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Our Cover for This Issue

Pictured: Choir members during a Sunday morning service in 1952 at Morning Star Baptist Church, 910 Burgundy Street, New Orleans. This photo is part of the Hogan Jazz Archive’s extensive Ralston Crawford Collection of Jazz Photography.

The Morning Star Baptist Church served a small, Black French Quarter neighborhood that no longer exists. Its choir leader and piano accompanist, Annie Pavageau, and her husband, traditional jazz bassist Alcide “Slow Drag” Pavageau, lived in that neighborhood. The church’s amenable location, its unaffected choir, and its personal connection to jazz made it a magnet for photographers, folklorists, and jazzologists. Writer and record producer Fred Ramsey recorded a Sunday morning service there in 1954. In 1961, the Riverside Records series of LPs, New Orleans/The Living Legends, for which Ralston Crawford did the cover photos, captured Annie Pavageau singing “Precious Lord” and “Sweet Bye and Bye” with Jim Robinson’s New Orleans Band, including “Slow Drag” Pavageau on bass. And in 1970, Lars Edegran produced a definitive Annie Pavageau and the Morning Star Choir LP for Southland Records.

Ralston Crawford covered a lot of ground during his 1950s sojourns to New Orleans. He photographed second-line parades and funerals with music from Central City to Algiers Point; his portraits of traditional New Orleans jazz musicians are extraordinary; and his location shots take viewers into gone-but-not-forgotten places ranging from the Morning Star Baptist Church to the Tijuana Club and Dew Drop Inn. The entire Ralston Crawford Collection of Jazz Photography can be seen on our Hogan Jazz Archive site at jazz.tulane.edu.
“Misfortunes Never Come Singly”
Verifying the Release Date of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s First Record

By
E. Douglas Bomberger

The Jazz Archivist’s Issue XXX (2017) was devoted in large part to the one-hundredth anniversary of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s path-breaking record of “Dixieland Jass Band” and “Livery Stable Blues.” One of the most influential and largest-selling of jazz records, Victor 18255 introduced the new musical style to a national audience, spawning imitators hoping to replicate its success. Its musical style has been analyzed repeatedly, eliciting rapturous praise, derisive dismissal, and everything in between. The record has been analyzed from nearly every vantage point, and the evolution of critical responses to its musical style over the course of a century could form the subject of a book-length study. Apart from its musical and stylistic qualities, the record exercised a profound cultural influence on American life by introducing jazz to a national audience. Court Carney notes that the medium of recording was not merely incidental but was essential to the transmission of the new musical style: “Sheet music—the traditional mainstay of popular musical distribution—conveyed neither the improvisational structure of jazz nor the emotional temper of the blues, the definitive attributes of the two genres.” In Carney’s estimation, “the impact of the ODJB remains incalculable.”

Surprisingly, there is no scholarly consensus on a basic aspect of the record’s history: its precise release date. Given the detailed accounts of the February 26, 1917, recording date and the undeniable impact that the record exerted on musical life in the United States, it is curious to find opinions on the national release varying so widely. John McDonough suggests a release date of March 1; numerous authors give dates ranging from March 5 (Alyn Shipton) to “on or about March 15” (Jean Christophe Averty); Marc Myers puts its arrival in record stores “just days after the United States entered World War I” (on April 6), and the Discography of American Historical Recordings lists the release date as May 1917. Discretion seems the better part of valor for careful scholars; Tim Gracyk, for instance, states that the record was released “relatively quickly” after the February recording session.

This article will examine the available evidence in an effort to pinpoint when the record went on sale, a date that is by no means inconsequential because of the influence that the recording exerted on American culture.

The engineers of the Victor Talking Machine Company, under the leadership of Charles Sooy, recorded the two sides of the ODJB’s first record in their twelfth-floor studio at 46 West 38th Street in Manhattan. Biographer H. O. Brunn interviewed ODJB cornetist Nick LaRocca about this February 26 recording session and included an extensive passage of the cornetist’s recollections in his 1960 book on the band. LaRocca recalled that Sooy had “the patience of a saint,” and he supplied colorful details about the adjustments made by the engineers to obtain an optimal balance among the five instruments playing a medium of music that was new to the company. According to Victor’s files, the record was created from take 3 of “Dixieland Jass Band” and take 1 of “Livery Stable Blues.”

The physical copies of the record were manufactured in Victor’s Camden, New Jersey factory, a process that took a significant amount of time in the era of acoustic recordings. It is possible to get a sense of the length of time involved by comparing several other recordings from later in the year, whose dates of recording and release can be verified precisely. In October 1917, Victor invited the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra to Camden for the first recording sessions of a full 95-piece orchestra, under the direction of Raymond and Harry Sooy, the older brothers of Charles. The BSO sessions took place on October 2–6, and the first records were released nationally on December 1. The Philadelphia Orchestra sessions were held on October 22 and 24, and the release...
The date of their first record was January 1. In the first case, the production time was a bit less than two months, and in the second it was a bit more than two months. Publicity for the BSO recording portrayed the production process in dramatic terms: “At the Factory men had worked all night in the laboratories in order that not one precious minute should be lost. Had labored thru the long hours, when only the stars and the wandering winds were abroad. So that if the critical ear of one of the world’s most famous
conductors could detect the slightest error there should be time to correct such errors and win his complete approval.” Presumably this account contains some hyperbole, but the timing of these two sets of recordings gives an approximate time frame of seven to nine weeks from recording session to commercial release. If the ODJB record required a similar processing time, this would put the release date at mid to late April.

Working from the other direction, there are clues that by early May the ODJB record had already attracted a national following. Kenner B. George, an orchestra leader in Lake Charles, Louisiana, wrote to the ODJB’s trombonist, Eddie Edwards, on April 30, asking where he could find the sheet music for the record that his customers were all talking about. The *Daily Missourian*, in Columbia, reported on the arrival of what it called “the newest brand of orchestra noise” in a May 1 article: “The craze has struck Columbia. It ‘jazzed’ in a week or two ago.” A widely cited article entitled “A Blessing in Disguise?” published in the *Wichita Beacon* on May 23 advocated using a combination of jazz and Hawaiian music as a weapon against the Germans, whose sensitivity to music would make them powerless before this assault. Tellingly, the first sentence of the editorial states, “The saying that misfortunes never come singly has been illustrated by the fact that the war and the jazz came almost at the same time.” The United States Congress had declared war on April 6.

Much of the confusion surrounding the release date stems from the famous promotional flyer with a photograph of the band members leaning to one side and a sugar jar at LaRocca’s feet. On the reverse of this flyer in the bottom right corner beside the Victor logo is a tiny printed notation (3552—UQA—3–7–17), which led Brunn to assume that the record was released on March 7. On the copy of the flyer in the Nick LaRocca Collection housed in the Hogan Jazz Archive, this notation is circled, and the date “MARCH 7 – 1917” is written in LaRocca’s handwriting in blue ballpoint pen. Since ballpoint pens were not sold in the United States until 1945, this date was clearly added decades after the fact.

A closer look at the correspondence between Victor and the band’s trombonist Eddie Edwards makes it clear that the notation does not refer to a publication date, but in all likelihood indicates the date that the art department began the job. A telegram from Victor dated March 9 says, “PLEASE HAVE PHOTOGRAPHS HERE BY SATURDAY NOON.” A letter dated March 13 clarifies the materials that had been received and those still outstanding: “We have received the photographic proof which will answer the purpose of our illustrators and we shall be glad also to receive the promised photograph as early as possible.” A telegram dated the following day expresses frustration at the photographers who were working with the band: “APEDA STUDIO FAILED TO SUPPLY JASS BAND PHOTOGRAPH ON TIME TELEPHONED THEM THIS MORNING RECD NO SATISFACTION ARTISTS AND PRINTERS WAITING PLEASE INSTRUCT PHOTOGRAPHERS TO MAIL PHOTOGRAPH AT ONCE FAILURE TO RECEIVE THIS DELAYING ACTION ANSWER.” A subsequent letter of March 29 describes the materials that were still being designed in the art department along with a tentative time frame: “I may say that at present our advertising of the Jass Band will consist of a special poster and a special supplement, which will be sent to all Victor dealers all over the country, for display and distribution. These, I should say, will be on
display inside of a couple of weeks, although I have not at this moment, positive information on that point.\textsuperscript{13} These documents verify that the record and publicity materials had not yet been released on March 29.

By early April, Victor was dealing with a larger issue with the potential to impact its distribution network. In an effort to control sales by thousands of Victor dealers throughout the country, the company had introduced its License Royalty Scheme in 1913. Under this plan, Victor dealers nationwide were required to adhere to uniform release dates and pricing. In addition, the scheme stipulated that Victor players and records remained the property of the company when they were purchased, licensed to the public for use rather than sale. This onerous system was struck down by the United States Supreme Court on April 9, 1917, allowing dealers to set their own pricing according to local conditions and (if they wanted to risk the ire of Victor) to sell records before the official release date.\textsuperscript{14} More relevant to this study is that the earliest pressings of the ODJB’s first record contained labels that were printed before the court decision. Around the edge of the label is this warning: “This record is licensed in U.S.A. for use only, and only under the conditions printed on the Victor Company’s envelope containing it.” Later pressings removed this now obsolete statement, but it seems that the company was unwilling to scrap the labels that had already been manufactured before April 9.

Another clue to the timing of the record’s release lies in the copyright filing. Since the band members played by ear, a copyright for the musical score was not a priority for them. On April 9, their agent Max Hart filed copyright claims for both numbers with the copyright office in Washington. He had hired an arranger to listen to the band’s performances and transcribe the two melodies, which he then submitted as unpublished manuscript compositions, with himself as composer and claimant. The filings made no mention of the band members.\textsuperscript{15} This copyright claim eventually became the subject of

\textbf{Copyright deposit records for “Barnyard Blues” and “Dixieland Jazz Band One Step,” April 9, 1917, containing spelling discrepancies from the titles of the records as eventually released.}
a lawsuit when the Chicago publisher Roger Graham, along with the
band’s former clarinetist Alcide Nunez and his friend Ray Lopez, filed
separate copyright claims in May and published a sheet music version
of the popular “Livery Stable Blues” in June. This highly publicized
lawsuit has been the subject of extensive scholarly study, including a
recent thesis. The titles of the musical works in the copyright claim
are significant because of the discrepancies with the titles on the
records as eventually published. Hart’s claim was for “Barnyard Blues,
Fox Trot” and “Dixieland Jazz Band. One Step.” This claim suggests that
on April 9, Hart had not actually held a copy of the record in his hand,
because the titles on the record and all publicity materials would be
“Livery Stable Blues” and “Dixieland Jass Band.” The first title was the
subject of the lawsuit, but the spelling of “Jazz” in the second title is
equally significant as an indication that Hart had not actually seen the
record yet.

The most conclusive evidence for the nationwide release
of this record may be found in
newspaper advertisements. The
online database Newspapers.com
indexes 1,760 papers published in
March and April 1917. This is by no
means all the papers in the country,
but it provides a representative
sample of small and large papers
from every region of the country.
Searching for Victor advertisements
for the record allows us to narrow
the time frame for initial national
distribution to the third week of
April 1917. On Saturday, April 14,
four different newspapers in Buffalo,
New York, contained advertisements
for the record at the local Victor
dealer. Sunday, April 15 brought ads
in Chicago, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis,
Louisville, Richmond, and St. Louis.
Each day of the following week
brought new advertisements in other cities:

- Monday, April 16: Asbury Park, NJ; Atchison, KS;
  Baltimore, MD; Rock Island, IL; South Bend, IN;
  Washington, DC; Wilkes-Barre, PA

- Tuesday, April 17: Altoona, PA; Bloomington, IL;
  Bridgewater, NJ; Brooklyn, NY; Coffeyville, KS; Dav-
  enport, IA; Elmira, NY; Greenfield, IN; Hartford, CT;
  La Crosse, WI; Marshalltown, IA; Mount Carmel,
  PA; New Orleans, LA; Scranton, PA; Salt Lake City,
  UT

First advertisement of
the record in the Chicago Tribune,
April 15, 1917.

First advertisement of
the record in the Wilkes-Barre Times
Leader, April 16, 1917.
Wednesday, April 18: Appleton, WI; New Brunswick, NJ; Decatur, IL; Chester, PA; Lansing, MI; Minneapolis, MN; Richmond, IN

Thursday, April 19: Butte, MT; Enterprise, KS; Fairmount, IN; Portland, OR; Perth Amboy, NJ; Meyersdale, PA

Friday, April 20: Anaconda, MT; Bridgeport, CT; Durham, NC; Fitchburg, MA; Lancaster, OH; Los Angeles, CA; Pensacola, FL

Many of the advertisements during the first week of distribution call attention to the novelty of the record or the dealer’s distinction at offering it first.

- “The first Victor Records by a ‘JASS BAND’ are on sale here today” (Buffalo Courier, April 14)
- “Jass Band Records for the first time on Victor Records” (Chicago Tribune, April 15)
- “Just Received Today: Two Victor Record Specials” (Washington Star, April 16)
- “The Jass Band is here . . . It has taken New York City by storm and is rapidly spreading to every section of the country” (Elmira Star Gazette, April 17)
- “We have received our first shipment of Jass Band Records” (Appleton, WI Post-Crescent, April 18)

The competition was particularly intense in Portland, Oregon, where two Victor dealers hit the paper on the same day:

- “As usual, The Wiley B. Allen Co. leads other Western Victrola Dealers with an adequate stock of the new Victor Record ‘Specials’ of the Original ‘Dixieland Jass Band’ fittingly described as ‘Brass Band Gone Crazy’” (Oregon Daily Journal, April 19)
- “Man, Alive, Listen! We [Eilers Music House] Have Scooped Them Again. Through Eastern connections we have secured a limited quantity of two advance Victor records” (Oregon Daily Journal, April 19)

By the end of the month, the database lists over a hundred newspapers in cities across the country advertising the new record.

The newspaper advertisements, along with the information presented previously, point very strongly to an official release date of April 15. Victor typically released the majority of its new records on the first of each month, with occasional “specials” on the 15th, which seems to have been the case with this record. There are two intriguing outliers that are worth mentioning, however. On Sunday, April 8, the department store Spear & Company included this brief notice in the midst of full-page ads for a range of products in the three Pittsburgh papers:

A New Record
Ask for 18255—10-inch, 75c.

Do you know what a Jass Band is? If you do you’ve probably been ’round a New York Cabaret. That is where they are all the rage just now. These are two of the craziest Jass monstrosities ever conceived. Be sure to hear them.17

Even more surprising is the ad that appeared in two Lincoln, Nebraska, newspapers on March 28 and
29. Buried near the bottom of a list of new Victor records on offer at Miller & Paine is this tantalizing description: “A new ‘Jass Band Record,’ which is so lively it will chase the blues away even when you have a string tied to them. Double faced 10-inch—Dixieland Jass Band—One Step. Livery Stable Blues—Fox Trot.” Was this an inadvertent slip of information about a record that was not yet available? Or did the citizens of Lincoln, Nebraska, have a two-and-a-half-week head start on the rest of the country in enjoying the first jazz record? We may never know for sure.

