

My Opinion on Some things

Blindness and other things

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Stale Bread's Blindness

When did Lacoume go blind? There are many mentions of his blindness that give a different year that this happened. The problem is that Lacoume blindness was not a sudden thing, but he began to lose his sight gradually, beginning as early as 1899. There is no evidence that he was totally blind. The 1917 draft card list him as blind so he was not drafted. He was sent to Hot Springs Arkansas in 1904 to get help with his eyes. There was a benefit for him in 1901. He visited the mayor's office blind in 1901. He was going blind when entering Mrs. Wright's school in 1903.

My conclusion is that Lacoume was beginning to go blind in 1899 and his eye sight deteriorated in the years to follow. In

1906 Lacoume would be 21 years old and no longer leading the band. In 1906 Gregson became leader of the band.

After 1906 the band is no longer called Stale Bread's Spasm Band. In 1913 Hennessey is listed as leader of the band. In 1910 Lacoume is mentioned as having on orchestra. Lacoume would have a number of years to have studied a 'legit' musical instrument and began to take 'gigs' as a 'legit' musician on the guitar and piano. He is listed in 1913 as playing piano at various New Orleans clubs. Thus began his career as a 'legitimate musician.

The authors of 'Jazz Men' concluded that the Spasm Band was not a jazz band and they put the beginning of the band in 1896 when it really began around 1894-95. Stale bread was going blind in 1899 at which time there was a benefit for him.

I don't know about Lacoume only playing in the district when he learned to play legitimate instruments. There are accounts of the band playing in the district much earlier. Perhaps they meant the Tango Belt as part of the district. And there is account of the Spasm Band playing as early as 1894-95. Albert Montlugin is mentioned as a member of the band.

"Stale Bread played in the district (meaning the tango belt) but only when he'd learned to play legitimate musical instruments. A lot of nonsense has been talked about Stale Bread and his Spasm Band. **Jazz didn't come from toy instruments**, no matter how quaint or colorful this street corner band sound to the tourist trade. A great many New Orleans musicians did begin their careers on something conjured out of odds and ends that made sound. Rapp's was a one-string violin, made with a cigar box. Stale Bread himself didn't play a toy instrument but he did make a business of what others confined to the back yard.

In 1896 Stale Bread got together his first band, years before Rappolo was born. He himself played zither but the line-up is so raggle-taggle that it might as well be listed:

Stale Bread (Emile August Lacoume, Sr.), zither; Cajun (Willie Bussey), harmonica; whiskey (Emile Benrod), bass constructed from half-barrel, string with clothes-line wire and played with cypress-stick bow; Warm Gravy (Cleve Craven), four-string, cheese-box banjo; slew-foot Pete (Albert Montluzin), soap box cut down to make a four-string guitar.

With these crude instruments the boys dished out home cooking for Doc Malney's Minstrel show. They continued playing, one job following another, until 1901. In that year Stale Bread went blind from an eye infection. By 1903 he was

back in the music business and the band was practically legitimate:

Stale Bread (Lacoume), zither and piano; Dolly (Charles Carey), string bass, Dude (Jimmy Lacoume), banjo; Sonny (?), guitar & mandolin' Sweet Potato (Harry Carey), tambourine & cornet.

Within a few years Stale Bread was playing on riverboats, sometimes with Lawrence Veca, of who he commented, 'he was a real musician.' One job was on Basin Street at Toro's, with Harold Peterson on drums. Years later, when he played at the Halfway House with the Brunies and Rappolo, Stale Bread played banjo. He liked people to think of him as a musician, not as a blind man playing music. He wore dark glasses and most of the time no one seemed to notice it. The boys didn't read music, anyway."

First Jazz Band???

Should the Spasm Band have been named the 'first jazz band? This naming of the Spasm Band is first found in an article by Mr. Huguenot in an article in the Times Picayune on March 2, 1919. Many writers in later years quoted this article and it became 'fact' that the Spasm Band was the first jazz band. Emile Lacoume began his association as the leader of

this band in 1895. He went blind in 1899. A benefit for him was held in 1900. In 1901 he traveled to Hot Springs, Ark. to have a specialist help with his blindness but to no results. He entered Mrs. Wrights School in 1903 and it is stated that the band was playing 'legit' instruments at this time. It is stated that in 1906 Harry Gregson became leader of the band. Lacoume was still in school in 1909. In 1901 it was mentioned that he was noted as having the 'Stale Bread orchestra. The name 'Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band first mentioned in 1909 with Gregson as leader. The last mention of the band was in 1910. In 1911 it is mentioned the new leader of the band was Robert Hennessey. Gregson had joined the police dept in 1905. In 1913 Lacoume was playing piano in clubs around New Orleans. In 1920 he was playing in the Halfway House Band. He continued to 'gig' playing piano in clubs. In 1923 he was playing at the LaVida Dance Hall. In 1929 there is mention of a Lacoume Blue Moon Orchestra.

