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The Evolution of Jazz in Britain
c. 1880-1927:
Antecedents, Processes and
Developments

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

City University
Department of Music

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**THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN REDACTED AT
THE REQUEST OF THE UNIVERSITY:**

Figure 1 (after page 36)

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List of abbreviations

- BBCWAC BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading
- HJA William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana
- IJS Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey
- NJFA National Jazz Foundation Archive, Loughton Public Library, Loughton, Essex
- ODJB Original Dixieland Jazz Band
- SSO Southern Syncopated Orchestra

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines the way in which jazz evolved in Britain beginning with an examination of the cultural and musical antecedents of the genre, including minstrel shows and black musical theatre, within the context of musical life in Britain in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. The processes through which this evolution took place are considered with reference to the ways in which jazz was introduced to Britain through imported revue shows and sheet music, as well as by the visits of American musicians. Finally, the subsequent development of jazz in Britain in the 1920s is analysed with particular consideration of the 'jazz age', modernism and the 'culture industry' as theoretical constructs and detailed study of dance music on the BBC and jazz in the underworld of London.

The thesis falls into two parts, the first provides historical and theoretical perspectives on the topic, and the second presents various case studies that examine particular manifestations of the evolving presence of jazz in Britain. The research makes use of a wide variety of primary source material; in addition to recordings (where available), sheet music, and concert programmes, which offer direct information about the music performed; biographies, film, photographs, government, police and court records, newspapers and periodicals provide the necessary context.

This thesis presents a new version of the history of jazz in Britain, not only through the factual findings resulting from the consideration of how jazz evolved in Britain, but also through the methodological approach used. The research establishes the parallel worlds of jazz that existed by the end of the 1920s in Britain: the realm of the institutionalised 'culture industry' and the underworld, and shows the importance of image and racial stereotyping in shaping perceptions of jazz in Britain. Most significantly, this study clearly establishes that the evolution of jazz in Britain is unique, rather than an extension or reflection of that in America.

Introduction

This thesis examines the antecedents of jazz, the processes through which jazz evolved, and the subsequent developments in the genre in Britain. The thesis falls into two sections; part one is concerned with historical and theoretical perspectives. The second part of the thesis presents various case studies that examine particular manifestations of the evolving presence of jazz in Britain.

In order to be able to research in sufficient detail to reach meaningful conclusions, some limitations have necessarily been imposed on the scope of this thesis. Firstly, the study is centred on London, principally in order to limit the wealth of material to be considered. It is possible that detailed study of jazz in other areas of the country could yield interesting results. Secondly, a specific time span, c. 1880-1927, was established. These dates define the main period under consideration, although reference is also made to events outside these parameters. This date range also means that this study is timely, as there is now a sufficient perspective of time from these events to allow them to be critically evaluated. These dates were not chosen arbitrarily, as it was in the 1880s that the first American musical craze, the banjo and its music, hit Britain as the culmination of the nineteenth century popularity of minstrel shows of which the banjo was a significant part (see Chapter 5). In 1927, at the end of the period under consideration, *The Appeal of Jazz* by R. W. S. Mendl was published. Mendl was educated at Harrow and University College, Oxford, obtaining his BA on 21 October 1915 (first class honours in Classical Moderations in 1913 and second class honours in *Litterae Humaniores* in 1915).¹ He wrote several books on musical aesthetics and one on Shakespeare. In the preface to *The Appeal of Jazz*, Mendl claimed that this 'is the first book about jazz to be published in Great Britain' (1927:v), which given the date of publication, seems probable. At any rate, the book is exceptional, certainly for the period, in that the author sets out to evaluate the place of jazz in society and in the history of art. Even in 1927, Mendl recognised the importance of jazz that had 'secured and still retains a more widespread vogue among its contemporary listeners than any other form of music ever known' (1927:80). *The Appeal of Jazz* is a truly fascinating book that inspired my initial choice of this research topic and informs both the historical and theoretical aspects of this thesis.

A conventional view of the history of jazz in Britain would tend to begin by documenting the earliest American performances of jazz in the country. This would result in a survey restricted by the modern difficulty of defining 'jazz' as a musical style. It is clear that

¹ Information courtesy of Oxford University Archives.

from a twenty-first century perspective, many of the musicians and most of the music under consideration in this thesis would not be classified as jazz, but yet all were vital either in shaping the future development of the music, or were clearly understood as representative of what the contemporary public believed to be jazz. A conventional treatment of the subject would also be lacking in sufficient historical, social and cultural perspective, resulting in the presentation of a chronological documentation of the presence of jazz rather than an explanation of why the music evolved and developed in the way that it did.

Many jazz publications have been written in this 'documentary' style, and generally there is a lack of theoretical writing on the genre, especially when compared with other musical forms. Within the area of jazz in Britain, several books have been written that focus on the 'dance band era' including Colin (1977), McCarthy (1971), Rust (1972) and Tracy (1995 and 1997). Two authors have attempted a wider survey of jazz in Britain, Boulton (1959) and Godbolt, whose two volumes of *A History of Jazz in Britain* (1986 and 1989) present exactly that and have become the standard and largely unchallenged texts on the subject. Rye's chapter on *Fearsome Means of Discord: Early Encounters with Black Jazz* in Oliver's *Black Music in Britain* (1990) presents a useful overview from which to begin research. However, no significant academic study of jazz in Britain has yet been published.

Many of the existing publications available on the subject of jazz in Britain tend to isolate the subject both from other forms of popular music and from the nature of the society in which it was received. Crucially, jazz was by no means the first American music that had been heard in Europe, as black performers in particular had visited in large numbers during the nineteenth century. Consideration of the previous experiences of American music in Britain is vital to explain the reception and subsequent development of jazz in this country. As a popular music, the evolution of jazz is tied to the contemporary sociological situation. Jazz was brought from the specific cultural situation in America to an equally unique, and quite different, environment of post-War Britain, which also influenced its reception. The resulting position of jazz was therefore unique to Britain, and this thesis will seek to illuminate and explain the distinctive nature of this evolution of jazz, taking full account of the specific national sociological and cultural profile.

In Part One, *Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*, Chapter 1 establishes the context of popular music and society in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and also examines the cultural antecedents for jazz. In particular, the popularity of the

minstrel show is examined to assess the development of racial attitudes and musical expectations. The visits of minstrel troupes also established the movement of theatrical productions from New York to London and *visa versa* that was essential to the later importation of jazz. Chapter 2 examines the image of jazz that evolved in Britain even before jazz bands themselves became commonplace. The rapid formation and wide dissemination of the idea of jazz through sheet music demonstrates the importance of the consideration of manifestations of the genre other than live performance. Finally in this part, Chapter 3 examines three concepts: 'jazz age', modernism and the 'culture industry', that provide a theoretical basis for understanding and evaluating the position of jazz in Britain in the 1920s alongside other artistic and cultural movements. F. Scott Fitzgerald's idea of a 'jazz age' positions jazz as the music representative of the post-War era, both literally and metaphorically. His novels and stories provide evidence of the social function of jazz in the 1920s and disseminated a clear image of jazz in Europe. Theodore Adorno's writing on jazz is of fundamental importance as the earliest significant theoretical consideration of the genre and provides an invaluable contemporary European perspective. In addition, the discussion of Adorno's ideas on jazz, modernism and the 'culture industry' alongside Mendl's work provokes fruitful consideration of the comparative position of jazz in Britain and Germany and assessment of the influence and wider manifestation of the British perception of jazz in Europe.

In Part Two, *The Evolving Presence of Jazz in Britain*, Chapter 4 examines the American production of *In Dahomey* that was performed in London in 1903. This show was significant as the first all-black production on Broadway, and is also notable for the quality of Will Marion Cook's music. *In Dahomey* was very successful in London, and provokes interesting comparisons with the reception of nineteenth century minstrels. Chapter 5 analyses the music and symbolism of the banjo, an instrument that had a continuous presence in American music in Britain throughout the period under consideration. In particular, the black banjo bands that visited Britain during the second decade of the twentieth century are considered as the immediate precursors of jazz. Chapter 6 considers the visits of the two American ensembles widely cited as the beginning of jazz in Britain: the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra. The former often and the latter occasionally are mentioned in the available literature on jazz, but extensive comparisons of their respective performances and reception have not been made, although the consideration of the situation of one white and one black group of American musicians performing contemporaneously in London is extremely informative. Accounts of popular music and jazz in Britain in the 1920s have tended to focus on the dance orchestras that

performed in upper-class hotels and on the early BBC radio service. Chapter 7 offers a detailed analysis of the bands associated with the Savoy Hotel that formed the backbone of the BBC's popular music output in the 1920s as a response to the image of jazz that had been established in Britain in the preceding years. However, there was also a continued presence of American musicians in Britain that is considered in this chapter. British dance bands were influenced by the 'symphonised syncopation' introduced by Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin and perpetuated by other white American groups, but black musicians mainly visited within the context of 'plantation revues' which continued to present the familiar Negro stereotype. Significantly, performances by American musicians and especially black American musicians became increasingly restricted during the decade and jazz was increasingly forced into the underworld of London.

A wide variety of primary sources have been used in this study to gain an idea of contemporary reactions and perceptions of jazz, as well as conducting retrospective analysis using a large range of secondary sources. In addition to recordings (where available), sheet music, and concert programmes, which offer direct information about the music performed, biographies, film, photographs, government, police and court records, newspapers and periodicals provide the necessary context. Much of this material has yet to be analysed in such detail. Nor has research been restricted exclusively to British sources. Extensive archival work in New York, Chicago and New Orleans was greatly informative on musicians and groups that came to Britain, the processes through which this occurred, and the similarities and differences between American and British society and culture.

The case study methodology adopted in the second part of this thesis has been influenced by sociological research. The sociologist Michael Haralambos identifies that the purpose of the case study as a method of research is primarily to gain a comprehensive understanding of the group under consideration (Haralambos, 1990:726). Several of the case studies in this thesis build upon work on specific groups and individual visiting American musicians undertaken by historian Howard Rye and published in *Storyville*. Unlike Rye's work, the purpose of the case studies in this thesis is not to present a comprehensive log of the activities of these groups, but instead, having collated the available information, to then present a salient analysis. Haralambos also states that a single case study has no claim to be representative, but it can be seen in this thesis how a series of case studies can be used 'to develop more general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process' (Haralambos, 1990:726). Therefore, it is not the intention of this thesis to provide a

comprehensive survey of jazz in Britain, rather, restricting the amount of material under consideration allows analysis of detailed and specific historical knowledge to formulate conclusions and hypotheses about trends and their causes in the evolution of jazz in Britain.

Part One: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

Chapter 1

The cultural and musical antecedents of jazz in Britain

The established view of the history of jazz in Britain is that it began in 1919 with the arrival of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra.¹ Although these visits are important events in the history of jazz in Britain, as these were the first bands that came from America to specifically perform jazz music, this premise is clearly an over-simplification for a number of reasons. Firstly, sheet music of jazz compositions, including those of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, had been published in Britain since at least 1917 and was widely available.² Recordings made by this band were probably also available in Britain prior to their 1919 visit. Secondly, the *Dancing Times* had reported as early as January 1918 'A fearsome thing called 'Jazz music' has reached us from the other side of the Atlantic: it has been described as 'syncopation runs riot'. What its effect will be, time alone can show.' (January 1918:126). The word 'jazz', then, was in general use in Britain before 1919, albeit in various contexts and layers of meaning, but this in itself illuminates the wider picture of the development of the genre in this country, which will be examined in Chapter 2.

Most significantly, however, to examine the evolution of jazz in Britain beginning in 1919 fails to take into account the cultural and musical antecedents of the genre, including the complex evolutionary pattern of events in the history of black American music in Britain, which fundamentally influenced the way in which jazz itself was perceived and received in Britain. Many black American musicians came to Britain during the nineteenth century, ranging from complete minstrel troupes of sixty or more entertainers, to individual performers who took their place on the music hall bills alongside native artists. Although the music performed by these black musicians was not necessarily musically related to jazz, the importance of their performances as both antecedents to jazz as an American music and as a significant part of popular culture in Britain cannot be over-estimated. Therefore, the 1919 visits described above should be examined within the context of a well-established pattern of visiting American musicians and entertainers touring in Britain and Europe. Hence, it is essential to begin

¹ See for example Godbolt, J. (1986) *A History of Jazz in Britain: 1919-1950*.

² The British Library Collection contains three compositions by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band published in Britain in 1917; *Ostrich Walk: Jazz Foxtrot*; *Sensation: Jazz One-step*; and *Tiger Rag: One Step* (contained in h3828.yy). The first songs in the collection published in London and containing the word 'jazz' in the title are also from this year.

an examination of the evolution of jazz in Britain by discussing the context of popular culture in Britain as a framework for analysing the encounters and reactions of the British public to earlier forms of American syncopated music. In this way, the various responses to jazz can be understood within historical and social, as well as musical, contexts.

The Victorian period was particularly rich in musical entertainment and there is evidence that the Victorian middle- and working-class population was actively involved in music in a number of ways. Indeed, the period has been described by Ronald Pearsall as 'the age of both the large choir and the small piano' (1973:12). Amateur choirs and brass bands were prolific, the former gained in popularity due to the teaching of tonic sol-fah from the 1840s. Choirs also formed an important part of the popular political movement, (e.g. the Clarion Vocal Union) with musical performance becoming a metaphor for socialist fellowship ('the act of performing and its social context mattered more than the music performed' [Russell, 1987:55]) as well as a way of communicating political messages. The competitive music festival movement also began at this time. Pianos and pianolas were to be frequently found in homes and became central to domestic music making. Musical activities were encouraged by the developments in printing which made a huge amount of sheet music available to the general public, which included music hall and minstrel songs.

In addition, Victorian upper-class philanthropists organised concerts for the ordinary people in an 'attempt to broaden popular cultural horizons' and this even went as far as organising orchestral performances in the streets known as 'court and alley' concerts (Russell, 1987:35). Indeed, there is evidence of the popularity of serious concerts and of opera presented by touring companies during the Victorian period among the lower classes (Russell, 1987:69). Popular opera melodies were also the staple repertoire of other musical entertainment including music hall, and arranged for brass band and even heard on barrel organs on street corners. Interestingly, as a result, 'not that many Victorians drew a sharp distinction between serious and popular music' and 'middle class tastes ranged easily from religious arias to popular tunes' (Read, 1979:84). This meant that most people were familiar with a wide range of music whatever their social class, and this mix of musical styles also characterised the music hall, which was 'the most highly organised sector of the entertainment industry' at that time and as such, significant, as a 'prefiguration of the mass entertainment business of the twentieth century' (Russell, 1987:72).

The music hall evolved throughout the Victorian period from 'song and supper rooms' and 'pubs which had been extended to include a singing saloon' (Kift, 1996:2) Derek Scott has pointed out that 'The tavern concert room, with its lower-middle-class patrons and professional or semi-professional entertainment, has a more direct link to the music hall than do the song and supper rooms around Covent Garden and the Strand, which were frequented by the aristocracy and wealthy middle class.' (2001:216) Purpose built halls began to exist from the 1850s in the suburbs and spread steadily during this decade into the city centres and London experienced a music-hall boom in the early 1860s 'with the help of a new law which allowed the setting-up of limited companies' (Kift, 1996:21). The music hall was firmly established as a national institution from the 1870s through syndicates that set up halls in smaller provincial communities, and enabled acts to tour throughout the country (Russell, 1987:77).

Contemporary writers on the music hall have not made explicit the links between this flourishing tradition and the large numbers of visiting black American performers in Britain in the nineteenth century, but it seems likely that they often performed within the established shows, and certainly at the same venues. Visits of black American performers to Britain began in 1836 with the blackface performer T. 'Daddy' Rice, famous for his Negro impersonation and song 'Jump Jim Crow'. Blackface minstrel troupes such as the Virginia Minstrels, the Ethiopian Serenaders and Christy's Minstrels came to Britain from the 1840s, followed by black minstrel troupes such as Hague's, Callender's and Haverley's in the second half of the century. As individual members often remained behind after the troupes had departed, black performers must have been well represented on the British music hall stages and 'a great deal of American music was known in England' at this time (Mackerness, 1964:222). Heindel states that 'by 1905 one-third of the music-hall performers were Americans' (1940:330).

When discussing the response of white South Americans to black culture, Christopher Small states that 'white people have always viewed black culture with a mixture of fascination and fear' (1987:141); if anything, these emotions must have been even more concentrated in nineteenth century Britain. The black population of Britain had been in gradual decline from 1800 and most of those who were left in the country were very poor, and would not have been frequently seen by middle and upper class people (Walvin, 1973:202). Therefore, British audiences became fascinated with the Negro character and culture, and black minstrels developed a great novelty value as entertainers, whilst among the lower classes, black performers may have been regarded 'as much with a self-regarding sympathy as with a self-appeasing pity' (Pickering, 1986:84). Thus, black music and entertainment had already begun to

develop 'the power to seize the imaginations of so many different kinds of people...a phenomenon which still lacks a satisfactory 'official' explanation' (Small, 1987:11); such appeal amongst people of different classes was to be a significant feature of the reception of jazz.

The movement for the abolishment of slavery, which became extremely strong in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly amongst upper class, was an important factor that influenced the response to black minstrels in Britain. Indeed, public meetings and appeals on behalf of the cause continued even after British participation in the slave trade had ended, as by then it had become fashionable for 'idle ladies' and rich philanthropists to patronise emancipation societies (Little, 1948:206-207). This meant that there was generally considerable sympathy for black performers. For example, philanthropic interest was essential to the Jenkins Orphanage Band and Fisk Jubilee Singers, who came to England in the late nineteenth century to raise money. The latter group, a choir of young black students who were attempting to obtain funding for university buildings, were fortunate enough to secure the admiration of the Earl of Shaftesbury who organised a concert that was attended by many influential people. Subsequently the Singers were invited by the Duke and Duchess of Argyll to perform at Argyll House in the presence of the Queen who 'listened with manifest pleasure' (Marsh, 1902:50). Royal patronage was extremely important for visiting black musicians, as it seemed to exert significant influence on the general public as well as providing the artists with all-important publicity. Many visiting artists gave command performances that ensured their success in Britain, for example the *In Dahomey* company in 1903.

However, there were also negative aspects to the philanthropic interest shown in black entertainers. Minstrel shows provided whites with a way to offload their guilt about slavery, as they generally presented 'an idyllic view of the noble savage' that had been civilised through the careful education of whites (Walvin, 1973:186), supporting the view of those who were pro-slavery. The success of the Fisk Jubilee Singers was partly due to the fact that they sang religious songs, and thus ironically supported the argument that slavery was beneficial to Africans as they could be converted to Christianity (Walvin, 1973:170). Even as late as 1927, Mendl commented that spirituals 'are filled with a pathos and a nobility and a devotional fervour which were the spontaneous outcome of a people torn from their homes and who found their solace in the great religion of the oppressed, Christianity' (1927:30). In addition, although generally 'minstrels thrived upon an appeal to the anti-slavery sentiments of their audiences' (Lorimer, 1975:40), this was ironic as many fervent abolitionists did not

realise that minstrelsy was in a way as much of a yoke to black people as slavery. The peculiar nature of the stereotype portrayed by minstrels that appealed to white audiences will be examined in detail, as it exerted considerable influence on the reception of jazz in the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, the primitive aspect of the presentation of the Negro in minstrel shows ensured their widespread appeal in Britain. Later, the lingering assumption that all black culture was 'primitive' and therefore needed to be injected with a healthy dose of 'civilized' white culture was to exert a negative influence on the value judgements which were made by white Britons about jazz. In fact, the so-called 'primitive myth' (Gioia 1988:31), was only one aspect of the white stereotype of black culture and people which was presented by the black minstrel shows that visited Britain, which can be summarized as 'sexual, musical, stupid, indolent, untrustworthy and violent' (Walvin, 1973:160). In order to ensure their success, minstrels had to present entertainment that was 'a reflection of the prevailing attitudes of the day' (Small, 1987:149). Minstrel shows thus included elements in support of both sides of the slavery debate, which, as we have already seen, were represented in contemporary British society; on one side sufficient anti-slavery sentiment, and on the other, the acknowledgment of the improving influence of whites. There was also a need to present the Negro stereotype, which was not necessarily particularly faithful to black culture, as this was expected in Britain. There were many paradoxes inherent in the stereotype including 'faithful servant/indolent laborer, Christian/sinner, patient slave/lustful, vengeful savage' (Pickering, 1986:85). This meant that the Victorian sensibilities were unlikely to be overly offended as 'whenever the Victorians considered the position of a black man, they could conjure up an image of a patient suffering slave, a comic minstrel or a cruel lustful savage to fit the particular situation' (Lorimer, 1975:45).

Similarly, although the popularity of minstrel shows clearly demonstrates that 'there was need in white culture for what black culture had to offer' (Sidran, 1981:32), black entertainment that was founded on realism was less popular than 'diluted' versions presented by whites. The apparently threatening nature of these realistic portrayals of black culture to the British public is shown by problems encountered by Sam Hague, who brought an all-black troupe to Britain in 1866. In the end, Hague had to replace most of the troupe with white, blacked-up performers 'as the public seemed to prefer the imitation nigger' (Reynolds, 1927:165). Likewise 'the Haverley Coloured Minstrels [visiting in 1881] did not meet with the same amount of success as the Haverley

Mastodon [white] Minstrels in 1880' (Reynolds, 1927: 207). The threat of genuine black performers was clearly being felt even as late as 1912, as one writer commented

'When the nigger-minstrel can wash his race off after office hours he is harmless; but the true negro singer is often a dangerous fellow to be let loose in a hall- we dare not be so familiar with him.'
(Titterton, 1912:213)

The competition between black and blackface minstrel shows would have increased the pressure for black minstrels to conform to a white stereotype for their survival, and thus established this stereotype as a permanent truism in the mind of the British public. Indeed, the blackface stereotype of the Negro was such that it could be easily imitated, and thus further exaggerated and disseminated, by British street performers and amateurs. The preference for imitation black performers rather than the genuine article suggests a fascination with the concept of the blackface mask itself, which 'served to distinguish and signal a certain kind of act and certain types of comic effects' and blackface was in fact a late nineteenth century fashionable convention in British music hall and variety theatre (Pickering, 1986:79). This suggests a widespread familiarity with the Negro stereotype that could account for the way in which this continued to affect the reception of black performers in Britain into the twentieth century. Specifically, an innate musicality was considered to be one of the characteristics of the stereotypical Negro, an idea that was confirmed through the centrality of music in the minstrel show. The banjo was the instrument most closely associated with black music in the minstrel show, and the instrument developed a clear musical and symbolic identity that had important long-term effects on British perception and reception of black American music that will be examined in Chapter 5.

Essentially, minstrelsy was successful in Britain as it fitted very well within the evolving popular culture and hence became 'one of the most prominent forms of entertainment in the nineteenth century, both inside and outside the music hall' (Pickering, 1986:70). Initially at least, minstrelsy was probably seen as an extension of the caricature, clowning, melodrama and sentimentality already existent in the British music hall, but with an extra dash of exoticism due to the racial characteristics, imitative or otherwise, of the performers, who emphasised these for maximum effect on their white audiences. In addition, Pickering suggests that visiting performers made adaptations to ensure their success in Britain, and it is the flexibility of the minstrel show format, particularly within the 'olio' section in the centre of the show, which allowed the introduction of 'new and spectacular elements' and prefigured the twentieth century variety show (1986:75).

Significantly, the rise and fall of minstrelsy in Britain is closely allied to that of the music hall. Whereas early music hall was 'financed by the sale of alcohol, and in many cases, the entertainment on offer did not correspond with what was regarded as socially acceptable' (Kift, 1996:2) over time, the music hall lost its vulgar associations. During the 1870-90s, proprietors 'not only moved sales of alcohol and drink completely out of the auditorium, but also replaced the rows of tables by fixed rows of seating. The internal architecture of halls increasingly came to resemble that in the theatres' (Kift, 1996:22) and the quality of the acts was improved (Pearsall, 1973:39). These new standards ensured that eventually smaller informal institutions were wiped out and music halls became more respectable and began to appeal to the middle and upper classes. However, 'by conceding to middle-class tastes the halls had become detached from their popular roots and lost a considerable amount of vitality' (Kift, 1996) in particular, 'performers no longer had any great say in shaping the programme along with the audience and were overwhelmingly restricted to conforming to a set time-table' (Kift, 1996:61) and the entertainment became increasingly respectable (Scott, 2001:216). The wide repertoire of music presented in the halls (for example, performances often included an operatic overture) led to them being regarded by Victorian philanthropists as a source of musical education for the lower classes (Russell, 1987:88). In this context, it seems likely that minstrelsy was considered to be a musically and culturally educative experience.

Indeed, 'the minstrel show quickly established a reputation for respectability and propriety that was long maintained' (Pickering, 1986:73), and autonomous minstrel presentations from the 1840s onwards were probably considered respectable before the native music hall. Abolitionist concern with life on Southern plantations together with natural curiosity about Negro life and culture which fitted in well with the philanthropic desire to use the music hall for the education of the masses meant that minstrelsy was novel but yet respectable family entertainment. In addition, there was widespread belief in the 'primitive' myth that advocated that minstrel shows presented 'authentic' Negro culture that was basic, simple and even spiritual. Thus, minstrel performances continued to be appropriate within the increasingly civilised late nineteenth century British popular culture.

The addition of the upper classes to the theatre-going public in the late nineteenth century meant that theatre managers now had to pay more careful attention to the tastes of their audiences, and as a result the traditions of the music halls, associated correctly or otherwise with vulgarity, drink, prostitutes and the lower classes, were eroded and music hall developed into civilised variety theatre. The standardised

minstrel show format, similarly to the traditions of the British music hall, had become increasingly outdated and also began to dissolve, becoming more like variety shows (Pickering, 1986:77). Significantly though, it was through nineteenth century minstrelsy that strong links between British theatrical promoters and black American performers were established which laid a firm foundation for subsequent visits in the twentieth century, and thus helped to pave the way for the presentation of jazz in Britain.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most American musicians were brought to Britain through these pre-existent theatrical channels, indeed, although it seems unlikely that any large minstrel troupes visited Britain after the 1880s, undoubtedly individual performers continued to be featured on the West End variety stage. The flexibility of the variety show format allowed foreign acts to be included within British popular culture and to be disseminated widely through the national networks of venues. Although the traditional minstrel show was not as popular as it had been, many of the American musicians who visited Britain in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries were directly linked to and actively built upon the popularity of minstrelsy in Britain. These include, for example, the large numbers of solo banjo players that visited Britain to record and perform, and all-black groups such as the Memphis Students, who were presented as a novelty act on the variety stage, as well as Will Marion Cook's show, *In Dahomey*. Members of these two groups were later founder members of the Clef Club, an organisation that was established in New York in 1910 to promote black musicians. The exploitation of the long-standing contacts between Broadway and the West End by the Clef Club seems to have been instrumental in the visits of three important black pre-jazz ensembles (see Chapter 5) and later the Southern Syncopated Orchestra (Chapter 6).

Theatre managers in the Edwardian period were increasingly concerned with commercial success rather than the educative potential of their shows, continuing a trend in the development of music hall entertainment. Indeed, Kift suggests that 'by the 1860s educational components had almost completely disappeared from the music-hall programme' (1996:58). Access to art music, formerly integrated within the music hall or street entertainment, was often provided separately by cheap concerts at venues such as the People's Palace and the coffee music hall at the Old Vic (Scott, 2001:121) from the 1880s. Proprietors of central London music halls in the late nineteenth century had to provide a diverse programme of 'respectable' and novel entertainment to entice an audience drawn from various social classes (Kift, 1996:62). Hence popular music began to develop a specific function as an alternative to high-brow art music.

Novelty and variety became fundamental to popular entertainment, and for these reasons cinematograph and bioscope presentations were initially easily incorporated into music hall and variety theatre. The rise of the cinema is important when considering musical life in the early twentieth century, as the silent films all required musical accompaniment that ranged from a solo pianist/organist to a full orchestra and was therefore an important source of work for musicians. The first cinema opened in 1907 and became popular with young members of the working-class who became 'a brand-new public for mass entertainment' (Read, 1979:421). There is evidence of use of new American music in films which was 'imported by a ship's musician on the Atlantic run' (Erlich, 1985:199), and may well have been the first exposure of the young audience to the new 'syncopated dance music'.

Musical comedy became a central form of popular entertainment at the turn of the century, as is shown by the popularity of selections from the shows for brass band (Russell, 1987:71). Musical comedies of the period were 'self-consciously modern', often including the latest fashionable clothes and commenting on contemporary life (for example, *In Town* of 1892 was based on life in London) (Pearsall, 1975:19). Other shows reflected the contemporary trend for the exotic, such as *The Geisha* (1896) and *A Chinese Honeymoon* (1901) (Pearsall, 1975:21). In 1903, the black American composer Will Marion Cook presented the all-black show *In Dahomey*, which was an early example of a new type of black musical entertainment that aimed to elevate black culture away from minstrelsy (see Chapter 4). This show was very successful in Britain, as it reflected the vogue for exoticism (due to the whole company being black) and light-hearted musical comedy at this time.

Significantly, extensive transferring of shows between London's West End and Broadway in New York began as early as 1898 with the presentation in London of the musical comedy *The Belle of New York*. Indeed, all things American became fashionable in pre-War Britain, and in his book *London in my Time*, Burke states that:

'The first quarter of this century, indeed, may be known to history as London's American phase, since the major part of the many and rapid changes it has suffered may be traced to America...The bulk of our entertainment is American in quality and largely in personnel.'
(1934:35)

This was due in part to the shows that were imported along the well-established routes that were responsible for introducing the latest trends from across the Atlantic. This included ragtime and later, jazz, both in terms of the presentation of the actual music and also the attendant symbolism and metaphor.

Albert De Courville, a producer and impresario, was a particularly important figure in the development of the American-style revue in London. As a journalist, De Courville had travelled widely, and had seen American revue shows in New York (De Courville, 1928:52). De Courville was employed by Sir Edward Moss to secure the necessary attractions to 'make the Hippodrome pay' (De Courville, 1928:77), and he immediately began to import foreign acts and then to commission new musical comedies for the Hippodrome (De Courville, 1928:92). Eventually, to reduce costs, he began to write and produce his own material, influenced by American ragtime revues, of which he wrote: 'The new rhythm fascinated me. It seemed to fit into the atmosphere of revue marvellously, as its tempo was suitable for chorus work.' (De Courville, 1928:97). De Courville continued to import American performers, and was responsible for booking important black American musicians such as Joe Jordan's Syncopated Orchestra for the revue *Push and Go*, drummer Louis Mitchell for *Joyland*, (both in 1915) and Dan Kildare and Harvey White for *Hullo America* (1918). After the War, De Courville was responsible for importing the Original Dixieland Jazz Band for another Hippodrome revue, *Joy Bells*.

Significantly, it was the revue *Hullo Ragtime*, which was the first in the series of American-style revues presented by De Courville at the Hippodrome, and was apparently seen by 400,000 people (Pearsall, 1975:185), that defined and popularised ragtime in Britain in 1912. The revue included American artists such as Shirley Kellogg and Ethel Levy and was a huge success, as De Courville recalled:

'I do not think I am exaggerating if I say it was one of the biggest successes that has ever been put on in London. We were sold out for weeks ahead, and the show ran nearly a year, playing twice daily to figures which I had never dreamed of at the Hippodrome.'
(De Courville, 1928:108).

De Courville's description of the orchestral rehearsals for *Hullo Ragtime* clearly shows that ragtime was unfamiliar to the musicians at the Hippodrome:

'Syncopated music had to be played in a certain way...I used to insist on the American melodies I had brought over being played in a certain way, with a proper sense of rhythm and syncopation. I met with all sorts of protests when trying to achieve this object. They told me it was not music. To keep the balance I had brought over a trap drummer and a cornet-and-trombone player from America. Jones [the leader of the orchestra] told me that their playing was something quite new and against all principles of music, but nevertheless he agreed with me that the syncopated rhythm was effective.'
(De Courville, 1928:105)

It must be remembered that the piano remained central to domestic entertainment, as it had been in the Victorian period, and that the publication, wide dissemination and subsequent domestic performance of songs from American revues followed the same pattern as the music hall songs from earlier in the nineteenth century. Indeed, songs such as Irving Berlin's 'Alexander's Ragtime Band' could make 'traditional popular music out of date almost overnight' (Pearsall, 1976:10). Significantly, American revues established orchestrated ragtime songs rather than solo piano ragtime as the standard manifestation of the genre in Britain. As piano ragtime was hardly represented at all, (player pianos never achieved the same success that they had in the United States and there were no visits from significant ragtime pianists) this ensured that the banjo-based bands remained central to performances of syncopated music in Britain, and the effects of this are analysed in detail in Chapter 5.

In conclusion, examination of the history of popular culture in Britain in the period before the arrival of American jazz bands provides the background to the extreme popularity of jazz as the main form of popular music in the 1920s and beyond. Nineteenth-century popular culture in Britain thrived upon novelty, exoticism, sentimentality and humour, which were qualities encapsulated in the black minstrel performer. There was also extreme juxtaposition of various musical genres within a single evening's entertainment. Minstrels appealed equally to the philanthropic upper class as to empathetic lower class; both groups that increasingly played their parts in the formation of late-nineteenth century music hall and variety show audiences and the minstrel show provided a culturally interesting novelty for the Victorian public. Hence, visiting black American performers were integrated within British popular culture and specifically within the music hall and variety theatre. The widespread dissemination of the Negro stereotype amongst different classes of people and throughout Britain via the established national chains of venues was to have a long lasting effect on the perception of black performers, including jazz musicians, in subsequent years. Although this led to racial degradation in some instances, this was most often due to ignorance rather than maliciousness, and black performers continued to be regarded with fascination by British audiences in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the strength and popularity of the stereotypical Negro certainly contributed to the continued use of the banjo as the main instrument for the performance of American syncopated music in Britain into the 1920s.

Significantly, the visits of minstrel performers established routes of movement from the theatrical communities of America, specifically New York, to London, which were exploited not only by black American musicians but also by the producers of revue

shows. Revues not only brought American performers to Britain but also provided a direct insight into American life, albeit in exaggerated form. It was through these pre-War shows that the British public were initiated into the latest pre-jazz dances and music, either directly through watching the show or indirectly through the various sheet music publications. The vogue for American culture led to the replication of dances and music in the most fashionable London clubs and increased the demand for the latest styles, and hence it was as theatrical entertainment and as accompaniment for dancing that the first jazz bands were brought to Britain in 1919.

Chapter 2

The evolving image of jazz in Britain in sheet music

Music theatre, and in particular the revues produced by Albert de Courville at the Hippodrome in the period 1912-1919 (detailed in Seeley and Bunnett, 1989), was fundamental in introducing American fashions of all kinds to Britain. Therefore, the popularity of ragtime reached its peak in Britain through the revue *Hullo Ragtime* (1912) and the earliest 'jazz' song contained in the British Library collection was included in *Box o' Tricks* (1918). However, it is significant that it was not the music of these revues that defined either ragtime or jazz as musical styles, as most revue songs, including those that specifically referred to these genres, used a standardised musical idiom which was related to the music hall song and often included some syncopation. Rather, it was the verbal and visual imagery associated with these musical styles, presented in the song lyrics and dances of the revues, which provided the earliest clear descriptions of these genres. The popularity of these shows led to the importing of American sheet music and the publication of songs in Britain. As this sheet music could easily be disseminated outside London, it was clearly very important in establishing the image of ragtime and jazz throughout the country.

The growth of the sheet music industry ran in parallel with the evolution of jazz in Britain and, before the widespread use of recording and broadcast technology, this was the main way in which music of all types was disseminated. There was certainly a great demand for sheet music around the turn of the century, and popular hits could sell as many as 200,000 copies (Ehrlich, 1989:5). Indeed, the popularity of sheet music is shown by the widespread piracy where 'material was hawked on the street of London and provincial cities, in vast quantities and at a fraction of its legitimate price' (Ehrlich, 1989:8). The sheer scale of the music publishing industry is extremely significant, especially when considered in conjunction with the estimate that 'by 1910 there were some two to four million pianos in Britain – say one instrument for every ten to twenty people'. Therefore, ownership of pianos, and hence sheet music, was 'by no means confined to the middle classes' (Ehrlich, 1990:91). In addition to the publication of songs from American revues, trends of all types were reflected in contemporary song in Britain, a feature inherent in the music hall tradition of humorous, satirical parody of public figures, fashions and events. This led to the composition and publication of British songs, influenced by American models, that described jazz as it became the latest fashion. Therefore, many people would have experienced jazz initially, or even exclusively, particularly outside the main cities, through domestic music-making rather than live professional performances that tended to take place in socially exclusive

venues. Thus, the importance of printed music in forming a public perception of jazz cannot be underestimated, and it is therefore informative to examine the evolving image of jazz in the proliferation of sheet music available from the period.

For the purpose of this study, I have used the printed music collection of the British Library, and restricted my research to songs published in London,¹ to ensure that the songs would be known in Britain. The fact that American songs were certainly available in this country, as they appear in the collection, is certainly important, but it is also clear that only a few of the songs published in London were also published in America² or written by known American composers and lyricists. This clearly indicates that there was a group of British composers and lyricists writing songs in an American style for the British public. The aim of this research is to investigate the British perception of jazz, therefore this study will consist of a socio-cultural examination of the image of jazz created by the songs focussing on lyrics and title page illustrations,³ rather than an extensive musicological evaluation of the jazz elements used.⁴ As the *Dancing Times* reported, 'The Jazz was always primarily a word. It was a word which to some suggested the acme of poetical motion, while to others it conveyed conceptions of the lowest depths of immorality and degradation' (September 1919:544).

The general musical style of these songs evolved from the nineteenth century music hall song and in many cases the accompaniments are simple and chordal, which may indicate that they were being aimed at the domestic market. Some songs incorporate elements such as complex syncopation, dotted rhythms, 'breaks', triplet patterns, and repeated rhythmic and melodic motifs that clearly show the influence of the syncopated banjo music that was the prominent popular and dance music in early twentieth century Britain and can be seen to prefigure jazz (see Chapter 5). Although these elements became part of a style that was by no means unique to songs with lyrics concerned specifically with syncopated genres, it is noticeable that the accompaniments of some

¹ These songs will be referenced in the text using the British Library volume number. A full list of songs consulted with detailed information is contained in Appendix 1.

² Through comparison with the songs contained in the online sheet music database of Duke University in the USA, it can be assumed that very few of the composers of songs published in London were American. (<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/sheetmusic/>)

³ Unfortunately, very few of the songs considered here have title page illustrations. Derek Scott has suggested (in a seminar given at the Institute of Historical Research for the Music in Britain Seminar Group entitled 'Music Hall Cockney: Flesh and blood or replicant?' on 14 February 2000) that the lack of illustration on the covers of songs in the nineteenth century implied that the song was aiming to be more upmarket. However, in the case of the latter part of the period 1900-1919 it is more likely that economising due to the effects of war was responsible for less lavish publications.

⁴ A similar aim is expressed by Leppert in relation to his study of the depiction of music in art in the eighteenth century: he aims to examine 'not just 'how it looked' but 'how it was made to look in art' (1988:4).

later songs, especially those that describe a 'jazz band', make greater use of these features. This suggests that by 1920, jazz had begun to develop some kind of musical as well as symbolic identity, which will be discussed later. However, more often it seems that the writers of these often topical and era-specific songs were under pressure to produce new compositions that reflected ever-changing fashions and trends, including music and dance but also extending to matters such as politics, personalities and dress, and therefore worked at speed. For this reason, many of the songs considered here are stylistically very similar and often formulaic in structure. Indeed, a contemporary commentator when describing 'jazz' songs states that: 'Occasionally one is struck by the melodic or harmonic aspect of a particular number, which raises it above the mass but this is rare, and a regular harmonic and melodic routine is usually followed' (Nelson, 1934:29). Therefore, although songs have limited use as a resource for investigating the *musicological evolution* of jazz, the retrospective examination of the lyrics gives a clear idea of the *image* of jazz that was presented to the British public.

It is easy to see the popularity of jazz in Britain as simply a result of the increasing American influence on many aspects of British life and culture. However, retrospective analysis of contemporary song lyrics clearly illuminates jazz as a replacement for the previous ragtime craze, which was rejected for various reasons by a surprising number of songs, almost all written as early as 1912-1913. Songs mention as one reason the age of the music and the craze associated with it, for example in *Goodbye Mr. Ragtime!* [h3989.d(5)] 'Ragtime really has to go, its getting old and tottering with age', suggesting that the replacement dance will be the tango. Similar ideas about the tango are evident in the media from this point onwards, illustrating the ability of songs to accurately reflect the trends of fashionable society.⁵ More importantly, this establishes that ragtime was regarded primarily as dance music in Britain and therefore would probably be encountered in performances by the banjo bands that played for dancing rather than solo pianists: an important factor in the unique way in which jazz was to evolve in Britain. Indeed, two songs reject not only ragtime, but also the whole idea of dance crazes. One song is entitled *Don't Sing in Ragtime!* [h3994.hh(10)] and suggests that 'To abstain from all these crazes for a time will do us good' and the song *There ain't going to be any ragtime* [h3994.cc(24)] continues:

⁵ The revue *Hullo Tango* was presented at the Hippodrome in 1913. Josephine Bradley, a leading dancer and dance instructor in Britain at this time, described how the craze for the tango was 'interrupted' when war broke out in 1914 (1947:9). It was then that the foxtrot then began to evolve and there was a move away from set dance patterns towards dancing that was more improvisational in character.

'There ain't going to be any dancing
No not even the old cakewalk
But just for once we're all going to all sit round
And have a nice quiet talk.'

In *Don't Drive Me Crazy with Your Ragtime Song* [h3996.e(26)] and *I Don't Want a Ragtime Coon* [h3994.jj(48)], the rejection of ragtime is linked with race:

'I don't want a ragtime coon
I don't like his ragtime tune
His syncopating and his hesitating
Won't set my heart palpitating.'

The story of how ragtime 'died' is told in *Who Killed Ragtime? A Modern Nursery Rhyme* [g1520.pp(11)] which includes references to the supposed roles played by prominent public figures of the time, such as Mrs Pankhurst and Lloyd George, which shows that ragtime was very much within the spirit of the age. Another reason for rejecting ragtime is given in the song *Change that Rag into a March Refrain* [h3990.t(34)], written in 1915 which implores bands to 'Play a military march instead [as] that's the sort of tune we're needing now' suggesting that ragtime music was inappropriate in a time of war. The song ends:

'Goodbye to ragtime! We can do without it
Play up that march tune there's a charm about it
Change your evening dress to khaki brown and just bid your sweetheart
goodbye!'

Later, in a jazz song of 1919 [h3993.e(45)], ragtime is explicitly rejected in favour of jazz, and as this is the chorus of the song, it receives particular emphasis.

'Heigho, jazz it with me
It's easy as easy can be
It's better than ragtime or any zig-zag time
Maggie come jazz it with me'

This song describes a man who 'was crazy on ragtime', but goes on to say that 'one fatal night he yelled with delight/"I've just learned to jazz and it's great!'".

Initially, the use of the word 'jazz', particularly in song titles, added to the general confusion about what it actually meant. As musical styles tended to evolve and change much more slowly and infrequently than the associated nomenclature, fashionable words such as 'rag' or 'jazz' seem to have been applied to music and songs more or less indiscriminately, and therefore had little meaning as names of musical styles. The *Dancing Times* reported as late as February 1920:

'It has become fashionable to call any band that has a trap drummer and some banjoists a Jazz band, but I am sure that in nine cases out of ten the nomenclature is wrong and the band quite harmless.'
(February 1920:350)

The fact that American syncopated styles had been the basis for most popular dance music in Britain from the late nineteenth century meant that jazz was perceived, initially at least, as merely another dance craze. *The Literary Digest*, an American magazine, reported:

'The latest international word seems to be 'jazz'. It is used almost exclusively in British papers to describe the kind of music and dancing - particularly the dancing - imported from America, thereby arousing discussions, in which bishops do not disdain to participate, to fill all the papers.'
(26/4/1919:28)

The speed at which various dances fell in and out of fashion meant that the names of the associated musical styles were often used synonymously for periods of time; therefore, it was difficult for the distinctive characteristics of particular forms to be defined and understood. This was particularly true with pre-jazz instrumental pieces, where the terms 'ragtime', 'cakewalk' and 'two-step' were used interchangeably or in various combinations until at least 1905 (for example *The Manhattan Cake Walk: A Rag-time Solo for Mandoline* [h188.j(8)] and *General Jasper Jones: Cakewalk Two-step* [h1981.g(34)]), and a similar confusion in nomenclature is also demonstrated by contemporary song lyrics. The first three 'ragtime' songs published in Britain (in 1900-1901) all mention the cakewalk, the contemporary dance trend. Indeed, the subject of *I Love My Little Honey* [h1654.rr(27)] described as the 'latest rag effusion' is in fact a visit to a cakewalk competition:

'The coons they had a cakewalk this summer
Of course I had to take my baby Hannah
Well when she commenced to dance
The niggers knew they had no chance'⁶

The song *I'm Certainly Living a Ragtime Life* [h3986.ss(11)] seems to define ragtime as only a characteristic of cakewalk music, rather than a specific musical style. The song over-emphasises the word ragtime, applying it as an adjective to everyday objects and practices, but as soon as music is mentioned the term is dropped 'cakewalk music fills the air/It can't be dodged because its ev'rywhere'. This suggests that in 1900, ragtime

⁶ Many of the song lyrics considered here use what would nowadays be considered offensive and racist language. It must be remembered that at the time at which these songs were written, terms such as 'nigger' and 'coon' were widely used and were not usually considered particularly offensive by whites.

had yet to establish itself as a distinct musical style, although the word was widely used in society.

Similarly, the lyrics of 'ragtime' and 'jazz' songs in the period 1900-1919 have many common themes, of which the link between music and dance is the most prevalent. Developments in social dancing in Britain in the twentieth century can be closely linked with the use of American syncopated music in the theatre. The show *In Dahomey* (1903) had established the cakewalk in Britain, and subsequent revues brought numerous ragtime dances that were fashionable before and during the War. Towards the end of the War, revues began to include 'jazz' songs and dances, and the first songs to contain the word 'jazz' in the title were published in Britain in 1917. Shows throughout the period 1900-1919 generally utilised a standardised musical style and orchestration and this meant that there was an initial lack of musical distinction of jazz from other popular forms, such as ragtime, other than in terms of the characteristics of associated dancing. R.W.S. Mendl, writing in 1927, clearly saw jazz within the category of 'modern syncopated dance music' (1927:25) and placed the music in the overall context of the many musical forms and genres that had evolved in conjunction with dance in the past. Initially, there were numerous references to jazz within the pages of the contemporary dance press, but there were no journals that dealt with jazz as a musical style until *Melody Maker* and *Rhythm* in the mid-1920s. Indeed, the verb 'to jazz' meaning 'to dance' (for example in the quotation from *Heigho! Jazz it with Me* above) was extremely common in song titles and lyrics and was certainly encountered more frequently than the noun 'jazz' denoting a musical style. The majority of early jazz songs contain the phrase 'jazz band', and describe the reactions of people to performances by these groups, including many references to dance.

The language used in connection with dance in song lyrics throughout the period 1900-1919 is remarkably consistent, and clearly establishes jazz as part of a long tradition of American dance forms in Britain. Ideas associated with jazz can be seen to have their roots in earlier ragtime songs, and in jazz songs this imagery is often taken further and made more explicit. The infectious nature of the music is often emphasised, and expressed through the inability of anyone listening to keep still, suggesting that the music had a strong power over the listener, for example the ragtime billiard player [h3988.uu(40)] 'often makes a thousand break/But he still can't keep still!'. The same idea is used in several jazz songs and is specifically linked with the music of a jazz band such as *Stick Around for the New Jazz Band* [h3991.ii(5)] 'Lordy, honey, Oh! I can't keep still' and *When I Hear that Jazz Band Play* [h3996n(22)] 'Say what you will, you can't keep still while they're playing'. Several songs make the point that once you

have started dancing it is impossible to stop: 'And if you take the chance, you will want to dance/Right through the night 'till the break of day' [h3993e(9)] and activity could therefore result in exhaustion, as the ragtime band 'Makes me dance till I can hardly stand' [h3991t(44)].

The nature of the movements associated with dancing is also referred to in song lyrics. In ragtime songs, this tends to be a list of stylised dance steps:

'Inside the ballroom bands are gaily playing
Ragging the music, see those dancers swaying
Two-steps and tangos and ragtime fandangoes
Argentine sliding and Gaby gliding'
[h3990.t(34)]

Apparently jazz was initially regarded as an addition to this list. An advertisement for Rector's club in the February 1919 edition of the *Dancing Times* described 'foxtrotting and jazzing to the tune of a banjo band' and the editor of the *Dancing Times* had published *The Darewski Jazz Chart* (1919) which provided a diagram of the main step used for jazz dancing, with the comment 'It is known as the jazz, and causes the couple to progress in a zigzag fashion, and should therefore be used sparingly in a crowded room'.

However, the extremely rapid evolution, apparently within just a few months, of the ideas associated with jazz dancing can be seen through the examination of contemporary dance magazines. This began with an article in the April 1919 edition of the *Dancing Times* which asserted that 'as for the Jazz dance- there is no such thing. There is a step that may be introduced into the foxtrot, one-step or valse which is called the Jazz step' (April 1919:248) but two months later, the magazine reported that 'the real trouble is that there is nobody to say with real authority what the so-called Jazz-step really is' (July 1919:439). In September, an article described 'The Passing of the Jazz-Roll', a step that dancer Josephine Bradley described as 'slow, quick, quick' but which turned into a 'long gliding movement' that 'revolutionised dancing' (Bradley, 1947:12) and then became absorbed into foxtrot dancing. By the time of the November 1919 issue, there was acknowledgement that 'the word 'jazz' refers to the music and not to the dancer's movements' (November 1919:86). This opinion may well have been influenced by Mrs Vernon Castle, a leading authority on dance at the time, who asserted that:

'there is no such dance as the 'Jazz' and anyone who tells you there is wrong...the nigger bands at home [America] 'Jazz' a tune, that is to say, they slur the notes, they syncopate, and each instrument puts in a lot of little fancy bits of its own...'
(Pearsall, 1976:56).

Articles in the *Dancing Times* indicate the increasing lack of specificity of 'jazz' as a dance and early recognition of its characteristics as a musical style that took place in Britain during 1919. Likewise, in later jazz songs, unlike ragtime songs, there are no references to specific dance steps, and lyrics emphasise the freedom now permitted to dancers. This indicates the increase in improvised dancing that developed alongside jazz music, confirmed by Josephine Bradley, who commented that 'Improvisation was rife' in the ballroom at this time (1947:13). W.W. Seabrook, writing in *Brightest Spots in Brighter London*, noted the individuality of dancing where formal steps were abandoned and described that in nightclubs there were 'so many people, each executing his or her own peculiar style of dance to the same tune' (1924:138). The song *Jazz!* [h3988.yy(1)] encouraged dancers: 'When you hear that rhythm- just go with 'em- jazz jazz!/For when the music's playing start in swaying- jazz jazz!'. One song even goes as far as to suggest that the intense physical activity associated with dancing to jazz could lead to serious injuries!

'Let our arms entwine,
Come and bruise your knees on mine,
Till you dislocate your spine'
[h2452(33)]

The word 'swaying' is often used in jazz songs to describe the movements of the dancers: 'You can't resist you start to twist while you're swaying' [h3996.n(22)]. The word itself suggests that the music had an almost hypnotic power over the listener, acting particularly on the feet that then control the rest of the body. The Javanese Jazz Band 'Makes you happy and it makes you dance' and when listening to the music 'You can't make your feet behave' [h3996f(43)]. Similarly in *Everybody Loves a Jazz Band* [h3993.e(9)] 'your feet 'er goin' to make your body sway'.

The increasingly improvisational nature of modern jazz dancing probably made this style intimidating for dancers used to the previously strict conventions of ballroom dancing. The *Dancing Times* encouraged dancers: 'Do not, if you are a temporary stranger to the ballroom, be kept away by fear of the Jazz. He is not so fearsome as the Press would make one think.' (February 1919:157). Similarly, song lyrics indicate that there was a perceived risk, expressed as having to 'take a chance', associated with the sort of dancing which required participants to lose their inhibitions to the music. Initially it was difficult to resist 'You want to dance, so take a chance/Come on and hear

that Jazz Band music!' [h3991.ii(5)]. Some songs take this idea further, describing the hypnotic power of the music, which has the ability to exercise control of the minds of the listeners. The performance of the Javanese Jazz Band 'Hypnotizes, puts you in a trance...Of those notes your mind is a slave' [h3996.f(43)], and similar power is attributed to the music in the song *Rag-Time Crazy* [h3995.jj(30)] 'That mysterious rag I cannot slip/I'm in the grip/I've got ragtime on the brain'.

Indeed, the words 'craze' and 'crazy' are used very frequently in songs, particularly in connection with dancing. These are often juxtaposed and mixed even within the same song, as it is the overwhelming and infectious enthusiasm for music which is constantly heard and provokes a compulsion to dance ('craze') that drives people to a state of madness ('crazy'). Many songs emphasise the universal extent of the enthusiasm for ragtime: 'Ev'ry one has got the ragtime craze' [h3986.ss(11)] and jazz: 'Ev'rybody's got the jazz band craze' [h3996.u(24)]. The same idea is expressed in ragtime songs using the word 'rage', as in the song *The Rage of Ragtime* [h3984.yy(37)], but this word is never used in connection with jazz. The idea that music also has the power to make people crazy by controlling their minds is frequently explored in the lyrics of ragtime songs, in fact there are two songs called *Rag-time Crazy* [h3995.o(14) and h3995.jj(30)] which assert respectively that 'Ev'ry one seems crazy with ragtime on the brain' and 'Ev'ryones raving ragtime mad/The youngster the mother and the dad'. This is explored further in some songs such as *The Rag-time Craze* [h3995.j(46)] 'The music sends you simply mad' and ultimately in *Don't Sing in Ragtime* [h3994.hh(10)] 'We're right on the brink of it, brink of it, brink of what? Of the lunatic asylum'. Similar ideas pervade jazz songs such as *The Jazz Band Cabaret* [h3994.xx(47)]:

'Ev'ryone's crazy tonight.
Oh! what a mad refrain,
Geel there it goes again,
Join in this whirl of delight.'

Surrendering to the power of the music through listening or dancing is shown in some lyrics to create a mood of reckless abandon, for example: 'Come and hear the Ragtime band play Dixie...And you'll feel like jumping o'er the moon!' [h3991.t(44)]. A similar reaction is provoked by a jazz band 'Something they do, I never knew just makes me/Feel oh! so good that I could throw myself away' [h3996.n(22)]. In most ragtime songs the results of this are usually left to the imagination, but the risk associated with surrendering to the music is made clear *Come and hear the Ragtime band play Dixie* [h3991.t(44)], which suggests that ragtime music is a threat to domestic stability: 'It's a tune I'd leave my happy home for...Put your arm in mine, for there's danger on the line when the band plays Dixieland'.

The nature of this 'danger' is shown more explicitly in jazz songs, which demonstrate that the music can provoke excesses of emotion: 'Oh! My it nearly makes me cry/Oh! Gee it seems to creep right over me does that jazzipated melody' [h3995.b(8)]. This can easily lead to possibly illicit romantic activity: 'I've got a heart so big, come on and hug me kid/Hug me and don't ask why.' [h3994.xx(47)]. The hypnotic power of jazz can have a similar effect, as in *The Jazz Band Cabaret* [h3994.xx(47)] 'While the band plays music to mesmerise/You'll find rapture deep in somebody's eyes'.

The link between dance and sexual attraction is made explicit in some later songs. The presumably 'ordinary' Rag-time Postman Bill seems to be universally popular with women due to his dancing abilities as 'When he goes by all the girls cry' and 'Parlour maids and nurse maids banish their pride/Throw their arms around his neck and do the wedding glide' [h3996.f(47)]. The syncopated characteristic of ragtime is used as a sexual image in the sentimental ballad *Ragtime Kisses* [h3990.o(1)]:

'I'll teach you how the syncopations go
And I'll kiss you in ragtime while the band plays below...'

'Just you and I dear together in Ragtime ecstacies quite new
Those syncopating palpitating kisses and you.'

Dancing, or 'jazzing' is used as a more direct sexual metaphor in later jazz songs, with the new independence permitted by improvisational dance equating to the increasing sexual liberty and freedom of women in social situations. In *Heigho! Jazz it With Me* [h3993.e(45)], jazz dancing is linked with flirting: 'She wore the Jazz skirts and like all the Jazz flirts/Maggie didn't object to a squeeze'. In the same song, Maggie's uncontrollable flirtatiousness and promiscuity due to jazz leads to inappropriate activity:

'One day on a bus oh! There was such a fuss
That poor Maggie she could not keep still
She grabbed the conductor, a fat old conductor
And Jazzed with him till he was ill.'

In *The Coster Jazz Song* [h3991.r(24)] a woman describes how her partner Bill, a lower-class man, is able to mix with the upper classes and secure the affections of women due to his dancing ability: "E's took to dancin' nah and I'm as jealous as can be/'Cos all the gels 'e dances wiv gets mash'd on 'im yer see'. This song suggests that in 1919, jazz dancing was primarily an occupation of the upper classes, and a form of entertainment towards which those in the lower classes could only aspire. Certainly, in London at this time the venues for dancing to jazz, luxurious hotels and restaurants as well as clubs such as *Ciro's* and *Rector's*, would only be open to those with money and social connections. It was not until October 1919 that the opening of the Hammersmith

Palais de Danse, which presented what P.J.S. Richardson, editor of the *Dancing Times*, called 'dances of a more popular nature', provided some opportunity for others to experience jazz dancing (Moseley, 1924:25). In *The Coster Jazz Song* his wife complains 'My Bill 'e's always jazzin' it', but is unable to stop him due to her lack of dancing ability: 'Oh lor! nah wots a gel to do? 'Cos I can't dance yer see'. In this song, 'jazzin' once again becomes a metaphor for sexual activity:

'My poor Bills' goin' orf 'is 'ead
'E comes 'ome at any time and flops in bed
Dreams I'm somebody else instead
And starts jazz-jazzin' it wiv me'

Indeed, moral objections were being made at this time to what some people saw as the overt sexual connotations of jazz dancing. For example, a writer in *The Times* in 1919 stated:

'I was amazed to see my girl handed by and handing young fellows with so much familiarity...They very often made use of a most impudent and lascivious step called *setting* to partners, which I know not how to describe to you but by telling you it is the very reverse of *back to back*.'
(29/4/1919:15)

Explicit imagery in songs may have played a part in fuelling this publicly aired debate over jazz dancing, as it enabled people such as Canon Drummond, who 'had no personal experience of the art of Jazz dancing', to strongly condemn it as 'mean, low entertainment' (15/3/1919:7). Similarly, Sir Dyce Duckworth saw jazz dancing as a sign that 'the morals of Old England had become degraded' (18/3/1919:7).

As well as the sexual implications of inappropriate body contact between dancing partners, it can be seen that jazz was also developing metaphorical associations with other activities that were thought of by some as socially and morally inappropriate. In the song *That Ragtime Suffragette* [h3988.zz(14)], ragtime music became symbolic of a woman's suffragette activities in a portrayal which is clearly disapproving (my emphases):

'She's no household pet
Oh mercy! while her husband's waiting home to dine
She is **ragging** up and down the line a-shouting "Votes for women"

'**Bands are playing** as she swaggers by
Banners are waving as the men all cry
"Why don't you go home and bake a cake?
One like dear old mother used to make?"

