HEAR ME TALKIN' TO YA:

JAZZ AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY IN HARLEM OF THE 1920s

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Letters

Michael J. Conklin

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Madison, New Jersey

May 2020

ABSTRACT

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The luster of twentieth-century America was seductive. The age of modernity was ushered in by the automobile, motion picture, radio, and transatlantic flight. The mores of the Victorian era were crushed by a Prohibition-induced defiance. The 19th amendment to the Constitution of the United States bestowed a new freedom upon the women of the country; all things seemed possible. And jazz, with its complex contradictions and tensions, was an aural manifestation of it all. This was most evident in a northern section of Manhattan, New York–the neighborhood of Harlem.

Hear Me Talkin' to Ya, unlike most studies of the Harlem Renaissance in which music is treated peripherally and in subordination to literary advances, examines how jazz of the period served as a catalyst for the African American community, bolstered the morale of the country, and elucidated the need for social equity. This dissertation will employ an ethnomusicological approach to offer a vibrant picture of American society at a seminal time as well as put forth an understanding of not only what the music was, but why it was: what it meant to its practitioners and audiences, how those meanings were conveyed, and the profundity of its cultural impact. Moreover, it will be argued that the

leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, such as James Weldon Johnson, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Alain Locke, privileged a music that championed an elitist, Eurocentric aesthetic and one that was not true to the spirit of the African American population.

The crux of my study will demonstrate how three progenitors of jazz: James P. Johnson, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, and Thomas "Fats" Waller, all of whom participated in the celebratory era of the Harlem Renaissance, created vernacular music, largely using the blues and jazz idioms, that elevated not only the black population, but the entirety of the United States–thus challenging the Eurocentric epistemologies of Locke and his contemporaries; to date, no scholarship has refuted the position advocated by the black intelligentsia during the period of the "New Negro."

DEDICATION

To my wife, Valerie, whose love knows no bounds and without whom, this journey would not have been possible.

And, to our babies—Eugene, Emme, and Bailey who have never left my side.

To my dad, who suffused in me a steadfast work ethic.

To my mom, who taught me to dream.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of tackling a dissertation is not a journey that one takes alone. With immense fortune, I have been dexterously shepherded by Drs. Liana Piehler and Robert Butts. Their unwavering support, guidance, and profusion of erudition in their respective disciplines have been both heart-warming and inspiring. Perhaps most importantly, I am grateful for their kindness and humanity as I navigated through myriad health issues during this project.

I would like to express my gratitude to Brookdale Community College President Dr. David Stout, Vice President of Learning Matt Reed, and the Board of Trustees with awarding me with educational leave during the Fall 2019 semester. I am humbled that they value my scholarship and contribution to the college community. I hope I've demonstrated to be a prudent investment in Brookdale's mission, value, and goals.

It is with both pride and humility that I express my thanks to Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey and the Institute of Jazz Studies for endowing me with the honor of the Berger-Carter-Berger Fellowship at the IJS. The financial support not only helped to offset the costs associated with research but afforded me the opportunity to revisit the world's foremost research facilities for jazz scholarship. Special thanks to Adriana Cuervo, Head, Archival Collections and Services, Institute of Jazz Studies for her guidance and to my fellow Rutgers alum, IJS Reference Associate, Joe Peterson for his assistance with the James P. Johnson archival collection.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Ben Bates, Operations Manager, Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford University for providing me with access to the Riverwalk Jazz recordings, which were not only stimulating, but informative.

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INTRODUCTION

> The status of the Negro in the United States is more a question of national mental attitude toward the race than of actual conditions. And nothing will do more to change that mental attitude and raise his status than a demonstration of intellectual parity by the Negro through the production of literature and art. Is there likelihood that the American Negro will be able to do this?[1]
>
> James Weldon Johnson

James Weldon Johnson, an elder statesman of the Harlem Renaissance, palpably advocated for the unequivocal recognition of the African American population's cultural contribution to the United States. Serving as the Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, from 1920 through 1930, Johnson was emboldened to "secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons."[2] It was his contention that these rights could be procured through the promulgation of stimulating art; this cause, racial uplift through the advocacy of aesthetic endeavors, was the mission of Johnson and the leaders of the "New Negro Movement" of the 1920s.

Musically, as the late, eminent scholar Samuel Floyd Jr. espoused, "the idea was to produce extended forms such as symphonies and operas from the raw material of spirituals, ragtime, blues, and other folk origins"[3] in order to validate the black

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[1] Henry Louis Gates and Gene Andrew Jarrett, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 427.

[2] "What is the Mission of the NAACP?" NAACP, accessed January 14, 2020, https://www.naacp.org/about-us/.

[3] Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 107.

community. Floyd anthologizes a series of essays with which to substantiate his declaration. In *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, he posits that the works of black, classical composers such as Harry T. Burleigh, R. Nathaniel Dett, Florence Price, William Levi Dawson, and William Grant Still are paradigmatic of the Renaissance mission and casts aside the import of African American, vernacular music. Expositions by Georgia Ryder on Dett's choral composition, *Chariot Jubilee*, highlight the thrust of elevating African American music towards "high art," while Rae Linda Brown focuses on large-scale orchestral works such as Price's *Symphony in E Minor*. My research refutes this elitist perspective and expands upon Lorenzo Thomas's assertion that, "In the area of music, the prevailing cultural hierarchy assigns value to the European symphonic tradition at the expense of indigenous American musical conventions. Compared to jazz, classical music has been assigned a higher cultural value which-of course-has very little to do with music per se."[4]

Hear Me Talkin' to Ya: Jazz as Social Commentary in Harlem of the 1920s, is the only study, to my knowledge, which disavows the Eurocentric exclusivity of the black intelligentsia and leaders of the Harlem Renaissance. I establish, through an ethnomusical approach, a stance that concurs with Larry Neal: "The Harlem Renaissance was essentially a failure. It did not address itself to the mythology and the lifestyles of the black community."[5] Moreover, I rebuke, by way of underscoring the genius of James P.

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[4] Lorenzo Thomas, "'Classical Jazz' and the Black Arts Movement." *African American Review* 29, no. 2 (1995): 237. https://doi.org/10.2307/3042299.

[5] Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," in *Visions of a Liberated Future: Black Arts Movement Writing: Poetry and Prose* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1989), 78.

Johnson, Duke Ellington, and Fats Waller, the egregious contention of classical composers, such as Walter Damrosch, who suggest African American, vernacular music like jazz, "stifles the true musical instinct by turning away many of our talented young people from the persistent and continued study and execution of good music."[6]

To establish a sturdy foothold for my examination, I turn to the field of ethnomusicology, which bolsters my fundamental proclamation of this dissertation—that art is not created in a vacuum; sociocultural agents facilitate its creation and, in the case of jazz, form a syncretic entity. Ethnomusicologists examine music as a social process and consequently assess not only what music is, but what it means to those who conceive it and those who consume it. This approach will interweave aspects of music history, performance practice, critical race theory, and cultural anthropology. While many ethnomusicological studies emphasize global perspectives (e.g. non-Western music), I have chosen to concentrate on the elements that form the foundation of vernacular music in America of the 1920s.

The preeminent text, "…for all who would more knowledgeably appreciate and better comprehend America's most popular music,"[7] as Langston Hughes professed, is *Blues People*: *Negro Music in White America* by Amiri Baraka. *Library Journal* expanded Hughes's contention by adding, "*Blues People* is American musical history; it is also American cultural, economic, and even emotional history. It traces not only the development of the Negro music which affected white America, but also the Negro

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[6] Kathy J. Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 157-158.

[7] Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Perennial, 2002), Front cover.

values which affected white America."[8] Baraka explicated the impetus for his sociocultural approach to examining black, American music:

> …as I began to get into the history of the music, I found that this was impossible without, at the same time, getting into deeper into the history of the people. That this was the history of the Afro-American people as text, tale, as story, as exposition, narrative, what have you, that the music was the score, the actually expressed creative orchestration, reflection, of Afro-American life, our words, our libretto, to those actual, lived lives.[9]

The underlying tenets of *Blues People* will evince my position that African American vernacular music, particularly the blues and jazz of Harlem during the 1920s, was central to galvanizing change in American principles; popular music by composers like James P. Johnson would unify the disparate consciousnesses of this country—not the ostensibly highbrow, Western European classical models as purported by the Harlem Renaissance elite. Following this mindset, I will address: how art manifested this transmutation; what profound, musical inventions opened the ears of a prejudiced public; how the African American population navigated the diverging paths of popular entertainment; what atypical conditions forged the sonic foundry of the 1920s; how the music was emblematic of the times; and, why the "New Negro" movement, musically, was an appalling failure.

At the time of this writing, the United States of America has embarked upon this millennium's inaugural decade of the '20s. Only days into this neoteric epoch, I question if the subsequent ten years will be remembered as a whisper or a roar. What advancements will be realized in the form of humanity? How will art enrich the global

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[8] Ibid., Back cover.

[9] Ibid., ix.

community? Will there be another renaissance by which a plagued people will exact retribution? Only time can resolve these queries. But, perhaps ruminating over that pivotal decade through an interdisciplinary lens could prove illuminating.

CHAPTER ONE

AIN'TCHA GOT MUSIC?

FRAMING THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

In what way would the music of savages be inferior to that of civilized man?[10]

Hugues Panassie

On February 17, 1919, a mass of nearly two thousand black soldiers triumphantly and stoically marched up Fifth Avenue in New York City in a tight formation reminiscent of the allied French infantries. These men, members of Harlem's 369th Regiment, were dubbed by their German foes as the *Harlem Hellfighters*; they valiantly fought for freedom abroad for nearly two hundred consecutive days and facilitated the Allied invasion of the Rhine. For their bravery, they were awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French commanding officers. Once the regiment reached its destination of Harlem, the soldiers broke ranks and were rejoined with friends and family. It was, perhaps, at that moment that the age of the "New Negro" had arrived–the African American community would use all means necessary to procure the respect of the white population and quell the subjugation, denigration, and inequity from which they suffered since the advent of slavery. The Harlem Renaissance,[11]"that dramatic upsurge of creativity in literature, music and art within black America that reached its zenith in the second half of the

[10] Ted Gioia, "Jazz and the Primitivist Myth," *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1989), 130.

[11] For this study, the period of the Harlem Renaissance will begin with the return of the 369th Infantry and end with onset of the Great Depression after the stock market crash of October 24, 1929.

1920s,"[12] would be the fulcrum by which the African American community would strive to achieve its leverage.

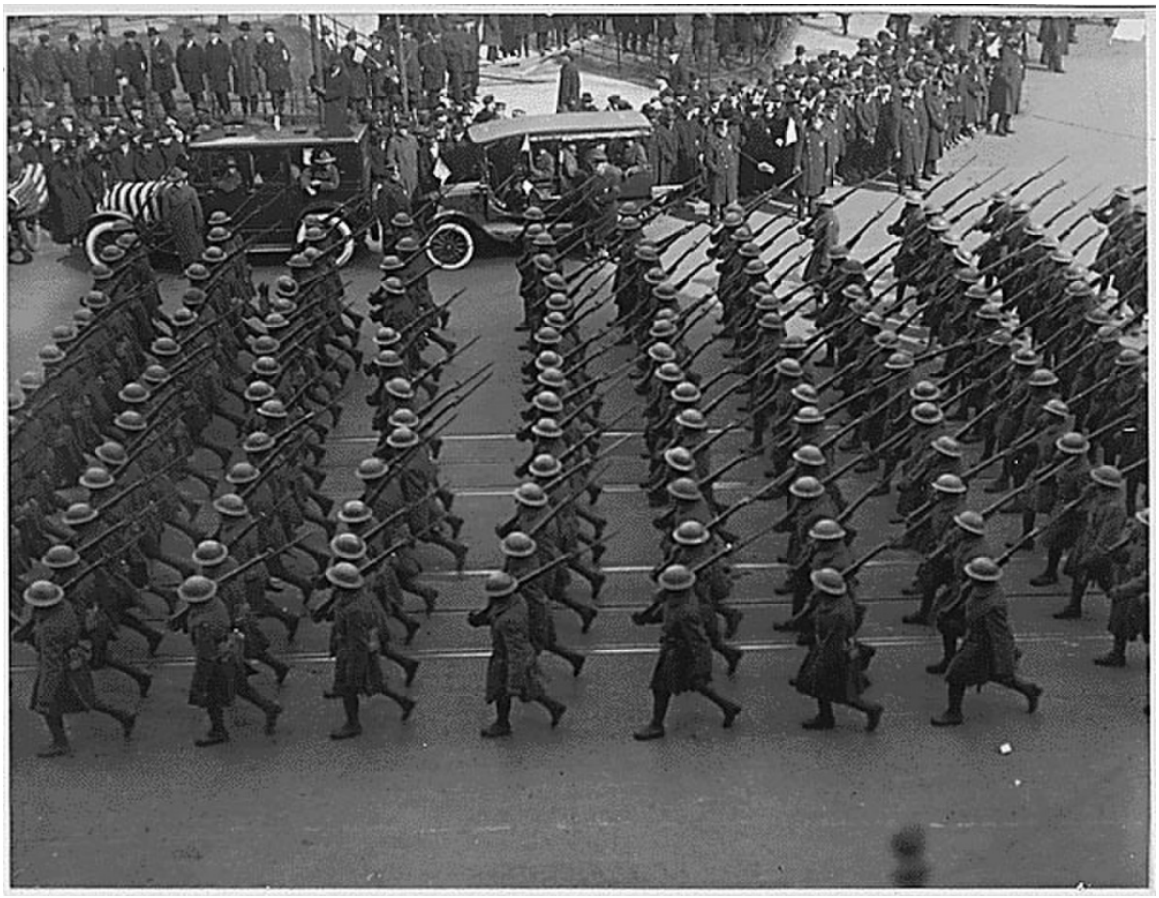

Fig. 1.1. Soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City on Feb. 17, 1919. Image courtesy of the New York National Guard.

Nathan Huggins affirmed this sentiment when he declared, "The aura of the post-war decade, epitomized in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'younger generation' and the Jazz Age, was reflected among Negro intellectuals too. They created the 'New Negro.'"[13] Alain Locke

[12] Arnold Rampersad. "Introduction" in *The New Negro: The Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Leroy Locke. (New York: NY. Simon and Schuster, 1997), ix.

[13] Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 52.

clarified, “The Old Negro, we must remember, was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. He has been a stock figure perpetuated as an [sic] historical fiction.”[14]

“How does it feel to be a problem?”[15] African American intellectual, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, hereafter W.E.B. Du Bois, posited this query in his seminal text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in 1903. There subsists a struggle for African Americans to construct and sustain an affirmative identity in a society where their mere existence is perceived as an obstruction. Du Bois expounded, “Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth century is the problem of the color line.”[16] Du Bois’s intention was to address this challenge by the “development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity.”[17]

Du Bois ardently maintained that the role of art was to explicitly serve to initiate social change. Published in the October 1926 edition of *The Crisis*, Du Bois fervently declared:

> Thus all Art [sic] is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of

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[14] Alain LeRoy Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 3.

[15] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

[16] Ibid., v.

[17] Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses, 1890-1919*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner (New York: Pathfinder, 1991), 78-79.

> black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda.[18]

In writing *Souls of Black Folk*, then, Du Bois's unequivocal aim was to edify the white population of the pain and anguish inflicted upon the African American community; the envisioned outcome would be an expressed humanity and aspiration from the white populace to buttress their black counterparts. Not all African American philosophers acceded with Du Bois's deduction—not the least of which was Alain Locke.

Alain LeRoy Locke has been proclaimed as the "Dean of the Harlem Renaissance"[19] for his conviction to cultivating cultural change in America. In 1925, he published the epoch-making anthology, *The New Negro*. The collection portended a "new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life."[20] He lamented, "…for generations in the mind of America, the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being—a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be 'kept down,' or 'in his place,' or 'helped up,' to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden."[21] The

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[18] Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," *The Crisis*, October 1926, Volume 32 edition, 290-297.

[19] Adam Kirsch, "Art and Activism," *Harvard Magazine*, February 16, 2018, https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2018/03/alain-locke-the-new-negro.

[20] Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 3.

[21] Ibid.

turn of the twentieth century, however, realized that "[i]n the very process of being transplanted, the Negro is becoming transformed."[22]

The transplantation to which Locke was referring was the *Great Migration*—a mass exodus of African Americans who fled to points North, East, and West:

> The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the northern city centers is to be explained primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions.[23]

Locke, in direct opposition to Du Bois, asserted:

> My chief objection to propaganda, apart from its besetting sin of monotony and disproportion, is that it perpetuates the position of group inferiority even in crying out against it. For it leaves and speaks under the shadow of a dominant majority whom it harangues, cajoles, threatens or supplicates. It is too extroverted for balance or poise or inner dignity and self-respect. Art in the best sense is rooted in self-expression and whether naive or sophisticated is self-contained. In our spiritual growth genius and talent must more and more choose the role of group expression, or even at times the role of free individualistic expression—in a word must choose art and put aside propaganda.[24]

In 1925, Locke compiled and edited a corpus of work, which included fiction, poetry, drama, prose, plays, music historiography, and illustrations by black and white artists. The intention was to demonstrate that "[e]ach generation…will have its creed and that of the present is the belief in the efficacy of collective effort, in race cooperation."[25]

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[22] Ibid., 6.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Locke, "Art or Propaganda," in *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University, 1995), 312.

[25] Locke, *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015), 11.

The anthology was among Locke's most weighty contributions to his legacy—*The New Negro*: *An Interpretation.*

In the introduction to Locke's opus, Arnold Rampersad espouses, "To many scholars and critics of the movement known as the Harlem Renaissance…*The New Negro* is its definitive text, its Bible."[26] It is quite telling that a tome of this magnitude reserves a miniscule portion of its contents to the significance of music to the movement; in the edition used for this dissertation, twenty-eight pages of the four hundred and fifty-two (not including front matter) are used to discuss or illustrate music's role in the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, some of what is included within the dearth of material is poetry; the implication is obvious. Locke, being aligned with his contemporaries, discounted the unifying power of music and relegated its role to the periphery. Later scholars, such as Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., attempted to remediate this issue.

Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays (1990), edited by Floyd, places music at the epicenter of this period of cultural change. He argues that while the Harlem Renaissance may have been literary in origin, music became the most decisive vehicle by which to achieve its goals of racial uplift and equity. However, with the exception of a seminal article written by the late Ellington scholar, Mark Tucker, on Ellington's formative years, Floyd's anthology is a prime example of how, in the perspectives of the Harlem Renaissance leaders and in contemporary American cultural history, the vernacular music of the African American community was suppressed in favor of that which embodied a classical, high art sensibility. In the opening to the

[26] Arnold Rampersad. "Introduction" in *The New Negro: The Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Leroy Locke. (New York: NY. Simon and Schuster, 1997), ix.

collection, "Music in the Harlem Renaissance," Floyd establishes those who were in the forefront of the movement as well as their intentions, "The primary artistic leaders of the Harlem Renaissance were a group of intellectuals…Jessie Redmond Faucet, Charles S. Johnson, Casper Holstein, Alain Locke, and James Weldon Johnson; they aspired to high culture, as opposed to that of the common man, which they hoped to mine for novels, plays and symphonies."[27]

The essays in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, keeping with the position of "high culture," largely focus on composers who crafted works based on established Western European classical models such as the symphony, concerto, sonata, opera, and oratorio. This is evidenced in "Vocal Concert Music in the Harlem Renaissance," an article by Rawn Spearman, where the author maintains, "composers and performers alike turned toward the musical stuff of 'high' cultural and steeped themselves in European musical traditions."[28] While some thematic materials employed by the Harlem Renaissance composers were based on the "Negro" spirituals, and at times, the blues, their essence was diluted by a non-indigenous, classical treatment. Locke, seeing this approach as an artistic elevation, lauded several composers:

> The credit for turning this tide goes principally to a convinced group of Negro musicians in New York City, all of them with formal conservatory background, but a deep faith in the dignity of Negro folk music. Two of them, J. Rosamond Johnson and Will Marion Cook, projected a Negro Conservatory of Music and another, Harry T. Burleigh, was destined to

[27] Samuel A. Floyd. "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview" in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 1.

[28] Rawn Spearman. "Vocal Concert Music in the Harlem Renaissance" in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 41.

> dignify and popularize the spiritual by winning a place for them [sic] in the general repertory of the concert stage.[29]

The upward artistic mobility, as Locke and his contemporaries would likely see it, of the African American spiritual is emphasized once again in the fourth chapter of Floyd's anthology, "Harlem Renaissance Ideals in the Music of Robert Nathaniel Dett," by Georgia A. Ryder.

> The "Chariot Jubilee" for tenor solo, eight-part chorus and mixed voices and orchestra, which I wrote for the Syracuse Festival Chorus, and which was performed by them and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, with Mr. Lambert Murphy as soloist, Keith's Theatre, Syracuse, May 9, 1921, marks, so far as I know, the first attempt to develop the spiritual into an oratorio form.[30]

In her essay, "William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson: Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance," Rae Linda Brown perpetuates the "New Negro" modus operandi of elevating "Negro musical idioms to a position of dignity and effectiveness in the field of symphonic and operatic music."[31] Like Dett's treatment of the spiritual, Still, in his *Afro-American Symphony*, aspired to demonstrate, "…how the Blues [sic], so often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to the highest musical level."[32]

Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance supports Locke's perspective of absolute music–art for art's sake. In his essay, "Vindication as a Thematic Principle in the

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[29] Locke. *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present.* (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 2002), 119-120.

[30] Georgia A. Ryder. "Harlem Renaissance Ideals in the Music of Robert Nathaniel Dett" in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 55.

[31] Floyd. "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview" in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 13.

[32] Rae Linda Brown. "William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson: Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance" in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 73.

Writings of Alain Locke on the music of black Americans," Paul Burgett posits, "[T]here clearly was a tendency among Negro intelligentsia that sought the cultural transformation of black folk culture into a formal or high culture–an art of greater value."[33] Nathan Huggins in, *Harlem Renaissance*, reflected that, "Harlem intellectuals promoted Negro art, but one thing is very curious, except for Langston Hughes, none of them took jazz—the new music—seriously."[34] This edict illuminates the divisive dogma that delineated intellectuals from "show people."[35] Composers who crafted works of a high art sensibility would be among the former classification, while the latter was reserved for jazz and popular music entertainers.

In his text, *The Negro and His Music*, Locke stratifies "Negro" music in three strands: folk, popular, and classical music. The first layer, folk music, is categorized by its rudimentary development. It is "[p]roduced without formal musical training or intention" and is a product of "emotional creation."[36] An example of this, as per Locke, is the spiritual—a form of slave song that rose from the blood-stained soil of the antebellum South. The impetus for its development was the deep suffering and oppression of the enslaved. What Locke failed to realize is that the spiritual was both sacred and secular,

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[33] Paul Burgett, "Vindication as a Thematic Principle in the Writings of Alain Locke on the Music of Black Americans," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 29.

[34] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9-10.

[35] Floyd, "An Overview," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 18.

[36] Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present.* (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 2002), 8-9.

hallowed and profane. The lyrics were an explicit prayer to God to save them from their earthly Hell, but also served to covertly communicate with other slaves.

A quintessential spiritual, "Go Down Moses," embodies the pluralistic functionality of the slave song. The text of the spiritual is clearly Bibical; it references Exodus 8:1 of the Old Testament, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me,"[37] in which the Lord commands Moses to order the release of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. Implicitly, the song provided a coded meaning of escape, which was propagated among the slaves. In *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, Sarah Bradford's authorized biography of Harriett Tubman, she affirms this as the trailblazing abolitionist disclosed that "Go Down Moses" served as a form of communication fugitive slaves used when fleeing Maryland.[38] While these songs were an essential aspect of the oral tradition of early African American culture and thusly did not require to be formally notated, as Locke submits, their functionality was much more complex than he suspected.

Velma Maia Thomas buttresses this contention in her book, *No Man Can Hinder Me: The Journey from Slavery to Emancipation through Song*: "You take a Negro spiritual like 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.' This is a metaphorical expression of movement. The chariot represents the conductors of the Underground Railroad as they bring the enslaved northward to freedom."[39] The use of double-meanings is not only

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[37] Ex. 8:1.

[38] Sarah H. Bradford, "Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman," Sarah H. Bradford (Sarah Hopkins), https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bradford/bradford.html, 26-27.

[39] Velma Maia Thomas, *No Man Can Hinder Me: The Journey from Slavery to Emancipation through Song* (New York: Crown, 2001), 14.

representative of what Henry Louis Gates defines as *signifyin'*[40] but is central to the African American musical aesthetic for "it allows individuals to demonstrate intellectual power while simultaneously obscuring the nature and extent of their agency."[41]

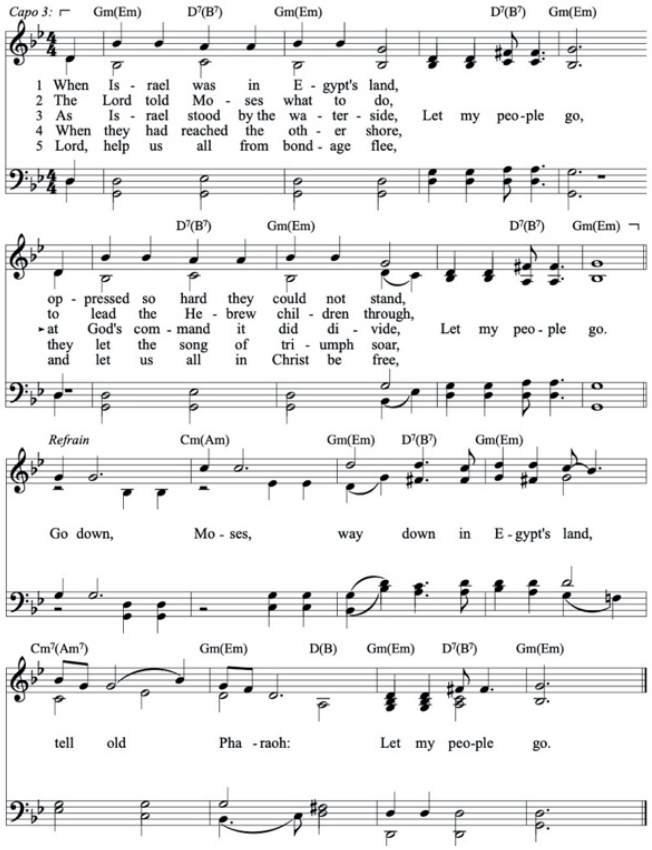

Fig. 1.2. *Go Down Moses*, Traditional.

[40] Henry Louis Gates describes signifyin(g) as "a trope in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (the master tropes), and also hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis." For more on *signifyin'*, see Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literacy Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[41] Joseph Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 138.

Locke's condescension of the spiritual's inherent worth reaches its apogee when he claims the musical genre received its "highest possible recognition"[42] when employed as thematic material for Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, *From the New World*, Op. 95:

> [T]he spirituals and even the secular Negro folk melodies and their harmonic style have been regarded by most musicians as the purest and most valuable musical ore in America; the raw materials of a native American music. So gradually ever since, their folk quality and purity of style have been emphasized by *real* [emphasis added] musicians.[43]

Locke's supposition is easily confuted. In *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences*, Otakar Šourek, a Czech writer and authority of Dvořák, wrote:

> …before I set out with the score, the Master wrote at last minute on the title-page "Z Nového světa" ("From the New World"). The title "From the New World caused then and still causes today, at least here in America, much confusion and difference of opinion. There were and are many people who thought and think that the title is to be understood as the "American" symphony, i.e. a symphony with American music. Quite a wrong idea! This title means nothing more than "Impressions and Greetings from the New World"—as the Master himself has more than once explained.[44]

Dvořák substantiated Šourek's claim in a letter from February 1900 to Czech violist, composer, and friend Oskar Nedbal, "…I am sending you Kretschmar's analysis of the Symphony, but the nonsense—that I made use 'Indian' and American [Negro] motifs—

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[42] Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present.* (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 2002), 20.

[43] Ibid., 21.

[44] Antonín Dvořák and Otakar Šourek, *Antonín Dvořák: Letters and Reminiscences* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 171.

leave out, because it is a lie, I only sought to write in the spirit of these American-folk melodies."[45]

The melody in question lies in the first movement and second theme of Dvořák's symphony:

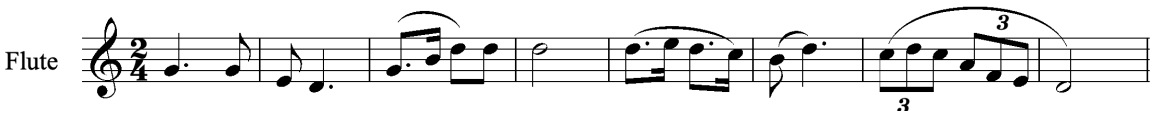

Fig.1.3. Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, *From the New World*, Op. 95. First movement, second theme.

Locke, and others, have likened the above them to the "Negro" spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

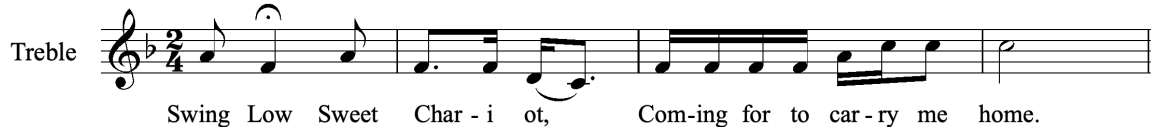

Fig.1.4. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Negro" spiritual.

A close analysis of the two musical examples above will illuminate that the similarities are inconsequential. Firstly, each melodic line consists of obvious syncopated figures. While syncopation, the use of accents on beats or parts of beats that are not traditionally accented, is what Amiri Baraka would refer to as an "Africanism" or African retention, and certainly common within the context of the spiritual, it is not the sole property of African or African American culture. In fact, early use of syncopation[46] in the Western European canon can be found in the refrain "Deo Gratias" from the 15th-century English Agincourt Carol:

[45] Ibid., 211.

[46] Earliest examples of syncopation in the Western European canon, although rudimentary, can be found in fourth species counterpoint of the Middle Ages.

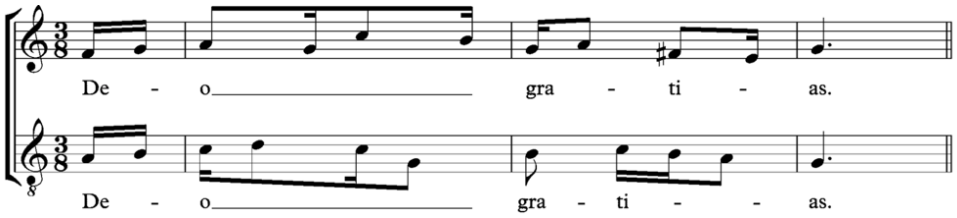

Fig.1.5. "Deo Gratias" from the 15th-century English Agincourt Carol, Anonymous.[47]

Melodically, Locke might speculate that the consecutive pitches, which bridge the distance of a descending minor third followed by a descending major second in the opening two measures of the Dvořák (G4–E4–D4) were derived from measure two of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (F4–D4–C4). Likewise, the sequence of ascending pitches in measures three and four of the Dvořák (G4–B4–D5–D5–D5) were appropriated from the spiritual's third and fourth bars (F4–A4–C4–C4–C4); each line arpeggiates an ascending major triad and repeats the penultimate and ultimate pitches. The commonplace, melodic movement of each line makes Locke's theory suspect, at best.

According to Locke:

> The Negro's own natural[48] reaction back to gaiety and humor and way from the intense reactions of his enforced sorrow and seriousness gave birth to the second strain of Negro folk music—light, mock-sentimental and full of pagan humor…it has become the principal source and ingredient of American popular music."[49]

[47] This is a fine, early example of modal counterpoint where two voices engage in cross-rhythm, a type of syncopation.

[48] Throughout African American music historiography, critics and writers have promulgated a racist ideology of naturalism and primitivism. Here, Locke suggests that it would be innate for a black American to return to a state of joy after being oppressed. It is likely that any human, irrespective of race, would search for joy after suffering. For more on this, see Ted Gioia, "Jazz and the Primitivist Myth," *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1989): pp. 130-143, https://doi.org/10.1093/mq/73.1.130.

[49] Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present.* (North Stratford, N.H.: Ayer Company Publishers, 2002), 8.

He cites the insipid, minstrel-like tune, "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'" by white, vaudeville musician, Wendell Hall from 1923 as a paradigm of this style. One might ask, "How does a musician who is not African American, compose 'Negro' folk music?" Moreover, why would a leader of the "New Negro" movement choose *that* musician as emblematic of the style? It is evident that Locke, when unable to use classical, European models as representative of the Harlem Renaissance, opts to highlight a white musician in hopes of pandering to his constituents and disseminating his agenda.

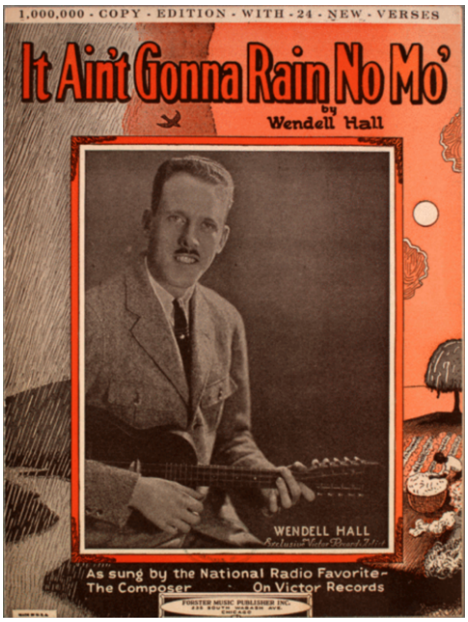

Fig.1.6. *It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'*. Wendell Hall. 1923.

The third class of Locke's stratification of "Negro" music is a "strictly formal or classical type…properly styled Negro music only when obviously derived from folk music idioms or strongly influenced by them."[50] He cites "classical jazz" as an example of this strain and uses George Gershwin's 1924 composition *Rhapsody in Blue* as evidence. Locke expands his conception of this category by including what he deems as

[50] Ibid., 9.

"straight"[51] classics such as Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, William Dawson's *Negro Folk Symphony* and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's oratorio, *Hiawatha*. These are most perplexing choices. Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* cannot be considered "Negro" music, like the aforementioned tune by Hall, because the composer was white. Dawson, on the other hand, was an African American composer, but his *Symphony* was written in 1934 and thusly falls beyond the temporal parameters of the Harlem Renaissance. Coleridge-Taylor, a black London composer who was dubbed the *African Mahler*, completed his oratorio in 1899—again falling outside the temporal bounds of the "New Negro" movement; moreover, the composer was not American.

This study, to evince a model that repudiates any predilection to debase the import of black, vernacular music to American cultural history, subscribes to the ideology espoused by the late Amiri Baraka. In a 2007 panel discussion at Jazz at Lincoln Center entitled *Race in Jazz Academia*, Baraka declared, "What does America have of value in the arts that it created except Afro-American music? Now the refusal to accept it as *that*—black music by black people, you understand, is no different from the status that we're regarded in everything."[52] This is a poignant sentiment and commentary on present-day cultural perspectives. In nearly eight decades after the close of the Harlem Renaissance, the success of the movement is dubious; the spirit of black America is still being subjugated and the ownership of their culture in question. Baraka exclaims, "I mean [white] people think that tap dancing started with Fred Astaire!"[53] The allusion is

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[51] Ibid., 10.

[52] *Race in Jazz Academia* (Jazz at Lincoln Center, 2007).

[53] Ibid.

that white America discounts and disregards the cultural capital put forth by the African American community; in this case, Baraka reminds people that black dancer, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson was the progenitor of tap dancing.

In 1963, Baraka, formerly LeRoi Jones, published a ground-breaking text on the role of race in the development of music in America. It was entitled, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* and represented a staunch standpoint that was diametrically opposed to the Eurocentric ideologies of Locke. Regarding the origins of "Negro" music, he declared:

> That there was a body of music that came to exist from a people who were brought to this side as slaves and that throughout that music's development, it had had to survive, expand, reorganize, continue, and express itself, as the fragile property of powerless and oppressed People [sic].[54]

The "body of music" to which Baraka is referring is the slave song, which included the field holler, work song, and spiritual. Its expansion and reorganization fostered the developments of the blues and jazz.

By 1860, there were roughly four million Africans enslaved in the United States. Forcibly transplanted to a new land, they brought with them a rich, African heritage—including songs. Adapted to reflect the hardship of forced labor on plantations, field hollers, work songs, laments, and shouts of protests wafted through the air like the scent of smoldering sugar cane. Frederick Douglass captured the impulse behind these songs in his autobiography:

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[54] Amiri Baraka, "Introduction" in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Perennial, 2002), ix.

> Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.[55]

The field holler was performed by a lone slave with the explicit function of self-expression—ways of communicating despondency, loneliness, lassitude, or any myriad human emotions. Conversely, the work song was practiced in groups and helped synchronize the slaves' movements, lift their spirits, and, in general, help manage the toil of daily life of being captives in a free land. These songs, along with the spiritual, evolved into the blues—the wellspring that would feed all streams of vernacular, American music—including jazz.

The blues, as a musical form and a form of musical expression, was an advent of post-emancipation America; as such, it celebrated the possibility of freedom for the black population albeit within a world rife with uncertainty, racism, and oppression. The unique character of the blues projected dejection and despair, but as jazz saxophonist, Branford Marsalis declared, "The blues are about freedom. There is liberation in reality. When they talk about these songs…when they talk about being sad, the fact that you recognize that which pains you is a very freeing and liberating experience. When I hear the blues, the blues makes me smile."[56]

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[55] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass* (S.l.: 12TH Media Services, 2019), 15.

[56] *Gumbo: Ken Burns' Jazz, Part 1* (PBS, 2000).

The late writer and cultural critic, Albert Murray, concurred, "Playing the blues was a matter of getting rid of the blues. The lyrics may have been tragic in their orientation, but the music was about having a good time. So, the music was really a matter of stomping the blues away."[57]

By the 1920s, the blues had matured into a cogent, musical form that piqued the interest of burgeoning music labels such as Columbia Records. In the 1923, Bessie Smith, who would be dubbed, "The Empress of Blues," made her first recordings under the Columbia banner. Accompanied on piano by Clarence Williams, Smith performed her renditions of "Down Hearted Blues"[58] and "Gulf Coast Blues." The record sold more than two million copies.[59] The former served as the paradigm of the twelve-bar blues and the essence of blues performance practices.

The "classic blues" model utilized a twelve-bar chorus, an AAB structure, and strict, basic harmonic progression. Moreover, the implementation of the blue note, or "worried" note, was essential to the expressive content of the performance. Figure 1.7. provides an analysis of Smith's first chorus of "Down Hearted Blues."

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[57] Ibid.

[58] "Down Hearted Blues" was composed by Alberta Hunter and Cora "Lovie" Austin in 1922.

[59] Gini Gorlinski, *The 100 Most Influential Musicians of All Time* (New York: Britannica Educational Pub., 2010), 162.

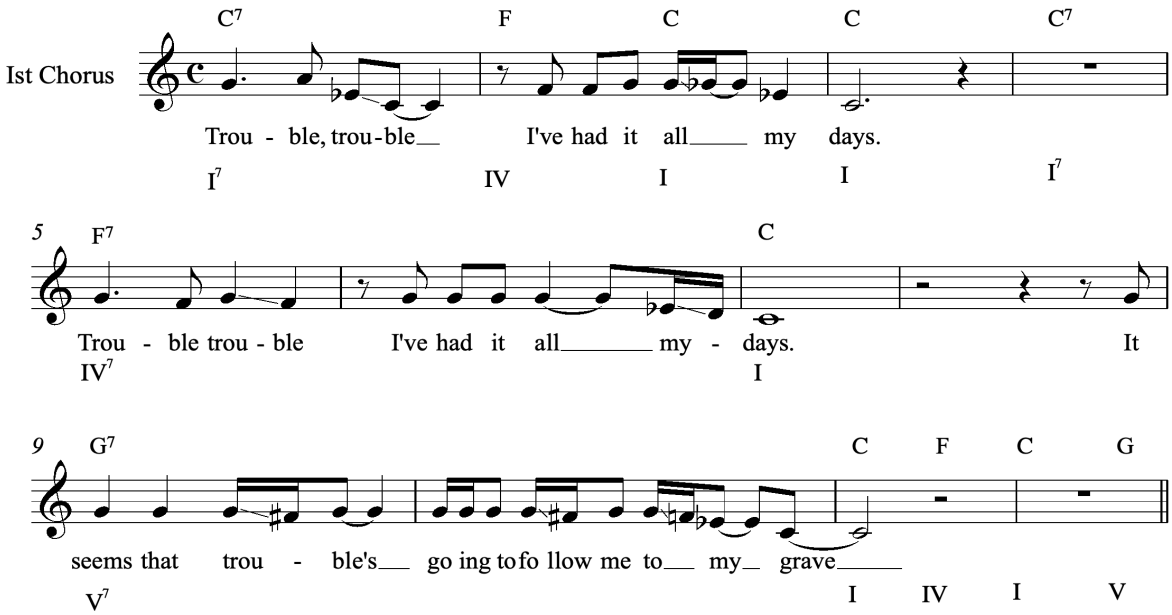

Fig.1.7. *Down Hearted Blues* performed by Bessie Smith, 1923. First Chorus. Author's Transcription and Analysis.

A prominent feature of black, American music performance practice is the implantation of the blue note. This is the tendency for black musicians to produce unstable, microtonal pitches, or pitches that fall between the "cracks" of the diatonic scale. These blue notes, which are difficult to transcribe due to their inexactness, are often applied to the third, seventh, (and occasionally fifth), scale degrees derived from the Common Practice period. Figure 1.8. loosely interprets the implementation of the blue notes.

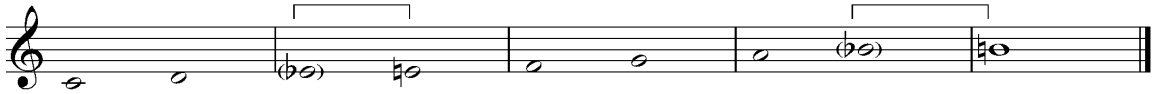

Fig.1.8. *Blue Notes*.

In my transcription of Smith's recording of "Down Hearted Blues," I employ glissandi marks to approximate the microtonal vocalization of these unstable pitches. The function of this practice is to suggest a sense of worry or despondency—a feeling derived

from the oppression that continued to hold captive the post-emancipation African American population.

In order for the blues aesthetic to be codified, it was necessary not only to establish melodic attributes of performance practice, but a systemized harmonic framework, as well. Figure.1.7. outlines the simultaneities used in a typical twelve-bar blues progression; these include in bars one through four: $I^{(7)}$–IV–I–I; bars five through eight: IV–IV–I–I; bars nine through twelve: V–IV–I–V. It should be noted that, while "Down Hearted Blues" is recorded by Smith in the key of C major, the first chord in the song is a C^7—this, sounding as the dominant of the subdominant ($V^{7/}$IV), establishes the harmonic ambiguity found in the blues. Moreover, each triad, depending on the performers' inclinations, could be performed as a seventh chord.

The blues, a key ingredient in the complex, musical cauldron of the United States, would amalgamate with another popular musical form, ragtime, to create jazz. Like the blues, ragtime began as an oral tradition among the African American community of the nineteenth century.

> In the last decade of the 19th century, what was labelled as "ragtime" was played much earlier in minstrel shows, disseminated by itinerant musicians (e.g. banjo players), and performed at the same time as dance and song. As whites became fascinated by this new music, they tried to imitate this Afro-American performance style and to notate the music. By the end of the 19th century music was published as sheet music bearing the labels of "cakewalk," "two step," or other synonyms of ragtime frequent used in the period.[60]

[60] Ingeborg Harer, "Defining Ragtime Music: Historical and Typological Research," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38, no. 3/4 (1997): p. 409, https://doi.org/10.2307/902493

While much of the music associated with the minstrelsy tradition was not syncopated, early, African American ragtime pianists arranged the songs in a jaunty, propulsive style whereby temporarily displacing the regular metrical accent by stressing a weak beat or weak part of a beat; this sense on unevenness in the rhythm was referred to "ragged time," which led to the moniker for the style…ragtime.[61] And, as declared by Henry Martin and Keith Waters, "For the first time, a specifically black musical genre entered and dominated the U.S. mainstream."[62]

The solo piano rags of Scott Joplin, which often used a modified march form standardized by John Philip Sousa, became the apex of the ragtime canon and the archetypal rag was his 1899 composition, "Maple Leaf Rag." Figure 1.9. shows the first edition of the sheet music as published by John Stark.

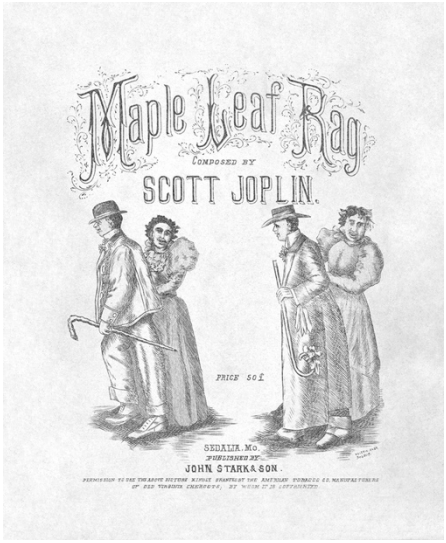

Fig.1.9. *Maple Leaf Rag* by Scott Joplin. *John Stark & Son* publisher.1899.
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

[61] John Edward Hasse, *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 6.

[62] Henry Martin and Keith Waters, *Jazz: The First 100 Years* (Boston, MA, USA: Cengage Learning, 2016), 39.

Fig.1.10. *Maple Leaf Rag* cover from third edition. 1904.

The stark disparity of the sheet music cover illustrations should not be lost on the reader. The first edition, which was published as Joplin intended—a solo piano composition—underscores the pedantic and puritanical airs of white American society of the Victorian era. This would be juxtaposed to the zealous, syncopated rhythms that would await the intrepid pianist inside the cover, many of whom were young women who pursued ragtime as a rebellion against the pretensions of their prosaic parents. As Max Morath affirms, "The great majority of pianists were unquestionably middle-class women, keyboard trained in the European manner, participating in America's booming quest for culture…succumbing to ragtime's lure, often as not in the face of stormy parental objection."[63] Moreover, the women would serve as a catalyst to expiate the white population's denigration of black, American culture.

The third printed edition, as exhibited in Figure 1.10., displays the heinous, racist caricatures associated with the minstrelsy tradition—the "Old Negro." This version of Joplin's classic includes lyrics by Sydney Brown, which uses a hackneyed "Negro" dialect. This amalgam of image, words, and music is emblematic of the knotty racial history of the United States: the illustration and lyrics perpetuate the need of white America to subjugate the African American people through maintaining the precepts of minstrelsy, while Joplin is clearly repudiating those stereotypes with a defiantly demanding work of art.

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[63] John Edward. Hasse, *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 154.

Musically, “Maple Leaf Rag,” named after the *Maple Leaf Club*, a black social organization in Sedalia, Missouri, employs what came to be a codified musical form. Effectively, all rag sections, referred to as strains, contain sixteen bars that are divided into four equal parts; each rag consists of four discrete strains. A typical rag is a statement of the AABBACCDD form. The A strain establishes the tonic harmony, while the B centers around the dominant. The latter provides a lighter, contrasting quality. After the second B strain, there is a recapitulation of the A theme, and then a statement of the trio, or C strain, follows. The trio generally modulates to the subdominant and, as is exhibited in the marches of Sousa, for example “Stars and Stripes Forever,” tends to have a more subdued sensibility; this precipitates the climax of the final section, or D strain.

