional color line between the whites and blacks was drawn (precisely it was in 1896 after the case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*) and the separate-but-equal doctrine became reality. However, it does not mean that racial segregation (even though it was not called that way until the beginning of the twentieth century[1]) to some extent did not exist before; on the contrary, since the arrival of the first slaves to Virginia in 1619, the meeting of the European and African culture in the New World started and the corner stones for both segregation and jazz were laid. During more than two centuries of slavery, American society developed an array of informal rules concerning interracial relations and thus, when segregation *de jure* was established, there had already been segregation *de facto*, segregation in habits and customs, enduring far to the twentieth century.

Hence the conditions of the prenatal period, the very birth of jazz and a good portion of its development were significantly shaped by the color line. The following pages are dealing with the relationship of these two phenomena mainly during the 1920s and 1930s; the two decades of the twentieth century through which jazz music spread from the rural South to the rest of the USA, became publicly recognized, developed into a worldwide idiom and experienced the most popular period in its whole history.

The connections between jazz and color line were explored from several different perspectives and a single chapter was reserved for each of them. As the approach is not chronological, the chapters may overlap from time to time. After outlining the overall situation in the American culture in the first few decades of the twentieth century and defining the importance of jazz during the era, the biracial character of jazz music and the individual ingredients contributive to its creation as well as the multiethnic environment of its "cradle" will be discussed,

[1] See Edward L. Ayers, "The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction," in *When the Southern Segregation begin?,* ed. John D. Smith (Boston—New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2002), 87.

followed by the range of opinions on the music in the period between 1920s to 1940s (as the latter ones refer to previous decades, they do not pass the previously specified period of time). The consecutive chapters will focus on the question of black jazzmen mobility and their struggle against color line while on the move and the disparity of conditions of black and white musicians in the dynamically developing industries related to music. The final two chapters concern with the link between the popularity of black jazzmen and the successive betterment of the black community and the first attempts to integrate white and black artists on a recording session, during jam sessions and within one band, respectively.

2. American Culture in the Early Years of Jazz

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States had been undergoing significant changes in various fields concerning economy, politics, ethics and arts, which "by the 1930s had transformed America into a more interconnected and homogeneous nation" (Carney 2003, 4). The 1920s and 1930s, as historian Warren Susman noted, were an era characterized explicitly by the cultural transformations occurring throughout the nation.

"By 1922," Susman argues, "an exceptional and ever-growing number of Americans came to believe in a series of changes in the structure of their world, natural, technological, social, personal, and moral." Technology and the diffusion of cultural forms hastened much of this shift in values, but "at the same time," Susman writes, "they found themselves in the process of developing new techniques both for amassing still more knowledge and for achieving even fuller experiences." (Susman 1984, 106)

In the 1920, the "urban population outnumbered the rural" and "the United States had become a nation of cities" (Boyer and others 1990, 841). The mass production of automobiles via the assembly-line allowed an increase of regional mobility, whereas mass production by and large fostered a new kind of customer, obsessed with purchasing, spending and consuming. With the shortening of work week and the invariable repetitive labor, more and more people became widely interested in leisure-time activities and fun, pleasure and entertainment rose in significance.

Revolutions in communication and organization facilitated rapid reduction of distance and the advent of such path breaking technological inventions as new printing methods, radio broadcasting, electric recording and movies enabled unprecedented amount of information to be shared by the whole country. "News could reach every corner of the nation in a few seconds and succession of fads and events—or pseudoevents—preoccupied millions of Americans." (Boyer and others 1990, 842-7)

The new media emphasized the shift from the "Culture of Character" to the "Culture of Personality" and celebrities—movie stars, sportsmen and musicians—crazed the whole USA.

Well, not the whole country, at least not everyone. All the modern inventions and processes, these "novelties" together "eroded the Victorian moorings that underpinned American culture" and good many Americans did not welcome them, but were more than indignant upon the deterioration of the traditional Victorian values of "commercial thrift, emotional repression, and hard work" (Carney 2003, 4). For that group, America lived "more and more in two dimensions, length and breath with no depth" (Knoles 1955, 51).

The clash between the Modernism and Puritanism was most apparent in the new mores and values of the youth. "In the later nineteenth century," John Cavelti observes, "youth became something very different than it had been." With education and a "more affluent middle class" the premature stage began to represent a "much more protracted phase of life" and the adolescence with "the phenomenon of generational revolt" were discovered. (Cavelti 1996, 8-9) Therefore, adolescents in the twenties:

> exemplified perhaps for the first time the rebellion against the past; the quest for liberation; experimentation with new mores and patterns of behavior; and a new kind of immersion in popular culture. (Cavelti 1996, 9)

By 1920, jazz reached the northern cities and its new audience, extrinsic to the music's original cultural background, recruited right from the ranks of the white middle class juveniles. "In their efforts to break with the past," these young rebels eagerly embraced the African-American culture, its "music, dance, language, and humor" (Barlow 1995, 1). Jazz quickly became the expression of their life style; "a college existence without jazz would be like a child's Christmas without Santa Claus," declared a twenties' university student newspaper (Boyer and others 1990, 853).

The immodest dress code of young flappers, lack of moral constraints but also the attraction to the black subculture horrified the conservative Americans, since the 1920s were on one hand an era of development, success and

abundance, but on the other hand time when the revived Ku Klux Klan reached its peak with five million members[2] and the country had been just recovering from the number of race riots responding the black migration to the North. W. E. B. Du Bois truly stated, that "the problem of the twentieth century [was] the problem of the color line"[3]; white Americans were at the same time fascinated by "the cultures and peoples non-Western," (Susman 1984, 119) but having been indoctrinated by the "White Supremacy Virus," they regarded these cultures as barbaric and uncivilized and feared the impact on their own civilization. White patrons attended night clubs (often ornate in "jungle" or "plantation" style) in black quarters, seeking for their identity or healing their nostalgia for the past times. The Negro culture seemed a useful psychotherapy tool. That state of affairs, however, would not last for ever.

Between the World Wars, the popular culture would continue to foster "white Anglo-American hegemony as it had traditionally done," nevertheless there were "increasing signs of change in areas like the movies, radio, and popular music" (Cavelti 1996, 11). The growing popularity of jazz had been comparably lowering its controversy and the eventual acceptance of jazz reflected the degree to which Americans were able to identify themselves with the new set of values (Carney 2003, iv). Jazz in various forms became, thanks to radio broadcasting, record industry and moving pictures, the omnipresent soundtrack of the interwar era and even though the white jazz bands achieved much greater share of the commercial success, it was "in the area of popular culture that African-Americans for the first time broke out of the walls of segregation and discrimination" constructed "after the Civil War" (Cavelti 1996, 8).

[2] See Derrick A Bell, JR., "The Racial Imperative in American Law," in *The Age of Segregation: Race Relations in the South, 1890-1945* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 11.
[3] See John H. Franklin.—A. Meier, *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), 83.

3. Biracial Origins of Jazz

The basic nature of jazz is that of a "hybrid," a fusion of arts, a mix of different and in some ways contradictory musical cultures and approaches to art in general[4]. This is essential for understanding of the peculiar relationship of jazz to segregation; jazz is a style of music created from various sources of both European and African-American origin but for a long period of its existence[5] the multicultural character of it was either claimed or denied by members of both traditions, and its performance restricted by the color line in numerous ways. Color line, on the other hand, played a bizarre, in the outcome not necessarily negative, role in the blending of black and Creole communities in the turn of the century New Orleans—the place where, as the story goes, all the parts came together.

3.1. Jazz Ingredients

Jazz did neither "fall out of the blue", nor was it invented by one particular person (although several musicians, for example Jelly Roll Morton[6], claimed otherwise) at a specific date and place. It was a result of a slow, for decades lasting, process of absorbing often highly diverse influences.

One line of the origin of jazz comes from the old African tribal rites, where the rhythm was much more important than harmony and therefore it could develop into a great complexity, which the other source, European music with its stress on harmony, could not reach. As the black slaves were confronted with Christianity, their original religions and rituals were mixed with the

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[4] Even if we start with the name of the music, a mystery on its own—there are so many culturally dissimilar possibilities of the origin of the word "jazz," ranging from African or Arabic languages brought to Africa, through French, Creole, Old English, Spanish, etc., to personal histories of musicians, that nothing than a hybrid could be created with such a pedigree. For details about individual alleged origins of the word jazz see: Merriam, Alan P.—Garner, Fradley H. "Jazz—The Word," in *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert G. O Meally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[5] Or it could be said, that for the whole existence of jazz there can be find persons trying to claim jazz as white or black only. Most recently a black saxophonist Wynton Marsalis from Jazz At Lincoln Center. It is easy to guess which race he prefers.

