Jazz À La Creole:

The Music of the French Creoles of Louisiana and their Contribution to
the Development of Early Jazz at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

by

Caroline Vézina

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ABSTRACT

As a result of its unique colonial history, Louisiana was characterized by a three-tiered society in which the Creoles formed a middle-class that distinguished itself by its attachment to the French culture and language, and to the Catholic Church. Using creolization as a model to describe the process of cultural interchange leading to the creation of new cultural products, this thesis documents the contribution of the Creoles to the development of early jazz.

Already in the nineteenth century, Creole musicians played and/or sang classical, military and dance music as well as popular songs and *cantiques* that incorporated African, European and Caribbean elements. When jazz emerged (1890-1917), they continued to play a significant role as teachers, bandleaders, instrumentalists, singers, and composers. Their most original contribution were the Creole songs, regularly performed during the formative years of jazz but recorded only during the early jazz revival of the 1940s and 1950s.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
CHAPTERS	
INTRODUCTION	1
1. THE CONCEPT AND PROCESS OF CREOLIZATION	8
2. CREOLIZATION AND CREOLES IN LOUISIANA: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CREOLE STATE	18
3. THE PRECURSORS OF EARLY JAZZ IN NEW ORLEANS	38
4. EARLY JAZZ, CREOLE MUSICIANS AND CREOLE SONGS	69
CONCLUSION	101
APPENDIX 1. LIST OF CREOLE MUSICIANS	104
APPENDIX 2. JAZZ RECORDINGS OF CREOLE SONGS	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115

INTRODUCTION

Years ago, I “discovered” that Louis Armstrong was singing an English version of *La Vie en Rose* as early as 1950, only five years after it had been composed by French singer Édith Piaf¹. This struck me as it created a direct link between the most iconic singer of the *chanson française* and the most iconic founder and performer of jazz. This discovery prompted my interest about the exchanges between the French chanson and jazz.

In 2011, I traveled to Louisiana. By then, I had become curious about the music and songs played by the slaves in the French plantations. When I visited Laura’s Plantation – a historic French Creole plantation – I bought the 1867 anthology *Slave Songs From the United States*, in which I was both surprised and delighted to find seven plantation songs in Louisiana French. I then started to wonder if there were more of these songs that I didn’t know about and who exactly performed them, since I had never heard about these French Creole songs before.

Generally speaking, the narrative of the development of early jazz revolves around the general idea of the syncretism – “ the blending together of cultural elements that previously existed separately” (Gioia 1997, 5) – of African and European music. More precisely, jazz is often said to have emerged out of the combination of African (poly)rhythms and call and response structure, with European harmony and instruments. Ring Shouts, work songs, Negro spirituals, dance music (quadrilles, polkas, schottisches

¹ The song was created by Marianne Michel in early 1946 and recorded by Piaf in November of the same year. Louiguy, Piaf’s accompanist, is credited with composing the music since Piaf was registered as a lyricist (*auteur*) but not as a composer at the Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique (SACEM).

² Sanchirico defines myths as “false notions accepted as fact” (2012, 78).

³ Sanchirico specifies that his study does not include biographies, autobiographies, historical essays and other specialized publications (2012, 57n6), nor the lecture content and viewpoint of college professors,

etc.), military marches (John Philip Sousa) are all frequently mentioned as being part of this musical blend, while the blues, which brought its particular vocal timbre and melodic inflection, and ragtime, which brought it syncopated rhythms, stand as the two musical genres that led directly to the early development of jazz. Caribbean clave-like rhythms are usually mentioned only when Jelly Roll Morton's famous Spanish tinge is discussed.

In a 2012 article examining various myths² once commonly found in jazz history as exposed by Randal Sandke (2010), Andrew Sanchirico has analyzed the "content [...] of all the jazz history published since 1990 (1)"³ which form a list of fourteen monographs (58-59). Sanchirico agrees with the seven myths identified by Sandke⁴ but he wanted to verify if they were still conveyed today. While he has concluded that recent jazz histories have generally corrected these myths, he rightfully adds that

Jazz is difficult to define, in part, because of its complex history, for jazz has African, European, and even Caribbean roots. Although the precise contributions of various cultures and subcultures remain controversial, without their blending, jazz would not have come into being.

The literature contains two basic explanations of why the black originators of jazz combined their traditional African music with European and Caribbean musical styles. One is that the slaves were forced to give up much of their African culture—including many of their musical traditions—because of systematic resocialization imposed upon them by slaveholders and other dominant whites. The other is that the blending of African and European

² Sanchirico defines myths as "false notions accepted as fact" (2012, 78).

³ Sanchirico specifies that his study does not include biographies, autobiographies, historical essays and other specialized publications (2012, 57n6), nor the lecture content and viewpoint of college professors, who, according to Sandke are also responsible for perpetuating the myths. However he "contends [...] that the writers included in [his] study represent the mainstream jazz scholarship and that their books reflect a conventional view of jazz history" (Sanchirico 2012, 79).

⁴ The myths are as follow: "1) Jazz has African origins [in the sense that jazz would be a direct extension of West African music in the U.S.]; 2) Congo Square was the link between African music and jazz; 3) The 1890s Jim Crow laws led to the creation of jazz; 4) Buddy Bolden was the quintessential black musician who embodied the raw primitive nature of jazz; 5) Rhythm was the defining characteristic of bebop; 6) Black nationalism was the source of avant-garde jazz; 7) Jazz was sustained almost exclusively by the black community until after World War II" (Sanchirico 2012, 57, 75).

cultural traits—including those associated with music—reflects the pluralistic nature of American society into which African Americans were acculturated.

While these two explanations reflect somewhat different perspectives, they basically agree that by the time jazz emerged, the traditional African musical traits blended with those of the European culture. In New Orleans, where jazz originated, there was an additional blending of Caribbean culture. (Sanchirico 2010, 61-62)

The multicultural nature of jazz, as well as the need to adapt to a new environment suggest that it was born out of a process of creolization that took place over a long time – in fact, right from the beginning of the colony and the arrival of the first slaves in 1719. It might well be that both the phenomena of “systematic resocialization” and acculturation described above could have happened in Louisiana throughout its history, due to the distinct ideologies and rules that the French, Spanish and American regimes held towards their Black⁵ population. But if the concept of creolization – which will be discussed further in chapter one – has now been well defined as the process by which traits from diverse cultures blend together to create a new cultural product, and used in various contexts, it hardly appears, or is misunderstood, in jazz history books. In many of these histories, even if the Creoles⁶ as a cultural group are mentioned and even if it is accepted that jazz was born out of the merging of various African, European and Caribbean musical genres, the length of time over which this process took place and the fact that in colonial and post-colonial societies the meeting of cultures takes place in an environment of asymmetrical power relationships are often overlooked. This can be seen, for example,

⁵ It should be noted that, as suggested in the New Oxford American Dictionary, I have capitalized the words Black, White and Negro when referring to persons or race, as would be done with nouns and adjectives referring to nationality, such as French Canadian. However, when used in quotation I have left the orthography used by the author.

⁶ In this thesis, unless specified otherwise, the word *Creole* used alone refers to the people of mixed ancestry of Louisiana who spoke French, or refers to French culture, and the Catholic religion as their cultural heritage, in other words the social group that was once referred to as Creole of colour.

when Gunter Schuller, a strong supporter of the idea of jazz as the extension of African music in the United States, writes that: “Acculturation took place, but only to the limited extent that the Negro allowed European elements to become integrated into his African heritage. Until the 1920s, he took only European ingredients that were necessary for his own music’s survival” ([1968] 1986, 62).

In the same vein, Louisiana’s particular three-tiered social organization in which the Creoles (of colour) formed a distinct social and cultural group is generally described only in one or a few scattered paragraphs. Usually, Creoles are presented as a specific cultural group descending from the unions between French or Spanish colonizers and African slaves. With time they formed a group of *gens de couleur libres* who had access to a good education and often worked as skilled labourers, such as carpenters, bricklayers or cigar makers. They maintained the French language and culture as well as the Catholic religion and retained European musical traditions, so that,

[f]or its part, Creole music contributed French quadrilles and Spanish habaneras and an insistence on high professional standards. (Giddins and DeVeaux, 2009, 79)⁷

It is also often specified that before the Civil War they enjoyed a fair amount of civil liberties and economic privileges, but that Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow laws deprived them of their middle-class social status, turning them into second-class citizens. This disenfranchisement pushed them towards the other Blacks whom they traditionally despised, or at least tried to avoid. Finally, they adopted the “hot” and “ratty” music of the Blacks – as exemplified by Buddy Bolden – for economic reasons

⁷ Some Creoles also spoke Spanish but this is hardly ever mentioned.

since this style of music was more and more in demand among the patrons and audiences that were their job providers.

Nevertheless, Gioia acknowledges that “[t]he role of these New Orleans Creoles in the development of jazz remains one of the least understood and most commonly misrepresented issues in the history of this music” (1997, 33). Therefore, it is the purpose of this thesis to explore the contribution of the Creoles to the development of the early New Orleans jazz style. As I suggest that jazz evolved out of a process of creolization, I will provide an overview of the music of the Creoles during the nineteenth century as jazz emerged partly out their active musical life. Consequently, before speaking of the music itself, I will begin with a short review of the study of acculturation and creolization in the United States and the Caribbean and the emergence of *Créolité* as identity politics in the French Caribbean. I suggest that the process of creolization has been under-studied in jazz history as it took place over a longer time than just the period between 1890-1917, which is the period during which jazz emerged. Consequently, I will continue by outlining a short history of Louisiana and how it came to be such a cosmopolitan society before discussing the meaning of the word *Creole* – and the different groups of Creoles – in the specific context of Louisiana and its Caribbean-like three-tiered society, and how this society came to be threatened by the rise of segregation after the Civil War. Finally, I will briefly outline the meaning of the word *Creole* as it is used today in Louisiana.

The second section of my thesis will then focus on the music of the Creoles, with special emphasis on those features that pertain to their contribution to the development of the early New Orleans jazz style at the turn of the twentieth century. Chapter 3 describes the New Orleans musical scene during the nineteenth century, as the precursor and the

milieu that fostered the cultural and musical performances, contacts and cross-fertilization of creolization that led to the birth of jazz in which both the slaves and the free people of colour took an active part. In chapter 4, I will present a few of the Creole musicians who played a significant role in the development of jazz. Indeed, if Jelly Roll Morton is generally given a prominent place in the jazz history books, the Tio family and Lizzie Miles are barely mentioned or not at all, Kid Ory is presented as a minor figure,⁸ and Sidney Bechet is also often only briefly mentioned.⁹ However, when juxtaposed with each other, their careers show that Creoles made a significant contribution to all aspects of the development and diffusion of early jazz, whether it be as virtuosic instrumentalists or singers – such as the Tios and Bechet on the clarinet, and Morton on the piano – as well as teachers, bandleaders, composers and arrangers.

I will conclude chapter 4 by discussing the early jazz revival in the 1940s and 50s during which several Creole songs were (finally) recorded by jazz musicians and singers. I argue that the Creole songs – and their recordings – constitute a tangible Creole legacy that belongs to both Black American and Franco-American folk music, and that they were one of the components of the early New Orleans jazz style, even if these songs are almost never mentioned in jazz history books. Moreover, although recordings of Creole songs by jazz musicians came later, there is good reason to believe that these songs had a significant influence on early jazz. Indeed, when put all together some eighty Creole songs have been preserved in written form, which suggests that there might have been many more that were lost. And, in listening to interviews with some Creole musicians – Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Alphonse Picou, Paul Barbarin and Lizzie Miles – it

⁸ The first monograph about Ory was published in 2012.

⁹ Although Gioia (1997) and Giddins and DeVeaux (2009) gave him 2-3 pages in their books.

becomes obvious that these songs were part of the repertoire of early jazz musicians even if they were only recorded during the early jazz revival.

If it is widely recognized that jazz emerged out many cultural and musical contacts and exchanges, I suggest that the concept of creolization is especially well adapted to describe the long process that led to the development of early jazz. Creoles as a cultural group and their contribution to this long process have also been understated as the career of many Creole jazz musicians and the body of Creole songs they recorded testify.

Most of this thesis has been researched and documented using secondary sources, apart from the information about the *Cantiques* and the Creole songs for which I have done a lot of archival research of both written – such as unpublished thesis and dissertations – and recorded sources – such as recorded interviews and old recordings – at the Hogan Jazz Archives and the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University, the Historic New Orleans Collection, and at the *Archive de folklore et d'ethnologie de l'Université Laval* in Quebec City. My six-month sojourn in New Orleans has proven to be invaluable in that it allowed me to see (and hear) the locations and events – such as street parades and the Carnival season – that were important in the musical life of the city and the development of jazz.

CHAPTER 1

THE CONCEPT AND PROCESS OF CREOLIZATION

Creolization is both a concept and the model of a historical and sociological process that aims to describe and explain the many facets of contact, exchange and cross-fertilization between cultures – especially in colonial and/or post-colonial societies – that leads to the creation of new languages and other cultural products. Working on the meaning of the concept of *Creole* as a signifier for both culture and identity, Jean-Luc Bonniol has used the model offered by the “old French colonies” to identify the basic components of creole-forming situations – *situations créolisantes*:

- Heteronomy of a colonial project characterized by a plantation economy controlled from afar for the purpose of satisfying the needs of the metropole;
- Disappearance [...] of the indigenous population, so that all inhabitants immigrated to the colony: besides the European colonizers, the majority of people were forcefully brought into slavery on the plantations;
- Hierarchical ideology based on the diversity of physical appearance where “race” and a colour prejudice is used to justify the social organization.

(Bonniol 2006 51-52 my translation)¹⁰

As a model of analysis, these three basic components rightfully describe colonial Louisiana, as a creole-forming location, a fact that continued in antebellum and postbellum Louisiana. However, Bonniol also notes that this concept evolved out the

¹⁰ - hétéronomie d'un projet colonial marqué par la prépondérance d'une économie de plantation « à moteur externe », car vouée à la satisfaction de besoins extérieurs, ceux de la métropole;
- disparition (« désapparition »), [...] d'une population autochtone ; tous les hommes viennent donc d'ailleurs : à côté du colonisateur européen, le flux prépondérant de peuplement est constitué par l'immigration forcée en provenance d'Afrique, du fait de l'appel en main d'œuvre servile que génère la plantation ;
- la diversité des apparences physiques chez les arrivants sert de matériau à une idéologie hiérarchique : la « race » permet de justifier les ordonnancements sociaux (le « préjugé de couleur ») (Bonniol 2006, 51-52).

research of linguists who aimed to explain the linguistic process that sometimes leads to the formation of new languages (Bonniol 2006, 51).

As I suggest that creolization has been under-studied in relation to jazz, I will now propose a short review of the study of creolization as it eventually became used in social and cultural studies.¹¹ In his introduction to Chaudenson's book on creolization, Mufwene explains that "[s]ince the 1970s research on Creole languages has significantly increased while it got better informed and influenced by debates that improved owing to the history of colonial economy, and to developments in theoretical linguistics" (2003, 7 my translation)¹². Indeed, during the 1970s, the "aftermath of the Civil Right struggle [saw] the swift establishment of Afro-American and Black Studies programs in U.S. universities, part of the veritable explosion of general interest (and publication) in the sphere of Black History" (Mintz and Price 1976, vii). However, scholars – mostly anthropologists – had begun to study the phenomena of cultural contact and intermingling between indigenous populations, Africans and Europeans in the context of colonialism and slavery since the middle of the twentieth century.

From Acculturation to Neo-Culturation

In 1938, anthropologist Melville Herskovits published *Acculturation: The Study of Culture*, which states:

Intensive study of contact between peoples is a relatively recent development in the anthropological repertory, and is to be attributed to a constantly increasing interest in the dynamics of human life. [...] In the United States,

¹¹ However, it should be noted that the concept of acculturation – occasionally with other related concepts such as transculturation – has sometimes been used in jazz history books such as in Martin and Waters ([2002] 2012); Berendt and Huesmann ([1953] 2009); Shipton (2001); Schuller ([1968] 1986); Stearns (1970 [1956]).

¹² La recherche sur les créoles s'est intensifiée depuis les années 1970, plus informée et marquée par des débats de mieux en mieux éclairés tant par l'histoire économique coloniale que par les développements en linguistique théorique (Mufwene 2003, 7).

though the past decade or two have seen the word acculturation pass into the ethnological vocabulary, it has only been toward the latter part of this period that specific field studies of the results of cultural contact have been made. (1, 5)

After reviewing the various current theories/definitions of acculturation and assimilation, Herskovits, with two of his colleagues, proposed the following definition:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups. (Ibid., 10)

According to Buisseret,

[Herskovits] was concerned in part to counter the arguments of the sociologist Franklin Frazier who [...] had denied the possibility of any African influences surviving the Middle Passage.¹³ However, Herskovits also set out a full analysis of the concept of acculturation, offering reviews of many of the current theories [which] more properly described “assimilation” than “acculturation” [...] Herskovits allowed for the possibility of acculturation being mutual, but it was not a point upon which he insisted. (Buisseret and Reinhardt 2000, 3)

In 1940, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term *transculturation* to describe the many cultural contacts that took place in, and forged, the nation of Cuba (Ortiz 2011, 165). More precisely, he aimed to describe the merging of the processes of deculturation—losing one’s culture—and acculturation—acquiring (or being imposed) a new one—that leads to the creation of new cultural phenomena by social groups engaged in the reconstruction of their identity. He suggested calling the end result neo-culturation (Ortiz 2011: 166 et 170).¹⁴ These “new” concepts were important since they introduced the notion that, regardless of the duress of their forced transplantation, Africans had

¹³ The Middle Passage refers to the journey on slave ships between Africa and the United States. In 1941 Herskovits furthered his counterargument with the publication of *The Myth of the Negro Past*.

¹⁴ Originally in Spanish, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y del azúcar* was published in 1940 and translated into English in 1995 and French in 2011.

retained enough of their native culture for it to be part of the dynamic “culturalscape” of the New World.¹⁵

From Neo-Culturation to Creolization

Proposed some forty years later, Homi Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity and “third space” appear to be very close to Ortiz’ idea of transculturation and neo-culturation.

However, Bhabha’s work was done in a context that led him to try to find new ways to reconcile the concept of cultural diversity and cultural difference.¹⁶ Bhabha argues that:

Multiculturalism represented an attempt both to respond to and to control the dynamic process of the articulation of cultural difference, administering a *consensus* based on a norm [given by the host society or dominant culture] that propagates cultural diversity. [However] all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. [...] The concept of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, 208-209, 211)

Working on a different but related topic, that of the Black Atlantic, Paul Gilroy’s reflection is nevertheless similar to Bhabha’s ideas about cultural hybridity. Gilroy argues against the idea of “cultural nationalism [and] the overintegrated conceptions of ‘pure and homogeneous’ culture which present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of ‘black’ and ‘white’ people” (1993, 2). Building on the work of W.E.B. Du Bois,¹⁷ Gilroy suggests that to be both Black and European “requires

¹⁵ In 1943 both Herskovits and Ortiz were involved in the establishment of the *Instituto Internacional de Estudios Afroamericanos* (International Institute of Afro-American Studies) in Mexico City (Afroamérica. La tercera raíz, 2004).

¹⁶ The context was the controversy that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* in 1998.

¹⁷ Du Bois articulated the idea of the double-consciousness in his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk* in which he wrote: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, [...]. One ever feels his twoness,—

some specific forms of double consciousness” and that against the viewpoint of “ethnic absolutism”

stands another, more difficult option: the theorisation of creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity. [...] All of them [post-slave black cultural forms] are configured by their compound and multiple origins in the mix of African and other cultural forms sometimes referred to as creolisation. (1993, 1-3, 75)

Robin Cohen has noted that social scientists often use “a variety of similar terms – creolization, hybridity, syncretism, métissage, mélange and others” – interchangeably. He himself prefers creolization “because of its links to existing and historical examples and its cultural reference points” (2007, 21-22n3). I also prefer creolization because I find that it better represents the fact that elements of many cultures can be part of the process, but moreover, because it better implies the multilayered aspect of the process in which cultural products that arose out of previous métissage, hybridity or creolization can themselves be part of a new process of creolization.

Finally, in *Creolization of Agriculture in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, Daniel Usner proposes this definition:

The concept of creolization, which originated in the study of languages, characterizes the process of interaction among different cultural groups in a colonial region as they adapted to a new environment. (Usner in Buisseret and Reinhardt 2000, 35)

Both Louisiana and the Caribbean were contact zones where colonization and slavery led to either intentional or forced diasporas. This in turn led to the meeting, intermingling, and creolization of cultures that were required to adapt in a new and changing environment. There were challenges related to cultural identity for all the

an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois, [1903] 2006: 9).

communities involved, but maybe more for the dominated groups such as the African slaves and, eventually, the *gens de couleur libres*.

Identity politics and Créolité

“Neither Europeans, nor Africans, nor Asians, we proclaim ourselves Creoles” (Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant 1993, 75). When they wrote these words as the opening statement of their manifesto *In Praise of Creoleness*,¹⁸ Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant had been preceded by Black intellectuals and *penseurs* including Martiniquans Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant, and Senegalese Léopold Senghor. Césaire and Senghor, along with other Africans and Antilleans who had all met as students in Paris, founded the *Négritude* movement, which put forward a “theory of the distinctiveness of African personality and culture, [which emerged] in the period immediately before and after the Second World War” (Ashcroft et al. 2000, 161).¹⁹ The *Négritude* movement is similar to the Harlem Renaissance to which its founders were exposed and by which they were influenced. However, long before the Harlem Renaissance and the emergence of the movements of *Créolité* and *Négritude*, the Creoles of colour – as they were then called – claimed their cultural identity as French Creoles and not Anglo-African Americans by putting the emphasis on their French and Spanish ancestry. They largely rejected their African heritage in order to emphasize their background as *gens de couleur libres* and to differentiate themselves from the newly freed slaves. Although this is paradoxical, and reflects the multiple and sometimes confusing changes in the meaning of the word *Creole* and the groups it represents, the emergence and affirmation of *Créolité* in the 1970s

¹⁸ First published in French – *Éloge de la Créolité* – in 1989.

¹⁹ There is no definite and recognized end to this movement which is generally considered to have evolved into a broader ideological and artistic/aesthetic movement in the Caribbean.

validates the status of the Creoles of colour as a specific and distinct cultural group. This distinct status was particularly important after the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, at a time when African ancestry and heritage was not celebrated but, rather, widely denigrated as second-class citizenship.

Jazz as a Creole Music

Both the concept of creolization as a dynamic process, and Creole as a cultural identity, can be useful tools in describing and understanding the development of the early New Orleans jazz style. In the Caribbean as well as in New Orleans, music and dance spread widely not only throughout the colonies but also throughout the socio-racial classes of their populations who adapted and creolized them in many ways. Cohen has proposed a range of areas where creolization can occur, such as religion, food and music, adding that “jazz developed as a Creole music *par excellence*” (2007, 7). This sentiment is echoed by Logsdon and Bell when they write:

Drawing from this peculiar creole-American cultural interchange, black New Orleans added many new features to the city’s vibrant folk culture – none more famous than new musical form of jazz. (1992, 245)

It is worth noting that jazz is recognized as a creolized form in the literature about creolization, but this is not systematically developed in the literature about jazz. Even if the multicultural nature of jazz is acknowledged, the short explanation usually given – as outlined in my introduction – tends to suggest that African, European and Caribbean musical elements co-existed side by side until they were combined by one, or very few, musicians in the few decades it took for early jazz to develop. While this could be understood as an acknowledgement of both the Creoles as a specific cultural group and creolization in a narrow sense, it fails to fully describe the history, strength and self-

asserting character of the Creole identity and the complexity of the process that led to the development of early jazz.