The rhythmic aspect of ragtime is its most paramount feature. Composed for the piano, the left hand maintains a regular, steady pulse with a march-like, “oom-pah,” ostinato based on eighth note values. The right hand propels the rhythm forward with the use of syncopated figures. Figure 1.11. illustrates two common musical tropes:

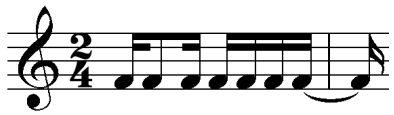

Fig.1.11. Syncopated Figures

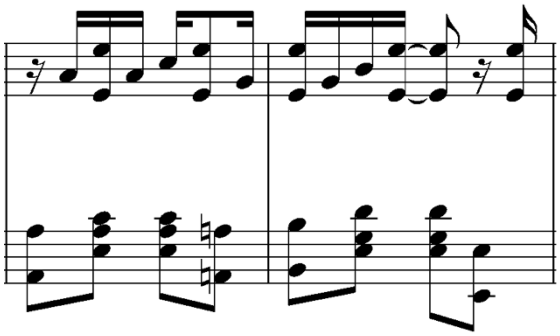

Fig.1.12. *Maple Leaf Rag*, mm. 3-4. Syncopated figures.

Measures three and four of Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag,” Figure 1.12., typify this orthodoxy.

America's fascination with ragtime would wane in the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century. However, the synthesis of the blues with ragtime would bring about the country's greatest cultural contribution to the world—jazz. America's preeminent jazz composer, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington explained:

> You see, there were two lines of jazz at this time. One was the New Orleans line that came up through Chicago, Saint Louis. Then there was the Eastern that came up through Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and New York. And the Eastern of course concentrated more on tunes and piano, *et cetera*. And the Western came out clarinets, trumpets, trombones, that sort of thing.[64]

Beginning this examination in 1919, just two years after the first example of recorded jazz by the *Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, and with the return of the 369th Regiment, establishes a nascent period where African Americans, willing to fight for freedom abroad with hopes of fomenting social change at home, coincides with the incipient, black, musical leaders such as James P. Johnson (and later Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington and Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller) and their ambition of expressing the worth of the African American people to this nation—as Baraka declares, "Black people did not drop out of the sky, although, 'fo' sho',' they continue to be, despite the wildest of ironies, the most American of Americans."[65]

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[64] John L. Fell and Terkild Vinding, *Stride!: Fats, Jimmy, Lion, Lamb, and All the Other Ticklers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 7.

[65] Baraka, "Introduction" in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Perennial, 2002), ix.

CHAPTER TWO

YOU'VE GOT TO BE MODERNISTIC:

JAMES P. JOHNSON

> *All the licks you hear, now as then, originated with musicians like James P. Johnson. And I mean all the hot licks that ever came out of Fats Waller and the rest of the hot piano boys. They were all just faithful followers and protégés of that great man, Jimmy Johnson.*[66]
>
> Ethel Waters

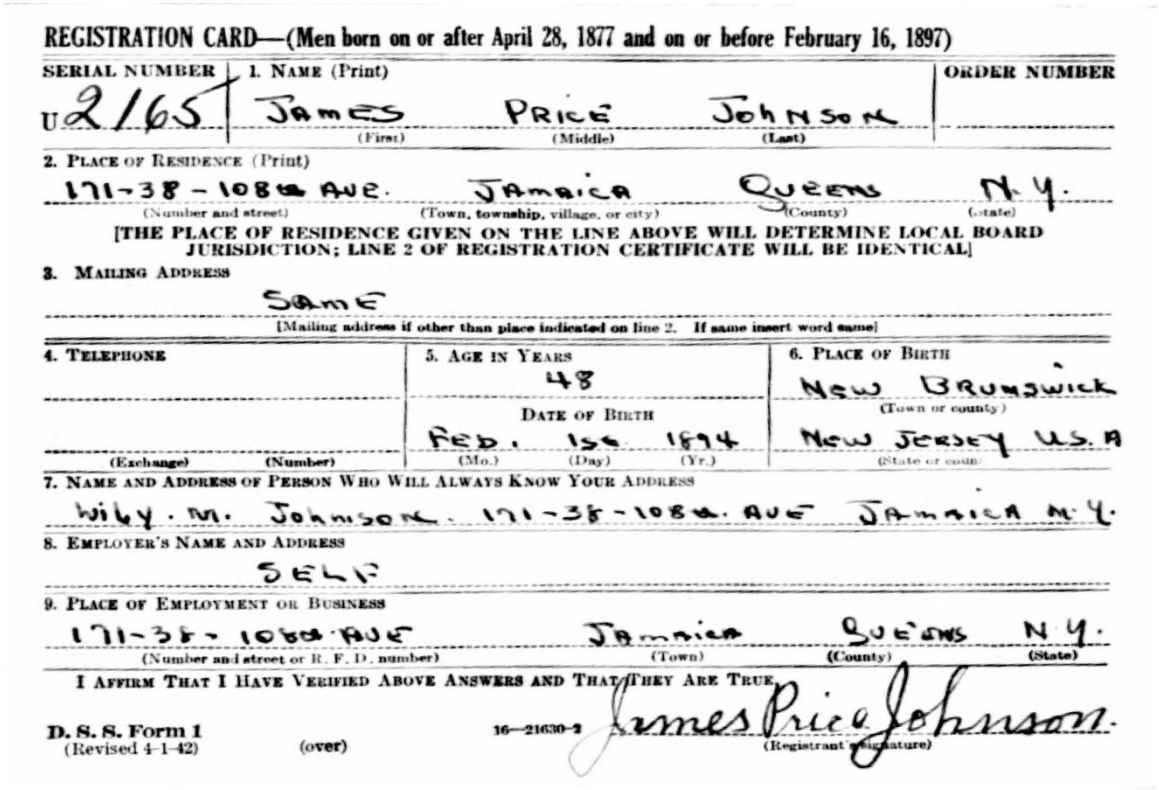
Much of the history of jazz is canonized by writers and critics, many of whom lack the formal training necessary to adequately discern the musical, historical, sociological, and humanistic significance of those who contributed to the development of the art form. Consequently, many musicians are cast to the periphery of the narrative or worse, never discussed at all. Perhaps the most egregious offense has been perpetrated on James P. Johnson, whose artistry, impact in the development of jazz piano, and his substantial contribution to American musical theater are often overlooked; consequently, he has been referred to by Reed College musicologist David Schiff, as "the invisible composer."[67]

James Price Johnson was born on February 1, 1894 in his parents' home at 6 City Alley, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Jazz historiography, however, is mired in ineffectual research and, as such, perpetuates the insouciance with which Johnson is treated; unfortunately, such research is not relegated to writers and critics. For example, renowned composer, musician, and jazz historian Gunther Schuller, cited Johnson's birth

[66] Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (New York: Dover, 1966), 176.

[67] David Schiff, "A Pianist with Harlem on His Mind," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1992, pp. 1, 28.

year as 1891 in his tome, "Early Jazz."[68] Johnson's registration for selective service, which states February 1, 1894 as his date of birth, clearly repudiates Schuller's claim (Figure 2.1.). Moreover, Johnson's name is conspicuously absent in a book entitled, "Tunes of the Twenties (and All that Jazz): The Stories Behind the Songs." The author, a professor of music at a liberal arts college in New Jersey, seems to have forgotten "Charleston"—a song composed by Johnson, which is considered to be the metonym for the 1920s.



REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

SERIAL NUMBER U 2165 | 1. NAME (Print): James (First) Price (Middle) Johnson (Last) | ORDER NUMBER

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print): 171-38 - 108th AVE. (Number and street) Jamaica (Town, township, village, or city) Queens (County) N. Y. (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS: SAME

[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]

4. TELEPHONE (Exchange) (Number)

5. AGE IN YEARS: 48

DATE OF BIRTH: FEB. (Mo.) 1st (Day) 1894 (Yr.)

6. PLACE OF BIRTH: New Brunswick (Town or county) New Jersey U.S.A (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS: Wife · M. Johnson · 171-38-108th. AVE Jamaica N.Y.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: SELF

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: 171-38-108th AVE (Number and street or R. F. D. number) Jamaica (Town) Queens (County) N.Y. (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

James Price Johnson. (Registrant's signature)

D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42) (over) 16—21630-2

Fig.2.1. James P. Johnson's Registration for Selective Service.[69]

[68] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 215.

[69] United States, Selective Service System. *Selective Service Registration Cards, World War II: Fourth Registration*. Records of the Selective Service System, Record Group Number 147. National Archives and Records Administration.

Johnson, the youngest of five children, was raised in a loving home that was steeped in the tenets of the Methodist faith. His mother, Josephine, exposed her children to traditional church hymns as she accompanied herself on their upright piano; a young James sat at her feet and played with the instrument's pedals. On weekend evenings, after church, the Johnsons commonly entertained friends by hosting parties at their home. Cotillion, set, and shout dances were performed for the guests–many of whom were transplanted laborers from southern states such as Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas. James P. recalled the events in an interview with Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis:

> The Northern towns had a hold-over of the old southern customs. I'd wake up as a child and hear an old-fashioned ring shout going on downstairs. They danced around in a shuffle and then they would shove a man or woman out into the center and clap hands. This would go on all night and I would fall asleep sitting at the top of the stairs in the dark.[70]

The music and dancing to which James P. was exposed during these festivities had a profound impact on his later musical development; suffused in African traditions and customs, they would prove to be the foundation of not only his mature piano style, but of his overarching musical aesthetic. The ring shout was central to this footing.

The ring shout, which had become more secular in nature by the time James P. was exposed to it, had its origins in a West African dance ceremony. The participants shuffled counterclockwise, ostensibly around a deity. It was considered reverent to move in the direction whereby the participants' hearts were closest to their god. Sterling

[70] Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime*, (New York: Oak, 1971), 190.

Stuckey elucidates, "the dancing and singing were directed to the ancestors and gods, the tempo and revolution of the circle quickening during the course of the movement."[71]

Upon their forced uprooting to the New World, African slaves created a syncretistic ritual that fused African traditions and Protestant Christianity. Baraka expounds on its development, "Since dancing was irreligious and sinful, the Negro said that only 'crossing the feet' constituted actual dancing. So, the ring shout developed, where the worshipers link arms and shuffle..."[72] The impassioned shouters, moving gradually at an increased tempo, often reached heights of exhaustion and ecstasy. As they sung in antiphonal fashion, they were accompanied by intensely syncopated hand clapping and the pounding of a wooden broom stick against the floor. Figure 2.2., "Wade the Water to My Knees," is an exemplar of the time-honored ring shout.

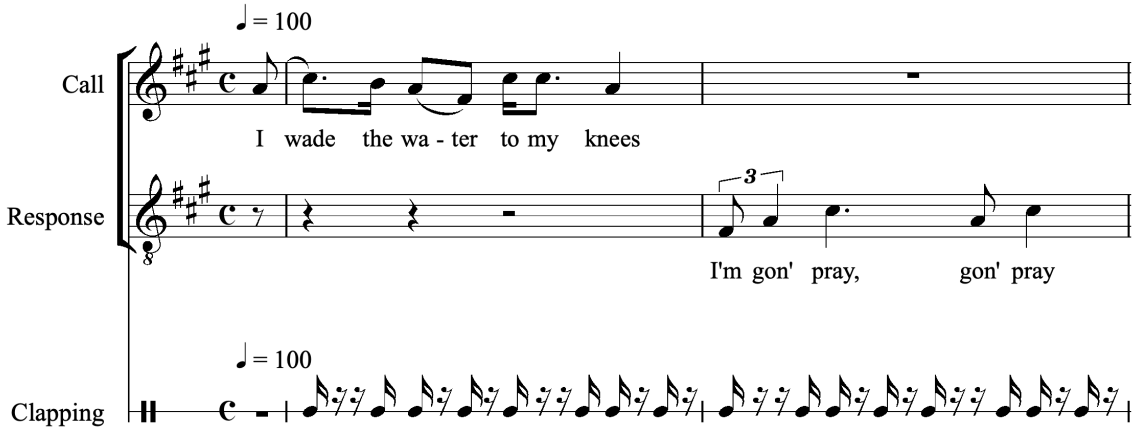


Fig.2.2. *Wade the Water to My Knees.* Author's transcription from *Spirituals and Shout Songs from the Georgia Coast* (Bolden Home Lodge, 2015).

[71]Sterling Stuckey, *A Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 85.

[72] Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America.* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 43.

The essence of the ring shout would not be lost on Johnson. As he matured musically, he retained myriad elements of the secular performance. The call and response patterns, short melodic phrases, repeated motivic fragments, and fervent syncopation would be principal to his compositional and improvisational practices. Figure 2.3., *The McIntosh County Shouters Performing the Ring Shout in Bolden Home Lodge, 2015*, is a photograph taken by Margot Newmark Rosenbaum for the liner notes of *Spirituals and Shout Songs from the Georgia Coast*: The McIntosh County Shouters, an album produced by the Smithsonian Institute's Folkways project. It is an authentic icon of what James P. experienced as a child.

Fig.2.3. The McIntosh County Shouters performing the ring shout in Bolden Home Lodge, 2015.

In 1902, the Johnson family relocated to Monmouth Street in Jersey City, New Jersey. The area, known for its unsavory establishments such as barrelhouses, would prove to be an inspiration for young James. While too young to be permitted to enter the bawdy saloons, he sat outside and was able to pick up popular tunes of the day such as, "She Got Good Booty" and "Baby, Let Your Drawers Hang Low"–all of which were being performed by a pianist referred to as a "tickler." Johnson recalled his interest in becoming a "tickler" in a series of interviews with Tom Davin. The journalist queried, "How did you get launched as a professional pianist?"

> I told you before how I was impressed by my older brothers' friends. They were real ticklers–cabaret and sporting-house players. They were my heroes and led what I felt was a glamorous life–welcome everywhere because of their talent.[73]

While in his early teens, the Johnson family moved to the African American section of Manhattan called San Juan Hill. This area, north and west of Columbus Circle in the lower sixties, was referred to as "The Jungles." James P. described this neighborhood as "the Negro section of Hell's Kitchen and ran from 60th to 63rd west of 9th Avenue. It was the toughest part of New York. There were two or three killings a night."[74] The violence did not deter Johnson's passion for exploring the music of the metropolis:

> In New York, a friend taught me real ragtime. His name was Charley Cherry. He played Joplin. First he played, then I copied him, and then he corrected me…I used to go to the old New York Symphony concerts…I didn't get much out of them, but the full symphonic sounds made a great impression on me."[75]

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[73] Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P. Johnson." *Jazz Review*. July 1959, 10.

[74] Davin, "Conversations." *Jazz Review*. Vol. 2, No.6, July 1959, 11.

[75] John Edward Hasse, *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 169-170.

During the summer of 1912, Johnson sojourned to the beach resort town of Far Rockaway, Queens; it was there where he, now in possession of an orchestral[76] approach to the piano, began his cabaret career in earnest. He played regularly in a saloon that he described as:

> a couple of rooms knocked together to make a cabaret. They had beer and liquor, and out in the back yard was a crib house for fast turnover…It was a rough place, but I got nine dollars and tips, or about eighteen dollars a week overall. That was so much money, I didn't want to go back to school.[77]

In fact, Johnson did not return to school. He spent his time gaining valuable experience in the vast array of sporting-houses and cabarets that peppered Manhattan and the remaining boroughs of New York City. But it was in the "Jungles Casino," a club located at Sixty-first Street and Tenth Avenue, where he found his home.

> The dances they did at the Jungles Casino were wild and comical–the more pose and the more breaks, the better. These Charleston[78] people and the other southerners had just come to New York. They were country people and they felt homesick. When they got tired of two-steps and schottisches…they'd yell, 'Let's go back home!' … 'Let's do a set!"… or 'Now put us in the alley!'[79] I did my 'Mule Walk' or 'Gut Stomp' for these country dances… Breakdown music was the best for such sets, the more solid and groovy the better. They'd dance, hollering and screaming until they were cooked. The dances ran from fifteen to thirty minutes, but they kept up all night long or until their shoes wore out—most of them after a heavy day's work on the docks.[80]

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[76] An orchestral approach to the piano refers to using the entire range of the instrument and employing densely-textured harmonies.

[77] Davin, "Conversations." *Jazz Review*. Vol. 2, No.6, July 1959, 11.

[78] Out of these dances, would come the "Charleston" rhythm. This would be the foundation for Johnson's 1923 composition of the same name that launched the dance craze of the "Roaring Twenties."

[79] A "set" refers to a set dance (similar to that of country square dancing). "Alley" refers to music of the blues.

[80] Davin, "Conversations." *Jazz Review*. July 1959, 12.

The vernacular songs performed in the "Jungles Casino" would likely be derided by Locke and the black intelligentsia of the "New Negro" movement—they were the apotheosis of the low-brow, musical comportment against which they were combatting. However, Johnson was aware of the music's capacity to heal the "homesick." This is the paragon of racial uplift—possessing the empathy with which to comprehend the austere actuality of a people twice-displaced and, in spite of that reality, buoying their spirits and giving hope to his community.

During the following years, Johnson would meet several musicians who would have a substantial influence on his playing–Willie "The Lion" Smith, Richard "Abba Labba" McLean, Luckey Roberts, and Eubie Blake. Each of these men provided invaluable informal training, encouragement, direction to their friend and protégé. Johnson, who was gifted with perfect pitch and an astonishing tonal memory, was able to assimilate their styles while in the process of developing his own:

> I was starting to develop a very good technique. I was born with absolute pitch and could catch a key that a player was using and copy it, even Luckey's. I played rags very accurately and brilliantly running chromatic octaves and glissandos up and down with both hands. It made a terrific effect.[81]

According to Johnson's account with Davin, a Mr. Fay from the Aeolian Piano Company contacted him in 1916 to cut ragtime piano rolls.[82] However, no tangible evidence is extant to corroborate the pianist's claims. The following year, however,

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Hasse, *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 169-170.

James P. was afforded the opportunity to document a series of piano rolls, the first of which was in May, a William Farrell composition, "After Tonight," for the Universal company. Sixteen additional hand-played rolls followed, including nine original compositions: "Caprice Rag," "Daintiness Rag," "Fascination," "Innovation," "Mama's Blues," "Monkey Hunch," "Steeplechase Rag," "Stop It," and "Twilight Rag."

The process of cutting piano rolls was tedious but paid well. Using a "recording" piano, Johnson would perform his composition in real time. As he depressed the piano keys, "pencil marks were made by eighty-eight tiny carbon markers. When the 'recording' was finished, the result was a marked-up preliminary master roll. The next operation consisted of manually cutting out the marked spots with special die punches."[83] Copying machinery would mass produce rolls that would be ready for public purchase. Using a player piano, or pianola, the user could entertain friends and family by "performing" rags and classics; pumping pedals on the piano would force air into the instrument, thus causing the roll to move. As the roll rotated, the perforated marks in the paper would trigger a mechanism to initiate a hammer to strike the strings, thus producing the correct pitch and its duration.

Johnson's transmutation from the straight ragtime style vis-à-vis Joplin to the looser, swinging approach for which he is renowned, transpired after February 1918 and prior to May 1921. The evolution was likely an organic one, with no singular moment lucidly marking his transformation. The former date, however, documents James P.'s initial piano roll for his masterpiece, "Carolina Shout," while the latter marks his

[83] Hasse, *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 94.

subsequent cut of the tune. The transfiguration is remarkable. The 1918 version is stiff in comparison and rife with an undemonstrative character. The 1921 rendering embodies the fervor and prowess for which Johnson had been striving—the hallmarks of the Harlem stride aesthetic. The music was steeped in the countrified, agrarian spirit of his past while capturing the ebullient, cosmopolitan ethos of his present. "Carolina Shout," which became the étude for all aspiring stride pianists, in its capacity to raise the proverbial bar for vernacular piano playing and composition, should have quelled the bemoaning voice of the black intelligentsia. In his article, "Balancing Composition and Improvisation in James P. Johnson's Carolina Shout," Martin illuminates the essence of the style and thusly, the import of Johnson's seminal composition:

> Stride piano developed from a blend of three musical genres: ragtime, the blues, and the ring shout. From the blues, stride took blue notes (or bent notes) and used note clusters to approximate them. From solo piano ragtime, stride took formal structures and harmonic and textural elements. From the ring shout, a dance of African origin, stride took its exciting affect, call-and-response formulas, short melodic patterns, and 'groove.'[84]

Duke Ellington shared his experience with Johnson's 1921 tour de force:

> My first encounter with James was through the piano rolls, the Q.R.S. rolls. Percy Johnson, a drummer in Washington told me about them, took me home with him, and played "Carolina Shout" for me. He said I ought to learn it. So how was I going to do it, I wanted to know. He showed me the way. We slowed the machine and then I could follow the keys going down. I learned it! And how I learned it. I nursed it, rehearsed it…Yes, this was the most solid foundation for me… "Carolina Shout" became my party piece.[85]

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[84] Henry Martin, "Balancing Composition and Improvisation in James P. Johnson's Carolina Shout." *Journal of Music Theory.* Vol. 49, No. 2 (Fall, 2005), pp. 277-278.

[85] Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 93.

Ellington's reference to a "party piece" explicates a part of Harlem history that is inextricably bound to the inequity and malevolence with which the black community was forced to withstand and one that was central to the need for *their* art as a respite—discriminatory housing practices.

The first decade of the twentieth century saw a mass exodus of African Americans fleeing the unspeakable circumstances manifested by the tyranny of Jim Crow. While the first World War may have facilitated the necessity for black labor in northern industrial cities, the impetus for the *Great Migration* was assuredly self-preservation. Harlem's African American populace, for example, more than quadrupled between 1910 and 1920; 9.89% of central Harlem's entire population of 181,949 swelled to 32.43% of 216,026 by the time of the second census. [86] This induced white property owners to punitively increase the cost of apartment rentals to black Americans by twenty to thirty dollars more than what was charged to white residents.[87] In its 1927 report on 2,326 Harlem apartments, the Urban League found that 48% of the [black] renters spent an average of $55.70 per month compared to $32.43 by white tenants.[88] In order to subsist, the African American community determined its resiliency and resisted the

[86] Census Tract Data from *National Historical Geographical Information System*. Compiled by Andrew A. Beveridge et al.

[87] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 279.

[88] David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 108.

display of fiscal injustice by devising a "unique social and entertainment phenomenon known as the rent party."[89]

As the name implies, the rent party served as a social gathering where attendees would be provided food, drinks, and entertainment for a nominal admission fee. The money raised during the event would help offset the cost of the tenant's rent. (Figure 2.4. is a lithograph entitled, *Harlem Rent Party*, by Mabel Dwight that depicts a scene from the Wallace Thurman play, "Harlem," from 1929. Figure 2.5. illustrates how a typical rent party was promoted.)

Fig.2.4. *Harlem Rent Party*, Mabel Dwight lithography from 1929.

[89] Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 279.

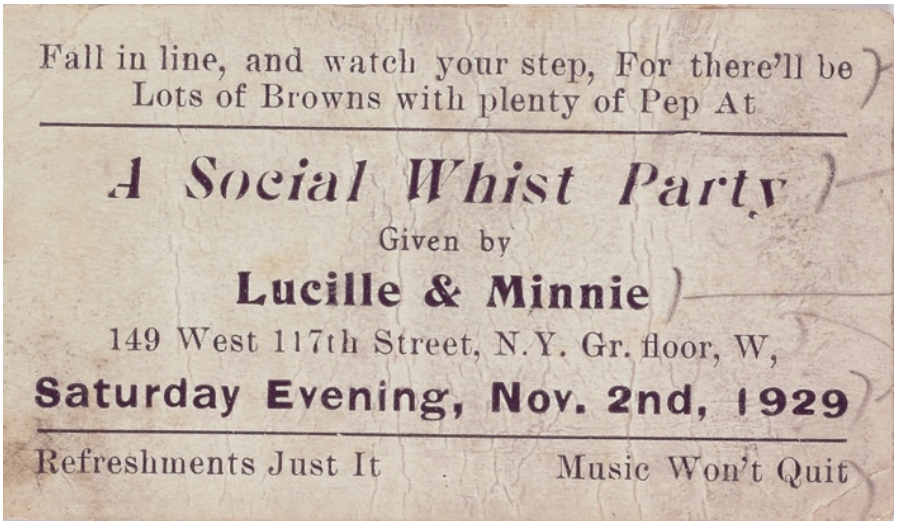

Fig.2.5. Rent Party Cards from the Langston Hughes Papers (Courtesy of James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of African American Arts and Letters, Yale Collection of American Literature).

The tagline, the "music won't quit," was apropos for the rent party setting, since the central figures were the "ticklers." The "Big Three," James P., Willie "The Lion" Smith and Thomas "Fats" Waller had a ubiquitous presence throughout Harlem. Through the night and into the following morning, partygoers would be entertained by each man attempting to "cut" the other with incessant musical invention. Duke Ellington recalled:

> Before you knew it, James had played about thirty choruses, each one different, each one with a different theme. By then, The Lion would be stirred up. 'Get up and I'll show you how it's supposed to be done,' he'd say. Then, one after the other, over and over again they'd play, and it seemed as though you never heard the same note twice…You know, [James] normally played the most, and in competition a little bit more.[90]

Invariably, Johnson's most resolute "cut" piece was his intricate showcase, "Carolina Shout." A close analysis of the composition, as published in 1926 in sheet music form, should illuminate its profundity as well as Johnson's desire to retain the call and response

[90] Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 93.

patterns, short melodic phrases, repeated motivic fragments, and fervent syncopation associated with his musical ancestry.

As written, "Carolina Shout," is a jubilant composition which is built upon a series of strains. Johnson breaks from the conventional ragtime form of AABBACCDD and employs a form of: A1 (16 bars), A2 (16 bars), B (16 bars), C (16 bars), D (16-bar trio), E (16 bars), F (16-bar variant of D), G (16-bar variant of D), Coda (7 bars). Using the published version, as scholar Henry Martin argues in his article, "Balancing Composition and Improvisation in James P. Johnson's 'Carolina Shout'," "that [Johnson] be called a compositionally-oriented musician who elaborated his works at the piano in live performance."[91] The intimation is that while James P. did vary his performances of the tune, he essentially used what was written as a framework for his embellishments. Martin expounds on the use of variation, "in the case of 'Carolina Shout,' it is likely that Johnson developed variations in advance and then retained them for future performances if they were successful."[92]

Irrespective of the version used for analysis, Johnson invariably began "Carolina Shout" with a four-bar introduction (Figure 2.6.). The opening measure not only establishes the tonal center, tempo, and musical disposition of the piece, but references the essence of the blues with "crushed" blue notes.[93] The second bar moves away from the tonic by way of two predominant simultaneities, ii and IV. As expected, the dominant

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[91] Martin, "Balancing Composition and Improvisation in James P. Johnson's 'Carolina Shout,'" *Journal of Music Theory* 49, no. 2 (January 2005), 296.

[92] Ibid., 294.

[93] Since a piano cannot create the microtonal elisions of other instruments such as the voice, the pianist must "crush" adjacent notes to replicate the blues aesthetic.

chord follows. Johnson adds some color on the third beat of measure three with a minor tonic triad via mode mixture (enharmonically spelled). The closing beat uses an applied or secondary dominant in the form of a leading-tone triad of the supertonic harmony. The downbeat of the final bar is a D^7 chord, presaging a return to G major. However, James P. postpones this resolution by using a whole-tone cluster on the third beat[94]—a foreshadowing of his 1929 composition, "You've Got to be Modernistic," and perhaps represents what Houston Baker called for when suggesting, "a more inclusive 'renaissancism' defined as an ever-present, folk or vernacular drive that moves always up, beyond and away from whatever forms of oppression surrounding [it]."[95] Thus, by conflating the vernacular language of the blues with a more "modernistic" harmonic practice, Johnson asserts his agency against the Eurocentric, elitist musical traditions and exposes the primitivist-modernist dichotomy of Harlem's vogue in the 1920s.

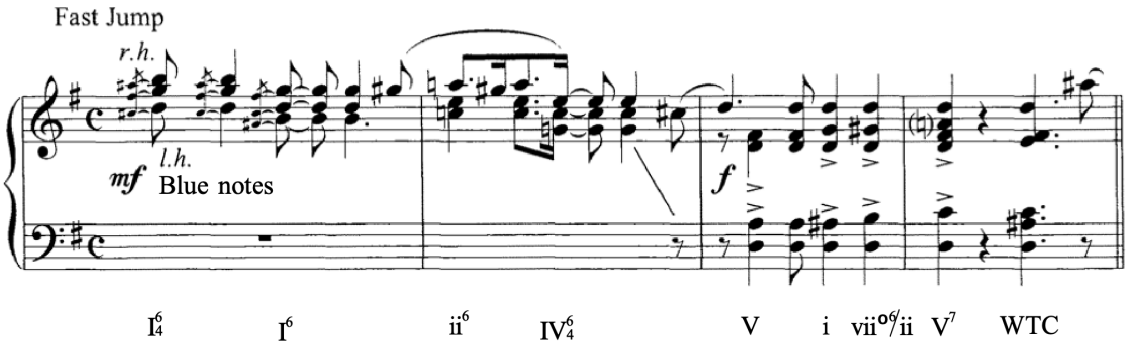

Fig.2.6. *Carolina Shout*, James P. Johnson. MCA Sheet music edition, 1926. Author's analysis.

[94] An alternative reading of this chord could be a $D^{9(\#5)}$, thus expanding the dominant harmony in that measure. The WTC analysis is based on the history of chromatic upper extensions in jazz; these harmonic tensions were an advent of the bebop era of the 1940s-1950s and not likely how Johnson would have viewed them.

[95] Houston Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 96.

Each of the primary strains, A through D, of the 1926 version comprises some aspect of Johnson's pluralistic aesethic—representing both the past and present—and is archetypal in its function to put the listeners back "in the alley" and "beyond and away from whatever forms of oppression surrounding [them]" simultaneously. This is evident from the onset of the composition.

The first strain, as shown in Figure 2.7., begins with a four-measure thematic block, which David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor astutely assert is reminiscent of the folk idioms used in ragtime pieces such as the first strains of Ted Snyder's "Wild Cherries Rag" from 1908 and Jelly Roll Morton's "Perfect Rag" from 1924.[96] Johnson establishes the metric pulse with the left hand in the first two and a half bars, but brilliantly turns it around using "backbeats"[97] or "change-steps" to disrupt the organization of strong and weak beats. This metric dissonance is what Johnson was referring to when he described, "Breakdown music was the best for such sets, the more solid and groovy the better."[98]

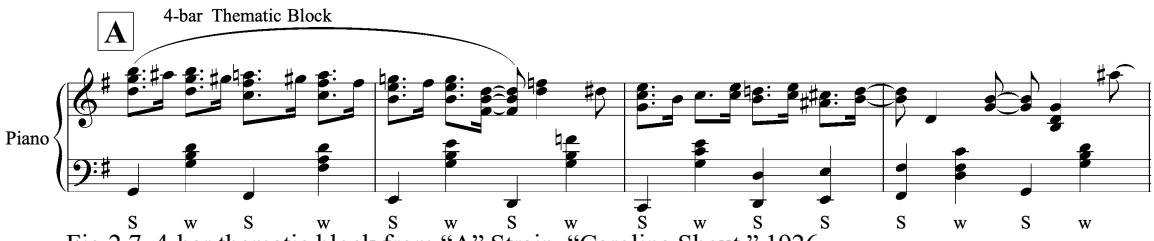

Fig.2.7. 4-bar thematic block from "A" Strain, "Carolina Shout." 1926.

[96] David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History* (New York: Dover, 1989), 244.

[97] The term "backbeat" in stride is not applied in the same fashion as it is in contemporary rock and roll music. In the latter style, the "backbeat" is referring to beats two and four (in common time).

[98] Davin, "Conversations." *Jazz Review*. July 1959, 12.

Conventionally, in common time (4/4 meter), the first and third beats are stressed (labeled here as “S” for strong), whereas the second and fourth are not (labeled here as “w” for weak). Johnson’s use of “backbeats” or “change-steps” found in the third measure forces an alteration to the established meter. This creates a metric displacement that he would characterize as “groovy” and it was invariably a delight to the audience.

In the second strain, B (Figure 2.8.), Johnson uses a repetitive “groove” in the right hand that is supported by the traditional, striding left hand. Harmonically, he moves temporarily away from the tonic and towards the subdominant with a V^7/IV to IV progression. In the third bar, he alters the metric pulse by returning to the backbeats. This is juxtaposed against a highly syncopated right hand which increases the rhythmic excitement of the composition.

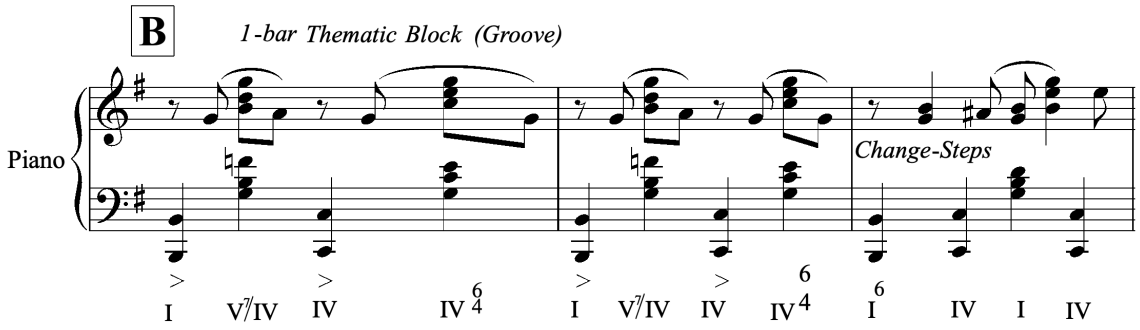

Fig.2.8. B Strain, 1-bar thematic block. “Carolina Shout.” 1926.

Johnson musically induces the memory of the ring shout in the third section, the C strain, with an antiphonal pattern in the right hand. The change in register enhances the call and response effect—perhaps mimicking an impassioned preacher and a jubilant congregation. The fervent syncopation in the left hand engenders a jaunty, propulsivity that is both infectious and technically demanding. The consequence of these two colliding, musical tropes besiege the feeble ideologies espoused by Locke and his ilk—embracing “the musical stuff of ‘high’ cultural and…European musical traditions” did

nothing for the elevation of the African American community; they longed for *their* tradition and James P. was cognizant of it.

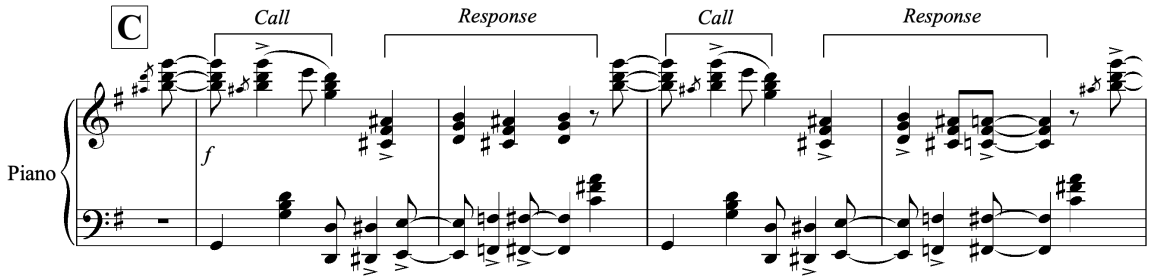

Fig.2.9. C Strain. "Carolina Shout." 1926.

For the final primary section, the D strain, Johnson follows the ragtime model by modulating to the subdominant in the trio (Figure 2.10). The change of key and less dense textural treatment produce a lighter, overarching comportment and thusly balances the composition. The use of a thematic block has proven to be essential to James P.'s aesthetic. Here, he employs a two-measure phrase that is based around the dominant of the new key. Of particular harmonic interest is the simultaneity, labeled *, in the second bar, which is marked dynamically as sforzato and is highly syncopated against the change-steps in the left hand. Obviously, this was the focal point of the thematic block and has "modernistic" implications; it serves a secondary dominant function, V^7/ii, however includes a flatted ninth—the $B^{\flat}$. The presence of an upper extension, along with the closely-positioned texture, portend the harmonic lexicon of stride pianists who would follow him, such as Art Tatum. Moreover, Johnson chooses not to resolve the applied dominant to its anticipated harmony of D-minor, but rather continues to concentrate on the dominant of the temporary new key.

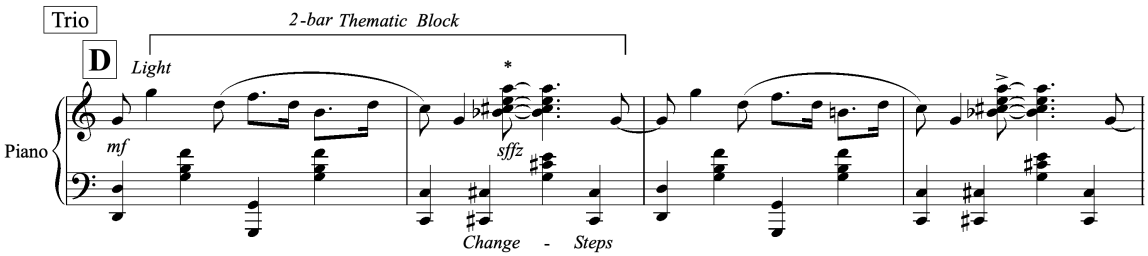

Fig.2.10. D Strain. "Carolina Shout." 1926.

"Carolina Shout" is a masterful exposition of a composer who is both fiercely innovative and reverent of his musical heritage. Being mindful of this duality, Johnson belies the need of the black intelligentsia to culturally transform vernacular music to an art of "loftier magnitude" and chooses to serve those whose spirits crave authentic black, American music.

If James P.'s contributions to the history and tradition of jazz ended with "Carolina Shout," he would assuredly be included into the pantheon of the music's elite. However, his humanity—his desire to provide a salve for the homesick denizens from the Carolinas—served as a compelling impetus for him to continue composing. While entertaining the exiled African American community in the "Jungles Casino," James P. recalled:

> The Charleston, which became a popular dance step on its own, was just a regulation cotillion step without a name. It had many variations—all danced to the rhythm that everybody knows now. One regular at the Casino, named Dan White, was the best dancer in the crowd and he introduced the Charleston step as we know it. But there were dozens of other steps used, too. It was while playing for these southern dancers that I composed a number of Charlestons—eight in all—all with the same rhythm. One of these later became my famous *Charleston* when it hit Broadway.[99]

[99] Davin, "Conversations." *Jazz Review*. Vol. 2, No.6, July 1959, 12.

On October 29, 1923, a black musical theater production entitled, *Runnin' Wild*, opened at location in San Juan Hill not too distant from the "Jungles Casino." A decade after exultantly entertaining the longshoremen in a cellar where, "when it rained, the water would run down the walls from the street so [the dancers] all had to stop and mop up the floor,"[100] Johnson had made it to the *Colonial Theatre* on the corner of Broadway and 62nd Street. *Runnin' Wild*, a musical revue which would become the only all-African American Broadway production to rival the success of *Shuffle Along*[101] by Eubie Blake and Nobel Sissle, ran for two hundred and thirteen performances on Broadway before closing on May 3, 1924. The show was a musical comedy in two acts with a total of ten scenes. The book was by Flournoy E. Miller and Aubrey L. Lyles, who incidentally wrote *Shuffle Along* and were the stars of the production. James P. composed the score, Cecil Mack (a pseudonym for Richard McPhearson) provided the lyrics, the choreography was arranged by Lyda Webb, and George White (of the *George White's Scandals* fame of 1919) was the producer.[102] Like its predecessor in *Shuffle Along*, *Runnin' Wild* was based on a paltry plot that was connected by the nucleus of the revue—its music. Two crowd-pleasing numbers received critical acclaim—"Old Fashioned Love" and the epoch-making "Charleston."

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[100] Ibid.

[101] *Shuffle Along*, from 1921, was the first all-African American musical revue in which the performers and audiences alike were treated with dignity. The black theatergoers could sit in orchestra seats rather than being relegated to the balcony and the show highlighted a sophisticate love story, rather than one steeped in a frivolous, minstrel style. It ran for over five hundred performances and propelled the careers of Josephine Baker, Adelaide Hall, and Paul Robeson.

[102] Bernard L. Peterson, *A Century of Musicals in Black and White: An Encyclopedia of Musical Stage Works by, about, or Involving African Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 298.

"Charleston," the late theater historian Gerald Bordman exclaimed, "ultimately expressed and symbolized the whole gaudy era about to explode. It pronounced the beat for the 'lost generation' and liberated the whole jazz movement."[103] Indubitably, James P., as a testament to his humility, had no reason to believe that the rhythmic allure and lyrical nature that were featured in "Charleston" would procure international renown. In 1913, when he first played the tune at the "Jungles Casino," his aim was to entertain himself and his community and provide an experience that would vanquish the social, racial, and economic bigotry that confronted them.

Considering the esteem with which "Charleston" is held and its nexus to the "Roaring Twenties" and the "Jazz Age," Johnson only recorded the song on three occasions—all of which moved away from the two-beat rhythm of ragtime; the first document of the tune is from the QRS piano roll from March 24, 1924, where James P. performs a medley from *Runnin' Wild*: "Charleston," "Old Fashioned Love," "Open Your Heart" and "Love Bug." The second recording, another QRS piano roll, was from June of 1925. Lastly, Johnson took part in the Rudi Blesh broadcast, *This is Jazz*. This final version of "Charleston" was an aggregate setting with James P. on piano being accompanied by Dixieland staples Muggsy Spanier, cornet; George Brunis, trombone, vocals; Albert Nicholas, clarinet; Danny Barker, guitar; Pops Foster, bass; Baby Dodds, drums and Sidney Bechet, soprano sax.

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[103] Gerald Martin. Bordman and Richard Norton, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 382.

As published in 1923 by Harms Incorporated of New York, "Charleston" is an infectiously syncopated composition built on a verse-chorus (AB) song form. From the onset, Johnson presents the audience with the primary rhythmic motive and his harmonic invention within an eight-bar introduction. The "Charleston Rhythm," as it has been ubiquitously dubbed for decades, was simply a syncopated, duple rhythm which alludes to jazz's foundations in ragtime (Figure 2.11.):

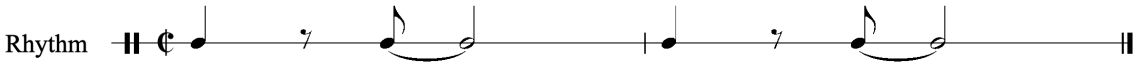

Fig.2.11. *Charleston Rhythm* as published in 1923.

James P., however, performed the rhythm in a simple-quadruple meter as can be seen in measures five through eight in Johnson's introduction to his March 24, 1924, piano roll for QRS, (QRS 101027)[104] (Figure 2.12.):

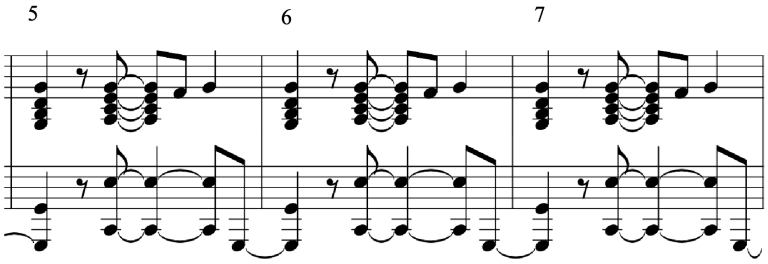

Fig.2.12. *Charleston Rhythm from piano roll QRS 101027*. Author's transcription.

Harmonically, "Charleston" is much more complex than its rhythmic counterpart. There exists a certain irony here; while the syncopation within the context of the tune is exultant, the composition's success is assuredly not singularly contingent upon it. The harmony not only supports the melodic framework of the song but adds sustenance to the

[104] Craig Martin Gibbs, *Black Recording Artists, 1877-1926: An Annotated Discography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 401.

rhythmic comportment as well. Johnson introduces the tune on the submediant of $B^{\flat}$ major, G-minor. In the second bar, he employs the secondary dominant of the subdominant (V^7/IV), $B^{\flat 7}$, and progresses, as expected, to the IV chord on the downbeat of the subsequent measure. On the second beat in the third measure, Johnson plays an Italian-Augmented Sixth chord, It^{+6}, ($G^{\flat}$—$B^{\flat}$—E♮). This simultaneity is not common in the jazz canon, which illustrates James P.'s proclivity for assimilating unconventional, musical elements into his compositions—his "modernistic" approach. The It^{+6} moves to a second-inversion tonic triad, rather than the expected dominant chord. On the downbeat of the fourth measure, Johnson restates the It^{+6} and advances to a French-Augmented Sixth chord, Fr^{+6}, ($G^{\flat}$—$B^{\flat}$—C♮—E♮). While some may attempt to analyze the latter sonority as a $C^{7(\flat 5)}$, a more common spelling in the jazz idiom, it is was not a part of early jazz nomenclature. More importantly, as a student of Joplin's compositions, James P. would likely be familiar with his rag, "Binks' Waltz" from 1905, which contained a German-Augmented Sixth chord in measure ninety-six (Figure 2.13.):

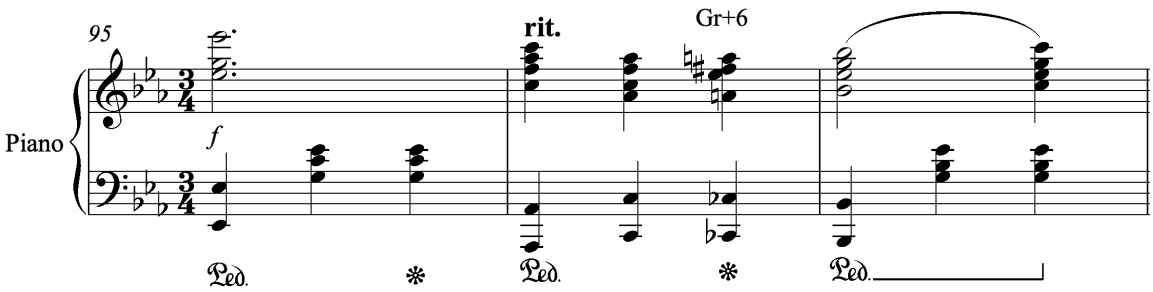

Fig.2.13. "Binks' Waltz," Scott Joplin. 1905.