In 1943 Lacoume had a crippled right hand. In 1946 he is mentioned being a program seller at the Fair Grounds.

Did Lacoume continue to play as leader of the 'Spasm Band' when he went blind? It would be hard to lead a street band when blind. By 1899 he would have been 14 years old. It was Gregson who was then was leader of the band that was closer to "jazz' then the earlier band and in 1903 they were

playing "legit" instruments. An article remarked that ' the first jazz band was organized by Harry Gregson, its leader and called the Razy Dazzy Spasm Band. Bolden's band was well established by 1897.

Is there more evidence of the Spasm Band except the article of March 2, 1919? I think that the first Spasm Band of Lacoume was not a "jazz" band and that writers mixed up the first Spasm Band with the 'Razy Dazzy Spasm Band' which was led by Gregson. By the time that Gregson had the band as a "legit' Band in 1909 it was just one of many bands that played jazz.

The Spasm Band of Lacoume was not the first jazz band and was misnamed and accepted with only the mention of this band in 1919, and that description was not accurate.

How did Jazz begin?

To begin with it is impossible to date when an art form began. One does not know how music began. Common sense tells us that it was not on purpose but an experiment in sound, perhaps used as a signal as a warning of danger.

The music that was present at the beginning of jazz (around 1900 or earlier) was: classical, opera, military music and dance music. In New Orleans all of the above were present and the citizens were exposed to these styles. There

were very professional musicians as well as amateurs playing music. These amateurs were not performing opera and the military bands were mostly reading musicians and very capable. Jazz was influenced by these styles but their main interest was performing their musical jobs. The elements of jazz were not used at first in marching or funeral bands. These early dance bands did not give concerts. Most of their jobs were dance jobs, playing for picnics, ballyhooing in the streets and other odd jobs needing a band. During this era (the turn of the new century) dancing was a very popular activity. In New Orleans there were more requests for dance bands than there were bands, thus the need for musicians. There is much information on a person who was asked to join a band that did not have very much skill as a musician. When they joined a band many times they would be faking more notes than they knew. When a part was not well known the person would 'fake' the notes. Then rhythm was furnished by a 'trap' drum set and kept the rhythm steady. While ragtime was present with its syncopated style, this syncopated style was popular during this time. The new musician often was struggling with his instrument and thus (not being a schooled musician) would either come in early or come in late. The 'faking' of a musical part was the beginning of jazz. It was not one person or band but a number of bands in New Orleans played in this manner. Solo improvising was not present. Many club owners

would ask why a musician was not playing. This probably was due to the length of time bands played in this era. Often they played from the early night to almost dawn. The cornet player would need a rest for his lip. Another horn would cover for him and perhaps try to play his part, not the way that a cornet player would play but an attempt to duplicate his part. He was not able to duplicate his part exactly but 'faked' through a chorus with his performance covering the cornet's part not exactly, thus this 'fake' improvising was played with rhythm and syncopation by a musician trying to 'fake' the leading part. It was not until Armstrong played solos with the Oliver band that 'true' jazz as we know it was born. Buddy Petit was noted for his ability to improvise a second part and other rather 'unskilled' musician did the same. Petit' was imitated by many other New Orleans musicians including Armstrong. The Ballyhoo wagons and the bands playing at the resorts and camps around Lake Pontchartrain heard other bands and had bucking contests and listening to the repertoire and style of bands they heard. White and Negro bands had the opportunity to hear each other. Many of the 'legit' bands such as Piron were heard and their repertoire was duplicated as best they could. Thus the attempt at duplicating what they heard was not perfect. This 'faking' was the principle element of the beginning of jazz. The bands and musicians developed a style that was more personal and each band could be known

by their individual style. The bands were known as ragtime bands but they played ragtime with what would be known as jazz elements. New Orleans bands thus played ragtime in what would be known as a jazz style making them heard with a new way to play ragtime. The ancestors of jazz- minstrel music, cakewalks were styles that these bands were exposed to. Even the March compositions were said to be interpreted in a 'rag' style. The cakewalk main rhythm was a syncopated one (short, long short)

These 'amateur' dance bands played ragtime for dancing in their own style. Playing ragtime was an art, especially for pianists. This ragtime music was not simple and must have been difficult to imitate by an amateur band. With syncopation present the musician used it in their performance. With the rhythm of the trap drums playing a steady beat this emphasized the conflict between syncopation played with a steady beat added. The wind instruments playing together in a contrapuntal style was more cacophony than schooled counterpoint of Bach. Thus no rules were followed but played with a good musical ear.