As an alternative, creolization as a multilayered process allows us to account for the many cultural influences, cross-fertilizations and syncretisms within this history, and to expand from a simplistic view that jazz emerged out of the European tradition maintained by the Creoles – that sometimes suggests that Creole music contributed only the quadrilles and “an insistence on high professional standards” (Giddins and DeVaux 2009, 79) – and the African tradition maintained by the Blacks. As mentioned above and discussed further in later chapters, I argue that Creole songs were also one of the many components in the formation of early jazz. Creolization also allows us to draw attention to the length of time over which this process occurred as people kept on adapting to a new and changing environment. In Louisiana (but not only there) creolization unfolded over centuries. Indeed, right from the very beginning of the colony, licit or illicit unions between Indian, African, Canadian, French and other early settlers led to the creation of an Afro-Creole population and culture (Dawdy 2008, 181-182; Hall 1992b, 160). Therefore, I suggest that even if jazz is said to have emerged in the few decades from 1890 to 1917, the process of creolization that led to this development happened over two centuries, in an environment characterized by a series of asymmetrical power relationships. Nevertheless, an Afro-Creole culture developed and thrived until the twentieth century, when it experienced considerable setbacks resulting from the rise of segregation.

Before becoming a new and global genre, jazz started as a localized music played by a small group of people, or, to borrow a term from Slobin, it started as a micromusic.²⁰ Slobin has described micromusics as “small musics living in big systems” (2000, xiii), and as the product of subcultures that can be defined using different parameters such as social class and/or ethnicity. Micromusics always develop in relation to a superstructure, while an interculture – a cultural phenomenon that can penetrate and/or influence various groups²¹ – can also be at play. Bonniol’s analysis of creole-forming situations strongly suggests a hierarchy in the various cultures involved, which could be described using Slobin’s framework. In the case of antebellum Louisiana, the superstructure would be that of the White masters, Creoles²² or Anglo-Americans, and the subcultures, those of the Creoles of colour, the slaves, the Cajuns, the Sicilians, the Jews, etc. However, after the Purchase and especially after the Civil War, the Anglo-American culture gradually became the superstructure while the French Creole culture – whether White or Black – became one of the subcultures involved in the development of jazz, and their music, a micromusic. This could explain why, by the time of the New Orleans jazz diaspora of the 1920s, when jazz was first getting recorded and gaining in popularity and recognition, not one Creole song was recorded,²³ even if Creole identity became important in the marketing of early jazz.

²⁰ Some authors have argued that jazz did not only appear in New Orleans, but at various places all at once. Even if that is the case, all these various versions of early jazz would have been micromusics.

²¹ The rise of segregation at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century could be described as an interculture phenomenon, in that it affected (for better or for worse) all the socio-racial classes of Louisiana.

²² Some Creoles of colour as *gens de couleur libres* were also slave owners.

²³ This could be due to a commercial assumption that songs in the French language would have been less marketable and therefore less profitable (Raeburn 2014). It is likely that a market existed for those songs (in Louisiana and French-Canada or in French countries in Europe) but this might not have been recognized by a recording industry dominated by the Anglo-American superstructure.

Indeed, as Raeburn has suggested, the word *Creole* had become more of a “free-floating signifier”²⁴ rather than the marker of a specific cultural identity, as it had previously been (2012a, 13). As it got absorbed into the broader African American culture – due to the one-drop rule and the rise of segregation after the Civil War²⁵ – the specificity of the Creole culture became less and less known and understood, while “blackness,” and by extension a more generic understanding of *Creole*, became associated with authenticity when speaking about jazz – the latter also implying relative privilege and exoticism. Consequently, *Creole*, as a signifier, became a trendy marketing tool used not only by bandleaders such as King Joe Oliver, but also by manufacturers who used it to sell various products, such as hair treatments, to African Americans (Raeburn 2012a, 13-14). This transformation of *Creole* into a signifier might explain why, as a cultural group, Creoles are often described in a cursory fashion and as something of the past.

However, the later recording of Creole songs, and of Anglo-American songs that included verses translated in French, as well as the composition/improvisation of new Creole songs all indicate that the Creoles themselves continued – and still continue – to identify as such.²⁶ In order to best comprehend their position and status in the social fabric of Louisiana, the next chapter presents a review of the unique history of the state as a French and a Spanish colony before being purchased by the United States.

²⁴ According to Dominguez, the transformation of *Creole* into a marketing signifier started a little before the Civil War as the rivalry between Anglo-American and Creoles had been going on for decades. She argues that this “is part of the process of culturalizing sociopolitical differences. [For instance] Creole ice cream made from local ice made its first appearance in New Orleans” (1986, 126).

²⁵ According to this rule, one drop of Black blood made a person legally Black. See p. 35 for more information about this rule and the rise of segregation after the Civil War.

²⁶ See Nick Spitzer (2011).

CHAPTER 2

CREOLIZATION AND CREOLES IN LOUISIANA: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CREOLE STATE

In order to understand how this “peculiar creole-American cultural interchange” (Logsdon and Bell 1992, 245) happened, it is necessary to explore the history of Louisiana as part of the French and Spanish empires in North America, and its development as a cosmopolitan society with a Creole culture closely tied to the Caribbean – mostly to St. Domingue (Haiti) and Cuba – before being sold to the United States. After about one hundred years of French and Spanish domination, the passage to Anglo-American control led to struggles for cultural and political power that only intensified during the Civil War and the postbellum period.

Louisiana’s social organization was one in which the *gens de couleur libres* stood in between the Whites and the slaves, which granted them access to a middle class status and associated economic and social privileges. This three-tiered society has been the locus of multiple cultural contacts, exchanges and cross-fertilizations eventually leading to the development of new cultural products – Creole food, religion and music. The historical summary that follows aims at describing the foundation and evolution of this peculiar cosmopolitan and three-tiered society as these are the specific characteristics that allowed for the process of creolization to take place, eventually leading to the development of various Creole musical genres.²⁷

²⁷ Such as Zydeco, Rhythm and Blues and Swamp Pop that appeared during the twentieth century.

French Empire in the Americas

Although it is not apparent anymore, France once had a vast empire in the Americas. In 1534-1535 Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence River and paved the way for Samuel de Champlain to found Port Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1605, and Quebec City in 1608. In the following years, Champlain himself went down the Ottawa River valley and many other French and French Canadian explorers and missionaries continued his work of exploration. One of the most notable was René-Robert Cavelier de La Salle who reached the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico in 1682 and took possession of the territory – *La Louisiane* – on behalf of the king of France.²⁸ In 1718, Jean Baptiste Lemoyne de Bienville founded the city of New Orleans; a city that not only became the capital of the colony but also an expansion of the French Caribbean colonies onto the North American continent.²⁹

In 1624-1625, France had taken possession of French Guyana and the islands of St. Christophe and Dominica; and then of Guadeloupe, Martinique and St. Lucia in 1635 and of St. Domingue in 1665, which became the richest of the French colonies, once counting as many as 455,089 slaves (Carré 2011, 4). Following the treaty of Utrecht (1713) and the treaty of Paris (1763), which ended respectively the War of the Spanish Succession and the Seven Years War, France ceded Acadia, Canada and St. Christophe to Great Britain. In 1803, Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States and, after a slave rebellion – actually a war of independence – in 1804 St. Domingue became a republic under the name of Haiti. Finally, after the fall of Napoleon in 1814, France ceded Dominica and

²⁸ French Louisiana was a vast territory going from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

²⁹ New Orleans has often been described as a continental, and the northernmost Caribbean city.

St. Lucia to Great Britain. As of today, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyana remain the only French territories in the Caribbean.

Maybe because of the near disappearance of the French Empire and the overwhelming presence of the British and Spanish Empires – and later of the United States – the involvement of France in the Atlantic slave trade has not often been discussed. Nevertheless, one and a half million Africans (Optiz 2009, 503) were “imported” from Central and West Africa to the various French colonies of the Caribbean and Louisiana to help build the colonies and to work on the plantations.

A Short History of Cosmopolitan Louisiana

Right from its very beginning, Louisiana bore the seed for the development of a cosmopolitan society. According to historian Jerah Johnson, its early settlement by French Canadians would have played a significant role in the formation of such a society:

Most of colonial Louisiana's history is better understood against its Canadian background. The formative Louisiana colonial experience represented an extension of the French experience in Canada. [...] Gary B. Nash put it succinctly when he noted that the “greater flexibility and willingness” of the French “to accept native culture on its own terms ... led to a far greater degree of interaction [and intermarriages] between the cultures in New France than in England’s colonies.” (Johnson 1992, 19, 24)³⁰

Like the rest of the Americas, Louisiana was inhabited by the First Nations long before the establishment of *La Louisiane* as a French colony.³¹ Continuing the work of

³⁰ Johnson attributes the assimilationist views of the first colonizers to a particular French ethos that “offered far greater freedom for individuals to associate not only with members of their own corporate groups but, more important, with members of other groups as well. By the eighteenth century, this freedom had become a fundamental characteristic of French society” (1992, 16)

³¹ Among the Native nations were the Natchez, the Choctaw, and the Chickasaws. As the African and Native populations intermarried, the Natives “‘melted away into mulattoes’ The Indians became New Orleanians by gradually blending into the city’s African community. An overwhelming number of black families in New Orleans today have in their genealogies several not very remote Indian ancestors” (Johnson, 1992, 40).

La Salle, Pierre Lemoyne d'Iberville led three expeditions – in 1699, 1700 and 1701 – during which he built three forts and started the colonization of the territory. Indeed, Laura Locoul Gore wrote in her memoir as a plantation owner – Laura Plantation, now a historic site – that one of her first ancestors had come from Quebec with Iberville in 1699, “to settle the Louisiana wilderness” (Locoul Gore 2007, 122). In 1714, Louis Antoine Juchereau de St. Denis built two huts to serve as a trading post that became Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches two years later and an important French trade center in the Lower Mississippi Valley.³² In 1719, only a year after Bienville founded the city of New Orleans, slaves were imported from West Africa (Hall 1992a, 67; Usner 1979, 25). La Salle, Iberville, St. Denis, and Bienville were all “New French” that is, French Canadians. Further explaining why he argues that this is a significant factor in the development of the colony Johnson continues:

Canada's French were turning into Indians both in culture and in blood at a far more rapid rate than the Indians were becoming French. So in the 1680s, and particularly in the 1690s, the assimilationist ideal declined. [...] Rather, crown priorities were reordered so that the assimilationist ideal was shifted to a secondary level of concern and, remarkably, transferred from Canada to Louisiana. (Johnson 1992, 28)³³

Around 1724, sixty households of German farmers were established on the east side of the Mississippi River just above New Orleans in an area that became known as the *Côte d'Allemagne* in response to the efforts of the French *Compagnie des Indes* to settle Louisiana (Hall 1992b, 18; Klein n.d., 18). This effort also involved the importation of

³² The fort still exists today in the city of Natchitoches, which makes St. Denis' modest establishment the oldest European settlement in the territory of the Louisiana Purchase and an important location in the development of the Afro-French creole culture (www.biographi.ca).

³³ From 1699 until 1763, *La Louisiane* had been ruled by French Canadian governors for 41 years – with Bienville ruling for 29 years in four different periods – and three years by a French-born governor who had already spent 20 years in New France before his appointment as governor.

slaves. Most of them arrived in *Louisiane* between 1719 and 1731 and, despite their dehumanizing ordeal and many deaths, they formed “a particularly coherent, functional, well integrated, autonomous and self-confident slave community” (Hall 192b, 159). By 1736, the French were at war with the Chickasaw Indians. In need of soldiers, the French enlisted Africans, both slaves and free – promising freedom to those who were not already free – and by 1739 *Gouverneur Bienville* “was commanding 270 blacks, including 50 *nègres libres*” (Ibid., 173).

From 1763 to 1800, Louisiana went under the control of the Spanish crown, which nevertheless offered asylum to the French-speaking Acadians who had been deported in 1755 from what is now Nova-Scotia. Spanish-speaking “Isleños from the Canary Islands, Germans from various German states, as well as English, French, and Americans” also migrated to the colony (Klein n.d., 44-45). Still, “the Franco-African host culture of the city [...] was able to resist the attempt of a small Spanish officialdom to make the colony conform to Iberian norms during the forty years Spain held Louisiana” (Hirsh and Logsdon 1992, 11).

[But] it was during the Spanish period that Louisiana’s free people of color achieved sufficient numbers and a political importance that enabled them to mature into a community. [...] In 1785, [...] 563 free people of color lived in New Orleans and 612 lived in the districts. [...] By 1803, the overwhelming number lived in the city, close to 1,200 of the 1,500 or so. (Johnson 1992, 52, 53)

Although France sold *La Louisiane* to the United States in 1803, and Anglo-Americans and their slaves started to arrive, the new state remained mostly French. This is not to say that the Spaniards were absent from the city’s cultural life: “The first Spanish-language newspaper in the United States, *El Misisipí* (1808), and the first

Spanish-language daily, *La Patria* (1846), were published in New Orleans” (Dunn 2007, 849). Nevertheless, New Orleans attracted French citizens fleeing the revolution, and then the rise or fall of Napoleon, and many free people of colour after the independence of St. Domingue (Haiti) in 1804 – a significant number of them coming to Louisiana via Cuba where they had first taken refuge. Until the end of the nineteenth century, Creole society was able to maintain a significant but declining presence as the influx of French-speaking immigrants, the foreign French – *français étrangers* – contributed to the persistence of the French-speaking population in New Orleans after the Louisiana Purchase. The foreign French came either from Europe or St. Domingue (Lachance 1992, 102-103). Most notably,

[i]n 1809, the population of the city doubled with the influx of ten thousand refugees from St. Domingue. [...] Historians estimate that these migrants were divided in thirds among white plantation owners, free people of color, and black slaves, [which] certainly contributed to the performative practices linked to Catholic Mediterranean and Caribbean cultural traditions. (Dunn 2007, 854)

Eventually, the French-speaking community included French, French Canadians, Cajuns, free people of colour, and slaves. Anglo-Americans and their slaves also started to settle in Louisiana, especially in the north, as the region offered good opportunities for the production and sale of cotton. The settlement of Anglo-Americans concurred with the arrival of new groups of immigrants, such as Irish and Germans, who contributed to the increase of the White population in New Orleans, which tripled in the 1830s. Finally, more than 200,000 Italians migrated to New Orleans in the 1920s, a group that became visible enough that the neighbourhood they lived in was nicknamed “Little Palermo” (Boulard, 1988).

As we can see by this short review of Louisiana's history, the colony, and then the state, has always been a cosmopolitan society which, especially during the antebellum period, made possible cultural contacts, exchanges, and marriage/concubinage between its members – a fact that certainly facilitated the creolization of the many cultures forming this cosmopolitan society.

The Creoles of Louisiana

Although the word *Creole* is now commonplace in the English language, its meaning was, and often still is not always clear. It has always carried the notion first, of a category of people and later on, of a specific cultural identity. The oldest form of *Creole* would be the Portuguese *crioulo*, but the first documented use is the Spanish *criollo*, both derived from the verb *criar* (to create, nourish/nurse, raise), from the Latin *creare* (to create). If scholars agree about the origin of the term, they disagree as to its original meaning. Either it was used to designate the slaves born in the colonies and then later also applied to the Spaniards born in the colonies (Bonniol 2006, 49-50; Hall 1992b, 157; Tregle 1992, 137); or it first designated the Spaniards and then later the slaves born in the colonies (Knorr 2008, 2; Dominguez 1997, 14). In any case, it came to French from the Spanish *criollo* and finally from the French language into English.

First spelled *criole*, the word is documented in the French language beginning in 1649. It appears in the *Richelet* and *Furetière Dictionnaires* in 1680 and 1690 respectively, wherein it is defined as “the name that the Spaniards give to their children born in the Indies” (*Furetière* 1690, my translation) which is to say in the colonies.³⁴ However, in 1722 a French missionary, *le Père Labat*, wrote about the *Créoles* as Black

³⁴ C'est un nom que les Espagnols donnent à leurs enfants qui sont nez [*sic*] aux Indes (*Furetière* 1690). According to Véronique, these children were most likely Métis (2000, 33).

slaves (Cohen 2007, 5; Chaudenson 2001, 4; Véronique 2000, 33), which corresponds to the use of the word in other French colonies.

As Tregle wrote:

In the French colony of St. Domingue during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *creole* meant simply native-born, again without reference to color, and it was this tradition which took root in colonial Louisiana as early as the beginning of French settlement at Mobile. Long before the transfer to Spain, Iberville and Bienville referred to *creoles* as a matter of course in their communication with royal officials, and church functionaries regularly so described native parishioners in registering births, marriages, and deaths among their flock. Spanish officials, for their part, identified native Louisiana slaves as *criollos*, while bondsmen themselves in the late eighteenth-century colony separated their numbers into those who were creoles and those who were not. (Tregle 1992, 137)

A hundred and fifty years before Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Confiant, the French-speaking population – both White and coloured – vigorously claimed their *Créole* identity to differentiate themselves from Anglo-Americans settlers, namely free Whites and their Black slaves. Tregle summarizes:

It was the clash between original Louisianans and migrant Anglo-Americans after the Louisiana Purchase which for the first time made place of birth a critical issue and gave the *creole* label its crucial significance. [...] Now the new partners in the community derived from a democratic republic, children of English common law and the language of Shakespeare, heirs of the Protestant Reformation. In almost every conceivable way they represented a tradition utterly unknown to the indigenous population. And unlike the Spaniards, they came in ever-growing numbers, vigorous, assertive, demanding, often boisterous and domineering. There could be no escaping awareness that they represented a deadly threat to the way of life of the original inhabitants or that their presence made conflict for control of the community an inevitability. (Tregle 1992, 133-134)

This conflict implied an underlying desire of the French – who felt threatened – to maintain, and Anglo-Americans to impose, their own ideology, language and religion.

Especially striking was the big difference between the social position that was deemed appropriate for Black and Creole people to occupy. As Hirsh and Logsdon explain:

[T]he Americanization of New Orleans was more than just a struggle between Americans and Creoles. It also involved, for nearly a century, the curious coexistence of a three-tiered Caribbean racial structure alongside its two-tiered American counterpart in an ethnically divided city. (1992, 189)

This three-tiered society was composed of Whites, free people of colour, and slaves. All the three groups were Creoles as they had been born and lived in Louisiana for a few generations, so that they also came to be called the *ancienne population*. They shared the Catholic religion and the French language as important defining factors of their cultural identity, although they were divided by skin colour, wealth, rights and privileges (or lack thereof), occupation, and education.

Louisiana also had different legal traditions: the French Civil law or Napoleonic code and the *Code Noir*. The Napoleonic Code gave more rights to women – such as the right to own property, to inherit, and to enter into contracts – than the English Common Law (Morlas 2005, 4-6). First passed in 1685 by King Louis XIV in France, the *Code Noir* outlined the conditions of slavery in the French Caribbean colonies. Introduced in Louisiana in 1724, five years after African slaves were first brought to New Orleans, the *Code Noir*, prescribed baptism, marriage and religious instruction in the Catholic faith, as well as minimum food and clothing allowances, the right to complain if mistreated, and the right to manumission. It also decreed Sundays as a day of rest, forbade the sale of children without their mothers, and prohibited interracial marriages and concubinage (Johnson 1992, 41). According to Johnson, 425 slaves were baptized at the St. Louis Church in New Orleans between 1731 and 1733 (1992, 41). And, despite the *Code Noir*,

“French missionaries [...] sanctioned interracial Catholic unions, hoping to build a Catholic colony of settlers and natives” (Pastor 2005, 1).

Although its rules were not always respected, the *Code Noir* provided slaves with some rights and avenues towards freedom, which was a significant difference between the French assimilationist and Anglo-American segregationist regimes (Johnson 1992, 41; Morlas 2005, 93). According to Johnson, this “French ethos” came from

early modern French social structure and theory, as well as [...] the adjustment the French had to make when they sought to replicate them in Canada and, a century later, in Louisiana. [Indeed] the assimilationist impulse in France offered far greater freedom for individuals to associate not only with members of their own corporate group but, more important, with members of other groups as well. By the eighteenth century, this freedom had become a fundamental characteristic of French society. (Johnson 1992, 13, 16)

Indeed, as a middle caste, the *gens de couleur libres* enjoyed some of the privileges of Whites prior to the Civil War and Reconstruction, such as:

marry[ing] legally, the right to own property, to serve as witnesses in a court of law, and [...] the right of trial by jury. They were allowed to bear arms and fought in defense of their new nation in the War of 1812 (Dollar 2011, 3).

[However], the *Code Noir* did not threaten the White supremacy but contributed to the establishment of a three-tiered society in which the free people of colour occupied a middle position between the Whites and the slaves. (Le Menestrel 2006, 221, my translation)³⁵

The majority of the rich Creoles planters (among whom there were some free people of colour) lived either in New Orleans or the in the southwest along the River Road on both sides of the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, or along the Cane River, around Natchitoches in the northwest of the state.

³⁵ Le *Code noir* ne menace donc en rien la suprématie des Blancs, mais contribue à fonder une société tripartite au sein de laquelle les gens de couleur libres occupent une position intermédiaire entre les Blancs et les esclaves (Le Menestrel 2006, 221).

The French Slaves

Although relatively little has been written about them, many of the French slaves were also Creoles. As discussed in the next chapter, the literature provides evidence that under the French regime slaves had already been gathering to dance and sing and that they also had a repertoire of plantation songs. Both dances and songs were surely influenced by the African regions from which the slaves came. Scholars have noted that under the French regime most of the slaves were “imported” from the Senegal River basin, which allowed them to bring and preserve their Bambara culture, “a happenstance unique in the annals of New World slavery” (Hirsh and Logsdon 1992, 11). Moreover, “[t]he early Africanization of the culture of New Orleans under French rule was reinforced by a massive re-Africanization under Spanish rule (Hall 1992a, 84-85). This, and the social organization of the colony in the early decades, “contributed to an unusually cohesive and Africanized slave culture – arguably the most Africanized slave culture in the United States” (Ibid., 65). In this regard, the dynamism and adaptation of this Africanized culture in the “New World” is well demonstrated by the fact that

[l]inguistic as well as historical evidence has established that the Louisiana creole language was created by these early slaves and was not imported from the French islands. This language became a vital part of the identity, not only of Afro-creoles, but of many whites of all classes. (Hall, 1992a, 69)

As late as the 18th century, just a few years before the waves of immigration coming from St. Domingue,³⁶ a strong African component was still present in the city, which might have had a significant influence along with “the 3,226 [French-speaking] slaves accompanying the refugees of 1809” (Lachance 1992, 117). Their arrival added

³⁶ Refugees from St. Domingue actually started to arrive in New Orleans in the 1790s, followed by “several boatloads of refugees [which] arrived in 1803 and 1804” (Lachance 1992, 104).

French Caribbean elements to the already distinct slave culture of New Orleans, such as “the dances in Congo Square, the creolized French dialect, [and] the practice of voodoo” (Ibid.).

The literature is scarce about the fate of the French slaves and their experience after the Louisiana Purchase. It seems that access to manumission continued for a while, but prior to the Civil War, legal restriction increased in order to limit and eventually ban it (Dollar 2011, 3). In one of the few articles speaking only about the life of the slaves after the Louisiana Purchase, Michael Picone (2003) has gathered evidence that Francophone planters purchased American slaves and that eventually Franco-, Anglo- and Creolophone slaves did work together in the fields and in the households.³⁷ Indeed, Lachance estimates that

[s]laves were probably the first caste to cease to be predominantly French. [...] In January 1831, [a refugee from St. Domingue] wrote that over the two preceding years, more than twenty thousand slaves had been introduced into the states and complained that “everywhere one only hears English spoken, for in every house there are a number of old servants who have become fluent in this idiom.” (Lachance 1992, 117-119)

According to Picone, who quotes Taylor, “approximately 80,500 slaves were imported from the East” – meaning that they most likely had an Anglophone profile – so that by 1840 they constituted “48% of the total slave population” in the state (2003, 411). Nevertheless, there must have been some French and Catholic slaves left until the Civil War. For instance, after their emancipation, people who had been enslaved downtown (the French district), some of whom were relatives of Creoles, often remained where they were and integrated themselves into the Creole society (Brothers 2006, 189).