Paradoxically in addition to, as well as alongside these prevalent images of social and moral impropriety, weddings are a surprisingly common theme in both ragtime and jazz songs, presumably because the musical styles were popular with younger people who were of the age to be getting married. In several songs, jazz or ragtime replaces the traditional wedding music, and in this way jazz acts as a metaphor for the increasing freedom of young people to usurp tradition:

'Said the bridegroom looking stiff as starch,
We don't want any organist to play the wedding march...
Old man Joe on your old banjo
Play a little bit of ragtime music'
[h3990.i(47)]

'They jazzed it one day to the church down the way
And a real jazz choir sang as they wed:
Heigho, jazz it with me...'
[h3993.e(45)]

'Dull solemn music played down the aisle,
Give me a brighter style.
Often I wonder why no one has
Ever composed a real wedding jazz.'
[h3670.a(25)]

Examination of song lyrics is extremely illuminating of the differences in the images of jazz and ragtime. The word 'ragtime' is often personified, as in *Who Killed Ragtime?* [g1520.pp(11)]. The number of songs that emphasise that ragtime permeated society confirms the theory that increasing cross-class popularity of music hall entertainment in the late nineteenth century was fully developed through the widespread popularity of American syncopated music, for example in *Rag-time Crazy* 'No matter where you wander ragtime music fills the air/From the cottage to the mansion you can hear it everywhere' [h3995.jj(30)]. There are also many ragtime songs about 'ordinary' people including the milkman, postman, policeman, and motor man. *Rag-time Crazy* continues:

'The poor old milkman down our street has lately lost his 'ead
Instead of singing milk he whistles ragtime tunes instead
The butcher and the baker's boy the dustman and the sweep
Are like a ragtime quartette as around the place they creep.'

Ragtime is also shown in song lyrics to have permeated many aspects of everyday life, such as church and school:

'Last Sunday in Church the parson exclaimed
He hoped he wouldn't do wrong
'Stead of preaching sermons he sang a ragtime song'
[h3995.o(14)]

'Teacher said that little children now should keep up with the times
Said we must remember how to sing in 'rag-time' Nurs'ry Rhymes'
[h3986.qq(26)]

This idea receives extended and exaggerated treatment in *I'm Certainly Living a Rag-time Life* [h3986.ss(11)]:

'I've got a rag-time dog and a rag-time cat,
A rag-time piano in my rag-time flat
Wear rag-time clothes from head to shoes
I read a paper called the 'Rag-time News'
Got rag-time habits and I talk that way
I sleep in rag-time and I rag all day
Got rag-time troubles with my rag-time wife
I'm certainly living a rag-time life.'

However, jazz songs rarely make the link between music and everyday life and more often portray exotic scenes and express escapist sentiments. This may have been as a result of the exclusive venues in which jazz was first performed, as well as the influence of World War One, which would have prompted a natural desire to escape from the unattractive reality of everyday life, an idea explored extensively in Chapter 3. Indeed, several jazz songs mention the ability of jazz bands to lift the spirits and take away the 'blues', for example:

'When you're kind of feeling blue
I guess I'll tell you what to do
You'd better come right down to my hometown
Where they'll show you something new
They've lately formed a big Jazz Band'
[h3988.yy(1)]

The now legendary assumption that jazz is linked with excesses of alcohol and drugs is mentioned in two songs from 1919. The chorus of *Johnson's Jazz-time Band* [h3991.q(4)], which is set 'down in Sheriff Johnson's gin and fizz saloon', begins:

'When old man Johnson is serving out the grog,
And the cabin's full of smoke like a London fog,
Well all the coons are busy jazzing till your heart feels good...'

Figure 1 shows the cover illustration of this song, which depicts three musicians clearly under the influence of alcohol, and two couples dancing to the music, but interestingly all the people in the illustration appear to be white. The exoticism of the setting of the

Figure 1 **Cover illustration for the sheet music of *Johnson's Jazz-time Band***

song *That Mandarin Jazz* [g426.d(33)] is further enhanced by references to drugs ('Dream pipe dope is rife tonight') and the intoxicating power of these substances is compared to that of jazz music: 'When a chink gets busy on the tympanium/There's a sinister spell like opium.'⁷

At this time, links were beginning to be made between drugs, people of 'exotic' races, and jazz. This was physically embodied in Edgar Manning, a notorious 'Dope King', who was a black Jamaican and played drums in a jazz band (Kohn, 1992:7). As the most fashionable dance music, jazz was naturally present in the upper class and bohemian social situations in which drugs were also prevalent. Most significantly, however, jazz and drugs were ubiquitous in London's West End, which itself embraced all social classes:

'There was a continuum in West End society, from the street prostitutes and petty criminals at the bottom, through the chorus girls and actresses who might work as prostitutes between engagements, to those whose success in the entertainment world allowed them to mix with the social elite.'

(Kohn, 1992:6)

The formation of the underground drugs scene in the West End was encouraged, ironically, by war-time restrictions on alcohol and midnight curfews placed on London's clubs at weekends which meant that 'by the end of 1915, there were 150 illegal nightclubs in Soho alone' (Kohn, 1992:30). Jazz later provided the musical accompaniment for these underground activities for reasons explained in Chapter 7. Thus, although the drugs underworld seems far removed from the variety entertainment in which the songs considered here would have been performed, in reality the centrality of drugs in the West End meant that underneath the superficial respectability of stage acts, the two were inseparable. In this context, it is significant that the image of jazz as presented in contemporary songs is so consistent with the conventionally understood effects of drugs: addiction, swaying, hypnosis, craziness, abandon, excessive emotion, sexual desire, and escapism. In addition, there were clear links between jazz and intoxicating substances due to the freedom of women to both take drugs and dance to jazz; activities which became symbolic of their post-war independence. Edgar Manning himself recalled in 1926 that

⁷ In the first decade of the twentieth century, a large Chinese settlement had become established in the Limehouse area of London and the Chinese opium dens evolved their own mythology (Kohn, 1992:18). Opium became illegal in 1916, but there was apparently a certain tolerance towards this drug, as 'Britain founded its Indian administration upon revenues from sales of opium to China in the eighteenth century' and it was considered mild in comparison with other drugs. (Kohn, 1992:61).

'The women...seemed to go utterly mad with excitement. Dope had sapped away all their feelings of modesty and restraint. The wild syncopated rhythm of Africa's pulsing music - translated into American jazz tunes - did the rest.'
(Kohn 1992:158)

This description shows the compatibility of taking drugs and dancing as social activities, and also emphasises the origins of jazz in 'exotic' Africa. Indeed, several songs of the period are set in exotic locations including China (*Miss Ching-A-Loo: The Ragtime Chinese Wedding* [h3992(35)]) and *That Mandarin Jazz* [g426d(33)], and Java (*That Javanese Jazz Band* [h3996.f(43)]). *That Jungle Jazz in Congo Land* [h3994dd(31)] uses a fictional exotic setting, while 'the Rag-time Coon' [h3989.f(42)] can be heard singing in Hindustan and the Indian Seas. American place names are used in a similarly random way to provide settings. The song *Jazz!* [h3988.yy(1)] provides a context of 'Down in Alabama where the cotton grows/ That's the place you've got to learn to shake your toes' and *Johnson's Jazz-time Band* [h3991.q(4)] performs 'Out in Arizona at the dead man's bluff'. New Orleans is used as a setting in two songs; [h3996.n(22)] 'You've heard of nearly ev'ry kind of band/But there is one that's come from Dixieland' and [h3993.e(9)] 'I heard 'em down in New Orleans'. Only one song, *You've Got to Sing in Ragtime* [h3990.zz(36)] of 1911, links ragtime with America in a 'patter' dialogue between the performer as representative of 'English' and a stereotyped American 'wearing a very light suit, baggy trousers, square shouldered coat, soft hat, bright red tie and yellow gloves. Has cigar in mouth at upward angle'. The Englishman announces to the audience: 'I don't know whether you like this rag-time or not. Anyhow, don't blame me, it's not my fault. It's an American idea. Over in America everything is rag-time.' The American then attempts to educate the Englishman as to the correct way to perform the song.

Certainly, very few songs give a clear idea of the specific geographical origins of jazz, except a general impression of exoticism created through references to the Orient or America; indeed, Arizona was probably as foreign to the majority of the British public as Java in the early twentieth century. An article in the *Dancing Times* even claimed that jazz had originated in China, and included a picture of a 'native Chinese Joss Orchestra' (February 1920:350). The fact that exotic settings appear to have been chosen indiscriminately indicates that for songwriters and the public, any setting outside the West could represent the 'other' and thus achieves the effect of

establishing jazz as music of 'another world'.⁸ This added to the appeal of jazz as an escapist music with the power to take the listener out of his or her own environment, with or without the help of drugs.

Significant numbers of songs specifically associate ragtime and jazz with the stereotypical 'nigger' or 'coon'. These caricatures would be familiar to the public through their use in a huge body of songs published in Britain from the late nineteenth century. Indeed, sufficient numbers of these were published to denote 'coon songs' as a separate category in publishers' listings of songs on the back covers of music. Typical elements of the Negro stereotype, which had descended from the minstrel show, are presented in songs. The 'coon' is portrayed as a simple character, with nothing to do except make music: 'Who sang all day in such a pleasing way/That they called him the 'Rag-time Coon' [h3989.f(42)]. If engaged in employment, it is a menial task such as selling oysters and clams [h3651(45)], although even then the 'coon' is portrayed as being lazy as he 'takes things easy-goes along at a crawl'. The song continues: 'Jasper Jones wasn't born with a 'silver spoon' stuck in his mouth/It was a shovel there isn't a doubt'. The typical stereotype emphasised that Negroes supposedly had large mouths, and therefore loud voices, which are useful when selling produce: 'Ev'ry weekday morning comes a long thin greasy coon/A-shouting "Oysters" and A-shouting "Clams"!'. The association between 'coons' and shouting leads a rag-time milkman to distinguish himself and his trade from that of 'coons':

'Meelk! I'm not a coon
Meelk! it's my usual tune
It's always been the milkman's cry
Years before the ragtime coon came nigh'
[h.3983.gg(59)]

Indeed, 'milkman' could be a metaphorical reference to a white man. This is the most overtly racist song examined, as the chorus ends with a bitter claim: 'And when I hear the coons shout "well"/It makes my milk turn sour'.

The grotesquely large features of the stereotypical Negro are emphasised in a cautionary tale to children:

⁸ Derek Scott has noted a similar non-specificity in the settings of Orientalist operas: 'I had first thought it might be important to understand where [the operas] were set geographically. Then I began to realize that, for the most part, all I needed to know was the simple fact that they were set in exotic, foreign places'. (1998:309). He also notes that 'the Orient can begin in Spain, if the intention is simply to connote a cultural Other' (1998:326), similarly jazz, an American music, is shown in these songs to be considered sufficiently 'Other' to be compatible with more conventionally exotic Oriental cultures.

'Oh, that ragtime gollywog man
With his great big eyes and his great big hand;
When you see him coming that's the time to start a-running
And just run as fast as you can.'
[g1520(50)]

Songs link the 'crazy' element of the music with the influence of 'coons' on the music, for example in *Rag-time Crazy* [h3995.o(14)] 'Ev'ry one seems crazy with the Coon song on the brain'. The chorus of this song most clearly links ragtime with the 'coon' stereotype:

'Coal black coons and slivery moons,
All you can hear is ragtime tunes;
Honey and money and Lindy Lous
Singing 'come out in the moonlight do';
Mandy and Carolina dancing to the ragtime strain,
Ev'ryone's gone crazy with ragtime on the brain.'

However, in the second verse, this appears to form the basis of a reason to reject ragtime: 'All the coons sing 'ma baby my love is true'/Isn't it time we had something new.' This gives a new emphasis to lines from the first verse, which now reveal a mood of resignation rather than enthusiasm:

'Some songs live for ever, some for a day,
Once all the rage then pass away,
But there's a song that's going to stay,
You know what I mean it's the coon song'.

Interestingly, few songs depict black performers of ragtime or jazz, and those that do are derogatory or patronising in nature, for example 'You ought to hear those crazy tunes/Played by all those crazy coons' [h3988yy(1)]. This is taken to extremes in *That Jungle Jazz in Congo Land* [h3994.dd(31)] which could be an innocent, slightly nonsensical song about jazz in the jungle, but could also have racial undertones. Written in 1919, it clearly prefigures the pseudo-African 'jungle' music of Duke Ellington. The song begins:

'Have you heard the latest news from Congo Land?
All the animals home from zoos in Yankeeland
Brought with them to kill the 'blues' that new Jazz Band
Now they make the forest ring each night'

These lines could refer to Negroes emancipated from captivity in American 'zoos'. The second verse clearly compares jazz performers to animals:

'Leader is a chimpanzee of great renown
 Seems to play the tune all upside down
 Makes the tiger, full of glee, act like a clown
 Joy your heart is sure to syncopate'

Similarly, the Negro origins of jazz were generally only mentioned in contemporary articles by those who wished to criticise jazz, just as at this time 'blacks' were generally blamed for the concurrent 'drug problem' (Kohn, 1992:66). Canon Drummond referred to jazz as 'a dance so low, so demoralizing and of such a low origin - the dance of the low niggers in America' (*The Times*, 15/3/1919:7) and Sir Dyce Duckworth described 'wild dance - amid noises only fit for West African savages - held in London drawing rooms' (*The Times*, 18/3/1919:7). However, the general lack of any associations between jazz and black performers in songs published in England is significant, especially when considered together with other statistics which suggest that overall numbers of songs about 'niggers' or 'coons' dropped rapidly in the second decade of the century when jazz was coming to prominence.⁹ Interestingly, this indicates that jazz was *not* presented in songs as a black music, and that the origins of the music had therefore become suppressed. This was probably due to the importance of the revues in introducing jazz to Britain, as these presented an image of white America. After *In Dahomey*, black shows, although still popular, seem to have become novelties aside from, rather than as part of, the theatrical mainstream in London. A similar phenomenon exists with respect to musical performance, as although black bands played for dancing throughout the capital, it was the version of jazz presented in the performances of the white Original Dixieland Jazz Band which initially shaped the perceptions of the music in Britain, and was later taken up and disseminated further by white British bands.

The significant number of songs that make detailed references to the characteristics of musical styles shows that it was not only performances that defined jazz for British people. Indeed, by examining the differences between the way that ragtime and jazz are described in song lyrics, conclusions can be reached about what distinguished jazz from other syncopated music styles heard in Britain. The first important point that emerges is that there is a strong link between ragtime and song, whereas in jazz

⁹ The following table shows the number of incidences of the words 'coon' and 'nigger' in titles of songs published in London in the British Library Collection:

	Nigger	Coon
1880-1890	6	2
1891-1900	9	69
1901-1910	12	140
1911-1920	3	23
1921-1930	2	0

songs, the instrumental aspects tend to be emphasised. Singing in a ragtime style was a common subject for ragtime songs, for example *You've Got to Sing in Ragtime* [h3990.zz(36)], *Don't Sing in Ragtime* [h3994.hh(10)] and *Don't Drive Me Crazy with Your Ragtime Song* [h3996.e(26)]. Characters in ragtime songs are often portrayed either singing or whistling the music whilst going about their work, for example 'Ev'ry newspaper boy sings it in the street' [h3995.j(46)]. The sheer number of songs that use this idea reinforces the tendency for ragtime to be portrayed as permeating everyday life, as discussed earlier.

The rhythmic aspect of ragtime and jazz is emphasised in several songs, and the word 'syncopation' occurs frequently, for example in *The Rag-time Craze* [h3995.j(46)] 'Ev'ry new song you hear is a different rag/And it's filled to the brim with syncopated gag'. Rhythmic features of the music often appear to be emphasised when the song is set in an 'exotic' context, for example the ghost of the rag-time coon can be recognised 'When you hear that music of that syncopatin' air' [h3989.f(42)], in *Johnson's Jazz-time Band* [h3991.q(4)] 'You can hear them hitting up a syncopated tune' and in *That Mandarin Jazz* [g426.d(33)] 'That Mandarine is sure some guy/Ev'ry Jasbo rhythm he'll try'. It is possibly the rhythmic complexity of the music which leads to a lack of understanding in the derogatory portrayal of the composition process in *You've Got to Sing in Ragtime* [h3990.zz(36)]:

'When composing in ragtime, if you want to make hits,
Take a sheet of music, cut it up into bits
Paste it all together, never mind if it fits,
Play it in gag time, that'll be ragtime.'

The idea of 'ragtime' is retained in lyrics of songs written after the ragtime craze as a characteristic of jazz, such as in *Johnson's Jazz-time Band* [h3991q(4)] 'Sammy with the bones is full of ragtime tricks' and *Stick Around for the New Jazz Band* [h3991.ii(5)] 'Dan on the banjo as cute as can be/Picking out the rags in any old key'. It is particularly significant that references to ragtime within 'jazz' songs are associated with the most rhythmic instruments, banjo and percussion, indicating that 'ragtime' was perceived as a primarily rhythmic characteristic. This may have been influenced by the prominence of the banjo in most performances of syncopated music before 1919, either as a solo instrument or as part of the bands that played for dancing. These performances reinforced the rhythmic characteristics of the music due to the origins (as an instrument to accompany dancing) and percussive, rhythmic nature of the instrument.

Indeed, the banjo is the most frequently mentioned instrument in songs that describe performances of syncopated music and in ragtime songs; the inclusion of the instrument often becomes a metaphor for nostalgia. In a song called *The Ghost of the Rag-time Coon* [h3989f(42)], the performances of the minstrel are described: 'Ev'rywhere he used to go/Playing cute airs on his old banjo'. After his death, it is the characteristic sound of his banjo that alerts people to the presence of his ghost: 'They'd hear the strains of the old banjo and this is what they'd say: It's the ghost of the rag-time coon...'. Similarly in *On Your Rag-Time Rag Shop Banjo* [h3990.i(47)], it is the performances of an old man on a banjo that are known and appreciated by a community 'Old Man Joe on your banjo/Play a little bit of ragtime music...'. Thus, by the second decade of the twentieth century, when the songs mentioned above were written, banjo ragtime is metaphorically portrayed as the ghostly remnants of the earlier minstrel banjo style in a way that seems to imply that minstrel and ragtime music are of the same 'spiritual' roots. This imagery also shows that the banjo was widely understood and well established as a traditional symbol of black music-making.

The drums are the most frequently mentioned instrument in jazz songs, and this emphasises the centrality of 'noise' in descriptions of jazz, for example, when Johnson's Jazz-time Band are playing 'You can always hear the melody a mile away' [h3991.q(4)]. Indeed, from about 1919 there is evidence of an actual and perceptual shift in focus from the omnipotent banjo to the drums as the provider of rhythmic drive and excitement in syncopated music. As early as 1917, the *Encore* reported under the heading *Mr. Jazz Arrives*:

'[jazz musicians] are certainly correctives against air raids, because no matter how loudly the anti-aircraft guns roar outside, the trap drummer inside with his colleagues of the trombone, etc. can be guaranteed to drown out all extraneous noise'
(*Encore*, 11/10/1917)

In January 1919, a review of a 'jazz' performance at the London Coliseum, entitled 'The Art of Jazz: Drummer as Chief Conspirator', stated:

'The object of a jazz band, apparently, is to produce as much noise as possible; the method of doing so is immaterial, and if music happens to be the result occasionally so much the better for all concerned. The chief conspirator is the drummer...'
(*The Times*, 14/1/1919:11)

Reviews of the earliest 'syncopated' or 'jazz' bands often devoted significant space to descriptions of the 'trap drummer' and his extensive equipment, and visiting drummers such as Hughes Pollard (known as 'Black Lightning' [*sic.*]), Louis Mitchell and Alec

Williams quickly achieved notoriety in the British press. The drums are normally referred to in songs as 'pans' and 'tin cans', of which the principle characteristic is the volume of sound produced, which is not always appreciated by the audience:

'There'll be sixteen iron pans
And a set of old tin cans
Twenty saucepans and a worn out bassinet
Just fill your ears with chunks of cotton wool'
[h2452(33)]

This idea was also reflected in the *Dancing Times*, in a description of a jazz band percussionist as a

'hefty and utterly unscrupulous young man who has previously made a tour of the marine stores and collected such curios as frying pans, tin-lids, fire-irons and such-like impedimenta- in fact he is well provided with everything BUT music!' (January 1919:123).

One song is unusual in being a little more complimentary about the musicality of drummers: 'They get melodies from pots and pans/They get music out of old tin cans' [h3996.u(24)]. Similarly, Theodore Curson pointed out in the *Dancing Times*:

'We are authoritatively assured that "Jazz" is not music, but merely noise. However, as exactly the same thing was said of Wagner's music when it came to birth, it is possible that the process of time may change the critical pronouncement as to "Jazz".'
(February 1919:183).

However, the loud and unrefined nature of the sound, as produced by pots, pans and cans, was also the principle feature of performance of jazz on other instruments. An important characteristic of jazz performance as presented in song lyrics is the ability to produce odd noises from familiar instruments:

'Hear that trombone with that peculiar moaning
That saxophone with that peculiar groaning'
[h3996n(22)]

'They got a funny clarinet
And a man that plays cornet
In such a funny manner'
[h3993.e(9)]

This can even be taken to the point of 'producing sounds that pianos never ought to make' [h3991.q(4)] and creating the assumption that jazz bands 'play all out of tune' [h3996n(22)].

Whereas very few songs refer to instrumental performance of ragtime, more than half of the jazz songs examined contain the phrase 'jazz band' in the title. In addition, the description of performances of jazz on instruments including trombone, saxophone, piano, clarinet, cornet, trumpet, cello and fiddle suggests that the variety of instrumental effects was the main way in which jazz was distinguished from previous American syncopated music. Significantly, the accompaniments in many 'jazz band' songs are no longer merely functional, but are more musically interesting, containing features such as 'fills', breaks and counter-melodies to a much greater extent than ragtime songs. In some cases, the piano parts are specifically illustrative of the elements of jazz performance described in the lyrics. There are also examples of contemporary piano pieces that try to 'describe' jazz in musical terms (for example *The Jass Band* by Henry Steele [h3284.yy(21)]), sometimes with appropriate annotations on the music to indicate to the player the effect or instrument that he/she should be attempting to reproduce or represent on the piano keyboard. This seems to indicate not only that instrumental effects were fundamental to the accepted *image* of jazz, but also that the genre had begun to develop a clear *musical* identity which was linked with the instruments on which the music was performed.¹⁰

Ragtime, on the other hand, was brought to prominence in Britain almost exclusively by revues, and unlike in America, the concept of 'ragtime piano' was virtually unknown in Britain (a situation that will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 5). Ragtime was therefore understood mainly as the prevailing popular song style and dance music. There is little mention in song lyrics of any particular instrumentation of ragtime, suggesting that it was a general musical style that was applied to pre-existent ensembles, as the revues utilised the conventional pit bands in the West End. Finally, the fact that ragtime is portrayed as having been retained as a feature of jazz demonstrates that its main stylistic feature, the syncopated rhythm, was compatible within this new genre. Therefore, the emphasis on the instrumental characteristics of jazz in song lyrics can be understood, as it was the most appreciable difference between this music and the similarly syncopated ragtime.

The perception of ragtime as the basic syncopated rhythm and jazz as instrumental colour, which is clearly asserted in song lyrics, is also the basis of an early definition of jazz, written by R.W.S. Mendl, author of the first British book on jazz:

¹⁰ A similar phenomenon had occurred previously during the banjo craze of the late nineteenth century, where banjo effects were represented in piano accompaniments to songs that described banjo performances (see Chapter 5). The banjo had developed a clear *musical* identity that could be evoked without even using the instrument itself. In the same way, it can be seen that certain musical features became representative of jazz in song accompaniments.

'Strictly speaking, jazz has nothing whatever to do with rhythm: it is solely concerned with instrumentation, and it would be possible to have jazz music that is not syncopated at all. You cannot play jazz music as a pianoforte solo: if you perform syncopated dance music on the pianoforte it is ragtime, not jazz. It only becomes jazz when it is played on a jazz orchestra.'

(Mendl, 1927: 45-6)

This definition is clearly very different to the way in which jazz is generally described today. Improvisation, usually considered as inherent in the style, is not mentioned by Mendl, and is merely hinted at in only one song that I have considered:

'There's a charm you can't resist
Ev'ry man's a soloist...'

'Ev'ry player gives it fits
Puts in little twiddley bits...'
[h3991.r(31)]

However strange Mendl's idea of jazz may sound, the fact that it largely concurs with the way in which jazz was presented in popular song suggests that it is an accurate representation of the image of jazz in Britain in the early twentieth century. This image can be understood with reference to the way in which jazz had evolved in preceding years. Jazz was clearly perceived in Britain as part of a larger category of music defined by Mendl as 'modern syncopated dance music', as due to the geographical distance from the source of the music, the British public received only 'snap-shots' of the much more detailed evolutionary process that was occurring in America. Thus the word 'jazz' was initially a vague, all-embracing term for current syncopated dance music in Britain, as were 'cakewalk', 'foxtrot' and 'ragtime' before it. This meant that the first distinguishing characteristics that emerged became accepted and established as the definitive elements of the jazz style.

It is by comparison of lyrics of ragtime and jazz songs that we see these features that were perceived as distinctive of jazz gradually emerging. Whereas ragtime was portrayed as an 'everyday' music, jazz was shown to have the ability to take the listener outside the realm of ordinary life and into another world, through the hypnotic quality of the music itself or associations with exotic locations. Jazz also began to develop associations with the use of drugs as a method of escaping reality. These escapist characteristics would have been particularly relevant in the context of the later years and aftermath of World War One, and it is in this context that jazz becoming a music representative of the spirit of the age can be understood. The relationship between music and dance is of fundamental importance, and jazz is shown to be closely linked with improvised dance that encouraged social and even sexual freedom,

particularly for women, contrasting with the set dances associated with ragtime. Jazz is described as having hypnotic power and either this or the excessive emotion provoked by the music creates a sense of abandon that can initiate inappropriate activity, closely linked with increased use of sexual imagery in songs. The beginning of the rejection of traditional values reaches its fullest extent through the image of the inclusion of jazz in wedding services. These ideas can all help to explain the contemporary opposition to jazz on moral grounds.

The image of jazz shown in song lyrics is significant as it must surely bear some relation to the perception and understanding of the 'ordinary' Briton as, in a competitive market, publishers would only be able to sell songs that would either influence or reflect contemporary attitudes. Therefore, the fact that image of jazz portrayed in songs is also consistent with the way in which it was presented by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band when they visited Britain in 1919, gives an indication of the strength of their influence in Britain. Significantly, the ODJB was initially booked to perform within a revue at the Hippodrome, where the image of jazz detailed here had already been presented with such success, and this made their claims of authenticity undeniable. Although the word 'jazz' was being used a few years before the arrival of the ODJB in April 1919, indeed, there were jazz songs and even a few 'jazz' bands in existence, it needed the commercial presentation of the American band to establish a clear musical meaning for the word. Indeed, the ODJB achieved emblematic status in Britain simply for being the first to present instrumental jazz that sounded different to other syncopated styles and to produce recordings.

The fact that performances of earlier syncopated music in Britain normally involved the banjo, whereas the ODJB did not include this instrument, established an image of jazz as being primarily concerned with the kind of noisy, comical instrumental effects that are clearly presented in song lyrics and accompaniments. The rejection of the banjo, which was strongly symbolic of black music-making, by this group also implies a rejection of the origins of jazz in black music, which became explicit when later they claimed to have 'invented' jazz. This is reflected in the fact that black performers are rarely mentioned in songs, which suggests that the black origins of the music were not a significant part of the British image of jazz at this stage. Therefore, the image of jazz that was presented in sheet music served to disseminate further and establish as seminal the performances of these white men who, in 1919, presented jazz in Britain in such a way that 'the blind prejudice felt by many towards what they think is jazz can be traced straight back to Original Dixieland Jazz Band's comic hats' (Harris, 1957:201).

Chapter 3

The 'jazz age', modernism and the 'culture industry'

During the early 1920s, jazz became phenomenally and universally popular in such a way that it provided the fundamental basis, in musical and evolutionary terms, for the formulation of later popular music genres. In this chapter, I shall examine three concepts that are relevant in understanding the popularity of jazz in Britain during the 1920s. Firstly, I shall consider the idea of the 1920s as a 'jazz age', where jazz was the music representative of this particular period, and secondly, assess how far jazz can be seen as part of modernism, a theme that was evident in other arts at this time. Thirdly, jazz was a music disseminated via technological means from its very beginnings, and I shall consider the role of the broadcast and recording 'culture industries' in influencing the evolution and popularity of jazz in Britain. In this chapter, I shall consider Theodore Adorno's writings on jazz, (1933-1941) with particular reference to modernism and the 'culture industry', together with R.W.S. Mendl's insightful book *The Appeal of Jazz* (1927), as the earliest extensive European criticisms of jazz and see how usefully their ideas can be applied to explain the evolution of jazz as popular music in Britain.

In 1922, the author F. Scott Fitzgerald published a collection of short stories set in post-war America that he called *Tales of the Jazz Age*. These 'tales' define the 'jazz age' as one of

'disenchantment and scepticism, of a failed and vulnerable romanticism that takes the place of lost belief in the old gods of order and progress, and of exuberant, inflationary excess in which the philosophy of *carpe diem* vies with the restrictions of Prohibition as the gap between the rich and poor expands to the point of collapse with the stock market crash of 1929' (O'Donnel in Fitzgerald, 1998:viii)

In Fitzgerald's work jazz becomes metaphorically and literally, through the inclusion of jazz dancing in the stories as an important social activity, representative of the modern age. Nor was this idea of the 'jazz age' a peculiarly American phenomenon. The fact that jazz came to prominence as a new musical genre in the unique post-war cultural, social and political climate, evolved alongside modern art, literature and 'serious' music, was disseminated through new technology such as radio broadcasting and the gramophone and was popularised by the related rise of mass consumerism meant that this music also became strongly representative of the spirit of the era in Britain.

The characteristics of the post-war period actually began to be formulated as early as 1917 in Britain, when the initial enthusiasm for war had waned, conscription was taking

effect and the sheer scale of the death toll was becoming apparent. The futility and naivety of the original promise that the War would be 'over by Christmas' became apparent by the reality of conflict and everyday life in wartime. Soldiers had been told that they were fighting for 'civilisation', but they had clearly seen its very destruction on the battlefield. Cynicism towards those who had sent them to war grew, and at the end of the War the establishment and the state, and particularly the 'old men' at the helm, became the new enemy.

There had been much speculation during the War as to what life would be like after it but, as peace came nearer, it became in some ways more daunting than war itself as speculation turned to anxiety and uncertainty. Lady Asquith commented in an entry in her diary on 7th October 1918: 'I am beginning to rub my eyes at the prospect of peace. I think it will require more courage than anything that has gone before.' (1968:480). This feeling culminated at the Armistice, which Hynes suggests was anti-climactic (1990:255). Virginia Woolf commented on the resulting feeling of disillusionment: 'in everyone's mind the same restlessness and inability to settle down, & yet discontent with whatever it was possible to do' (1977:216). Certainly, it appears that there were few artistic responses specifically to the 'eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month' (Hynes, 1990:255). Disillusionment was not just confined to the responses of society leaders. Ordinary soldiers felt that they did not receive the hero's treatment that they were led to expect during the War, rather, they faced poverty, unemployment and disability, and saw the new monuments as impractical, empty gestures, prompting riots on ceremonial occasions (Hynes, 1990:281). Women, who had taken on essential work during the War, were pushed aside by returning men and by 1921 a smaller proportion were employed than before the War. In some ways, the War served only to emphasise the inferior status of women, as they were excluded from the action, and the shortage of men after the War meant that some would never have a family, which added to their sense of worthlessness (Hynes, 1990:380). Asquith had set up a 'Reconstruction' committee that Lloyd George developed into a ministry as an attempt to make the War seem worthwhile, but this was abandoned in 1919 leaving the word with only ironic associations (Hynes, 1990:263). Thus, England fell into a post-war period founded mainly on disillusionment and disenchantment.

In the latter part of the War, art and literature had been infected with a new spirit of realism, which prompted the development of modern techniques, as pre-war 'academic' styles were inadequate to represent the horror of war. As the War began to draw to a close in 1918, there was a sense in the arts of 'looking to a new but unspecified future' (Hynes, 1990:241), which created a momentum towards

experimentation in new artistic styles. Realism took a satirical turn, as soldiers expressed their hatred of war and increasing alienation from the country for which they were fighting (Hynes, 1990:242). The anti-hero in the shape of the 'damaged man' became a frequent and dominant character in literature from the middle of the War and much art, even by the official war artists, demonstrated an anti-monumental attitude through representation of total physical and emotional destruction rather than propaganda-style glory of war.

Not surprisingly, two groups of artists developed during the War, combatants (i.e. War poets) and non-combatants (i.e. the 'Bloomsbury' group). During the War, civilians had taken over important editorial jobs, and became responsible for the new artistic directions. Soldiers returning from the War found that the arts had changed, and for many of them the War had taken up their formative years (Hynes, 1990:327). In this way, modernism can be seen as a personal solution for these combatant artists, as a way of constructing their own post-war styles, as well as a way of expressing the realities of war that they had experienced. This allowed the division between soldiers and civilians to persist after the end of the War. Middleton Murray commented that 'Modernism and hatred of war were...the same; and traditional art and traditional views of war were on the other side together' (Hynes, 1990:275). In this way, modernism could allow artists to express disregard for the 'establishment' by rejecting classical forms and devices.

The distinction between tradition and the avant-garde was sharpened due to the fact that the past persisted through the 'old men' who were seen to be responsible for the wartime destruction, and particularly the phenomenon of the 'lost generation', as they had sent the young to war. At the Armistice, people who came of age during the War were 'lost' either in the sense of death which meant that a generation of political or artistic leaders had been lost, leaving an unnatural cultural and social void; or, in the case of those that survived, 'lost' in the sense of being directionless and confused, with only irrelevant pre-war and horrific wartime memories from which to construct a future. In addition, there was the post-war generation, who came of age post-1918, and became the students and 'bright young things' of the 1920s. Although they had not experienced war directly, they emerged into a world of disillusionment and disenchantment and took the destruction of the past for granted (Hynes, 1990:395). Hence, although the War created a gap in artistic development, it was also a driving force in encouraging the construction of post-war modernism, and was therefore the most important event of the twenties, although it did not occur within that decade. Both the post-war and 'lost' generations had to formulate modernist ideas to explain their

lives and create a progression towards the future for which there was little foundation in the society and culture of post-war Britain. A modernist response was thus one of necessity, and as Pearsall comments, 'the Bright Young Things boasted of their emancipation, their freedom from the conventions that had constricted their parents, but in reality their reactions were predictable' (1976:18). Therefore, modernism can be seen to have been prompted dually by aversion to tradition and the need for artistic experimentation to express the nature of the modern experience, both ideas that are reliant on the prevailing disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the past in the post-war period.

On this basis, Bradbury and McFarlane have defined modernism as 'less a style than a search for a style in a highly individualistic sense' (1991:29). The pluralistic nature of post-war modernism that is implied in this definition can be seen in the adoption of jazz as the music of the age, as it was in itself a culturally composite musical style. In addition, it was interpreted by individuals on a practical level through improvisation in dance and instrumental performance and metaphorically through numerous attempts to understand the essence and meaning of the music. Many of the characteristics of modernism which developed through the latter years of the War can be seen in jazz and its role in society, and in this way Fitzgerald's idea of the 'jazz age' can be understood.

The realist tendencies of early modernism were reflected in the increasing interest in the 'primitive' in the post-war period, showing a desire to return to a perceived basic, simple culture that contrasted with the decadence of Western civilization, which some moralists believed to have caused the War. Adam Lively has sketched the links between the nineteenth century interest in the exotic, knowledge gained through colonialism, the *fin de siècle* encounters with 'primitive' cultures through exhibitions and Darwinian theories of evolution, and the culmination of this in primitivism which is 'one of the strongest threads connecting the seminal works of high modernism' (Lively, 1998:99). Jazz can be seen as the musical expression of modernist primitivism, through its associations with black culture, which was perceived as 'primitive', and also through the idea that the music was founded on rhythm, an expression of the primitive. Interestingly, a similar two-fold manifestation of the 'primitive' idea can be seen in visual art of the period, where there is 'art which attempts to express the workings of the primitive mind' as well as examples of stylistic primitivism (Gauguin, for example) (Rhodes, 1994:7).

As we have seen, black performers had been interesting to white Britons from the nineteenth century. However, it is significant that in the 1920s, the perceived simplicity and freedom of black culture was something desirable for whites to emulate, rather than just imitate, and jazz 'seemed to promise cultural as well as musical freedom' for young people (Frith, 1996:128). Although this was tinged with misunderstanding based on the old stereotypical assumptions of the black man as a simple, noble savage, this attitude seems to demonstrate genuine interest and appreciation of the 'authentic' qualities of black culture. The values of black culture could act as a constructive replacement for the ruined past for 'lost' young Britons, and was also a way in which they could subvert tradition: 'Whites gravitated toward black music and black culture in general because they felt it expressed the abandon and hedonism toward which they liked to think they were moving' (Sidran, 1981:54).

Paradoxically, primitivism can also be read as the rejection of the whole idea of the modern age, with the Negro as a cultural primitive who 'maintained a kind of escapist innocence in the face of technology- a myth perpetuated by blacks who were gaining respectability in white society' (Sidran, 1981:54). Perry (1993:3) identifies a similar adoption of primitivism as an alternative to modernism by some artists. But yet, the tendency towards black culture in so many art forms in the 1920s, particularly through the literature of the 'Harlem Renaissance', established the 'primitive' Negro, ironically, as a primarily modern idea. Jazz was unique in presenting this 'primitive' culture in a way in which it could be assimilated, reproduced and experienced directly by whites, and thus 'became a cultural shorthand for that which was both supremely modern and, through its African roots, connected with the exotic origins of things. It was the music of the urban jungle' (Lively, 1998:99). The paradoxical expression 'urban jungle' is particularly apt when describing the simultaneous expression of 'supreme modernity' and 'the exotic origins of things' in London in the 1920s. Jazz encapsulates musically the metaphor of the 'urban jungle', as modernity was expressed through its perceived 'primitive' rhythmic qualities.

Whites responded to jazz in a simplistic, 'primitive' manner through dancing that was becoming increasingly improvisational. Stanley Nelson, music critic of *The Era* describes the post-war return to the primitive culture ('earthy things') through the adoption of jazz as dance music in his book *All About Jazz* written in 1934:

'The War shattered many of our illusions and brought us nearer to earthy things. That is why the artificiality of the Victorians in their dance music was superseded by a dance music [jazz] which was unashamedly proud of showing its crude emotional stress'
(1934:170)

Indeed, to an extent 'the reigning obsession of the 'jazz age' was not jazz but dancing' (Goddard, 1979:28). There was a huge increase in venues for dancing in the capital after the War, from the hotel restaurant dances and luxury clubs such as Ciro's and the Kit-Cat, to the Hammersmith Palais and the London Club, where the entrance fee was affordable by the lower middle classes (Pearsall, 1976:78). Clubs were often decorated in a modern way, here the colour scheme is reminiscent of primitive art: 'The floor was black ebony and the walls and furniture were in the prevalent jazz fashion of black and orange' (Bradley, 1947:8) (the underworld of London's nightclub scene in the 1920s will be examined in detail in Chapter 7). Most significantly, the dance hall was the only form of entertainment that could rival the cinema and public house, and crucially, dancing to jazz was specific to the young people of the 'lost or 'post-war' generations, and hence demonstrates many of the features of the modernist approach to the post-war period.

New dance styles provided another way in which young people could subvert tradition, as they could reject the long-established formal steps and music of dances. The tempi of dances were much faster than previously, which in itself dictated the nature of the dancing, described by Josephine Bradley: 'the only thing one could do was walk, which we all did with energy and enthusiasm' (1947:16). Steps initially associated with jazz, such as the 'jazz roll', quickly went out of fashion, which meant that there was greater opportunity for self-expression through dance and allowed various transient fashions to be set and hence for jazz dancing to remain modern. This, together with the energetic nature of the dancing necessarily confined it to fashionable young people, confirming the division between young and old that had begun through the later years of the War.

Developments in jazz dancing in the 1920s hinged on the increased social and sexual freedom of women. During the War, women from the upper and middle classes had been permitted more contact than formerly with men through their work as volunteers, and women from the lower classes left domestic service which gave them increased sexual freedom. The philosophy of *carpe diem*, which promoted living for the present moment without concern for the future, was widely adopted in wartime and probably led to more extra-marital sexual encounters. Contemporaneously, writings by Stopes and Freud addressed sexual issues openly for the first time, and the traditional role of the woman as a mother was increasingly rejected by young girls who felt that they deserved their freedom through their role in the War.

War-work led to increasing practicality in the design of women's clothes, but more significantly, the resulting freedom was also reflected by the changes in dress at this time. Hemlines rose steadily and an un-corseted simple silhouette became fashionable, showing the rejection of pre-war decadence and the return to basic ideas. Significantly, 'the thin young woman, who was so far from symbolizing the family that her dress minimized the maternal bosom, while exposing the legs, in the manner of a little girl' (Steele, 1985:230) was now the ideal image for women. Sexual freedom was demonstrated by these clothes that enhanced natural feminine beauty, and meant that 'a woman wearing twenties dress was much more touchable than a woman in Victorian and Edwardian dress' (Steele, 1985:240). The emphasis on 'youth' in the ideal image of the twenties woman meant that it was the young rather than middle aged women who began to set fashion trends in the 1920s, once again underlying the division between generations that we have seen in relation to 'old men' and soldiers. Orientalism and primitivism also influenced women's dress, through the addition of turbans, scarves, beads and tassels and the use of cosmetics and perfumes (Steele, 1985:233). The use of elements of the exotic cultures in this way created a mysterious sensuality reflecting the more explicit expression of sexuality and the need for escapism characteristic of the age.

Dance halls were probably the centre of the fashionable world, as the movements of dancing could show off dresses excellently.¹ Leading figures of the dance world, such as Irene Castle, the well-known American professional 'exhibition' dancer, set the trends not only for dance but also for fashion; she was said to have been influential in the trend for 'bobbed' hair for women in the twenties (Steele, 1985:229). Dance halls gave women the opportunity to go out and enjoy themselves, and the associated activities of drinking cocktails and smoking became popular with young women of the twenties as symbols of their emancipation (Stevenson, 1984:384), with the availability of drugs in nightclubs adding to the heady atmosphere (Pearsall, 1976:78). Indeed, 'drug use was understood as a crisis of young womanhood; cocaine, especially, was a young woman's drug.' (Kohn, 1992:8). The movements of jazz dancing required close contact between partners, 'dancers had to adopt the style of the man pressing his head firmly on the lady's 'perm' to keep balance' (Bradley, 1947:12). Together with the nature of twenties dress which made the women more 'touchable' and the 'mysterious sensuality' of the exotic elements of fashionable dress, this meant that dancing was a more overtly sexual experience than previously. As jazz was the new dance music of

¹ Dance and dress fashions had been closely linked since before the War. Steele suggests that 'Perhaps more than any other single factor, the popularity of the tango and similar dances led many women to abandon orthodox corsetry in 1913 and 1914' (1985:229).

the time it became inextricably linked with youth and freedom of sexual expression, which epitomised the rejection of traditional moral values.

Modernism, as we have seen, is founded on dissatisfaction with and rejection of the past, and thus raises the issue of people's relationship to time. Consideration of jazz as the music of the age can explain some of the complexities of this idea. As we have seen, the demonstrable roots of jazz in another culture gave particular relevance to the post-War youth who had seen their own past destroyed. However, it must be remembered that whilst poets, artists, composers, writers and philosophers were wrestling with the problems posed by the destruction of elements of civilisation by the War, many ordinary people were coming to terms with loss and the practicalities of its aftermath. Hence, while culture and society appeared fractured by war, there were elements of indestructible continuity, which hinged around the need for entertainment. Towards the end of the War, mass destruction had led to a spirit of *carpe diem* as described by Josephine Bradley: 'All the girls were having a very good time with men friends home on leave, who wanted to fit into each moment as much as they possibly could. Night life was at its height...' (1947:7).

Pearsall also comments that a similar attitude existed in the immediate post-war:

'The optimism of the first year after the war - before demobilisation of the armed services threw hundreds of thousands of men onto the market to precipitate one of the evils of the age - unemployment on a massive scale - encouraged popular music to proceed as if the war had never happened' (1976:7).

Although the stasis demonstrated by 'high' art during the War can also be seen in relation to popular culture, the effect of war was less shattering on the course of its overall development due to the fact that popular music and dance had constantly functioned as a diversion from the realities of wartime life. In the post-war period, popular culture remained a reliable distraction in the face of the destruction of so many other elements of society and culture. According to Nelson, 'The intervention of the war left the civilised world in a mental chaos, and Jazz provided the very stimulant it required' (1934:13), and Mendl describes jazz as a 'musical alcohol' for soldiers returning from 'the horrors and hardships of the trenches' (1927:89).

An important feature of jazz in the 1920s was the novelty aspects and humorous presentation of the music: 'The god of the 1920s was novelty, whether it was in art, serious music, dance music and jazz, architecture or literature' (Pearsall, 1976:79). The idea of 'novelty' is consistent with the spirit of constant re-invention which must be

inherent in modernism, as, broadly speaking, if a particular style becomes established as typically 'modern', by definition it can no longer be so. This led to a constant feeling of progression and development in the twenties, especially when compared to the stasis in the preceding war years. In this way, jazz is an expression of modernism, and 'Its pulse reflects the restlessness and inexorable momentum of the pace of modern life' (Pleasants, 1961:157). However, as Ted Heath explained 'Jazz was a novelty and people wanted to dance and forget the horror of the First World War' (1957:28). Significantly, jazz was more than just dance music, as it also functioned as entertainment that presented a humorous diversion from everyday life. This explains the popularity of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in 1919, and the replication of their novelty effects by British bands after their departure (see Chapter 6). It seems that when the saxophone was introduced it was regarded as the latest humorous novelty, as Nelson comments that

'...the saxophone is a stock jest to-day, and our foremost humorous daily weekly rarely fails to comment caustically upon it, while our music hall comedians have seized eagerly upon the instrument as a welcome addition to Wigan, mothers in law, and all other things that are fondly supposed to be intrinsically funny'
(1934:17)

Therefore, jazz had the ability to encapsulate in one form the defining, often paradoxical features of the post-war age such as aversion to tradition and the progressive experimentation, constructive and escapist approaches to reality, and the Western and the 'primitive'. Jazz can be seen as an intrinsically modern music as it mediated the contemporary interest in primitivism, both as a way of deliberately subverting native traditions, and constructing a new past and future for those who felt that they had none. Jazz dancing as a social activity encouraged the division between young and old, and the liberation and sexual freedom of women. Jazz also permitted individual freedom of expression and interpretation in instrumental performance, dance and dress. Significantly though, whereas modernism was a direct response to the reality of the War and post-war, and attempted to construct explanations of the meaning of modern life, jazz was adopted primarily as a reaction against reality, and fulfilled an important escapist function, acting as an antidote to the actual and metaphorical complexities of the period. Jazz was music with immediate impact, unlike some complex modern art forms, and was thus closely allied to the spontaneity of the *carpe diem* philosophy. As we have seen, the fact that jazz was a black music with 'primitive' associations meant that it was seen as 'a joyous revolt from convention, custom, authority, boredom, even sorrow' (Sidran, 1981:54). The new dance clubs were decorated in unusual, other-worldly colour schemes, and the prevalence of drink and drugs offered other sources of escape. Dancing was now a response to the basic

rhythm of the music, rather than a formal series of steps, and required participants to become absorbed in the music. Indeed, dancing, together with the social freedom of women and the nature of their dress offered possibilities of sexual 'escape'. Jazz itself can also be seen as a musical form that constantly re-invents itself, and thus remains supremely modern, but through its escapist characteristics, can even be seen to transcend modernism itself, as it represents art which is 'independent of or else transcending the humanistic, the material, the real, [which] has been crucially important to a whole segment of the modern arts' (Bradbury and McFarlane, 1991:25). Jazz is thus clearly representative of the escapist spirit of the age, and therefore Fitzgerald's idea of the 'jazz age' is a valid label and an important concept. This is reflected by Mendl, who wrote in *The Appeal of Jazz*: 'even if it [jazz] disappears altogether it will not have existed in vain. For its record will remain as an interesting human document - the spirit of the age written in the music of the people' (1927:186).

Theodore Wiesengrund Adorno was a leading German philosopher of the Frankfurt school of critical theory, whose work on contemporary culture included several essays on jazz. Although Adorno's work has been extensively criticised by some recent scholars, his writing provides a theoretical perspective on jazz and the culture industry based on his own experiences as a European, which is invaluable to this study. Interestingly, Adorno clearly detected the tendency to characterise the era as the 'jazz age', as he comments in his 1936 essay 'On Jazz', 'Jazz is pseudo-democratic in the sense that it characterizes the consciousness of the epoch', but also commented on the problems of this phenomenon:

'The more deeply jazz penetrates society, the more reactionary elements it takes on, the more completely it is beholden to banality, and the less it will be able to tolerate freedom and the eruption of phantasy, until it finally glorifies repression itself as the incidental music to accompany the current collective. The more democratic jazz is, the worse it becomes.'
([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:50).

The accessibility of jazz is also an important factor, for Adorno 'the only way things can be taken seriously is if they are distanced from the real world' (Witkin, 2000:170), and hence the inaccessibility of much modern music allows it to be treated seriously, whereas the easy access to jazz creates a music with universal appeal and rapidly diminishes its possibilities as an art form. Whilst Henry Pleasants interprets jazz positively, as an antidote to contemporary 'serious' music, as it has 'embraced a numerous and worldwide public' (1969:46), Mendl, like Adorno, recognises the problem of the popularity of jazz, commenting in his book on the 'appeal of jazz' that

'[the lover of music's] objection to jazz music, such as it is, consists partly in fatigue resulting from its over frequent performance. Almost everywhere he goes, in the street, on the river, in the restaurant and the theatre, syncopated dance music is hurled at him by singers and players, good, bad and indifferent. It is a small wonder that he wearies of it. But this is only another way of saying that he is a victim of its immense popularity' (1927:75).

In Adorno's idea of modernism, 'the activity of art [is] part of a historical process of change which involves art at the same time in a process of constant redefinition of itself, both as a reflection of, and in opposition to, the world outside' (Paddinson, 1983:3). However, he describes jazz as a 'perennial fashion', an instance where 'fashion enthrones itself as something lasting and thus sacrifices the dignity of fashion, its transience' (Adorno, [1955], trans. Weber and Weber 1967:122), and hence, due to this permanence cannot be modernist. In addition, Adorno's philosophy states that the score is the closest representation of the musical work itself. As the 'sounding object' the work is under the sway of the 'culture industry' which 'acts as a pre-selective filter and shapes public taste' and the 'work as performance' acquires a function as entertainment (Paddinson, 1983:195). Thus, the fact that jazz is disseminated mostly through recording and performance rather than written scores means that under Adorno's definitions, jazz can not be autonomous art, and is therefore also incapable of 'constant redefinition' necessary to be modern. Interestingly, Adorno acknowledges at the start of his essay 'On Jazz' that 'one could concede that [jazz] is a type of dance music... distinguished from what preceded it by its decidedly modern character'. However, it is significant that he attributes this modernity to 'pasted-on ornament[s]' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:45), principally syncopation, which can exist in various forms but never alter the basic meter; and instrumental effect such as vibrato, which does little to affect the basic sound.

Adorno suggests that as soon as music takes on a social function as entertainment, it loses its autonomy, and becomes reliant on a 'generalized musical language...made up of gestures made familiar through repetition and association' (Paddinson, 1983:202). Adorno comments that many musical and extra-musical elements of jazz had been 'fetishized' and saw the fact that jazz had become generalized in this way in Europe, and indeed, was further generalized as the music of the age as clear proof that it could not be a valid expression of modernism. Indeed, he sees jazz as a resulting symptom of modernist art which had 'freed itself from social and religious function', as the public then 'broke down this difference between art and life by reducing art to entertainment' (Paddinson, 1983:207).

Thus, consideration of Adorno's views on jazz gives weight to the idea of the 'jazz age' as a more useful concept than modernism when considering the evolution of jazz in Britain, although the position of jazz as representative 'of the consciousness of the epoch' brings with it a particular evolutionary situation where the music is subservient to external factors, and 'the form [of jazz] is dominated by the function and not by autonomous formal law' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:47). For Adorno, jazz is a manifestation of the 'culture industry' which manipulates the public demand for entertainment and then, aided by technology, creates a 'circle of manipulation and dependency making the system more powerful' (Paddinson, 1983:203). I shall return to this idea and consider Adorno's writing on jazz further, but as we have seen, there was an emotional need for jazz in Britain in the 1920s, and the fact that this was exploited by a burgeoning, powerful and regulated culture industry, in the form of the broadcasting and recording companies, which developed contemporaneously, was of fundamental significance to the evolution of jazz in Britain.

The popularity of the radio was reflected in the rapid growth of licence holders, from 36,000 licences in 1922 to 2 million in 1926 (Stevenson, 1984:407) and 'by the end of 1926, about 20 per cent of the nation's households owned radios' (Doctor, 1999:19). Tuning into radio broadcasts had begun as an enthusiast's pastime, with the aim to pick up any sort of signal, the actual content of the broadcast being a secondary consideration since 'initially the fascination of the radio was its magical quality; its marvellous ability to generate sound from an apparently lifeless box' (Pegg, 1983:6). Similarly, several decades previously, 'The gramophone first entered the home as a novelty among the monied classes' (Chanan, 1995:40). Instructions for building crystal sets to receive radio signals could be found in specialist magazines, of which there were around 30 titles on sale by 1924-6 (Pegg, 1983:45) and local or even national papers, and it seems that initially there was as much pleasure derived from building a successful set as from listening to the programmes that were broadcast. At first, the recording industry too was centred upon technological aspects rather than recorded material itself: 'the business was geared to the manufacture, first, of industrial equipment used to produce records; second, of consumer furniture to play the records on; and third, the records themselves' (Chanan, 1995:55). Hence, the consumer had some control of the technological aspect of radio reception, but little input as to content whereas with the gramophone the listener could exercise more control over the material that could be heard.

Radio and the gramophone represented a totally new dimension in home entertainment, which had previously been self-generated, centred around the piano,

but was now available with little personal effort and with much greater variety, and was still relatively affordable as a crystal set cost about the equivalent of a week's wages for a manual worker (Pegg, 1983:47). The absorption of radio into home life is shown by the more expensive radio receivers, which 'were free standing cabinets, considered by dealers and department stores in the same way as furniture' (Chanan, 1995:39). Gramophones, too could be housed in splendid cabinets, and 'it was even possible to conceive of -and make- an object with the threefold purpose of being 'an artistic lamp, a provider of music and a decorative item' (Ward, 1978:20), and indeed, for early producers 'records appeared almost as a sideline to promote the sale of furniture' (Chanan 1995:55).

Moseley, writing in the 1930s, perceived that 'broadcasting has...given a tremendous impetus to dancing and dance music' (1935:117). Broadcasting and recording clearly meant that many more people had access to performances by the top dance bands in Britain than they might have had without these industries. Indeed, as electrical recording developed, effects could be created which involved the listener further in the performances. By picking up the natural resonance of a room, the listener could be 'brought into' the atmosphere of the performing space. Conversely, by use of close-micing techniques, an effect of 'artificial intimacy' could be produced, 'as if the singer and the song are transported into the presence of the listener', which led to the development of the 'crooning' style (Chanan, 1995:59). The fact that performances which were otherwise socially exclusive were now much more accessible was important in the evolution of jazz as the music of the age. However, the fact that broadcast and recorded material could gain an element of authenticity simply through being broadcast or recorded, and jazz was reliant on this technology for its dissemination, meant that the broadcasting and recording industries, often economically rather than artistically driven, were fundamental to the way in which jazz developed in Britain in the 1920s. Thus, the two main pillars of the culture industry in early twentieth century Britain, the BBC and the record industry, should be analysed carefully in order to understand the way in which jazz was presented and perceived at this time.

The British Broadcasting Company, as it was initially, was formed in 1923 under the leadership of Sir John Reith, who was a man with strong views on the public role of broadcasting, and a commitment to the use of the radio for the education of the masses. In this way, 'Sir John Reith and his associates were determined to provide what they thought the public ought to have, not what it wanted' (Pearsall, 1976:10) and they largely rejected the idea of the provision of entertainment as a function of

broadcasting. Reith famously commented in his book *Broadcast over Britain*, published in 1924:

'...to have exploited so great a scientific invention for the purpose and pursuit of "entertainment" alone would have been a prostitution of its powers and an insult to the character and intelligence of the people'
(1924:17)

If any entertainment was to be included at all in BBC schedules, it was to consist of items such as talks, plays and classical music that would 'widen listener's intellectual and cultural horizons and... heighten their critical perceptions' (Doctor, 1999:27). Reith clearly viewed jazz as entertainment of a less desirable type:

'To entertain means to occupy agreeably. Would it be urged that this is only to be effected by the Broadcasting of jazz bands and popular music, or of sketches by humorists? I do not think that many would be found willing to support so narrow a claim as this.'
(1924:18)

Significantly, the BBC defined popular music as 'entertainment' rather than culture (Barnard, 1989:8) and this meant that from the outset popular music was separated from 'serious' music. Although dance music was clearly 'entertainment', it was still made to fit within the BBC's brief of providing material considered 'suitable' for the public. Pearsall has pointed out the irony of an approach to music whereby 'The BBC made classical music popular, and tried to make popular music classical.' (1976:125). Whilst performances of classical works were accompanied by explanatory talks, the popular music performances that were broadcast in the 1920s were of tightly arranged music that was formally presented.

The categorisation of music was an important feature of the BBC's music programming at this time, and there is evidence that this affected the way in which jazz was perceived at this stage and later in the twentieth century. Interestingly, the word 'jazz' itself does not seem to feature often in the schedules, as performances of popular music were usually referred to as 'dance music'. Articles in early editions of the *Radio Times* show that jazz was considered to be a brief phase of development in dance music, outdated and unfashionable when compared with modern syncopated music. Jazz also had undesirable associations with the underworld, examined in Chapter 7, which were widely understood at the time and clearly rendered music called 'jazz' unsuitable for inclusion on the BBC. Significantly, the adoption of the term 'dance music' implies functionality, which meant that, unlike 'serious' music, it could not and should not be appreciated as autonomous art, subtly restating the division between 'serious' and 'popular' music that the BBC had articulated from the start.

Similar categorisations were a feature of the record industry at this time. The most significant amongst these was 'race records' which was virtually the only way that black artists could gain entry to the recording environment. Although the main market for race records was within the black community itself (as well as, once again, satisfying the curiosity of intellectual and philanthropic whites), the fact that black artists were categorised separately in this way ensured the continuation of the black stereotype. In addition whites remained in overall control as race record labels were owned by large recording companies, for example Okeh, which was owned by Columbia, and hence 'blacks have been permitted to excel in entertainment only on the condition that they conform to whites' images of blacks' (Cashmore, 1997:1). The fact that black artists were usually restricted to recording 'traditional', race specific material, rather than contemporary 'hot' jazz, meant that the 'dance music', performed by white, British bands, and disseminated by radio and records, came to be perceived as an improved, civilised and more sophisticated form of black music.

