

THE GENDER OF JAZZ.
CONTEXTUALIZING ALL-GIRL JAZZ BANDS OF WORLD WAR II.
by

JORDAN KEEGAN

(Under the Direction of Stephen Valdez)

ABSTRACT

This thesis combines the research of Jill Sullivan and Sherrie Tucker to explore the full impact of all-girl civilian and military bands of World War II. History books promote Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson as the leaders of swing music. In reality, all-female groups such as Ina Ray Hutton and Her Melodears, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, and Ada Leonard's All-American Girls, among the other multitudes of all-girl bands, regularly performed swing music. The women of swing are frequently ignored by scholars, creating an absence of women's history within not only this musical style but also the genre of jazz. Recently, however, scholars such as Sherrie Tucker and Jill Sullivan have contributed to a new field of study: gender studies in jazz music. This thesis continues the conversation in an emerging field of study and contextualizes the impact of all-girl jazz bands during World War II.

INDEX WORDS: All-Girl jazz bands; All-Girl military bands; World War II; Great Depression; swing music; Anna Mae Winburn; International Sweethearts of Rhythm; Ada Leonard's All-American Girls; and Thelma White's All-Girl Orchestra.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis to my mother, Jeanine Krenz. She taught me how to be an independent, strong woman not only through her words, but also through the example of her daily life. Because of her, I grew up with limitless dreams and the confidence to pursue them. I thank my husband, Chris Keegan, and father, Robert Krenz, for supporting me as I continue to achieve my dreams. I am forever grateful for my grandparents, Charles and Jean Courtney and Donald and Dorothy Krenz, who have perpetually told me stories of their childhood, inspiring me to further study and explore the culture of America in the 1930s and 1940s.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

World War II is remembered in the popular imagination for the Greatest Generation, the start of the Atomic Age, Rosie the Riveter, Good triumphing over Evil, and an overwhelming sense of American nationalism. It was a defining event in the twentieth century, which for many, marked the beginning of a new age. As a result of the war's enormous impact, events and culture which happened beforehand are often marginalized or left out of the history books.

Swing music has been nostalgically linked with World War II. During the war, soldiers wanted to hear swing because of its link to peacetime; however, that peacetime they remembered was flawed. With the Great Depression preceding World War II, one might initially wonder how a cultural explosion could happen while people were preoccupied with providing basic necessities for their family. This was one of the worst times in American history, when many people focused solely on providing food and clothes for their families. Throughout the 1930s, swing music developed its cultural identity as American music.

Although swing music became popular in the 1930s, it came to define the sound of American culture in the 1940s during World War II. With so many men fulfilling their patriotic duty as soldiers during World War II, one might initially think that bandstands would empty and the clubs on 52nd street in New York would close; yet swing music evolved to define a musical culture designated to keep morale high throughout the United States. Because swing music was so popular, both men and women desired to perform this new musical style. Women who played

both the instruments and the musical style of jazz experienced a social outcry as they became a popular topic of debate in music magazines; and yet women had been performing on trumpets, trombones, and other brass instruments for decades before the swing craze swept the nation.

This thesis combines the research of Jill Sullivan and Sherrie Tucker, to explore the full impact of all-girl civilian and military bands of World War II. Swing music, which is nostalgically linked with World War II, is a musical style of jazz whose origins commenced during the Great Depression. History books promote Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson, among other male musicians, as the leaders of swing music. In reality, all-female groups such as Ina Ray Hutton and Her Melodears, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, and Ada Leonard's All-American Girls, among the other multitudes of all-girl bands, regularly performed swing music. The women of swing are frequently ignored by scholars, creating an absence of women's history within not only this musical style but also the genre of jazz. Recently, however, scholars such as Sherrie Tucker and Jill Sullivan have contributed to a new field of study: gender studies in jazz music.

This thesis continues the conversation in an emerging field of study and contextualizes the impact of all-girl jazz bands during World War II. The second chapter examines the validity of the attitudes presented in the music magazines *Down Beat* and *Metronome* that proper women don't perform jazz on brass instruments. Such magazines depict a collective loss of memory in society, because women had been regularly performing on the same brass instruments only fifty years earlier as part of women's brass bands. Most of the second chapter will focus on the nineteenth century American phenomenon of community brass bands. The women who participated in the all-girl jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s had to overcome this collective memory loss in order to pursue successful careers. The third chapter scrutinizes the inherent

connection between swing music and World War II, when swing music became mainstream in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. This involves examining the state of race relations from the 1930s into the 1940s. Jazz is steeped in racial tensions from its inception. Many scholars, such as Sherrie Tucker and Thomas J. Hennessey, have unpacked the issue of race relations through the development of jazz as a genre.¹ The fourth chapter explores how civilian and military all-girls band worked together using swing music to keep American morale uplifted throughout the course of World War II. Over time, several facets of this new jazz culture were overlooked in history books, such as the popular and normality of all-girl jazz bands of World War II.

The largest problem concerning the study of all-girl jazz bands of World War II is the lack of recordings available. This is a historical problem. At the inception of jazz, recording instruments were not trusted as forms to preserve this newfound musical tradition. “In December of 1915, Victor Talking Machine offered to record [Freddy] Keppard and his band. He was said to have been frightened because other musicians would buy his records just to steal his stuff.”² With improvisation as a key element in the roots of jazz performance, early jazzmen were concerned about others stealing their sound and technique. The lack of recordings available is not limited to the early jazz period. Only a handful of jazz recordings exist from the World War II era as well. The materials used for assembling records were important in weapon supplies for the soldiers overseas. The only exceptions to the no-recording rule were discs made for soldiers’ entertainment overseas. Although the USO provided the opportunity for live performances on military bases throughout the world, a live show was not given every night. When there wasn’t

¹ The brief discussion which takes place in chapter three is not exhaustive, as this thesis focuses solely on an examination of gender in jazz. For further information, please consult Sherrie Tucker and Thomas J. Hennessey’s works as listed in my bibliography.

² Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 1, PBS, 2000. DVD.

live entertainment provided, many times recordings of popular tunes from home were played to improve morale around camp. It was common to re-use discs, recording over previous performances of many groups. Jill Sullivan, whose research studies all-girl military bands, found only three surviving recordings of women's military bands.³ The recordings were part of the personal memorabilia of the women she interviewed for her research.

Another contributing factor to the lack of recordings is the recording strike that began in August 1942 and lasted until November 1944. James Petrillo, who was President of the American Federation of Musicians, called for the recording ban to force record manufacturers, such as Decca Records, RCA Victor, and Columbia, to pay standard union wages.⁴ The recording ban forced the record companies to create regular payment schedules for recording musicians, which were absent before this time. As a result of this strike, the style of bop emerges almost spontaneously, because the evolution between swing and bop was not recorded. Scholars now understand that bop was an evolution of swing created in the after-hours, unrecorded jam sessions in the swing clubs on 52nd street in New York.⁵ In the modern era, scholars are blessed with the availability of sources such as Retro-YouTube, in which some recordings and performances are found. Primary sources such as these are part of the few remaining ways in which scholars can study the impact of music on culture in the past.

³ The military regularly recorded the women's military bands. They just had to reuse the discs regularly because those same materials were used for guns, ammo, and other war supplies. Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. , 2011, 7.

⁴ Joanna R. Smolko and H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Petrillo, James C(aesar)," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, second edition, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2267447>.

⁵ For Further discussion about this, please see the conclusion of Chapter 3. The exclusion of women in these after-hour jam sessions made a lasting impact on jazz.

Literature Review

Few scholars have directly addressed all-girl bands of World War II. Some may indirectly address them through discussing the Rosie the Riveter movement, but only Jill Sullivan and Sherrie Tucker directly discuss the impact of all-girl bands on American culture. Maureen Honey's book *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* explores the difference between pop culture references of Rosie and the movement of "good" Rosie's into and out of the workplace.⁶ This book also discussed the images and advertisements used to manipulate the civilian population in the Rosie the Riveter movement.

Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change, by Sherna B. Gluck, highlights the nuances of the social movement.⁷ In her words, "I now appreciate the subtle and incremental nature of change and understand the changes in consciousness are not *necessarily* or *immediately* reflected in dramatic alterations in the public world. They may be very quietly played out in the private world of women, yet expressed in a fashion that can both affect future generations and eventually be expressed more openly when the social climate is right."⁸ Written history not only reflects the events of the past, but also the attitudes of the historian in their day. Later in the introduction Gluck also writes, "If women were able to tell their own story, might we discover a whole hidden history of World War II?"⁹ My goal is not to re-write history with a retrospective gaze, but rather to highlight important events that were not necessarily recorded in history books. A large part of the history of women jazz musicians has been glossed over or

⁶ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.

⁷ Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987.

⁸ *Ibid*, x.

⁹ *Ibid*, xi.

hidden, and it's important to recognize this history on its own merits without linking it to Rosie the Riveter.

Sherrie Tucker has created the foundation of the scholarship for the emerging area of gender studies in jazz.¹⁰ Her dissertation, "Changing the Players Playing the Changes: "All-Girl" Jazz and Swing Bands during World War II" evolved into her book *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*.¹¹ She then published several articles, such as "'and Fellas, They're American Girls": On the Road with the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Band," which expanded upon the ideas of her dissertation.¹² Before Tucker began her scholarship, nothing was written on all-girl bands of World War II. Tucker faced much resistance when beginning her work. As she explains:

Almost immediately on embarking on this project, I encountered notions that all-girl bands lacked an intangible, yet crucial, "authenticity" possessed by men's bands. The man who answered my first telephone call to the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) local in San Francisco responded to my request for information by insisting, "Groups of housewives who got together during the war would not be considered *real bands*. They wouldn't have been professional, and they wouldn't have belonged to the union."¹³

This AFM representative's perspective is a common one: women's bands were a novelty act during World War II and were only successful due to the lack of men on the home front. Except they weren't a novelty act. Tucker's scholarship affirms this truth. In her own words, she has achieved her goal in, "presenting a history that looks at ways in which women and men were both present and that recognizes swing culture as a field on which specific gender constructions

¹⁰ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, 3rd Printing. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

¹¹ Sherrie Tucker, "Changing the Players Playing the Changes: "All-Girl" Jazz and Swing Bands during World War II." Santa Cruz, CA: University of California, June 1999.

¹² Sherrie Tucker, "'and, Fellas, They're American Girls": On the Road with the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Band," in *Frontiers*, 1996: 128.

¹³ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, 3rd Printing. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, 3.

were affirmed, contested, performed, and consumed.”¹⁴ While Tucker observed and analyzed civilian jazz bands, my purpose is to evaluate how civilian and military women’s bands operated during the 1940s, blurring public gender roles and expectations. My research expands upon her work, contextualizing the development of all-girl jazz bands during this era.

While Sherrie Tucker’s scholarship focuses on the big bands of the 1930s and 1940s, Sally Placksin concentrates on female soloists throughout the evolution of jazz in her book, *American Women in Jazz, 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music*.¹⁵ She starts with “The Blues Women” (Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, et al) and quickly switches to instrumentalists of the twenties such as Lil Hardin Armstrong and Peggy Gilbert. One of the leading arguments against women jazz musicians as “real musicians” is the perceived lack of female soloists in the genre. Placksin dismisses this notion by not only providing the leading female jazz soloists (instrumentalists and vocalists), but also showing their constant presence throughout the evolution of jazz as a genre.

Kristin A. McGee examines the role of jazzwomen in the moving image in *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1928-1959*.¹⁶ McGee expands upon Tucker’s work by providing insight into how women in all-girl jazz bands are portrayed in film. McGee explored the performances of groups that Tucker does not address. McGee’s analysis on Thelma White and Her All-Girl Orchestra’s performance of *Hollywood Boogie Woogie* further proves that not only were there hundreds of all-girl bands, they also could play well.

¹⁴ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, 3rd Printing. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, 29.

¹⁵ Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present Their Words, Lives, and Music*. New York: Seaview Books, 1982.

¹⁶ Kristin A. McGee, *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1928-1959*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009.

While the scholars previously mentioned focused on civilian groups, Philomena Goodman's scholarship is on the development of women in the military in Great Britain; her scholarship is useful in contextualizing the development of women in the American military.¹⁷ Originally, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in the United States was based on the model of Great Britain's women's auxiliary corps. The women who participated in the military in both Great Britain and the United States faced similar problems and similar attitudes from society in this evolution, making Goodman's book *Women, Sexuality, and War* an important source to consult.

Jill Sullivan, who examines women as they began their work in the military in her book *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, closely analyzes the role of music and bands within these endeavors.¹⁸ Sullivan privately interviewed the women who participated in the military bands and attended several reunions, gathering pivotal information about the military band tradition. Her work provides a fundamental insight into the gender-neutral roles women fulfilled in each branch of the military. Sullivan clearly identifies the WACs as having the most institutionalized bands of the military branches, and explores how women used bands as a proper forum to socialize. Her work is fundamental as an insight to the role of bands within the military as women joined the ranks.

For a more general history on jazz, Frank Tirro wrote a book appropriately entitled *Jazz: A History*, which is a succinct, thorough history from jazz's controversial origins through the 1980s.¹⁹ However, he tends to marginalize women jazz musicians, selectively bringing up the topic in his introduction to World War II and swing music. Organizing his material in this

¹⁷ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*. Hampshire, U.K.: Palgrave, 2002.

¹⁸ Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011.

¹⁹ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1993.

manner sends the wrong message about women jazz bands for several reasons. First, this links women jazz bands with World War II only, which is factually incorrect. Tirro writes, “Women began to make noticeable inroads into the male-dominated world of instrumental jazz during the late 1930s, and new opportunities opened up during World War II when the draft pulled many male musicians into the armed services.”²⁰ While he correctly states that women’s jazz bands begin during the 1930s, he also leaves the impression that women’s bands were popular only because of the demand for music and the lack of men to fill this role due to World War II calling them away from the home front. In other words, he perpetuates the interpretation that their success is due to the Rosie the Riveter movement.

While the war effort did allow for a temporary dissolution of gender barriers in the workforce and women’s jazz bands took full advantage of this opportunity, they also continued their work after the end of World War II.²¹ More importantly, Tirro devotes exactly three paragraphs to women’s jazz groups: one paragraph for generalizations about female jazz groups; one for Ina Ray Hutton and Her Melodears; and one for the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. In the end, the lack of information presented about women’s jazz groups marginalizes their presence in society. As Sherrie Tucker reminds us in the introduction to her book, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s*, “There were hundreds of all-woman bands.”²² Tirro only mentions two.

²⁰ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1993 278.

²¹ Good Rosies, advertisements encouraged, left their jobs and returned to a domestic life once their soldiers returned from war. While some female musicians did follow this trajectory, many kept working after World War II. Although big bands went out of style and all-girl bands did not perform in a bebop style, some young women worked as music teachers, private instructors, and performers – not following in the societal expectation of a Good Rosie.

²² Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s*, 3rd Printing. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Jeffrey Magee follows the evolution of jazz from the days of Louis Armstrong and Storyville in New Orleans to the beginnings of sweet jazz with Fletcher Henderson's arrangements for big bands in his book *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz*.²³ This book creates a wonderful narrative of the natural evolution from hot jazz to sweet jazz. Magee creates a succinct overview to preface the details and nuances which Dave Oliphant and Lawrence McClellan, Jr. underscore in their more detailed books of the two different swing eras.