³⁷ Picone’s research was done in the Cane River Valley, in northwestern Louisiana.

The Creoles of Colour

From the early days of the colony until the first years of the American period, some slaves in Louisiana were able to gain their freedom, which eventually allowed them to form a tier of their own between the free Whites and the Black slaves. Moreover, during the colonial period, an increasing number of White men chose to marry Indian or Black women (Dollar 2011, 2; Usner 1979, 39). As Hall notes,

[d]uring the early decades, then, New Orleans was a town with loose, flexible race relations. [...] Documents [...] record the departure of Indian and African slaves [...]. They were often Indian-African couples. (Hall 1992a, 64, 65)³⁸

Dollar elaborates:

The racially mixed offspring of these unions became the first of Louisiana's Creole of color. [...] Many of the first-generation Creoles of color [...] had been born in slavery during the French colonial period when the *Code Noir* provided several avenues to obtain freedom. [...] The Spanish period continued the trend with a liberal manumission policy that contributed to the growth of a significant population of free Creoles of color within the colony. (Dollar 2011, 2-3)³⁹

According to the 1732 census, New Orleans Blacks worked as apprentices with French tradesmen, merchants and craftsmen. In addition,

252 Negroes then residing in the city belonged to skilled white craftsmen. Carpenters, joiners, and blacksmiths owned more Negro slaves than other artisans, but blacks worked at a variety of specialties ranging from hospital service to ironworking. Occupational and personal proximity of these Negroes with white inhabitants invited interracial mixture and emancipation. Well into the nineteenth century, a growing class of free blacks and mulattoes and an expanding group of black artisans contributed profoundly to the economic welfare, as well as the cultural wealth, of New Orleans. (Usner 1979, 35)

³⁸ See note 28 on page 19.

³⁹ The right to self-purchase (*coartación*) was included in *Las Siete Partidas* that replaced the *Code Noir* during the Spanish regime (Gross and de la Fuente 2013, 1734-35; Pasquier 2011).

The number of free people of colour was also increased by unions between White men and quadroon women – often refer to as *plaçage* – that took place since colonial times.⁴⁰

After the Purchase, Creoles of colour participated actively in the economy of the new state. Many received a “European” education, either at home or abroad. Others became skilled workers or tradesmen. In the countryside, many became slaveholding planters, landowners, tenant farmers, or simple field hands or labourers on the plantations. Creoles of colour valued formal musical training and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, many became jazz musicians such as Jelly Roll Morton, Kid Ory, Sidney Bechet and jazz and blues singer Lizzie Miles (Dollar 2011, 4; Picone 2003, 406; Le Menestrel 2007, 97; Brothers 2006, 174).

According to Lachance, the *gens de couleur libres* who immigrated from St. Domingue were considered to be foreign French, though they increased the number of the French-speaking free people of colour in New Orleans (1992, 102-103).

[And], [t]o the extent that their actual number was lower, immigration [of Anglo-American free people of color] in the 1830s was less important, perhaps even limited enough for free persons of color to have remained preponderantly French-speaking as late as 1840, or longer than a majority of whites and slaves continued to speak French. (Lachance 1992, 119)

The White Creoles

As the descendants of French, Spanish and French Canadian colonizers, White Creoles occupied the top of the social ladder – the Creole aristocracy, as they came to be called – with the emergence of the plantation economy during the Spanish regime and its

⁴⁰ *Plaçage* refers to a practice in which white men established women of mixed ancestry as “official” mistresses, providing them with houses and financially supporting them and the children born of their union. This practice would have been quite common, even if these unions were forbidden by the French *Code Noir* and later by the Anglo-American Black Code. However in recent literature, Askalon (2012) and Clark (2013) argue that such unions did exist but were more of the nature of common law marriages.

coming to maturity during the antebellum period (Johnson 1992, 19). However, the social status of the first white Creole settlers was more modest. Indeed, a significant number of the first settlers were French Canadians both women and men, some of whom came with Iberville as early as 1699 (Morlas 2005, 17; Locoul Gore 2007, 122). Others came as soldiers and sailors (Johnson 1992, 36; Hall 1992, 61) and some as illegal fur traders known as *coureurs des bois* (Johnson 1992, 29).⁴¹ Settlers also came from France. Many were soldiers and sailors; some were convicts (Morlas 2005, 18; Hall 1992b 4-6). Some German families came with the *Compagnie des Indes* and assimilated – mostly through marriage – with the French settlers. Nonetheless, Acadians born in Louisiana⁴² were not considered Creoles, even though some of them became wealthy planters known as the “Genteel Acadians” (Dubois and Horvath 2003, 193).

By the time of the Purchase, many of the first settlers had become planters. Some were quite wealthy, owning big estates on which they cultivated sugar cane through the labour of slaves. They enjoyed a rich lifestyle, often living on their plantation during the spring and the summer until the harvest, and in New Orleans during the winter (Morlas 2005, 4; Locoul Gore 2007, 48). Such families often sent their boys to be educated in France (Locoul Gore 2007, 20; Tregle 1992, 160), while the girls tended to be educated at the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans (Morlas 2005, 67; Locoul Gore 2007, 72). In their leisure time, White Creole families also attended the opera and frequented society and masked balls. But, even if they maintained close ties with France and the French culture after the Purchase, a fair number of White Creole families married their daughters – and

⁴¹ When a company was given monopoly on fur trading, such as the *Compagnie des Indes*, the *coureurs des bois* were considered illegal because they traded autonomously, disregarding the monopoly.

⁴² Also called Cajuns.

less frequently their sons – to the children of rich Anglo-American planters, creating alliances that maintained their social status and privileges (Lachance 1992, 128).

Race Relations

In 1806, the Black Code replaced the old *Code Noir*. It stipulated that free people of colour ought never to insult or strike white people, nor presume to conceive themselves equal to the white; but on the contrary that they ought to yield to them in every occasion, and never speak or answer to them but with respect, under the penalty of imprisonment. (*Acts Passed at the First Session of the First Legislature of the Territory of Orleans*, Sec. 40, 188,190)

After the purchase, the White Creole elite wanted to protect their privileges as the ruling class not only as the dominant racial cast but also in front of the increasing number of Anglo-Americans migrating to the newly acquired territory or, as of 1812, to the newly formed state. The arrival of a large number of foreign French played a significant role in delaying the anglicization of Louisiana. As Lachance states:

The addition of white French immigrants to the white creole population enabled French-speakers to remain a majority of the white population until almost 1830. If a substantial proportion of free persons of color and slaves had not also spoken French, however, the Gallic community would have become a minority of the total population as early as 1820. (1992, 117)

In New Orleans the tension and struggle for political power between the two groups led to the division of the city into three semiautonomous municipalities from 1836 until 1852. This arrangement allowed each group to do business, pass regulations, and establish school systems “to perpetuate its culture and language” (Hirsh and Logsdon 1992, 93). Two of these municipalities were under the control of the French Creoles – but with mixed populations – while the third became the American sector (Hirsh and Logsdon 1992, 93; Tregle 1992, 156-157). However, even if White Creoles had become

used to living beside free people of colour (and in some cases sharing family names due to intermarriages or common law unions) tensions between the two groups often flared after 1803 (Morlas 2005, 115, 125). In one case, hostilities arose when the White heirs of a White Creole man attempted to disinherit the mixed children he had with a free woman of colour, with whom he had lived for fifty years until his death in 1845 (Morlas 2005, 113).

It is ironic that slaves and free people of colour should have been so important in maintaining the French language and heritage in Louisiana since, after the Civil War, Whites appropriated the term *Creole* – which had been used to designate native-born people of Louisiana regardless of colour – to designate only White native-born people, in order to hold on to their class privileges and differentiate themselves from the free people of colour and from the newly freed Blacks (Tregle 1992, 173; Dollar 2011, 7). As they were sometimes suspected to have “a touch of the tarbrush” (Dominguez 1997, 141), the White Creoles also actively argued for the purity of their ancestry,⁴³ denying miscegenation and strongly excluding people of (obvious) mixed heritage from this new definition of the Creole identity (Rodriguez 1997, 137-148; Tregle 1992, 172-173). Among other things, this required putting aside their rivalry with Anglo-Americans for the sake of protecting their belief in White supremacy. In other words, as Tregle wrote “[u]nchallenged white supremacy, in short, had made it possible to accommodate a pan-racial creolism. The Civil War changed all that” (1992, 172).

However, wanting to hold to their middle caste position and privileges, “[a]fter slavery, the descendants of free people of colour chose to designate themselves Creole of

⁴³ Namely in the newspaper *Le Carillon* that was published between 1869 and 1875.

colour in order to differentiate themselves from former slaves” (Le Menestrel 2007, 97). In turn, some Blacks joined in this struggle for power by asserting their superiority over the mixed-blood mulattoes. Rodriguez cites as one example a long poem written in “Negro dialect” that seeks to “denigrate the *métis* but also [...] deny them categorical status as a separate race” (1997, 139-140). Nevertheless, following the end of Reconstruction, the removal of the federal troops in 1877, the rise of the Redeemers,⁴⁴ and the 1879 and 1898 State Constitutions (Somers 1974, 27, 29), all African Americans faced increased segregation with the application of Jim Crow laws and the one-drop rule according to which one drop of Black blood made a person legally Black.

Traditionally on the middle rung of a three-tier colonial society, all of Louisiana’s native-born people of color were affected by the American binary racial code that Anglo America brought. Americanization recast these people from their colonial cultural identities into new American racial ones. (Dollar 2011, 2)

This new one-drop rule put an end to the three-tiered society of Louisiana. Little by little, the Anglo-American bi-partite White and Black social order and the so-called “Separate but Equal” ideology took over with the tacit approbation of the Supreme Court as demonstrated by its ruling of the 1886 *Plessy v Ferguson* case.⁴⁵ As a result, “New Orleans became, in its race relations, very similar to other American cities in the South” (Logsdon and Bell 1992, 259).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ A group of White conservatives dedicated to preserving/re-establishing White supremacy in Louisiana – along with more radical and violent groups like the White League/*La Ligue Blanche* and the Ku Klux Klan.

⁴⁵ In 1892 Homer Plessy, supported by the *Comité des Citoyens*, a Creole activist organization, challenged the 1890 *Separate Car Act* by sitting in a White only car. Four years later, the Supreme Court ruled against Plessy stating that the Louisiana Segregation Act was constitutional.

⁴⁶ However, according to Somers (1974), the urban setting of New Orleans created an environment where race relations were better and more integrated. Interestingly, he chronicles this point using sports and unions as examples, although music and jazz might have played the same role, as Boulard (1998) argues in his article.

This new and institutionalized segregation was particularly harsh for the Creole community, which was stripped of its antebellum middle caste privileges. As a result, the Creole community isolated itself, maintaining exclusive practices with regard to education, occupational patterns, social relations, and marriages. Therefore, markers of their Creole cultural identity – family background, language, occupation, morality, colour, and a certain appreciation of mostly French arts and music, which were seen as a cultural refinement, became important signs of distinction from the larger African American population. However, the neighbourhoods in which they lived were racially mixed ones where Irish, German, Jewish, Spanish, Italian and coloured families “interact[ed] with each other in a variety of ways, [and, even if they did not become] socially intimates, [...] sincere and genuine patterns of neighboring developed in downtown New Orleans’ racially mixed neighborhoods” in the last and first decades of the nineteenth and twentieth century” (Anthony 1978, 150-152).

During the same time and despite the efforts of White Creole associations to protect and promote their culture, the French Creole culture was gradually repressed as the French language was outlawed from schools. The 1868 state constitution “excluded the French language from the elementary schools and forbade publication of laws and judicial proceedings in anything other than English” (Tregle 1992, 170). Then, “In 1916, the State Board of Education suppressed the use of French in Louisiana’s schools” (Natsis 1999, 326). Finally, the State Constitution of 1921 established English as the sole language of instruction, enabling English to take over as the prevalent language in Louisiana (Natsis 1999, 326; Dubois and Horvath 2003, 201; Johnson 2000, 249).

“In present-day southwest Louisiana, individuals who call themselves Creoles are descendants of both free people of color and freed slaves” (Le Menestrel 2007, 97).

Asserting their Creole identity is also a means to differentiate themselves from the French Acadians/Cajuns among which they often live (Le Menestrel 2007, 88; Spitzer 2003, 58). Le Menestrel adds that “[i]n New Orleans and in the Cane River region around Natchitoches, Creole activists have asserted their identity as neither white nor black, but uniquely Creole” (Le Menestrel 2007, 97). However, the Cane River National Historic Park gives the term a more inclusive definition: “Today, as in the past, Creole transcends racial boundaries. It connects people to their colonial roots, be they descendants of European settlers, enslaved Africans, or those of mixed heritage, which may include African, French, Spanish, and American Indian influences,” a definition which is closer to Usner and Glissant’s concepts of creolization as discussed earlier.

After much effort by Anglo-Americans to assimilate the unique French Creole culture of Louisiana, this complex cultural identity has become one of the most distinctive and celebrated features of the Creole state, which has contributed and continues to contribute a great deal to the U.S. and global culture through its creolized cultural output such as jazz, *Mardi Gras*, voodoo, gumbo, and more.

If, as stated above, Louisiana history led to the cosmopolitan society that fostered an environment in which cultural and musical creolization happened, the Creoles (of colour) became active agents through which the process occurred.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRECURSORS OF EARLY JAZZ IN NEW ORLEANS

Each ethnic group in New Orleans contributed to the very active musical environment in the city, and in this way to the development of early jazz

National Park Service – New Orleans Jazz

The years between 1890 and 1917 are generally agreed to be the time when the development of early jazz took place. By this time, New Orleans was the largest and most cosmopolitan city of the South (Ellison 1994, 293), whose unique French and Spanish colonial history and Creole culture made it different from all other cities in the United States.

Jazz was born out of a process of creolization of various music genres. One of the musical components involved in this process was what James Lincoln Collier has called the “black-American Folk Music,” a term he used to describe the unique culture that the Black slaves developed as their musical practices began to be influenced by the “white culture in which it was embedded.” Collier called this period the “American transplantation” (1978, 16, 17).

Black American folk music comprises work songs and boat songs – whose texts were not always related with the work itself, but were sometimes “insult songs” or “song of derision” – field hollers,⁴⁷ street cries from the street vendors, prison songs, play songs – for both children and adults – as well as spirituals and ring shouts⁴⁸ (Collier 1978, 19, 20-28), and eventually country blues.⁴⁹ However, even if some Creole songs were

⁴⁷ Collier use the spelling hollar (1978, 21)

⁴⁸ A dance sometimes accompanying the spirituals

⁴⁹ According to Schuller, the blues gradually emerged out of the synthesis of work songs, field hollers and prison songs ([1968] 1986, 36).

collected in the 1867 anthology *Slave Songs of the United States*, neither Collier nor Schuller mentioned them, nor the French *cantiques* sung in the Catholic Church, in their overview of early African American music. Nevertheless these songs were part of the soundscapes of New Orleans and Southwest Louisiana until – or close to – the turn of the twentieth century. The musical White culture that influenced the development of Black American folk music included various dance musics such as the waltzes, minuets, quadrilles and others performed in the many balls held all year long; classical music performed at the opera or at concerts given at the French Opera house, at theaters, or by the Negro Philharmonic Society; and military music and parades. These various genres of music – often performed by Black slaves for their White masters, or by Black or Creole soldiers – also played a role in the development of early jazz, as they were appropriated by the Creoles, especially during the nineteenth century.

Therefore this chapter focuses more closely on the various musics played and heard in New Orleans at the time, as one of the products of the creolization that took place throughout the history of Louisiana. It is important to note that even if the population was divided into rigid classes, the residential patterns weren't as divided. Some slaves lived in close proximity to their masters' home in rich parts of the city. Other neighbourhoods were racially mixed, with *gens de couleur libres* living "door to door with locally born whites, immigrants, and black slaves" (Campanella 2006, 298). The music played by the various groups was accessible to others not only during parades, balls or other public occasions, but also because they were living close to each other. Consequently, I will review the different musical genres enumerated above, starting with the African-influenced dances and music and the Creole plantation songs, before

discussing the European-influenced ballroom dances and music, classical music of Creole composers and finally military music.

Black American Folk Music

In his book *Early Jazz*, Gunther Schuller, a strong advocate of the African origins of jazz, argues that “the slave continued to maintain the three basic canons of his [African] musical traditions” ([1968] 1986, 18). In a similar vein, James Lincoln Collier attributed three main defining features to the Black American folk music of the nineteenth century (Collier 1974, 24). When combined, their analyses offer an interesting overview on the main characteristics of pre-jazz African American music, even if at times Schuller over-reached in his assessment of jazz as an “extension of traditional African music” (Sanchirico 2012, 59). Not only for Schuller and Collier but also for many jazz historians and musicologists, major features of Black American folk music include:

- 1- An approach to time that involved an attempt to reproduce in the European musical system the implications of the cross-rhythms – polyrhythms – of Africa. Often based on three-over-two figures, this eventually evolved into the rhythmic “swing” of jazz (Schuller [1968] 1986, 7-10, 17-18; Collier, 1978, 24-25, 106);
- 2- The essential but contrasting rhythmic element that is “[t]he foundation of a regular substructure, [...] the beat” over which a melodic line can be played in a more or less improvised and free rhythm and phrasing (Schuller [1968] 1986, 18; Collier 1978, 25);

- 3- Common use of the pentatonic scale and of blue notes, that is, microtonal alteration of the third, seventh, and sometimes fifth so that the actual note falls in between the notes of the diatonic scale (Collier 1974, 26; Schuller [1968] 1986, 39-40, 46,51);
- 4- The use of different vocal techniques to alter the timber and/or pitch such as “slurring from one note to the next,” guttural tones and rasps, “leap into the falsetto,” and melismas (Collier 1974, 23, 27);
- 5- “[A] call-and-response format in which this musical material is set” (Schuller [1968] 1986, 18).

These characteristics have always proven to be a challenge when attempts have been made to transcribe them into European musical notation. The Creole songs from the Good Hope plantation (described below) were “as peculiar, as interesting and [...] as difficult to write down or to sing correctly, as any [of the slaves songs in English] that have preceded them” (Allen, Ware and Garrison 1867, 113). This suggests that the Creole songs share some, or all, of these characteristics. Moreover, in his 1950 dissertation, Dr. Alfred Pouinard collected twenty-two Creole songs of which he gave a brief analysis. The song “Joe Ferail” has a “binary rhythm in 2/4 with syncopation on the second beat following an irregular triplet that could give the impression of a ‘Negro’ rhythm.” A Berceuse has a “syncopated rhythm of a quarter note between two eights that reflects some influence of the first ragtime [...] the initial motif is based on the pentatonic scale [that] is frequent in African American melodies” (1950, 238-239, my translation)⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Rythme binaire à 2/4. Avec la syncope sur le second temps succédant à un triolet irrégulier, pourrait donner l'impression d'un rythme nègre. [...] le rythme syncopé une croche entre deux doubles se ressent de l'influence des premiers rag-time [...] La gamme pentatonique est fréquemment dans les mélodies des nègres américains (Pouinard 1950, 238-239).

The two over three approach to rhythm described by Schuller and Collier, or the binary rhythm with syncopation described by Pouinard, also appeared in the various rhythmic cells of Caribbean dance music, such as the habanera and tresillo units. The habanera cell in 2/2 or 2/4 time

is one of the rhythmic cells that were developed and/or introduced by the slaves dancing and singing in New Orleans and in the Caribbean. It is hard to say if rhythm cells were transplanted to New Orleans, or if their arrival reinforced rhythmical units already in place, since slaves arrived in the city both directly from Africa and via the Caribbean, mostly St. Domingue and Cuba.

As a result of the uprising, a large number of Haitians, both African descendants and French colonists, fled St. Domingue and settled in Cuba. Many of the musicians of African heritage among them played for the quadrilles, minuets and cotillions of the French elites who had also absconded to Cuba. As author Ned Sublette has pointed out, those musicians added their interpretation to the simple melodies that appeared in written form. They imposed African-derived cell or patterns, one of which initially came to be known as “tango,” a word of Kongo origin. This rhythmic cell gained such prominence in Cuban music that it became identified with Cuba and received the name “habanera” meaning “of Havana.”⁵¹ (Evans 2011, 38)

The habanera rhythm eventually made its way into the European classical music of Creole composers, as well as in the blues, early jazz and the Creole songs.

Slave Songs on the French Plantations

Africans began to gather to dance and sing early under the French Regime. In 1726, Antoine Simon Le Page Du Pratz (who had come to the colony in 1718) accepted the

⁵¹ The uprising Evans refers to is St. Domingue’s war of independence (see p. 19). In Cuba, the rhythm cell was called “tango,” and the two names were eventually applied to the same rhythmic unit (Sublette 2004, 134 and 2008, 123).

position of manager of the “Company’s plantation also known as the King’s plantation” (Evans 2011, 13), located on the South shore of the Mississippi River, across from New Orleans. At this time, “enslaved Africans customarily assembled for dancing and recreation on Sundays throughout the area” (Evans 2011, 18). However, in 1758 he warned other planters of the danger that such gatherings could foster rebellion, and abolished them on the King’s Plantation (Evans 2011, 13; Johnson 1995, 7; Ellison 1994, 288; Usner 1979, 40; Epstein 1973, 72).

There are many places where music and dances from African tradition were performed in French by slaves under the French, Spanish and early American regimes. Songs and/or dances would have been performed on the plantations and on various public squares including the famous Congo Square – *Place Congo* – in New Orleans. The first collection of slave songs – *Slave Songs of the United States* – was published in 1867 under the direction of William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware and Lucy McKim Garrison. In the introduction, the authors explain that the book follows articles written by Lucy McKim and H.G. Spaulding, who were the first to draw attention to the music of the slaves in 1862 and 1863.⁵² Most of the songs presented are English spirituals but the book closes with seven songs, all secular, that were “obtained from a lady who heard them sung before the war, on the ‘Good Hope’ plantation, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana” (Allen, Ware and Garrison 1867, 113). A short explanation informs the reader that they are sung in a language that is “evidently a rude corruption of French [as] spoken by the negroes [*sic*] in that part of the State” (Ibid.).

⁵² The articles in question were Lucy McKim’s “Negro Songs” published on August 9, 1862 in the *Dwight’s Journal of Music* (XXI); and H.G. Spaulding’s “Under the Palmetto” published in August 1863 in the *Continental Monthly*.

Despite their small number, these songs are still very informative: four⁵³ were “sung to a simple dance, a sort of minuet called the Coonjai” that was performed

by an orchestra of singers, the leader of whom – a man selected both for the quality of his voice and for his skill in improvising – sustains the solo part, while the others afford him an opportunity, as they shout in chorus, for inventing some neat verse to compliment some lovely *danseuse*, or celebrate the deeds of some plantation hero. [...] and the usual musical accompaniment, besides that of the singers, is that furnished by a skilful performer on the barrelhead-drum, the jawbone and key, or some other rude instrument. (Allen, Ware and Garrison 1867, 113)

The next song was based on a “sort of contra-dance” called the Calinda – also the name of the song – which, according to the authors, had then passed out of use. However, this is significant because the Calinda was danced during the gatherings at Congo Square, which are said to have played an important role in the preservation and transmission of African culture in North America (Evans 2011, 2). Another song in the collection – “Lolotte” – provided Louis Moreau Gottschalk with the theme for his *Ballade Creole* called “La Savane.”⁵⁴ Finally, the last song – “Musieu Banjo” – is described as an original composition from an “enterprising Negro” who, according to the authors, successfully wrote a “French song” (Allen, Ware and Garrison 1867, 113).