Indeed, the BBC made a clear distinction between 'dance' music and 'hot' music, generally characterized as British and American respectively, remembered by Graves and Hodge:

'The BBC now provided dance music: plenty of the humorous and sentimental kind- Jack Payne and Henry Hall, for instance- very occasionally the really hot stuff, straight from America'
(Graves and Hodge, 1940:237)

As Graves and Hodge suggest, the British version of jazz was dominant in radio output, and therefore probably widely accepted as 'standard' popular music, with the American 'hot' music as an occasional novelty, and increasing racial intolerance in post-war Britain probably diminished the acceptability of broadcasting black American music. The infrequency of American performances was probably also linked with the idea that the BBC should be inherently British, with 'a commitment to the concept of a British National Culture' (Barnard, 1989:5). After all, the BBC had originally been formed with the intention creating a monopoly in order to avoid the chaotic situation of American commercial radio. Hence, the American roots of popular music were hidden beneath a façade of Britishness, for instance the use of the term 'dance music' rather than the obviously American 'jazz'. Together with the BBC's commitment to providing suitable entertainment, this influenced not only the way in which the music was presented (formally announced, as bandleaders were not permitted to announce their own numbers to prevent 'song plugging'), but the generally restrained nature of the performance and the music itself, as there was little room for spontaneous displays of improvisation in the carefully scored arrangements.

Indeed, the majority of the BBC senior staff were from 'dinner-jacketed Oxbridge and public school backgrounds' who were determined to lead rather than be influenced by public taste (Pegg, 1983:97). Thus, the popular music that was broadcast was tightly controlled through the selection of reputable British bands and 'there was barely a hint of the quality which writers on jazz of the time called dirt.' (Pearsall, 1976:125). In particular, the BBC developed a close association with Savoy Hotel bands, considered extensively in Chapter 7, and had various 'house' bands, most notably the BBC Dance Orchestra under Jack Payne. Payne became one of broadcasting's first stars, and according to Moseley, 'received 50,000 letters, postcards and telegrams a year' (1935:118), and many other bandleaders also became household names through their extensive recording and broadcasting. Indeed, the fact that national stars could be made through recording and broadcasting indicates the strength of the influence that the British 'culture industry' had over the population at this time, particularly when it came to setting trends in popular music.

The strict control exercised over the 'dance music' that was broadcast meant that there was little distinction between the various bands, particularly 'through the medium of the primitive wireless set' (Pearsall, 1976:125) and hence the BBC were responsible for creating and disseminating a stylistically unified music, suppressing the whole spirit of individuality which was to be central to the future development and longevity of jazz. Indeed, the broadcasting and recording of the British version of 'jazz' gave the music significant authority through association with the 'official' BBC and the permanence of a recorded performance respectively. The fact that radio and records disseminated a similar concept (civilised, white dance music as opposed to black 'hot' jazz) gave this music further validity. Indeed, 'radio operates in the present tense, records reproduce a past moment. Radio is ephemeral, records preserve the evanescent.' (Chanan, 1995:60), hence technology in the form of radio had the capacity to allow the modernity of jazz to be expressed, by reflecting its transience through the presentation of its latest phase, whilst at the same time, records created a history which gave the style integrity. The nature and effects of the standardisation of dance music by the BBC in the 1920s will be examined in detail in Chapter 7.

Therefore, it is easy to understand how British audiences accepted the music that the 'culture industry' presented as being 'authentic' jazz. In the 1920s, 75% of letters to BBC complained about reception problems rather than programming, the fascination with the technological aspects of broadcasting probably meant that the listeners were less discerning than they were to become later in the twentieth century (Pegg, 1983:37). Maine, writing in 1939, commented that the BBC 'has helped to persuade

listeners that dance music is a serious subject, helped to cultivate one jazz vogue after another' (1939:126); certainly, the BBC appears to have had the capacity to influence public taste. Indeed, the fact that the BBC held a monopoly over broadcasting and was perceived as an 'official' body, must have meant that the quality of the broadcast output was questioned less by the general public than it might have been.

However, it is interesting that apparently 'altogether, more vitriol and prejudice was espoused for the cause of broadcast music than for any other subject' (Pegg, 1983:200). This reflects both the centrality of music in the BBC's output- music accounted for 2/3 of the daily programme output in the twenties (Doctor, 1999:39) and the BBC's rigid categorisation of music that encouraged the polarity of 'serious' and 'popular' musical styles which was taken up by the media. Whilst the popular press resented the monopoly enjoyed by the Company and urged the BBC to pay more attention to listener's tastes, 'critics in the serious press generally supported Reith's intention to raise public taste and oppose the popularising or vulgarising of music which they saw in 'popular' music' (Pegg, 1983:200). In one week in 1925, 125 letters out of 8000 received condemned 'dance music', suggesting that, unsurprisingly, lovers of 'serious' music were more vocal in their opposition to 'popular' music than visa versa. Indeed, it is significant that although the presence of 'dance music' in broadcast schedules was both criticised and commended, its validity as a musical style was largely unquestioned. This shows that in the 1920s, the BBC had the power to define jazz universally and unequivocally, and it was this definition that was to affect the perception and evolution of jazz in Britain for several years to come, as we shall see in Chapter 7. Therefore, it must be remembered that condemnations were directed either at what people *thought* was jazz as defined by the culture industry itself, which included 'dance music', 'hot' music with its many undesirable associations with America and its being representative of black culture and simply a mysterious music that was not suitable to be broadcast.

Whilst Adorno's views on jazz have been criticised as flawed through their limited scope, the fact that he was constrained principally by his restricted experience of the music, as like all Europeans he was geographically removed from the sources of jazz, means that his ideas are particularly valuable when considering jazz in Britain in the 1920s. Schönherr comments that Adorno wrote a radio talk on serial music with little knowledge of the subject, but yet was able to make accurate observations as to the future of this music (1991:86-7), almost aided by this detachment, and this is comparable with Adorno's limited acquaintance with jazz. Indeed, it is significant that Adorno, like the British general public, is himself a victim of the 'culture industry' that he

describes, as he was clearly reliant on the culture industry itself to supply him with the musical material on which to base his theory. Although this could be seen to make his judgements on jazz and the culture industry unreliable, the fact that Adorno too is immersed, almost unwittingly, in the very phenomenon that he is criticising actually makes his theories more relevant to an understanding of the evolution of jazz in Britain.

Those who have criticised Adorno's work on jazz have largely been able to work with a larger geographical and chronological perspective on the music. Witkin cites Theodore Gracyk, writing in 1992, as an opponent of Adorno. Gracyk criticises Adorno's theory which takes jazz as the basis for pop music; he states that jazz was never synonymous with popular music and became increasingly less so (Witkin, 2000:173), criticises Adorno's limited field of exploration within jazz, and argues that jazz is not based exclusively on the 32-bar song form that Adorno analyses (2000:174). This shows that Gracyk is clearly unable to appreciate Adorno's constraints. Even Witkin, who is largely more aware of Adorno's situation when writing on jazz, criticises Adorno as he 'resorts to a number of generalised and negative characterisations of jazz as music, rather than offering, as in the case of classical composers, analyses of specific works' (2000:171). A critical defence of Adorno can only be made through a 'repositioning of jazz in relation to the culture industry' (Witkin, 2000:177) where jazz is displaced by other popular forms, for example rock, and becomes independent of the culture industry, a phenomenon of which Adorno was unaware at the time at which he was writing. Thus, Adorno's theories are particularly, and possibly exclusively relevant to European jazz in the early part of the twentieth century.

Indeed, Adorno's writing on jazz characterises a typically European acquaintance with the music. He writes that 'the wild antics of the first jazz bands from the South, New Orleans above all, and those from Chicago, have been toned down with the growth of commercialism and of the audience.' ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:121). Adorno is writing from a European perspective here, as clearly there was continuation and development of 'wild' or 'hot' jazz since the first jazz bands in America; but as we have seen, European institutions such as the BBC sidelined such music as a novelty in favour of 'civilised' dance music. It is clearly to the latter musical style that Adorno largely refers in his critique of jazz, as he begins:

'Jazz is a music which fuses the most rudimentary melodic, harmonic, metric and formal structure with the ostensibly disruptive principle of syncopation, yet without ever really disturbing the crude unity of the basic rhythm, the identically sustained metre, the quarter-note'
([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:121)

Adorno was sceptical of the improvisatory features of the music, commenting that 'the routine today scarcely leaves room for improvisation, and that what appears as spontaneity is in fact carefully planned out in advance with machine-like precision' ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:123). His dislike of jazz even led him to enthuse over 'the prospect of the Nazi authorities banning the music altogether', although he was a Jew who was exiled by these same authorities (Kater, 1992:33). Michael Kater, describing Adorno's writing on jazz, claims that 'that brilliant pundit's analysis was corrupted by his private prejudice' (1992:28), and Schönherr comments similarly that 'Rather than basing himself upon an aesthetic analysis of the music, his judgement seems to be dominated by personal idiosyncrasy' (1991:88). However, when the complexity of the context of Adorno's work is considered, it can be seen that his views are more than a result of simple 'prejudice' towards the music.

In *Different Drummers* (1992), Kater provides a remarkable insight into the type of music to which the German public might have been exposed and which would have probably formed a basis for Adorno's writing on the subject. In some ways this is similar to the British experiences of the music in the same period, for instance, the development of jazz primarily as dance music, and the accompanying fashions for the shimmy, the Charleston, the tango and the foxtrot as dance styles, the exclusive clubs and large hotels as the main venues for jazz, extending even to the popularity of 'tea dances', a tradition imported directly from Britain. Indeed, Germany appears to have been reliant upon Britain to lead the way in defining jazz, with bandleaders trying to employ British musicians, as well as those from America and Canada (Kater, 1992:7). Later in the decade, broadcasts of British bands could be heard in Germany, and keen German jazz fans obtained subscriptions to the British *Melody Maker* magazine. Jack Hylton's band, which visited Berlin in 1928, was praised for its 'rhythm and discipline' (Kater, 1992:9). As in Britain, the 'jazz orchestra' was the norm in Germany, with a few smaller combos attempting to play American 'hot' jazz which 'was known only to a tiny subculture of aficionados' (Robinson, 1994:107). Early German 'jazz' musicians seem to have mixed the British idea of jazz with national elements. German jazz in the early 1920s was strongly influenced by the march, and in the second half of the century jazz elements became mixed into the 'salon' style where violins remained prominent (Kater, 1992:14). Robinson explains that the German *Radaukapellen* (racket bands) created what they thought was jazz by 'disfiguring Wilhelmine march and salon numbers and peppering them with unmotivated explosions or sound effects from the drummer, from police sirens to pistol shots' (1994:120), which seems to be consistent with the way in which jazz was often presented in Britain at this time.

Robinson provides a translation of a fascinating first-hand account of Henry Ernst, a German bandleader, entitled '*Meine Jagd nach der 'Tschetzipend'*', published in obscure German weekly trade magazine *Der Artist* in 1926 (1994:118-9). When Ernst and his band were booked to play at a Swiss luxury hotel in St. Moritz, they found out from the fashionable French and English audience that their music was behind the times. Ernst recalled that in 1920 he was asked to play 'jazz' and had no idea what the word meant. Such was the extent of Germany's isolation from the rest of Europe that it was not until he stumbled upon a piece of sheet music depicting a jazz band on the cover that he was at all enlightened: 'At long last I saw what a jazz band is. Seven blokes in sport dress: piano, violin, two banjos, saxophone, trombone and percussion'. Indeed, German musicians relied on not only the covers, but also the musical content of sheet music imported from Britain and France, especially piano music that was easier to obtain than full sets of parts, to provide them with supposedly up-to-date material which they then arranged themselves (Robinson, 1994:119).

Indeed, as Robinson points out, Germany's political, cultural and economic isolation in the post-war period meant that few jazz recordings were imported, and American jazz musicians visiting Europe tended to avoid Germany as the currency was worthless (1994:114).² Although many American musicians made recordings in Germany, these were not widely released or available, and the matrix exchange programme bartered German classical recordings for white American dance band music of Guy Lombardo, Paul Specht, Vincent Lopez and Paul Whiteman (Robinson, 1994:116). In addition, increasing racial intolerance in Germany meant that black musicians were not permitted to play a full part in disseminating jazz, and were eventually banned from performing at all at the start of the 1930s (Kater, 1992:18-19). Jazz was also seen as a symbol of American capitalism and Jewish wealth, and as such was branded 'unacceptable music' by the leaders of the youth music movement in the late twenties and early thirties (Potter, 1998:7). Following on from this, the Hitler Youth organization, which became compulsory from 1939, 'emphasized notions of racial purity, constantly harping on the evils of Judaism and the need to eradicate its musical manifestations (such as jazz and the 'Jewish' school of composition) from German musical life.' (Potter, 1998:16). Jazz became the prime manifestation of 'degenerate' music for the authorities, and this is clearly shown on the cover of the catalogue for the 'Degenerate Music Exhibition' in 1938, which Potter describes as showing 'a caricature of a black saxophonist against a red background wearing a Jewish star on his lapel, an image

² The Original Dixieland Jazz Band's recordings were never released in Germany (Robinson, 1994:115) and the leader of the band, Nick LaRocca, declined an offer to perform in Germany for financial reasons.

that neatly suggests the collusion of all the symbolic enemies of German culture (American jazz, subsidized by Jewish promotion, with bolshevism and internationalism lurking in the background).' (1998:18).³

Thus, between the Wars 'Germany cultivated a very distorted, second-hand notion of American jazz, having access only to imported sheet music, a few recordings of white dance bands...and home-grown 'text books' by German authors explaining methods for 'jazz' performance and composition.' (Potter, 1998:20). Jazz as performed by Hylton and Whiteman constituted the limited German *aural* experience of the music. But jazz had developed a unique identity in Germany during the 1920s which was further disseminated by German composers who began to incorporate what they thought was jazz into their works, particularly operas such as Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*, Weill's *Mahagonny*, *Die letzte Pierrot* by Rathaus and *Baby in der Bar* by Grosz (Robinson, 1994:110). Significantly, as a result of the restrictions detailed above, Weimar Germans were more likely to have heard Krenek's *Jonny* than American jazz. Robinson points out the consistency between the way jazz is represented musically in these works, which seems to have little foundation in American jazz. Robinson also shows that the German composers' representations of jazz all have clear roots in the textbooks written in the 1920s, particularly the *Jazz-Buch* by Alfred Baresel published in 1925.⁴ Crucially, this highlights the significance of printed sources in the formation of the image of jazz in Germany, apparently in absence of experiences of the real thing, and furthermore, Mátyás Seiber, writer of several textbooks and jazz-influenced works and who taught at Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt, making him 'the first jazz instructor at an officially recognised musical institution', apparently served as jazz advisor to Adorno (Robinson, 1994:124). This suggests that Adorno's writing was influenced by the 'second-hand notion of American jazz' based on a British model and perpetuated by these German writers and composers.

Thus, it is in the specific context of the jazz in Germany that the roots of Adorno's observations and supposed prejudices can be found. Indeed, Adorno asserted that 'If one wanted to describe the phenomenon of interference in jazz in terms of broad and solid concepts of style, one could claim it as the combination of salon music and march

³ During the Second World War the government restrictions on jazz were 'notably tentative' as it was considered 'better to be lenient than to impose restrictions and risk defiance'. The authorities realised the futility of banning jazz on the radio, the record imports were difficult to regulate and also night clubs were difficult to control, especially as they were 'frequented by SS and SA officers who were jazz enthusiasts.' (Potter, 1998:23-4). However, jazz still remained the music of enthusiasts in Germany rather than a significant part of the popular mainstream, and anyway, by this time Adorno had left the country.

⁴ Interestingly, Berg annotated a copy of Baresel's book and Robinson shows in detail how Baresel's ideas clearly influenced the composition of *Lulu* and *Der Wein* (1994:129-134).

music.' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:60-1). This statement shows clear correlation with the German formulation of jazz that used native music as a basis. Adorno's criticism of syncopation which does little to alter the basic pulse of the music, would have been based on music that still relied on traditional marches, and hence retained the four-in-a-bar feel, which would have made the feeling of 'swing', essential to jazz, impossible. It is interesting that Mendl, writing several years earlier, describes the effect produced by the steady beat of the percussion against the syncopation of the upper melodic lines and the part played by dancers in 'emphasising with your feet a beat which was not stressed by the players.' (Mendl, 1927:84), suggesting that the 'march' element was not so prominent in British jazz.

Adorno would indeed have heard a 'toned down' version of early American jazz, due to the mix of jazz elements with the German salon tradition that created civilised dance music suitable for polite society dances, and to the almost exclusive availability of records of 'sweet' white American bands. Kater also suggests that as a result of the depression in the early 1930s the romantic, nostalgic salon style was popular in Germany (1992:28), just before the period in which Adorno wrote his essay 'On Jazz'. It was the perceived combination of the march and salon style in jazz and similarity of instrumentation between military and jazz bands that led Adorno to link jazz dancing with marching and its particular social and political associations: 'The former [salon dancing] represents an individuality which in truth is none at all, but merely the socially produced illusion of it; the latter [marching] is an equally fictive community which is formed from nothing other than alignment of atoms under force that is exerted upon them'. (Adorno, [1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:60-1). It was this theory of the roots of jazz that led Adorno to a Freudian (as dances have the 'drastic innuendo of sexual consummation...the dance is a means for achieving sexual satisfaction and at the same time respects the ideal of virginity' [Adorno, [1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:62]) and totalitarian (due to its similarity to military marches) analysis of jazz respectively. Whilst 'bourgeois individuality' can be seen in the movements to salon music, for Adorno dancing is merely another scheme of social behaviour to which the public conform, and which is perpetuated and enforced by the culture industry.

Not only was the jazz that Adorno would have heard based on the products of the British culture industry, it slavishly imitated bands such as Hylton's, and later solos by American musicians were learnt and then presented as 'improvised' (Kater, 1992:16). Hence, Adorno's criticisms of jazz as formulaic, and lacking in real improvisation can be justified. Significantly, Adorno cites the music of Duke Ellington, one of the American jazz musicians that he may have encountered on record or radio, as

'stabilised' jazz which 'submits itself to the standards of 'artistic' music', as a form of jazz in which he sees potential, although he goes on to state that 'compared with ['artistic' music], however, jazz exposes itself as lagging far behind' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:59). At least, this seems to destroy the idea of Adorno being fundamentally prejudiced against jazz or black musicians; rather, he had only limited acquaintance with black musicians. Some contact with the American sources of the music was allowed initially through the visits to Germany of Josephine Baker with Sidney Bechet and Sam Wooding's band, but these were probably viewed as 'socio-cultural rather than musical events' (Robinson, 1994:113). Therefore, music such as Ellington's would have very much been the exception rather than the rule for Adorno, and he based his theory on the jazz that he considered to be standard. There is a case for saying that had Adorno been able to hear the infinite variety of interpretations, improvisations and potential directions for jazz, even at this early stage, his observations may have been very different.⁵

However, as Adorno was constrained in another very significant way, namely his own theories of music, such a drastic change in his ideas on jazz would have been unlikely. Thus, it is in the context of Adorno's views on modern music in general that his ideas on jazz must be considered. Adorno opposes all music in which 'form imposes its authoritarian order upon elements which are subsumed by it' (Witkin, 2000:169), such as Schoenberg's serialism, as this shows the domination of the collective over the individual. This idea is present on several levels in Adorno's writing on jazz. In his analysis of the typical jazz song, Adorno perceives an unequal relationship between the verse, or individual and chorus, the collective, in which the audience member identifies him/herself. In addition, Adorno sees features such as syncopation, improvisation and the impressionism that he hears in Ellington's jazz as restricted through the 'metric-harmonic schema of the standard cadence of the eight-bar measure.' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:60). On the largest scale, jazz is subservient to the demands of the public and the resulting demands made upon it by the culture industry.

Indeed, the effects of the culture industry meant that Adorno could not appreciate jazz as an autonomous art form and immediately prompts the comparison and opposition between jazz and serious music, rather than the recognition of two complimentary musical forms. Adorno, like so many other critics of jazz, seems only able to appreciate

⁵ In fact, contrary to the opinion of some present-day critics, Adorno did shift his position on jazz fundamentally, from bidding it 'farewell' in 1933 to consideration of the music as 'perennial fashion' in 1955.

the music in relation to classical music, reflecting the common assumption, cited by Henry Pleasants, that 'jazz might be susceptible to esthetic elevation and social improvement by exposure to a symphonic environment and the injection of symphonic blood' (1969:34). Paradoxically, for Adorno, jazz is not original because it only uses elements that have already been used in classical music, such as syncopation and effects of orchestration, but yet he nevertheless imposes classical conditions upon the music. Jazz is flawed, according to Adorno, as the elements that it adopts from serious music are then constrained, rather than developed, within a standardised format. The two main features that Adorno exposes, then rejects, as potentially progressive in jazz are not present in classical music; firstly, the 'reintroduction into the composition of those who are reproducing it' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:55), unlike the alienation between the composer and performer in artistic music and the lack of freedom of interpretation in new music and secondly, the 'working process' which is 'an obvious distribution of labor' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:56). Whilst Constant Lambert objects to the prominence of performer over composer in jazz, demonstrating a 'classical' viewpoint (1934:186), Mendl recognises that 'the performers are relatively of greater importance to this twentieth century popular music than they are in the case of the works of the great masters' (1927:77), the inherent freedom of performers to re-arrange and develop basic material, (1927:78) and his comparison between jazz and folk music is more fruitful than Adorno's persistent attempt with classical music and jazz.

Mendl, as a European writing about jazz, recognises similar features in the evolution and position of jazz at this time but interprets these in a very different, indeed, positive way. Firstly, like Adorno, he acknowledges that jazz as dance music is part of large-scale musical evolution, incorporating many of the 'great' composers, but unlike Adorno, he uses this analysis to refute the idea of 'the symphonic art and dance music in antithesis' (1927:13), refusing to stereotype the musics into high/low brow, and claiming that jazz can appeal to 'both those who are seeking for skill and wit and ingenuity, and those who care for sentiment or pathos' (1927:114). Mendl also recognises the use of musical features common to classical music, but unlike Adorno, who commented that 'the belief in jazz as an elementary force with which an ostensibly decadent European music could be regenerated is pure ideology' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:52), he perceives a development rather than stagnation of these in jazz, and sees a role for jazz techniques in the future of modern 'serious' music, particularly in America. Mendl outlines four aspects of modern dance music which he believes 'sharply differentiate' it from any other sort of dance music. These are its 'species of rhythm' (syncopation), the use of the colours of the jazz band, its wide public appeal, and that 'it has not yet been taken up by any composer of the front rank', unlike earlier

forms of dance music. It is interesting that Adorno, too, identified syncopation and instrumental effect as characteristic of jazz, although he sees them as expropriations of classical music and dismisses them as 'pasted-on ornament'.

Schönherr points out that Adorno considers jazz ahistorical particularly in relation to classical music, thus 'negating all the differences between New Orleans and be-bop' (1991:88) although it is unlikely that Adorno would have been familiar with the differences between these styles. Schönherr's more significant observation is that Adorno fails to notice the cultural expropriation of jazz, which would provide a historical foundation for the music, but instead 'only the linear move out of the marginality of cultural praxis into commodity culture' (1991:91). For Adorno, the more jazz is integrated into the culture industry, the more its development is limited and a 'negative historical state' is created (Adorno, [1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:126).

It is hardly surprising that Adorno comments that 'The extent to which jazz has anything at all to do with genuine black music is highly questionable' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:52), bearing in mind his limited experience of black jazz in Germany. However, he also recognises that the whole idea of blackness in jazz has been fetishized like other aspects, and that 'the skin of the black man functions as much as a colouristic effect as does the silver of the saxophone' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:53). Indeed, in the early twentieth century

'primitivist clichés could acquire by repetition a lacquer of irony, becoming self-parodic, while the ritualistic rehearsal and exorcism of racial stereotypes (either through tragic or comic catharsis) ran the risk of seeming to succumb to these stereotypes' (Lively, 1998:244)

In particular, Adorno rejects the 'wild' African origins of jazz, suggesting instead the origins of the music in 'the domesticated body of bondage' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:53) with 'wild' gestures then analysed as an attempt to break into the culture industry. This is commensurate with Kater's description of the German blacks who were used in circus-style dance attractions and expected to conform to the stereotype of 'native simpletons subservient to their white superiors.' (1992:18). Mendl, on the other hand, has a clear understanding of the roots of jazz, as although he recognises that syncopation has been an effect well-used in Western classical music, he also provides an extensive analysis of the roots of syncopation in African music. He also recognises the cultural expropriation of jazz by whites, and hence, unlike Adorno, he is able to appreciate the 'history' of the music; however, it is clear that he views white

bands such as Whiteman's and Hylton's as a considerable improvement on primitive 'nigger jazz bands' (1927:49 and 73).

In his assessment of jazz, Adorno is also constrained by a lack of perspective of time from his subject: as in the case of all contemporary art, its impact cannot truly be assessed until some time after its creation; therefore, although he recognised that he had bade a premature 'farewell' to jazz, Adorno did not understand that the paradox of 'perennial fashion' was an important one in relation to popular music, and that the jazz that he had experienced represented only part of an initial phase in the long-term development of the music. In this respect, it is remarkable that in *Abschied vom Jazz* Adorno predicts the development of jazz later in the twentieth century:

'if one had drawn the consequences out of the syncopation and the rhythmic-improvisatory impulses, then the old symmetry and therefore also the structure of tonal harmony would have collapsed...then jazz would have lost its consumability and its easy intelligibility and would have changed into 'artistic' music...Jazz didn't engage in such ventures.'
(Quoted in Schönherr, 1991:93)

The many actual and theoretical factors that constrained Adorno's theories of jazz can be seen as a result of the culture industry's central role in the dissemination of jazz in Europe, and indeed, Adorno sees jazz as first and foremost a commodity, that is 'subordinate to the laws and also to the arbitrary nature of the market, as well as the distribution of its competition or even its followers' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:48) and comments that 'Jazz is not what it 'is': its aesthetic articulation is sparing and can be understood at a glance. Rather, it is what it is used for...' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:47). This idea, whilst lacking in consideration of the musicological and historical basis of the style, usefully focuses Adorno's treatment of the subject onto the social and economic factors that governed the production of jazz as popular music at this time, and which, as we have seen, then influence the stylistic evolution of the music, particularly in Europe, where anyway, the quality of the music itself was not initially the main consideration either for record purchasers or radio listeners.

Although the BBC existed to provide a public service, it nevertheless clearly fits within Adorno's concept of the culture industry. Adorno and Horkheimer wrote in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that 'Pure amusement, with its result of relaxed self-surrender to all kinds of association and happy nonsense, is cut short by entertainment on the market' (Cook, 1996:32), suggesting that the ulterior motives of the culture industry destroy any intrinsic potential for amusement, instead creating its own rationale. Although the authors were referring to business considerations as the corrupting factor, this could equally well apply to the BBC's desire to educate rather than entertain which influenced

the choice of broadcast material. Adorno stresses four distinct features of commodified cultural goods: standardization, pseudo-individualism, schematization and stereotypes, and the way in which jazz was disseminated by broadcasting and recording industries in 1920s Britain demonstrates some of these aspects.

As we have seen, there were consistencies in the type of music that was presented as 'jazz' by the BBC and the record industries. Adorno recognised that 'standardization' was an intrinsic part of the workings of the culture industry, leading him to conclude that 'even in its most complex manifestations [jazz is] a very elementary matter of incessantly repeated formulae' ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:122), and offers several explanations as to why it occurs which are relevant to jazz in 1920's Britain. He explains that standardization results in 'the strengthening of the lasting domination of the listening public and their conditioned reflexes. They are expected to want only that which they have become accustomed and to become enraged whenever their expectations are disappointed' ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:124), an idea which Adorno terms 'regressive listening'. Adorno believed that standardization is a result of imitation rather than mass production techniques (as in theory, debatably, it costs no more to produce a original work than a standardized one): 'Different companies competing in the same cultural sector imitate successful products, and standards begin to crystallize' (Cook, 1996:39). The 'growing concentration of ownership' (Cook, 1996:40) of jazz by large record companies and the BBC is another explanation for standardization.

Standardization, paradoxically, also leads the culture industry to emphasise the novelty or originality of products to hide the fact that they are standardized and to ensure that the consumer perpetuates the cycle by continuing to buy products, as it is this upon which the culture industry is reliant; but yet 'the music must promise the listeners something new without leaving the beaten path' (Adorno, [1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:126). Therefore, 'the paradoxical demand on the composer [is] that his work always be 'just like' and yet 'original', a demand which cripples all productive power.' (Adorno, [1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:54). The British culture industry of the 1920s accomplished this by recording and broadcasting many different bands, all ostensibly playing in the same style, and frequently the same music, but emphasising the differences between them, for example the venue in which bands were based, unusual musical effects and personalities such as bandleaders and soloists. Adorno referred to this as 'pseudo-individualization', where the listener is 'told' that the music is being made especially for him or her ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:126), and cited the role of arrangement in jazz as an example, where a particular arrangement

can bring the music closer to the 'sphere of the well known, thus rendering it more easily comprehensible' but at the same time also present a 'new' version of familiar material ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:130). Adorno also recognised that 'The elements in jazz in which immediacy seems to be present, the seemingly improvisational moments...are added in their naked externality to the standardized commodity character in order to mask it' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:48).

Schematization conceals pseudo-individualisation as it 'serves to obviate the consumer's need to think for himself or herself' (Cook, 1996:44) and leads the consumer to expect certain things. This can be seen in the development of a generalized musical language for 'dance music' in the 1920s, and the presentation of this stereotype by the British culture industry. It was this that led Adorno to comment that there was little to understand in jazz but rules ([1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:128). Schematization and stereotype can be seen, for example, in the lyrics of popular songs of the period, which describe standardized settings and reactions to jazz (see Chapter 2). In this way, 'Stereotypes and schemata help to standardize behavior, ensuring that individuals do not deviate from what is acceptable' (Cook, 1996:46) and Adorno describes how jazz specifically 'sets up certain schemes of social behaviour to which listeners must conform' (Adorno, [1955], trans. Weber and Weber, 1967:126). At the same time, pseudo-individualisation once again becomes important to conceal the repetitiveness of the resulting products.

In conclusion, the cultural and economic climate of the 1920s was dictated by the War, the principle event of the preceding decade, which created a predominant mood of disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the past. There were, broadly speaking, two responses to this situation. Firstly, there was modernist art that attempted to construct and express the meaning of the reality of modern life. The second response involved a variety of art that presented an escape from the reality of everyday life through, for example, embracing of alternative 'primitive' culture, decadence, novelty and the rejection of tradition and established moral and social codes. The centrality of the escapist characteristic in this response allowed art of this type to transcend the reality of everyday life, rather than as a reaction or response to it as in modernism.

Jazz fits more readily within the second response to modern life, having many escapist characteristics, and hence, jazz can be seen as the music that is representative of the spirit of the age. It is also clear that the lack of association with the complexities of real life rendered jazz more accessible than modern art, which tackled the problematic aspects of living in the modern age. The inevitable resulting popularity of jazz coincided

with the growth of technology and the 'culture industry', which became an omnipresent factor in the development of the music. The policies of the culture industry served to crudely cement the division between the two types of response to modern life, as described above, into 'serious' and 'popular'. Nowhere is this more prominent than in music, and the definition of jazz as 'popular' music at this stage had a significant impact upon its evolution, especially in Europe, where there was considerable reliance upon the 'culture industry' to provide jazz.

Adorno also rejects jazz as a modernist music, as for him, jazz as a popular music is forever subject to the demands that the public place upon the music through the 'culture industry'. Examination of the British culture industry at this time shows that technological considerations often had a higher priority than programme content, both for audiences and programmers. Broadcast or recorded music gained an authentic and authoritative stance virtually irrespective of quality. The BBC's commitment to providing 'suitable' British entertainment meant that white, civilised 'dance music' rather than black, American 'hot' jazz was the norm, with the record industry similarly biased, as race records restricted black musicians from recording anything other than 'traditional', race-specific material. The BBC's categorisations of music firmly defined dance music as 'popular', the antithesis of 'serious'. The Company demonstrated strict control over the music that was broadcast, and hence, disseminated a standardized product that defined jazz for listeners.

Adorno's views on jazz are as a result of his own experiences of the music through the filter of the European 'culture industry', so he criticises jazz as being lacking in spontaneity, particularly in improvisation, commercially 'toned down', and lacking in history. He sees jazz as a standardized product, using a generalized musical language that is concealed by pseudo-individualisation, but yet uses reassuringly familiar schema and stereotypes. He also accuses jazz of being ahistorical, which indicates a limited acquaintance and understanding of black music. Adorno's theories should not be criticised for his failure to take into account the developments in modern jazz, but instead his work provides a useful theoretical model when examining the evolution of jazz as popular music in the early part of the twentieth century, particularly in Europe.

However, Adorno is also constrained by other factors that can be seen to make his judgement biased, and Mendl's earlier but yet perceptive analysis of the 'appeal of jazz' illuminates some of the deficiencies in his work. Firstly, Adorno held 'serious' modern music in high regard, as in his opinion, inaccessibility was a prerequisite in creating the autonomy necessary for modern art. Jazz as popular music was under the sway of the

culture industry, therefore had no autonomy and therefore was not art. Mendl, on the other hand, rejects the antithesis between jazz and 'serious' music, which allows him to consider the question of whether jazz is art: 'whether or not we have a high or low opinion of jazz, it is a form of music; and as music is an art, it follows that jazz is an art form' (1927:162) and cites earlier examples of music which are considered art but have been or are currently popular. Crucially, Mendl's work provides the counter-argument to Adorno's culture industry theory: 'It has been said that jazz making is an industry; so it may be, but that does not prevent it from being also an art.' (1927:163), and also recognises that the artistic appeal of jazz is different to that of classical music. Jazz, for Adorno, can only aspire to the lofty status of classical music, and the major flaws in his arguments result from the fact that he inflexibly imposes the same conditions upon jazz as in his analyses of classical music.

Both writers recognise the links between 'serious' and 'popular' music, but whereas Mendl sees jazz as the continuation of the evolutionary strand of 'dance music', Adorno interprets the features common to both types of music, such as syncopation and instrumentation, to prove that jazz is unoriginal. Mendl, conversely, sees the development of such features in jazz in a way that he believes will eventually influence 'classical' composers. For Adorno, the musical score represents the work in its most pure form, as in reproduction or performance it is subject to external, and often material influences. This presents a problem with jazz, in that the performance is essential for the full realisation of a work. Adorno dismisses the new relationship between creator and the performer in jazz, whereas Mendl recognises the fundamental importance of the performer or arranger (1927:164).

Whilst commercial jazz apparently fits within Adorno's theory of mass culture, he admits to a problem of contingency with 'hot' jazz 'even though this music, at least in Europe, has reached only a fraction of the general public' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:64), and his attempts to explain hot jazz are vague and largely unconvincing. He asserts that hot jazz allows 'the upper class to maintain a clear conscience about its taste' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:51) whilst being unintelligible to the majority. Although this allows Adorno to be critical of the music as totalitarian and fascist, surely the fact that 'hot' jazz was not principally a product of and disseminated by the culture industry for mass consumption grants it a certain 'remoteness' that might allow it to be appreciated as modern art? Adorno's belief, based on his experiences of the music in Germany, that jazz is the result of the two extremes of sweet, or salon, music and the march leads him to position 'hot' jazz centrally, and he therefore asserts that 'The jazz subject of hot jazz is not free, it is a victim of the collective.' ([1936], trans. Daniel,

1989:64). Hence, it is 'hot' jazz which Adorno sees as the basis for 'stabilized' jazz which 'too soon condemned to classical status, will continue its meagre specialized existence.' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:68). Again, Adorno seems incapable of recognising that jazz could exist as a musical art form outside the classical sphere, commenting that once 'hot' jazz splits off from its origins, 'jazz will be beyond redemption.' ([1936], trans. Daniel, 1989:68). As we have seen, the many restrictive factors acting upon Adorno could not allow him to theorise differently, but yet his prediction of the future independence of hot jazz is remarkably accurate.

Mendl makes three main predictions for the future of jazz, firstly that 'composers will go on turning out syncopated dance tunes by the hundreds every year' (1927:180), with only a few of these becoming well known, leading to the stagnation and death of the genre. Secondly, like Adorno, Mendl sees a possible future for 'jazz compositions of an artistic kind' as 'jazz may form the basis of an art form apart from dancing' (1927:184) as a minority interest within classical music, an idea also expounded by Lambert: 'the next move in the development of jazz will come, almost inevitably, from the sophisticated or highbrow composers' (1934:198). Finally, most significantly, Mendl can see that jazz may 'become a product of genuine artistic value, without losing its popular appeal' and that 'somebody [a composer] may appear who possesses a real genius for syncopated dance music' (1927:181). In his appreciation of Duke Ellington's 'stabilised' jazz, Adorno came close to this idea, but his reliance on the 'culture industry' as a way of analysing the appeal of jazz does not allow him to grant jazz such autonomy, even hypothetically. Indeed, Adornian arguments that jazz, as a popular music, had no right to artistic status persisted and led to Henry Pleasants, in his book, *Death of a Music: The Decline of the European Tradition and the Rise of Jazz*, arguing for the 'recognition and acceptance [of jazz] as a new art music' (1961:9). Mendl seems to have greater insight than Adorno into the nature of popular culture, even at this very early stage. Rather than the Adornian 'perennial' fashion, Mendl asserts that jazz will either change and develop or disappear completely when he concludes that 'jazz is a product of a restless age...[it] will either be trained and turned to artistic uses or else vanish utterly from our midst as a living force'. (1927:186).

Part Two: The Evolving Presence of Jazz in Britain

Chapter 4

Case study:

In Dahomey: A Negro Musical Comedy in London, 1903

In Dahomey: A Negro Musical Comedy was composed and conducted by Will Marion Cook, an important figure in the history of black American music in Britain as in 1903 he brought this show and also, in 1919, the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, to London. Both groups consisted entirely of black performers, and represented a conscious effort by Cook to promote black music and musicians. Cook had obtained a 'classical' music education, including studying the violin under Joachim in Berlin and at the National Conservatory in New York, which at the time was headed by Dvorak, who 'urged American composers to forge a new path using the indigenous musics of America' (Carter, 2000:207). Cook made his Carnegie Hall debut and received a promising review, but was clearly classified as a 'colored violinist' and realised that his career as a performer would be limited by the fact that he was black. He then devoted himself to composition, composing several musicals in his lifetime and influencing other black musicians and composers, most notably Duke Ellington (Dixon 1992:14-15).¹

Cook first became well known through *Clorindy, the Origin of the Cakewalk*, which through his sheer determination was performed at the Casino Roof Garden in New York in 1898 (Dixon, 1992:15). Cook commented optimistically on the importance of this achievement for black artists: 'Negroes were at last on Broadway, and there to stay. Gone was the uff-dah of the minstrel! Gone the Massa Linkum stuff! We were artists and we were going a long, long way.' (Cook, 1947:233).

Significantly, Cook came into contact with many black composers, librettists, lyricists and performers in New York that shared his aim to elevate the image of the Negro. He was a member of the 'All-Star Stock Company' at Worth's Museum that 'worked to train a professional group of show people that became the core company of many later shows' (Riis, 1989:26). Indeed, the show *A Trip to Coontown*, written by Bob Cole, who was the leader of this company, provided a precedent for *In Dahomey*, as it had

¹ Cook taught Ellington 'some of the standard devices for melody writing taught at conservatories' as he recognised that Ellington would never attend a conservatory himself. He encouraged Ellington to 'let your inner self break through and guide you. Don't try to be anything but yourself'. (Collier, 1987:109)

'a continuous plot and a full cast of characters, and it provided a full evening's entertainment; it thus became the first full-length black musical comedy actually written, performed, and managed by blacks. It sparked many imitators and inaugurated a decade of New York shows patronized and applauded by both black and white audiences.'
(Riis, 1989:28)

Cook was one of a group of black artists that met at the flat of comedy duo Bert Williams and George Walker and then Marshall's Hotel, both on West 53rd Street, for evenings of 'Southern Food, syncopated music, and stimulating dialogue on how, in effect, to remove the minstrel mask from the musical stage' (Carter, 2000:207). This group was to be the basis for the formation of the Memphis Students, a group that visited Britain in 1905, and the Clef Club, organised in 1910 by James Reese Europe to assert the aims of the group more publicly, particularly through concerts at Carnegie Hall from 1912. Specifically, Cook became acquainted with artists who were to be fundamental to the later success of *In Dahomey* such as Williams and Walker and poet and lyricist Paul Laurence Dunbar (Southern, 1983:231). Indeed, Will Marion Cook's son, Mercer, recalled that *In Dahomey* was conceived specifically as an operetta for Williams and Walker (Cook, Mercer; symposium paper contained in IJS 'Cook' file, p.8).

In Dahomey opened in New York in 1903, and was the first full-length black musical comedy on Broadway (Riis, 1989:91). Later in the year the cast sailed for Britain, opening at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London in May where the show ran for seven months (Sampson, 1980:25). The original cast remained touring in Britain until 1904, when they returned to America and were replaced by new performers (Riis, 1989:104). Crucially, *In Dahomey* was not only the first black musical comedy to appear in Britain, but also the most significant, successful and widely influential (due to the length of its run) all-black entertainment to be staged in Britain since the nineteenth century minstrel shows. As such, an examination of the nature of this show and the responses to it is clearly fundamental to understanding the role of black American culture in British society in the twentieth century. The show is mentioned in the standard literature, but has only been considered in depth by Thomas Riis (1996), who mainly considers the show in an American context, and Jeffrey Green (1983a), who provides a sociological background to the London run through examination of contemporary newspaper reports.² In this chapter I shall combine elements of these two approaches in an attempt to unravel the reception and significance of the show in Britain.

² Dr. Marva Griffin Carter, Georgia State University has undertaken extensive work on Will Marion Cook. Her biography on Cook is due for publication imminently.

Firstly, the very choice of Dahomey as the main location of the musical is significant. Dahomey had been conquered by the French in 1851, and therefore this setting provided an opportunity for the civilising influence of white Europeans to be shown. However, before this conquest Dahomey had developed a reputation as an 'aggressive military power', whose people were alleged to practice human sacrifice and cannibalism (Riis, 1996:xix), thereby conforming to the widespread white myth of 'savage Africa'. Therefore, although in one way 'civilised', Dahomey still had the connotations of being exotic, remote and primitive that would provoke public curiosity in a show set there. This was clearly a significant part of Cook's plan for the show, as it was originally entitled 'The Cannibal King' (Riis, 1996:xviii), and there is a reference to cannibalism in the first line of the *Caboceer's Entrance*, when the chorus sing: 'We are the subjects of King EatEmAll'.

Riis suggests that Dahomey would have been familiar to educated African-Americans as 'the last major port-of-call for slave ships making the infamous "middle passage" in the early nineteenth century' (1996:xix). Inspiration for the show could also be traced back to the Dahomians that were features of American exhibitions that Cook and Dunbar, as educated Americans, would have almost certainly visited in the late nineteenth century. In addition, Bert Williams and George Walker, who were to become the stars of *In Dahomey*, were even employed to take the places of some of the tribe who arrived late for the San Francisco exhibition of 1894, and therefore gained some knowledge of customs and rituals:

'Bert and George were among the 'natives' hired in the hoax, and for a few weeks they impersonated Dahomians, dressed in animal skins, posing among the potted palm trees'
(Charters, 1970:25).

Indeed, it seems that the writers of the show were trying to present an authentic image of Dahomey, as Riis' comparison of *In Dahomey* with the 1864 writings of the British explorer and writer Sir Richard Burton on the Dahomian tribes demonstrates some significant similarities, for example the inclusion in both of 'pompous ceremonial activity, complete with caboceers, musicians, jesters, and griots' (1996:xx). This indicates that the writers had been influenced by the facts that were available to them at the time.

The British public had also encountered displays of African culture at this time, although significantly the Dahomian tribes probably did not arrive in Britain until after

the performances of *In Dahomey*.³ Riis notes that 'Dahomey was not an obvious representative of all Africa; Egypt and Ethiopia had commonly been used for that purpose before' (1996:xix), and a programme for the Imperial International Exhibition in 1909 indicates the unfamiliarity of Dahomey compared to Egypt:

'one day the European tourist will go to far Dahomey as he now goes to Egypt in search of sunshine and merriment in the winter months. Until that time comes he must seek his amusement, instruction and entertainment in this Dahomey village'
(Greenhalgh, 1988:94-5)

Therefore, the setting of Dahomey would have had particular exotic appeal for the British public, due to either its unfamiliarity or its legendary status for those who were well read and acquainted with Burton's account.

The Imperial International Exhibition programme refers to a 'tribal village' display, a feature typical of exhibitions held in cities all over Europe around the turn of the century that exploited the fascination of whites with the exotic. British exhibition organisers had seen the potential in the '*tableaux vivants*' at the 1889 Paris Exposition (Greenhalgh, 1988:90), and African tribes were brought to Britain and could be observed carrying out their daily routines in their specially created villages (Green, 1998:5). In England such exhibits emphasised the idea of imperial power conquering and ruling 'primitive' people, and had particular appeal for the Victorian public as they provided a glimpse of 'exotic' races that was an undoubtedly real but yet non-threatening experience, which allowed a balance to be maintained between authenticity and good taste.

Crucially to the preservation of this equilibrium that ensured the success of the Exhibitions, Mitchell notes that 'two parallel pairs of distinctions were maintained, between the visitor and the exhibit and between the exhibit and what it expressed' (1992:297). The visitor was surrounded by but yet excluded from the reality of the exhibits as a 'safe' distance of separation between visitors and the exhibits was maintained, both physically through use of fences and enclosures; and also through the concept of the Exhibition in which the world was catalogued and presented in such a way as to give an false effect of order and certainty (Mitchell, 1992:290). Egyptian Orientalists visiting the exhibit of their own country at the Paris Exposition noted order even within the chaos, describing the exhibit as 'carefully chaotic' (Mitchell, 1992:291). Indeed, an exhibit, 'however realistic, always remained distinguishable from the reality it claimed to represent' (Mitchell, 1992:297). In particular, the realism of the exhibits

³ Green's earliest evidence of the Dahomian Warriors in Britain is a group of postcards from 1905 (1998:11).

was undermined by the underlying and reassuring presence of the commercial world from outside the Exhibition gates even in the Exhibition's most exotic areas, for example, buildings that appeared exotic externally could turn out to contain a conventional modern coffee house or shop. Of course, the commercial and financial potential of the exhibitions must have been important to the organisers, and also to those being exhibited, but these motives were hidden from the public in favour of more lofty educational aims: 'When presenting African villages, the promoters did not tell the public that the living exhibits were seasoned travellers and semi-professionals. The image was the reality.' (Green, 1998:7).

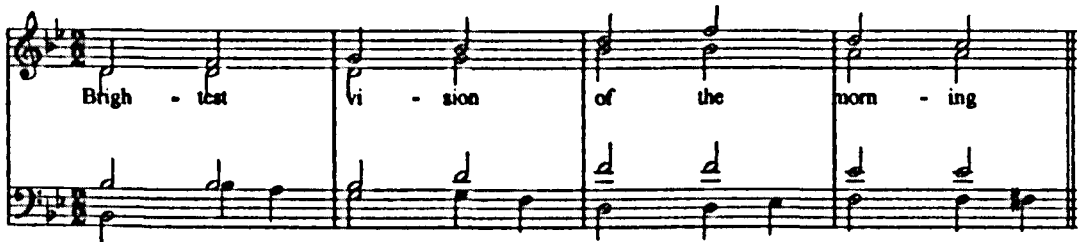
Similarly to the exhibitions, black theatrical entertainment had long provided the British public with experiences of black culture which were undoubtedly real, but which allowed distance between the performers and the audience through the conventions of the stage, and also between the show and the reality of the American South through the consistent use of expected clichés and stereotypes, and blackface performers extended the distance between minstrel shows and the reality of black life still further. Indeed, possibly for these reasons, minstrel shows were often considered more respectable entertainment than the British music hall in the nineteenth century (Pickering, 1986:73), and provided the precedent for Negro musical comedies such as *In Dahomey*, which itself offered an suitably distanced but yet real and authentic experience of exotic culture. The perception that *In Dahomey* was generally acceptable entertainment was emphasised by a performance given by the company at Buckingham Palace in June 1903, and later, in December, the show was advertised as "Christmas entertainment" suitable for children.

In addition, the fact that the British upper classes could 'justify' the value of Will Marion Cook's work as he was a pupil of Dvorak and could successfully apply white musical values to this black music probably contributed to the widespread acceptance and popularity of the work. However, although Cook's Western training allowed the acceptance of his music by some people in Britain, others saw the intrinsically Negro qualities of the music as the principal attraction of the show. Indeed, the popularity of *In Dahomey* was essentially due to the combination of the familiar and the unusual, and elements of black American and white European cultures, which are used to great effect in Cook's music. In the *Caboccer's Entrance*, for example, Cook 'constructed a kind of musical evolution, from pseudo-African primitivism to African-American ragtime to European romantic transcendence' (Riis, 1996:xxxiii). The number begins with typical musical depiction of exotic savagery: a fifth drone bass, accompanied by a pentatonic melody (see example 1). Syncopation is then dramatically introduced from

the outset of the singing, and the number ends with a four-part chorale in B flat major (see example 2).



Example 1 *Caboceers Entrance* (bars 6-10)



Example 2 *Caboceers Entrance* (bars 80-83)

Will Marion Cook himself clearly saw a combination of Negro spontaneity and Western training as essential to his work: 'Negroes are saturated with melody, and they only require training to exhibit magnificent results' (*Daily News*, 16/5/1903:6)- here he may well have been thinking of his own life.

It seems that the theatrical community in London was in a state of some stagnation at the time of the arrival of *In Dahomey* company, and this contributed to the significant impact of the show in London. As the *Weekly Dispatch* (31/5/1903:8) stated with reference to the show, 'the first and foremost requirements of a jaded theatrical community is novelty'. Sixth months later, *The Era* was still describing the show as a refreshing change from standard British entertainment:

'The fresh and novel experiment of introducing to the jaded Londoner an American musical comedy played throughout by real coloured people, and written and composed by gifted representatives of the Negro race, with lyrics from the pen of the members of the same interesting nationality...' (3/10/1903:15)

Indeed, many newspaper reports of *In Dahomey* mention the novelty of a show that was entirely performed by a coloured cast, and this seems to have aroused considerable public curiosity. The review of the show in *The Globe* stated that 'they [the Negroes] attract and they amaze. Nothing quite like '*In Dahomey*' has been seen in

London before, and the production should therefore be a success of curiosity, if of nothing else.' A preview in the *Daily News* on the morning that the show opened in London emphasised that 'Save that the scenery was painted by white men, this is a negro production throughout, the ninety persons in the company being all of that race'.⁴ Interestingly, when a performance of selections from *In Dahomey* was given at Buckingham Palace on 23rd June 1903 to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Wales, the company appeared alongside a Punch and Judy show and a troupe of performing colliers (*Era*, 27/6/1993:12). This gives an insight into the novelty appeal of a show performed by an entirely Negro company, which provoked curiosity from everyone, including the King.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, there were many nineteenth century precedents for black and blackface American performers visiting Britain, and the popularity of the minstrel show ensured that by the end of the century a clear stereotypical image of the Negro had been established in Britain. However, the strength of this stereotype was such that the all-black minstrel troupes that visited in the late nineteenth century and presented a more realistic portrayal of plantation life were not as popular as blackface groups that sought to exaggerate Negro characteristics. Significantly also, the last tour of an entire black American minstrel company was probably in the 1880s, and hence Britons were probably much more familiar with home-grown blackface minstrel shows than genuine black performers. It is in the context of the prominence of blackface minstrelsy in Britain, and the fact that this was the main way in which black culture was represented in the nineteenth century, that contemporary reviews of *In Dahomey* should be understood.

Significantly, there was genuine fascination that the show's black performers had so many different skin colours⁵ which reflects the familiarity with blackface shows in Britain, where all the performers would be made-up as a similar colour:

'In Dahomey is played entirely by a Coon company, and its plot, like its exponents, has various degrees of colour.'
(*Daily Mail*, 18/5/1903:3)

⁴ This indicates that the orchestra for the show must also have been black.

⁵ Interestingly, Bert Williams wore burnt cork make-up. This may have been due to the lightness of his skin, but Hoefer suggests that this was part of a deliberate attempt to bring an artistic side to blackface, and to compromise with audiences expecting minstrel show conventions: 'Negroes were accepted only as minstrels and as they went into the Negro musical comedy era (1890-1910) there were many oppositions to overcome.' (Hoefer (n.d.) in 'Williams' file in IJS).

'The company is a very large one, and all colours, from the slightest trace which the octaroon possesses to the deep purple of the full-blooded negro, are represented'
(*Sunday Sun*, 17/5/1903:6)

This lack of contact with real black performers meant that the show was often considered with reference to the stereotypical Negro that had been delineated on British stages for several decades previous to the presentation of *In Dahomey*. The critic of *The Sphere* (23/5/1903:162) regretted that Cook had not included 'old plantation melodies', staple parts of minstrel show repertoire, in *In Dahomey*. In particular, the beliefs that a typical Negro was innately musical and often overly emotional clearly influenced several reviewers of the show. For example, the 'natural dash and swing' (*Daily Mail*, 18/5/1903:3) of the performance was widely appreciated, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* stated that 'the music was utterly and completely negro. It had tune, prettiness, rhythm and catchiness' (18/5/1903:11). Will Marion Cook apparently conducted the Overture facing the audience and singing along, and the freedom of this unusual style was noted:

'the composer conducted with much vigour, singing most of the tunes with his band with a kind of untrammelled spontaneity that finds expression in the whole action of the piece, and more particularly in the dancing, which seems the natural expression of a racial instinct, not the laboriously acquired art of schools'
(*The Times*, 18/5/1903:12)

Many reviewers praised the enthusiasm with which the chorus carried out their roles on stage: 'They play, and sing, and dance as if they thoroughly enjoyed the business' (*The Standard* 18/5/1903:5). However, for some people this was clearly offensive to British sensibilities, and furthermore, merely confirmed the nineteenth century claims of black simplicity and inferiority:

'The chorus sang, as they danced, with an infectious enthusiasm and admirable training, but their general effect, like that of the orchestra, was distinctly too powerful.'
(*St. James Gazette*, 18/5/1903:15)

'Here was the coon in music, naked and unashamed, merry, pathetic, eager and alive with emotion; but always limited by a certain circle of not very wide ambitions'
(*Pall Mall Gazette* 18/5/1903:11)

'coon-songs and cake-walks are made to seem like the obvious expressions of genuine, if somewhat elementary emotions'
(*The Times*, 18/5/1903:12)

Although the idea that Negroes were prone to an excess of emotion was even asserted by Will Marion Cook in an interview: 'We are more emotional than you...We are easily

moved. But the Englishman- he is difficult to rouse, but once you have roused him he is the greatest fighter on earth' (*Daily News* 16/5/1903:6), these reactions to *In Dahomey* show that it was not always successful in achieving Cook's aim to elevate black culture away from minstrelsy.

In addition, the music of *In Dahomey* had several features that may have prompted comparisons with earlier British experiences of black and blackface entertainment. Firstly, the choral style of some of the numbers recalls spirituals, which had been presented in Britain by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the late nineteenth century and had become part of the later minstrel shows, as the standard and size of choruses had improved and enlarged (Hamm, 1979:138-9). As we have seen, the *Caboceer's Entrance* in *In Dahomey* ends with a four-part chorale which becomes harmonically adventurous through use of chromatic voice leading. This is reminiscent of religious songs, not only in musical terms, but also through the eulogising lyrics: 'Brightest vision of the morning/Deign to glad our longing eyes', 'Great thy name and great thy station/Caboceers long may ye reign'. Secondly, the finale of *In Dahomey*, advertised on a poster as 'Special: At Finale of last Act will be presented a Grand Spectacular Cake Walk', is an extension of the traditional 'walkround' minstrel show finale in which couples improvised steps in competition with each other (Stearns, 1968:122). Finally, the show also contains important song types of the minstrel show, such as the sentimental love ballad and the 'Jonah man' song, which would already be familiar to British audiences. Indeed, most of the songs are based upon standard Tin Pan Alley forms, although in some cases Cook extended these (see for example, *Society* or *The Czar*).

Therefore, the combination of the novelty value of the presentation of black culture by a genuine all-black cast, but in a form which yet drew upon familiar themes and conventions associated with previous black and blackface entertainment, was clearly significant to the success of *In Dahomey* in London. But in addition, the fact that the show also fitted within contemporary popular culture in Britain in the early twentieth century was also extremely important. As was noted in Chapter 1, the musical standard of music hall entertainment in Britain had risen from the late nineteenth century, and by the time of the performances of *In Dahomey* in 1903, musical comedy had taken over as the main form of popular theatrical entertainment. Thus, the quality of the music of *In Dahomey* alone, which was clearly exceptional within the musical comedy genre, ensured that the show was congruent within current theatrical fashions. *In Dahomey* also fitted within the contemporary vogue for 'exotic' theatrical entertainment set in far-

off lands. Indeed, for one reviewer, race was initially the only way in which *In Dahomey* could be expected to be distinguished from other similar entertainment in Britain:

'we had vaguely supposed *In Dahomey* to be like any other 'musical comedy', save in the complexion of its performers; and it was in an idle kill-time mood we visited the Shaftesbury Theatre...Since Japanese performances of Sada Yacco⁶ we had seen nothing so curiously disquieting as *In Dahomey*. The resultant impression left on our mind was one of strangeness, the strangeness of the colored race blended with the strangeness of certain American things.'

(Riis, 1989:103)

Certainly, the music was considered by *The Star* (18/5/1903:1) as 'one of the best items of the production' and the *St. James Gazette* declared that Will Marion Cook had 'considerable talent for a really tuneful score' (18/5/1903:15). Indeed, the score shows that Cook had a sound grasp of various styles, as there is a good mixture of musical material, including 'coon' songs, sentimental ballads, ragtime-style songs, and syncopated dances as well as numbers that are indebted to nineteenth century 'classical' music. Indeed, Cook had the ability to exploit conventional Tin Pan Alley forms dramatically through structural extensions and adventurous harmonies; the skilfulness of his writing can be seen in extended numbers such as *Society* (see below).⁷ Songs are frequently unified by motivic development, and the introductions often use material from, and thus balance, the central refrain. A similar balance also operates in the large-scale structure of the piece, as *On Emancipation Day*, the last song of the show on which the cakewalk finale is based, is used extensively in the overture, suggesting a cyclic form. The clear musical links and devices used to underline the drama would have contributed to the understanding of an audience who were unable to follow the plot⁸ or understand the dialogue, which reviews indicate were significant problems for the British audience.

The number of reviews that praise the show for its lack of vulgarity seems to suggest that this was expected of a musical comedy at this time. The review in the *Daily Mail* (18/5/1903:3) said that there was 'never a suggestion of vulgarity. It will be well if some English concoctors of musical comedy take a lesson from the stranger within our gates' and *The Era* (3/10/1903:15) stated that 'the musical comedy is as harmless as it is

⁶ Sada Yacco was a koto (Japanese zither) soloist, who was in Europe in the early years of the twentieth century.

⁷ Reviews such as *The Era* (3/10/1903) also praised the orchestration of the work as 'truly excellent', and various accompaniment textures can be seen in the score. None of the original orchestrations survive, but some parts are reconstructed in Riis' *The Music and Scripts of In Dahomey* (1996).