In the fifth bar, James P. begins with a G-minor-seventh chord in second inversion and prolongs the dominant harmony by using a leading-tone-seventh chord of F, or a $vii^{\circ 7}$/V in third inversion ($e^{\circ 7}$/Db). The movement to the dominant, F^7, is temporarily delayed by a half-diminished-seventh chord in first inversion, $A^{\varnothing 7}$/C. The remainder of the sixth

measure functions with the V^7 chord as it moves to the tonic in the penultimate bar. Johnson cleverly sustains the outer voices here, while employing standard voice-leading techniques within the inner voices to change the harmonies with a crescendo-building sequence of V^7/iv (mode-mixture)—vi$^{(add\ 6)}$ —V^7/iv—vi$^{(add\ 6)}$. This movement settles on the tonic harmony for the closing bar of the introduction. Johnson rests for half a beat and then sets up the verse with a sforzando-marked V^7/vi chord (Figure 2.14.):

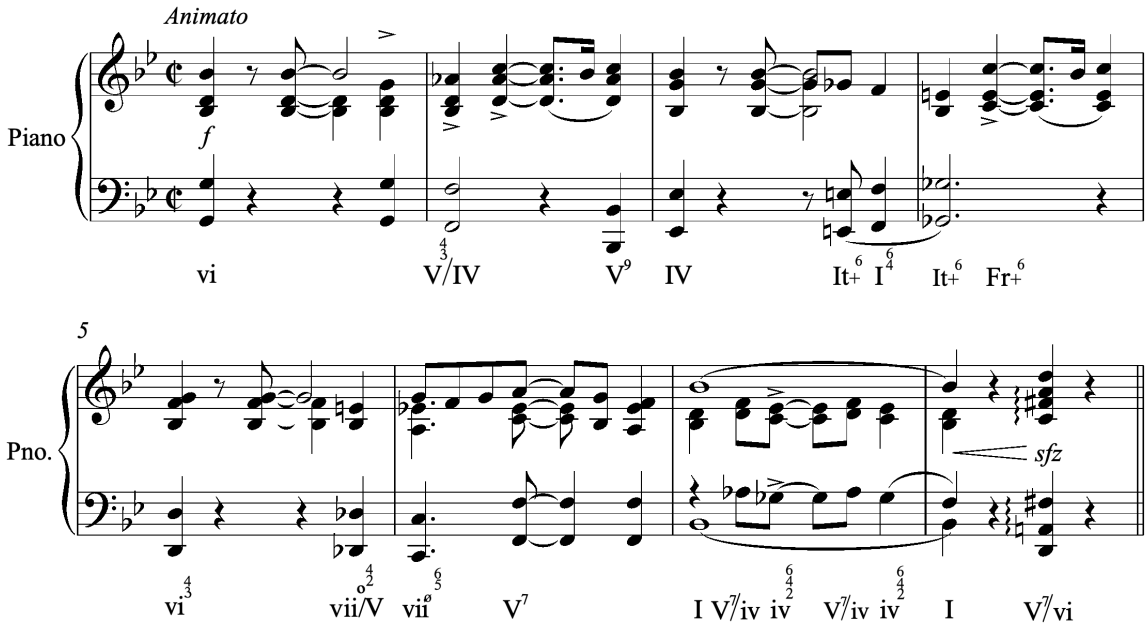

Fig.2.14. "Charleston," James P. Johnson, 1923. Author's analysis.

With the verse, (Figure 2.15.), Johnson modulates to the submediant, G-minor This is prefigured by the arpeggiated D^7 chord in the final bar of the introduction. The first two bars present the tonic harmony: Gm—Gm^7—Gm^6. In the third measure, the tonic chord moves to the subdominant, or C-minor. The opening lyrics to the verse, "Carolina, Carolina, at last they've got you," are made more pungent by the minor tonality which supports them; South Carolina, as was the case for most southern states, was treated with apathy by much of the North throughout this country's history. Johnson

brightens the mood with a dominant-seventh chord to reflect that there has been a positive, societal change. The D^7 harmony returns, as expected, to the tonic. Measures thirteen and fourteen as nearly exact restatements of the first two bars. The subsequent bar highlights a secondary dominant of the dominant chord, or an A^7. This harmony supports the lyric, "with a peculiar snap!" It's interesting how Johnson moves to a major chord when bolstering a positive line of text. The A-dominant-seventh leads to a D major triad in first inversion in measure sixteen. James P. shifts the tonality, by way of the F^7, to the relative major key of B^b. The luster of the new key illuminates the lyric, "You may not be able to buck or wing." There is a playful buoyancy in both in the text and in Johnson's score. The unstable triad of F#-diminished, the vii$^\circ$ of vi, aligns with, "fox-trot, two-step or," as if the singer was expressing skepticism to the dancers. The following simultaneity is the anticipated G-minor chord. Of note is Johnson's left hand throughout this section; he is rolling the chords in order to punctuate them—imploring the listener to understand the magnitude of these four bars. On the final beat of measure twenty, James P. lifts the mood with the dominant of the home key. The lyrics, "if you ain't got," are supported by the F major triad. The ultimate harmony in measure twenty-one is of paramount importance. It is an exceedingly unconventional chord; it is a vii$^\circ$/vii$^\circ$ harmony. Johnson is rebuking traditional harmonic practices, here. He disavows the past and summons his creative, "modernistic" invention—all the while providing the footing for the word, "religion." Mack and Johnson are mocking the stodgy sensibilities of white America—those who subscribed to the ideology that jazz was the "Devil's" music or as

Anne Shaw Faulkner probed, "Does jazz put the sin in syncopation?"[105] for the *Ladies Home Journal* from August of 1921. James P.'s unorthodox harmonic approach continues in measure twenty-two with the progression of A-diminished—D-minor—D^{b}-augmented, or vii$^{\circ}$—iii—PC (passing chord), which aligns with the words, "in your feet, you can." Johnson returns to relative, harmonic stability for the final two bars. The lyrics, "do this prance and do it neat," are placed along with a C^{7}—F^{7}—C^{7}—A$^{\circ}$—F^{7}, or V^{7}/V to V^{7} to V^{7}/V to vii$^{\circ}$ to V^{7} progression. Worth mentioning is the rising left hand in octaves, which moves in parallel motion to the ascending melody—both of which prepare the listener for the ensuing, ecstatic refrain.

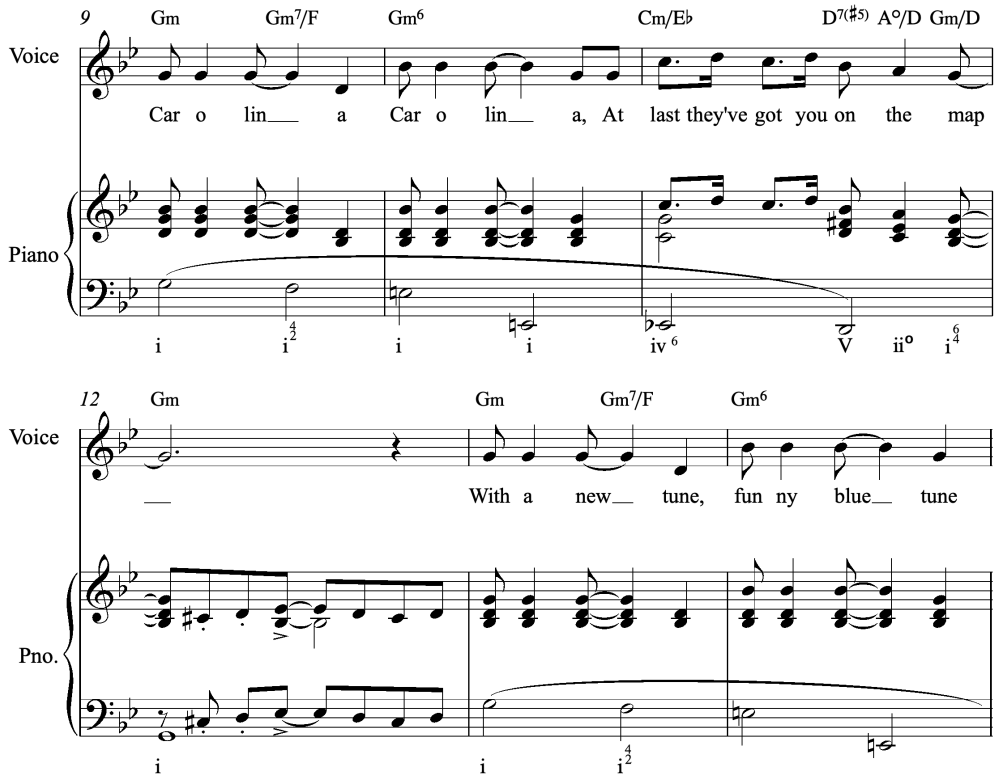

Fig.2.15. "Charleston," by James P. Johnson. Measures 9-14. 1923, *Harms Incorporated*.

[105] Anne Shaw Faulkner, "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1921, pp. 16-34.

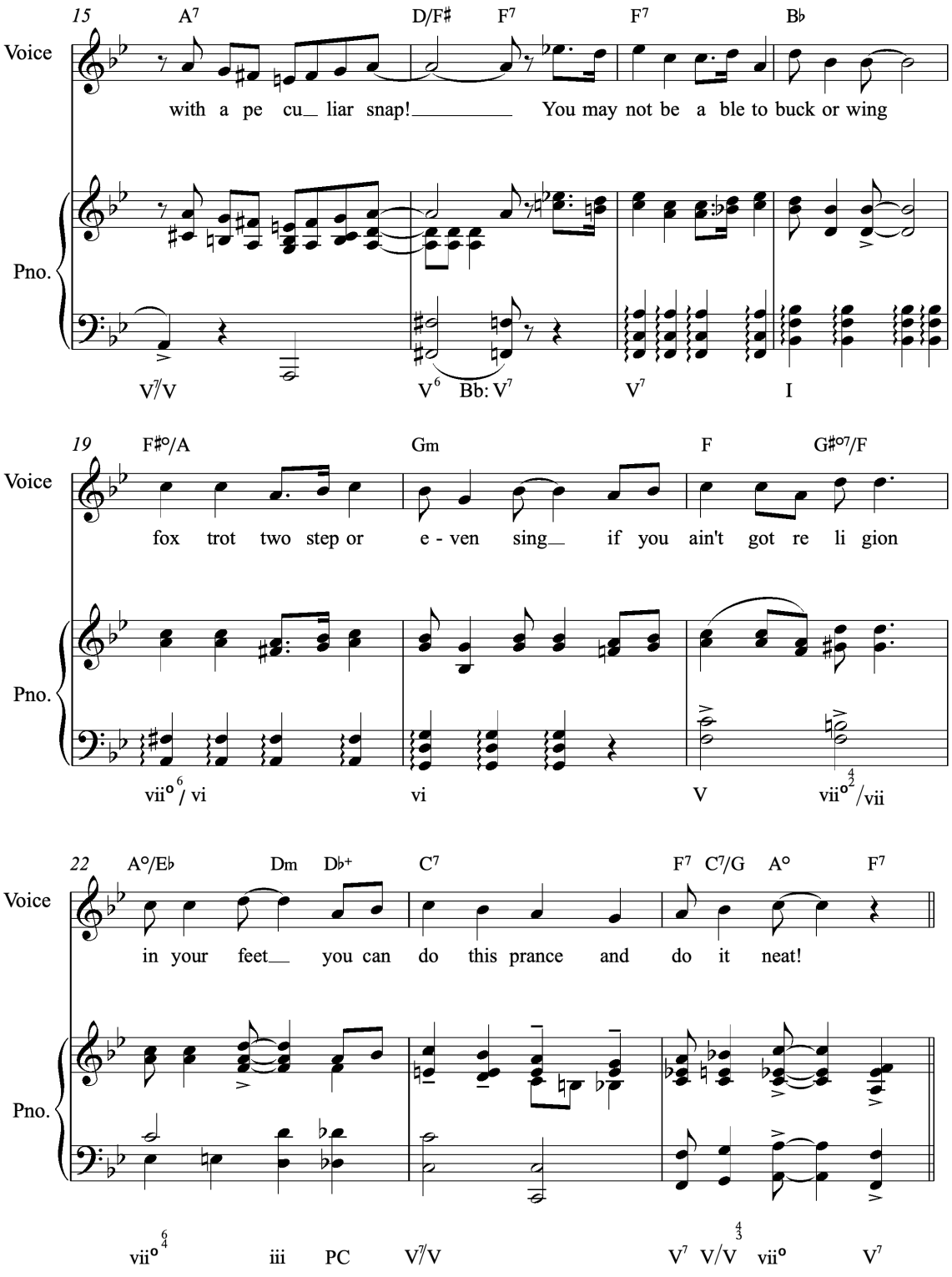

Fig.2.16. “Charleston,” by James P. Johnson. Measures 15-24. 1923, *Harms Incorporated*.

The form of "Charleston" contests convention, to say the least. The 1920s established a codified musical system for the structure of popular songs—the AABA, thirty-two bar format. This methodized practice was proliferated by the composers of "Tin Pan Alley," a section of Manhattan on West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, where the preponderance of music publishing companies was housed. Since the arrangement was essentially devised of two eight-bar phrases, it initially suited the amateur musician. However, the propagation of the form and its consequent prominence in American culture would come to serve as a creative vehicle for jazz composers.

With "Charleston," Johnson defied the masses and employed a thirty-two-bar form, separated into eight, nearly discrete four-bar sections for the refrain: ABACABDE. Johnson begins the refrain with the statement of the tonic, B^b major, and the compelling "Charleston rhythm." The score (Figures 2.17. through 2.20.), marked *con spirito*, beseeches the performer to play with spirit—the same vivacious defiance embodied by this new American age. Along with the propellent rhythmic figure, James P. creates a stimulating, melodic line that ascends chromatically in the first three bars. He employs a string of secondary dominants to support the exclamation, "Charleston! Charleston! Made in Carolina."

The second, four-bar phrase, which continues with applied dominant function, begins with "Some dance." This harmonic tension adds to the composition's adrenaline-inducing affect. Johnson brilliantly chooses to contradict the stepwise motion of the tune's first phrase by applying disjunct motion in the melody beginning on the fourth beat of measure twenty-seven and ending with measure thirty-one. The upward leap of a perfect fifth on "o-lin" is musically audacious! He follows that jump with a descending

leap of the same interval on the syllable, “a.” Measures twenty-nine and thirty are identical with their melodic statements—G4 leaps to D5. All veneration for convention is rebuffed! Johnson’s approach to the tenets of voice-leading, where a note that leaps in one direction should be followed by stepwise motion in the opposite direction, corroborates his desire to be “modernistic” and defy Eurocentric, musical norms. This treatment can be observed with the lyrics, “Some dance, some prance.” The disjunct motion continues in measure thirty-one with an ascending leap of a minor third with the lyrics, “I’ll say.” Bolstering the phrase is a harmonic progression which extends the function of the V chord (mm. 29-31): C^{9}—F^{9}—Gm^{7}/D—E°/D^{b}. Measure thirty-two breaks up the “Charleston rhythm” with a series of consecutive eighth notes that are aligned with the words, “There’s nothing finer than the.” Harmonically, the dominant function is once again prolonged (mm. 32): A° /C—F^{9}.

There is a recapitulation of the primary theme, A, from measures thirty-three through thirty-six. James P. juxtaposes this restatement of the first phrase with a see-saw-like melodic line in the C section. “Every step you do, leads to something new. Man, I’m telling you, it’s a lapazoo.” It should be noted that the lyrics here are a form of word-painting—a compositional technique where the music reflects the literal meaning of a song's lyrics; the words are moving up and down, by step. Harmonically, the entire C phrase supports the extension of the V chord (V—V^{7}/iii—V^{7}/vi —vii$^{\circ}$—V). The next four measures are a return to the A theme and open with the tonic harmony (mm. forty-one through forty-four). Johnson balances this return with a slight variation of the B phrase.

A new section, D, occurs with the lyrics, “Sometime, you’ll be dancing it one time. The dance called the.” These four measures are distinct in their harmonic structure (Gm—B^{b9} —E^{b}—B^{b}) and conjunct melodic line. Of particular interest is the presence of the Italian-Augmented-Sixth chord in measure fifty-one and the French-Augmented-Sixth chord on the downbeat of the following bar.

The final phrase, E (mm. fifty-three through fifty-six), is constructed upon a protraction of the V chord (vi—vii$^{\circ}$/V—V), which eventually resolves to the tonic harmony and a confluence of step-wise and disjunct, linear motion—all supporting the song’s apex, “Charleston—made in South Caroline!”

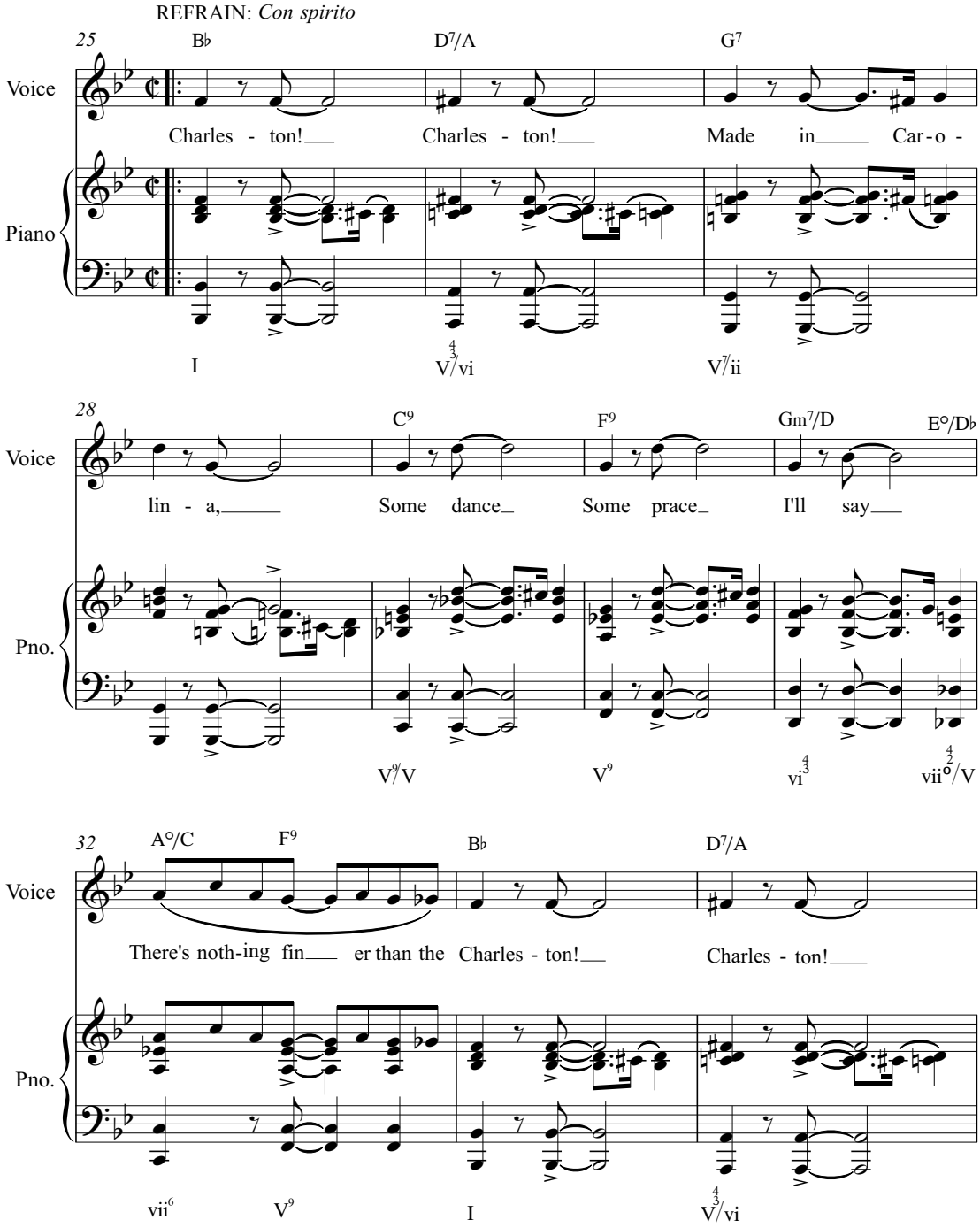

Fig.2.17. “Charleston,” James P. Johnson. Measures 25-34. Author’s analysis.

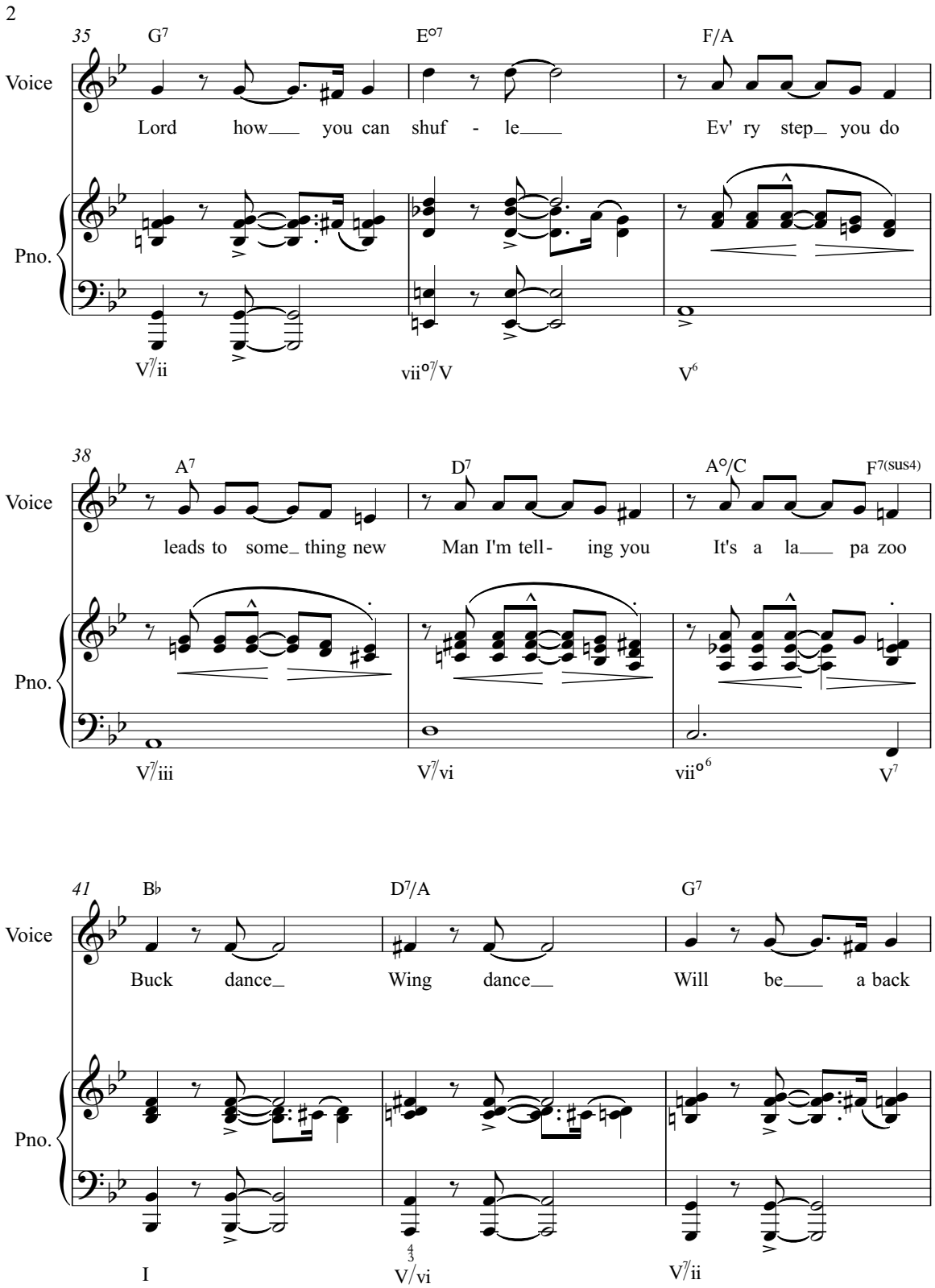

Fig.2.18. "Charleston," James P. Johnson. Measures 35-43. Author's analysis.

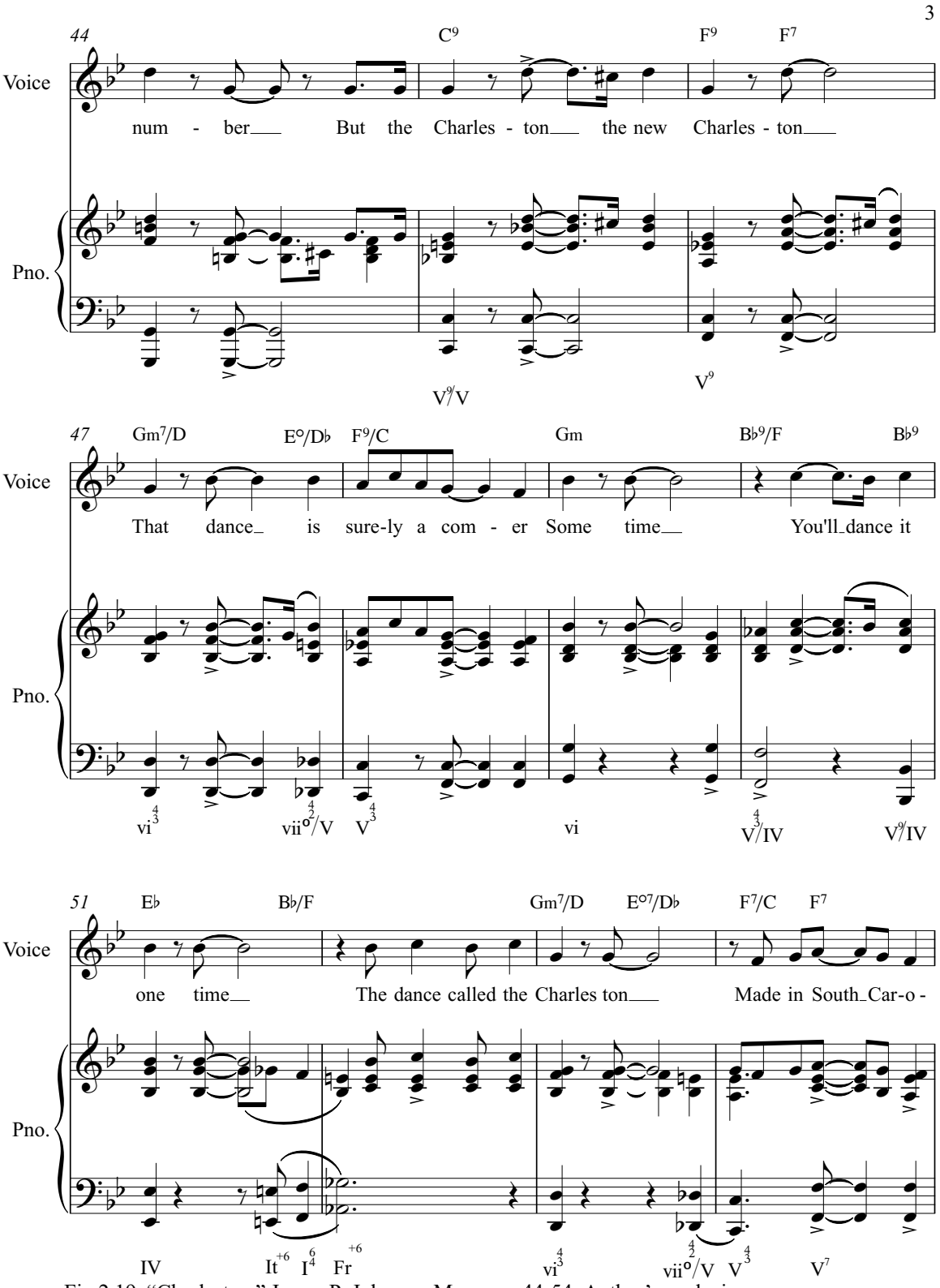

Fig.2.19. “Charleston,” James P. Johnson. Measures 44-54. Author’s analysis.

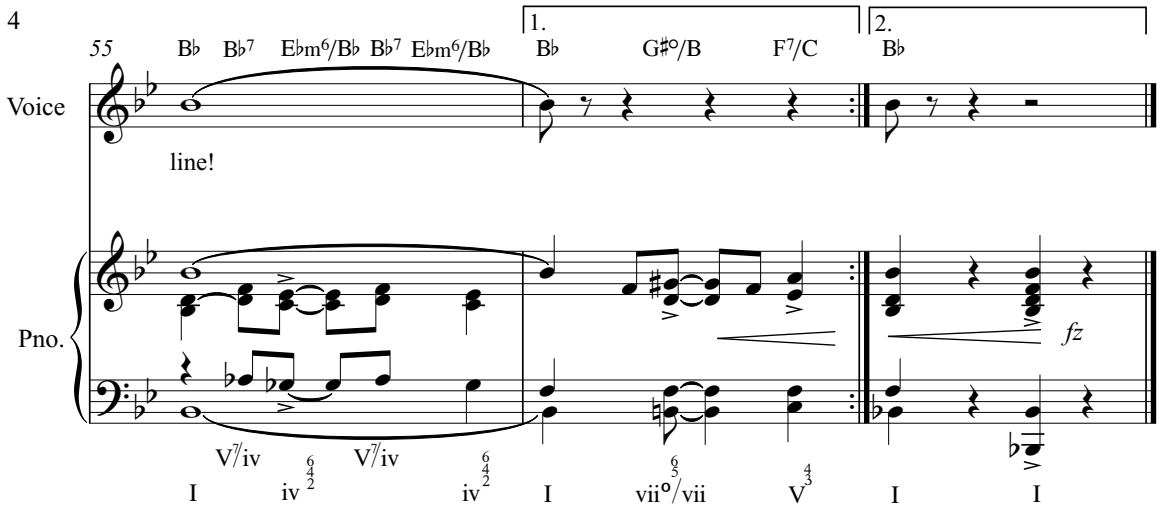

Fig.2.20. "Charleston," James P. Johnson. Measures 55-57. Author's analysis.

It is apparent that "Charleston," and its accompanying dance, not only played instrumental roles in the racial uplift of pre-WWI Harlem but, by transcending its initial racial implications, had an acute impact during and after the second decade of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, the rebellious nature of "Charleston," which echoed the recalcitrant ethos of the younger generation, was deemed impertinent by older Americans as it crushed waning Victorian-era principles. It symbolized the energy and spirit of a new America—one in which women had the right to vote, had the freedom to express themselves with a dramatically less conservative sartorial sensibility (hence the advent of the flapper, see *The Flapper*, Volume I, No. 5. October 1922. in Figure 2.17.) and found an advocate for female contraception in Margaret Sanger. [106] Moreover, the general populace defied the United States government and its ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which proscribed the manufacture, sale, or transportation

[106] In 1921, Sanger established the American Birth Control League, an antecedent to today's Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Two years after the league's formation, Sanger opened the first legal birth control clinic in the United States.

of alcohol by fostering secretive clubs, known as speakeasies, where liquor could be consumed, and jazz reigned supreme.

Fig.2.17. *The Flapper*, Volume I, No. 5. October 1922.

To underscore the essence of the flapper, writer Dorothy Parker penned a sardonic poem in 1922:

The Flapper

The Playful flapper here we see,
The fairest of the fair.
She's not what Grandma used to be, --
You might say, au contraire.
Her girlish ways may make a stir,
Her manners cause a scene,
But there is no more harm in her
Than in a submarine.

She nightly knocks for many a goal
The usual dancing men.
Her speed is great, but her control
Is something else again.
All spotlights focus on her pranks.
All tongues her prowess herald.
For which she well may render thanks
To God and Scott Fitzgerald.

Her golden rule is plain enough -
Just get them young and treat them
Rough.[107]

The capacity of "Charleston" to fuel social change was not relegated to the United States—an incandescent, global phenomenon was ablaze that would serve as a beacon for humanity. According to the British periodical, *Dancing Times*, the magazine "helped to bring the Charleston to Britain. In July 1925, 'The Sitter Out' [article] reported on the dance that was "captivating New York." The article's source came directly from New York City, where British exhibition dancers Annette Mills and Robert Sielle had learned the routine. Furthermore, "This was a dance where toes turned in, knees knocked, legs

[107] Dorothy Parker and Stuart Y. Silverstein, *Not Much Fun: The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker* (New York: Scribner, 2009), 113.

kicked high and arms went into big scarecrow poses. It's an extravagant, thrill-seeking dance. [This] hedonism was in part a reaction against so much loss and grief."[108] English novelist, Barbara Cartland, substantiated the solemnity of the song and dance when recalling how the anguish of losing her father in WWI was assuaged. She ruminated, "I couldn't bear being involved in the tears and unhappiness that had affected my childhood following the death of my father…I just wanted to dance."[109] As in the "Jungles Casino," Johnson's "Charleston" provided a balm for those in grave distress. When the inimitable Josephine Baker visited Berlin in 1925, she attested to the potency of this music on the European landscape, "The city had a jewel-like sparkle…the vast cafés reminded me of ocean liners powered by the rhythms of their orchestras. There was music everywhere."[110] The denizens of the multiplicity of European cities, like their American counterparts, were enticed by the "sin in syncopation," flocked to participate in the youthful intemperance, and be embraced by its compassion. Assuredly, Europe had welcomed the embers of modernism and James P. was witness to this when he brought his show, *Runnin' Wild*, to London, England in May of 1928.

Prior to his European sojourn, Johnson attempted to replicate the success of *Runnin' Wild*. He, along with his protégé Fats Waller, sat down to compose the score for the musical, *Keep Shufflin'*, with the assistance of lyricists Henry Creamer and Andy Razaf and a book by Lyles and Miller. The show, while running for a hundred and four

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[108] P.J.S. Richardson, "The Sitter Out," *Dancing Times*, July 1925, pp. 1056-1057.

[109] Nicola Rayner, "How the Charleston Changed the World," Dancing Times, June 13, 2016, https://www.dancing-times.co.uk/how-the-charleston-changed-the-world/.

[110] James Donald, *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics, and Modernist Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 66.

performances between February and May of 1928, yielded no musical numbers that realized any critical or popular acclaim. As Walter Winchell, the drama critic for the *New York Graphic*, reasonably assessed, "its score—a large one, containing about twenty-two numbers—provides but three tuneful melodies, none of which, however, are of the contagious order."[111] Johnson's final Broadway attempt of the 1920s came with his 1929 show, *Messin' Around*. It was an abysmal failure and only ran for thirty-three performances.[112]

Irrespective of James P.'s inability to sustain the triumph of *Runnin' Wild*, he continued to be a formidable contributor to musical terrain of Harlem in the 1920s. Between 1927—1930, Johnson participated in sixty recording sessions. He continued to cut piano rolls of his original compositions, record piano solos, lead orchestras, and accompany vocalists. Noteworthy documents of his prodigious output include the landmark recording of "Backwater Blues" with the Bessie Smith on vocals from February 17, 1927 and a QRS piano roll duet with Fats Waller, QRS 3818, of Johnson's classic composition, "If I Could Be with You (One Hour Tonight)" in the following month. On November 18, 1929, he would lead his own orchestra, which included the jazz pioneer Joe "King" Oliver on trumpet, for two seminal sides for the Victor label—"You Don't Understand" and "You've Got to be Modernistic." The latter tune, one of Johnson's most principal and prescient, would be a clarion call for all jazz musicians who followed in his wake. If the song titles are abutted, James P., in one of his final sessions of the "Roaring

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[111] *The Giants of Jazz – James P. Johnson*, Time-Life Records STLJ18 1981, 33⅓ rpm.

[112] David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: a Musical History* (New York: Dover, 1989), 78.

Twenties," is proclaiming to all who would listen, "You don't understand. You've got to be modernistic!"

James P. Johnson, if not for his humility and reticence, would be metonymic of the 1920s, for the wealth of his influence was not contained within the richness of Harlem, but was disseminated throughout an international community. His music transcended racial strictures, yet was the paradigm of the African American spirit. Through the development of the exultant piano style of Harlem stride, he upraised a displaced people and bestowed upon them the gifts of optimism and resilience. His compositions, like "Charleston," emboldened a war-weary global community and ignited the fervor of a neoteric generation. And, perhaps, put more simply, he reminded the world to dance.

CHAPTER THREE

BLACK AND TAN FANTASY:

DUKE ELLINGTON

My men and my race are the inspiration of my work. I try to catch the character and mood and feeling of my people. The music of my race is something more than the "American idiom." It is the result of our transplantation to American soil and was our reaction, in plantation days, to the life we lived. What we could not say openly we expressed in music…there is no necessity to apologize for attributing aims other than...for showing how the characteristic, melancholic music of my race has been forged from the very white heat of our sorrows and from our groping after something tangible in the primitiveness of our lives in the early days of our American occupation.[113]

Duke Ellington

Harlem of the 1920s was fraught with complex contradictions, not the least of which was the dichotomous nature of the daily lived experiences of its residents. In his painting entitled, *Harlem Street Scene* (Figure 3.1.), artist Jacob Lawrence depicts the diurnal, bustling character of any given neighborhood street corner. The work is balanced with the secular and the profane: two houses of worship are placed on the peripheries—one a store front church and the other a more established chapel—while the central focus lies on the quotidian activities of the city's locals. In the bottom left corner, children can be seen playing while a couple saunters towards them from one direction and a street vendor peddling fruits and vegetables approaches from another. A white police officer manages the traffic, while across the street, a woman walks her dog, men congregate on the sidewalk for a game of checkers, and a homeless man slouches against the neighborhood bar and grill. On the rooftop, a quartet of men shoot craps while laundry catches the crisp breeze. Along the sidewalk below, men are hoisting an upright piano

[113] Duke Ellington, "The Duke Steps Out," *Rhythm*, March 1931, pp. 20-22.

that will likely serve as the centerpiece for prospective rent parties. *Harlem Street Scene* is unquestionably Jacobs's use of memory, space, and place [114] and his attempt to rejuvenate, through his art, the vitality of Harlem prior to the Great Depression.

Fig.3.1. "Harlem Street Scene" from Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*. Casein tempera on hardboard. 1941.

[114] Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers, "Music, Memory, Space and Place," in *Popular Music Scenes and Cultural Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 37-59.

While the musicians who performed in the Harlem night clubs such *as Connie's Inn*, the *Cotton Club*, and *Small's Paradise* would have likely partaken in the sundry happenings as encapsulated by Lawrence, their evenings were spent in a discrete Harlem—one in which affluent, white carousers would *intrepidly* leave the safe environs of lower or midtown Manhattan in search of the "primordial cure for the ills of a civilized and increasingly mechanized society."[115] One such enticement was the urbane bandleader and composer, Duke Ellington.

Ellington, who would ultimately possess the sine qua non for entry into the pantheon of American artistic expression, was born on April 29, 1899 at 2129 Ida Place (now Ward Place), N.W., in Washington D.C. Raised in a tight-knit, middle-class family by his parents James and Daisy, Ellington was taught that "proper speech and good manners were [his] first obligations."[116] In his formative years, he learned that sartorial details were essential and, as a consequence, earned the noble moniker, "The Duke," from his childhood friend, Edward McEntree.[117] As an African American in a segregated city, he understood the importance of appearances; the way in which he carried himself was his method for transcending the ruthless realities of social inequity. It was with an intrinsic sense of pride and dignity that Ellington lived his life; these attributes would be the foundation upon which he would express, through music, the feelings of his race.

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[115] Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 233.

[116] Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 17.

[117] Ibid., 20.

Ellington revealed, at an early age, to be drawn to the pastime of baseball. However, his mother, who tended to dote on him, witnessed her son take a blow to the back of the head by a "boy [who] was demonstrating his skill at batting."[118] Consequently, Daisy decided piano instruction would be a safer vocation for young Edward. While Ellington admitted to missing more lessons than he took, he did glean a modicum of classical technique. This proved constructive when, in the summer of 1914, he was confined to the house for weeks due to an illness. During his temporary quarantine, he composed his first tune, "Soda Fountain Rag," which was roused by his time spent as a soda jerk at *Poodle Dog Café*. He was merely fifteen years old.

"Soda Fountain Rag," is not a conventional rag. Within an ABA form, Ellington moves away from the passé, two-beat rhythm of ragtime and employees a syncopation that is more indebted to Eastern piano playing than that of the Midwest. The following illustration, Figure 3.2., is from the introduction to the 1973 published edition:

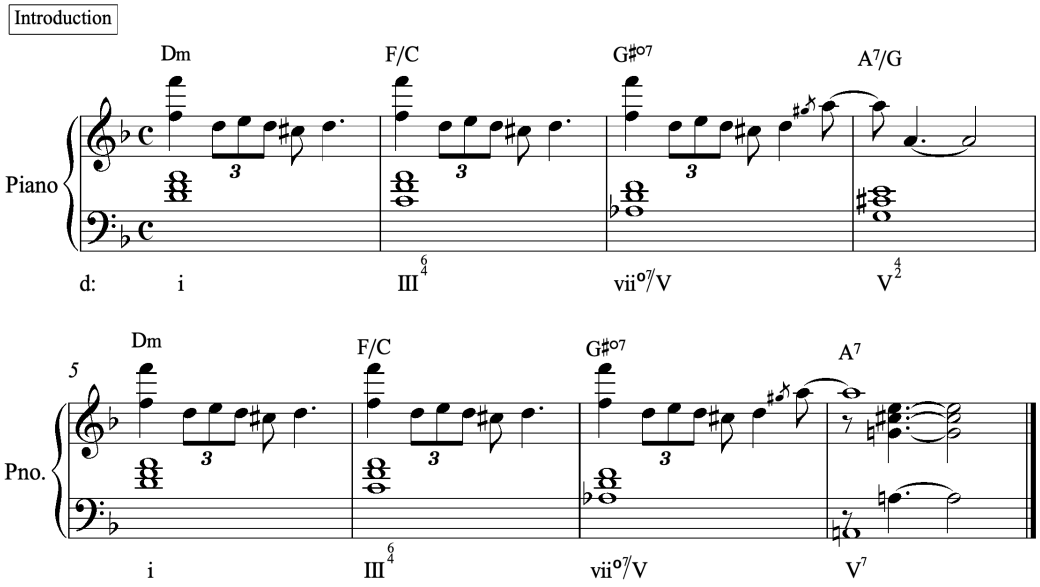

Fig.3.2. "Soda Fountain Rag." Duke Ellington, 1973. *Tempo Music*.

[118] Ibid., 9.

The composition demonstrates Ellington's heritage, as was the case with James P. Johnson, that was suffused in the music of the African American church.[119] The use of the riff, or repeated melodic statement, that is descendent from the ring shout and the "crushed" notes to imply a blues sensibility are both present. Placed in the unconventional key of D-minor, "Soda Fountain Rag," moves from the tonic to the mediant, and then to a sonority in measure three that is spelled as a D-diminished chord in second inversion—this is likely an error in the score and should written enharmonically as a $G^{\#\circ 7}$; a vii$^{\circ}$/bII, the chord that is used in the publication, is not harmonically functional. The proper spelling of $G^{\#\circ 7}$ (vii$^{\circ 7}$/V), which progresses to the V chord in the subsequent bar, makes musical sense. The introductory riffs in measures one through four are recapitulated, with a slight variation in the final bar.

The first section, measures one through eight, of "Soda Fountain Rag," illustrates Ellington's proclivity for the early jazz aesthetic of the East Coast, to which he was exposed while frequenting neighborhood establishments such as Frank Holiday's poolroom. One primary distinction is found in the left hand, which is no longer relegated to timekeeping with rigid, eighth note figures; Ellington's approach is much more aligned, albeit simplified, with the shout style of his mentor, James P. Johnson. Harmonically, the piece centers around the most common chord progression in jazz: the ii—V— I.

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[119] Ellington stated in his autobiography that his mother took him to two church services each Sunday; "usually to the Nineteenth Street Baptist, the church of her family, and to John Wesley A.M.E. Zion, my father's family church." Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 15.

In the opening of the A section, Ellington modifies the aforementioned riff and creates a new two-bar block. He repeats this over the first half of the strain. By simply oscillating between the tonic and dominate over measures one through four, the tonal center, D-minor, is made quite evident. In order to introduce a new motif in the sixth bar, Ellington approaches it melodically with an anticipatory $B^{\flat}5$; this allows him to initiate a new harmony, the E° triad. The supertonic chord moves as is projected to the dominant in the subsequent measure. Of note is Ellington's inclusion of a rootless A^7 chord in the penultimate bar. This engenders a harmonic ambiguity that would augur the voicings of post-1940s jazz. Moreover, that he chose to use a quartal placement of the implied V^7, is exceedingly prophetic.[120] For the closing bar of the A section, Ellington repeats the right-hand phrase and infinitesimally varies the bass function.

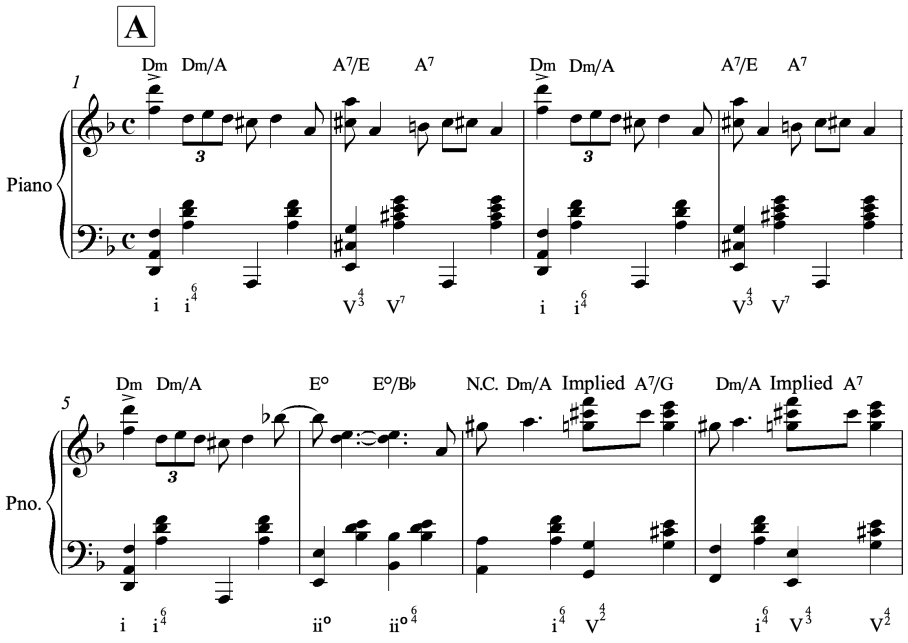

Fig.3.3. A Section. "Soda Fountain Rag," Duke Ellington, 1973. *Tempo Music*.

[120] While it could be argued that this analysis is based upon the published sheet music of 1973, thus Ellington would have been cognizant of the post-WWII jazz lexicon, close examination of other Ellington compositions would illuminate that he did not expression a particular predilection towards quartal harmony.

Although he was a gifted visual artist and procured a scholarship to the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York, Ellington chose to leave high school and pursue his passion for the syncopated music that was pioneered by black, itinerant musicians of the East Coast; he knew this meant an expedition to the mecca of jazz, New York City.

Ellington's first venture to New York was in February of 1923. He was asked by bandleader and banjoist, Elmer Snowden to join his ensemble for an engagement in Harlem's *Lafayette Theater*. Ellington recollected his time with Snowden, "We [Ellington, Miley, and Hardwick] joined him in New York. It was another world to us, and we'd sit on stage and keep a straight face. I realized that all cities had different personalities…I also learned a lot about show business from Sweatman."[121] After the run at the *Lafayette Theater* and some time spent at *Barron Wilkins Exclusive Club*, Sweatman chose to pursue the vaudeville circuit. Ellington and his friends from Washington, D.C., Greer and Hardwick, were left without work. The three men prowled the Harlem scene, where they discovered clubs that remained opened after dawn and speakeasies that provided an endless stream of illicit alcohol. The gregariously natured Ellington and Greer quickly made the acquaintance of the trumpeter James "Bubber" Miley and trombonist, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton however, steady employment never materialized, and the group returned home.

Spurred by inestimable ambition, and the recommendation of Fats Waller, Ellington and his friends returned to New York. According to Ellington, Waller promised him employment however, "Everything had gone wrong and there was no job."[122] After

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[121] Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 36.

[122] Ibid., 69.

successfully peddling a few compositions and remaining in the entertainment circles, Ellington and his ensemble were offered a contract at the *Hollywood Club* at 49th Street and Broadway. The aggregate consisted of Ellington (piano), Greer (drums), Hardwick (saxophones), Snowden (banjo), Charlie Irvis (trombone) and Miley on trumpet. In 1924, this band augmented its size. The additions, which included Nanton (trombone), and Harry Carney (baritone saxophone), would prove to be immensely transformative. With his suave manner and adept charm, Ellington assumed leadership[123] of the group and replaced Snowden with George Francis on banjo. With his newfangled autonomy, Ellington was no longer consigned to perform the music of others; more importantly, he now had a vehicle by which to perform and disseminate his compositions.