In conclusion, it seems that the editor of the Wichita Beacon was correct in stating that the war and the jazz arrived at nearly the same time, in mid-April 1917. For listeners who found this strange new style offensive, the bon mot, “Misfortunes never come singly,” was humorously appropriate. For the rest of the country, and before long the rest of the world, the frenetic energy of the first jazz record was a welcome safety valve to the anxiety of wartime. Its influence would be felt for years to come.

Endnotes

1 Court Carney, Cuttin’ Up: How Early Jazz Got America’s Ear (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 69, 47.
8 Letter, Kenner B. George to Eddie Edwards, April 30, 1917, Eddie Edwards Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Box 2 Folder 2.
11 Brunn, 68.
12 Nick LaRocca Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Series 6, Box 9, Folder 15, Item 21.
13 These four documents are contained in the Eddie Edwards Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Box 3 Folder 29.
15 Copyright application E404182, “Barnyard Blues” by Max Hart, April 9, 1917; Copyright application E404183, “Dixieland Jazz Band” by Max Hart, April 9, 1917, U. S. Copyright Office, Library of Congress.
17 “Just Received!” Pittsburgh Daily Post, April 8, 1917, 33.
Bessie Smith – Charlie Green – Porter Grainger:
The March 20, 1928, Session

By Wayne D. Shirley

Editor’s note: This is the fifth installment of Wayne D. Shirley’s annual column, exploring Bessie Smith’s recorded opus. Earlier installments can be accessed online at jazz.tulane.edu/jazz-archivist.

[Initial terminological warning: writing about “Empty Bed Blues,” a twelve-bar, three-line blues until its final verse, I use “verse” to mean each three-line (or two-line) unit; writing about “Bring It Right Here” I use “verse” for the initial section of this verse-chorus-patter-chorus vaudeville song. Now to business:]

Bessie Smith’s recording session of March 20, 1928, yielded only two numbers, but these two are highlights of her repertoire. “Empty Bed Blues,” with words by J.C. Johnson is, despite its title, her most vivid celebration of the sometimes strenuous joys of sex; it shows up regularly on lists of the essential Bessie Smith records.1 “Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There)” is a knock-out vaudeville song done in high style with first-rate accompaniment.

Bessie Smith’s instrumentalists in this session are trombonist Charlie Green and pianist Porter Grainger. Charlie Green is a major figure in Bessie Smith’s recording history, celebrated by name in one – or rather one and a half – of her recordings;2 he deserves his own full column, preferably by someone more knowledgeable about the trombone than I: here we will look only at his contributions to her recording session of March 20, 1928. But the year from September 1927 through August 1928 saw all of Bessie Smith’s sessions with Porter Grainger as pianist:3 this is perhaps a good place to treat his general involvement with Bessie. At the time of their March 1928 session Bessie and Grainger had already made several of the recordings we remember her by: “Mean Old Bedbug Blues;” “A Good Man Is Hard to Find;” “Homeless Blues;” “I’d Rather Be Dead and Buried in My Grave.”

“Mean Old Bedbug Blues,” the first song on the first session Bessie and Grainger recorded together, is particularly important in considering our March 20th session.4 “Mean Old Bedbug Blues” is a standard twelve-bar blues, each verse three lines with lines one and two being identical, while the third line rhymes with them (sorry to go through this one more time). The final verse of “Mean Old Bedbug Blues” breaks from this tradition: it has only two lines, which would normally be the first and the third, with the last line having the harmonies in the third line of a regular blues. The effect is that of a sudden emphatic close:

Got myself a wishbone, bedbugs done got my goat;
Got myself a wishbone, wish they’d cut their own doggone throat.5

We’ll find this same effect at the end of “Empty Bed Blues”; it appears as an ender in no other Bessie Smith recording. In “Empty Bed Blues” it serves both to emphasize the point of the song — “Don’t Advertise Your Man”6 – and to signify the ending of what has been a two-sided record.

Both “Empty Bed Blues” and “Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There)” were first recorded by Bessie Smith: neither of them had appeared earlier as recordings. The copyright deposit wordsheets for each – carbon copies of typed sheets of paper – represent substantially what Bessie Smith sings: changes of some significance will be mentioned in the discussion of each song. “Empty Bed Blues” was written by J.C. Johnson, who had been songwriter for two 1924 Bessie Smith recordings, “Haunted House Blues” and “Eavesdropper’s Blues.” He continued to write material for Bessie Smith, giving her four of her most important recordings: he is credited under his own name with the music to “Slow and Easy Man” (words
by Andy Razaf), and, under pseudonyms, with the writing of “Me and My Gin”, Hustlin’ Dan”, and “Black Mountain Blues.” All four are major Bessie Smith recordings: “Slow and Easy Man” perhaps the best of her find-my-lost-man songs, “Hustlin’ Dan” last and best of her dying-gamblers; “Black Mountain Blues” the ultimate Bessie-Smith-as-tough-gal blues:

I’m bound for Black Mountain, me and my razor and my gun.
Lord, I’m bound for Black Mountain, me and my razor and gun.
I’m gonna shoot him if he stands still and cut him if he run.

“Me and My Gin” is sometimes cited as an autobiographical song: the singer’s self-confession. It was, rather, written by J.C. Johnson. (I have read that gin was not, in fact, Bessie Smith’s drink of choice.)

J.C. Johnson is primarily a songwriter, though he did serve occasionally as pianist (though not with Bessie Smith). Porter Grainger was primarily a pianist, but he did write songs, including four that Bessie Smith had recorded before the March 20 session: “’Tain’t Nobody’s Biz-ness if I Do” (with Everett Robbins); “Mistreatin’ Daddy” (with Bob Ricketts); “Sing Sing Prison Blues” (with Freddie Johnson); and “Homeless Blues,” his reaction to the 1927 Mississippi flood. We shall look very briefly on his later songs for Bessie Smith towards the end of this column.

“Empty Bed Blues” is the only Bessie Smith recording to devote both sides to a single song. Such two-siders are extremely rare in 78 rpm popular music: Ida Cox made one (with Papa Charlie Jackson; “Mister Man”, 1925); neither Clara Smith nor Mamie Smith ever made a two-sider. J.C. Johnson in his lyric sheets for “Empty Bed Blues” spells out clearly that his twelve-verse text is to be done in two parts – its two pages are labeled respectively “PA[R]T ONE” and “PART TWO.” Johnson lays out each of the two parts similarly: the opening verse of each states the singer’s current solitary condition, while the closing verse - (the closing two verses of Part One) – state a moral. The opening verse of Part One starts with that standard opener for blues, “Woke up this morning…”

I w oke up this morning, with an awful aching head
My ne w man had left me, just the room and an empty bed

The opening verse of Part Two moves the story along: now it’s awhile since the singer woke up to find the bed empty beside her, and she’s reflecting on what her new life is like:

When my bed got empty, it made me awful mean and blue
My springs are getting rusty, sleeping single like I do

The two verses at the end of Side One tell why “her new man” has left the singer and draws the moral:

He had that sweet something, and I told my gal friend Lou
From the way she’s raving, she must have gone and tried it too
When you get good loving, never go and spread the news

Gals will double cross you, and leave you with the empty bed blues.

The ending of Side Two repeats the final verse of Side One. Between these bookends of opening verse and closing verse/verses of each “part,” everything is reminiscences of a happy, if sometimes physically strenuous, cohabitation (“from my elbows down was sore”): all is remembrance of her “new man’s” prowess and of her kindnesses to him (“I bought him a blanket…”). In fact, despite the attempt in the first verse of Part Two to move the narrative of the song on, the central sections of the two parts of the text don’t particularly differ in content; perhaps the text of Part Two has a bit more narrative (verses “He came home one evening with his spirit way up high” and “He gave me a lesson…”). Part Two does, in my mind at least, end with a revelation just before the final two-line verse: the man she’s singing about was her first lover:

He boiled my first cabbage, and he made it awful hot
He boiled my first cabbage, and he made it awful hot
Then he put in the bacon, and it overflowed the pot.
This is certainly ending by driving to a climax; but how her “new man” has become her first man—well,
blues are not required to be always logical.14
The recording follows the text of the copyright deposit closely except for two things. First, it removes the copyright deposit copy’s final verse from the first side, so that it is heard only at the end of the recording. Second, the impression that the time of Side Two is later than that of Side One is obscured in the recording where Bessie Smith sings

“Empty Bed Blues”: copyright deposit copy of lyrics for Part One.
"When my bed get empty, makes me feel awful mean and blue," rather than
"When my bed got empty, it made me awful mean and blue.
Otherwise it is a straightforward readthrough of the text as seen in the copyright deposit – almost
certainly sung from the typescript of which that copy is a carbon. The changes in positioning and
number of lines in the verse "When you get good loving..." would have been agreed among the
performers before formal recording began; other changes represent the singer’s spontaneous
alterations. But if the textures of the two Parts of J.C. Johnson’s text are similar, the two sides of the
"Empty Bed Blues":
copyright deposit copy of lyrics for Part Two.
recording differ markedly, in ways that justify it as a two-sided record.

There’s a good general justification for having a contrast between the sides of a two-sider record. The 78 rpm blues record, as we think of it, is a form: as a sonnet is fourteen lines, so a 78 rpm blues record is about three minutes long (Bessie Smith’s “Jail House Blues” gets through its spoken introduction and its two relevant verses in one minute forty-six seconds and has to pad out with two great miscellaneous verses; yet who would think of it as anything but a major recording?) But Side One of “Empty Bed Blues” has, in its third verse, what is arguably the most vivid metaphor for sexual prowess in the blues literature:

He’s a deep sea diver, with a stroke that can’t go wrong
He can touch the bottom, and his wind holds out so long16

Something must change if Side Two is not to be heard as an anticlimactic repetition of what was done better on Side One.17

“Empty Bed Blues” is not a wail. It is the story, told to the listener as a friend, of how the singer feels about being deserted by her good man. We can see it as a set of two narratives, Side One as taking

“Empty Bed Blues”: copyright copy of lead-sheet for Part One. The music does not correspond to the music as sung on the Bessie Smith record.
place on the day she finds out her man has left her overnight and Side Two taking place a while later; or we can hear that first “woke up this morning” as meaning simply that at the moment of waking – with that “awful aching head” – she has forgotten that he had left somewhat earlier and that her springs are already “getting rusty.” Either way we look at it, the main part of her story is reminiscence about just how wonderful her “new man” was, and how she furnished him with what might suit him – the “coffee grinder” on Side One, the blanket/pillow/mattress on Side Two. Toward the end of Side One the narrative as sung even goes from the past tense of J.C. Johnson’s typescript to present tense (“He knows how to thrill me...” / “Lord, he’s got that sweet something...” This is not a slip, but rather a warming of the singer’s reminiscences. (The text of the verses on Side Two – “He came home one evening...”, “He give me a lesson...”, “He boiled my first cabbage...” – makes it impossible to do a similar shift-to-present-tense on Side Two.)

With her singing of the first verse Bessie Smith establishes firmly the setting of the song; she also establishes that both the phrasing and the grammar of the lyrics will be as she likes them:

I woke up this morning with an awful aching head.

She sings through the remainder of both sides as she sings through this first verse: in her best voice, telling the story. Humorous as some of J.C. Johnson’s lines may seem on paper, she never delivers them as jokes; it’s all serious narrative to the singer. Her straightforward voice, in fact, serves equally well for exposition (first verse of each side), reminiscence (middle verses of each side), realization-of-betrayal (final verse of Side One) and moral (final verse of Side Two). This column has said far too often that Bessie Smith “rides above her accompaniment” when she uses her standard delivery for an entire record side; I suppose I could say it again here. But “her accompaniment” – actually her two equal collaborators – have a lot to do with giving each side of the record its own feeling, and with making “Empty Bed Blues” a major achievement in Bessie Smith’s recorded repertory. Clearly their work has been thought-out and rehearsed: this is not singer and her accompaniment, but a trio of equals.

Side One of “Empty Bed Blues” is primarily about the singer’s “new man’s” prowess. Grainger reveals his talent as bar-room pianist: steady left-hand, independent right-hand (somewhat showy, but knowing not to overshadow the answering instrument at the end of the singer’s line), absolute control of the harmonic drive. Green, his trombone open (that is, not muted), becomes more flamboyant through the side up to the ending flourish. He is also ready with a set of flutter-tongue growls for the “coffee-grinder” verse and, still in flutter-tongue, joins Grainger in an almost Straussian illustration of the image of the “deep-sea diver.”

Side Two takes its cue from the end of its first line – “makes me awful mean and blue.” Charlie Green’s trombone is muted, and remains so through the side: Porter Grainger starts the side with repeated chords, both hands in low register, in a driven, dotted rhythm over which a set of motives in Green’s trombone will gradually coalesce into a sort of ironic fast-march. (Green will also contribute a crying effect after “wring my hands and cry”). At the third verse – “He came home one evening with his spirit way up high”- Grainger’s right hand frees itself for some independent work; at “He give me a lesson” both players move to stop-time. From the third verse on, Side Two comes to suggest hard-driving but satisfying sex: the singer is proud of those sore elbows. The two-line final verse is a stroke of genius: did Bessie and Grainger remember its effect in their “Mean Old Bed-Bug Blues”?

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If “Empty Bed Blues” seems to have been planned ahead, its session-mate “Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There)” has the sound of having been run through a time or two – “we know how to do this sort of thing” – and then recorded. For this material that may well be the way to do things: the
record comes out fresh and playful, a first-rate recording of a first-rate verse-and-chorus vaudeville song of the sort Bessie Smith had sung since her days in black vaudeville, with Porter Grainger playing great bar-room piano to accompany her. (He goes into stop-time – a standard patter texture – for the patter.) Charlie Green’s trombone is muted throughout the record. His work with Bessie Smith on the verse, under the singer as well answering her, is really remarkable. In the choruses he is more routine:

He’s got to get it (wah) and take it (wah)
And bring it right here (silence from trombone)
Or else he’s got to keep it out there (brief answer from trombone).

But this is what the music needs: more, or more elaborate, would be too much. He is basically silent during the patter, though there are occasional sounds as though he’s thinking of doubling the stop-time bass.

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"Put It Right Here (Or Keep It Out There)": copyright deposit copy of lyrics.
"Put It Right Here (Or Keep It Out There)"; copyright copy of lead sheet.
“Put It Right Here (Or Keep It Out There)” is a vaudeville song – verse and two choruses, with a bit of patter between the choruses (Bessie Smith always does well with patter). It’s a prime example of the genre in both words and music, delivering the singer’s message clearly and with humor; Bessie Smith performs it essentially as Porter Grainger wrote it. She does sing “on else” for “or else,” as she had previously done in her recording of “St. Louis Blues.”

The lyrics of “Put It Right Here (Or Keep It Out There)” are basically single-entendre: the “it” that is to be Put Right Here is money, while the “it” that will stay Out There if the first “it” is not delivered is the Bacon that caused the Pot to overflow in “Empty Bed Blues.” But it may be worth noting that what seems to be set up in the verse isn’t quite what is delivered in the chorus. The verse sets up the basic premise: the singer has supported her man (for fifteen years!) and now he must support her: but it seems to suggest that his problem is what we’ve now come to call Erectile Dysfunction –

Once he was like a Cadillac,
Now he’s like an old worn-out Ford.