⁸ Even in retrospect the plot of *In Dahomey* seems extremely convoluted, with various sources contradicting each other. A brief suggested synopsis is contained in Appendix 2.

amusing; and its humour, if simple, is never coarse or indelicate. Its popularity, therefore, can easily be accounted for.' Indeed, the comedy aspect of the show was widely praised, and most reviewers recognised the importance of Williams and Walker as the comedians who 'carried' the show (*St. James Gazette*, 18/5/1903:15). The *Sunday Sun* reported 'on two [actors]- Bert Williams and George Walker- the success of the piece largely depends. They are both excellent comedians, and it would be difficult to find any better on the London stage.' (17/5/1903:6).

Certainly, the humour of *In Dahomey* was essential to its appeal in Britain, being based on the slapstick and puns familiar to music hall audiences. *The Times* (18/5/1903:12) recognised 'a number of dialogues [of Williams and Walker] that occasionally remind one of the pairs of knockabout artists' at the music halls'. The *Daily Mail* (18/5/1903:3) compared Bert William's Jonah Man to the Christy and Templeton Minstrels (a blackface troupe) in its 'spirit of drollery', as the song *I'm a Jonah Man* humorously portrays a typical Negro who suffers from permanent bad luck:

'My hard luck started when I was born leas' so the old folks say
Dat same hard luck been my be's fren' up to die very day
When I was young my mamma's frens to find a name they tried
They named me after Papa and the same day Papa died.'

This song, which Williams wrote with Alex Rogers in 1900 (Charters, 1970:71), was representative of Williams' comic stage personality, and interpolated into *In Dahomey* with great success.⁹ The *Daily Mail* related how 'those who came to scoff remained to laugh. And they did laugh' describing the show as 'a captivating and attractive mixture, thoroughly irresponsible and vastly hilarious' (18/5/1903:3). The show, and particularly the performance of Williams, clearly loosened up a possibly inhibited or puzzled British audience as he 'upset the gravity of everybody, and the preservation of a rigid and decorous countenance became absolutely impossible' (*Daily Mail* 18/5/1903:3). The reviewer in the *Daily News* clearly links Williams' abilities to the fact that he was black: 'In my opinion, no white American comedian can compare to Bert Williams when it comes to being funny' (16/5/1903:6).

However, the show's comic double act clearly had serious ambitions for the show. Having encountered real Africans at the American exhibition, Williams and Walker stated their intention to 'delineate and feature native African characters as far as we could, and still remain American, and make our acting interesting and entertaining to American audiences' (Riis, 1996:xx). This statement shows that Williams and Walker

⁹ This song is a clear precedent for *Nobody* (1905), another Rogers/Williams collaboration that became Williams' trademark song.

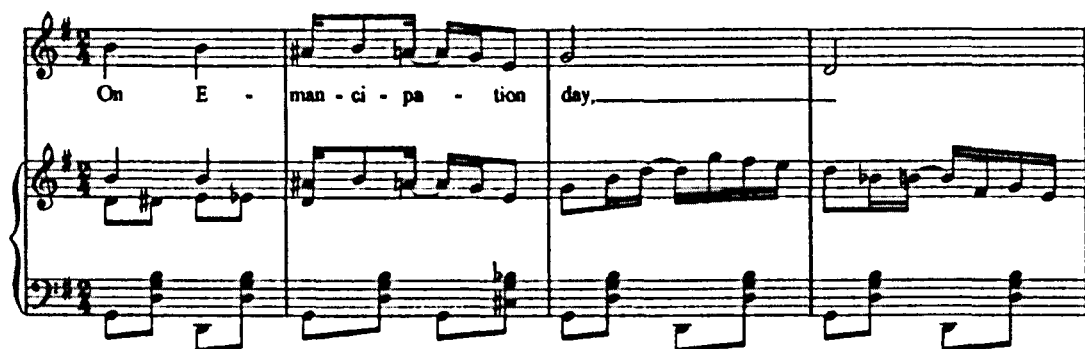
had both black pride and white aspirations and thus exemplifies the idea of the dual identity of the American Negro, described by W.E.B. Du Bois in his seminal work *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in the same year as *In Dahomey* was first presented on the stage (Carter, 2000:213):

'One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.'
(Du Bois, 1903:3-4)

The Williams and Walker double act in *In Dahomey* illustrates and exaggerates the two sides of the American Negro, with Walker as the aspiring 'dandy' and Williams' droll, lazy 'darky' character. This even extends to the names of the respective characters, Walker as 'Pinkerton', a name familiar to British audiences even in the days before Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* as that of a character from a play of the same name, and Williams as 'Homestead', reminiscent of the American South. Furthermore, the idea of Negro 'twoness' is clearly embodied in both the music and the dramatic content of *In Dahomey*. Indeed, a particularly prominent idea in the show is the striving of blacks to reach the exalted social position of whites, which was representative of the actual aims of many of the company. As we have seen, the enthusiasm that the performers exhibited, supposedly to attain these white standards, was widely praised by British critics, probably due in part to the fact that this flattered the white audience. However, paradoxically, *In Dahomey* also made 'an explicit appeal to black pride' (Riis, 1996:xxxiv), as many of the songs present positive images of blacks. The song *On Emancipation Day* is a prominent in the show due to its extended use in the overture and finale. The lyrics describe the excessive joy of the freed slaves, and suggest that they have not only reached the exalted social position towards which they have been aiming in earlier songs, but have transcended whites in a spontaneous expression of joy of which whites are not capable:¹⁰

¹⁰ Carter suggests that this song made 'a clear, perhaps even prophetic statement about the appropriation of African-American culture that would characterize the emergent popular music industry in subsequent decades' (2000:210).

'On Emancipation day
 All you white folks clear de way...
 When dey hear dem ragtime tunes
 White folks try to pass as coons
 On Emancipation day.'

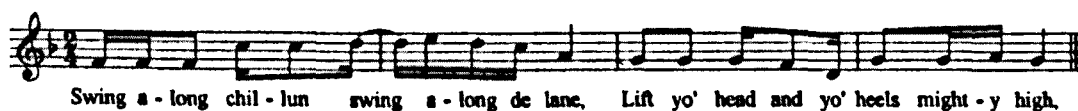


Example 3 Chorus from *On Emancipation Day* bars 46-49

The opening chorus of the show, *Swing Along*,¹¹ portrays the Negroes at leisure, and also indicates the exclusion of whites who can only watch in envy:

'Swing along chillun, swing along de lane
 Lif yo' head and ya' heels mighty high
 Swing along chillun, t'ain't a goin' do rain
 Sun's as red as de rose in de sky

Come along Mandy, come along Sure
 White fo'ks a'watchin' an' seein' what you do
 White fo'ks jealous when you'se walkin' two by tow
 So swing along chillun, swing along chillun, swing along.'

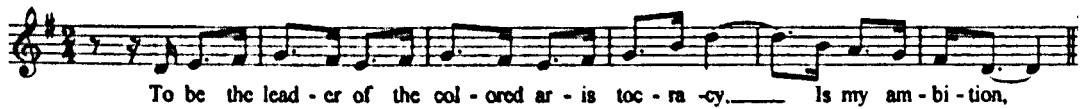


Example 4 *Swing Along* (bars 5-8)

It is significant that these songs that present positive images of black people use dialect and syncopation, representative respectively of black speech and black music, whilst those characters that aspire to white 'high society' usually have non-dialect lyrics and non-syncopated music. In this way, the combination of vernacular language and syncopation are used for dramatic effect throughout the show. In contrast, the song

¹¹ Mercer Cook recalled that Will Marion Cook composed *Swing Along* in London, and was determined to include it in the show. On the first night 'the curtain was delayed for twenty minutes while Jesse Shipp and others made a last attempt to dissuade him'. But it was eventually included and 'the audience, composed of supposedly blasé Britishers, cheered for ten minutes' (symposium paper in IJS 'Cook' file, p.10). *Swing Along* was clearly a popular song, as it exists in several arrangements published separately a few years later. This song was also included in the programme of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra under the direction of Cook on his return to Britain in 1919.

Leader of the Coloured Aristocracy describes 'the colonizer's scheme to raise the social class consciousness of the Dahomians' (Riis, 1989:97): 'Now to establish swell society for color'd folks I have a yearning/And from the high ton'd 'ristocratic white folks how to lead I have been learning'.



Example 5 *Leader of the Coloured Aristocracy* (bars 9-14)

A strict dotted rhythm is used in the melodic line of the verses to suggest propriety (see example 5), and there is minimal syncopation and simple harmony in the chorus. The call and response between the soloist and chorus used in this song is one example of the way in which the show demonstrates the solidarity of the black people in their aims. Similarly, the use of chorale-like passages in the *Caboceer's Entrance* gives these leaders of the black community pseudo-religious importance. The big chorus number *The Czar* also demonstrates the solidarity of the community behind their leader:

'He is the greatest thing
And known afar,
The black folks always sing
He is the Czar
His style is super fine
He's always right in line
He says 'the world is mine'
He is the Czar.'

In the verses of the same song, the importance of the Czar as representing every type of leader for the community is emphasised:

'There's a man who's mighty grand
Who rules supreme in Dixieland
He's the president, the Mayor and the Governor,
He's the citizen's private counsellor.'

There are indications that the aspirations of the characters in the show are fulfilled, as the contrast is made towards the end of the show between the primitive and the civilised. The lyrics of the song *On Broadway In Dahomey Bye and Bye* describe the expected transformation of Dahomey when the colonizers arrive, and show a stark contrast between the wildness of the place and the values and ideas which will be imposed upon it, although the tone of the song is humorous: 'You'll see on the sides of roads and hills/ "Use Carter's Little Liver Pills"' and 'then have Wagner sung by parrots every night'.

In Dahomey concludes with four instrumental numbers, the first of which, *March: On Emancipation Day*, not surprisingly is based on the chorus from the previous song. However, it begins with a section that uses a D minor pentatonic melody, strongly reminiscent of the *Caboceer's Entrance* near the beginning of the show, except here there is greater use of syncopation:



Example 6 *March: On Emancipation Day* (bars 11-14)

In this way, the image of the 'primitive' that was presented at the start of the work is contrasted sharply and directly with the closing image of black people as free and joyful, and empowered to ask whites to move out of the way, and even leading white people to aspire to be black. Thus, in the music as well as in the drama of *In Dahomey*, we see a spirit of empowered optimism, which Riis defines as 'a synecdoche for the entire production' (1996:xxxiv).

However, in the case of the composer of *In Dahomey*, the idealistic view of black empowerment as presented in the show itself was influenced by practical realism. In an interview printed in the *Daily News* on the morning on which the show opened in London, Will Marion Cook spoke of his own aspirations, saying that in *In Dahomey*, 'I have not strayed beyond themes that are light and amusing, and only here and there do I give glimpses of higher possibilities'. This indicates that Cook had an acute awareness of the nature of the audiences he was playing to on Broadway and the West End, possibly due to his contact with other black music theatre artists in New York, which inspired in him a more realistic approach to his compositional ventures and tempered his youthful idealism. Crucially, it was important for his works to be performed and heard by as many people as possible to most strongly assert the position of black artists, and this meant making certain artistic compromises. The original libretto for *In Dahomey*, written by Dunbar, Cole and the Johnson brothers, had been revised by Jesse A. Shipp before it was performed, and Mercer Cook commented that 'the result was quite different from the ambitious operetta of which Dad and Dunbar had dreamed, but it was at least successful and brought in more money than the young composer had ever earned' (Cook, Mercer; symposium paper contained in IJS 'Cook' file, p.9). However, Cook's approach to *In Dahomey* was clearly not intended to be a long term compromise of his artistic aims, as he also said that in the future he was aiming to 'produce a little musical melodrama of my own, conducting it

myself; and after that... I mean to rise to the heights of grand opera' (*Daily Mail* 18/5/1903:3). Indeed, examination of Cook's approach to the composition of *In Dahomey* clearly exemplifies in real terms the 'twoness' of on the one hand the striving of blacks towards white status, but yet retaining pride in his own culture.

The fact that some of the numbers in *In Dahomey* do reach operatic proportions shows the seriousness of Cook's intentions. For instance, the Overture shows clear operatic tendencies. It is of a substantial length, and uses a medley form, typical of nineteenth century operetta, with material taken from other numbers in the show. It has been carefully constructed, as some of material is presented in different keys in the overture than in the songs, and short passages unique to the overture are used to link the various sections together. The *Daily Mail* (18/5/1903:3) reported that in the show 'there is one concerted chorus quite in the grand operatic manner, which secured immediate applause', and this probably referred to *Society*. This is one of the longest numbers of the show, but can be divided up into several contrasting sections, which are often motivically related, thus creating unity within the whole. The macrocosmic form of the piece is two sections, equivalent to two standard Tin Pan Alley songs, the first in 4/4 based around A minor and the second in 3/4 time in Bb flat major. A melodramatic, operatic section that includes recitative style writing links the sections. A diagram of the basic structure of this song is shown below (adapted from Riis, 1989:96).

First section				
Introduction	Verse	Solo & chorus	Verse	Solo & chorus
5 bars	16 bars	8 bars	16 bars	8 bars
A	A	B	A	B'
Middle section				
Recitative	Solo & chorus	Solo	Solo	
8 bars	4 bars	6 bars	6 bars	
Final section				
Verse (solo)	Verse (duet)	Refrain (duet)	Refrain (duet & chorus)	
16 bars	16 bars	16 bars	16 bars	
C	C	D	D'	

The operatic tendencies of this number clearly emphasise the aspirations of the characters towards belonging to 'the best society' expressed in the lyrics. The principal emotions of characters, sentimentality and driving ambition, which up until this point in

the show have been mostly kept separate, are brought together for the first time here, hence there is dramatic contrast in the lyrics and mood of each section. The verses of the first section show the ambitions of the colonizer Hamilton Lightfoot:

'To get in high society I've always had an ambition
 And since I've got the brass, now we're sure to have position
 A royal prince my little girl shall wed
 For since the days of lords and dukes have sped
 It takes a prince to put you at the head of the best society'

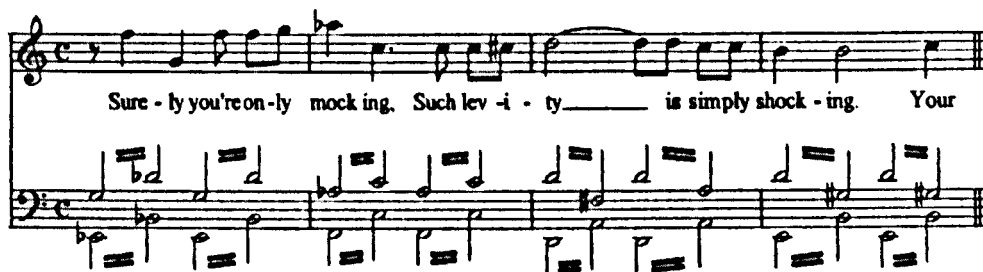
Example 7 *Society* (bars 5-9)

The verses are in A minor, and use a simple melody and largely un-syncopated rhythm. In between the verses there are contrasting passages (B and B' in the above diagram) sung by Pansy, Lightfoot's daughter and Leather, a bootblack whom she loves, and accompanied by the chorus singing sustained four-part harmonies. These repeat the last phrase of the lyrics of the verse that precedes it, and use contrasting keys, D minor and Bb major respectively. Both use the same rhythm, and are further linked through free inversion of the melody of B in B'. The dramatic meaning of these sections is unclear, but the contrast in style and the way that the phrases are echoed between Pansy and Leather suggests that the lovers are absorbed in each other, and possibly not paying full attention to Lightfoot's assertions:

Example 8 Section B of *Society* (bars 22-26)

However, the recitative at the start of the middle section provides instant and dramatic contrast, with a wide ranging vocal line over chromatically shifting tremolo chords, resolving onto A major on the last word. The lyrics show that Pansy believes her father's ambitions to be ridiculous, and show that she is in love with Leather, who to her is a 'royal prince'.

'Surely you're simply mocking
Such levity is simply shocking
You prince for me would be too far above
A royal prince is he I love.'



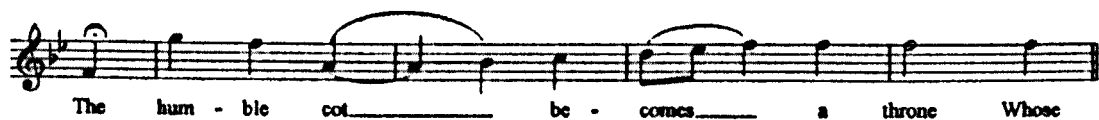
Example 9 Recitative from *Society* bars (58-61)

The three note ascending idea used in B is incorporated into this recitative and thus Pansy's outburst is linked with the earlier sections in which she was singing with Leather. Following the recitative, the music immediately returns to A minor, for a last-ditch attempt by Lightfoot to win his daughter round ('Just think of a house on some big avenue'). In the repeat of this passage he is joined by the chorus, who contribute to the dramatic tension by providing chromatic harmony to the static melody. The repeated monotonous rhythm seems to emphasise Lightfoot's determination and anger with his daughter, who has clearly spoilt his plans. Both the rhythm and tonality clearly link this to the earlier verses (A), and thus although the musical material used in the middle section appears to be new, it is closely derived from the preceding section.

The middle section concludes on an F7 chord, in preparation for the stable Bb flat major of the final section. There are two main themes, C and D, which are linked to earlier material.



Example 10 Theme C from *Society* (bars 83-90)



Example 11 Theme D from *Society* (bars 114-118)

The melody of C uses the three note ascending motive used in B and heard again during the recitative, and the large leap at start of D recalls the start of the recitative (see example 9 above). The message here is clearly 'love conquers all', and stands in contrast to Lightfoot's material ambition. This new sensibility is marked 'by setting the

text to a tender waltz in Bb' (Riis, 1996:xxxv). Pansy's assertion that Leather, although a humble bootblack, is a prince in her eyes is also expanded.

'Love looks not at estate, oh no!
'Twere folly one should think it so
The beggar maid becomes a queen
Who through her lover's eyes is seen.

The humble cot becomes a throne
Whose dwelling place love makes his own
So all man's heart and being sing
Love is the King! Love is the King!

The music builds up to a splendid choral finale, marked *molto pesante*, with an operatic top B flat for the leading lady. The song ends with an instrumental coda, which uses a descending line related to a bass motive introduced at the dramatic climax at the end of the recitative.

Society subtly embodies Negro 'twoness', shown by Lightfoot's aspirations that his daughter will make a good match and secure her future in high society, but, conversely, her happiness in her genuine love for a humble bootblack. This is reflected in the music, clearly demonstrating Cook's skill as a composer and his personal ambition to elevate black musical culture away from the minstrel show. In the context of the whole show, the operatic numbers such as *Society* contrast with the vernacular style of other numbers such as *On Emancipation Day* and *Swing Along*, and thus show 'twoness' of black pride and white aspiration operating on a macrocosmic level in *In Dahomey*. Indeed, the way in which 'twoness' is such an integral part of both the drama and the music of *In Dahomey* indicates certain self-awareness on the parts of the authors and composer. There is recognition by black artists such as Cook, Williams and Walker of the natural characteristics of the Negro, and thus the presentation of the Negro in the show seems to be no longer an exaggerated stereotype enforced by whites, but rather a more realistic self-aware self-parody. This is even shown in the Jonah man song, as the concluding lines of the refrain show that he takes some pride in his lowly status: 'But I'm a good substantial full fledged real first class Jonah man'. For this reason, in retrospect the portrayals of supposedly stereotypical Negroes in *In Dahomey* take on a very different slant compared to earlier, particularly blackface, minstrel shows.

However, there is considerable evidence to suggest that contemporary British audiences simply did not understand the subtleties of the show, due to the powerful influence of the blackface minstrel stereotype on their perception of Negroes. As we have seen, *In Dahomey* included elements of the Negro stereotype that would be familiar to Britons from the minstrel show and were only appreciated on this level by the

audiences in London. Indeed, the combination of primitive savagery and the depiction of civilised, upper class Negroes, who are shown to be aspiring towards white standards, such as in the *Caboceer's Entrance*, is a paradox inherent in nineteenth century minstrel shows, which often emphasised the improving influence of whites on black slaves. The portrayal of Negroes as savages on one hand and civilised people on the other can also be seen with reference to contemporary Exhibitions, where 'African peoples were presented as conquered peoples, and paradoxically, as warriors and soldiers' (Green, 1998:7). In this way, *In Dahomey* appeared to British audiences to be little more than a twentieth century minstrel show or another Exhibition display.

Ironically, the familiarity of British audiences with the native blackface stereotype also meant that when confronted with *In Dahomey*, in which there was an attempt to delineate a more genuine African-American experience, there were criticisms that the show was not authentic and overly American. The *Daily News* (18/5/1903:12) suggested that 'it is just as far as it is characteristically racial that the performance is really interesting'. The reviewer regretted that there was no 'dreamy sentimentality, the gently appealing charm, the almost childish slyness of humour', characteristics that are the 'finest and most attractive in the negro's nature', and that in adopting Parisian fashions on stage the Negroes had assimilated 'what is worst in European civilization'. Similarly, the review in *The Globe* stated:

'Everything is thoroughly American and up-to-date. And that is our chief grievance against "*In Dahomey*"... What we really get is negro-America. We do not get the negro in the rough; we get him with a Yankee veneer' (18/5/1903:8)

In contrast, the more overtly 'African' elements of *In Dahomey* were generally well received in Britain. The popularity of the 'African' numbers seems to have led to their use the start of the show, rather than being scrapped completely, when the finale was restructured soon after the opening night. Riis explains that

'What had been the first scene of the third act, a transformation scene set in Africa with several songs, was shortened and made into a prologue, thus allowing the retention of two strong 'African' musical numbers, 'My Dahomian Queen' and *Caboceer's Entrance* (1996:xv).¹²

Bearing in mind that Cook and Dunbar, as well as Williams and Walker, probably had some knowledge, through the exhibitions, of what Dahomey was really like, these

¹² The original position of the 'African' numbers in the finale is confirmed by a review in *The Sunday Sun* (17/5/1903), which states that 'the closing act, which takes place *In Dahomey*, was, it must be admitted, a fiasco, notwithstanding the fine duet of 'My Dahomian Queen'. The song *My Dahomian Queen* later became the opening song of the show (see Riis, 1996:xv).

African elements were bound to have made a significant impression on a British audience, including the reviewer in *The Times* (18/5/1903:12): 'When the scene changes to Africa...a succession of apparently irrelevant pictures of native life are given'. These included a war dance, choruses 'sung with stentorian voices', and 'fine effects of costume and stage management'. More likely though, the popularity of the 'African' numbers was due the use of typical 'Tin Pan Alley' formulas such as minor keys, modal melodies and drone accompaniments. The first song in the score, *My Dahomian Queen*, begins with an extensive introduction using diminished harmonies, which continue under the verse, undermining the tonality of the start of each verse. These features are all included on Derek Scott's list of 'Orientalist devices' that form the 'Orientalist musical code' that was established by the late nineteenth century (1998:310). Scott shows that 'many of these features can be applied indiscriminately as markers of cultural difference' (1998:327), and that the Orientalist musical code could be used to broadly indicate the 'otherness' of any particular setting. The use of these musical features in *In Dahomey* meant that the fundamental exoticism of the African setting was understood and appreciated by British audiences. Therefore, it can be seen that the reception of *In Dahomey* in Britain was strongly influenced by the audiences' rather limited and standardised previous experiences of Negro and African cultures.

In examining the reception and understanding of *In Dahomey* in London, it is interesting to compare the British critical reaction with a review of the show in Britain by an American journalist, S.J. Pryor, in the *New York Times* (19/7/1903:3) under the heading 'Colored Folk in English Eyes...The Inner Meaning of the Play at the Shaftesbury' (also printed in the *London Express*). Pryor describes the show as 'a perfect cinematograph of the 'negro' life of New York, or of Boston, or of any other Northern American city today. It is a tragedy as well as a comedy'. Pryor recognises the two sides of the show, the presentation of the 'irresponsible, happy-go-lucky, old time darky character', which was clearly well understood by the British public, and the 'very pathetic and very serious and ominous other side of life of the coloured race in America' which was not.

Pryor himself believed that Britons did not understand that the show was representative of real life, and attributes the British lack of comprehension to the fact that the average Briton 'requires a guidebook' to understand the humour of the show, as they could not appreciate the slang as anything more than 'genuine American tongue'. This is confirmed by the London paper *The Sphere*, which said that the dialogue 'was too full of American slang to be comprehended on the first night' (23/5/1903:162) and the *Sunday Sun* (17/5/1903:6) which stated 'At present it is hard to follow the words'. This

meant that the British public were probably laughing at the blatant, surface, slapstick humour, and were largely unable to understand the subtleties of the script. Indeed, British reviews often emphasised the novelty aspects of *In Dahomey*, such as the cakewalk dancing, and the singing of the chorus, although criticised by some as overly powerful, also made a considerable impression on British audiences: 'the curious half-metallic, but not unpleasant, timbre of their voices afford a new musical sensation' (*Daily News*, 18/5/1903:12). However, Pryor praises the show in its own right, rather than as a mere novelty, for the

'...supple-hipped, ball-bearing jointed dancing that only the blood of Africa puts into the limbs, it provides singing full of quaint catches and cadences that no white voice can imitate, and choruses that are a revelation to choristers'.

Pryor suggests that '*In Dahomey* is worth seeing in a serious mood' as 'the foundation of the show is solid fact'. Particularly, he cites the aspirations of characters in the show to have a land and nation of their own as 'a true dream' and the idea of a coloured aristocracy 'may seem comic, but is also sincere'. The serious aspects of the show seem not to have been widely understood or appreciated in Britain, as only one review, in *The Times* (18/5/1903:12), indicates any understanding that there was a serious element behind the comedy. The reviewer noted that 'a kind of ethnological purpose seems to run through the whole undertaking' and recognised that

'there may have been an intention to point the contrast between the dignity and picturesque surroundings of the African race in Africa and the absurd aping of men's ways which is perhaps the most pathetic thing in regard to the 'colour problem' of the present day'

As we have seen, to present an accurate and 'dignified' picture of Africans was one intention of the writers of *In Dahomey*, particularly in the light of the racism that they would have encountered in America.¹³ Riis suggests that the show was 'a visible symbol of co-operation and patience, as well as musical and theatrical creativity, in the face of persistent discrimination against blacks, against women on the stage and against actors in general' (1996:xiii). Whilst the British public may not have recognised that the show had a serious message, Cook indicated in his interview in the *Daily News* (16/5/1903:6) that the company was treated better by Britons than by their fellow Americans on their visit to London:

¹³ Charters, in her biography of Bert Williams, describes riots in New York in August 1900, where 'mobs of whites assaulted Negroes, due to a murder of white vice squad patrolman'. Walker was injured in the riots, and Williams was 'psychologically affected' (1970:54-55).

'There is no feeling against us here...We wanted to put up at the Cecil, and the management were willing enough to take us, but the [white] Americans stopping there objected to our presence, so we had to go to another hotel.'

Later in the year a paper called *Mostly About People* declared 'They [Cook's company] are one and all charmed beyond expression with the manner in which they and their kind are socially treated on this side of the water' (15/8/1903, quoted in Green, 1983a:39-40). In addition, George Walker commented on the visit of the company to Buckingham Palace: 'We were received royally. That is the only word for it. We had champagne from the Royal cellar and strawberries and cream from the Royal garden.' (Sampson, 1980:80). Williams also remarked that the group had not been received at such a socially approved gathering in America (Green, 1983a:37). Apparently, also, 'after the final curtain, men like the Duke of Connaught, Kennedy Cox and Cavendish Morton took Williams to their clubs and homes for dinner and conversation' (Charters, 1970:76). This indicates the extent to which the black performers were accepted in Britain and this patronage seemed to exert significant influence on the general public as well as providing the artists with all-important publicity. This apparent lack of racism that performers experienced in Britain compared with America may explain why the show remained in Britain for such a long period of time.

In addition, it appears that the company were keen to remain and to be successful in Britain, and hence took criticism on board and made several significant changes to the show during its run at the Shaftesbury Theatre. Firstly, the problem of the language used in the dialogue was addressed. Riis states that 'nearly a dozen...small emendations of the original script are scattered through the British libretto' with some lines cut and words altered (1996:xxvii). However, as we have seen, dialect remained an integral part of the drama and created a specific effect, especially when combined with syncopation in songs. The dialogue was also more substantially cut and rearranged in the British script (Riis, 1996:xlvi) in order to more smoothly introduce the songs and also to attempt to clarify the plot. Almost all the reviews highlight the lack of a clear plot as a fundamental failing of the piece. *The Times* dismissed the show as 'an example of plotless drama' (18/5/1903:12), and although a synopsis of the story was printed in the programme it was still very hard to understand. The critic of the *Daily Mail* expressed his exasperation: 'What it is about we are unable, even with the aid of a printed "argument", to fully understand' (18/5/1903:3). Some reviewers picked up that the essence of the plot was 'some story of a lost casket and a bogus scheme for transporting negroes from Florida to Dahomey' (*The Star*, 18/5/1903:2). Misunderstanding persisted, even after the show had been running for six months. In October 1903, *The Era* stated with resignation 'of course, there is no pretence at

connected plot in a piece of this sort. The intention merely is to provide a 'go-as-you-please' entertainment, full of smart and attractive items; and this intention is completely carried out' (3/10/1903:15). It seems as though the comedy, the music, and later the dancing was enough to ensure the success of a show that was largely incomprehensible to the public.

However, the most criticised aspect of the production was the ending. The *Sunday Sun* critic saw this as the fundamental problem with the whole show and wrote optimistically 'A more lively and convincing ending will doubtless soon be improvised, and then in all probability the play will go well from start to finish' (17/5/1903:6). The *St. James Gazette* reported that when the show gets to Dahomey in the last act 'it goes all to pieces in a manner which is little short of bewildering' (18/5/1903:15). In all probability, the cast was equally confused due to a complete lack of dialogue for the last Act; the American script contains only a synopsis of the action. Most of the papers reported on the extraordinary occurrence that when the curtain fell on the opening night: 'the audience placidly remained in their seats, not a little puzzled, but patiently seeking Enlightenment' (*The Standard*, 18/5/1903:5), and apparently, nobody realised that the entertainment had ended until the National Anthem was played. It was not until late in May 1903 that dialogue was written for the last Act, but this did not make the plot any clearer, as Riis comments that 'the circumstances that motivate the characters are left unexplained, and the reasons for all of the action except the final decision to return home, are virtually non-existent. No wonder early audiences were confused' (1996:xxviii).

However, the addition of the cakewalk into the finale of the show more than compensated for the lack of clarity in the plot for British audiences. After the first performance of *In Dahomey*, the critic of the *Sunday Sun* had commented that 'the dancing to me was a disappointment. I had expected better things'. Dancing is mentioned specifically by very few of the early reviews, but after the rapid addition of the cakewalk into the show at the start of the second week of performances, it became a legendary part of the entertainment. *The Era* reported:

'A real cake-walk has been introduced into *In Dahomey*...This item was omitted on the first night because it was believed that the dance had had its day in London. The number of letters received by the management requesting its introduction prove this idea to be incorrect.'
(23/5/1903:14)

The cakewalk had developed in America through plantation slaves, who learnt European dances and, combining them with traditional African circle dances, used

them to satirise their white owners. Stearns comments that 'with its added emphasis on humorous improvisation, the dance was readily adapted to minstrelsy' (1966:11). Ironically, a member of the cast of *In Dahomey*, Aida Overton Walker 'was eagerly sought after by titled persons to teach them the cakewalk [dance]' (Sampson, 1980:438) when the show came to Britain, thus teaching the very class of people whom the cakewalk originally satirised. The cakewalk was clearly recognised by Cook as a popular element in shows after the success of *Clorindy*, and it became fundamental to the success of *In Dahomey*, particularly due to its comic presentation by Williams and Walker: 'Walker did a neat cakewalk, much like the strut of today, and Bert Williams would follow behind him, doing a slow loose-jointed mooch dance' (Stearns, 1968:122).

The revised finale of *In Dahomey* presented a cakewalk competition, with couples trying to outdo each other by presenting novel steps, such as in the contests which had begun in New York from 1897 (Stearns, 1968:122). The *Weekly Dispatch* reported that at the Shaftesbury Theatre, the audience 'signify their verdict by the volume of applause' (7/6/1903:8). The *Era* reported that the cakewalk had been 'made more effective by the introduction of a huge cake over six feet in height, and illuminated by one-hundred electric lights' and that the cakewalk competition now included a £10 prize for the person who 'wins the cakewalk prize most times during the week' (20/6/1903:12). The Royal Family also appreciated the cakewalk when members of the company performed at Buckingham Palace. The *Era* stated that 'the portion of the programme which created the greatest interest in the production was the cake-walk, the King being one of the first to recognise its merits' (27/6/1903:12), and by October The *Era* reported that 'the ubiquitous "cake-walk" is at the height of its popularity' (3/10/1903:15). Indeed, the addition of the cakewalk dancing proved so successful that The *Era* reported that 'several novelties were added to this already attractive and original entertainment', 'a troupe of dancers in Spanish costumes' and 'a minuet à L'Africaine by Miss Walker and a male chorus' (3/10/1903:15). The increase in the dance content of the show indicates the expectations of a British audience which associated dance with black entertainment, an important feature of the later reception of ragtime and jazz in Britain.

The fact that the cakewalk was allegedly omitted initially because it was seen as dated is interesting. It could indicate that this assumption had been made with reference to the status of the cakewalk in America, and that therefore Britain was some years behind in its popular trends, which was to be a feature of the adoption of ragtime and jazz in Britain later in the twentieth century. The fact that letters were (supposedly) sent requesting the inclusion of the cakewalk supports Green's hypothesis that 'In the 1890s

cakewalk dance was so associated with Black Americans that Britons expected it' (1988:85). This is also one factor that disproves the theory that the show introduced the cakewalk to London (cakewalks had been published in London since at least 1890), although it did precipitate a huge craze for cakewalk dancing in Britain (consider, for example that the sheet music for at least 43 cakewalks were published in London in 1903, compared with 10 in 1902 and 24 in 1904). There was even an instructional song called *That's How the Cakewalk's Done* included in some versions of *In Dahomey* (Riis, 1996:xxxix). Therefore, *In Dahomey* demonstrated improvised dance in Britain, which was to become a significant feature of dancing to later syncopated musical styles, as well as providing a new sort of entertainment within the musical comedy format.

The interpolation of songs, common practice in the central part of minstrel shows, was also important to the success of *In Dahomey* in Britain. Interpolation accounts for the permanent and occasional inclusion of several songs in *In Dahomey* that were not composed by Cook, and has resulted in the discovery of the show in a variety of formats (see Riis, 1996:xv). A very large number of songs that were included in the show at some stage have been located. From newspaper reports of the opening night in London, for example, we know that *Annie Laurie*, *Sally in our Alley* (*Star* 18/5/1903:1) and *A Rich Coon's Babe* (*The Times*, 18/5/1903:12) were interpolated on that occasion, and it seems likely that many other songs could have been heard during the London run. Interpolation would presumably have preserved public interest in the show over a period of time by allowing its content to be constantly varied and also helped to ensure its popularity by inclusion of familiar songs and thus contributed significantly to the length and success of the London run of *In Dahomey*.

However, a core group of songs remained consistent in both inclusion and position within the show from the New York production in February 1903 to the publication of the score in London during the second week of the show's run (see Riis, 1996:xv). As the overture uses material drawn from five of these core songs, these must have been permanent elements of the show. The London score includes an Overture, twelve songs and concludes with the four instrumental numbers necessary for the inclusion of the cakewalk and the extension of the finale.¹⁴ The fact that this score was published so soon after the start of the London run indicates that the alterations to the finale must have taken place very swiftly after the opening night, as the new order of songs and the

¹⁴ In a later edition of the score, two further instrumental numbers were added at the end (Riis, 1996:xv), which were also published separately.

dance numbers at the end are included. This indicates the strength of the desire to make *In Dahomey* popular and successful in Britain.

In conclusion, *In Dahomey* was successful in London as it presented audiences with an acceptable but yet authentic experience of black culture and included a mix of familiar and exotic elements, similar to the Exhibitions and blackface minstrel shows of the preceding decades. Indeed, the novelty of an all-black show set in the exotic land of Dahomey was balanced through the inclusion of minstrel conventions, familiar to the British public, which meant that *In Dahomey* was often evaluated in the context of the nineteenth century Negro stereotype in Britain. The show also fitted well into the pre-existent British music theatre conventions, as it had good quality music, including songs that used typical 'Tin Pan Alley' forms and devices. Crucially, the show also included strong elements of comedy and dance, which were vital to the show's success as the plot and dialogue were apparently incomprehensible.

Significantly, as a result of the combination of this lack of understanding and the strength of the Negro stereotype in the public mind, British reviewers, unlike the American S.J. Pryor, were not able to appreciate the idea of Negro 'twoness' that is shown on so many levels in the music and drama of *In Dahomey*. In retrospect, the show's use of stereotypical Negro characteristics indicates the self-awareness of the writers and the operatic tendencies show Cook's aim to elevate black musical culture. However, in Britain in 1903, Williams and Walker's attempts to portray 'natural' African-Americans were largely lost on the British public, whose experience and knowledge of Negroes was firmly based on the stereotype, and ironically led to criticism that *In Dahomey* was not authentic. Disbelief was expressed that *In Dahomey* was representative of Cook's serious aspirations towards creating a new genre of 'negro opera', and reviewers even encouraged him to write 'work of a more solid and enduring character' (*The Era*, 23/5/1903:12). Therefore, Cook's intention to begin to 'remove the minstrel mask from the musical stage' (Carter, 2000:218) through *In Dahomey* was not particularly successful in Britain, although the show itself was undoubtedly popular.

However, it is fundamentally important to note that the lack of understanding shown by the British reviewers is not due to deliberate racism. Indeed, the *In Dahomey* company was apparently better treated in Britain than their native America and was certainly eager to please their audiences. As we have seen, they responded to criticism and made substantial alterations to the show in order to ensure their success in Britain. Nevertheless, the reactions to the performances of *In Dahomey* in 1903 show the extent to which the stereotypical image of the Negro had permeated British society,

due to its prominence on the British stage during the preceding century. Therefore, this indicates the context within which the reception of other forms of black American culture, including jazz, in Britain in the early twentieth century must be evaluated.

Chapter 5

Case study:

The banjo in the musical and symbolic evolution of black American music in Britain

In this chapter, the role of the banjo in both the actual musical and perceived symbolic evolution of black American music in Britain will be examined in order to understand the unique way in which jazz evolved in Britain and in turn to explain some of the idiosyncrasies of the British perception of jazz. The banjo was present in all the forms of African-American music that were heard in Britain before jazz, and significantly, by the twentieth century the banjo had developed particularly strong symbolism as the instrument of the stereotypical plantation Negro. In Britain in the early twentieth century, the banjo had a unique status as the main instrument through which ragtime was disseminated, particularly by the black bands that visited Britain from America to play for dancing at exclusive London clubs. Therefore, the figure of the stereotypical 'black banjo player' was perceived in Britain to be central to the development of American popular music and, as a result, the evolutionary sequence of early syncopated forms towards jazz in Britain is demonstrably different when compared to that of America.

The banjo became widely known to whites due to the transportation of slaves, mainly from West Africa, to colonies around the world from 'as early as the seventeenth century' (Sadie, 1984:151). It was known by various names in different countries, but is clearly described in several accounts written as early as 1621 (Epstein, 1975:350, Lloyd Webb, 1993:9). The banjo was used by slaves on American plantations to accompany their songs and dances as it was suitably portable and was relatively easy for them to construct from natural materials such as gourds, wood, skins and gut (Lloyd Webb 1993:9). Naturally, the singing and dancing of slaves was 'a source of interest and amusement for whites' (Oliver, 1984:24) particularly on plantations, but crucially, it was the unique social and political situation in New Orleans, Louisiana that allowed black culture to be more publicly disseminated to whites.

In the eighteenth century, the *Code Noir* 'exempted slaves from forced labour on Sundays and religious holidays...[and] shortly came to include Saturday afternoons as well' (Johnson, 1991:122). Although Sunday was a 'non-work day' throughout the American South, it was in Louisiana that slaves had 'the right to use their free time

virtually as they saw fit, with little or no supervision' (Johnson, 1991:124). Slaves were often permitted to grow and sell their own produce at the market in New Orleans. The market place eventually became known as the infamous Congo Square where slaves and free people of colour danced on Sundays. Congo Square was established as a focal point for dancing, not only due to the market, which made it a natural meeting point, but also because an early nineteenth century law which forbade dancing anywhere else. (Johnson, 1991:141).

The dancing in Congo Square was unique because it was still overwhelmingly African, whereas elsewhere in America pressure from evangelical religious sects which considered dancing sinful had led to the erosion of these traditions and acculturation to Anglo-American norms (Epstein, 1975:348, Johnson, 1991:141). The cultural diversity of New Orleans that allowed the traditions of individual ethnic groups to flourish and develop uniquely, including those of the large African population, as well as the French Creole's love of dancing contributed to the longevity of African music and dance in the city (Johnson, 1991:146). The fact that the dancing took place in a prominent location also allowed it to be observed and documented by visitors to the city, such as Benjamin Latrobe, an architect originally from Leeds. In 1819, Latrobe wrote an account of the dancing in Congo Square, in which he described the use of a banjo-like instrument (he also sketched the instruments that he saw):

'The music consisted of two drums and a stringed instrument...which was no doubt imported from Africa. On the top of the finger board was the rude figure of a man in a sitting posture, & two pegs behind him to which the strings were fastened. The body was a calabash. It was played by a very little old man, apparently 80 or 90 years old.'
(Latrobe, ed. Wilson 1951: 46-49)

Latrobe's reaction to what he saw in Congo Square is typical of the white perception of black culture at this time: 'I have never seen anything more brutally savage, and at the same time dull and stupid, than this whole exhibition.' (Latrobe, ed. Wilson 1951:49).

Negroes were the subjects of artistic and literary caricature since the 18th century (Walvin, 1973:159), and contemporaneously, plays were beginning to use slave life as a subject (Nathan, 1962:13). Thus, 'the stereotype of a happy, carefree slave, dancing and strumming on the old plantation was known to English audiences well before 1800' (Epstein, 1975:347), and, indeed, was adopted by pro-slavery writers in England who regarded 'musical talent as quite compatible with innate inferiority' (1975:347). The deep-seated implications of the acceptance of such a simplistic view of black culture and the banjo specifically were matched only by the reaction of the abolitionists, who in

their wholesale rejection of the 'Negro banjo player' also rejected the elements of truth within the myth.

Interestingly, recent research has suggested that in fact the fiddle was a more central part of African-American culture, (see Linn, who cites Winans' work on runaway slave adverts that found mention of only 17 banjo players compared with 627 of the fiddle/violin (1991:42)), but yet it was the banjo that 'seems to have been the most widely reported and longest lived of all the African instruments in the New World.' (Epstein, 1975:351) and certainly developed the strongest imagery (Linn, 1991:49). This can be explained by the essential 'otherness' of the banjo, which was quite unlike any Western instrument (Linn, 1991:67), especially when compared with a fiddle, which even when played in a different style, retains its long-term associations with conventional Western music. It is easy to see how the banjo was congruent with the perceived 'otherness' of black-skinned people from a far-off land and thus became the instrument representative of black music, particularly for people without first-hand knowledge of African-American culture.

In Britain then, the banjo was not only familiar as an instrument of black culture, but specifically as the instrument of plantation slaves. This becomes even more significant when placed in context with Epstein's description of 'the most common and confusing legend about the banjo: that it was unknown to the plantation Negro.' (1975:348). In Britain, the Negro banjo player was more clearly associated with the plantation than any other setting, due to the repeated presentation of this environment in literature and drama, especially the minstrel shows. The lack of any evidence of Epstein's legend in Britain, rather, the unequivocal and repeated positioning of the banjo within a plantation setting indicates the strength of the 'happy, carefree slave' stereotype in Britain.

This stereotype was presented in songs and minstrel shows, genres that were well represented and understood in Britain. The lyrics and music of popular songs present both literary and musical symbolism that indicates the nature of the understanding and reception of banjo music in Britain.¹ Black characters were 'sometimes found in English comic operas of the late eighteenth century, including some popular in America' (Hamm, 1979:110). One such opera, *The Wags or The Camp of Pleasure* by Dibdin, written in 1790, includes an early example of a song that connects the banjo with a portrayal of a stereotypical Negro. *The Negro and his Banjer* [g380e(15)], also introduces features that were to become typical of later 'banjo' songs. The

¹ These songs will be referenced in the text using the British Library volume number. A full list of songs consulted with detailed information is contained in Appendix 3.

accompaniment to this song includes a violin part that uses semi-quavers repeated on the same note, perhaps to represent the sound of the banjo. Indeed, depiction of the characteristics of the banjo on other instruments is common in accompaniments to later songs that mention the banjo. The song portrays the banjo as the instrument of the plantation slave, and the lyrics are written in a pseudo-Negro dialect that became a standard feature of 'coon' songs from this point onwards into the twentieth century:

'One Negro wi my banjer
Me from Jenny come
Wid cunning yei
Me savez spy
De buckra world one hum
As troo a street a stranger
Me my banjer strum.'

In later songs the banjo is clearly linked with the both the positive and negative elements of the paradox that is the stereotypical Negro. In *The Old Banjo* [h3990q25], which in 1910 would have been considered a comic novelty song, various negative elements of the stereotype are presented. These include laziness: 'A nigger play'd on a banjo/The whole of the day, he'd sit and play'; cannibalism: 'I'm Lobengula/King of the Cannibal Nuts' who later fries his children for dinner; and excessive sexuality: 'The ladies all snigger because of my figger/I wear nothing else but an old banjo' and 'The next day they were wed/And quickly their family grew'. In this song, it is the banjo playing of his 72 children that drives Lobengula to shoot and eat them. Thus, the banjo is clearly linked with the supposedly wild and uncontrollable nature of the Negro.

On the other hand, *Ring de Banjo* [h1437(8)], a much earlier song of 1853, describes a dutiful slave who having been freed by his master, returns voluntarily to continue to serve him:

'I could not go no farder
I turn to massa's door
I lub him all de harder
I'll go away no more'

It is to the music of the slave's banjo that the master dies:

'I on de banjo tapping
I come wid dulcem strain
Massa fell a napping
He'll nebber wake again'

The endearing qualities of the slave described in this song are enhanced by use of pseudo-Negro dialect that was common in such early 'coon' songs. As in *Ring de*

Banjo and *The Negro and his Banjer*, many songs link the banjo directly to the plantations. In *That Banjo Song* [h3992hh(6)] the music of the 'old banjo' is described as 'the sweet song of my old plantation home' and in *'Tis the banjo softly speaking* [h1788j(41)] banjo music is the accompaniment for the 'the whole plantation's singing'.

The adjective 'old' is frequently used to describe the instrument in songs, for example the song *On Your Rag-Time Rag Shop Banjo* [h3990.i(47)] describes the performances of an old man on a banjo: 'Old Man Joe on your banjo/Play a little bit of ragtime music...'. Linn points out that whilst nineteenth century banjo players in songs were generally young, 'by the 1920s the image of the Southern black banjo player was usually that of an elderly man' (1991:65), which showed that once he must have been a slave and therefore lent him a certain authenticity as plantation banjo player. Several later songs link the banjo with ghosts and life after death. In a song called *The Ghost of the Rag-time Coon* [h3989f(42)], the performances of the minstrel are described: 'Ev'rywhere he used to go/Playing cute airs on his old banjo'. After his death, it is the characteristic sound of his banjo that alerts people to the presence of his ghost: 'They'd hear the strains of the old banjo and this is what they'd say: It's the ghost of the rag-time coon...'. A similar image is used in *The Old Banjo* [h3990q(25)] in which the 'nigger' returns as a ghost: 'I'm dead and I'm gone/But I'm still going on/Playing gaily away on my old banjo'.

The consistency of this imagery illustrates that the banjo was widely understood and well established as a symbol of traditional black music-making and, in later ragtime songs, the inclusion of the banjo acts as a metaphor for nostalgia. It also places the banjo within the popular myth of the 'Old South', which although more developed in America was also relevant and influential to the perception of the banjo in Britain at the turn of the century. Linn describes how the South had developed romantic and sentimental imagery that had captured the American imagination beginning with productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and minstrel shows (1991:55). These particular manifestations were present in nineteenth century Britain, and crucially, included the banjo as representative of the music of the 'Old South'.²

The 'sentimental' myth of the Old South was particularly strong in the North of America which was distanced from the reality of the South, and where people were often immersed in 'official' culture. The dichotomy that results from Linn's consideration of

² Interestingly, Linn comments that Harriet Beecher Stowe's original novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* does not mention a banjo, but yet the instrument appeared frequently in the films and shows of the book. (1991:58)

the differences between 'sentimental' and 'official' culture can also be used to explain the appeal of the banjo as a sentimental instrument for people immersed in official European culture (Linn, 1991:61):

(sentimental)	(official)
nature	civilisation
leisure	work
sensual	controlled
primitive	modern
emotional	rational
black	white
South	North
feminine	masculine

The banjo appealed to British audiences in the late-nineteenth/early twentieth centuries as an 'Other' instrument with no place within the history of 'official' Western music just as it appealed to Northern Americans. Most importantly, however, the banjo indicated the existence of an entire alternative culture, the Otherness of which was heightened for British audiences that were even further removed from the sources of the 'Old South' myth than North Americans. It is interesting to note that later in the nineteenth century, the banjo craze that swept both Northern America and Britain did not affect the Southern American middle and upper classes (Linn, 1991:18), indicating the importance of distance in developing the 'Old South' mythology of which the banjo was an integral part.³

Although the distance between British audiences and the American South helped to ensure the popularity of the banjo as representative of an 'other' culture, it also ensured that the plantation Negro stereotype was accepted as authentic and this had a long

³ In New Orleans in the early twentieth century, the guitar was initially more popular than the banjo, and it seems that many musicians only began to play the banjo as a result of the increase in popularity of the instrument in entertainment in Northern cities in the 1910s. Johnny St. Cyr reports that the banjo started to become popular around the time he was working with A.J. Piron in 1908-9 and this prompted him to construct his own banjo-guitar (Johnny St. Cyr interview, August 27 1958, HJA transcript p. 1). Danny Barker began playing a banjo-uke that his aunt bought as a result of a ukelele craze, and later obtained his first banjo from his uncle, Paul Barbarin, who was playing in Chicago with King Oliver (Danny Barker interview, June 30 1959, HJA transcript p. 15). Emanuel Sayles' brother bought a banjo 'when they were popular' which Sayles borrowed (Emanuel Sayles interview, January 17 1959, HJA transcript p. 5).

term influence on the reception of black music in Britain. The stereotypical image of the 'Negro and his banjo' became a standard part of minstrel shows in the 1830s-1840s, beginning with the pre-emancipation blackface troupes such as the Virginia Minstrels who visited Britain in 1843-5 (Lloyd Webb, 1993:11) including legendary banjoists Dan Emmett and Billy Whitlock. Indeed, it was 'the original and unique instrumentation of banjo, violin, bones and tambourine', quite unlike other music of the period, which enhanced the appeal of the minstrel show as new and different entertainment (Mahar, 1999:341). However, the white experience of supposedly 'authentic' banjo music was initially that which was transmitted as an exaggerated parody typical of blackface minstrelsy, where 'most of the banjo-playing, singing and dancing [of blackface minstrels] were casual and stereotyped imitations' (Blesh and Janis, 1917:11). Although the banjo was an element of authentic African culture, and after Emancipation, enabled blacks to perform on the stage, performances had to remain within the boundaries of the stereotype that had been established by white blackface performers. By performing in shows in America and all over Europe, the Negro minstrels were disseminating and reinforcing this white stereotype, of which the banjo was an important part, as it was both a visual and musical symbol. Thus, the banjo became indicative of the paradoxical Negro stereotype that was created and fuelled by whites:

'It casts both bright and dark shadows: banjo is frolic (but banjo is slavery); banjo is entertainment (but banjo is blackface); banjo accompanies the dance (but dancing in bondage, longing to be free).
(Lloyd Webb, 1993:7)

The plantation Negro stereotype, though exaggerated, was nevertheless based on some elements of truth. Benjamin Latrobe witnessed a particular type of dancing with banjo accompaniment in Congo Square:

'They were formed in circular groupes [*sic*] in the midst of four of which, which I examined (but there were more of them) was a ring, the largest not 10 feet in diameter... Most of the circles contained the same sort of dancers. One was larger, in which a ring of a dozen women walked, by way of dancing, round the music in the center.'
(Latrobe, ed. Wilson 1951: 46-49)

Dancing to banjo music became an important element of the nineteenth century minstrel show, and significantly, the dancing that Latrobe describes strongly prefigures the circular form of the minstrel show 'walk-around' finales, which invariably took place in a plantation setting. The Bohee brothers even apparently 'played the banjo while dancing, and may have been the first minstrel team to perform that speciality.' (Rouse, 1989:8). They were known to have performed highly rhythmic numbers as part of the

climactic walk-around, thus perpetuating the traditional link between banjo and dance. Later in the nineteenth century, the walk-around developed into the cakewalk, a precursor of ragtime, which is the result of complex cross-fertilization of African and European dance traditions.

Few minstrel banjo players could replicate the reputed agility and dexterity of the Bohees, but for the banjoist the urge to dance was still present and expressed through 'tapping'. Paul Oliver describes the slave practice of 'patting juba', which involved the beating of resonant parts of the body to produce syncopations against the beat of the fiddle or banjo (1984:24), a tradition that was continued as banjo performances moved onto the stage as part of minstrel shows:

'It was not possible for him to dance, and yet he did not remain entirely motionless. In true Negro fashion he tapped out with one foot the regular beat of his music'.
(Nathan, 1962:59)

The practice of 'tapping' to banjo tunes is also mentioned in banjo methods. Nathan quotes from S. S. Stewart's Method:

'The time in the above jig may be tapped with the foot, 4 taps to each measure-which is the method generally adopted for playing jigs. It seems that the practice of tapping to banjo tunes came from the Negro, who still today considers a metronomic, percussive background indispensable to the vigorous rhythm he wishes to produce.'
(Nathan, 1962:190)

These instances clearly attribute 'tapping' to the stereotypical 'primitive' but yet innately musical Negro.

Contrary to the minstrel show image of the 'plantation Negro banjo player' it is interesting to note that black banjo players in professional theatre, including Horace Weston and the Bohee brothers, the best and most famous black banjoists who visited Britain with minstrel troupes such as Haverley's and Callender's, were not necessarily Southern and often had no direct links with plantations. However, even if British audiences had known this, it is unlikely that it would have diminished their fascination for the black performers. Indeed, the Bohee brothers were the most significant black minstrel banjoists to visit Britain, as they remained in the country for some time and continued to be popular in music halls after the minstrel troupes had left. The popularity of the Bohees was such that they formed their own minstrel group and 'were greatly in demand in London at society functions and private entertainments' (Reynolds, 1927:201). The act comprised 'banjo solos, duets, ballads, songs and dances, during

which they accompanied themselves on the banjo' (Reynolds, 1927:202). The Bohees recorded on Edison in early 1890 (Schreyer, 1993:1), and were probably the first black artists to have recorded commercially (Heier and Lotz, 1993:74), yet again reinforcing the banjo as the instrument of black music.

The continued appeal of the banjo as representative of a sentimental, exotic, primitive alternative to 'official' culture, led to banjo music becoming the first American musical craze to hit Britain. Two songs of 1889, *Banjo Mania* [h1260m(32)] and *Twang the Banjo* [h1260m(35)] specifically describe the concurrent 'banjo craze', which is shown to have permeated all layers of society: 'In hut and palace it is found/It pleases low it pleases high/ They all adore it so' [h1260m(35)]. The song *Twang the Banjo* mentions that 'What's good enough for the Prince of Wales/Is good enough for me'. The Prince of Wales received banjo lessons from James Bohee⁴ and this indicates both the acceptance of a black banjo player into high society⁵ and the extent of the vogue for the banjo. James Bohee and his brother George opened a banjo academy in London and Reynolds states that 'To learn the banjo became quite a craze amongst society folk' (1927:201).⁶

Of course, this was not the first time that the banjo had been appropriated by whites, as the 'early nineteenth century banjo music and minstrel shows presented the first commercial use of African-American musical culture by white entertainers', i.e. blackface minstrelsy (Linn, 1991:5). However, it seems that by the latter part of the century, the banjo had developed such a strong symbolism that its 'otherness' could be evoked without recourse to such obvious visual or even aural prompts, as 'the actual banjo, the repertory, and the playing style offered by the white minstrel banjoists of the late nineteenth century increasingly had little foundation in black tradition' (Linn, 1991:48).

At this time, several prominent publishers and manufacturers such as S.S. Stewart and Clifford Essex attempted to elevate the banjo 'to a higher class of musical practice and a better class of people', bringing it within 'official' culture specifically by distancing it

⁴ In an interview in the *Radio Times* of May 29th 1925, the banjo maker Mr. A Weaver stated: 'I can remember [James Bohee's] excitement when he was commanded to appear at Marlborough House to give lessons on the banjo to King Edward [formerly the Prince of Wales], who later became an accomplished player. I made one hundred and fifty instruments for Jim Bohee alone. He and his brother came from America with the famous Haverley Minstrels about 1882 and went the round of the music halls for many years.' (p. 456).

⁵ Horace Weston appeared in front of Queen Victoria, and 'so entertained her with the music of his banjo that she presented him with a gold medal, which he highly prized' according to his obituary (Linn, 1991:46).

⁶ Interestingly, Rudyard Kipling wrote his poem *The Song of the Banjo* at the height of the banjo craze (1894).

from its African-American origins (Gura and Bollam, 1999:248). In contrast with the image of the 'old plantation banjo', instruments became more highly decorated, as 'if the banjo were to become an instrument of a higher class of music, the object itself needed to be transformed into art, thus making it a worthy object for the parlor of a prince.' (Linn, 1991:13) and increased metalwork on the bodies of the instrument emphasised their modernism. Tutor books were published that advocated a 'guitar style' of banjo playing that was taught by Western notation, and large amounts of sheet music for banjo began to be published from the 1880s.

The expansion of the banjo repertoire shown by sheet music is also reflected in the minstrel show, which had begun to evolve away from the standard 'plantation' format towards variety theatre as audiences increasingly came to expect higher musical standards. Thus, shows increasingly incorporated music other than plantation material, and the performance of novelty pieces and arrangements (titles included the *William Tell* Overture and Dvorak's *Humoresque*), precipitated the development of a virtuosic banjo style. These pieces were extremely popular with the late-nineteenth century music hall audiences in Britain, who were becoming increasingly respectable, and represented an alternative to the traditional 'sentimental' banjo repertoire. However, as Linn points out, attempts to elevate the banjo into 'official' culture generally failed, as the instrument never really lost its associations with the black musicians of the plantations in the Old South (1991:36).

However, in America the racially-based associations with 'other' culture that were at the foundations of the massive adoption of the banjo by whites were increasingly seen as inappropriate for black musicians. It was probably the strength of the racial symbolism of the banjo that resulted in a gradual decline in numbers of black solo banjoists from the second half of the nineteenth century as 'the banjo stood as a reminder of the old troubles of slavery, and the new troubles of half-citizenship conferred by emancipation. In some quarters, at least, blacks expressed a desire to be rid of the banjo' (Lloyd Webb, 1993:17). Therefore, later developments in black music of the early twentieth century America centred on other instruments such as the cornet and the piano, partially as a result of the negative associations of the banjo that featured less prominently in early jazz bands.