In November of 1924, *The Washingtonians* arrived at the Blu-Disc studio for their first recording under Ellington's leadership and documented two sides, "Choo Choo (I Gotta Hurry Home)" and "Rainy Nights (Rainy Days)." The personnel consisted of Duke Ellington (leader, piano), Bubber Miley (trumpet), Charlie Irvis (trombone), Otto Hardwick (alto sax), George Francis (banjo), and Sonny Greer (drums). For the first time, Ellington was given composer credit on a recording. This marked the commencement of an illustrious career that spanned nearly five decades.

Between November of 1924 and June of 1926, Ellington's ensemble produced only ten sides within a period of five recording sessions. Likely discontented with the meager output, the leader successfully procured an arrangement with the prestigious Brunswick imprint and its affiliate, Vocalion, which was purchased in late 1924. The

[123] According to Ellington scholar, Mark Tucker, Snowden was forced out of the band due to taking more money than was contractually agreed upon. See, Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995), 109.

label's focus was on race records[124] and popular music; the latter category included sides by Isham Jones and Al Jolson. On May 28, 1926, the company secured its landmark hot jazz recording with the *Erskine Tate Orchestra*. It produced two sides, "Stomp Off, Let's Go!" and "Static Strut," Voc 1027, and featured a twenty-four-year-old trumpet phenom from New Orleans—Louis Armstrong. Vocalion's subsequent breakthrough session would follow later that year with the burgeoning band led by Ellington.

By late 1926, Ellington began to reveal an idiosyncratic compositional style. This musical language, which was not aligned with the modus operandi of the black intelligentsia, was predicated upon blues elements and forms, call-and response sequences, riffs and shouts, improvisational breaks and fills, polyrhythms and syncopation, a swing sensibility, and the manipulation of the characteristic timbres found in his ensemble; his approach was what Albert Murray deemed as the "vernacular imperative to process (which is to say stylize) the raw, native materials, experiences, and the idiomatic particulars of everyday life into aesthetic (which is to say elegant) statements of universal relevance and appeal."[125] Through this language, Ellington "summarized the American experience, with its diverse cultural streams, its pain, pleasure, pride, dreaming, vitality, hope, and yearning for freedom."[126] He expressed this

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[124] Race records were often vocal blues recordings, spirituals, and novelty numbers by African American musicians and explicitly marketed to the black community. The term was conceived by OKeh records as the blues craze was at its zenith. See Paul Oliver, *Songsters and Saints: Vocal Traditions on Race Records* (Cambridge u.a.: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1984), 8-13.

[125] Albert Murray, "The Vernacular Imperative: Duke Ellington's Place in the National Pantheon," *Boundary 2* 22, no. 2 (1995): pp. 19-24, https://doi.org/10.2307/303817.

[126] John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 404.

most eloquently in such works as, “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo,” “Black and Tan Fantasy,” “Creole Love Call,” and “The Mooche.” The effect was a sophisticated soulfulness that evoked the tenor of resilience that was inherent in his race. Mark Tucker affirms the import of these works, “The [first] two compositions, in particular, signaled the arrival of an ensemble with its own sound and style; they also represented the first major triumph of its ambitious young leader.”[127]

On November 29, 1926, *Duke Ellington And His Kentucky Club Orchestra* with the personnel of Duke Ellington (leader, piano), Bubber Miley, Louis Metcalf (trumpets), Joe Nanton (trombone), Edgar Sampson (alto sax), Otto Hardwick (bass sax), unknown (clarinet, tenor sax), Fred Guy (banjo), Mack Shaw (tuba), and Sonny Greer (drums) entered the Vocalion studio in New York City. They recorded two sides, “Birmingham Breakdown” and, of paramount consequence, “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo,” which were released on the 78rpm disc labeled, Voc 1064. The latter composition, which Greer described as “the prettiest theme song we ever had,”[128] was programmatic in its conception. Ellington explicates the development for the piece, “This is an old man, tired from working in the field since sunup, coming up the road in the sunset on his way home to dinner. He’s tired but strong and humming in time with his broken gait.”[129]

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[127] Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995), 213.

[128] Sonny Greer. Interview with Stanley Crouch for *The Smithsonian Institute Jazz Oral History Project*. 1979.

[129] Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 106.

"East St. Louis Toodle-Oo,"[130] is imbued with the very essence of the blues idiom, yet is not a blues composition by way of the conventional twelve-bar blues arrangement. Figure 3.4. clarifies the form:

East St. Louis Toodle-Oo Form Diagram

Introduction	**A**	**B**	**A1**	**B1**	**B2**	**A**
	First Theme	Second Theme	First Theme	Second Theme	Second Theme	First Theme
Ensemble	Miley	Nanton	Clarinet	Brass	Ensemble	Miley
C minor	C minor / Ab major	Eb major	C minor	Eb major	Eb major	C minor
8 bars	32 bars	18 bars	16 bars	18 bars	8 + 10 bars	8 bars

Fig.3.4. "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" form diagram.

Murray explicates how Ellington and Miley were able to convey the spirit of the blues without relying on a particular, musical structure.

> The blues as such are synonymous with low spirits. Blues music is not. With all its so-called blue notes and overtones of sadness, blues music of its very nature and function is nothing if not a form of diversion. With all its preoccupation with the most disturbing aspects of life, it is something contrived specifically to be performed as entertainment. Not only is its express purpose to make people feel good, which is to say in high spirits, but in the process of doing so it is actually expected to generate a disposition that is both elegantly playful and heroic in its nonchalance.[131]

The composition is brilliantly balanced with two contrasting sections. The eight-bar introduction establishes the tonal center of C-minor. The reeds melodically alternate between ascending thirds and descending seconds over the first four measures before descending by thirds and ascending my seconds for the fifth and sixth bars. The illusion of a weary, blues-ridden older man with a broken gait is painted expertly.

[130] The last word of the title is pronounced, "toad'lo."

[131] Albert Murray and Paul Devlin, *Stomping the Blues* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 45.

The first theme, stated by Miley, begins in measure eight as he growls a syncopated, rising line—reminiscent of a call in an antiphonal setting. He rests for two-and-a-half beats and responds to his inner dialogue:

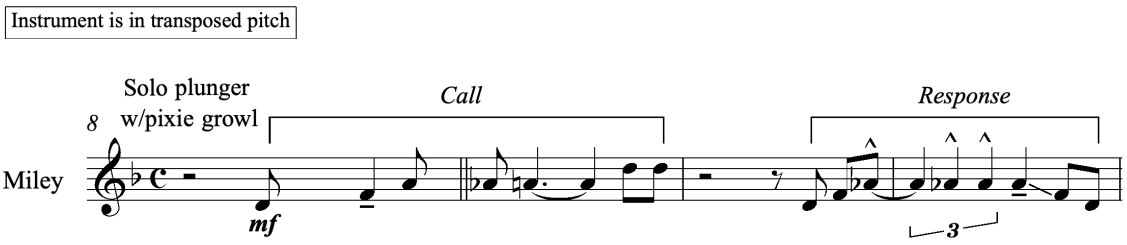

Fig.3.5. "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" first theme.

The remaining four bars of the first theme consist of a falling, melodic figure that rhythmically displaces the conventional accents that accompany the gentleman's stride. Miley leaps to an $E^{\flat}$ (concert pitch) with an emphatic growl to begin a modified statement of the initial phrase. At measure twenty-four, the composition modulates to $A^{\flat}$ major, which delivers a reprieve from its plaintive demeanor. Beginning on bar thirty, Ellington devises a descending, chromatic string of secondary dominants (C^7—B^7—$B^{\flat 7}$—A^7—$A^{\flat 7}$—G^7) that leads to the return of the home key. Gunther Schuller asserted that, "Ellington found instinctively and logically that chromatic melodies and chromatic voice-leading gave these slow pieces just the right touch of sadness and nostalgia."[132] Miley recapitulates the primary theme for a final eight measures. Louis Metcalf anticipates the B section with three emphasized quarter-notes on $A^{\flat}4$ (m.40, beats two through four).

[132] Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1977), 341.

The piece's programmatic conception, as was devised by Miley, intimates the impression of optimism, "coming up the road in the sunset on his way home to dinner. He's tired but strong and humming in time with his broken gait." This is suggested by the modulation to the relative major key, $E^{\flat}$. Nanton enters on measure forty-one with a jubilantly carefree melody that bounces around the tonic and dominant harmonies. It presents a contrast, which is ingeniously fashioned to "generate a disposition that is both elegantly playful and heroic in its nonchalance."

The remaining strains reiterate the two sections and are labeled as: A1, B1, B2, and A, respectively. Ellington maintains the key centers, but alternates bar lengths and texture. For example, A1 is a retelling of the principal melody, but the timbre is drastically transformed with the substitution of the clarinet for Miley. The B1 segment is presented by a brass soli and B2 is performed by the entire ensemble. Miley's elegiac soulfulness returns with the closing reiteration of the A strain, thus unifying the composition. Nearly a year (10/27/1927) after their recording of "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo," *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra* entered the Victor Talking Machine Co. in Camden, New Jersey, where they recorded multiple takes of "Black and Tan Fantasy" with the fourth take, Vic 24861-A, being designated as the master. The composition, written by Ellington and Miley, is loosely based on the Victorian, religious song, "The Holy City," by white composer Michael Maybrick[133] from 1892. In an ironic twist, Ellington and Miley paradoxically transmute the goals of Locke and his contemporaries by using a sacrosanct composition and converting it into a blues—a prime, musical

[133] In some publications, Michael Maybrick is credited by his pseudonym, Stephen Adams.

exploit of Gates's signifyin' trope. For comparison, Figures 3.5. and 3.6. juxtapose Miley's earthy introduction against Maybrick's choral refrain.

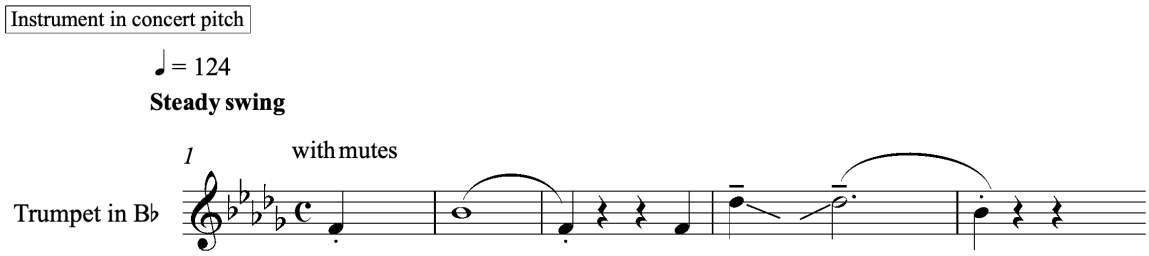

Fig.3.5. "Black and Tan Fantasy." Bubber Miley's introduction from 10/26/27 recording. Author's transcription.

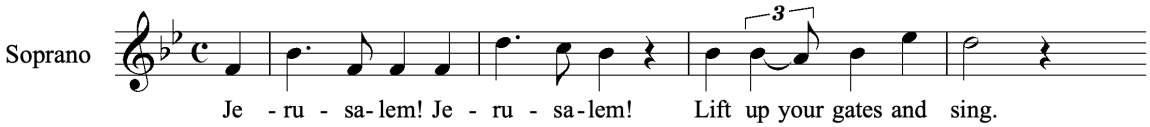

Fig.3.6. "The Holy City," music by Michael Maybrick and lyrics by F.E. Weatherly. 1976 edition by *Boosey & Co*.

While there is a discernable relationship between the two melodies, the minor tonality of "Black and Tan Fantasy" inverts, through satire, the religiosity of "The Holy City."

In a 1933 article, "My Hunt for Song Titles," for the British periodical, *Rhythm*, Ellington elucidated how the titles of his works reflected the experience of his people—principally the life of Harlem in the 1920s. He explicated, "There are in Harlem certain places after the style of night clubs patronized by both white and coloured [sic] amusement seekers, and these are colloquially known as 'black and tans.'"[134] Through "Black and Tan Fantasy," then, Ellington aspires to unify the bifurcate nature of the lived experiences in what Locke dubbed as the "Mecca of the New Negro."[135] By way of musically juxtaposing two contrasting themes, (one black, the other tan), he fashions one

[134] Ibid., 89.

[135] Locke, ed. "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," *Survey Graphic* 6.6 (1925).

cohesive and *integrated* composition. The extramusical implication, which prefigures his 1943 tone parallel to the black American experience entitled, *Black, Brown, and Beige*, is that of an indefatigable people so resolute in procuring social equity and the universal acceptance of their humanity.[136] Figure 3.7. sheds light on how Ellington, through musical form, coalesces the urban aesthetic of the African American population with the urbane character of the white clientele.

Black and Tan Fantasy Form Diagram

Chorus 1	Interlude	Chorus 2	Chorus 3	Chorus 4	Chorus 5	Chorus 6	Coda
First Theme	Second Theme	Solo	Solo	Solo	Solo	Solo	Coda
Miley	Hardwick	Miley	Miley	Ellington	Nanton	Miley	Ensemble
Bb minor blues	Bb major	Bb blues	Bb blues	Bb blues	Bb blues	Bb blues	Bb minor
12 bars	16 bars	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	10 bars	Chopin Funeral March Quotation

Fig.3.7. "Black and Tan Form Diagram" based on the 10/26/27 recording.

The piece opens with the emphatic temperament of the brass over a $B^{\flat}$-minor blues. This chorus is meant to evoke the unflagging character of the black population, buoyed by their faith that they shall overcome someday.[137] To convey this spirit, Bubber Miley utilizes a plunger mute as he bends the notes of the languid, melodic line. Nanton harmonizes beneath him. The rhythm section (bass, drums, and banjo) propels the movement by accenting each beat while Ellington syncopates the tune with stabbing, percussive off-beat chords on the piano. On the final beat of the first chorus, Sonny Greer crashes, then immediately mutes, the cymbal; this separates the contrasting blues with the following sixteen-bar interlude in the major mode.

[136] Alternate readings of the title suggest the "illicit pleasures and over-ripe atmosphere of a 'black and tan' cabaret." See Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1995), 213.

[137] This is an allusion to the spiritual, "We Shall Overcome." The biblical reference that accompanies the song is, "For whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith." Cited from, Rev. Dr. Delores Carpenter and Rev. Nolan E. Williams, eds., *African American Heritage Hymnal* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2001), 542.

The second strain is an unconventional treatment of a blues composition. The aforementioned sixteen-bar interlude opens with a G♭7 chord. While the tonicization of a key that is a third away is not uncommon in the jazz idiom, it does create a startling effect. Hardwick presents a new melody in a sweet style in the parallel major key of B♭; this contrast may allude to the possibilities of unanimity through diversity that the black and tan nightclubs presented. During a two-measure break, the band performs a turn-around that includes a descending, chromatic figure that connects the two, eight-bar phrases. There is a recapitulation of the first phrase that ends with Greer's muted cymbal expression.

Miley picks up in the subsequent chorus with a gritty improvisation over a B♭-major blues. For the first four bars, he holds the tonic pitch that foretells Louis Armstrong's well-documented solo during his 1928 recording of "West End Blues." For the remainder of the chorus, Miley plays affecting, bluesy phrases. By manipulating the position of the plunger mute over the straight mute, he varies the timbral essence of the tune; this "wah-wah" or vocal effect would become a staple in Ellington's sonic palette.

Seemingly unwilling to acquiesce to reticence, Miley solos in the fourth chorus. Carving a melodic contour that cascaded from the opening B♭ in measure twenty-nine to its cadence in measure forty (chorus three), he leaps to the flatted-fifth of the tonic chord to begin his new improvisation. His distinctive growling, as he attacks the blue notes, reminds the listener that this is a black man asserting his agency through his music; or, as Murray explicated, "The blues is a way of getting rid of despondency, despair, discouragement. You accept the necessity for struggle. So, you look upon the dragon as

an evocation for heroic action."[138] Once Miley reaches the dominant chord in measure fifty, Miley aggressively rips an ascending glissando to a climatic B♭4 on the third beat of the bar. His solo comes to a close in measure fifty-two where Ellington commands the fifth chorus.

The mood lightens when Ellington initiates his improvisation—a loose, relaxed, swinging stride in the vein of his mentor, James P., which starkly counters Miley's fiery and emotive vernacular sermon. Rhythmically, the solo is replete with over-the-bar syncopations and backbeats, while crafting a lyrical melody that rises and falls. Ellington, the consummate commandant of tonal color, constructs a vibrant and ebullient twelve-bar statement. Assuredly, he is reacting to the "white heat" of his people's sorrows by presenting, musically, what Langston Hughes would later declare as, "pain swallowed in a smile."[139]

The penultimate section opens with the tight plunger work of trombonist, Nanton. His approach complements the growling effects and vocal mimicry found in the improvisations of Miley. The comical whinny provides a release from the tense, dark timbre that permeates the piece. "I laughed like everyone else over its instrumental wa-waing and gargling and gobbling," author and music critic, R.D. Darrell wrote. He maintained:

> But as I continued to play the record...I laughed less heartily and with less zest. In my ears the whinnies and wa-was began to resolve into new tone colors, distorted and tortured, but agonizingly expressive. The piece took on a surprising individuality and entity as well as an intensity of feeling that was totally incongruous in popular dance music. Beneath all its oddity

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[138] "Albert Murray," *Bookmark with Don Noble* (The Center for Public Television, June 6, 1996).

[139] Langston Hughes et al., *Essays on Art, Race, Politics, and World Affairs* (Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2002), 35.

> and perverseness there was a twisted beauty that grew on me more and more and could not be shaken off.[140]

In the final chorus, Miley returns with two, two-bar phrases that are answered by acute accents from the rhythm section. The ensemble joins the trumpeter in the eighth measure of this ten-bar strain. In the final bar, the F^7 harmony prepares for the return to the parallel minor key in the coda. Here, Ellington quotes Frédéric Chopin's "Funeral March" to end the piece definitively.

The inclusion of the march irreverently decries the pronouncements of the Harlem Renaissance elite. The work of Ellington and Miley has come full circle. The piece began with a Gatesian parody of "The Holy City" and ends with the insertion of a fragment from a renowned composition of the classical canon, Chopin's "Funeral March." This treatment would likely to be considered impious by Locke and contravenes the very means by which he hoped to inaugurate the "New Negro"—by implanting African American folk music into Eurocentric, classical models, one could *uplift the white population's perception of the black community*.

"Black and Tan Fantasy" transfigured a cinematic manifestation with the December 8, 1929 RCA release of *Black and Tan*. This musical short, with the story and direction by Dudley Murphy, is the film debut of Duke Ellington and his ensemble. The opening identifies the aggregate as *Duke Ellington and His Cotton Club Orchestra*—likely endeavoring to capitalize on the band's triumph at the eminent Harlem cabaret. The acknowledgement that the group is presented by "arrangement with Irving Mills" is

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[140] R.D. Darrell, "A Landmark in Ellington Criticism: R.D. Darrell's 'Black Beauty'," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 57.

emblematic of Mills's hegemony over Ellington.

Fig. 3.8. Screenshot of opening credits to "Black and Tan." 1929.

The film offers a visual rendering of the blues impulse as espoused by writer, Ralph Ellison:

> The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism. As a form, the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically.[141]

Black and Tan, which is set during the Harlem Renaissance, expresses the tragic-comic arc of the African American community. The film commences with Ellington at the piano and rehearsing, "Black and Tan Fantasy," with Arthur Whetsol. The trumpeter states the melancholy theme as Ellington accompanies him. After performing the first strain, they discuss the tune's arrangement, "This is for the saxes, you see," Ellington explains. The film cuts to two men with ropes, ostensibly piano movers, investigating the

[141] Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 77-78.

floor of an apartment building for the correct address. Murphy relies on minstrel humor and "Old Negro" stereotypes by depicting the piano movers as daft, dimwitted black men who speak in stereotypical dialect. They enter the apartment and one man demands, "Brother, remove your anatomy from that mahagony!" Ellington retorts, "Well, you're not gonna take my piano, are you?" The pianist's wife, portrayed by Fredi Washington, offers to pay the men not to repossess the instrument. They refuse payment but are swayed by Washington's flirtations. She offers the men a taste of gin and they leave contentedly with the bottle of alcohol.

The second act of the short evokes Ellison's "chronical of personal catastrophe." Washington's character, who is a famed dancer, procured an engagement at an illustrious cabaret, however Ellington pleads with her to forgo dancing lest she strain her weakened heart. She dismisses his concern, "Oh, don't bother about my heart." The film cuts to an elegant nightclub scene where Ellington's band performs his composition, "Black Beauty," as accompaniment to a refined dancing troupe. At the conclusion of their routine, the emcee addresses the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen, I've got a little surprise for you. You all know our star's been sick for quite some time. But she's better now and I'm going to have her come out here and do a little dance for you. The inimitable Fredi Washington. Let's go, Duke!" Ellington's band performs the up-tempo tune, "Hot Feet," Washington begins to dance and collapses. With total apathy for the "star," the emcee commands two men, "Here boys, get her out of here quick. Sit down, Duke and play something! Play the girl's number! Get the show on! Keep the show on!" Ellington acquiesces, Washington is taken away, and the performance resumes.

The final act cuts to a dimly lit room as Washington lays on her death bed, Ellington beside her, and a choir moaning a despondent lament. Ellington, now at the piano, performs "Black and Tan Fantasy." Whetsol growls the opening theme as the band and choir accompany him. As the tune progresses through its multiple strains, the film alternates between images of Washington, who at times is seemingly, peacefully embracing the blues impulse, and a macabre, wide shot of the entire room. With the recapitulation of the initial theme, the dancer looks to be struggling. She takes her last breath, the Chopin "Funeral March" is quoted, and the camera cuts to Ellington with tears welled up in his eyes. The image blurs. The film ends.

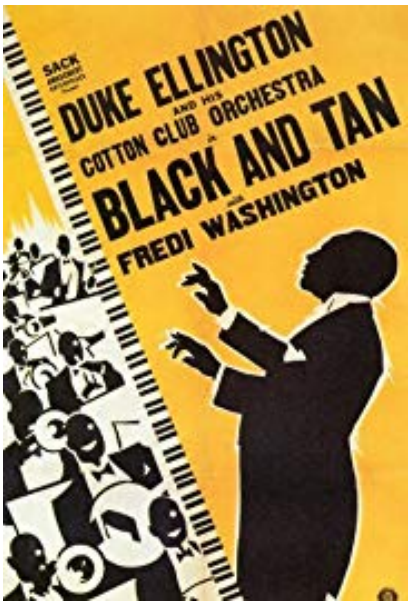

Fig. 3.9. Cinematic Poster for RCA's *Black and Tan*. 1929.

Black and Tan is thronging with the complex contradictions of African American life. Ellington's participation in the film, which depicts his race as inane figures who are easily tempted by illicit pleasures, is confounding.[142] Is it plausible that an ambitious,

[142] Ellington would continue this trend of self-promotion when he participated in *Check and Double Check* the following year. The movie featured the racist characters of Amos and Andy.

young African American man was willing to endure the film's racist implications for the sake of self-promotion? Or, perhaps this was the influence of Mills who was eager to propagandize the pianist's persona. Irrespective of the inducement for Ellington to join such a venture, it is laudable that a deep, romantic love between a black man and a black woman was documented on film and disseminated to the public in 1929; this is yet another instance of the primitivist-modernist dichotomy of Harlem's vogue in the 1920s. Indisputably, though, *Black and Tan* could not have encapsulated Ellington's conception of a *fantasy*. This should not be remarkable. The story and direction were concocted by a white man who was acutely oblivious to the gravity of being black in America. Mercifully, the music has, since its inception, abounded independently as an aural manifestation of the African American experience.

"East St. Louis Tooodle-Oo" and "Black and Tan Fantasy," were among Ellington's repertoire when he was afforded the opportunity to audition as the house band at the hallowed, Prohibition-era, Harlem nightspot—the *Cotton Club*. In his autobiography, he recalled:

> The next big step was when we went into the Cotton Club on December 4, 1927. We had to audition for this job, but it called for a band of at least eleven pieces, and we had been using six at the Kentucky Club…by the time I scraped up eleven men it was two or three o'clock. We played for them and got the job. The reason for that was that the boss, Harry Block, didn't get there till late either, and didn't hear the others! That's a classic example of being at the right place at the right time with the right thing before the right people.[143]

The *Cotton Club*, located on Lenox Avenue and West 142nd Street, was dubbed the "Aristocrat of Harlem," and considered to be the "gaudiest and well-known nightspot

[143] Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 76.

[and] was virtually unknown to Afro-Americans."[144] The segregated venue served as a sanctuary for wealthy, white thrill-seekers when Chicago gangster, Owney Madden, christened it in 1923.[145] David Levering Lewis comments on the racist admission policy, "W.C. Handy, ['The Father of the Blues'], was himself turned away one evening while the sound of *his* [emphasis added] music blared inside.

Fig.3.8. *Cotton Club* program. ca. April 1932.
Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.

[144] Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 209.

[145] Ibid.

Not only did the *Cotton Club* perpetuate exclusionary practices based on race,[146] the décor of the venue rendered a heinous, antebellum theme that was meant to satisfy the patrons' insatiable fetishization for the exotic dissimilarity of the racial Other. Singer and bandleader, Cab Calloway,[147] recalls his time there:

> The bandstand was a replica of a southern mansion, with large white columns and a backdrop painted with weeping willows and slave quarters. The band played on the veranda of the mansion, and in front of the veranda, down a few steps, was the dance floor, which was also used for the show. The waiters were dressed in red tuxedos, like butlers in a southern mansion, and the tables were covered red-and-white checked gingham tablecloths…and the whole set was like sleepy-time-down-South during slavery. Even the name, Cotton Club, was supposed to convey that southern feeling. I suppose the idea was to make the whites who came to the club feel like they were catered to and entertained by black slaves.[148]

Ellington's remembrance was devoid of Calloway's racist descriptors. In fact, he asserted that the *Cotton Club* was a "classy spot" where "impeccable behavior was demanded in the room while the show was on" and extolled the ownership for its treatment of the talent, "[t]he performers were paid high salaries."[149] Perhaps Ellington was judiciously aware of the incongruities of Harlem in the 1920s—irrespective of the club's ostensible façade, he was cognizant of the agency with which he was provided. "Sometimes I wonder what my music would sound like today had I not been exposed to

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[146] According to Ellington biographer, Terry Teachout, *The New York Age*, a black newspaper, warned its readers that the club, by order of the New York Police Department, "does not cater to colored patrons." See, Terry Teachout, *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington* (NY, NY: Gotham Books, 2014), 75.

[147] Calloway's band replaced the Duke Ellington Orchestra at the Cotton Club in 1931, but the venue was unchanged.

[148] Cab Calloway and Bryant Rollins, *Of Minnie the Moocher & Me* (New York: Crowell, 1976), 88.

[149] Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1980), 80-81.

the sounds and overall climate created by all the wonderful, and very sensitive and soulful people who were the singers, dancers, musicians, and actors in Harlem when I first came there."[150] Moreover, it was an opportunity for him to express the "character and mood and feeling" of his people. Consequently, he endeavored to underscore racial injustice not only to the patrons of the club, but to listeners throughout the country, "The Cotton Club became famous nationally because of our transcontinental broadcast almost every night."[151] This Ellingtonian thrust was redolent of what David Levering Lewis considered the deportment of 1920s Harlem, "…the manipulated manipulating, the subordinated subverting, and of the politically and economically impuissant attempting to acquire political and economic advantage by other means."[152]

The *Duke Ellington Orchestra* held tenure as the *Cotton Club*'s house band from 1927-1931 and would return on occasion between American and European tours. The young, debonair bandleader and his sartorially sophisticated band intrigued well-to-do, white patrons. The clientele was captivated as they beheld a visual splendor juxtaposed to the raunchy, low-down exposition of the blues aesthetic. In order to lure the public away from Broadway to experience the grandeur of the *Cotton Club*, a Machiavellian marketing scheme had to be employed (Figure 3.9):

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[150] Ibid., 81.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), xxiii.

Fig.3.9. Advertisement for the 1929 *Cotton Club* revue, *Spring Birds*.
(reprinted in Lasker's *A Cotton Club Miscellany*)

The *Cotton Club* advertisement for the musical revue, *Spring Birds*, is quite instructive. It informs the potential, white patron that the venue is a fifteen-minute cab ride from the innocuous, affluent Central Park; they are insulated from the elements, *human* or otherwise, as they are ushered into the club under the protection of its canopy (Figure 3.10.):

Fig. 3.10. The *Cotton Club*. (Photo by George Rinhart/Corbis via Getty Images).

The promotional bill also accentuates that the music and lyrics for the revue were by composer and lyricist Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields (both of whom were white), with *Duke Ellington's Recording Orchestra* as accompaniment. Citing the Ellington's band as the "Recording Orchestra" is meant to give credence to the all-black ensemble; this designation is conspicuously absent in his discography. Ellington expounded on the arrangement, "they [the management] would use numbers that I wrote…and we played these between shows and on the broadcasts."[153] During this time, the band would play pieces such as its theme song, "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo," as well as "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Creole Love Call" and "The Mooche"—all of which were ascribed as "jungle music" and distributed across the country via CBS radio.

The origin of the term "jungle music" in relation to Ellington's *Cotton Club* oeuvre is dubious and evokes a faction between rousing and the repugnant. However, Ellington was composing in this distinctive style prior to his engagement at the *Cotton Club* thus, it is evident that he was not musically implying a primitive or "jungle" narrative—one that would be aligned with the ciphers of the club's interior. Furthermore, he would likely find it to be a pejorative term and one that he would not associate with the music of his race. In a 1979 interview for the *Smithsonian Institute's Jazz Oral History Project,* Stanley Crouch discussed the *Cotton Club* at length with drummer, Sonny Greer. While the story maybe apocryphal, Greer recalls George Gershwin sitting at the bar with bandleader, Paul Whiteman. During a set of Ellington tunes, Gershwin, per Greer, looked to Whiteman and exclaimed, "I know what that is! It's jungle music."

[153] Ibid.

Greer seemingly lamented, "And it stuck with us."[154] The drummer, however, was adamant that Gershwin's expression was not meant in a deprecating manner and combats the association with crudeness, "Well, the way we played. The way we looked and the class we had. They never seen nobody like us."[155] Irving Mills, however, chose to promulgate the aphorism when, in 1929, he staged a recording to sound like a live *Cotton Club* broadcast[156] by announcing, "Welcome to our famous Cotton Club. Introducing the living master of 'jungle music'—that rip-roaring harmony hound, none other than Duke Ellington. Take your bow, Dukie. The first number is the 'Cotton Club Stomp.'"[157]

As was presented in the earlier discussion of James P. Johnson, the term "jungle" had a disparate subtext. Rather than inferring a primitivist perspective, it related to the perfidious section of Manhattan ("there were two or three kills a night"), Hell's Kitchen, where musicians would take part in competitive displays of technical and creative prowess. In his interview with Crouch, Greer clarified:

> I knew that the color musicians, we had just millions of them, fabulous, could play in Harlem. You could go right next door and hear the damnedest horn blowing things you ever heard in your life, drummers, Big Sid Catlett, all them guys, Jabbo [Smith] on trumpet, sure Sidney DeParis and all them guys, sharks, because they had to be because it was a jungle. Everybody waiting for you to make a mistake and they got you.[158]

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[154] Sonny Greer Interview.

[155] Ibid.

[156] While Ellington's band did broadcast weekly from the *Cotton Club*, no recordings are extant. In fact, the first date of an aircheck recorded by the *Duke Ellington Orchestra* was at the *Publix Allyn Theatre* in Hartford, Conn., April 11, 1932.

[157] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 840.

[158] Greer interview.

For Greer, as was the case for Johnson, the concept of the "jungle" was not one in which white "slummers" sought the proscribed pleasures of alcohol, prostitution, and gambling, but rather one in which African Americans competed to "stomp away the blues," as Murray would avow. "This is the way it [life] is. What are my possibilities? So, if you see yourself in heroic terms, then you come up with the epic."[159] Irrespective of the venue, these musicians, chiefly Ellington, were epically traversing the incongruous landscape of Harlem—indomitable in their aspiration to vanquish injustice through their art.

Ellington's art has principally been preserved and is appropriately housed at the *Smithsonian Institute* in Washington, D.C. A perusal of his discography of the 1920s traces the evolution of a nascent, young pianist and composer. The earliest extant substantiation of his songwriting for the decade was the 1924 "Choo Choo (I Gotta Hurry Home)" arrangement for dance band. The following year, he is known to have contributed to the score of the musical revue, *Chocolate Kiddies*, however much of the work was copyrighted under the publisher, *Robbins-Engel, Inc*; songs include, "Jig Walk," "Jim Dandy," and "With You." In 1926, Ellington expended much time recording popular tunes from other composers and songwriting teams as Spencer Williams, Roy Turk and Lou Handman, Iriving Kahal and Sammy Fain, Fred Rich and Harry Link, and Lucky Johnson. His most substantial compositions from that year came in March and encompassed "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo," "Birmingham Breakdown," "Immigration Blues," and "The Creeper." Pieces such as "Hop Head" and "Down in Our Alley Blues"

[159] "Albert Murray," *Bookmark with Don Noble* (The Center for Public Television, June 6, 1996).

from March of 1927 were credited to Ellington and Otto Hardwick. The unparalleled "Black and Tan Fantasy" succeeded during the subsequent month, as did lesser known pieces such as "Gold Digger" and "Washington Wobble." "Creole Love Call," a staggeringly captivating tune of the "jungle style" was documented in October, in conjunction with "Blues I Love to Sing"—these would conclude his output (as is documented) for the 1920s. It is conspicuous, however, by way of "Gold Digger" and "Washington Wobble," that Ellington was keen to experiment with brighter tempi and tonal colors. This would signal his entrée into popular songwriting, which would mark a new epoch for Ellington. His momentous masterpiece, which would become the anthem for the swing era, "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got that Swing)" from August of 1931 evinces this transition.

With their resonant nature of the blues idiom, tenacious ethos, and affirmation in the face of adversity, Ellington's oeuvre, expressly "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" and "Black and Tan Fantasy" purely depict an American aesthetic. To reiterate Baraka, "[black people] continue to be, despite the wildest of ironies, the most American of Americans."[160] Murray applied this dictum specifically to Ellington whom he proclaimed, "is the quintessential American composer not only because he was always mostly concerned with the actualities of life in an American landscape, but also because he was able to process it into such fine art and to such international effect."[161]

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[160] Baraka, "Introduction" in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Perennial, 2002), ix.

[161] Murray, *The Blue Devils of Nada: A Contemporary American Approach to Aesthetic Statement* (New York: Vintage International, 1997), 79.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLACK AND BLUE:

FATS WALLER

My Only Sin is in My Skin
Andy Razaf

Fig. 4.1. 78rpm disc of "Blues for Fats" by James P. Johnson

On December 18, 1943, James P. Johnson arrived for a scheduled recording session at the New York City studio of a twenty-one-year-old record producer named Bob Thiele. The space, *Signature Records*, was launched by Thiele three years earlier. Johnson accompanied *Yank Lawson and His Jazz Band* on four sides: "Squeeze Me," "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," "Too Many Times," and "The Sheik of Araby," which were authenticated as Signature 28103. After the session, Thiele suggested that James P. stay to record a few tunes. Johnson agreed and documented three songs: "Old Fashioned Love," "Blueberry Rhyme" and "Over the Bars (also known as "Steeplechase Rag"). However, his dear friend and protégé, Fats Waller, passed away three days prior at the age of thirty-nine and Johnson, overcome with grief, emotively extemporized a song in Waller's honor. It was entitled, "Blues for Fats."

The eulogy, taken at an andante tempo, begins with a four-bar introduction. Johnson fills the onset of the tune with blue notes and harmonic chromaticism, which set the lugubrious mood of the piece— incontestably reflecting his own melancholy. The form is unconventional: a twelve-bar blues, (A), follows the introduction; an eight-bar phrase (B) succeeds the blues section; and the tune ends with two successive statements of a twelve-bar blues. Johnson continues the improvisation by reverently quoting Waller staples such as “Ain’t Misbehavin’” and “Honeysuckle Rose.” His poignancy is palpable.

Prior to his death, Waller was interviewed by broadcaster Hugh Conover on September 23, 1943 for the WABC radio network in New York City. The lengthy segment is worth including in its entirety, not only for posterity but, to acquire a glimpse of Waller’s humor and humility:

> Conover: Where were you born?
> Waller: I was born in Harlem, kickin’ and screamin’! I quit that kickin’ but, I’m still screamin’.
> Conover: Fats, if you are referring to your singing, you’re doing yourself a great injustice.
> Waller: Well, let us say then, “moanin’ and groanin’.”
> Conover: Well, tell us, when did you make your first professional appearance?
> Waller: When I was approximately fourteen. That’s a good word, approximately. I like that. I took a job playin’ in a theater and that was when I first got into trouble.
> Conover: Huh? How come?
> Waller: Well, my father was a minister and he had no use for theaters. He came there and took hold of me and said, “Son, you come on home out of this den of iniquity.”
> Conover: And I presume you went?
> Waller: You presume? Well, very definitely!
> Conover: Well, that of course that didn’t kill your interest in show business did it?
> Waller: No, I kept right on playin’ the piano and organ and writin’ songs. Some of the songs even got published.

> Conover: Well, then of course you did vaudeville work, had your own band, toured Europe, played a couple of concerts at Carnegie Hall, got into radio, went into the movies, wrote the music for another Broadway show, and finally hung out your sign at the Greenwich Village Inn.
> Waller: My life in a nutshell![162]

Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller, born May 21, 1904 to Edward and Adeline Waller, proved to be a provocative choice of study. Unlike Johnson, who was remarkably reticent, and Ellington who exuded an aura of grace and refinement, Waller expressed a lighthearted, flamboyant persona. His technical prowess eclipsed both his friend and mentor but was accompanied by an outwardly clownish exhibitionism that may have been perceived as pandering to white audiences—a quality not likely to provide uplift to the people of his race. Waller's gregarious nature, however, was an unaffected gesture to bring joy to all people—something clearly craved by a country that had professed "all men were created equal," yet continued to denigrate an entire population. Jazz scholar and author of *What a Wonderful World*: *The Magic of Louis Armstrong's Later Years*, Ricky Riccardi, conjectured, "Few jazz musicians brought more joy to the world than Satch and Fats." [163]

Thomas, as he would be called (unlike his siblings who were referred to by their middle names) was one of the five children born to his parents who would survive childhood; six others died either during infancy or early adolescence. At the time of Thomas's birth, the family resided at 107 W. 134th Street in Harlem. Adeline, who was unreservedly protective of her children, chose the home because of its adjacency to a

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[162] Hugh Conover, *Fats Waller Interview* (New York, NY: WABC, September 23, 1943).

[163] Ricky Riccardi, informal conversation with author, May 21, 2018.

school. Maurice Waller, Thomas's son, recalled, "Grandma didn't want her brood to linger on the streets where they could be physically hurt or tempted by the evils of the devil. She watched over the children with the attention of a clucking mother hen. Adeline was determined that her five surviving children would grow to adulthood."[164]

By the age of six, Thomas began to express an interest in music. His parents, both of whom were devout Christians and incalculably conservative in their practice of childrearing, supported their son's pursuit, deeming it would curb his mischievous nature.[165] Providentially, a neighbor was in possession of a piano and was copiously kindhearted; she permitted Thomas to venture into her apartment and discover the splendor of the instrument. His older brother, Robert, moved by Thomas's affection for music, suggested to his parents that the family purchase a piano of their own. Edward and Adeline acquiesced, however the idea proved to be cost-prohibitive. Undeterred, Robert approached his Uncle Pat, who had the means by which to procure the instrument. Maurice educed, from his memory, the story of how, "…one afternoon when [Thomas] came home, there it was—a brand new, shiny black upright with the famous Horace Waters' action. Dad sat down and played all afternoon and for several days no one could pry him from the old Waters."[166]

Thomas received early piano instruction from a Miss Perry, however her pedantic approach to learning scales and proper technique wearied him. With his affable

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[164] Maurice Waller and Anthony Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 3.

[165] Assuredly, two of Waller's most famous tunes, "Keepin' Out of Mischief Now" and "Ain't Misbehavin'" reflected this impish comportment!

[166] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 6.

personality, the young student persuaded his teacher to play through some sheet music of popular songs. He memorized her finger positions as she performed each tune. After his lessons, Thomas would scurry home, sit at the piano, and play the pieces he had just memorized. His mother, astounded by his prodigious progress, asked how he learned the songs so speedily. Maurice recalled his father's response was, "I remembered it."[167]

The steadfast student continued to learn music aurally until he reached Public School 89, where he was provided a more pedagogically structured environment. A Miss Corlias was the music teacher at PS 89 and astutely recognized her new student's aptitude. Thomas quickly began to learn to read music and was eventually afforded the opportunity to be the school orchestra's pianist. Edward, convinced his son would become a classical pianist, brought him to see the preeminent Polish pianist and composer, Jan Paderewski at Carnegie Hall; the concert had a weighty impact on Thomas and fueled a lifelong passion for classical music.

Adeline's health began to deteriorate with the start of diabetes and the family was compelled to relocate. They found an apartment with fewer stairs on Lenox Avenue and 134th Street, the nascent center of Harlem, that would accommodate Adeline's weakened condition. "We were so proud of our new place," Maurice recalled his father saying, "that I went out and got a bucket and a brush and I painted 'Waller' in large letters right on the top step of the stoop."[168] The family name remained on that doorstep until the residence was demolished. However, living in the epicenter of a once agrarian landscape, now

[167] Ibid., 6.

[168] Ibid., 11.

turned to a metropolis, presented immeasurable adversities. The growth of the African American population, due to the *Great Migration*, meant ethnic neighborhoods were constrained to conflate; the black community was entwined with Jewish, Irish, and Italian families. As a consequence of the racist, territorial tension, Thomas found himself being accosted by a group of white bullies while delivering groceries for Eckhert's Delicatessen.[169] The gang of menaces attacked Thomas, who was ultimately stabbed by one of the assailants.[170]

The incident, along with the strain caused by the advent of World War I, forced Adeline and Edward to keep watchful eyes on their children. This proved decidedly difficult when it came to Thomas, who was enticed by the vivacity of the neighborhood, one that was now replete with spirited nightclubs and bars. He was enthralled by the ardent syncopation and earthy blues that permeated from these establishments. Harlem musical kingpins such as James P. Johnson, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Luckey Roberts were featured in the basement cabarets that were peppered along Lenox Avenue. Acutely aware that he lacked the proficiency with which to meet the standards of his idols, Thomas approached his father with a proposition; he would leave school, secure full-time employment, and follow his resolute fascination with music, "there wasn't any rhythm in algebra."[171] Ultimately, Edward yielded to his son and Thomas began his pursuit in earnest.

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[169] With his mother's declining health, Thomas took on more responsibilities such as working part-time as a delivery boy.

[170] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 11.

[171] Ibid., 13.

Two brothers, George and Conrad Immerman, were the proprietors of an established delicatessen, which, during the Prohibition, served as source of illicit alcohol. Thomas, now affectionately referred to as "Fats," was offered a position as a delivery boy, earning a guaranteed weekly salary in addition to tips from satisfied customers; he was transporting both deli sandwiches and bottles of gin. The late-night hours and his obsession with the burgeoning sounds of jazz provoked tension between Edward and his son. After a series of heated arguments, Fats left home. The rift was short-lived but put a strain on his mother's rapidly waning health. One afternoon, she confessed to her son, "Thomas, I'm not going to be here to help you with your problems. I'm not going to be here too much longer and you need special help."[172] The actuality of his mother's mortality was devasting to Fats and, perhaps as a diversion, he immersed himself in his musical endeavors.

Each day, he passed the *Lincoln Theatre* on 58 West 135th Street near Lenox Avenue. The building, which opened in 1905 as a nickelodeon[173] called *The Nickelette*, was purchased by Maria C. Downes in 1909. She established the *Lincoln Theatre* as a venue that catered strictly to the increasing African American population. Its most esteemed possession was a ten-thousand-dollar Wurlitzer organ.[174] The massive sound eventually coaxed Fats into the theater, where he found an organist accompanying the silent film that was being projected on to the screen. He was spellbound. Routinely, he purchased a ticket, sat near the pit, and absorbed what the organist, a Miss Mazie

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[172] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 17.

[173] A nickelodeon was an early incarnation of a movie theater where customers were charged a nickel for admission.

[174] Richard Newman, "The Lincoln Theatre," *American Visions* 6, no. 4 (August 1991), 29-32.

Mullins, had performed. Eventually, Fats mustered the courage to approach Ms. Mullins and ask for instruction; she welcomingly obliged.

Fig. 4.2. *The Lincoln Theatre. 58 W. 135th Street*. Photo courtesy of cinematreasures.org.

Fats garnered a substantial education from his new teacher. His technical facility at the keyboard flourished exponentially and was, consequently, asked to serve as a substitute for Ms. Mullins when she was inflicted with influenza. When she decided to leave the theater, Fats was hired immediately and paid a salary of twenty-three dollars per week.[175] As per Maurice's recollection:

> When the word spread through Harlem that Fats Waller was the regular organist at the Lincoln, the youngsters flocked to the theatre—which was exactly what Mrs. Downes had hoped for. Once again his classmates stomped and shouted at him to "make it rock." He'd raise his eyebrows and mug as his fingers slid over the keys. Dad became aware he could make the crowd laugh with a raised eyebrow or a funny face, and this was all the encouragement he needed. He told me he delighted in those Saturday matinees and wished his parents would come to the theatre to hear him play.[176]

[175] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 21.

[176] Ibid.

The description of Fats entertaining the African American audience is of paramount importance; it illustrates that as a teenager, he had developed the onstage persona that would be the hallmark of his mature style as well as his desire to bring unbridled joy to his community. Lucidly, the minstrel-type mugging was adversative to the charge of the "New Negro" agenda; in the eyes of the black intelligentsia, this behavior promoted the stereotype against which they were fighting—the "Old Negro." They were short-sighted. His slapstick antics, accompanied by his merry music-making, united the black community. Moreover, his virtue of humor would bolster his fortitude—a trait that he would summon when his mother passed away on November 10, 1920.

The death of Adeline deeply afflicted Fats. He lost the woman who championed his artistic sensibilities—even when they may have opposed her principles. She fostered a sense of self-assurance in her remarkably talented son, believing he was blessed with a divine gift. Fats, distraught with grief, "…spied the old upright piano in the parlor, and grew sadder as he thought about the many times he sat there, accompanying his mother as she sang hymns. He never touched it again."[177]

Fats rallied the resilience to renew his ambition of becoming an accomplished pianist. A classmate, Wilson Brooks, introduced Fats to his older brother, Russell, who was a talented pianist in the neighborhood. Since the elder Wilson was not a qualified teacher, he promised to arrange a meeting between Fats and the "Father of Harlem Stride," James P. Johnson. A couple of months had lapsed since their discussion, when Wilson came home to find his friend on his doorstep. The hostility at the Waller residence apparently reached its apex and Fats left once again; this time, it was

[177] Ibid., 22.

permanent. Mrs. Brooks, approached Edward to discuss the state of affairs. She considered, like Adeline, that Fats was in possession of a shrouded virtuosity and it was imperative that he be given the appropriate encouragement. Edward, believing the Brooks family to be honest and good people, consented and permitted Fats to reside with them.

Living in the Brooks household was a transformative opportunity—not only were his talents aptly supported, but he had access to a player piano. Among the Brooks's collection of piano rolls was James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout." Fats learned to slow the tempo of the instrument and follow the keys as they were mechanically depressed. Russell, hearing Fats practicing Johnson's étude, was reminded of his promise; he approached James P. and persuaded the keyboard master to meet his potential pupil. Maurice remembered the story of his father's introduction to James P.:

> At first James P. didn't say much. He just let me play. Then he'd tell me to do this, or try that, and I did. Before I knew it, he was sitting on a stool next to me, making that piano rock. He'd play trills and strong bass figurations. He taught me more in an afternoon than I had learned in ten years. [178]

This encounter was Waller's initiation into the Harlem nightlife and the dawning of a cherished friendship that would last his lifetime.