[6] See Courtney Patterson Carney, *Jazz and the Cultural Transformation of America in the 1920s*, Ph.D. diss (Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 35; or J. Fordham, *Jazz*, trans. Petr Dorůžka and Markéta Cukrová (Praha: Praha, 2001), 95.

"western" customs into such extent that for example "some slaves were celebrating the Saint Patrick's day with drum sessions, to join a holy day of one religion with a rite of another" (Fordham 2001, 11). It cannot be said that the jazz rhythms are African—they are also a product of combination of European and African patterns, but the polyrhythmic approach, the emphasis on rhythm and the steadiness of the beat can be traced back to the Dark Continent.

If concerning the melody and harmony, some principles of both African and European music were similar enough to be joined in a song form; one of the first forms was the blues, which combined Afro-American folk music with European church song scales and harmonies and became the corner stone of the western pop music and an essential form of jazz. Blending the African pentatonic and European diatonic scales escalated into a so-called blues scale containing "blue notes"—these were by white musicians at first interpreted as mistakes.[7]

Another contributive aspect, coming from African languages where the meaning of words can be altered by intonation and pitch, enriched a jazz vocalist's performance with glissando, bending of tones and falsetto, in striking contrast to the exact intonation of European singers. These various techniques of tone embellishment were adapted by brass and string instrumentalists who endowed the unique, human-voice quality to their sounds.[8]

Some of these features and mixtures were already reflected in the pre-jazz musical styles of spirituals, blues, and ragtime—these all had deep impact on jazz. The permanent willingness to fuse is most natural for jazz and so the mutual influence between jazz and other styles has been continuous throughout its history.

Even if it is questionable, which of the two music traditions could be marked as more contributive, it is clear that jazz would not evolve into the shape we know it today without any of these ingredients.

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[7] See Fordham, J. *Jazz*, trans. Petr Dorůžka and Markéta Cukrová (Praha: Praha, 2001), 12; Megill, David W.—Tanner, Paul O. W—Gerow M. *Jazz* (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1992), 20.

[8] See Fordham, J. *Jazz*, trans. Petr Dorůžka and Markéta Cukrová (Praha: Praha, 2001), 11; ; David W. Megill—Paul O. Tanner, *Jazz Issues, a Critical History*, (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc., 1995), 38-39

3.2. The Cradle of Jazz?

In the first paragraph it was said that jazz was not invented in a specific place and it is true that music with similar features was appearing throughout the country at approximately the same time. Yet, if the emergence of jazz were to be connected with a single location, the choice would definitely be New Orleans because of the town's rich cultural variety and long row of outstanding jazz musicians coming from the area—Louis Armstrong, primarily, but also Charles "Buddy" Bolden, Kid Ory, Joe "King" Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet and others. More over, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who firstly brought jazz to larger audiences in 1917, sprang from New Orleans.

Besides the white and the black dwellers, another ethnic group resided in New Orleans—the Creoles of mixed blood of Spanish, French and black origin. These three groups that differed not only racially, but in religion as well (blacks were predominantly protestant; Creoles catholic; and the whites represented a variety of religious groups) inhabited three more or less divided areas. But at the end of the nineteenth century, after a set of Jim Crow laws all around the South and continuing migration of whites and rural blacks to the city, the Creoles lost their status of the "middle group" between the white and black and were compelled to move upward to the black part of the town. (Carney 2003, 36-8)

This resulted in a closer contact of the Creole and black communities and in inspiring exchange of musical approaches. Whereas the black New Orleans musicians were usually musically illiterate, their Creole colleagues were often educated in western classical music, reading scores and theories of harmony. The relationship between the two communities was marked by great rivalry and racial intolerance, frequently explicitly expressed by open violence, however, around 1900s in rich combinations of rural blues and rhythmically sophisticated ragtime, "blacks and Creoles alike began to swing the beat" (Peretti 1994, 26).

All three communities played a certain role which can be represented by a single musician from each of them: White bandleader Jack "Papa" Laine, did not bring any innovation to the music performed in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century, but he was behind almost every white brass band in town and he "raised" also later members of The Original Dixieland Band—orchestra which was the first to record instrumental jazz (in the 1917).

Creole pianist Jelly Roll Morton merged ragtime with blues tonality and even Latin American styles, emphasizing the compositional approach. The last, perhaps the most influential musician was cornetist Buddy Bolden. His main contribution is in initiating the importance of a soloist in a jazz band. (Carney 2003, 43-51)

The ethnically diverse environment of New Orleans stimulated the creation of the "hot music" (as the label "jazz" was given to it a few years later[9]), but before the move to the North around 1917, the music of New Orleans was not significantly successful and its performance was constrained within the original community of the performers

[9] See Fordham, J. *Jazz*, trans. Petr Dorůžka and Markéta Cukrová (Praha: Praha, 2001), 14.

4. Opinions on Jazz up to 1940s

The "America's Classical Music," the "rare and valuable national American treasure," "the only truly original American contribution to the arts", as nowadays jazz is dubbed, has recently been paid a significant attention. This musical art is highly respected amongst critics and general public and has become the focus of numerous researches by foremost scholars. However, it was not always the case. Until the second half of the last century, jazz did not gain the status of a fine, "high-brow" art and too often it was treated with disrespect and disdain. Hence, the more startling it becomes when we find out what has been said about the precursors of jazz as early as the turn of the century by a famous Czech classical composer.

Antonín Dvořák who in 1892 came to teach and compose in the United States became so amazed by the vernacular music of black people that in 1893 he claimed:

> I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. (Levine 1998, 435)

In the 1890s, "in the Negro melodies of America" Dvořák discovered[10] "all that [was] needed for a great and noble school of music" (Peress 2004, 9). Thirty years later, what was discovered in the Negro melodies of jazz neither could be called "great" nor "noble" and it would have been easy to find voices claiming that such music was not "needed" at all.

Jazz in the 1920s and later was identified with Modernism which good many of the Americans recognized as a disaster, not a "blessing" (Carney 2003, 179-81). Jazz was also an antonym for Culture as that term was then understood, since it lacked "refinement," a word usually equated with Culture (when at that time someone used the word Culture, it already contained the adjective "high") (Levine 1998, 432).

[10] And not only did he discover the beauty, he also used motives from black spirituals and pentatonic scales in his own works, for example in Symphony No. 9 in E minor *From the New World* or Humoresque in F sharp major for piano.

After taking into account the cultural backgrounds of jazz of the period, it is not surprising that most of what was thought about the music in the interwar era were in a close relation to the stereotypical imagery of African-Americans. Such opinions can be divided according to their sources into following categories: the views of the musicians themselves, judgments of musical critics, opinions of black intellectuals and attitudes of the lay public.

4.1 Jazz Musicians

Despite the existence of white orchestras similar in attitude of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings who stated that "they did whatever they could to sound like [King] Oliver and others", number of white musicians in the 20s', or even later, ignored or belittled the black part of jazz foundations. The members of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the first orchestra to record Dixieland as early as 1917, denied having been influenced by black jazz players in the New Orleans. (Megill—Tanner—Gerow 1992, 71)

The leader of the band, Nick LaRocca, felt that the black musicians had "never played [our] kind of music" and not willing to change his mind trough out his whole life, in the 1950s he wrote letters to attack the blacks' credit in the creation of jazz. Another white musician, George Brunnis, argued that "jazz originated in barbershop singing" and blues came from Jewish hymns accompanied afterwards with African tom-toms. (Peretti, 187-9)

As Burton W. Peretti observed, in Paul Whiteman's book *Jazz* (1926), there is no mention of blacks, or their music, and Whiteman himself "felt that Jazz mostly consisted of syncopated classical music" (Peretti 1994, 189). However, Whiteman's case is not that simple. The "King of Jazz," as he was dubbed, desired to gain jazz certain respectability. Unfortunately in the mid-twenties, "to convince the audience that [jazz] was an American music, he was bound" to claim it officially as "a white music" (Early 1998, 409). Although the propagator of the "symphonic jazz" is frequently despised by later jazz critics, since he was probably the first prominent white band leader to hire a black arranger, not all of his deeds were condemnable (Ibid.).

Even the Chicagoans, the generation of young white jazz musicians who were close to black musicians, could not escape racial stereotypes completely.

