

## *Brief Story of Popular Music: from Medieval Entertainer to Modern Jazz Player*

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The only musical entertainer in medieval times was the minstrel. He travelled around singing songs and playing his harp or lute at country fairs and in market places.

The most popular style of music during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe was the polyphonic style. This is music in which people sing or play different tunes together at the same time. This was the birth of the madrigals – popular love songs. Opera developed from the music of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first operas were Italian. There were opera seria (serious opera) and opera buffa (comic opera).



In 1842 in New York, the white songwriter Daniel Emmett (1815-1904) and three friends gave the first minstrel show. They called themselves the Virginia Minstrels. They performed in blackface (make-up), sang songs, danced and played bone castanets, the banjo and the tambourine.

Variety shows with singing, dancing and comedy were a very popular type of entertainment with working class people in

the UK from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1920's. This was called music hall. In the US, variety shows like music hall were called vaudeville.



[http://darkartsmedia.com/amazing\\_garland.html](http://darkartsmedia.com/amazing_garland.html)

Ragtime rhythms (the 1930s) originated from minstrel show songs, the cakewalk (a dance invented by black American slaves), banjo playing and black folk music. Ragtime influenced jazz greatly.

Black people at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the southern US were the first people to sing and play blues. Their songs were about their hard lives and bad times. In the 1920's many black people moved to the north for jobs and took their music with them in big cities like Chicago and Detroit.

Jazz comes from many black musical styles. The first jazz bands were from New Orleans, Louisiana, and they were black. They usually played at parties, funerals and parades. This was New Orleans jazz (early 1900's). Later white musicians started to play New Orleans jazz but they called it Dixieland. In 1917 the first jazz record was made. In the 1920's and 1930' many musicians from New Orleans moved to Chicago, and the new jazz style was born – Chicago jazz.

<http://www.freewebs.com/aawashco/>

Then in 1930's and 1940's, Big Bands appeared. This was the Swing Era. The music had a strong rhythm and was good to dance to.

Modern jazz involves many styles such as bebop, hard-bop, post-bop, jazz-rock, acid-jazz, etc. Jazz has been developing through years and has become a very high intellectual music.

(after Jennifer Gascoigne *The Story of Popular Music* )