Dave Oliphant and Lawrence McClellan, Jr. write two companion books concerning the swing era: *The Early Swing Era: 1930 to 1941* (Oliphant) and *The Later Swing Era: 1942 to 1955* (McClellan, Jr.).²⁴ While Tirro presents an excellent overview on the evolution of jazz, these two books work seamlessly together to dive into the details of the music and the culture of the swing era. Oliphant and McClellan also highlight the differences between each phase of the swing era. The early swing era is characterized by both hot jazz and sweet jazz ensembles, while the later swing era has more analogous sounds trending toward just sweet music. Both of these books have been important in connecting the music back to the culture of its time, but they both omit all-girl jazz bands entirely, focusing more on race relations than gender relations from 1930-1955.

Robert Walser created a fascinating collection of articles about jazz in his book *Keeping Time*, which reflects the contemporary, historical attitude about jazz.²⁵ In his introduction to the chapter entitled, "Jazz and Gender during the War Years," he presents a refreshingly candid

²³ Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

²⁴ David Oliphant, *The Early Swing Era, 1930 to 1941*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. Lawrence McClellan, Jr., *The Later Swing Era, 1942 to 1955*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.

²⁵ Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

attitude concerning gender studies and jazz. In the second footnote of his introduction he writes, “Scholarship addressing issues of gender and sexuality in jazz scarcely exists as yet, with a handful of important exceptions.”²⁶ He then lists exceptions in order to further explore the gender divide which existed in jazz music, especially during World War II. Walser also preserved important articles of each era, preserving attitudes and opinions which are not necessarily popular today. Such articles are important in order to contextualize normative attitudes that prevailed among society.

In the evolution of jazz historiography, it is interesting to note who has been the subject of multiple biographies and who has not. There are several books devoted to the subject of Paul Whiteman, who is considered the man who made a lady out of jazz. As I explore this more in chapter three, Whiteman is seen as the man who created a socially proper reputation for jazz as a genre. Don Rayno, Joshua Berrett, and Carl Johnson all provide invaluable insight to Paul Whiteman’s life and accomplishments bringing jazz to the concert hall.²⁷ In *Jazz: Popular Culture in America 1800-1925*, Paul Whiteman provides his perspective on the role of jazz within our society with his ghostwriter, Mary Margaret McBride.²⁸ While this doesn’t relate directly to the all-girl jazz bands of World War II, his contributions to jazz improved the style’s reputation. Whiteman created a sense of propriety for the genre after James Reese Europe created a sense of legitimization of jazz as a genre

Reid Badger wrote a thorough biography of James Reese Europe, who almost singlehandedly created an environment in which jazz could cross-over from “black music” to

²⁶ Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 111.

²⁷ Don Rayno, *Paul Whiteman Pioneer in American Music Volume I: 1890-1930, Studies in Jazz, No. 43*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003; Joshua Berrett, *Louis Armstrong & Paul Whiteman, Two Kings of Jazz*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004; and Carl Johnson, *Paul Whiteman: A Chronology (1890 - 1967)*. Williamstown, MA: The Whiteman Collection, 1977.

²⁸ Paul Whiteman and Mary Margaret McBride, *Jazz*. New York : Arno Press, 1974.

“white listeners.”²⁹ Europe’s life is important in the evolution of Jazz in the 1920s, especially in tracing its musical roots in European traditions. Europe brought jazz to the military. Arthur Rollini, who performed in Benny Goodman’s big band, wrote about his experiences in the big band era in his memoirs *Thirty Years with the Big Bands*.³⁰ In this book, he discusses his role within a big band that performed in a sweet style of jazz. Many all-girl bands also performed in this sweet jazz style.

Lil Hardin was one of the first women to perform jazz and maintain her social propriety. James L. Dickerson is the only scholar to capture her life in a biography.³¹ He freely admits his lack of material, advertising a call for information at the end of his book. Hardin was also the second wife to Louis Armstrong, who strongly influenced the evolution from early hot jazz to swing. Actually, Hardin was the intellect behind Armstrong’s success. Although this is a slim volume, Dickerson’s efforts in growing the scholarship on women in jazz is laudable. Hardin was a woman who controlled her career in music and successfully navigated society to retain her status as a proper lady. Some women, like Mary Lou Williams, have a fifty-year career as a jazz musician and yet no biography exists to record her lifelong contribution to jazz.

The two documentaries *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns* and *The Girls in the Band* have been insightful primary sources. In *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*, jazz musicians such as Wynton Marsalis, Branford Marsalis, and Dave Brubeck present their opinions on the evolution of jazz as a style.³² Ken Burns provides a thorough history of the beginning of jazz, devoting an entire episode to the emergence of a truly American musical tradition. Burns also devotes two episodes

²⁹ Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

³⁰ Arthur Rollini, *Thirty Years with the Big Bands*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

³¹ James L. Dickerson, *Just for a Thrill: Lil Hardin Armstrong, First Lady of Jazz*. New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002.

³² Ken Burns, *Jazz*, PBS, 2000. DVD.

to swing music, emphasizing that same shift that Oliphant and McClellan, Jr. do from swing as musical innovation to swing as nostalgic music.

While Burns released his film in 2001, Judy Chaiken led the team who directed and produced *The Girls in the Band*, which was released in 2011.³³ Chaiken and her team follow several women who participated in swing bands during the 1930s and 1940s, including members of The International Sweethearts of Rhythm and Ada Leonard's All-American Girl Orchestra. Chaiken allows women to speak for themselves and tell their own stories, preserving their memoirs without commentary. This documentary provides invaluable understanding of this previously ignored area of study.

It is my objective to use a historical perspective, to highlight the musical expertise of women and to prove that they were, indeed, impassioned, technically proficient, and gifted instrumentalists. Jill Sullivan and Sherrie Tucker have provided such foundational work in the emerging field of gender studies in jazz. Sullivan and Tucker analyze specific aspects of American culture in the 1940s, while I offer a more holistic analysis. I explore the impact of both groups on American culture in the 1940s, normalizing their performances as an integral part of the swing era in jazz history.

³³ Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

CHAPTER 2

SASSY & BRASSY: LADIES' BRASS BANDS OF THE 19th CENTURY

In its February 1938 issue *Down Beat* published an article titled, “Why Women Musicians Are Inferior,” proclaiming, “Women are better performers on strings and piano, which are essentially sympathetic instruments more in keeping with their temperament. They do NOT shine on wind instruments, however, nor do they make good percussionists.”³⁴ This was a common and popular attitude held in society concerning women jazz musicians of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Just a few years later, music critic Marvin Freedman continued this argument in another article in *Down Beat*, which was published on February 1, 1941. He wrote, “Good jazz is a hard, masculine music with a whip to it. Women like violins, and jazz deals with drums and trumpets.”³⁵ According to Freeman, women wanted nothing to do with the masculine brass instrumentation of jazz. A great debate raged among society in the popular music magazines of the day about women’s status as jazz musicians. Robert Walser preserved this argument in the pages of his book *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, “Magazines such as *Down Beat* exploited these issues to attract attention and circulation, but they could not have done so in a vacuum. Arguments about popular all-women big bands...reflected wider controversies concerning the proper social roles of women.”³⁶ In other words, some might interpret the journalists’ attitudes as a public relations ploy to sell more magazines, but this debate was

³⁴ Unknown, “Why Women Musicians are Inferior,” *Down Beat*, February 1938, p. 4 as reproduced by Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 113.

³⁵ Marvin Freedman, “Here’s the Lowdown on Two Kinds of Women,” in *Down Beat*, February 1941, p. 9.

³⁶ Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 111. As discussed in my lit review, Walser re-prints the original articles of the day, literally preserving the argument. The article was not written by Walser and does not necessarily reflect his personal views.

authentic, and it was central to the success of women's jazz bands at the time. Could women really play and perform on brass instruments? Walser captures the consequences of this debate as he continues his thoughts:

Writers on both sides discussed the issue of how women and men might come to perform differently – whether through nature, nurture, or social restrictions. Depending on the writer's agenda qualities such as intuition, cooperation, and personal attractiveness were made to seem advantageous or crippling. While many jazz critics championed racial equality, gender was different: prejudice and cruel disparagement seem to have been more acceptable for this social category.³⁷

This debate was critical to the success of all-girl jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s, however, only fifty years earlier women's brass bands were community and cultural norms. Before the rise of jazz and before World War I, community brass bands were a craze that swept America during the 1800s. Both amateur and professional brass bands were common throughout America until World War I. Out of the highly popular American tradition of community brass bands, which was predominantly male, rose a tradition known as ladies' community brass bands.³⁸ The women's brass bands were not uncommon, nor were they a phenomenon, nor did they consist of women of questionable character. In fact, the women's brass bands were regularly lauded and praised in newspapers nationwide, comprised of members of the highest social standing in their community. In the bands, women performed on cornets, alto horns, slide trombones, and tubas.

The first mention of a women's brass band is an article in *The Bolivar Bulletin* from Tennessee, lauding the success of a Nebraska Women's Brass Band in 1876: "Our ladies' brass band carried away the premium offered for the best band at the State Fair...It is composed of

³⁷ Robert Walser, *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 111.

³⁸ "Lady" is a problematic term because of the class-bias associated with the term. The women who participated were young, white upper-middle class women of notable social standing. The tradition here is known as "ladies' community brass bands."

young ladies from the best families in Lincoln.”³⁹ Not only were the women extremely talented, but their character was also beyond reproach. In 1880, *The Phoenix Herald* praised the brass band from Albany, Oregon. The article states, “The ladies’ brass band of Albany, Oregon, is composed of twelve members, the foremost young ladies in the city in social standing and intelligence. The instruments used by this band cost \$350.”⁴⁰ This article is important for several reasons. First, the young women who were members of this band were not only considered social elites, they were also extremely intelligent. There were no aspersions cast upon them because the young women performed on cornets, alto horns, or euphoniums; only fifty years later in the 1930s society questioned the character of the young women who decided to play trumpets, trombones, and saxophones. Second, the cost of this band is listed. This is a high price, especially for the times. It cost money in order to (1) buy instruments and (2) buy band uniforms. Only the well-to-do members of communities could afford to enroll their daughters in such an experience. *The New Northwest* in Portland, Oregon, discusses the difficulties of fundraising: “A number of young ladies of the city are becoming interested in the matter. A portion of the necessary funds have been raised. First-class instruments will be purchased.”⁴¹ The communities were proud of creating a first class women’s brass band. *Devils Lake Inter-Ocean* from North Dakota reported on October 20, 1899, “The Young Ladies’ Militia corps encouraged by their success as cadets will form a ladies’ brass band....at present there are several of the young ladies who can finger on the cornet and alto horns pretty nicely.”⁴² Returning to Freeman’s original

³⁹ *The Bolivar Bulletin*, November 2, 1876, Vol. 12, No. 11 ed, pg. 3, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴⁰ In today’s economy, that would cost about \$7,558. *The Phoenix Herald*, July 9, 1880, Vol. 5 No. 22 ed, pg. 2, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴¹ *The New Northwest*, December 2, 1880, Vol. 10 No. 12 ed, pg. 5, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴² *Devils Lake Inter-Ocean*, October 20, 1899, Vol. 17 No. 32, pg. 5, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

claim, women clearly prefer their cornets and alto horns to any stringed instrument. Not only do they perform on these instruments, they perform well, promoting the community's pride in their band.

The bandswomen returned this communal pride by performing and acting as pillars of their community. In 1888, the *Wood River Times* from Hailey, Idaho reported, "At [Madison], Wis [consin], the Fourth of July celebration this year, was entirely conducted by women, even the brass band."⁴³ The *Evening Capital Journal* from Salem, Oregon, reported from the same event, "I doubt if ever before there was a woman's Fourth of July celebration with a woman's brass band. This band is to be one of the attractions at Madison, Wis [consin] at the Monona Lake assembly."⁴⁴

The brass bandswomen not only participated in big holiday celebrations, they also participated in regular, local community events. *The Columbian* from Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania wrote, "Opelousas, La. boasts the unique distinction of possessing one of the very few, if not the only woman's brass band in the south. The organization is known as the Opelousas Academy Ladies' brass band."⁴⁵ This group was popular in Louisiana and yet the quality of the band was well-known in Pennsylvania. The article continues to describe the group as having, "attained great proficiency."⁴⁶ *The Richmond Planet* reports of the same group, "there are 18 members and they are leading society girls of the town."⁴⁷ This group also was a quality women's brass band, which included the social elite of Opelousas, Louisiana. While the groups previously mentioned

⁴³ *Wood River Times*, July 20, 1880, Vol. 13 No. 16 ed, pg. 2, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴⁴ *Evening Capital Journal*, August 13, 1888, Vol. 1 No. 145 ed, pg. 3, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴⁵ *The Columbian*, July 19, 1900, Vol. 35 No. 29, pg. 4, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *The Richmond Planet*, July 21, 1900, Vol. 17 No. 21, pg. 4, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

are briefly discussed throughout newspapers, there is one group mentioned fairly regularly in Kansas: the Young Ladies' Cornet Band of Iola, which exemplifies the tradition of women's brass bands of the nineteenth century.

Young Ladies' Cornet Band of Iola, Kansas

The young women of Iola, Kansas first formed a brass band in July 1890. They exemplified the tradition of a women's brass band as pillars of their community. On Friday, February 13, 1891, the ladies' aid society of the Christian Church hosted a taffy social at the G. A. R. Hall, where the Iola women's band furnished the music.⁴⁸ This band consisted of young debutantes who participated in the band as a means to properly socialize not only within Iola, KS, but also among the local Kansas communities as well. The Iola ladies' band, also known as the Ladies' Cornet Band of Iola or the Young Ladies' Band of Iola, acted as an integral part of the Iola community during the 1890s. They performed Saturday afternoon concerts quite regularly for the community in conjunction with the local male brass band, however, their role within the community extended past regular concerts. The Iola ladies' band consistently appeared at local celebrations. In 1891 they provided the music for the ninth annual commencement of the Iola High School. In May of that year, this brass band performed at the seventy-second anniversary of the Odd Fellowship at their local Lodge, known today as an orphanage. According to the *Iola Register*, less than a year after they formed, "the ladies' band attracted many admiring glances and were highly complimented on their music, a great many critics pronounced it the best of any of the four bands which were in attendance."⁴⁹ The bandswomen were pillars of their community.

⁴⁸ *Iola Register*, February 6, 1891, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁴⁹ *Iola Register*, May 1, 1891, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

The bandswomen of Iola also acted as emissaries to other communities. The neighboring city of Humboldt, KS, had a regionally-acclaimed women's brass band called the Young Ladies' Military Band of Humboldt. They played in regional festivals including a Bluegrass Fair and Exposition in Creston, IA; a strawberry festival in Bronson, KS; and a Fourth of July Celebration in Wichita, KS.⁵⁰ In fact, one of the members, Emma Fussman, a tuba player, was recruited to perform in the American Ladies' Symphony Orchestra.⁵¹ While much more is known about the Young Ladies' Military Band of Humboldt, the evidence suggests that both groups established a relationship with each other from the beginning of their respective formations. The band was a means by which the young women could easily travel between the two communities. The Iola ladies' band first performed in Humboldt in October 1890. This sparked a relationship between the communities, which would exchange bands depending upon the festivities. The Young Ladies' Military Band returned the favor in Iola on Halloween, Friday, October 31, 1890. Not only did the Iola ladies' band create relationships with other communities, it also welcomed tourists who came to visit Iola. On April 21, 1893, "the Kansas City tourists started out Monday night to capture the Sunflower state but last night they surrendered at Iola to a band of pretty girls under [the] command of Miss Clara Foust, a handsome little prairie flower."⁵² Miss Clara Foust and her fellow bandswomen represented the best of the Iola community, presenting quality music from quality young women of Iola.