That is, he was a good old wagon, but he’s done broke down. Yet in the chorus he seems still to want to put the bacon in the pot. We must accept this seeming confusion, as we can accept that the man in “Empty Bed Blues” is both the singer’s “new man” (Side One, verse one) and the man who “boiled her first cabbage” (Side Two, final three-line verse). This sort of irregularity goes with the repertoire – for both twelve-bar blues and vaudeville songs.

The patter section gives us no such problem. Indeed it’s one of the best patter sections of any Bessie Smith song, reinforcing the message of the chorus proper. It does contain the one spot where Bessie Smith changes a word: what is in the copyright deposit as

From a hoss to a gnat
she sings as
From a mule to a gnat.

This is inaccurate biology – mules are sterile – but it sings far better than Grainger’s original line. It’s worth noting that, while Bessie Smith is careful to sound the e in “Get” during the verse proper – she’s being emphatic on “He’s got to GET it”; she sings the word as “git” in the more informal patter section. (The copyright deposit typescript has “get” throughout the song.)

The Patter sections of several Bessie Smith records lead to triumphal recaps of the last few lines of chorus. “Put It Right Here,” on the other hand, gives us a full second chorus, complete with an ethnic joke – one of the two in the Bessie Smith canon – in the spot just before final repeat of the title line, the standard spot for New Joke in Second Chorus. Like the other ethnic joke (in “Sorrowful Blues”) it’s a Chinaman joke, this time a Chinese-laundry one, an expansion of the “no tickee – no shirtee” one-liner which died out along with old-time Chinese laundries in the 1950s.

“Empty Bed Blues” is a perennial on lists of essential Bessie Smith records. Major themes – “Woke up this morning...”; What your man can do; Don’t advertise your man – the two sides themselves so different in texture – a great performance, clearly thought out. “Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There)” is a first-rate verse-and-two-choruses vaudeville song, complete with punch-line-of-title in parentheses (always a good sign with Bessie Smith records); it’s about that enduring subject an unsatisfactory man; it’s sung by Bessie Smith at her best with the aid of two major instrumentalists who know how to put a vaudeville song over. If it seems less planned-out than “Empty Bed Blues” – you can occasionally hear Charlie Green trying out quietly to see whether a spot could use a wee bit of trombone – it’s properly romped through by three people who know high quality stuff when they’ve got it.

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In fact “Put It Right Here” is one of four songs about women dealing with unsatisfactory men written for Bessie Smith by Porter Grainger and recorded by them in 1928. The other three were
recorded on August 24, 1928, Grainger’s next-to-last session with Bessie Smith. Unlike the three-record-sides/two numbers session of March 20, the session of August 24 produced six record sides, all of them significant recordings: besides the three songs by Porter Grainger the session included “Washwoman’s Blues” (writer: Spencer Williams), “Slow and Easy Man” (words: Andy Razaf; music, J.C. Johnson), and “Poor Man’s Blues” (writer: Bessie Smith). Grainger’s fellow instrumentalists on Grainger’s own songs and on “Washwoman’s Blues” and “Slow and Easy Man” are single-reed men Ernest Elliott and Bob Fuller (two single-reeds was Grainger’s favorite ensemble to accompany him; Ernest Elliott was his first-reedman of choice). Trombonist Joe Williams joins these forces for “Poor Man Blues,” and does an excellent job as “response” to Bessie’s lines, while Grainger and the reeds hold back to let the two of them put over this important song.

The “four songs about women dealing with unsatisfactory men” written for Bessie Smith by Porter Grainger are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recorded</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There) [the woman taking charge]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24</td>
<td>Yes, Indeed He Do [high irony]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Devil’s Gonna Git You [mockery]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You Ought To Be Ashamed [straight talk]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All four are worth repeated listening, despite the fact that two-single-reeds is not a favorite texture for current listeners. (The two reeds seem to have been written out for much of the August 24 session; they perform straightforward figures, often in thirds. Ernest Elliott does do some commendable responses, obviously improvised, to Bessie Smith’s lines in “Washwoman’s Blues.”) Two cautions, of two different types: In “Yes, indeed he do,” the present-day listener, used to the general run of popular-song lyrics of the 1920s, is likely to hear

Is he true as stars above me?
What kind of fool is you?

as asking for the answer “yes” to the question in the first line. The singer’s meaning is the exact opposite: how can you expect any man to be true?

In “You Ought To Be Ashamed,” the singer finally collapses into acceptance of her fate. I’ll admit this is a disappointment, though close reading of the songtext establishes that what her man should be ashamed of is “running around” rather than physical abuse.

The day after the August 24 session Porter Grainger did his final session with Bessie Smith, this time with only trombonist Joe Williams as sideman. They recorded two songs, “Please Help Me Get Him Off My Mind” (writer: Bessie Smith) and “Me and My Gin” (writer: J.C. Johnson). A final excellent session, though only two titles this time. Porter Grainger is in fine shape, though a bit under-recorded; Joe Williams does well in two twelve-bar blues (that’s blues-plural) for both of which the trombone as answering voice to the singer is much more suitable than a treble-clef instrument would be.

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A final note from a specialist. Since I’m making a concordance of the lyrics of Bessie Smith’s recorded repertory, I couldn’t help noticing how many words appear for the first time in the two songs of the March 1928 session. It’s not uncommon for a song of the late 1920s to have five or six words which haven’t appeared before – numbers, names of people or places (“Jim” in “Yes, Indeed He Do”; “Hackensack”), things appropriate to a subject (“bootlegger” in “Me and My Gin”); but “Empty Bed Blues” has nineteen, and “Put It Right Here (Or Leave It Out There)” has twenty. These general counts belong in footnote – to which I’ve duly sent them – but one word in “Put It Right Here” is worth remarking on. I won’t know until I’ve finished the concordance how many of the other words which first
show up in the March 20, 1928, session show up only in that session; but I do know that “damn” shows up only there. Blues singers of the 1920s are very chary of using profanity – especially profanity with a Biblical cast – in their songs; the nearest any other song comes to a “damn” is in “Take It Right Back (‘Cause I Don’t Want It Here)”:  

   If you think that I miss you, say,  
   That’s just simply your D.B.A.  

“D.B.A.” is an abbreviated clean-up for “damn black ass.” “Put It Right Here” gets away with its “damn” because it’s part of an ethnic-dialect joke. (“I’d Rather Be Dead And Buried In My Grave” does get away with “Hell” as curseword: “I ask him where he’s going, he says ‘Go to Hell.’” [In “Blue Spirit Blues,” the “Hell” of “‘This is Hell,’ I cried” is scene-setting.])

There are only two other words I’m absolutely sure show up only once in the Bessie Smith repertory. One is in “Salt Water Blues”: I think you’ll be able to spot it from the line it’s in:  

   I’m crazy about my sugar, my sugar and my oolong tea.  

The other one-timer word I’m sure of shows up in the next-to-last verse of the final Bessie Smith record, “Down In The Dumps.” Here it is in context, with the line preceding as well as the line it’s in:  

   But I’m going to straighten up  
   Straighter than Andy Gump –  

Andy Gump is the tall and gangly main male character of the comic strip “The Gumps,” drawn by Sidney Smith, which ran from 1917 to 1959 and was going strong in the late 1920s. I’m quite sure “Gump” doesn’t show up earlier on Bessie Smith records; I’m not absolutely sure about “Andy.” And I’m far from sure that “Gump” is the very last new word to appear in a Bessie Smith record: in the final verse of “Down in the Dumps” there is the line  

   I got plenty of vim and vitality.  

Neither “vim” nor “vitality” is much of a Bessie Smith word – though vim and vitality themselves are very much a part of her singing - even when she sings about the “deep-sea diver” who has deserted her.

Endnotes  
1 Indeed when Robert Penn Warren, in the section on “blues” of the two-volume anthology American Literature: The Makers and the Making (N.Y.: St. Martin’s Press, 1973, vol. 2, 2753 – 2770) chose one Bessie Smith blues-text to transcribe, he chose the text of “Empty Bed Blues” (2769). The transcription is not perfect – “his spirit” has become “his fair head” – but it’s generally a good try. (Bessie Smith’s fellow-transcribers in this section are W.C. Handy, Ma Rainey, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Leadbelly, and Robert Johnson; there’s also an excerpt from an interview with Jelly Roll Morton.)  
2 “One and a half?” The full recording is “Trombone Cholly,” where he is specifically named in the final two lines:  

   “Oh, Charlie Green, play that thing,  
   I mean that slide trombone!”  

The half-recording: a trombonist named “Charlie” – no last name – is the subject of the first two verses of “Rocking Chair Blues.” After those two verses the record goes on to add three unrelated verses – unrelated to each other or to any trombonist. These three final verses have traditional-blues roots – Bessie is filling up the rest of the three minutes of a ten-inch 78-rpm blues record with good old folk material.  
3 She also recorded with pianists Fletcher Henderson and Fred Longshaw during this year, the latter twice.  
4 Also important as a major performance of a significant blues (first recorded by its writer Lonnie Johnson). Not, however, a good sample of Porter Grainger’s work: he is entirely subservient to the one-motive-fits-all guitar playing of Lincoln M. Conaway. (Grainger and Conaway recorded together as accompanists in early 1924; the only other listings of Lincoln Conaway in the current edition of Blues and Gospel Records / 1890-1943. Fourth Edition [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997] is the Bessie Smith session of September 27, 1927.)  
5 These lines – in two-line or three-line form – are not in the copyright deposit copy of the lyrics.  
6 Title of a major Clara Smith record (accompanied, as it happens, by an ensemble including Porter Grainger on [near-inaudible] piano). The most appropriate Bessie Smith title – “Keep It To Yourself” – would require an explanation.
7 So credited on copyright deposit; on the recording the song is credited to “S. Red” – “Speckled Red,” bluesman Rufus Perryman, a far less likely author for the lyrics of “Slow and Easy Man.”

8 “Hustlin’ Dan” and “Black Mountain Blues” both have notations on their copyright registration: “Certificate to J.C. Johnson 36 W 138th Apt 25 / New York City NY.”

9 Copyright deposit copy of “Black Mountain Blues” is written from a man’s point of view. This verse has lyrics for a man angry that his girl has left him for another man. This line in the copyright deposit reads “I’m gonna dare her to stand and dare him to run” – a bit elaborate even for this male-singer version (gal stands still and gets slashed; man runs and is shot). Bessie gets confused in her attempt to make a quick change. (I do not think this is a conscious joke.)

10 “What’s the Matter Now?” is listed by Wikipedia in its entry for Porter Grainger as one of his “notable songs”; it is given the date “(1921).” The “What’s the Matter Now?” sung by Bessie Smith is, according to its copyright registration, by Clarence Williams and Spencer Williams; it is credited on the record label as being by “Williams and Williams”. The date on its copyright deposit is March 20, 1926. Perhaps Porter Grainger wrote a different song with the same title.

11 Deposited for copyright: Cl E 688847; deposited April 18, 1928. (Copyright deposits for newly written material recorded on Columbia Records in the 1920s were usually the originals or carbons of the lyrics as submitted to the singer, sent in after the session [thus April 18 for a March 20 session]). See my column “Transcribing Bessie Smith” in the 2015 issue of The Jazz Archivist for a longer explanation of this seemingly reversed sequence of recording date and date of copyright deposit.

12 Other Bessie Smith recordings which use this phrase are “Mama’s Got the Blues,” “Frosty Mornin’ Blues,” “Hateful Blues,” “Young Woman’s Blues,” and “Back Water Blues.” “Hateful Blues” and “Young Woman’s Blues” begin with this phrase.

13 Quotations in this paragraph are from the copyright deposit sheet, not from Bessie Smith’s singing. I do not reproduce the ALL CAPITALS format of the original, though I do respect its no-period-at-end-of-lines punctuation.

14 For example, if “putting in the bacon” is actual entry, is “boiling the cabbage” merely foreplay? This sort of fussing belongs in footnotes (if even there).

15 This also gives the suggestion that her bed has gotten empty several times. J.C. Johnson’s original words make it clear that time has passed since the “this morning” of Part One.

16 This text can make do for both typed text and sung recording.

17 On June 26, 1928 Elizabeth Johnson made a cover record of “Empty Bed Blues” for OKeh Records (OKeh 8593) with King Oliver, cornet and Clarence Williams, piano. Side Two of the OKeh “Empty Bed Blues” is a bit faster than Side One, but the feeling is still that it’s just more of what we’ve already heard. (King Oliver is flawless; Clarence Williams never gets much beyond one chord per beat; Elizabeth Johnson is somewhat miscast. On her one other record, much more folkish [OKeh 8789, with her “Turpentine Tree-O”], “Sobbin’ Woman Blues,” a sixteen-bar blues [aaab], is worth a listen.

18 From here on quotations of lyrics are from Bessie Smith’s recording rather than from J.C. Johnson’s copyright deposit sheet. (Punctuation is mine. There will be no further indications of breathing.)

19 “Hard-Driving Papa,” which Bessie Smith recorded in May 1926 with Fletcher Henderson and Joe Smith, is not about sex but rather about an exploitative man who “takes all [the singer’s] money and starts to crying for more.” The title is, in fact, a bit of bait-and-switch.

20 In “St. Louis Blues,” this is the line “or else he would not go so far from me.” She will sing “on else” when she gets to the “St. Louis Blues” film sound-track as well.

21 “(But It Breaks My Heart To Give It Away)” “(Cause I Don’t Want It Here).”

22 I wouldn’t take a million for my sweet, sweet daddy Jim,
And I wouldn’t give a quarter for another man like him.

23 In order of appearance: coffee, grind (first as “grinder”), brand-new (though not “brand” or “new”), diver, stroke, bottom (though there’s “bell-bottom” in “Florida Bound Blues”), breath, girlfriend, raving (there is “rave,” its root-word, in “A Good Man Is Hard To Find,” so this may not count), rusty, single, blanket, mattress, lesson, elbows, cabbage, bacon, pot, and double-cross (“cross” by itself is in “Yellow Dog Blues” – indeed in “where the Southern cross the Yellow Dog.”)

24 In order of appearance: fifteen, Cadillac, worn-out, Ford, lousy, according, borrow, somewhere, pork, chops, grease, Park, comb (“honeycomb” does appear in “What’s the Matter Now?”), gnat, rooster, worm, hen, check, laundry, and damn.
Donald Heywood: Composer of a Jazz Standard
Had a Long Career in Vaudeville, Broadway, and Film

By Ray Funk

Donald Heywood is best remembered as the composer of the music for the jazz standard, “I’m Coming Virginia.” It was featured by Ethel Waters in two stage productions, Miss Calico (1926) and Africana (1927), and it was also recorded by her in 1926. Many more recordings of it followed, including by Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Bix Beiderbecke, Tony Bennett, Bunny Berigan, Benny Carter, Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman, Stephane Grappelli, Woody Herman, Peggy Lee, Django Reinhart, Artie Shaw, Dinah Shore, Art Tatum, Jack Teagarden, Fats Waller, Paul Whiteman, Lee Wiley, and Teddy Wilson, among others. Beyond this one major song hit, Heywood had a surprisingly rich and complex musical and theatrical career that merits exploring in depth.

Heywood was the first Trinidadian to become an important entertainment figure in the United States. Based in Harlem at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, he was a pioneering composer, bandleader, choir leader, music director, playwright, actor, producer, and screenwriter. He worked in theatre, film, radio – indeed, the full range of performing arts. From 1920 through the 1950s, he was
involved in endless theatrical endeavors and seemed to be constantly writing new songs and rehearsing new shows.