Johnson, cognizant of the import of emotionally and artistically buttressing a young, black man in 1920s America, harbored the budding pianist under his proverbial wings and established a systematic routine for his student. Each morning, Fats would spend learning tunes by way of the piano rolls; in the afternoons, he would study privately with James P., and lastly, he would perform in the evenings at the *Lincoln Theatre*. Ultimately, Johnson was confident in his apprentice's proficiency and introduced

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[178] Ibid., 29.

him to the chief architects of the Harlem shout piano style[179]—the most important of whom was Willie "The Lion" Smith.

> James P. greeted his friend, who first grunted and then, staring, asked:
> Who the hell's the punk kid with you?
> Johnson: Fats Waller.
> Smith: Fats Waller… he looks more like Filthy Waller. [180] You can't bring no punk kid in here lookin' like that. Get his pants pressed and buy him a new shirt. This here's a high class joint.
> Johnson: I'm takin' Fats around town… meetin' people. Tryin' to help him along. He plays a good piano, man. Let him play something for you. He plays some of my stuff really good.
> Smith: I can't be bothered listenin' to some punk kid.[181]

Fats, at his tutor's request, played for "The Lion," who in turn replied, "That wasn't bad, kid."[182] After that evening, Fats would come to be regarded as one of the "Big Three"—the three most technically fluent and intimidating pianists on the Harlem rent party scene of the 1920s.

Still reeling from the loss of his mother, Fats sought out an acquaintance whom he had met during a neighborhood party. Her name was Edith Hatchett and the two had an instant connection; weeks later they were wed at city hall. The marriage, however, was incessantly precarious. Edith longed for a stable family life and, as a result of her husband's nocturnal vocation, found herself to be desperately lonely. She quickly became pregnant and, in 1921, the couple welcomed a son; he was given the name Thomas

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[179] Willie "The Lion" Smith invariably referred to the style as shout piano. As evidence, see "Willie 'The Lion' Smith," *JAZZ 625* (London: BBC, November 7, 1965), where it describes it as "The real stride, the shout, feeling of the church, the spiritual, combined together."

[180] Throughout the remainder of Waller's life, he would be affectionately referred to as "Filthy." James P, because of his physique and command at the piano was dubbed, "The Brute."

[181] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 33.

[182] Ibid.

Waller Junior. Edith hoped that having a child would dissuade Fats from continuing his late-night performances within the rent part circuit, along with the heavy drinking and eating that accompanied them; her wishes went unfulfilled and the martial strife intensified.

In an attempt to substantiate his merit as the breadwinner for his young family, and thusly assuage the contempt with which he was held by Edith's parents, Fats accepted all piano-related forms of employment. His friend, Clarence Williams, recommended him to the producer of OKeh Records, a promising label founded by Otto K.E. Heinemann in 1918. With Mamie Smith's ground-breaking recording of "Crazy Blues"[183] on August 20, 1920 for the OKeh label, producer Fred Hager and Heinemann established an untapped market—the African American public. Hager declared, "The coloured [sic] folk are buying records and records players like crazy. They don't really have that kind of money to spend. It's these records of Mamie Smith's."[184] The race record industry was consequently born and Fats, like Mamie, would provide a conduit through which the black community could escape the epidemic racism in America—whether they could afford to do so or not.

On October 21, 1922, Waller entered the OKeh studios and recorded his first 78rpm disc, OKeh 4757. It consisted of two solo sides: W.C. Handy's "Muscle Shoals Blues" and "Birmingham Blues" by Artie Mathews and Charles McCord. It was, by all

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[183] "Crazy Blues," with a vocal by Mamie Smith and accompanied by *Her Jazz Hounds*: Johnny Dunn (cornet), Dope Andrews (tuba), Ernest Elliott (clarinet, tenor sax), Willie "The Lion" Smith (piano) and Leroy Parker (violin), sold 750,000 copies in its first month. See Ted Gioia, *Delta Blues: The Life and Times of the Mississippi Masters Who Revolutionized American Music* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009), 38.

[184] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 67.

accounts, a mild success and the earliest example of the pianist's flowering, improvisational ingenuities. The elation among those present was irrepressible. Ralph Peer, the Director of Record Production, exclaimed, "Fred, that's not bad at all! Use this fellow again!"[185] Within six weeks, on December 1, 1922, Fats was back in their studio to accompany the propitious blues singer, Sara Martin. This momentous occasion marked the inception of his prolific recording career.

While ecstatic for the privilege of becoming a recording artist, Fats was not professionally contented—he had an unyielding desire to compose popular songs. He approached his friend, Clarence Williams, who, by 1922, was a well-regarded pianist, promoter, and music publisher. Fats queried, "Did you mean what you said about you publishing some tunes of mine?"[186] Williams responded affirmatively and the two began a fruitful collaboration. The first song the duo completed was "Wildcat Blues." The form of the composition, an AABBCCDC structure, is much more aligned with ragtime than the blues. The printed sheet music for piano by *Clarence Williams Music Publish Co. Inc*., begins with a four-bar introduction in C-minor; a simple i—iv—VI—V progression leads into the home key of C-major for the A strain. The piece, as published, is filled with syncopation and backbeats placed in the left hand, but exhibits an explicitly two-beat, ragtime approach. Figure 4.3. illustrates the essence of the tune, based on the opening

[185] Ibid., 70.

[186] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 72.

eight bars of the initial A section:

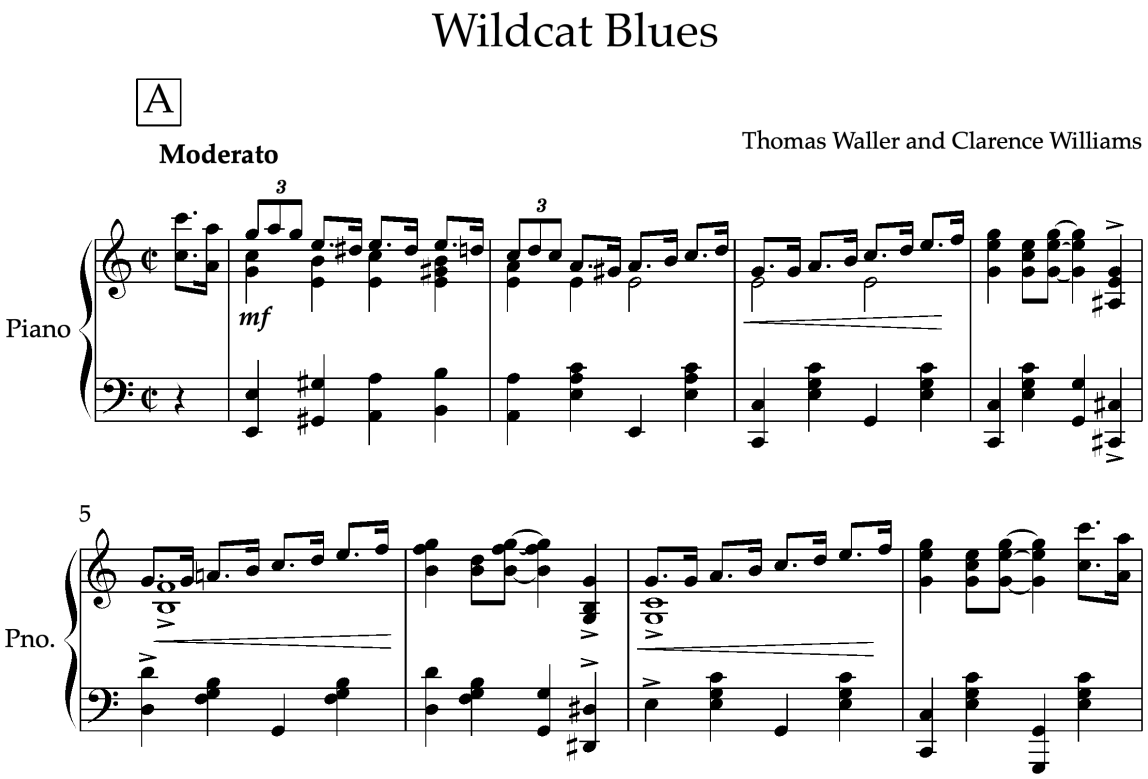

Fig.4.3. "Wildcat Blues" by Thomas Waller and Clarence Williams. 1923. *Clarence Williams Music Publish Co. Inc.*

Since Waller never recorded the tune, it is problematic to construe its veritable, musical disposition as he conceived it. Fortunately, *Clarence Williams' Blue Five* documented the song for OKeh Records on July 20, 1923; the tune was issued on OKeh 4925. His band included the New Orleans, clarinet virtuoso Sidney Bechet, Tom Morris (cornet), Jay Mayfield (trombone), Williams (piano), and Buddy Christian on drums. The ensemble exudes a lively swing, but the performance is more analogous to that of a Dixieland band, in which the members collectively improvise and create a polyphonic texture. Irrespective of style of jazz that was captured on disc that day, Waller did glean exposure from record sales and, more notably, was now an established songwriter.

Fats found an advocate in Williams who functioned, unofficially, as his manager—arranging recording sessions, booking performance dates, and keeping an attentive eye on his friend's voracious attitude toward living. Fats, however, continued his late-night appearances at inestimable rent parties (where he was often paid in food and drink) and resultantly devoted less time to his family. The struggle became agonizing for Edith and the marriage dissolved merely two years after their wedding day.

With a newfound liberation, Fats assiduously endeavored to enlighten the Harlem public of his talents. [187] He auditioned and won a piano competition held in the *Roosevelt Theatre* at 2497 Seventh Avenue and 145th Street, where he performed James P.'s tour de force, "Carolina Shout." As per Ed Kirkeby, "In the audience a young man thrilled by the performance, caught up to [Fats] on the sidewalk. 'Say, Mr. Waller, I just saw you win that contest. I like the way you play. My name is Andy Razaf."[188] The two shook hands, continued to walk together, and discussed music over a cup of coffee. Andy, a poet, longed to collaborate with a musician who possessed a wellspring of melodic ideas to complement his lyrics; he found that in Fats. The pianist, who enjoyed his time with Clarence Williams, was amenable to working with the animated, erudite writer. This would initiate an intimate friendship and prolific partnership that would last for the remainder of Waller's life.

In the 1920s, most songwriters peddled their wares for nominal sums. A fairly reputable composing team might expect fifty dollars per tune. Cognizant of the nefarious

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[187] Fats would never be truly liberated from Edith. Their divorce settlement stipulated an alimony payment of thirty-five dollars per week. Myriad times, he fell behind on that responsibility and was incarcerated.

[188] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 77.

trade practices in the entertainment industry, Fats and Razaf manipulated the system. They would bring a song to a prospective buyer (Fats would accompany Razaf's vocals) and likely sell it. Then, they would approach a rival publishing house with the same number—perhaps exchanging the verse for the refrain and vend it ostensibly as a new tune. Publisher Irving Mills explained, "You never knew when they were going to come up with another big it, so you *had* to buy them, even though you knew they probably had sold it elsewhere down the street, or even across the hall."[189]

As a result of their maverick approach to hawking their work, an undetermined number of compositions were published without being credited to Waller and Razaf; two speculative examples include "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and "On the Sunny Side of the Street"—both of which are ascribed to Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields. Jazz scholar, Paul Machlin, expounds on this premise when discussing the papers of Waller and Kirkeby that are housed at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey:

> …the collection includes some instrumental parts in Waller's handwriting (for "Walkin' the Floor" and "Spreadin' Rhythm Around"). Though the 1935 copyright of "Spreadin' Rhythm Around" attributes the music to Jimmy McHugh, the fact that these parts are in Waller's handwriting argues strongly that he, not McHugh, was the original composer of the song.[190]

Machlin's discovery adds credence to the plausibility of other songs that have been attached to McHugh were effectively composed by Waller, whose adroitness for

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[189] Ibid., 87.

[190] Paul Machlin, "Fats Waller Composes: The Sketches, Drafts, and Lead Sheets in the Institute of Jazz Studies Collection," in Edward Berger et al., *Annual Review of Jazz Studies*, vol. 7 (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 1-24.

constructing beguiling melodies was unparalleled; the ease with which he could compose a masterful tune may have been to his detriment—he would rather peddle a song for quick cash than fret over retaining copyrights. "He stuffed his pockets with manuscripts and made rounds of downtown publishers' offices, offering to sell any melody outright for $5 or $10."[191]

James P., the ubiquitous paternal presence in Waller's life, aspired to afford his protégé inestimable opportunities by which disseminate his gifts; to that end, Johnson introduced Fats to Max Kortlander and J. Lawrence Cook who managed the QRS piano roll company. Fats recorded the Spencer Williams composition, "Gotta Cool My Doggies Now," which was released in March of 1923 on QRS 2149. He would subsequently beget nine additional piano rolls for the label, for which he was remunerated fifty dollars each. Waller's name, as a corollary to cutting these tunes, was dispersed across the country.

In 1924, the Immerman brothers, the erstwhile employer of an adolescent Waller, purchased a fiscally-challenged cabaret called the *Shuffle Inn*, which was adjacent to the *Lafayette Theatre* at the intersection of 131st Street and Seventh Avenue. This, for a time, was the nexus of Harlem activity. Astutely, the Immermans established a trendy nightclub in the basement of 2221 Seventh Avenue; it was pertinently dubbed, "Connie's Inn."

[191] David A. Jasen and Gene Jones, *Black Bottom Stomp: Eight Masters of Ragtime and Early Jazz* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 110.

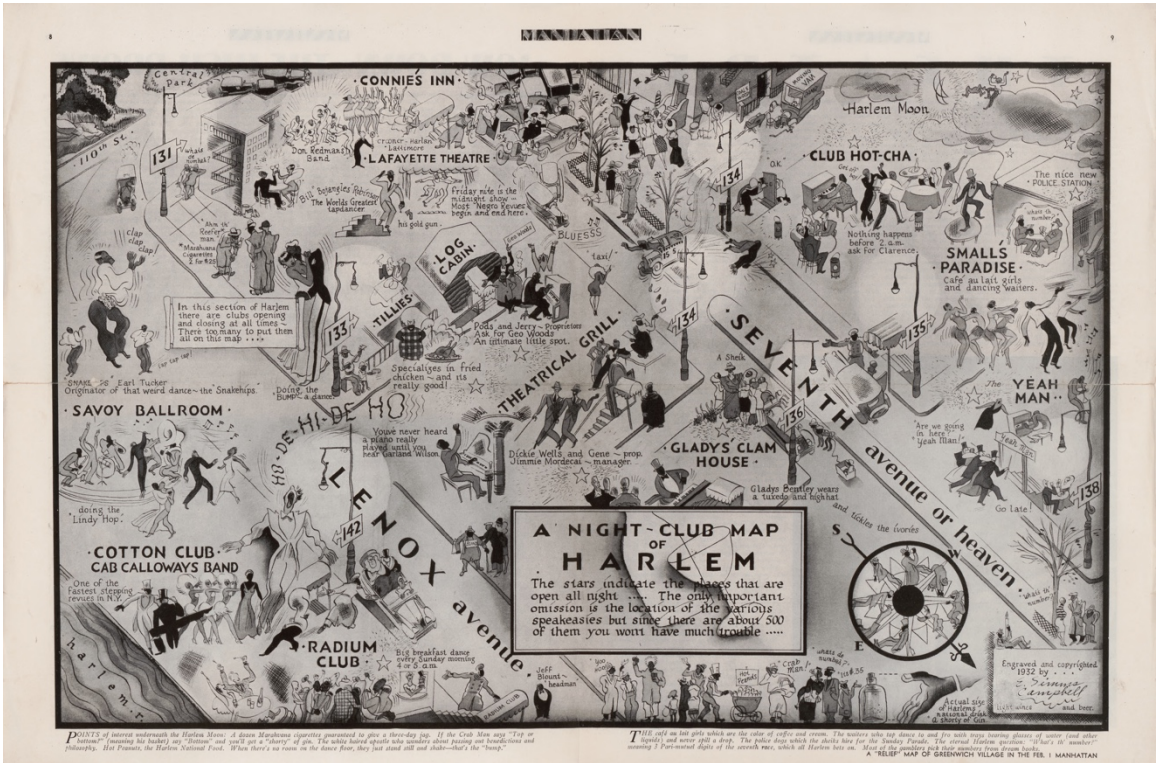

Fig.4.5. *A Night Club Map of Harlem*. E. Simms Campbell (Elmer Simms), 1906-1971, Cartographer.

In Figure 4.5., *A Night Club Map of Harlem*. by E. Simms Campbell, [192] *Connie's Inn* is situated near the top-center of the image. An exasperated police officer mediates a confrontation between two taxi drivers as one, who palpably parks illegally in front of the cabaret, causes an accident. A contemptuous, white couple exits the cab and is greeted by an African American club attendant. *Connie's*, like its competitor the *Cotton Club*, had an exclusionary entrance policy based on race; only wealthy, white patrons were welcome. Meanwhile, an African American couple with an acute sartorial sophistication, seems confounded, as they walk their dog, by the oblivious nature of those who are visiting their neighborhood. The former pair is clearly consuming the fabricated ethos of exotica

[192] Campbell, E. Simms , Cartographer, and Publisher Dell Publishing Company. A Night-Club Map of Harlem. [New York, N.Y.: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., ©, 1932] Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/2016585261/.

realized in Harlem during the epoch of the "New Negro." The latter is embracing the quotidian experience of being black in Harlem during the 1920s. The dichotomy is unambiguous. Figure 4.6. propounds a more detailed visual account of Campbell's cartography. Figure 4.7. is a photograph of *Connie's Inn* taken by Carl Van Vechten.

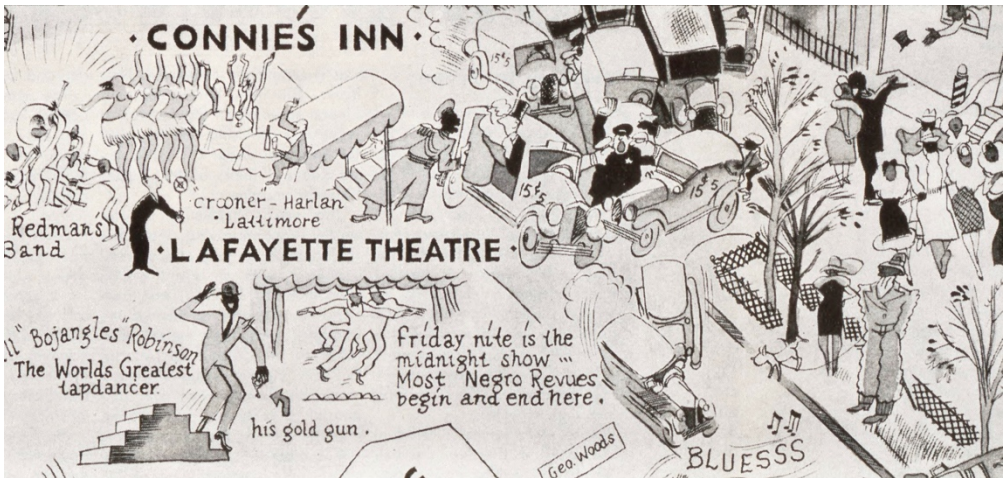

Fig.4.6. *A Night Club Map of Harlem*, Connie's Inn focus. E. Simms Campbell.

Fig.4.7. *Connie's Inn*. Photograph by Carl Van Vechten. © Van Vechten Trust.

The images above substantiate the benefit of employing a multi-heuristic approach when considering the lived experiences of the Harlem residents during the period of the "New Negro." As was evidenced by Willie "The Lion" Smith's quip regarding Fats's vestiary deportment, and as can be seen in the icons presented by Campbell and Van Vechten, the black community embraced the occasion to express a sense of cultural dignity through their voguish sensitivity. These visual manifestations, commingled with the aural expositions of jazz, inspired a young, African American poet named Langston Hughes.

Dubbed the "Poet Laurette of the Harlem Renaissance," Hughes was one of few leading participants in the "New Negro" movement who comprehended and appreciated the blues and jazz. Like the musicians he so admired, Hughes was spurred by the social condition of the African American people. His first poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," was published the same year in which *Shuffle Along* debuted and James. P Johnson made his formative recording of "Carolina Shout"—1921.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers
by Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.[193]

With "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," the eighteen-year-old poet captures the voice and memory of his people, who were forcibly transplanted from their homeland and shackled by a system of chattel slavery in the New World. The poet shares glimpses of his heritage and declares the depths of his soul, and thus of his people, is comparable to that of the ageless tributaries. Hughes's lyricism exudes pride in his "dusky" race, not unlike the earthy growls of Bubber Miley.

In the following year, the NAACP's publication, *The Crisis*, featured Hughes's poem, "My People." He would later retitle the work, "Laughers."

Laughers
by Langston Hughes

Dream-singers,
Story-tellers,
Dancers,
Loud laughers in the hands of Fate—
My people.
Dish-washers,
Elevator-boys,
Ladies' maids,
Crap-shooters,
Cooks,
Waiters,
Jazzers,
Nurses of babies,
Loaders of ships,
Rounders,
Number writers,
Comedians in vaudeville
And band-men in circuses—
Dream-singers all,—

[193] Langston Hughes, *The Langston Hughes Reader: The Selected Writings of Langston Hughes* (New York, NY: G. Braziller, 1971), 88.

My people.
Story-tellers all,—
My people.
Dancers—
God! What dancers!
Singers—
God! What singers!
Singers and dancers
Dancers and laughers.
Laughers?
Yes, laughers . . . laughers . . . laughers—
Loud-mouthed laughers in the hands
Of fate![194]

With "Laughers," Hughes encapsulates the essence of dignity among his people and the contributions they have made to American society. He embraces the Homeric spirit of the African American community, disavows tragedy, and insists on the heroic action of his people to rebuff the fateful gift of subservience from white America. To reaffirm Murray's contention, "This is the way it [life] is. What are my possibilities? So, if you see yourself in heroic terms, then you come up with the epic." The three seminal subjects of this study are emblematic of Hughes's "Laughers"—perhaps the most salient of which was Fats Waller.

Now that Fats was deeply ensconced in the Harlem jazz scene, the Immermans deemed him a commodity for their burgeoning nightclub. Capitalizing on their established relationship with the pianist, the brothers hired Fats to perform when he was not engaged with the *Lafayette*. Word spread of Fats engrossing the audience during intermission by taking requests. Consequently, members of the entertainment industry

[194] Langston Hughes, "Laughers," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersand (New York, NY: A Divison of Random House, Inc., 2004), 27-28.

began to flock there; one interested patron was a prominent press agent named George H. Maines.

Maines, who was regularly addressed as "Captain" for the rank he earned in the United States Army during WWI, was highly regarded amongst the political elite (Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower deemed him a confidant), as well as those in the public sphere such as Al Jolson and Ty Cobb.[195] Maurice Waller reflects upon the beguilement with which Maines held his father:

> For some time, Captain Maines and his wife were fascinated by my father and his antics at the baby grand and they frequently requested songs just to watch him. One night they invited him to the apartment of a friend on the fashionable West End Avenue. The apartment featured an organ and piano and Dad entertained them for hours. Maines was convinced my father was a man of tremendous ability both as a composer and performer.[196]

Shortly after this event, Maines offered to manage Waller, who keenly accepted. Engagements at the famed *Kentucky Club* on Forty-ninth Street and Seventh Avenue followed, where Fats performed intermission piano opposite Duke Ellington's band; this was "downtown," white society's first exposure to the emerging entertainer.

In 1925, Louis Armstrong, who had met Fats through the mutual acquaintance of saxophonist and arranger Don Redman, invited him to join his band at Chicago's *Hotel Sherman*. An apocryphal story places Fats in Chicago where he became a pet of the city's organized crime outfits. While performing at the *Sherman*, the associates of Al Capone absconded with Fats and *persuaded* him to perform for their boss. Ostensibly, he was

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[195] "Obituary George H. Maines ," *Flint Journal*, October 26, 1970.

[196] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 55.

deluged with hundred-dollar bills and champagne as he entertained the guests at a surprise birthday celebration for the mobster that lasted three days. [197]

Upon his return to New York, Fats resumed his schedule of doubling at the *Lafayette* and *Lincoln* and partaking in innumerable rent parties. One afternoon, he spied an attractive young lady entering for the matinee—her name was Anita Rutherford. Fats approached her and politely asked if he could take her out. After meeting Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford, the couple was permitted to commence a courtship. The sixteen-year-old Ms. Rutherford was decidedly mature and was in possession of a pragmatism that belied her years; when Fats proposed to Anita, she requested time to consider his question and the potential ramifications of getting married. She called upon Captain Maines for his insight.

Maines addressed Anita's concerns of the financial instability that could come with being wed to a musician. He assured her that Fats had brilliant prospects as a composer and pianist but needed a modicum of direction. He intimated that she could provide that for him. After allaying Anita's fears, Maines confronted Fats, who declared his earnestness in marrying the young woman. The couple was married in 1926.

With a newfound impetus for fiscal sovereignty, Fats peddled a collection of songs to his close friend, Fletcher Henderson, which included "St. Louis Shuffle," "Whiteman Stomp," "Keep a Song in Your Soul," "Crazy 'Bout My Baby," and "Stealin' Apples."[198] On November 3, 1926, Waller joined *Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra*

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[197] Ibid., 62-63.

[198] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 104.

at the New York City studio of Columbia Records. Fats performed on the organ and piano on "The Henderson Stomp," which would subsequently be released on Col 817-D. His star was in ascension.

Armed with an assiduous nature and unyielding conviction in his client, Maines persuaded the Victor Talking Machine Company to record Fats. Ralph Peer, now responsible for the production at Victor, had an appealing proposition. He would have Fats in the studio, which was a converted church in Camden, New Jersey, to cut two solo sides—but on the organ that was housed in the church, not the piano. This elated Fats, who would go on to say, "Ashton Stevens, music critic of the *Chicago America* wrote: 'The organ is the favorite instrument of Fats' heart; and the piano only of his stomach' Well, I really love the organ. I can get so much more color from it than the piano and that really sends me."[199]

On November 17, 1926, Fats recorded two tunes for the Victor label: W.C. Handy's, "St. Louis Blues" and his own, "Lenox Avenue Blues." These recordings, issued on Victor 20357, provide the earliest analog documents of Fats Waller as a solo artist. In an effort to promote their client to the African American community in a grander magnitude, Victor ran an advertisement in the January 29, 1927 edition of the *Chicago Defender* as seen in Figure 4.8.

[199] Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff, *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* (New York: Dover, 1966), 267.

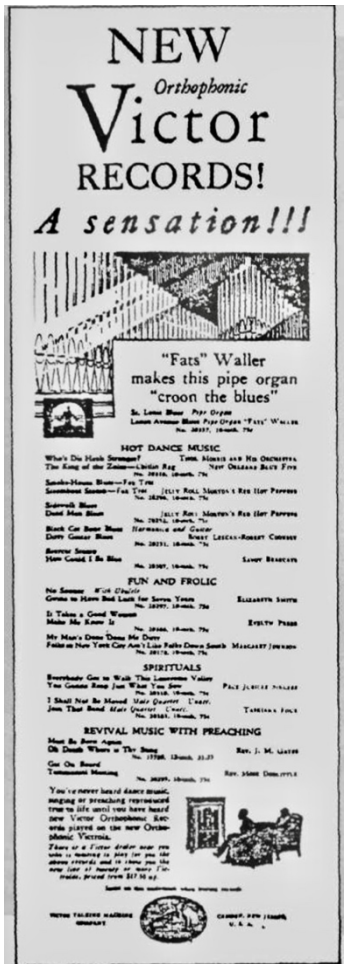

Fig.4.8. Victor Records advertisement. *Chicago Defender*. January 29, 1927.

Fig. 4.9. Estey Pipe Organ used by Waller at the *Trinity Church Studio* of the Victor Talking Machine Company. Unknown date. Image courtesy of Victor Records.

The following year continued to be productive for Fats, but he was yet to hit his stride. On January 14, 1927, Peer asked him to return to the Camden studio, where two

organ solo sides were recorded, “Messin’ Around with the Blues” and “The Rusty Pail,” Victor 20655 and Victor 20492, respectively. The succeeding month, Fats joined his friend and mentor, James P. on a piano roll duet for the Biograph label; the tune was “Cryin’ for My Used to Be” and later released on compact disc only, Biography BCD114. On February 16th, Waller resumed his time at the Victor studio and documented three organ tunes for Peer: “Stompin’ the Bug,” “Hog Maw Stomp” and “Black Bottom is the Latest Fad.” A fourth song, Waller’s “Blue Black Bottom,” was recorded as a piano solo but went unissued; it would have been the earliest evidence of Fats in this capacity.

The months of March, April, and May of 1927 have been documented ineffectually in the past. A notable engagement at Chicago’s *Vendome Theatre* for Fats must have occurred sometime after March 12th and before April 22nd. The import of this appointment lies in the reconnection with his friend, Louis Armstrong, where both musicians would play for the venerated *Erskine Tate Vendome Orchestra*.[200] Ed Kirkeby postulated that the sojourn had taken place in May:

> In May came an unexpected new opening—a job offered Fats in Chicago at the Vendome Theatre. Fats’ friend, Louis Armstrong, was making history playing in the pit band led by Erskine Tate, and he and his wife, the former Lil Hardin, offered to put up Anita and Fats in their home for as long as they wished to stay.[201]

Maurice Waller concurred with Fats’s manager when explicating that the trip occurred after the Victor recording of *Thomas Waller and Morris’s Hot Babies*:

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[200] The profundity of this experience cannot be overlooked—two prodigious, prospering jazz musicians performing with the most prominent ensemble in late-1920’s Chicago would have been an immensely inspiring and edifying encounter.

[201] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 104.

> The May 20 cuts were the "Fats Waller Stomp," "Won't You Take Me Home," and "Savannah Blues." With Captain Maines satisfied that the bank account was solvent, Anita began packing the bags (and me) for the trip. The Waller family was going to stay with Tate and his wife, Lil Hardin. Chicago was one of Dad's favorite cities, and he was looking forward to this trip.[202]

Waller could not have joined Tate's orchestra in May. As Armstrong authority, Ricky Riccardi, points out:

> The Melrose books of Armstrong transcriptions were released in early April 1927, around the same time that Louis left Erskine Tate's band at the Vendome Theater. He began leading his own group, Louis Armstrong and His Stompers, and as he later related, "Wild Man Blues" became a favorite number to perform live, with Armstrong and Dodds taking such long solos, each one would take turns going in the back room and eating spaghetti while the other was soloing! So when Dodds got his Vocalion session on April 22, "Wild Man Blues" was a no-brainer.[203]

Moreover, a March 12, 1927 edition of the *Chicago Defender* stated:

> Fats Waller, the organist from New York, has been retained to play the mammoth pipe organ in the Vendome Theater. He comes direct from the Lincoln Theater, New York where he was a sensation. With this great organist and Erskine Tate's orchestra it will give the Vendome Theater the distinction of being the most delightful theater catering to race patronage in the United States.[204]

Blatant errors in Maurice's recollection render his statement dubious. Firstly, he claims that the Wallers stayed with Tate and his wife, Lil Hardin. However, Hardin was never married to Tate—she was married to Louis Armstrong. The erroneousness

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[202] Maurice Waller and Anthony Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 70-71.

[203] Ricky Riccardi, "85 Years of the Hot Seven: Wild Man Blues," (Blogger, June 23, 2012), https://dippermouth.blogspot.com/2012/06/85-years-of-hot-seven-wild-man-blues.html.

[204] "Waller Joins the Tate Orchestra," *The Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1927.

of Maurice's assertion rests in his apparent misreading of Kirkeby's earlier-published text, "…Louis Armstrong, was making history playing in the pit band led by Erskine Tate, and he and his wife, the former Lil Hardin, offered to put up Anita and Fats in their home for as long as they wished to stay." Clearly, Maurice was relying on the Kirkeby's memory (and, unfortunately, his semantics) to place his father at the *Vendome Theatre* in May of 1927. Secondly, and perhaps a more grievous miscalculation, Maurice Waller was not born until September 10, 1927.[205]

The formative excursion to the "Windy City" would sadly be transitory. Fats was arrested for failure to maintain his alimony payments to Edith and was extradited to New York City, leaving his young bride to remain in Chicago. Auspiciously, the judge presiding over the case merely chided him and demanded he adjust his priorities. Fats pledged to be more accountable to his former wife and son.

Back in New York, Fats exuded an unambiguously indefatigable nature. On May 11th, Waller accompanied the *Fletcher Henderson Orchestra* on two sides for the Columbia Records: "The Whiteman Stomp," a composition by Fats, and "I'm Coming, Virginia," written by Donald Heywood. These would be released on Col 1059-D. A Reverend J.C. Burnett requested Fats's presence on a gospel recording for Columbia. With Waller on piano, four songs were documented: "Preach the Word," "I'll Just Stand and Ring My Hands and Cry," "Try Friendship," and "The Christians' Trouble is Ended." These takes, which were waxed merely six days after the Fletcher Henderson session, would be distributed as discrete discs: Col 14317-D, Col 14242-D, Col 14339-D, and

[205] Waller and Calabrese, *Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1977), 70.

Col 14295-D, respectively. The Victor label would call on Fats to accompany the renowned vocalist, Alberta Hunter, on May 20th. The duo recorded "Sugar," "Beale Street Blues," and "I'm Going to See My Ma" with Waller on organ. Victor released the first two tunes on Victor 20771 and the final song was issued as Victor 21539. The most noteworthy performance on this date, however, would be issued as *Thomas Waller with Morris' Hot Babies*. As per Ed Kirkeby:

> On this day, 20 May 1927, on which the old church seems to have rocked most irreligiously, a new band recorded for the Victor label. It was Thomas Morris' Hot Babies, a pick-up group which included the leader on cornet, Charlie Irvis on trombone, and Eddie King on drums. Fats played organ in combination with the band, which is probably a jazz recording first. The selections were *Fats Waller Stomp*, *Savannah Blues*, and *Won't You Take Me Home*? The vital music that is displayed on these Hot Babies sides is in no small way due to the indescribable hot quality that Fats manages to coax out of the pipe organ. He was undoubtedly the most successful jazz organist of the time…[206]

Fats resumed this prolific period in 1928. Most notably was his collaboration with James P. in a musical revue entited, *Keep Shufflin'*. The show, written with the assistance of lyricists Henry Creamer and Razaf and a book by Lyles and Miller, debuted on February 27, 1928 at *Daly's 63rd St. Theatre*. While this was not Waller's earliest foray into musical theater (he contributed to *Tan Town Topics* and *Junior Blackbirds* of 1926), it was his most substantial production to date.

Considered to be a sequel to 1921's momentous opus, *Shuffle Along*, *Keep Shufflin'*s backdrop was the fictional settlement of Jimtown. The show, which served to

[206] Kirkeby, Schiedt, and Traill, *Ain't Misbehavin': The Story of Fats Waller* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1975), 108.

promote Miller and Lyles as its principals, was still dependent upon racial tropes fostered by the minstrelsy tradition. *Keep Shufflin*', a musical comedy in two acts, follows the reprehensible exploits of Steve Jenkins and Samuel Peck, who have an aversion to manual labor. The pair devises a scheme by which to fleece the Jimtown community.[207]

The following pages offer a glimpse of the 1928 playbill for the revue. Figure 4.11. highlights the production is by Con Conrad Inc. and features Miller and Lyles. Waller, James P., and a rather obscure figure in jazz history, Clarence Todd, share the composer credits. Figure 4.12. substantiates the remaining cast members and the locales for the first act. It also acknowledges the chief pit musicians include Waller, Johnson, and cornet virtuoso, Jabbo Smith.[208] The subsequent page, Figure 4.13., features the locations for the Act Two and, most importantly, the musical numbers in order of performance.[209]

The first tune, after the opening chorus, was "Choc'late Bar." Razaf, compelled to comply to the Jim Crow standard that white audiences were expecting of a black revue, wrote:

> When it comes to sweetness hon' you sho' am sweet,
> Honeysuckles droop their heads in shame.
> Sweeter than a watermelon right off the vine,
> Sweeter than the sweetest 'tater, and you're all mine.[210]

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[207] Bernard L. Peterson, *A Century of Musicals in Black and White: An Encyclopedia of Musical Stage Works by, about, or Involving African Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 207.

[208] The playbill's claim that Waller performed on the white keys, while Johnson played on the black keys should not be taken earnestly; it was a casual attempt to merely say both men were performing on the piano.

[209] Since the plots of the show were secondary, black musical revues of the 1920s tended to have a fluid score. The songs were not necessarily aligned with the action of the show and thus could be removed or added at any time. "Willow Tree," a later supplement to *Keep Shufflin'* and an exemplar of the mutability of the score, became one of its few memorable tunes and one of the only two that Fats would subsequently record.

[210] Barry Singer, *Black and Blue*: *The Life and Lyrics of Andy Razaf* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1992), 191.

The music for "Choc'late Bar" was composed by Waller, but there is no evidence to suggest he ever recorded the tune. In fact, none of the numbers as listed in the *Keep Shufflin*' program, Figure 4.13., were ever waxed by Fats.

"Willow Tree," composed by Waller with lyrics by Razaf, was occasionally used as an encore number for the Conrad production. The sanguine rejoinder rendered by the pubic and critics thrusted the tune into revue's running order. Written and performed as a ballad, "Willow Tree," exudes a blues sensibility. Its mournful melodic line, rife with bent notes, reflects the despondency in Razaf's lyrics:

> I saw a darkey in the woodland, bowed down with sorrow all his own,
> He went to nature with his trouble with tearful eyes I heard him moan:
>
> Oh Lordy, Willow Tree,
> Hear my plea,
> When you weep, think of me,
> 'Cause I'm so weary
> with misery.
> Happy breeze, pity please,
> Sigh for me thru the trees—
> My life's so dreary with misery.
>
> For me, it rains and rains,
> Each day brings aches and pains.
> Feel like a stranger everywhere,
> Nobody seems to care,
> The burden's more than I can bear.
>
> Willow tree hear my plea,
> When you weep, think of me,
> 'Cause I'm so weary
> with misery.[211]

Lyrically, Razaf begins the song with the introductory lines that induce an

[211] Barry Singer, *Black and Blue: The Life and Lyrics of Andy Razaf* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1992), 192.

anticipated minstrel stereotype. However, in a spirit of defiance, he abruptly redirects the tenor of the song to a plea for humanity. The character turns to the weeping willow for compassion and thusly decimates the discernment that the "darkey" is not human. "Willow Tree," with its subversive implications, can be seen as a harbinger to songwriting duo's 1929 opus, "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue."

On March 27, 1928, Fats entered the studio with an ensemble dubbed the *Louisiana Sugar Babes*. The aggregate consisted of Jabbo Smith (cornet), Garvin Bushell (clarinet, alto sax, and bassoon), James P. Johnson (piano), and Waller on organ. In his autobiography, *Jazz from the Beginning*, Bushell recollects the session:

> In March I went down with James P., Fats, and Jabbo to record in Camden, New Jersey. Victor had bought this church there which had a great sounding organ, and used it as a recording studio. The organ pipes were in one room and we were in another. Fats played organ on this date. The piano and the organ manual were together, but since the pipes were in the next room Fats had a real job, because the organ always sounded a fraction of a second late. It was quite a thing. And it was hard keeping time because we had no drums or bass.That morning, Fats didn't drink his fifth of gin until *after* we got through recording.[212]

The session rendered Waller's "Willow Tree," Johnson's "'Sippi," "Thou Swell" by Rodgers and Hart, and a tune by Gus Kahn and Neil Moret, "Persian Rug." The first two songs would be distributed on Vic 21348, while the latter would be circulated on Vic 21346.

Keep Shufflin', which ran for one hundred and four performances at *Daly's*, was undeniably a success for Waller. His triumphs, however, would be derailed when he was

[212] Garvin Bushell and Mark Tucker, *Jazz from the Beginning* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1998), 74.

arrested for failure to maintain his alimony payments. As per an article entitled, "Fats Waller Sent Away: Abandoned His Family," from the September 19, 1928 edition of *Variety Magazine*, Judge Albert Cohn of the Bronx County Court sentenced Fats to a term of six months to three years in jail, Figure. 4.10. The shame of the prison term was exacerbated when Edward Waller passed away; Fats refused to attend the funeral service due to the embarrassment of having to be shackled in order to be in public.[213]

Fats Waller Sent Away ;
Abandoned His Family

Thomas Fats Waller, Negro organist and pianist, who won fame by making a pipe organ record of "St. Louis Blues" for the Victor records, won't make any more records for awhile. The reason is that Fats has been sentenced to serve from six months to three years in the New York County jail. The charge was abandonment of his wife, Edith Waller, and their 4-year-old son, Thomas, Jr.

When Fats was haled before Judge Albert Colin in the Bronx County Court he was very wistful and repentant. He told the judge that he had been in jail 31 days and had learned his lesson.

The judge told Fats that he had had five lessons already.

Sometime ago Mrs. Waller was awarded $20 weekly alimony but Waller slipped up on the payments. The Wallers live at 1006 Brook avenue, Bronx.

Fig. 4.10 *Variety Magazine*. September 19, 1928.[214]

[213] Jasen and Jones, *Black Bottom Stomp: Eight Masters of Ragtime and Early Jazz* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 114.

[214] Abel Green, "Fats Waller Sent Away: Abandoned His Family," *Variety Magazine*, September 19, 1928, p. 55.

THE NEW YORK MAGAZINE PROGRAM

DALY'S 63rd ST., THEATRE

63rd ST. THEATRES, LTD., INC., Proprietors

FIRE NOTICE: Look around NOW and choose the nearest Exit to your seat. In case of fire, walk (not run) to THAT Exit. Do not try to beat your neighbor to the street.

JOHN J. DORMAN, Fire Commissioner.

WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1928
Matinees Wednesday and Saturday

CON CONRAD, INC., offers

MILLER AND LYLES

In the Musical Comedy

"KEEP SHUFFLIN'"

Book by Flourney Miller and Aubrey Lyles
Music by Jimmy Johnson, "Fats" Waller and Clarence Todd
Lyrics by Henry Creamer and Andy Razaf
Dances and Ensembles Staged by Clarence Robinson
Orchestrations by Will Vodery Musical Director, Jimmy Johnson
Entire Production Staged by Con Conrad

FOREWORD

The comedy team of Miller and Lyles has become a distinct institution in the realms of the American theatre. Those inimitable performers, noted for their unusual artistry in exemplifying the traditional humor of the Negro, have existed as a unit from the time they attended Fisk University—where they made a hobby of theatricals—to their present appearance in "Keep Shufflin'." In contemporary stage activities Miller and Lyles occupy a position which is shared by few. Neither has ever appeared without the other, and their record behind the footlights discloses the rather significant fact that they have been highly successful in every show in which they have been starred, featured, or performed. Their initial diadem was won in the memorable production, "Shuffle Along." Subsequently they appeared in "Runnin' Wild." While their latest vehicle "Keep Shufflin," possesses a title suggestive of locomotion, it cannot be regarded as one of the usual Miller and Lyles vehicles. The book of the present musical comedy was written by Flourney Miller and Aubrey Lyles and it is confidently hoped that this present production will live up to the expectations of all those who have cooperated in making its entertaining qualities and magnitude a reality, and it is further hoped that it will be received by the theatre-goer with the appreciation which has been allied with the past successes in which Miller and Lyles have appeared.

CON CONRAD

THE CAST

(In order of appearance)

Boss ..... Jerry Mills
Henry ..... George Battles
Brother Jones ..... John Gregg
Mose ..... John Vigal
Walter ..... Clarence Robinson
Scrappy ..... Byron Jones
Evelyn ..... Evelyn Keyes
Honey ..... Honey Brown

PROGRAM CONTINUED ON SECOND PAGE FOLLOWING

Fig. 4.11. Playbill for *Keep Shufflin*', page 14.

PROGRAM CONTINUED

Alice ..... Jean Starr
Mrs. Jenkins ..... Margaret Lee
Steve Jenkins ..... FLOURNEY MILLER
Sam Peck ..... AUBREY LYLES
Ruth ..... Josephine Hall
Maude ..... Maude Russell
Yarbo ..... Billie Yarbough
Hazel ..... Hazel Sheppard
Grit ..... Gretta Anderson
Marie ..... Marie Dove
Bill ..... Gilbert Holland
Joseph ..... Herman Listerino

IN ORCHESTRA

On the White Keys ..... "Fats" Waller
On the Black Keys ..... Jimmy Johnson
Behind the Bugle ..... Jabbo Smith

ACT I.

Scene One—Exterior of Industrial School, Jimtown.
Scene Two—Street in Jimtown.
Scene Three—Front Yard of Steve Jenkins' Home.

PROGRAM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Fig. 4.12. Playbill for *Keep Shufflin*', page 15.

PROGRAM CONTINUED

ACT II.

Scene One—Town Hall.
Scene Two—Main Street, Jimtown.
Scene Three—Interior of Steve Jenkins' Home.
Scene Four—Outskirts of Jimtown.
Scene Five—Back in the Front Yard of Steve Jenkins' Home.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act One

1 Opening Chorus (by Creamer and Vodery).....Ensemble
2 Choc'late Bar (by Razaf and Waller).....Evelyn Keyes and Byron Jones
3 Labor Day Parade (by Razaf and Todd).....Clarence Robinson and Company
4 Give Me the Sunshine (by Creamer, Johnson and Conrad).....Jean Starr, John Vigal, Clarence Robinson
5 Pining (by Creamer and Todd)....Josephine Hall and Clarence Robinson
6 Leg It (by Creamer, Todd and Conrad).....Maude Russell and Company
7 Washboard Ballet (Waller).....Honey Brown
8 Exhortation (by Creamer and Conrad), George Battles and Jubilee Glee Club
9 Sippi (by Creamer, Johnson and Conrad).....Maude Russell
10 How Jazz Was Born (by Razaf and Waller).... Jean Starr and Company
11 Finale .....Entire Company

Act Two

1 Keep Shufflin' (by Razaf and Waller).....John Vigil and Company
2 Everybody's Happy in Jimtown (by Razaf and Waller).....Male Octette
3 Give Me the Sunshine—Reprise (by Creamer, Johnson and Conrad), Miller and Lyles
4 Dusky Love (by Creamer and Vodery).....Josephine Hall, Clarence Robinson and Company
5 Charlie, My Back Door Man (by Creamer and Todd)....Jean Starr and Strut Men
6 On the Levee (by Creamer and Johnson).....Maude Russell and Girls
7 Harlem Rose (by Gladys Rodgers and Con Conrad).....Maude Russell
8 Finale .....Entire Company

LADIES OF THE ENSEMBLE—Gussie Williams, Hazel Sheppard, Ethel Moses, Marie Buschell, Marion L. Tyler, Vivienne G. Brooks, Lila Brogdan, Evelyn Irving, Gladyce Bronson, Hazel Coles, Gertrude Gaines, Violet Speedy, Marie Dove, Mineola Phillips, Shirley Abbey, Jean Kane, Edna Ellington, Peggy Burnett, Pauline MacDowell, Billie Rickmon, Marion Ford, Madeline Odlum, Olive Harrison, Byrdie Wallace, Clarice Egbert, Ruth Cherry, Ruth Lambert.

PROGRAM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Fig. 4.13. Playbill for *Keep Shufflin*', page 16.

PROGRAM CONTINUED

JUBILEE SINGERS AND DANCERS—Charles Lawrence, Herman Listerino, Lloyd Mitchell, Howard Browne, George Battles, Joseph A. Willis, Burkie Jackson, Chris Gordon, Edwin Alexander, Sandy Brown and Kenneth Harris.

