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Music in St. Louis

In January of 2021, St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) announced that it would consider the closure of Sumner High School, located in the Ville. Immediately alumni from around the country and in town started a campaign to prevent SLPS from actually closing Sumner. Local articles reminded St. Louis that out of Sumner High School came music artists such as Grace Bumbry, Tina Turner, Chuck Berry, and Robert McFerrin (Woytus, 2021). In honor of this legacy, the focus of a rebrand of Sumner High School became focused on the arts.

St. Louis has had a long and rich history in music dating back to before the Civil War (Clotter, 1959). St. Louis music has been heavily influenced by being on the river, just up from New Orleans where music such as blues, jazz, and ragtime in America flourished (King, 2021). St. Louis has also been influenced by its strong gospel tradition, with many Black churches. Some of the first Baptist churches west of the Mississippi River started in St. Louis (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023; Wright, 2001). Music in New Orleans can trace its heritage back to musical traditions in Africa that have morphed and evolved into new forms of music (King, 2021).

A few communities within St. Louis were important sites of music traditions in St. Louis, including Chestnut Valley, Gaslight Square, and the Ville. Chesnut Valley was near the river and therefore riverboat artists could hop off the riverboats and play in Chesnut Valley. Gaslight Square became the next site of music clubs when Chestnut Valley was shut down by the city of St. Louis. The Ville has contributed to the music scene in many different ways - from the many Black churches, strong music traditions at Sumner High School, the May Day parade, Poro

College support, graduating well-known musicians, and musicians who volunteered their time at Sumner High School.

Logan (2023) remembers that he felt that the Ville had plenty of places to see and enjoy Black music, like Miles Davis.

Y'all see all the jazz masters used to be there? You know, like Charlie Parker, of course, you know, well, Miles was lifted across the river. So I could walk in and see those guys...When I was in the Ville seemed like you knew these guys because we would just walk in and walk in on, we will see them, you know, and it was always like that (P. Logan, personal communication, July 27, 2023),

Spirituals and Gospel

People from the continent of Africa have a long strong tradition of music that uses a strong rhythm and beat (Jara, 2023; King, 2021). Whites who enslaved Africans took away their drums, but that did not stop Blacks from using their bodies as drums, gourds with cloth across, or any other instrument to create their music (Jara, 2023). Drums were not the only thing that was prominent in their music - banjos fashioned out of creative sources was also popular (Jara, 2023).

Black people living in America figured out how to combine their musical traditions from Africa with the messages that they were being exposed to by Whites (Holman et al., 2021). Blacks were not supposed to practice their own religion - only Christianity (Holman et al., 2021). Blacks did not necessarily convert completely, but wove their own religion into their version of Christianity (Holman et al., 2021). One of the ways one could see the blending happen is through spirituals. Spirituals took biblical themes such as Moses leading his people out of Egypt to uplift the spirits of those enslaved (Jara, 2023). Some songs such as "Go Tell It On The Mountain" have a strong

upbeat tempo while some songs are more slow and sorrowful, such as “Swing Low Sweet Chariot.” Scholars debate whether the songs were also used to send messages about how to get to freedom, but they agree generally that these spirituals give messages of hope to those in challenging times (Jara, 2023).

Black music flourished after enslavement. More churches popped up and Blacks were free to worship how they wanted to. Black churches played an important role in fostering music by providing a space for Black people to safely express themselves. Gospel music was a type of music frequently sung in Black churches. Gospel music is, according to the Library of Congress website on Gospel Music, “ form of euphoric, rhythmic, spiritual music rooted in the solo and responsive church singing of the African American South. Its development coincided with -- and is germane to -- the development of rhythm and blues” (n.d., par.1). Gospel music was a strong tradition in St. Louis, especially due to the large number of Black churches in St. Louis (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

Riverboats, Ragtime, Jazz, and Blues

Riverboats

Jazz, blues, and ragtime in St. Louis were influenced by the traffic on the Mississippi River through riverboats. Riverboats during the 1800’s did not just carry cargo up and down the Mississippi River, but also people. The entertainment that was hired would sometimes stop in St. Louis - sometimes a short while or sometimes a long while - to play at local establishments in St.

Louis. St. Louis developed a scene for ragtime, jazz, and blues through these traveling musicians.

Blues

Blues was developed right along with gospel music - often called 'secular' gospel () Blues music has different meanings to different people but often is characterized by a song that expresses feelings rather than a story, and a "blue note" (Jara, 2023). A "blue" note is a note that is flattened in relation to a major scale (Jara, 2023). The most common type of Blues is the twelve-bar blues (Jara, 2023). Blues music often incorporates guitars, pianos, and harmonicas. Blues often is also characterized as secular (nonreligious) gospel (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Blues retains the emotional depth of gospel with themes around being Black in America, teenager angst, and broken hearts (Clotter, 1959; Jara, 2023; Smith, 2021). With a strong presence of the Black churches and gospel, musicians who played on the riverboats, and rampant racism, St. Louis was a perfect town to foster Blues music. In fact, the person commonly credited for making Blues popular was W.C. Handy, who made a song called "St. Louis Blues" about his short but miserable stay in St. Louis (Clotter, 1959). Blues would continue on in St. Louis - so much so that the St. Louis National Hockey League team is named the "St. Louis Blues" after the strong history in St. Louis. The Blues logo is a music note with wings. Blues, however, wasn't the only genre of music influenced by riverboats. Ragtime was another form that was influenced by St. Louis and its proximity to the river.