Jazz grew up with all the above musical elements present. These bands were accepted, not for their great skilled musical abilities but for their ability to furnish music needed for a certain activity. Music was a good activity for musicians

who usually had daytime jobs and was a way to earn more money. There were few people who could use music as a regular job. A person who needed extra money would attempt to become a musician and thus have more money coming in.

The repertoire of the 'old' dance bands were played but their dancers, being young, wanted new styles as those of our present day and they attended to dances with these 'amateur' bands playing. Soon most of the music played at these dances was 'modern' for its day. This music became jazz.

A New Orleans music teacher, John Spriccio was a gifted musician who loved "jazz" for its own sake and reveling in "Blues" and tricky syncopation, he taught his pupils, including Yellow Nunez, what is now called jazz long before it won a place in the sun - old John Spriccio knew all the music of the darkies.

Jack "Papa" Lane had known of the young Nunez who played a tin whistle and eventually changed to guitar, he began on when he first played with an organized group led by John Spriccio, an early music teacher and violinist from New Orleans, possibly the first teacher of "Jazz." (New York Mirror, Dec. 114, 1918)

Time Line for Lacoume

1885 - Born

1884/85 - Forms Spasm Band

1897 - Bucking with German Band

1899 - Fair Grounds & New Year's Eve Minstrels - becomes blind

1901 - Visits Mayor (Lacoume is blind)

1902 - Playing in barroom

1903 - Enters Mrs. Wright's school. Had money stolen from him.

1905 - Spasm Band plays for Archbishop

1906 - Playing guitar in trio. (Gregson leader of Spasm Band)

1908 - Trouble at Fabacher's restaurant (23 years old) Again plays for Archbishop

1909 - Plays on Steamboat Tormentor (still in school) also sang

1910 - Perhaps last appearance of Spasm Band. Stale Bread has orchestra

1911 - New leader of Spasm band - Robert Hennessey

1913 - Playing piano in clubs.

1918 - Playing at West End

1919 - First mention of Spasm Band ' as a jazz band.'

1920 - Playing at Halfway House -guitar/banjo

1921 - Playing guitar & piano for toy fund

1922 - Playing at LaVida Dance Hall

1929 - Blue Moon Orchestra

1943 - Crippled right hand

1946 - Selling programs at Fair grounds. (Probably in 1943)

1946 - Died

Conclusions and Thoughts

Was the **Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band** the first jazz band? There is mention of the band as early as 1894 (in the Times Picayune, on May 31,1894) How does the performances of the Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band compare with the early jazz bands such as Buddy who by 1897 was developing a band style and membership of his band and was taking a definite shape. There were early Negro bands at this time, many

coming from the larger brass bands) usually smaller in size to fit in the smaller dance halls.

Both the Spasm Band and many early jazz bands were comprised mostly of untrained musicians; their music was cacophonistic, but it was played by musicians with good musical ears. Did they think of chord progressions? The Spasm Band were entertainers, using various techniques in their performance such as trombone slides, unique sound effects made by homemade cigar boxes, a gas pipe, tin cans, musical saws, washboards, spoons, bells, pipes, sandpaper, xylophones, sets of bottles filled with different amounts of water, harmonicas, Jews harps, lone string fiddles, guitars, small bass fiddles, tub basses, kazoos, ram horns, and steer horns.) 'Showmanship' was an important part of the Spasm Band's performance with singing, dancing and various acrobatic antics. Early 'jazz' bands such as Bolden's Band were playing for dances where the Spasm Band performed as a 'show' band. Was their musical ability the same as many of the dance band musicians? The boys in the Spasm Band could not afford regular instruments unlike the dance band musicians who used regular instruments and had some instructions from their peers.

Did the ODJB, the Original Creole Band, the Tennessee Ten and other bands in vaudeville get their antics from this spasm band? The two bands mentioned were vaudeville acts-not only playing music but dancing, singing

and even comedy was included in their vaudeville acts. (Creole Ragtime Band, Nov. 25, 1916 in the Colorado Springs Gazette-at Basinstreet.com 'Creole Band' in "Jazz Studies III") Also mentioned is the 'Tennessee Ten Jazz Band' in the (Scranton Republican, May 19, 1816, page 3 in Basinstreet. com.)