"Alabama Day" Paraders, Citizens of Jimtown, etc.

FOR CON CONRAD, INC.

Saul Bernie	General Manager
Nat Phillips	Manager
Miller Earle	Assistant Manager
John F. Gillespie	General Publicity Director
George H. Morris	Publicity Representative
Frank R. Stich	Associate Press Representative
Charles E. Ashley	Stage Manager
Naomi Werner	Secretary
Clarence Roe	Chief Electrician
Mrs. Mrs. F. Larkin	Wardrobe Mistress
Ethel Crevelliere	Assistant Wardrobe Mistress

Costumes by Mahieu. Scenery by Karl O. Amenda. Shoes by Ben and Sally. Hosiery and furnishings by Nat Lewis.

Fig. 4.14. Playbill for *Keep Shufflin*', page 17 .

Upon his release from Welfare Island prison, Waller recommenced his songwriting partnership with Razaf, the result of which was a revue titled, *Hot Feet*. The show, produced by Leonard Harper, opened on the evening on February 28, 1929 at *Connie's Inn*. *Hot Feet*, an all-African American musical production, rivaled the analogous shows of its chief competition, the *Cotton Club*; each offered elaborate floor shows, buoyant music, restrictive admission policies that were based on race, and purported ties to organized crime. *Hot Feet* was considered to be the apogee of black entertainment that emanated from a Harlem nightclub. Abel Green of *Variety Magazine* lauded the production:

> Leonard Harper's new show is a pip. Harper (colored) is a past master at this kind of floor entertainment and Connie Immerman of the Immerman Brothers, the impresarios, are giving the customers a generous two bucks worth for the covert charge. "Hot Feet" is the label and it's plenty torrid. Just the type of show a black-and-tan should have.[215]

After a ten-week run of *Hot Feet* at *Connie's Inn*, the show's impresarios opened a new iteration at the *Windsor Theatre* on the corner of Fordam and Knightsbridge Roads in the New York City borough of the Bronx. They had renamed the revue *Connie's Hot Chocolates* and asked Waller and Razaf to compose a few more numbers for the revamped show; these songs included "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue," "Can't We Get Together," and the show's most popular tune, "Ain't Misbehavin'."

According to Razaf biographer, Barry Singer, "Ain't Misbehavin'" was concocted in Waller's apartment on 133rd Street. The pianist, in his pajamas, extemporized a

> marvelous strain, which was complicated in the middle. I straightened it out with the "no one to talk with, all by myself" phrase, which led to the phrase "ain't misbehavin'," which I knew was the title. The whole thing took about forty-five minutes. Fats dressed and we proceeded to Jack

[215] Green, "Connie's Inn (Black and Tan)," *Variety Magazine*, March 13, 1929, p. 58.

Mills's office, where we demonstrated and sold the song. From there we went to the theater, where Harry Brooks arranged it.[216]

Fig. 4.12. "Ain't Misbehavin'" by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf. Cover page. Author's collection.

[216] Singer, *Black and Blue*: *The Life and Lyrics of Andy Razaf* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1992), 213.

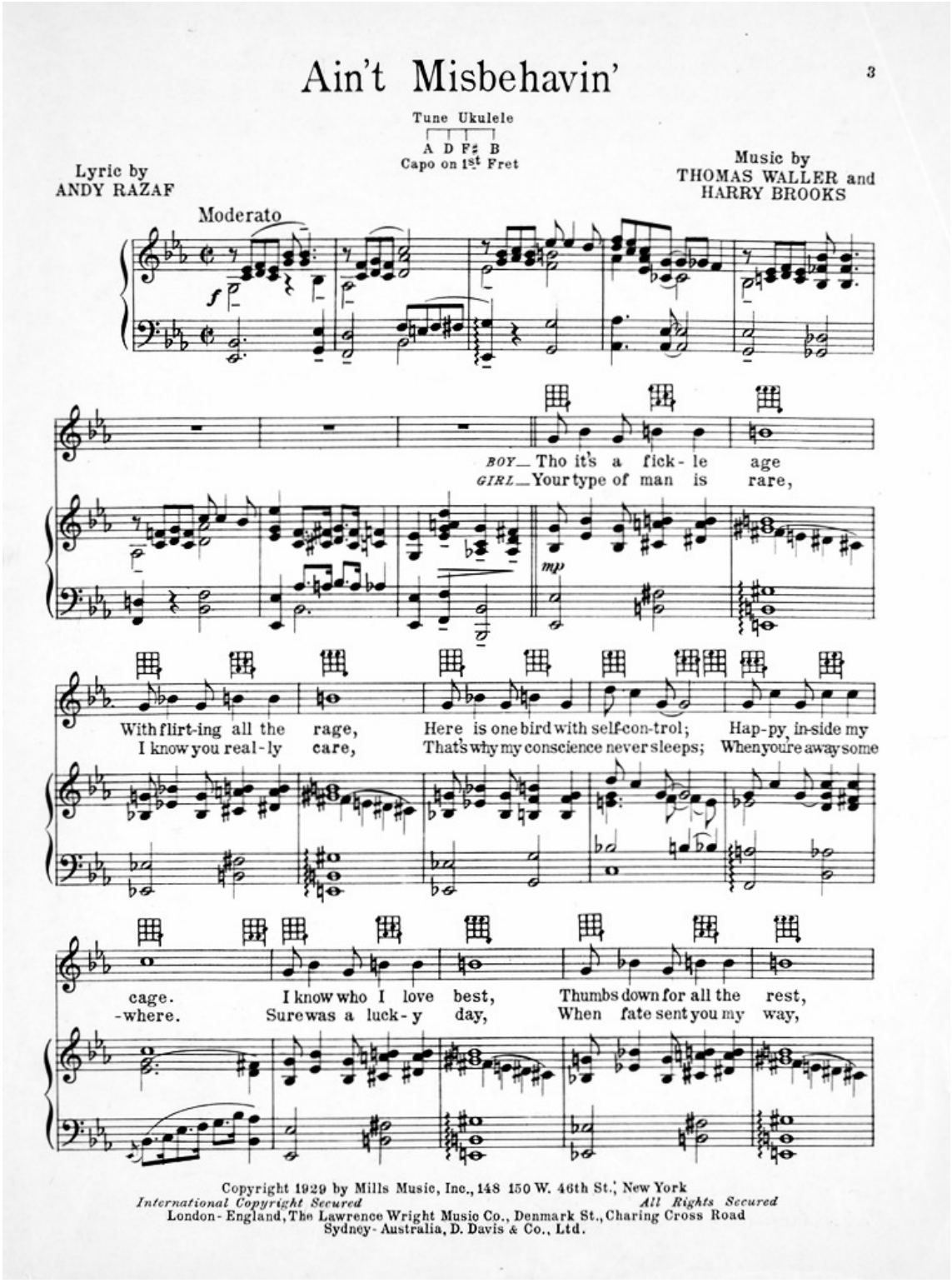


Fig. 4.12. "Ain't Misbehavin'" by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf. Page 3. Author's collection.

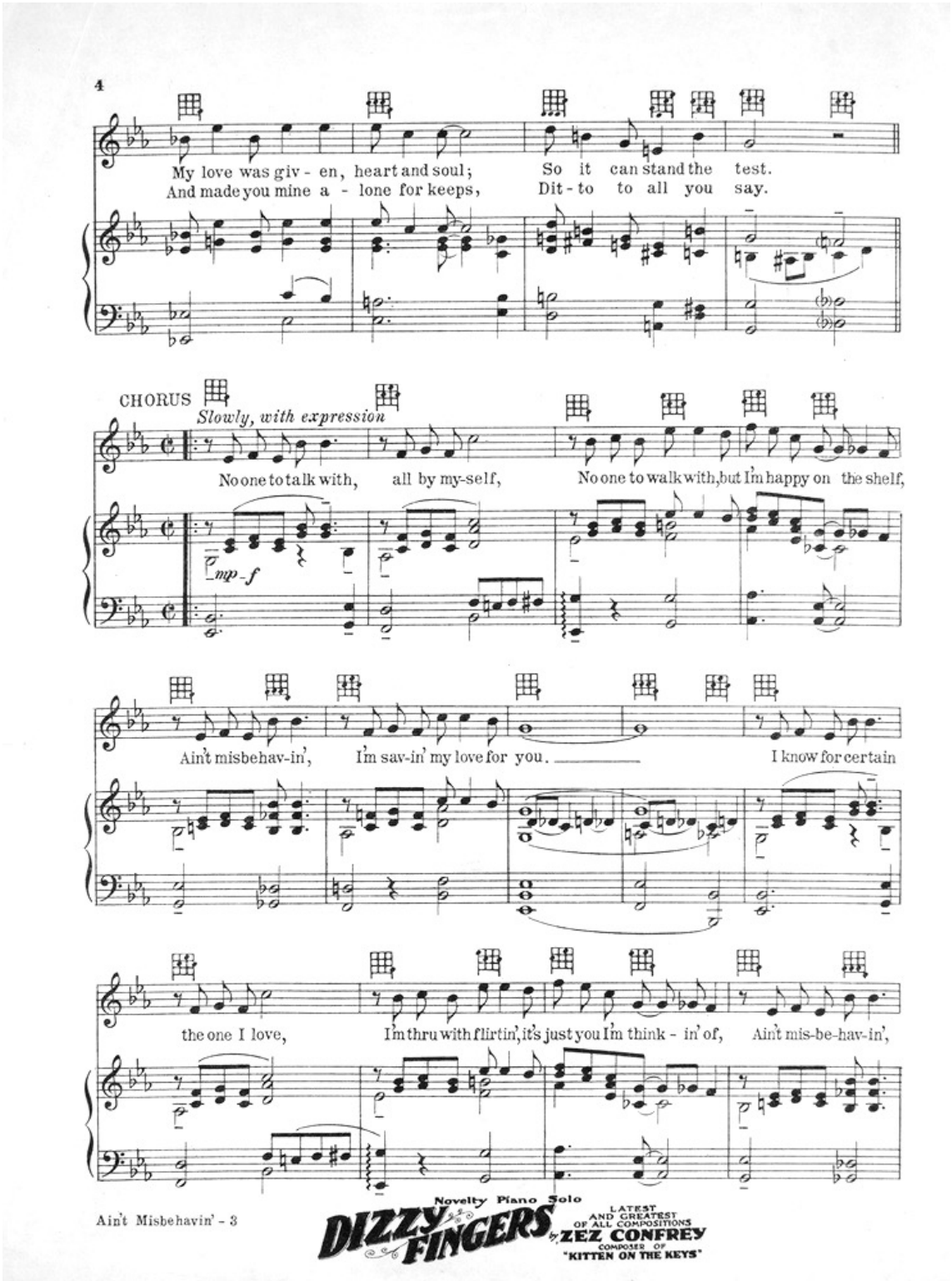


Fig. 4.13. "Ain't Misbehavin'" by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf. Page 4. Author's collection.

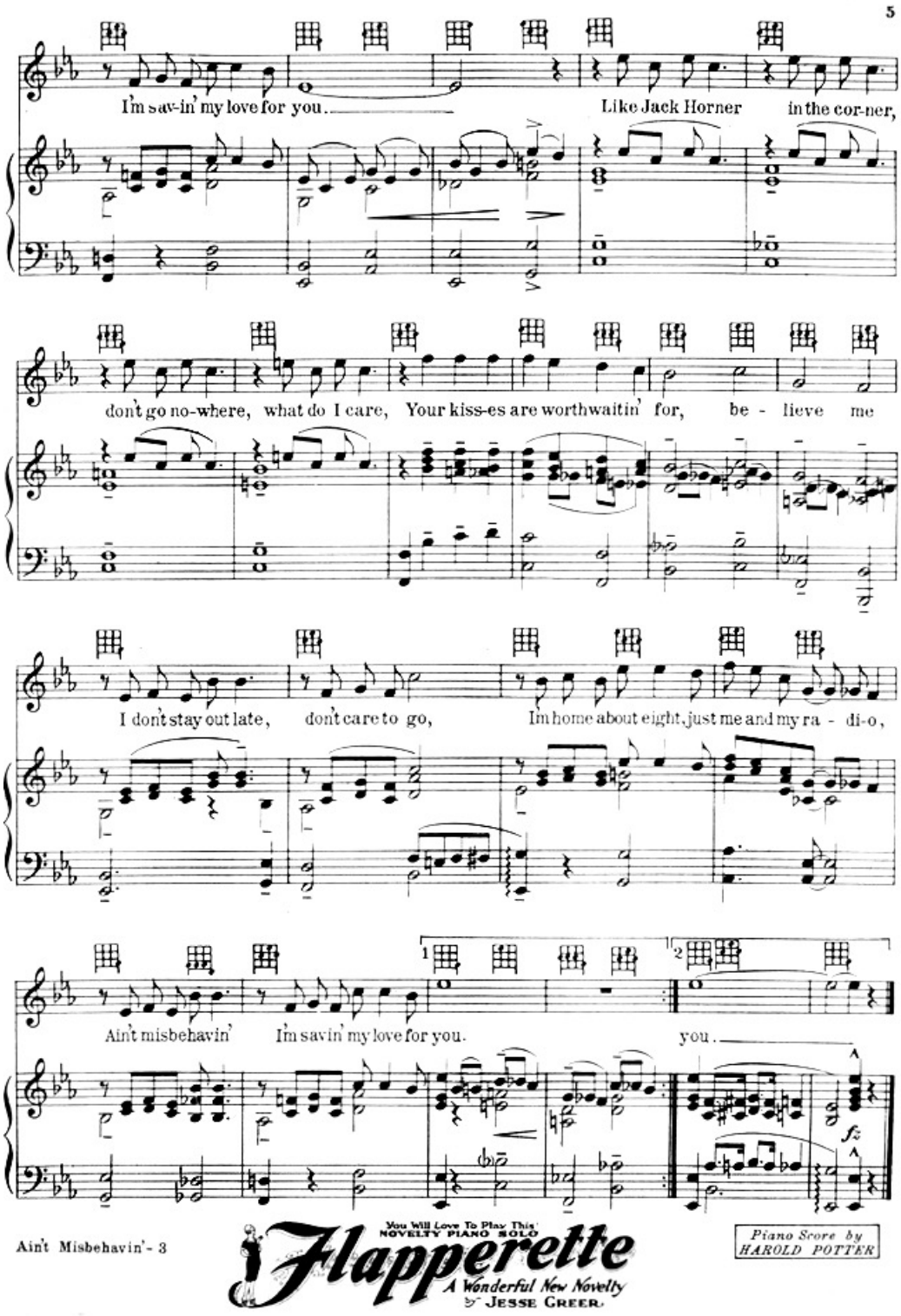


Fig. 4.14. "Ain't Misbehavin'" by Fats Waller and Andy Razaf. Page 5. Author's collection.

"Ain't Misbehavin'" exemplifies the quintessence of the thirty-two-bar song form and rebuffs the claim by Lew Leslie, renowned Broadway producer, that "[c]olored composers excel at spirituals, but their other songs are just [white][217] songs with Negro words."[218] Razaf's lyrics, which are the earnest expression of an ameliorated man, are juxtaposed against Waller's whimsical, melodic line.

As is conventional within the American popular song form of the 1920s, "Ain't Misbehavin'" begins with a musical introduction. An analysis of Waller's eight-bar opening, which is divided into two four-measure phrases can be found in Figure 4.15. below:

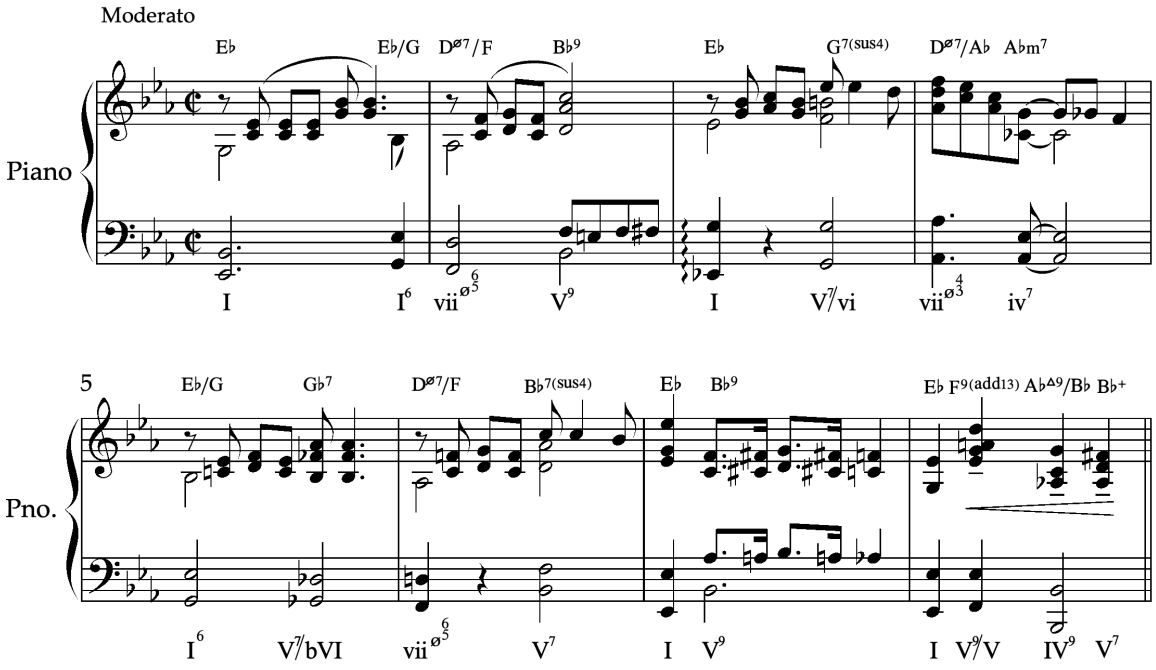


Fig. 4.15. "Ain't Misbehavin'" introduction. Author's analysis.

[217] Leslie's claim is egregious, racist, and illogical. What are the implications of the term "white" in relation to 1920's popular song? If he is intimating that Waller's music was merely an imitation of such Tin Pan Alley composers such as Irving Berlin, he is mistaken. The following analysis will elucidate this position.

[218] Allen L. Woll, *Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls* (New York, NY: Da Capo, 1989), 97.

The home key is established within the first three bars of the introduction. Waller moves from the tonic chord in measure one to the leading-tone-seventh chord on the downbeat of bar two. The vii chord serves to prolong the dominant function, which is continued with the V^9 harmony of the second half of the measure. The tonal center is secured with the motion from the B^{b9} to the E^b triad on the subsequent downbeat; the rolling of the left hand with the interval of the tenth accentuates the weightiness of the chord.[219] An applied dominant of the submediant, V^7/vi, adds harmonic interest to the progression, while the melodic line, which employs a suspended forth, creates a charming sense of temporary tension. In the fourth measure, Waller defies tradition by refusing to move to the anticipated submediant sonority; instead he opts for the less stable half-diminished-seventh chord. The utilization of mode mixture on the second beat of the forth bar, a minor subdominant chord, colors the composition by diverging from the home key. The succeeding four bars are an altered recapitulation of the opening phrase.

In the fifth measure of the introduction, Fats opens with the tonic harmony. Rather than prolong the tonal center of the tune, he chooses to use a non-diatonic chord, a G^{b7}. This can be alternatively be analyzed as mode mixture (Waller is using the mediant of the parallel minor key) or as a secondary dominant of the bVI chord. The function, irrespective of the harmonic enquiry, is to provide variation to the initial theme. Fats builds tension in the sixth bar with two dominant-functioning chords, the $vii^{ø}$

[219] While the rolling of the notes E^b2 to G3 stresses the tonic triad, the publisher likely added the articulation for those pianists whose left hands could not simultaneously play both notes. In Paul Machlin's book, Stride: *The Music of Fats Waller*, the jazz critic, Richard Hadlock, reported that, "…pianist George Shearing once described the experience of shaking hands with Waller as 'like grabbing a bunch of bananas.'" See Paul S. Machlin, *Stride: The Music of Fats Waller* (Boston, MA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 14.

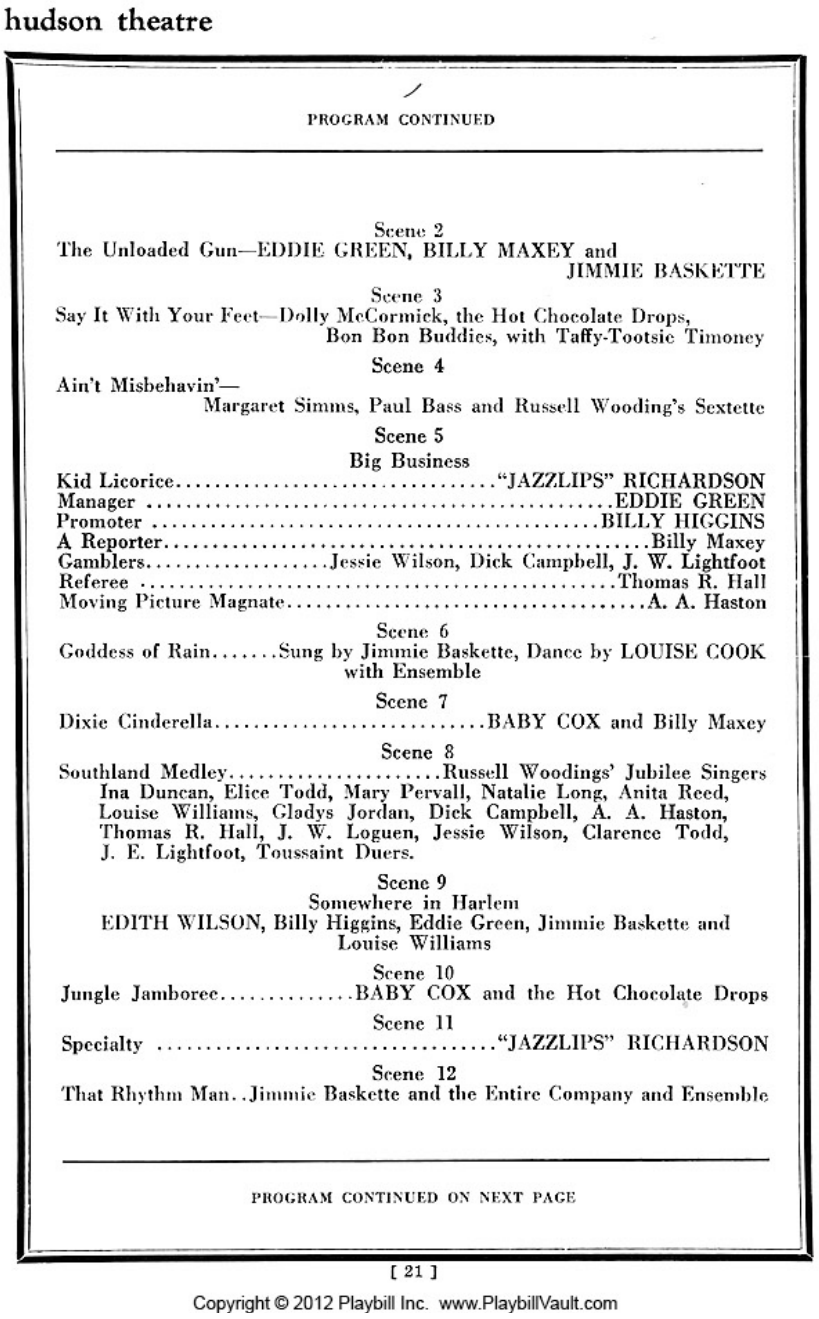
and V sonorities, respectively; this generates a musical propulsion towards the tonic in the penultimate bar. The rhythmic diminution within the B^{b9} chord engenders a sense of climax as Waller progresses to final measure of the introduction. By way of an increase in the harmonic rhythm, where he employs a discrete chord for each subdivision of the two beats for the first time, Fats presages an arrival to the verse; his choice of voicings is of particular interest here: E^{b} (with the omission of the fifth of the chord) moves to a $F^{9(add13)220}$ (or V^{9}/V) with an unprepared melodical leap to D5, which advances to an $A^{b\Delta 9}$ (with the fifth omitted). The arrival of the B^{b+} establishes the archetypal dissonance through which the tonic resolution is stated at the onset of the verse.

A careful examination of the published sheet music reveals a rather novel discovery—"Ain't Misbehavin'" was composed as a duet. The dearth of research on the tune's verse can be answerable for this unearthing. The program for *Hot Chocolates*, which opened on June 30, 1929 at *The Hudson Theatre* on 44th Street (East of Broadway), substantiates the intent of Razaf and Waller to have the song presented by a male and female couple. Figure 4.16. corroborates that Margaret Simms and Paul Bass performed "Ain't Misbehavin'" in this capacity during the fourth scene of Act One. In their book, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, Jasen and Jones assert that:

> …["Ain't Misbehavin"] was served up several ways throughout the evening. It was introduced as a boy-girl duet by Paul Bass and Margaret Simms, then reprised at intermission in a scalding trumpet solo and scat vocal by Louis Armstrong, then used as a departure point for the comic

[220] It is apparent that Waller is moving away from the conventional harmonic practices of his mentor, James P. Johnson. The addition of upper structures such as the 9th, 11th, and 13th of a chord was harmonically advanced for the 1920s and was largely not a part of the harmonic lexicon of Tin Pan Alley composers such as Berlin. This illustrates that Waller was not merely emulating white songwriters, but producing works of greater, musical interest. See Allen Forte, *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era: 1924-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 86-116 for analyses of Berlin's work, specifically.

asides of the 'Thousand Pounds of Rhythm.'[221]



hudson theatre

PROGRAM CONTINUED

Scene 2
The Unloaded Gun—EDDIE GREEN, BILLY MAXEY and JIMMIE BASKETTE

Scene 3
Say It With Your Feet—Dolly McCormick, the Hot Chocolate Drops, Bon Bon Buddies, with Taffy-Tootsie Timoney

Scene 4
Ain't Misbehavin'—
Margaret Simms, Paul Bass and Russell Wooding's Sextette

Scene 5
Big Business
Kid Licorice.....“JAZZLIPS” RICHARDSON
Manager .....EDDIE GREEN
Promoter .....BILLY HIGGINS
A Reporter.....Billy Maxey
Gamblers.....Jessie Wilson, Dick Campbell, J. W. Lightfoot
Referee .....Thomas R. Hall
Moving Picture Magnate.....A. A. Haston

Scene 6
Goddess of Rain.....Sung by Jimmie Baskette, Dance by LOUISE COOK with Ensemble

Scene 7
Dixie Cinderella.....BABY COX and Billy Maxey

Scene 8
Southland Medley.....Russell Woodings' Jubilee Singers
Ina Duncan, Elice Todd, Mary Pervall, Natalie Long, Anita Reed, Louise Williams, Gladys Jordan, Dick Campbell, A. A. Haston, Thomas R. Hall, J. W. Loguen, Jessie Wilson, Clarence Todd, J. E. Lightfoot, Toussaint Duers.

Scene 9
Somewhere in Harlem
EDITH WILSON, Billy Higgins, Eddie Green, Jimmie Baskette and Louise Williams

Scene 10
Jungle Jamboree.....BABY COX and the Hot Chocolate Drops

Scene 11
Specialty .....“JAZZLIPS” RICHARDSON

Scene 12
That Rhythm Man..Jimmie Baskette and the Entire Company and Ensemble

PROGRAM CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Fig. 4.16. *Connie's Hot Chocolate's* program. Courtesy of www.playbillvault.com

[221] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around: Black Popular Songwriters, 1880-1930* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 394.

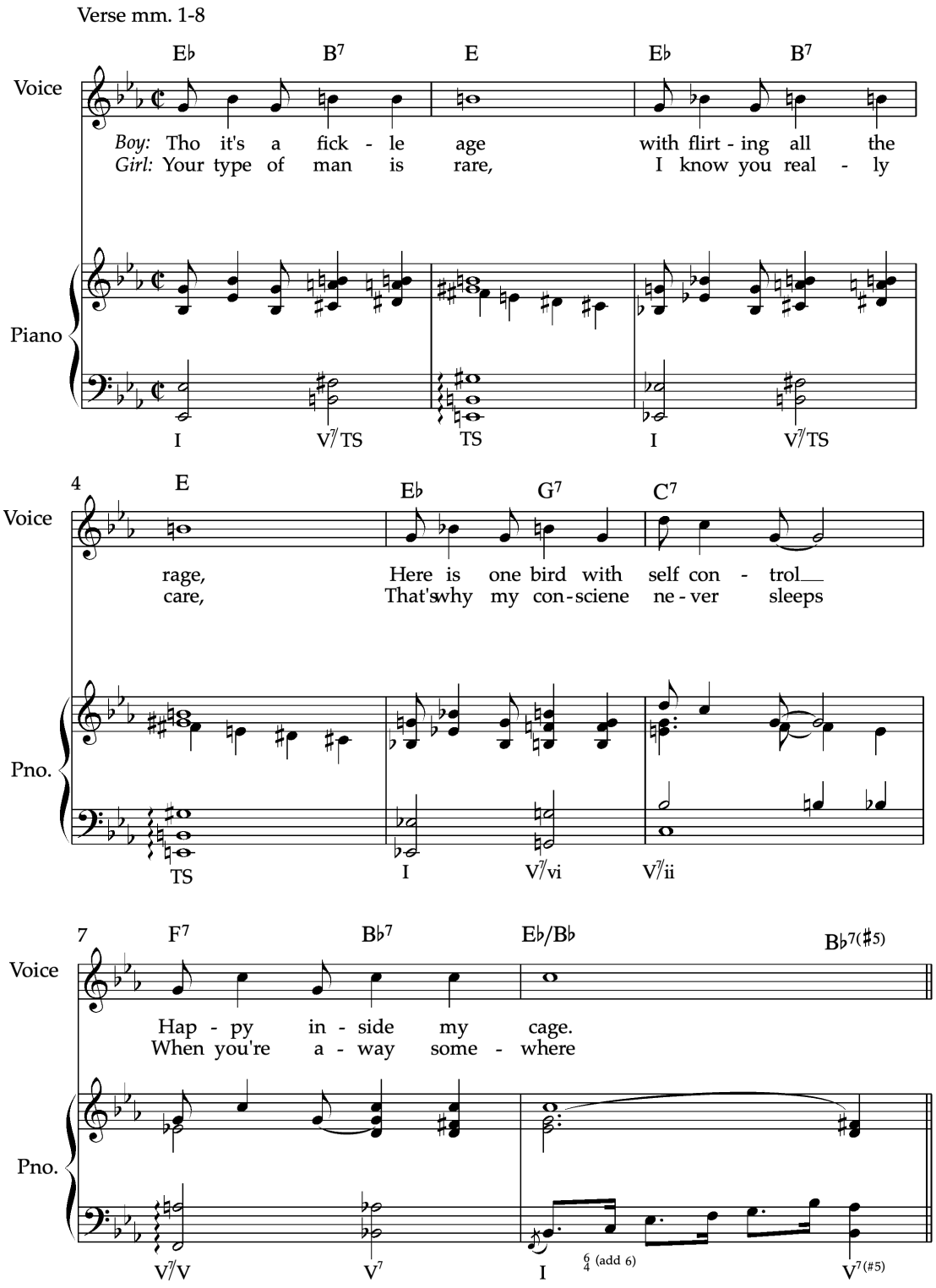


Fig. 4.17. “Ain’t Misbehavin’” verse. Author’s analysis.

The verse to "Ain't Misbehavin'" possesses a recitative quality, whereby the performers project a sense of holding a dialogue. Waller accomplishes this by employing a limited melodic range and contour. The disjunct motion and syncopated line add to singspiel sensibility. In the opening measure, for example, the melody begins on G4, leaps to $B^{b}4$, returns to G4, and rises to B4; the pitches are "spoken" on the words "Tho," "it's," "a," and "fickle," respectively. Measure two retains the previous note, B4, on the word, "age." This *see-saw* approach is relieved upon the lyrical whimsy of Waller's refrain.

Harmonically, the verse is much more remarkable. Fats begins the tune on the expected tonic chord, E^{b} major. He creates a sense of tonal uncertainty by proceeding to the non-diatonic chords of B^{7} and E major; here, he is employing a V^{7} of the tritone substitution, E major. It has a startingly effect. Waller recapitulates this progression for the third and fourth bars. In measure five, he arrives at the tonic triad only to use a string of secondary dominants over the circle of fifths: G^{7}, C^{7}, F^{7}, and B^{b7} through bar seven. A half cadence is reached in the final measure, however Fats opts to color the tonic chord with an added sixth. The entirety of the tune's verse is an exercise in tonal ambiguity, which is a reflection of the ingenious dichotomy of his musical humor and Razaf's lyrical sincerity. An infectious quality results—one which assuredly brought joy to listening public.

A *New York Times* review from June 21, 1929 captures the vitality of *Hot Chocolates* and the import of its seminal composition.

> *Hot Chocolates* is a noisy, high spirited, fast moving show, produced with more slickness and competence than any of its immediate predecessors…Cornets and saxophones blare an adequately torrid musical setting for the stage proceedings. One song, a synthetic but entirely

> pleasant jazz ballad called *Ain't Misbehavin'* stands out and its rendition between the acts by an unnamed member of the orchestra was a highlight of the premiere.[222]

Terry Teachout, in his biography of Louis Armstrong entitled, *Pops*: *A Life of Louis Armstrong*, astutely reminds that, "…it was still customary in 1929 for the drama critics of New York's morning papers to leave shows at intermission so that they could write and file their reviews in time to appear the following day."[223] The anonymous contributor of the aforementioned appraisal apparently remained for the intermission and serendipitously witnessed a young, African American trumpeter reprise "Ain't Misbehavin'" with unparalleled virtuosity on his horn and a throaty vocal refrain. The young man was none other than Louis Armstrong.

By 1929, Armstrong had recorded his landmark sessions with his *Hot Five* and *Hot Seven* ensembles for the OKeh label. Tunes such as "Gut Bucket Blues," "Heebie Jeebies," and "West End Blues" precipitated his billing as the "World's Greatest Cornet Player." While he was revered in cities like Chicago, he was yet to procure the cachet of the New York critical circles. It was his intermission performances of "Ain't Misbehavin'" that propelled him into the proverbial spotlight and by July 8, Armstrong was listed on the *Hot Chocolates* program. Perhaps more crucially, he entered the New York City studio of OKeh Records to wax "Ain't Misbehavin'." His ensemble, *Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra*, included Armstrong (trumpet, vocal), Homer Hobson (trumpet), Fred Robinson (trombone), Jimmy Strong (clarinet), Bert Curry, Crawford

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[222] "Hot Chocolates is High Spirited," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1929, p. 17.

[223] Terry Teachout, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* (Waterville, ME: Thorndike Press, 2010), 138.

Wethington (alto saxophones), Carroll Dickerson (violin, conductor), Gene Anderson (piano), Mancy Carr (banjo), Pete Briggs (tuba), and Zutty Singleton (drums). The tune would be released on OKeh 8714. The disc, and all 8000-labeled OKeh sides, would be marketed as race records. As such, their advertisements would appear in black newspapers and resultantly propagate Armstrong's renown. Figure 4.18. touts, "Ain't Misbehavin'…but Louis Armstrong's trumpet is as he flourishes these hottest rhythmic melodies…Here they are as New York audiences hear Louis play them in…the colored musical, *Connie's Hot Chocolates*."

Figure 4.18. Armstrong OKeh advertisement.
Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

Unquestionably, the chorus of "Ain't Misbehavin'" was the element with which the audiences, critics, and musicians were fascinated. Its memorable melodic line and relatable lyrics obviously resounded with the public. Unlike the somewhat stagnant contour of the song's verse, the refrains' phrases rise and fall, which "is a critical component of melodic structure, and has an important impact on listeners' perceptions of,

and memory for, music."[224] Moreover, Waller syncopates the melody, bringing a buoyance to Razaf''s lyrics, and employs the identical, sophisticated chordal structures as performed in his introduction.

The bridge is unconventional in its harmonic scheme. Dizzy Gillespie, the preeminent innovative force in "modern" jazz, confirmed:

> Art Tatum, James P. Johnson, Earl Hines—all of them respected 'Fats' Waller. That's right! All you have to do is listen to 'Ain't Misbehavin'' ('No one to walk with, all by myself') or 'Honeysuckle Rose.' Those tunes will last forever. The bridge in 'Ain't Misbehavin'.' Where did he get that from? Boy, I bet all the piano players, right now, love it. That change'll[225] last. That's some hip shit. I haven't heard anything in music since that's more hip, harmonically or logically.[226]

A close study of Figure 4.20. should irradiate the "hip" quality as espoused by Gillespie. To begin, Waller modulates to the relative minor key, C-minor. From a statement of the tonic harmony in the initial measure, he progresses to the dominant of the Neapolitan Sixth chord. A series of applied dominants follows in the subsequent three bars; as was illustrated previously, Fats exhibited an affinity for inducing tonal abstruseness in his compositions. In the fifth measure, he returns to the key of E^b by way of a VII pivot chord. A string of secondary dominants pervades the second half of the bridge—all leading to the cadential B^b in the ultimate bar. Waller's practice of manipulating the tonal center is a manifestation of his humor. As an upshot of the bridge's harmonic nebulousness, the connotation of the Razaf's lyrics is made facetious.

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[224] Mark. A. Schmuckler, "Melodic Contour Similarity Using Folk Melodies," *Music Perception* 28, no. 2 (2010): pp. 169-194, https://doi.org/10.1525/mp.2010.28.2.169.

[225] "Change" is referring to the harmonic progression or in jazz parlance, "changes."

[226] Dizzy Gillespie and Al Fraser, *Dizzy Gillespie, To Be or Not to Bop* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1981), 303.

Following the B section, and as is characteristic of the thirty-two-bar, popular song form, there is a recapitulation of the A section. Figures 4.19. and 4.20. afford analyses of the first two A sections and the bridge of the AABA structure. They offer a view of the shape of the melodic line, its rhythmic ingenuity, and harmonic complexity—all of which conflate to craft a song that maintains its jubilant resonance nearly a century after its conception. Clearly, as manifested by "Ain't Misbehavin'," it was Waller's resolute ambition to spread goodwill through his art.

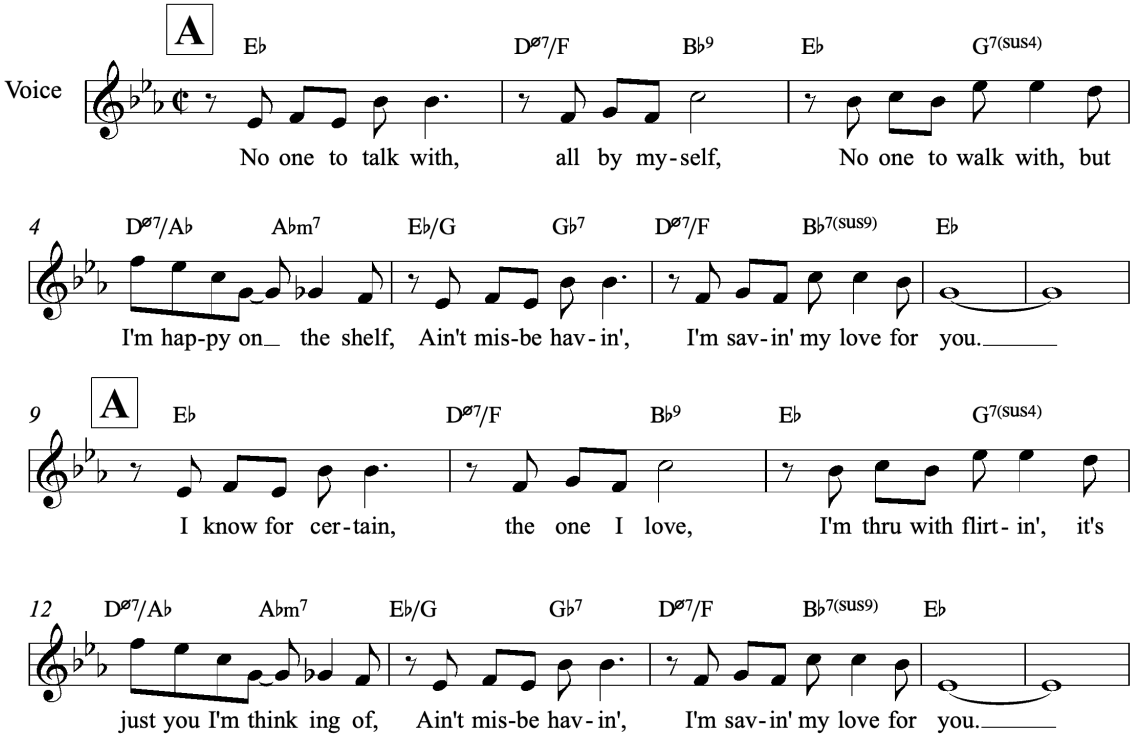
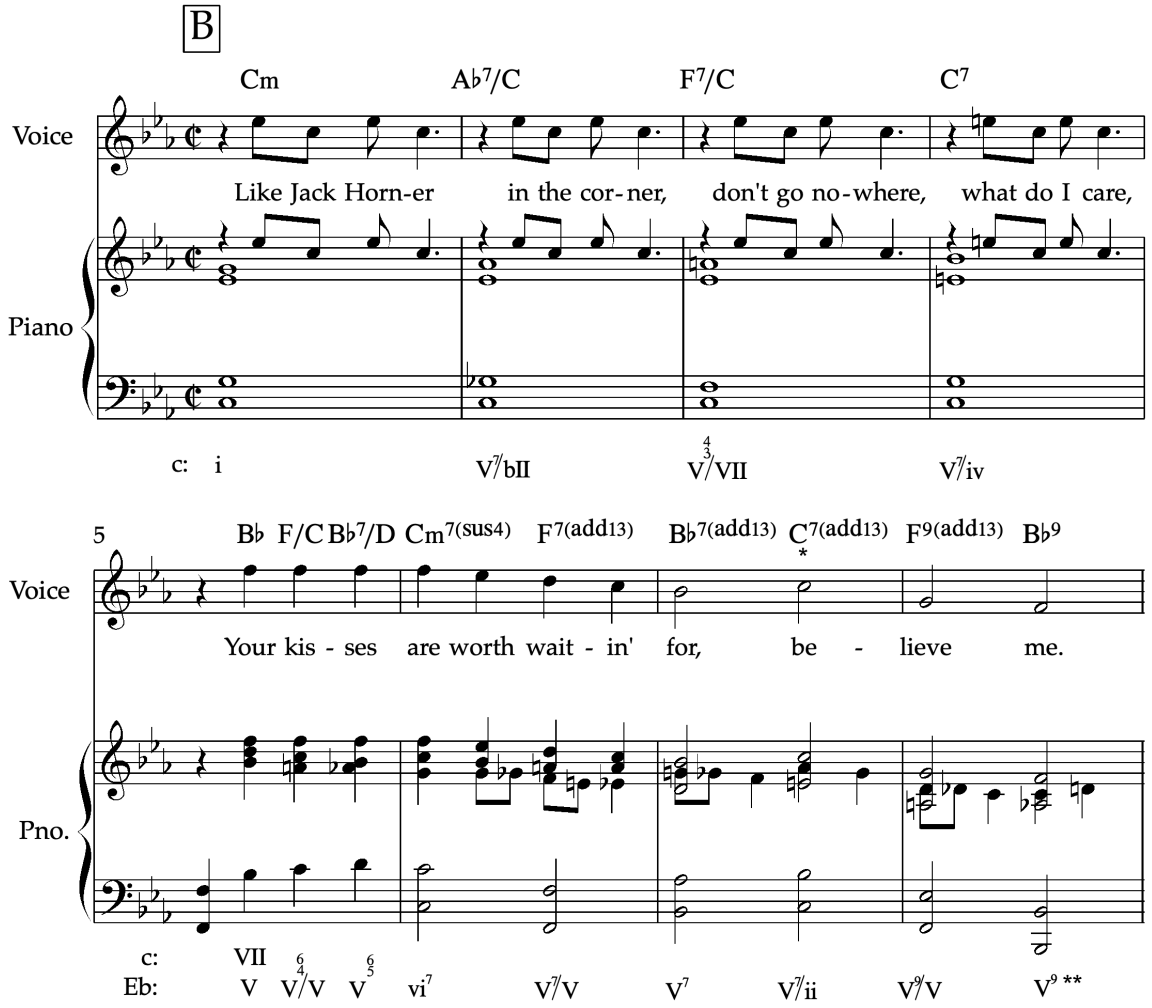


Fig. 4.19. "Ain't Misbehavin'" lead sheet with harmonic analysis by author.[227]

[227] The lead sheet rendering is based on the 1929 published sheet music by *Mill Music, Inc*.



* In jazz theory pedagogy, there exists some dispute about the 6th or 13th of a chord. Steve Strunk would posit that the pitch A in the C-dominant-seventh chord acts as a 6th because of its resolution to the fifth of the presiding harmony. If no resolution was present, then the pitch would be considered a 13th.
See Steven Strunk, "Harmony (i)," *Oxford Music Online*, 2003,https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.j990085.

** An alternative designation for the C4 in this chord could be that of a retardation.

Fig. 4.20. "Ain't Misbehavin'" lead sheet with harmonic analysis by author.

Irrespective of the critical and popular acclaim of "Ain't Misbehavin'," it was the racially-charged "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" that served as an anthem of the burgeoning, cultural pride of the African American community. The origins of the song, however apocryphal, were documented by Singer, "Schultz, this particular

afternoon, complimented Razaf on his work with the show thus far, but added his pointed opinion that *Hot Chocolates* still lacked something…[a] funny number…something with a little 'colored' girl singing how difficult it is being 'colored.'"[228] In an act of subversion, Razaf penned a poignant lyric articulating the despondency of being black in America. By doing so, the poet exerts his agency as a black man—one who abjures to be subjugated by the threat of white America. If it were not for Razaf's mettle in the face of adversity, the world would have been denied the profound potency of "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue." The lyrics, as published in 1929, follow:

Verse: Out in the street, shufflin' feet,
Couples passin' two by two,
While here am I, left high and dry,
Black, and 'cause I'm black I'm blue.
Browns and yellers, all have fellers,
Gentlemen prefer them light,
Wish I could fade, can't make the grade,
Nothing but dark days in sight:

Chorus 1 (A): Cold, empty bed, Springs hard as lead,
Pains in my head, Feel like old Ned.
What did I do, to be so black and blue?

Chorus 1 (A): No joys for me, No company,
Even the mouse ran from my house,
All my life through, I've been so black and blue.

Chorus 1 (B): I'm white inside, It don't help my case
'Cause I can't hide, what is on my face, oh!

Chorus 1 (A): I'm so forlorn, Life's just a thorn,

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[228] Dutch Schultz, was born Arthur Flegenheimer on August 6, 1902, in the Bronx borough of New York City. He was an alleged bootlegger and head of a New York City crime syndicate. As per Singer, Shultz provided financial backing for several musical revues, including *Hot Chocolates*.
See Singer, *Black and Blue*: *The Life and Lyrics of Andy Razaf* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1992), 216.

My heart is torn, Why was I born?
What did I do, to be so black and blue?

Chorus 2 (A): 'Cause you're black, Folks think you lack
They laugh at you, and scorn you too,
What did I do, to be so black and blue?

Chorus 2 (A): When you are near, they laugh and sneer,
Set you aside and you're denied,
What did I do, to be so black and blue?

Chorus 2 (B): How sad I am, each day I feel worse,
My mark of Ham seems to be a curse!

Chorus 2 (A): How will it end? Ain't got a friend,
My only sin is my skin.
What did I do, to be so black and blue?