To Bud Freeman blacks seemed “carefree and happy” (Peretti 1994, 189), Eddie Condon believed in the “all you [black] folks got rhythm” idea (Baraka 1998, 139) and Hoagy Carmichael was captivated by the appearance of Louis Armstrong on stage: “those big lips of his, at the mike … blubbering strange cannibalistic sounds, tickled me the marrow” (Peretti 1994, 190).

On the other hand some black jazzmen found white players less skilled and inferior. Pops Foster believed that most of the white bands of the 1920s should have studied intonation, since they thought that “if you’re not blowing loud, you’re playing nothing” (Peretti 1994, 192). Nonetheless, that would be a fitting description of the way The Original Dixieland Jazz Band with their barnyard sounds. Sydney Bechet, who was passionate separatist, thought about the white jazz in a similar way. From his viewpoint, white jazz:

> wasn’t our music. It wasn’t us.... It’s awful hard for a man who isn’t black to play a melody that’s come deep out of black people. It’s a question of feeling." Dixieland ‘musicians’ could only "play what they learned from us," but their blues playing was still "a burlesque of the blues. There wasn’t nothing serious in it any more." (Peretti, 192)

It has to be said that claims from the black players were more a means of defense to protect themselves from the infiltration of the whites and their stereotyped conception of the black culture as a whole.

4.2 Musical Critics

Strange as it is, to a similar extend to which some white players adopted jazz as a predominantly European music, certain critics (up to the 1940s there were almost no black critics and there is still a disproportion between white and black jazz critics) tended to see jazz as an unequivocally African art in origin. As Lee B. Brown in his essay on jazz theories asserted:

> Many influential writers of the 1930s and 1940s—white writers, by the way—sentimentally touted the earliest forms of jazz as the most authentic forms, on the assumption that they were its most intuitive, least disciplined versions. For these critics, execution was valued over conception, nature over tutelage… Robert Goffin… describes authentic jazz players as falling into trancelike states or whipping themselves into frenzies while playing. In such music, we can directly feel the “soul of the black” musician… (Brown 1999, 238)

These “primitivists”, nicknamed after their theory of “primitivism,” denied white contribution to jazz. If we put it differently, anything that was not “trancelike” and natural was not the “real” jazz for the primitivists. According to this rule, music of Benny Goodman, Bix Beiderbecke or Fletcher Henderson stood far from being jazzy. But if we look closer, even the early recordings of trumpet man King Oliver, whose performance was suitable to “pass the primitivist's test…already contain dangerously sophisticated diminished seventh chords.” [Diminished chords are an artificial invention, an element not older than two hundred years, in contrast to the other seventh chords, which are simply derived from diatonic scales and are therefore more natural. In a nutshell, such harmonies hardly could come from the ‘black soul’.] Another, on the first glance fitting candidate for primitivist theory, Louis Armstrong, simply represents the opposite, because he “could generate jazz interest simply by ping-ponging skillfully placed trumpet notes back and forth within a single harmonic interval.” But if you consider “such performance as either straightforward European or African”, you “could hardly get the musical sense of the effort.” (Brown 1999, 239-40)

This Afrocentric theory was not accepted by critics in unison. For example in Winthrop Sargeant’s *Jazz: Hot and hybrid*, written in 1938, there are mentioned all of the various aspects of jazz music coming from both cultural traditions. However, for Sargeant the aesthetic value of jazz was on the same level as that of “the skyscraper, the baseball game, and the ‘happy ending’ movie,” and when contrasted with a “Greek temple or a medieval cathedral, like jazz, the skyscraper lacks the restraint and poise of the classical tradition.” In his last chapter, he sadly concluded that: “You can’t ignore an art that makes up seventy per cent of the musical diet of a whole nation,” even if it fails “to fit the aesthetic categories of refined music criticism.”(Sargeant 1959, 251)

Not alone, Sargeant wanted to make clear that jazz (black or white it did not matter) could by no means compare to the western classical music. The overall feeling was described by George Knoles, who said that: “American music, of all the arts, had suffered most from the overwhelming prestige of European masters” (Knoles 1955, 120). It seems ironic that these “European masters,”

such as Dvořák, Milhaud or Stravinsky, did not apprehend losing their prestige when "borrowing" from the American music.

4.3 The Black Elite

It is striking that even black intellectual elites of the time did not take jazz seriously. Although promoting the art, the music did not exactly fit into their concept.

The representatives of Harlem Renaissance (with the exception of Langston Hughes) "tended to view it as a folk art—like the spirituals and the dance—the unrefined source for the new art,"(Huggins 1973, 10) as it did not fit the conception of the impatiently awaited "New Negro music" equal to the Western classical music. The proper image was personified in James W. Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man,* where the protagonist dreams about ragtime-based scored music. (Huggins 1973, 11)

Alain Locke, after his initial disdain for jazz, "came to recognize its potential as a "shock troop advance [guard]" for a modern world music." However, he preferred "Paul Whiteman's 'symphonic jazz' over the propulsive blues aesthetic of (for example) the Count Basie Orchestra."(Dinerstein 2003, 304)

Dave Payton, the black exception amongst the white musical critics, who regularly analyzed contemporary jazz compositions on the pages of Chicago *Defender*, held identical opinion to Locke. He praised the compositional factors in jazz, but the "the barbaric, filthy, discordant, wild and shrieky music," he wrote in 1927, "should be eliminated from the public dance halls" and suspended by decency (Carney 2003, 195-6).

The most influential black leader of the era, W. E. B. Du Bois, failed to grasp the importance and future potential of jazz as well. As historian Mark R. Schneider put it:

> The very phenomenon he wished the Harlem Renaissance would produce—a distinctively African-American art that would help transform white American attitudes towards Negroes—unfolded before his eyes and he did not see it. (Dinerstein 2003, 310)

4.3 Lay Public

The public attitudes towards jazz showed during the 1920s to 1930s period a certain development, however mainly just after the black migration waves to the northern cities, jazz was perceived as a problem and a scent of controversy maintained even during the Swing fad. As Courtney P. Carney pointed out:

> Throughout the 1920s community leaders labeled jazz dangerous, pastors posited jazz as immoral, and a sizable number of African-Americans worried that the popularity of jazz would only debase further the black community. (Carney 2003, 180)

As long as jazz stayed within the black communities, the public was not too outraged, "yet once jazz was adopted by the 'highly civilized' white race, criticism of the music increased dramatically" (Carney 2003, 191).

In the early twenties, a wave of pseudo-scientific writings about pure racial origins helped scare the white population against not only darker-skinned people, but also immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (Early 1998, 412). In jazz context, whites became afraid of deterioration of their culture, values, but also about race mixing and jazz accompanied with immoral dancing full of dangerous physical contact, and what was worse, contact between a black man and a white woman, which was a "real" threat.

"Why 'Jazz' Sends Us Back to the Jungle," "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" or "The Jazz Problem," were the names of articles appearing in journals and magazines, warning against the savage jazz music (Anderson 2004). A significant number of black Americans were upset by jazz as well, since they feared, "that the increased exposure of jazz music would only degrade the African-American community" (Carney 2003, 194-5).

The fear and disgust about jazz gradually faded, as music press began publishing more favorable articles and prominent (white) band leaders combined jazz with classical pieces to develop a "sweeter and smoother" style. By 1935, when the Swing era had begun, "the cultural transformation of the nation produced a new, nationally recognized expression of modern America" (Carney 2003, 201) and much of the previous jazz controversy was forgotten.

5. Jazz and Black Mobility—Facing the Color Line

One of the qualities characteristic to the profession of a musician is movement. In order to earn your living you have to travel to various dancehalls clubs or studios in different parts of a city or a state to perform, to record or to broadcast. Sometimes you may stay at one place for a certain period of time, but eventually you have to move on to other venues to maintain the attractiveness of the music, to seek better occupational or social conditions or for other reasons. That, in the age of Jim Crow[11], was a complicated matter for a black person, since traveling through, accommodation or residency in certain areas was connected with hostility of the white communities.

The present chapter is dealing with the problems and limitations imposed by the color line upon the black community and particularly on the early black jazzmen before their migration, while moving to and then seeking for employment and housing in the northern cities and during their tours around the country.

5.1 Stay in Your Place

One of the reasons for drawing the legal color line between the white and the colored Americans was the white majority's need to define the space relations of these two groups, both literally and abstractly. If the Old Negro from the times of slavery knew where his place was, the New, uppity Negro certainly did not (Litwack 2002, 155). White Southerners were scared of the possible social equality of blacks and tried to prevent it. Typically, the case that constitutionally approved of segregation concerned railroads[12], the clear symbol

[11] The name Jim Crow comes from an old minstrel show, for more details see chapter 7; on the abstract level the name describes a period of time approximately between 1890s and 1950s or 60s when in the South of USA segregation was enforced by law.