Significantly, in addition to the strongly developed racially symbolic character of the banjo, contemporary songs show that the banjo had a clear *musical* identity that could be evoked without even using the instrument itself. Firstly, several songs feature vocalised banjo sounds, such as 'Tink a tank, tink a tank' [h3980cc(35)] and 'plunk,

plunk, plunk' [h3992hh(6)]. Characteristics of banjo music are also frequently used in the piano accompaniment to songs, most often arpeggiated patterns, spread chords, and dotted rhythms and triplets that also sometimes find their way into song melodies. *That Banjo Song* [h3992hh(6)] also has a great number of phrases that begin on the offbeat (in this case the second quaver of a 2/4 bar) which are also characteristic of banjo music. The piano accompaniment in the song *Twang the Banjo* [h1260m(35)] is even marked '*sempre a la Banjo*'. It was the transferable nature of banjo music, particularly to the piano, as seen in these songs, that was to evolve into the ragtime piano style in America. The link between banjo music and ragtime has been well documented, for example Blesh and Janis state that 'Piano ragtime was developed by the Negro from folk melodies and from the syncopations of the plantation banjos' (1971:7). Scott Joplin met and heard the banjo player Plunk Henry at the 1893 Chicago Exposition and then 'developed the rudiments of piano ragtime from banjo syncopation' (Oliver, 1984:29).

However, whilst in America around the turn of the century the piano took over from the banjo as the main instrument for the performance of syncopated music, the banjo remained prominent as the main instrument for the performance of syncopated music in Britain for a number of reasons. Piano ragtime did not make such an impact in Britain as in America, and there is very little evidence that any of the 'big names' in ragtime piano visited Britain until the 1920s (Rye, 1990a:45), which is especially significant in the context of most of the top American banjoists visiting this country in the preceding decades of the twentieth century. Eubie Blake, a ragtime pianist who performed in Britain in 1925, commented 'My playing of jazz seemed particularly astounding to the English musicians. They tried to classify it according to musical form, but failed.' (quoted in Rye, 1990a:53). This indicates that ragtime piano was not a familiar style to Britons.

This lack of identification with piano ragtime in Britain was probably due to the fact that ragtime was popularised in Britain primarily through the imported revue shows. Within this context, piano ragtime would have been inappropriate both as a song or dance accompaniment, due to its lack of audibility, and also as a variety 'turn' in itself, as it lacked the visual interest of a band. Theatrical revues therefore tended to use orchestrated ragtime, which then became the convention for dance accompaniment outside the theatre for similar reasons. Therefore, the British public associated ragtime with a variety of different forms including 'coon songs, ragtime songs and instrumental music' (Oliver, 1984:33), rather than, as in America, predominantly with piano rags, and this is particularly relevant to an understanding of the fundamental differences between

the evolution of syncopated styles in Britain and America. In Britain, due to the absence of piano ragtime, there was a greater emphasis on the syncopated 'coon songs, ragtime songs and instrumental music', which have the banjo as a common musical and symbolic denominator.

Significantly then, whereas in America 'the generally racist ideas that clung to the image of the black banjo player not only encouraged the abandonment of the instrument by blacks, in the end it discouraged the survival of the instrument as a viable vehicle for music making in American culture.' (Linn, 1991:75), the geographical and temporal distance from the reality of the Old South meant that the romance of this myth and the appeal of the banjo was intensified and persisted for longer in Britain where the association between black performers and the banjo was strongly maintained. This is shown by the fact that it is virtually the only instrument mentioned in nineteenth century songs that describe Negro music-making, and as the most frequently mentioned instrument in songs that describe American syncopated music between 1900 and 1919. For example, in the 1917 song *Banjo Moon* [h3809b(25)], people in heaven are described as 'Playing the harp and singing see/Just like an everlasting Jubilee', but 'black folks' will 'want a banjo too'. The songs explains:

'There's a great big banjo in the moon
So that niggers when they die
Can sit and play all the live long day
And raise their voices high'.

The association between black performers and the banjo was maintained by the leading black banjo ensembles that visited Britain: Joe Jordan's Syncopated Orchestra (1905-6 and 1915), Dan Kildare's Clef Club Orchestra (1915-1920), and the Versatile Three/Four (1913-1926), who all used at least one banjo or derivative (banjoline, mandoline etc.) at a time when there was 'a growing vogue for Afro-American sounds in high-class dance clubs' (Rye, 1990a:46).⁷ These bands, initially at least, appeared in evening dress at exclusive venues in London such as the Savoy Hotel and Ciro's Club, which was 'extensively patronized by younger members of the royal family' (Rye, 1990a:46). The repertoire of these bands also reflected their civilised appearance. Dan Kildare's Orchestra played a mixture of popular, often sentimental, songs and dances, which were most often waltzes, and Hawaiian style numbers, incorporating typical glissandi between rapidly strummed chords in the banjo parts, that were apparently the craze at the time (e.g. *Hello Hawaii*, *How Are You?* and *Hawaiian Butterfly*). The Versatile Four performed a similar 'civilised' repertoire to Kildare's band, but also

⁷ Recordings by all three groups are available on CD from Document Records- see discography.

interestingly included a few pieces that made reference to the supposed Southern plantation origin of the performers, for example, *Circus Day in Dixie* and *Down Home Rag*.

The respectability that the banjo had gained through the late nineteenth century banjo craze is reflected in these performances by black banjo bands but yet, as we have seen, the instrument still retained the strong associations with the perceived sentimentality and primitiveness of black music. This made the banjo the ideal vehicle for the dissemination of the type of non-threatening 'diluted' or 'civilised' black culture that British white audiences had preferred since the nineteenth century. Black banjo bands were the subject of the same upper class philanthropic interest that had permeated the British reception of black music since the minstrel show, as that the fact that the groups consisted of coloured performers was their principal attraction. For example, Dan Kildare's 'Clef Club Orchestra' was re-named 'Coon Orchestra' shortly after its arrival in Britain. Interestingly, several reviews of Joe Jordan's Syncopated Orchestra linked the music that the band performed with the spirit inherent in the nationality or colour of the performers:

'...the latest American musical sensation- a band of gentlemen of colour who play rag-time music as if to the manner born.'
(*The Era*, 5/5/1915:14)

'They come from America, and seem to have rag-time in their blood'
(*The Scotsman*, 1/6/1915:1)

It is interesting to note that many white banjoists continued to perform 'characteristic'⁸ material in mere imitation of black players, exploiting the stereotypical image of the banjo in the same way as whites had perpetuated and exaggerated black characteristics in blackface shows of a hundred years earlier. It was the white vaudeville banjoists that sustained the dying traces of minstrelsy, which was not an appealing form for black performers due to its associations with unflattering racial stereotyping. Conversely, as we have seen, some white players also tried to reposition the banjo within 'official' culture through the performance of classical music.

Hence, it was largely left to the black players to develop banjo music in new directions, prompting them to build upon rather than perpetuate the popularity of the minstrel show. Indeed, the three groups that visited Britain were closely linked with the Clef Club, a society that had been set up by James Reese Europe in New York in 1910 to

⁸ Defined as 'black-influenced or -derived music, which was seen as being "characteristic" of blacks' (Linn, 1991:6)

allow black musicians to prosper and black music to develop. In practice, this meant that the club provided 'a central union, clearing house and booking agency for the employment of black musicians' as well as forming an orchestra to raise the profile of black musicians (Badger, 1989:50). The Clef Club Orchestra performed in Carnegie Hall in 1912-14, and smaller groups were in demand for high society functions. Significantly, Europe was not aiming to form a conventional Western orchestra; rather, he embraced the banjo as central to black music and the ensemble consisted mainly of banjos and derivatives. Although Europe himself did not visit Britain, the formation of the Clef Club and his later association with the famous Castles, who were at the forefront of modern dance fashions, ensured that black music gained respectability and popularity with the fashionable elite that allowed black banjo bands to make successful visits to Britain at this time.

Significantly, the lack of black solo banjoists performing in vaudeville meant that the familiar figure of the 'black minstrel banjoist' was commonly perceived in Britain to have been absorbed into these new black banjo bands. A review of Joe Jordan's Syncopated Orchestra in the *Newcastle Evening Mail* (22/6/1915:4), states that the band 'are unquestionably one of the smartest combinations since minstrelsy was in its prime'. Thus, evolution from minstrel traditions was seen to have taken place in performances by black, not white, banjoists, which placed them at the forefront of developments in syncopated music in Britain.

An important factor in the domination of the banjo in the dissemination of early syncopated music in Britain was that the banjo was well represented in early recordings, as it produced good results due its restricted frequency range and percussive penetration, especially when compared to the piano. In fact, the number of banjo recordings made in Britain led to the situation where 'the British recording industry actually dominated in banjo solo and banjo ensemble sides produced' from the start of World War I to the end of World War II (Schreyer, 1993:4). It seems likely that the banjoists that recorded in Britain would have also given live performances. As the banjo was most often used in recorded performances of syncopated music, which disseminated the music increasingly widely, the instrument therefore became synonymous with the new musical styles in Britain.

Conversely, technology did not allow pianists to record as successfully, therefore their performances were probably not as widely known as those of banjoists, and also they had no particular reason to visit and perform in Britain. Indeed, it is interesting to note the role of the piano as an accompanying instrument in early recordings of 'solo'

banjoists. Frequently, these involved the syncopations of the banjo against the steady on-beat, chordal accompaniment provided by the piano, and it was rare for the piano part to contain much melodic material. Even in vocal numbers, it was almost always the banjo and rarely the piano that played any countermelody or took a solo between verses. The piano fulfilled a similar underlying role in larger ensembles that included banjos, where it was relegated to the background due to a combination of the fact that the part it played was rhythmically and melodically uninteresting and the unsuitability of early recording techniques for capturing its sound.

The recordings of the black banjo groups that visited Britain illustrate both the technical problems with which bands were faced at this time and the suitability of the banjo for these early recording methods. The version of Dan Kildare's Orchestra that first recorded in 1916 consisted of banjo, banjoline, 'cello, piano, string bass and drums. The banjo and banjoline can be heard most clearly, the cello when used is reasonably clear, the piano faint and the bass inaudible. The percussion can only be heard when woodblocks are used. The Versatile Four, who performed on two banjolines, piano and drums as well as singing vocal numbers in close harmony, are more consistent in terms of the recording quality.

As banjos were responsible for providing both melodic and rhythmic interest in performances of these groups, this suggests that their prominence was pre-meditated and usual, not just the result of primitive recording methods. Indeed, banjo parts held melodic interest even in vocal numbers. In Dan Kildare's band, the banjos were used melodically to play decorative counter-melodies reminiscent of New Orleans polyphony and also play extensive variations in between the vocal verses on numbers such as *Where did Robinson Crusoe Go With Friday on Saturday Night?*. Similarly, the performances of the Versatile Four incorporate rapid, decorative banjo counter-melodies under the vocal line, for example in *I Want a Doll*, vocal and instrumental 'breaks' and a sense of 'call and response' in some of the performances, where an ornamented banjo part is used to fill in the gaps at the end of the melodic lines.

It is the banjos in Dan Kildare's band that are responsible for the rhythmic drive, making up for the 'cello, whose legato counter-melodies frequently fall behind the beat. In fact, the second session, recorded by the group in October 1916, omits the 'cello and has a lot more rhythmic clarity than the first. The banjos also have a clear role to play on the last sections of several numbers, such as *My Mother's Rosary*, performing with more vigour and often incorporating increased syncopation and cross rhythms into their strumming, thus anticipating the role of the drummer in, for example, big band jazz

arrangements. In some pieces, the banjo and drums can be heard playing in rhythmic unison, which clearly indicates that they fulfilled a similar rhythmic function within the group.

The recordings of the Versatile Four clearly prefigure jazz, as due to the use of the banjo their music often incorporates a strong sense of off-beat accentuation (on beats 2 and 4 in a 4/4 bar). The recording of *Down Home Rag* is certainly the most exciting and 'jazz-like' performance by this group that has survived. This number was rare among the early recorded output of this group as it is purely instrumental, and thus most clearly relates to later instrumental jazz. The tempo is very fast and the rapid melody must have represented a considerable challenge for the banjoists. The main melody uses a simple three note rising motive, whereby on the return to the starting note, which is metrically displaced, syncopation is created and the drum part emphasises these accents. Most of the group's early recordings featured characteristically strong three-part singing, and it seems likely that the style of the songs and practicalities of having to play and sing restricted their banjo style to an extent. After 1920, one of the banjo instruments was discarded in favour of the saxophone, and they recorded only instrumental numbers, probably as a result of the contemporary trend for jazz bands (Lotz, sleeve note to DOCD5624).

Thus, although the banjo bands were subject to the demands of their audience for sentimental songs and waltzes, they nevertheless were able to develop the banjo style rhythmically and by incorporating increasingly interesting and dense polyphony and embellishments into their arrangements. The bands mentioned above subsequently played at a wide variety of venues in London and the provinces, where they were generally well appreciated, and provided important models for the development of numerous similar groups and a foundation for the evolution of syncopated music in Britain. This can be seen with reference to the Savoy Hotel, which employed a banjo-based group, initially known as Murray's Savoy Quartette (because they also played at Murray's club), from 1915. Interestingly, the Savoy Quartette included Alec Williams, a black drummer, from 1917 (Rye, 1990a:48; Savoy Archive). Their recorded repertoire shows considerable parallels with that recorded by the groups mentioned above, particularly Ciro's Club Coon Orchestra, and it can be seen that these two groups recorded the same numbers within months or even weeks of each other. This clearly shows that a new musical genre had been firmly established in Britain, that there was constant cross-fertilization between various similar groups in London at this time, and that the 'modern' concept of the 'popular song' with a limited lifespan was developing.

Indeed, banjo-based bands and music remained popular in Britain long after the instrument was considered old-fashioned in America, as is demonstrated by the Versatile Four, who came to Europe in 1913, and were successful in Britain and the continent. However, when they returned to America in 1914, they found that work was not plentiful, as by this stage the banjo was probably considered old fashioned, certainly in New York where even James Reese Europe was recording without banjos or mandolins at that time (Badger, 1989:53). Yet back in London shortly afterwards the Versatile Four played at significant venues such as the London Pavilion and Murray's Club. (Lotz, sleeve note to DOCD5624). The centrality of the banjo to the performance of syncopated music in Britain is illustrated by a Savoy Orpheans concert programme of 1924. This provides a fascinating history of syncopated music as it was perceived in Britain, and clearly states that banjo bands were the first to introduce syncopation to dance music: 'Syncopated rhythm of ragtime was introduced in new musical numbers about ten years ago, by orchestras composed of banjos with a piano'.

In conclusion, the banjo was firmly established as part of the Negro stereotype that was disseminated in Britain through the nineteenth century minstrel show and 'coon' song, which particularly emphasised the plantation origins of the instrument. The banjo was part of a sentimental image of the Old South, which appealed to Europeans as an alternative to their official culture. The banjo was perceived as an 'other' instrument due to its lack of association with European music and its clear presentation throughout the nineteenth century as the main instrument of black music. This exotic appeal of the banjo led to the late nineteenth century craze for the instrument, in which the banjo gained respectability through its associations with Royalty and the aristocracy. Subsequently, the banjo symbolized a mix of 'otherness' and respectability that was manifest in the early twentieth century black banjo bands that performed for high society. These bands were clearly perceived in Britain as a development of the minstrel show genre due the race of the performers and the symbolism, and no doubt also the sound of the banjo. In Britain, black banjo players remained fascinating for upper class, philanthropic whites as myths about the Negro and the Old South strengthened and persisted due to the distance from their original source.

Although the perception by the British public of the evolution of syncopated music was based on the primarily *visual* and *symbolic* concept of the stereotypical Negro banjo player, initially as a solo minstrel and later as part of a black band, it was strengthened by a demonstrable *musical* evolution from plantation songs and dances to ragtime in which the banjo also had a central role, as crucially, there were elements of truth underlying the Negro stereotype and the Old South mythology. As we have seen, the

banjo has a documental African and African-American history and was indeed used for accompanying dancing on the plantations of South America. This history of the banjo as an instrument for accompanying dancing permeates its continued use in this way in the twentieth century. For example, the practice of 'tapping' can be seen to have continued through the use of piano accompaniments in early recorded banjo music that emphasised a steady beat under the syncopated banjo melody. It is also interesting to note that two twentieth century banjo players refer to tapping. Johnny St. Cyr mentioned in an interview that he doesn't usually pat his foot, but that he is one of the few musicians that doesn't (Johnny St. Cyr interview, August 27th 1958, HJA transcript p. 18) and similarly, Emmanuel Sayles mentioned that when recording 'almost everyone had to use pillows so their foot stamping wouldn't be picked up.' (Emanuel Sayles interview, January 17th 1959, HJA transcript p. 31). The reference to tapping in these interviews implies not only that tapping was considered central to the banjo style, but also that it extended to other instruments, indicating an evolution of multi-instrument jazz from banjo music.

The descriptions of 'tapping' may be favourably compared with the description of early performances of syncopated dance music in Britain in *The Appeal of Jazz* (Mendl, 1927), in which the universal appeal of jazz is attributed to the unusual sensation of dancing to syncopated rhythms:

'There was an instinctive delight in emphasising with your feet a beat which was not stressed by the players. We all felt, did we not, that we were playing our little part in the performance.'
(Mendl, 1927:84).

Therefore, the beginnings of modern improvisatory dance in response to the syncopation of the twentieth century banjo bands can be directly linked via the banjo to the dancing witnessed by Latrobe in Congo Square. Viewed superficially, the social setting of upper-class clubs in which groups such as Dan Kildare's Orchestra performed could not have been more different from Congo Square or the Southern plantations. However, returning to the idea that slave banjo music was 'a source of interest and amusement for whites' (Oliver, 1984:24) it can be clearly seen that a performance situation identical to that of the plantation was being artificially replicated, at the instigation of whites, in these London clubs. The fundamental difference is that these later banjo performances were given primarily for the enjoyment of the white audiences rather than the black musicians themselves.

The continued use of the banjo as the main instrument to accompany dancing was a rare element of African-American culture that had been preserved in the black banjo

bands that visited and became popular in Britain in the early twentieth century, and this is vital to an understanding of the unique way in which jazz evolved in Britain. The banjo linked all the various forms of African-American music in Britain prior to jazz both symbolically and musically, thus establishing an evolutionary sequence that clearly connected modern syncopated music to its black origins. Therefore, it is significant that banjos were included in almost all early ragtime and jazz ensembles in Britain into the 1920s, except for the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who came to Britain in 1919. As this group had such a high profile on the stage and on record, they became responsible for defining jazz in Britain, as we shall see in the next chapter, and the main way in which the British public would have differentiated jazz from previous syncopated styles was probably, therefore, partially based on the banjo-less instrumentation of the group. This provides evidence that this white group were possibly attempting to deny the black origins of the music that they performed by deliberately omitting the instrument that had the strongest associations with this culture. Also, more significantly, the notable omission of the banjo indicates a reason why this group made such an impact upon their arrival in a banjo-dominated Britain.

Chapter 6

Case Study:

The Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in London, 1919-1922

The year 1919 was marked by the arrival in Britain of two important American ensembles: the all-white Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, a group that consisted entirely of black performers. It is fascinating to compare the activities of these extremely different groups of American musicians who were performing new and individually unique musical entertainment in London contemporaneously. The role of these ensembles in disseminating jazz in Britain has been debated at length in modern literature. All too often, such debates focus on whether the music performed can be called 'jazz', and thus falter as a modern, 'evolved' definition of jazz is applied unsuccessfully to these early incarnations of the music. As we have seen, the word 'jazz' was on the lips of the British public by 1919, however, there was continuing discussion as to its meaning (see Chapter 2). This confusion was compounded by the introduction of 'jazz bands' that sounded no different to the familiar bands that had played for dancing for several years previously, due in part to the persistent inclusion of the banjo (see Chapter 5). Whether or not we now consider the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra to be jazz, their performances were clearly seminal and definitive for those that heard them, and had considerable influence on the future development of jazz as popular music in Britain in the 1920s and beyond. In this chapter I shall present case studies of the two groups, and then evaluate their significance in the evolution of jazz in Britain.

The Original Dixieland Jazz Band in London, 1919-1920

There have been many criticisms, particularly in modern literature, of the role in the dissemination of jazz and the commercial success enjoyed by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band supposedly at the expense of musicians of the black community in which jazz has proven roots. These critics include Christopher Small, who states that the ODJB 'simplified the idiom of the black musicians, substituting crude melodic formulas for their often subtle and flexible improvised melodic lines, and mechanical patterns for their vigorous rhythms' (1987:328) and Gunther Schuller: '[the ODJB] took a new idea, an innovation, and reduced it to the kind of compressed, rigid format that could appeal

to a mass audience' (1968:180). These authors imply that because the group was white and commercially successful this somehow diminishes their authenticity as a jazz band, and this view has clearly influenced many previous evaluations of the ODJB's visit to London.

The fact that members of the ODJB were white was certainly very significant in the way in which they were received in Britain, and probably meant that their music made a much greater impression on the public than if they had been black. Essentially, racism in Chicago and New York, the northern American cities that acted as springboards to Europe for jazz bands, would have made 'a similar success for a comparable Negro group impossible' (Schuller, 1968:179), and thus only a white group could have been similarly precipitated into the international spotlight. In Britain, as we have seen, black performers were inevitably compared or linked, consciously or subconsciously, to the minstrel stereotype that had been embedded in the public perception; but these white men could perform without any 'cultural baggage' other than their American nationality. This meant that the focus was more on the content of their act rather than on the people performing it, and whereas such strange music played by black performers could be put down to their perceived eccentricities, this was less easy for British audiences to reconcile when the performers were white. This in turn meant that the music that the ODJB performed was more easily comparable to the performances of similar music by familiar, native white musicians and there were enough similarities between the ODJB and the few existent British 'jazz' bands that the ODJB was more easily able to influence the performance of these white bands. Bernard Tipping explained that the ODJB 'seemed to set a new standard for Jazz bands, and every musician who was anybody at all immediately copied or tried to model his own efforts on the style of this marvellous combination' (*Rhythm*, April 1930:20).

Significantly, only a few of the contemporary reviews of the ODJB in London specifically mention that the performers were white, for example *The Daily News* stated that:

'In view of the unkind and disrespectful things which have been said about Red Indians and negroids and West African savages it should be stated that the players are all white- as white as they possibly can be'
(4/4/1919:5)

The fact that creed of the performers was rarely mentioned, and then only in passing, indicates that reviewers already saw nothing unusual in white rather than black men performing jazz. Even the most exaggerated parts of claims of authenticity made by the band were widely accepted in Britain, by a public who had not experienced anything to

the contrary. This meant that the ODJB defined jazz as 'a specialized form of white dance music' (Gerard, 1988:17). In retrospect, it can be seen that this had the negative effect of weakening the understanding of the black roots of the music in Britain. However, twenty-first century attitudes and retrospective understanding should not be allowed to interfere with analysis of the past, and it seems clear both that the ODJB were fundamental in establishing jazz in Britain, and the fact that they were white musicians had significant long-term effects on the way in which jazz was perceived. This establishes careful consideration of the ODJB as central to an understanding of the way in which jazz evolved in Britain.

The history of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band began when entrepreneur Harry James arranged for a New Orleans band led by Johnny Stein and including Nick LaRocca, who was to become the leader of the ODJB, to go to Chicago to perform at the Schiller Cafe. LaRocca persuaded him to include Eddie Edwards on trombone and Henry Ragas on pianos, who were to become founder members of the ODJB (Brunn, 1963:23).¹ At this stage the band was known as 'Stein's Band from Dixieland', but one night, the story goes, a drunken punter shouted out 'Jass it up, boys!!' and so the word 'jazz' was incorporated into the name (Brunn, 1963:30). In May 1916, four members of Stein's band (LaRocca, Edwards, Ragas and Nunez, a clarinettist) left in search of better-paid employment (Brunn, 1963:38), and sent for drummer Tony Sbarbaro² from New Orleans to join them (Brunn, 1963:41). Soon Nunez was sacked, and Larry Shields taken on in his place, and thus the personnel of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was complete (Brunn, 1963:44).

The band were successful in Chicago, but were clearly ambitious and Edwards wrote letters to New York with a view to securing employment in the city. Whilst the band were working at the Casino Gardens in Chicago, Edwards reported that 'all the celebrated actors and actresses would come to hear us' (*Second Line*, September-October 1955:10). One night, Max Hart, a theatrical agent, visited Casino Gardens along with performers from the show the *Ziegfield Follies*, and signed the band to play at Reisenweber's Restaurant on Columbus Circle in New York (Edwards, 1947:5-6)

¹ *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band* by H.O. Brunn (1963), who was a freelance writer and trombonist, but did not play in the ODJB (Squibb, 1963:17), is used as a source for these early movements of the ODJB, with a few reservations. Some details are inaccurate, and the facts sometimes embroidered in fulfilling the book's function as a 'story' and commiserate with the fact that Nick LaRocca was clearly a driving and influential force behind the writing of the book, as can be seen from letters in the files of the IJS. J Russell Robinson, a pianist with the band, expressed his views on the book in a letter in 1960 'In my opinion nothing good can ever happen from Brunn's mish-mash called 'the Story of the ODJB'. It only adds to the lies already written about jazz and it's beginning. And old debbil (sic.) Nick is the worst prevaricator of anyone before him.' (in "Edwards" file, HJA).

² Also known as Tony Spargo.

where they were billed in advertisements as 'Untuneful Harmonists Playing "Peppery" Melodies'. Reisenweber's presented different entertainment on every floor, and the ODJB were the latest novelty. LaRocca recalled numerous actors that heard the band at Reisenweber's, including Charlie Chaplin, and said that 'till the dancers toppled over I'd stay there and play...they were all rich people, and they liked it...' (LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.65).

It is significant that the band appealed to a theatrical agent, indicating that their performance must have encompassed more than solely musical entertainment. Indeed, LaRocca credited his band with introducing jazz into the theatre in Chicago and New York (LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.62) and by the time the band arrived in England they were clearly experienced vaudeville performers. In particular, the ODJB appealed to 'show people' who were sufficiently skilled and extrovert to improvise new dances to the music (Edwards, 1947:6), indeed, the band initially met with a poor reception in New York, and it had to be announced to patrons that the music was for dancing. However, they became popular during 1917 and made their first recordings. It was at the height of their success and fame in New York that the impresario Albert De Courville, who, as we have seen in Chapter 1, had already been responsible for bringing many American musicians to Britain, signed the band for a ten week run at the Hippodrome in *Joy Bells*, to commence at the beginning of March 1919 (Brunn, 1963:117).

The ODJB encountered problems even before the band left America, as Edwards, the trombonist, was conscripted and replaced by Emile Christian, and Ragas, the pianist, died from influenza two days before the band was due to sail for England. He was replaced by J Russell Robinson (Brunn, 1963:120), who, interestingly, had learnt ODJB repertoire from their phonograph recordings (*Second Line*, September-October 1955:13). The band was granted an extension by De Courville, and eventually left for England on the HMS Adriatic on the 22nd March, arriving in Liverpool on April 1st (*Liverpool Echo*, 1/4/1919). The band travelled straight to London and apparently spent their first night in London in the dressing rooms at the Hippodrome, as there were no hotel rooms available (Brunn, 1963:125). Similarly to the previous movements of the band within America, the visit to London seems to have been motivated by the promise of more money and fame. Musicians from New Orleans regarded the northern American cities of Chicago and New York, and even more so London and Paris in Europe, as full of promise, as there jazz was more of a novelty than in their home town and this could lead to inflated fees. A report in *Time* magazine in 1936 suggested that

the ODJB's weekly income in New York was more than doubled in London (15/6/1936, contained in "ODJB" file in IJS).³

The band had been previewed prior to their arrival in London, in the *Dancing Times*:

'...the 'Dixie Land Jazz Band', for whom a special spectacular scene has been prepared [in *Joy Bells*]. This sextette will play Jazz, so I am told, as it is known in the Southern States and the West, and not as it is played in the Night Clubs of London'
(March 1919:191)

and *The Era*:

'...you will see, or hear, 'the original Dixieland Jazz Band'- all the way from New Orleans, where the crocodiles come from!'
(19/2/1919:14)

Thus, the geographical origins of the band were emphasised, which established it as being an authentic representation of American jazz, as well as creating interest through exotic references and indications that the performances of this band were different to the sort of music which British audiences had been used to hearing. The first performance that the band gave in England was on April 3rd 1919, when they presented a special show between the matinee and evening performances of *Joy Bells*. The reviewers of this early performance continue to stress the band's authenticity as 'the real original of all Jazz bands' (*The Performer*, 10/4/1919:25), an idea which seemed to have been impressed upon them by the promoter 'I was told by Mr de Courville that this was the original Jazz band' (*The Performer*, 10/4/1919:23).⁴

The ODJB eventually appeared in *Joy Bells* on April 7th for one night only, which the paper *Town Topics* put down to the drummer contracting influenza (12/4/1919:2), a story confirmed by Sbarbaro himself (*Second Line*, Sept-Oct 1955:5), but was more likely due to the objections of the principal comedian, George Robey,⁵ who 'approached de Courville in a seething rage and served his ultimatum: Roby [sic] or the jazz band would have to go- de Courville could have his pick' (Brunn, 1963:126). This is confirmed by Billy Jones, who took over from J. Russell Robinson on piano whilst the band were in Britain (in "Jones" file in NJFA), and there was a subtle reference in the

³ Financial factors also motivated the band's return to the States, which LaRocca attributed to the value of the pound falling (LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.84) and also wrote in a letter to Gus Mueller in June 1920 that he had had an offer to go to Germany but declined as the exchange rate was not favourable (letter in the New Orleans Jazz Exhibit at the Old Mint, New Orleans).

⁴ *The Performer* contains two separate reviews of the ODJB in the 10/4/1919 issue.

⁵ George Robey (1869-1954) was apparently a very popular performer, and was particularly famous for his innuendo 'delivered dead-pan' (Pearsall, 1975:64).

Encore's column of rhetorical questions based on theatrical gossip, 'What does Geo. Robey think about it?' (1/5/1919:4), referring to Robey's probable displeasure when the band was asked to return to the Hippodrome for the 'Joy Bells Ball' in April.

However, on April 14th, the band began a two week run at the Palladium, performing three times a day as one act in a variety show, billed in a programme for the week beginning 21st April as 'The creation of Jazz. The sensation of America.'⁶ The ODJB clearly received mixed reactions, as according to *The Era* they 'met with hearty approval' (23/4/1919:14), but the reviewer in the *Encore* stated that 'This is the most discordant and uninteresting entertainment I have yet seen at the Palladium' (17/4/1919:5). The band's previous experience in vaudeville and performing to audiences of actors and actresses in Chicago and New York meant that they were well placed for success on the British stage. The ODJB appeared at the Hippodrome with a dancer, and their Palladium act used a male dancer, Johnnie Dale, and an unnamed lady who danced and sang. The addition of the singing and dancing to the band's performances shows their awareness of the requirements of variety theatre, in which acts had to be visually as well as aurally attractive, and ensured that this act was integrated well amongst the comedy, singing, dancing and bioscope projection which formed the rest of the bill.

It is significant that the *Encore* reviewer commented that 'After seeing jazz, musical studies are of no account' [my italics] (17/4/1919:5). This clearly indicates the band's performances were perceived as an 'act' which was visually and choreographically, rather than solely musically, entertaining. Indeed, the dance aspect of the act generally received more detailed comment than the music itself. *The Era* described 'the lady singing a couple of numbers excellently. Johnnie Dale is the male jazz dancer, and his steps and gyrations are little short of wonderful...' (23/4/1919:14). The review in the *Pall Mall Gazette* described 'Jimmy Dale' (sic) as 'a dancer not easily to be equalled either in agility or grace. He turned catherine-wheels when he was a little boy, and ever since then he has turned them into fame in the front rank of the New York stage' (23/4/1919). The reviewer in the *Encore* was less complimentary, commenting that the female dancer 'almost danced without moving her feet; in fact when she danced with her partner later on, she was more danced against than dancing'. The male dancer 'came in and riggled [sic] himself about just like a filleted eel about to enter the stewing pot' (17/4/1919:5). These descriptions clearly provide a basis for the frequent

⁶ The band was usually billed in this way in Britain. On most billboards and posters, the ODJB usually appeared at the bottom but in similar size writing to the headline stars, suggesting that the band was an important novelty attraction. (see photographs and posters in the LaRocca scrapbooks, HJA).

contemporary criticism of jazz and jazz dancing as being overly sexual and therefore immoral, and the inclusion of dancing in the ODJB's act from the start prefigures the group's later development and rise to fame as a dance band in Britain.

The band did perform a few numbers on their own, without singing or dancing, at the Palladium, but it was still the visual aspects of their performance that received the most comment: 'The band itself gave 'The Barnyard Blues Jazz' and the 'Tiger Rag', in the latter a saucepan and bowler hat serving as accessories to the various instruments.' (*The Era*, 23/4/1919:14). Indeed, there are several aspects of the ODJB's performance that show that they were conscious of the image that they were presenting on stage. The saucepan mentioned in this review was probably one of the 'sugar cans' that the band had originally used as a receptacle for collecting tips at Reisenweber's (Brunn, 1963:57) and can be seen in photographs of the band in London. However, Lew Davis commented on another use:

'the trumpeter tipped his instrument into one of the boxes and shook it; the trombonist did the same into the other. They were crude in those days' (1934a:7)

Much comment has been made (see, for example, Harris, 1957:201) about the top hats that the band wore in performances at the Hammersmith Palais, which were painted with the letters D-I-X-I-E that could be read from left to right as the band stood on stage (see figure 2).⁷ LaRocca later defended these hats, saying that they were 'just to show who we were, that's all' (Rust, 1967:25). However, there is also a photograph of the band in Britain in which they are smartly dressed in matching suits (see figure 3), which indicates that they adapted themselves to different playing situations and audiences.

The fact that none of the reviews of the ODJB at the Hippodrome or the Palladium are able to critically evaluate the music itself is surely significant. Not only does this indicate that the attention of audiences was primarily drawn to the visual aspects of the act, but also that there was substantial confusion about the music that they were hearing. A lack of understanding can be seen to permeate the reaction of the British critics towards the ODJB, as there is little overt opposition to the band in reviews, but nor is the group particularly acclaimed. Critics generally sat on the fence and avoided commenting specifically on the music itself, and, as we have seen, tended to 'play it

⁷ The sugar can is present in this picture. More interestingly, there are two (alto?) saxophones on the stage (surely these were not only props) and a smaller, cornet-like, trumpet and four black cones that resemble trombone mutes. The stuffed monkey that can be seen in this photograph apparently 'had electric lights for eyes and a baton that waved automatically' (*Time*, June 15th 1936).

Figure 2 **The Original Dixieland Jazz Band at the Hammersmith Palais, 1919. (Max Jones Archive)**

Figure 3 **The Original Dixieland Jazz Band c. 1919. (Max Jones Archive)**

safe' and focus on familiar aspects of the performance, such as the singing and dancing.

The confusion demonstrated by critics also permeated audiences of these early performances. Lew Davis, who was a member of Lew Stone's band in the thirties and recalled hearing the ODJB at the Palladium, stated that 'if truth must be told [the band] was a complete flop at the Palladium. Nobody understood it. I didn't either, but I was thoroughly interested...' (1934a:8). A critic in *The Star* observed the audience reaction at the same performances:

'It is interesting to watch the faces of the audiences at the Palladium when the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, which is said to be the only one of its kind in the world, is doing its best to murder music. Most are obviously bewildered by the weird discords, but some, to judge by the cynical smiles, evidently think that it is a musical joke that is hardly worth attempting. Perhaps they are right.'
(*The Star*, 19/4/1919:3)

It seems that this audience was not sure whether the band's performance was meant to be comical, or whether the music was meant to sound strange. The reviewer in the paper *Town Topics* hedged his bets in calling the performance 'a novelty not unartistic' (12/4/1919:2). Clearly, the fact that the band was seen in Britain as 'the only one of its kind in the world', and a poster outside the Palladium advertised the ODJB as performing jazz 'quite unlike the various renderings already heard in this country' (Rust, 1972:10) made understanding and evaluating their performances more difficult. Indeed, the root of the confusion surrounding the ODJB's performances was that their music was radically different to anything performed by 'jazz' groups already present in Britain. Bernard Tipping commented that he heard the band at the Hammersmith Palais and 'was amazed. I had never previously thought that real dance music could be produced by such a combination' (*Rhythm*, April 1930:20). Lew Davis explained:

'Just to show how far in advance this band [the ODJB] was of the English conception of dance music at that time, I must mention that when the Dixieland Band had a night off, I used to go and dance at the Elysée Ballroom, Bayswater-quite a good class place. Music was supplied by a typically English combination of the day. It consisted of piano, violin, drums and two banjos!'
(1934a:7)

The ODJB's drummer Tony Sbarbaro also commented that 'the average band that we had to buck up against [in London]...was two banjos, piano and a drum' (Sbarbaro and Christian interview, February 11th 1959, HJA transcript p. 47). As we have already seen in Chapter 5, the banjo was fundamental to the evolution of syncopated music in Britain, and remained an important part of most British bands into the 1920s. The fact

that the ODJB did not include a banjo, or indeed any string instrument (violins and string bass were often found in contemporary British bands) and featured a front line of cornet, clarinet and trombone, surely meant that the band would indeed seem louder and brasher than more familiar native ensembles. Indeed, it seems to be the timbre and volume of sound produced by the ODJB that struck audiences most forcefully. Lew Davis describes the impact that this sound made upon him:

'They started playing when the curtain was still down, and, from the first note, I felt strangely stirred and exhilarated. To my uneducated ears, the music sounded like nothing on earth, but it certainly was exciting to listen to...'
(1934a:8)

The timbre of the ODJB's music led some of the less open-minded critics to dismiss the band, assuming that little conventional musical skill was required to perform jazz:

'I've come to the conclusion that that the best qualification for a Jazzist is to have no knowledge of music and no musical ability beyond that of making some sort of noise on either a piano or trombone, or clarionet, or cornet, or trap drum, which I believe form the proper constituents of a Jazz orchestra.'
(*The Performer*, 10/4/1919:23)

'musical studies are of no account...if I can only master a rattle on an old tin can my fortune is made'
(*The Encore*, 17/4/1919:5)

Town Topics conceded that there was 'a certain charm' in the music of the ODJB, but that this was 'dramatically broken by cheery jingles and a miscellany of noises such as one generally hears "off"'. Interestingly, this is the only review that recognised the use of 'improvised' solos,⁸ which were clearly practically unprecedented in the experience of British audiences:

'At one moment the whole orchestra would down tools while one member tootled merrily or eerily on his own account, and then the whole would resume again, always ready to give a fair hearing to any player who suddenly developed a "stunt".'
(12/4/1919:2)

It may have been these reactions to the sound of the band that led Chilton to suggest that the band really 'presented a new sound rather than a new music' (Kernfield, 1994:275). This suggests an acquaintance with the body of recordings made by the ODJB in Britain, of which almost half are commercial, popular numbers (including two waltzes), which were being performed and recorded by other bands before and after

⁸ The extent to which the ODJB included improvisation in their performances will be considered later.

the ODJB. In these cases it would be true to say that the band were indeed presenting only a 'new sound' and not a 'new music'. It was probably the sound of the ensemble playing these 'sweet' numbers that Londoners would have been more used to hearing on a banjo/violin combination, such as that described by Davis above, which struck the early audiences most forcefully. However, other numbers in the band's repertoire had almost certainly not been heard in Britain, other than possible performances from piano sheet music, until the arrival of the ODJB, and so they also undoubtedly presented audiences with 'new music'.

There is also evidence that the sound of the band was commented on simply because outrageous, loud instrumental combinations were a feature of the few early manifestations of 'jazz' in Britain, and reviewers were forced to evaluate the band's performances based on these previous experiences. This is confirmed by the fact that part of the *Encore's* opposition to the ODJB was their nationality, because as a variety act the band was not seen to be presenting anything better than or radically different from local acts:

'American jazz may be all right for those who want it, but I know some rattling good English acts walking about that can really entertain the English public as they love to be entertained.'
(17/4/1919)

The *Encore* continued its attack on the band after they closed at the Palladium, reporting that 'The [house] orchestra opened the matinee [at the Palladium] on Monday to a not over-crowded house with 'Jazzmania', by Lawrence Wright, just to let us hear how real jazz music should be played' (1/5/1919). This indicates that this reviewer, at least, did not regard the music that the ODJB were playing as anything better, different, or more authentic than the music performed by British bands.

Indeed, it is with reference to the 'native' presentation of jazz in Britain that the reactions to the ODJB can be understood in context. Murray Pilcer was a white American drummer who came to Britain in 1916, performed in many West End venues with his band and remained resident in this country, probably until his death (Hayes, 1989:61-2). Pilcer was clearly an extrovert performer and 'a marvellous showman' (Tipping, June 1930:18). Tipping recalls 'the extraordinary tackle used by Murray Pilcer. He caused a great sensation at the time with the wild performance he put over with this collection of gadgets'. A photograph that accompanies this article shows Pilcer at the drums, in front of which is a frame hung with bells, gongs, and pans, which must have produced a real cacophony. Murray Pilcer made recordings of four numbers early in 1919, the first of a 'jazz' band in Britain. These were advertised with a suitably

eccentric and extrovert description of Pilcer's performance in *The Sound Wave and Talking Machine Record*:

'Having put his cannonading party in effective positions, he divested himself of all clothing decency would permit, and fitted his feet, legs, arms and head with mediums for extracting sounds from many and various instruments.'

(March 1919:101)

These performances were clearly seen as representative of true jazz, as a review of the Pilcer records explains:

'The constituent elements of a Jazz band, consisting mainly of syren, rattle, buzzer, cymbals and drum, make revel in an orgy of cacophony which will rejoice the hearts of all true Jazzites.'

(*The Sound Wave and Talking Machine Record*, April 1919:165)

The existing recordings made by Murray Pilcer, 'Wild Wild Women' and 'K-K-K-Katy' (National Sound Archive NP5915W), indicate the influence of march repertoire and orchestration, but also show the prominence of banjos and novelty effects, such as the aforementioned 'syren' and exaggerated trombone glissandi, typical of British popular music of this period.

John Lester's Frisco Five was also reported to be giving 'auditors the first taste of Jazz' (*The Era*, 12/3/1919) touring the variety halls prior to the arrival of the ODJB. Jazz was clearly classified in *The Era* as a 'novelty', and whilst the 'banjo ensemble' itself was 'greatly liked', 'the applause hit of the show was invariably the Jazz dance by the Lester Boys' which featured 'difficult gyrations' and somersaults (12/3/1919). The Lester Boys were John Lester's sons, Harry and Burton, who had been touring the halls as 'The Jazz Boys' since late 1918 with an act that featured 'ragtime singing and dancing...and eccentric and Jazz band antics' (*The Encore*, 31/10/1918). In addition, as we have seen in Chapter 2, by 1919 jazz had already developed a clear image through sheet music that was similar to the way in which jazz was presented by Pilcer, Lester and the ODJB, and the principal features of jazz, namely that it was novelty and often comic entertainment, full of eccentricities; with the music consisting mostly of unrefined noise and mainly used as an accompaniment to unusual dancing; had already begun to be established before the arrival of the ODJB. There is clear evidence that the critics writing on the early ODJB performances were relating them to these previous experiences of jazz, and commenting on these common factors which for them defined the newcomers' performances as jazz. The fact that the ODJB was initially presented in Britain as a variety act meant that these extra-musical, novelty aspects of their performance were emphasised. This provoked critics to make a superficial comparison

with earlier 'jazz' bands, fitting the ODJB within their existent understanding of jazz rather than providing anything more than a basic recognition of the musical differences involved.

The ODJB began develop a new and significant role outside variety theatre when, about a month after their arrival in Britain, they were booked for their first dance gig. On April 16th, *The Era* had reported that

'Albert De Courville is fixing up a series of Jazz and other dances at a new club of his, to be called the Dixie. Moreover, he is planning to give, there or elsewhere, a dance to celebrate the success of his new Hippo revue. It is to be called 'The Joy Bells Ball'.
(16/4/1919).

On 22nd April *The Times* advertised that the ODJB would be appearing the following day in 'Albert de Courville's London Hippodrome "Joy Bells Ball"', with 'Dancing at 10pm'. As the band were advertised as appearing at the Palladium as well, this suggests that they played three variety shows then performed at the Hippodrome afterwards. The *Dancing Times* reported that the dance

'was well attended by members of the theatrical profession, who were somewhat divided in their appreciation of the extraordinary noise made by this orchestra. It is evident that dancing to true Jazz music is an acquired taste.'
(May 1919:321)

As we have seen, dance had been associated with the ODJB's performances from the start, when the 'gyrations' of the dancers performing with the band at the Hippodrome and the Palladium made a huge impression on variety audiences. A poster outside the Palladium also advertised that the band 'made the feet ache to dance', although of course this probably would not have been practically possible in a theatre. Billy Jones stated that the ODJB 'was strictly a band for dancing to, really, not a show band in any sense of the word' (in "Jones" file in NJFA), indicating that the band was more at home in dance clubs than in variety theatre. Certainly, it was as a dance band that the group had most success, and this was as much due to the fact that their presence in Britain was timely with regard to the evolution of modern dance as to the nature of their music. As we have seen in Chapter 3, at the time of the ODJB's arrival in London, the capital's society was re-grouping following the end of the War. There is evidence that whilst recreational activities had continued during the War, fashions of all kinds had remained rather static, with few significant new 'crazes'. This was especially true in dance and

dance music, where, despite attempts to establish tango as the new popular dance,⁹ the majority of Londoners were still dancing two-steps and waltzes accompanied by banjo bands. Indeed, there was a huge expansion of dance as a leisure activity during 1919, with the opening of more venues and with announcements of dances and dance clubs taking up increasingly more space in listings magazines such as the *London Amusement Guide*.

Having closed at the Palladium, the ODJB opened on April 28th at the 'Dixie Club' on Bond Street, which had been bought by Albert De Courville (*The Times*, 27/4/1919), and had quickly changed its name from Martan's.¹⁰ Edwards reported that 'The Prince of Wales used to come into the Bond Club [*sic*] almost every night to hear us play' (1947:6) and it seems that the club was certainly expensive and exclusive. This engagement marked the first extended period that the band was not employed as a variety act. De Courville had promoted the band as a dance group at the Joy Bells Ball, which together with the renaming of the club would have provided the group with some useful publicity and allowed them to establish a new profile away from the variety halls. On June 28th the band caused a sensation when they played at the Savoy's Victory Ball in the presence of the King and Queen and various other dignitaries to celebrate the signing of the Versailles Treaty (LaRocca interview June 2 1958, HJA; transcript p.88; Jackson, 1964:107).¹¹

The following day, the band began a new contract at Rector's Club, which Josephine Bradley, a leading dancer of the time, comparing it to the Grafton Galleries, described as a club 'of a slightly different calibre'. Bradley also compared the musical content: 'The band was of a different type- the Original Dixie-land Band, it was called. Whereas one might describe the Versatile Four [of the Grafton Galleries] as playing 'sweet music', these virtuosi of Jazz 'hotted it up' and 'went to the town' in a big way' (1947:15). These remarks indicate that the music of the ODJB was generally regarded

⁹ The ODJB performed opposite a tango band (including Billy Jones) at Rector's.

¹⁰ The club was to be renamed again in December 1919, as the Embassy Club, with music provided by Benny Peyton's Jazz Kings, a group of musicians from the Southern Syncopated Orchestra (see later).

¹¹ Brunn reports that the band performed at Buckingham Palace for King George around this time (1963:129), a claim reiterated by modern writers although there is apparently no primary source material to confirm it. Brunn credits Lord Donegall with arranging the 'command performance'. However, Donegall does not mention the event in a letter to the Editor of *Jazz Tempo* (1944, No. 17:21) outlining his involvement with the ODJB. He recalled meeting up with LaRocca in New Orleans in 1936, the latter stating that 'he considered the greatest moment of the Band's life was when it played at the Peace Ball at the Savoy Hotel in London...Earl Haig was one of the guests'. In addition, there are no records of the performance in the Royal Archives at Windsor. It seems likely that the source of this myth was that, as reported by Edwards, 'one time Shields and Spargo tried to crash Buckingham Palace and almost got shot. They just wanted to see the King' (1947:6).

as being different in style from most dance music in London. The ODJB remained at Rector's until their move to the Hammersmith Palais de Danse, the 'largest and most luxurious dancing palace in Europe', for its opening on October 28th 1919. The *West London Observer* reported that:

'The music will be a feature of the Palais de Danse. By the employment of two exceptionally good Jazz bands, provision has been made for continuous music. One is the Dixie Band, now playing at a well-known West End club, and the other from the United States. As one band finishes, the other immediately strikes up, and so avoiding intervals'
(24/10/1919)

The opening of the Hammersmith Palais, which could accommodate almost 3000 people, shows the extent of the dance craze in Britain at this time. The band remained resident at the Palais until they left England on July 8th 1920, and it is probably during this period that the ODJB made its most lasting impression. The Palais was revolutionary in that the admission prices were relatively small, and membership did not exist, whereas it was mandatory for the classy dancing establishments of central London, such as Rector's. In addition, instruction was available from '50 ladies and 30 gentlemen...who will be constantly in attendance to dance with patrons' (*West London Observer*, 24/10/1919). Owing to the size of the Palais and the fact that it was open to anyone who could afford the entrance, the band would have performed to many thousands of 'ordinary' people, especially when compared to the exclusive dance clubs of central London. The fact that the ODJB played in the newest and largest dance venue from its opening night for six months is significant, as their version of 'jazz' was widely disseminated and firmly established as the new dance music in Britain.

Returning to Chilton's idea that the ODJB 'presented a new sound rather than a new music', it is significant that the ODJB presented not only a new *sounding* music, but that their rhythmic drive and tempi were also different to anything which dancers had experienced before, and this seems to have thrown the conventionalists of the dancing world into panic. LaRocca apparently commented that 'We played one-steps', which he said were particularly appreciated by young people who were bored with the old dances (Rust, 1972:10). Interestingly, LaRocca credits Vernon and Irene Castle with provoking development of the ODJB's style:

'I played ragtime. The rhythm wasn't changed until I hit Chicago...it was a dance team called...the Castles. And the Castles was [*sic.*] bringing out a new dance like a straight dance- like a walk. Now ragtime music would fit it, but I noticed the general public, it was hard for them with the methods of music we were playing- that jumping music-so I decided to play in march time, slow down, making a fox trot of it, fast, making a fast march...'
(LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.50)

In response to the new music, a new step, known in Britain as the 'jazz-roll', was invented, which Josephine Bradley describes as 'initially a slow, quick, quick' but which turned into a 'long gliding movement' presumably due to the speed of the music, which 'revolutionised dancing' (1947:12). LaRocca stated in the *Palais Dancing News* of April 1920, with customary exaggeration, that 'the jazz step...typifies 'pep', energy, push, advancement, the love of living, and the things that go with an up-to-date and modern world' (from sleeve note to Columbia 1087: The ODJB in England). Although articles in the *Dancing Times* suggest that the specific jazz step was fairly swiftly abandoned, the ODJB's fast one-steps were probably responsible for introducing a freer style of dancing in Britain. Therefore, although variety theatre at the Palladium and the Hippodrome was undoubtedly a popular form of entertainment, it was not until their appearance as a dance band that the ODJB were established as anything more than another novelty 'turn'. It was at the dance clubs that their actual *musical* performance was widely appreciated, through the response of those dancing, and in this context it is hardly surprising that the music of this band became synonymous with jazz in the minds of many people in Britain from the 1920s and beyond. A programme for the first anniversary concert of the Savoy Orpheans, published in 1924, stated a common perception in Britain that 'The history of jazz is practically the history of the Dixieland Jazz Band'.

Crucially, the members of the band, and particularly LaRocca, were conscious of the image that they presented not only on stage, but also through what they said off stage, and in this way were early examples of popular musicians who exploited media interest for their own publicity. Indeed, it seems that LaRocca 'understood the golden rule of promotion, advertising and public relations: anything, repeated often and pervasively enough, will be believed, regardless of accuracy' (Sudhalter 1999:14). Significantly, by billing themselves as the 'creators of jazz' and stressing that the band was the 'real original', the band established an image of authenticity that was believed by the majority of the British public, for whom the word 'jazz' had yet to develop any clear meaning, especially as a musical style. They also rejected the black origins of jazz,

subtly, possibly, through the omission of the banjo from their group, but also more blatantly.¹²

'They will not have it that the word is of Red Indian origin, or that 'jazz so' is a term of praise in the dialect of the negroes in the Southern States'
(*The Daily News*, 4/4/1919)

The band projected an image that was consistent with their claim to be the originators of jazz. In the *Palais Dancing News*, April 1920 (from sleeve note to *The ODJB in England* [Columbia 1087]), LaRocca was at pains to emphasise the originality, creativity and radical nature of their work:

'jazz is the assassination, the murdering, the slaying of syncopation. In fact, it is a revolution in this kind of music...I even go as far as to confess we are musical anarchists...our prodigious outbursts are seldom consistent, every number played by us eclipsing in originality and effect our previous performance.'

This led the interviewer to conclude 'That they are musical geniuses is evident, for they are unable to read music; and play from memory, thus concentrating their attention on producing and inventing new, but appropriate and much appreciated, dance accompaniments.'

It is interesting that LaRocca was always at pains to stress the band's musical illiteracy, as if to prove their natural ability and spontaneous approach, a feature normally associated with the oral tradition of black musicians whose role in jazz LaRocca was generally so keen to reject.¹³ Jack Weber stated that Eddie Edwards, the trombonist who did not travel to London with the band, was the only reading musician of the ODJB (Shapiro/Hentoff, 1955:60), and Brunn states that 'the fact that Daddy [Eddie] Edwards could read music was a closely guarded secret for many years' as it was not

¹² Many years later, in 1936, Nick LaRocca was to unequivocally reject the Negro roots of jazz in an article 'Jazz Stems from Whites Not Blacks' in *Metronome* magazine (October 1936:20) and in numerous letters attacking Marshall Stearns and Hughes Panassie who advocated the importance of black musicians in the development of jazz. Similarly, as Schuller has pointed out (1968:175n), Brunn's book also avoids mentioning the black musicians of New Orleans that must have had an influence on the musicians of the ODJB, and LaRocca clearly intended this publication as another way of making his position and views clear, although he later claimed that material on the contribution of black musicians had been omitted for political reasons.

¹³ Nick LaRocca became increasingly passionate in his later years in his assertions that the ODJB invented jazz, were the first jazz band to travel to North America and to Europe. His scrapbooks contain offending articles that suggested otherwise, and he sent numerous vitriolic letters to magazines and individuals, stating his point of view (see "LaRocca" file in IJS). A photograph in the New Orleans Jazz Exhibit in the Old Mint, New Orleans shows LaRocca and Tom Brown in 1955, moments before they came to blows in a televised debate over whose band was the first to go to Chicago. LaRocca deposited his scrapbooks and papers in the HJA at Tulane University in the belief that his version of events would be recognised as the truth by future historians.

compatible with the image of the band (1963:92).¹⁴ However, despite LaRocca trying to find a pianist to replace Robinson who could not read music (Ramsey/Smith 1957:51), Billy Jones, who had been a member of Murray Pilcer's band and could read music, took over and had an important role in the publication of ODJB numbers (Rust, 1972:16). Jones himself describes the group as a 'glorified band of buskers really; none of the boys could read a note of music-I was the only one who could. I'd run through the new numbers on piano once or twice, and then we'd throw the music away' (in "Jones" file in NJFA). LaRocca was proud of the fact that he could not read music, stating in 1936 that 'None of us can read a note of music and we do not intend to learn' (*Jazz Tempo* 17, c. 1944:21). He also cited his musical illiteracy when defending claims that he had published New Orleans 'standards' as his own, explaining that since he was a faker rather than a reader, and learnt things by ear, 'bits of tunes came to mind and were incorporated within his compositions' (LaRocca interview May 21 1958, HJA; transcript p.8-10).

In addition to their much-publicised image, the fact that the ODJB were the first jazz band to record, and that so many of their recordings were made in London, certainly assisted in establishing the band as representative of jazz in Britain, and indeed world wide, as their records sold many thousands of copies. The ODJB were an ideal band for making recordings using the relatively primitive technology available at that time, as the group did not use instruments such as the double bass, the low frequencies of which were difficult to record and reproduce. Nick LaRocca described the band's early recording sessions:

'The cornet stood about twenty to twenty-five feet from the horn, the trombone was fifteen feet, the clarinet had a separate little horn...and he stood right near the piano. The piano faced me-right under the horn. The drums stood alongside me.'

(LaRocca interview May 21 1958, HJA; transcript p.30)

The band initially recorded for Columbia, but the results were unsatisfactory, due, according to Eddie Edwards, to disruptions through people putting up shelves whilst the band were playing (Edwards, 1947:6). A recording of *Livery Stable Blues* on Victor had been due to be released in England in November 1917, but the records did not in fact appear until June 1919 (Rust, 1967:24), after the band's arrival in Britain. The band cut their first sides for English Columbia, *At the Jazz Band Ball* and *Barney Blues* on April 16th 1919, and returned to the studio throughout the duration of their time in

¹⁴ J Russell Robinson could also read music and published his own compositions, (see "Robinson" file in IJS) but seems to have escaped consideration by both Weber and Brunn.

London, recording a total of seventeen numbers on May 12th and 19th, and August 13th 1919; and January 1st, 8th, and 10th and on May 14th 1920.

The ODJB recorded a mixture of popular and traditional New Orleans music, which was probably a representative sample of the repertoire that they performed 'live'. The recordings of popular numbers were mostly made in January 1920 when the ODJB was well established at the Palais, and were mostly drawn from American shows, but would have been known in Britain as they were all published as sheet music in 1919. There is generally less variety and musical interest in these recordings, which possibly reflects the fact that these would have been played for dancing and detail and variety within numbers was therefore less important. However, the two waltzes, *Alice Blue Gown* and *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*, show that the band could perform with delicacy and respond to the demands of the British dancing public, who still expected waltzes. *Sphinx* uses typical Tin Pan Alley formulae to suggest the exotic, such as chromaticism, diminished chords and a drone bass, which shows that the band were aware of the techniques used by the popular song writers of the day. The syncopation of the upper lines against the driving rhythm of the piano and drums, for example in *Ostrich Walk*, is reminiscent of piano ragtime. The influence of the blues can be detected in *I Lost My Heart in Dixieland*, which features a trumpet lead over chalumeau register clarinet and trombone bass line. LaRocca uses vibrato and bends the notes, creating an improvisatory feel to his rendering of the melody. Numbers such as this clearly show that the band did not produce a noisy cacophony all of the time, although it was this feature of their playing that naturally attracted public attention and, as we have seen, provoked some extreme reactions.

Indeed, as well as performing a stylistically diverse repertoire, the band could also exploit their instrumental resources to create variety within individual pieces. As well as the classic rise in dynamic on the last choruses, some numbers make effective use of dynamic contrast, for example in *Satanic Blues*, which features a middle section in which the texture is lightened and the dynamic much softer. Several of the numbers feature breaks, most frequently for the clarinet, which provides a contrast with the prevailing polyphony. The full range of the clarinet is exploited, resulting in variation in the 3-part front line polyphony of clarinet-trumpet-trombone in descending order of pitch, most often to trumpet-clarinet-trombone. The piano and trombone are also occasionally given the melodic lead, and there is use of dialogue between instruments. These ideas are most clearly shown in *Sphinx* and *Soudan*, the last pieces that were recorded by the band in Britain. In many ways, these pieces are the most musically developed of the set and reflect the prevailing vogue for the oriental and exotic.