As mentioned above, these songs are the last presented in the book. The preceding ones were all collected in English-speaking slave states (mostly South Carolina and Virginia). However, the authors noted in their introduction of the anthology:

[t]he voice of the colored people has a peculiar quality [...] the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper. [It] abound[s] in “slides from one note to the another, and turns and cadences not

⁵³ “Belle Ayotte,” “Rémon,” “Aurore Bradaire,” and “Caroline.”

⁵⁴ Gottschalk is an American Creole composer born in New Orleans in 1829. In 1849, he made his debut in Paris playing a group of his Creole compositions. He died in Brazil in 1869.

in articulated notes” “It is difficult,” [...] “to express the entire character of these negro [*sic*] by mere musical notes and signs.”(Ibid., iv-vi)

This tends to indicate that, whether in English or French, the songs shared unique characteristics with regard to vocal timbre, pitch inflections, phrasing, and improvisation. However, these songs were collected long after the time when the first slaves had been brought to the French colony. Indeed, when they first started to sing while working on building the young colony, the slaves sang in their own languages using their own melodies and dances (Evans 2011, 77). The language used – French Creole – in the songs collected by Allen, Ware and Garrison, and the characteristics of the music as discussed above indicate that the process of creolization started long before the development of early jazz. Still, considering their African-derived musical characteristics, these songs should be mentioned along with the early Black American folk music as one of the constitutive elements of early jazz. Based on this small repertoire of French plantation songs that have survived until 1867, we can infer that there must have been many more at the time when Creole plantations were thriving. However, musical creolization not only happened on the plantations, but also at Congo Square in New Orleans.

Congo Square

In mainstream jazz history, Congo Square is presented as a location where slaves were able to maintain some of their African traditions and culture. However, the history of the Square is much more rich and complex as the varied crowd that gathered to dance and sing or simply to listen and watch included many Whites and tourists. Jerah Johnson and Freddi Evans have thoroughly documented this history. As their accounts demonstrate, Congo Square was a location where the diverse African cultures “joined and blended” together (Johnson 1995, 43), a fact largely ignored in jazz histories.

Congo Square is a famous and significant location because both free and enslaved Blacks and people of colour held a market and gathered to dance, play music and sing on Sundays from the earliest days of the colony until the middle of the nineteenth century. Its size and appearance have varied in accordance with the development of the city (Evans 2011, 18, 35; Johnson 1995, 20, 37), and today it is located in the southern corner of Louis Armstrong Park adjacent to Faubourg Tremé. By virtue of mandating that all colonial subjects observe the Catholic holidays, the *Code Noir* extended the privilege of Sunday as a work-free day to enslaved Africans giving them the opportunity to gather and commemorate their cultural practices (Evans 2011, 1, 15, 52). These gatherings took place on the plantations or in various public spaces. However, Congo Square was also used by Black vendors as a market place – the work-free day didn't prevent the slaves from working for themselves – that provided much-needed supplies to the city's residents (Johnson 1995, 13).

The permission to gather on Sundays was carried through under the Spanish and American regimes.⁵⁵ According to Johnson, “the Louisiana Purchase inaugurated the second and most important phase of Congo Square's history,” that is a period and location where the “formative stage of Afro-American culture involved a blending of African, Indian, and French, plus a few German and Spanish cultural elements” (1995, 19, 43). The new American Black Code adopted in 1806 still established Sunday as a day free of work (except for house slaves and drivers) but also contained articles to regulate and impose restriction on the lives of the free people of colour. And in 1817, following restrictions imposed after the slave revolt of 1811, the city council designated Congo

⁵⁵ The Spanish governors were under the direction of a captain-generalcy at Havana, Cuba where slave vendors' markets were commonplace (Johnson 1995, 15).

Square as the only place allowed for the Sunday assemblies of enslaved people (Evans 2011, 25, 26). However, it is important to note that despite this restriction, one visitor, Timothy Flint, “observed the Congo-dance in the streets in 1822” (Ibid., 42).

By then the area at the back of the Square, the Faubourg Tremé, had developed into a racially mixed neighbourhood with Blacks and Whites living side by side. Eventually it grew to become the home of New Orleans’ – and the whole Deep South’s – largest free-coloured community, growing from over 1300 at the time of the Purchase to 19,000 people of colour at the eve of the Civil War (Johnson 1995, 35).⁵⁶

Consequently, Congo Square’s Sunday crowds came virtually entirely from the city’s Creole community.⁵⁷ Few came from the English-speaking Black community, which lived well uptown from the square. (Ibid.)⁵⁸

There were also a fair number of slaves, of which many had come directly from Africa to Louisiana, since many slaves were “smuggled into Louisiana from Africa well after such imports became illegal” (Ibid., 39n40).⁵⁹ Consequently, native African music and dances were still performed in New Orleans for a longer time than anywhere else in the United States. The Sunday gatherings at Congo Square continued throughout the 1830s and 1840s with uneven regularity. During the 1850s the city’s official passed an ordinance that made it difficult for the gatherings to take place. Finally, as the tension rose before the Civil War, restriction on movements and gatherings of both slaves and free people of

⁵⁶ This number differ significantly from that given by Lachance who writes that according to the US federal censuses there were 11,607 free people of colour in 1830; 19,376 in 1840; 10,237 in 1850; and 11,133 in 1860 (Lachance 1992, 119-120). Campanella (2006) gives 4950 free people of colour in 1810; and 10,689, in 1860. Unfortunately Johnson does not cite his source, which makes it difficult to explain this difference.

⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that St. Augustine Church (which will be discussed later) was located just a few blocks north of Congo Square. This suggests that Black and Creole parishioners could easily go to mass in the morning and to Congo Square in the afternoon.

⁵⁸ According to Evans, enough English-speaking African descendants came so that songs in English also became part of the Congo Square repertoire (2011, 77-78).

⁵⁹ G. M. Hall argues that during the Spanish regime (1763-1803), the slave population grew “because of a massive re-Africanization beginning in the 1770s” (Hall 1992, 84).

colour increased, leading to an 1858 ordinance making it unlawful for them to assemble (Evans 2011, 28-30, 32; Johnson 1995, 37, 44).

In 1864, an article in the *Daily Picayune* stated that the dancing days in Congo Square were over. However, people of colour still continued to meet and a few dance halls or theaters for coloured people remained in operation in the vicinity of Congo Square, some of them well into the twentieth century (Evans 2011, 33; Kmen 1966, 235). A notable example is the Globe Hall, where balls were held as of 1864 and where Buddy Bolden – the “first man of jazz” – sometimes played. It was demolished in 1920 for the construction of the Municipal Auditorium (Marquis 1978, 70).

One of the main sources of information about the gatherings at Congo Square are the travel journals of people that visited New Orleans during the nineteenth century. In his journal, architect and engineer Benjamin Latrobe describes his visit to Congo Square in 1819, where he observed “a crowd of five or six hundred persons” (Evans 2011, 144), practically all Blacks, dancing dances, singing songs, and playing music with instruments of African origin such as various drums, marimbas and the banja, the ancestor of the banjo (Evans 2011, 34, 70; Johnson, 1995, 24, 25, 36; Cable 1886a, 519). In time, instruments of European origin were adopted by the musicians in Congo Square. James R. Creecy, who visited New Orleans in the early 1830s, wrote that he saw violins and triangles, while others mentioned having seen tambourines, harps, panpipe-like instruments called the quills, and cremonas.⁶⁰ Many of these travelers also reported having seen the gatherers dancing and singing in a festive, sometimes trance-like manner (Evans 2011, 1, 24, 26, 43, 71; Johnson 1995, 36-38, 41, 42; Cable 1886a, 519).

⁶⁰ Johnson writes that the Cremona is probably a “Jew’s harp” [*sic*] (1995, 38), but Evans says that the violin was also known as Cremona, which is more plausible considering that the town of Cremona in northern Italy is famous for its violin making.

Creole Songs and Dances at Congo Square

Freddi Evans has dedicated one chapter of her book to the Creole songs heard at Congo Square. Following her thorough review of the existing literature, she concluded that the repertoire of songs performed in Congo Square did change with time, reflecting the changes in New Orleans' African American population. "As time passed, she writes, songs with a combination of African and Creole words, those in Louisiana Creole,⁶¹ and those in English joined and basically replace those of African origin" (2011, 75).

Nonetheless, the songs retained many structural elements of African influence such as "call and response, improvisation, ornamentation, and slides from one note to the other" (Evans 2011, 86). In other words, as they changed to reflect the changes in the African American population, the songs went through a process of creolization as they came into contact with, and absorbed elements from, the culture and music of the new residents of the city. "Creole people used these songs to tell stories, impart history, express belief, and just 'pass a good time'" (Ibid., 79).

Apart from the writings of visitors, the songs and dances at Congo Square were described by New Orleans born novelist and historian George W. Cable (1844-1925). In 1886, Cable published two articles in *The Century Magazine*. In February, he published "The Dance in Place Congo" and in April, "Creole Slaves Songs." Although Johnson and Evans were able to establish that the Congo Square Sunday gatherings took place until the 1850s, it is not clear if Cable ever witnessed them as a child. Indeed, Cable himself writes that "[a]ll this Congo Square business was suppressed at one time; 1843, says the tradition" (1886a, 527). However, the context in which he wrote this makes it unclear if

⁶¹ For Evans the Louisiana Creole, "also known as Creole or *patois*, was itself an Africanized form of French" (2011, 76).

the “Congo Square business” was the whole gathering, or just one specific dance, the Calinda, which he deemed “bad enough” (Ibid.). On the other hand, his knowledge about the Creole songs and dances seems to indicate that he would have been able to have observed some of them, even if he wrote that

[o]nly a few years ago I was honored with an invitation, which I had to decline, to see danced the Babouille, the Cata (or Chacta), the Counjaille, and the Calinda. (1886a, 527)

But this doesn’t mean that he didn’t have other occasions prior to this one. According to Johnson, Cable “saw” and “observed” the musical instruments he described (1995, 32) – without actually saying where he would have seen them – while Evans argues that Cable’s date of birth would have precluded him from actually seeing the dances in Congo Square, although he could have seen them “at other times or locations” (Evans 2011, 3). Nevertheless, these articles are interesting because they not only document the songs and dances of the Blacks and Creoles in antebellum New Orleans, but also document the knowledge of these songs and dances after the Civil War.

In his article “The Dance in Place Congo” Cable describes the main dances and some of the songs with which they were associated, and for which he included lyrics and musical transcriptions. The dances were the Bamboula⁶² (also the name of the drum used to accompany it), the Counjaille, and the Calinda. Of the seven Creole songs included in *Slave Songs of the United States*, six appeared in Cable’s article. The similarity in both texts, as well as the writings of Isaac Holmes in 1821, Théodore Pavie in 1829-1830, and Alcée Fortier in 1888 – all quoted by Evans (2011, 91-92) – suggest that the slaves had

⁶² According to Evans, the Bamboula was interchangeably called the Congo Dance in New Orleans, although they appear to have been two different but closely related dances in other parts of the West Indies where the Bamboula was also called the Chica dance (2011, 94, 98, 103).

similar practices whether they gathered in New Orleans or in the rural plantations.

Moreover, describing the slow beginning of the Sunday dance, Cable quotes a song that consists of a simple four-note melody that showed the “emphatic barbarism of five bars to a line,” which he once heard on the cane field (Cable 1886a, 523). According to Cable, singing and dancing were always bound together and intermingled:

The singers almost at the first note are many. [...] They swing and bow to right and left, in slow time [...]. Among the chorus of Franc-Congo singing girls is one extra good voice, who thrusts in, now and again, an improvisation. [...] The measure quickens [...] the female voices grow sharp and staccato, and suddenly the dance is the furious Bamboula. (Ibid.)

In relation to this dance, Cable presented a song he called "The Bamboula" which is also known as “Quan Patate La Cuite” (Gottschalk 1902, 15; Evans 2011, 103). In her collection of Creole songs, Clara Gottschalk, the sister of the pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869), specifies that her brother’s piece “Bamboula-Danse de nègres” opens with the first few bars of “Quan Patate La Cuite,” which is only eight bars long (1902, 15). The next song “Musieu Banjo” is simply described as an original composition by Allen, Ware and Garrison, while in Cable “Miché Banjo” is classified as a Bamboula. Cable continues his description:

Suddenly the song changes. The rhythm sweeps away, long and smooth [...] with a louder drumbeat. [...] I could give four verses, but let one suffice, it is from a manuscript copy of the words, probably a hundred years old, that fell into my hands through the courtesy of a Creole lady some two years ago. It is one of the best known of all the old Counjaille songs. (1886a, 526)

Four songs are classified by Allen, Ware and Garrison, as well as by Cable as Coonjai: “Belle Ayotte,” “Rémon,” “Aurore Bradaire/Aurore Pradère,” and “Caroline/Ainée de trois,” which seems to be the song appearing on Cable’s old manuscript copy.

The last dance described by Cable is the Calinda, which “ended these dissipations of the summer Sabbath afternoon” (1886a, 528). Cable also recalls that, as a child, he heard a street merchant – *marchande de calas*⁶³ – singing a Calinda song “Michié Préval” – also compiled by Allen, Ware and Garrison under the name of Calinda. However, Cable writes that

[t]he true Calinda was bad enough. In Louisiana at least, its song was always a grossly personal satirical ballad. [It] was a dance of multitude, a sort of vehement cotillion. The contortions of the encircling crowd were strange and terrible, the din was hideous. (1886a, 527)

Cable’s remembrance is interesting because it indicates that Creole songs were performed out of Congo Square and into the streets of New Orleans. However, the tone of his comment is also important. The Calinda described by Cable still carried strong African elements, which were usually despised by the “good” Creole and White society. This points to the fact that the Creole songs that later became part of the Creole culture and identity had been somehow “smoothened” out of their African elements, as the early jazz of the uptown Blacks would eventually be smoothened out of its “rough” edges.

In the first jazz history books that were written, misunderstanding of Cable’s article and other sources led to the impression that there was a direct link between the Sunday dances and early jazz musicians who were thought to have personally eye-witnessed the Congo Square gatherings. Further research by Kmen (1972), Johnson (1995) and Evans (2011) has demonstrated that this would have been impossible since the dances stopped too soon for the first jazz musicians to have observed them. However, it is generally accepted that jazz evolved out the cross-fertilization between African, Caribbean and European elements. Therefore Congo Square, by providing a safe location for African

⁶³ The *calas* were rice cakes very popular for breakfast (McGinty and Nickerson 1979, 85).

Americans to commemorate and, as far as possible, preserve their culture, fostered the favourable environment for the blending of the various African music and dances among themselves, and eventually with European music and dances. The place given to Congo Square in jazz histories varies depending on the authors, but more recently an agreement seems to emerge according to which it helped in

shap[ing] New Orleans culture thereby acting as a foundation upon which jazz was built [...] a place where slaves were already beginning to blend musical elements from different non-African cultures. (Sanchirico 2012, 64)

Significantly, one of the regular spectators at Congo Square, E. P. Christy was a prominent figure in the development of Blackface Minstrel shows in the mid-nineteenth century and “specified ‘Congo Green’ in New Orleans as having had an influence on his art” (Evans 2011, 45).

As a precursor of the development of jazz, the importance of Congo Square lies mostly as a “third space” particularly propitious for the creolization of the various African and European dances and musical traditions present in New Orleans. It is also significant as the location of the creation and/or performance of Creole songs, which became part of the musical repertoire of the Creoles and a way to express their cultural identity.

The Cantiques

As a French and Spanish colony, Louisiana’s society was fashioned by the Roman Catholic Church, which regulated the lives of the inhabitants whether natives or settlers, free or slaves. The *Paroisse Saint-Louis* was established in 1720 and a first church was completed in 1727. It was eventually expanded and rebuilt to become St. Louis Cathedral as it still exists today on the northwest side of Jackson Square in the French Quarter

(www.arch-no.org; Leblanc, n.d. 2). Throughout the French regime, the 1724 *Code Noir* required slaveholders to baptize and instruct their slaves in the Catholic faith. “Between 1731 and 1733, St. Louis Church [...] registered 425 slave baptisms” (Johnson 1992, 41). In 1800, there were 724 baptisms of adults and children at the St. Louis Cathedral, 377 were slaves, 225 were Whites, and 125 were free people of colour (archdiocese-no.org).

In 1842 St. Augustine Catholic Church was consecrated, making the parish of the same name the first African American parish in the United States (staugustinecatholicchurch-neworleans.org). The Church is located in the Faubourg Tremé, a racially mixed neighbourhood, and it served Creoles of colour, White and Black parishioners, and

[i]n an unprecedented social, political, and religious move, the colored members also bought all the pews of both side aisles [and gave them] to the slaves as their exclusive place of worship. [...] This mix of the pews resulted in the most integrated congregation in the entire country.
(www.staugustinecatholicchurch.org)

The Catholic Church also expanded in rural areas with the establishment of Convent, Grand Coteau, Lafayette (then known as Vermilionville), and Thibodaux Parishes in Southwest Louisiana in the first decades of the nineteenth century (archdiocese-no.org). From 1842 to 1864, the Archdiocese of New Orleans published a weekly newspaper, *Le Propagateur Catholique* (archdiocese-no.org; clarionherald.info) and, until the end of the nineteenth century, French remained the main language used by officials of the Louisiana Catholic Church (Leblanc n.d., 3). The strong influence of the Catholic Church is still visible today in the division of the state into parishes rather than counties as in the rest of the United States.

According to Pastor, the Catholic churches of New Orleans and surrounding areas were interracial until the establishment of official parishes after the Civil War and

“blacks and whites would worship together. [Nevertheless], this did not guarantee equality outside church walls” (2005, 79). However, it surely provided the occasion and location for the Black and Creole population to learn and sing French *cantiques*. At the end of the 1950s Dr. Elizabeth Brandon and Dr. Harry Oster collected some of these songs, which are especially valuable since there were no French *cantiques* included in Allen, Ware and Garrison’s anthology, nor do they ever get mentioned in jazz history. This might be explained by the fact that at the time the songs were collected, most slaves or former slaves had been assimilated into the Anglophone communities (Lachance 1992, 118-119), and that after the Civil War many had converted to Protestant religions (Pastor 2005, 81).

In 1955, Brandon completed a PhD in French at Laval University in Quebec City with a dissertation entitled *Mœurs et langue de la paroisse Vermillon en Louisiane*. Brandon collected a body of folk songs and tales – which she used to make a thorough linguistic analysis of Louisiana French – that include eight Creole songs, of which seven are *cantiques*. Brandon writes only briefly and not entirely convincingly about these songs having been influenced by Negro spirituals, adding that they were sung in a “plaintive tone and in a minor mode” (Brandon 1955, 326). According to Brandon, the *cantiques* are not sung anymore, but her informants had sung them in Church forty years before (Ibid.). In the same vein, in a short two page article published in the *International Folk Music Journal* in 1962, Oster argued that the 32 *cantiques nègres* he had collected in 1957 and 1958 are the equivalent of the Protestant Negro spirituals, without stating that one had been influenced by the other. The *cantiques* are in a language that

approximates to standard French [and many of them] were originally taught to Negroes by Catholic priests. [...] The texts have generally been condensed,

usually preserving and intensifying the most dramatic elements of a white hymn. The style of performance is sometimes marked by syncopation, and almost always by the singer's ability to make a song a unified whole, instead of (as in much white singing) a series of verses connected in logic but not in rhythmic flow. Thus, the fluid movement of the tune to fit the words, the driving and musically sensitive sweep from verse to verse, the dynamic changes, and even breathing, make the performance an organic growing thing. (Oster 1962, 166)

Oster continues with a textual analysis of one of the *cantiques* in which he compares a nineteenth century version collected in France – “Madeleine au Tombeau” – with the performance he recorded in 1957 – “Tombeau, tombeau Marie-Madeleine.” For Oster, it is characteristic that the “Negro singer” has retained only the most dramatic lines of the song, repeated several times in a way that “embodied subtle and complex rhythmic phrasing, in a style which is African in origin” (Oster 1962, 167). Another of the *cantiques*, “Dans un jardin solitaire” well illustrates both Brandon and Oster's argument. It is truly a lament, sung in the Dorian mode, with artful voice inflections and rhythmic variations so as to emphasize the most dramatic words of the lyrics.

Even this small number of documented *cantiques* is a concrete manifestation of the French and Creoles, free or enslaved, belonging to the Catholic Church, in which they developed their own version of the Church's music, which Oster called Negro French Spiritual (Ibid.). In this case we can see creolization at work as they not only adapted the text to fit their need, but also sang the melodies following their musical tradition. When thinking of a singer like Lizzie Miles (discussed later), it gives some indication of songs and singing style she might have learned at catechism, which is where she learned to sing. This catechism training eventually made her a fine vaudeville, blues and early jazz singer.

European Music and Dances

As mentioned above, the White culture in relation to which the Black American folk music evolved, included the music and dances performed in balls, at the opera, at concerts as well as military music (sometimes performed by Creole or Black musicians). As also noted above, the Creoles viewed the appreciation of French culture as a form of refinement. Therefore the knowledge of classical music and methods – musical notation, good technique and tone – became markers of their cultural identity and a way to keep a higher status in the three-tiered society. However, as they appropriated European classical music, Creole composers, especially Louis Moreau Gottschalk, added some Creole melodies and rhythms. This early creolization of military and classical music is significant as the brass bands and ragtime that grew out of the music of this period were direct precursors of early jazz.

Balls and Dance Music

Balls, masked or not, were the most popular entertainment throughout all the social classes. Because of the size of the crowd they appealed to, and the money they earned ballroom and theater owners (which were often coupled together), they also contributed to the development of theater and opera in the city (Kmen, 1966, 59).

Competing amusements generally had to accommodate themselves to the balls. Nearly every concert prior to 1830 was coupled with a ball, and occasionally a play or an opera was followed by a ball held right in the theater. At other times the curtain might be raised early so that the opera would be over in time for a night of dancing. (Ibid., 5)

Eventually, New Orleans became the first city of the United States to have its own opera house and resident company. The opera became the city's "cultural glory throughout the nineteenth century" (Kmen 1966, 56), and an important locus for the

formation of classically trained musicians. Public balls were an important part of the social life and entertainment season in nineteenth century New Orleans and Louisiana. In her memoir, Laura Locoul Gore, the last owner of the White Creole sugar cane plantation named after her, describes her first ball as a debutante in 1882, and how it marked the beginning of the social season as “[t]he rest of the winter was a round of countless balls, dinners and luncheons until Carnival [and *Mardi Gras*] came” (2007, 96). According to Randal Couch, balls occurred all year long and they often were masked, not just during the *Mardi Gras* celebrations.

Public masked balls very probably were introduced into New Orleans by Pierre de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil during his term as governor of Louisiana (1742-1753). Son of a Canadian governor, [...] Vaudreuil made a point of introducing a number of modish social forms in Louisiana’s tiny colonial capital. (Couch 1994, 406)

The first ballroom - *Salle de Bal* – on Condé Street (now Chartres Street) opened on October 4th, 1792 and was soon followed by a fair number of other such establishments (Kmen 1966, 17; Couch 1994, 409). Kmen estimates that by 1841 there were over “eighty identifiable ballrooms or sites for dancing [that] had been put in operation [...] with the majority of them still functioning” (1966, 7). However, Couch expressed some scepticism about this number, arguing that some establishments listed by Kmen were not “ballrooms proper, but bars or cafes that occasionally gave a dance” Excluding ballrooms that were in operation for only a couple of seasons, he brings the number down to 24 ballrooms (1994, 422-423n62). In any case, balls, masked or not, were held practically all days of the week – Couch mentioned all days but Thursday. Sundays were especially popular for dancing and “it was not unusual for the Louisiana French to attend worship in their ball dress and to proceed directly after to the ball” (Kmen 1966, 11). At first, the

Anglo-protestant newcomers, especially ministers, were rather shocked by this attitude, which they deemed unreligious, but as time passed “it was rather the Protestants who succumbed to the charm of the dance rather than the other way around” (Ibid.).