The Spasm Melody

Others in the Spasm Band were choral or rhythm instruments. We don't know whether other melody instruments in the Spasm Band played a 2nd part as Buddy Petit was known for. (See 'Under the Influence,' page 6 at Basinstreet.com) Then what is the basis for calling the spasm band an early jazz band? Did the Spasm Band eventually acquire regular instruments, and what did they sound like?

The melodic instrumentation of the Spasm Band at various times was a violin, harmonica and guitar supported by various rhythm homemade instruments. The guitar probably played chords, while the violin and harmonica played melodic lines. Did the two melody instruments play in unison, or one back up the other with a second part? This we do not know. The violin would take the melody with the harmonica might have improvised a 2nd part. It is likely that there was no solo improvising. When one boy got tired another would take up the lead. Being amateur musicians they probably did a lot of 'faking' which led to a 'jazz'

interpretation. Not being schooled most of their playing was not by written music but by individual interpretation. We read that the band 'bucked' against a German Band. How could a spasm band outdo a German brass band?

This 'bucking' contest was mentioned in 1923, (New Orleans States, August 19, 1923, 26 years ago-making it in 1897).

Did the Spasm Band develop into a more conventional instrumental band? By 1903 were they playing mostly regular instruments? This development could be the beginning of a more jazz sound.

The Spasm Band was a string band. Was it an early example of jazz? It did contain some jazz elements. First was syncopation. The earliest example of syncopation is seen in the works of Machaut (c1300-1377) The Second is improvising. Music began with improvisation. It could be called 'faking.' When a member played alone his skill and musical knowledge was such that he probably didn't stick to the straight melody but played it as well as an unskilled musician could. Bands of the era, either music readers or more skilled ability than is seen in a musician that played by ear. So the jazz main elements of the Spasm Band were syncopation and improvising ('faking') their music. There is no mention of 'blue notes' in their music. We must also mention that the Spasm Band had a strong rhythm section.

We don't know if they played with a 'backbeat' which would also be an element of jazz linked to syncopation. Where accents were placed is unknown. Also the tempos are unknown. Did their performance include 'jazz' effects' such as glissandos, half value and other jazz effects?

'Their repertoire was varied with popular songs, folk songs and other music. There was a singer with the group but we don't know how often vocals were used. The band's antics also are spoken of that added to the group appeal. There were other street musicians on the streets of New Orleans but none received the fame and publicity of the Spasm Band. There were small groups playing but a large band of street musicians was not noted in any publicity or newspaper articles.

A number of early so-called jazz bands couldn't read music. They played solely by ear.

What was different with the Spasm Band?

Around 1894/95, the date of the beginning of the Spasm Band, we don't have evidence of what these early bands sounded like, only oral transcriptions describing their sounds.

Their repertoire was extensive. A number of popular songs ('Charley Butler,' 'Popularity,' and 'Bye, Bye, You'll

be My Honey.' 'I'm Glad I'm Married,' 'That's What the Rose Said to Me,' selections from the 'Merry Widow' and 'Big Night Tonight,') were played by the Spasm Band. The boys in the band knew a number of folk and popular tunes and often whistled them. (I wonder whether the early Spasm Band could have played a number of the 'standard' jazz tunes.). Stale Bread said: 'We copied off somebody. We heard 'em in the streets an' we sang 'em in the streets. Now they say we invented jazz.

Before disbanding did they develop into what is called a 'regular jazz band?' This was without Lacoume. The Razy Dazy Spasm Band was one of many spasm bands given in Newspapers The YMGC Spasm Band, The Fort McComb Spasm Band, John Spramer Spasm Band, the Spasm Band of the Elks, and others-Page 54)

The 'Young Men's Gymnastic Club Spasm Band,' listed in 1894 in the newspapers was an amateur string band mostly guitars that took the name 'Spasm Band' as they were also amateur musicians that later developed into a more professional band. (See page 43 for articles on this band)

Other bands had the name of 'Spasm Band.'" This title in this era meant they were not professional musicians but amateur musicians most often playing homemade instruments.