The young women who participated within this band were debutantes of the Iola community. The article in the *Iola Daily Register* which names Miss Foust, "a handsome little

⁵⁰ *Iola Register*, July 31, 1891, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

Iola Register, June 10, 1892, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

Wichita Daily Eagle, July 2, 1892, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁵¹ *Iola Register*, June 10, 1892, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁵² *Iola Register*, April 21, 1893, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

prairie flower,” continues to name the women who participated within this group: Miss Sue Reimert, Miss Jennie Kelsoe, Miss Guertie Duffy (See Appendix A, Figure 3), Miss Minnie Irving, Miss Beulah Reimert, Miss Ida McHugh, and Miss Bertie Reimert.⁵³ All socialites have their social activities recorded in the *Iola Daily Register*. In Figure 1, Sara Taylor-Ewing is pictured in her band uniform, which matches Miss Guertie Duffy’s uniform in Figure 3.⁵⁴ While Miss Sara Taylor may not have participated in the event on April 21, 1893, she was regularly mentioned in the society pages alongside Miss Duffy within the Iola community. We don’t have names to attach to the bandswomen pictured in the appendix, Figures 2, 4, and 5, it is obvious that the women also participated within the same group.⁵⁵ The band uniforms are unique for their times, because they are personally altered to fit the women. This reinforces the idea that the bandswomen were from families of means. In other words, this group was definitively from well-to-do families within the Iola community because of the cost associated with uniform alterations as well as purchasing instruments.

It is also important to note that the young women participated while they remained single; Mrs. Sara Taylor-Ewing married in 1896 and was not linked with the band in the *Iola Daily Register* after this time.⁵⁶ While she participated in the Iola ladies’ band, her name was Miss Sara Taylor. This created a large turnover rate within this group. The figures pictured may have all participated in the Iola ladies’ band, but they may not have participated at the same time. Regardless of the roster provided by the April 21 event, all the women’s names may not have

⁵³ Kansas Historical Society, “Kansas Memory,” Guertie Duffy, Iola, Kansas, accessed September 3, 2015, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/100598> and *Iola Register*, April 21, 1893, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁵⁴ Kansas Historical Society, “Kansas Memory,” Ella Taylor-Ewing in Band Uniform, accessed September 3, 2015, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/100353>.

⁵⁵ Figure 2 is from Kansas Historical Society, “Kansas Memory,” Woman Band Member, Iola, Kansas, accessed September 3, 2015, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/100625>.

Figures 4 and 5 are from George Foreman’s private collection.

⁵⁶ *Iola Register*, June 19, 1896, accessed September 3, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

been provided. Ambiguity still surrounds these photographs, however, a link exists between the women: they were all part of the Iola ladies' band at one time.

This high turnover rate is not an exclusive problem for the ladies' band of Iola, KS. Returning to the event in Mauston, WI, the *Wood River Times* reported the group was, "made up of girls from 18 to 24 years old."⁵⁷ This is how the tradition started, as a socially acceptable convention in which young, single women could socialize. The Iola ladies' band played a functional role within the Iola community, exhibiting the trademarks of a proper women's brass band of the times. It created an opportunity for the local young debutantes to socialize not only within the Iola community, but also within the larger Kansas community. Women's brass bands were more common than one would initially suspect, leaving a legacy that women could perform on masculine-gendered brass instruments while their social propriety remained intact.

Problems with Propriety and Genre

When considering women's involvement in both brass bands and jazz bands, one should reflect upon the reputation of each genre. An important obstacle women faced performing in jazz bands was maintaining their propriety. When contemplating the reputation of each genre, women who participated in brass bands may have found it easier to maintain a proper social standing than the women who were associated with early jazz. Brass bands of the nineteenth century were expected to improve their community and its morale. *The Sun* from New York reported on their women's brass band, "The women's military company and brass band is a telling feature. The martial music and the intricate marching arouse a great deal of enthusiasm," from their

⁵⁷ *Wood River Times*, July 20, 1880, Vol. 13, No. 16, pg. 2, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

community.⁵⁸ Brass bands created community pride, which then created further positive results for that community. Lyon & Healy created a booklet ad for their company concerning such an outcome entitled *A Tale of Two Bands*.⁵⁹ Today, while scholars might find this story outlandish, it emphasizes an extremely popular opinion of the day: brass bands were good for the community, keeping young men and women of their community out of trouble. Each article stresses the quality or moral caliber of the women involved in the community brass bands. The Nebraska Women's Brass Band "is composed of young ladies from the best families of Lincoln."⁶⁰ The members of the Opelousas, LA brass band, "are leading society girls of the town."⁶¹ Another brass band which formed in Oregon announced, "Its membership is made up entirely of...the maids and matrons of the most prominent families in the town."⁶² The women held reputations that were above reproach, which contributed to the communal pride in the success of the local brass bands. The women who participated in jazz bands were not afforded such benefits.⁶³

⁵⁸ *The Sun*, March 28, 1897, Vol. LXIV No. 209 ed, pg. 15, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁵⁹ Lyon & Healy was a company that manufactured instruments, music, and band uniforms. Like C.G. Conn, they were a one stop shop for setting up your own local community brass band.

⁶⁰ *The Bolivar Bulletin*, November 2, 1876, Vol. 12, No. 11 ed, pg. 3, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁶¹ *The Columbian*, July 19, 1900, Vol. 35, No. 29, ed pg. 4, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁶² This is the only instance in which I have found married women participated in a community brass band. This seems to be an exception to the rule. The other photographs that mentioned a woman with the title of "Mrs." were labeled after the fact of the event. At the time of the event, the women who participated were single. Frequently, these pictures are labeled later after these women were married. *Daily Press*, March 13, 1898, Vol. 3, No. 60, ed pg. 4, accessed November 4, 2015, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.

⁶³ See Chapter 3 for further discussion upon this matter of propriety connected with genre and gender. Subheading: Race and Music: An Integrated Experience.

Brass Bands as a Precursor to Jazz Bands

I argue that the American brass band tradition of the 19th Century acts as an important precursor to the American tradition of jazz bands of the 20th Century. Thomas J. Hennessey writes in his scholarship about African-Americans and jazz, “The strongest instrumental traditions in the rural and small town areas of this time were the local amateur and touring professional brass bands. The dazzle of these bands filled the memories of young future jazzmen.”⁶⁴ Not only did rural bands participate in this practice, but city bands did as well, making this an extremely popular musical practice across America. In New Orleans, the home of jazz itself, the *New Orleans Picayune* ran an article in 1838 stating, “There is a mania in this city for horn and trumpet playing. Citizens of every color and nationality march to the music of brass bands.”⁶⁵ While discussing the influence of popular culture on the origin of jazz in America, Hennessey declares, “It emerged in the form of independent traditional music and popular musical styles, all linked by the common bonds of African American and European American musical parentage with a performance orientation.”⁶⁶ While the African roots of jazz are often emphasized in discussing its origins, one must remember that there also was a European influence from popular culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

When the jazzmen – and jazzwomen – were young, the brass bands were the traditions that influenced them as children. One of the young jazzmen influenced by this late nineteenth-century band tradition was James Reese Europe. In the early 1890s, the Europe family lived in

⁶⁴ Thomas J. Hennessey, “Raising the Curtain on Jazz,” In *From Jazz to Swing: African-American Jazz Musicians and Their Music, 1890-1935*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994, 17.

⁶⁵ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 1, PBS, 2000. DVD. I think it’s worth noting here that despite the inclusive vocabulary of “every color and every nationality,” I have been unable to find documentation of a black, female brass band. There are multitudes of white, male brass bands and black, male brass bands and white, female brass bands. The Black, female demographic is the least documented demographic historically speaking.

⁶⁶ Thomas J. Hennessey, *From Jazz to Swing: Black Jazz Musicians and Their Music, 1917-1935*, Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1973, pp. 470-473.

Washington, DC, just a few doors down from John Philip Sousa and his family.⁶⁷ At this time, Sousa was the renowned leader of the President's Own Marine Corps Band. Reid Badger, who wrote a biography entitled *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe*, noted,

The Marine Band regularly took part in such important events in the black community as Howard University's commencement ceremonies, and band members often provided musical instruction to promising black children. One of those youngsters was Jim Europe, who, along with his sister Mary according to some accounts, received instruction on piano and violin from Enrico Hurlei, the assistant director of the band. It is entirely likely that this early training provided the foundation for Europe's later successes as a composer of marches and as a leader of a military band during World War I.⁶⁸

During World War I, Lieutenant James Reese Europe led the notable 369th Infantry "Harlem Hellfighters" Band. This band popularized early forms of jazz. One form that Europe popularized is the twelve-bar blues through the performance of W. C. Handy's "Memphis Blues."⁶⁹ Europe used his training as a young boy in the late nineteenth-century band tradition to inform his musical style later as a jazzman.

Before James Reese Europe brought jazz to the international stage, legendary jazz musician Charles Joseph "Buddy" Bolden brought it to regional prominence in New Orleans. He was the first of the New Orleans cornet 'Kings,' which he established through the power of his tone and rhythmic drive, among other qualities.⁷⁰ In an interview with PBS for their documentary

⁶⁷ The Europe family first moved to DC for Henry Europe's profession in the postal service in 1889. Their little home was located on 308 B. Street S. E. In 1891, Sousa and his family moved in to 318 B. Street S. E. In the words of Reid Badger, "Such an event could hardly have escaped the notice of the musical Europe family, especially that of the two Europe boys." Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 19-20.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ "In New York, a month after their return from Europe following their service during the First World War, they recorded *Memphis Blues*, interestingly subtitled *A Southern Rag*." Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, second edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993, 103.

⁷⁰ J. Bradford Robinson, "Bolden, Buddy [Charles Joseph]," *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/03441>.

Jazz, Wynton Marsalis explained, “Bolden’s band is credited with creating the big four, the first syncopated bass drum pattern to deviate from the standard on-the-beat march.”⁷¹ The march was part of the standard repertoire for the brass band. This is quintessentially a part of that European American musical parentage of early jazz. The rhythmic deviations emphasize the unique musical shift from standard European marches to the earliest American jazz performances. Jazz scholar James Lincoln Collier further defines this musical evolution, “At least two processes were at work. The second process was the undergirding of the two-beat marches, and especially rags, with a 4/4 ground beat. Virtually all rags were written in two-beat time; in fact most were based on march forms, which necessarily require a duple meter.”⁷² The earliest musical expressions of jazz were rhythmic deviations from the standard repertoire of the brass band. Continuing Hennessey’s thoughts, “the interaction of these two very different traditions shaped the history of jazz.”⁷³ Women’s brass bands participated in the European heritage which influenced the shaping of jazz musical technique. Since much of the same instrumentation crossed over from brass bands into jazz ensembles, it would be logical to assume that the many of the performers would stay the same, regardless of gender.

By 1913, the legacy of the women’s brass bands were almost forgotten.⁷⁴ *Down Beat* magazine led the way in attempting to keep women from participating in the “hard, masculine music” known as jazz. Society’s collective memory loss concerning women’s brass bands might partially explain the popularity of the early female jazz musicians. Lil Hardin, Mary Lou

⁷¹ Wynton Marsalis was interviewed by Ken Burns. Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 1, PBS, 2000. DVD.

⁷² James Lincoln Collier, “Jazz,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J223800>.

⁷³ Thomas J. Hennessey, “Raising the Curtain on Jazz,” In *From Jazz to Swing: African-American Jazz Musicians and Their Music, 1890-1935*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1994, 16.

⁷⁴ World War I marks the end of the phenomenon of community brass bands at large across America. After World War I, children were more likely to learn instruments in the public schools than through their communities in a community band. Thus, the popularity not only of women’s brass bands, but also all community brass bands ended.

Williams, and Marian McPartland, among others, were successful as professional jazz pianists from jazz's fledgling years. It is important to note that women of notoriety performed on piano during the early evolution of hot jazz, because it was more socially proper for women to perform on piano. Judith Tick emphasizes the effeminate features highlighted while playing this gender-appropriate instrument, women, "required no facial exertions or body movements that interfered with the portrait of grace the lady musician was to emanate."⁷⁵ While such women crossed gender barriers as jazz performers, they still retained their femininity by performing on the piano. They were still performing on a socially acceptable instrument, not challenging gender roles. Doubleday explains this acceptance as, "'Suitable' instruments for women tend to be prestigious...;"⁷⁶ Women who performed on the piano were prestigious and accepted by society. It was easier for women to break that superficial "glass-ceiling" of performing jazz on this socially-designated proper instrument. Mary Lou Williams was considered a child prodigy by the age of six, and proceeded to support her ten siblings and parents through her skills as a piano performer.⁷⁷ James L. Dickerson writes that with Lil Hardin's breakthrough onto the Chicago jazz scene, "Almost overnight, Lil transformed into an articulate woman who dressed with modest sophistication and engendered an air of elegance."⁷⁸ Visually, Lil represented femininity while performing an extremely "hard, masculine music." The first few female pianists maintained their femininity while performing in a male-dominated genre, but battled against the controversy of the tawdry, salty, sultry reputation of jazz music as a genre.

⁷⁵ Judith Tick, 1987, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American musical life, 1870-1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, edited by J. Bowers and J. Tick. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 327.

⁷⁶ Veronica Doubleday, "Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender," in *Ethnomusicology Forum*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (June 2008), 22.

⁷⁷ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 6, PBS, 2000. DVD.

⁷⁸ James L. Dickerson, *Just for a Thrill: Lil Hardin Armstrong, First Lady of Jazz*, New York: Cooper Square Press, 57.

Lil Hardin, Mary Lou Williams, and Marian McPartland navigated their own way through this risqué genre, retaining their femininity and reputation as proper ladies. Lil Hardin's mother, Dempsey, actively worried about her daughter's involvement in the jazz world. Dickerson writes, "It presented a real dilemma for Dempsey. Her reaction to Lil playing in a cabaret was based on her very strong Christian beliefs and what she had seen happen to innocent young girls who worked at the clubs in Memphis. Nightclubs and the people they attracted were evil; there was no question about that in her mind."⁷⁹ Dempsey's perspective indicates the average mindset concerning the women involved with the jazz scene.

While the women in brass bands of the nineteenth century held impeccable reputations, the genre of music they performed also was considered socially acceptable. Like the women's brass bands of the nineteenth century, the women of early jazz crept their way into the genre, and they also had to fight against the vulgar character associated with jazz while adapting jazz performance techniques. Lil Hardin found that perfect balance in performing jazz after an accidental meeting with Professor "Jelly Roll" Morton. Of this interaction, Hardin recalls, "I imitated him after that...Boy, I only weighed around eighty-five pounds, and from then on you could hear all eight-five of 'em."⁸⁰

Mary Lou Williams also incorporated jazz techniques into her performance style. Tirro writes of Williams, "she featured a solid left hand that could lay out a ragtime bass, stride the Kansas City... or rock the piano boogie-woogie eight to the bar."⁸¹ Her technique and performance style contributed to her successful career, which spans over five decades. Mary Lou

⁷⁹ James L. Dickerson, *Just for a Thrill: Lil Hardin Armstrong, First Lady of Jazz*, New York: Cooper Square Press, 55.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 41.