There were various kinds of private, semi-private (on subscription) and public (admission-charging) balls, for Whites or coloured people, which would theoretically not accept mixed-race participation,⁶⁴ with the exception of the quadroon balls open only to coloured women and White men. Slaves were generally forbidden to attend balls unless they had a permit from their masters. However, in practice White women did go to the quadroon balls and slaves, who benefited from a fair amount of freedom in antebellum New Orleans, often attended coloured balls without permit (Kmen 1966, 43-45, 51, 52). It has usually been said, and in some cases it is probably true, that quadroon balls were meant for quadroon women to *place* themselves according to the practice of *plaçage* which, as discussed above, and as the presence of White women suggests, were a more complex social event than they have been assumed to be.

“Negro musicians also supplied much of the music at the quadroon balls. [...] And [they] also played for many white balls as well” (Kmen 1966, 231). Although Kmen doesn’t give more information about these “Negro musicians” they were most likely Creoles. Indeed, dance promoters constantly competed with each other to offer the “‘newest and most fashionable’ music” and the latest music was “‘immediately purchased and played” (Kmen, 1966, 40). Even if some slaves could play music and knew the European dances, only the Creoles had received the proper training to be able to sight read the new music that kept on arriving from the North or from Europe. There were

⁶⁴ However, both Couch and Kmen mention that some public masked balls allowed for the mixed participation of people from different social classes and races, the mask itself being the means by which this could happen (Kmen 1966, 11; Couch 1994, 403, 404).

many dances played during a ball, such as two-steps, quadrilles, minuets, waltzes, boleros, gavottes, mazurkas, reels, schottisches and the “ever-present French and English quadrilles” (Kmen 1966, 13, 21). These balls certainly paved the way for orchestras like John Robichaux Orchestra (who carried the same kind of repertoire), that were in demand in post-bellum New Orleans when dances, lawn parties, picnics etc., were very popular. These are the bands that would eventually start to incorporate the “hot” syncopated style of the Black musicians (see next chapter).

The quadrilles seem to have had some peculiar and significant meaning so that, either by deference to the newly arrived Anglo-Americans or by regulation from city officials, two French quadrilles had to be played for each English one (Kmen 1966, 13, 27; Couch 1994, 408, 409). Among all the dances, the quadrille stands out for its popularity in France, the Caribbean and Louisiana. The history of the quadrille in the Caribbean and New Orleans provides a good example of its appropriation (and creolization) by Creole musicians and its influence on early jazz musicians.

Music and dance were part of courtly entertainment and sophistication during France’s Old Regime and under Napoleon. Popular dances among the aristocracy, like the *contredanse* (from which the quadrille evolved), the minuet, and the gavotte were somewhat complicated and ruled by a strict etiquette controlling who could dance with whom (Cyrille 2006, 51; Clark 2002, 504, 507). Quadrilles were often inspired by operas, the music and new dance steps of which influenced both dancers and composers. By the mid-nineteenth century the quadrille became a symbol of bourgeois civility, revealing the “social control necessary for participation in genteel circles” (Clark 2002, 510). The quadrille also represented “a safe space for social interaction” and conversation between

women and men (Ibid.). Nevertheless, it also allowed for dance improvisation, physical prowess and/or closeness of the bodies – considered inappropriate, especially for women – that led to a ‘subgenre’ of quadrille, called *chahut* or cancan (Clark 2002, 511-512).

The Quadrille in Louisiana and the Caribbean

[F]rom its inception [New Orleans] faced south, a member of the Franco-Spanish culture of the Caribbean rather than of the Anglo-Saxon world to the North. Its spiritual homeland was France. There was a libertarian spirit in the city, which manifested itself in the indulgent attitude toward pleasure that was the mark of the French court. The town saw itself as a sort of Paris-sur-Mississippi and attempted to act the part. (Collier 1978, 58)

Writing about the politics of quadrille performance in her native Martinique, Dominique Cyrille states “this dance and music repertory was first introduced there in the late eighteenth century by French colonists who wanted to recreate some of the aristocratic lifestyle they would have enjoyed on the continent” (2006, 1). Indeed, as was done in France, the French ruling class – of which some were of mixed descent – participated in dance lessons with “official” dance masters, in preparation for the *bals de société*, and other less formal occasions on the plantations. According to Cyrille, mulattoes had easier access to the elite culture thanks to the help of their White fathers, while others were able to access it indirectly, either as domestic servants in the house or as concubines (which would have allowed them to view the dance lessons given by the dance master), or as domestic-musicians providing accompaniment for the dances parties of their masters (Cyrille 2006, 46,53).

The quadrille was imported all over the Caribbean, and has been observed in many variations in all of the islands (Daniel 2010; Szwed and Morton 1988). Even if at the end of the eighteenth century Louisiana was under Spanish control, the quadrille made its

way to the colony where it was played at both White and Creole balls (Szwed and Morton 1988, 33; Collier 1978, 61; Kmen 1966, 12-13).

Alice Zeno, mother of the early New Orleans clarinetist George Lewis, says that in 1878 at black Creole dances, people danced the waltz, the mazurka, the polka, and the quadrille. “But I certainly never danced the Slow Drag... My, but those Creole dances were elegant.” (Collier 1978, 61)

As the oldest musicians interviewed for the Hogan Jazz Archives recalled, they were “accustomed to playing polka, mazurkas, schottisches, lancers, and varieties (these last two dances were subspecies of the quadrilles)” (Gushee 1994, 15). However, new dances made their appearance and became popular, so that “by 1910 these sets had changed to include a two-step, slow drag, ragtime, one-step, and the fox-trot. But the quadrille still remained as the midnight centerpiece” (Szwed and Morton, 1988, 33). According to Szwed and Morton, “the best example of the transformation of set dances and dance suites into popular culture is their use in the creation of jazz in the United States, through the slow mutation of the quadrille/cotillion from music for social dancing to a purely abstract musical form” (1988, 29). Maribeth Clark also commented about this transformation of the quadrille:

Elaboration of this musical structure [that of the nineteenth century quadrille in Paris] was certainly possible. Some evidence suggest that performers of quadrilles achieved a high degree of virtuosity, complexity, and musical interest, perhaps even serving as the improvisatory frame for what later developed into jazz; however, as in jazz traditions of the 20th century, the beat remained steady and the phrase structure predictable. (2002, 504ⁿ⁴)

Eventually, some quadrilles were adapted by early jazz musicians, such as “Tiger Rag” which has now become a jazz standard and was recorded by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) on the very first jazz recording in 1917 (Morton 1938, 153; Goffin [1944] 1975, 19; Schuller [1968] 1986, 177). At the same time, jazz was arriving in

France on the footsteps of the American soldiers fighting overseas during WWI, and as early as 1918 the ODJB recordings were distributed in France (Tournès 1999, 14-15). But even if the ODJB copyrighted “Tiger Rag,” it wasn’t an original composition. Indeed, in a series of interviews made for the Library of Congress by folklorist and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, Jelly Roll Morton, himself a Creole, explained that:

[j]azz started in New Orleans. And this, “Tiger Rag” happened to be transformed from an old quadrille that was in many different tempos. And I’ll no doubt, give you an idea how it went. This was the introduction, meaning that everyone was supposed to get their partners. (Morton 1938, 153)

In his book *Early Jazz*, Gunter Schuller also points out that, prior to being called “Tiger Rag,” the piece was called “Praline” or “No 2 Rag,” and was performed in the streets of New Orleans by many marching bands ([1968] 1986, 177), and by the Dixieland Five around 1914 (Stearns 1956, 74). Belgian jazz critic and historian Robert Goffin, author of one of the first monographs on the history of jazz, wrote that:

From 1880 to 1914, Europe still danced to these old refrains [the quadrilles]. It was a genuine emotional experience for me when I discovered that the famous *Tiger Rag* was none other than the distorted theme of the second tableau of a quadrille I used to hear as a boy at all the balls of Walloon Belgium. [...] This tune had a somewhat different fate at New Orleans. [...] The first Negro orchestra dubbed it *Praline* and really pulverized it. [...] You can still hear musicians like Sidney Bechet and Buster Bailey play it in pretty much the old style. ([1944] 1975, 19)

However, the quadrille and other ballroom music was not the only European style of music that led to the formation of jazz through the cross-fertilization of African, Caribbean and European elements (Szwed and Morton 1988, 22-23; Schuller, [1968] 1986, 4). As their status allowed them to have access to a formal training in classical music, some Creoles became successful musicians and composers in the European

musical genres, and furthered the creolization of the music by incorporating Caribbean rhythms in their compositions.

Classical Music and Composers

Balls, theater, and opera provided opportunities for the free people of colour and slaves to be in contact with European music, either as spectators – they had to sit in segregated sections – or as musicians. In the 1830s the Negro Philharmonic Society was formed with more than a hundred members. It organized concerts and performances by invited artists and it also provided opportunities for Black and White musicians to play together since White musicians would fill in whenever the Society lacked the “necessary instrumentation for certain overtures or selections” (Wyatt 1990, 126; Kmen 1966, 232, 234).

As the century progressed, despite the disadvantages of the Civil War and the subsequent problems of Reconstruction, New Orleans remained a fertile environment for music. In studying the music of the period 1850-1900, it becomes clear that the dance forms of black Creoles, consisting of waltzes, polkas, mazurkas, marches, and quadrilles, contained elements that were used in the formation of jazz. (Wyatt 1990, 126)

Wyatt did not provide specific musical examples of the elements that were used in the formation of jazz. However, he presented and compiled the compositions of Black and Creole composers such as Edmond Dédé (1827-1903), Lucien Lambert (1828 or 29-1896), Samuel Snaër (ca 1832-ca 1880), Sidney Lambert (ca 1838-ca 1900), and Basile Barès (1845-1902), who wrote waltzes, mazurkas, quadrilles, as well as opera.

Basile Barès especially stands out for not only was he born in slavery – he belonged to a piano and music store owner – but one of his compositions, “Grande polka des Chasseurs a Pied de la Louisiane,” was published in New Orleans in 1860 while he was

still a slave (Sullivan 1988, 64-65). Generally speaking, Barès' music stays close to the French musical tradition. However one piece, *Los Campanillas*, is worth noticing for the way it uses the Cuban habanera rhythm years before

W. C. Handy relied on it to make "St. Louis Blues" into a hit, or Morton himself adopted it for his composition "The Crave." Even earlier, Louis Moreau Gottschalk enjoyed a transatlantic success with his composition *Bamboula*. As these examples attest, the [Spanish] "tinge" entered the parlors of the city's many amateur pianists long before the appearance of jazz music. (Gioia 2011, 6)

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) was arguably the most famous of the nineteenth century Creole composers. As I mentioned before, some of his compositions were inspired by the dances and music of Congo Square, which he would have heard as he was growing up in New Orleans. The habanera rhythm appears in the left hand accompaniment of "Ojos Criollos (Danse Cubaine)" which was published in 1860 in New Orleans. "If you listen to 'Ojos Criollos' today, it sounds like ragtime. But it's a *danse cubaine* that preceded the ragtime boom by thirty-five years" (Sublette 2008, 125). According to Sublette who quotes Gottschalk's biographer, the composer created a link between Cuban musicians who created "lyrical syncopated music" and the creators of ragtime such as Scott Joplin and Jelly Roll Morton (Sublette 2004, 150). The brass bands, which became a landmark of New Orleans music, would eventually adapt ragtime music to their own formation.

The Civil War and Military Music

As time passed, Louisiana Creole society became more and more Americanized, until the Creole planters' way of life – and the social organization it implied – collapsed

after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. However, the Civil War was not a period without music, and Creole music could still be heard after the War.

In New Orleans, Black and Creole men were sometimes divided regarding the best way towards freedom, hesitating between revolt and attacks against their previous masters, or joining the Confederate Army's Native Guards, which many did in the beginning of the war (Ellison 1994, 293-294, 301). After the victory of the Federal army in 1862 and the occupation of New Orleans that ensued, many "free people of color and slaves [...] rushed to enlist with the Union army" of which many were musicians (Ellison 1994, 308). Due to the shortage of Federal Troops, the Louisiana Native Guards were recruited in the Federal Army and eventually became the *Corps d'Afrique* - which itself became the U.S. Colored Troops (usctchronicle.blogspot.ca). For the slaves, joining the Federal Army represented their hope to obtain freedom, while for the Creoles it represented their hope "to win full equality with white New Orleans" (Ibid., 294). Not surprisingly, "the abolitionist action was catalyzed and reinforced by music" (Ellison, 1994, 285). Military music accompanied the soldiers on the battlefield as the "drummers helped maintain the extraordinary level of bravery" while some songs were meant "to encourage the [...] troops in battle and were accompanied by the heavy beat of army drums" (Ibid., 312, 315).

Free Black and Creole musicians had already served in the U.S. army during the War of 1812. According to Ellison, this "made possible the parade element in this vital musical mélange, [and] was the start of the New Orleans brass band tradition" (1994, 292). Jordan B. Noble, a Creole of colour, "drummed the Americans in line at the battle of New Orleans" (Ibid.). The war also made Creoles (of colour) famous for their war

songs, among which Ellison mentioned “En Avant Grenadier,” and, by the end of the war, “black brass bands became commonplace” (Ellison 1994, 292). During the Civil War “En Avant Grenadier” was also sung by the Native Guards and the *Corps d’Afrique*. It is not clear whether they sang it in English or French, since Ellison provides the lyrics in English although there were French-speaking soldiers and officers such as Major Francis E. Dumas, Captains André Cailloux and Caesar Carpentier Antoine (Ellison 1994, 309-310).

Even in times of war, Creoles (and French slaves) took an active and creative part in the music performed for this specific situation, music that also reflected their cultural identity. Creole songs were written to commemorate famous battles such as the battle of Chalmette in 1814 (Cable 1886b, 815), and the U.S. Vice Admiral David G. Farragut’s victory and entrance to New Orleans in 1862. Unfortunately, neither Cable nor Ellison provided the title of the songs. Other Creole songs reflected some suspicion towards the Union army, such as “Chaque Colonel.” Finally, a few old Creole songs were adapted and/or translated to reflect the feeling of the slaves and Creoles towards the war and its promise of freedom, such as “Nèg Pas Capa Marché”, “Criole Candjo,” and “Dé Zab,” (Ellison 1994, 298). These songs were also sung in the many barrelhouses and saloons that appeared in New Orleans after the victory of the Federal Army.

These establishments and the larger concert saloons provided a new home for classically trained Creole musicians when many of the theaters and halls where they had previously played were closed for at least part of the war. They began to play music that was more appropriate for a saloon setting and developed new styles borrowing heavily from folk songs. Because most of these New Orleans musicians also played in the brass bands, the seeds for jazz were sown in the cultural turmoil engendered by the Civil War. (Ellison 1994, 308)

Indeed, the Civil War also led to the establishment of the brass band tradition in the Black/Creole community that influenced the formation of the typical early jazz band.⁶⁵ This tradition would keep on living through the many parades, funeral processions and the famous second lines⁶⁶ that became part of everyday life of the city (Ellison 1994, 317). And, if post-Civil War politics and segregation eventually led to the near-disappearance of the French Creoles, they still had the time to leave their mark on the changing Louisianan society. Indeed,

[t]he well-established creole life-style of good food, dance, music, gambling halls, ritualized festivals, and marching bands quickly caught the attention of the Protestants newcomers. [...] uptown Protestants quickly copied the creole customs of “music, dancing, feasting, and romps” in their own neighborhoods. By the 1880s their own marching bands were stopping at Protestant churches to have their banners “blessed.” (Logsdon and Bell 1992, 244)

The review of the involvement of the Creoles in the many genres of music performed and composed in New Orleans during the nineteenth century is important, and generally overlooked when assessing their contribution in the development of early jazz. In many cases they furthered or sometimes introduced (as in the case of classical music), the process of creolization out of which jazz finally emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, while at the same time asserting the specificity of their Creole identity.

⁶⁵ The Black bands were predominantly composed of Creole musicians (Sakakeeny 2013, 17).

⁶⁶ The group of active spectators walking, dancing, singing, clapping hands, blowing whistle, shaking tambourines etc. behind the musicians and the members of the club that organized the parade, themselves known as the first line.

CHAPTER 4

EARLY JAZZ, CREOLE MUSICIANS AND CREOLE SONGS

Given all the music that was made in antebellum New Orleans and surrounding areas, in which the Creoles (of colour) took an active part, they could hardly have failed to have a significant role and influence in the development of jazz. Music was part of the community life both in urban and rural areas, and was played on various occasions. There were plenty of employment opportunities for musicians who were hired to play at parades, funerals, dances, picnics, “fish fries, political rallies, store openings, lawn parties, athletic events, church festivals [and] weddings” (nps.gov/jazz).

Having inherited a long tradition of music making, Creole musicians were known for their discipline and skills as they often had been classically trained in solfège, sight-reading, theory, and instrumental technique while most of the uptown Black musicians played a more improvised style of music, usually by ear. However, according to Brothers,

[t]he Creoles who dominated the music profession during Armstrong’s youth were not the land-holding, well-educated artists and intellectuals, reading their plays and attending operas, in the manner of some of the most illustrious *gens de couleur libres* of the early nineteenth century. Most of the Creoles Armstrong knew had only a fifth-grade education. They may best be described as belonging to an artisan class. Many worked in trades that had been associated with the *gens de couleur libres*. [...] Of the Creoles Armstrong knew, Isidore Barbarin was a plasterer, Alphonse Picou and Manuel Perez were tinsmiths. [...] Barney Bigard rolled cigars [...] The Creole-of-color [*sic*] sense of class position was very much tied to this profile of skilled labor, which distinguished them from the common-laboring Negroes uptown, just as their ancestors had been distinguished from the slaves by caste position and type of work. Music fit right in with this artisan-class position. (2006, 173-74)

The meeting of the two groups of musicians – the Creoles from downtown and the Blacks from uptown – both bringing their own musical culture, was an important triggering factor in the birth of jazz.⁶⁷ Although there was some tension between the two groups – the Creoles were still holding on to their old middle-class status, their musical literacy, and instrumental technique as a way to assert their difference – the musicians eventually formed a tight community and often played together in various groups. For instance, in New Orleans Louis Armstrong was once part of Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band, and in Chicago, Kid Ory took part in Armstrong’s Hot Five recording sessions of 1927.

Among the numerous Creole musicians active in New Orleans in the beginning of the twentieth century – some of which would later be active during the revival of the 1940s discussed later – were: the Tios, a family of clarinetists and music teachers; trombonist, bandleader and composer Edouard/Edward “Kid” Ory, who led the band that made the first jazz recordings by a “Black” band; pianist, composer, and bandleader Jelly Roll Morton, who is considered to be the first jazz composer; singer Lizzie Miles, one of the first touring and recording blues/jazz singers; and clarinetist and saxophonist Sidney Bechet, who played a significant role in the development of jazz saxophone and in bringing the music to Europe and to the USSR. The life and music of these musicians has been researched and documented, and monographs have been published about them, with the exception of Lizzie Miles and the Tios.⁶⁸ However, it is interesting and revealing to review their work and contribution to the development of jazz to have a better sense of

⁶⁷ When jazz emerged, the word *jazz* was not used to designate the new music. The two groups of musicians might have felt that they were playing a different kind of music from each other, but today they both fall under the umbrella of jazz, as two different approaches to the music.

⁶⁸ Among the monographs available are *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* by John McCusker (2012); *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz,”* by Allen Lomax (1950); Sidney Bechet ([1960] 2002) *Treat It Gentle: an Autobiography*; Sidney Bechet: *The Wizard of Jazz*, by John Chilton, ([1987] 1996).

the involvement of Creole musicians and singers in all the major areas of the music's performance and creation.

It is worth noting that they all spoke or at least understood French, even though the language was waning in New Orleans. Musicians like Paul Barbarin (1899-1969) and Danny Barker (1906-1980) would later recall that even if they did not learn the language, they remembered their parents or grandparents speaking it. This slow disappearance of the language – which reflects the ban on teaching French – combined with the rise of segregation could explain why, by the early jazz age, Creole became a free-floating signifier rather than the marker of a highly particular cultural identity as it had been, as described in chapter 1. However, regardless of the loss of their middle-class status and privileges, the Creoles' insistence on maintaining their standards of respectability created a situation in which the word *Creole* became associated with connotations of sophistication and education, two attributes that musicians – whether they were Creoles or not – might have wanted to project in order to make it in the music business in and outside of New Orleans. This change of “Creole” to a free-floating signifier is also reflected in the fact that many of the Creole musicians who appear in jazz history books are only quickly identify as such, with a short and underdeveloped description of what Creole means as described in my introduction. Furthermore, the numerous appearances of the word in band names such as the “King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band,” in song titles such as “Creole Rhapsody” by Duke Ellington, or the common description of Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band as the first *Black* band to have recorded jazz, create confusion around the cultural identity of the actual Creoles.

Therefore, even if some of the musicians enumerated above are well known, some others aren't, and a thesis about the Creoles' contribution to jazz would be incomplete without a short review of their respective careers, as their music permitted them to express their Creole identity at a time when it was often obscured by the growing confusion around the word *Creole*.

The Tio Family

The Tios are a particularly interesting case of Creole musicians that produced four generations of influential teachers and clarinetists. Their history brings us from the time of the Civil War up to the famous dance bands of the late nineteenth century and through the birth of jazz, therefore providing a concrete example of a locus where creolization, as a creative process, happens slowly, on a day-to-day basis, year after year. And, to some extent, they also had some influence on the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Nevertheless, jazz history books usually give passing mention only Lorenzo Tio Jr., and sometimes his uncle Louis. In fact, the family has been so little documented that there is practically only one source about the Tios, which is Charles E. Kinzer's Ph. D. dissertation (LSU 1993).

The Tios were of French Canadian, French, Spanish and African ancestry and belonged to the first families of free people of colour of Louisiana. François Marie Joseph Hazeur was a "Quebec-born infantry captain who [...] retired in Louisiana in 1750" and Marcos Tio had been born in Catalonia and "migrated to the Spanish colony of New Orleans sometime before 1787" (Kinzer 1993, 1, 15). Both families became well established in the colony as soldiers, entrepreneurs, and planters. Later on, the family's renowned clarinetists and music teachers who were active between 1814-1933 played in many of the bands and musical genres that influenced the birth of jazz and taught many

of the early jazz clarinetists. The first “professional” musician of the family was actually Louis Hazeur (1872-1860), who enrolled in the First Battalion of Free Men of Color of Louisiana during the War of 1812, where he became one of the “senior musicians” in the small regimental music band. Both Louis’ sister and daughter married into the Tio family, so that Hazeur eventually became the father-in-law of his nephew Thomas Tio (1828-1881). Thomas himself was a clarinetist and saxophone player⁶⁹ – as well as a cigar maker – playing for musicales⁷⁰ and concerts, dance orchestras, theaters, and marching bands (Ibid., 13, 95-96).

Two of his sons, Louis “Papa” (1862-1922) and Lorenzo (1867-1908) became musicians. They both were born in Mexico where the family lived from 1860 until 1877⁷¹ and they both became renowned clarinetists. Following the Creole tradition, they received formal music training, and moved on to quite similar careers as professional musicians and music teachers. They played for minstrel shows and for influential brass bands (Louis was a member of the Excelsior Brass Band and Lorenzo, of the Onward Brass Band) and occasionally played for John Robichaux Orchestra. Lorenzo’s early death in 1908 prevented him from getting much involved in the birth of jazz, but Louis did adapt his style when playing in the Manuel Manetta’s band at the Tuxedo Dance Hall from 1910 to 1913.⁷² Although never considered a jazz clarinet player, he taught future jazz players such as Achille and George Baquet, Barney Bigard, and Albert Nicholas.

⁶⁹ Kinzer argues that the impetus for a musical education most likely came from the Hazeur side of the family since “There is no evidence of any prior musical activity on the paternal sides of either of these families. Some amount of musical training was probably a family tradition on the Hazeur plantation” (1993 82n2).