Woodblocks are used to particularly good effect on the former, and there is tonal variety with a major key section contrasting with the main minor tonality, whilst the latter uses a quotation from Grieg's *Hall of the Mountain King* as well as an unusual 'fade out' ending.

Although it was with the up-tempo, brash and to an extent formulaic performances on numbers such as *Tiger Rag* and *Sensation Rag* that the band was and continues to be mainly associated,¹⁵ careful analysis of the whole group of recordings shows that the band was influenced by the many different types of music which they would have encountered due to the racial mix in their home city of New Orleans. Musicians were influenced as much by white march music as black blues, and jazz can be seen as a product of the tension 'between European, Euro-American, and Afro-American values' (Small, 1987:312). Bruce Boyd Raeburn has explained that in the city the 'demographic patterns which created a "crazy quilt" of mixed neighbourhoods also yielded an extremely eclectic musical amalgam' (1991:3). Jazz musicians, whether white or black, tended to all come from certain areas of the city; for example, the white ODJB clarinettist Larry Shields was a neighbour of the legendary black trumpeter Buddy Bolden. Trumpeter and singer Wingy Manone recalled the racial integration of musicians in New Orleans:

'It was all mixed up there. Buddy Petit, Sidney Bechet, Freddie Keppard, Bunk Johnson, Nick LaRocca, the Bigards...we were all in one area. The musicians listened to each other, and sometimes played together in parades...The young jazz musicians listened to everyone who came up who could play, white or coloured...when the Dixielanders played, the coloured guys would go and hear them. There wasn't any prejudice if you could play.'
(Jones, 1987:149)

The ODJB itself included men of Italian, Irish and English origins, reflecting the wide racial mix of the city. LaRocca himself recalled hearing accordion-based bands on the riverboats and German brass bands on Sundays (LaRocca interview May 21 1958, HJA; transcript p.2) and also experienced the strong operatic tradition of the city through his work as a lighting attendant at an opera house (LaRocca interview May 21 1958, HJA; transcript p.12). As well as the direct influence of the range of native music that could be heard in the city, the various ethnic groups had their own benevolent

¹⁵ See, for example, Lyttelton in *The Best of Jazz: Basin Street to Harlem* (1980:15-25), who bases his evaluation of the ODJB solely on an analysis of *Tiger Rag*. It is interesting that these two numbers, which are most often cited as examples of the ODJB's formulaic approach, were the two numbers that were taken straight from the repertoire of New Orleans marching bands. Hence the ODJB probably simply used the original march form, with which they were mostly all familiar already, as an easy way of structuring the number, and saw no reason to alter this over the years.

societies into which people paid money as 'insurance' against medical bills, and funeral and burial costs (which were significant, as in New Orleans bodies were buried above the ground on account of the high water table) and provided support for widows and orphans. These societies required bands for funerals, functions, and especially parades, which acted as advertisements, and hence provided opportunities for musicians to perform and be heard. Indeed, several of the members of the ODJB began their careers in Papa Jack Laine's various parade bands. Laine himself recalled 'I picked [LaRocca] up and brought him in the band, made a good cornet player out of him...pretty good cornet player' (Laine interview, March 26 1957, HJA; transcript p.16) although he said in a later interview that initially LaRocca was allowed only to march and not play in the parades (according to Laine, LaRocca never played at a funeral or Mardi Gras parade) and was never considered to be one of the best cornet players (Laine interview, May 23 1960, HJA transcript p.3, 19). There is evidence that the repertoire and style of the ODJB had been influenced by march music, particularly in the structure of numbers and in the decorative clarinet obligato parts. Larry Shields was clearly a gifted and innovative player, as can be heard on his rapid descant on *'Lasses Candy*.

Papa Jack Laine also claimed that the origin of many ODJB numbers was in the repertoire of his Reliance Band, indicating that these pieces must have been well-known standards in New Orleans (Laine interview, March 26 1957, HJA; transcript p.18-19). He resented LaRocca, claiming that he had learnt the numbers whilst playing with the marching bands, and then copyrighted and published them as his own compositions (Laine interview, May 23 1960, HJA transcript p.10).¹⁶ Indeed, one of the biggest criticisms levelled against the ODJB was (and continues to be) that they claimed to have written tunes themselves that were in fact part of the standard New Orleans repertory. This led to some resentment of the success of the ODJB from black musicians such as Sidney Bechet:

'Some of the white musicianers had taken our style as best they could. They played things that were really our numbers...it's awful hard for a man who isn't black to play a melody that's come deep out of black people. It's a question of feeling.'
(Bechet, 1960:114)

Further to this, Jack Weber recalled that in New Orleans 'Different bands had different names for the same tune, but they used variations and played the tunes in different

¹⁶ Moreover, Laine claimed that LaRocca had 'double-crossed' him in monopolising on an opportunity to go to the North: 'Some fella from north came down here and wanted to speak to the leader, and get the band to go north. [LaRocca] jumps in and takes my place, see.' (Laine interview, March 26 1957, HJA transcript p.16).

keys' (Shapiro/Hentoff, 1955:60). According to Weber 'Tiger Rag was known as No. 2, [and] Sensation as Meatballs'. Jack Laine stated that *Tiger Rag* was known variously as Praline, Meatballs and Keep a Shufflin' (Laine interview, May 23 1960, HJA transcript p.4). Bunk Johnson suggested that *Tiger Rag* was based upon the 8 bar introduction that he played with Buddy Bolden's band before a quadrille (Shapiro/Hentoff, 1955:36). Band members Sbarbaro and Christian acknowledged that "Tiger Rag' was always a New Orleans number in the first place' (Sbarbaro and Christian interview, February 11th 1959, HJA transcript p. 44). A judge ruled in 1917 that the copyright of *Livery Stable Blues* could not be claimed by anyone, as the melody was not original but derived from 'More Power Blues' (Brunn, 1963:85). Preston Jackson, a trombonist, remembered Joe Oliver playing 'Eccentric', a number that appears to be very similar to the ODJB's *Livery Stable Blues*:

'He took all the breaks, imitating a rooster and a baby...The LaRocca boys of the Dixieland Jazz Band used to hang around and got a lot of ideas from his gang'
(Shapiro/Hentoff, 1955:42)

Laine recalled that Yellow Nunez and Achille Baquet had composed *Livery Stable Blues* (Laine interview, May 23 1960, HJA transcript p.4). Furthermore, Schuller states that 'farmyard imitations were not new, having been 'popular' musical fare for many years' (1968:179n).

However, what is most significant is that both the musicians themselves (with the exception of Billy Jones, an Englishman) and the music that the ODJB performed in London were clearly rooted in and representative of the New Orleans musical tradition. In addition to the musical grounding gained through performances with Laine's bands, members of the ODJB had played in 'spasm' bands (LaRocca interview, May 21 1958, HJA, transcript p.2, Sbarbaro and Christian interview, February 11th 1959, HJA transcript p. 9), and as advertisements and entertainment for fights (Sbarbaro and Christian interview, February 11th 1959, HJA transcript p. 22 and 25). The work of the band was respected by New Orleans musicians such as Wingy Manone, and also Paul Barnes, who commented that 'they had a real good band. The Original Dixieland Band, they were what you call a first-class band' (Jones, 1987:2). Therefore, it can be seen that British audiences were experiencing in the performances of the ODJB music that was not only new to them and perceived to be 'the real thing' but was also, basically, *actually* authentic. Criticisms of the band in modern literature are based mainly on retrospective analysis that can place the claims of originality and authenticity into perspective within the context of a wider knowledge of the development of jazz, which was impossible for Londoners at the time. The reality, as we have seen, that the ODJB

presented a version of jazz that was indebted to the music of New Orleans, lies somewhere between the understandable naivety of these early audiences, who accepted everything that they saw as intrinsically representative of the new music called jazz, and present day critics that write the band off in retrospect for their commercial appropriation of what they see as an essentially black art form.

Similarly, there is a danger of basing judgements about the ODJB solely on the evidence of the recordings that can be heard today, and it is for this reason that generalisations have been made by writers as to the nature of their performances and their role in the evolution of jazz. According to John Chilton, the fact that the band recorded at all ensured that the musicians achieved 'a degree of eminence that was out of proportion to their musical skills' (Kernfield, 1994:274) and other authors have made similar derogatory statements:

'the members of the band promoted assiduously the idea that they were all untutored musicians who just played whatever came into their heads...'
(Small, 1987:328-9)

'Contrary to being improvised, their choruses were set and rehearsed, and they were unchanged for years...The ODJB thus did not actually improvise.'
(Schuller, 1968:180)

Contextual analysis of the band's background, activities and recordings establishes these ideas as overly simplistic. Firstly, most of the musicians in the ODJB were indeed 'untutored' in a formal sense, and would have learnt their instruments and the music upon which their repertoire was based through the musical and cultural mixing-pot that was New Orleans in the early years of the twentieth century, and particularly through marching bands and associated small groups run by Papa Laine. As they could not read music, they would have had to formulate an arrangement of a particular number by the very process of 'playing whatever came into their heads' of which Small is so sceptical. Brunn suggests that improvisation was a significant part of the rehearsal process of the band, where arrangements and 'contrapuntal interest' developed as a number was played more often (1963:31) and this is confirmed by Tony Sbarbaro and Emile Christian who stated that the 'tunes were written as a group while you were playing together' (Sbarbaro and Christian interview, February 11th 1959, HJA transcript p. 45). LaRocca was apparently the driving force behind the arrangements according to Brunn, (1963:90), as improvisation was 'in his blood' and compositions would evolve out of music that he heard in New Orleans-as we have seen, much of the ODJB's repertoire was indebted to the standard repertoire of that city. Shields' influence was

also important for the effective clarinet breaks and obligato lines that can be heard on recordings.

Secondly, a 'set and rehearsed' approach would have been necessary when the band were part of variety shows or making recordings. In variety, the band was merely one act on a bill and presumably was given a set length of time in which to perform. As their act often, apparently, involved dance routines that may have been choreographed, these would have also required a precise musical structure and length. When the band came to the recording studio, they would have had to work out a rigid structure for each number, firstly, and most basically, in order to ensure that the music would fit onto the limited time span permitted on the disc. Sudhalter suggests that this limitation also influenced the manic speed of the band's recordings (1999:17) and Squibb, in a 1963 review of the re-released recordings, points out that these ODJB records become 'more listenable' when the turntable speed is reduced, and that this slower speed may be a more accurate reflection of the band's live performances (1963:16-17). It would also be necessary to encompass in each number a sufficient variety of features such as solos and ensemble choruses to make the piece interesting. A pre-arranged structure was also important bearing in mind that unlike in the modern recording process, there were no editing facilities and there were presumably limited numbers of 'takes'. LaRocca commented on the pressure and restrictions on improvisation when recording as 'there was no way of me throwing in an extra lick here or there, because if I did and I missed out, that matrix was ruined and the whole thing was ruined' (LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.64). Sudhalter also comments on the early studio conditions where 'a combination of factors- mechanical, temporal, atmospheric, acoustic and especially supervisory- could make the environment downright inhospitable for the kind of spontaneous interaction which lies at the heart of all good jazz' (1999:x).

On the other hand, it is much more likely that on their many nights as a dance band, the musicians would have extended the numbers which they performed, and may well have improvised extra choruses to keep themselves interested and to fill up time. The fact that the band did not perform from music certainly indicates that such flexibility was possible. Thus, the recorded performances that can be heard today were probably distilled versions of the numerous choruses that had been initially improvised, and then gradually refined during these rehearsals and dance engagements. In addition, although many of the recorded numbers sound loud and brash, this was probably the result of the primitive recording technology than carelessness. Indeed, there is compelling evidence that the members of the ODJB were aware of appropriate

dynamic levels for different numbers and venues, as Eddie Edwards stated that 'The Original Dixieland Jazz Band frequently played soft and ratty...so that the shuffle of [the] dancers' feet could be heard (Edwards interview, July 1 1959, HJA transcript p.2) and LaRocca mentioned that as the Hammersmith Palais was such a huge hall, the band had to play loudly (LaRocca interview, May 26 1958, HJA transcript p.84). Hence the band, and particularly their use of improvisation, cannot be judged solely from listening to recordings.

It also must be remembered that the recorded numbers are a representative sample of the band's repertoire, as it would take more music to fill their sets at dance clubs. In order to ensure successful sales of the recordings and to compete with British bands for popularity with dancers and audiences, the group clearly considered which numbers were popular, and themselves now distant from America, they would have been reliant upon British public opinion in formulating their choices of recording material. There is evidence of this from a report in the *Knights of Columbus News Bulletin* (contained in the LaRocca scrapbooks, HJA) on the Victory Ball of June 1919, where the band performed several popular numbers that they never recorded (including *Goodbye Khaki*, *Everything is Peaches Down in Georgia*, *If You Could Care*, and *That Rag*). LaRocca recalled that the ODJB learnt some numbers that were popular in Britain when the band was performing to the masses at the Hammersmith Palais, and that 'every now and then I'd slap 'em one of these snotballs that I had' (LaRocca interview May 26 1958, HJA; transcript p.85). Once again, this demonstrates the band's flexibility to adapt successfully to different venues and performing situations, and this is also reflected in the fact that the band recorded more popular numbers and waltzes in their 1920 sessions.

The extent of the influence of British preferences is shown in that when the band returned to America:

'their limited repertoire was not conducive to long-standing popularity, and the demand was for fresh novelties. While the long sojourn abroad had wrought few advances in their own style, the U.S. had become more exacting and demanded something beyond the mere exhilaration of five musically illiterate youngsters' (Tonks, 1944:23).

Tony Sbarbaro stated that 'after we returned to America, our old place at Reisenweber's was not the same. The rigor mortis of prohibition had set in and changed things up a great deal.' (*Second Line* September-October 1955:5), and Billy Jones described how 'Show bands were all the rage in New York, and the Dixielanders couldn't compete' (in "Jones" file in NJFA). Subsequently, LaRocca even wrote to

Mitchell and Booker, the owners of Rector's and the Hammersmith Palais, seeking return engagements, but in a reply dated 6th June 1922, the owners stated that the fee that he had nominated was too high (LaRocca scrapbooks, HJA).

The Southern Syncopated Orchestra in London, 1919-1922

The Southern Syncopated Orchestra was formed by Will Marion Cook in November/December 1918, and was known before its European tour as the New York Syncopated Orchestra and then the American Syncopated Orchestra. Cook had the specific aim for his new group, just as with his previous British success *In Dahomey* sixteen years earlier, of elevating the status of black music as an art form. He remained dedicated to this task throughout his life, writing before his death:

'Let the Negro alone. Stop telling us how to be ourselves. Let us alone, and maybe the next generation will give us a healthy, honest, robust (not decadent) drama, beautiful, realistic, soul-stirring songs of the Southland, treated with the simplicity, the fervour, the grandeur of the Master-Beethoven, a Beethoven burnt to the bone by the African sun!'
(Cook, Mercer; symposium paper contained in IJS "Cook" file, p.20)

Indeed, since *In Dahomey*, Cook had been an important member of the Clef Club, the organization established by Europe in 1910 to raise the profile of black musicians and composers in New York. James Reese Europe's Clef Club Orchestra¹⁷ was an obvious precedent for the Cook's new group as, like the SSO, it included instruments such as mandolins, banjos, bandolas, and guitars and consisted entirely of black musicians. Europe's Orchestra had performed a concert in Carnegie Hall on 27th May 1912, which as Badger points out, was an event of great significance, occurring 'twelve years before the Paul Whiteman-George Gershwin concert at the Aeolian Hall and twenty-six years before the Benny Goodman concert of 1938' (1989:50). This concert also included a similar repertoire to the SSO and demonstrated a significant commitment to black composers, including songs by Cook himself (Badger, 1989:50), who was involved in training the choir for the performance (from *New York Age*, 25/4/1912 quoted in Southern, 1978:73).

¹⁷ Europe's 1912 Clef Club Orchestra should not be confused with Dan Kildare's Clef Club Orchestra that visited Britain, which, although an offshoot of the Clef Club, was primarily a dance band. Indeed, Will Marion Cook was critical of the later directions taken by the Clef Club and Europe in particular, in his work with the Castles and his wartime 'Hellfighters' band, which he classified as belonging to a 'brand of brassy jazz and novelty bands on Broadway, which claimed to represent the Negro's music from New Orleans, as unworthy reflections upon the dignity of Negro music' (Schuller, 1968:251). He clearly considered Europe's work overly commercial and doing little to further the cause of black music as a serious art form, which may well have prompted the formation of his own 'syncopated orchestra'.

In March 1919, the British promoter André Charlot negotiated a contract for the Southern Syncopated Orchestra to come to London (Rye, 1990b:139), and approximately 24 instrumentalists 'who played violins, mandolins, banjos, guitars, saxophones, trumpets, trombones, bass horn, timpani, pianos and drums' (Rye, 1990a:48) and 12 singers arrived in three groups in June 1919 (Rye, 1990b:142). According to clarinettist Sidney Bechet, who was a recent addition to the group, the musicians travelled in a cattle boat, 'the trip took fifteen days and we were all as sick as dogs' (1960:125). The group were engaged to perform two 2-hour shows each day at the Philharmonic Hall, Great Portland Street, London from 4th July until 6th December 1919 (Chilton, 1987:36).

There are several reasons why the role of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra in the evolution of jazz in Britain has not been often considered in depth in modern literature. Firstly, the group was not initially very popular with Londoners (especially when compared with the ODJB); Lew Davis describes that the Southern Syncopated Orchestra 'played to crowds of twenty people and less' (1934b:6). This apparent lack of popularity appears to render the activities of the group irrelevant in an examination of jazz as a 'popular' music, although the performances were well received by the sparse audiences. *The People*, who had announced the forthcoming performances of the group in its 'Concert Notes' column, reported that 'The SSO has caught on well at the Philharmonic Hall. The entertainment is as delightful as it is original...most of the vocal and instrumental numbers are vociferously encored at each performance' (27/7/1919:4).

Secondly, the group did not perform exclusively jazz, indeed, very few numbers performed by the whole SSO were actually specifically designated as 'jazz'. However, it is the wide variety of musical styles in the repertoire of the SSO that actually makes the group extremely significant when considering the evolving presence of jazz in Britain. The performances of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra encompassed various black American genres including 'spirituals, ragtime, plantation and coon songs, and formal compositions such as those of Samuel Coleridge Taylor' (Rye, 1990a:48). An early programme for the Philharmonic Hall concerts (included in Averty, 1969:22) includes several numbers by Cook, such as *Swing Along*, which had been made popular in Britain through the performances of *In Dahomey*. In addition, classical pieces such as *Hungarian Dance No. 5* by Brahms and Dvorak's *Humoresque* were on the programme. Bertin Depestre Salnave, a flautist recruited by Cook in Britain, recalled 'the orchestra had customarily borrowed several of the items in its repertoire from the classical domain. Thus we performed Grieg's *Peer Gynt* in a syncopated version, in

other words, transformed into jazz'. (Rye, 1978:211). The conductor Ernest Ansermet who, according to Sidney Bechet, came to all the Philharmonic Hall performances (1960:127) described performances of ragtime based on 'the *Wedding March from Midsummer Night's Dream*...[and] Rachmaninoff's celebrated *Prelude*' (1959:4), the latter being *Russian Rag*. The programme also included solos by drummer Buddie Gilmore¹⁸ and Sidney Bechet, who performed *Characteristic Blues*. The juxtaposition of plantation songs and spirituals with instrumental ragtime and Bechet's improvisational blues thus provided in effect an illustrated lineage of the evolution of black American music, and it is significant that the SSO linked the new styles of syncopated music with black American musical forms with which the British public would already be familiar.

Interestingly, at the time of the first performances by the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, contemporary reviewers were also wrestling with the problems posed by the orchestra's stylistic plurality, as the entertainment could not be easily classified within existing musical categories. This, together with the general lack of popularity, meant that the group initially received few reviews (compare, for example, the column inches given over to Cook's previous London venture, *In Dahomey* [see Chapter 4]). British reviewers variously attempted to define and assess the performances as 'minstrelsy', 'negro folk music', 'religious music', 'art music', or 'ragtime'-genres with which they considered themselves more or less familiar at this time. Many reviews clearly assessed performances of the SSO within the context of earlier styles of black music in Britain. For example, a review in the *South London Press* headed 'Minstrelsy at Kennington' (2/4/1920:11), stated that 'the entertainment is much in advance of any previous native coloured performance seen in this country'. Several reviews praised the Negro songs contained in the performance, indicating that spirituals could still fascinate and captivate British audiences, just as the performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers had done over forty years earlier.¹⁹ It seemed that these songs in particular had the power to evoke memories of these early British experiences of black music:

'The musical value of this body lies in its singers and their rendering of genuine coloured music, particularly of old negro plantation ditties...These quaint and semi-religious songs took one back to the atmosphere of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'.'
(*The Referee*, 6/7/1919:4)

¹⁸ There are several variations in the spelling of this drummer's name, Buddie/Buddy/Gilmore/Gilmour appear in primary sources in various combinations and are reproduced here as found.

¹⁹ Indeed, four of the vocalists who associated with the Southern Syncopated Orchestra performed as the 'Exposition Jubilee Quartet' (Rye, 1990b:143), thus clearly continuing the tradition begun by the Fisk group and recalling the practice of inclusion of 'Jubilee' groups as acts in minstrel shows dating from the mid-1870s (Toll, 1974:238).

'...some of the singing brings back the palmiest days of Mohawk and Moore and Burgess...'²⁰
(*The Times*, 9/12/1919:12)

'Memories of the 'Jubilee Singers' and 'Haverley's Minstrels' were awakened by the performances of the American Southern Syncopated Orchestra...'
(*The Scotsman*, 21/1/1920:8)

Although the performances were assessed as 'black' entertainment, the reviews themselves are in the main complementary and largely free from overt racism or racial stereotyping, and instead seem to indicate that there was a genuine interest in the music and its performers. In addition, reviews indicate awareness that what was being heard was in some way a genuine cultural experience as opposed to the mere 'imitations' that had been presented previously. Indeed, the review in *The Referee*, although it described the band as 'more noisy than musical', concluded: 'We have had so much imitation coloured music that it is refreshing to hear the real thing rendered in the true manner, and the opportunity of doing so should not be missed' (6/7/1919:4). The reviewer in the *Musical Standard* recognised the importance of the racial and spiritual roots of the music, stating that 'This Negro Folk-music is quite an art-music of its own and is of course best when interpreted by those who truly love and understand the spirit of it as those 36 players do.' (2/8/1919, quoted in Rye, 1990a:49). *The Daily Herald*, in a review of the free concert which the orchestra gave at the People's Palace in the East End of London, took a more romantic view: 'At last we had the real thing. They had come straight from the cotton-fields of Georgia'. The reviewer also noted that the members of the audience were encouraged to become 'real internationalists':

'We were now being given an opportunity to study and enjoy the ideas and culture of another people. Some day, perhaps, we would be able to take to America something worth showing. One day there would be an end of hatred, and barriers of race and creed would be broken down, for at the bottom we were all merely men and women'
(*Daily Herald*, 4/8/1919:3)

This idealism is given particular resonance considering that 1919 was the year in which the racial tension erupted into race riots between black and white people in many of the major cities in Britain, particularly at ports but also in the East End (see Jenkinson, 1986).²¹

²⁰ These were British blackface minstrel companies that amalgamated around the turn of the century.

²¹ The race riots are examined in more detail in Chapter 7.

Interestingly, the performances of the SSO seem to have provoked an increased appreciation of the evolution and developments that had taken place in black American music since the minstrel shows and performances of spirituals in the nineteenth century. There was a realisation that performances of syncopated music by whites were in some way inauthentic and that audiences were now experiencing 'Real ragtimes by real darkies' (*Daily Herald* 4/8/1919:3). Earlier black music genres were now beginning to be recognised as the fundamental roots of contemporary ragtime and jazz, and were perceived as more significant and permanent than the present day syncopated styles that they had spawned:

'[The performances of the SSO] can bring us back to the darkie folk-songs and melodies that will live long after jazz and rag-time have enjoyed their spell of popularity'
(*The Times*, 9/12/1919:12)

'[The music of the SSO] serves to demonstrate how very far from its original sources nine-tenths of the ragtime we get howled at us has strayed'
(*Musical Standard*, 2/8/1919, quoted in Rye, 1990a:49)

Felix Barker, in his history of the Coliseum (a venue in which the SSO performed later in 1919), put these various reactions into context:

'Never before had audiences in this country seen the spectacle of a large negro band on the stage. Never before had they had a chance to hear ragtime played by members of the coloured race responsible for its creation.'
(1957:191)

Even if this is not strictly accurate, this was certainly the first time that a large group of coloured performers had presented entertainment in a British theatre, which, unlike minstrelsy, was purely musical and had little or no dramatic content. The immediate precedents for the black musicians in Britain fall into two main categories; the ragtime bands such as Dan Kildare's Orchestra that performed in London clubs as an accompaniment to dancing, and black American musicians, such as solo banjoists and drummer Louis Mitchell, who performed on the West End stage as acts on variety bills. In both cases, the musical value of the entertainment was secondary to the novelty visual aspect, whereas the SSO, initially at least, presented the music 'straight' in a show where they were the only act on the bill.

However, despite good reviews, *The Times* noted that even after five months of performances by the SSO 'there must by thousands of people in London who have never heard of its existence' (9/12/1919:12), which meant that the recognition and appreciation of the importance of black music as described above was probably fairly

limited. In addition, Will Marion Cook's aims for the orchestra were diluted due to the significant changes in the way that the SSO was presented and marketed to the public during its time in Britain. Cook had returned to America in October and was replaced for a time as director by Egbert E. Thompson (Rye, 1990b:144). More significantly, the manager George W. Lattimore, a New York lawyer (L.175, A.100²²) appointed to look after the financial side of the orchestra as Cook 'was not a business man, but an Artiste' (L. 542, A. 297), gained increasingly greater control of the group in Cook's absence. This was to result in law suits between the two men.

In marketing the group, Lattimore exploited the connection that critics and the public had already made between the SSO and minstrelsy. He secured a long-term engagement at the Kingsway Hall in 1920, and in a full-page advertisement in the *London Amusement Guide*, which includes his photograph, he asserted his position as the founder of the SSO:

'Mr George W. Lattimore presents the World-Famous American Southern Syncopated Orchestra of 50 Players and Singers...
The American Southern Syncopated Orchestra was organized by Mr. G.W. Lattimore in 1918 under the name of the New York Syncopated Orchestra with a view of emphasising the wealth of art, distinctive and characteristic, to be found in the song and music of the American negro.'
(August 1920:63)

The accompanying drawing shows white faces with exaggerated features against a black background, caricatures that are strongly reminiscent of the stereotypical nineteenth century minstrel. Similarly, the advertisement emphasises stereotypical characteristics of black performers, promising 'Life, pulse, rhythm, tears and laughter' and 'Southern negro music...[with] an honest native sense of rhythm and a spontaneous blending of the humour and pathos in music'. Indeed, the light-hearted, novelty nature of the performance is stressed; the advert mentions visual delights such as the return of 'Buddie' 'repeatedly mopping his dark head' and an exaggerated description of 'the gymnastics of the tympanist...[which] are quite an entertainment in themselves'. The programme included 'glees, darkie folk-songs, 'spirituals', and various popular melodies', which tended to emphasise the Southern and exotic roots of the performers (e.g. 'Wyoming' valse and 'Sand Dunes' African dances), but interestingly also included a 'Suite de Concert by the distinguished negro composer, Coleridge-Taylor' (*The Stage*, 8/7/1920:8).

²² References to files of court proceedings in the Public Record Office (see bibliography for full details).

Lattimore increasingly emphasised the connection with minstrelsy in his promotion, and also began to influence the content of the show. By October 1920, when the group was again performing at the Philharmonic Hall, they were advertised as:

'The American Southern Syncopated Orchestra and Singers
In an Entirely New Musical Entertainment Depicting Scenes of Southern,
Colonial and Plantation Life'
(*London Amusement Guide*, October 1920:64)

A review of these performances mentioned 'A Plantation lullaby and an American-Indian love lament being very enjoyable' (*The Stage*, 4/11/1920:11). The entertainment was enhanced by new coloured lighting effects, which seem to have emphasised the exotic aspects of the show: 'The auditorium being darkened, a shaded green light was thrown on a white background, and in front of this were grouped some half a dozen singers in Beduin-like garments' (*The Referee*, 7/11/1920:3). It is clear that by this time the music performed was no longer the principal focus of the show, and that the visual and dramatic content was becoming more significant. A description of the company's performance at the Palladium in December 1920 clearly recalls the minstrel shows that depicted plantation life:

'This company of coloured performers open in a picturesquely arranged sit-round...The entire act...gives a delightful impression of the everlasting youthfulness of the Southern coloured folk, and it is hugely enjoyed.'
(*The Stage*, 16/12/1920:12)

By the time the orchestra was engaged to perform during August 1921 at The Dome in Brighton, 'humour' had become 'the predominating feature of the entertainment'. There is evidence that a stereotypical portrayal of black music-making was offered, as 'native music' was performed 'with inimitable fidelity to its ecstatic warmth of emotion, and those elements of grotesqueness and humour that are so different from anything to be found in the productions of the white races' (*Evening Argus*, 2/8/1921:4).

Even before Lattimore's ruthless and degrading marketing, by the end of the run at the Philharmonic Hall the orchestra had 'achieved considerable popularity with a certain section of the public' (*The Referee*, 14/12/1919:7). The success of the group, particularly with upper class philanthropists, was such that the musicians had already been invited to perform at prestigious events, such as a garden party given by the King on 10th August 1919 for his servants at Buckingham Palace. Sidney Bechet recalled that for this event Cook was 'going to take a quarter of the band and feature a quartet around me' (1960:128). This is confirmed by the report in *The Times* which refers to performances by 'the Southern Syncopated Orchestra from the Philharmonic Hall, and by a nigger "Jazz" band' (11/8/1919:13), the writer clearly assuming that these two

groups were unrelated. In November 1919 the band played at the Victory Ball held at the Albert Hall to celebrate the anniversary of the Armistice, one of the few occasions on which the whole group played for dancing. The organisers dispensed with an Empire procession 'which would cause too long a break in the dancing' and employed two bands at this event to provide continuous dancing which reportedly began at 10pm and lasted until 5am (*The Times*, 1/11/1919:9). These ideas were no doubt popular with the dance-crazed London society. However, the *Dancing Times* criticised both the positioning of the bandstand in the centre of the Hall as 'there was a very unpleasant echo' and also the SSO whose 'dances were all tantalisingly short' (Christmas 1919:213). Nevertheless, the entertainment was undoubtedly enjoyed by all present. Solomon Plaatje, a South African Nationalist who was at the ball, reported 'Vociferous applause from the spectators and revellers greeted the end of [the SSO's] pieces. They would repeat a piece two or three times, then strike up a better one while the throng still clamored for more of it' (quoted in Chilton, 1987:40).

It is interesting to note that orchestra's appearance as a dance band at the Armistice Ball and the move from the serious surroundings of the Philharmonic Hall²³ to the more light-hearted atmosphere of the Coliseum (on 8th December), events which do not seem particularly in keeping with the Cook's aim to promote black music as an art form, took place after his departure in October and therefore under Lattimore's influence. Later, however, Cook himself was forced by financial circumstances to compromise artistic aims in order to find work for the orchestra as a dance band and in variety. There is no doubt that the Coliseum, a variety hall, was a less suitable venue for the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, although it probably meant that their performances were heard by more people than if they had remained at the rather austere Philharmonic Hall. The two main problems identified by reviewers were the difficulty in condensing the SSO's two-hour show into a much shorter variety slot, and that the entertainment was simply not suitable for a variety bill:

'as a Coliseum turn their efforts were not particularly successful. The turn was far too long for variety purposes, and the plaintiveness of the majority of the songs and part-songs presented hardly in keeping with the general character of the Coliseum entertainment'
(*The Referee*, 14/12/1919:7)

The Times also commented 'in three-quarters of an hour [a long time for a variety act] it is difficult to appreciate every point' and that the orchestra's contribution came as a

²³ The Philharmonic Hall appears to have been mainly used as a venue for films and presentations about explorers, for example Captain Scott and Ernest Shackleton (*London Amusement Guide*, May 1919 and March 1920).

strange contrast to the 'eccentricities' and 'frivolities' of the other acts (9/12/1919:12). Although the orchestra was still well received, this lack of compatibility with the variety format must have made it difficult for them to find employment. There is evidence of possible further artistic compromising, maybe in an effort to better integrate their performances:

'One has grown to associate syncopation with musical fireworks and jazz drummers who hurl themselves at a dozen instruments in their efforts to extract noise from anything and everything. The Southern Orchestra can provide this kind of entertainment when required...'
(*The Times*, 9/12/1919:12)

As we have seen, more drastic compromises were made to the performances and marketing of the SSO as Lattimore became increasingly powerful, and after an important contract for the group to perform in Paris at the start of 1920 was broken, the gradual demise of the orchestra was almost inevitable. Lattimore occupied himself in a successful court case to obtain damages of £1733 from the Parisian theatre, but managed to find alternative work for the orchestra touring to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool (Rye, 1990b:165). Will Marion Cook had returned to Britain in January 1920, but he stated that Lattimore refused to allow him to return to the orchestra as conductor (L.647, A.310), and this was corroborated by Fred Coxco, a member of the SSO, who testified that Lattimore had said that 'he now had another Conductor and the Boys did not like [Cook] and would not work under him as Conductor' (L.647, A.327). This, together with the fact that there were no funds available to pay the musicians (Rye, 1990b:167) led to a strike. Twenty-one of the musicians returned to London with Cook, leaving Lattimore with five singers and four instrumentalists (L.542, A.297). This in turn led to the cancellation of the remaining engagements in Liverpool and temporary disbandment in February (Rye, 1990b:168). Cook found engagements for the orchestra at the Kennington Theatre, to which Lattimore reacted angrily by issuing a law suit against Ernest C. Rolls, the promoter (1920 L.542), and then against Cook, Rolls and André Charlot (1920 L.647) in an attempt to stop the musicians performing other than under his management.

The dispute between Lattimore and Cook centred upon the argument about to whom the SSO belonged. Cook claimed that he founded the orchestra then brought in Lattimore to help with the business side of the operation, and revealed that during the period when the Orchestra were at the Philharmonic Hall he 'was having constant trouble with the Plaintiff [Lattimore]. I demanded Accounts which he did not give me' (L.542, A297). Although the musicians who testified in these cases were loyal to Cook, as the disputes continued, the original orchestra personnel disintegrated. Felix Barker

gives an idea of how the orchestra's activity was perceived by the general public, stating that 'Six months after their second Coliseum appearance [in May 1920] they faded from the English scene' (1957:192), although performances by SSO groups have been traced until as late as 1922 (Rye, 1990b:231).

After touring to Bristol, Liverpool and Sheffield, the group returned to both the London Coliseum (two separate visits in May and June under Cook) and the Philharmonic Hall (under Thompson) during 1920. They seem to have been more successful at the Coliseum in May than in 1919, and *The Stage* reported that the SSO 'quickly caught the fancy of the house with their vocal and instrumental selections' (13/5/1920:11). It seems that Cook was unwilling to compromise on the length of their performance which consisted of a set of thirteen items that came at the end of 'an unusually long bill'. The reviewer commented on the 'spontaneous and natural humour of the performers' and concluded that the various items 'go with a rare swing'. This appears to indicate that there was some success in adapting the SSO show to fit within the 'variety' format; this particular bill included items as diverse as Russian and Spanish dancers, Violet Essex, a popular singer, comedians, acrobats and a bioscope projection. However, the same paper commented in June that the SSO's programme was 'not so attractive as formerly. There are too many individual items and the re-inclusion of their 'negro spirituals' or similarly novel numbers, would assist matters considerably' (24/6/1920:10). This provides more evidence of the SSO abandoning Cook's original aims and fidelity to their musical roots in an attempt to provide commercially successful light, variety entertainment.

Although the orchestra continued to exist in some form until 1922, it never regained its initial integrity and coherence after the disputes of 1920 as the personnel seems to have been constantly changing and 'the ranks of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra itself were soon swelled with non-American members of the African diaspora' (Rye, 1990a:50). Eventually, after the tragic sinking of the ship on which the orchestra was travelling to Ireland in 1921, white Britons such as trumpeter Tommy Smith, trombonist Ted Heath and pianist Natalie Spencer were also recruited. Billy Mason, a pianist who was recruited in Glasgow immediately after the accident, was apparently 'blackened up' to appear with the SSO, but none of the other musicians recall that they had to be 'disguised' in this way (Jones, 1960:12). Ironically, the result of the gradual breakdown of the SSO meant that both individuals and the group as a whole had more influence on the evolution of jazz in Britain than they otherwise might. The groups were forced to tour more widely in Britain due to the broken Paris dates, and the split between Cook and Lattimore meant that there were at times two groups in operation at practically the

same time, which resulted in increased circulation of the music and musicians. Many of the disillusioned musicians who left the SSO sought alternative work in Britain and thus disseminated the music even more widely around the country and into Europe. Indeed, many of these musicians remained active in Britain long after the final demise of the SSO.²⁴ In addition, native musicians who were absorbed into the group to replace those who had left were able to learn about jazz techniques first-hand, especially through jam sessions which took place during orchestral strikes and periods of inactivity. Salnave recalled that 'It was during the orchestra's various strikes that I really began to play true jazz. Then I could vie for honours with the other coloured musicians. It was at this time also that I bought my first saxophone...' (Rye, 1978:215).

Indeed, it is in the accounts of the more 'unofficial' and informal activities of the musicians of the SSO, such as dance band work and jamming, that compelling evidence emerges which establishes the direct importance of this ensemble to the evolution of jazz in Britain. Obviously, opportunities for extended extemporisation were limited within the large ensemble, and certain musicians were more proficient than others, and it was probably these men who formed small groups and eventually ceased playing with the main orchestra (Rye, 1990b:144). The Portman Syncopated Orchestra, the first small group to be drawn from the orchestra, played for dancing at the Portman Rooms in Baker Street from mid-September to 20th December 1919 (L.175, A.99). The *Dancing Times* simply reported that 'The Portman Dances will be held daily in the newly re-decorated Portman Rooms, Baker Street...Music by the Portman Syncopated Orchestra' (October 1919:33) and the *London Amusement Guide* describes the band as 'a combination of New York dance players, who are not only excellent musicians, but sweet singers as well' (October 1919:34). In fact, two bands shared the work at the Portman Rooms, the Portman Syncopated Orchestra and the Red Devils. Bernard Tipping, although he mis-remembered the name of the band formed from musicians who 'originally came to this country as members of the SSO' recalled that they 'had a fine swinging tempo and...always imparted to their playing that peculiar zest and vigour which can only be associated with coloured musicians' (November 1930:57). The group consisted of Fred Coxcito on saxophone (L.175, A.99), and probably John George Russell (clarinet) and Pierre de Caillaux (piano) as their names did not appear on an October programme for the main orchestra (Rye, 1990b:143). George Smith (violin) joined on 15th October (L.175, A.98), and Henry Saparo (singer/mandoline) on 14th November (L.175, A.97). The latter was probably the only musician who also continued to perform with the main orchestra (L.175, A.97). The engagement

²⁴ Details of some of these musicians can be found in Walker (1972:208) and Goddard (1979:61), and their later activities in Britain are considered in Chapter 7.

apparently ended when the club closed to allow a new floor to be laid and more new decorating to be carried out (*Dancing Times*, January 1920:307).

The SSO percussionist Benny Peyton was asked by Lattimore on the 18th December 1919 to lead a band at the Embassy Club on Bond Street (described by Bechet as 'a smart place where we had to wear white tie and tails' (1960:129)) and the 'Jazz Kings' finally opened on New Year's Eve 1919.²⁵ 'The Embassy Club' was in fact the 'Dixie Club', named after the ODJB who had played there earlier in 1919. The Jazz Kings were clearly much more commercially successful than the SSO, for a number of reasons. Firstly, they played dance music, which was praised by the magazine *Dancing World*: 'This combination of talented artists can certainly render dance music (much of it being of their own composition) in the most inspirited, lively and pleasing manner' (October 1920:4). Peyton had a good choice of musicians for his band as he was able to use the musicians who had been playing at the Portman Rooms, with the addition of himself and Sidney Bechet, who replaced Russell (L. 175, A.79). The format of clarinet, alto saxophone, violin, banjo, piano and drums was similar to that of a standard dance band in Britain, but as it consisted entirely of black musicians and was a called 'jazz' band, the latest trend in dance music, it thus represented a desirable balance of the familiar and the exotic. The Jazz Kings were clearly popular, as they recorded some numbers for Columbia (although these were never issued) (Averty, 1969:23) and performed at the most important dance venues in the capital including the Hammersmith Palais de Danse from 3rd October to December 1920, returning from April to September 1921²⁶ and Rector's Club on Tottenham Court Road in December 1920, and January and February 1921 (*London Amusement Guide*).

The Jazz Kings were ambitious, and achieved musical and material autonomy from the SSO as when they found out that Lattimore had been taking a large share of their earnings, having stated that he was not making any money from the engagement, they negotiated their own contract with Albert De Courville, the proprietor of the Embassy Club. This led to Lattimore attempting to sue De Courville as well as Peyton, Smith, Saparo and Coxcito, whom he claimed that under the terms of their work permits had

²⁵ Although this group was known as 'The Syncopated Orchestra' until they appeared at the Hammersmith Palais later in 1920, they are referred to as the 'Jazz Kings' here for clarity.

²⁶ During April the Jazz Kings shared the billing at the Palais with 'Buddie' Gilmour's Syncopated Orchestra. The bands played 'alternately at each end of the hall' (*London Amusement Guide*, April 1921:8).

to remain as part of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra or return immediately to America (L.175, A.79), although they were all apparently unaware of this.²⁷

The Jazz Kings also seem to have paid careful attention to their image. A photograph (see figure 5) shows them resplendent in matching striped costumes complete with turban-style hats, probably as part of the 'carnivals and 'frolics' that were included in the weekly programme at the Embassy Club (*Dancing Times*, January 1920:307). There is evidence that Peyton had picked up on the prevailing idea of jazz as novelty entertainment in Britain, as in an interview he stated that 'We do our best to render Jazz music in a manner sufficiently good, we hope, to make the public like it, and to free it from monotony. But further than that, the 'Jazz Kings' can entertain with tricks, stunts, solos and so on' (*Dancing World*, October 1920:4). Indeed, from the evidence of their costumes, financial deals and stated aims, the Jazz Kings were far more commercially astute than the SSO.

The other main dance group to spring from the SSO, known as Marion Cook's Syncopated Players, was formed in March 1920 from the musicians who left Lattimore in Liverpool and played for dancing at the Trocadero Restaurant (Rye, 1990b:169). It seems that Cook arranged this primarily to aid the musicians who were owed money from Lattimore and were probably becoming increasingly desperate. This engagement was advertised in *The Referee* as *Le Souper Dansant*:

'In the story of the furore of the dance, the introduction of dancing at the Trocadero marks an epoch. A Supper in the ultra-Trocadero style and an Orchestra worth of the reputation of the restaurant.'
(7/3/1920:11)

The *Dancing Times* reported that 'the band, which is called Marion Cook's, is good, albeit some who do not like too much syncopation, might take exception to that feature of its playing' (April 1920:547), suggesting that the band were capable of playing suitable dance music, although possibly a little too modern for some. The engagement at the Trocadero continued until about August 1920 (*London Amusement Guide*).²⁸

²⁷ Interestingly, Russell, not Bechet, was named in the contract that Peyton made with De Courville (L.175, A.79) and neither Russell, Bechet or De Caillaux were included in the legal action (1920 L.175). This may be because Bechet probably returned to the main SSO for a period during 1920, performing at the Kingsway Hall and the Philharmonic Hall (Bechet, 1960:129) and spent some time in Belgium or France playing with Louis Mitchell; although he did also play with the Jazz Kings on their French engagements in this year (Averty, 1969:23). This clearly shows Bechet's independent spirit.

²⁸ Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra, a small group, also performed for dancing in the Australian Pavilion at Crystal Palace from July until about September 1920 (Rye, 1990b:172).



Figure 4 **The Southern Syncopated Orchestra. (*Sound Wave*, October 1920:698)**



Figure 5 **The Jazz Kings at the Embassy Club, 1920. (Max Jones Archive)**

As was discussed earlier, the SSO has been neglected in modern analyses of early jazz as initially, none of the material that the group performed was specifically designated as 'jazz'. However, John Chilton has claimed that 'Will Marion Cook was determined not to use the word 'jazz' for any of the music performed by the SSO...Cook felt that the SSO's music would receive more careful listening, and more lasting acclaim, if it was not described as jazz' (1987:35). In fact, Cook probably considered that some of his music was jazz, but just objected to the connotations of the name, which would compromise his artistic aims. Since in Britain in the early twentieth century the precise meaning of the word 'jazz' was still very much open to interpretation, this was another description that could be variously adopted or rejected by critics in relation to the Southern Syncopated Orchestra's performances. Early reviewers applied definitions of jazz that were based on their previous limited experience of the music, and it is significant that the performances of the SSO were seen initially as being appreciably different. The reviewer in the *Daily Graphic* stated explicitly that the music performed by the SSO was 'Ragtime but not Jazz' as it was a 'melodious species of ragtime...quite distinct from Jazz, [and] has a special appeal to those interested in the folk-lore of plantation days' (9/12/1919:6). However, reviews of the SSO dating from 1920 begin to mention jazz in connection with their performances:

'Jazz music is not forgotten, either...'
(*Edinburgh Evening News*, 21/1/1920:5)

'Jazz, as well as ragtime pieces figured in the bill...'
(*The Stage*, 8/7/1920:8)

It is unclear whether this was because jazz was beginning to be included in the programme (certainly Buddie Gilmore's solo was named the 'quintessence of jazz' from early 1920), or simply that a better understanding of jazz meant some of the music was recognised as such. A review in *Sound Wave* suggests that the SSO's performances of jazz were rather different to the noisy and unrefined jazz with which Britons were familiar:

'The wildest orgy of jazz effects [in the SSO's performances] never reveals for an instant any real discord, for each artist plays with the harmonious objective of the complete performance uppermost in his mind'
(October 1920:698)

However, most significantly, there is evidence that the improvisatory essence of jazz was not only present in the small group and leisure time playing of certain individual musicians in the SSO, but as an integral part of the rehearsal process and performances of the full orchestra. Examination of these subtle references to the performance practice of the SSO is fundamental to an understanding of the way in

which the whole group and individual players influenced the evolution of jazz in Britain. White pianist Natalie Spencer found that 'playing in an orchestra composed of people of an entirely different race was a unique, and, as it transpired, a pleasant experience' (1921:409). Her account provides a fascinating insight into the way in which the orchestral players 'with an artistic and elastic conductor' were able to introduce 'highly original bits...not necessarily at rehearsals, but, should the spirit move one, at a show' (1921:410). Spencer's account suggests that although the band normally performed from printed music there was considerable flexibility for innovation and improvisation, governed by 'Mr. Cook's expression' that 'formed an unmistakable gauge of the success or otherwise of one's attempt' (1921:410). Indeed, improvisation was clearly part of the rehearsal and arrangement process, in which very good improvised embellishments were rewarded with a quiet smile 'and you knew that bit was 'in for keeps' and would be expected more or less in future' (1921:410). Her account leaves no doubt as to both the musical and humorous capabilities of her colleagues: 'An amusing occupation is 'answering each other'-taking a phrase or bit of embellishment that you heard someone else put forth, and putting it in, (usually in another key) in another part of the tune' (1921:410). Spencer's account suggests that although not all of the music that the orchestra played was jazz, the ability to improvise spontaneously was clearly important and expected from members of the SSO. Her description of SSO performances is confirmed by Ernest Ansermet, who stated that 'there are very few numbers I have heard them execute twice with exactly the same effects' (1959:4).

Some contemporary reviews suggest that the orchestra did not always use music, which may indicate that they learnt the music by ear and certainly that there was a freedom in their approach to playing in a large ensemble which would encourage improvisation, albeit within a limiting framework. For example, the reviewer of a performance in Bristol stated that 'All the singers and nearly all the instrumentalists know the music by heart, and are thus untrammelled by the need of reference to the printed notes.' (*Bristol Times and Mirror* 6/4/1920:5) and in Sheffield 'The whole programme was played from memory' (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 27/4/1920:4). Natalie Spencer also describes one instance when the brass and wind parts for a particular number were unavailable. After the instruction from Cook 'First strain in C major, modulating to A flat for the second part, then back to C' the band proceeded to perform the piece (1921:409). However, the jazz elements of the SSO's show were most clearly demonstrated in the performances of the musicians that Will Marion Cook chose to feature, Buddy Gilmore and Sidney Bechet, who were to all intents and purposes jazz musicians. As such, both made strong individual impressions on the public, even before they branched out into small group work.

Salnave stated that 'Along with Sidney [Bechet], it was drummer Buddy Gilmore who aroused the public's enthusiasm.' (Rye, 1978:215). Indeed, Gilmore was even admired by the Prince of Wales. Salnave recalled that 'The Prince, who took lessons with Buddy, much enjoyed playing the drums. He appeared with the band every time he came to the [Savoy] club' (Rye, 1978:215). It was Gilmore's performance that led *The Times* critic to conclude that 'the Southern Orchestra can provide jazz entertainment when required' as they had 'a drummer who fascinated yesterday's audience- and more important still, the Coliseum's own expert- by his lightening dexterity and his knack of juggling with his drumsticks.' (9/12/1919:12). The reviewer in the *Dunfermline Press* also lauded him as an 'amazingly clever individual...[whose] antics keep the audience in continuous merriment' (24/1/1920:4). When Gilmore left the Southern Syncopated Orchestra for a time, he placed a large advertisement, complete with illustration, in *The Performer* to advertise his own act, 'The Quintessence of Jazz' (12/8/1920:27, see figure 6) which had been the name adopted for his solo in the SSO show (see, for example, *The Scotsman*, 21/1/1920:8). Trombonist Ted Heath joined the band for a tour to Vienna, the last recorded appearance by a permutation of the SSO (Rye, 1990b:230), at a time when morale among many of the longer serving musicians was clearly at low ebb. Heath was 'terrified by the vicious arguments and when the knife fights started to break out, both Tommy and I decided that it was high time we started for home' (1957:30). However, the experience was clearly a formative one, as Heath recalls learning from Buddy Gilmore (who had returned to the SSO) 'something about the different approach and technique necessary for jazz' (1957:30), thus leaving little doubt as to Gilmore's credentials as a jazz musician.

Sidney Bechet was undoubtedly the most significant member of the Jazz Kings, and indeed the Southern Syncopated Orchestra. He was born and brought up in New Orleans, alongside jazz legends such as Buddy Bolden, and played in many New Orleans bands. Bechet made his way north to Chicago like the ODJB, with the Bruce and Bruce Stock Company, with which Bechet commented that 'sometimes I played on the stage myself with solos and things' (Bechet interview, 1958, HJA tape, Reel 1). Bechet met Will Marion Cook in New York prior to the group's departure for London, where Bechet was playing in a band with New Orleans musicians including Freddie Keppard (Bechet interview, November 19 1945; HJA transcript p.11). Cook must have recognised Bechet's potential as he was recruited to the SSO even though he could not read music. According to Averty, when Will Marion Cook was organising the SSO for their departure for Europe, he "kidnapped" Bechet outside the hotel where he was working (1969:23). However, it is clear from the interviews that Bechet gave for the Hogan Jazz Archive that he was in sympathy with Cook's aims to elevate black music,

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Figure 6

Buddie Gilmore Advertisement. (*The Performer*, 12/8/1920:27)

in particular showing respect for Cook's own perseverance against racial discrimination (Bechet interview, 1958, HJA transcript p.27).

Although it was probably in the small group situation that Bechet could really shine, as in addition to improvising he had 'great talents as an arranger, at a time when this skill was as yet practically unavailable in Europe' and made instant arrangements on the stand (Rye, 1978:211); his improvisational abilities were immediately put to good use in the SSO. Bechet had his own feature in the show and seems to have been happy to be in the spotlight. As we have seen, improvisation was important when playing with the SSO, and Salnave recalled how once Bechet spontaneously improvised a clarinet obbligato to Abie Mitchell's *Madame Butterfly* solo, much to the surprise of Cook, who was conducting. (Rye, 1978:210). Bechet may have been familiar with the aria due to the strong operatic tradition in his home city New Orleans.

Bechet's European travels were extremely significant to the development of the understanding of jazz in these countries, including Britain. Bruce Boyd Raeburn has commented that 'New Orleans was always right there with him, in his music and in his soul, and he gave the world a taste.' (1997:17). Indeed, his upbringing in New Orleans meant that Bechet had been influenced by some of the great early jazz clarinetists, and his improvisational abilities and apparently already distinct sound made a great impression upon those that heard him in London. This led to him being one of the first individuals to be appreciated as a jazz musician in Britain, initially through his *Characteristic Blues* solo within the SSO show. Bechet's extemporisations were probably truly spontaneous and were certainly recognised as such. Bernard Tipping recalled that Berchet (sic) 'would conceive the most weird and clever ideas quite spontaneously while he was playing, and out they used to come all on the spur of the moment as it were' (1930:57). The reviewer in *The Cambridge Magazine* linked the performances of Bechet, 'who extemporizes a clarinette solo...[and] compels admiration, so true is his ear and so rhythmical and vital his conception' with the abilities of slaves who 'having a great sense of rhythm they extemporised on any tunes, using subtle dissonances which are characteristic of them' (*The Cambridge Magazine*, 1919 quoted in Rye, 1990a:49). Thus, the origins of jazz and improvisation in black music were clearly understood by some, and the use of the term 'subtle dissonances' suggests an awareness of the 'blue' notes must have featured in Bechet's solo.²⁹

²⁹ If Bechet's later recording of this piece is anything to go by, these early twentieth century audiences certainly experienced a blues performance, full of characteristic elements, which was unprecedented in Britain.

Indeed, Bechet's playing of 'perfectly formed blues' prompted one of the earliest essays that recognised the significance of jazz by the Swiss conductor, Ernest Ansermet (contained in Williams (1959) *The Art of Jazz*). Bechet recalled Ansermet's numerous visits to the Philharmonic Hall: 'Many a time he'd come over to where I was and he'd ask me all about how I was playing and what it was I was doing, was I singing into my instrument to make it sound that way?' (Bechet, 1960:127). Obviously Ansermet had never heard a clarinet played in this way, and Tipping was also struck by the originality of 'a man who could glide and slide about on the clarinet as easily as if it were a slide-trombone' (November 1930:57). Most significantly though, Ansermet recognised that what he was hearing was more than just a one-off novelty. Firstly, he understood the lineage of black American music that was being laid out before him by the SSO, in which spirituals, rags, dances and blues were inextricably linked. Most significantly, however, he also recognised that this evolution was set to continue into the future, remarking that Bechet's improvised solos 'already show the germ of the new style' and suggesting that this may be 'the highway along which the whole world will swing tomorrow' (Ansermet, 1959:6).

Conclusion

Fundamentally, it is clear that rigorous analysis of the activities of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra within the historical and sociological context in which their performances took place establishes both groups as vital to the evolution of jazz in Britain and demonstrates the superficiality of the judgements of many modern writers. It is interesting to note that contemporary British audiences and critics viewed both groups as authentic. Although the two ensembles performed different repertoire, both were rooted in American music with the SSO performing mainly a mixture of black musical styles, and the ODJB their own versions of traditional New Orleans and popular music. In actual fact then, both groups were on the cutting edge of where jazz began to evolve from earlier American genres as a separate, new musical style, but nevertheless some contemporary writers have been unsuccessful in appreciating the performances of either group as jazz. Although improvisation was not as central to the performances of the SSO and the ODJB as it was to become in later jazz, it was nevertheless very much present as a significant aspect of the way that both groups worked. The similarities between the way that the two groups extemporised new ideas in rehearsal, that were then rejected or adopted in performances are very striking, and it is clear that this provided a foundation for the development of improvisation in jazz.

Both groups had problems with lack of comprehension of their music by critics and the public, and were evaluated superficially. The SSO presented such a range of music that it was often simply classified as 'black entertainment'. Immediately this prompted comparisons with earlier instances of such entertainment in Britain, most notably the minstrel show, associations that were later exploited by Lattimore in an attempt to promote the group. However, the feature of the performances that was most appreciated by audiences was that the SSO represented an authentic cultural experience, unlike previous imitations. This reflects the change from the Victorian and Edwardian diluted and distanced experiences of black culture through the conventions of the Exhibition and the minstrel show, described in Chapter 4; to the post-war desire for realism, the deliberate embracing of 'alternative' cultures and the spirit of *carpe diem* explained in Chapter 3. The SSO presented an illustrated lineage of black American music, which led to some recognition of the fundamental roots of modern syncopated styles in black music. However, the word 'jazz' was not used by the main SSO until later in their time in Britain, by which time the idea of jazz that had been disseminated by the ODJB had been widely adopted. This meant that reviewers initially had trouble in defining anything that the SSO played as jazz, as it was said that it was too melodious and not noisy enough.

The fact that the ODJB appeared initially in variety theatre led to them being classified as a novelty 'act' rather than as a musical group. Initially, reviewers commented on the aspects of the band's performance that were consistent with the way in which jazz had already been heard in Britain, and the dancing or singing in the 'act' received much more detailed analysis than the music. In addition, their use of humour and extra-musical effects, which ensured their success in variety, led to the assumption that there was no musical skill involved in their performance, and it was not until they were employed as a dance ensemble that their musical qualities were appreciated. At dance clubs, the band presented the first version of jazz that was appreciably different from current dance music in Britain, the main difference being the instrumentation and resultant timbre, which therefore became understood in Britain as the main characteristic of jazz. However, it was vital that elements of the way in which they presented jazz were seen to be more or less consistent with the basic, scant perception of the music that had already been established in Britain. For this reason and the fact that they were American, the group was understood to be performing authentic jazz, and their assertions that they were the 'creators of jazz' were widely believed. This led to British bands continuing to perpetuate this version and image of jazz after the ODJB had left Britain, confirmed, for example, by the number of photographs of five piece bands dating from the early 1920s, albeit including the

ubiquitous banjo, but in dinner suits with the name of the band on the bass drum and often striking eccentric poses, that are contained in the Savoy Archive.

The difference between the reception and relative success of the two groups in Britain can be put down as much to the way in which they were presented as to the nature of the music that they performed. Will Marion Cook, who was particularly passionate about promoting black music as an art form, had formed the SSO from under the auspices of the Clef Club, and although he had previously been involved in music theatre, this new venture presented black music without any dramatic associations. The very fact that the group was called an 'orchestra', appeared in black tie and included works by established classical composers, indicates that Cook was determined to establish the credibility of black people as musicians and black music as an art form comparable to Western high art. It is also significant that the group initially appeared at the Philharmonic Hall, a venue for serious presentations and concerts. Indeed, the SSO then continued to perform their own shows, mainly in concert halls, and were well received by audiences who were genuinely interested in black music and culture. However, the ODJB performed from the start in London's most popular variety theatres and dance venues, to audiences who were merely expecting whatever was the latest novelty or dance band, and thus quickly permeated the British entertainment world. Their profile was assisted by Nick LaRocca's ability to make outrageous statements, asserting that the band were 'musical anarchists' and suchlike, and the moral controversy that surrounded the evolution of jazz dancing with which the band were closely associated.