Ragtime

Ragtime is a type of music using a syncopated beat (Jara, 2023). Ragtime mainly uses the piano but also can have brass instruments (Jara, 2023). Ragtime is meant to be upbeat and fun. St. Louis was exposed to ragtime through riverboat performers who stopped over in St. Louis on their way up and down the Mississippi River. When they got off the boats, ragtime players would play in late night clubs. In St. Louis, there used to be an area close to downtown called Chestnut Valley where most Ragtime players could be heard. One of the famous composers who spent some time in St. Louis was Scott Joplin. He had traveled around the country looking for work and making money with his piano and banjo and stopped in St. Louis for a time being. One of his major hits was “The Entertainer”, “March Majestic”, and a play called “The Ragtime Dance”. He also wrote “Maple Leaf Rag.”

While Ragtime musicians moved to Chicago in the early 1900s after the St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904 was over, the legacy of Ragtime remained behind. Black musicians who did stay in St. Louis would take the spirit of Ragtime and evolve it into new forms: jazz, blues, and even popular songs (Ownsely, 2006a). A local St. Louis historian, Judge Nathan B. Young said, “out of old Chesnut Valley sprang the stock of popular American music, nurtured and flavored by Negro musicians. Many of the theme songs and radio favorites of 1937 were first played here in the ‘90s [1890s],” (as quoted in Ownsley, 2006a, p. 1). White composers took tunes coming out of Chestnut Valley and made them famous, such as “Frankie and Johnnie” originally sung in Chestnut Valley and “Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-Ay” that became the melody for the theme song for the *Howdy Doody Show* (Ownsley, 2006a).

Early Jazz

Jazz became more popular and much more common in St. Louis. Jazz draws on influence from marching bands, blues, and other music of the time period (Jara, 2023). Jazz is a broad term but the National Museum of American History defines it as, “a kind of music in which improvisation is typically an important part....most jazz is very rhythmic, has a forward momentum called "swing," and uses "bent" or "blue" notes” (n.d., par. 1). In the context of St. Louis jazz, its distinctive character is shaped by the influence of riverboats and its strategic location upriver from New Orleans (Owsley (2006a; Owsley (2019b). New Orleans arguably was the center of the jazz experience. According to Clotter (1959) interview with Marable “Jazz was the outgrowth of Negro life in New Orleans. It developed from the chants of roustabouts loading Cotton boats, singing in perfect rhythm as they lifted the Bales. It grew out of the music played by the bands which accompanied funeral possessions” (as quoted in Clotter, 1959, p. 319). The earliest jazz bands were characterized by a minimal instrumentation that typically included a string bass, guitar or banjo, drums, one or two cornets, trombone, clarinet, and occasionally a violin (Clotter, 1959).

There were many famous jazz musicians that came out of St. Louis. There are people who played with famous people like Duke Ellington and Count Basie. Some of these people came back to St. Louis to foster more successful jazz in St. Louis. For example, Singleton Palmer returned to St. Louis after touring with the Count Basie Orchestra and organized a Dixieland band.

St. Louis boasts a rich musical heritage, with influential genres like Gospel, Blues, and Jazz that persist to the present day. However, the strength of this musical legacy wouldn't have been possible without dedicated spaces that nurtured the ongoing development of Black music, particularly in the context of a segregated city like St. Louis. The flourishing of music required deliberate and concerted efforts from the Black community to establish environments where musical creativity could thrive.

Fostering Black Music: Making It in a Segregated City

Clubs

Black musicians had a harder time getting recorded than White artists, so artists had to find other ways to get seen, heard, and have an income stream (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Night clubs were one venue that that happened. Black business owners like Tom Turpin were some of the earliest nightclubs that provided spaces for Black musicians. Turpin operated several establishments and by doing that, fostered the music scene in St. Louis. Other future owners of clubs such as Sumner alumni Jordan Chambers, would do the same thing later on. St. Louis city rules made it hard for some of them to operate so more opened up across the river in East St. Louis. His club was named Club Riviera. Each club had their own flavor. For example, the Rosebud Café had two bars and in one of them had two pianos for dueling piano contests.

The Black Church

Gospel music is not the only contribution that Black churches have made to fostering Black music. Another important part of the Black churches is providing a space for musically inclined Black individuals to practice and express themselves through song (Clotter, 1959). Church choirs served as a platform to foster and encourage strong musical talent, with several renowned recording artists tracing their beginnings back to the Black church (Holman et al., 2021). Furthermore, churches in the Ville frequently hosted concerts by visiting artists (Clotter, 1959). After the concert, Black churches would help musical artists by taking up a collection to fund their livelihood (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

An example of how Black churches and those who worked for them helped impact music is through the contributions of Angela Dietz Ferguson. Ferguson was well-known in St. Louis for her exceptional skills as an organist and pianist. In addition, she actively worked to nurture and motivate emerging talent, guiding promising students to hone their skills (Clotter, 1959). Notably, Ferguson adopted an inclusive approach by offering lessons on a sliding scale, ensuring accessibility for those who couldn't afford traditional tuition (Clotter, 1959).