[12] The case of Plessy vs. Ferguson was originally a provocation attempting to challenge segregation in Louisiana. Adolph Plessy, a light-skinned mulatto (he was 7/8 white) openly violated a law requiring "equal but separate accommodations for white and colored races" on trains. In 1892 Plessy bought a first-class ticket, but on the train, as it was common, the first-class cars were reserved for 'whites only' and he was instructed to repair to the second-class which was intended for colored passengers. Plessy refused and was arrested. After that he was supposed to win the trial (the action was prearranged by his lawyers and the railway company as well—providing separate cars was more expensive), but he had failed. Four years later he failed the Supreme Court trial and legal segregation received the constitutional blessing.

of mobility and equality.

Historian Warren Susman discovered that spatial mobility was to many Americans "the equivalent of social mobility. Such an opportunity to move in space was somehow joined ideologically with ideas of freedom or social movement as well." (Susman 1984, 263) By stating the consequence of lacking that opportunity, sociologists Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, dealing with patterns of American segregation, vindicated the former claim: "In every way, barriers to spatial mobility are barriers to social mobility, and where one lives determines a variety of salient factors that affect individual well-being" (Massey-Denton 1994, 149).

Whites made attempts to restrain blacks from both types of mobility—there were informal rules for black drivers and pedestrians, most of public parks, swimming pools and other public facilities were "white only" (Litwack 2002, 155-162) and white Southerners "collectively denied blacks access to certain industries and occupations" (Higgs 1978, 108) as well, "concentrating male workers into unskilled jobs and female workers into domestic service" (Tolnay 2003, 7).

The high number of black musicians in the South was, therefore, a by-product of the occupational deficiency—playing music was the virtue out of necessity, one of the few remaining areas where it was possible to earn some extra money. As Sydney Bechet remarked: "You know, the Negro doesn't want to cling to music, people are always putting him to music. 'That's your place,' they say" (Peretti 1994, 38).[13]

During the World War I when the demand for factory workers in the North rapidly increased, hundreds of thousands black Southerners decided to take advantage of the opportunity and the Great Migration started[14]. Not many jazz musicians stayed south, they sought for betterment more than any other group; about 86 percent of "major musicians born in the South before 1915 migrated to the North in the four decades preceding World War Two,"

[13] It is interesting to consider what would have happened, if the black community received better living and occupational conditions in the early twentieth century, would be jazz the same? Or would there be jazz at all?

[14] And it continued at a substantial rate even during the Great Depression. See Douglas S Massey—Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid—Segregation and the Making of the underclass* (Cambridge/Massachusetts, London, England: Harvard University Press, 1994), 29.

compared with roughly "20 percent of southern blacks as a whole in the same forty-year period" (Peretti 1994, 45). Blacks from the South commonly believed that North would provide them both a well-paid job and greater freedom; such belief was supported by widely read northern black newspapers, especially the most commercially successful one, the Chicago *Defender*, which was encouraging them to move (Massey-Denton 1994, 29).

The exodus was not free of troubles; there have been numerous, if ineffective, attempts to prevent blacks from leaving the South by for example arresting them at the railway stations (Higgs 1978, 108).

When they arrived to the northern cities,[15] mainly Chicago, New York and also Los Angeles, black migrants found out that Northerners were little better then Southerners and that even the original middle-class black communities were not welcoming them. With the continuing tide of in-migrants, the once-peaceful relationship of white majority with the black minority vanished and race riots struck cities of Chicago, Atlanta and others. In the highly industrialized North there was no need for Jim Crow laws (Berry 1978, 57).

During and after the migration, the Occupational and Residential segregation proved highly effective and with the "determination of white citizens to segregate" the newly arrived blacks "in one section of the city," seeking for housing became a serious problem (Franklin—Moss 1994, 311).

Jazzmen's arrival to the cities did not imply an immediate employment in the entertainment area, either. For example Chicago before the 1920s, when compared to New Orleans, lacked sufficient quantity of entertainment facilities and musicians coming to the city had to find another job first (Peretti 1994, 45).

5.2 Locked Up in the Ghetto

In the 1920s, jazz musicians were locked in the emerging ghettos of Chicago's South side and New York's Harlem and their job opportunities were mostly limited to these areas. But life in the ghetto had also some positive aspects—it was relatively safe from white aggression and the northerners

[15] There is some evidence, that black migrants were headed predominantly for the big cities, whereas the white migrants for smaller towns. See Stewart E Tolnay, The African American "Great Migration" and beyond, Annual Review of Sociology (Palo Alto: 2003.Vol.29 pg. 209), 220.

tolerated economic advancement in the area. Hence, isolated from the rest of the city, black business managed to ensure economic independency on the white majority, unthinkable in the South.[16]

If the black community was restricted in movement, the white was definitely not. When the middle-class youth of New York discovered the "free spirit" of jazz, they started making trips to black ghetto to experience the energy of the exuberant Negro music. As Nathan Huggins noted: "How convenient! It was merely a taxi trip to the exotic for most white New Yorkers" (Huggins 1973, 89). Since some of these venues, most notably the Cotton Club, did not allow black patrons, black musicians were caught in a paradox—playing in a black quarter club for white-only audience. Not always the boundary was explicitly racial; some "high society" clubs allowed both white and black audience, however high admission fees excluded the financially weaker black visitors anyway (Carney 2003, 79).

Similar situation was in Chicago, where the musical "territories" were represented by the Loop, area comprising most of white hotels and ballrooms and Bronzeville on the South Side, where clubs and cabarets employed only black bands and the audience, except some white jazz enthusiasts, was mostly black.

When black jazzmen in that era obtained occupation outside the ghetto, it was a great success and the *Defender* columnist Dave Payton used to congratulate black bands performing in the Loop area (Carney 2003, 84).

So naturally, when Fletcher Henderson and his orchestra got a steady job in at that time prestigious Roseland Ballroom in New York of 1924, it was welcomed by black literary critics, his success was perceived as a great achievement and Henderson himself was seen as an ideal black musician; his manners and music should destroy the fantasy of the black savage (Magee 2000, 1).

Nonetheless the same qualities of the orchestra and its bandleader that were praised in the mid-twenties—the versatility, the smooth sound among

[16] W. E. B. Du Bois was a great promoter of such policy, he said that blacks "MUST DO FOR THEMSELVES," they should develop their own business, schools and welfare institutions. See John H. Franklin— A. Meier*, Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), 77.

others, outraged jazz critics in the 1940s and later. The only positive aspects the critics found in the music were Armstrong's trumpet solos which shone "like a solitary star in the sky at night," as Hugues Panassie, a prominent French "primitivist," sighed (Magee 2000, 32). These scholars certainly failed to understand that the status of a black musician during the jazz age did not allow a simultaneous immense success and artistic freedom. The inequality of chances of a black musician to the white is well proved in Paul Whiteman's claim after he heard Henderson's Orchestra: "If Fletcher was white man, he would be millionaire" (Ibid.).

5.3 On Tour

Leaving the confines of the ghetto could be dangerous and black musicians ascertained about that too often. One of the important studios recording Chicago jazz was Gennett Records—"a small outfit located several hundred miles away in Richmond, Indiana." Recording there compelled black musicians to "experience rural Midwestern race relations." Indiana in the 1920s had the largest number of Ku Klux Klan members and black musicians could not effort to stay overnight in Richmond lest they wanted to have problems. (Carney 2003, 92-3)

After the sudden freezing of the U. S. economy in the 1929, musicians lost most of the economical supports of radio broadcasting and recording companies from the previous decade and had to search solution from their hard situation. Some of the most famous musicians, e.g. Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington left for Europe to earn their living, followed by Coleman Hawkins in 1934. Many orchestras, for example Fletcher Henderson's, came apart. Since not every black musician was famous enough to leave the USA, a remarkable part of Jazz players, mostly from the Midwest and Southwest, started to travel in order to earn money. These groups, nicknamed Territorial Bands, because of their touring in buses around a certain district, had to face a lot of both open and hidden manifests of racism and segregation. (Fordham 2001, 26)

At those times, dances were mostly separated; bands touring the South often gave performances for whites or blacks only:

> If there was a black dance, Cab Calloway band member Garvin Bushell noted, "there would be white spectators who were not allowed to dance. If it was a white dance, they didn't have black spectators." (Peretti, 178)

Even if both white and black patrons were let in, there was a distinctive feature, a rope usually, which marked individual space for each group, and in South Carolina an additional section was reserved for mulattoes (Peretti 1994, 178). Within the dancehall, where they played the role of an entertainer, black musicians were relatively safe. Outside, the situation was worse. The transportation itself was difficult, as Bill Coleman, the leader of Cincinnati band, recalled:

> It was not always pleasant traveling through West Virginia. It was necessary to pass through small towns and villages where mostly white miners and farmers lived and as the bass and drums and other baggage was carried on the running board of the car, we could be seen coming into a place from a great distance.
> The white kids seemed to know that it would be a car with Negro musicians and they would throw rocks at the car and call us niggers. It was a bitter pill to swallow and we could do nothing about it. This also happened going through places in Kentucky. (Peretti, 180)

After the performance musicians had to look for accommodation, which was not easy; preponderance of hotels or pensions would not let black people in. Famous bands like the Ellington's hired agents to search for accommodation in the southern parts of the USA or in later years traveled in a special Bus equipped with beds and social facilities, but less established bands had hard time not only with housing but also with groceries (Cohen Fall 2004, 296). Both were usually provided by the black residents, and "when there were no blacks in the town", the musicians knew "they would probably not be able to get anything to eat and would have to move on" (Peretti 1994, 183).