⁸¹ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 282. Williams's career spanned five decades, and yet a biography on her life is still missing from the cannon on jazz music.

Williams, among other women, started female participation within the male-dominated genre of jazz, but were still limited by instrumental gender roles. It was the women's jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s that shattered this glass ceiling of gender expectations with instrumentation, fulfilling the legacy of the women's brass bands of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

FROM THE TOP

Before the all-girl big bands of the 1940s, swing music emerged in the 1930s. Despite the nostalgic link between swing music and World War II, swing music functioned quite differently within society during the Great Depression. The culture surrounding the emergence of swing music is frequently marginalized, making it important to study the roots and history of jazz as a genre. It is important to note that jazz is a synthesis of multiple musical traditions. As thoroughly discussed later in this chapter, jazz has strong African roots, but it also has European roots as well. My goal is not to privilege one tradition over the other, but rather to trace the evolution of all-female ensembles from one tradition to another. Although mostly remembered for its nationalistic use during World War II, swing music's legacy is one of hope during times of uncertainty and change in American culture.

History and Economics of the 1930s

With the stock market crash of 1929, the Roaring '20s came to a screeching halt. The flamboyant atmosphere of the 1920s disappeared as people lost their jobs. By 1932 the unemployed numbered around 15 million in a workforce of 45 million.⁸² Americans felt hopeless with Hoover in the White House, and the 1932 election, in which Roosevelt won the Presidency of the United States, initiated the transformation of America. Through his use of the New Deal,

⁸² Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 6.

Roosevelt expanded the government and its work in an attempt to stimulate the economy. One of the new governmental agencies was the Works Progress Administration, which used public funds to promote American cultural identity. Historian Gerald D. Nash writes of the impact of American culture on society at this time, “Indeed the impact of American culture was as penetrating as on the economy.”⁸³ With public funds used to promote a sense of American identity, the entertainment industry became directly linked with nationalism.

Americans became interested in their own history as a source of strength to face their present troubles. Nash explains this concept as it was reflected in literature; “The message transmitted by these poets [and authors were] that Americans could take pride in the vision and the stamina of their forebears that could sustain their hopes in their own time of troubles.”⁸⁴ The Depression was the most devastating economic situation that America had faced. Americans questioned how this situation could have happened and strove to recognize the warning signs they missed by studying their past.

The impact of the Depression on American culture was to stimulate a reexamination of the values which formed it... In the process, Americans came to know themselves better than before, and to discover aspects of their heritage of which they had not been aware in previous years.⁸⁵

There was an American cultural re-awakening, which subsequently linked the idea of American culture to the entertainment industry:

The Depression shook the values of many Americans...For the masses, though, the search for an American identity also produced a nationalistic mood, a positive reaffirmation of American values even if the Depression revealed serious shortcomings. These attitudes and values were reflected in the work of writers, musicians, and entertainers of the era.⁸⁶

⁸³ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 81.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 80.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 83.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 77.

With this shift in attitude came a shift in entertainment, which is especially prominent in the evolution of popular music in the 1930s. “Popular music in the 1930s took on a lighter tone than was found in the brash jazz of the preceding decade. Americans sought music made for dancing and distraction from their daily woes, rather than contemplative listening. The jazz of the 1920s gave way to the more easygoing Swing of the 1930s.”⁸⁷ Although it was originally created to distract people from their daily distractions, swing music evolved into a tool to combat and persevere through the tough times of the Great Depression. Gerald Early commented on the effect of swing music: “As an antidote to the Depression, swing music did as much as MGM musicals to pull America through.”⁸⁸ This easy going swing music also included an evolution from small, hot jazz combos with five or six players to big bands, which consisted of multiple people on the same instrumentation as before. Previously, in the Roaring ‘20s, New Orleans’ jazz combos featured three people in the rhythm section, one person on clarinet, one person on trombone, and one or two people on trumpet.⁸⁹ Jazz historian Frank Tirro explains the instrumentation of the first hot jazz combos, “the early ensembles often featured a brass bass, since the groups frequently derived from brass bands.”⁹⁰ King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band had seven members when they famously recorded *Dippermouth Blues*.⁹¹

With the beginning of swing, though, the orchestration and instrumentation markedly changed. Dave Oliphant describes the changes that affected swing groups: “Throughout the Swing Era, bands would attempt to vary more and more the sounds of instrumental blends and

⁸⁷ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979, 85.

⁸⁸ Gerald Early was interviewed by Ken Burns. Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 5, PBS, 2000. DVD.

⁸⁹ For further information see Frank Tirro’s definition of “The Jazz Combo.” Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, second edition, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993, 120-122.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 120.

⁹¹ The recording group included: King Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong on cornet, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Honoré Dutrey on Trombone, Lil Hardin’ on piano, Bud Scott on banjo, and Baby Dodds on drums. *Ibid*, 123.

contrasts, yet employing almost always the basic approach of riff and call-and-response.”⁹²

Groups would achieve this sound using alto and tenor saxophones, trumpets, trombones, clarinets, and other reeds, which is an instrument grouping that would not have existed in the Roaring ‘20s. Oliphant emphasizes the evolution of instrumentation in the 1930s: “As often notated by commentators on jazz history, the Swing Era saw the saxophone supersede in many ways the trumpet as the dominant jazz solo instrument.”⁹³ Instead of the emphasis on brass in jazz combos, clarinets, saxophones, and other woodwinds began to weave their timbre and value into the genre, creating a drastically different timbre in the 1930s swing. Oliphant argues this “is achieved by utilizing so many different combinations of brass and reeds against sax, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, and tenor solos...as if a changing kaleidoscope of colors and shapes.”⁹⁴ Big bands of the early swing era had many more people than the original hot jazz combo. This evolution also provided many more publicly funded jobs to musicians. Consequently, racial barriers became more elastic throughout the Great Depression. As Nash argues, “Blacks, who had been largely excluded from the legitimate stage, were welcomed.”⁹⁵ Black Americans were viewed as more authentic performers of jazz, in both hot jazz and swing. At the beginning of the 1930s, black groups were favored for their live performances.

“In 1937, The Great Depression suddenly deepened. In less than six months, 4 million more lost their jobs. They called it the Roosevelt Recession.”⁹⁶ With the election of Roosevelt in

⁹² Dave Oliphant, *The Early Swing Era 1930 to 1941*, Westport, CT,: Greenwood Press, 2002, 13.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 8.

⁹⁴ Oliphant was speaking specifically about Claude Hopkins orchestra performing “Jelly Roll” Morton’s arrangement of “King Porter Stomp” (which was arranged by trombonist Fred Norman). They performed it in 1934. This description matches the change of sound which happened during the Depression/New Deal Era. Although this statement is about one specific band, it highlights how the sound so drastically changed between the hot jazz of the 1920s to the smoother sound of the 1930s. *Ibid*, 13.

⁹⁵ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933-1945*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979, 88.

⁹⁶ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 6, PBS, 2000. DVD.

1932, there had been hope in a change of national policies. His New Deal had brought American culture to the forefront of daily American life. Nash explains, “In this sense, the New Deal organized popular culture and gave it a more prominent place in the structure of American Life.”⁹⁷ The Roosevelt Recession dissipated the effectiveness of his New Deal. Now Americans clung to their culture with a sense of hopelessness. Swing music became, “A national craze that despite the Depression kept on growing. America seemed to have an insatiable appetite for more records, more bands, more music.”⁹⁸ The music industry was in full swing as one of the few industries in which there was growth during the Great Depression. People followed their favorite jazz musicians as avidly as they followed their favorite baseball players.⁹⁹

Technology had as big an impact on defining American music as swing music did at this time. In 1933, President Roosevelt created his tradition of Fireside Chats, addressing the American people in their own homes through the radio. The radio became an intimate means of communication, allowing music, soap opera programs, the President, etc., into one’s home. This development contributed to the uniquely American nature of the popularity of swing music: “Musicians, as well as other performers, found that recently developed mass media – radio, recordings, and motion pictures – provided them with vast new audiences in their own country, where they once had to rely on more appreciative Europeans.”¹⁰⁰ American musicians could easily reach American audiences now. In an interview with Ken Burns, Dave Brubeck explains how Benny Goodman exploited technology to create an impactful, lasting career:

The thing about Benny that was so great was that it was kinda an explosion. He showed up on the scene completely unknown as far as we were concerned. We

⁹⁷ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979, 89.

⁹⁸ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 6, PBS, 2000. DVD.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979, 83-84.

knew Duke Ellington, we knew all of the big names, but no one had heard of this kid named Goodman. Overnight, this guy walks into the American parlor with jazz by the scruff of its neck. And jazz, which had almost been like a cult music, has become American Pop music. That's what Goodman did.¹⁰¹

Once jazz had become part of the American mainstream culture, it became entrenched.

Biographer and jazz historian James Lincoln Collier noted in an interview, "If you were going to be a dance band musician at all [during this time], you had to play jazz. People were just swept up in this music."¹⁰² The Great Depression created an opportunity in which American musical culture became a central point of hope and distraction for the nation. Nash defines this trend in American music, "The decade witnessed increasing maturity in the music world...the economic crisis spurred a surge of nationalistic feelings as well as regional pride among musicians. Dubbed the American Wave, it reflected a revitalized concern by composers regarding their relation to society."¹⁰³ Swing music travelled from the edges of societal culture as a fringe popular sound to become the cultural, exportable sound of America. Ken Burns eloquently describes the development, "Swing music, which had grown up in the dance halls of Harlem, would become the defining music of an entire generation in America."¹⁰⁴ As a music rooted in the melting pot of African and European musical traditions combined, it seems only fitting that jazz and swing music became the first major exportable music that America, the Great Melting Pot, offered to the world.

¹⁰¹ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 5, PBS, 2000. DVD.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America 1933- 1945*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979, 83-84.

¹⁰⁴ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 5, PBS, 2000. DVD.

Race and Music: An Integrated Experience

“Jazz music is not race music. Everybody plays jazz music. Everybody has always played it, but if you teach the history of jazz, there was black bands and white bands. Musicians don’t learn like that.”¹⁰⁵ In an interview with Ken Burns, Wynton Marsalis explains how he thinks race is irrelevant in the performance of musical styles. In the jazz world, some white musicians were stylistically influenced by black musicians and some black musicians were stylistically influenced by white musicians. Despite this approach, racial tensions are the fundamental underpinnings to the evolution of jazz in American culture. Duke Ellington defined jazz music as an American Negro’s feelings in musical form.¹⁰⁶ In his book *Jazz in Black & White*, Charley Gerard explains how race affected the evolution of the big band era and the early years of jazz: “Race has played an important role in the formulation of the jazz community, which was one of the first areas of American society in which African Americans and whites mixed as equals. By the early 1930s the jazz community developed a climate of parity among musicians based on ability.”¹⁰⁷ At the beginning of the development of swing music, black bands performed more prominently and consistently in this style, creating a glass ceiling for white musicians to break through. Randall Sandke writes in his book *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, “White musicians have been inversely stereotyped as inauthentic jazz players. They have been accused of “appropriating” a black style and at the same time criticized for not being able to master it.”¹⁰⁸ Gerard continues this same idea in his own words: “Several white musicians have even

¹⁰⁵ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 5, PBS, 2000. DVD.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Charley Gerard, *Jazz in Black & White*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, 83-84.

¹⁰⁸ Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 3.

expressed the notion that white artists are incapable of attaining the level of vitality, sincerity, mystery, flair, and emotional strength reached by the best African American artists.”¹⁰⁹

This contributed to the cultivation of a movement called the Black Mystique in which “most white jazz artists have an almost worshipful respect for African American artists.”¹¹⁰ The African roots of jazz allowed black musicians the opportunity to bring this genre to the national stage. In order to be accepted as a jazz musician, you had to have been associated with black culture in some way; “Because black creativity is esteemed so highly in the jazz world, being accepted as a member of a prominent African-American jazz group bestows upon white musicians a badge of authenticity that their other white colleagues lack.”¹¹¹ Sandke expresses how this attitude permeates the scholarship surrounding race and jazz:

...jazz commentators and historians have tended to emphasize the differences between black and white cultures, and categorize musicians according to race. This outlook is perhaps only natural, given that the music sprang from a black environment, and the overwhelming majority of its greatest exponents have been African-American. In addition, black and white musicians rarely performed together during the first thirty to forty years of the music’s history. Recorded evidence shows that stylistic differences according to race are often plainly discernable, especially in the early days of jazz.¹¹²

Sandke admits that this is a logical attitude accepted in the larger scholarly community, but reminds his readers that jazz is ultimately a synthesis of several different musical genres.

“Michael Bane commented ironically: ‘Music has no *color*, man.’”¹¹³ Jazz is rooted in African musical tradition. Jazz historiography is fraught with racial tensions. While Sandke does not deny the historical facts regarding the origins of jazz, he does challenge his readers to think

¹⁰⁹ Charley Gerard, *Jazz in Black & White*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, 105.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 111.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 106.

¹¹² Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 2.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 111.

about the evolution of this genre from a different perspective: "...Black culture has always been much more porous and open to outside influences than most commentators would like to admit."¹¹⁴ The synthesis of outside influences with black culture led to the creation of the unique sound of jazz. While many scholars emphasize the African influence on the inception of jazz, its connection to European musical tradition is integral to understanding how women entered into performing jazz music. Brass bands were a strong European tradition. In this tradition both men and women participated. Women's participation in all-female ensembles date back to the nineteenth century in America. In order to explore the complete cultural context of jazz, you have to consider all aspects of its musical heritage.

Only in America could African musical tradition and European musical tradition blend to create a new genre. "A convincing case can be made that American music developed its own identity only after it took on influences stemming from its African-American populace."¹¹⁵ The hybridity of the two genres created that distinctly unique, American sound more commonly known as jazz. "The more these dynamics are taken into account, the clearer it becomes that jazz has been an interracial phenomenon throughout most of its history," making jazz the genre "where the dark and the light folks meet."¹¹⁶

Jazz has always held a questionable reputation in society, reputedly linked with prostitution, gambling, drinking, and other activities of an unsavory nature. Journalist Anne Shaw Faulkner was one of the first to publicly state the link between jazz and this seedy lifestyle in her 1921 *The Ladies' Home Journal* article, "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?," She preached, "Welfare workers tell us that never in the history of our land have there been such

¹¹⁴ Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 3.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 71-72.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 139. The name of the book is *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*. This hybridity of genres from both a black culture and a white culture cause much of the racial tension in jazz music.

immoral conditions among our young people, and in the surveys made by many organizations regarding these conditions, the blame is laid on jazz music and its evil influence on the young people of today.”¹¹⁷ This link has been established for several reasons: 1) the origins of jazz lay in what was considered the lower social classes of society; 2) jazz was originally performed in questionable areas of town such as vaudeville halls and house of ill-repute (i.e. brothels); and 3) the titles, subject matter of the songs, and dance moves associated with this genre often held double entendres, linking the performers with sex and socially improper material.