Angela Dietz Ferguson's commitment to fostering musical excellence extended beyond individual instruction. She played a pivotal role in establishing a St. Louis chapter of the Coleridge Taylor Society, an organization for Black musicians. This local chapter later evolved into the National Negro Music Association, Inc. (Clotter, 1959). Additionally, Ferguson initiated clubs aimed at inspiring and cultivating musical talent among the youth. These clubs became breeding grounds for successful soloists who emerged under her mentorship (Clotter, 1959).

Ferguson's contributions underscore the profound influence that dedicated individuals within the church community had in shaping and advancing musical talent.

Schools of Music

A group of Black musicians and people who believed in the performing arts came together to form a Black school of music for Black St. Louisans in 1888 (Clotter, 1959; Ownsley, 2006a). Before then Black musicians had to take music classes from German instructors which was focused on German-style of music (Ownsley, 2006a). That school that they formed was the Luca School, situated within All Saints Episcopal Church in the Greater Ville area. The school prepared students in either vocal or instrumental instruction (Clotter, 1959). Luca saw itself as not just preparing students for excellent performances, but also encouraging students to pursue a career in music and get the recognition they deserve (Clotter, 1959). The school employed the help from many locally talented musicians to help grow the young musicians attending. The impact of the school on the growth of Black music talent in St. Louis is widely acknowledged by the local community (Clotter, 1959).

After the Luca School closed, another school took its place. The J. Roy Terry School of Music was another notable institution that made significant contributions to the musical landscape. Terry brought a lot of talent and knowledge himself. He tried to do the same thing that Luca School did by growing musicians who loved music and wanted to join the profession. He

encouraged innovation. He was involved in the greater community and believed in giving back when he could.

Annie Malone & Music

Affluent individuals played a crucial role as patrons of the arts, contributing significantly to the sustainability and continuity of the cultural scene. Their financial support helped sustain artistic endeavors, ensuring the continued vibrancy of the arts in the community. One local example was Annie Malone (Clotter, 1959). First, she opened her business center / community hub, the Poro College, to be a place where performing artists could perform. She kept costs low so that many people could attend. She brought in local artists and national hits such as Marion Anderson (Clotter, 1959). In addition, she had a weekly talent show that provided opportunities for aspiring musicians to perform in her auditorium, which held nine hundred people. If that was not enough, she sponsored an all Black concert orchestra, which she financed herself (Clotter, 1959). She ensured the orchestra was fully staffed and had the support to be excellent. Lastly, Malone helped to start a parade called the May Day parade. The parade was not just a fundraiser for her home for orphaned kids, but also a showcase of many marching bands and drum and bugle corps. According to Clotter (1959), Malone is often “singled out as the one person who contributed more towards the encouragement of culture among the Negroes of St. Louis than any other individual.” (p. 202).

fMusic at Sumner High School Choir & Bands

Sumner's musical legacy extends far beyond individual jazz musicians who graduated from the school. The institution boasts a rich music tradition, owing much of its vibrant history to the dedication of numerous individuals committed to music education. Long before the appointment of formal music directors at Sumner, these passionate individuals volunteered their time to impart musical education. Their efforts not only contributed to the school's musical heritage but also played a significant role in advocating for the hiring of full-time band, choral, orchestral, and music coordinators in Sumner and other schools within the St. Louis Public School district (SLPS) system. Their collective commitment helped shape and strengthen the musical programs in these institutions.

Sumner offered music classes as soon as Oscar Waring, the first Black principal of Sumner, came to take charge (Clotter, 1959). Those students showcased their hard work by starting a tradition of performing at the commencement. They sang and played instrumental music. In turn, those early performances set the tone for Sumner's excellence in music (Clotter, 1959).

Schools in the Ville such as Sumner and Simmons, benefited from the closeness of so many churches (Clotter, 1959). The Black church has had a long tradition of strong gospel music, which has been a long-standing music outlet (Holman et al., 2021; N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023). Musical directors at churches in the area volunteered their time at Sumner to help keep the music program alive. Church leaders were some of the key advocates to hire full-time music teachers and directors.

After much insistence and many teachers and musicians offering their time, SLPS eventually brought in full-time staff. J. Gerald Tyler was a key figure in this shift. He took the reins as the head of Sumner High School's music department and supervised music programs in several nearby elementary schools. Tyler established a high music standards at Sumner, leaving behind a legacy of excellence. People came to expect great performances out of Sumner's programs.