Though they were sometimes painful for the individuals involved, those tours had a value, as Burton Peretti observed, as a "challenge to racial barriers" (Peretti 1994, 193). White Southerners encountering Northern black jazz bands were confronted with a different kind of Negro than they were used to—the

musicians were usually neatly dressed,[17] often in better way than their white audience, their manners were polite and they emanated a certain dignity; combined with the uneasy discovery that the Southerners found delight in the Negroid music caused (at least in some cases) a slight corrosion of their deep-rooted attitudes toward blacks.

[17] Two scholars pointed out, that by exhibiting fine clothes African Americans expressed their undefeated pride while facing Jim Crow. See Harvey G. Cohen, "The Marketing of Duke Ellington: Setting the Strategy for an African American Maestro," The Journal of African American History 4:89(Silver Spring: Fall 2004), 303.

6. Jazz and Segregation in Mass media

Even though a lot of jazz critics lamented over the shameless white commercialization of the original jazz by the entertainment industry and mass media, whites were not the only ones who benefited from it—the economic aspect of the playing was important for black musicians, moreover at times when exclusion from an array of other valuable occupations was commonly in practice. Yes, as a rule, white musicians, promoters and studio owners gained higher profits than their black counterparts and the conditions were not just at all, yet the white-controlled entertainment industry of the interwar era with its largely white audience provided some space for the black voice of jazz.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the main way of spreading music was by sheets of scores popular among the plentiful amateur piano players. Scores of Ragtime, one of the musical styles that deeply influenced jazz, were selling in hundreds of thousands. That means was not suitable for jazz; the most valuable details of the rhythm as well as the frequent deviations from pitch could not be transcribed into notes. With the advent of recording, radio broadcasting and sound motion picture, jazz received the most important channels for its preservation and dissemination throughout the whole country. On the other hand it provided racial discrimination a new scope.

6.1 Recording Industry

In the first decade of the twentieth century, success of a song was measured by number of sold sheets. After the recording of "Livery Stable Blues" by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band from the 1917 and adequate response of the public (over a million copies sold in two years), however, music publishers realized the potential of jazz recordings and the music was brought to wider audience. [18] As in other fields of music industry, records were generally made by white musicians and these also profited mostly from them but the situation was not as catastrophic as described by Samuel Charters and Leonard Kundstadt:

[18] It is interesting, that the opportunity to record the first instrumental jazz recording was offered a black trumpet player Freddie Keppard two years prior to the ODJB; Keppard rejected, because he feared that other players could copy his solos.

> Work in the studios was monopoly of a small group of musicians who recorded hundreds of recordings in different groupings and under various names... and it was done only by people from white orchestras. Only some of the white musicians, and it was mainly Goodman, worked with Harlem musicians. (Matzner—Wasserberger 1969, 138)

Racial discrimination in the North could be diminished by economic success and when blues recordings of Mamie Smith in 1920 showed the purchasing capacity of the enthusiastic black listening public, the short era of race recording labels, exemplified by The Black Swan (the only black-owned company), Okeh, Paramount and Columbia, arrived. Production of these labels was marketed directly to the black audience which mirrored the names of groups present on the records: The Creole Jazz Band, Jazz Hounds, et cetera; these should signal the race of the author (Magee 2000, 13).

The stylistic variety of those records was rich (jazz, blues, gospels) and brought together average musicians as well as jazz stars like Louis Armstrong or King Oliver. The negative effect of this "segregationist" approach of the race records lied in the detachment from the white audience. It was one of the reasons why jazz by the 1920s for most of America "meant the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (to the hip) and Paul Whiteman (to the square)." (Mackie 1998, 514) Before Duke Ellington, one of the few black musicians prosperous in the larger field of white market was Fletcher Henderson (with Louis Armstrong in his ensemble), the only African-American in the 1920s to approximate in numbers of sold records to Paul Whiteman (Magee 2000, 13).

For most studios, business was above artistic or racial questions (for instance the Gennett studio, responsible for the first integrated recording sessions of Jelly Roll Morton with New Orleans Rhythm Kings sold Ku Klux Klan recordings to their local communities as well [Carney 2003, 94]) and black and white musicians alike faced intrusion of the producers into their works; the arrangements were simplified, the already technically time-limited compositions shortened, all in pursuit of higher commercial appeal (Peretti 1994, 149).

But recording did not stand in the center of the entertainment industry of the 1920s and as it offered a limited range of influence it was soon, in 1927,

overshadowed by national radio broadcasting. Radio smashed the existing borders of popularity and rapidly shrank the time needed for a song to become well known. Its ability to mediate the same (thanks to microphones faithfully transmitted) music to the whole country was crucial in jazz dissemination.

6.2 Radio Broadcasting

No surprisingly, the majority of radios in the 1920s' tended to play commercially successful white dance bands of the era such as the ones led by Vincent Lopez, B. A. Rolfe or Paul Whiteman, as well as to prefer white interpreters of black song. Therefore "black" music could have been heard on the radio at those times almost daily, but it was scarcely performed by black musicians. (Barlow 1995, 1)

Still, according to William Barlow, author of an essay on radio broadcasting, the second decade of the 20th century was more generous to the black musicians to the number of performances in local radio broadcasts when compared to the following one and "no less than eight hundred of shows with black players went 'on air' within the years 1920 and 1930." It was caused by various circumstances—radio broadcasting was brand new phenomena and it was not as commercialized as in later years, when the two dominant networks, NBC and CBS took over a large percentage of the market. Thus not long after the very beginning of radio broadcasting there appeared a multitude of small local radio stations, which, "especially…in large urban markets, were much more likely to feature black entertainers than the network operations of the next decade."(Barlow 1995, 4)

The most hospitable were local stations in New York and Chicago, the major urban centers for black music. The first black radio-pioneers were in 1921 pianist Earl Hines and vocalist Lois Deppe, performing on KDKA, Westinghouse's station in Pittsburgh, followed by Kid Ory's Sunshine Orchestra in Los Angeles in 1922, Bessie Smith in Atlanta in 1923 and many others. (Barlow 1995, 3-5)

During Henderson's stay in the Alabam club in 1924, a New York station WHN established regular broadcasts from the club, which brought Henderson contract at Roseland later that year (Carney 2003, 124-5). The most successful

black musician as to the broadcasting during the 1920s was certainly Duke Ellington, whose orchestra performed live on radio from the New York Cotton Club over two hundred times between 1927 and 1930, thanks to great effort (more than adequately rewarded) of his white manager Irving Mills (Barlow 1995, 3).

When the Great Depression came, many small stations disappeared and were replaced by larger networks like CBS. And as the white Jazz player Jimmy Maxwell recalled of CBS: "the studio worked just like everybody else, they had categories .... If you were a black musician, you were Jazz player and you didn't get too [many] calls to be a lead player" (Peretti, 185). Commercial broadcasting sponsors also frequently helped to promote discrimination, as they feared losing investments if they hired black or mixed bands. The lack of black voices on radio then discouraged "black listenership, which remained under ten percent of the total black population throughout the Depression years" (Barlow 1995, 4).

Although the efforts of the sponsors were supported by the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) and no black musicians were permanently employed in the network radio before 1940, there still was a significant progress in the thirties: blacks received sporadic exposure on radio either on small black-owned stations (those who survived the collapse at the beginning of the decade) or as "rapid replacements for unavailable white musicians." These minor successes "paved way for Ellington's, Tatum's and Waller's local weekly shows" and most notably Waller's "breakthough" nationwide show on CBS in 1934. (Peretti 1994, 201)

6.3 Motion Pictures

Whereas recordings and radio could hide the performer's tone of skin, films fully revealed it and so in the several motion pictures of the 1920s and 1930s connected with jazz, the complexity of race relations and identity in the USA was most noticeable.