The stylistic differences in jazz music are rooted in African traditions. Jazz Historian James Lincoln Collier describes the most important cultural contribution of African roots in jazz: “From the point of view of jazz, the most important aspect of the music of the slaves was the re-creation, by different means, of the counterrhythms of West African music.”¹¹⁸ These counter rhythms led to the improvisatory nature of hot jazz as performed in New Orleans. When hot jazz first blossomed it did so in the flamboyant part of New Orleans known as ‘Storyville,’ which not only was filled with dive bars and dance halls, but also brothels. Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton rose to notoriety through his regular performances throughout Storyville. “He [“Jelly Roll” Morton] would play to the choreography of the prostitute. He would get tips based off how successful he was,” Wynton Marsalis explained on the early success of Professor “Jelly Roll” Morton within the Storyville community.¹¹⁹ With all three of these factors contributing to the prominence and success of jazz, it is easy to understand how the women associated with this

¹¹⁷ Anne Shaw Faulkner, “Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?” in *Keeping Time*, edited by Robert Walser, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 32.

¹¹⁸ James Lincoln Collier, “Jazz,” in *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J223800>.

¹¹⁹ Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 1, PBS, 2000. DVD.

genre could easily have a questionable reputation as a barmaid, or even more scandalous, as a prostitute.

Jazz was also successful because the music was fast paced and danceable. Most of the dance steps associated with this music were perceived as disreputable, not only because they were mostly performed in the confines of Storyville, but also because the moves themselves were risqué. Faulkner further wrote of these performances in her 1921 article: “Never before have such outrageous dances been permitted in private as well as public ballrooms, and never has there been used for the accompaniment of the dance such a strange combination of tone and rhythm as that produced by the dance orchestras of today.”¹²⁰ With this insight to jazz’s origins, the implication is that it was more difficult for “proper” women to engage with and perform a genre that held such illicit, improper roots. Unlike brass bands, which were established to promote community pride, jazz was born from a culture of sin; however, one cannot ignore the contributions that Paul Whiteman made to jazz.

Making a Lady out of Jazz

The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, second edition, defines Paul Whiteman’s efforts to bring jazz to the concert hall as the creation of Symphonic Jazz, sometimes called Concert Jazz. On a more basic level, though, Whiteman was the first to create the form and style that became commonly known as Sweet Jazz. Whiteman described his mission: “My task was to reveal the change and try to show that jazz had come to stay and deserved recognition.”¹²¹ In order to successfully accomplish this mission, he filled Aeolian Hall with music connoisseurs and critics.

¹²⁰ Anne Shaw Faulkner, “Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?” in *Keeping Time*, edited by Robert Walser, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 32-33.

¹²¹ Paul Whiteman, *Jazz*, New York: Arno Press, 1974, 94.

As he described it, “It wouldn’t be enough for me simply to gather into Aeolian Hall a capacity audience of flappers and dancing men. We had to have the musicians, the critics, the music students – the type of man who takes music seriously as vocation or avocation.”¹²² In order for jazz to gain acceptance, Whiteman knew that acceptance of jazz by these critics would create a socially acceptable reputation for this genre.

He was both applauded and ridiculed for his lifelong efforts. “Whiteman was a key figure in American popular music. While jazz purists accused him of diluting the character of early jazz for commercial purposes, less biased observers applauded the high polish and versatility of his orchestras, which had to be as comfortable in the concert hall as at a college dance.”¹²³ Ragtime had made its way around the country through Vaudeville halls; but Whiteman created this new style of jazz for the concert hall, which was considered much more socially proper and socially acceptable.¹²⁴ Symphonic jazz had elements of not only jazz, but also classical compositional elements.¹²⁵ Popular composers such as William G. Still and George Gershwin allowed jazz to influence their compositional style, but no one had performed an entire concert consisting of jazz music before Whiteman. In fact, *Rhapsody in Blue* by Gershwin was premiered at this concert.¹²⁶

¹²² Paul Whiteman, *Jazz*, New York: Arno Press, 1974, 89.

¹²³ Carl Johnson, “Paul Whiteman,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, second edition, accessed January 10, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/30223>.

¹²⁴ Scott Joplin was known for his ragtime. Although it was performed in vaudeville halls, Joplin wrote as if he were composing Western Art song. “Working primarily in a popular idiom, he strove for a “classical” excellence in his music and recognition as a composer of artistic merit, rather than one simply of popular acclaim.” He brought legitimacy to ragtime music, much like Whiteman did for a later form of jazz. Edward A. Berlin, “Joplin, Scott,” in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, second edition, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2253061>.

¹²⁵ Ryan Raul Bañagale, “Concert Jazz,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, second edition, accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2228141>.

¹²⁶ Whiteman called this concert “an experiment in modern music.” Richard Crawford, “Gershwin, George [Gershwin, Jacob],” in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, second edition, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2252861#F923200>.

Other jazz men followed Whiteman's lead; jazz scholar Ryan Raul Bañagale indicates that "From the early 1930s such black composers as James P. Johnson and Duke Ellington engaged with concert jazz to create what they forwarded as an authentic adaptation of jazz and ragtime to classical forms."¹²⁷ This experiment with concert and symphonic jazz created an environment in which jazz was considered more socially acceptable. Whiteman described the situation: "I believe that jazz was beginning a new movement in the world's art of music. I wanted it to be recognized as such. I knew it never would be in my lifetime until the recognized authorities on music gave it their approval."¹²⁸ Whiteman conducted the first concert of a complete jazz program on February 12 1924, preparing this sense of propriety for all-girl jazz bands of the 1930s and 1940s. Whiteman wanted to elevate jazz's social reputation to that of Western Art Song and solicited many new symphonic jazz works from his contemporary classical composers. The continued efforts of fellow composers such as Duke Ellington and James P. Johnson contributed to this acceptability. Although jazz's origins are steeped in notoriety, this effort in the mid-1920s to gentrify jazz created an avenue through which women could navigate a socially proper career as a jazz musician, which they utilized beginning in the 1930s.

At the beginning of the Swing Era in the 1930s, swing was most frequently performed by black musicians. Sandke suggests, "Like jazz itself, the nature of its community changes rapidly."¹²⁹ From 1930-1945 jazz experienced a drastic change not only in community, but also in practice and performance, affected by the culture of World War II. Racial tensions seemed to rise in America with our entrance into World War II. Before World War II, the jazz community

¹²⁷ Ryan Raul Bañagale, "Concert Jazz," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press, second edition, accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2228141>.

¹²⁸ Paul Whiteman, *Jazz*, New York: Arno Press, 1974, 94.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 83.

seemed to prefer musicians based on ability and not race.¹³⁰ Although Jim Crow remained the law of the land in 1930s America, racial boundaries seemed slightly blurred when it came to performing jazz music at this time. It seemed as if jazz was the one genre in which blacks and whites could meet and perform on equal footing. There was a mutual exchange of tunes between groups, regardless of race, in which "...jazz classics [were] played both by the black and white name bands."¹³¹

Nostalgia: Linking Swing Music to World War II as a Coping Mechanism

World War II created a tense atmosphere throughout America and rigidly snapped racial barriers back into place. "The war years were difficult even for bandleaders who managed to avoid the draft. The move toward integrating bands – which Benny Goodman and Charlie Barnet famously began in the mid-thirties – picked up speed during the war years."¹³² With the benefit of hindsight, scholars now know that Bennie Goodman's big band and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm would remain exceptions to a strict rule of segregation between big bands. Jazz offered an opportunity, a glimpse of life based on merit and not the amount of melanin in a person's skin. Despite progressive strides toward integration in jazz, the entertainment industry was still driven by the tastes of white consumerism. "Few blacks were able to read music or could afford to purchase sheet music, so the market was driven by white tastes."¹³³ The military also enforced strict segregation policies, creating black and white divisions for both men and women throughout each branch of the military. While the early swing

¹³⁰ "Before World War II, it didn't seem to matter." "It," being race didn't seem to matter as much. Charley Gerard, *Jazz in Black & White*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, 84.

¹³¹ Dave Oliphant, *The Early Swing Era: 1930-1941*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, 263.

¹³² Others, such as Leo Reisman, had tried integration in his band before, in the late twenties. Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 156.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 117.

music era created an atmosphere where racial lines were blurred, the late swing era cemented those racial barriers.

Of course, we can't turn a blind eye to a tangled and dishonorable history that cast entire groups of people into a prison of racial divisions with no hope of escape.....Nor can we fail to recognize cultural differences became magnified through a forced separation of the races (however much of these cultural differences have been exaggerated and distorted in the jazz literature). Yet still I can't fail to observe how this imposing and sometimes all-consuming edifice of racial classification in the United States is built on the flimsiest and most fanciful foundations. Thus it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, and so it is now.¹³⁴

Despite the racial tensions surrounding this genre, the music was used as a tool to unite wartime America. "The music of a subculture had truly become the music of a nation, and the portion of jazz that we know as swing was a universally accepted idiom of the United States."¹³⁵ Jazz musicians found a patriotic pride in defining themselves as purely American. Frank Tirro further elaborates, "Jazz musicians could assume a new pride in their profession."¹³⁶ The effects of the war on this music lasted well after the close of hostilities: in 1946, one critic wrote, "The six years of the World War were years during which jazz advanced more rapidly and more impressively than in any previous period."¹³⁷ This fledgling novelty of American music generated enthusiasm and patriotism among the troops. "The health and vitality of swing during the early postwar years, perhaps generated by the enthusiasm of a successful war effort, gave it an impetus that carried it safely through the 1940s and....to the end of the 1950s."¹³⁸ Soldiers linked swing music to the time of peace before World War II.

¹³⁴ Randall Sandke, *Where the Dark and the Light Folks Meet*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 238.

¹³⁵ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A history*, 2nd edition, (New York: Norton, 1993), 278.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

“Far from home and faced with danger, soldiers felt tremendous homesickness.”¹³⁹

Although life was far from perfect during the Great Depression, the boys weren’t scarred by the atrocities of war during that time. “Soldiers yearned for music that reminded them of their private lives and lost leisure that represented ideas about peacetime America for which they could fight and to which they could dream of returning.”¹⁴⁰ This music represented nostalgia for a return to the way things were before the war.

“Incorporated in 1941, the U.S.O. worked to combat homesickness.”¹⁴¹ The United Service Organization built centers of American culture near military bases not only in America but also throughout the Pacific and European theatres, where American movies played regularly and live acts also performed for the troops. “Reminders of home were being mass-produced and commercialized,” and America had a distinct, exportable popular culture for the first time in history.¹⁴² The USO and the military worked together to export American culture to soldiers fighting around the world.

When the soldiers returned from war in 1945, it was the swing music of the 1930s that psychologically assisted them in dealing with the atrocities they faced. Private First Class Myrtle Louise Davis, a WAAC who was trained at Ft. Oglethorpe, GA, spent her career teaching injured soldiers how to play the piano, using popular music, as part of the blossoming music therapy field that was emerging.¹⁴³ Music therapy was a fledgling discipline used for overcoming subsequent physical deformities and mental blocks from the war. American soldiers were

¹³⁹ Susan J. Matt, *Homesickness: An American History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 201.

¹⁴⁰ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 35.

¹⁴¹ Susan J. Matt, *Homesickness: An American History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 204.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 208.

¹⁴³ For more information about Private First Class Myrtle Louise Davis see Chapter 4.

learning to play popular music on the piano after arriving home from the war. This only further served to connect the swing music of the 1930s to the soldiers' aftermath of World War II.

Conclusion

Although swing music was born in the time of the Great Depression, it came to symbolize hope. At first it was the hope of surviving the Great Depression, then it evolved into the sound of hope to endure and ultimately win the Second World War. The early swing era is characterized by the expansion of hot jazz groups into big bands and the innovation of arrangement styles indicative of swing. By the late swing era, this music was considered mainstream and was characterized by the uniformity of musical styles among every group. In other words, the early swing era is noted by its innovation in jazz style, while the late swing era is exemplified as a music of nostalgia. Both eras were two very different economic times in America. Although the same music continued to permeate popular culture, it functioned in two very different ways.

World War II was a time when societal expectations of gender were temporarily suspended. Women could do anything, because women had to do the jobs of both men and women. The general public presumed women to suddenly be capable of contributing to society in more ways than just the traditional domestic management. Many African Americans anticipated this attitude might influence how American society perceived race at the time; however, it remained wishful thinking. While the populace accepted the capability of the "fairer sex" to operate professionally in the workplace, it was ostensibly unreasonable to extend that same conclusion by race. The military strictly enforced the Jim Crow laws of 'separate but equal.' Although black men fought in the war, they served in racially segregated regiments. They

could fight to defend this nation, but not alongside their fellow white servicemen. The black jazz music of the 1930s was performed more frequently by all-white groups in the 1940s, which ultimately changed the nature of the sound of swing from a hot, improvisatory nature into a sweet jazz style. There were groups who attempted integration. It wasn't the groups who received the societal backlash, but the individual who "broke the [unwritten] rules." Roz Cron, who played trombone in the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, was the only white member of this group. In her various interviews for *The Girls in the Band*, she recalled feeling the most endangered (of being put in jail or worse) when the group toured the South. Bandmates would paint her with heavy, thick makeup to shade her skin darker, so authorities couldn't distinguish the difference in her skin.¹⁴⁴ Black and White bands were both lauded for their musical talent, as long as they remained divided among racial lines. Also, all-girl and all-boy bands were regularly praised for their talent, as long as they remained separate. Not only was it a 'separate but equal' status for racial barriers but also gendered ones. This was a missed opportunity for barriers to be lessened within society, which created the foundation and the tensions that led to the Civil Rights Movement which began in the 50s. The end of the war set the stage for influencing the modern culture of America.

Historically, everything about all-girl jazz bands has been taught as taking place during World War II. For many historians, this grouping is logically explained. All-girl jazz bands were not perceived as innovators. Instead, they performed the popular style without changes. They performed the stylistic basics of swing music without adding the experimentation that

¹⁴⁴ And it worked too! See Ana Mae Winburn's story in Chapter 4. At the same time, Roz Cron was ashamed that her own race acted so childishly toward other human beings. Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

categorizes Charlie Parker's or Dizzy Gillespie's career.¹⁴⁵ Logically, they should be studied in the late swing era, which is a period of continuity, perpetuating swing music because of its nostalgic link to the decade before the horrors of war. Those all-girl groups which were popular in the 1930s, such as the International Sweethearts of Rhythm and Ina Ray Hutton and Her Melodears, are among the most mentioned of the all-girl groups. Because her group was an all-girl group, it was considered an innovation and worth noting in the history books. Both groups were among the first all-girl jazz groups to form and were extremely popular at the time. They were a driving force in changing societal expectations for prim and proper young women of society.

Musicologists and historians have the benefit of understanding that all-girl jazz bands of World War II were not a phenomenon. Although they were ubiquitous performers, there was a tendency to exclude them from jazz traditions. The most impactful example of this is the tradition of the jam session, which was part of the nightly ritual on 52nd street in New York. During the late 1930s, men would perform swing music while the clubs were open. After closing, the band would begin jam sessions, which promoted innovation and experimentation in jazz. Jam sessions were prominent male-inclusive traditions. In the documentary *The Girls in the Band*, Peggy Gilbert, who played saxophone, and Clara Bryant, who played trumpet, were both invited by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie to play at the after-hours jam sessions. These two women were clearly an exception to an unwritten rule: No Girls Allowed. The men in the jam sessions were impressed and shocked that both Gilbert and Bryant knew how to “play the changes,” which was insulting because every good jazz player knew how to “play the

¹⁴⁵ Although Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie are considered modern jazzers, they did start their careers at the tail end of big bands. They were the leading forces in the evolution from swing to bebop.

changes.”¹⁴⁶ Portraying progressive thinking and actually believing in the ability of women to perform equally with men were two different levels of forward evolution.