The letter of Huguenot (earlier quoted) and the band he formed might be called the first jazz band. They were adult musicians and the members could read music. His letter used the word 'jazz band.' (Dramatic Mirror, 1919)

We have no evidence for the date of disbanding of the Spasm Band but it was around 1909. Lacoume was going blind in 1899 and Gregson is listed as leader. It was during his leadership that the band changed to regular instruments. Could this be called the first real jazz band? Lacoume continued in music after the Spasm Band disbanded. He was a musician through his entire life.

Some answers of past history will never be known. Whether one calls the Spasm Band the first jazz band will always be debated but as the music of the Negro and white minstrels, cakewalks and ragtime are now considered prerequisites to early jazz. The Spasm Band will take its place as such.

Henry Kmen describes the dancing and music of Congo Square as early as 1799 had fifes and fiddles were used, and in time banjos, triangles, Jews harps and tambourines were added? Was this activity the ancestor of the Spasm Band?

It is not known who first called the Spasm Band the 'First Jazz Band.' (See Huguenot article) One wonders what criteria were used and whether he had heard the music of the band in a live performance. One's opinion, whether the

Spasm Band indeed was what is called 'The First Jazz Band,' is open to discussion, opinions and historic facts. In history it is impossible to give a beginning date of an art. Events can be dated accurately but the development and evolution of an art cannot be dated.

Buddy Bolden (1877-1931) is considered the first 'legit' jazz band. Again there is no recording of Bolden although there is thought to be a cylinder that Bolden recorded but it has never been found. Bolden had developed his band style and membership by 1897. Did he hear the Spasm Band and was he influenced by the band? That concept is hard for me to believe.

The 'Right at 'Em Razz Band' formed and is said to have been an imitator of the Spasm Band. In this band there were reading musicians with Yellow Nunez a 'faker.' What material did they imitate from the Spasm Band?

There have been no answers to the questions stated in the above article. Perhaps the questions just lead to more questions.

Jazz from Arica?

Information from the past is the question? Oral interviews - how accurate? Questions asked - influencing an answer? These are the questions about discovering the truth of the past. Writers of the past should have no prejudice when asking or writing. They should do their homework and

educate themselves in the true information requested and not be influenced with what has been written before them.

A writer should dig deep into the existing material but with a doubt of material written. In Jazz there was one article that mentioned that the Stale Bread Spasm Band was the first Jazz band. There are no recordings of what this band sounded like, only statements about their sound. While there is in existence some info on this subject, no accurate conclusion can be found. Many times writers just repeat what has earlier been written, taking this info as fact with no question about the validity of what has been written. Only one article written calls them an 'early jazz band.' The book 'Jazzmen' takes the opposite view that it was not the first jazz band. More info has been written stating that this band was the first jazz band when disputing the claim that the spasm Band was the first jazz band.

Jazz from Africa?

Early jazz research states that jazz came from Africa. Most jazz researchers accept this view. If you doubt this claim you are prejudice. Dr Miller has written a book on the elements of North African Arab music and states that jazz elements was present in North Africa Arab music. He makes a good account of this music contains jazz elements. ('Roots & Branches of Jazz,' by Dr. Lloyd Miller)

But - most African slaves came from the coastal villages of Africa where Arab influences were not as great. The music that these coastal slaves brought to America did not contain jazz elements. They brought their culture (music and art) with them and it was melted with the European culture they were exposed to. They integrated the European culture with what music they remembered from their past. The Arab music of North Africa was not present.

Every element of jazz is found in European music - syncopation, improvising, the rhythms of the 4/4 March, special effect such as a glissando of a trombone, the use of the call and response and music for the dance. So jazz elements were present in the music of Northern Africa but not present in the music of the coastal slaves.

The elements of European music and the music of the Negroes combined into early Jazz music. That is why the city of New Orleans was the birth of the music later called Jazz.

The New Orleans Negro adapted the circumstances that were found in his new environment. The musicians of the city did not invent Jazz - it was not a deliberate attempt at discovering the music we call Jazz but a gradual development of what music was needed in their attempt at playing music. I believe that it was this city that evolved Jazz - both the black and white population of the city. During the evolution of this music the social makeup of the city was more liberal than other cities in the country. While there

was segregation between races the musical city of New Orleans offered opportunities for each race to hear each other's music. The city had March music, opera, dance and popular music.

It is usually the person who has the best publicity or 'blows his own horn' that is given the credit which might or not be the case. As an example, the great trumpet player Emmett Hardy; this early jazz was spread to the country by the Original Creole Orchestra (band) in vaudeville, the use of ballyhoo bands, and bands playing at the Lake Pontchartrain lakefront and with the popularity of the dance.

