

### *Section 4.1.1*

## AN EXTREMELY SHORT HISTORY OF JAZZ

### **Birthplace: New Orleans**

African American musicians first developed jazz in **New Orleans** in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They derived their inspiration from a number of sources (in no particular order): European church and religious music, European classical music, African dances, popular songs, ragtime, blues, marches, spirituals, slave songs, funeral music, waltzes, overtures, etc.

### **“Creoles of Color” in New Orleans**

New Orleans had a three-tier society before the Civil War: (1) whites, (2) mixed-descent **Creoles**, who were largely free and educated, but not respected by the whites, and (3) African Americans (mostly slaves). The mixed-descent Creoles, or “Creoles of color” as they were called, considered themselves more cultured than other African Americans; they often had conservatory training and much better instruments than other African Americans. After the Civil War, New Orleans society collapsed into two tiers (white and black). The resulting blend of the musical skills of Creoles (accomplished technique) and former slaves (improvisation) was one of the reasons jazz developed in New Orleans in particular.

### **Ragtime**

**Ragtime** is a piano style popularized by the Creole musician **Scott Joplin**. The left hand typically has steady eighth notes, while the right hand has syncopations. **Maple Leaf Rag** and **The Entertainer** are two famous ragtime pieces by Joplin.

### **Blues: Rural blues**

**Rural blues** is a blues style that developed earlier than classic blues and focused on rural society in the South. Rural blues performers typically sang with a guitar for a small group of friends. They were almost always men, and the lyrics covered a wide variety of subjects. There were no standard chord progressions. Performers added growls, slides, and sound effects. Rural blues was directed primarily toward African-American society.

### **Blues: Classic blues**

**Classic blues** developed after rural blues and focused on city society in the North. The performers typically sang in a public venue with a band. Initially the soloists were women (**Bessie Smith**, **Billie Holiday**), and the lyrics focused on sex, love, and the importance of respecting women. Classic blues uses a stricter vocal style and standard chord progressions. It was more accepted by whites and was recorded and sold commercially.

**1920s:  
New Orleans Jazz  
or Classic Jazz**

**New Orleans jazz** developed in New Orleans during the first two decades of the 1900s. Important early artists include **King Oliver** and **Louis Armstrong (Hot Fives and Hot Sevens)**. New Orleans Jazz uses a stylized group improvisation:

1. The **trumpet** carries the main melody.
2. The **clarinet** soars above the trumpet with obligato countermelodies.
3. The **trombone** plays chord roots, smears, and sometimes countermelodies.
4. The **rhythm section** (tuba, banjo, piano, drums) plays **two "beats"** to the bar.

**The rise of the  
soloist: Louis  
Armstrong**

In 1922, King Oliver asked Louis Armstrong to leave New Orleans and join him in Chicago. While there, Armstrong reinvented and elevated the jazz solo into a new, higher art form. In 1924, Armstrong went to New York to play with **Fletcher Henderson's** band. Henderson's tenor sax player **Coleman Hawkins** absorbed much of Armstrong's solo technique. In a general sense, jazz moved from **New Orleans to Chicago to New York**.

**1930s:  
Swing**

During the 1920s, New Orleans jazz evolved via Armstrong's solo innovations and increasingly pre-composed arrangements. The resulting style, **swing**, was composed (not so much improvised) for four sections: trumpets, saxes, trombones, and rhythm (piano, bass, drums). Swing uses a feel of **four "beats"** for each bar. Here are some swing jazz milestones:

1. **1924:** Armstrong visits Fletcher Henderson in New York City
2. **1930s:** Radio shows by **Duke Ellington** and **Benny Goodman**
3. **1935:** Benny Goodman has a three-week engagement at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles that sparks the "Big Band" craze
4. Late 1930s: Count Basie brings his blues-infused swing style (**Kansas City Jazz**) from Kansas City to New York
5. 1939-1945: Glenn Miller's swing-influenced "big band" enjoys fame

**1940s:  
Bop or bebop**

During the recording strike in the dark days of World War II, **Charlie "Bird" Parker** and **"Dizzy" Gillespie** forged a new style: **bebop** (or **bop**). Parker's 1945 solo album revealed the new style. Characteristics include:

1. Bebop is **improvised**, unlike the composed arrangements of swing.
2. Bebop uses **small ensembles**, often a few wind soloists plus piano, bass, and drums.
3. Bebop uses **eight "beats"** to the bar.
4. Bebop is **harmonically complex**.
5. Bebop was not nearly as commercially successful as swing had been.

**Miles Davis** A trumpet player, arranger, and promoter, Davis began playing during the late swing era / early bebop and had a long and deep influence on jazz. Three important Davis albums are **Birth of the Cool** (1949, Cool Jazz), **Kind of Blue** (1959, Modal Jazz), and **Bitches Brew** (1969, Fusion).

**Early 1950s:  
Cool jazz** **Cool jazz** grew out of bebop and swing. It used larger ensembles than bebop and precomposed arrangements, minimizing the influence of the blues. Cool jazz emphasized easy, singable lines, in contrast to bebop, and tuneful polyphony. An important early album was **Birth of the Cool** by Miles Davis.

**Late 1950s:  
Hard bop** **Hard bop** was a reaction to the sublimation of “African-American” elements in cool jazz. Hard bop emphasized blues, spirituals, and a renewed focus on improvisation. Artists included **Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Wes Montgomery, Charles Mingus**, and the **Jazz Messengers**.

**1960s:  
Modal jazz  
Latin jazz  
Bossa Nova,  
Free jazz,  
Avant-garde jazz** **Modal jazz** utilized extremely slow harmonic changes and easy-going explorations of the diatonic modes. The first modal album was **Kind of Blue** by Davis (1959). **Latin jazz** (for example Miles Davis and Gil Evans, **Sketches of Spain** (1959) and Gillespie’s **Cuban jazz** of the 50s) as well as **Bossa Nova** (that is, Brazilian jazz, e.g. Astrud Gilberto) became popular in the 1960s, opening the way for the exploration of other ethnic musics. **Free jazz** and **avant-garde jazz** explored the limits of sound, forgoing time signatures and key signatures. Free jazz artists sought to bring jazz back to its racial roots (**Ornette Coleman’s** album **Free Jazz**, 1961; also **Charlie Mingus**) and/or spiritual roots (**John Coltrane, A Love Supreme**, 1965).

**1970s: Fusion** Miles Davis’s album **Bitches Brew** (1969) launched **jazz-rock fusion** (sometimes also called **funk**). Fusion was very popular and influential in the 1970s, and led the way for a number of other cross-stylistic developments.

**1980s to Present:  
Neobop /  
New Swing** **Neo-bop** (or **new swing**) draws on all prior jazz styles, but the primary emphasis is on bebop (with somewhat simplified pitch materials). Famous neobop artists include **Wynton Marsalis, Cassandra Wilson**, and others.