Gerald Tyler is a prime example of how Black educators at Sumner were deeply engaged within the community. Alongside teaching at Sumner Teachers College, which later became Stowe Teachers College, Tyler provided private music lessons to needy children and actively participated in various church groups. His dedication extended to nurturing St. Louis as a musical center, tirelessly working in multiple capacities to foster the city's musical growth (Clotter, 1959). Many noted Tyler's intense efforts in encouraging and inspiring others to reach their fullest potential. He firmly believed in anyone's capacity for success in music and ensured that people felt that belief under his guidance.

Harry Laird Phillips was a mechanical art teacher but cared deeply about music. He volunteered to help with the musical bands and choir during his free time. Meanwhile, he recognized that the extra time without compensation was neither fair nor sustainable. So he kept pushing SLPS to invest in full-time staff dedicated to each department, such as band and choir. It would take many people for SLPS to listen finally.

In 1931, SLPS finally listened to the advocates and agreed to hire full-time band directors. The first band director was Major Clark Smith, a highly qualified individual with previous experience

in the US Army and at the Tuskegee Institute. At Sumner, Clark Smith went above and beyond, bringing in his own musical instruments for students who couldn't afford to buy or rent them. He also played a pivotal role in organizing a chorus comprising exceptionally talented singers. This chorus performed at renowned venues like the Fox Theater, Muny, and on the Columbia Broadcasting Service (now KMOX Radio). Notably, this program produced many famous figures in the music industry, including Clark Terry, the Four Vagabonds, Walter Ray, Walter Bell, Ernie Wilkins, Jimmy Forrest, Wendell Marshall, Oliver Nelson, Ernest and Vernon Nashville, and Ollie Wilson (Clotter, 1959).

Kenneth Brown Billups is one instructor who, for many, remains a symbol of Sumner's musical excellence (i.e., J. Allen, personal communication, July 27, 2023). Billups started as a Sumner alumni himself. After graduating from Sumner High School, he attended Lincoln University, Missouri's Historically Black College/University. He then went on to Northwestern University for his master's degree in the School of Music. Billups came back to teach the choir at Sumner. He had very high expectations of his choir, and those who joined were prepared that it would be very intense. She says,

I was in the choir, oo but I got out of the choir, it was too much work. Mr. Billups, if you didn't know music, and you got in his choir, you knew something about music. You could read music when he left the choir. And I was in the Glee Club and the choir. He started the Legend Singers. That was his baby. He used to direct the choir over at Antioch Baptist Church. Okay. acapella choir over there. And he had the choir every year the choir put on a Christmas program. They actually did Aida one year. (J. Allen, personal communication, July 27, 2023)

Though some decided it was not for them, Billups remained well-loved during his term at Sumner. Billups even has a street named after him.

Those committed to Billups' choir reaped significant rewards (Clotter, 1959). His choir from Sumner participated in festivals across Missouri and consistently achieved top ratings. Under Billups' guidance, the choir seized the opportunity to perform alongside the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO) on multiple occasions. Additionally, Sumner's choir showcased their talents in various locations across St. Louis, including different high schools and public venues. Billups extended his musical influence to Antioch Baptist Church as the minister of music. He even spearheaded an interracial vocal group known as the 'Cosmopolitan Choir.' His involvement didn't stop there; he served as the Musical Director for the St. Louis "Wings Over Jordan" Choir, which toured extensively across the United States. Alongside his conducting, Billups was also a composer and arranger, with his works being published by major companies. He generously offered private music lessons to students as well.

Allen (2023) still to this day remains impressed with Billups and the way he took his job seriously.

He was well known in the music community, period. And he did some things with the symphony orchestra and you know, stuff like that. That was because I was not in there. But those people who were in his choir loved that choir. It was it was like an obsession with them, you know. And it was so funny, because every year they had a Christmas Vespers. And they have no, I don't even know what I did with it. But I got a copy of one of the old ones. And it would have all of the patrons that patronize it, it was like two sheets of paper, front and back. And then it had all the songs, the program, and everything, who the students were, the accompanists were, just like a regular program. He was it was very, what he did was very professional (J. Allen, personal communication, July 27, 2023)

Sumner also had a band. Allen (2023) remembers William Overby being the instructor. She says that it was very popular when she attended Sumner High School and had over one hundred members (J. Allen, personal communication, July 27, 2023). The band played at football games and other community affairs. The band also performed / marched in the May Day Parade.

Brass Bands & Drum & Bugle Corps

According to Daniels & Maultsby (2021), syncopated brass bands came out of the Civil War Black marching bands. They incorporated a similar 'ragging' effect to ragtime music. Daniels & Maultsby (2021) define syncopation as,

Syncopation is a rhythmic device that involves placing accents off the beat in unexpected places or playing two rhythms against one another. Military-type ensembles that performed in this rhythmic style are called syncopated brass bands. They often "rag" or syncopate the melodies of songs to produce the "ragged" rhythmic quality associated with ragtime. Their diverse repertoire included marches, hymns, and other religious songs, patriotic songs, popular ballads, and stylized dance music used for religious, cultural, and social events in African American communities (par. 1).