Gender discrimination had far reaching effects in the evolution of jazz. At jam sessions, the genre of bop emerged, which lacked any significant female ensemble participation. All-girl groups were involved with jazz in the 1930s and 1940s and again in the 1970s. This absence of women performing in bop can be traced to the exclusion of women during the popularity of this genre (1950s and 1960s). While all-girl groups disappeared with the invention of bop, female soloists such as Marian McPartland and Mary Lou Williams adjusted their performance techniques in order to continue their careers. In the late 1940s, Mary Lou Williams was known for hosting salons in her apartment, which created the conditions for a laboratory for musical experimentation.¹⁴⁷ She provided the atmosphere in which Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker could experiment, although she was not the front person for the new stylistic experimentation. Williams changed her style of composition and arranging in order to evolve with the times, contributing to her successful, lengthy fifty-year career.¹⁴⁸ Women were not seen as innovators in the evolution of jazz as a genre.

¹⁴⁶ This refers to playing the rhythm changes from the harmonic progression of the Gershwin brothers' popular song, "I Got Rhythm." This song was premiered in 1930. Every good jazz player, regardless of gender, knew how to "play the changes."

¹⁴⁷ Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

¹⁴⁸ And yet, there is still NO biographical book written about Mary Lou Williams and her life.

CHAPTER 4

SWING & SWAY THE MILITARY WAY: ALL-GIRL BANDS OF WWII

During World War II, women performed in civilian and military groups, which performed internationally and domestically respectively. They utilized the nostalgic link of swing music to a peaceful past to boost morale for American soldiers. Rosie the Riveter was a movement that was being publicly promoted, creating a possibility in which society could erroneously connect all-girl swing bands with this movement. Despite societal prejudice, all-girl big bands such as those led by Thelma White and Ada Leonard proved they operate in both musical styles of sweet and hot swing jazz. In more recent scholarship, all-girl big bands have started to emerge from the shadows of jazz history. While many scholars have studied civilian and military female big bands separately, together their performances and careers cemented the link between swing music and World War II in American culture.

Rosie the Riveter

Middle class women entered the workforce in droves because the men were off fighting in World War II. This phenomenon was socially represented by the emergence of a new icon: Rosie the Riveter. “Rosie the Riveter is a lasting symbol for women workers during the war.”¹⁴⁹ She represented the patriotic woman who did the right thing for her country. Sherri Tucker has a brilliant description of what Rosie epitomized.

¹⁴⁹ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 40.

But Rosie wasn't just a woman worker. She was a particular kind of worker, whether she bucked rivets or took hot trumpet solos. The image of an independent Rosie the Riveter, rolling up her sleeves to reveal capable muscles, cheeks glowing with good health and self-esteem, proud of her labor.¹⁵⁰

As the archetype of a faithful American, she iconically represented the duty that every woman had to her country while her husband, boyfriend, brother, husband, or son was fighting in World War II.¹⁵¹ Because of the demand for men in the military during the war, a new demand for women in the domestic economic market emerged. The men who normally played the bandstands were now fighting in the European or Pacific theatres, so a new economic demand emerged on the home front.¹⁵² With this evidence, some scholars then erroneously professed that women musicians flocked to the nightclubs to fill those positions. In fact, many of the women musicians already had started their careers before the U.S. entered World War II. Due to the circumstances in which all-girl bands became popular, many have unjustly attributed the success of their careers to the lack of men available.¹⁵³ Many attribute the success of the all-girl bands to a repercussion of the Rosie the Riveter movement: "the attitude that women musicians were pitching in for the war effort pervaded the publicity and reviews of the most successful all-girl bands whether the women in them had played professionally before or not."¹⁵⁴

All-girl bands had trouble being defined as a "real band" full of "real musicians," because the young women were considered to be filling-in until the real bands, like the Glenn Miller Orchestra, could return. They were unintentionally associated with the Rosie the Riveter

¹⁵⁰ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 40.

¹⁵¹ "So long as her man is away and her country is at war, Rosie will "work for victory." *Ibid*.

¹⁵² "The war thrust the swing industry (and other industries) into a supply-and-demand crisis that required drastic reconfiguration of workers and consumers." *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁵³ "In fact, many of the women musicians who scrambled from one-nighter to one-nighter during the war years, entertaining the troops, filling the "dance band shortage," playing swing shift dances for defense workers, and traveling on USO-Camp Shows, were the self-same women who had cut their teeth performing in "all-girl" bands in vaudeville and tent shows, dance halls, ballrooms, carnivals, and theatres a decade earlier." *Ibid*, 38.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 41.

movement, because there was a publicity advantage to align the all-girl bands with this image: “women musicians might improve their chances for bookings and enhance their popularity by embracing a patriotic Rosie the Riveter identity, or they might risk accusations that they were selfish and unpatriotic by adopting a more enduring image.”¹⁵⁵ This image was forced onto all-girl bands because of their gender. The fact that all-girl bands had been extremely popular in the 1930s was completely ignored: “two all-women orchestras stand out both for their success and renown at the time and for their technical excellence: Ina Ray Hutton and Her Melodears Orchestra, an organization that first rose to prominence before the war, and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm.”¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the success of women’s brass bands in the nineteenth century was completely ignored.¹⁵⁷ While the women’s brass bands previously had successfully performed not only within their community but also throughout their region on a more public stage, society had evolved to confine women to the domestic sphere. Tucker continues her appropriate clarifications:

What they had no choice about, however, was their audiences’ tendency to think “Rosie the Riveter” when they saw an all-girl band on the stand and to interpret women musicians as substitutes, amateurs, or cheerleaders, no matter how well they performed. Figuring out ways to be taken seriously as musicians without appearing unpatriotic and self-interested was a particular challenge for women musicians during the 1940s.¹⁵⁸

The legacy of the nineteenth century women’s brass bands was completely forgotten, with society assuming that all-girl bands were temporary and unique to this situation – a novelty. Both the military and civilian all-girl bands overcame assumptions to have successful careers.

¹⁵⁵ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 41.

¹⁵⁶ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition, (New York: Norton, 1993), 278. Other popular 1930s all-girl bands include: The Fayettes, The Phil Spitalny Orchestra, Harry & the Debutantes, and The Ingenues. Few scholars mention them, including Sherrie Tucker. They were briefly mentioned in the documentary, *The Girls in the Band*, although they weren’t further discussed either.

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter One.

¹⁵⁸ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 41.

Maureen Honey argued in her book *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*: “Certainly the propaganda campaign of World War II was the most comprehensive, well-organized effort this society has made toward ending prejudice against women in male occupations and toward legitimizing the notion that women belong in the paid labor force.”¹⁵⁹ Previous scholarship leads many to believe that all-girl bands emerged as a result of the Rosie the Riveter social movement, which is factually incorrect. All-girl jazz bands developed in the 1930s, before World War II and the need for Rosie the Riveter. Tucker says the one consistent truth with which she began and ended her research with is, “There were hundreds of all-woman bands.”¹⁶⁰ They were not necessarily beholden to the Rosie the Riveter movement.

While researching this topic, the term “all-girl” recurs repeatedly. This was disconcerting because the women participating in such bands and orchestras were aged eighteen years or older. As Sherrie Tucker and Jill Sullivan both discovered throughout their various interviews, it seems the women who participated preferred this term, because they chose this career during their youth; thus, in their minds, remaining girls.¹⁶¹ Although erroneously linked with the Rosie the Riveter phenomenon, the true phenomenon of World War II is that the all-girl bands fought and won their own war to keep morale high through the performance of swing music, permanently linking swing music to World War II. Domestically, the women who participated in big bands redefined gender roles and were heartily welcomed on the frontlines when they toured with the United Service Organization (U. S. O.)

¹⁵⁹ Honey, Maureen. *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, 211.

¹⁶⁰ The term seems more abhorrent to modern scholars than it did to women back then. Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 29.

¹⁶¹ As mentioned in Chapter One, in the nineteenth century women’s brass bands, the popular practice was for the young single society women to participate in the community brass bands until they were married.

United Service Organization: The Civilians Who Served Internationally

The U. S. O. had one main mission: to provide the emotional support the troops needed during the war.¹⁶² They had facilities located on the frontlines around the world. The USO performance venues not only provided emotional support for the troops, they also created a place on base where the soldiers could enjoy American culture. Frank Tirro explains, “The health and vitality of swing during the early postwar years, perhaps generated by the enthusiasm of a successful war effort, gave it an impetus that carried it safely through the 1940s...”¹⁶³ In part, the reason for its success was its link to peacetime – an era before the tragedies of a second world war struck. This music represented nostalgia of a return to the way things were before the war.¹⁶⁴ The all-girl bands reinforced this notion not only through their performances but also through their music.

“Women musicians were “girls from home,” not “women from Mars,” when they traveled on USO,” Sherrie Tucker explains.¹⁶⁵ Civilian all-girl bands that toured with the USO include Virgil Whyte’s Musical Sweethearts, Ada Leonard’s All-American Girl Band, Joy Cayler’s Band, D’Artega’s All-Girl Orchestra, the Sharon Rogers Band, and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. The International Sweethearts of Rhythm was the only truly integrated swing group as they had members of Samoan, African, and European descent. This fact only became problematic during their Southern tours. Ana Mae Winburn once told a sheriff, “If you can pick out the one white girl you can arrest her.” In her words, “Sure enough, the women he

¹⁶² “History of the USO,” An USO Organization, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://www.uso.org/history.aspx>.

¹⁶³ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition, (New York: Norton, 1993), 278.

¹⁶⁴ “Soldiers yearned for music that reminded them of their private lives and lost leisure that represented ideas about peacetime America for which they could fight and to which they could dream of returning.” Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 35. Also, The Works Progress Administration (a federally funded program) created a breads and circuses effect- bringing culture to the forefront of society’s mind instead of necessarily fixing the problem. See Chapter One for further details.

¹⁶⁵ Sherrie Tucker, *Changing the Players Playing the Changes: “All-Girl” Jazz and Swing Bands During World War II*, PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, June 1999, 412.

identified was a mulatta.”¹⁶⁶ Upon its formation, Ada Leonard’s All-American Girl Band tried to become a racially integrated band as well. Clara Bryant, a trumpet player, performed once with Ada Leonard before she started receiving death threats and other vile messages through the mail.¹⁶⁷ Although society accepted all-girl jazz bands, they could not come to accept an interracial band, regardless of gender.¹⁶⁸ The individual who was racially different from the rest of her group received most of the backlash and social outcry from this blending. Regardless of race, though, all of the troops enjoyed the live performances of the all-girl jazz bands when they toured with the USO.

The troops enjoyed the visual and audible aspects of their performances. A large part of the successful U.S.O tours of all-girl jazz bands, though, came in the objectification of the performers. Maureen Honey explains “...the emphasis on female sexuality gave the message that these new roles did not signify fundamental changes in the sexual orientation of women themselves or in their customary image as sexual objects.”¹⁶⁹ The men appreciated both the music and the femininity of the performers. For the soldiers, the physical appearance of the women was just as important as the music they played. For the women, as Sherrie Tucker elaborates, “Glamour became glorified as a patriotic duty.”¹⁷⁰

The women who performed with the U.S.O. held a powerful status among the soldiers. As Philomena Goodman wrote in her book *Women, Sexuality and War*, “Male sexual activity was good for morale...”¹⁷¹ All-girl bands functioned as powerful symbols of home, family, sex,

¹⁶⁶ Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Benny Goodman had been actively attempting to create an integrated band as well. He hired Fletcher Henderson, Charlie Christian, among others. He too faced resistance. Ken Burns, *Jazz*, Episode 6, PBS, 2000, DVD.

¹⁶⁹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*, Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, 114.

¹⁷⁰ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 56.

¹⁷¹ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*, Chippenham, Wiltshire, Great Britain: Antony Rowe, Ltd., 2002, 23.

romance, and private life in the USA.¹⁷² The costume choices for each performance were designed to promote this concept.¹⁷³ The women publicly created a sexual identity, which redefined this music genre. In an interview, bandleader Joy Cayler recalls that while civilian audiences wanted to hear patriotic numbers, the servicemen wanted to hear swing.¹⁷⁴ Swing music invoked a time of peace. American male soldiers sought to protect and to return to this peace.

The popularity of swing music among American male soldiers created a different opportunity for all-girl bands. Tucker emphasizes, “For women musicians, USO-Camp Shows were a place where it was possible to combine identities of professionals, patriots, and adventurers.”¹⁷⁵ Young women began to control their own sexual identity and discuss it publicly. As Tucker explains it, the women “were available for romantic encounters on their own terms.”¹⁷⁶ Clora Bryant, a trumpet player in the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, recalled a situation before they performed for the Tuskegee Airmen, “It had rained, so we couldn’t walk in the mud in our high heels, so we had to be picked up by these guys [the Tuskegee Airmen]. I had never been picked up by a man before, and Oh my goodness! I can’t explain how good it felt.”¹⁷⁷ In this case, it was proper for the airmen to assist the women in the rain, but they also got to cuddle with the bandswomen. In situations like this one, proper social gender roles were observed, but a little sexual tension created an indecorous situation. Women began publicly

¹⁷² Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 56.

¹⁷³ As Roz Cron, a saxophonist and a member of The Ada Leonard Orchestra and later the International Sweethearts of Rhythm remembered of each performance, “The things they put on us were unbelievable.” She remembers an over the top pink, puffy dress with a sweetheart neckline that emphasized certain specific bodily curves. Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

¹⁷⁴ Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 435.

¹⁷⁵ Sherrie Tucker, *Changing the Players Playing the Changes: "All-Girl" Jazz and Swing Bands During World War II*, PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, June 1999, 414.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 447.

¹⁷⁷ Judy Chaiken, *The Girls in the Band*, One Step Productions, 2011. DVD.

commenting on sexual innuendo and sexual tensions in situations; whereas, before World War II, women would have kept their comments private. Ada Leonard and Joy Cayler, among many others, highlighted during their interviews the fact that this balance was often weighted in favor of the sexual tension when traveling with the U. S. O.

“For women, the liberative potential of wartime changes is undeniable because the dislocations of a nation at war have always created important challenges to traditional assumptions and practices.”¹⁷⁸ Women started to control their sexual identity in the public sphere. This was a societal development, which happened as a direct result of a wartime atmosphere in America. Expectations of traditional gender-roles were shattered, because men were absent from the country; yet, both roles still had to be filled.

Despite this fluidity of social expectations, the emergence of a public discourse on feminine sexuality caused much controversy throughout American culture. To finish Philomena Goodman’s thought from earlier, “...female promiscuity was not [good for morale].”¹⁷⁹ The women who traveled with the U.S.O. were glamorized and pushed toward displaying a more public sexuality. Goodman later writes in her book, “Glamour and active sexuality are often linked in public discourse. Within a variety of cultural forms and practices, femininity is judged by appearance – and appearance, however inaccurately portrayed, is seen as an index of morality.”¹⁸⁰ In other words, the women who performed with the U.S.O. not only had to act the part, but also look it. Because the girls did perform so publicly, the organizers of the U.S.O. took it upon themselves to act as morality police: “As a result, a renewed vigilance regarding

¹⁷⁸ Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981, 3.