Interestingly the very first talking movie, filmed in the 1927, was called *The Jazz Singer*. With an immensely popular musical-comedy star Al Jolson, the film was a tremendous hit. Typically, the film jazz singer was neither black nor was he singing jazz (or at least what today would be considered jazz), the

songs Al Jolson performed in blackface were rather slightly syncopated popular tunes, but in 1927, the hit song "Toot Toot Tootsie" from the film was closer to the ordinary American's concept of jazz than Armstrong's "West End Blues." Jolson performed in blackface only when wanted to express emotions—that clearly showed the stereotyped perception of African-American culture as being more emotional and unrestrained.[19] But compared with a later film *Check and double Check* (1930), where the initial sequence of the film featured Duke Ellington's band, The Jazz Singer did not show any mocking of blacks.

The black and white identity was a rather complicated case with *Check and Doublecheck*; a film based on a vaudeville-minstrel radio show of *'Amos 'n' Andy'*—where two white blackface artists (but as it was their debut on the screen, before the movie the color of their skin was unknown to their listeners, both black and white) acted as black characters, originally in the black urban ghetto, but for the purposes of the movie the settings were changed to white suburbs. As the studio wanted to avoid any "misunderstanding" of the audience, two members of Ellington's band, Juan Tizol, who was Puerto Rican, and light-skinned Barney Biggard, had to wear blackface makeup. During the band's performance at the beginning of the film, the trumpet section was singing into megaphones, actually pretended to sing, since their part was overdubbed by a white singing trio. Thus the voices of white singers were appropriated by black musicians, a quite extraordinary situation.[20]

In the same year, another important figure of early jazz was involved in a movie—Paul Whiteman. The movie, called *The king of Jazz*, narrates Whiteman's (or it could be said the "white man's") version of Jazz history. The initial sequence contains a cartoon, in which Whiteman, on a "big game-hunting trip" in Africa, accidentally discovers the music of the "darkest" continent, but it is more as if he brought music to Africa. Except heavily costumed dancers or a

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[19] See Boyer, Paul S. and others, *The Enduring Vision: a History of the American People—Volume 2: from 1865* (Lexington, Massachusetts—Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1990), 847a-b; Courtney Patterson Carney, *Jazz and the Cultural Transformation of America in the 1920s* (Ph.D. diss, Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 165-166. For a video clip from the film see http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ASI/musi212/brandi/clip/jazzsing.mov (Accessed 21 April 2006)

[20] See Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz* (Illinois: Illini Books ed., 1994), 187; Courtney Patterson Carney, *Jazz and the Cultural Transformation of America in the 1920s* (Ph.D. diss, Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 144-5

baby, there are no black people present in the film, and in the spectacular finale back in the USA where in a vast melting pot Whiteman mixes the alleged Scottish, Italian, Irish and other European influences of jazz, to "cook" a new, truly American music;[21] the African-American contribution is omitted as well.[22] (Carney 2003, 208-13)

After the whitewashed jazz narration in *The King of Jazz*, Ellington's Symphony in Black (A Rhapsody of Negro Life), cinematized in 1935, was a true remedy for the "souls of the black folk." The all-black-cast short film is a kind of video clip for the above mentioned composition—the shots of Ellington's orchestra performing four parts of the symphony are intercut with illustrating shots from four parts of black life (work, dancing and love, funeral and finally leisure time—performed by black actors) and each introduced with a shot where Ellington is actually composing the piece and writing the score. Ellington is depicted as a respectable composer and his orchestra as a group of professionals, the film on the whole is lacking any trace of minstrelsy; a rarity at those times.[23]

Besides Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong, few black jazz musicians appeared in a film up to 1940 (among others these were Bessie Smith in *Saint Louis Blues* or Cab Calloway in *Hi De Ho*) and hardly could they escape connections with minstrelsy, as for instance Armstrong had to wear leather skins (in *Rhapsody in Black and Blue* 1932) (Carney 2003, 169-70). But the mere presence of a black musician in a Hollywood movie, moreover when the cast was racially integrated—Armstrong with Bing Crosby in *Pennies from Heaven* from 1936, for example—meant an important signal of the growing acceptability for the black community.

[21] For video clips from King of Jazz, particularly the cartoon and the grand finale, see http://www.redhotjazz.com/movies/kingofjazz.MOV (accessed April 19, 2006)
[22] After such a film it is surprising to find out that the "King of Jazz," could not actually play the music, or play it well, as he himself confessed in his biography, see Gerald Early, "Pulp and Circumstance: The Story of Jazz in High Places," In *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert G. O Meally, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 398.
[23] For the film see http:/www.redhotjazz.com/movies/ellingtonsymphonyblack.WMV (accessed April 19, 2006).

7. From Clown to Cult—Jazz Personalities and Interracial Relations

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the image of African-American created in the minds of white Americans was hardly dissimilar to the image a hundred years old. Negroes were still considered lazy ignorant creatures with lack of restraint and insatiable appetite—in the sexual meaning as well, which scared many white man to death—as several writers pointed out, the alleged danger of a black man raping white lady haunted whites for decades and suspicion of such crime frequently led to mobs and lynching. Negroes were believed to be incapable of numerous intellectual activities, but on the other hand deeply emotional and naturally spiritual.[24]

The popularity of jazz musicians in the long run helped to alter such view, since through their performances, radio broadcasting, recordings, film appearance, or simply by their manners, they were proving that Negroes could do better than jump in ridiculous dances and speak in dialect. For ordinary white Americans could seldom come into closer contact with blacks in their everyday life, their opinions on blacks were formed by mediated experience from the newspapers, plays and most obviously from the minstrel shows (Berry 1978, 34).

7.1 Minstrels

The man to establish the original form of a minstrel show is said to be Thomas "Daddy" Rice, who in 1828 saw an old slave named Jim Crow dancing and singing. When Rice learnt his manners, he started presenting his "Jump Jim Crow" performance in front of white audience, later followed by many others (Smith 2002, 7).

In the early stage, minstrel shows were performed by white males in a

[24] See Leon F. Litwack, "Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow," In *When Did Southern Segregation Begin?* ed. John D. Smith, (Boston—New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2002),155; Edward L. Ayers, "The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction," In *When the Southern Segregation begin?* ed. John D. Smith, (Boston—New York: Bedford/St. Martin, 2002), 86.

blackface singing and dancing in a mock-slave style, but after the Civil War, blacks realized the commercial potential of minstrelsy and commenced performing as well. Black minstrels, that too were wearing the burnt cork masks as their white precursors did, however could not escape caricaturing their own culture since the audience was interested only in a narrow scope of themes. With exaggerated lips, blacks facilitated portraying Negro as a docile old darky "nostalgically remembering the happy days of youth in slavery," or a "ridiculous Coon." (Berry 1978, 36)

More than seventy years after Thomas Rice, minstrel shows were still immensely popular and the most famous black performers like Bert Williams and George Walker, the "Two Real Coons" as they called their team, proved highly influential on the white community when in 1903 they crazed the U.S. and Britain into the Cakewalk fad. Yet, despite their efforts to change the stereotype by inserting new themes concerning black power and elegance, Williams and Walker could not change much within the narrow limits of "permitted" black acting and it is ironic that their talent served as a lodestar for Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, the authors of *Amos 'n' Andy*. (Huggins 1973, 180-2)

If in the field of comedy and drama blacks did not begin "to play a wider variety of roles than jesters and servants until the 1940s" (Berry 1978, 36), the situation on the jazz stage was more favorable—even though vaudeville and minstrel shows were deeply connected with the first generation of jazz players since these shows served as a means of spreading the popularity of ragtime, blues and later jazz (Megill—Tanner 1995, 135) and this connection was mirrored in the clownish names of some musicians, "Jelly Roll" Morton for instance, the most famous black jazzmen could escape the role of an entertainer.

8.2 Jazz and Promotion of Black Culture

When jazz reached the Northern cities in the early 1920s, American society was in the process of shift from the "culture of character" to the "culture of personality" (Susman 1984, 271), which in other words signified a shift from being "like somebody" to "be somebody," to have some distinctive qualities, and that was reflected in the rise of celebrities—movie or sport stars, but also in the

new status of musicians—musicians became icons of pop culture, and thanks to the new technologies, they could influence the taste of public, their dress code, et cetera.