Razaf's work is a resounding clarion call for social and racial equity, whose penetrating purpose is made even more effectual by Waller's score. Figure 4.22. illustrates the musical and lyrical insolence in the hands of the songwriting pair.

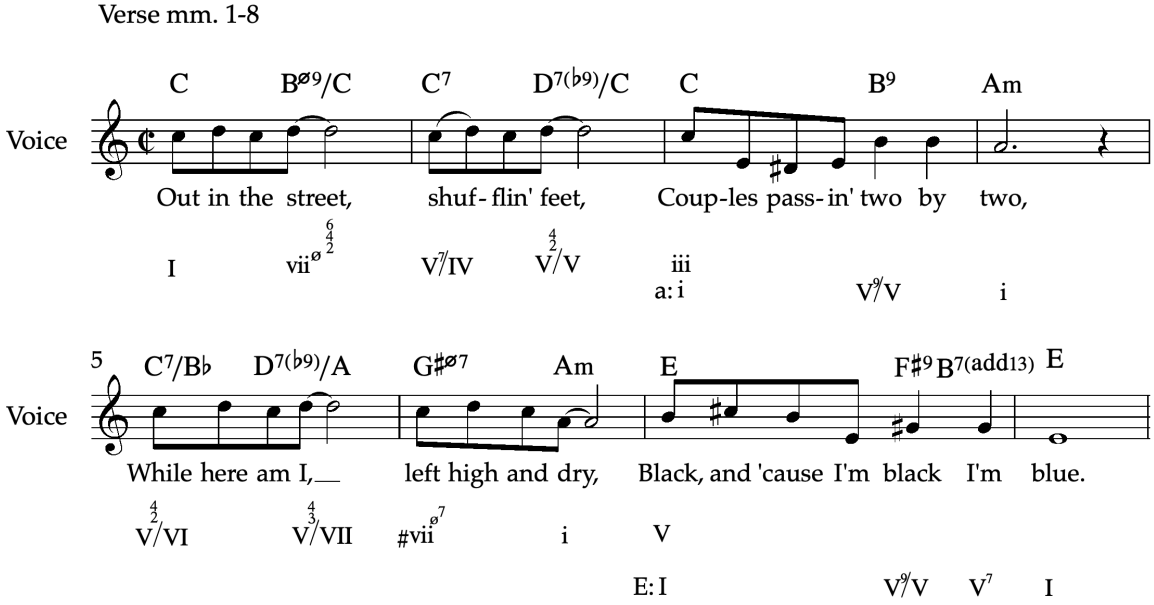

Fig. 4.22. "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" lead sheet with analysis by author.

"(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" opens in the key of C-major. This was categorically implemented to give the impression that the song would be a "funny number." Edith Wilson, who performed the tune during its run at the *Hudson Theatre*, delivers her initial message—men are attracted to lighter-toned woman. Waller supports the lyric, "Out in the street, shufflin' feet, couples passin' two by two," with the tonic chord occupying most of the first beat in measure one. He moves to a series of unstable harmonies: B-half-diminished-ninth to the dominant of the subdominant chord and then reaches the dominant sonority. In measure three, Fats modulates to the relative minor key, A-minor, by using the C triad as a pivot chord. The penultimate and final bars of this four-bar phrase end with a i—V^9/V—i progression.

The second four-measure statement begins with two applied dominants. Waller is resolutely evading diatonic harmonies in order to give the lyric an unhinged sense of longing and despair. The lyrics, "While here am I," are accompanied by V/VI and V/VII chords. In the sixth bar, Fats aligns a leading-tone-seventh chord, G#^{7}—diminished, with the words, "left high and." This simultaneity engenders as sense of grave tension and indubitably elicits consideration to Wilson's plight. The expected A-minor triad follows and adds a musical resolution on the word, "dry." One might postulate that Waller would remain in the home key since a cadential point was reached, however, he modulates to the dominant in measure seven. Using the E-major triad as a pivot point, being V in A-minor and I in E-major, he derisively accompanies the lyrics, "Black, and 'cause I'm black and blue." The verse continues in similar fashion as Wilson laments being lonely as a result of her dark-hued skin.

The implication of Razaf's refrain is not relegated to Wilson's character—it is a beacon by which he intends to illuminate the historical calamity that is racial injustice. Within the strictures of two choruses, he and Waller expose the physical and emotional privations that the black population has been forced to endure since their deracinating with the onset of slavery in America.

Waller's approach to the chorus is seditious. While the lyrics explicitly articulate the vitriolic conditions that arise from racism, the music is surreptitiously scathing. A methodical reading of the harmonic progression within the A sections of the refrain will divulge that it is placed in the key of C-major. Without the benefit of systematically analyzing the functional harmony of the first sixteen measures, one might conclude that "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" has the tonal center of A-minor.

The chorus opens with an A-minor triad that accompanies the words, "Cold empty bed." This progresses to a Dm^7 chord in bar two to support, "Springs hard as lead." The succeeding measure returns to the A-minor simultaneity, which reinforces, "Pains in my head." Functionally, if the refrain were in A-minor, the chords would be analyzed as i—iv—i, which is perfectly logical. However, in the fourth bar, Waller writes a D^9 to C progression, which would equate to a V^9/iv to III. Thus, the most cogent analysis for these measures would be: vi—ii—vi—V^9/V—I. Fats moves from the C-major triad in bar five to a C#-fully-diminished-seventh chord. This leads to an imperfect authentic cadence of $G^{9(\#5)}$—C to close the opening phrase.

The second A of the AABA structure is identical to measures nine through thirteen. In bar fourteen, Waller uses a G^7, or V^7 in C-major, for the lyrics, "I've been so." On the second pulse of this measure, Fats places a melodic E^b for the word, "black."

He is employing the flatted-third of C as a blue note, however the pitch has harmonic implications as well—it is part of a German-Augmented-Sixth chord, A^{b}—C—E^{b}—F#. As projected, the Gr^{+6} moves directly to the V^{7}, G^{7}, and resolves on the tonic triad of C-major. Figure 4.23. provides an analysis of the first two A sections of the refrain.

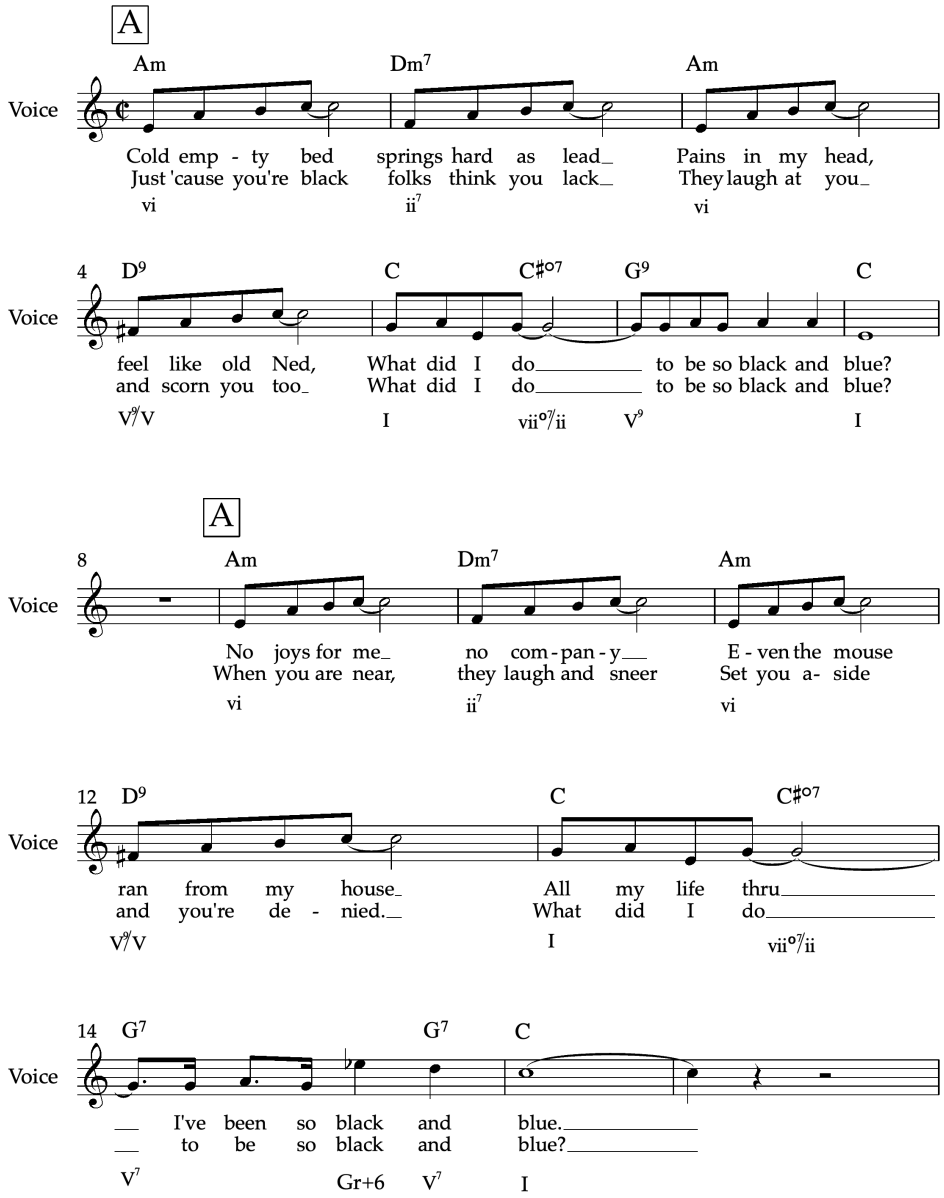

Figure 4.23. "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue," refrain. Author's analysis.

The bridge, or B section, of "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" reflects the ambivalence with which the black population has been regarded. Together, Razaf and

Waller propound the question of racial difference; how is one human subordinate to another, solely based on the color of one's skin? Fats challenges the affront to humanity that is racism with musical aplomb. The bridge begins with an A^{b7} chord, which presents an effect that is as disquieting as the words it accompanies, "I'm white inside." Temporarily moving to the bVI of a major key is not uncommon in the jazz idiom and it often returns to the original tonic chord, as seen in measure three. Waller prolongs the tonic by way of the leading-tone-seventh chord built on the pitch $D^{\#}$, which immediately returns to the I chord. He arrives at the V^7 of the bVI at the end of the phrase. Fats recapitulates the initial opening melodic line in bars five and six and supports them with the A^{b7} sonority. In the penultimate measure, with the lyrics, "what is on my," he modulates to the relative minor of C-major, the key of A-minor. From the tonic triad, Waller moves to the secondary dominant of VII, D^7, then to an It^{+6} chord. As estimated, he progresses from the It^{+6} to close on the E^7, where he accompanies the words, "Face" and "Oh!" Figure 4.24. explicates this analysis.

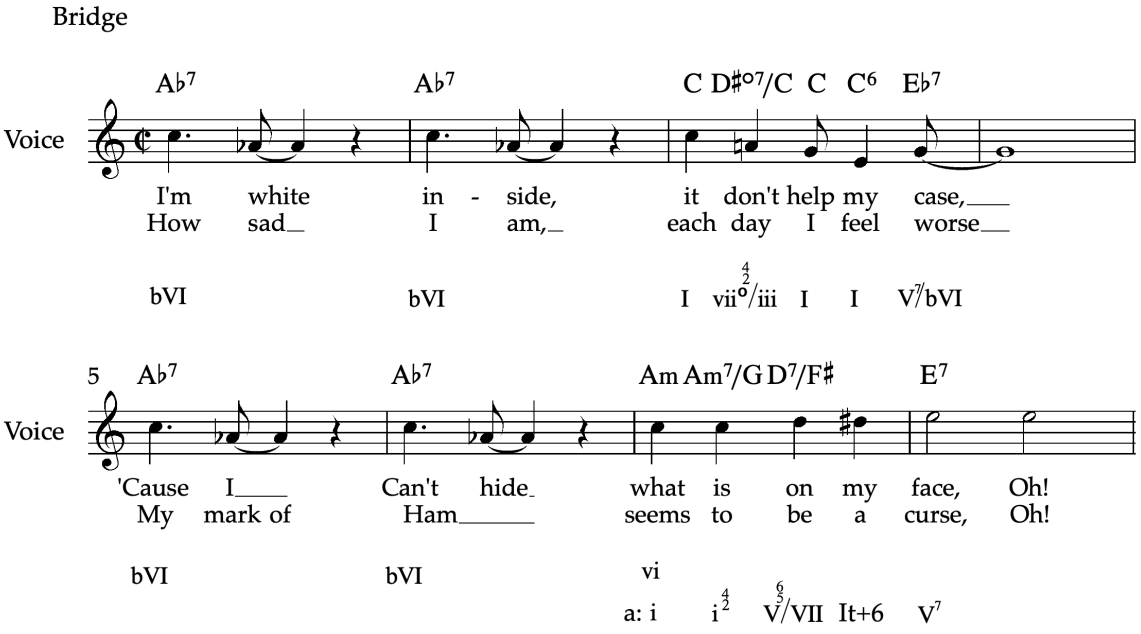

Figure 4.24. "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue," bridge. Author's analysis.

Following the bridge, the refrain is unified with a recapitulation of the A section. While the music remains consistent through this restatement, Razaf's lyrics grow more poignant—"How will it end, ain't got a friend. My only sin is in my skin. What did I do to be so black and blue?"

What can one do to justify centuries of physical and emotional abuse that manifests through bigotry? With "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue," Waller and Razaf proclaim an unyielding retort—nothing.

Connie's Hot Chocolates ran for two hundred and nineteen performances at the *Hudson Theatre*. Waller's eminence reached a new apex and he was only twenty-five years old. Before the curtain would fall on the "Roaring Twenties," the self-proclaimed, "Harmful Little Armful," would compose another musical revue, *Load of Coal*, with Razaf. The show would yield two songs that would garner popular and critical acclaim—"My Fate is in Your Hands" and "Honeysuckle Rose." During this prodigious epoch, Fats also crafted such numbers as: "I've Got a Feeling I'm Falling," "Love Me or Leave Me," "Smashing Thirds," "Numb Fumblin'" "Minor Drag," and his tour de force, "Handful of Keys."

It was with humor, charm, and an unparalleled musical gift that Fats Waller reached the masses. From the whites-only, cellar speakeasy of *Connie's Inn* to the African American audiences of the *Lincoln Theatre*, his music transcended the socially constructed confines of race. His humanity brought his friend, Louis Armstrong, to Broadway and consequently thrusted him to stardom. He bestowed joy to the struggling black community as a staple in the rent party circuit. And perhaps most pointedly, he

edified the American people that everyone should be treated with dignity and never suffer being “Black and Blue.”

CONCLUSION

> The final measure of the greatness of all peoples is the amount and standard of the literature and the art they have produced. The world does not know that a people is great until that people produces great literature and art. No people that has produced great literature and art has ever been looked upon by the world as distinctly inferior.[229]
>
> James Weldon Johnson

Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the balance of the black intelligentsia of the Harlem Renaissance subscribed to an ideology of racial uplift vis-à-vis the creation of resplendent art. James Weldon Johnson's declaration in the epigraph of this chapter is profound, precise, and prescient. These epistemologies are incontestably principled however, the leaders of the "New Negro" movement failed to untether themselves from the estimation wherein Eurocentric, music-making models were paradigmatic. The works of Floyd, *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, and Locke, *The Negro and His Music: Negro Art: Past and Present*, are among those which foster this skewed and erroneous dogma. In doing so, they denigrated the value of the black, American vernacular art and marginalized the music of such composers as James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington, and Fats Waller. This study, keeping within the temporal parameters of a decade, merely scratches the proverbial surface, yet hopes to serve as fertile ground for subsequent scholarly examination.

It is the aim of this dissertation to present a broader lens by which to assess the cultural contributions of an otherwise unseen society. Through an ethnomusicological

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[229] Henry Louis Gates and Gene Andrew Jarrett, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892-1938* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 427.

approach, I draw from photographs, visual art, poetry, oral histories, and musical analysis to incite the embracing of an American culture—one which no longer depends on the validation of a foreign entity. As Baraka declared, "Afro-American music is the classical music of America. Everybody has a classical music...What's the classical music of Hungary? It all comes from a folk root…If you listen to Bartók, it's Hungarian folk dances. That's why Ellington is so great, because that's the folk music of America."[230]

I contend, through my investigation, that the quintessential folk music of the United States is based on the blues aesthetic—one which is steeped in this country's knotty, racial history. From the slave songs to jazz of the 1920s, black music has unremittingly been a commentary on the social inequities of life for African Americans. James P. Johnson's experience in the "Jungles Casino," where he entertained the homesick migrants from the South, is an exemplar of racial uplift through vernacular music. His 1923 composition, "Charleston," not only buoyed the spirits of his people, but incited an international, cultural coup. Through its syncopated rhythms and simple lyricism, he endowed the "Roaring Twenties," in all its blatant decadence, with an exhilarating soundtrack.

Duke Ellington, by way of the "vernacular imperative," complemented Johnson's contributions. "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" articulated the essence of the blues impulse but was not a blues proper. By manipulating the tonal colors of his ensemble, Ellington musically projected the inherent resilience of the black community. This aural manifestation of fortitude, as embodied by the earthy growls of Bubber Miley, was antithetical to Eurocentricity of Locke. It was this sound, dubiously dubbed his "jungle

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[230] *Race in Jazz Academia* (Jazz at Lincoln Center, 2007).

style," that simultaneously captivated transcontinental audiences and emboldened Ellington to capture the "character and mood and feeling" of his people. During his multiyear tenure as the house band at the illustrious *Cotton Club*, Ellington exposed the white clientele to the aural embodiment of racial pride—a sophisticated yet earthy resonance that expressed that the African American people were indeed human, not "real estate."[231] And perhaps, the indefatigable nature of a Bubber Miley's improvisation might evoke the tenacity and boldness with which the men of Harlem's 369th Regiment confronted the face of fascism.

Fats Waller, with his zest for life, brought joy to those who would listen—despite any culturally fabricated boundaries. His fondness for the American, vernacular song—the AABA form—was cause of a prolific composing career. Tunes such as "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Honeysuckle Rose" and "(What Did I Do to be So) Black and Blue" not only spurn the ideology of the "New Negro," but attest that art knows no bounds. It is a timeless manifestation of humanity.

If Americans, irrespective of race, religion, dogma, or orientation do not embrace that, "[t]he art music known variously as jazz, swing, bebop, America's classical music, and creative music has been associated first and foremost with freedom…of expression, human freedom, freedom of thought, and the freedom that results from an ongoing pursuit of racial justice,"[232] then the work of Johnson, Ellington, and Waller may have been in vain.

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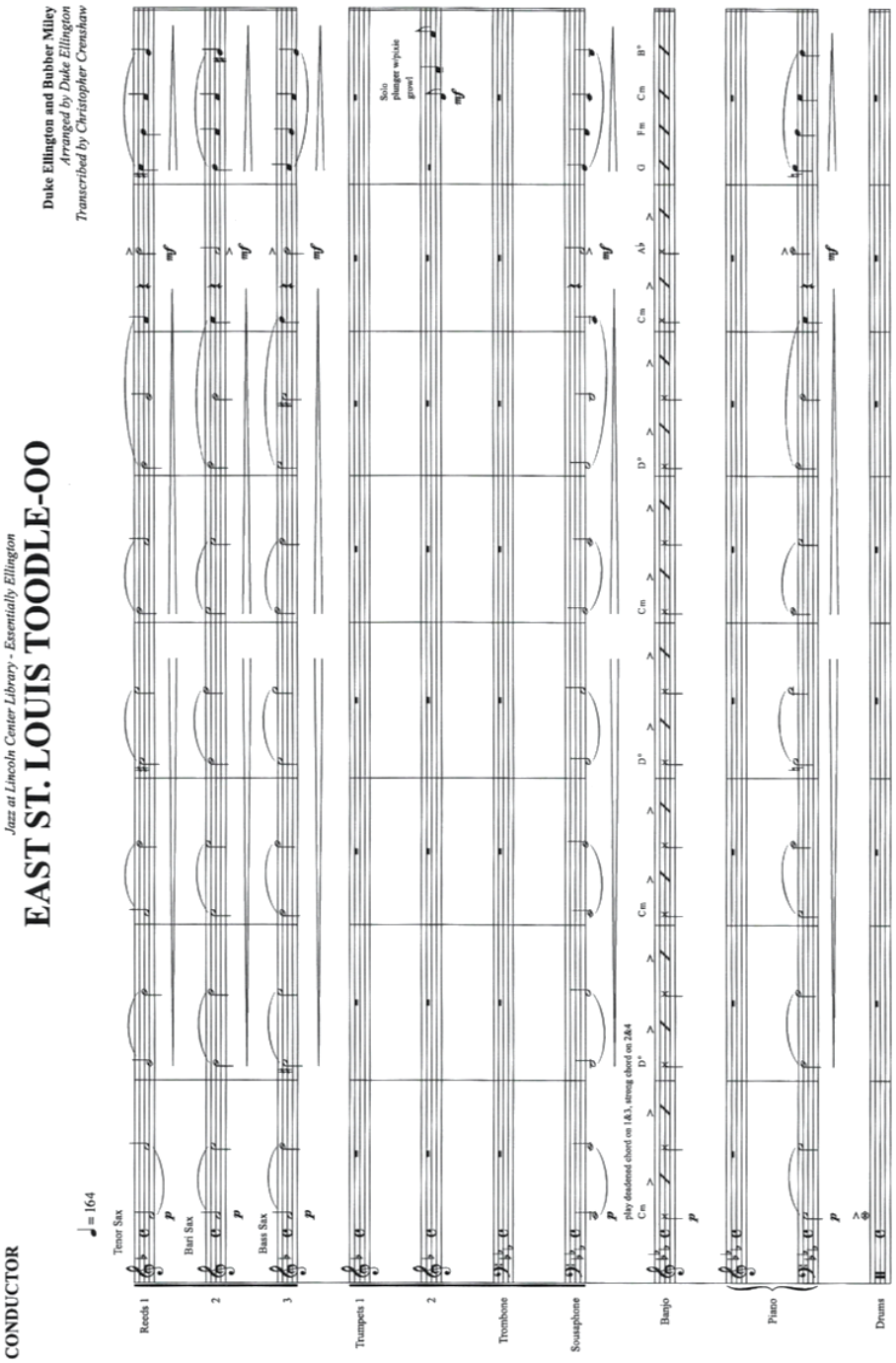
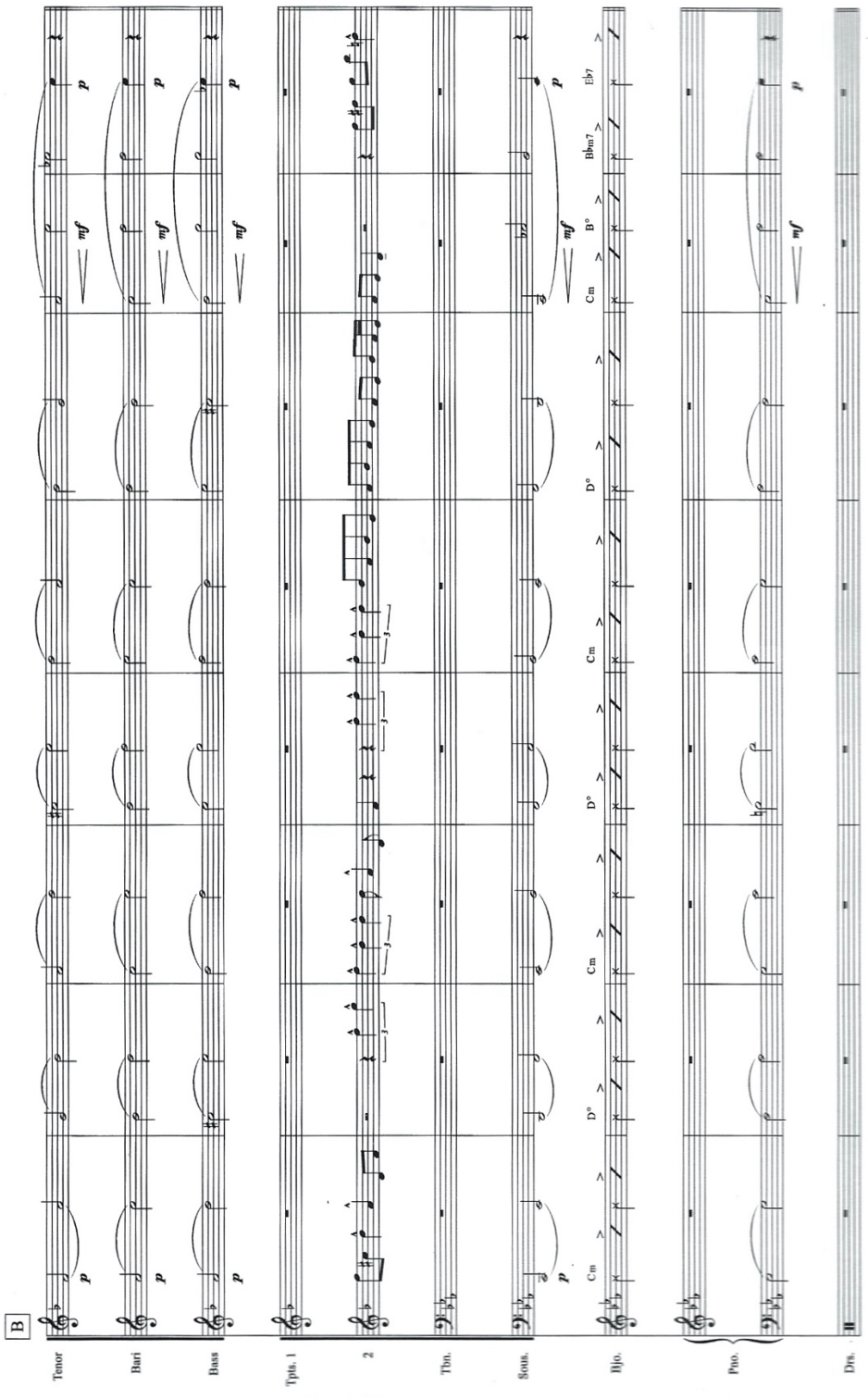
[231] Baraka, "Introduction" in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Perennial, 2002), x.

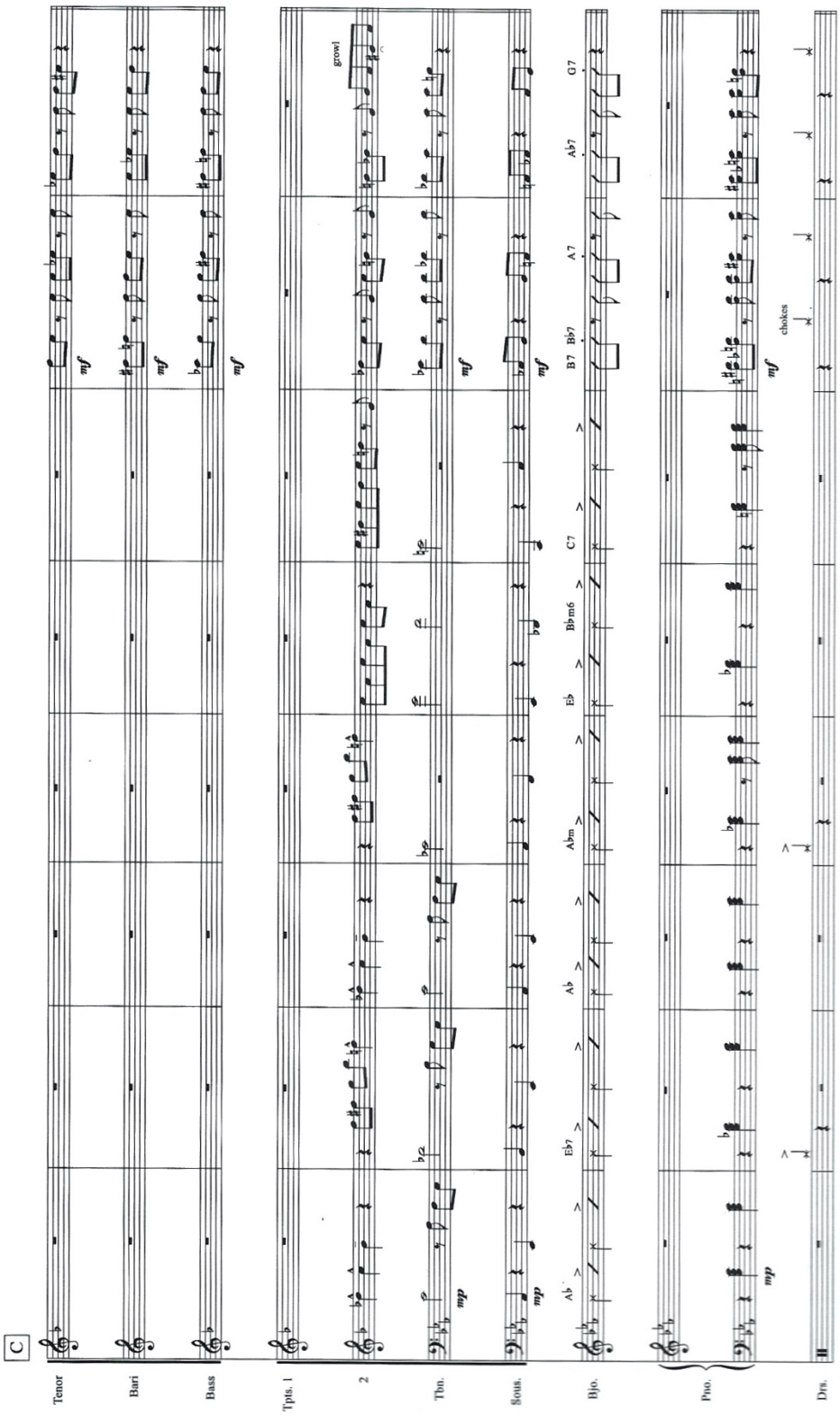
[232] Gerald Early and Ingrid Monson, "Why Jazz Still Matters," *Daedalus* 148, no. 2 (2019): pp. 5-12, https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01738.

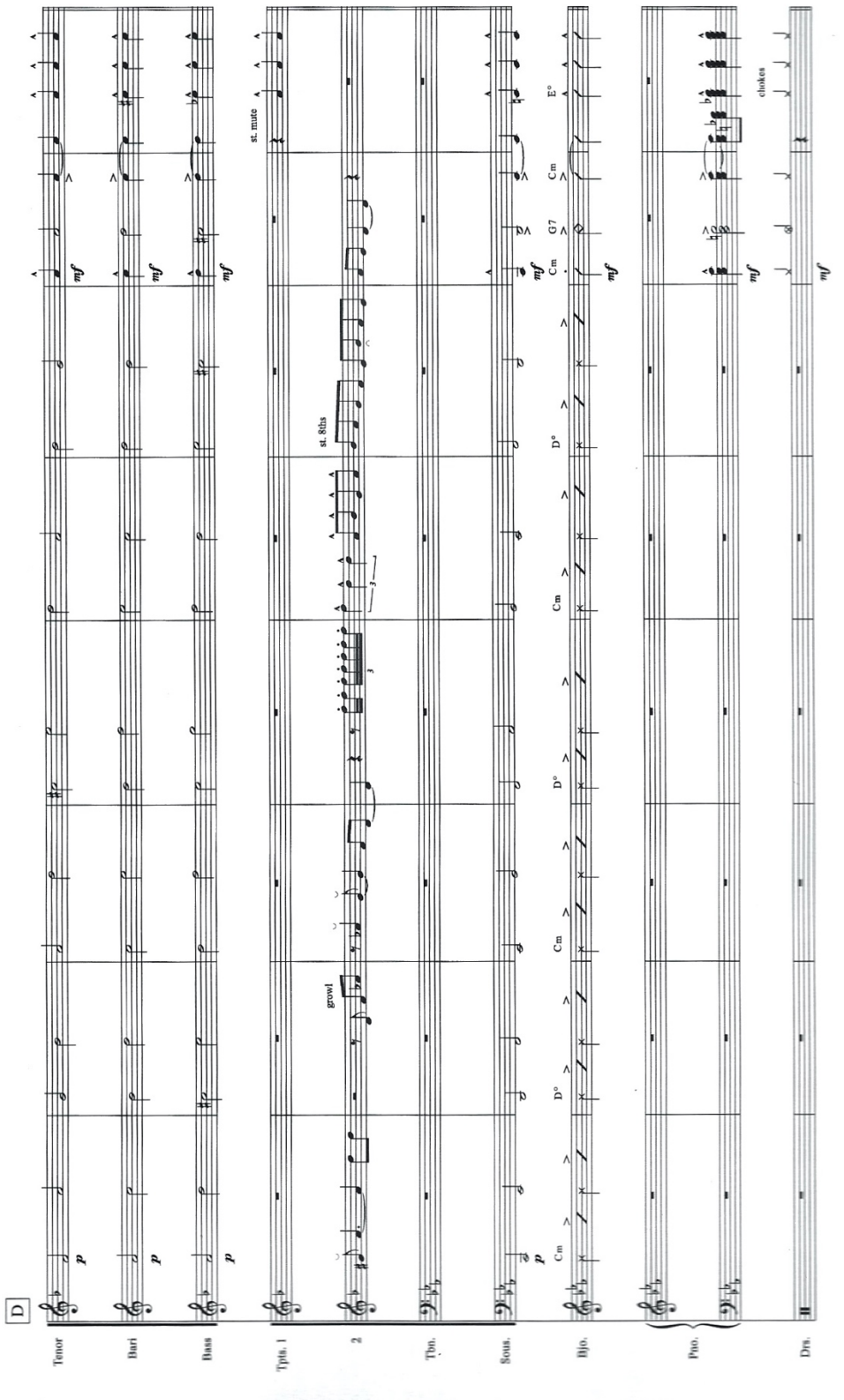
APPENDIX I

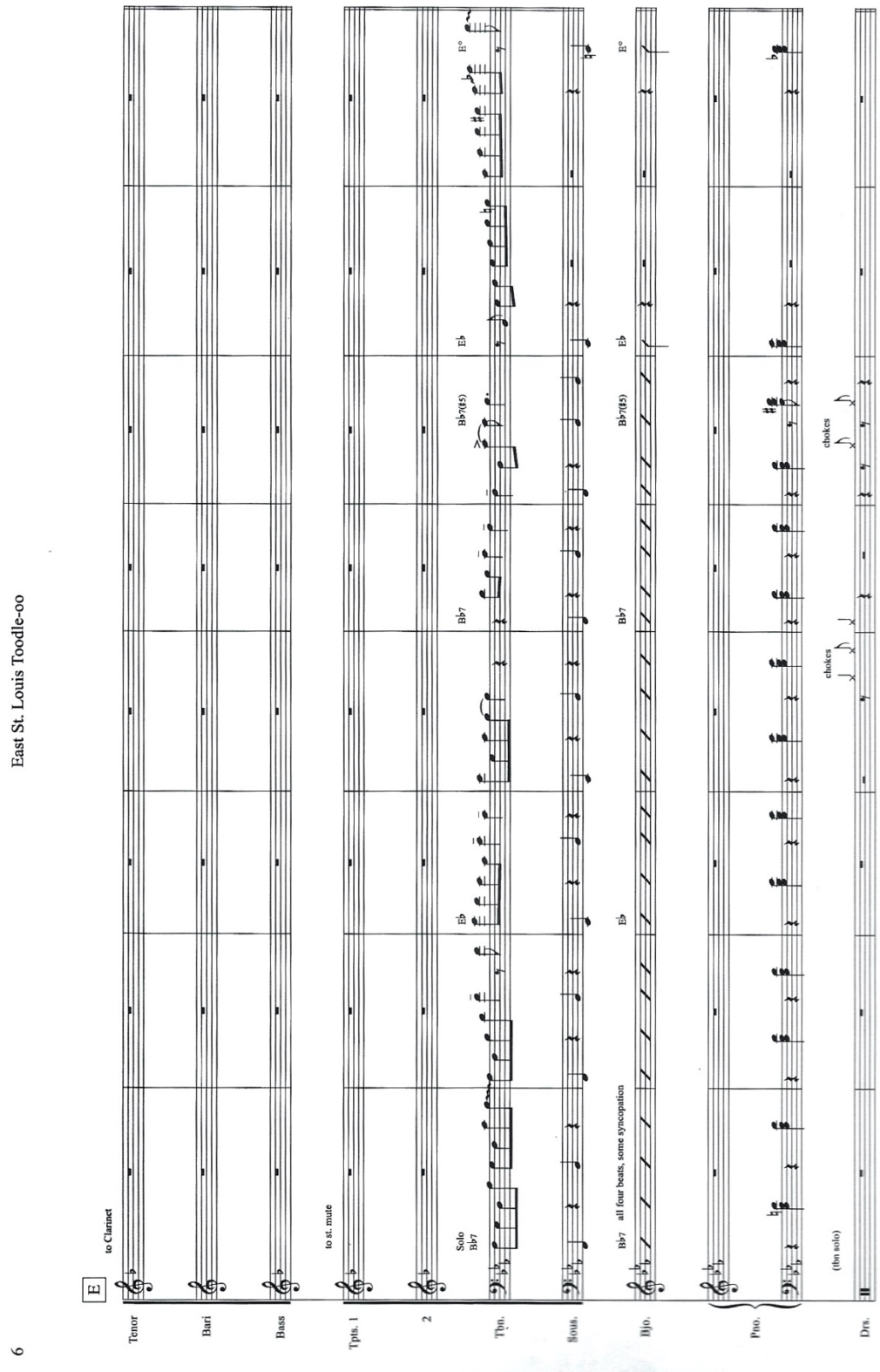
"EAST ST. LOUIS TOODLE-OO" SCORE

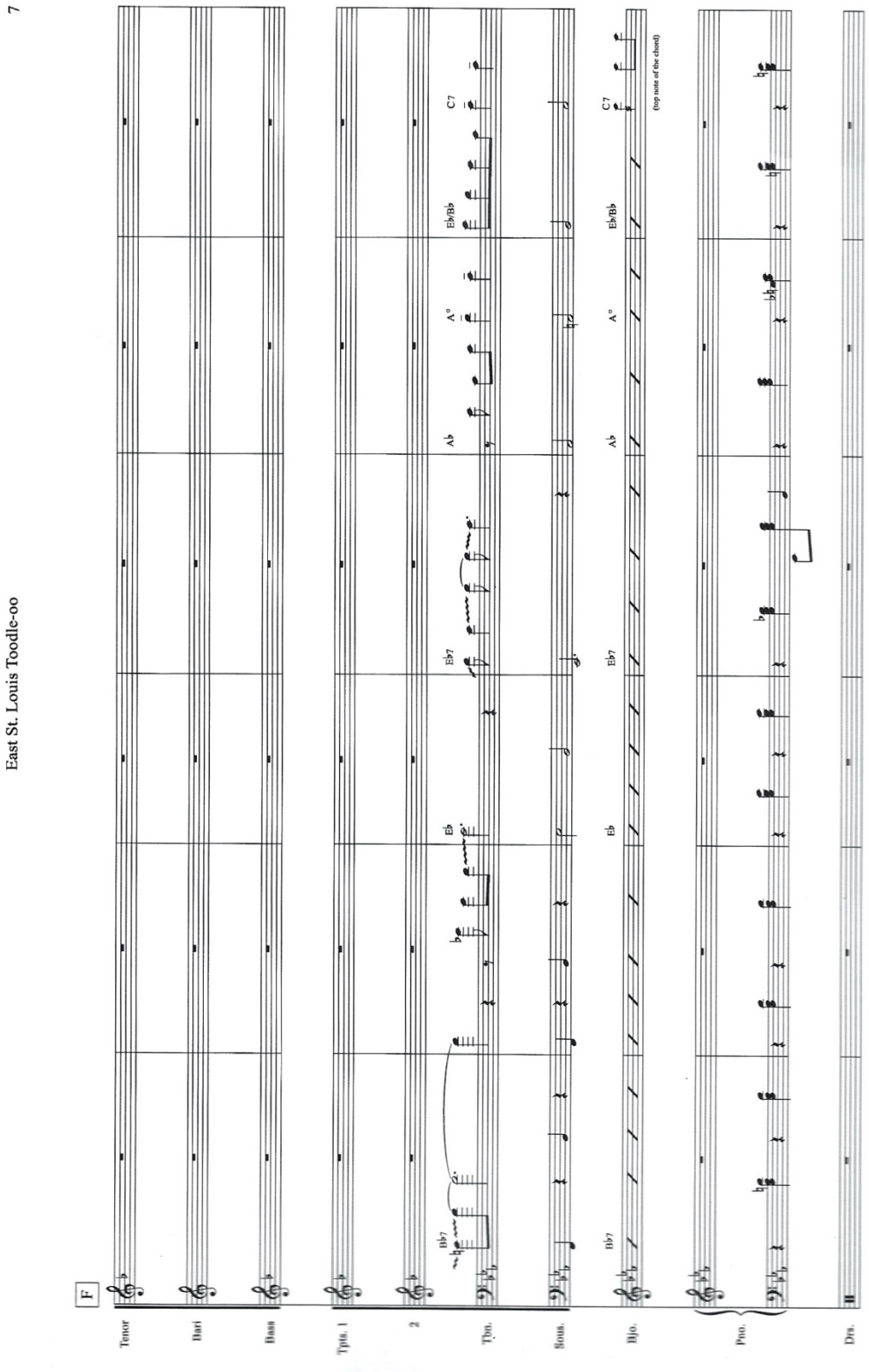


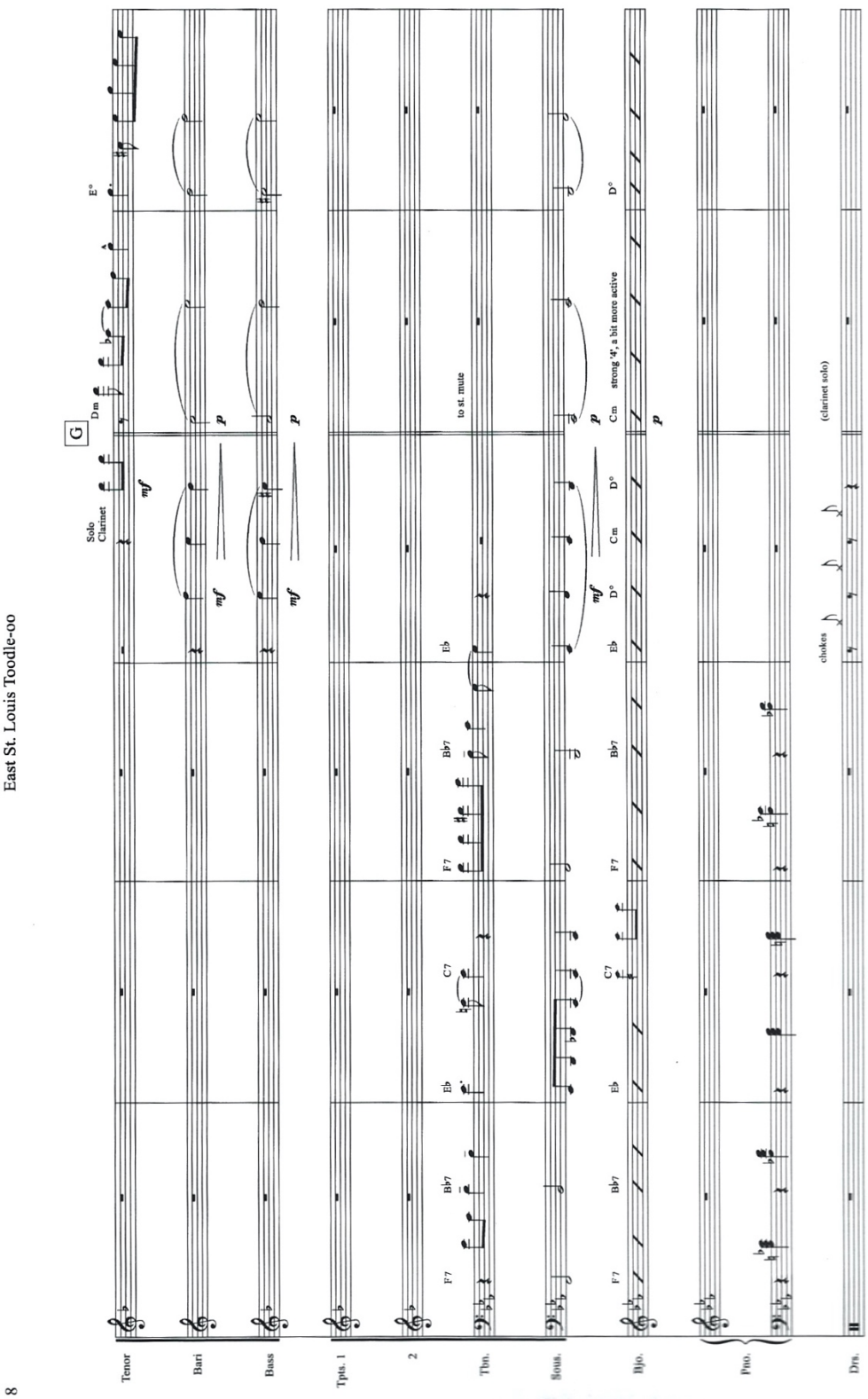

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
3
B
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
Cm
D°
B°
Bbm7
Eb7
p
mf

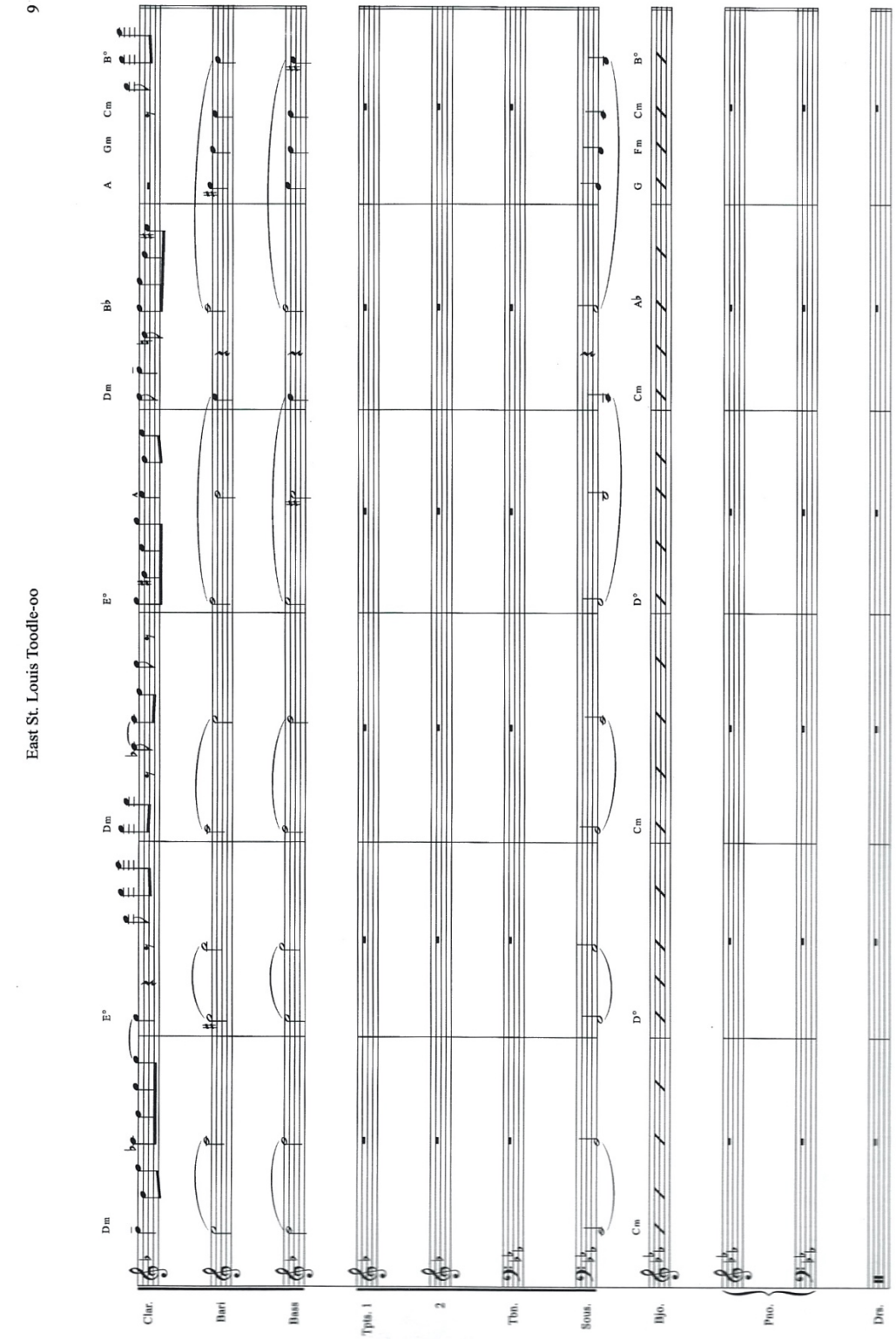

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
4
C
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Dru.
mf
mp
growl
chokes
Eb7
Ab
Abm
Eb
Bbm6
C7
B7
Bb7
A7
Ab7
G7