The bands usually used clarinets, trombones, horns, drums, trumpets/cornets (Daniels & Maultsby, 2021). They played at a lot of social functions, such as funerals, weddings, church events, and other religious, cultural, and social events. The May Day Parade historically stood as a significant occasion for bands to exhibit their talents, with many invitations extended for performances during this event. Therefore, these bands were an important part of the community.

In addition to serving the greater Black community, the bands were important to the continued development of the St. Louis music scene (Ownsley, 2006a). These bands served as an important learning ground for budding musicians. They provided valuable hands-on guidance from experienced musicians and opportunities to showcase their skills in front of live audiences. Additionally, members of these Black bands generously volunteered their time to teach and nurture talent at institutions like Sumner and Vashon.

The contributions of these bands can be illustrated by a few specific examples of bands. For instance, P.B. Langford was one band instructor who led the Oddfellows Band. Langford trained a significant amount of well known jazz musicians of the 1920s that passes through the Oddfellows Band. Some of the famous trumpet players were Andrew 'Big Babe' Webb and Dewey Jackson (Ownsley, 2006a).

William Blue, a notable figure, served as the bandmaster for the Blue and Harmony Band (Ownsley, 2006a). His musical talents led to his recruitment into the 350th Field Artillery Band. Although his attempts to enlist more members from St. Louis were unsuccessful, Blue effectively led this Field Artillery Band, which consisted of about 100 musicians. Military bands, as stated by the Department of Defense (2018), not only entertained soldiers but also uplifted civilian morale through vibrant concerts, fostering a sense of American pride. They toured across the United States and later traveled overseas. Blue's band is believed, according to Clotter (1959), to be one of the first, if not the very first, Black military bands led by a Black conductor.

A third well known band that had a hand in developing many musicians out of St. Louis was the Fate Marable band (Ownsley, 2006a). Fate Marable is one of the riverboat jazz musicians who worked in and out of St. Louis who was important to the development of St. Louis music for many reasons. First, Marable helped develop a new form of jazz. It was a smooth and subtle jazz with a combination of blues and ragtime. It also had the idea that some of jazz would be based on improvisation.

The Fate Marable band was an important band, not just for its unique form of jazz, but also for the training it offered Black musicians (Ownsley, 2006a). Marable led bands on riverboats. According to Ownsley (2006a), “New Orleans musicians said that playing for Marable was like going to a conservatory,” (p. 9). One of the people that was in Marable’s Jazz band was Louis Armstrong. He was just seventeen. Marable helped many people the in contact with St. Louis he went on to be nationally known (Clotter, 1959).

****Do I mention Allen’s memory of Tom Powell Drum & Bugle Corps here?*****

Other Black musical groups in St. Louis

People’s Symphony Orchestra

The People's Symphony Orchestra represented a significant milestone as the first all-Black community-sponsored symphony orchestra west of the Mississippi, as detailed by Clotter in 1959. Prior to this, Malone had sponsored a similar orchestra. Dr. Herman Dreer, who served as

the assistant principal at Sumner High School, played a key role in its management. The orchestra aimed to showcase the musical prowess of Black musicians in performing orchestral music with the hopes of advancing careers in music for participants. Like many other musical organizations, the orchestra also hoped to generate a love for music in the players and the audience. Lastly, musical performances also hoped to promote music by putting on display positive musical role models for youth. Their debut concert received a warm reception.

Y Circus

The 'Y Circus' was a significant musical event for musicians as another way for musicians to showcase their talent (W. Young, personal communication, September 24, 2023). It provided a platform for soloists to showcase their talent and potentially secure employment opportunities. Additionally, the Y Circus was crucial for instrumentalists and arrangers, as it was the only annual opportunity for them to be involved in such presentations, due to the historical exclusion of black musicians (Clotter, 1959). Typically, the Y Circus featured a local band consisting of 10 to 20 musicians. This production had a significant impact on the development of Black jazz musicians in St. Louis and other performers in the popular music scene.

The Legend Singers

Another musical group is a choral group called the "The Legend Singers." They were directed by Kenneth Brown Billups. It was a project under the national youth administration. One of the well-known singers was Laverne Hutcherson who became an international concert artist. The Legend Singers performed at the Muny several times and the Y Circus. They were featured on

KSDK TV. They were also featured at the Muny and gave their own concert at the Kiel auditorium. They also appeared twice on the Columbia Broadcasting Networks (KMOX).

St. Louis Cracker Jacks

The St. Louis Cracker Jacks was another Black jazz group in the 1920s and 1930s. Eddie Johnson, Winfield Baker and Joseph ‘Chick’ Finney were prominent leaders. They became one of the leading dance bands in the area for three years. One of their leaders took popular hits and made special arrangements. They were very popular and successful. Count Basie was one of the members of this band for awhile. Others went on to play for Duke Ellington. The St. Louis Cracker Jacks sometimes did “battles” which according to Clotter (1959) was super popular. Eventually the band faced issues with funding and labor issues and broke up.