Born and raised in Trinidad, Heywood originally came to the United States to go to college, but was soon drawn by the musical stage to move to New York City. He settled in Harlem in the early 1920s and lived there for the rest of his life. At his death in 1967, his friend Noble Sissle noted, “He wrote any number of songs... He was also the first to introduce a vocal orchestra in the pit on Broadway. It was a sensation.”

Heywood’s career has been hard to reconstruct. There are no known interviews and very few articles to draw from; the three most notable articles are the sketch of his theatrical career in Errol Hill and James V. Hatch’s *A History of African American Theatre*; a two-page typed biography by William W. Sanders in the collection of the New York Public Library for Performing Arts; and a brief entry in the *ASCAP Biographical Dictionary*. However, the digitization of newspapers in the last decade, plus online access to many additional resources, allow a much more detailed look at his complex career.

**Trinidad to New York**

The details of Heywood’s early life in Trinidad remain sketchy. The date of his birth has been reported as both 1893 and 1901. A reporter for the *New York Age* in 1932 gave this colorful view of his childhood: “Mr. Heywood is a West Indian. As a child he wrote stories, coming here in his teens to study music and Negro folk-songs at Fisk University. Later he began to write works in which music and story were combined, in the belief that a Negro play is never authentic unless it combines melody, rhythm and dialogue—a natural outgrowth of the Negro disposition.”

His entry in the *ASCAP Biographical Dictionary* says he attended Queen’s Royal College, a leading secondary school in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The date of his immigration to the United States is reported as 1910. Hill and Hatch note: “Heywood at an early age showed promise of unusual musical ability by mastering the piano and other stringed instruments. However, his father, a physician, desired that his son follow his profession and upon graduating from secondary school, young Heywood was sent to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He stayed for two years, then transferred to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, for medical training.” According to the Sanders bio, he played cello at the age of four in a children’s orchestra: “Within a few years he had mastered several other stringed instruments, the flute and the piano.” He was in Surrey, England, for a period while growing up, and at Fisk he became a friend of Roland Hayes.

While studying medicine at Northwestern, Heywood also sought musical training at the Chicago Musical College from composer Felix Borowski (1872-1952), who taught him “harmony and counterpoint.” *Chicago Defender* articles of 1918-1919 place a Donald “Haywood” at musical events in Chicago, playing piano at a “September Super Musicale” and at a wedding. He also played two of his own compositions at a lyceum program in the city. These few glimpses are all that seem to survive to describe his early career in Chicago.

Heywood is also reported to have written songs for Rosa Raisa and Ernestine Schumann-Heink during this time. Polish born Rosa Raisa (1893-1963) was a star in Italy before she joined the Chicago Opera and became a leading singer in the United States. Australian born contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1936) had a long career at the Metropolitan Opera and made numerous cross-country tours. He is also reported to have written a mass, *Te Deum*.

Heywood left his medical studies at Northwestern University to focus instead on music. He shifted away from the classical music that he was being trained in to concentrate on blues, jazz, and the popular stage. A later newspaper piece commented, “While in the Windy City he lived at the same house with the late Florence Mills [star of *Shuffle Along*], who saw talent in the young artist and encouraged him to write.” Perhaps she also encouraged him to move to Harlem; or perhaps he wanted to go to the
place with the largest population from the British West Indies. Unlike Nashville and Chicago, Harlem was home to a very large Caribbean population; reportedly up to 25% of the black population in the mid-1920s were immigrants, primarily from the Caribbean.  

Harlem

Exactly why or when Heywood decided to make the move from Chicago to Harlem is not clear. By 1921, he was working with the pioneering Black-owned, Harlem-based record company Black Swan. He recorded two 78s for them. On the first, he plays two piano solos, both his original compositions, “Autumn Leaves” and “Operatic Dreams.” The score for the latter was published in 1922 as “Venetian Rag.” On the other, he accompanies singer Marion Harrison (1901-1951) on two more of his compositions, “So Blue” and “Baby Can’t You Understand.”

In 1922, Heywood was involved in writing the music for a vaudeville show at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, Quintard Miller’s Creole Follies Revue, which was very successful. It ran for two weeks, starting May 22, 1922, featuring a young Josephine Baker. From the Lafayette, the show went on tour to Washington, D.C., and other locations, featuring blues singer Lucille Hegamin. At the time, Black musicals were basking in the popularity of Shuffle Along, which had produced a storm on Broadway, premiering in May 1921 and running for a staggering 504 performances. New musicals were being rushed out in hopes that they could get to Broadway and be as popular.

Creole Follies Revue received mixed reviews. The New York Age was quick to point out that there was “no story, but a series of vaudeville numbers with several new songs and dances by a large and snappy chorus.” Its 26 songs were mostly composed by the team of Donald Heywood and Porter Grainger. Porter Grainger (1891-1948) was also based in Chicago before coming to New York in 1920. It is possible that he and Heywood knew each other in Chicago or even traveled together to New York. A decade Heywood’s senior, Grainger became a primary accompanist for female blues singers, from Bessie Smith to Clara Smith. With Creole Follies Revue, Heywood and Grainger began an association that would continue for many years.

Heywood and Grainger next worked together on a revue called Dumb Luck. It made a tour of New England, starting September 11, 1922, but within a month it had broken down in Worcester, Massachusetts, and funding from the stars of Shuffle Along was needed to get the cast and crew back to New York City. Alberta Hunter reported that the show was lousy, and that the costumes had to be sold to get the performers back home. Yet Heywood later considered “this production a [milestone] in his career because he forced the producer to put Ethel Waters in the show, thus giving her first big part.”

Heywood and Grainger co-wrote musical selections for a third revue, Get Set (1923). The show’s producers, J. Homer Tutt and Salem Tutt Whitney, were experienced black producers involved in various traveling shows. They likely could have had the pick of composers, and it was a major break for Heywood and Grainger to be hired to write the music for them. Get Set started in Harlem and then went on the road. Ethel Waters was the star. To the extent that the show had a plot, it appeared to concern “the efforts of the wife of a soldier of fortune to get into society.”

Presumably it was for Get Set that Heywood wrote what became one his first popular blues numbers, “I Want My Sweet Daddy Now.” Accompanied by Fletcher Henderson, Ethel Waters recorded it in June 1923. In the following months several other female blues singers, including Rosa Henderson, Josie Miles, Clara Smith, and Hannah Sylvester, covered it. Waters herself recorded it again in 1927.

At this point, Heywood seems to have come into great demand. Over the next few years he composed songs for a bewildering number of musical revues. He did the music for How Come, a musical that ran at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem from April 16 to May 19, 1923, after runs in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. How Come featured the great Sidney Bechet as the “Chief of Police.” Bessie Smith and Alberta Hunter were also associated with the show. Bechet had gone to Europe with Will Marion Cook’s
Southern Syncopated Orchestra, but, following an assault charge, was deported to the United States in late 1922. Bechet would work with Heywood again in 1939, in the film *Moon over Harlem*.

In August 1923, producer Irving C. Miller put on a musical comedy at the Lafayette Theatre, *The Sheik of Harlem*. The music was by Heywood, and an ad in the *New York Amsterdam News* noted that it was “a musical speed revue” with a cast of fifty people offering “plot-melody-surpriselaughs.” Heywood was involved in a steady stream of vaudeville shows during the next few years. For Salem Tutt Whitney and J. Homer Tutt he did music for *North Ain't South* (1923) and *The Jazz Express* and *Come Along Mandy* (1924), followed by the Pollack Brothers production, *How’ve You Been* (1925), and Irvin C. Miller’s shows, *Blue Moon and Brownskin Models*. Miller was the older brother of Flournoy Miller, who

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*Clara Smith recorded Donald Heywood’s “I Want My Sweet Daddy Now” for Columbia in 1923 (Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections).*

with his childhood friend and partner Aubrey Lyles formed the comic duo who wrote the book for *Shuffle Along*.

When *Brownskin Models* was in Pittsburgh at the Elmore Theatre in December 1925, a local newspaper reporter predicted that a song Heywood wrote for the production, “‘Mary Ann,’ a gay rollicking air,” would “take the entire country by storm.” That appears not to have happened. The show did get good reviews, however, and, along with writing the score, Heywood was at the piano for performances.

Among Heywood’s songs for *Brownskin Models* was “Charleston Ball,” which was recorded in November 1925 by the Missourians, the band that would eventually be taken over by Cab Calloway.
It was covered in January 1926 by two white dance bands, the Georgia Melodians and the Six Jumping Jacks, led by banjoist Harry Reser. Not only was a piano sheet issued for “Charleston Ball,” but also a commercial 16-piece band arrangement.

In August 1926, Heywood was back working with Ethel Waters. Producer Earl Dancer had put together a revue featuring her, called Miss Calico. It opened at the Alhambra Theatre on 125th Street in Harlem, and ran for a couple weeks before going on the road to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago, lasting through the end of the year. The Pittsburgh Courier noted that the show started with a new song. “The play opens with a review of the entire company, with the chorus carrying along the melody of “I’m Coming Virginia,” sung by Ethel Waters and the refrain carried along by the entire company with a weird and haunting harmony, which sticks throughout the entire show.”

Blue Moon appeared at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C., in September 1926, with book and lyrics by Irvin C. Miller and music by Heywood, featuring local talent. The reviewer for the local paper found it to be “clever, mirthful and jazzy,” opening with “a beautiful number entitled ‘Happiness’ written by Mr. Heywood the director.” Miller followed this with a show he wrote called the Great Temptations of 1927, which appeared at the Royal Theatre in Baltimore. He and Heywood also wrote two songs for Lottie Brown, who had been featured in Great Temptations, and wrote musical numbers for a show called Tam O’ Shanter at the Alhambra Theatre in Harlem in June 1927. But it was that one number for Miss Calico that took on a life of its own.

“I’m Coming Virginia”

Ethel Waters recorded “I’m Coming Virginia” on September 18, 1926, backed by Will Marion Cook’s Singing Orchestra. Heywood wrote the music and Cook wrote the lyrics. How Heywood and Cook came together to compose it has not been documented. Heywood appears to have worked with Cook’s Syncopated Orchestra upon Cook’s return from England in early 1923. Heywood and Cook were involved with subsequent shows starring Ethel Waters, including one called Too Bad and the successful touring show Miss Calico.

Alex Wilder analyzed “I’m Coming Virginia” in his book, American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950: “It’s a twenty-four measure song, and the only feeling of stopping and starting up again (too often the awkwardness of pop songs) is in the seventh-measure cadence. But even this, due to adroit use of harmony, conveys continuous motion.”

David A. Jasen and Gene Jones called Bix Among the many examples of commercial recordings of Donald Heywood’s “I’m Coming Virginia” are those by Frankie Trumbauer, Paul Whiteman, and the Original Indiana Five, all from 1927 (Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections).
Beiderbecke’s recording of it “one of the landmarks of twenties jazz.” 43 Beiderbecke had heard Waters sing it in Miss Calico on November 22, 1926, at the Garrick Theatre in Detroit. 44 He recorded it with the Frankie Traumbauer and his orchestra in New York City on May 13, 1927.

In his notes for the 1990 reissue album of early Bix Beiderbecke recordings, producer Michael Brooks gave his take on it: “Bix loved Ethel Waters and her recording of ‘I’m Coming Virginia’ was one of his favorites. [Don] Murray [the arranger] has pitched the reed section in an usually low key, giving the piece a sinister air which is only slightly alleviated by Tram’s lovely solo on the verse, a Bronte heroine wandering over the mist-shrouded moors. The unbalanced rhythm section is hardly noticeable as [Eddie] Lang carries it single stringedly... setting the stage for Bix’s solo, each note hit with the strength and precision of a hammer on an anvil.” 45

It may be that Bix’s version was what drew worldwide attention to the song. While several vocalists went on to record it, there have been many more instrumental recordings, and Bix seems the touchstone. Steve Sullivan, in the Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings, summarized the critical response:

Beiderbecke’s playing on “I’m Coming Virginia,” wrote Gunther Schuller, is “the essential Bix ...poignant with a touch of reserve and sadness shining through.” Ted Gioia cites this performance as one of the “decisive contributions to the tradition of jazz.” He notes that the 2/4 bounce so prevalent on many previous jazz recordings “give way to a smooth 4/4 ballad tempo, helped along admiringly Eddie Lang’s subtle guitar textures. Yet, the achievements of the rhythm section are overshadowed by the pungent solos by Beiderbecke and Trumbauer, with their artful balance of emotion and logic...”

Emotionally, declares Richard Sudhalter ... this “is a strongly layered performance. It is dark, elegiac, saturated with brooding melancholy, but the gloom is seldom absolute”, at key moments, shafts of light pierce the darkness.” 46

Eventually, “I’m Coming Virginia” was used in a number of films, including a “soundie” from 1942, in which it was performed by the obscure all-girl orchestra, Aileen Shirley & The Minoco Maids of Melody. Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra performed it for the feature film The Strip (1951), but his performance was cut and never heard until audio outtakes were released on a soundtrack album in 1997. Will Friedwald, in the liner notes to the album, noted that Armstrong’s all-star group included Barney Bigard, Earl Hines, and Jack Teagarden, adding: “The deleted ‘I’m Coming Virginia’ shows how generous Armstrong was in featuring Teagarden who, though technically a sideman, could have been a co leader, playing second fiddle only to Pops. Armstrong’s own solo is remarkably tender: one suspects he might have been thinking of Bix Biederbecke, who was always identified with ‘Virginia.’” 47

Certainly the most amazing use of the song was in Arthur Penn’s film Mickey One (1965), in which Warren Beatty stars as a washed-up night club comic; halfway through the film, Beatty is in a club with a group and starts singing “I’m Coming Virginia,” then tosses out a joke about astronauts, followed by an out-of-control drum solo. Artie Shaw’s 1938 recording of “I’m Coming Virginia” was included on the soundtrack of both the 1998 comedy, The Imposters, and James Franco’s 2011 film on the life of poet Hart Crane, The Broken Tower. Traditional jazz groups continue to record and perform it regularly.

**Africana**

Ethel Waters made her Broadway debut in producer Earl Dancer’s all-black musical revue, Africana, with a score by Heywood. It opened at the Daly Theatre on July 11, 1927. After four weeks, Africana was grossing about $8,000 per week, a definite hit at the time! 48 Dave Peyton noted in the Chicago Defender: “Donald Heywood, well-known composer, has written the music score for ‘Africana,’ XXXII, 2019
the current success of Broadway, starring Ethel Waters. ... Joe Jordan, well known musician, has assisted with the arrangements and Allie Ross, who had the distinction of directing the world premiere of jazz symphony, will conduct the orchestra."49 In her autobiography, Waters suggested the revue was an amalgamation of prior shows she had worked on with Earl Dancer.50 The Dictionary of the Black Theatre condensed the critical commentary:

This revue featured songs and comedy routines from Waters's many years on the road. Variety commented that “Ethel Waters is the kick of Africana,” and praised almost every song she performed, including such hits as “My Special Friend Is in Town,” “Dinah,” “Shake That Thing,” “Take Your Black Bottom Outside,” and “I’m Coming Virginia.” Time followed suit, devoting half its review to Miss Waters’s talents: “She uses a typical husky, soft voice to unusual advantage, employs mannerisms frankly and disarmingly Negroid, understands the art of ‘living’ her songs, so that they take on dramatic quality. In Harlem, she is queen. In Manhattan, she stopped the show.”51

While Africana was on Broadway, Heywood also served as musical director of another show, a two-act musical comedy called Buenos Noches, at the Alhambra Theatre in Harlem.52 But the popularity of Africana was such that for a time Heywood himself appeared “in several scenes.”53 Indeed, station WGBS (Gimbel Brothers, New York) featured a weekly selection from the show, and one week it was tenor Paul Bass singing “Clorinda,” accompanied by Heywood.54 Africana closed on September 10, 1927, after 72 performances. Over a decade later, in 1938, Earl Dancer announced from Hollywood that Africana was being revived as a film with Ethel Waters, Cab Calloway, the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and many other stars set to participate, but this never came together.55

Donald Heywood’s “Smile,” recorded in 1928 by Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra, with Bix Beiderbecke on cornet (Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections).