⁷⁰ A musical gathering or concert, typically small and informal (New Oxford American Dictionary).

⁷¹ The Tios lived in the French-speaking colony of Eureka, where many Creoles of colour relocated in the hope of escaping the increasingly harsh conditions in the South (Kinzer 1993, 103).

⁷² Nevertheless, Louis Tio is known to have disliked the ratty music of the uptown Blacks.

Lorenzo Tio Jr. (1893-1933) followed in the footsteps of his father and uncle to become a performing clarinetist. Establishing himself as one of the prominent clarinet players in the beginning of the 1910s, Tio also found engagements in jazz-oriented bands such as the Eagle Band lead by Willie Geary “Bunk” Johnson and with a dance-band led by Freddie Keppard. From 1919 until 1928, Tio played with Armand Piron’s (all Creole) Orchestra, then the most famous in New Orleans, before moving to New York around 1930 where he concentrated his efforts mostly on performing but also on arranging and composing to supplement his revenue. Tio, along with other Creole musicians such as Freddie Keppard and Peter Bocage, could both read music and improvise. As such, he belonged to the generation that started to bridge the gap between the Creole European-oriented musical tradition that valued “technical fluency, proficiency in music-reading, and the production of a broad, singing tone” (Kinzer 1993, 330) with the new syncopated and improvised music. Like his uncle “Papa” Louis, with whom he sometimes exchanged students, Lorenzo played a significant role in the transmission of the Creole musical values that influenced a number of young jazz musicians, such as Sidney Bechet (although Bechet always refused to learn music notation), Barney Bigard, Omer Simeon, Albert Nicholas and Jimmie Noone to name but a few.

Edouard “Kid” Ory (December 25, 1886 – January 23, 1973)

For a long time, Kid Ory has been overlooked even if he played a significant role in the development of jazz as a bandleader, trombonist and composer. He is generally mentioned as the leader of the band who made the first “Black” jazz recordings, and as a sideman for King Oliver, Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. Thanks to John

McCusker, the gap has been filled with the publication of *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* in 2012.

Edouard “Kid” Ory was born in 1886 at the Woodland Plantation, some fifty kilometers northeast of New Orleans. His father was of French and German ancestry and his mother was of Spanish, African and Native American descent. His white paternal grandparents had themselves been sugar cane planters and slave owners. They were Catholics and they all spoke French, Ory’s first language. Indeed, Ory remembered his mother singing to him in French when he was a child and neither his father nor his (father’s) cousin spoke English, and Ory always identify as a Creole (McCusker 2012, 12-13, 22; Ory 1957, reel 1, 14m). Nevertheless, since he had one grandparent of African heritage the one-drop rule made him legally Black (Raeburn 2011; Brunisma and Rockquemore 2002, 107).

Ory began his musical career on the plantation where he formed and led his first bands, and moved to New Orleans in 1910. Musically speaking he belonged more to the uptown Anglo-American musicians that played hot improvised music by ear than to the musically literate downtown French Creoles. Prior to moving, Ory and his band had made several trips to the city to hear and learn from the popular bands of the day such as (Black) Buddy Bolden’s and (Creole) John Robichaux’s band. McCusker suggests that Ory, influenced by John Robichaux, smoothened the rough edges of the Buddy Bolden hot style, therefore contributing to the creative melding of the two styles. Bassist Wellman Braud later recalled that Ory and his band took “New Orleans by storm” a popularity that enabled him to cross over the colour line and to get hired by both White and Black patrons (McCusker 2012, 83-84).

Among his qualities as a bandleader, Ory had the ability to discover good musicians and give them the opportunity to play and develop musically. In 1917 Ory hired cornetist Joe Oliver, allowing him to polish his style and his talent as soloist and bandleader before leaving for Chicago the following year. After Oliver's departure, Ory replaced him with a young and unknown cornet player named Louis Armstrong enabling Armstrong to grow as a professional musician. Armstrong spoke about his debut with Ory in his autobiography:

What a thrill that was! To think I was considered up to taking Joe Oliver's place in the best band in town. [...] Kid Ory was so nice and kind, and had so much patience, that first night was a pleasure instead of a drag [...] After that first gig I was in. I began to get real popular with the dance fans as well as the musicians. All the musicians came to hear us and they'd hire me to play in their bands on the nights I wasn't engaged by Kid Ory. (Armstrong 1954, 137, 139)

Ory was active during, and took part in, the development of the "tailgate" trombone style, which became a defining element of the early New Orleans jazz style. By the time this early jazz style was established, it was characterized by an ensemble composed of a front line of horns with the cornet (or trumpet) playing the melody, the clarinet playing an ornamented counter-melody in a high register, and the trombone playing a melodic and rhythmic bass line, therefore creating a polyphonic texture also used for collective improvisation. The horns were supported by a rhythm section made of a guitar, a banjo or a piano, a bass – or sousaphone (or tuba) in marching bands – and drums, maintaining a regular and syncopated beat in 2/4 time. More precisely, the role of the tailgate trombone was a supportive one which consisted of playing counter-melodies, generally in the lower register of the instrument, while also acting as a "rhythmic upper bass line" and

sometimes adding glissando or “smear” obtained by extending or retrieving the slide of the trombone while holding a note (Sager 1988, 2,10).⁷³

In 1919, Ory and his Creole Jazz Band moved to Los Angeles. During the months of May and June of 1922 the band, nicknamed the Sunshine Orchestra, recorded four sides as back up for singers and two instrumentals. The pieces, “Ory’s Creole Trombone” and “Society Blues,” were the first jazz recordings done by a “Black” band. In his “Tale of the Slide Trombone in Early Jazz” David Sager discusses “Ory’s Creole Trombone” that well describes Ory’s style, in which he sometimes takes the lead, something uncommon in early jazz.

Its melody is, indeed, creole in flavour. The trombone is shifted back and forth from lead to countermelody. Its first strain is a “smear” strain and in its third strain are some “breaks” where the soloist [Ory] performs some simple but demanding pyrotechnics. In his various recordings of the piece, Kid Ory added so much of his own wit and charm that it could never be considered a “set piece” to be written down and played the same way each time. (Sager 1988, 10-11)

The word *Creole* in the title of the song seems to act as both a trendy, market-oriented free-floating signifier, and as a marker of Ory’s cultural identity, even if the band was considered – and still is described as – a Black band, thus creating confusion and ambiguity around the Creole identity.

From 1925 to 1927, Ory lived in Chicago where he recorded with Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five, which recorded two of Ory’s compositions, “Muskrat Rumble,” now a jazz standard, and “Ory’s Creole Trombone.” He also recorded with Joe Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band and with Jelly Roll Morton’s Red Hot Peppers. If his role as a sideman has

⁷³ The name “tailgate trombone” is derived from the position the trombone player occupied at the back – the tailgate – when dances and picnics were advertised by wagons with signs on the side and musicians playing inside. Ory became the first to use such a device to advertise his own band (McCusker 2012, 96).

been acknowledged, his actual playing has been less thoroughly examined. In these sessions Ory displayed his own creativity on the trombone, as demonstrated by his recollection of his work with Morton: “I wanted to put some harmony and legato and you know, other stuff in it, mix it up, and he told me, ‘Don’t worry about your music; I can’t write your music’” (McCusker 2012, 177). All these recordings have been praised in jazz history due to their influence on the new generation of jazz musicians, especially the Hot Five recordings in which Armstrong established “free reign for the individual soloist” (Giddins and DeVeaux 2009, 242-243), “point[ing] to the direction in which jazz was to go” (Shipton 2001, 143).

In 1928, Ory went back to California, but due to the 1929 crash there was not too much work. This put an end to his career and by the 1930s he was working as a janitor. However, in March 1944, filmmaker and radio host Orson Welles hired him just in time for him to become a major figure of the early jazz revival. Ory retired to Hawaii in 1966 and died in Honolulu in 1973, two years after a last appearance at the Jazz and Heritage Festival in New Orleans.

Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe / Jelly Roll Morton (1885 or 90 -1941)

Ferdinand Joseph Lamothe (or LaMenthe) alias Jelly Roll Morton,⁷⁴ is the Creole that receives the most attention in jazz history books, as a pianist, a bandleader, and most importantly as the first jazz composer. On the 1938 recordings for the Library of Congress conducted by Alan Lomax, he also appears as a fine analyst and theorist of his own music, while discussing and demonstrating the various styles of music he was exposed to as a young Creole in New Orleans – opera and classical music; Mardi Gras

⁷⁴ Jelly Roll was a self-chosen nickname with sexual connotation and Morton is most likely the anglicization of “Mouton,” the family name of his mother’s second husband (Gushee 1985, 393).

Indians' songs,⁷⁵ Creole and Spanish popular tunes; ragtime; the blues; dance music and marches – all of which contributed to his piano playing and compositions. Moreover, Morton lived both downtown and uptown and was also exposed to Black musical traditions; he even heard “King” Buddy Bolden's Band at Jackson Hall in 1905 (Gushee 1985, 392). As such Morton embodies the process of creolization as it happens in his everyday life, as it probably did with other New Orleans musicians.

Lomax – who places Morton's birth in 1885 – wrote in the notes he took during his interviews that Morton spoke French when he was young. Speaking about his grandparents, Morton explained that neither of them spoke “American or English” (Morton, 1938, 8). He claimed that his family had been in New Orleans since long before the Louisiana Purchase, and had come directly from France. But this was not the case and, according to Lawrence Gushee, who placed the birth of Morton in 1890, “it is important to point out that Morton is linked not just to the prewar society of the *gens de couleur libres* but more specifically to Haiti” (Gushee 1985, 393).⁷⁶ Gushee also tells us that Morton knew and lived with a great-grandmother who would have been “a most influential link to antebellum culture of New Orleans's [*sic*] free colored French-speaking population” (Ibid.).

It is as a composer and arranger that Morton made his most original and unique contribution to jazz. Morton's compositional devices included breaks – which eventually

⁷⁵ Mardi Gras Indians are “tribes” of African Americans, some with Native American ancestry, who dress in the full Native American regalia – that bear influences of the West African and Caribbean cultures – to perform their own parades and celebrations on *Mardi Gras* and St. Joseph day.

⁷⁶ However, as he added, it is not sure if Morton's claims are based on shame, ignorance, or the perception that the peculiar status and history of the Creoles would not be understood elsewhere (Gushee 1985, 391). It should also be pointed out that towards the end of Reconstruction and the removal of the Federal troops in 1877, segregation was on the rise, giving place to some violent episode such as the Battle of Liberty Place fought by the White League in 1874 or the Robert Charles Riot in 1900 – which young Ferdinand witnessed. Such a situation might have led individuals or families to “adapt” their ancestry and family history, and/or to anglicize their name.

evolved into full solos – riffs, and the “Spanish tinge” that mainly describes Caribbean and Latin American rhythms such as the tresillo and the habanera which he used as early as 1902 in his “New Orleans Blues.” Morton composed and/or recorded close to twenty songs with a “discernable Spanish tinge,” which some scholars have argued to be a foundational element of jazz (Garrett 2008, 54, 62). Garrett argues that the tinge is found in more than just rhythms. It can also describe the performance of Latin American songs, such as “La Paloma” or “Tia Juana (Tee Wanna),” and the iconography of sheet music as on the cover art of the “The ‘Jelly Roll’ Blues” (1915) where the design hinted that the music would “contain a mixture of African American and Latin musical elements” (Garrett 2008, 63-65).

Looking back on his early days, [Warren “Baby”] Dodds identified what he felt was a distinctive Creole approach to the blues: “In the downtown district where the Creole lived, they played the blues with a Spanish accent. We fellows that lived Uptown, [*sic*] we didn’t play the Creole numbers like the Frenchmen downtown did – such as *Eh La Bas*. And just as we changed the Spanish accent of the Creole songs, we played the blues different from them. They lived in the French part of town and we lived uptown in the garden district. Our ideas for the blues were different from theirs. They had the French and Spanish style, blended together” [and] he “later note[d] that an interest in Spanish rhythms eventually spread from the Creole district throughout New Orleans.” (Garrett 2008, 58)

Schuller has suggested that Morton’s arrangement of his *Jelly Roll Blues*, published in 1915, and which included a “habanera-style section,” (Garrett 2008, 64) “probably makes it one of the first, if not the first, jazz orchestration ever published” (Schuller [1968] 1986, 137). Morton’s noticeable use of the Spanish tinge not only springs from a practice “that was already commonplace in New Orleans when he first heard it”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ According to Raeburn, Morton first heard Afro-French pianist Mamie Desdunes playing the blues with a habanera rhythm when visiting his Godmother as a child (2012b, 24).

(Raeburn 2012b, 24), but his “Spanish-tinged” compositions also stand as the forerunner for Juan Tizol’s Latin tinge contribution to the Duke Ellington Orchestra, which he joined in 1929, and the 1950 development of Latin Jazz – prompted by Dizzie Gillespie’s collaboration with various Cuban percussionists starting with Chano Pozo who joined his band in 1949.

As in the case of many others, the economic crisis meant tough times for Morton who eventually moved to Washington, DC, where he had been offered a residency in a bar. This is where Alan Lomax heard him and interviewed him for the Library of Congress in 1938. Morton died in Los Angeles in 1941, rather isolated, but, as Collier wrote,

it is difficult to believe that the new men were not listening carefully to the Morton sides. [...] Yet it seems quite clear to me that Morton, in the Hot Peppers records, showed Ellington, Henderson, Moten, Basie, Goodman, and the rest a way that jazz could go. (1978, 107)

Lizzie Miles (1895-1963)

Élizabeth Marie Landreaux, better known as Lizzie Miles, was a French Creole blues and early jazz singer born on the famous Bourbon Street in New Orleans in 1895. She started to sing, dance and perform as a child in her catechism school as her teacher would give “little concerts on Sundays for the neighborhood” (Miles 1951, reel 1, 1m15). That led to Miles receiving offers to sing in halls, such as Francs Amis Hall, L’Équité Hall, Artisan Hall, Hopes Hall and Globes Hall where concert-and-balls were held and where she sang with King Oliver, Kid Ory, Alphonse Picou, Manuel Perez and Bunk Johnson (Miles 1951, reel 1, 2m20-3m00).

During WWI, she toured in the vaudeville and minstrel circuit, therefore contributing to the spread of Black music (Miles 1951, reel 1, 12m50; Abbott and Seroff

1992, 60-63, 68). Miles got her first job as a cabaret singer in New Orleans with Manuel Manetta, after which she went up to Chicago where she sang with King Oliver's Creole Jazz band and with Freddy Keppard. She made her first recordings in New York City in 1922 and, in 1924, she went to Paris with two other musicians. She got the nickname of *La Rose Noire* singing in cabarets such as Chez Mitchell – also written Chez Michelle – and Chez Bricktop, which were managed by musicians from the United States. “I didn't have no trouble getting along in French, because I learned Creole French from my mother” (Goreau 1964, 9; Miles 1951, reel 1, 19m20). Back in New York in 1927 she played in various cabarets while continuing to make recordings among which “I Hate a Man Like You” with Jelly Roll Morton. She quit the music business and returned to New Orleans in the late 1930s.

However, in the early 1950s she resumed her career. According to the mail she received from all around the world she was still very popular (Smith 1968, 22; Goreau 1964, 9). In an article published in 1957 in the *Jazz Journal*, Miles said that she sang “in Creole – add or take away.” The author of the article, Berta Wood, explains that this means that Miles could “sing either in Louisiana Creole Patois, or in a Creole that is close to Parisian French” (Wood 1957, 1). This comment suggests that she might have performed more Creole songs than the small number she recorded, although it might also refer to Miles' bilingual performances of famous songs such as “Basin Street Blues” or “Bill Bailey Won't You Please Come Home.” Miles performed until 1959, and died four years later. Of particular interest is Lizzie Miles' bluesy voice: her timbre and range are mostly in the register of the chest voice with a powerful and raspy tone, whether she sings in English or in French.

Sidney Bechet (ca 1897-1959)

Like Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet had a long and influential career, but unlike Armstrong he is often presented in only a few pages in jazz history books. Nevertheless, his life has been well documented, so that his career as one of the first great soloist both on clarinet and soprano saxophone is usually well known. However, lesser known is the fact that Bechet's musical training (or lack thereof) represented a radical change from the Creole musical tradition.

Bechet was the youngest child of a musical French-speaking Creole family of the 7th ward in New Orleans. His father and his four brothers were all tradesmen by day and musicians by night. Either at six or eight years of age, Bechet received his first clarinet and began to take lessons with prominent Creole musicians of the time such as George Baquet, Paul Chaligny, Alphonse Picou, Louis and Lorenzo (Jr.) Tio, and Johnny St. Cyr. He visited the Opera House with his mother, and he also recalled hearing Buddy Bolden during a street parade (Chilton 1987, 5).⁷⁸ Sidney began to play professionally in his older brother Leonard's Silver Bell Band, but soon got gigs with many other bands, even appearing as a guest with John Robichaux.

Regardless of his Creole musical upbringing, Bechet always refused to learn musical notation, and definitely preferred the blues and rag music of the uptown Black musicians. Louis "Big Eye" Nelson, whose real name was Delisle, (1880 or 1885-1949) introduced him to the "ratty" and rough sound of the uptown musicians and became Bechet's "stylistic model" (Brothers 2006, 192; Chilton

⁷⁸ Bolden's last appearance in a parade - and last gig - was on the Labour Day parade of 1906, when Bechet was nine years old (Marquis 1978, 116).

1987, 7). Along with Nelson and cornetist Freddie Keppard (1890-1933), Bechet belonged to the group that Brothers calls “The Creole Rebels” (2006,189), for they willingly refused to follow the Creole musical tradition and chose to learn and play with the uptown hot bands.⁷⁹ However their musical upbringing might have still made a difference in terms of technique and tone for Nelson became one “the best ragtime clarinet player” (Pop Foster quoted in Brothers 2006, 190) and Keppard became “the leading Creole cornetist of his generation” (Brothers 2006, 191).

Around 1911 or 1913 Bechet joined Bunk Johnson and his Eagle Band, which was mostly formed by Buddy Bolden’s former sidemen. As Bechet put it, this was a “real gut-bucket band, a real low band that really played the blues and things, and those real slow tempos” (Ibid., 194). This tends to indicate that the younger generations of Creoles slowly began to accept and embrace their African heritage. Bechet’s trip to Europe with Will Marion Cook deserves mention. In the October 10, 1919 issue of the *Revue Romande*, Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet (1883-1969) wrote a review of the show – the first review ever done of a jazz performance – in which he highly praised Bechet as a “clarinet virtuoso” and an “artist of genius” (Chilton 1996, 40).

On June 30, 1923, Bechet made his recording début – on the soprano saxophone – as a member of the pianist and composer Clarence Williams’ Blues Five. Barney Bigard (1906-1980) later recalled that he heard the record “while I was still in New Orleans, and I used to copy him note for note. Everybody had that record” (Chilton 1987, 58; Bigard 1985, 71). Through Bechet, Bigard, who was

⁷⁹ The Creoles perceived the Blacks as the “rough element”, and jazz was seen as a disrespectful and distasteful music (Leonard Bechet 1949a, 150, 153 and 1949b, track 1).

trained in the Creole tradition, was absorbing the music of the uptown Blacks, in which Bechet's upbringing in a Creole musical family was somehow heard in his "voice-like quality [of] playing, [that] exhibited a rare sensitivity to the potential of timbre and phrasing" (Gioia, 1997, 58). Indeed, later in the fall, Bechet recorded several other songs with Williams and various singers. On Mamie's Smith's "Lady Luck Blues," Bechet plays an eight bar solo with a beautiful tone, controlled vibrato on long notes, and glissandi towards higher notes that must be noted as one of the first recorded saxophone solos.

Two years later, Bechet had another occasion to participate in the diffusion of jazz when he joined the crew of *La Revue Nègre* who debuted at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* in Paris on October 2, 1925. The show was a success and it eventually traveled to Brussels and Berlin. Afterwards, Bechet joined trombonist Frank Withers who was organizing a Black band to tour the USSR. The early jazz revival also proved beneficial to Bechet as French jazz promoter and critic Charles Delaunay invited him to appear in a music Festival in Paris in 1949. During the festival he played with French clarinetist Claude Luter and his band, sitting in many times at the Vieux-Colombier. Trumpeter Pierre Merlin later recalled:

I think we mostly played numbers from our repertoire, but Bechet made them into something quite different [...] I think only one of our band spoke English fluently, so it was obvious that Sidney would speak in French, but because of his accent this made things difficult. I suppose he was out of practice, but it wasn't only accent, it was his vocabulary as well. (Chilton 1996, 216)

Finally, as many jazz musicians had done before him, Bechet relocated permanently to France in 1950, where he was part of the traditional jazz scene until his death in 1959.

These musicians, each influential in the development and/or the spreading of early jazz, are but a few among many other Creole jazz musicians active during the formative years of jazz (see Appendix 1). Some would go on to become influential big band musicians during the swing era, such as Barney Bigard, who played with the Duke Ellington Orchestra and is listed as one of the composers – with Duke Ellington – of “Mood Indigo.” However, as he wrote in his autobiography, Bigard used a composition that his old New Orleans teacher Lorenzo Tio Jr. had shown him, therefore extending the influence of the family – and of the Creole musical tradition – into the famous Duke Ellington Orchestra.

My old teacher, Lorenzo Tio [Jr.], had come to New York and he had a slip of paper with some tunes and parts of tunes he had written. There was one I liked, and I asked him if I could borrow it. He was trying to interest me in recording one or two maybe. Anyway, I took it home and kept fooling around with it. [...] I changed some of it around... and got something together that mostly was my own but partly Tio's. (Bigard 1985, 64)

The Early Jazz Revival

The early jazz revival is an important period with regard to the Creoles' contribution to the development of jazz. During the revival Creole musicians finally recorded some songs in Creole French, a repertoire that is closely linked to their cultural identity and that seems to have been presented regularly when playing for Creole audiences.

During the 1930s, “hot” jazz collectors – many of whom were to become the first jazz scholars – started to go down to New Orleans to document the music they loved. The

first jazz history book published in the U.S.⁸⁰ appeared in 1939, at a time when jazz was well known and was becoming the prime popular music in the United States, allowing hundreds of big bands to thrive during the swing era of the 1930s and 1940s. This interest in the history of jazz led to a revival of the early New Orleans jazz style, as many feared that this style was soon to disappear.

In 1942, when Sterling Brown, an African American professor, poet, and jazz lover travelled to New Orleans he was disappointed to find none of the jazz musicians or venues he was expecting to encounter easily. Brown later wrote:

“There were a few good jazz combinations in town, . . . but most of them were playing in white places where I could have gone only at the cost of problems.” The disillusioned Brown concluded “that in New Orleans the feeling for jazz was nostalgic, commemorative, quite different from the force that sustained young Louis Armstrong.” (Souther 2003, 40)

This could be explained by the fact that until the early jazz revival that was soon to take place, jazz did not appear as a positive asset for the city. In 1918, in an anonymous editorial published in the *Times Picayune*, “Jass and Jassism,” the author refused to accept the idea of New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz. Speaking about “this particular form of musical vice,” he concluded that “[w]e do not recognize the honor of parenthood” (Sakakeeny 2013, 79; Raeburn 2009a, 219).⁸¹ By WWII, many jazz musicians had already left the city. At the same time, the arrival of a large number of rural Anglo-Americans (attracted by wartime manufacturing jobs) who preferred hillbilly music, along with the “growing popularity of radio [that] fostered the standardization of

⁸⁰ In 1932 Robert Goffin, a Belgian lawyer, poet and jazz aficionado published *Aux Fontières du jazz*. Then in 1934, French critic Hugues Panassié published *Le Jazz Hot*, which was translated and issued in the U.S. two years later. Of more value though was Charles Delaunay’s 1936 *Hot Discographie*, which provided “hot” jazz collectors with the first listing of discs and personnel (Raeburn 2009a, 46).