Jeter-Pillars Orchestra

Another popular jazz orchestra was called the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra after the founders and leaders, James Jeter and Hayes Pillars. The orchestra was known for being able to play a lot of different types of music. Very well known jazz musicians played with the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra. According to Smith (2022), the band featured “lavish harmonies and arrangements that did not give huge play to soloists,” (p. 45). Chuck Berry characterized the band as a Big Band and credited them with influencing him in his music (Smith, 2022). The Jetter-Pillars toured all over America but also played locally in St. Louis at picnics in Tandy Park and at the Y Circus. According to Smith (2022), the Jetter-Pillars Orchestra were a “landmark” in St. Louis (p. 45). They played live on the air six nights a week, going from WIL to KMOX (Smith, 2022). The

Jetter-Pillars not only toured throughout the United States, but also was asked to perform overseas for a U.S.O. Tour.

People Who Made It: Sumner Alumni

Ernest Wilkins, a Sumner graduate, found success in the realm of jazz, notably joining the Count Basie orchestra, where Clotter (1959) attributes a significant portion of the orchestra's excellence to his contributions. Beyond his musical endeavors, Wilkins served in the military, lending his talents to military performances. Eventually, he departed from the Basie orchestra to pursue a career as an arranger, a move that propelled him to great success. He established his own albums and received numerous opportunities to arrange music, even working with renowned artists like Dizzy Gillespie and Don Terry. Clotter (1959) notes that Wilkins became a sought-after arranger, with many seeking to collaborate with him due to his exceptional skill.

Singleton Palmer, another Sumner graduate, found success in jazz, for infusing his music with a distinctive Dixieland style (Clotter, 1959). Initially playing with various bands in St. Louis, Palmer eventually joined the Count Basie orchestra after making a name for himself in the local scene. Following his stint with Basie, he returned to St. Louis and organized a musical ensemble called the "Dixieland Six," performing extensively in the area. Clotter (1959) recognizes Palmer as one of the premier tuba players, often sought after to play with multiple bands in the St. Louis region, earning praise in various articles for his exceptional musical talent.

Blues / Rock N Roll with Chuck Berry

Chuck Berry is one famous musician who lived in the Ville at 2520 Goode Avenue for a good portion of his life. His parents were not as wealthy as some families in the Ville but had a keen sense of business to supplement the income that was coming in. His dad supplemented the family income by growing vegetables and selling them to neighbors. Chuck learned, through these interactions, how to have keen business sense that would help shape his own future (Smith, 2022).

Berry went to Simmons and felt that Julia Davis, one of his teachers, was an important part of helping him stay in school and stay on track (Smith, 2022). He hung out at one of the many sandwich shops after school across the street. According to Smith (2022), during lunch the older kids would eat lunch and then dance while listening to the jukebox, enjoying bands such as Count Basie and Glenn Miller. This was the safety of a place where they were not welcome anywhere else. Neil Daniels II whose mother was heavily involved in the music scene in St. Louis felt that the juke joint was the secular version of church and was a key place for community and to access music. Daniels says,

And then secondarily, the secular part of the black church was juke joints. And that's, and the tie is music. When you look at the jazz, when you look at gospel, when you look at the blues, the blues the secular gospel. Yeah, for the most part. Yeah. I mean, and those connections, it's just like, where you felt your connection (N. Daniels II, personal communication, November 7, 2023).

Smith (2022) argues that within Berry's music is that sense of community and sounds that one would hear in the juke joints.

But there was a time when that kid with the telescope wanted you to understand there was this room he stood inside and it buzzed with the energy of eight beats to the bar, with a smell of onions on the grill and bodies in motion on a humid St. Louis afternoon, and it had an abundance of sounds, laughter and a cash register ringing....(Smith, 2022, p, 22).

Berry attended Sumner but struggled while there (Pegg, 2002). He felt that he did not fit in amongst the wealthier students who attended Sumner (Pegg, 2002; Smith, 2022). Sumner has been compared to a "prep" school in the way it had many rules and was so strict. Berry did not fit into that culture. Some kids made fun of his poor clothes and his rejection of their middle-class ways (Smith, 2022). However, educator Julia Davis had moved to Sumner at that time and encouraged Berry to find the music room and develop his love for music. Berry did find the music room and enjoyed hanging out there, even when he skipped other classes (Smith, 2022). Berry also pushed the boundaries of Sumner when he sung a song for one of the Sumner assemblies that was considered "shocking" because it was more blues than classical. At that time, Sumner's assemblies featured more classical music and thought the blues music to be too 'radical.'

Berry developed a rebellious and resentful attitude towards his parents, Sumner's strict rules, and Antioch Baptist Church, where his parents attended (Smith, 2022). Blues music, the kind he enjoyed listening to and signing, was considered "beneath" his parents and his classmates at Sumner. It was considered anti-religious and not welcomed by the church either. Berry became

more and more angry with his parents and everything around him that he felt was suffocating him. Berry, along with some of his friends, decided they had had enough and took matters into their own hands.