Heywood carried “I’m Coming Virginia” over to Africana from Miss Calico. While it was the most popular Donald Heywood song from Africana that was recorded, it was not the only one. Ethel Waters also recorded Heywood’s “Smile” from that show.56 Bix Beiderbecke recorded it as well, with Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra.57 Other recordings of it include those by vocalist Bessie Brown and by three different dance bands, led, respectively, by Fred Elizalde, Frank Sylvano, and Irving Kaufman.58 “Smile” is featured on the soundtrack of a short called Chips Off the Old Block (1928), featuring the Five Singing Fois, a popular vaudeville act of the time.59 It was also recorded by Hoagy Carmichael.60 Most recently, guitarist and flutist Les Spann recorded it on his 1961 album Gemini.

By early 1927, Heywood had a late-night show on New York City radio station WGL.61 That summer he recorded a series of releases for Victor’s West Indian market. These are discussed in detail in
John Cowley’s seminal article, “West Indies Blues.” These sessions included two instrumentals by Donald Heywood’s West Indian Band and two backing Sam Manning, an important Trinidad composer and performer in his own right, under the pseudonym Marsa Langman. Heywood had worked with Manning in November 1926 in a show called Hey Hey at the Lafayette Theatre, presented by Marcus Garvey’s first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey.

One of the releases is the Heywood composition, “Mister Joseph Strut Your Stuff.” Cowley described it as “pure black North American vaudeville in execution, though its subject is the Trinidad West Indian in New York and it is sung to an island melody.” The spoken interlude focuses on the figure Mister Joseph cuts in Harlem.

Do you know anybody ever heard about Mister Joseph?
Yeah, Mister Joseph’s the boy from Trinidad ....
Mister Joseph works Down Town ...and he runs an elevator.
When you sees him on the Avenue you’ll think he’s a doctor...
Mister Joseph gets his payroll every Saturday evening ....
and the girls just wild ‘bout him.

The chorus reinforces the positive image of the new migrant making it in the United States: “Mister Joseph strut your stuff — Lord sir! Show you come from far, you certainly make a hit in this America.”

Heywood’s next recording session was in December 1927, when he accompanied two singers’ recordings his compositions. One was a solo by Jamaican Dan Michaels. The other two cuts, “Mango Lane” and “Susanne,” had Michaels singing duets with Hilda Perlino, who had appeared on Broadway in the cast of Chocolate Dandies in 1924. Around the time of this recording session, Heywood was serving as an accompanist for Hilda Perlino. In January 1928 Perlino and Heywood did a radio show on station WCGU in Manhattan. His next recording session in April 1928 as the accompanist on recordings by two other vocalists, Timothy Dunn and Adrian Johnson. These were his last known recordings.

In the spring of 1927, Donald Heywood and Jimmy Marshall co-produced a vaudeville show, Great Temptations of 1927. It went to Baltimore and Detroit. Another Heywood and Marshall production, Chocolate Babies, followed, featuring singer Lottie Brown. Heywood and Marshall hooked up in July for a show titled One Glorious Night at the Lincoln Theatre on 135th Street in Harlem, where instead of just featuring his songs, he was present, leading his Incomparable Paramount Orchestra.

Clarence Williams created the Broadway revue Bottomland as a vehicle for himself and his wife, blues singer Eva Taylor. It opened at the Princess Theatre June 27, 1927, and ran for 27 performances. While most of the show featured Williams’s own compositions, it seems Heywood supplied at least one. A review in the Pittsburgh Courier highlighted a Heywood number that took the form of a letter sung by a mother to her daughter (Eva Taylor), telling her to come home. Eva Taylor went on to record “Come On Home” in 1929.

Heywood got his next experience on Broadway when he was hired to supply the musical setting for a “morality play” called Veils. Written by Irving Kaye Davis, it told a tale of two sisters, with scenes in a monastery. After opening on March 13, 1928, it was criticized as “sprawling and loose-jointed.” The public followed the critics, and it closed after only four performances. This was the second of eight plays that Irving Kaye Davis got to Broadway - none of which proved successful. But what appears to have been unique at the time is that it was a white musical for which Heywood was asked to write the score, likely on the success of Africana.

Heywood had better luck with his next effort on Broadway, not as a composer (though he did write some of the music) but an actor. He took a minor role as “Skeeter” in Ringside, a play about boxing, at the Broadhurst Theatre on 44th Street, which ran for 37 performances starting August 29, 1928. The New York Daily News ran a positive review: “‘Ringside’ moves you right into the center of a box fighter’s

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training camp. Introduces you to the perspiring sparring partners, the manager, the girl, the fellow who is going to try to fix the fight, the vamp who is going to try and fix the fighter, the plot of the piece and everything.”

It was also reported during this time that Heywood was writing songs for young baritone singer/actor Barrington Guy, who was featured in Lew Leslie’s Blackbirds of 1928 and went on to appear in later Heywood productions.

In October 1928, the New York Times informed: “An operetta, ‘Evangeline,’ based upon the Longfellow poem, is announced for production by George A. Stevenson and Charles P. Davis. Donald Heywood, who wrote the score of Africana, has supplied the music.” It was not produced. This was followed by an extravaganza called Payday, a musical that premiered in January 1929 at the Orpheum Theatre in Newark; produced by Henry Myers, directed by Heywood, who also wrote the score, and featuring Ida Anderson, it was “a flaming cross section of Harlem life, revealing the colored race in midst of a stage of hysteria, co-mingled with exultation induced by an end-of-the-world scare, which has gripped New York.” The book was by Irving Kaye Davis, who had grown up in Newark and prevailed to have the premiere there. It is not clear whether the show ever got out of Newark.

In March 1929, Paramount Pictures hired Heywood to write “theme songs.” What titles he may have written for Paramount, and whether or not they were ever used, has not been traced. Heywood also wrote music for a Joe Jordan show that was reportedly headed to Broadway in the Fall of 1929, Jazz Regiment. It had runs in Baltimore and Washington during the Spring of 1929 and came to the Lafayette Theatre in September for a week, but went no further, even though Jordan had been a very successful writer and producer for decades and had been successful on Broadway in the spring of 1928 with a show called Keep Shufflin’, an attempt to clone the success of Shuffle Along.

Also in 1929 came notice of the budding movie industry showing further interest in Donald Heywood. The Indianapolis Recorder noted: “Donald Heywood, of I’m Coming Virginia’ fame, has just finished ‘Soft Hearted,’ and ‘I Got a Gal,’ for Remick’s Publishing Co., and ‘Soft Hearted’ has been declared a hit, for which Heywood was offered a large advance royalty from another [publisher] and will now do the score for the forthcoming all-talking, singing and dancing special ‘Thoroughbred,’ to be produced by the Essanay Picture, Inc. This picture will also use about one hundred and fifty colored artists.” It would appear that these titles did not get published, nor the film made.

At the end of 1929, Heywood was back on Broadway with Ginger Snaps, which the New York Times identified as “a Negro revue in two acts and eighteen scenes.” With book and lyrics by J. Homer Tutt, Donald Heywood, and George Morris, it featured music by Heywood. The New York Times reviewer called it “inept,” save for some “pulsating” ballads. A reviewer for the Baltimore Afro-American was more positive, declaring it “a darn good snappy show,” and noting in particular:

[I]t’s in the musical numbers by Heywood that “Ginger Snaps” gets its real punch. Such stoppy, jerky, screaming rhythm reminds one always of the name. Then there is that soft melody carried from the piano keys direct to the feet of that “Snapperette” chorus, like no white producer has yet been able to describe, let alone imitate.

Some of the tuneful numbers that got good hands and are sure to live long after the show is gone, are “Sweet Lips” “Change My Luck” “Something to Write Home About” and “Love, Love, Love.”

Regrettably, Ginger Snaps was also short-lived, only seven performances. Heywood’s next production was a revival of a traditional minstrel show. He wrote the music for Kilpatrick’s Old-Time Minstrels, which opened on Broadway in April 1930. Tough critic Brooks Atkinson found the first segment “really enjoyable.” Only around for a week, it had nine performances.
The 1930s

The 1930 Federal Census offers a brief glimpse of Heywood’s home life in Harlem. He is listed as one of fifteen lodgers at 246 W. 138th Street. The professions of the residents reflect a strong theatre focus: beyond a housekeeper there are five actors, one actress, three orchestra musicians, a drummer, and a professional dancer. Heywood’s profession is given as “songwriter,” and he is the only lodger listed as being born out of the United States. Half of the lodgers in the building next-door were from the British West Indies, and two were from Panama.  

While Heywood’s first efforts of the new decade, Ginger Snaps and Kilpatrick’s Old-Time Minstrels, were short-lived, he had another Broadway production in the wings. Will Morrissey’s Hot Rhythm opened August 21, 1930, at the Time Square Theatre and went for 68 performances, thus becoming one of the most successful musicals that Donald Heywood was ever involved in. This revue featured blues singers Mae Barnes and Revella Hughes, with lyrics and music by Porter Grainger and Donald Heywood, along with songs contributed by Eubie Blake, Andy Razaf, and others. It also featured comedian Johnny Huggins, star of Lew Leslie’s Blackbirds. The New York Times critic gave Hot Rhythm “less than extravagant praise.” Revella Hughes, in a 1980s interview, had kind words about the music for the show: “I always thought that Donald Heywood and Porter Grainger were ahead of their times in that musical score.” Yet, this appears to be the last time that Heywood and Grainger worked together.

Two songs by Heywood were recorded from Hot Rhythm. Edith Wilson and Bubber Miley recorded both “I’ll Get Even with You” and “The Penalty of Love” (the latter with lyrics by Heba Jannath). Bert Lown and his Hotel Biltmore Orchestra also recorded “The Penalty of Love” with vocalist Elmer Feldcamp. The Bubber Miley/Edith Wilson recording of “Penalty of Love” was featured in the TV series Broadway Empire in 2014.

While Hot Rhythm was transferring from Times Square to the Lafayette Theatre uptown, Heywood had an “All Star Choir of 22” at the Alhambra Theatre, 126th Street and 7th Avenue, in Melody Lane. This All Star Choir featured Rollin Smith, who had replaced Jules Bedsoe in Showboat, as well as other singers from “Broadway and European productions.”

Oscar Micheaux

In 1931, pioneer Black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux recruited Heywood to provide the music for his first talking films. Micheaux had already logged a long career in silent films, and he was making the

Bubber Miley recorded Heywood’s “The Penalty of Love” in 1930; and in 1931 Cab Calloway recorded Heywood’s “Black Rhythm” (Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University Special Collections).
transition to sound when, in January 1931, he launched a new film company, Fayette Pictures, with partners Leo Brecher and Frank Schiffman, who had control of the Lafayette and other theatres in Harlem, where Heywood was already well known. Over the next two years, Heywood worked on four Micheaux films; three features, *The Exile* (1931), *Ten Minutes to Live* (1932), and *Veiled Aristocrats* (1932), and a short film, *The Darktown Revue* (1931). They were all produced on very tight budgets. Interestingly, one of the actors in all three of the feature films was fellow Trinidadian Carl Mahon (1906-1992).

Micheaux biographer Patrick McGilligan noted that his first talking films used intercut music and dance numbers, which became standard procedure for his own and other black films set in Harlem in the Thirties and Forties: “In the sound era, his films were chock-full with black singers, musicians, cabaret entertainers, specialty acts and kooky comedians.” McGilligan summarized Heywood’s role in the first Micheaux film he worked on: “For *The Exile*, Micheaux asked for an overture of spirituals (to underscore the opening images of the film, a simmering montage of Chicago buildings and street life) and dance music for the club scenes (‘searing quotations of hot jazz,’ in the words of J. Ronald Green). Heywood brought his own choir and band to the studio, and even appeared on-screen conducting the orchestra.”

Micheaux’s short film, *The Darktown Revue*, appears to have been assembled from extra footage originally shot for *The Exile*. Heywood also appeared on the screen as a master of ceremonies in the feature, *Ten Minutes to Live*. For a midnight preview of *The Exile* at the Ogden Theatre in early March 1931, Heywood appeared with his choir to offer “several fine selections as a prologue.” From this start, Heywood would go on to provide music for a number of other films.

But Heywood was never just working on one project; while working with Micheaux, he was also appearing on Broadway as an actor. He played a porter in *Wonder Boy*, a comedy at the Alvin Theatre, which ran for 44 performances, starting October 22, 1931.

**The Black King**

In early August 1930, the papers reported that Heywood’s *The Black King*, one of two recently-announced plays about Marcus Garvey, was expected to open by Labor Day. “The life of Garvey, known variously as ‘Provisional President of Africa’ and ‘Imperial Potentate of the Valley of the Nile,’ will be treated satirically by Mr. Heywood, who has also written six incidental musical numbers for the play. Leone Massine will direct the production.” Massine was a choreographer for Sergie Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes; how he was to direct Heywood’s play is unclear. Regardless, the play got derailed from Broadway, while the other Marcus Garvey play, Robert Wilder’s *Sweet Chariot*, did finally open on Broadway in October, only to close after three performances.

Though Heywood’s script never made it to Broadway, it did become the basis for a film. Details do not survive to explain how Heywood got together with low-budget film king Bud Pollard (1886-1952) to make *The Black King* (1932). Pollard directed and produced it with a story adaption by Morris M. Levinson and dialogue by Heywood. Pollard had been an actor in silent films, and had formed his own company during the transition to talkies. In 1931 he made a low-budget *Alice in Wonderland* and went on to make horror and exploitation films, several with all-black casts.

*The Black King* does not have a Caribbean setting; rather, the plot is set first in Logan, Mississippi, where Charcoal Johnson, a charismatic new deacon of the Rise and Shine Baptist Church, proclaims himself the Emperor of the United States of Africa. He goes from Mississippi to Tulsa, Chicago, and finally New York City, gathering disciples who are committed to travel on a boat back to Africa. As things proceed there are parades and pomp, titles and medals, and ever more elaborate costumes. Judith Weisenfeld in *Hollywood Be Thy Name: African American Religion in American Film, 1929-1949*, placed The Black King among “several race films of the 1930s and 1940s that took seriously and evaluated - albeit
in a comedic mode - the nature of black religious leadership and raised questions about the appropriate relationship between the church and its leaders and other elements of black civil society." To some extent, the film depicts how in any cult, followers can follow without considering the logic of what is going on around them.

