

## Jazz Moves From New Orleans to Chicago

In 1917 a famous part of New Orleans, known as Storyville, was closed down. This was due to the fact that many disreputable establishments had risen up and flourished in that area for many years, and the people of New Orleans wanted to eliminate some of those elements from their community. This had a tremendous effect on jazz, especially the Dixieland style of jazz. The musicians who performed this style of music were forced to move to other parts of the country. Many moved up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, others went on to Kansas City, and still others moved all the way to Chicago. We'll focus our attention on the specific developments in the jazz style that occurred in Chicago.



Louis Armstrong

One of the most important aspects of the New Orleans Dixieland style was the group improvisation, particularly in the front line. In early New Orleans-style Dixieland music, the front line musicians would improvise and play at the same time. Perhaps the most important development in the Chicago style was the shift of focus from group improvisation to a single soloist, allowing that soloist to take the spotlight. Without a doubt, the most important performer in this style of music was the great trumpet player Louis Armstrong. In his band performances, he would have the entire ensemble—still a very small ensemble with the rhythm section and front line—perform together at the beginning of the piece and then join together at the end. The middle was opened up for soloists, usually members of the front line as well as the piano player, to take a chorus in order to improvise a solo based on the melody of the piece or the harmonic chord progressions, or a combination of the two.

Louis Armstrong led two groups that were very important to the development of this style of jazz. They were known as The Hot Five and The Hot Seven. Both of these groups made sound recordings in the 1920s and helped make this style of jazz popular and available to the general public. Other important musicians who helped push this style into the public's eye were white musicians such as Bix Beiderbecke and Paul Whiteman.

Paul Whiteman and his group presented the first jazz concert in 1924. The concert was performed in Aeolian Hall in New York City, a hall that had only been used for classical music concerts before then. This concert also premiered George Gershwin's famous jazz piano concerto, *Rhapsody in Blue*. The concert was an historically significant event in several ways, especially in that it opened the way for jazz to take its place as a true art form and be presented in concert halls around the nation and the world.