Since the basic feature of jazz is the personal approach of the performer who is trying to express his or her own personality by creating a specific style of playing that can be recognized by ear, jazz was just perfectly fitting the situation.

When the audience applauded black minstrels, they were applauding a character, not a real person; moreover, they were applauding the alleged black stupidity, clumsiness or ignorance. Black musicians performing in the ballrooms, on radio or appearing on records were presenting only themselves and their individual skills and creativity. Naturally, frequently the white audience sought black clubs and black music for a "primitive" experience and numerous black musicians did not try to change their clownish status, but still, the greatest personalities managed to acquire a more advanced position.

At the times of the Harlem Renaissance, Nathan Huggins observed, every individual success of a black person in arts, business, or politics was at the same time success of the whole black community, proving the abilities of the new Negro. On the other hand, every individual failure cast shadow on the community (Huggins 1984, 141).

Sometimes the success was ambiguous—the enormously talented Louis Armstrong became immensely popular during the 1930s and his fame transcended the USA, but the "greatest trumpet player that ever lived"—a title he received in the late 1920s—played too frequently the role of a clown either in movies or on the radio, and the next generation of musicians hand in hand with later critics blamed him for helping to maintain the minstrel imagery and not taking the advantage of his influence sufficiently on the black community improvement. (Appel 1995, 32)

Nevertheless, before the World War II it was not common (and if ever possible at all) that musicians would politically fight against segregation and discrimination; their endeavor had a more subtle nature. The increasing popularity connected with financial success encouraged the black part of the society and the growing approval of jazz by the white majority facilitated more common encounters of both communities. By self promotion of their work,

black musicians, most notably Edward "Duke" Ellington could push on the frontiers of color line, limiting black creativity.

Ellington, with the assistance of his white manager Irving Mills, who had been managing Ellington's band from 1927 to 1939, received during the period high artistic appreciation and simultaneously by "celebrating the African-American experience" he significantly helped to promote the black culture (Cohen Fall 2004, 291).

In a pursue to add dignity and express the quality of the music, the most common words used while promoting Ellington were "genius" and "aristocrat," extraordinary terms in connection with a black artist in the era. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ellington was aiming at a larger, biracial audience and, therefore, his music was referred to as "compositions," a he himself a "composer"—that was not common for almost any jazz musician, but it was necessary to overcome the prejudice to jazz as a novelty phenomenon without any lasting value; it was one of the reasons that Ellington used terms describing classical forms in the names of his pieces, such as suite or rhapsody. Still, Ellington's greatest contribution was in his works and many of his opuses were explicitly dealing with the African-American culture, which is apparent from their titles: "Black and Tan Fantasy", "Creole Rhapsody", "Creole Love Call", and "Symphony in Black."[25]

Ellington, who was dubbed by the black media of 1930s a leading "race man," through his work "created an audience considerably less constricted in taste and tolerance" and became the first African-American "accepted as a serious composer," enjoying "crossover popularity with white audiences that no other black artist of his time could match."[26]

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[25] See Harvey G. Cohen, The Marketing of Duke Ellington: Setting the Strategy for an African American Maestro (The Journal of African American History. Silver Spring: Fall 2004.Vol.89, Iss. 4), 291-316.

[26] "created an audience…" and "accepted…": Harvey G. Cohen, The Marketing of Duke Ellington: Setting the Strategy for an African American Maestro (The Journal of African American History 4:89, Silver Spring: Fall 2004), 309-10; "crossover.." Harvey G. Cohen, Duke Ellington and Black, Brown and Beige: The Composer as Historian at Carnegie Hall, (American Quarterly 4:56, College Park: Dec 2004), 1004.

8. The First Steps to Integration (in Jazz)

Jazz with its unique ability to bridge the gap between the "highbrow" and "lowbrow" arts has always had an ability to lessen the gap between the segregated races as well. Since the diffusion of jazz in the early 1920s, there have been increasing attempts of black as well as white musicians to collaborate, initially on the temporary basis—on recording sessions in studios or informal jam sessions, but later also on a long term basis—within a band. Such attempts were frequently rejected by the public and music industry agents, however with a declining tendency and the warm reception of Benny Goodman's swing concert in the Carnegie Hall in 1938, which included several songs performed by an integrated orchestra, indicated that the process of public acceptance of jazz as a racially inclusive art with a "recognized" influence of African-Americans was at the end of 1930s on a promising way.

8.1 Recording, Jamming, Sharing

Perhaps the first integrated recording was the above mentioned (in Chapter 6) session of Jelly Roll Morton with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings from the 1923. Such occasions benefited from the producers awareness of black talents from the race records and these players had been hired as replacements of the white players or later as the "first choice" in pairs with them. Musicians willing to record had to be prepared for obstacles since producers were afraid of losing profit and prestige, but once these barriers were overcome, the mixed sessions became more common. (Peretti 1994, 201)

Recording producers would change their minds if they saw that the competing companies allowed integrated recording, so in 1929 Louis Armstrong and Eddie Condon persuaded the Okeh producer when he learned that the Viktor recording company had already done such sessions. Condon recorded in the same year with another black musician—trumpeter "Ham" Davis and many would follow (Peretti 1994, 202); Duke Ellington's "Cotton Club Medley" from 1933 recorded with his fourteen piece orchestra enlarged by white musicians to twenty-four (Cohen Fall 2004, 305) and one of the most popular band leaders of

the swing era, Benny Goodman, recorded with Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday (Peretti 1994, 203).

The meeting of black and white jazz musicians during the 1920s and 1930s was not restricted to the studio. In places like Chicago's South side, black and white Jazz camps were exchanging musical ideas, stealing motifs when there was an opportunity to hear each other (Peretti 1994, 198).

The generation of Chicagoans, young white students deeply impacted by jazz, at first emulated their idols, but later some blacks utilized the originally white players' ideas, as for example one solo originally performed by white Bix Beiderbecke, was later recorded and "copied-to-the-last-note" by black trumpet player Rex Stewart, among others (Matzner— Wasserberger 1969, 72). These thefts became sharing, as the white and black composers circulated works among themselves.

In the early 1930s (and even before, in case of Paul Whiteman hiring black arrangers William Grant Still and Don Redman[27]), black arrangers got jobs for white bands and vice versa, but working for the "opposite side" was not the main aspect which helped to bond blacks and whites, the crucial events were interracial jam sessions, which begun in Chicago, later spread to other cities like New York. These 'bloodless battles' shifted the border between 'good' and 'bad' players far from the color line; and, as they admired each other's abilities, the players realized that they were working towards common goals and thus the question of race was overshadowed by musical skills, which both black and white musicians had in abundance. (Peretti 1994, 199)

In the 1930s, "the most skilled white and black musicians" also began "to share their private lives and concerns." Their frequent "contact in nightclubs, recording studios and jam sessions blended the personal and musical attitudes, speech" and helped to decrease the influence of the racial stereotypes. (Peretti 1994, 206) White musicians, such as Mezz Mezzrow or Bix Beiderbecke, admired their black colleagues' talents and culture (and not only culture— Mezzrow married a black woman) to such extent, that for their attitudes to

[27] See Gerald Early, "Pulp and Circumstance: The Story of Jazz in High Places," In *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, ed. Robert G. O Meally (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 409.

segregation were occasionally confronted by other whites that opposed their advocacy of black music. Unlike the jazz musicians, who were bond through the music, their families did not share these "integrated" friendships from the beginning since the residential and social segregation prevented them to interact and it took time and a lot of effort from the side of musicians to erode the barrier. (Peretti 1994, 208).

The integration of musicians was helped by a number of radio and record producers, managers and other promoters even though mostly it was happening unconsciously(Peretti 1994, 200). Naturally, some exceptions could be found; there were people who were helping the integration deliberately, one of them were John Henry Hammond.

Hammond combined career of a writer on Jazz with the one of a promoter, record producer and activist. He was a controversial figure with radical opinions—he criticized Ellington for his longer compositions which in Hammond's opinion were betraying the basic jazz qualities of dance music[28]; but Henry's hard work for integration of white and black musicians is unquestionable—it was Hammond who in 1933 convinced the "King of Swing", Benny Goodman, to record with Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday (though under pseudonym), and again thanks to Hammond, three years later Goodman hired pianist Teddy Wilson who became the first black member of a major white band.[29] In 1937 Goodman joined Wilson, the vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, and the drummer Gene Kruppa in the Benny Goodman Quartet, and jazz "received its most dramatic symbol of integration," (Peretti 1994, 203) or it would be better to say, the second most dramatic symbol. In the 1938, Benny Goodman orchestra, including the Benny Goodman Quartet and Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, and Cootie Williams from Duke Ellington's band, played in a hopelessly sold out Carnegie Hall, and twenty years after its arrival to the North of the USA, jazz music had been given a complete artistic satisfaction.