In my book 'Essay I' there is a section devoted to the explanation of how a society (Slaves) reacts to their situation in the city of New Orleans. (See page 53) It is the process called 'Tentation' (the Mode or method of adjustment by successive steps, trail or experiments). Tentation brings to life the Slave musical culture diffused into the musical environment of New Orleans. Their musical culture is assimilated by acculturation and was culturally changed by the process of innovation, social acceptance, selective elimination and integration. It should be mentioned that culture is the product of education not of heredity. Thus Jazz was a process of altering a society, especially the modification of primitive culture by contact with an advanced culture.

In African the arts were a functional part of their society and were integrated into everyday life. There were no concerts or art shows but most events were benefited by their arts. New Orleans had the benefit of using music in many forms: in concerts, art shows and music's participation in events such as dances, parades, picnics, etc.

Jazz was influenced and evolved from the music that was present in the minstrels, blues, cakewalks and ragtime.

Alberto Chiaffarelli
1884-1945

Ciaffarelli was born in Prata Sanorita, Italy, 75k. North of Naples on Feb. 8, 1884. He migrated to the U.S. as an infant in 1884, with his father. Charles (born June, 18312 who was also a clarinet player. this was a musical family, and Alberto's brothers Frank (born April 1871) and Angel (born Jan. 1875) were also trained as clarinetists. In 1903-1910 Chiaffarelli played in Victor Herbert's traveling orchestra, and in several bands. In 1904, Chiaffarelli joined the Sousa Band. Then for nine seasons, 1910-1919, Chiaffarelli played clarinet in the New York Philharmonic. The next season, in 1919-1920He became co-principal clarinet in the Metropolitan Opera, remaining for two seasons. Chiaffarelli then took the same position with the Chicago Opera orchestra. In 1924, like a number of other musicians, he worked in the orchestra of a theater, in this case, the theater of Marcus Klaw (1858-1936) in New York City. Unusual was that Alberto Chiaffarelli played on an Albert system clarinet more associated with ethnic music (Turkish, Klegner, etc.) than with a symphony orchestra. He died in New York City in 1945. (From web site of 'Principal Musicians of Met. Opera')

The Evolution of Jazz

By Louis Raymond Reid

IT is the age of jazz. The war—we'll have to lay it to the war—has brought us syncopated lawlessness. A jumble-tumble of emotions finds its expression in weird noises, in blues—Memphis blues, matrimonial blues, Beale Street blues, senatorial blues, actor-manager blues, prohibition blues. And we can thank (or curse, if we choose) the negro. He it was who, with incorrigible sense of gaiety and rhythm, took Terpsichore on a toot. The result? She is afflicted with an acute case of delirium tremens.

New York has offered a refuge. So has Chicago. So have other cities which audaciously boast an underworld in these piping times of peace and prohibition. Sometimes it appears as if Terpy would never again be invited into a Keeley cure of waltzes and two-steps—so great has been her fall. Yes, indeed, jazz is a hopelessly drunken, reeling thing. It breathes the spirit of the underworld—of that underworld which has almost become legendary in insouciance and youthful vigor. With its irresistible sway it has restored New York, New Orleans and San Francisco in the affection of that cynical foreigner who once declared those cities to be the only worth while ones in the United States. A broad assumption, it is true. But is it not obvious that this foreigner knew only two classes of people—the gay and the stupid? And surely New York, New Orleans and San Francisco at one time expressed only the gay.

Jazz—no one knows the derivation of the word—had its origin in the African jungles. Savage, monstrously masculine, primitively passionate, it formed an integral part of the negro's character just as certain as did his plaintive folk songs that sprang from the cotton plantations and his flashing era of ragtime. With curiously sensual wriggles of the body he danced it. With tom-toms, human bones and various other noise-making devices he played it. Gradually it crept out of Africa. It made its way via the slave ships to New Orleans, where it definitely established a foothold, stole triumphantly north to Chicago, finding access to shadowy retreats in the so-called black belt, and made its way into the gaudy resorts of New York's tenderloin.

The negro had done his part. It remained for the white man to take up the burden and capitalize it for the benefit of a jaded world. The latter, with his keener commercial sense, his greater lust for life, his insatiable greed for novelty and excitement, made it a supreme melodic atrocity, a fascinating grotesquerie of noise, a prehistoric combination of innocence and vice.