⁸¹ As Raeburn points out, not everybody agreed with this point of view, as can be read in the “Letters to the Editor” sent by various readers following the publication of the editorial (Raeburn 2009a, 220).

national popular music tastes” and the appearance of jukeboxes in public venues contributed to the sharp decline in employment for jazz musicians and in local interest regarding the city’s indigenous music.

Nevertheless, the arrival of servicemen stationed in New Orleans sparked a revived interest in jazz music, even if they did not find as much live jazz as they expected (Souther 2003, 42-45). At the same time, the research of the authors of *Jazzmen*, and especially William “Bill” Russell, led him to discover sixty-year-old trumpeter Bunk Johnson in New Iberia, 250 kilometers west of New Orleans. By then, Johnson did not even own an instrument, but Russell recorded him in 1942 after helping him to get new teeth and a trumpet. *Jazzmen* also started to document and popularize the role of New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz, a distinction that the tourist industry quickly used in its branding of the city. Indeed, the exodus of many jazz musicians and the decline of employment for musicians did not lead to the complete extinction of jazz, and the preservation and promotion of the music “seemed an ideal springboard for cultural tourism” (Souther 2003, 47). This distinction and the unexpected publicity the city therefore received (many jazz aficionados traveled to New Orleans to experience the “Birthplace of Jazz” [Ibid.,1]), as well as a reaction against bebop, led to a revival of the early New Orleans jazz style. Revivalist movements also took place in New York City, namely at Nick’s tavern/jazz club in Greenwich Village, which had opened in 1936 or 1937, and in San Francisco, home of the traditionalist Yerba Buena Jazz Band founded in 1940, allowing many musicians to resume their career (Gioia 1997, 279; Collier 1978, 282-283). In 1946, Rudi Blesh published his own history of jazz, *Shining Trumpets*, in which he also located the birth of jazz in New Orleans (154-155).

The Revival and the Creole Songs

The revival benefited many musicians who saw their career gain a *second souffle*. Not only were they able to go back into performing, but early jazz recordings were re-issued and new ones were made. At the end of the 1930s the rise of interest in early jazz led to the reissuing of recordings such as Armstrong's Hot Five, Morton and his Red Hot Peppers, King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, Bessie Smith, and Bix Beiderbecke by small and private labels such as the Hot Jazz Club of America. During the 1940s the "big three record companies, Victor, Decca, and Columbia," who had acquired most of the smaller labels during the Depression and therefore now owned many of the earlier recordings, jumped onto the bandwagon and began to put together album sets of the Hot Five and the Red Hot Peppers (Raeburn 2009a, 111; Collier 1978, 281).

As they sought to document and preserve the music they liked, a few of the hot jazz collectors went on to make new recordings of many of early jazz musicians. For example, in 1944 Bill Russell founded the American Music label to release new Bunk Johnson recordings (Raeburn 2009a, 117; Hazeldine 1993, xiii). This was just the first of many other sessions Russell conducted with various musicians in various locations, among them New Orleans. Similarly, Nesuhi Ertegun and Marili Morden who "ran the Jazz Man Record Shop in Hollywood" (Raeburn 2009a, 155), established the Crescent Records label, which released the four sides recorded by Kid Ory in Los Angeles in August 1944 and September 1945 (McCusker 2012, 186, 197-199; Raeburn 2009a, 129). The label was short-lived and became part of the Jazz Man label, which issued traditional jazz recordings between 1946 and 1951. Kid Ory also went on to record for the independent Exner Label, as well as for Decca, Columbia and Verve. And, in 1947,

Circle Records, founded one year earlier by Rudy Blesh and Harriet Janis, issued the LP *Jazz a la Creole*. The label also produced recordings with Lizzie Miles.

All these recordings are significant for they included Creole songs (see Appendix 2), none of which had been recorded by jazz musicians previously. It is probable that Creole songs were not recorded in the 1920s because record producers would not have seen any commercial value to them. However, as the revival of the 1940s was largely prompted by the desire to document the origins of jazz, Creole musicians and collectors alike might have thought it important to record what they remembered of this uniquely Louisianan repertoire as it was interpreted by early jazz musicians and singers. At the same time Bechet, who had a prolific and successful recording career in France, also recorded few Creole songs.

The Creole Songs

Although not many Creole songs were recorded, those that were, were recorded quite often. Those recordings, as well as comments made by early jazz musicians suggest that Creole songs were part of the repertoire of early jazz musicians, who would have performed them to satisfy their Creole audiences as they were always aiming to please their patrons in order to get regular work. Information about the performance of Creole songs not only during balls, but also during Carnival, at dinner parties, or in the streets of New Orleans etc. can also be found in many of the interviews done with jazz musicians, of which some excerpts, presented here, stand out as being particularly significant.

Jelly Roll Morton didn't really have the time to fully profit from this revival since he died in 1941. Nevertheless, an abridged version of his Library of Congress recordings was issued in 1947 on the Circle Records label rendering them accessible and popular,

mostly among collectors. His performance, and recollection of the Creole song “C’été ’n aut’ can-can, payé donc” provide evidence that Creole songs were performed in the formative years of jazz.

This one [...] was one of the early tunes in New Orleans. It's from French origin. And I'm telling you, when they start to playing this thing in the dance hall they would really whoop it up. [...] This was around about nineteen-five, nineteen-six. All the bands – the little bands that was around – played it [...] it happened to be a favorite so far as the tune goes. But there seemed to be some vulgar meaning to it that I have never understood. I know what all the rest mean, but the can-can – I can't understand the can-can business. [Laugh]. But I'll tell you, everybody got hot and they threw their hats when they get to start playing this thing. (Morton 1938, 107)⁸²

In 1949, while working on a biography of Morton, Alan Lomax went to New Orleans to interview some musicians who might have known – or known of – Morton. In doing so he met with Alphonse Picou (1878 or 79-1961). Telling the story of his debut as a professional musician when he was sixteen years old (around 1904), Picou recalled his first rehearsal with trombone player Bouboul Augustat who first invited him to play:⁸³

“One day Bouboul Augustat, the trombone player, heard me practising at the house and ask me if I want to come to one of his rehearsal.” [...]

“So I went. They were playing some good jazz that I didn't know nothing about...”

<i>Femme en dans lit</i>	<i>Woman in bed</i>
<i>'N homme en bas lit</i>	<i>Man under bed</i>
<i>Moi pas l'aimez ça</i>	<i>I don't like that</i>
<i>Moi pas l'aimez ça</i>	<i>I don't like that</i>
<i>Ai, ai, ai</i>	<i>Ai, ai, ai</i>
<i>Moi pas l'aimez ça</i>	<i>I don't like that</i>

(Lomax 1950, 72)

⁸² A note in the transcript of the interviews specifies that the can-can was “a variation on the quadrille and polka [that] was first danced in France in the 1820s and [was] subsequently banned by the police as indecent” (Morton 1938, 106). See also the section about the quadrille in Paris on pages 60-61. Both Johnny St. Cyr (1949b, track 8) and Leonard Bechet (1949b track 10) also mentioned having played this song. For Bechet can-can meant “gossip.”

⁸³ Picou also told the story of his first rehearsal in an interview with Richard Allen in April of 1958, this time calling the trombone player Bouboul Fortunette (Picou 1958, reel 1, 7m10).

Lomax added a short score of the song “Moi Pas l’Aimez Ça” in his Appendix One “The Tunes.” Either Lomax himself or Hally Wood, who did the transcription, added the following commentaries (comment A refers to the first eight note of the second beat of this rhythmic figure):

A There [was] actually more syncopation throughout than can be indicated. For instance, this note might just as well have been written as the last sixteenth of the previous beat. Triplets might be substituted.

B The first voice often came in with the stanza while the chorus voices were still singing their last note or two. An early stage of African polyphony.

(Lomax 1950, 281)

Unfortunately, neither Lomax nor Wood specifies the recording (or performance) from which the transcription was done, but the mention of syncopated rhythms and vocal polyphony are interesting for they provide another example of a Creole song incorporating African-derived elements of the early jazz style.

The same year, Lomax also met with Creole guitarist and banjoist Johnny St. Cyr (1890-1966). Here is a part of this conversation that took place when they were discussing the hot bands such as Freddie Keppard and the Olympia Brass Band – “Now, the Olympia was the hottest band” – Bunk Johnson and the Superior Band, Manuel Perez and the Imperial (both Keppard and Perez were Creole musicians).

St. Cyr: That was around — oh, as far back as I remember — that’s around about nineteen four — four or five. And back around— uh, the *first* real *hot* band, to my knowledge, was back around nineteen hundred. That was the Golden Rule band. You never hear no talk about those people.

[...]

Lomax [speaking about the Golden Rule Band] I guessed they had some Creole tunes of their own that they played

St. Cyr Well, no. Those Creole tunes come up in later years. [...] we had a lots of Creole tunes during that time, but the bands never bothered with them. They were all trying to play the popular numbers.

Lomax What do you mean? Who played those Creole tunes then?

St. Cyr Ah, people used to just sing'em. They'd always get a bunch of Creoles – Creoles are noted for good times, you know. On Sundays, they'd have what we call a *cowan* in Creole, turtle dinners, you see. It was famous around Creole section. Until today they's quite a few of'em still has those *cowan* dinners. And, uh, they have their wine and their beer there, and – wasn't as many musicians then as they have now. And those babies get out there and they'd get happy. And they'd get to singing and clapping. People would be dancing and that's it!

Wanting to demonstrate his point, or getting carried away by reminiscence, St. Cyr went on to play and sing his rendition – with different lyrics – of the popular song “Eh La-Bas.”

Lomax Now you said you couldn't sing!

St. Cyr No, no I can't, I can't. [Laughs.] I don't consider that no singing.

Lomax That's fine. That's great for me. I wish you could think of some more of those *cowan* tunes!

St. Cyr [Laughs.] Say, man. I'm getting close to sixty now. A lot's happened in my life since then. [Laughs.] And so much other music, you know, it's more, uh – developed, complicated music that I played since then. It's hard for me to remember.

Lomax Johnny, don't you think they took some of those old Creole tunes and made their, made their riffs and their breaks out of them? They use them for –

St. Cyr Oh, lots of them, they did, yeah. I imagine they did. I couldn't just put my finger on any particular number. But they'd get'em – lots of those riffs and breaks from those old tunes.

(St-Cyr 1949a, 142-143 and 1949b, tracks 6 to 9, emphasis in the text)

In her 1951 interview with Richard B. Allen, Lizzie Miles explained that her mother started singing publicly in her old age “for old folks concerts, singing old Creole songs” (reel 1, 0m50). Unfortunately, she wasn't asked more details, so we don't know

much about the musical accompaniment to which she sang nor about the social context of these “old folk concerts.”

Carnival was another time when Creole songs would be performed. Speaking with Paul Barbarin and Theresa Wilson – Barbarin’s sister – on January 7, 1959, William Russell and Richard B. Allen inquired what people would sing during Carnival time:

Wilson: They would sing all kind of French songs. Creole songs, and all.

Barbarin: Oh yes, all Creole songs.

Allen: Do you know any of them?

Barbarin: Just a few words. I mean, you used to say most of them. Then say, “Ai Ai Ai Mo, Pas Lemmé Ça. Mo, Pas Lemmé Ça. Mo, Pas Lemmé Ça.”

[...]

Wilson: We’d sing all kind of Creole songs. We’d put all kind of words in them – well, they know how to talk that kind of stuff, you know, and they –

Barbarin: Yeah

Wilson: They all – they’d make a real song out of it. They’d rhyme it up.

(Barbarin 1959, reel 1 28m45)

In another interview conducted on April 4, 1958 with clarinetist Alphonse Picou by William Russell, Al Rose and Ralph Collins, Picou explains that he used to play Creole songs such as “Eh La Bas” during dances and at *Mardi Gras* (Picou 1958, reel 2, 3m55, 5m30 and 6m55). But, even if they were playing a lot of those, he had trouble remembering the title of other songs. He added that if his “brother [Ulysses] was living, [...] he is the one that composed all Creole songs [such as] ‘Who Stole My Bottle / Qui Veut Qu’Y Voler Ma Bouteille?’ or ‘Qui Veut Qui Dit Toi Que Moi T’As Parlé Là-Bas / Who Told You I Was Going Over There’” (Ibid., reel 2, 5m30).⁸⁴ Actually, in the

⁸⁴ The translation of the titles in English are from Picou.

interview Picou did with Alan Lomax in 1949, his brother Ulysses was present and joined to sing one of his compositions called “La misère / Misery,” with Alphonse on clarinet and Paul Dominguez on guitar (Picou 1949, Track 8). This performance is very interesting and informative for Ulysses Picou’s work as songwriter testifies to the vitality of the Creole culture in the ongoing creation of new songs. The work of Lizzie Miles, who performed translations of popular songs such as “Basin Street Blues,” “Bill Bailey Won’t You Please Come Home,” and “A good man is hard to find/Un Bon Nomm,” and of De De Pierce’s who sang a Creole version of “All of Me/Tout de Moi,” also testify to the dynamism of Creole musicians in maintaining and sharing their Creole heritage.

The testimonies of Morton, Picou, St. Cyr, Barbarin and Miles provide evidence that Creole songs were performed in the formative years of jazz and that enough of the Creole culture survived well into the twentieth century for traditional songs and dances to remain in the repertoire of Creole musicians.⁸⁵ And although St. Cyr’s answer about the use of Creole songs to create riffs and breaks is somewhat elusive and may have been prompted by Lomax’s leading question, the oral history suggests that it is very conceivable that Creole songs were part of the musical vocabulary that Creole musicians would eventually incorporate into their music.

Of particular interest is Camille Nickerson’s recollection of his father’s rendition of “Suzanne Belle Femme” in a private familial setting, showing that the songs belonged to the everyday life of the Creoles. Camille Nickerson (1887 or 1888-1982) was the daughter of William Nickerson (1865-1928) who toured with the Georgia Minstrels along with Louis Tio and played viola in the (Lorenzo) Tio and Doublet Orchestra around 1890.

⁸⁵ See also the quotation about Warren “Baby” Dodds’ memories on p. 80.

Camille herself played in Louis “Papa” Tio’s large ensemble – dubbed by Barney Bigard the “symphony band” – in the late 1910s (Kinzer 1993, 206). In her 1932 thesis, she recalled:

My first introduction to this Creole music can best be given in the description of a picture which has stayed with me through many years and is still quite vivid in my mind today. It came about on the occasion when as a very small child, I beheld my father playing an accompaniment in double-stops on his violin to a most attractive, jolly little tune – one “Suzanne, Belle Femme.” My father also sang the tune as he played its accompaniment. But the sole performer in this interesting picture was my great grandmother who, with a brightly colored tignon, or head-handkerchief, tied neatly around her head, made graceful play with a madras handkerchief, which she held by its corners, while she danced gaily up and down and all around, unable to resist the strains of “Suzanne.” (1932, 4)

Wanting to collect Creole songs for her thesis, Nickerson noted “the difficulty of notation owing to the Negro’s *oddity of intonation* and his ingenuity for *complicated rhythm*” (1932, 6, my emphasis) and that even if only few Creole songs have been preserved “there was a time when the songs were plentiful and popular” (1932, 8).

The song “Eh La Bas” stands out as the Creole song that has been recorded the most often by many jazz musicians. According to Sybil Kein, “Eh La Bas” is a call and response tune “which is based on ‘Vous Conné Tit la Maison Denis’” and was “sung by Creole men dressed as women and playing small guitars on *Mardi Gras* as late as the 1940s” (Kein 2000, 124). This information is important because while discussing Carnival, where people would sing all kinds of Creole songs, both Wilson and Barbarin told the story of men dancing with men dressed as women, even if they could hardly recall any songs (Barbarin 1959, reel 1 28m00). This is also interesting because several other scholars have collected a song they usually called “Mon cher cousin” or sometimes “Maison Denise” that contains the same first verse as “Eh La Bas,” followed by different

lyrics.⁸⁶ In *Gumbo Yaya*, Lyle Saxon wrote that “‘Mo Ché [*sic*] Cousin, Mo Ché Cousin’ was one of the most popular of all the Creole songs. It is said that more than one hundred verses were written to the same tune, all dealing with cooking and mulattoes striving to pass for Whites” (1945, 432).

This substantiates Barbarin and Wilson’s recollection of people singing all kinds of Creole songs and that they’d “put all kind of words in them” and “rhyme [them] up” (Barbarin 1959, reel 1 28m45). Leonard Bechet also recalled that musicians “had a variety of pieces, that they make up themselves” (1949b, track 10). This indicates that Creole jazz musicians did use well-known songs to improvise “new” songs, and/or, as Lomax suggested, that they could even have used these songs to create riffs for other pieces. It is therefore possible that Creole musicians would also have maintained a practice of improvising music, at least on some occasions such as Carnival and informal familial music playing – like in *cowan* – even if they were formally trained.

The streets of New Orleans used to be animated by the cries of various vendors selling pralines, peanuts, onions or offering services like chimney sweeping or scissor sharpening. One of these vendors caught the attention of Cable who in 1886 wrote about the *marchande de calas* that he heard singing a Calinda song when he was a child in New Orleans (1886a, 527; see also p. 52 above). Danny Barker also recalled the *calas* vendors outside the church after mass.

They have a basket on their head, and they wouldn’t hold the basket. It would be the blackberry lady or the strawberry lady or the pie lady. People sell all kinds of bartering to make some money to survive. Old ladies used to sell ... I can’t think of them things. Calas. You know what a cala is? Cala is a rice cake. It had rice

⁸⁶ Such as Marie Theard (ca 1935, 220), Henri Wehrmann (1946, 7), and Alfred Pouinard (1950) who listed a song as “Mon cher cousin” but did not include it in the scores he added in his dissertation. In 1946, Harry Oster recorded it during a field trip, (CD 1671, Track 28; song # 133 on the list), and the same year, Adelaide Van Hey recorded “Maison Denise” on her *Street Cries and Creole Songs* LP.

and flour, and it looks like a round doughnut, like a brown biscuit. They stand by the church. Each church you see these old women standing there with a basket. Have on 'em slave clothes. Big skirts. They're from way back there. [...] One particular [...] I'd go and stand and look at her, and she would look at me, and I wouldn't say a word. She would shake her head. "Pauvre. Pauvre petit." (Barker 1992, 7)

The ladies carrying baskets on their head without holding them would definitely have given a Caribbean look and feel to the city. Camille Nickerson has described the street cries as "short musical expressions, which were sung with the purpose of selling wares" (McGinty and Nickerson 1979, 85). These "short musical expressions," such as the one used by the *marchandes de Calas*, which would always shout/sing (with some variations): *Belles calas tout chauds!* (Saxon 1945, 32-35) eventually inspired Creole musicians who used them into their songs. For instance "Les Oignons," another popular song⁸⁷, contains *Belles calas tout chauds!* as a call and response type of refrain.

By the time of the early jazz revival in the 1940s, the Creole songs revealed themselves as having a commercial potential. In the liner notes for a re-issue of the *Jazz a la Creole* session on CD in 2000, Blesh wrote that:

The *Jazz A La Creole* session sticks in my memory for a peculiar aftermath. We set up a date for the Creole Serenaders to wax some traditional cooking A 'La Creole [*sic*], with Nick [Albert Nicholas], Pops [Foster], Danny Barker, and the Harlem stride giant, James P. Johnson. Nick and Danny did the Creole singing. There was much Creole laughter after the vocals, one of them in particular. Within weeks we had a mysterious best selling in Montreal and Quebec. Later on we found that our little Circle, dedicated to "pure" jazz, has [*sic*] innocently waxed a "party" record in patois we didn't dig. But they did dig it in Canada where the local French and the New Orleans Creole are strongly similar – both being Early French. (Blesh 2000)

I suspect that the mysterious hit was "Les Oignons" [*sic*] as the phrase *Belles calas tout chauds!* can have a *double entendre* with sexual connotations.

⁸⁷ The instrumental version of the song became a hit for Sidney Bechet in France.

On March 21, 1945 Kid Ory recorded “Blanche Touquatoux” for Decca Records, with Cecile Ory (his sister-in-law) on vocals (McCusker, 2012, 197). In 1960, he recorded a solo version of the same song for the Verve/Mosaic label. This song is an adaptation of a famous Creole song “Toucoutou” composed in 1820 by Joseph Beaumont. According to Lyle Saxon, dozens of versions existed for this song, reflecting the dynamic improvisational nature of the Creole songs, which continued to be composed and/or improvised upon and were not only old plantations songs. The lyrics of Ory’s version are substantially different from Saxon’s. Ory’s version is also significantly shorter – better fit to be jazzed up – but the similarity of the lyrics based on the true case of a women who wanted to pass as White (*Passé Blanc*) but was defeated in court allows us to identify it as the same song performed either solo or in a call and response manner between two singers.

On the Verve/Mosaic sessions during which Ory re-recorded “Blanche Touquatoux” were also included “Creole Bobo,” and “C’est l’aut Can-Can” (the same song that Jelly Roll had sung for Lomax). He also recorded a series of traditional French songs that were part of the common repertoire of children’s songs in Louisiana (Theard ca 1935) as well as in French Canada.⁸⁸ Someone at Verve had taken notice of Ory’s success in France and wanted to release an album of French songs, but it seems that this project never materialized since “[w]hat the French wanted is traditional jazz, not FRERE JACQUES” (liner notes of The Complete Verve Sessions, emphasis in the text). However, I suggest that Ory recorded these songs as a tribute to his French heritage as he most likely heard and sang them as a child along with Creole songs. Indeed, some eighty-five Creole

⁸⁸ The songs are: “Au clair de la lune,” “Auprès de ma blonde,” “Frère Jacques,” “Il était une bergère,” “L’alouette,” “Le roi Dagobert,” “Marlborough s’en va-t-en guerre,” and “Sur le pont d’Avignon.”

songs have been published by various musicians, historians or collectors since the publication of *Slaves Songs of the United States* in 1867. Consequently, early jazz musicians had access to a large repertoire of Creole songs to perform in and around New Orleans when playing for a Creole audience, even if by the time they were interviewed they had forgotten a lot of them.

As the comments and analysis of various scholars indicate, the Creole songs share some of the characteristics that became important and defining elements of early jazz. These include: unique vocal/melodic inflections; alternation of binary and ternary rhythms, syncopated and Caribbean-like rhythms such as habanera and tresillo; and improvisation and/or alteration of lyrics and formal structure (Nickerson, 1932; Pouinard 1950). Kein also observed that the melody of many songs starts “on the second beat of a measure instead of the first beat. This emphasis on the second beat was carried over into the development of early jazz and is a hallmark of that music” (Kein 2000, 124). Similarly, Pouinard noted that several of the melodies he analysed started with a pick up (*anacrouse*) before the first bar – which often emphasizes the fourth beat; again a jazz-like characteristic in that it emphasizes a beat other than the first (1950, 232-241).

As a whole the Creole songs form an original French repertoire that is also part of Black American folk music, reflecting not only the multicultural and creolized nature of jazz, but also the cultural identity of the Creoles of Louisiana.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have aimed at uncovering the contribution of the French Creoles of Louisiana to the development of early jazz at the turn of the twentieth century. Using creolization as both a concept and the model of a historical and sociological process, I have also aimed at pointing to the complexity of, and the length of time over which this process occurred, while suggesting that *Créolité*, as it emerged in the French Caribbean in the 1980s, validates the claim that Louisiana Creoles had made a century earlier with regard to their specific cultural identity expressed itself through language, religion, occupation and music.

Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, the Creoles had a very active musical life, performing and/or composing music in all the musical genres heard in New Orleans. Congo Square is notable for the Sunday gatherings, where African cultures were able to survive, blend together, and come in contact with European cultures. A body of Creole songs – closely linked to the “Negro” slave songs – emerged out of these gatherings, and would eventually inspire composers, such as Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who used Creole melodies and/or rhythms in their compositions. These Creole-inspired pieces have sometimes been described as one of the precursors of ragtime, itself a precursor of jazz.