The SSO were generally unsuccessful as variety entertainment, as their performances were too long, serious and lacked any significant extra-musical elements. Their attempts to adapt their show to variety theatre, by adding lighting and dramatic elements, were also unsuccessful, as in doing so the presentation of black music, which had been the backbone of the show and had attracted discerning audiences, became less important. The ODJB had come to Britain already experienced in vaudeville, and were presented in variety with dancers to add extra-musical interest. In addition, a five-piece band was much easier to employ than a whole orchestra. The ODJB showed during their time in Britain that they were sufficiently flexible to adapt to the demands of the various venues and situations in which they were employed, ranging from the variety theatre to the Savoy Hotel to the Hammersmith Palais, through costume, repertoire and probably stage demeanour as well. Crucially, the ODJB were successful as a dance band at a time when this form of recreation was flourishing, and

the SSO as a whole orchestra was simply not suitable for providing dance accompaniments.

Indeed, the fact that the ODJB were able to present jazz as dance music when new dance music was just what Londoners required in 1919 would ultimately ensured their success over an unwieldy orchestra, irrespective of race. A more meaningful comparison can also be made between Benny Peyton's Jazz Kings and the ODJB as similar sized dance groups, both of which claimed to be performing jazz. These groups performed in similar venues, including Rector's and the Hammersmith Palais, which appears to indicate a lack of racial discrimination. Like the ODJB, the Jazz Kings were commercially aware and image conscious. However, the extent of the influence of the nineteenth century minstrel stereotype meant that black musicians of the SSO were always destined to perform in the shadow of minstrelsy, and the Jazz Kings were probably only as successful as it was possible for them to be as black musicians. The ultimate success of the ODJB was due to long-standing white supremacy, and the fact that the population of Britain was predominately white. Most significantly, the ODJB were able to make recordings that gave them an emblematic status as the first jazz band for years to come. In contrast, the SSO having been 'considered by HMV for recording...the report to the committee was that they were not suitable' (Rye, 1990b:143) made no recordings and the Jazz Kings' recordings were never released. However, the perceived eccentricities of jazz were exaggerated in performances of the ODJB, as they had spent a significant amount of time as variety entertainers, whereas in performances of jazz by virtuosi such as Sidney Bechet and Buddie Gilmore, who would always be 'black musicians' first and foremost, musical peculiarities could be put down to the simple fact that they were black, the performances of the ODJB could not be explained by their race. Hence, it was the presentation of the music of the ODJB that was seen as a valid and important new development in dance music, because it was relevant to the native white culture and could be easily embraced by audiences and existent 'jazz' groups than a black music. Ironically, although the ODJB rejected the black origins of jazz, which allowed them to established themselves as the 'creators of jazz', they were always at pains to stress their illiteracy and spontaneity, elements normally associated with the black oral tradition, in establishing the unique nature of their music.

The high-profile success of the ODJB in introducing jazz to Britain was clearly a transient phenomenon, and its importance has been to an extent exaggerated by writers over the years. The group was small, close-knit and impenetrable, and after they left Britain, their demise was rapid, and their reputation was disseminated in the proceeding years through their recordings as a new oral tradition. These recordings

undoubtedly ensured that their music was widely disseminated and that they became representative of jazz, particularly in Europe, for a long time, although these recordings can easily give a misleading impression of the band and of jazz. Indeed, as we have seen the aftermath of their appearance spawned numerous imitators, keen to fill their shoes, but without a real understanding of the music, merely picking up on the superficial elements of their performances. Although the group was significant in shaping an initial understanding of jazz and fundamental to the development of modern dance, their impact on the long-term musicological development of jazz in Britain was limited. However, the SSO and associated small groups disseminated jazz widely through Britain, performing in most main cities and in parts of Europe over a three-year period. Hence, many more people heard the SSO than ever heard the ODJB live, as the latter performed in a limited number of venues in London and were only in Britain for just over a year. The SSO established their authenticity and credibility through simply presenting the music of their own culture and this quality was recognised by those that heard them.

However, although the music of the SSO was viewed with interest and appreciated by audiences, it remained an experience outside white British culture and did not yet have the power to permeate and influence it, except through one vital route- the musicians themselves. The essential paradox in the history of the SSO was that collapse of the ensemble, which was large and made increasingly unstable by the tension between Cook and Lattimore, was vital in allowing the SSO to disseminate the black ideas on jazz in Britain, and especially to British musicians. Several of the original American musicians found jobs elsewhere in Britain, no doubt encouraged to remain in the country by a relative lack of racial discrimination at this time. British musicians were absorbed in the band in their place, and could therefore experience the music first-hand at a time when strikes encouraged the members of the SSO to experiment and improvise at jam sessions, developing their own jazz playing still further. After the eventual demise of the orchestra, many of its musicians remained in Britain, and thus helped to ensure the long-term development of jazz in this country. Significantly, it was the SSO, not the ODJB, which received serious musical criticism that began to establish black music and jazz as an art form.

Chapter 7

Case study:

Jazz in Britain in the 1920s - dance music on the BBC, the 'plantation revues'¹ and the underworld of London²

American syncopated music rapidly became central to popular entertainment in Britain following its introduction and dissemination in the early years of the twentieth century. Black and white American musicians continued to visit and perform in Britain in the 1920s but, in addition, increasing numbers of Britons began to compose and perform in new syncopated styles. Hence, jazz existed in 1920s London within three main situations: performed by dance bands, usually white, at socially exclusive venues such as large hotels and respectable clubs; performed by music theatre companies, usually black and often accompanied by their own ensembles; and performed by small groups of musicians in West End clubs. The fact that in the former two situations the music performed was rarely referred to specifically as 'jazz' certainly does not render these irrelevant to the study of the evolution of jazz in Britain, and nor does this make the third situation of prime importance in such an enquiry. Rather, as the performances in all three situations were a response to experiences of jazz- both of its music and of its image- they should all be considered in order to gain a holistic perspective on the period.

Many white American dance bands visited Britain during the 1920s and performed in the capital's most exclusive venues, and numerous British dance bands were also formed in the same period. These have been considered at length in the standard histories of jazz. However, it was the BBC, rather than any one of these bands, that can be seen to have had the most fundamental role throughout the decade in the regulation and dissemination of dance music to the general public in Britain. In particular, the relationship between the BBC and another key British institution, the Savoy Hotel, established performances of 'symphonised syncopation' given by the bands of this hotel as the standard for dance music in Britain to which other bands ought to aspire, and the effects of this will be considered in detail. Black American musicians also continued to visit Britain during the 1920s, but as they came to Britain mostly as members of bands accompanying revue shows, they were subject to artistic

¹ A convenient term adopted by Howard Rye (1988b) to categorize the 1923 revues *The Rainbow* and *Dover Street to Dixie* that included black American companies performing racially specific entertainment in a plantation setting.

² The title of a book on crime in London by Felstead (1923).

and practical restrictions on their performances as well as the increased risk of racial prejudice in the wake of the race riots of 1919. This situation will be examined through consideration of the two black American companies that visited Britain to perform in the plantation revues of 1923, accompanied by their own bands.

Finally, jazz was also represented in Britain in the 1920s in the capital's nightclubs, and here it was largely unrestricted by the conventions of mainstream society. It was probably only in nightclubs that black performers, whether American or resident in Britain, were able to express themselves artistically. The fact that jazz flourished in this underworld environment, which had close associations with alcohol, drugs and prostitution, and also was increasingly seen as a black music at a time of growing racial intolerance, served to cement a negative image of jazz for the general public, distanced from the music not only geographically but through the pervasive and influential filter of the BBC.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, despite the fact that for Sir John Reith, the head of the BBC during the 1920s, the BBC existed primarily to educate the public, entertainment in the form of 'dance music' was an essential part of the broadcast output during this decade. However, dance music on the BBC was subject to rigorous control to ensure its suitability for listeners, primarily through the formation of 'house' bands and the careful choice of outside ensembles that were broadcast, and this led to the creation of a consistent musical style and associated image for the genre. As a result, even by the end of the decade, the increase in the number of different bands broadcasting did not lead to significant variety in the dance music that could be heard on the radio. Thus, the BBC's approach clearly exemplifies Adornian 'pseudo-individualisation', where superficial variation conceals a standardized product.

Radio in the early twenties was a novelty in itself, and many people received radio transmissions through homemade equipment. Thus, the standardized 'dance music' presented by the BBC was given credibility simply because it was broadcast at a time when listeners were still captivated by the technological wizardry of radio rather than being critical of the broadcast material itself. Radio created an accepted and expected stereotype for dance music, which was particularly influential on the perceptions of the general public, especially provincial listeners such as one correspondent in the *Radio Times* who wrote 'my knowledge of the London dance bands is due only to what I hear on the wireless' (1/1/1926:57).

Significantly, until 1926 most of the dance music on the BBC was broadcast from the Savoy Hotel, with the first broadcasts of the Savoy Havana Band and the Savoy Orpheans on Friday 13th April 1923 and Wednesday 10th October 1923 respectively. The Savoy Hotel had been at the forefront of fashionable life in London for the past thirty years, and the Savoy Quartette and other banjo-based groups had provided guests with musical entertainment in the early twentieth century. Significantly, as described in Chapter 5, the ODJB had introduced the idea of a band without banjo to Britain, and the next American group to come to London, Art Hickman's New York London Five, followed this principle and also replaced the clarinet with a saxophone. Indeed, although banjos remained part of many bands in Britain in the 1920s, they were now less prominent, and became a more significant part of the rhythm section rather than melodic instruments as formerly.

The saxophone began to become more important in the 1920s, both musically, as it made 'the sound of 1920s popular music distinctly different from the piano and banjo ragtime of the previous decade' (Pearsall, 1976:65), and as a strong visual symbol of up-to-date dance music. W.W. Seabrook, in an article on 'London's Nightclubs' published in 1924 asserted that a nightclub proprietor 'knows that he may as well be out of the business without a saxophone player' (Moseley, 1924:139). The banjo group the Versatile Three/Four had begun performing as a saxophone quartet as early as July 1917, and although they never recorded as an all-saxophone ensemble, from late 1919 their recordings all featured Gus Haston on saxophone (Lotz, sleeve note to DOCD 5624). As noted in Chapter 5, the Versatile groups kept pace consistently with the latest popular song numbers, and similarly the inclusion of the saxophone by this group must have reflected the fashion for this instrument at this time. Likewise, in 1919, when William F. de Mornys began to organise the Savoy Hotel's dance music, the Savoy Quartette was augmented by two saxophones and a violin to become the Savoy Dance Orchestra, possibly under his influence (Savoy Archives). In 1920, de Mornys was officially appointed Entertainment Director of the Savoy Group (Hayes, 1988:13). The Savoy Dance Orchestra was then reformed as a banjo-less quintet, and continued to be augmented until it was disbanded in 1923. By the end of 1920 the Savoy Quartette had made its last recording and left the hotel in January 1921.

De Mornys had already set up several clubs in London, including Rector's, and was therefore aware of current fashions in dance music. He also had contacts with American musicians such as the ODJB and Murray Pilcer (Hayes, 1988:9). Crucially, he recognised the importance of including American musicians in his bands. According to Hayes, de Mornys 'often went off on visits to the States to seek crack musicians',

and upon his appointment as Entertainment Director immediately began to employ American bands and musicians in the hotel: 'I decided that the hotel must have authentic music and I would bring over some Americans to carry the burden and put in some good-class jazz-minded British musicians.' (Hayes: 1988:15).

Initially, de Mornys appears to have attempted to replicate the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who had returned to America in July 1920, creating a band with the sound that he described as 'a piano twanging, the drummer hitting everything on his panoply of weird bits and pieces and the trombonist apparently blowing raspberries' (Hayes, 1988:15). In September 1920 he employed Bert Ralton, an American saxophonist, to lead the mixed American and British New York Havana Band, which became known as the Savoy Havana Band (Rust, 1972:31). His knowledge of the experiences of the ODJB in London also seems to have influenced de Mornys in the marketing of his new ensemble, as in 1922 he obtained a booking for the band in variety, an environment in which the ODJB had thrived and become popular. This enabled the band to perform to larger and less exclusive audiences than at the Savoy, and accordingly raised the profile of the band amongst the general public. De Mornys described the success of the band's variety performances at the Coliseum:³ 'The public was clamouring for encores every night and poor Bert Ralton...had to make speeches to say that they really could not play any more as there were other acts to follow.' (Hayes, 1988:16). De Mornys also recognised the commercial potential of the emerging recording and broadcasting industries. The Savoy Havana Band had made recordings from 1921, but although Reith was initially reluctant to let the band broadcast as, according to de Mornys, he regarded jazz musicians as 'eccentrics and madmen', de Mornys persuaded him to give the group a chance as a result of the band's success in variety (Hayes, 1988:16).

In 1923 de Mornys formed a new band to replace the Savoy Dance Orchestra, an eleven-piece band that was named the 'Savoy Orpheans' because the musicians 'played like gods-like Orpheus!' (Hayes, 1989:69) (see figure 7). De Mornys commented at the time:

'Jazz is becoming more dignified. Even in America, the nursery of jazz, there is no jazz to be heard any more. It has been replaced by symphonised syncopated music. So I have decided to form a new band featuring sweet music at the Savoy. I am certain that although the British public likes the rhythm, they want to hear the melody and dislike the music too swingy- they want melody and quality of tone.'
(Hayes, 1988:18)

³ A photograph in the Savoy Archive shows the 'Savoy New York Havana Band' billed at the Alhambra Theatre.

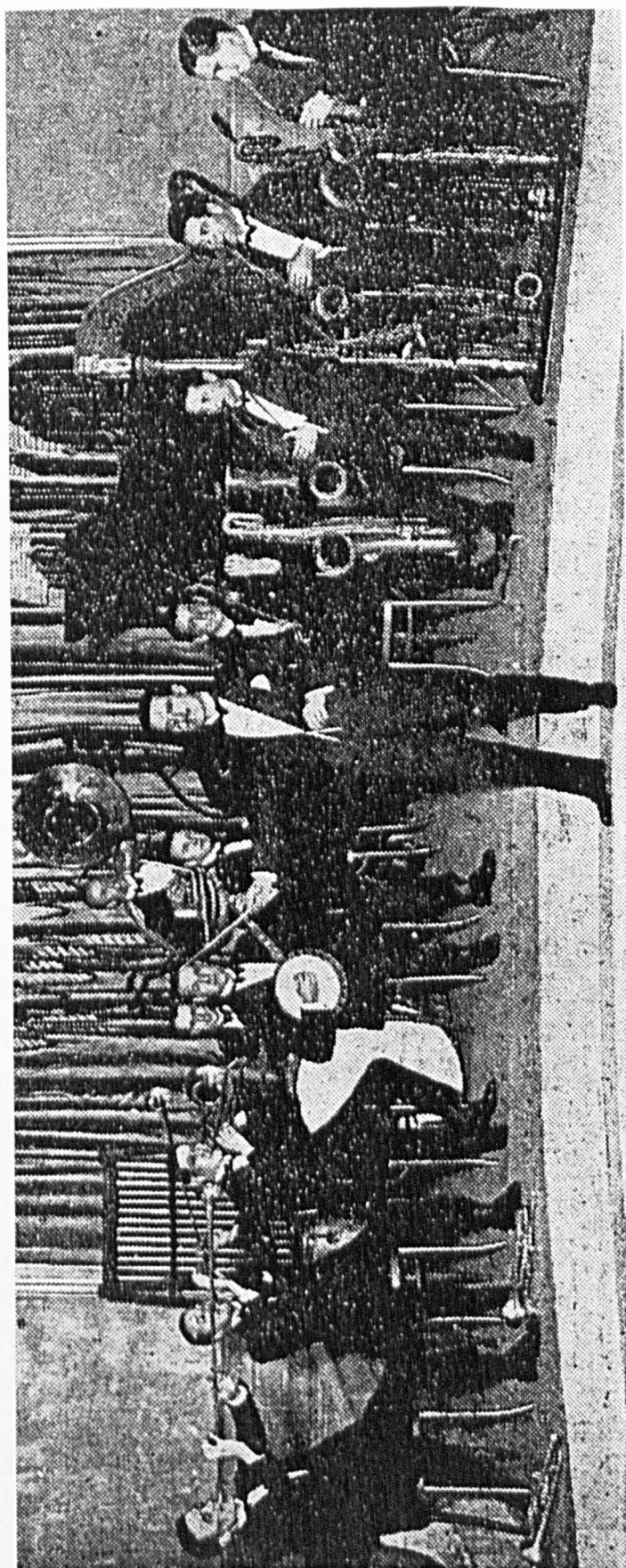


Figure 7 The Savoy Orpheans (*Radio Times*, 18/1/1924:141)

Significantly, Bert Ralton resigned as the new band was being formed, probably in objection to de Mornys' idea that performances should now be more restrained:

'We had a mixture of British and American musicians in the Orpheans and some of the Yanks had their own idea about jazz. When they got too 'hot' for the Savoy I sent them over to Claridges, where they soon had to quieten down. The restaurant manager went beserk if they played a note of jazz and rang me up complaining.'

(Hayes, 1988:18)

Significantly, the conductor of the Savoy Orpheans was also quick to disassociate the music of his band from jazz:

'Syncopation has come to stay, for a number of years at any rate. It is as different from the "jazz" music of a year or so ago as chalk is from cheese. Syncopation is a real music, not just a collection of noises. It requires, as I have said, real skill in its players, and hard study before it can be played correctly.'

(*Radio Times*, 5/10/1923:38)

'Dance music has completely changed its character in the past ten years-from the poorly constructed, poorly-orchestrated "Jazz" to the present-day syncopated music which takes advantage of every shade of orchestration and harmony.'

(*Radio Times*, 18/1/1924:141)

Hayes suggests that the band was formed as a result of a visit that de Mornys made to America, but the inspiration for this new venture may well have been nearer to home, as it was in 1923 that Paul Whiteman made his first visit to London, directing his band in the revue *Brighter London* at the Hippodrome (Schiff, 1997:52). During their time in London, the band also played at numerous parties and at the Grafton Galleries for 'a party of pressmen and friends' (*Era*, 30/5/1923:14). Whiteman recalled the circumstances that brought him to London:

'We had come to London at the invitation of Lord and Lady Mountbatten, cousins of the Prince of Wales. We met this friendly and charming couple in New York, when we played at a private party given in their honor. They loved to dance, and after that they would visit us often at the Palais Royale, a famous Broadway dance palace of that day. Lord and Lady Mountbatten became loyal friends of every boy in the band.'

"You simply must come to London," Lord Mountbatten insisted. "The Prince must have a chance to hear the band - that's all there is to it." When he returned to England, Lord Mountbatten arranged a six-week engagement for us in a musical called 'Brighter London'. Londoners must have liked us. We stayed on for six months.'

(Whiteman, (1948) in *Memories in Wax: Records for the Millions* from <http://www.shellac.org/wams/wpaulw1.html>)

The band were clearly popular with the public and received many good reviews:

'In the last scene, the Palais de Danse, Mr. Paul Whiteman and his band play jazz music on a varied selection of instruments with much skill and effect, and to the evident enjoyment of the audience, being loudly applauded... 'Brighter London' had a rapturous reception at its London première.'

(*Era*, 4/4/1923:11)

Just as the Savoy Havana Band seems to have been de Mornys' response to the phenomenal success of the ODJB, his new band, the Savoy Orpheans, was clearly influenced by Whiteman. De Mornys appointed Debroy Somers, 'a handsome, immaculate, soldierly man of immense charm, who had come from the Kneller School of Music' (Hayes, 1988:18), and who was also not dissimilar in appearance to Paul Whiteman, as leader of the new band. However, the correlation between the Orpheans and Whiteman's band was more significant than the merely visual. On 12th February 1924, Whiteman presented his famous 'Experiment in Modern Music' concert at the Aeolian Hall in New York, for which he commissioned Gershwin to compose *Rhapsody in Blue*. In the concert, Whiteman apparently set out to present various forms of syncopated music, beginning with *Livery Stable Blues*, an Original Dixieland Jazz Band number, and particularly demonstrating the skill of Grofé's arranging and the proficiency of his musicians. Similarly, the Savoy Orpheans presented a concert entitled 'Revolution of syncopated music from ragtime to symphonised syncopation' on their first birthday in October 1924, providing an opportunity for the audience 'to study syncopated music from its birth and origin, through its gradual phases and improvements, finishing with the modern symphonised music of to-day.' (Savoy Orpheans concert programme, 1924). As in Whiteman's concert, the programme cited the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, emphasised the importance of arrangements, and highlighted 'symphonised syncopation' as the most highly developed form of syncopated music.

In the following year, Gershwin himself visited the Savoy and on 15th June 1925 performed his *Rhapsody* with the Orpheans, an event that was broadcast on BBC radio and was to have a significant impact on the way jazz was regarded in Britain, as we shall see later. The Orpheans also gave concerts in the Queen's Hall in 1925, and in 1926 toured the country as the 'Savoy Orpheans Augmented Symphonic Orchestra' in order to 'endeavour to establish their claim that syncopated music such as Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue' deserves to be accepted as a serious contribution to art' (*Radio Times*, 16/10/1925:151). This shows obvious influence of the enlarged Whiteman band's concert performances, both in America and during a return visit to Britain in 1926, which included a concert at the Royal Albert Hall featuring Gershwin at the piano

for *Rhapsody in Blue* (Rust, 1972:50). The *Radio Times* even pointed out that 'the Savoy Orpheans have introduced scenery and modern lighting effects...because they do not think that the atmosphere of the concert hall should be kept dull and severe, as has been the practice up to now.' (19/3/1926:580). Whiteman had used lighting and scenery in his concerts from the outset- on the American tour of the 'Experiment' concert in 1924 there was

'a curtain of gold cloth with a silhouette of the Whiteman orchestra; this withdrew to reveal the orchestra dressed in its summer whites and seated in white bentwood chairs on tiers of dove grey trimmed with vermillion...To cap it all the stage was lighted (as it had been at Aeolian Hall) with shifting lights of green, yellow, pink and blue.'
(Schiff, 1997:61)

It was through the regular use of the Savoy Orpheans and Havana Band that the BBC ensured consistency and quality control in their early broadcasting of dance music. The relationship between the two institutions was clearly mutually beneficial, on one hand profiting the Savoy, whose management were largely eager to please in their dealings with the BBC (BBCWAC R30/2, 971/1 and R22/1, 058/1) and on the other, the BBC's leaders relished the association with such a well-respected, upper-class, British institution (which was also conveniently close to the BBC's headquarters, indeed, the Savoy was seen as an 'undercover branch of the BBC' [Pearsall, 1976:125]), which also allowed them to present an acceptable image for 'entertainment'. The Savoy Bands played three late-night slots, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday during 1924 and 1925. Initially, dance music was restricted to these late evening slots but, from spring 1925, dance music was also broadcast in the afternoon, reflecting the popularity of tea dances at this time. The BBC's desire to cement the relationship with the Savoy led to an agreement being made on 11th September 1924 to broadcast Savoy Bands exclusively (other bands were not to be broadcast unless with the consent of the Savoy management).

The BBC made it clear through propaganda-style articles in the *Radio Times* that their association with the Savoy allowed them to present dance music of the highest quality. The *Radio Times* was first published in September 1923, with the intention not only to provide information about future broadcasts, but also to make the BBC seem accountable to the public. For example, a memorandum to station directors about the intention to stop announcements by bandleaders to prevent song-plugging stated that 'It is possible that a certain amount of objection will be raised by listeners to the non-announcement of numbers, but this will be met by explanatory statements in the *Radio Times* as found necessary.' (BBCWAC R19/244). Early articles on the Savoy Orpheans allowed the care and expense taken to provide the dance music for broadcasting to be

explained and emphasised: 'As you glide over the floor, it all seems so delightfully easy and simple. You know nothing of the months of hard work and expense that have been necessary to give you an evening's dancing to a good band'. Musicians were selected carefully:

'we want a player who has been trained in syncopation; an ordinary musician is no good to us'
(*Radio Times*, 5/10/1923:38)

'Each member of the Savoy-Orpheans and Savoy Havana Bands is a soloist of the finest quality, procured at great expense and trouble...each soloist is 'discovered', brought to London, and, after much rehearsing, welded into the bands'
(*Radio Times*, 18/1/1924:141)

The repertoire of the Savoy Orpheans was selected with similar attention:

'...it is absolutely essential for the Savoy Hotel to have agents in every capital in the world searching for, and sending home new dance music. These new numbers are then considered by our special staff of arrangers in London and, where selected, are recast and orchestrated with every consideration for symphonic and syncopated beauty.'
(*Radio Times*, 18/1/1924:141).

Finally, as a radio audience would not, of course, be able to see the band in action, 'on broadcasting nights every effort is made to transfer to the listener by the music alone the true atmosphere of happiness.' (*Radio Times*, 18/1/1924:141). It is clear from these articles the phenomenon of outside broadcasting was still extremely new, both pieces emphasising that the band would

'...play at the Savoy Hotel, whence the music will be transmitted by a land wire to 2LO [the broadcast transmitter at Marconi House on the Strand], and so, through the ether, to your receiving sets.'
(*Radio Times*, 5/10/1923:38)

The fascination with the technological aspects of radio permeates early editions of the *Radio Times*, which contained letters and articles on, for example, reception and oscillation. Increasing numbers of advertisements in the magazine also highlight both the interest in broadcast technology and the centrality of dance music to the radio output in the 1920s, for example advertisements for 'Western Loudspeakers' featured an illustration of couples dancing to music from the radio (see figure 8), and used a similar idea in a written advertisement in the following year:



Figure 8

Western Loudspeakers Advertisement. (*Radio Times*, 14/12/1923:424)

'The company is congenial, the surroundings pleasant, the occasion ideal, but the dance will not be a success if the music is poor. A Western Electric Loudspeaker will enable your guests to dance to the latest music, played in perfect time, by the well-known Savoy Orpheans and Havana Bands.'
(*Radio Times*, 15/8/1924:341)

Readers were encouraged to purchase 'Brown's Loudspeakers' to hear dance music to the best advantage:

'Radio listeners throughout the country look forward to their dance music broadcast through all eight stations from the Savoy Havana Band. It is safe to say that in very many homes the dining room table is pushed out of the way immediately the Band strikes up and a happy informal little dance takes place. And the leader of the dance is the Saxophone, a nickel-plated, highly polished Instrument which is quite a newcomer to orchestradom.

To obtain the greatest pleasure from your Radio Dance you need a loudspeaker capable of rendering a loud and clear volume of sound without the slightest trace of distortion: a BROWN, in fact.'
(*Radio Times*, 25/1/1924:176)

The importance of the broadcasting of dance music in the 1920s is shown through the *Radio Times*, which suggests that people did actually dance to the music. Features in the magazine idealistically emphasised both the social importance of this, and that the BBC enabled music that was otherwise socially exclusive to become more accessible. In the November 23rd 1923 issue, the *Radio Times* reprinted an extract from an article in the *Evening Standard* 'Dancing to Wireless: A Possibility of the Future' (p. 315), in which the author could foresee the broadcasting of dance music from larger venues to 'the smallest dance studio and even to the private dance rooms', providing better music than had been customary at such venues at an economical price. In the spring of the following year, an article on 'Radio in the Summertime' predicted that 'Open-air wireless will largely be popularised through loud speakers enabling impromptu dances and concerts to be shared by holiday and picnic parties' and promising that 'Dance music and songs and popular programmes by well-known bands will figure more largely in the fare to be provided in the coming months.' (*Radio Times*, 16/5/1924:308). Dancing to the radio was not a pastime solely of the lower classes, as shown by a description by the 'distinguished essayist' E. V. Lucas, who also points out the advantages of the radio over the gramophone:

'In a house in Buckinghamshire where I was staying recently everyone, at the moment for which they had been waiting, began to dance, not to any instrument in the room, but to the strains of the band at the Savoy Hotel in the Strand, thirty-five miles away. In ten thousand houses the same impulse probably was setting other couples capering. The tune lasted longer than an ordinary gramophone record, nor did anyone, at the close, have to leap across the room to remove the needle.'
(*Radio Times*, 5/9/1924:442)

The pleasure of dancing to broadcast music was further extolled in an article entitled 'Are you a Radio Dancer?' by Lydia Kyasht:

'To listen to a loud speaker delivering the perfect dance music broadcast, for example, by the Savoy Orpheans Band, is a delight to the heart of a real dancer. It brings the exhilarating atmosphere of the ballroom into your home...You are transported by the magic of radio, which overcomes distance. You believe that you are actually listening at close quarters to the band'.
(*Radio Times*, 2/10/1925:73)

In both descriptions, the 'magic' ability of the radio to bring the atmosphere of a distant ballroom into ordinary, domestic settings remains an integral part of the overall experience, showing that the early fascination with broadcast technology had not yet totally receded. Programmes of uninterrupted dance music were advertised in advance so that evening dances or afternoon *thé dansant* parties could be planned and, by 1926, the *Radio Times* reported 'an increasing tendency lately for listeners to organize loud speaker dances' (22/1/1926:195). Broadcast dance lessons were also transmitted and accompanying diagrams, photographs and written instruction published in the *Radio Times*, and in this way it can be seen that the BBC played a central role in perpetuating and disseminating the latest dance trends.

However, later in the decade, listeners became less fixated with technological aspects of broadcasting and more critical of the BBC's programming. The BBC encouraged 'listeners-in' to write to the *Radio Times*, and published a selection of letters in each issue, stating from the outset that 'We hope to give on this page each week a limited selection of typical letters from the BBC postbag. The points raised by the writers will be answered briefly immediately beneath each communication.' However, the correspondence published on the 'Listeners' Letters' page of the *Radio Times* seems sometimes to have been chosen to justify programming decisions as being a result of listeners' opinions. It is interesting that after the agreement had been made to broadcast the Savoy Bands exclusively, the BBC printed a letter entitled 'Too much Savoy Bands?' in the *Radio Times* in which a listener wrote:

'I should like to express the opinion... that we are having rather more Savoy Bands transmissions at the present time than the average listener can appreciate...I would suggest that it is a style of music of which one quickly tires.'
(21/11/1924:385)

The editorial answer provided was that 'The Savoy Bands are broadcast only three times per week out of eight transmissions', but the timing of the publication of the letter suggests that the BBC were preparing to distance themselves somewhat from the exclusive deal with the Savoy, and possibly to convince the Savoy that this was a result of listeners' opinion. In the middle of the following year, the Corporation printed the results of a survey by a listener in Cheshire, giving the opinions of a group of work colleagues on the BBC's programming: 'They gave it as their opinion that the Savoy Bands are not as popular as formerly. One or two originally thought these bands the only item worth listening to, and now apparently they consider them monotonous!' (*Radio Times*, 3/7/1925:72).

At this time the BBC wrote to the Savoy management 'We recognise that the Savoy, as pioneers of this form of broadcast service, should have preference, but realise that we can no longer give any particular band in London a monopoly for dance music', but promised that the Savoy should continue to broadcast the majority of dance music (BBCWAC R22/1, 058/1). The Savoy management responded 'we are inclined to think we should like to give the public a respite from the Savoy Bands. This would not of course prevent any novelty we might produce from time to time being broadcasted if you thought that desirable' (BBCWAC R22/1, 058/1), suggesting that they were concerned that listeners, such as the correspondents in the *Radio Times*, were tiring of the Savoy Bands' broadcasts and that therefore the bands were beginning to lose public interest through over-familiarity.

Significantly, the opening of the 'high powered' service from Daventry in 1925 allowed more flexibility in the arrangements for broadcasting of a wide range of music, with the London station and Daventry providing contrasting musical genres simultaneously. The *Radio Times* of October 2nd 1925 reported that 'starting on November 2nd, broadcast dance music will be available from Daventry every day, except Sunday, from the conclusion of the ordinary programme until midnight.' (p.32), and the Friday broadcasts were extended until 2am (*Radio Times*, 16/10/1925:151). By necessity, more bands were required to meet the massively increased demand for dance music, and therefore it was impossible for the BBC to honour an exclusive agreement with the Savoy Hotel. Indeed, there was a huge growth in the broadcasting of dance music in 1926-7, both in terms of its proportion of the BBC's total broadcast output and as a

percentage of music broadcasting, as shown by the following table (adapted from Doctor, 1999:40-41):

	Dance Music as	
	% of total broadcast hours	% of music hours
October 1925 (month)	6.62	9.94
October 1927 (week)	16.43	24.11
October 1929 (week)	9.92	16.52

BBC programme records enable comparisons to be made between output in the same week in successive years to be made, and it can be seen that during 1925 the BBC began to broadcast music from a wide variety of venues in the capital, although the Savoy Bands continued to feature frequently. For example, in the first week of March in 1925, the Savoy Bands provided all the late-night dance music that was broadcast, whereas in the corresponding week in 1926, Jack Payne's Hotel Cecil Dance Band, Jack Hylton's Kettner's Five, J Whidden and his Midnight Follies Dance Band from the Hotel Metropole, Firman's Carlton Hotel Dance Band and Ted Brown's Café de Paris Dance Band performed late-night dance music in addition to the Savoy Bands. In the first week of March in 1926 and 1927, every evening (except Sunday) ended with dance music, and in 1927 these slots were filled with outside broadcasts from the most famous and exclusive hotels and clubs, including Ciro's, the Royal Opera House, the Riviera Club, and the New Princes Restaurant, continuing until midnight and beyond on the Daventry station.

However, the apparent variety of dance music on offer conceals the fact that broadcasting of the Savoy Bands almost exclusively for almost three years had the effect of standardising London's dance music. The majority of the general public obtained their experiences of dance music from the radio, and therefore expected that dance music to sound like the Orpheans, whose controlled style also suited the image that the BBC wished to project. Even when the BBC began to obtain dance music from venues other than the Savoy, they still wished to provide what they viewed as 'suitable' entertainment and were obligated to an extent to satisfy listener's expectations. In the resulting vicious circle, British bands would have had to conform to the style laid down by the Savoy bands in order to be permitted to make the broadcasts and recordings necessary for commercial success. Thus, although in the later part of the decade a larger number of bands were broadcast, the basic style and presentation of the music remained generally consistent.

In addition, both radio broadcasts and gramophone records played an important part in the self-tuition of musicians in the new syncopated styles and therefore helped to ensure stylistic consistency. Indeed, the recruitment both of existing professional musicians and enthusiastic amateurs into dance bands was fast and widespread at this time (Ehrlich, 1985:202). Well-known British dance band musicians of the 1920s wrote tutor books, for example, the *Billy Mayerl School of Modern Syncopation*, available as correspondence course, which further disseminated the British dance band style in print for aspiring professional musicians. Furthermore, as Paul Whiteman's band, an ensemble that, as we have seen, was demonstrably influential on the Savoy Orpheans, was also the most popular and influential band in America, this meant that many other American bands could be booked that largely fitted within the prevailing dance music style in Britain. Visits and broadcasts of bands led by, for example, Vincent Lopez, Paul Specht, Ted Lewis and Isham Jones, perpetuated this style further and this led to the exclusion from Britain of American bands that did not conform. Another important factor in the standardisation process was, of course, that the activities of black musicians were restricted and therefore under-represented in Britain at this time, which will be discussed further later. Leon Abbey's (black) band not only performed but also broadcasted in Britain in the twenties, but this was probably because they too sounded like Whiteman's group. Fundamentally then, BBC policies severely restricted the popular music that could be heard in Britain, not only on the radio but also 'live' in venues all over the country.

A significant result of the standardisation of popular music by the BBC was that it was easy for all popular music to be classified as 'low-brow' in antithesis to 'high-brow' classical music. The 'Listeners' Letters' page in the *Radio Times* often included contradictory opinions on particular subjects, suggesting that the BBC were trying to justify their programming simply by proving that it was impossible to please everyone. The selected letters presented stereotypical extremes of the 'high-brow' and 'low-brow' listener, who, apparently, could be identified by their respective taste in music above anything else, which led to certain musical genres being stereotyped themselves as representative of these high and low categories. One reader attempted to define high- and low-brow musics thus: 'High-brow music is appreciated more the more one hears it; low-brow music is likeable at first, but rapidly tires on repetition'. (4/12/1925:489). A correspondent concerned about 'wireless etiquette' recommended 'a few lessons on this subject to "high-brows" who grumble audibly when "low-brow" music is being broadcast, and to the jazz enthusiasts who spoil their companions' enjoyment by jeering when Beethoven is coming across the ether.' (3/10/1924:50). This letter clearly

demonstrates the extreme polarity that was perceived to exist between different types of music and their respective groups of listeners.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the BBC had clearly rejected the term 'jazz' in favour of 'dance music'. Dance music was considered acceptable entertainment as it was firmly associated with the respectable upper class venues from which it was broadcast and, after all, was not meant to be listened to seriously but was considered as purely functional for dancing. However, even dance music was seen as a fundamentally low-brow form, and this prohibited any comparison with high-brow classical music, as although both genres were established as important and suitable for broadcast, this was within their respective high or low classifications and there was no question of which was the 'better' music. Although the word 'jazz' had undesirable associations, the use of the term 'syncopated music' as a synonymous alternative was equally problematic, as it implied that syncopation alone was the essence of the music. A listener wrote in the *Radio Times*:

'...to say that jazz is an important contribution towards musical development is nonsense. Modern dance music and popular songs are syncopated, and, as syncopation is no new thing, where does the important contribution to music come in?'
(20/3/1925:582)

Therefore, it is clear that whether the music was called 'dance', 'jazz' or 'syncopated' it was destined to be consigned to the 'low-brow' category as an antithesis to high art music.

Indeed, it seems that dance music and classical music were not regarded as different forms existing within the 'music' subset, but rather as representative of opposite extremes (high-brow vs. low-brow; autonomous art vs. functionality and pure entertainment) of the BBC's output. This is shown by the fact that whilst classical music was presented as 'high' art, complete with broadcast or published explanation and information in the *Radio Times* to encourage serious and attentive listening, pieces of dance music latterly were not even identified by their titles due to song-plugging restrictions. Song plugging, where payments were made to artists to encourage them to perform certain numbers was, of course, totally against the philosophy of the BBC and the subject of long-running battles between the Corporation, venues and artists. In early 1928, Sidney Firman, conductor of the London Radio Dance Band, was found to be 'not guiltless in the matter of receiving monetary grants from publishers for song plugging' (BBCWAC R19/244), and from 1928 onwards, 'no song-plugging' clauses

became a standard feature of contracts between artists and the BBC. Much correspondence on this subject can be found in the BBC Archives.

In addition, the practice of 'jazzing the classics' meant that jazz was further deplored by 'high-brows' as it was seen as a force with the ability to corrupt sacrosanct classical music. A letter from one listener protested:

'Why, in the jazz age in which we are now living, when new dance numbers are being published literally by the score every week, must we fall back on some of our most famous classical compositions and thus cheapen them simply to satisfy the desires of a jazz crazed world?'
(*Radio Times* 8/5/1925:294)

Another correspondent attempted to justify jazzing the classics as 'much of the artistic work of our time, especially in music and letters, is little more than improvisation upon subjects borrowed from the treasure house of a nobler and more creative age', but yet acknowledged the futility of the practice: 'Some profess the lofty aim of uplifting jazz through the grafting on of a finer stock. Yet, no really first-rank dance-music has been produced in this fashion.' (*Radio Times* 5/6/1925:504).

However, the overwhelming tendency to polarise 'high' classical and 'low' jazz was disrupted by the broadcast performance of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* by the Savoy Orpheans from the Hotel with the composer at the piano, the first time the work had been heard in Europe, and the fascinating interview with the composer in the *Radio Times* of July 3rd 1925, entitled *When we have a Jazz Opera*. Seemingly as a direct response to 'high-brows' concerned with the corrupting influence of jazz upon classical music, Gershwin stated that 'I do not think that serious music will ever be influenced by jazz, but it is quite probable that jazz will be influenced by serious music', predicting jazz symphonies, concertos, and citing his own ambition to write an 'opera for niggers'. He also refuted the notion that jazz was merely syncopation: 'Many people make the mistake of thinking that jazz is mere syncopation. But there is nothing new in syncopated music; it was written by Bach. Jazz is something more than that.' Crucially, he explained jazz as a fundamentally American music 'I feel that through this medium I can express myself, my nationality, my soul'.

Rhapsody in Blue made a significant impression upon listeners, for whom, influenced by the BBC's complete separation of dance and classical music save for the dubious practice of 'jazzing the classics', it represented 'the blending of two extremes of music' and a 'new era in music'. A correspondent to the *Radio Times* wrote: 'It would be interesting to know whether both high- and low-brows enjoyed it, or whether it appealed

to neither.' (3/7/1925:55). However, the long understood definition of jazz as syncopated music ('Jazz is music in which time, strict time, is the first and absolute necessity, while melody and 'soul' are secondary considerations' [*Radio Times*, 7/8/1925:279]) continued to pervade the views of another listener: 'Jazz has its limitations, and beyond them it cannot possibly go, for when jazz improves to Mr. Gershwin's hoped-for standard, it will cease to be jazz.' (7/8/1925:279).

Ironically, in the years after the broadcast of *Rhapsody in Blue*, which combined jazz and classical elements, there were numerous broadcast debates on the relative merits of jazz and classical music. This was because Gershwin's work had shown that jazz had aspirations towards becoming artistic and 'high-brow', and could no longer be cast aside as unequivocally low-brow. The music now represented a direct challenge rather than a mere antithesis to classical music, and in this context, the word 'jazz', rather than the term 'dance music', was used to further heighten the distinction and antithesis between the two genres. Debates and discussions included 'Jazz vs Classical' between Sir Landon Ronald and Mr. Jack Hylton with illustrations from the Wireless Orchestra and Hylton's band in July 1926, which sparked off a huge reaction from listeners in the letters pages of the *Radio Times*. Mendl also notes that often in the 1920s 'Jazz music' and 'classical music' are set in antithesis to one another as though one were bad and the other good' (1927:25). Subsequently, Mr Sebastian Brown, Lecturer in Music at Chelsea Polytechnic, the music critic Percy Scholes, and even P.P. Eckersley, Chief Engineer of BBC all broadcast their views on the subject, but their debates and listeners' opinions were inevitably inconclusive.

The conflict between high-brow and low-brow, if not jazz and classical music, was settled to some degree by the adoption of 'symphonised syncopation' as the main form of broadcast dance music, clearly influenced by Gershwin and Whiteman: 'Classical syncopation, or symphonic syncopation, is a new development in the arts of musical composition and of syncopation, and is a combination of the two.' (23/10/1925:201). In this way, the boundaries between high and low-brow music were broken down through combining elements of both in one musical form. Although in practice it was debatable how much effect this had upon standard dance music, the nomenclature nevertheless made jazz or syncopated music more acceptable as a musical form in its own right and to an extent legitimised it for staunch high-brows. Shortly after Gershwin's visit, Jack Hylton was defining jazz in 'classical' terms in the *Radio Times*: 'By jazz, I do not mean much of the trash which, whatever its popular appeal, does a great deal of harm to the serious efforts of composers who bring it to a high standard of technical

accomplishment.' (27/11/1925:438). In a second article, Hylton took his arguments further, stating:

'I do not hesitate to declare my belief that, after the test of time, some of the syncopated music of to-day will merit the designation 'classical'...Symphonic syncopation is not 'jazz', that nerve-torturing riot of sound which made its appearance during the war, when everything, music included, was topsy-turvy.'
(18/6/1926:466)

The adoption of symphonised syncopation in Britain was closely linked to the rejection of the increasingly undesirable black origins of jazz, that were understood, although not overly apparent in Britain, as 'symphonising' meant in effect the white 'civilising' of 'primitive' black music. This indicates the continuation of white Britons' preference for diluted or imitative black culture, already noted in connection with the nineteenth century minstrel troupes, and which, as we shall see, became more strongly stated as racist attitudes developed in the post-war period. Mendl, who was generally a perceptive analyst of early jazz, says that it is unfair to criticise jazz just because it is a black music, as white musicians had since civilised and improved it (1927:72). The romantic view of slavery often portrayed in minstrel shows, which suggested that black slave culture was improved by their contact with whites, is echoed by Mendl in his description of the evolution of jazz from 'little nigger bands-consisting, for instance, of a trumpet, cornet, clarinet and drum- [that] used to play weird syncopated strains in the back streets of the American towns' (1927:43). He then credits 'Whiteman, Hylton and others' for improving the jazz band, bringing it 'to so much higher a level that the modern syncopated dance band can hardly be put on the same footing or appropriately designated even by the same name, as the primitive organisms from which it took its origin' (1927:49).

In addition, contemporary musicologists and critics, even those who were not opposed to jazz, often had no way of evaluating the music other than to compare it with the 'classical' tradition rather than accepting the music in its own right. This meant that the sort of jazz that was valued by the musical establishment tended to be that which most closely adhered to classical music, in terms of performance practice and venues, arrangements and orchestration, and this further promoted the view that the 'best' jazz was of the 'symphonic' type. Mendl uses this idea in the conclusion of his book, where he predicts that European, white, classical composers will have a role in the future improvement of jazz as art music (1927:167ff). Most significantly, the adoption of 'symphonised syncopation', a composed and notated style, meant that the mysteries of early jazz performances could be forgotten. The music was now accessible for performance by British musicians and could be imitated by British composers. As a

result, the presence of even *white* American musicians, which had been seen as vital for a British band's success in the first half of the decade, was no longer necessary.

Indeed, whilst the Savoy Orpheans *First Birthday Book* (1924) clearly promoted the group as an 'international orchestra' with players drawn from six countries, later sources emphasise that it was in the genre of 'symphonised syncopation' that British dance bands could be seen to be surpassing the American instigators of the music and making it their own. The bandleader Jack Hylton explained the 'improvements' made to jazz by British bands: 'When jazz first came to Britain, many people protested against this invasion of so-called barbarous "music". But I saw possibilities in it' and stated that he aimed to 'combine the colour of jazz music with that element of harmony which is so beloved of our race' (*Radio Times*, 27/11/1925:438). A report in the *Radio Times* was quick to point out that 'While syncopated music comes from America, the Savoy Orpheans are particularly anxious to add a British touch to it, by introducing some characteristic humour and comedy' (19/3/1926:580). Furthermore, when the Savoy Havana Band returned to the microphone in 1926 after a short absence, an article pointed out:

'When the Havana band started, it was practically an all-American band, but now it is practically an all-British band, competing with the Americans at their own game and importing its music through the medium of gramophone records into America, the home of syncopated music.'
(*Radio Times*, 6/8/1926:250)

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the American roots of popular music were undesirable for the BBC that wished to be seen to be providing the best *British* entertainment. The formation of the BBC Dance Orchestra represented the clearest attempt by the BBC to form its own ensemble that would seriously rival both American bands and other ensembles that performed in London hotels and clubs. The previous BBC house bands, the 2LO Dance Orchestra and the London Radio Dance Band, crucially lacked a well-known 'name' at the helm. However, in 1928 the BBC appointed Jack Payne, who was already a well-known figure in the dance band world, to lead the new band. The BBC executives trusted him implicitly, making a contract with him solely and thus allowing him to employ his own choice of musicians. The group were initially known as 'The BBC Dance Orchestra, personally conducted by Jack Payne'. Payne was clearly commercially aware, if not also rather egocentric, and once his position at the BBC was secured he commented that the title did not suggest that he was in charge of the ensemble, and that indeed, his name was often missed out: 'That personal element which I think you will agree is so essential in appealing, from a show point of view, to the public, is entirely missing.' (BBCWAC 910 PAY) and proposed 'Jack Payne and the

BBC Dance Orchestra' as an alternative that was in line with current industry practice. In November 1929 the name of the group was changed again to 'Jack Payne and his BBC Dance Orchestra', indicating Payne's fundamental input to the development of the band and his own increasing fame. Most significantly, the BBC Dance Orchestra was launched thus in the *Radio Times*, under the heading 'British Dance Music' (my italics):

'A new era in studio dance music was marked by the engagement of Jack Payne, the brilliant young *British* dance band director, and his BBC dance orchestra. Jack Payne knows his job from A to Z. You remember his outside broadcasts of the past? They were first rate- but we had too little of them. He believes in plenty of variety in dance music, and the twelve men under his command are all versatile instrumentalists. Mr. Payne and his band are all *British*- and they mean to give *British* dances tunes a good showing. Though they have only been broadcasting for a few days, I have already received quite a batch of letters congratulating the BBC on its new acquisition.'

(23/3/1928:594)

Whilst the activities of all American musicians in Britain were increasingly opposed during the 1920s, *black* American musicians in particular faced additional restrictions in Britain at this time. Most of the black musicians that visited Britain from America in the 1920s did so in connection with a stage show for two main reasons. Firstly, there was an expectation in Britain that black artists would provide minstrel-style entertainment due to the long-established synonymy between black performers and minstrels. As we have seen, this had already had a profound effect on the presentation and reception of black groups in the early twentieth century; for example Lattimore recognised and successfully exploited the familiarity with the nineteenth century minstrel stereotype in Britain in his marketing of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra. In addition, at this stage black performers were not given the opportunity, either in America or in Britain, to participate as fully and as freely as whites in the commercial world of music through broadcasting and recording. It is clear that most black bands in the 1920s would generally be unable to compete with, for example, the publicity machine of the Paul Whiteman band. Therefore, in order to be successful in Britain, black performers had to conform to the public expectations of their performances to some extent. Secondly, there was the practical problem for American musicians of obtaining work permits, for which promoters had to prove that foreign performers could not be replaced by Britons. Clearly, native African-Americans could be more easily shown to be necessary for racially specific minstrel-type entertainment rather than purely musical entertainment.

It is significant that the only two notable groups of black performers in 1920s Britain that were not associated with stage shows were not entirely imported from America. Victor Vorzanger's Famous Broadway Band was a mixed race band consisting of

British and expatriate African-American musicians such as trombonist Ellis Jackson, who had been resident in Britain since he was a child and had been a member of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra (Rust 1972:45). It was probably a combination of the fact that the members of the band were resident in Britain and that not all the players were black that gave the group more freedom to 'compete' with white dance bands, as they were resident at the East Ham Palais de Danse in 1922-3. Leon Abbey's (black) band probably also included British subjects (Gulliver, 1977:14). Abbey was also prepared to compromise his performances to fit in with British tastes, as is shown from his description of events after the band's first night at the Olympia Ballroom:

'The next morning a page boy came and said the owner would like to see me. I went over to his office. He was very friendly, offered me a seat, and said: 'The way the boys carried themselves was fine...the uniforms were beautiful...BUT that screaming of the horns *isn't done heah!*' Now I had spent a lot of money on special arrangements but I went on the stand the following evening and I didn't pass any of them out...just concentrated on melodies and popular tunes, and after that everyone was tickled to death. I stayed there quite a while...went away and came back again...I never did play those arrangements.'
(Gulliver, 1977:11)

The reviewer in the *Encore* noted that the band's success was due to the lack of adherence to typically black playing styles:

'...we had also the excitement of a new coloured dance band who had just arrived in this country. Leon Abbey is the leader of the combination, who are away from the usual coloured entertainers in that they are more restrained, in spite of possessing wonderful rhythm and harmony. They made a complete success, and should undoubtedly soon also be performing on the music hall stage and broadcasting. They should certainly be heard by all.'
(*Encore*, 22/12/1927:10)

As a result, Abbey was successful in Britain, broadcasting several times on the BBC from December 1927 to February 1928 and recording for HMV (Rye, 1983b:207). It seems that as the sound of Abbey's band was compatible with the prevailing dance music style in Britain, the race of the band was considered less relevant, especially in the non-visual media of record and radio. However, black performers faced increasing union opposition from white British performers during the 1920s, and even Abbey's band faced problems in Europe at the end of the decade as they were 'perceived to be black musicians taking the jobs of natives' although in fact they were British citizens (Gulliver, 1977:14), or at any rate, not American.

Attitudes to black performers in the 1920s must be seen within the context of race relations in the post-war period. In 1919, the growing racial tension in post-war Britain

erupted into race riots between black and white people in many of the major cities in the country (Jenkinson, 1986:182). During the war years, black people had played an important part as some enlisted and many helped to ease the labour shortage (Jenkinson, 1986:190). However, at the end of the War there was competition for jobs between black workers and demobilized white soldiers. In addition, promises had been made by the government that after the War there would be greater economic security for workers, and improvements in health care and housing making Britain a better place to live. However, the reality for many was increasing poverty and unemployment, and this created a sense of disillusionment and anger (Gilbert, 1980:13). This situation initiated riots, particularly at ports, where competition for jobs was fierce and poorer blacks would accept lower wages (Jenkinson, 1986:185). There was also the perception amongst some whites that black people had taken housing that should have been available for demobilised servicemen and their families (Jenkinson, 1986:192). As a result of the riots, some authorities offered repatriation to black workers in an attempt to ease the tension, which would have meant a reduction in the numbers of black people in Britain, and in addition the riots initiated an increasingly negative attitude to black people.

Jenkinson also cites whites' sexual jealousy of blacks as a contributing factor to the riots, as there was the perception that black men had 'taken' white women made available by the absence of white men due to the War. Hence, 'sexual relations between black men and white women was mentioned as an anathema and soon the stress was laid on 'savage' instincts of the Black man' (1986:191). This jealousy was clearly fuelled by the well-established and widely understood minstrel stereotype. Indeed, the consistent reinforcement of negative ideas about black people through the continued presentation of this stereotype in black shows contributed to the development of racism in Britain in the 1920s. Ironically, it was an African-American, Will Garland, who was a theatrical promoter and singer, that was primarily responsible for ensuring that the British public remained familiar with the Negro stereotype in the period between the original production of *In Dahomey* in 1903 and the plantation revues of 1923 through the presentation of shows that imitated American black cast productions. These included *A Trip to Coontown*, after a show of the same name originally presented in 1898 in New York, in 1906; a version of *In Dahomey* in 1905; *Coloured Society*, a title which recalls well-known songs from *In Dahomey*, in 1917; and various versions of *Brownbirds*, paralleling the series of *Blackbirds* shows produced by Lew Leslie from 1927 (see the chapter on Garland in Lotz, 1997). Interestingly, although the group included several white members it was known as the 'Negro Opera/Operetta Troupe' (Lotz, 1997:200). In October 1922, an article entitled 'A

Black and Burning Shame: Coloured Artists who Disgrace the Stage' published in *John Bull* (28/10/1922:9) cited the supposed immoral behaviour of Garland's company, at that time touring Britain with the revue *All Black*, as reason for the opposition to C.B. Cochran's plan to import an American all-black company to Britain. This article clearly shows how easily the negative elements of the stereotype that black performers were delineating on stage could influence white judgements of all black people at this time.

Interestingly, the objections to black performers on the British stage in the *John Bull* article were exactly the same as the factors that Jenkinson identifies as the fundamental causes of the race riots in Britain in 1919. The first objection was based on economic factors and the perception that black actors would take employment opportunities that ought to belong to British performers. Referring to Cochran's plan to import an all-black revue, the article states that 'English actors and actresses, who have had a very bad time of it, contemplate this development with indignant anger'. Secondly, the article deals at length with the immorality of Garland's company. The excessive sexuality of the black performers, a widely believed aspect of the Negro stereotype, is emphasised: 'Garland protests that he has tried to stop coloured men and women living together. But he admitted that it had always gone on and several illegitimate children had been born.'. Moreover, the article alleges that chorus girls were involved in prostitution, as they were only paid two pounds a week 'a wage upon which it is obvious that they cannot live honestly' and 'went into the street in their stage costumes, trying to find and talk to men, particularly those with motor cars!'. Therefore, the immoral behaviour of the company posed a direct threat to white society in an interesting gender reversal of the sexual threat posed by black men in 1919: 'Garland admitted that his girls ran after white men and *visa versa*, and that he could not stop them'. The article concludes: 'We do not want low-class coloured people, who have an inferior sense of morality, to occupy our stage and elicit the applause of decent men women and children while they are living in a state of degradation [*sic.*] and moral filth.'.

The *John Bull* article not only gave nationwide publicity to union opposition (principally from the Actor's Association and the Association of Touring Managers) to the importation of black American performers but, significantly, it also seems to have brought this to the attention of the government. The Public Record Office file (LAB2/1187/EDAR954/1923) on the subject contains a typed copy of the *John Bull* article, and it was the Home Office that actually initiated correspondence with the Actor's Association in November in seeking to verify that their views had been correctly represented. Letters contained in this file from representatives of the Actor's Association once again detail the supposed negative economic and moral impact of

coloured performers. Interestingly, in a letter to Home Office, Alfred Lugg, Secretary of the Actor's Association, recalled the visit of the *In Dahomey* company twenty years earlier:

'...some of them were quite capable actors and actresses, and I believe the venture paid very well. Unfortunately, a large number of these negroes did not leave the country, but settled down chiefly in London, and in certain quarters, particularly round about the High Street, Bloomsbury, there is quite a colony of these people, either all black or half breeds, and it is a scandal in theatrical circles that most of these people who stayed behind have lived on white women and are responsible for a great number of evils of this kind.'

(Letter 5/12/22 in LAB2/1187/EDAR954/1923)

However, the government concluded in March 1923 that in respect to the proposed importation of one black group:

'...the performance which the members of the troupe are to give is of a special character and that it is not possible to obtain persons who can imitate it satisfactorily. In these circumstances, the Minister cannot regard the incoming of this troupe as displacing any British labour, indeed, the success of this particular item in the revue in question may tend to promote the employment of British people.'

(LAB2/1187/EDAR954/1923)

Despite this lack of racism and fairness of judgement on the part of the British government, which Lotz also notes in connection with Will Garland's company when it had run into difficulties on a Continental tour several years earlier (1997:202), following the *John Bull* article it was the views of entertainment unions including the Actor's Association, the Variety Artists Federation, the National Union of Theatrical Employees and the Musician's Union, that condemned the proposed importation of black performers to Britain, that continued to be most often represented in the theatrical and national press. These opinions were particularly stated in a series of articles written by Hannen Swaffer in the *Daily Graphic* in March 1923, prior to the appearance of the first 'plantation revue' at the start of April.

It was against this opposition that two black companies were brought to Britain to perform in the revues *The Rainbow* at the Empire Theatre and *Dover Street to Dixie* at the Pavilion Theatre by impresarios Sir Alfred Butt and C.B. Cochran respectively in 1923. Butt and Cochran had both been inspired to secure black companies for their revues having seen the cabaret at Sam Salvin's Plantation Restaurant on Broadway. Whilst Butt was unable to afford the actual performers from the restaurant, he hired another black company who had been performing a touring show, *Plantation Days*, in America and 'Robert Law, an American artist, to design a plantation setting' (*Daily*

Graphic, 5/3/1923:7). In addition to the stage show, Butt also wished to replicate the cabaret setting of Salvin's within the restaurant of the Empire Theatre, which was to be decorated 'like a cotton plantation in one of the Southern States' (*Daily Graphic*, 3/3/23:4). Cochran, on the other hand, engaged the artists from Salvin's, including the star of the show, Florence Mills, purely for a staged performance. Indeed, the similarity of the two shows was to lead to litigation between Butt and Cochran, adding to the publicity surrounding the revues.