Berry and his friends decided they would leave their parents, the Ville, and Sumner High School. Their rebellious spirit led them to gather up their money and head out of town. Berry and his friends did not get very far on the small amount of money they had. They got desperate to eat and ended up robbing some stores. They fled, but they were eventually apprehended. Berry received three years in prison as a consequence. When Chuck Berry was in jail, he joined a gospel singing quartet to have something to do. Thankfully, his sentence did not last long.

When Berry got out of jail, he returned to the Ville and to his parents because he did not have anywhere else to go. Just a few months later, he attended the famous May Day Parade. There he met a woman, who later became his wife. They moved into a place of their own in the Ville after they first got married. Berry struggled with holding down a job, so he even tried being a barber by attending barber school under the Poro System (Pegg, 2002). However, Berry's real passion was music.

Berry loved music more than anything so he sought opportunities to play in clubs - knowing that is how he would have to start. He got invited to play at a club in East St. Louis, just over the river from St. Louis in Illinois. East St. Louis clubs were not subject to the same rules St. Louis were, meaning that they were allowed to stay open longer. This fostered a strong music scene of

people wanting to relax and enjoy tunes after a hard's day work. They had no idea that when they sat down on that first night (DATE), they were going to be in for a new sensation: Chuck Berry.

Berry was an immediate success in his club in East St. Louis. Berry was very popular because he had the ability to “work the crowd” and be a performer (Smith, 2022). People really took to his style because he was so fun and exciting. He would dance while he was playing, which was not something other Blues players did. Berry also pushed the genre a bit and incorporated some country music into his songs, but the crowd still loved it (Smith, 2022). According to Pegg (2002), Berry's music was influenced by his background of hearing gospel songs of Antioch Baptist Church and classical music from Sumner assemblies and his sister - but also who he heard in juke joints in the Ville: Classic Blues singers, Black pop songs, and newer Blues bands like Tommy Steves Combo. Berry knew that ‘making it’ in the music world would require more than just good music - it was also would benefit from good crowd-pleasing skills.

Berry was able to use the attention to his advantage. He was able to get club owner support to pursue a record deal. He was able to get a better spot at the club in East St. Louis. And eventually he was approached to record a couple of his songs from a small, independent label based out of St. Louis. For Berry, this was a good start. However, Berry wanted more - he wanted a big record deal.

Berry aspired to achieve financial success as a musician, recognizing that he needed to align himself with a recording label from a larger record company than what St. Louis could offer. His journey led him to Chicago, where new record companies were emerging, particularly for Black

artists. Before the advent of these labels, major record companies primarily featured White artists covering the music of Black musicians, profiting significantly from these covers (Smith, 2022).

The role of record label companies has been complicated, but also important for musicians. One, record labels provide a platform for greater financial success through the publication of their music. In Berry's time, these companies also played a key role in getting songs played on the radio, which was the main way that people heard the songs for the first time (Smith, 2022).

Third, record labels were the ones who spit out physical records, which was the only other way people could access artists' music.

Unfortunately, most major record label companies did not want to sign on Black musicians (Pegg, 2002). However, smaller record label companies were more comfortable with signing on Black musician artists, especially when Black musicians started being a financial success. Also, the smaller record companies saw a new growing Black middle class with purchasing power which made Black musician records a more worthwhile investment (Smith, 2022).

Berry faced rejection from several record label companies, but eventually secured a deal with Chess Records. Phil Chess, upon hearing "Maybellene," was captivated by Berry's distinctive sound, noting, "different from everybody. Like nothing we'd heard before... We figured if we could get that sound down on record we'd have a hit. There was just something about the rhythm – the beat" (as quoted in Pegg, 2002, p. 38). The producer at Chess Records shared Phil Chess's conviction, stating, "I knew it had that certain quality and feeling, a complete story with good understanding" (as quoted in Pegg, 2002, p. 39).

Upon its release, Berry's "Maybellene" quickly became a massive hit, distinguished by its unique sound and engaging theme centered around car racing. Teens ate it up. It was so popular that even the White covers couldn't beat it in the charts. Record labels often took Black music and had White bands cover the music and used their influence to make it higher on the charts. Not, "Maybellene. " "Maybellene" holds historical significance as it marked the first instance where a song by a Black artist surpassed the popularity of White cover versions. Despite the backing of major record labels, the White cover versions failed to achieve the same level of sales as Berry's original.

Berry achieved enough success to secure an agent and additional performance deals. However, like many in the music industry, he had to deal with unjust record deals that disproportionately favored record labels and DJs over the artists in terms of royalties (Cannon, 2019; Pegg, 2002). Certain venues also exploited Berry by offering unfair compensation for his performances. Frustrated with his agent, Berry attempted to navigate his career independently at one point, yet this move did not shield him from being taken advantage of (Smith, 2022).