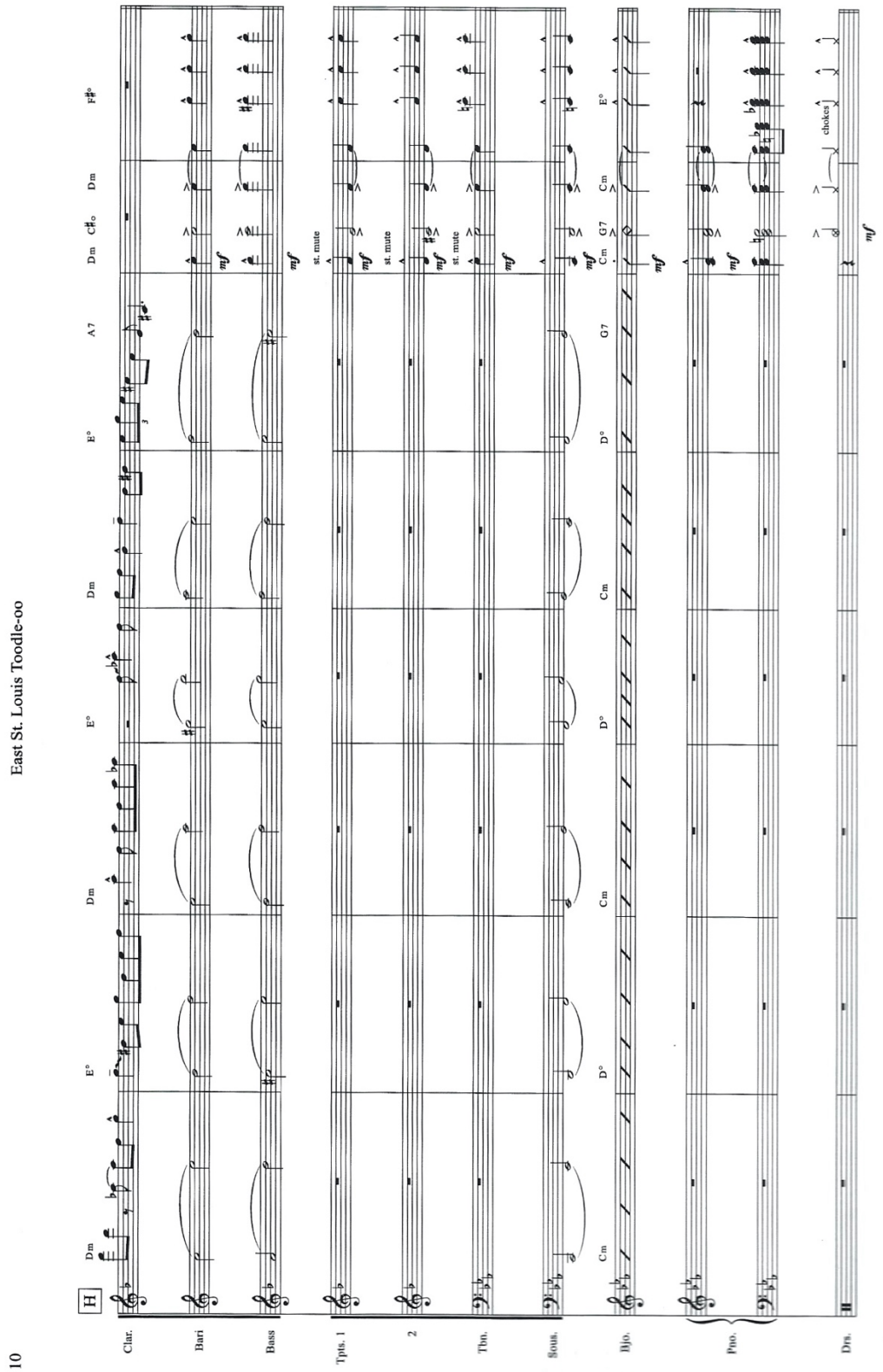

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
5
D
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
mf
p
st. mute
st. 8ths
growl
Cm
D°
G7
E°
choken

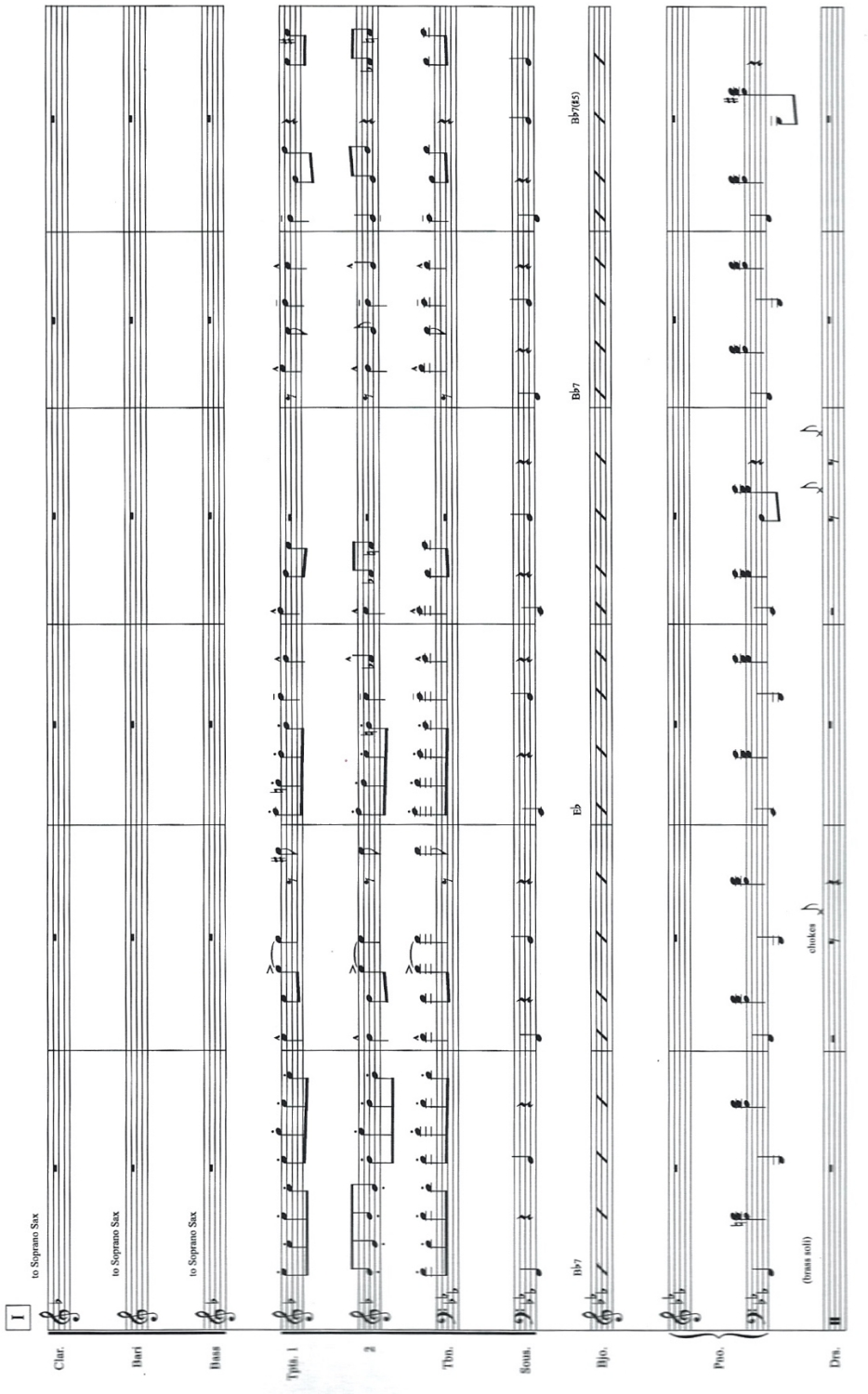

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
6
E
to Clarinet
Tenor
Bari
Bass
to st. mute
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Solo
B♭7
E♭
B♭7
B♭7(♯5)
E♭
E°
Bous.
B♭7
all four beats, some syncopation
Bjo.
Pno.
chokes
(tbn solo)
Drs.

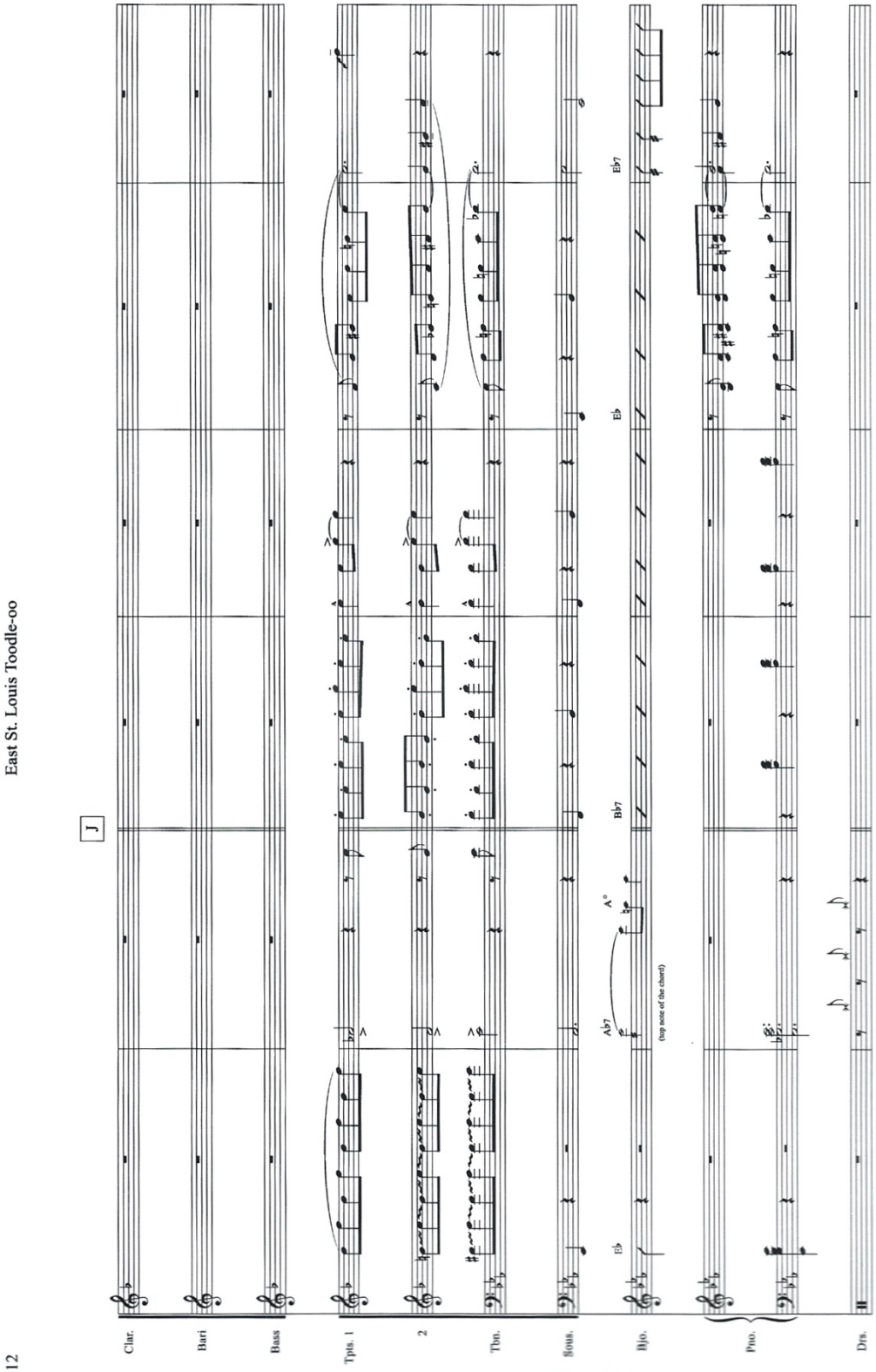

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
7
F
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
Eb7
Eb
Ab
A°
Eb/Bb
C7
(top note of the chord)

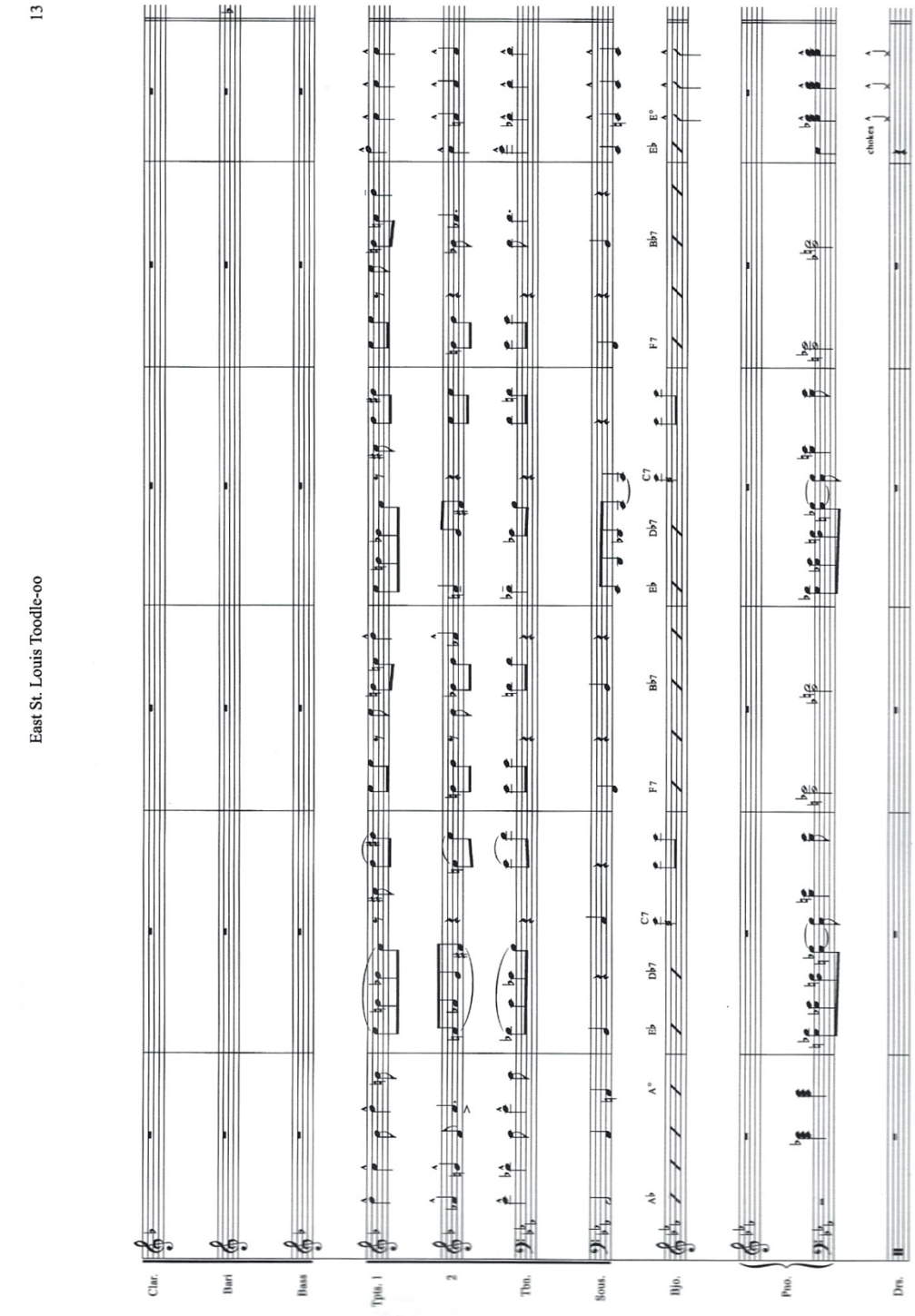

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
8
G
Solo Clarinet
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Dra.
to st. mute
strong '4', a bit more active
(clarinet solo)
chokes

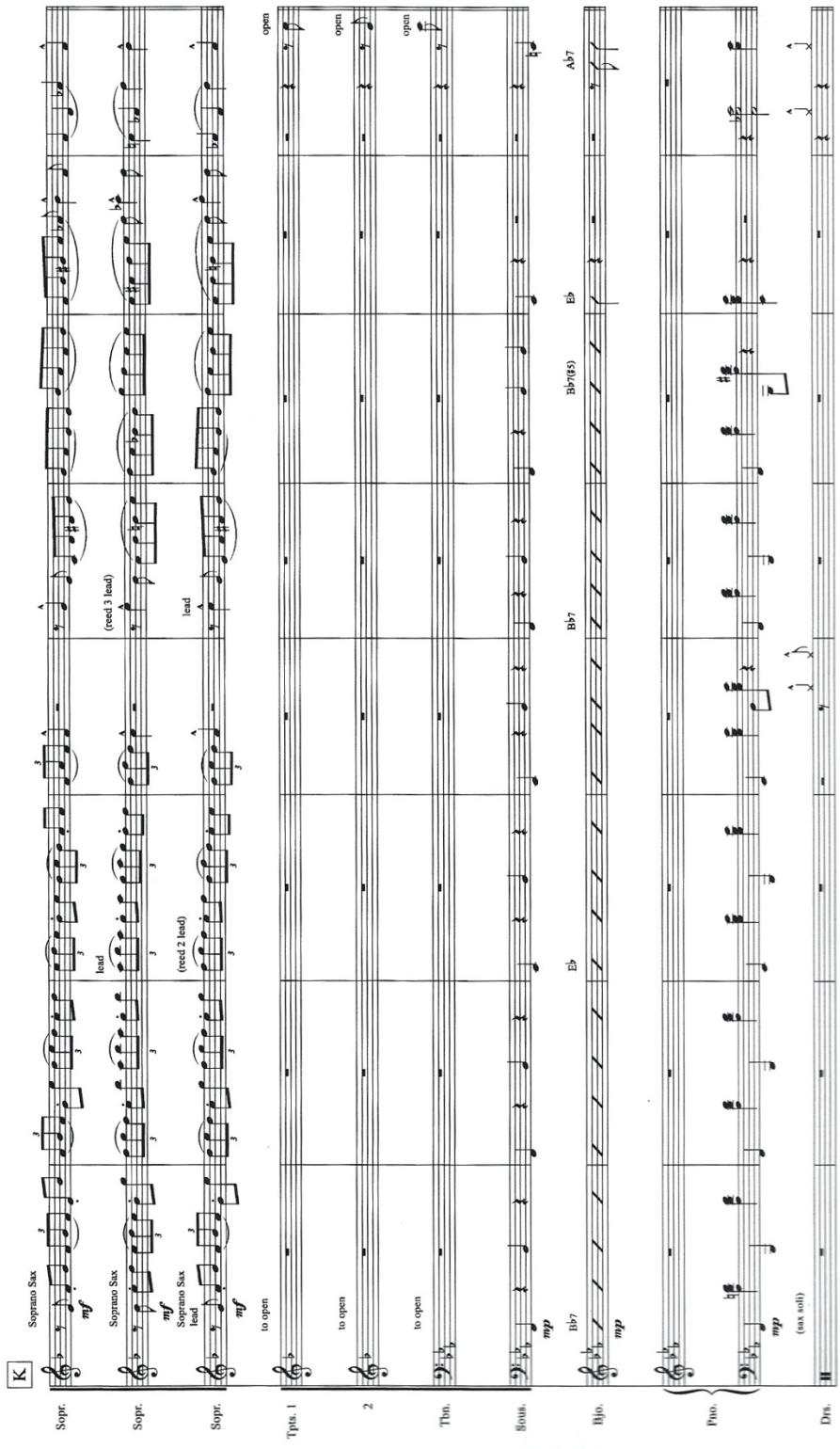

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
9
Clar.
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Dm
E°
Dm
Bb
A
Gm
Cm
B°
Dm
E°
Cm
Ab
G
Fm
Cm
B°
Cm
D°
Cm
D°

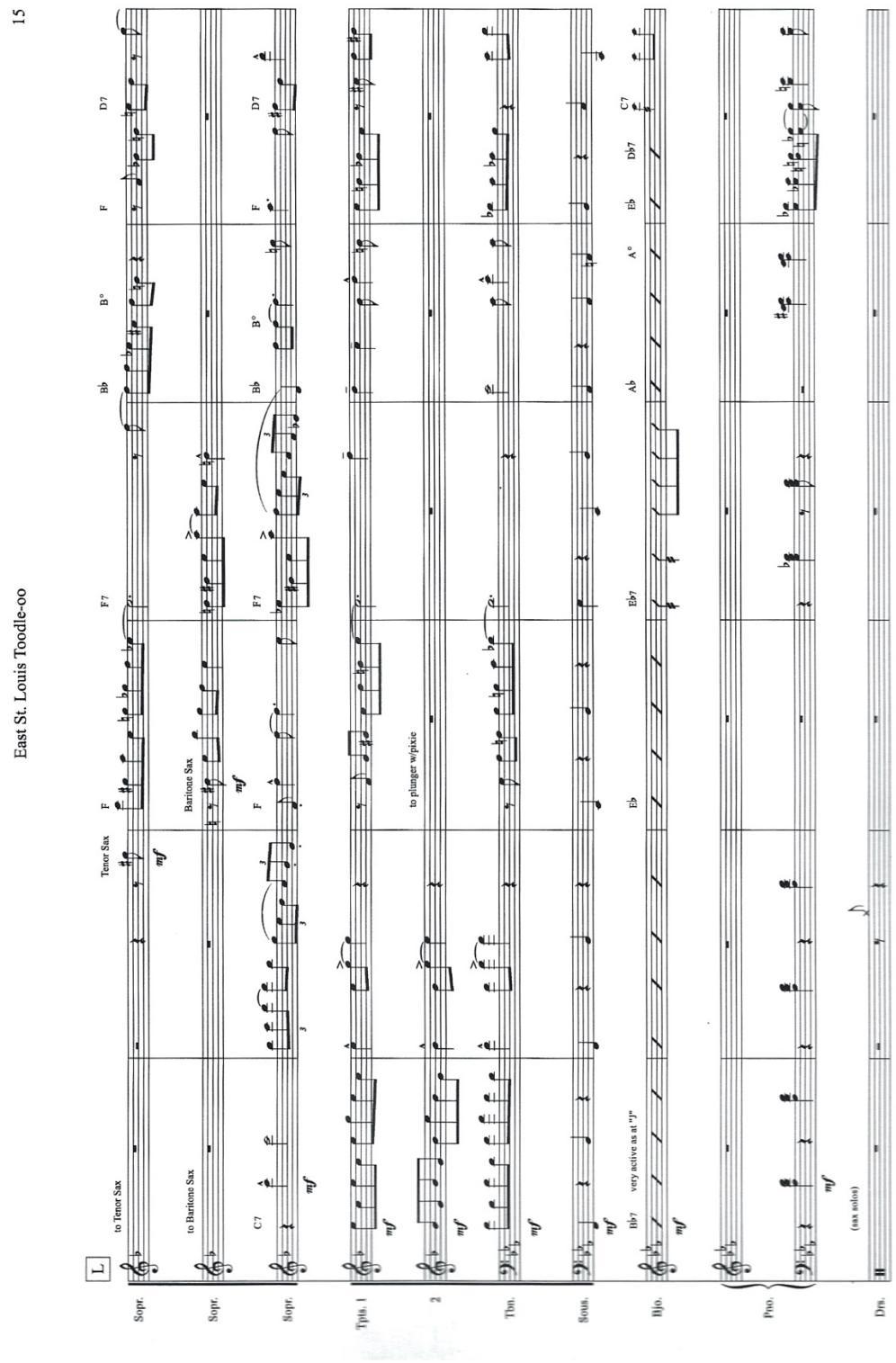

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
10
H
Clar.
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
Dm
E°
A7
C♯°
F♯°
Cm
D°
G7
st. mute
chokes
mf

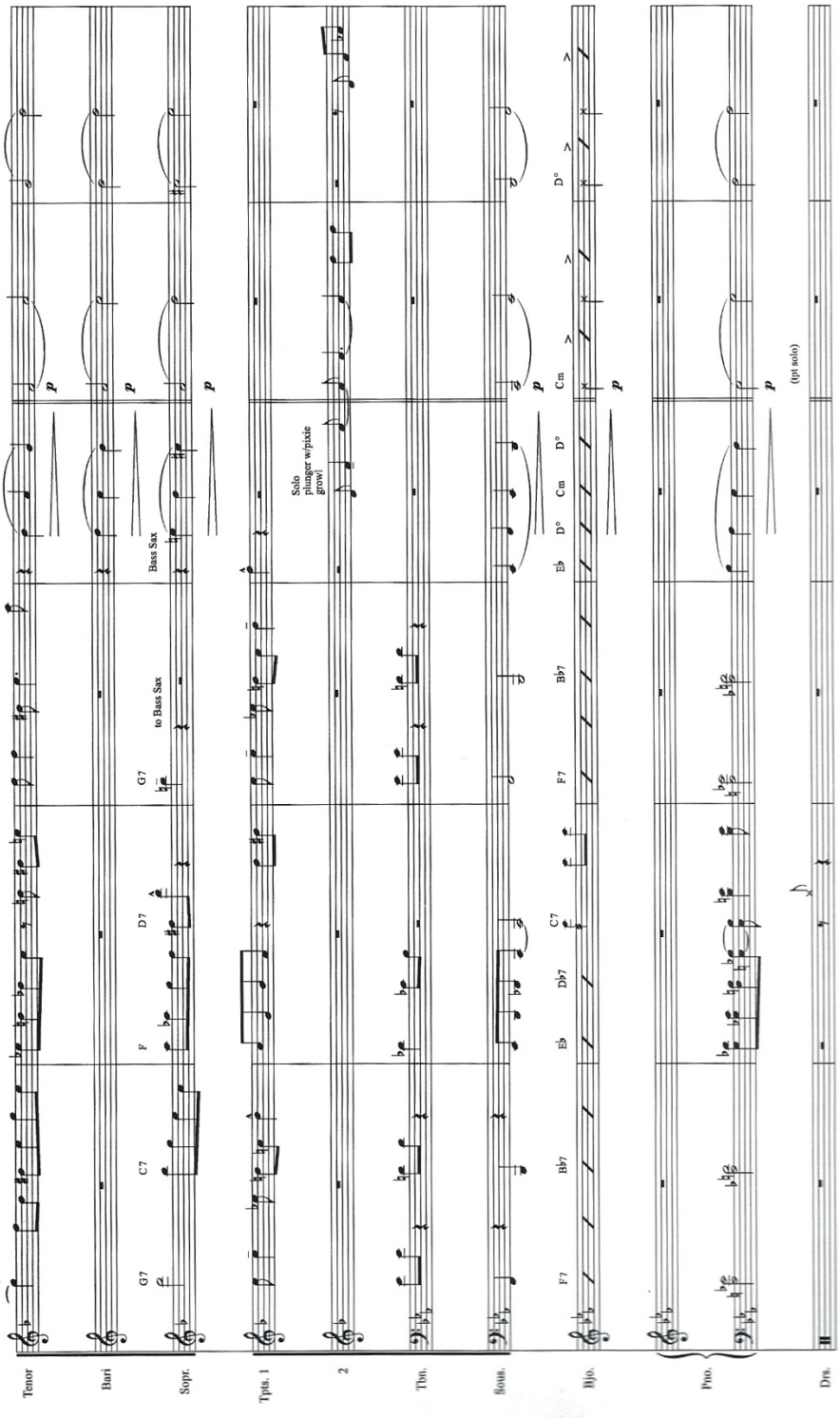

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
11
I
to Soprano Sax
to Soprano Sax
to Soprano Sax
Clar.
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Boun.
Bb7
Eb
Bb7
Bb7(b5)
Bjo.
Pno.
Dru.
(brass soli)
clunken

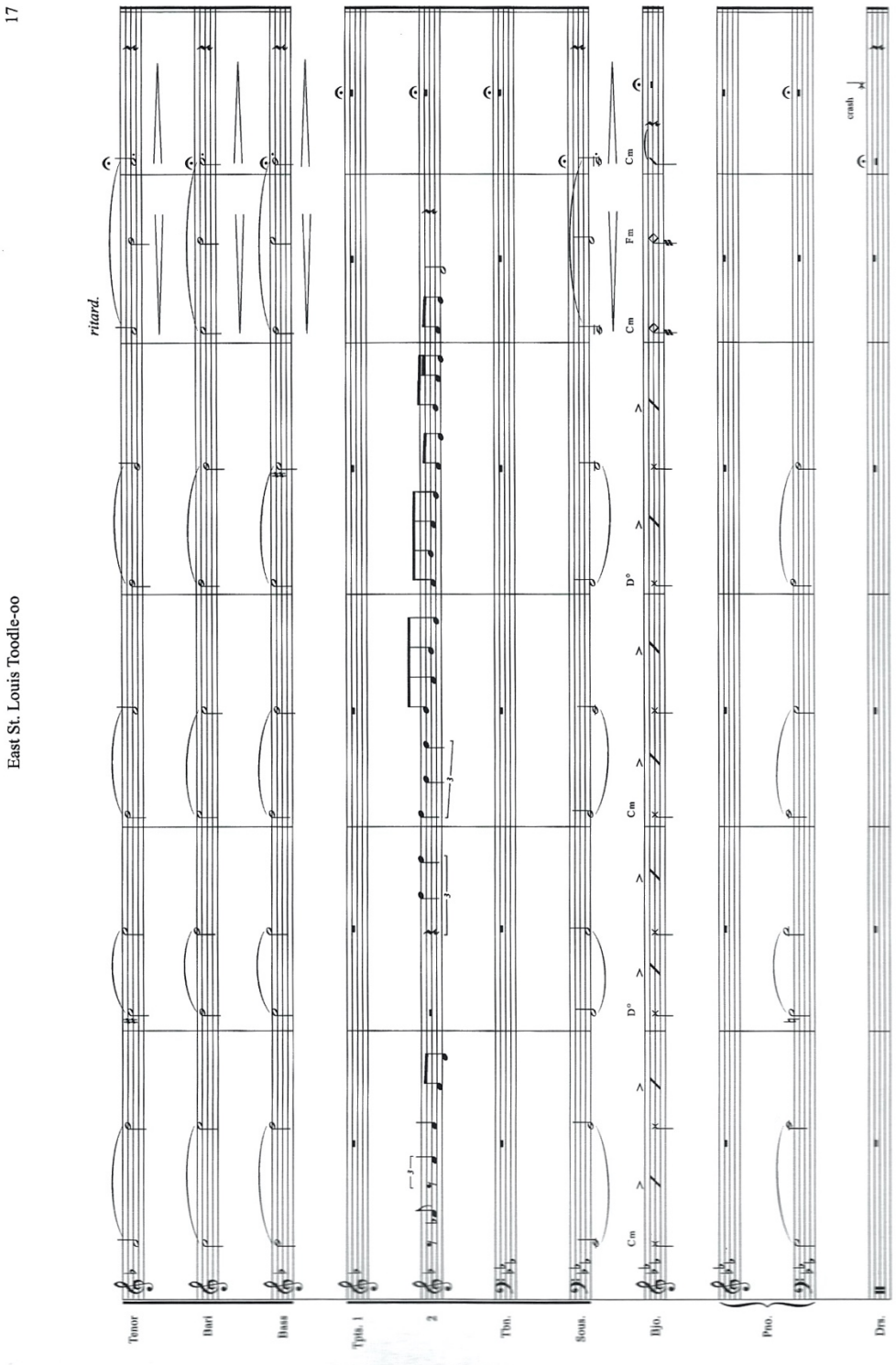

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
12
J
Clar.
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Tbns.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
Eb
Ab7
A°
Bb7
Eb7
(top note of the chord)


East St. Louis Toodle-oo
13
Clar.
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
A°
Ab
Eb
Db7
C7
F7
Bb7
Eb
E°
chokes


14
East St. Louis Toodle-oo
K
Sopr.
Soprano Sax
mf
lead
(reed 3 lead)
(reed 2 lead)
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bons.
Bjo.
Pno.
Dru.
to open
open
mp
Bb7
Eb
Bb7(#5)
Ab7
(sax soli)

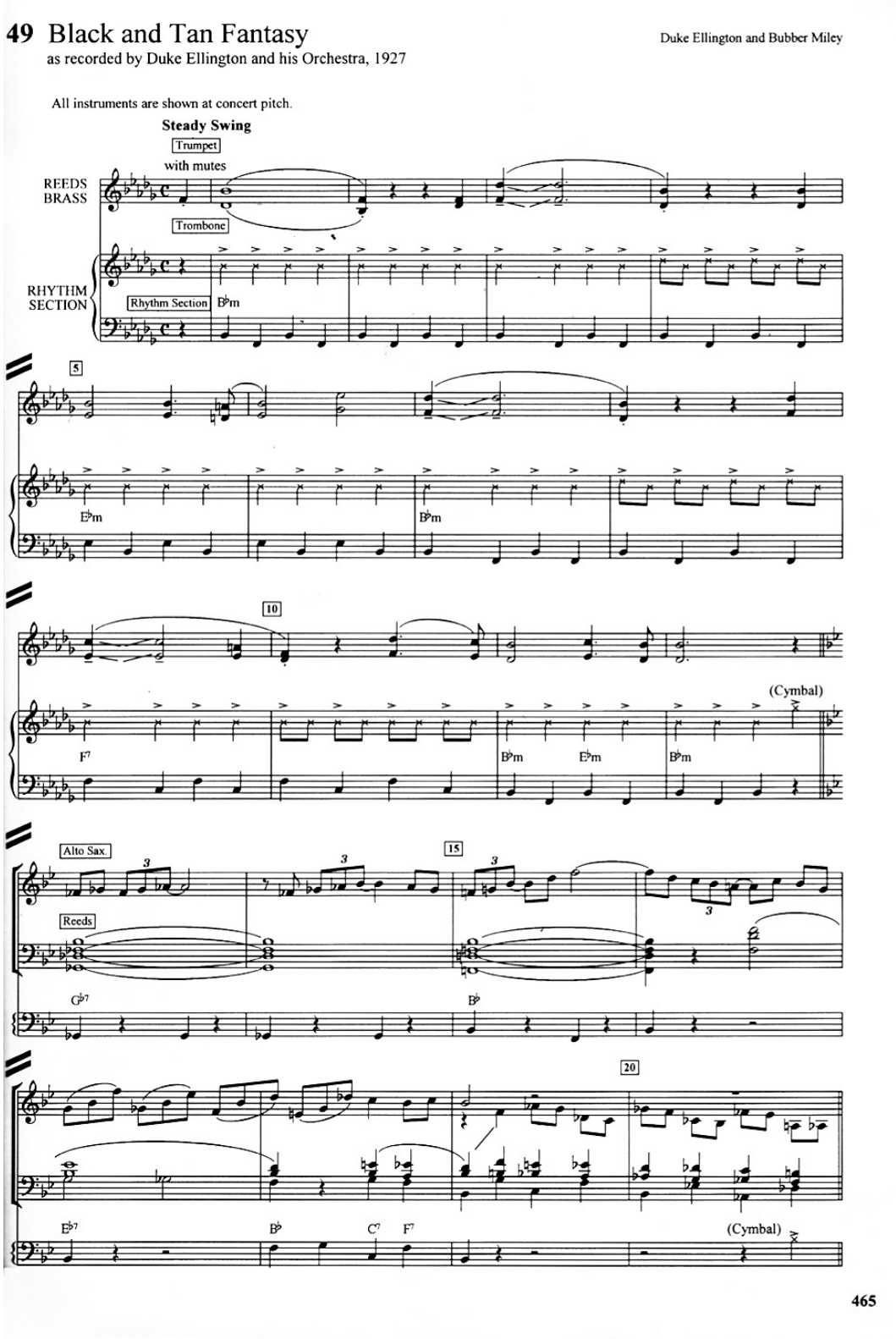

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
15
L
to Tenor Sax
to Baritone Sax
Tenor Sax
Baritone Sax
to plunger w/pixie
very active as at "1"
(sax solos)
Sopr.
Sopr.
Sopr.
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Dm.

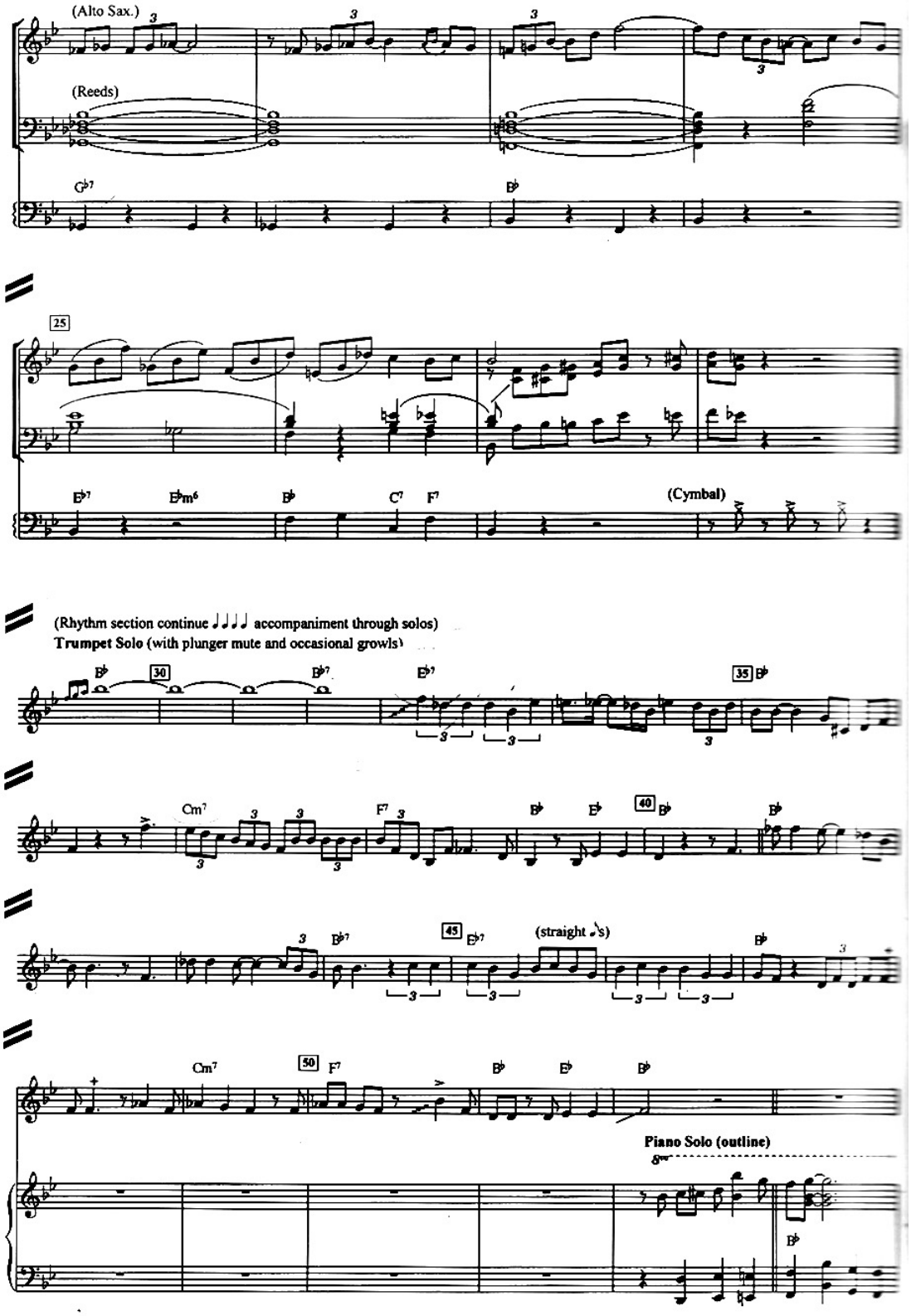

East St. Louis Toodle-oo
16
M
Tenor
Bari
Sopr.
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Bous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
Bass Sax
to Bass Sax
Solo
plunger w/pixie
growl
(tpt solo)
p

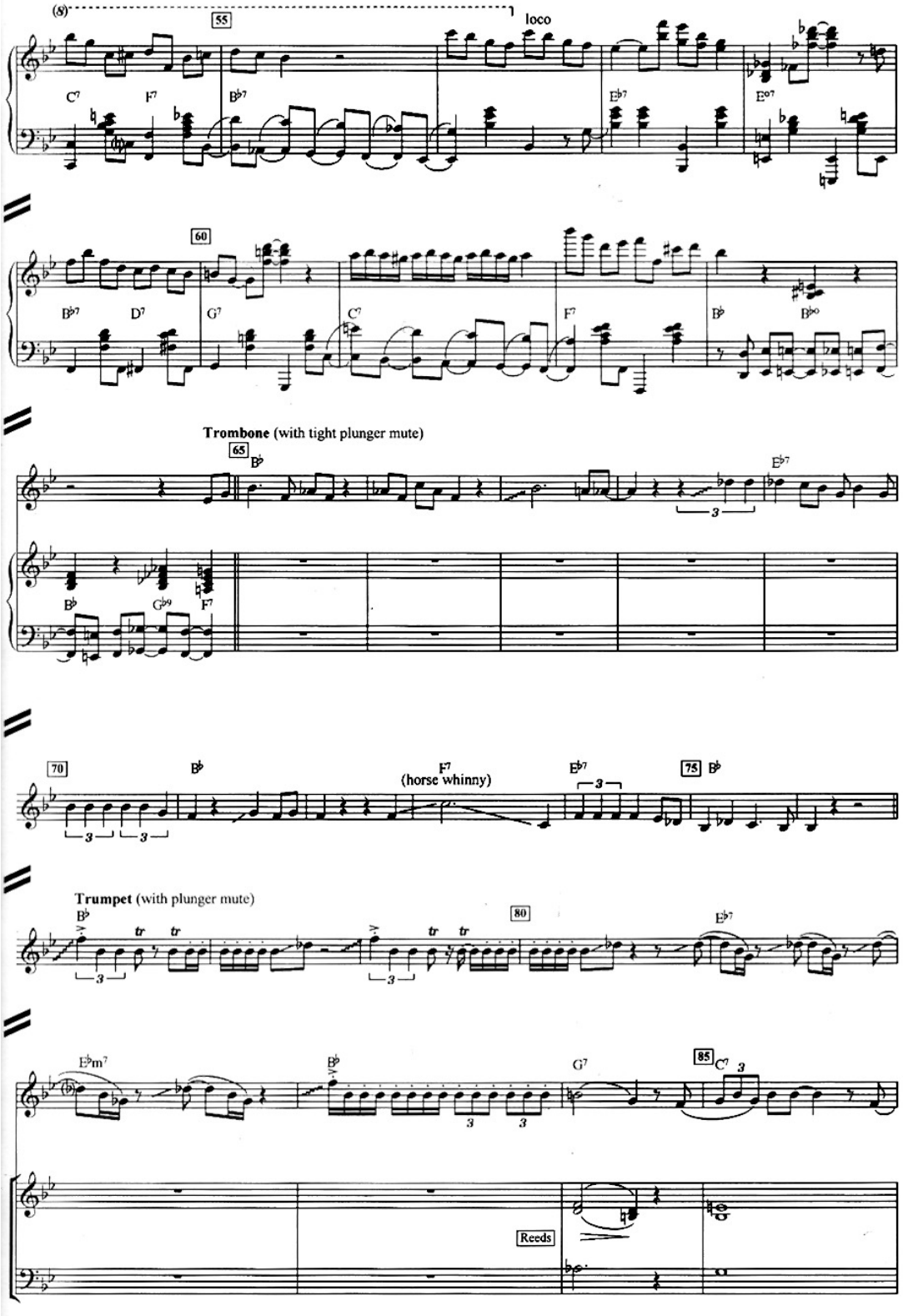

17
East St. Louis Toodle-oo
ritard.
Tenor
Bari
Bass
Tpts. 1
2
Tbn.
Sous.
Bjo.
Pno.
Drs.
crash
Cm
Fm
D°

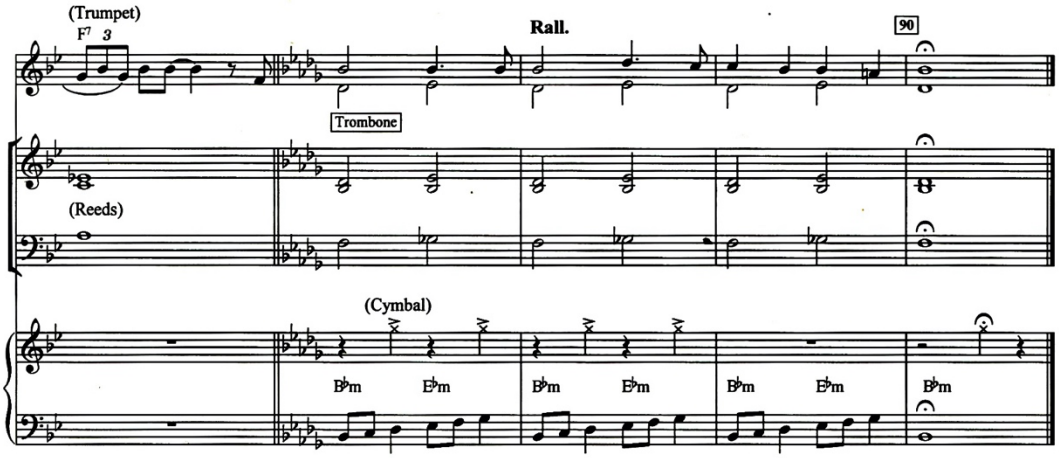
APPENDIX II

"BLACK AND TAN FANTASY" SCORE




(Alto Sax.)
(Reeds)
(Cymbal)
(Rhythm section continue accompaniment through solos)
Trumpet Solo (with plunger mute and occasional growls)
(straight mute)
Piano Solo (outline)
Pno


(8)
55
loco
C7
F7
B♭7
E♭7
E°7
60
B♭7
D7
G7
C7
F7
B♭
B♭°
Trombone (with tight plunger mute)
65
B♭
E♭7
B♭
G♭9
F7
70
B♭
F7
(horse whinny)
E♭7
75
B♭
Trumpet (with plunger mute)
B♭
80
E♭7
E♭m7
B♭
G7
85
C7
Reeds


(Trumpet)
F7 3
Rall.
90
Trombone
(Reeds)
(Cymbal)
B♭m
E♭m
B♭m
E♭m
B♭m
E♭m
B♭m

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