The numerous balls held in the city provided the means for Creole musicians to practice their profession and to develop a vast repertoire of dance music that preceded and prefigured the dance bands, such as the John Robichaux Orchestra, that eventually incorporated some of the hot syncopated music of the uptown Black musicians. The music performed by both the slaves and the *gens de couleur libres* who joined the military during the War of 1812 and the Civil War also played a significant role in the

development of the brass band tradition, which was influential in the formation of the typical early jazz band. Finally, even if there is very little documentation about the *cantiques* sung at the Catholic Church, the interpretation of these melodies by Creoles also demonstrated some pitch inflections and phrasing that reflected their African musical heritage. Therefore, creolization – both as a concept and multilayered process aiming to describe the many exchanges and cross-fertilization between cultures – allows for a better understanding of the contribution of the Creoles who had begun to blend African-Caribbean- and European-influenced musics long before the emergence of jazz.

Nevertheless, further research on the *cantiques* performed at Black Catholic churches, and music played and sung by the French slaves on Creoles plantations would enhance the knowledge of the Creoles' musical culture. However, the paucity of the extant documentation may render further research on these subjects difficult if not impossible. But it would be worth looking in written correspondence and diaries of the members of old Creole families. These documents have already provided the material needed for the description and better understanding of the antebellum Creole life, such as the life and times of the Bringiers, a rich and prosperous family of planters.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Creole musicians greatly contributed to the development of early jazz as teachers, bandleaders, instrumentalists, singers, and composers, as well as with the performance and composition/improvisation of Creole songs. Only briefly mentioned – if mentioned at all – in jazz histories,⁸⁹ this body of

⁸⁹ Blesh included them in his list of the formative elements of early jazz and mentioned the “Creole Song (C’est l’Autre Can-can)” performed by Morton and Ory (1946, 175, 179); Stearns described “Sali Dame” as a “signifying song,” a kind of song that would have originated in West Africa (1956, 11); Schuller mentioned Morton’s rendition of “C’été’n aut’ can-can, payé donc” to exemplify his ability to jazz up any tunes ([1968] 1986, 139). Finally, Shipton includes them in his chapter about the precursors of jazz (2000, 18-19).

songs that belongs to the Black American folk music, owing to the incorporation of African and Caribbean-derived elements, and to Franco-American folk music due to their attachment to the French language and musical traditions, was one of the components of in the formation of early jazz. Deeper musical and lyrical analysis would permit to identify more precisely the elements that these songs might have brought into jazz, such as song forms (different from blues, ragtime, or dance forms), Creole-inspired riffs etc.

Indeed, the Creole songs constitute a tangible heritage of the Creoles' cultural identity and unique contribution to jazz. As such, jazz gave the Creole community the means to create and appropriate an American identity while the performance of Creole songs – besides the blues and other popular songs – also allowed the people to hold on to, and share, their Creole identity and culture, through the present day, as some of these songs are still played and recorded today.

APPENDIX 1 - LIST OF CREOLE MUSICIANS

This list is not exhaustive. Unless specified otherwise, all the information given here comes from the Oxford Music Online. All the musicians presented here were either active during the formative years of jazz, or were influenced by the early jazz musicians. I added some personal details such as family ties, since family life was an important value for Creoles, but also because music teaching within the family was a common way to transmit and learn music.

Adams, Dolly Douroux - Pianist and Multi-Instrumentalist (Drums, Guitar and Trumpet)
Algiers (LA) Jan 11, 1904 – New Orleans Nov 6, 1979

Through her mother, Olivia Manetta (herself a trumpet player), she was the niece of Manuel Manetta with whom she played
(www.knowla.org/entry/1506/&view=summary)

Albert, Don / Albert Anité Dominique - Trumpeter and Bandleader
New Orleans, Aug 5, 1908 – San Antonio (TX) 1980

Baquet Théogène - Cornetist
New Orleans, ca 1854 or 58 – New Orleans, ca 1920
Lead the Excelsior Brass Band from 1879 or 82 to 1904 and other groups like the Lyre Club Symphony Orchestra
Father of Achille and George Baquet

Baquet, Achille - Clarinetist and Saxophonist
New Orleans, Nov 15, 1885 - New Orleans, Nov 20, 1956
Student of Louis Tio

Baquet, George - Clarinetist and Tenor Sax
New Orleans, 1883 - New Orleans, Jan 14, 1949
Played in the vaudeville circuit and with the John Robichaux Orchestra
Student of Louis Tio
Lead the George Bakay Swingters in Philadelphia

Barbarin, Isidore - Alto Horn
New Orleans, Sept 24, 1872 - New Orleans, June 12, 1960
Father of Paul, Louis, Lucien and William, and grandfather of Danny Barker.

Paul Barbarin - Drummer
New Orleans, May 5, 1899; New Orleans, Feb 17, 1969
His grandmother spoke nothing but French (Marquis [1978] 2005, 75)

Barbarin Louis - Drummer,
New Orleans, Oct 24, 1902; New Orleans, May 12, 1997

Barker, Danny - Guitarist, Banjoist, Singer, Composer, and Writer
New Orleans, March 3, 1906; Culver City (CA) June 27, 1980
He was the grandson of Isidore Barbarin who thought him as a child

Bigard, Barney (Albany Leon) - Clarinetist, member of Duke Ellington Orchestra
 New Orleans, March 3, 1906; Culver City (CA) June 27, 1980
 Student of Lorenzo Tio Jr.

Bigeou, Esther - Singer
 Sang Creole songs
 New Orleans c.1895; New Orleans c.1935
 Cousin of Danny Barker

Bocage, Peter - Cornetist and Violinist
 New Orleans, July 31, 1887; New Orleans, Dec 3, 1967

Braud/ Breaux, Wellman - Bassist with Duke Ellington,
 St. James Parish, LA, Jan 25, 1891; Los Angeles, Oct 27, 1966

Celestin, Oscar “Papa” - Trumpeter and Bandleader
 Napoleonville (LA), Jan 1, 1884; New Orleans, Dec 15, 1954

Cottrell, Louis “old Man” - Drummer
 New Orleans, Dec 25, 1878; New Orleans, Oct 17, 1927.
 Cottrell is credited with introducing the press roll into jazz drumming; he influenced two generations of drummers in New Orleans, including Baby Dodds.
 Father of Louis Cottrell Jr.

Cottrell, Louis Jr. - Clarinetist and Tenor Saxophonist
 New Orleans, March 7, 1911; New Orleans, March 21, 1978
 He studied clarinet with Lorenzo Tio, Jr., and Barney Bigard.
 Son of Louis Cottrell

Delisle, “Big Eye” Louis Nelson - Clarinetist
 New Orleans, Jan 28, 1880 or 1885; New Orleans, Aug 20, 1949.
 He was born Louis Delisle but his father adopted the name Nelson from an employer.
 He received some lessons from Louis Tio and Lorenzo Tio, Sr.

Dominique, Natty - Trumpeter
 New Orleans, Aug 2, 1894; Chicago, Aug 30, 1982
 Cousin of Barney Bigard and Uncle of Don Albert

Dutrey, Honoré - Trombonist
 New Orleans, c1887; Chicago, July 21, 1935.

Humphrey, James B. - Trumpeter and Music Teacher (known as Professor Humphrey).
 1859-1935.
 Was the son of a plantation owner and a Creole woman
 (McCusker, 2013, 28)

Keppard, Freddie - Cornetist
 New Orleans, Feb 27, 1890; Chicago, July 15, 1933.

Lewis, George (George Joseph François Louis Zeno) - Clarinetist
 New Orleans, July 13 1900; New Orleans Dec 31

Manetta, Manuel - Pianist, Cornetist, and Saxophonist
 New Orleans, Oct 3 1889; New Orleans Oct 10, 1969

Metoyer, Arnold - Cornetist
 ca 1876 New Orleans; 1935 New Orleans
 As a brass band musician he played with: Excelsior, Kid Ory's, Reliance, Tuxedo Brass Band ([www.hurricanebrassband.nl/Musician Arnold Metoyer.htm](http://www.hurricanebrassband.nl/Musician%20Arnold%20Metoyer.htm))

Morand, Herb - Trumpeter and Singer
 New Orleans 1905 - New Orleans, Feb, 23 1952
 Half-Brother of Lizzie Miles

Moret, George - Cornetist and Bandleader
 New Orleans ca 1870-1924
 Succeeded to Théogène Baquet as leader of the Excelsior Brass Band from 1904 until 1920 (Kinzer 196 and 216).

Pavageau, Alcoe "Slow Drag" - Double Bass
 New Orleans, March 7, 1888; New Orleans, Jan 19, 1969.

Perez, Manuel / Emile Emanuel Perez - Cornetist and Bandleader.
 New Orleans, Dec 28, 1878; New Orleans, 1946.

Picou, Alphonse (Floristan) - Clarinetist
 New Orleans, Oct 19, 1878; New Orleans, Feb 4, 1961)
 Spoke Creole at home

Picou Ulysses - Guitarist, Singer and Composer
 Brother of Alphonse
 No other information available
 (Picou 1949 and 1958, reel 2, 5m30)

Pierce, DeDe / Joseph DeLaCroix - Cornetist and Singer
 New Orleans, Feb 18, 1904; New Orleans, Nov 23, 1973

Piron, Armand - Violinist and Bandleader
 New Orleans, Aug. 16 1888; New Orleans, Feb. 17, 1943

Robichaux, John - Bandleader, drummer, and violinist
 Thibodaux, LA, Jan 16, 1866; New Orleans, 1939

St. Cyr, Johnny - Banjo and guitar
 New Orleans, April 17,; Los Angeles, 17 June 17, 1966

APPENDIX 2 - JAZZ RECORDINGS OF CREOLE SONGS

This appendix aims at providing an overview of the jazz recordings of Creole songs. This list is not exhaustive as many songs have been reissued more than once. Some songs were recorded on 78 rpm, others on LP (33rpm) and a lot have been reissued on CD, while obviously the most recent were recorded on CD. All of these songs have been released commercially, but for a few exceptions that I have found on taped or videotaped interviews. Some other Creole songs might have been recorded, but have not come to my attention.

“A Si Pare”

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 2005, *Swing Out*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0502

Don Vappie, 2005, *Banjo à la Creole*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0503

“Ba Mouin En Ti Bo”

Don Vappie, 2005, *Banjo à la Creole*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0503

“Blanche Touquatoux”

Kid Ory and His Creole Band, 1945,
Decca Records: 78 rpm 25134

Kid Ory, 1999, *The Complete Kid Ory Verve Sessions*, Disc 7
Mosaic: CD MD8-189

“Creole Song / C’était N’aut’ Can-Can, Payez Donc”

‘C’était N’aut’ Can-Can, Payez Donc /If You Don’t Shake, You Don’t Get No Cake)’
Jelly Roll Morton, 1938, *The Complete Library of Congress Recordings*, Disc Six
Boston, MA: Rounder Records.

‘Creole Song (L’autre Cancan)’

Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band, 1944,
Crescent Records: LP CPM-10-35-2A, CRESCENT 1

‘Creole Song’

Kid Ory, 1950, *The Great New Orleans Trombonist*
Colombia: LP CL 835

‘C’est l’aut Can-Can’

Kid Ory, 1999, *The Complete Kid Ory Verve Sessions*, Disc 7
Mosaic: CD MD8-189

‘Creole Song (C’est l’aut Can-Can)’

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 2005, *Swing Out*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0502

“Creole Bo Bo (À vous dirais-je Maman)”

Kid Ory, 1950, *The Great New Orleans Trombonist*
Colombia: LP CL 835

Kid Ory, 1999, *The Complete Kid Ory Verve Sessions*, Disc 7
Mosaic: CD MD8-189

“Creole Blues”

Albert Nicholas, 1947, *Jazz A' La Creole*
Circle Record: LP S-13
Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio; Jazz A' La Creole*, 2000
GHB Records: BCD 50

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 1997, *Creole Blues*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0971

“Eh La Bas”

Joe Thomas' Dixieland Band, 1992, *Prelude to the Revival Vol. 1:*
Kid Howard 1937 - Punch Miller 1941
American Music Records: CD AMCD-40

Kid Ory, 1950, *The Great New Orleans Trombonist*
Colombia: LP CL 835

Kid Ory, 1946, *Kid Ory and his Creole Jazz Band*
Columbia Records: LP 37275

Kid Ory, *Kid Ory at the Green Room* vol. 2
American Music Records: CD AMCD 43
Recorded in 1947

Kid Ory, 1999, *The Complete Kid Ory Verve Sessions*, Disc 7
Mosaic: CD MD8-189

Kid Sheik, 1994, *In Cleveland and Boston*
American Music Records: CD AMCD 69
Recorded in 1961

Kid Thomas, 1959, *Valentine's Creole Jazz Band*
Arhoolie: LP Arh 2001/2002
American Music Records: CD AMCD 49

Herb Morand, 1993, *Herb Morand 1949*
American Music Records: CD AMCD 9

Miles, Lizzie, 1956
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQlzbITSy9Y>
(Accessed July 21, 2014).
Original source not find

“Eh La Bas” (cont’d)

Barnes, Emile, 1995, *The Louisiana Joymakers Introducing DeDe and Billie Pierce*
American Music Records: CD AMCD 13
Recorded in 1951

Billie and DeDe Pierce, 2000, *Gulf Coast Blues*
Arhoolie Production: 1971 and 2000, 488
Previously released on Folklyric LP 110, Arhoolie LP 2016

Billie and DeDe Pierce, 1996, *DeDe Pierce with Billie Pierce in Binghamton, N. Y* Vol. 2
American Music Records: AMCD 80
Recorded at Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y. March 31, 1962

Papa Celestin with Celestin’s Original Tuxedo Orchestra
Regal Records (Linden NJ): 78 rpm 1200

The Original Tuxedo Brass Band – The World’s Oldest Jazz Orchestra Founded in 1896
Saba Records: LP SB 15047
Release in Germany and Brazil

Barbarin, Paul New Orleans Jazz Band, 1955, *Jazz band (New Orleans Traditional)*
Capitol: 78 rpm, Ci J-1077
Reissued on *The Atlantic New Orleans Jazz Sessions*
Mosaic Records: CD MD4-179 Disc II

Paul Barbarin and His New Orleans Band, 1952, *New Orleans Contrasts*
Riverside: LP, RLP 12 -217
Reissued on *Herb Morand 1950 / Paul Barbarin 1951*
American Music Records: CD AMCD 106

Paul Barbarin and His New Orleans Band
Atlantic Records: LP SD 1215, 1955
Reissued on Collectables: CD COLCD 6912, 2008.

St-Cyr, Johnny, 1949,
New Orleans Interview with Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress
Disc Eight – Track Four Morton, Jelly Roll. 1938. The Complete Library of Congress
Recordings. Boston, MA: Rounder Records.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cojwY2T_sc
(Accessed July 21, 2014)

Wooden Joes Nicholas, 1945, *Wooden Joe’s New Orleans Band*
Reissued on *Wooden Joe Nicholas*, 1992
American Music Records: AMCD 5 (#812)

Wooden Joes Nicholas, 1945, *Wooden Joe Nicholas*
Reissued on *Wooden Joe Nicholas - Rare and Unissued Masters 1945-1949*, 2013
American Music Records: AMCD 136 (#811)

“Eh La Bas” (cont’d)

Wooden Joes Nicholas, 1945, *Original Creole Stompers*

Reissued on *Wooden Joe Nicholas*, 1992

American Music Records: AMCD 5 (#882)

Wooden Joes Nicholas, 1945, *Original Creole Stompers*

Reissued on *Wooden Joe Nicholas - Rare and Unissued Masters 1945-1949*, 2013

American Music Records: AMCD 136 (#875)

Chris Barber, 1959, *Chris Barber’s Jazz Band in New Orleans with Dee Dee Pierce*

Rarities: LP no 13

Vappie, Don, 2008, Interview on WWNO, Radio Station, *American Routes*

At 34m55

<http://americanroutes.wwno.org/player/playlist/10271/hour/1>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

“La misère”

Ulysses Picou (vcl), Alphonse Picou (cl), Paul Dominguez (gt), 1949

Original composition from Ulysses Picou (ca 1934)

Interview with Alan Lomax in April, 1949, items # T992R09

<http://research.culturalequity.org/get-audio-ix.do?ix=recording&id=10600&idType=sessionId&sortBy=abc>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

“La misère fait macaque manger piment”

Uncle Lionel Baptiste

Video about the *Mardi Gras* Baby Dolls tradition.

Uncle Lionel Baptiste sings this Creole song at 2m40

<http://houseofdanceandfeathers.org/marchingcultureneworleans/babydolls/>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

“Lastic”

Sidney Bechet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56WdYDDuCY4>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

Original source not find

“Les Ognons”

Albert Nicholas, 1947, *Jazz A’ La Creole*

Circle Record: LP S-13

Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio; Jazz A’ La Creole*, 2000

GHB Records: BCD 50

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 2005, *Swing Out*

Vappielle Records: CD VR-0502

“Madam Bécassine”

Sidney Bechet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=377r8liGNKw>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

Original source not find

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 2005, *Swing Out*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0502

Louisiana Jazz Band, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlgFWKY1Kqc>

(Accessed July 21, 2014)

Original source not find

“Mo Pas Lemme Ca / Creole Song /Ai Ai Ai”

‘Mo Pas Lemme Ca’

Albert Nicholas, 1947, *Jazz A’ La Creole*

Circle Record: LP S-13

Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio – Jazz A’ La Creole*, 2000

GHB Records: CD BCD 50

‘Mo Pas Lemme Ca’

Albert Nicholas (with Baby Dodds), 1947, *Jazz A’ La Creole*

Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio – Jazz A’ La Creole*, 2000

‘Creole Song’

Kid Ory’s Creole Jazz Band, 2006, *New Orleans Jazz Revival 1940-1954*

Frémeaux et Associés: CD FA5135

Recorded in 1944

Kid Ory, 1991, *Kid Ory ’44 – 46*

American Music Records: CD AMCD 19

Standard Oil Broadcast: April 1, 1945

‘Ai Ai Ai’

Louis “Big Eye” Nelson Delisle, 1997, *The 1949 Sessions*

American Music Records: CD AMCD 7

‘Mo Pas Lemme Ca [Creole Song /Ai Ai Ai]’

Wooden Joe Nicholas, 1949

American Music Record: 78 rpm AM 534

Reissued on *Wooden Joe Nicholas - Rare and Unissued Masters 1945-1949*, 2013

American Music Records: CD AMCD 136

“Salee dame (Bon Jour) - Salée Dame”

‘Salee Dame’

Albert Nicholas, 1947, *Jazz A’ La Creole*

Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio – Jazz A’ La Creole*, 2000

GHB Records: CD BCD 50

“Salee dame (Bon Jour) - Salée Dame” (cont’d)

‘Salee Dame’

Albert Nicholas, 1947, *Jazz A’ La Creole*
Reissued on *Baby Dodds Trio – Jazz A’ La Creole*, 2000
GHB Records: CD BCD 50
(different version than above)

‘Salee Dame’

DeDe and Billie Pierce, 1996, *DeDe Pierce with Billie Pierce in Binghamton, N. Y* Vol. 1
American Music Records: CD AMCD 79
Recorded at Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y. March 31, 1962

‘Saly Dame’

DeDe and Billie Pierce, 1994, *DeDe Pierce and His New Orleans Stompers* Vol. 4
American Music Records: AMCD 82
Recorded at Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y. October 16, 1962

‘Salee Dame, Bon Jour’

Don Vappie and the Creole Jazz Serenaders, 1997, *Creole Blues*
Vappielle Records: CD VR-0971

Vappie, Don, 2008, Interview on WWNO, *American Routes*
At 28m45
<http://americanroutes.wwno.org/player/playlist/10271/hour/1>
(Accessed July 21, 2014)

“Ta-La-La-La”

The Dukes of Dixieland, 1952
Okeh Records: 78 rpm 6942 (CO48651)

“Quand Mo T’est Petite / When I was a child”

The Dukes of Dixieland, 1952
Okeh Records: 78 rpm 6969 (CO 48650)
Special Record For Radio Stations

The Dukes of Dixieland, 1952
Epic Records: EP LG-7019

‘Quand Motait Petit / When I Was a Little Kid’

Paul Barbarin and His New Orleans Jazz Band
G.H.B. Records: BCD- 2

‘Mon Chere Amie (Quand Motait Petit)’

Paul Barbarin and His New Orleans Jazz Band, 1955, *New Orleans Jamboree*
A Jazztone Society Classic: Jazztone LP J1205
Reissued on Hallmark, 2010: unknown number

TRANSLATIONS / BILINGUAL VERSIONS OF POPULAR SONGS

“Basin Street Blues / Bassin Rue”

Lizzie Miles, 1946, *Creole Special by Lizzie Miles and her New Orleans Boys*
Circle Records: 78 rpm Special No4 / Jazz Singer, N.Y. (NO-70)

Lizzie Miles, 1994, *Lizzie Miles*
American Music Records: AMCD 73

“A Good Man Is Hard To Find / Un Bon Nomm”

Lizzie Miles and Sharkey’s Kings of Dixieland, 1950, *A Night in Old New Orleans*
Capitol Records LP T 792

Reissued on Lizzie Miles, 1999, *Jazzin’ The Blues: The Remaining Titles of Ada Brown, Ruby Smith, Alberta Price, Chippie Hill, Lizzie Miles*

Document Records: CD DOCD 1019

Miles, Lizzie - The Creole Songbird, 1945, *The History of Jazz vol. 1*
N’Orleans Origins

Capitol Records: LP T 793

“Bill Bailey Won’t you please come home” (bilingual version)

Lizzie Miles and Sharkey’s Kings of Dixieland, 1950, *A Night in Old New Orleans*
Capitol Records LP T 792

Reissued on Lizzie Miles, 1999, *Jazzin’ The Blues: The Remaining Titles of Ada Brown, Ruby Smith, Alberta Price, Chippie Hill, Lizzie Miles*

Document Records: CD DOCD 1019

Miles, Lizzie - The Creole Songbird, 1945, *The History of Jazz vol. 1*
N’Orleans Origins

Capitol Records: LP T 793

Lizzie Miles, 1994, *Lizzie Miles*
American Music Records: AMCD 73
Recorded in 1953

“Darktown Strutters Ball”

Lizzie Miles and Sharkey’s Kings of Dixieland, 1950, *A Night in Old New Orleans*
Capitol Records LP T 792

Reissued on Lizzie Miles, 1999, *Jazzin’ The Blues: The Remaining Titles of Ada Brown, Ruby Smith, Alberta Price, Chippie Hill, Lizzie Miles*

Document Records: CD DOCD 1019

“I Ain’t Gonna Give Nobody None of This Jelly Roll”

Lizzie Miles, 1956, *Moans and Blues*

Cook Records: 01182

Reissued on Lizzie Miles, 1999, *Jazzin’ The Blues: The Remaining Titles of Ada Brown, Ruby Smith, Alberta Price, Chippie Hill, Lizzie Miles*

Document Records: CD DOCD 1019

“Tout de Moi (All Of Me)”

‘Tout de moi (All of Me)’

Barnes, Emile, 1995, *The Louisiana Joymakers Introducing DeDe and Billie Pierce*

American Music Records: CD AMCD 13

Recorded in 1951

Chris Barber, 1959, *Chris Barber’s Jazz Band in New Orleans with Dee Dee Pierce*

Rarities: LP no 13

‘Tout de moi’

DeDe and Billie Pierce, 1996, *DeDe Pierce with Billie Pierce in Binghamton, N. Y* Vol. 1

American Music Records: CD AMCD 79

Recorded at Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y. March 31, 1962

‘All of Me’

DeDe and Billie Pierce, 1994, *DeDe Pierce and His New Orleans Stompers* Vol. 3

American Music Records: CD AMCD 81

Recorded at Harpur College, Binghamton, N.Y. October 16, 1962

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