Jazz caught the fancy of the young. A world fed up with war and destruction had to offer some freedom, and



MISS GILDA GREY

Pronounced the foremost exponent of the "shimmy dance"—now in the Shuberts' "Gaieties of 1919"

the relief from high nervous tension was found in dancing wildly and living, as Nietzsche would say, dangerously. Complacent and languorous girls suddenly became wild women. Amiable and respectable fellows suddenly became wild men. And the dance was on and joy was unrefined. All the while there issued from various elevations noises such as the world had never known before. Every conceivable instrument and device which would give sound, strange and unmelodious, were pressed into service. Barrels, whistles, dishpans, washboards, kettles, bottles, all found a new use as instruments of torture. And if these were not enough ingenious jazzers performed weird tricks with staid saxophones and ludicrous trombones, even going to the extent of muting the latter with derby hats.

And the young on their way to the draft boards and the transports and social functions and shopping tours experienced a new sensation in their feet which rapidly spread to the shoulders, arms, chest and hips. The music of the jazz resurrected the spirit of St. Vitus. People suddenly de-

veloped an amazing ability to transform themselves into jelly. Such extraordinary bodily expression attracted sedate dodoes who were resting comfortably on the shady side of sixty and lured them away from their monotonous tasks of coupon-clipping. They too abandoned themselves to the shimmy with pride and eager eye. They would keep up with youth at all costs of dignity and watchfulness over rheumatic joints.

Tho the leading exponents of jazz are well known, the identity of the original standard bearer is obscured in mystery. Some of the dance-defying pioneers on the frontiers of respectability who have hewn their way into the innermost recesses of jazzland claim that old John Spricchio of New Orleans is primarily responsible. At any rate it is certain that he knows all the music of the negro and can transform it, when necessary, into any kind of inharmonious blues or hesitation. But there are many, many others who have similar accomplishments and who belong in the front rank of jazzers.

Bert Kelly was one of the first to invade the north. He concentrated upon Chicago and it was not long before he and his group of musicians became a sensation of the night life there. Walter Kingsley is authority for the statement that the word "jazz" came into existence at a party which Thomas Meighan, the movie star, gave in Chicago to several well known stage and screen players. Kelly's instrumentalists provided the music. Motion pictures were taken of the party, and on the film show- (Continued on page 72)

ing the musicians there was a caption which read "The Band That Makes You Jazz."

Kelly's band eventually made the pilgrimage to Bagdad-on-the-Subway where it was engaged by Frisco to furnish the accompaniment for this amusing and novel representation of toughdom. Incidentally, Frisco should be given credit for his efforts in popularizing jazz. A unique personality, he seemed the living symbol of the fascinating savagery of the underworld. Tipping his derby—and a derby was most essential to the proper expression of the rough-and-spicy jazz—and violently smoking cigars tilted at a dangerous angle he worked his legs into a veritable frenzy of locomotor ataxia. His audiences howled with delight. Here was the real thing at last, they declared. A fig for your parlor prancing and your lounge lizards who executed soft steps with almost feminine grace and deftness. Here was rich red blood, strong and supple limbs, self-satisfied savagery, dancing to wild, weird music with ever-increasing abandon. Because he seemed to embody the physical character of the Barbary Coast he gained the sobriquet of Frisco. It stuck to him. It helped to make him famous, but back in Dubuque, Ia., he is known as George Lewis. Forming a partnership with Loretta McDermott, a shapely little dancer, whom he had met in a Chicago resort, he went to New Orleans where the couple jazzed to the accompaniment of the darkies. They traveled on to Mobile, back up to Chicago and thence to New York where they emerged into undisputed fame and fortune. It is said that the late Vernon Castle gave considerable encouragement to Frisco, advising him of the potent spell which the jazz would have for New York if the dance were capitalized at the psychological moment when the modern cabaret and music hall steps had completely worn out their welcome.

One night Frisco and Loretta McDermott appeared in a revue at the Fulton Theater. The show was a failure, but the audience went wild over the dancers who could be so appealingly primeval. Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., ever on the alert for the new and novel, engaged them at once for his after-theater show on the roof of the New Amsterdam Theater, and there, great and instantaneous success greeted them.

