

# Jazz and Its Influence on American Music

This text is provided courtesy of the New York Philharmonic.

## JAZZ IS A TRULY AMERICAN ART FORM



- It is based on West African musical traditions.
- These traditions came to America with the Africans who were brought here as slaves.

- The slaves adapted the religious hymns they heard and created their own spiritual songs.



- In the late 1800's and early 1900's, New Orleans became an important jazz center.
- Jazz musicians improvised and incorporated the music of other cultures.

- Dixieland bands and ragtime piano playing thrived.



- The tunes were passed down—in a true folk tradition.
- Syncopated rhythmic patterns are an important characteristic of jazz.

# JAZZ

## AND ITS INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN MUSIC



## BY THE 1930'S, BIG JAZZ BANDS FORMED. THIS PERIOD WAS KNOWN AS

### "The Swing Era."

- Through technology, jazz musicians made records and broadcast on the radio, spreading the popularity of this art form.



- St. Louis became another important jazz center.
- Musicians like trumpeter Louis Armstrong and bandleader Duke Ellington became well known throughout America.
- Jazz fans now span the world!
- Jazz music has influenced many musicians and composers of the 20th Century...as you will hear in the pieces played today.
- Many feel that jazz is the only music that is authentically "American".

### SO, WHAT IS Jazz?



- Duke Ellington, in his lyrics, said of jazz, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing...Just keep that rhythm and give it everything you've got."
- And Louis Armstrong said, "Anything with beat and soul is jazz."
- Jazz, as defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary: American music developed from ragtime and blues and characterized by syncopated rhythms, contrapuntal ensemble playing and usually improvisation.

*It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing*