Weisenfeld doesn’t account for Heywood being a West Indian musician in Harlem in the Twenties, where he would have directly witnessed the rise and fall of Marcus Garvey and his Back to Africa movement. In addition, Heywood had worked with Sam Manning and Garvey’s disgruntled first wife, Amy Ashwood Garvey, who created their own spoof of the movement. Heywood also knew members of the cast of the film. The actor A. B. Comethiere, who played Deacon Charcoal Johnson, had been featured in Micheaux’s 1931 film The Exile. Dan Michaels, who had recorded with Heywood in 1927, was Brother Longtree in The Black King.

Heywood was soon busy on other fronts. He and his band were featured with the vaudeville comedy team of Butterbeans and Suzie at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem in January 1932. He also returned to Broadway in 1932 in what was clearly one of his most successful ventures, Blackberries of 1932. This musical started at the Liberty Theatre April 4, 1932, and ran for 24 performances, with music and lyrics by Donald Heywood and Tom Peluso and book by Eddie Green. Green may be best remembered for his 1917 composition “A Good Man is Hard to Find.”

By the time Blackberries of 1932 closed, Heywood was already at work on his next Broadway production, Ol’ Man Satan. Billed as “a play with music by Donald Heywood,” it featured “36 scenes, 125 people, singing chorus of 100.” It was a conscious effort to capitalize on the recent Broadway success of Green Pastures. The plot centered on a Black woman’s concept of the rise and fall of Satan: “Her idea of the devil shows him as a cleaning man at any office in heaven ...Promoted by the Lord, Satan becomes domineering and arrogant. A sort of super-racketeer, he tries to cut in on the Lord’s territory, to turn the good and faithful against their God in heaven. Finally, he is consigned to the nether regions, where he continues his spiritual sabotages. But the forces of the Lord are too strong, and he does not prevail.”

Ol’ Man Satan lasted 24 performances at the Forrest Theatre, starting October 3, 1932. The cast had rehearsed without pay for a year: “All have worked through long and discouraging weeks without pay, but their zeal and enthusiasm for Mr. Heywood’s work apparently have been un-dampened.” The results left the critics cold. The New York Times critic found it “confused, over-ambitious and somewhat repetitious.” A reviewer for Billboard managed to find merit in the music: “The best part of the show was really the excellent singing done between the scenes by Mr. Heywood’s choir and the one solo sung by Walter Richardson.” Efforts to take Ol’ Man Satan on the road appear not to have been successful. It was a show that Heywood seemed to have great faith in, as he continued to rework it for the rest of his life.

Heywood created a new operetta using the same name as the Earl Dancer production, Africana. It premiered on November 26, 1934, at the Venice Theatre on Third Avenue, but lasted for only three performances. The plot appears to have concerned an African prince who, after being sent to Oxford, returns home and confronts the French Foreign Legion. The Billboard reviewer, while not pleased with plot, did manage to find a kind word for Donald Heywood: “Mr. Heywood’s music, well played by a band under the direction of Phillip Ellis, seems worthy of better material.”

The 1934 edition of Africana’s short run was due, at least in part, to Heywood being assaulted in the orchestra pit by a man named Almamy Camaro. During the first act, Heywood was conducting the orchestra in the pit when Camaro appeared behind him and shouted, “Don’t you know me?” The New York Times detailed what happened next:

Before Heywood could turn, the man swung his fist against the back of the conductor’s head. The orchestra stopped playing immediately and many members of the
audience of 1,500 most of them white rose to their feet. Both men picked up chairs from
the orchestra pit and raised them over their heads, but before either could strike the
other members of the audience rushed forward and separated them.

The actors on the stage paused momentarily at the disturbance and then
resumed their roles. As a patrolman arrived and placed the intruder under arrest, Mr.
Heywood called the orchestra to attention and resumed conducting.¹³⁶

Camaro, an unemployed teacher, was convicted of disorderly conduct. He claimed his actions
were provoked by the fact that he had collaborated with Heywood on the operetta, which was based
on Camaro’s experiences in the French Foreign Legion, but Heywood refused to give him any credit. The
veracity of his claims has never been established, and, sadly, the scandalous attack is better remembered
than the production itself.

Sheet music cover for one of Donald Heywood’s original songs from Ol’ Man Satan (collection of the author).
In March 1935, Heywood was featured at the Apollo Theatre with his Rhythmaniacs Orchestra. Meanwhile, an amazing offer came his way: “International recognition of Donald Heywood’s ability as a musical composer and performer was evidenced this week following the announcement that he has been signed by the Amsov Artists Bureau, official representative of the Russian government, to write the score ‘Evolution,’ a musical revue to be produced by the Soviet Union in Moscow. Heywood and his Rhythmania [sic] Orchestra which features the Alhambian Singers and the world’s only Negro woman harpist, will be a feature of the revue.” Sadly, he is not known to have made it to Russia, but he is reported to have had a sixteen-week run that year with his own radio show on station WMCA.

In October 1935, the new Negro Art Theatre announced a Broadway production of Blow, Gabriel, Blow, a play with music by Donald Heywood. It does not appear to have come to fruition. During this period, Heywood seems to have had a choral group, as songs of “Mississippi life” were reportedly sung by the Donald Heywood Negro Chorus of forty voices, assisted by Eva Taylor, under the direction of Perry Bradford, at a centennial celebration for Mark Twain. Noble Sissle was touring with a revue featuring vocal arrangements by Heywood, and he later worked with Heywood’s Choir in a revue. Certainly one of the most interesting show listings was in a 1936 edition of the Brooklyn Eagle: “Donald Heywood and his vocal orchestra, an unusual aggregation of 16 singing voices impersonating an orchestra, head the RKO Tilyou Theatre’s current vaudeville show.”

On Broadway, Black Rhythm, a musical, opened at the Comedy Theatre December 19, 1936, under the direction of Heywood and Earl Dancer, who produced the original Africana, with book, music and lyrics by Heywood. It featured Jeni LeGon, Maude Russell, Alex Lovejoy, and William Walker with “a cast of 75.” The plot concerned “a colored producer who smashes Broadway with a sepia production.” But that did not happen with this production. Tragedy greeted the initial performance: “As the star of the show Jeni LeGon began her opening song on the first night, someone in the audience threw a stink bomb at the stage. After the bomb was located, a deodorant was sprayed throughout the orchestra while the show continued. The distracted performers forgot their lines, and, understandably, the premiere was a disaster.” As a result, the show ran for only six performances. Cab Calloway recorded “Black Rhythm,” credited to Heywood and publisher Irving Mills, back in 1931, and this piece may have informed the musical.

The Ubangi Club, which opened in 1934 at 131st Street and 7th Avenue in Harlem, had as its main attraction Gladys Bentley, a famous lesbian singer and pianist who performed in a white tuxedo and top hat. Heywood wrote the music for a show starring Bentley at the Ubangi Club in October 1936. In late March 1937, a new show opened called Brevities in Bronze, starring Gladys Bentley and Mae Johnson with a large cast. Heywood and Porter Grainger wrote the score. The show proved very successful, going through the summer, and when the Ubangi Club closed, Brevities moved to the Plantation Club. The best known song from Brevities appears to have been “Gladys isn’t Gratis Anymore,” reportedly written by Heywood. A New York World Telegram reviewer noted, “Portly Gladys Bentley in white tails, gives her number ‘Gladys isn’t Gratis Anymore,’ all she has, (about 300 pounds).” She recorded it as a private pressing a few years later, and a few other “blue” recordings of it survive, as well.

There is a 1937 copyright entry for a musical, Blues in My Heart: A Harlem swing drama in 3 acts, “text, music and lyrics by Donald Heywood.” But there is no known information to indicate that it was ever produced. Late that spring, the Major Bowes Dixie Jubilee Revue with 40 entertainers made a tour with Heywood leading the Black Rhythm Band in Detroit and other cities. In August the Negro Theatre Guild announced its first production, How Come Lawd? written by Donald Heywood and starring Rex Ingram, who played De Lawd in the film version of Green Pastures and was one of the most famous actors in Harlem at the time. It opened on September 30, 1937. Described in the program as a “Negro folk play,” it featured several musical numbers sung by the choir. Critic Brook Atkinson charged that, “‘How Come Lawd’... runs from white persecution to between-the-acts incendiarism, Negro labor union recruit-
ing, hot-blooded wenches on the loose and murder.” It only lasted for two performances. “Nevertheless, critics singled out Rex Ingram for dramatic honors, while Alex Lovejoy won praise for his comedic talents.”

In early 1938, Heywood did music for a show at the Studebaker Theatre in Chicago called Sugar Hill by Matt Matthews, a musical comedy lampooning aristocratic life in Harlem. By May Heywood and Matt Matthews were reportedly collaborating on a new play called Tune in and Swing, said to be “the lowdown on Harlem highbrows,” apparently adapted from Sugar Hill, and by July it was reported to be a “pending Heywood flicker.”

On October 30, 1938, the Plantation Club at 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue in Harlem opened “its Fall musical revue with a score by Donald Heywood.” While never the rival of the Cotton Club, the Plantation Club had been a leading nightclub in Harlem for many years. The show found praise: “Here is swing in its native habitat and the tap dancers are as good as any in town.” Besides tap dancers, the show featured Avon Long, Barrington Guy, the team of Moke and Poke, a chorus of ten women, and the Skeets Tolbert Orchestra. Heywood seemed to have put together a series of these revues. The New York Times in May 1939 noted a new one with “one of Donald Heywood’s most frenetic scores and lyrics to bring blushes to anyone’s cheeks.”

Meanwhile, the Negro Theatre Guild got behind another one of Heywood’s productions. This one had a West Indian theme. The Broadway gossip columnist for the New York Times noted on August 22, 1939: “‘Caribbean Cruise,’ a Negro musical comedy, is rehearsing these days and nights under the direction of Donald Heywood at the Bayes for an out-of-town opening on Aug. 28. According to the director, the National Negro Theatre Guild is sponsoring the attraction. Mathew Matthews wrote the book and Mr. Heywood also supplied the music.” It did not open in August. In November, the Times noted that it was still in the works, and that Joy Whitney and the Donald Heywood Choir would be in it. It was supposed to open on Broadway but apparently never did.

Possibly this was the same musical that finally did open in Harlem in 1941, under the title Tropicana. Set on a Caribbean cruise, it featured the “Calypso Singers,” blues singer Edna Harris, and gospel star Sister Rosetta Tharpe. But it lasted only a week. In 1942, there was a report of a new revue called Swing a New Song with a reworking of sketches from Caribbean Cruise, but it never appeared.

By the late 1930s, Heywood had ventured back into films, working on Moon Over Harlem in 1939. This film was directed by Edgar Ulmer, with Heywood listed prominently in the opening credits as composer of the “music score and numbers” and conductor of the “orchestra and choir” for the picture. The short Heywood biography by William W. Sanders lists him doing music for a film called Green Fields; since Edgar Ulmer had directed a film called Green Fields in 1937, it is possible that they had also worked together on this earlier effort.

Reportedly, it was Heywood who got Ulmer to agree to direct Moon Over Harlem, and with a very limited budget, it was filmed in four days, with a 60-person orchestra for the soundtrack. The featured musician in the film is the great jazz clarinetist Sidney Bechet, with whom Heywood had worked almost twenty years earlier, in the 1923 musical How Come. Moon Over Harlem was followed by two more low budget feature films, Sunday Sinners (1940), and Murder on Lenox Avenue (1941). Both films starred classic blues singer Mamie Smith, and shared some of the same actors, along with Irving C. Miller as unit manager and Frank Wilson as screenwriter; they were reportedly shot back-to-back at the Colonade Studios in Coral Gables, Florida.

The 1940s

During the World War II years, Heywood continued to work on different theatrical productions, though the details are limited. He worked on a series of different productions that never got produced,
including *Gospel Train*, written with one of his earliest collaborators in vaudeville, Homer Tutt; *Follow the Sun; More Powers to You; No Foolin’ Susie*, and *Dwarf Long Nose*. At the same time, he also got involved in a few successful stage productions.

Since the spring of 1942, Heywood, Joseph Tushinsky, and Johnnie Pierce had been collaborating on an African American production of Oscar Strauss’s successful 1908 operetta, *The Chocolate Soldier*. The project was halted due to the unavailability of Cab Calloway, who was to be featured in it. Tushinsky then decided to revive the operetta with a white cast, including motion picture star Allan Jones, and he retained Heywood and Pierce to assist him.

Allan Jones “expressed a desire to have Heywood to write a song for him to sing in the second act, so Heywood went home that evening and came back the next day with the words and music to ‘No Other Love’ which was enthusiastically received by Jones and the entire company.” However, Oscar Strauss refused to let them interpolate the song into his score: “None the less, the ballet in the first act was conceived by Heywood and Pierce and the a capella movements, the most beautiful in the show, were arranged, coached and directed by Donald Heywood.” The show, one of three operettas that Tushinsky produced in 1942, was held at Carnegie Hall for twenty-four performances during June and July.

Heywood and Andy Razaf wrote a show called *Born to Swing*, which Irvin C. Miller opened at the Lincoln Theatre in Philadelphia for a short run in February 1944, but which never made it to New York. In November 1946, Heywood led a thirty-person choir to back up the popular black vocal group the Brown Dots, recording as the Sentimentalists, on two Christmas records. In 1947, Adolph Thenstead and Sam Manning engaged Heywood to help with their calypso musical, but problems developed. The *New York Times* reported, “Donald Heywood has withdrawn as the director and contributor of songs.” Indeed, this may have been a fatal blow to the production, because Heywood had more experience on Broadway than anyone else involved in the show. It eventually appeared as *Calypso* on the road, and as *Caribbean Carnival* on Broadway, but was short-lived. Also in 1947, Heywood reconnected with Matt Mathews, with whom he had worked on the 1939 film *Moon over Harlem*. This time Heywood provided music for a show to be called *Angels over Broadway*, about “the backers of a song-and-dance manifestation” but again it does not seem to have been produced.

In 1948, Heywood won the Merrick Award for greatest contribution of the Negro to American music. That year he also sued a theatre company in New York State, asserting plagiarism. Specifically, Heywood claimed that the Jericho Company’s production, *Deep Are the Roots*, was taken from one of his own original plays, *Let’s Not Face It*, which is not known to have been produced. In a written decision, the court noted some similarities, but not enough to support a claim of plagiarism: “Both plaintiff’s and defendants’ dramatic composition relate to anti-negro prejudice and miscegenation is a phase of both plaintiff’s playlet and defendants’ play and both run the range of this prejudice. Both have as their hero a returned negro war veteran who has served well in Europe, and both involve the love of the negro veteran for a white girl.”

At the end of 1948 Heywood put together something he described as “a beboperatic musical,” *The New Look Revue*, with a company of thirty. It was given three performances in January 1949 at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel 106 Central Park South. At the end of 1949, Heywood and Matt Mathews introduced a new revue called *Holiday in Paris*, which ran for eight performances on Broadway, at the renovated Fourth Street Playhouse. The *New York Daily News* reported, “One of their songs, ‘A Rainy Day’ might make it. The others are things with lyrics like ‘I bow to no master, I’m Anna Lucasta.’” This would appear to be the last time Heywood had a show on Broadway. But from *Africana* in 1926 to *Holiday in Paris* in 1949, Heywood had been involved in writing music and scripts, leading the orchestra, and acting in at least eleven Broadway shows for over 300 performances.
Donald Heywood’s accomplishments during the 1950s were not as well documented as in prior decades, when various New York newspapers were full of notices of his activities; suddenly there was very little mention of a man whose activities had been nonstop during the prior thirty years. This may have been due, in part at least, to an extended trip that Heywood took to England, and then Trinidad, and perhaps other countries.