¹⁷⁹ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* Chippenham, Wiltshire, Great Britain: Antony Rowe, Ltd., 2002, 23.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 89.

women's sexual conduct and an increasing resort to psychological and social welfare authorities to explain and regulate women's behavior characterized the war years."¹⁸¹ Society expected women to be effeminate but not licentious, thus they controlled emergence of that public feminine sexuality. Women did not necessarily always have control over their public image, but were heavily policed: "the female body became a particularly contested site..."¹⁸² Both domestically and internationally, women were redefining their gender roles within society by creating a public discourse on feminine sexuality.

Ada Leonard's All-American Girls and the Sharon Rogers' All Girl Band were both forthcoming with details during interviews with Sheri Tucker.¹⁸³ Before starting her career as a bandleader, Ada Leonard was a contemporary of the notorious Gypsy Rose Lee, who achieved legendary status as an elegant and clever strip tease artist. Both Gypsy Rose Lee and Ada Leonard were well-known for their burlesque careers. This was central to maintaining their battle lines in the girls own war of improving morale of the soldiers. "The ability of Ada Leonard's burlesque, to play top notch music while appearing single, wholesome, and glamorous all at once, was already a part of its audience draw."¹⁸⁴ Maintaining propriety was of the utmost importance at all times for the USO, which expected women to balance this line effortlessly. Those who performed in the USO were expected to be sexually alluring but virtuous. "The ability to convey sex and propriety in the same breath was a hot commodity during World War

¹⁸¹ Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981, 76.

¹⁸² Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War* Chippenham, Wiltshire, Great Britain: Antony Rowe, Ltd., 2002, 23.

¹⁸³ "The first all-girl band officially signed by the USO was Ada Leonard's "All American Girls." Sherrie Tucker, *Changing the Players Playing the Changes: "All-Girl" Jazz and Swing Bands During World War II*, PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, June 1999, 414.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 483.

II.”¹⁸⁵ The USO’s success in carrying out their mission remained reliant on this definition of virtuous female sexuality. “Part of the job of the USO was to provide activities that would strike the public as wholesome, yet lure idle servicemen away from McNutt’s vaguely defined “less savory” dens of “exploitation.””¹⁸⁶ While Ada Leonard’s All-American Girls kept the seats filled at USO performances, the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Band had a different experience with the USO.

Sharon Rogers’ All-Girl Band performed in the Pacific Theatre of World War II, traveling around the Pacific Ocean and performing for servicemen. “As “nice girls” on their unsullied “first show in Japan,” the Sharon Rogers musicians also provided the troops with a magical, almost unbelievable mix of American popular music and idealized white American womanhood.”¹⁸⁷ Although this band exemplified the dream of every American soldier to return to an American girl, the band members also had a spirit of adventure. Tucker explains how the presence of the Sharon Rodgers band in Japan satisfied their adventurous spirit and provided hope for the American soldier, “The appearance of the twelve white American women of the Sharon Rogers band in occupied Japan, playing dance music...also coincided with a time of low morale, when agitated GIs were being persuaded to stop fraternizing with Japanese women

¹⁸⁵ Sherrie Tucker, *Changing the Players Playing the Changes: “All-Girl” Jazz and Swing Bands During World War II*, PhD Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, June 1999, 474. Philomena Goodman reinforces this idea, “The construction of patriotic femininity meant the negotiation of sexuality, and for women the maintenance of acceptable boundaries of propriety.” Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality and War*. Chippenham, Wiltshire, Great Britain: Antony Rowe, Ltd., 2002, 88.

¹⁸⁶ Previously Tucker writes, “In the words of Paul McNutt, Federal Security Administrator, “What for example, can a village of, say two thousand do when 20,000 soldiers from a nearby camp come to town to spend their leave? Shall those men be left to loiter on street corners – or in other less savory surroundings where they are open to every kind of vicious exploitations??”” In other words, he was worried about soldiers becoming delinquent in their downtime. *Ibid*, 485.

¹⁸⁷ Sherrie Tucker, “...And, Fellas, They’re American Girls”: On the Road with the Sharon Rogers all-Girl Band, *Frontiers* 16, no. 2-3 (1996), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/232357749?accountid=14537>, 2.

devastated by war and to instead patiently wait however many months it took the Army to ship them home.”¹⁸⁸

The young women fulfilled the USO requirement for good, clean, and proper fun for the troops. They also encountered extremely dangerous circumstances. “The Sharon Rogers Band served on the Foxhole Circuit from June 1945 to February 1946, enduring many discomforts and dangers along the way. They dodged enemy submarines while shipping out from San Francisco to Hawaii.”¹⁸⁹ On January 22, 1946, Sharon Rogers and her All-Girl Band boarded an airplane returning to Japan from Korea. Due to turbulent weather it crashed in a heavily-mined sea where a couple of Japanese fishermen in their boat rescued everyone.¹⁹⁰ There were no fatalities, but several band members were injured. One of the band members wrote a letter to her mother in the aftermath of the situation. This letter conveyed an attitude of an independent woman traveling the world for her career, and one who wanted to fulfill her patriotic duty.¹⁹¹ While the women of the Sharon Rogers’ All-Girl Band experienced danger, they found their mission of providing emotional support to the troops more important. Their goal was to improve morale so that America (the good guys) could win World War II. This was the goal of the various all-girl groups who toured with the USO.

The Military Way: Those Who Served Domestically

While women in civilian groups traveled the Foxhole Circuit or island-hopped around the Pacific Ocean, the women who enlisted in the military bands served stateside only. The U.S.O. is

¹⁸⁸ Sherrie Tucker, ““...And, Fellas, They're American Girls": On the Road with the Sharon Rogers all-Girl Band, *Frontiers* 16, no. 2-3 (1996), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/232357749?accountid=14537>, 2.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

not funded by the government, nor is it a government entity. As a result, all-girl civilian bands had the opportunity to travel across the dangerous frontlines. In the government-established military, women were required to serve domestically. Women pilots of the Army Air corps would fly bombers over to England, but that's the closest women in the military came to the frontlines during World War II.

Women first served in the military during World War I, but their role was limited to that of nurse. It was during the Second World War that the military employed women to “free a man to fight!”¹⁹² This became one of the most popular slogans, recruiting women to enlist. Mary Lazarus Woodbury's research has shown that this call was eventually met with success, impacting all three branches of service. “One hundred forty thousand women served with the Women's Army Corps (WAC), one hundred thousand with the Navy's WAVES, twenty-three thousand with the Marine Corps Women Reserve (MCWR), and thirteen thousand with Coast Guard's SPARS.”¹⁹³ The WAC and the MCWR had the most institutionalized forms of military bands, but the Coast Guard SPARs and Navy WAVES military bands served as more of a community in which women could socialize and make music for their local military base. The women who enlisted in the Coast Guard SPARs and Navy WAVES held various positions that men originally occupied. The band functioned more as a social club in a similar manner that the women's brass bands functioned in the late nineteenth century for these two branches only. The women in the military were pursuing careers in a pre-dominantly masculine field.

Each branch of the women's military units had difficulties in establishing a socially proper reputation for recruiting women to join their ranks. This parallels the similar manner in

¹⁹² Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 3.

¹⁹³ Mary Lazarus Woodbury, *Women Brass Players in Jazz: 1860 to the Present*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: A Bell & Howell Company, 1999) 49-50.

which the civilian groups first encountered societal resistance in their formation. The first branch to enlist women was the army with the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC). This unit later became known as the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Because the WAAC was the first branch to recruit women they faced the most resistance from the United States government. The House of Representatives passed the bill of creation in March 1942. However, the Senate delayed the bill through discussion and debate, narrowly passing it on May 14, 1942. The WAACs bore the brunt of the social outcry of women becoming soldiers, but each branch faced difficulties while integrating women into their branch of the military.

As a result of this change, the men of the Army created a slander campaign, insulting the character of the women who first joined their ranks. Private First Class Louise Davis from Forsyth, GA, wrote to her parents in a letter dated November 12, 1944, "The fact that in a lot of places the WACs have a bad reputation has certainly had its effects on some girls here..."¹⁹⁴ Consequently, the women in each division faced rigorous training and rules concerning their decorum at all times. PFC Davis had previously written her parents that her commanding officers were, "rather young, attractive, and strict."¹⁹⁵ The military implemented a rigorous time-intensive schedule, so the young women who enlisted would not have occasion to participate in the "immorality" that was taking place. Society considered youth and beauty as the cornerstones of femininity, and fought to protect it in the women who joined the various military branches. It was of the utmost importance that the women who participated in the military were proper young

¹⁹⁴ "The fact that in a lot of places the WACs have a bad reputation has certainly had its effects on some girls here. One girl who had been married two days before her husband went overseas got a letter from him the other day advising her he was seeking an annulment. Another girl who had been married a year had received word her husband is divorcing her because she has enlisted in the WACs. Still another girl who wrote to her fiancé with her army return address on it received it back unopened. If they only knew how busy we are they'd realize there really is not time for what some people call immorality. Just a few people in the group, however, can ruin the reputation of the group as a whole." PFC Myrtle Louise Davis, "Myrtle Louise Davis Papers," (Letter dated November 12, 1944), 2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, (Letter dated November 10, 1944).

women of society. Five divisions of bands emerged from the popularity of female participation within the Army: 400th, 401st, 402nd, 403rd, and 404th.

The WAVES, the second branch of the military (Navy) to encourage women to join, allied themselves with colleges in order to publicly promote the image of the high caliber women who participated within their ranks. They pre-emptively addressed the publicity nightmare that the WAC fought against originally. Five schools were associated with this program: Hunter College, Oklahoma A. & M., Indiana University, Georgia State College for Women, and the University of Wisconsin.¹⁹⁶ Within two months of implementing the Coast Guard SPARs, the female division of the Coast Guard, 80% of the previously male-held jobs had been taken over by women.¹⁹⁷ Sullivan explains the consequences, “This was disturbing for the thousands of men who now faced going to sea because their safe, land-locked jobs were now being taken over by women, and some SPARs recalled being resented and despised by the men and their parents.”¹⁹⁸ Unlike the women of the civilian all-girl bands who had to balance that fine line of traditional gender roles within society and an emergence of a public desirability, military women had to overcome basic gender roles at home in order to complete their jobs and perform in the military bands.

Despite lawmakers’ efforts to attempt to ignore gender in the military, gender still had an impact on women in the military. Maureen Honey noted: “There was an especially marked concern about femininity in advertisements recruiting women into the armed forces.”¹⁹⁹ Within the military regulations, women had a limited acceptable age range in which they could enroll.

¹⁹⁶ Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 52.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 66.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*, Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, 113.

“Across all branches of the women’s units women had to be at least twenty years old to enlist and could not be older than forty-five.”²⁰⁰ This age requirement included some of the most eligible women who fit in that “girl-next-door-waiting-at-home” types of which soldiers dreamt. Because of the high standards to which the military held their women, performing in the bands across all military branches was an honor. Some women surrendered the opportunity to advance in rank to continue their careers in the band. Music educator Edith Taft, who received a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, advanced only to assistant conductor in the SPARs, because officer training would require her to give up her participation in the band.²⁰¹ The All-Girl military bands had the same expectations of them as the all-men military bands, including the versatility with genres. Sullivan explains that the top military musicians formed dance bands to perform in clubs such as the Stage Door Canteen in either New York City or Washington DC.²⁰² Domestically, the military women provided the entertainment that civilian swing groups provided internationally on their tours with the U. S. O.

Fulfilling the same responsibilities as their male counterparts, all-girl military bands also provided fun on the military bases. Sullivan further elaborates, “At its home base, the WAC Dance Band played at the service club, which was converted into a “nite club” every Friday, to hold a WAC dance. The band “provided music from 8:30 until 11:30.”²⁰³ Out of every branch of the military, the WACs were the only one who had a black, female band unit, the 404th

²⁰⁰ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*, Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984, 4. The average age of those who participated in the Marine Corps Women Reserve was between 20 and 25, according to the official “Women Marines in WWII” WWII Fact Sheet.

²⁰¹ Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 67.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 20.

²⁰³ *Ibid*.

division. This division was the preferred group to dance to on Friday nights.²⁰⁴ The interesting thing to note is not that women could perform multiple genres and were musically versatile, but rather that all-girl military bands were expected to fulfill the exact same roles that their male gendered counterparts had performed domestically before World War II.

Regardless of the troubles initially faced when entering the military, women emerged from their careers triumphant. The Marine Corp Women's Reserve band was created to compete with the quality of the President's Own Marine Band. On their first tour, the women participated in fourteen concerts, twelve parades, eight color formations, five radio shows, five reviews, and one guard mount, all of which took place in thirty-four days. Each all-girl military band had a rigorous schedule like this example, raising war bonds to support the war effort, to salute the troops as they headed off to battle, to welcome them home from battle, and even assist injured soldiers recuperating in the hospital.

A Case Study: Hot Swing vs. Sweet Swing

World War II created a distinct and unique musical culture that inherently linked the idea of America to jazz music. Tirro explains the expansion of the culture at that time: "the music of a subculture had truly become the music of the nation, and the portion of jazz that we know as swing was a universally accepted idiom in the United States. Jazz musicians could assume a new pride in their profession."²⁰⁵ Jazz musicians were responsible for keeping American morale high both domestically and abroad. This was accomplished with the constant innovation of new tunes

²⁰⁴ As previously stated in Chapter 2, black musicians regardless of gender were seen as more authentic performers of jazz music. One of the performers in the group, Audrey Gross, recalled, "We had a swing band and those white girls would come over to our barracks. They didn't stay at the white barracks because they said our music was jazzier than theirs." Jill M. Sullivan, *Bands of Sisters: U.S. Women's Military Bands during World War II*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 34.

²⁰⁵ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition, New York: Norton, 1977, 278.

in the jazz scene. There we two distinct subgenres of swing music: hot swing and sweet swing. Fletcher Henderson first arranged hot swing tunes in the 1930s. In the 1940s, the Glenn Miller Orchestra epitomized the sweet swing style in every performance. Like the all-male swing groups, the all-girl big bands performed in both styles.

In this first example, Thelma White and Lionel Hampton performed the same song, but in the two different styles of swing. In this instance, Thelma White's group performs a sweet swing version of Lionel Hampton's hot swing version. In 1944, in the middle of World War II, Lionel Hampton and his orchestra first performed their song "Hamp's Boogie Woogie." In 1946, two years later, Thelma White & Her All-Girl Orchestra recorded an abridged version of the same song in a Hollywood soundie.²⁰⁶ I call this an abridged version for several reasons. First, there's the obvious time difference – Thelma White's performance is one minute shorter than Lionel Hampton's. More importantly, the musical structure is also quite changed. Lionel Hampton's all-black, all-male orchestra performs a raucous, virtuosic jump blues, while Thelma White's all-white, all-female orchestra performs a more conservative version in a sweet jazz style. "White's band featured a standard swing arrangement with only one pianist (as opposed to two), five saxophones, three trumpets, two trombones, and drums."²⁰⁷ While one might be tempted to hear this as a comparison of gender roles, the only indication of gender is the voices. In reality, this tune exemplifies the contrasting techniques between the sweet jazz of Paul Whiteman and the hot jazz of New Orleans.