Jazz became the order of the night. Vaudeville scouts and cabaret impresarios beckoned to the south for more geniuses of jazz. A golden treasury was promised, for was not the town enthusiastic over something that was new, something that stirred its jaded pulses? Reisenweber's at Columbus Circle engaged the Dixieland Jazz Band which had scored a big success in Chicago and which boasted a clarinet player who had the uncanny ability to take his instrument to pieces down to the mouth-piece and keep up with the band. This dis-

junction belonged to one "Yellow" Nunez. This organization played all kinds of "blues" numbers and eventually got into the courts over a song. And it was during the litigation over the ownership of the number that Nunez, in reply to a question from the court, as to the definition of blues, said: "Judge, blues is blues—a little off key but harmony against the rules." The court decided that "blues" could not be copyrighted inasmuch as they could not be described and orchestrated.

Jazz players seem to get most of their effects from cornets and clarinets, perhaps, because those instruments lend themselves most easily to imitations. In a number called "The Livery Stable Blues" the cornetist of the Dixieland Band even went so far as to introduce the neighing of a horse.

A. J. Baquet, born in New Orleans of a Spanish-Indian mother and a French father, is said to be the first white jazz clarinet player. He drifted to New York in the fall of 1918 and joined the "Original New Orleans Jazz Band," playing at various cabarets and restaurants. Edwin Edwards, J. Durante, Frank F. Shotak, Raymond Lopez, who appeared with Blossom Seeley; Tom Brown, Gus Mueller and Lawrence Shields are other prominent jazzers who paved the way to the present dance delirium. Nor must Ted Lewis be forgotten. Lewis, who incidentally is a great showman, was the first, it is said, to bring subdued tones to the playing of jazz. Just as Frisco has demonstrated what can be done with jazz physically, Lewis has shown what can be done with it instrumentally. He softened its notes tho taking care to maintain its weirdness.

Sophie Tucker advances a claim as the originator of jazz on the stage. She declares that she was the first to introduce shoulder shrugs and undulations during the singing of rag songs. When Miss Tucker became a hostess at Reisenweber's she brought jazz into a conspicuous place on the entertainment program, not only thru her own efforts but thru those of several young girls, one of whom, Gilda Gray, has been called her protégé.

The Shuberts engaged Miss Gray for the "Gaieties of 1919" and the opening night of that revue was featured by the remarkable jazz and shimmy performance which she gave. It was a new departure in this style of dancing that she offered. Standing in one position and singing with an utterly blank expression she brought the audience to its feet. For she knew how to be repressed and yet suggestive. The wildness, the indolence, the frankness of the underworld were superlatively symbolized in her performance.

Jazz has invaded the army and navy, and there are now a number of vaudeville acts composed of soldiers and sailors who saw service in the war, which are devoted to

its expression. The mortality list is creasing daily. Musical revues and operas are not complete unless there is a member of their casts who has fallen victim to the jazz. London is in the throes of an epidemic. Paris has accepted it as its own and all over the United States, jazz has a conspicuous place in amusement city. Phonograph record cases contain no more jazz numbers? The orchestras at dance casinos at various summer resorts include jazz numbers in their nightly repertoire. And the little gathering on the crabs at the four corners feel that they are not keeping up with the times unless they jazz a little on the old mouth organ. Indeed, wherever one may gaze or wander is a case of all for jazz and jazz for all.

ESRTWHILE SUSAN

(Continued from page 67)

"told me what she had done" his expression was grim. He held her hands close, looking down into her eyes eagerly. "Barnabette—how could you run away like that? Didn't you know that I—"

Then for the first time he saw the old Pop, glowering from his pillows, with hanging mouth waiting to receive a piece of pie balanced on his knife. He stared, Juliet, simpering genteely, crooked little finger as she drank her Barnabette's small, bright head went proudly as she introduced them to him boys merely granting in acknowledgment while Mrs. Dreary burst into a fit panegyric of welcoming.

It was David Jordan and Juliet, while Susan who did the talking during the rest of the meal, broken occasional by Pop's whine that he felt for meat a somepin wonderful, and the boy's silly draughts of tea. Afterwards Barnabette and the visitor walked up and down the path between the ragged robins and phlox, and he told her, quite casually he had been elected senator.

"Oh," cried Barnabette, joyously, "I'm so glad!" and then she broke off to try to release her hands, with a frightened smile. "No! You must please, Mr. Jordan—please—"

"I love you, Barnabette," David Jordan told her quietly.

He had to bend to hear her whisper. "But—you saw us! They're all people—I'm just an ordinary girl."

"Never ordinary!" His big voice boomed with an undertone of vibrant joy; "Susan, tell me you'll marry me and help me be a good senator. I can't do without Barnabette—possibly."

Soft color flooded her lifted face, eyes were full of tender mirth. "Why, I, a female," said Barnabette, "to have the dare to say 'No'?"