[28] See Harvey G. Cohen, "The Marketing of Duke Ellington: Setting the Strategy for an African American Maestro," *The Journal of African American History* 89:4 (Silver Spring: Fall 2004), 307.
[29] For details about John Hammond see: A. Matzner— I. Wasserberger, *Jazzové profily*, Praha: Editio Supraphon, 1969, Chapters "Bessie Smith", "Benny Goodman" and "Charlie Christian".

8.2 Swinging in a Temple of Music

The *Spirituals to Swing* concert from January 16, 1938 was not the first "non-classic" performance in such a venue. Before Goodman, James Reese Europe performed at Carnegie in 1912 and Paul Whiteman appeared in 1924 at the Aeolian Hall. Europe, a black band leader, the first to bring syncopated brass music to Europe during the World War I, arranged the program around ragtime based popular music (Early 1998, 417). His performance was a tremendous success, but the concert At Aeolian Hall is more interesting for its relation to Goodman's.

Whiteman's concert of "symphonic jazz" was similar to the Goodman's with the theme of the initial part—a history of jazz. But as Whiteman desired to "make lady from jazz" (Early 1998, 398), his "Jazz history of the world" concerned white-only compositions by which Whiteman tried to demonstrate the development jazz had undergone during the few years since the Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded their "Livery Stable Blues" to Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," composed specially for that occasion (Early 1998, 398-9).

Benny Goodman opened the concert in a sort of retrospective as well, called "The Twenty Years of Jazz," but his version of jazz history was more balanced: next to three songs composed by white artists were "Shine," originally performed by Armstrong and Ellington's "Blue Reverie" which hosted Ellington's sidemen. The rapturous applause of the audience approved of that jazz history interpretation and as Courtney P. Carney noted, the fact that a copy of the program recording was sent to the Library of Congress further illustrates the importance of the event. (Carney 2003, 229)

In 1924, Paul Whiteman strived to gain prestige for jazz by denying the African-American contribution. Fourteen years later it was not necessary. The first attempts for integration in jazz did not transform the USA into racial heaven on earth but at least it proved the whole nation that cooperation between black and white communities could be mutually contributive and profitable as well.

9. Conclusion

Jazz music developed during and after a period of time sometimes called "the nadir of race relations" and indeed, the bleak state of whites' and African-Americans' coexistence had an enormous impact on the music, its performers and composers, not to mention audience. In the society where things had to be black or white, jazz, the music with biracial roots, sought its own identity with difficulties. At first it seemed to be a primitive, exuberant holler of an "ex-African savage," and not much later, the public was urged to believe that it was a European-rooted, compositional music. But jazz was neither of these, and it took two decades with a lot of effort, on the side of the black and the white participants as well, for the American society to accept jazz as an American music and African-Americans as its main contributors.

In 1938, the color line have not vanished and black and white communities were still separate-and-unequal and until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the general situation was not subject to a remarkable change; nevertheless, jazz music represented a small area where an African-American could be "somebody," where blacks' skills and creativity were given a substantial space, their abilities admired and envied by whites and a significant number of them felt honored to cooperate with black musicians and last but not least, where African-Americans could gain a considerable financial reward for their efforts. For some white musicians and jazz fans as well, the music entailed a challenge for reconsidering their inured, stereotyped image of African-Americans.

The following, more politically conscious, generations of black musicians would often despise the commercial nature of their precursors' work and would seek for a new means of expression and a new, more direct methods of fight with the color line. However, without the achievements of the antecedent jazz generation the voice of bop, cool or jazz avant-garde would be inaudible and there would be no tradition to revolt against.

10. Resumé

Jazz, jedinečný hudební styl, často považovaný za jedinou ryze původní uměleckou formu, kterou Spojené státy přispěly do pokladnice světového umění, byl od svého vzniku výrazně ovlivňován segregací americké společnosti. Ať už se jednalo o segregaci uplatňovanou pomocí zákonů a vyhlášek či o hluboce zakořeněné zvyky a nepsaná společenská pravidla, černošští jazzmeni se museli neustále potýkat s omezeními, jež pramenila z jejich barvy kůže a rasové příslušnosti.

Tato bakalářská práce, čerpající především ze sekundární literatury, se zabývá vzájemným vztahem zmíněných fenoménů a jeho podobami, a to zejména v období 20. a 30. let 20. století, v etapě, kdy se jazz rozšířil po celém území Spojených států i do okolního světa a zaznamenal ve své dosavadní historii absolutní vrchol popularity.

Jazz vznikl na Jihu Spojených států zhruba na přelomu 20. století spojením evropské harmonie a afrických výrazových prostředků a důrazu na složitější rytmické struktury; byl tedy od svého prvopočátku směsicí prvků rozdílných kultur setkávajících se v Novém světe. V rasově segregovaných USA si ale tato multietnická hudba těžce hledala své místo a pestrost jejích kořenů byla zpočátku z různých důvodů popírána oběma komunitami.

Do širšího povědomí se jazz dostal kolem roku 1917, po své cestě z venkovského Jihu USA na sever země. Příznačné je, že prvními hudebníky, kteří vytvořili instrumentální jazzovou nahrávku a seznámili s tímto stylem hudby miliony posluchačů, nebyli afroameričané, nýbrž běloušští členové neworleanského Original Dixieland Jazz Bandu. Černošští jazzoví hudebníci dorazili do velkoměst Severu spolu s rozsáhlou vlnou nejen afroamerických migrantů, které přilákala zvýšená poptávka po pracovní síle v místních továrnách. Příliv chudých přistěhovalců vyděsil i pobouřil bělošské obyvatelstvo těchto měst a vyvolal nejdříve řadu násilných nepokojů a později přispěl ke vzniku černošských ghett. Ta poskytovala většině černých jazzmanů hlavní místo pro obživu; přístup do klubů a tančíren v bílých čtvrtích nebyl snadný a angažmá v takových prostorách bylo v té době považováno za výrazný úspěch.

Ghetta newyorského Harlemu či chicagské South Side však vábila bělošské publikum údajnou primitivní nevázaností černošského jazzu, a afroameričtí hudebníci se tedy do kontaktu s bělošským obecenstvem nakonec dostali, a nezřídka kdy pouze s ním, jelikož řada klubů v černošských čtvrtích umožňovala vstup jen bělochům.

Pro mnohé jazz ztělesňoval novou dobu a morálku, což bylo ve spojení se strachem ze zhoubného vlivu „méněcenné rasy“ na bělošskou mládež trnem v oku nemalé části Američanů. Odmítavé postoje vůči této hudbě otupily až snahy prominentních bělošských kapelníků typu Paula Whitemana o „uhlazení“ a „vybělení“ jazzu. Názory většiny společnosti se odrazily i v rozvíjejícím se hudebním průmyslu, a tak segregace podnítila vznik „rasových“ nahrávek, určených pouze pro černošskou komunitu, ovlivňovala složení rozhlasových pořadů a promítla se v neposlední řadě i do nejnovějšího média—zvukového filmu.

Segregace znepříjemňovala černým jazzmanům život při hledání práce, při vystoupeních i během turné. Mnozí z nich však tato omezení přijali jako výzvu a hudbou, svým vystupováním i stylem oblékání dávali najevo, že se o důstojnost připravit jen tak nenechají. Jazzové osobnosti zároveň sloužily zbytku černošského obyvatelstva jako vzor, symbol úspěchu.

Na konci 30. let 20. století jazz představoval jednu z mála oblastí, jež afroameričanům poskytovala určitý prostor pro seberealizaci bez nutnosti snižování se ke karikatuře vlastní kultury, a zároveň skýtal i šanci na slušné finanční ohodnocení jejich individuálního úsilí. Jazz se také stal společným jazykem bělošské i černošské hudební komunity a umožnil některým členům obou těchto skupin překonat kulturní bariéry stojící v cestě vzájemné spolupráce. Vřelé přijetí jednoho z nejvýznamnějších dokladů této spolupráce—společného koncertu orchestru Bennyho Goodmana a černošských hudebníků v newyorské Carnegie Hall v lednu 1938—dokázalo, že během dvaceti let svého pobytu na Severu USA jazz napomohl ke změně vnímání černošské komunity a posunul hranice segregace o malý, ovšem významný krok vpřed.

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