²⁰⁶ Soundies were displayed on Panorams, which are coin-operated film jukeboxes or machine music often found in nightclubs, bars, and restaurants. In other words, Thelma White's version was one of the first music videos. "Hollywood Boogie- Thelma White (1946)," Retro YouTube Videos RSS, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://www.retroyoutubevideos.com/hollywood-boogie/>.

²⁰⁷ Kristin A. McGee, *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television 1928-1959*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009, 152. Hampton's group has two pianos in its original orchestration.

Both of these compositions are a twelve-bar jump blues. In Hampton's original composition, only the rhythm section is heard until halfway through the song with the piano taking the melodic lead over the string bass and the drum set in the introduction. Thelma White's group begins with the full band, quickly returning to the rhythm section for a shorter version of the same piano solo, which seems more formulaic than the improvisatory nature of Hampton's solo (See Appendix B). This is the first indication that Thelma White's group performs in more of a formulaic sweet style of jazz than the hot jazz for which Lionel Hampton's group was known.

In the next section of "Hamp's Boogie Woogie," Lionel Hampton starts singing in the first Section A in a call-and-response style, "Choo choo.... (Choo choo)....Choo choo your gamma." Hampton leads the call-and-response, and his orchestra responds, shouting more than singing. In contrast, the second time the Section A is performed by Thelma White and her group, the lyrics are introduced by both Thelma White and her group, "Choo Choo, Choo choo your mama/ Choo Choo, Choo choo your mama/ Choo choo, Choo choo your mama/ Choo Choo, Choo choo your mama. Hey. Hey. Hey. Hey. Where? Who? Yes! You!" The additional lyrics are also sung in unison. Because the group sings in unison, the piano and drum set are the only instruments keeping time.

The break strain of "Hamp's Boogie Woogie" abruptly begins with the piano as the lead instrument. Here Hampton exclaims, "bop bop!" and snarls a wild, masculine, aggressive, jazz-inspired scream, whereupon the piano takes over the melody to finish the twelve-bar progression. White has also incorporated new lyrics to this section. In these twenty-four measures, the last of her lyrics are sung. The group begins in unison with "I see you. I see you." White screams, marking the end of the first four bars of the first twelve-bar blues progression. The saxophones

take over the harmony of the twelve-bar blues, while the piano leads a solo through the rest of this phrase. Next, the saxophones have a one-bar motive, which White responds vocally with, “bop bop,” as the snare drum mimics the same rhythm in unison. This two-bar call and response repeats once, followed by a second scream from White. In “Hollywood Boogie Woogie,” there is an addition of a second scream by the bandleader. Instead of Hampton’s wild masculine, mid-tessitura snarl, the audience hears a feminine high-pitched wail. The piano leads the ensemble with a brief piano riff, before the leader takes over the lyrics with the phrase, “I wonder who’s bookin’ my woogie nights.” The piano directs the harmonic progression at this point, completing the second repetition of the twelve-bar blues. The wind players, at the end of this twelve-bar blues progression, respond to the leader’s lyrics, “You’d be surprised.”

This is the first (and only) instance in which gender has crept into the performance of this piece. When the audience hears Hampton’s version – wild, masculine, aggressive, jazz-inspired scream – a different set of expectations are created by Thelma White’s high-pitched, half-crazed shriek. The tessitura differences clearly distinguish the male band leader from the female band leader. Because of the natural tessitura difference between male and female voices, the singing and the scream are the only two clear gender differences between the groups. Kristin McGee thinks that Thelma White’s group is limited because of this vocalization. In her book *Some Like it Hot*, she writes, “Here, the women’s vocalizing is excessively feminized; therefore their musical drive, swing, and hot soloing capabilities are partially and sonically contained.”²⁰⁸ At the time, McGee is correct, this would have limited the group. The audience would have both seen and heard the performance. They would not have divorced the gender from the genre at the time

²⁰⁸ Kristin A. McGee, *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television 1928-1959*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009, 153.

of performance. White's group performed more in the sweet style of jazz. If you remove the lyrics and visual performance, they sound like any other sweet jazz group.

Frank Tirro reminds his readers in a brief background of Kansas City Swing, from which Lionel Hampton's group borrows some of its musical style, "The blues tradition allowed extended solo choruses."²⁰⁹ Lionel Hampton's orchestra follows this tradition. Hampton has several extended solos throughout the original work. The first half of the song contains only the rhythm section, with Hampton soloing on the piano. In Section B, Hampton also solos on the piano, performing a walking bass in his left hand with a melodic solo in the extreme higher register of the right hand. Hampton was known for his solos, especially on vibraphone and piano. Gunther Schuller, a jazz scholar, notes Hampton's unique style in his solos, "But superficial excitement and seemingly unrestrained energy are Hampton's most obvious popular trademarks, and they are manifested in a most ostentatious way in his piano playing."²¹⁰

In "Hamp's Boogie Woogie," the recapitulation of Section A marks the beginning of Earl Bostic's raucous alto saxophone solo. Thelma White's group introduces a break strain when the saxophone section has its soli moment at this point, with the trombonists and trumpeters clapping the basic motivic rhythm under the saxophone line. One might be quick to comment that Thelma White's female group performs both a saxophone section soli and a trumpet section soli, while Hamp's male group performs several individual solos. Tirro mentions that regardless of gender, section solis were a popular arrangement choice, especially at the end of songs: "Frequently, arrangers would fit simple riffs for sections in unison or in a thickened melodic line to the simple chord patterns of the popular songs of the day...commonly thought to characterize swing."²¹¹ In

²⁰⁹ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition. New York: Norton, 1977, 232.

²¹⁰ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, Vol. II. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 396.

²¹¹ Frank Tirro, *Jazz: A History*, 2nd edition. New York: Norton, 1977, 284.

reality, White's performance aligns with musical characteristics commonly associated with big band swing music of the 1940s. After the break strain, White's group "then explodes into a typical Fletcher Henderson-style shout chorus with saxophones and brass in heavy counterpoint."²¹²

Earl Bostic's saxophone solo finishes the twelve-bar progression, and the trumpets have jazz licks on top of the solo, which are played in a higher register with an overly loud, bright sound, characteristic of traditional riffing used in swing bands. At the end of Thelma White group's "Hollywood Boogie Woogie," the trumpet section has a soli over the saxophones. The all-girl ensemble remains balanced, whereas, Hampton's group becomes unbalanced with the trumpets overwhelming the saxophones. Their bright timbres with the loud, high-register melody overpower this final evolution of the melody. The trumpets play in their highest extremes, so they wail on this final chord, which is indicative of hot jazz. In contrast, Thelma White's group ends their abridged version quite smoothly with a well-balanced chord, which comes to define the endings of many sweet jazz tunes (See Appendix C). Although there were differences between the two performances, McGee emphasizes, "These films helped promote the swing-based capabilities of female musicians while arousing military interest in White's all-girl boogie-woogie/dance-band aggregation."²¹³

In the second example, Ada Leonard's All-American Girls perform a hot swing style of "Back Home Again in Indiana." This tune was a standard for the jazz repertoire, so performing it was not particularly innovative. Instead, it was a crowd pleaser, linking to past performances. Ada Leonard's All-American Girls disprove the notion that all-white girl jazz bands performed

²¹² Kristin A. McGee, *Some Liked it Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television 1928-1959*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009, 153.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 151.

only sweet jazz music. With Ada Leonard's previous career as a notorious strip tease, the performance of hot swing perpetuates her sultry image.²¹⁴ In one of the few soundies recorded of Ada Leonard's All-American Girls, the song they perform has several elements of sweet jazz but retains mostly hot jazz elements in their 1943 performance. The form of the song is an ABA' standard jazz form. Section A has a hallmark of a trumpet melody, which sounds bright and brassy – not the smooth and conservative sounds of sweet jazz. Leonard's All-American Girls performance is significant due to the instrumental solos of two saxophones. As previously mentioned, the saxophone began to supersede the trumpet as the premiere solo instrument in swing groups.²¹⁵ The tenor saxophone is the first solo, which highlights the scalar nature of the instrument. The alto saxophone solo builds on this idea, adding repetitive notes with different articulations. This is a musical trope of hot jazz swing music. The use of different articulations on the same, repetitive note is a hallmark of Lester Young as he influenced the transition of styles from swing to bebop on saxophone. Ada Leonard's All-American Girls finish this song with a conclusive perfect authentic cadence in a similar manner in which Thelma White and her group finished, "Hollywood Boogie Woogie," with a formulaic composed ending. This performance allows scholars today to understand that not only did all-girl jazz bands perform sweet jazz, but they also played hot swing jazz as well.

While all-girl groups remain the most prominent in the history books during World War II because of their performances for American soldiers, all-girl jazz groups had been successful since the 1930s. Civilian groups performed for the soldiers while military groups performed for

²¹⁴ This was previously discussed in Chapter 3.

²¹⁵ Refer back to Chapter 2. Dave Oliphant, *The Early Swing Era 1930 to 1941*, Westport, CT,: Greenwood Press, 2002, 8.

the American people. Together, they used swing music as a tool to bolster American morale and provide hope that America would win World War II.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD

With the increased awareness of the lack of material on gender studies within this genre, it is my hope that scholars continue to build upon quality source material to continue examining what has been marginalized in history books. In the discussion of the history of jazz, the rapid changes between the styles of jazz are emphasized. How traditions continued are often ignored. Technology influenced this rapidity of change. With the advent of the radio, a regional musical style on the East Coast could influence musicians on the West Coast almost immediately.²¹⁶ Transportation had evolved and people could move around more easily. Trains and airplanes increased mobility, so big bands could tour the country more easily. This also brought various regional styles into conflict with each other, influencing each of them. For example, Count Basie and his band were rooted in Kansas City Swing and brought that style to New York, influencing Benny Goodman and other groups on 52nd Street. The rapidity of the evolution of styles is emphasized in the study of jazz, because no other genre had evolved this quickly before. As a result, some of the nuances within each jazz period are lost; the success of all-girl jazz bands is one such subject.

This thesis has explored how all-girl bands were ever present in American culture during the 1940s. Chapter two tracked the historical participation of women performing on brass instruments. Chapter three provided historical context, exploring other contributing factors to the misinformation surrounding the culture of World War II. Finally, Chapter four examined the

²¹⁶ Much like how Paul Whiteman, who's musical career began on the West Coast, was influenced by the jazz tradition in Chicago, the Midwest.

relationship between the civilian and military all-girl big bands and briefly analyzed the musical styles performed by the all-girl bands. Ultimately, this thesis explored how all-girl civilian and military bands worked together during wartime America to cement the genre of swing with the culture of World War II.

The lack of documentation and the dearth of personal interviews of women who lived through this time, contribute greatly to the scarcity of information about this period. With the emergence of precious little literature, it still is easy for scholars to rely on the current male-dominated narrative in the evolution of jazz. With the emergence of such documentaries as *The Girls in the Band*, the narrative of the history of jazz can become more inclusive. As a result, history will remember the success of all-girl jazz bands not as a phenomenon, but rather as technically and stylistically excellent groups based on their own merit. The women of all-girl jazz bands in the 1930s and 1940s were not a phenomenon of the era, but a catalyst for change in the musical industry.

Appendix A

Appendix A includes Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, which are cabinet cards of young women who all performed in the Young Ladies' Cornet Band of Iola, Kansas. Figure 1 is Miss Sara Taylor, who became Mrs. Sara Taylor-Ewing after her marriage. Figure 3 is Miss Guertie Duffy. While I have not discovered the names for the women pictured in Figures 2, 4, and 5, their similar dress and backgrounds lead me to believe they all participated within the same group around the same time (1889-1892). I thank the Kansas Historical Society for their online pictorial archives and Dr. George Foreman for access to his private collection and library to learn more about these women.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Appendix B

Appendix B includes Table 1.1 and Table 1.2. Table 1.1 is a formal outline of *Hamp's Boogie Woogie* as described in Chapter Four. This table highlights the length of the piano solo and saxophone solo in this piece. Table 1.2 is a formal outline of *Hollywood Boogie Woogie*, which highlights the placement and length of the piano solo and saxophone section soli. The placement of the piano solo earlier in the song and the creation of the saxophone section soli has a formulaic effect which defines the sound of sweet jazz. Also notice the drastic changes in form between the two songs.

Lionel Hampton's *Hamp's Boogie Woogie*

Table 1.1

Intro	Section A	A	Break Strain	A	A	B	A	A	A	Intro A	End
12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars	8 bars	12 bars	24 bars	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars	
Section A melody with piano & rhythm section only	Lionel Hampton starts singing		"Bop bop"; wild jazz scream	Section A harmonies finish the twelve bar progression	Piano solo	Piano Solo	First time full band enters	Sax solo; trumpet jazz licks	Trumpet jazz licks		Final cord, trumpet s in high range.

Thelma White's *Hollywood Boogie Woogie*

Table 1.2

Intro	A	A	B	Break Strain	A	A	A	End
8 bars	12 bars	12 bars	24 bars	12bar	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars
Section A motivic material	Piano Solo	"Choo Choo..." in unison	"I see you." (Extra lyrics)	Saxophone Section solo	Brass Section solo	Band unison.	Band unison, with all wind members standing.	Begins with motivic material from Section A.

Appendix C

Appendix C includes Table 2.1 and Table 2.2. Table 2.1 is a formal outline of *Hamp's Boogie Woogie* as described in Chapter Four. This table highlights the placement of the trumpet section soli and the ending of the piece. Table 2.2 is a formal outline of *Hollywood Boogie Woogie*, which highlights the placement and length of the brass section soli and ending of the piece. Again, notice the change into a more formulaic sweet jazz sound. Also notice the drastic changes in form between the two songs.

Lionel Hampton's *Hamp's Boogie Woogie*

Table 2.1

Intro	Section A	A	Break Strain	A	A	B	A	A	A	Intro A	End
12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars	8 bars	12 bars	24 bars	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars	
Section A melody with piano & rhythm section only	Lionel Hampton starts singing		"Bop bop"; wild jazz scream	Section A harmonies finish the twelve bar progression	Piano solo	Piano Solo	First time full band enters	Sax solo; trumpet jazz licks	Trumpet jazz licks		Final cord, trumpet s in high range.

Thelma White's *Hollywood Boogie Woogie*

Table 2.2

Intro	A	A	B	Break Strain	A	A	A	End
8 bars	12 bars	12 bars	24 bars	12bar	12 bars	12 bars	12 bars	4 bars
Section A motivic material	Piano Solo	"Choo Choo..." in unison	"I see you." (Extra lyrics)	Saxophone Section solo	Brass Section solo	Band unison.	Band unison, with all wind members standing.	Smooth Ending.

Appendix D

Appendix includes Table 3, which is a formal outline of Ada Leonard's All-American Girls hot swing performance of "Back Home in Indiana." The two saxophone solo sections are highlighted to emphasize their length, continuity, and virtuosity.

Ada Leonard's *Back Home in Indiana*

Table 3

Intro/ Section A	Saxophone Section Soli	Section A	Tenor Sax Solo	Alto Sax Solo	Section A/ Bridge	Trombone Section Soli	Section A/End
16 bars	24 bars	8 bars	16 bars	16 bars	16 bars	16 bars	12 bars
Tutti		Tutti	Virtuosic scalar passages	Virtuosic scalar passages; repetitive notes/different articulations	Tutti		Tutti

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