Heywood’s last known soundtrack work was for a very obscure film called *The Rage of Burlesque* (1950). According to the American Film Institute catalog, it featured “Burlesque sequence words and music by Donald Heywood, performed by The Johnnie Miscal Orchestra with vocals by Jean Barlo.”

No copy of the film is known to survive, though it also featured the Slim Galliard Trio. The plot involves a seaman who comes to New York and goes out every night for a week to different burlesque shows. It was shown around the country, often at midnight shows, with ads noting, “You’ll blush but more than enjoy.”

Ellen C. Scott cites it in her book on civil rights in film as one of a series of films with interracial burlesque that fell foul of censors.

Heywood was reported to have been in Europe in 1951, though details are sketchy. For the next few years he was based in England. In 1952 he was leading a “vocal orchestra” made up of ten men and ten women, all white, performing in London. The *Chicago Defender* carried photos of the ensemble noting, “The ‘ork’ performs without instruments, employing vocal chords to make sounds like horns, drums and piano.”

Heywood was also involved with a show called *Monty’s Army* at the Derby Hippodrome, playing piano, and he staged his long-dormant revue *Caribbean Cruise* for two weeks starting July 29, 1953, with a cast that included calypso singer Eric Hayden. This show had been in rehearsal back in New York in 1939, but never got to the stage until it appeared in England. Later that year, Heywood posted an ad in the British trade journal *The Stage*, offering “original material, Songs, Sketches, and Lyrics.”

In January 1954, Heywood was reported to be in a London hospital suffering from malaria. What he did after he recovered is not known. The next known mention of him in April 1955 has him taking a boat to Trinidad.

What he did in Trinidad has been a mystery, except for an intriguing notice on the back of a publicity photo in the Edric Connor collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of British-based actor Aldwyn Allen in costume as Mr. Satan. The back of the photo says he “played the character Satan in Donald Heywood opera called *Soucouyant* Roxy theatre in Trinidad 1956.” Further details have not been located on this opera, performed during the only time Heywood is known to have returned to his home country.

In 1958 Heywood was back in New York with a planned production called *The Awkward Age*, to feature Juanita Hall and a teenage Leslie Uggams with twenty new songs by Heywood. He was working at the time as a vocal coach. In a 2004 online interview, Uggams recalled working with him: “I studied with a man when I was 12 years old, by the name of Donald Heywood. Breath control, how to breathe correctly, which helped me to sustain a performance in the theatre.”

In 1959 there was an announcement of a planned revival of his 1932 musical *Ol’ Man Satan*, with two of the leading performers that Heywood had worked with decades earlier. The *New York Times* recorded his last major attempt to revive his seminal work: “Ethel Waters and Rex Ingram were announced yesterday for the starring roles in ‘Ol’ Man Satan.’ The producer of the musical is Donald Heywood, who supplied the book, music and lyrics. He is planning to open the show on the road in November and to bring it here in January.” The *New York Amsterdam News* carried photos of rehearsals in December. It seems to have never been produced. Indeed, for the rest of Heywood’s life, there were newspaper reports of attempts to get backers for this show.

Heywood created and produced *Discoveries of 1961*, performed on March 5, 1961, at the...
Carnegie Recital Hall. He wrote new music for a Black fashion show, *Rhapsody in Fashion*, for the summer of 1961, directed by Noble Sissle. These were the last two shows that he is known to have been involved in. Donald Heywood died on January 13, 1967, at Polyclinic Hospital on West 50th Street in Manhattan. He left no survivors, and ASCAP organized his funeral.

A Rich Career

The sheer quantity of Donald Heywood’s work in Harlem, on Broadway, and elsewhere is impressive. He collaborated with many of the leading composers and lyricists of the day, from Clarence Williams to Andy Razaf; Porter Grainger to Will Marion Cook. As he told the 1930 census taker, he saw himself primarily as a songwriter. It is likely that he composed hundreds of songs, “I’m Coming Virginia” being the one best remembered. Regrettably, almost all of his compositions seem to have disappeared, beyond the handful that got recorded and the more than fifty pieces of commercial sheet music that survive. He seemed not to have focused on becoming a recording artist; consequently, he is not well known for the few recordings he did make.

He was involved in over a dozen different Broadway shows that cumulatively had over 300 performances. While he was primarily the composer of music for shows, he is known to have led the band in some shows, and acted in or written the book for others. He was there at the dawn of talking pictures, working with America’s first important African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, and even appearing in two Micheaux films as the bandleader. He was the first Trinidadian to write dialogue for a feature film with *The Black King*, and he composed music for several more films over his long career.

Certainly there was no other migrant from Trinidad and Tobago that came to the United States during the beginning of the Twentieth Century and had such an amazing career in the interlocking worlds of jazz and blues music, musicals, vaudeville, and film.

Endnotes:
3. The William W. Sanders biography lists Heywood’s birth date as October 21, 1901, and this is the generally accepted date. This is consistent with the 1930 U.S. Census, taken April 23, 1930, in which he stated his age at last birthday to be 29 and immigration in 1910. However, on a UK-to-Trinidad embarkation form in 1955, his date of birth is listed as September 14, 1893 (Disembarkation record, Ship Antilles, departing Southampton, April 9, 1955, accessed by Ancestry).
6. 1930 census, New York City, Enumeration Dist. no. 31-984, Sheet no. 25-B Enumerated on April 23, 1930.
8. Sanders, Donald Heywood biography.
9. Ibid.
Black Swan 60004, c. late 1921.
17 It was recently recorded by Ragtime Dorian Henry and can be seen on Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aip6wYpeCuk.
19 Ad, Chicago Defender, May 20, 1922, 8.
27 Vocalion 4634, 1923.
28 Rosa Henderson, Vocalion 14708, 1923; Josie Miles, Gennett 5307, 1923; Clara Smith, Columbia A3991, 1923; Hannah Sylvester, Perfect 12086, 1923.
29 Ethel Waters, Columbia 14229-D, 1927.
31 Ad, New York Amsterdam News, August 8, 1923, 5.
34 The Cotton Club Orchestra (aka the Missourians), Columbia 14113, November 10, 1925.
35 Georgia Melodians, Edison 5109, 1926; The Six Jumping Jacks, Brunswick 3064 (song is listed on label as from “The Brown Skin Revue”).
36 Donald Heywood, “Charleston Ball” (New York: Edward B. Marks, 1925); Donald Heywood, “Charleston Ball” (arranged by Frank Skinner) (New York: Edward B. Marks, 1925).
39 Ad, Baltimore Afro-American, March 26, 1927, 12.
41 The New York Age, February 17, 1923, 6.
44 Jean Pierre Lion, Bix: the definitive biography of a jazz legend (London: Continuum, 2007), 132.
45 Michael Brooks, liner notes to Bix Beiderbecke: Singin the Blues, Volume One, Columbia 45450, 1990.
48 “‘Africana’ and ‘Rang Tang’ 4th Wk.,” Baltimore Afro-American, August 13, 1927, 10.
50 Ethel Waters with Charles Samuels, His Eye Is on the Sparrow (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1951), 189.
52 “Changes Policy,” Chicago Defender, June 18, 1927, 6.
56 Columbia 14229 D.
57 Victor 21228.
58 Bessie Brown, Brunswick 3922; Fred Elizalde and His Music, Brunswick 165; Frank Sylvano with Paul Christensen and His Hotel Ft. Des Moines Orchestra, Brunswick 3897; Irving Kaufman with the Majestic Dance Orchestra, Banner 6130.
63 Sam Manning Volume 1: Recorded in New York, 1924-1927, Jazz Oracle BDW 8028; Sam Manning Volume 2 - Recorded in New York, 1927-1930, Jazz Oracle BDW 8029.
64 Ad, New York Amsterdam News, November 3, 1926, 11.
67 “Whitman Sisters in DC This Week,” Baltimore Afro-American, February 4, 1928, 4.
70 Ad for Royal Theatre, Baltimore Afro-American, March 26, 1927, 12.
71 “Stage Notes,” Baltimore Afro-American, April 16, 1927, 9.
72 “Reviews,” “Royal,” Baltimore Afro-American, April 23, 1927, 10.
73 Ad for Lincoln Theatre, New York Amsterdam News, July 6, 1927, 11.
75 Eva Taylor with Clarence Williams, Edison unissued, August 7, 1929, later released on Diamond Cut DCP-203D.
77 ‘Here and There,” Baltimore Afro-American, March 3, 1928, 8.
81 “‘Pay Day’ to Open at Orpheum Theatre,” Baltimore Afro-American, January 12, 1929, 7.
84 “Donald Heywood Doing Picture,” Indianapolis Recorder, August 17, 1929, 3.
89 U.S. Federal Census, 1930, New York Block H, 33, 242-248 West 138th St, April 23, 1930. No additional census listings for Heywood have been located.
93 Victor V 38624 and Victor 23010, 1930.
94 Victor 22568, 1931.
96 New York Age, November 8, 1930, 6.
97 New York Age, November 15, 1930, 6. Rollin Smith recorded with vocal groups in 1932, his Rascals and Melodians, and had a complex career traveling the world as a solo and quartet performer.
101 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
116 Sanders, Donald Heywood biography.
128 Ibid.
130 *Index of Copyright Entries, Dramatic Compositions*, No. 11, 1937, 8019.
136 “Sugar Hill is a Satiric Play of Harlem life,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 25, 1938, 15. See also James J. Gentry, “Bronzeville in Chicago” *Chicago Defender*, January 15, 1938, 8; “‘Sugar Hill’ New Comedy Opens in Chi,” *Indiana Recorder*, February 5, 1938, 12. His collaborator’s name is variously reported with one or two t’s, as either Mathew Mathews or Matthew Matthews.


Manor 8002, “Silent Night”/”O Come, All Ye Faithful;” Manor 8003, “Ave Maria”/”White Christmas.” Heywood is identified on the record labels as Donald Haywood.


Chicago Defender, October 25, 1952, 23.  
163 Ad, The Stage, April 30, 1953, 2; http://www.overthefootlights.co.uk/London%20Revues%201950-1954.pdf.

In Rehearsal,” The Brooklyn Citizen, November 18, 1939, 9.


“Soucouyant” is the name of a Trinidad folklore character. The Roxy is a well know theatre in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Intriguingly, there is a page of a handwritten score by Heywood titled “Soucouyant Woman” in the Duke Ellington Collection at the Smithsonian; http://sirismm.si.edu/EADpdfs/NMAH.AC.0301.pdf, Box 353, Folder 2.


A document from Carnegie Hall confirms the booking, but details are not in the Carnegie Hall archives (Kathleen Sabogal, asst. director, Carnegie Hall archives, email to author, July 9, 2019).


IN THE ARCHIVE

Top row, left to right: Boswell Sisters scholars Aura Emsweller and David McCain; David Kunian, Music Curator of the New Orleans Jazz Museum. Middle row, left to right: visiting scholar Garnette Cadogan; Gregory Jean, from Xavier University; New Orleans jazz researcher Dan Meyer. Bottom row, left to right: H. Robert Cohen, Benjamin Knysak, and John Ehrenburg, representing the RIPM Jazz Periodicals digitization project; Claiborne Avenue History Project directors Raynard Sanders and Katherine Cecil.
Top row, left to right: Bo Scherman (far right) with a touring group of New Orleans jazz enthusiasts from Sweden; Patrick Hennessey, director of the Stetson Jazz Ensemble of Stetson University. Middle row, left to right: Scotty Barnhart, current director of the Count Basie Band; Prof. Carter Mathes, from Rutgers University; New Orleans brass band trombonist and artist Frank Naundorf. Bottom row, left to right: jazz scholar Ola Sand, from Sweden, and, in the background, jazz scholar and long-time Friend of the Jazz Archive Bjorn Barnheim, also from Sweden; musician and jazz studies instructor David Jellema, from the Eastside Music School in Austin.
Top row, left to right: Tasia Gabriel and Aiden Diedrich, researching the Gabriel family of New Orleans musicians; Madison Manoushagin, Prof. Elizabeth Townsend Gard, and Logan Schnell, investigating 78rpm records in relationship to their study of Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship. Middle row, left to right: Johns Hopkins University doctoral candidate Ezgi Ince; Akiko Uegami, representing the New Orleans Jazz Club of Japan; jazz saxophonist Brian Wingard. Bottom row, left to right: Chris Lopez, Desiree Lopez, and Donnie Jones exploring documents related to their great, great, great grandfather, bandleader John Robichaux; writer and storyteller Paris Dean.
A New Move
for the Hogan Jazz Archive Reading Room

In order to better serve researchers, as well as maximize usage across related collections, the Hogan Jazz Archive services have been further centralized within the Tulane University Special Collections (TUSC) repository. Also housed under TUSC are the Louisiana Research Collection, Rare Books, the Southeastern Architectural Archive, and University Archives. As a result of this effort, the home of all TUSC units is now the newly-refurbished reading room, located in Jones Hall 202. While there, visitors can benefit from unified procedures and service, staffed by our new Research Services Unit.

While the previous Hogan Jazz Archive reading room, Jones Hall 304, is no longer a public-facing research area, users can still access all Hogan-related services and collections via the new reading room. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., with exceptions made for official university holidays. For more information, or to inquire about services and collections, contact the Special Collections staff at specialcollections@tulane.edu or 504-865-5685. To search among TUSC repositories online, visit archives.tulane.edu.

Through the good work of the New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council, in conjunction with the U. S. State Department, representatives of Tulane University Special Collections were able to meet face-to-face with visiting representatives of the Center for Jazz Studies of Yaroslav, Russia, and exchange ideas on archival procedure and the art of conducting a jazz archive. Conversation was made possible by instantaneous translators Mila Bonnichsen and Ilya Feliciano. The participants (left to right) were: Igor Gavrilov, Cyril Moshkow, Natalia Kravchenko, Valentina Morozova (Yaroslav Center for Jazz Studies), Lynn Abbott, Agnieszka Czeblakow (Tulane Special Collections), Tatiana Tepilakova (Yaroslav Center for Jazz Studies), and Jillian Cuellar (Tulane Special Collections) (photo by Ilya Feliciano).
Yesterday’s Papers

A regular column, in which we take a second look at New Orleans music and culture-related articles harvested from old newspapers

The article below is excerpted from a longer piece that appeared in the April 23, 1908, edition of the Southwestern Christian Advocate, a weekly newspaper founded in New Orleans in 1873 as a mouthpiece for the Methodist Freedman’s Aid Society, an evangelical arm of the northern Methodist-Episcopal Church, whose missionaries were dedicated to educating the recently freed slaves and converting them to Methodism. They began their New Orleans work in 1865, and in 1873 they opened New Orleans University, a forerunner of what is now Dillard University. Over the years, and well into the twentieth century, the Southwestern Christian Advocate followed the progress of New Orleans University and its Methodist “sister schools” like Wiley University, which was also founded in 1873, and which came in for commentary in this 1908 report:

“They Came, They Saw, They Conquered”

They came. New Orleans has just been invaded by a representative set of students of Wiley University, Marshall, Texas, who were accompanied by President W. M. Dogan. They were given a royal and enthusiastic reception. The fame of Wiley had preceded them. President Dogan had been heard of as a forceful organizer, an intrepid leader, an incessant worker, an educator of liberal views and most careful training, and as a man whose soul was set on fire for the construction of the highest and best ideals in the life of the Negro. It is safe to say that the reputation of Wiley has grown considerably in length and breadth under the administration of Dr. Dogan. Not only has there been phenomenal growth of the university in buildings and in the number of student body, but there has been a gratifying growth in the spiritual life of the institution and its educational ideals. Its industrial features are known throughout the Church. In these lines of progress Wiley University has been a source of inspiration in many another institution. They were a representative set; strong, vigorous young men and women of training and refinement.