Objections to the black companies did not cease even when their visits were clearly inevitable, and the principle reasons given continued to fall with remarkable consistency into the 'economic' and 'moral' categories cited by Jenkinson and described in the *John Bull* article. Articles claimed that 'casual American turns' often failed to pay their Income Tax, thus defrauding British society (*Daily Graphic*, 6/3/1923:7), but the most frequent reason given for the opposition of the importation of black Americans was that they would be putting British performers out of work:

'London's ordinary white actors and actresses are naturally gravely concerned about the question of unemployment which will be accentuated by the wholesale importation of negro artists into a country where they do not belong.'
(*Daily Graphic*, 5/3/1923:7)

Moral objections focussed particularly on Butt's proposals to include black performers in a cabaret setting. Albert Voyce, Chairman of the Variety Artists Federation stated that:

'We have no objection to American artists coming to England...There are also in England negro turns, most respectable and most decent, who behave themselves and keep their place. But we view with the greatest apprehension a cabaret where black artists would actually mix with white folks at tables.'
(*Daily Graphic*, 6/3/1923:7)

Recalling the sexual jealousy of black men in the post-war period described by Jenkinson, Voyce goes on to detail the undesirable relationships that developed between white women and black men of the *In Dahomey* company, suggesting that this might be the result of Butt's cabaret where members of both creeds could mix: 'some of the black chorus men [in *In Dahomey*] were spoiled by the kindness they received here. Some of them stayed in England, and for years afterwards lived on the earnings of white women.' (*Daily Graphic*, 6/3/1923:7). Swaffer also indicates the disgust felt by many at the time about mixed race relationships, even on film: 'No white woman film actress would act in a scene where a negro had to touch her, or make love to her, and, if she did, the film would be too revolting to show.' (*Daily Graphic*, 6/3/1923:7).

Therefore, the black companies had already been blamed for unemployment and the decline of moral standards before the plantation shows had even opened in London. In this way, it can be seen that black American performers provided convenient scapegoats for problems that in reality they did little to exacerbate. Firstly, both revues included a substantial 'white' portion, and therefore did not put great numbers of native performers out of work. Indeed, in the case of *The Rainbow*, the black performers were only on stage for fifteen or twenty minutes, and Sir Alfred Butt pointed out that 'There is no 'scandal' of coloured artistes. The 'scandal' is that an attempt is being made to couple their engagement in this country with the appalling problem of the unemployed' (*Daily Graphic*, 10/3/1923). Secondly, Butt refuted the charge that immoral activity would result from the Empire cabaret, stating that 'the cabaret is, and was, so designed and constructed from the first that all artists are divided by a railing from the audience, and it is an improper and absolutely unjustifiable statement to say that they would have any opportunity of mixing with the audience.' (*Daily Graphic*, 10/3/1923).

In the context of the fervour of the surrounding debate, it is somewhat ironic that Butt's proposed cabaret, despite eventually obtaining the necessary permission from London County Council, never opened (Rye, 1988b:8) and also that *The Rainbow* made little impression and generally received poor reviews when it opened on 3rd April 1923. The critic in *The Referee* wrote: 'To me..."The Rainbow" as it stands (or stood) was simply vacant. There seemed to be no heart or meaning in it.' (8/4/1923:8). Nor was the short plantation segment any better received. The *Daily Graphic* reported that 'The revue itself was mediocre, and the much-advertised nigger scene, 'Plantation Days', unnecessary. Twenty-six niggers of various shades came on and made a lot of noise like rough children at a treat.' (4/4/1923). Many reviews devoted considerable space to the incident that occurred at the end of the first performance of *The Rainbow*, where as the curtain fell a comedian, Jack Edge, shouted 'I was engaged as a low comedian in this piece, and I wasn't given a chance'. As Albert De Courville, the producer, came onto the stage there were shouts from the audience of 'We want Jack Edge' and 'Send the niggers back.' (*Encore*, 5/4/1923:12; *Stage*, 5/4/1923:14; *Daily Graphic*, 4/4/1923).

However, *Dover Street to Dixie*, Cochran's revue that opened on 31st May 1923, was more successful. Indeed, the second half performed entirely by the black company from Salvin's was generally considered more successful than the white part of the show, and Florence Mills was particularly praised:

'There was a little hissing; but they quickly carried their audience with them. They are so fresh and vigorous. To say they dance 'like mad' is just to speak the truth...above all, there is Florence Mills, a lithe, slender girl with eyes full of expression, a sweet voice, now strident, as when she reproaches a lover tending to slack off, now pathetic, and a way of dancing that makes a fool of perpetual motion! These plantation people made a huge success, and deserved it.'

(*Era*, 6/6/1923:11)

It is clear that both *The Rainbow* and *Dover Street to Dixie* presented conventional black stage entertainment, signified to the audience through the typical plantation setting. A review of *The Rainbow* suggests that the production presented nothing new in the way of black entertainment, despite its use of 'authentic' American black performers:

"Plantation Days"...is just usual darky song-and-dance entertainment...It would seem to have been a waste of time to bring these performers "all the way from the Southern States of America". There should surely have been enough resident coloured folk in London able to do the same thing with the same lack of distinction.'

(*The Stage*, 5/4/1923:14)

It is clear that these 1923 revues perpetuated the Negro stereotype, especially as in both cases the black performers were deliberately presented as a contrast to a white company. *Dover Street to Dixie* included the cakewalk, made popular in Britain by *In Dahomey* twenty years earlier (*Stage*, 7/6/1923:17), and a 'Jonah man' figure, typical of the minstrel show and delineated in *In Dahomey* by Bert Williams, was portrayed by Shelton Brooks: 'a very black faced droll dry comedian in a cleverly rendered down-trodden worm-husband number, 'He Loves It' (*Encore*, 7/6/1923:9-10). Similarly, the description of Florence Mills as 'a dusky damsel with flashing eyes and gleaming white teeth' (*Stage*, 7/6/1923:17) recalls the exaggerated facial characteristics of blackface minstrelsy. Reviewers also focussed on the 'natural' exuberance and primitive tendencies of the black company, shown particularly through dancing in which women were 'displaying large tracts of brown flesh in the emphatically energetic performance of a number styled "Indian Habits"' (*Stage*, 7/6/1923:17).

It is interesting that the music of the plantation sections made a significant impression on the reviewers of both shows. Each black company brought its own band to Britain, led by James P. Johnson (*The Rainbow*) and Will Vodery (*Dover Street to Dixie*), which performed on stage as part of the act, rather than in the pit: 'The scene in the second half is laid in Dixie, with the Robert E. Lee moored against the landing stage with Will Vodery's coloured band arranged beside the side barrier.' (*Encore*, 6/7/1923:9-10).

Significantly, reviewers associated the music performed with 'jazz', noting that although the style of the music was familiar, the sound was unusual: 'There is a band, of course, but its 'jazzing' sounds different.' (*Era*, 6/6/1923:11). Specifically, many reviewers noted the volume of sound that the bands produced:

'there was a band of nine that made a lot of noise.'
(*Daily Graphic*, 4/4/23)

'Much of the ear-splitting music, mainly of the Jazz order, is performed by Will Vodery's Plantation Orchestra (including Johnny Dunn), the band, controlled by Vodery without the use of a bâton, being seated beyond a palisade to the stage right of a picturesquely-presented Southern Plantation, and the trombone-players, in particular, striving to produce the maximum of noise, to be distinguished from melody.'
(*Stage*, 7/6/1923:17)

It seems incredible that the band in *The Rainbow* came all the way to Britain only to perform in a twenty-minute section in a revue show, but under the terms of their work permits they were apparently restricted from doing much else. Sir Montague Barlow, Minister of Labour, stated in answer to a question on the subject of the importation of coloured artists to Britain in the House of Commons: 'The permits were issued upon the condition that the troupe give a stage performance only. They will not play dance music without obtaining the prior consent of the Minister of Labour.' (*The Performer*, 21/3/1923:5). In *Dover Street to Dixie*, in which the plantation entertainment took up the whole of the second half, the white orchestra even remained in the pit to play the national anthem at the end of the performance. (*Encore*, 6/7/1923:9-10). Nevertheless, a Musicians' Union Official had stated that 'There are something like two thousand of our union out of work. Many of them are unemployed because of the introduction of American negro bands, now in favour with certain dance clubs. British musicians could play quite as well' (*Daily Graphic* 6/3/1923:7). This statement, made before the black companies had even arrived in Britain, shows the ease with which black American musicians were blamed for British unemployment problems, yet it seems unlikely that black performers alone would have posed a significant threat to the livelihood of British musicians. As the activities of black musicians appeared to be sufficiently restricted and white pit orchestras were retained, there was little reason for the Musician's Union to protest about the plantation revues, other than as a continuation of union opposition to foreign musicians dating back to the start of the First World War (Ehrlich, 1985:188) or in support of other entertainment unions.

Whilst these extensive debates over the importation of black performers were taking place, Paul Whiteman and his band arrived in Britain. Having learnt of the intention to engage Whiteman to perform in Britain, the *Encore* reported that:

'...the Musicians' Union is up in arms that American bands should be imported into this country when there are so many of the home variety waiting for work. The Union declares that its opposition is not levelled against the musicians as musicians, but as potential ousters from employment of members of the Union.'
(*Encore*, 1/3/1923:3)

However, the opposition to the employment of this group of white Americans in Britain did not receive nearly such widespread publicity as the situation with regard to the plantation revue companies. This may have been for two reasons; firstly, that the unemployment situation for British musicians was not as desperate as that of actors, especially variety performers whose audience tended more towards the working class that were most severely affected by the economic depression and unemployment in Britain at this time. Secondly, this gives additional weight to the idea that it was *black* American performers that were most convenient scapegoats for the problems of unemployment amongst British performers. Later in March a report in the *Encore* under the heading 'Victory for British Musicians' describes a compromise agreement that had been reached between the Musician's Union and the Ministry of Labour whereby 'foreign conductors bringing a foreign band must engage British musicians on a 50-50 basis'. In addition, if the Whiteman band was to undertake engagements 'other than for theatrical purposes, a band consisting of British musicians, of the same size as Mr. Whiteman's own band, under his personal training and supervision, should be employed.' (*Encore*, 22/3/1923). Whether or not these conditions were actually implemented, it is clear that the Whiteman band was much less restricted than the plantation revue bands performing in Britain contemporaneously. It is ironic that visiting white American bands, that represented more direct competition to native British bands, were given much more freedom than black groups to perform for dancing at a variety of venues, and in the case of Whiteman's band, this was probably as a result of the contacts that he had developed in the highest ranks of society:

'Lord Mountbatten gave a party for the Prince of Wales, at which only thirty-two guests were present. All were either direct descendants of the throne or related to the throne. The Prince, whom you may know better as the Duke of Windsor, went out of his way to put me instantly at ease with a flattering comment about our music. A warm friendship developed between us and I played at many parties at his request.'
(Whiteman, (1948) in *Memories in Wax: Records for the Millions* from <http://www.shellac.org/wams/wpaulw1.html>)

Cochran noticed the disparity between the government treatment of Whiteman's group and Vodery's Plantation Orchestra that performed in his show *Dover Street to Dixie*, and wrote in a letter to the *Star* newspaper 'the Ministry of Labour has one rule for the rich and another for the poor' (*The Star* 28/7/1923:11). Apparently, Cochran was

hoping to offset the high costs of importing the company from Salvin's with additional income from Vodery's band playing for dances in the winter months. He argued that the decision of the Ministry of Labour to restrict the work of the band to the revue performances only would precipitate the closure of *Dover Street to Dixie*, thus putting the many British actors and employees involved in the show out of work. The Ministry of Labour stated to the *Star* reporter that 'It had been represented to us that the incoming of alien bands is acting in a way which results in employment for British bands being less than would otherwise be the case', saying that since the arrival of the Whiteman band in March they had tightened the conditions relating to the importation of 'alien' performers, and Cochran was the first to feel the effect of this (*The Star* 28/7/1923:11).

This Ministry statement is significant not only because it indicates the start of the increasing governmental restrictions upon visiting American performers, but also because it suggests that before mid-1923 there were loopholes for 'alien' bands and musicians to perform in venues other than that of their main engagements. As noted in Chapter 6, musicians in the Southern Syncopated Orchestra had to remain part of the group or return immediately to America under the terms of their work permits. However, this does not seem to have been rigorously enforced and there is evidence that the musicians themselves were unaware of these restrictions. Indeed, several musicians are known to have remained working in Britain having left the SSO, and as we have seen, the gradual fragmentation of the group, which began around 1920, was significant as it resulted in the wider dissemination and influence of these black musicians in Britain. Similarly, the work permits and conditions issued to the black musicians performing in *The Rainbow* did not totally prohibit the band from playing for dancing, and it seems that there was opportunity for further negotiation with the Ministry. This could explain Ellis Jackson's recollection of:

'Fred and Adele Astaire appearing at Ciro's Club accompanied by James P. Johnson and His Orchestra. He specifically recalled Addington Major being present. He also recalled Wellman Braud sitting in at Moody's Club in Tottenham Court Road.'
(Rye, 1988b:11).

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how strictly any work permit conditions for musicians were adhered to, and seems possible that musicians from Johnson's and Vodery's bands might also have performed more frequently than they were known to have done at clubs like Moody's during their time in Britain.

In summary, events surrounding the two plantation revues of 1923 had several important implications for black musicians in Britain. The revues themselves continued to present stereotypical Negroes, in a typical 'plantation' setting, to British audiences; 'but sought also to present an image of up-to-the-minute Harlem sophistication, sometimes with risqué overtones.' (Rye, 1990a:52). Thus, the sentimental idea of the 'old South' discussed in relation to the banjo in Chapter 5 still existed, but now the exotic appeal of the 'primitive' Negro had become more highly charged and sexual. This is commiserate with the increasing opposition to black entertainment on moral grounds, an important factor in the 1919 race riots and articulated in contemporary articles critical of the importation of black performers, showing the influence of the well-established, and now re-affirmed, Negro stereotype in the treatment by some White Britons of black people in real life. Black performers were also blamed for the unemployment of British performers, again recalling the chief causes of the race riots. This idea was applied to musicians, although, as we have seen, in reality the limited employment of visiting American black musicians had little effect on the situation. Although the government's treatment of visiting black companies was not overtly racist initially, it was clearly under increasing pressure from several trade unions. Accordingly regulations were tightened, even during the year 1923, resulting in restricting the performances of most visiting black American musicians to revue shows, where British performers could not so easily be substituted, thus perpetuating the vicious circle of racism rooted in the Negro stereotype.

Black musicians responded in two main ways to the open expression of racism in Britain during the controversy surrounding revues and the resulting increasingly restrictive government policies. Firstly, several black performers, even those who had been resident in Britain for some time, began either to move to the Continent, particularly to Paris, or to return to America. This was clearly a recognised trend, as Seabrook commented in 1924 'Coloured musicians, however, are no longer the vogue. London has grown tired of them, and most of these minstrels have gone to the Continent, and particularly to the Riviera.' (Moseley, 1924:138). Secondly, however, there remained a significant black population in Britain in the 1920s, particularly in cosmopolitan central London, which was largely isolated from the flash points for race riots in poorer areas and at the docks. There were opportunities for these musicians to perform, as governmental restrictions were initially applicable only to visiting black American musicians and not to black musicians already in Britain. The disintegration of the SSO had meant that many non-American black musicians were employed in the group and had the opportunity to learn about jazz techniques first-hand, and it was

from a pool of these musicians working at Moody's Club that Vorzanger's successful band was formed (Rye, 1990b:147).

However, the opportunities for black musicians in Britain were limited and artistically restrictive. Firstly, black musicians were affected by the prevailing popular dance style of the period, which meant that even if they could secure a booking in a significant public arena, they would probably have to make musical compromises, like Leon Abbey at the Olympia ballroom. Secondly, the public attitude towards black performers, influenced by the media, meant that they risked becoming victims of racial abuse like the black company in *The Rainbow*. In addition, in 1926 revisions were made to the Ministry of Labour's 'Alien policy and procedure', and employers wishing to employ 'aliens' had to complete a form entitled 'Particulars required by the Ministry of Labour regarding non-resident aliens now in the UK whom it is desired to employ or retain in employment', detailing their reasons for employing aliens and showing that steps had been taken to employ permanent residents in view of the prevailing unemployment⁴ (LAB2/1188/EDAR1149/1926). Therefore, the official opportunities even for black musicians who had been in Britain for some time were also curtailed from this point.

Rye comments that 'In general, ...the black small bands seem to have confined their activities very largely to London clubs, and possibly this limited social and geographical base contributed to the decline in their fortunes after 1922' (1990a:51), but in context of the events of 1923 and their long-term impact this is hardly surprising. Black musicians could perform in certain clubs with more musical freedom and for racially tolerant audiences, and it is tempting to propose, for example, that the musicians in Vorzanger's band played popular dance music at the East Ham Palais for financial reasons, and then returned to Moody's to jam. Therefore, the black jazz musicians that remained in Britain became associated with the notorious London nightclub scene, and this had a significant effect upon the image of jazz in Britain.

Many clubs had sprung up even within the relatively small area of Soho in London's West End in the post-war period, an area that Robert Fabian, a policeman in the 1920s, called 'The Square Mile of Vice...where you can buy anything and see everything...' (1954:10). There were in fact many different sorts of club in London at this time, embodying varying degrees of 'vice', and indeed, Seabrook, in his guide to London nightlife in *Brightest Spots in Brighter London*, wrote that 'London night clubs

⁴ The opposition to any American musicians, black or white, performing in Britain eventually culminated in the refusal of the Ministry of Labour to issue work permits to American musicians in March 1935, under pressure from the Musician's Union (Rye, 1990a:55).

are not at all to be avoided as seats of Satan' (Moseley, 1924:137). Establishments ranged from underground clubs: 'There is the common night club kept by common folk and their dupes; there is the night club where gambling is the chief *motif*; and there is the night house to which the dope fiends and their victims resort.' (Moseley, 1924:137). Fabian describes a 'shady' club that he visited in his official capacity as a police officer, which was considerably less glamorous:

'The club was up back stairs...It was just one room. The floor was bare and held half a dozen rickety tables with green wooden chairs...The 'bar' was a trestle table across one corner, covered with green baize and a few strips of tinsel.'

(Fabian, 1954:21)

Then there were venues that Kohn describes as 'just above ground' and 'legitimate but tawdry' (1992:123). Murray's Club was probably typical of this sector of London's nightclubs, as it managed 'to be regarded as both racy and reputable'. Although he attracted an exclusive and wealthy upper-class clientele, Jack May, the club's American proprietor, was also accused of inducing girls to smoke opium 'for vice or money or both' (Kohn, 1992:32). Finally, there were clubs such as Rector's, the Kit Cat and Ciro's, from which the BBC presented outside broadcasts of dance music in the second half of the decade, that were clearly considered to be, at least outwardly, 'respectable'. However, this was probably because the more wealthy and exclusive the club, the more elaborate the systems in place to protect the integrity and privacy of clients, for example, in the event of a police raid. The Metropolitan Police noted that conducting undercover work in clubs that 'cater for the richer classes, and where care is exercised as to the admission of members and strangers, it is very difficult, and sometimes practically impossible.' (MEPO2/2053⁵).

Nevertheless, in the 1920s 'the very words "night-club" immediately suggest to some people the picture of something degraded and disreputable' (Meyrick, 1933:88), due to the fact that for most of the general public, knowledge of nightclubs was restricted to stories of scandalous activities that were published in newspaper reports. One case in particular gave significant negative publicity to nightclubs in the national press: the death of Freda Kempton. Kempton was employed as a dance hostess at Brett's club, run by Kate Meyrick, the most famous nightclub proprietor of the twenties. Hostesses were employed to dance with rich men at the club in return for substantial tips and the possibility of a good marriage to one of their clients (Meyrick, 1933:210). Kempton inevitably became addicted to cocaine, a drug that 'answered the nightclub dancers'

⁵ References to Metropolitan Police files held in the Public Record Office (see bibliography for full details).

need to stay appealing and lively through long nights' (Kohn, 1992:124), and was kept supplied of the drug by the notorious Brilliant Chang. She died from a cocaine overdose in March 1922 (Kohn, 1992:128).

Following Freda Kempton's death, a 'war on drugs' was declared in the national press. Articles were published that clearly sought to link her death with the availability of drugs through the presence of foreign dealers such as Chang in West End 'dance dens', resulting in unprecedented coverage of nightclub activities (Kohn, 1992:134). In a report in the *Daily Express* headed 'Nights in the Dancing Dens- When the Chinaman takes the floor' (14/3/1922:1), a reporter visited an underground club. Although he did not actually witness any drug use, his description of the scene involving dancing, alcoholic intoxication and the theatrical entrance of 'a Chinaman' presented a glimpse into another world and established a vivid image of the nightclub scene for the general public that had no personal experience of it. A cartoon was also published which shows a skeletal figure of Death as a doorkeeper to the 'Dope Dance Club' and clearly presents the fatal link between nightclub dancing and drugs that apparently 'caused' Kempton's death. In addition, only two months later a film called *Cocaine* was released that disseminated similar imagery on the cinema screen and led to further newspaper articles on drugs and nightclubs. A civil servant reported that in the film 'The life of a Night Club is given in vivid detail. Many of the scenes are rather lurid and in some cases border on the indecent.' (HO 45/11599⁶).

Although the image of nightclubs described in newspapers tended to be exaggerated, sensationalist and presented in such a way that it was seen as representative of all establishments, there were elements of truth contained within it. Significantly, other than in the case of the classiest establishments, the clientele of clubs was very mixed, an indication that the underworld of London was separate from the hierarchy and regulation of 'normal' society. Meyrick describes a 'shady' nightclub 'patronised by the most undesirable types...men of a really criminal cast, accompanied by pretty but flashy girls...this dubious resort enjoyed a considerable vogue for a time among fashionable men of the West End.' (1933:87). Indeed, criminal activity was rife in nightclubs of all types, and police records indicate that no establishments were above suspicion and therefore subject to police raids. This is not to say that there was not a certain understanding between the police and some proprietors, for example, Fabian knew that there was a secret exit from the 43 club to save the embarrassment of important patrons, such as politicians and royalty, in a raid, but he trusted Kate Meyrick

⁶ References to Home Office files held in the Public Record Office (see bibliography for full details).

not let anybody use it who was 'better in the hands of the law' (Fabian, 1954:12). Numerous instances of many different clubs being fined for selling liquor outside licensed hours or without a licence altogether and also holding dances without a licence can be found in police files (MEPO2/2053). In addition, West End clubs were potential targets for gangsters, and in her autobiography, Meyrick describes how these criminals, disguised in evening dress, terrorised doormen, often refused to pay for drinks and even used guns inside her club in the early twenties (1933:27-8) stating that 'in those days London was just as bad as Chicago, if not worse' (1933:44).

Despite the prominence of illegal activities of this sort, the primary purpose of nightclubs was to cater for the predominant vogue for dancing at this time. Kate Meyrick described the centrality of dance to nightclub life: 'Everyone in London, young and old alike, had caught the dancing craze; almost any place with a respectable band and a decent floor was bound to make money.' (Meyrick, 1933:23). Assuming that most of the nightclubs in Soho and the West End in the 1920s hired a band of some description, a great number of musicians must have been employed within the 'Square Mile of Vice' at this time. One way in which the status of a particular club was gauged, and can continue to be evaluated retrospectively, was the type of band that the management employed. The large, upper-class clubs could clearly afford to engage and publicise large, well-known ensembles and American bands, usually consisting of white musicians. However, as the locations and names of underground clubs, never mind the bands that performed there, were never publicised in the contemporary media, the musicians that worked in this environment remain largely anonymous today. This is undoubtedly an area in which further research is needed, but, although it is difficult to establish exactly which musicians and bands played in underground clubs, in the light of the available evidence certain hypotheses can be proposed.

The limited descriptions of music in underground clubs suggest that the music was certainly different to the conventional British 'dance music'. In any event, the size of the smaller clubs would have prohibited the use of a large 'dance orchestra' on practical grounds. The undercover reporter for the *Daily Express* described how in the 'dancing den' that he visited 'the band crashed out a really good foxtrot- a band 50 per cent. better than that in many a well-known and irreproachable dance club.' (14/3/1922:1). Even the music of Teddy Brown's band, an ensemble that was broadcast on the BBC, when employed by Meyrick in the 'just above ground' 43, 'possessed a subtle appeal that carried everyone away with it. Sometimes it was insinuatingly soft and crooning, sometimes it would swell up into a triumphant riot of crashing sound.' (Meyrick, 1933:156). Interestingly, these descriptions recall the difference between familiar dance

music and that of Johnson's and Vodery's bands noted by reviewers of the plantation revues.

As we have seen, circumstances had encouraged black musicians to become involved in the nightclub scene, which represented 'the negative image of daytime society; its hours the reverse of the conventional order, its values attuned to the pleasure principle, its economy only tenuously and dubiously connected with the authorised fabric of wealth creation.' (Kohn, 1992:125). Similarly, whilst black people were suffering increasing racism in mainstream British society, there is strong evidence that they were probably much more welcome in the underworld of London. Seabrook noted the racial mix in nightclubs: 'The types of frequenters are as diverse as are their races, colours and creeds.' (Moseley, 1924:138). Significantly, the areas of London in which there were many nightclubs, such as the strip west of Tottenham Court Road, and the Seven Dials area of Covent Garden, were 'favoured by black men in particular.' (Kohn, 1992:141). Fabian describes that as a policeman on the beat in the West End 'I had a great deal to do with the African and West Indian boys in the West End, and got along with them very well.' (1954:14). He describes the existence of 'coloured clubs', such as the 'Big Apple', and gives a fascinating insight into the music that could be heard in such places:

'I learnt all about jazz, boogie-woogie and calypso from my coloured friends years before they became known outside the murky little 'coloured clubs'. When we were all in the mood-which was often- I would persuade them to give me a 'jam session' that would have opened new doors to any white musician, who had cared to spare the time to listen, in those days.'
(Fabian, 1954:15)

The nightclub scene was clearly a law unto itself, and it seems likely that proprietors that were regularly prepared to run the risk of supplying alcohol illegally would turn a blind eye to other indiscretions such as employing musicians without valid work permits. In addition, it seems likely that black American musicians that continued to visit Britain with further plantation-type revues would have been able to 'sit-in', or even pick up extra work at clubs. After 1926, black musicians may even have been employed for better rates than native musicians in disregard of the amendments to the Aliens Act. Interestingly, in her autobiography, Kate Meyrick, explaining how a nightclub's standing can be indicated by behaviour at a police raid, describes that when 'one inferior establishment' was raided 'The members of the band vaulted their 'fence' and dived through a trap-door to a cellar below- why I have never been able to understand, since it seems unlikely that they would have been involved in any trouble.' (1933:89). Meyrick does not state the race of the musicians, but it is possible they may have been working in the club illegally.

However, whatever the nature of the music performed and the precise statistics on the numbers of black musicians working in London clubs, illegally or otherwise, it is clear that the negative aspects of the Negro stereotype, which had continued to be enforced through the plantation revues and racist attacks, fitted particularly well within an environment which was publicly perceived to embody immoral and decadent behaviour. As we have seen, dark-skinned foreigners such as Eddie Manning and Brilliant Chang were principally blamed for supplying drugs to vulnerable young white girls, and in this context, it is interesting that Moody's Club, known to feature black musicians, was subject to an extensive series of detailed police observations soon after Kempton's highly publicised death (MEPO2/2053). Therefore, the increasing presence of black people in the underground nightclub environment in the 1920s meant that they could be held responsible for its associated social problems, just as black companies on the revue stage were being blamed for the unemployment amongst British performers.

In conclusion, by the end of the 1920s, jazz had developed a unique image and status in Britain. Crucially, jazz was increasingly recognised as black music as simultaneously racist attitudes developed in Britain towards Americans, and black Americans in particular. Even prior to the 1920s, the black origins of jazz had been highlighted by some people as a negative aspect of the music. As has been noted in Chapter 2, although few songs of 1919 depicted black performers of jazz, those that do are derogatory or patronising in nature, and the Negro origins of jazz were generally only mentioned in contemporary articles by those who wished to criticise jazz. However, adverse criticism of jazz based on race clearly became more common now that jazz was more specifically identified with black musicians and also Mendl, in a chapter entitled 'The Dislike of Jazz Music' in *The Appeal of Jazz*, suggests that people in Britain were averse to jazz in the twenties because of their 'antipathy towards everything connected with the nigger' (1927:71). He also notes that the principal objections to jazz were that it was sensual, noisy, stupid and grotesque: a description that clearly correlates with the negative side of the Negro stereotype presented in nineteenth century minstrel shows.

The attitude of the Savoy Hotel and the BBC towards jazz exemplifies the preference of Britons for 'diluted' black culture that had resulted in the popularity of blackface rather than black minstrelsy in the nineteenth century. The Savoy Hotel presented civilised white 'dance music' rather than black 'hot' jazz, and the BBC established the former as a standardised style through the consistent broadcasting of the Savoy bands for several years. The standardisation of audiences' expectations of dance music meant

that there was little variation in the type of band broadcast by the BBC in the 1920s, and visiting American bands also had to comply with the prevailing popular style in order to be commercially successful in Britain. The Savoy Orpheans adopted the symphonised syncopated style, as introduced by Paul Whiteman, where the process of 'symphonising' was clearly representative of the white civilising of black American jazz which rendered it acceptable to be broadcast. The adoption of symphonised syncopation meant that the presence of Americans in British bands was no longer seen as important, as most arrangements could be performed from written parts, and thus further diminished the significance of the American roots of the music. Furthermore, symphonised syncopation was established as the acceptable middle ground and jazz became the antithesis of classical music, and was thus established as profoundly low-brow music. Therefore, jazz was clearly established by the Savoy Hotel and BBC, albeit indirectly, as black American music at a time when black Americans were clearly unpopular in Britain.

Several factors meant that black musicians were unable to redress the balance between the prominence of white dance music and under-representation of black jazz in Britain in the 1920s. Black performers were still expected to conform in some way to the long-standing minstrel stereotype, and governmental restrictions on the nature of the performances of black Americans that were permitted in Britain meant that it was generally difficult for them to perform non-racially specific entertainment as this could be provided by British performers. In addition, the economic situation in Britain meant that black people had been blamed for unemployment in the twenties that was really due to the post-war economic depression, this in turn influenced the attitudes towards black performers imported from America. Specifically, black visitors were blamed for unemployment amongst musicians although this was clearly not the case. Further racist antagonism was based on stereotypical assumptions about black people that the plantation revues themselves did little to diminish. The controversy surrounding the 1923 plantation revues seems to have directly influenced the government to tighten regulations for visiting performers and eventually all 'alien' performers. In theory this meant that both black and white American bands were subject to government restrictions, but in practice it can be seen that white American bands continued to play for dancing, whilst black musicians were restricted to accompanying theatrical performances. It was clearly increasingly difficult for black musicians, especially Americans, to perform jazz in mainstream entertainment venues in London without either artistic compromise or risk of racist abuse. Thus, the government's response could be perceived as an indirect endorsement of the growing racism in society at this time. As circumstances encouraged black musicians to seek refuge in London's

nightclubs, they became linked with vice, which, as we have seen was extensively reported at this time, and therefore their association with this environment served only to add to the negative public perception of black people and their music, which was jazz.

As we have seen, the principal objections to black American jazz in Britain were either economic, due to the perception that black performers were taking white jobs exacerbating the already widespread unemployment, or moral, based on the stereotypical assumption that the Negro was a cultural primitive, wild and overly sexual and threatening to white supremacy. It is significant, then, that the environment in which jazz was permitted to flourish in the 1920s, the underworld of London, was clearly isolated from the economic problems facing Britain at this time and also not subject to a conventional moral code. The fact that black American jazz was not present consistently and significantly anywhere other than in the nightclubs of London's underworld, an autonomous community that represented a mirror image of the conventions of mainstream society, provides further evidence of the social function of jazz in Britain as the music representative of the escapist spirit of the age, as we have seen in Chapter 3.

It is hardly surprising that according to Mendl, jazz was regularly denounced in the 1920s as 'vulgar, coarse and crude and ugly; it is described as a debased product and its popularity is said to be the sign of a decadent age' (1927:25) an attitude epitomised in J.B. Souter's painting, *The Breakdown* (see figure 9). The painting depicts a black man in evening dress playing the saxophone. In the 1920s, as we have seen, jazz was increasingly identified as a black music, and the saxophone was adopted as a distinctive new musical timbre and a clear visual symbol of modern dance music, hence this figure clearly represents jazz. A naked white woman, a shingled, androgynous figure, dances to the music of the saxophonist, representing 1920s youth. The saxophone player is seated on a shattered Greek statue, possibly Minerva, a goddess associated with virginity, wisdom and the arts, traditional values with which the figures in the painting are apparently in disregard. Therefore, the corrupting influence of jazz as a black music is clearly implied in this painting.⁷ It is clear that due

⁷ Souter, a Scottish artist, submitted *The Breakdown* to the Royal Academy. The picture was included in the 1926 Summer Exhibition and viewed by George V and commended as 'a work of great promise executed with a considerable degree of excellence' by the President of the Royal Academy, Frank Dicksee (Matthew, 1990). However, after only five days the picture was removed from the exhibition under instruction from the Colonial Office, as the subject 'was considered to be obnoxious to British subjects living abroad in daily contact with a coloured population' (Royal Academy Annual Report 1926:13), showing continued governmental concern for imperial integrity.

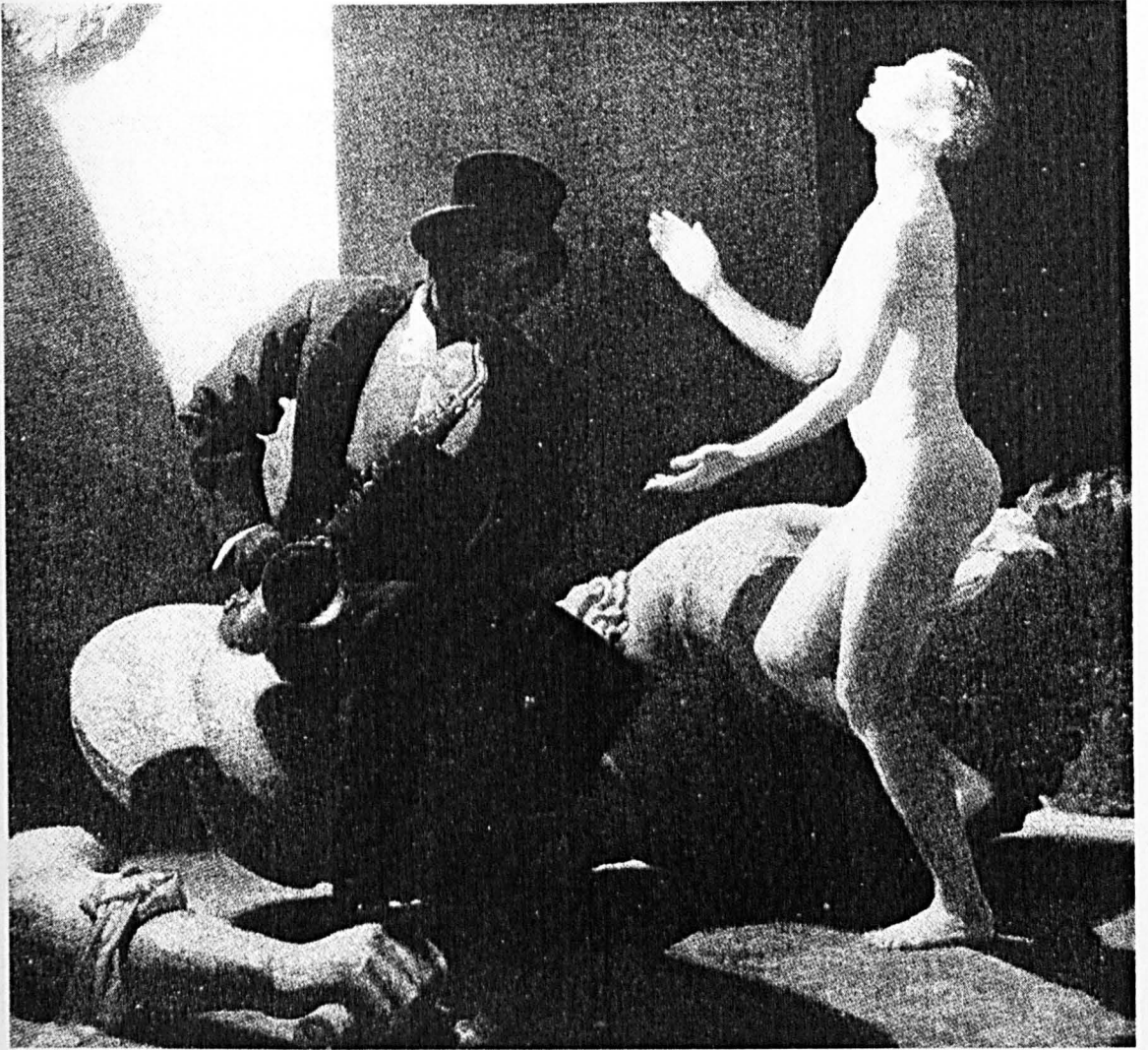


Figure 9 John B. Souter: *The Breakdown*. (Royal Academy of Arts Archive)

to the increasing representation of jazz as black music, and the concurrent move of black musicians into the nightclubs, by the end of the decade jazz was firmly positioned, metaphorically and literally, as the musical accompaniment to the other perceived evils of the underworld of London.

Conclusion

This thesis sheds new light on the development of jazz in Britain, as the methodological approach used has enabled the social and cultural evolution of jazz as a musical genre in Britain to be considered in detail. Examination of the antecedents and musical context for the evolution of jazz has meant that it is evaluated as one of many musical styles popular in Britain during the period under consideration, and therefore this study re-establishes fundamental relationships that exist between different genres of popular music. This research has had significant findings that require fresh consideration of the accepted version of the history of jazz, which in turn may provide the necessary foundation for the understanding of later developments in popular music in Britain in the twentieth century. Significantly, this study clearly establishes that the evolution of jazz in Britain is unique, rather than an extension or reflection of that in America.

In this thesis, the impact of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's visit in 1919 is evaluated as part of the large-scale evolution of popular music in Britain in the early twentieth century rather than, as in many publications on this subject, the beginning of jazz in Britain. Chapter 6 is significant in presenting an extensive comparison between the ODJB and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra who visited Britain simultaneously. This clearly shows that both groups are vital to the evolution of jazz in Britain, but also exposes the fundamental differences between the two ensembles and their reception in Britain, which can be attributed mainly to the effects of image and racial stereotyping.

These two closely related aspects are central to this thesis. Just as the image of the banjo as was as influential as the music that was performed on it, so the image that jazz that developed before most Britons had heard what it actually sounded like was extremely significant to its reception, as is shown in the consideration of the image of jazz in sheet music in Chapter 2. The arrival of the ODJB in many ways presented the personification and animation of this image, which, interestingly, did not specifically emphasise the black origins of the music at this stage. However, the Negro stereotype introduced by minstrel shows had a significant effect on the British reception of all black musicians considered in this research. This stereotype was perpetuated by black musical theatre such as *In Dahomey*, albeit unintentionally, and became familiar and expected by British audiences. The popularity of the stereotypical Negro in Britain became a useful marketing tool for promoters of black entertainment in the early twentieth century such as George Lattimore with the Southern Syncopated Orchestra and Will Garland with his black revue shows. However, the stereotype increasingly became a strait-jacket to which black performers were often forced to yield for their

own commercial survival in Britain, as is shown through the 1923 plantation revues examined in Chapter 7.

The final chapter of this thesis establishes the parallel worlds of jazz that existed by the end of the 1920s in Britain: the realm of the institutionalised culture industry and the underworld. Previously, research on jazz in Britain in this period has been centred almost exclusively upon the visible and audible products of the culture industry. Early in the 1920s, the developments in racial stereotyping and image of jazz converged as the sociological circumstances of the post-war period led to white Britons becoming increasingly less racially tolerant, and negative aspects of the well-established Negro stereotype were brought to the fore. Simultaneously, there was a clear and universal understanding that jazz was a black music, and thus jazz became linked with this negative perception of black people. In addition, as a result of racial abuse in mainstream society, black musicians sought refuge in nightclubs and became closely associated with the notorious reputation of the underworld of London. As a result, reactions to jazz varied between the extremes of, on one hand, adoption and total acceptance by the underworld, on the other the BBC's need for purification and refinement of the music.

Interestingly, this research clearly shows that the racism that existed at this time was an extension of the racial stereotyping that had occurred in Britain for several decades. Similarly, the image of jazz as the music representative of the escapist spirit of the age that had evolved by the end of the period under consideration was a clear development of the imagery in the earliest presentation of jazz in Britain in song lyrics, which clearly established jazz as music that could transport listeners into another world. Here a contextual and widely sourced approach to the study of jazz is shown to be a fruitful methodology.

Indeed, the range of primary source material used in addition to the obvious musical sources is significant in establishing a wider context for this study, and necessary when dealing with music that has been largely undocumented in recording or notation. It is only through consideration of these additional materials that jazz can be fully understood as a *popular* music, and can be seen to have a more profound significance than a purely musicological analysis might suggest. The examination of 'new' primary sources has been vital in understanding both the evolution of jazz in Britain and the history of the period in general, and the centrality of such material to this research has also helped to ensure that a twenty-first century retrospective position has not clouded the judgement of the events and circumstances of the period in question.

In particular, a close analysis of Mendl's book *The Appeal of Jazz* has yielded significant theoretical insights, which fully justifies the importance given to primary source material in this thesis. Interestingly, the application of a contextual approach described above specifically to Adorno in Germany has enabled a re-reading of his work on jazz that has provided a relevant theoretical basis for the consideration of jazz in Britain in Chapters 3 and 7. The work of these two authors is directly relevant to the subject of this study, both chronologically and geographically, and also provides a much needed and previously lacking theoretical framework for the consideration of jazz and popular culture that should inform future work in these areas.

In addition to the development of methods and theory to inform the study of popular music, this research provides a new historical perspective on jazz in Britain in order that other detailed studies can now take place. It would be interesting to extend the study of the evolution of jazz in Britain to a similar level of detail in other countries such as Germany and France, which would undoubtedly provide the opportunity for interesting comparisons as indicated in Chapter 3. The issue of racial stereotyping in Britain could usefully be examined further through specific consideration of the minstrel show in nineteenth century Britain. The analysis of the impact of such a well-established stereotype could also be extended further than the limits of this thesis. Undoubtedly there is potential for further research on the role of music and musicians in the underworld of London from the 1920s onwards. Most obviously, the findings and methodology of this thesis could be used to inform a similarly detailed study of the later history of jazz in Britain, in particular, the 'trad' revival of the 1940s, known to be a uniquely British phenomenon.

Appendix 1

Songs consulted for Chapter 2

Title	Written / Composed	Date	Publisher (all in London)	BL Number
I'm Certainly Living a Ragtime Life	Gene Jefferson / Robert S. Roberts	1900	Francis Day and Hunter	h3986.ss(11)
I Love my Little Honey	Ben Harney	1900	Charles Sheard and Co.	h1654.rr(27)
Rag-time Nursery Rhymes	Sam Richards	1901	Francis Day and Hunter	h3986.qq(24)
The Rage of Ragtime	Edward Kent	1903	Hopwood and Crew	h3984.yy(37)
Oysters and Clams or the Rag-time Oyster Man	Jack Drislane, A.J. Mills / Theodore Morse	1906	Francis Day and Hunter	h3651(45)
The Rag-Time Milkman	Alfred Ellerton / Alfred Ellerton Jnr.	1910	Shapiro, Von Tilzer Music	h3983.gg(59)
Rag-Time Crazy	R.M. Marks / John Neat	1910	E. Marks and Son	h3995.o(14)
You've Got to Sing in Rag-Time	Worton David and George Arthurs	1911	Francis Day and Hunter	h3990.zz(36)
Don't Drive me Crazy with Your Ragtime Song	J Sinclair	1912	E. Marks and Son	h3996.e(26)
Hear the Ragtime Band play Dixie	Walter Tewson and Alfred Glover	1912	Paxton	h3991.t(44)
Play that Piccolo Rag-Time Tune	George Arthurs	1913	Reynolds	h3988.uu(39)
The Ragtime Billiard Player	George Arthurs	1913	Star	h3988.uu(40)
Goodbye Mr. Ragtime	Lawrence Barclay / Barclay and Alf Glover	1913	Feldman	h3989.d(5)
The Ghost of the Rag-time Coon	Patrick L Barrow	1913	West and Co	h3989.f(42)
On Your Rag-time Rag Shop Banjo	Frank W Carter and Gilbert Wells	1913	Francis, Day and Hunter	h3990.i(47)
The Ragtime Gollywog Man	Elven Hedges and Penyston Miles	1913	Feldman	g1520.kk(50)

Title	Written / Composed	Date	Publisher (all in London)	BL Number
Who Killed Ragtime?: A Modern Nursery Rhyme	Robert Innes	1913	Star	g1520.pp(11)
There ain't going to be any Ragtime	Frank Leo	1913	Francis Day and Hunter	h3994.cc(24)
Don't Sing in Ragtime	J.P. Long, Paul Pelham and Billy Merson	1913	Francis Day and Hunter	h3994.hh(10)
I don't want a Ragtime Coon	Lester Barrett / Charles Lucas	1913	Francis, Day and Hunter	h3994.jj(48)
The Rag-time Craze	Jack Hulbert / Alan Murray	1913	Reynolds	h3995.j(46)
That Ragtime Minstrel Band	Pearl and Roth	1913	Francis Day and Hunter	h3995.x(11)
Rag-Time Crazy	George Rapley	1913	Feldman	h3995.jj(30)
Miss Ching-A-Loo: The Ragtime Chinese Wedding	R.P. Weston, F.J. Barnes, Maurice Scott	1913	Star	h3992(35)
That Ragtime Suffragette	Harry Williams and Nat D Ayer	1913	Feldman	h3988.zz(14)
The Rag-Time Villain Man	Patrick L. Barrow	1914	West and Co	h3989.f(43)
Rag-time Postman Bill	F.C.Smith	1914	West	h3996.f(47)
Change that Rag into a March Refrain	Fred E. Cliffe and Jay Whidden	1915	Francis Day and Hunter	h3990.t(34)
Ragtime Kisses	Arthur Charles	1917	Escott and co.	h3990.o(1)
When I hear that Jazz Band Play	Gene Buck / Dave Stamper	1917	Francis Day and Hunter	h3996.n(22)
Jazz!	Clifford Grey / Nat. D. Ayer	1918	Feldman	h3988.yy(1)
Strike up that Band: A Military Rag	R.S.B. Ribbands / A.R. Don	1918	West	h3991.j(1)

Title	Written / Composed	Date	Publisher (all in London)	BL Number
Stick Around for the New Jazz Band	A.J. Mills / J.A. Tunbridge	1918	Star Music	h3991.ii(5)
Everybody Loves a Jazz Band	Coleman Goetz / Leon Flatlow	1919	Herman Darewski	h3993.e(9)
Heigho! Jazz it with Me	Jack Foley	1919	Herman Darewski	h3993.e(45)
That Mandarin Jazz	Milton Hayes / Ronald Franklin	1919	H. Sharples and Son	g426.d(33)
That Jungle Jazz in Congo Land	Harry and Burton Lester	1919	Francis Day and Hunter	h3994.dd(31)
The Jazz Band Cabaret	Tom Mellor and A.C. Findon	1919	Herman Darewski	h3994.xx(47)
The Jazz Jazz Tinker's Wedding	Tom Mellor and Alf J. Lawrence	1919	Herman Darewski	h3994.xx(48)
That Blue-Eyed Jazz Band	A.T. Courtney / John W. Miller	1919	Whitehall Music Co.	h3995.b(8)
The Wedding Jazz	Clifford Grey / Ivor Novello	1919	Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew	h3670.a(25)
Oh! That Lancashire Jazz Band	Wynn Stanley and Andrew Allen	1919	The Lawrence Wright Music Co.	h3996.n(62)
Play me a Jazz Band Tune	Clay Smith, R.P. Weston and Bert Lee	1919	Francis Day and Hunter	h3996.u(24)
That Javanese Jazz Band	Enrique Smith	1919	Francis Day and Hunter	h3996.f(43)
Come and Jazz with Me	Clifford Grey / T.C. Sterndale Bennett	1919	Reynolds and Co	h2452(33)
Johnson's Jazz-time-Band	'Bay' / Reginald Tabbush	1919	West	h3991.q(4)
The Coster Jazz Song	Clifford Harris / Jas W. Tate	1919	Francis, Day and Hunter	h3991.r(24)
Our Big Jazz Band	Clifford Harris / Jas W. Tate	1919	Francis Day and Hunter	h3991.r(31)

Appendix 2

Synopsis of *In Dahomey: A Negro Musical Comedy*

After the alterations made to the show in Britain, *In Dahomey* began with a prologue set in Africa. Then the story begins with two would-be detectives, Shylock Homestead (Bert Williams) and Rareback Pinkerton (George Walker) who become embroiled in a case to find a silver casket, belonging to Hamilton Lightfoot, that eventually leads them to West Africa. They become involved in a scheme to defraud the would-be African colonizers and in particular, their leader Lightfoot. When it turns out that the slow-witted Homestead is actually far wealthier than the old man Pinkerton, he manages to extract enough money to put himself into decent clothes. Dressed as an African king, Pinkerton does a dance that wins the hearts of the Dahomeans. Homestead and Pinkerton are made Caboceers due to their large gifts of rum to the Dahomean King. Meanwhile, the colonists have been captured and Shylock and Pinkerton ply the King with yet more alcohol to get the prisoners freed.

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Appendix 3

Songs consulted for Chapter 5

Title	Written / Composed	Date	Publisher (all in London)	BL Number
The Negro and His Banjer	Dibdin	1790	The author	g380.e(15)
Ring de Banjo	Stephen Foster	1853	Campbell, Ransford	h1437(8)
'Tis the banjo softly speaking	Fred Caughan / Louis H D'Egville	1883	Chappell	h1788.j(41)
Twang the Banjo! Humorous song	Herbert Harraden	1889	Bath	h1260.m(35)
Banjo Mania: A humorous Song	Corney Grain	1889	J. Bath	h1260.m(32)
Bobbie's Banjo	Herbert Harraden	1898	Bath	h3980.cc(35)
The Old Banjo	Arthur Wimperis / Christine	1910	Von Tilzer	h3990.q(25)
That Banjo Song	J.W. Hamer / Chas Elbert	1912	Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew	h3992.hh(6)
The Ghost of the Rag-time Coon	Patrick L Barrow	1913	West and Co.	h3989.f(42)
On Your Rag-time Rag Shop Banjo	Frank W Carter and Gilbert Wells	1913	Francis, Day and Hunter	h3990.i(47)
Banjo Moon	Hugh E Wright / Kennedy Russell	1917	Ascherberg, Hopwood and Crew	h3809.b(25)
The Ghost of the Old Banjo	Medley Barrett	1919	Darewski	h3989.e(9)

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¹ The date given on the score is 1902. This must be an error, as many of the numbers contained in the score were not included until the show came to London in 1903, and the *Era* confirms that a score was published in London late in May 1903.

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	12/3/1919	John Lester's Frisco Five
	9/4/1919 (14)	Debate on Jazz
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	23/4/1919 (14)	The Dixieland Jazz Band
<i>Glasgow Herald</i>	4/4/1919 (9)	'Recital of Jazz Music'
<i>Italian American Digest</i> (pub New Orleans)	Spring 1989 15 (no. 1)	'Nick LaRocca, unsung Jazz Pioneer'
<i>Knights of Columbus News Bulletin</i>	28/6/1919	'Brilliant Military Ball in Honour of Departing Americans'
<i>Liverpool Echo</i>	1/4/1919	landing of ODJB
<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>	23/4/1919	defends ODJB performances
<i>People</i>	27/4/1919 (4)	the opening of the Dixie Club
<i>Performer</i>	10/4/1919 (23)	'Lively if Unmusical'
	10/4/1919 (25)	'The Real Jazz'
<i>Star</i>	19/4/1919 (3)	'Puzzled by Jazz'
<i>Times</i>	23/4/1919	ODJB performances
	24/4/1919	
	25/4/1919	
<i>Town Topics: 'The Joy Rag'</i>	12/4/1919 (2)	'The Dixieland Jazz Band'
	19/4/1919 (2)	
<i>West London Observer</i>	24/10/1919 (5)	opening of the Hammersmith Palais

Southern Syncopated Orchestra

<i>Bailie (Glasgow)</i>	7/1/1920 (7)	
<i>Bristol Evening News</i>	6/4/1920	
<i>Bristol Times and Mirror</i>	6/4/1920 (5)	'Syncopated Orchestra: Unique Entertainment at the Colston Hall'
<i>Clapham Observer</i>	19/3/1920 (7)	
	26/3/1920 (7)	
	2/4/1920 (7)	
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	12/11/1919 (6)	'Brilliant Victory Ball'
	9/12/1919 (6)	'Ragtime but not Jazz'
<i>Daily Herald</i>	2/8/1919	'Negro Musicians: East End Concert To-Morrow'
	4/8/1919 (3)	'Real Ragtime by Real Darkies'
<i>Daily Record and Mail (Glasgow)</i>	26/12/1919 (9)	'No Jazz Music on Sunday'
<i>Dancing World</i>	October 1920, 1 No.6 (4)	'The Jazz Kings are Welcomed in a New Country'
<i>Dunfermline Press</i>	24/1/1920 (4)	St. Margaret's Hall
<i>Edinburgh Evening News</i>	21/1/1920 (5)	
<i>Evening Argus (Brighton)</i>	29/7/1921 (2)	
	2/8/1921 (4)	
	9/8/1921 (2)	
	16/8/1921 (2)	
	23/8/1921 (2)	
	30/8/1921 (2)	
<i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i>	24/4/1920 (2)	
<i>People</i>	29/6/1919 (4)	
	27/7/1919 (4)	
<i>Performer</i>	12/8/1920 (27)	Advert for Buddy Gilmore

<i>Referee</i>	6/7/1919 (4)	
	14/12/1919 (7)	
	7/3/1920 (11)	'Le Souper Dansant'
	7/11/1920 (3)	'Matters Musical'
<i>Scotsman</i>	21/1/1920 (8)	'American Orchestra in Usher Hall'
<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	27/4/1920 (4)	'Syncopated Orchestra'
<i>Sound Wave</i>	October 1920 (698)	
<i>South London Press</i>	2/4/1920 (11)	'Minstrely at Kennington'
<i>Stage</i>	13/5/1920 (11)	
	24/6/1920 (10)	
	8/7/1920 (8)	
	4/11/1920 (11)	
	16/12/1920 (12)	
<i>Telegraph</i>	11/8/1919 (8)	'King and his servants: Royal Entertainment'
	6/8/1920 (16)	'Coloured Musicians at Variance'
<i>Times</i>	11/8/1919 (13)	'Kings Garden Party to his Servants: 1,100 Happy Guests'
	9/12/1919 (12)	'Syncopation and Sentiment: Southern Orchestra at the Coliseum'
	15/5/1920 (5)	'King's Bench Division: Lattimore v De Courville'
	25/9/1919 (13)	
	29/10/1919 (29)	
	1/11/1919 (9)	
	12/11/1919(17)	<i>Victory Ball</i>

Paul Whiteman Band

Era 14/3/1921 (14,17)

21/3/1921 (13,14)

4/4/1921 (11)

14/5/1921 (13)

Encore 1/3/1921

22/3/1921 (2)

28/3/1921 (11)

Stage 5/3/1921 (14)

Plantation Revues

Daily Graphic 25/1/1923 (10)

3/3/1923 (4)

5/3/1923 (7)

6/3/1923 (7)

8/3/1923 (10)

10/3/1923 (10)

15/3/1923 (8-9, 13)

4/4/1923

Era 14/3/1923 (1, 11)

21/3/1923 (9-10)

11/4/1923 (11)

6/6/1923 (11)

Encore 15/3/1923 (3)

22/3/1923 (3)

5/4/1923 (12)

7/6/1923 (9-10)

John Bull 28/10/1922

('A Black and Burning Shame')

<i>Performer</i>	7/3/1923 (5,6)
	14/3/1923 (5)
	21/3/1923 (5)
<i>Referee</i>	8/4/1923 (8)
<i>Stage</i>	5/4/1923 (14)
	7/6/1923 (17)
<i>Star</i>	1/6/1923 (6)
	28/7/1923 (11)
<i>Sunday Times</i>	18/3/1923 (6)
 <u>Leon Abbey</u>	
<i>Encore</i>	22/12/1923 (10)
 <u>Nightclub scene</u>	
<i>Daily Express</i>	14/3/1922 (1, 4)
<i>Evening News</i>	13/3/1922 (3)
	14/3/1922 (1)
	3/5/1922 (3)
<i>John Bull</i>	1/8/1925 (11)

Public Record Office Files

Lattimore Court Cases

L. 175

High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, 1920 between George William Lattimore, (plaintiff) and Albert de Courville, B. E. Peyton, George Smith, Henry Saparo and Fred Coxcito (defendants).

Affidavits, J4/9220

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| 79 | George William Lattimore |
| 96 | Benton Elsworth Peyton |
| 97 | Henry Saparo |
| 98 | George Mitchell Smith |
| 99 | Fred Coxcito |
| 100 | George Mitchell Smith |

Orders J15/ 3550 and J15/3551

L. 542

High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, 1920 between George William Lattimore, (plaintiff) and Ernest C. Rolls (defendant).

Affidavits, J4/9221

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 296 | Motion to continue interim injunction |
| 297 | Will Marion Cook |
| 298 | Ernest Charles Rolls |
| 304 | George Lattimore |

Orders J15/ 3552 and J15/3553

L. 647 High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, 1920 between George William Lattimore, (plaintiff) and Will Marion Cook, Ernest C. Rolls and André C. Charlot (defendant).

Affidavits, J4/9221

305	George Lattimore
306	Lawerence Morris
309	Frank Douglas Withers/Anthony Rivera
310	Will Marion Cook
323	Will Marion Cook
327	Fred Coxcito
334	George Lattimore

Orders J15/3553

L. 57

High Court of Justice, Kings Bench Division, 1920, between George William Lattimore, (plaintiff) and A. P. de Courville (defendant).

J54/1731

Plantation Revues

LAB 2/1187/EDAR954/1923	Actor's Association Opposition to black performers
LAB 2/1188/EDAR1149/1926	Alien Labour Policy and Procedure

Nightclubs

MEPO 2/2053	Nightclub irregularities
MEPO 3/2969	Police supervision of nightclubs
HO 45/11599	'Cocaine' film
HO 45/ 16205	Nightclubs: entertainments, liquor licensing, police supervision etc

Archive Files

Oral History Holdings of the William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz,
Tulane University (referenced as HJA)

Danny Barker	June 30 1959
	Fall 1988
Sidney Bechet	June 1944
	November 19 1945
	1957
	1958
Tom Brown	1956
Eddie Edwards	July 1 1959
Emanuel Sayles	January 17 1959
	January 29 1961
Papa Jack Laine	April 21 1951
	March 26 1957
	January 25 1959
	May 23 1960
Nick LaRocca	May 21 1958
	May 26 1958
	June 2 1958
Johnny St. Cyr	August 27 1958
Tony Sbarbaro and Emile Christian	February 11 1959
Harry Shields	May 28 1961

Information from files in the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, New
Jersey (referenced as IJS)

Information from files in the National Jazz Foundation Archive, Loughton Public Library,
Loughton, Essex (referenced as NJFA)

Information from files in the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading
(referenced as BBCWAC)

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