They saw. It was an education to these young men and women, who, for the most part, were among the most advanced students of the University, to spend four or five days in a great city like New Orleans, coming in touch with the school life of the several universities here located for the training of our people. From an educational standpoint, it was worth the time spent. It is said that one of the boys was thoroughly afraid of the street cars. Another, upon seeing a car marked “Clio,” said that meant C. L. number 10. As for the Mississippi River, one fellow actually thought it was the Atlantic Ocean, and wanted to know it there was any bottom to it. New Orleans to some of these friends was the acme of city construction. Well, there is enough of New Orleans to interest world travelers, much less these students of our institution in Marshall. They saw many things of interest and inspiration, and no doubt they go back home with a vision of life that they did not have before.

They conquered. We were all struck by the air of refinement that possessed them. Not only the President, but the entire company of young men and women, were reserved in their bearing, clean and tidy in their personal appearance, subdued in their voices and polite in their manners. They made quite an agreeable impression at the
social functions to which they were invited. Perhaps the largest impression on the part of our Texas friends was made with their public appearances, and especially in the concert given in the auditorium in New Orleans University. The male quartette literally took the house by storm. They were encored over and over again. The singing of these men was something delightful. Their voices blended almost perfectly, and were rich and melodious and full of sympathy, and had the soul-thrill that enraptures an audience.

By 1908, when the Wiley University Male Quartette took the New Orleans University auditorium by storm, male “jubilee” quartets were common adjuncts to the itinerant fundraising and public relations efforts of historically black colleges. The story of the jubilee quartet phenomenon and its role in preserving and perpetuating the Negro spirituals is a compelling one, worthy of estimation. And the notion that the Wiley University Quartet embodied “soul-thrill” also begs for explication. In the short run, however, the show-stealing element of this article has to be its early airing of the Clio Street/“CL-10” anecdote, which runs deep in the annals of New Orleans oral history. A variation on the theme of local color in the pronunciation of local street names – Cal-li-ope, Mel-po-mene, Fel-i-city – the “CL-10” construction has been popularly traced to Clio Street neighborhood children; but, in this early publication of it, credit plainly goes to a group of visiting students from Wiley University. That the story has a musical connection, in the form of the Wiley University Male Quartette, is a welcome bit of lagniappe.

A Word about Our Contributors

While the *Jazz Archivist* is obviously intended to be a newsletter, trumpeting the Hogan Jazz Archive and its work, it also strives to provide a publishing outlet for jazz scholarship. We are thankful for the opportunity to present new work from E. Douglas Bomberger, Ray Funk, and Wayne D. Shirley in this issue.

E. Douglas Bomberger is a professor of music at Elizabethtown College. His book entitled *Making Music American: 1917 and the Transformation of Culture* (Oxford, 2018) examines the changes that took place during the year that the United States entered World War I and jazz became a national phenomenon.

Ray Funk is a retired Alaskan trial judge and a recent Fulbright US Scholar. He has been doing music research over four decades, first on African American vocal music and more recently on Trinidad music and culture. He has written numerous articles and liner notes and co-authored books on the Calypso Craze and steelpan music.

Wayne D. Shirley, our regular columnist, has charted an exemplary career as reference librarian and music specialist for the Library of Congress, editor of *American Music*, and author of several indispensable discourses on American composers. He holds a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for American Music. He is currently resident in Durham, New Hampshire, where he is working on a concordance of the lyrics of the songs - blues and otherwise - on Bessie Smith’s recordings. He hopes by the time his next column for the *Jazz Archivist* is due the concordance will be complete.

In addition to recognizing our contributing scholars, we want to extend a proper thank-you to all the people who helped with the physical construction of this issue. The *Jazz Archivist* has always relied on the good will of colleagues throughout Tulane Special Collections and the greater Tulane Library system, as well as friends and colleagues in the world at large. Michael Jones, Tulane Library web developer, availed himself at every turn; without his expertise, this issue could have easily exploded on the drawing board at least five times. Jess Planck, also a Tulane web developer, offered additional expertise. Lisa Schexnayder, Tulane Library Associate, volunteered her impressive proofreading skills. David Sager, whose work has appeared in previous editions of the *Jazz Archivist*, freely provided counsel.

A Correction

In our previous issue (*The Jazz Archivist*, vol. 31, 2018), we presented an article by John McCusker titled, “‘Jazz Palaces’ in 1900 Scotland and other obtuse clues around the word ‘jazz.’” The article was founded on a “hit” obtained in a keyword search for the word “jazz” in a digital newspaper database. That there could have been “jazz palaces” anywhere in 1900 seemed too good to be true; nevertheless, we took an embarrassingly adventurous leap of faith by going to press with it. Then came the revelation: what we thought might be the reflection of some linguistic parallel universe turned out to be the reflection of a wrinkle in the metadata, which occurred when pages from a 1924 edition of an Anniston, Alabama, newspaper were inadvertently folded into a 1900 edition of the paper at some point prior to digitization. Etymologist Raphael Godron was first to point this out to us; several more readers also weighed in on the matter, and we thank you all for every corrective. Bottom line: yes, there were “Jazz Palaces” in Scotland, but the year was 1924, not 1900. With apologies for my lapse in diligence, I remain, your editor, Lynn Abbott.
Grants Awarded for Mahalia Jackson, Black Gospel Quartets, and Vernon “Dr. Daddy-O” Winslow Collections

Tulane University Special Collections, a division of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, recently announced two major grant awards that will support the digitizing and accessibility efforts of three Hogan Jazz Archive collections.

An $11,518.50 award from the GRAMMY Museum Grant Program will go towards the preservation of 25 unique recordings from the collection of Vernon Winslow aka Dr. Daddy-O, New Orleans broadcast pioneer. Winslow is credited as the first Black radio disc jockey to host his own full-length radio show in New Orleans. He began his on-air career in 1949 when Jax Brewery embraced his
style and scripts, replete with Black vernacular, for the “Jivin’ with Jax” show, a promotional vehicle for locally-brewed Jax beer. The grant award allows for the digitization of 78 rpm and 33 1/3 rpm acetate recordings of material used in broadcasts aired between 1949 and 1958. The recordings include live remotes; personalized promo announcements for New Orleans bars, music clubs, and the renowned J&M Recording Studio; as well as brief interviews with legendary artists such as Roy Brown, Duke Ellington, Avery “Kid” Howard, and Little Esther Phillips, among others. Once digitized, the recordings will be available to the public via the Tulane University Digital Library.

The Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) awarded one of its Recordings at Risk grants, in the amount of $14,903, to support the project, “Tell the Real Story of Me: Mahalia Jackson and Black Gospel Quartets in the South.” The funding will help preserve and give access to original recorded interviews with Mahalia Jackson, conducted by her biographer Laurraine Goreau. The New Orleans-born Jackson is not only heralded internationally as “The Queen of Gospel,” but was also recognized as a Civil Rights Movement activist, and an influential figure in Black American culture. The interviews also contain firsthand accounts of Jackson by renowned entertainers such as Ella Fitzgerald and Della Reese, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) co-founder Ralph Abernathy, fellow gospel stars Albertina Walker and Sister Ernestine Washington, accompanists Mildred Falls and Louise Overall Weaver, and others. The CLIR grant award will also help to preserve and provide access to oral history interviews with Black gospel quartet singers and practitioners, conducted by scholar and Tulane University Special Collections staff member Lynn Abbott. In this collection, Mary Thames Coleman, Rev. Paul Exkano, Bessie Griffin, James Payne, Edward Thomas, and other forgotten heroes of the genre explain their roles in the development of Black gospel quartets in New Orleans. Both Goreau and Abbott originally recorded their interviews on cassette tapes between 1967 and 1995.
Jazz Archive Joins Exhibits

One popular exhibit in the Tulane University Special Collections Gallery this year was “Captive Voices: Hearing, Seeing, and Imagining Angola Prison,” featuring materials from Special Collections and the personal collection of Tulane English Professor and author of Vengeance, Zachary Lazar. Among those who attended the opening were (left to right) Hortensia Calvo, Latin American Library; Rachel Stein, Latin American Library; and Lisa C. Moore, Amistad Research Center. The Hogan Jazz Archive’s contribution featured recordings, correspondence, and photos related to Louisiana blues singer-guitarist and Angola Prison inmate Robert Pete Williams (1914-1980), who, with the help of Louisiana folklorist Harry Oster and original Hogan Jazz Archivist Richard B. Allen, was able to obtain a full pardon and go on to perform his music at blues and folk music festivals across the United States and Europe.

In what was more of a pop-up exhibit, Tulane University Special Collections shared treasures from the Louisiana Research Collection, Rare Books Collection, Southeastern Architectural Archive, University Archive, and Hogan Jazz Archive with Tulane University President Mike Fitts and members of his staff. Participants included (left to right): Jillian Cuellar, Head of Special Collections; Agnieszka Czeblakow, Head of Research Services; David Banush, Dean of Libraries; Kerry Stockwell, Senior Advisor to the President; Lee Miller (barely visible, but nevertheless present), Curator of the Louisiana Research Collection; Beth Brown, Chief of Staff; President Fitts; Eli Boyne, Rare Books Library Associate; and Lori Schexnayder, Research Services Library Associate. The Jazz Archive’s contribution, in the foreground, included documents related to its earliest adventures in collecting oral history, as well as pages from a Mahalia Jackson scrapbook that resides in the collection of Mahalia Jackson biographer Laurraine Goreau.
Thinking about my path to the Hogan Jazz Archive made me think of one of my favorite sayings: “There are no coincidences in life.”

It also made me think of my earliest encounter with the Archive, which was through learning about Allison Miner, who managed the careers of Professor Longhair and the ReBirth Brass Band, among other legendary New Orleans artists. As a longtime New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival attendee, I couldn’t help but notice her photo hanging above the Music Heritage Stage, the oral history-focused stage that she founded, which was named in her honor after her 1995 passing. I was especially enamored with a saying that’s been attributed to her, that “the soul of the music is the soul of the musician.” Years later, I graduated from Fest-goer to one of the official interviewers of the Allison Miner Music Heritage Stage, and I always made sure to mention her quote to the audience as the reason why we were all there that day for whichever interview I was conducting. When I decided to learn more about her, my search brought me to the story of the Hogan Jazz Archive, where she worked as an administrative assistant in the late 1960s. Her work at the Archive led her to Newport Jazz Festival founder George Wein, who relied on her and Hogan intern Quint Davis’s skills in booking a 1970 celebration of New Orleans music, which was eventually, and more familiarly, known as Jazz Fest.

Like Miner, I always felt that New Orleans culture and contributions had something to do with everything I loved most. Growing up in New Orleans, I always connected most with music. By the time I graduated from Cabrini High School in Mid-City, I knew even more about the rich musical legacy and history of my city. That’s when I made it my mission to work in service of music and the arts, with a personal dedication to everything representing my home. When I was a college undergraduate, I began volunteering at WWOZ FM, the acclaimed community radio station that I am still affiliated with 25 years later. My professional life included rewarding positions with French Quarter Festivals, Inc., the non-profit
organization that produces French Quarter Festival and Satchmo SummerFest; and the Contemporary Arts Center, where I directed marketing efforts for visual arts exhibitions and NEA Jazz Masters concerts. And Tulane University, where I’ve called home for nearly a decade, is where I merged everything - my love for cultural programming, outreach, and education. In my position with Newcomb-Tulane College, the academic home for all full-time undergraduates at Tulane University, I managed multidisciplinary events such as the university’s annual Ellis Marsalis concert, and academic research grant funding for our students. And now I’m honored to introduce myself to you in my new position as curator of the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane. I dare call it a position because, as you’ve seen in my previous roles, it feels more like the culmination of my life’s work.

With that, I’d like to acknowledge the similarly passionate life’s work of fellow Tulanian and my predecessor, Dr. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, whose retirement as Hogan Jazz Archive curator was effective January 1, 2018. He has left an indelible legacy of collecting and sharing the stories of this music we love; and it is a thrill to be able to continue in his tradition as well as that of all previous HJA curators, administrators, and associates, including founding curator William Russell and co-founder Richard Allen.

The Hogan Jazz Archive is yet one player on the mighty team of Special Collections, a division of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane. And I’m thrilled to work alongside my new colleagues, an incredible group whose collective goal is to improve experiences for all users and researchers of our collections. I’d like to recognize Director of Special Collections Jillian Cuellar, subject specialist and library associate Lynn Abbott, and the entire Special Collections staff who help me daily in the learning of archives and special collections procedures and best practices.

With time, there will come more updates. In the meantime, I encourage you to contact me if you have comments, feedback, or would just like to say hello. I look forward to speaking with you about our expanded mission to improve discoverability of the collections, increase outreach efforts, engage more with both our local and student communities, refine services for researchers, and extend the stories and concepts of New Orleans jazz and New Orleans music that we collect and, hence, share with you and with future generations. The role of community is important to me, and I’d love to connect with you, whether you’ve previously engaged with the HJA or if you’d simply like to start a new conversation. You may reach me directly via mweber3@tulane.edu or 504-247-1807.

I’ve always kept Allison Miner’s story and spirit in my arsenal of inspiration. So it’s not a coincidence that on my first day as curator, one of the first collections that I wanted to view here at the Hogan Jazz Archive was hers. That I’ve found myself here, at the very place where this woman who I’ve admired from afar made her earliest contributions, is no coincidence, as there are none in my eyes. For me, it’s purpose. Thank you for sharing with me in this purpose to continue in the work of showcasing stories about the greatest music in the world – New Orleans music.

- Melissa A. Weber

Melissa A. Weber is a musicologist and communications professional, whose writing can be found in a number of music journalism sources. She has presented papers at academic conferences for the International Association for the Study of Popular Music; the Museum of Pop Culture; the National Council for Black Studies; and the Society for Ethnomusicology, Southeast and Caribbean Chapter, among others. In her spare time, she likes to collect LPs and 12” records, as she’s done since she was around six years old, as well as music memorabilia and ephemera. She feels at home among the Hogan Jazz Archive stacks and researchers.
“Ax for Jax:” In an ad for his sponsor’s product, Vernon Winslow, aka Dr. Daddy-O, King of Black New Orleans radio, toasts Roland Brown, King of the Zulus for 1951 (Louisiana Weekly, January 27, 1951, reproduced by permission of the Louisiana Weekly).