Berry had to figure out his identity as a Black man in a world that pushed him to appeal to White audiences. Similar to many Black artists during that era, Berry grappled with the dilemma of catering to what generated income (appealing to white audiences) versus addressing the needs and preferences of his own community (appealing to Black audiences). Mostly Berry's repertoire featured a dynamic blend of lighthearted themes, such as car racing, and more profound subjects. One notable example is "Brown Eyed Handsome Man," which delves into the challenges faced

by Black individuals within the legal system (Berry, 1956). Berry (1956) concludes the song with the powerful notion of Black music and rock and roll triumphing over the elitism of the contemporary music scene (Pegg, 2002). The song lyrics that resonated with Black audiences did not achieve the same level of popularity and sales (Pegg, 2002). Navigating this dual challenge posed a significant hurdle for Chuck Berry. On one hand, Black audiences expressed frustration, perceiving him as a 'sell-out.' The challenge for Berry was to chart a course that allowed him to find his own artistic path while addressing the concerns of his Black audience.

However, Berry certainly could not escape the racism from Whites, no matter how much his music might have appealed to White audiences. Touring in the deep South proved to be a stark contrast to the more subtle racism he was accustomed to in St. Louis. The Ville had shielded him from the racism of St. Louis which was not nearly as visceral as the South. He resorted to sleeping in his car when he could not find a hotel that would allow him in. He also faced rejection from many restaurants.

Berry's career faced a significant setback when he was unjustly accused of a crime, resulting in a twenty-month jail sentence (Pegg, 2002). The details of the case are complicated, but the judge exhibited clear racism against Berry from the beginning of the trial. Berry appealed on grounds of racism overduely influencing the outcome, but it was denied. Berry served his twenty months and returned to performing after it. Berry received advice not to publicly dispute the charges, avoiding attempts to salvage his reputation (Pegg, 2002).

Despite the myriad challenges Chuck Berry faced, he continued to perform in various venues throughout his extensive career. Whether playing in and around St. Louis or embarking on tours, his enduring presence in the music scene persisted. In recognition of his influential contributions, Berry was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1986 (Peek, 1982).

Chuck Berry's impact on the music industry and the history of Rock 'n' Roll is undeniable. Peek (1982), a key member of Rod Stewart's band, recalls being captivated by Berry's unique guitar sound as a child, considering him a key idol and influencer. According to Peek, Berry's music represents the truest form of rock 'n' roll, devoid of gimmicks, but instead, a storytelling experience delivered with overdrive (Peek, 1982).

While Berry's personal life was complex, his musical talent and legacy stand as an undeniable force (Pegg, 2002; Smith, 2022). Recognized as the father of Rock 'n' Roll, Berry paved the way for subsequent generations and artists to embrace his sound, catalyzing the evolution of an entire genre (Pegg, 2002; Peek, 1982; Smith, 2022). His influence extended across a spectrum of musicians, including Elvis Presley, Beach Boys, Beatles, and Rolling Stones (Pareles, 2017).

In the later years of his life, Chuck Berry frequently took the stage at Blueberry Hill, a local place in St. Louis. The owner, Joe Edwards, became a close friend of Berry's and encouraged Berry to continue to play.

His legacy lives on after his passing in 2017, with his family, including his children and wife, continuing to play active roles in the community. Chuck Berry Jr., for instance, has been engaged

in efforts to support Sumner High School, working to ensure its continued operation (A. Williams, personal communication, June 22, 2022). The Berry family's ongoing commitment to community involvement reflects their dedication to carrying forward Chuck Berry's impactful legacy.

Rock N Roll & Tina Turner

Tina Turner spent the majority of her childhood in Tennessee, bearing the name Anna Mae Bullock. Her upbringing was marked by significant challenges, with her parents frequently at odds, engaging in constant conflicts throughout her formative years. Faced with a turbulent family situation, she moved from one family member to another, particularly after her mother relocated to St. Louis while her father headed to Detroit. As the support network around her diminished, Turner made the decision to leave Tennessee and reunite with her mother in the Ville neighborhood. During this period, her mother worked as a maid, and she lived with a man employed as a truck driver.

Tina Turner doesn't delve much into her time at Sumner High School, as noted in her autobiography (Turner & Loder, 2007). She briefly mentions feeling like an outsider at Sumner, where most students came from affluent backgrounds, in contrast to her mother's occupation as a maid. Despite this, she persevered, spending two years at Sumner and eventually graduating.

From an early age, Tina had a clear passion for singing, a sentiment she expressed in her autobiography (Turner & Loder, 2007). Growing up, she found solace in singing during church

services, although her interest lay more in the music than the religious aspects. Tina knew she loved music and performing, which would influence her drive in the future.

Tina also struggled with money her whole life, due to her unstable family situation. She observed a wealthier lifestyle around her and was drawn to the attention and glamour associated with it. She also saw how much wealth could provide stability. Those observations would influence her in her future decisions as well.

Upon moving to St. Louis and exploring its vibrant music scene, Tina, alongside her sister, ventured across the river to East St. Louis. It was there that Tina encountered Ike Turner and his band, a pivotal moment in her musical journey. Ike recognized Tina's distinctive and powerful voice, foreseeing its potential for national success (Mahon, 2020). By the time Tina graduated from Sumner, she was already a member of Ike's band, actively performing in local venues.

Tina Turner and Ike formed a formidable musical duo, with one of their early hits being "Fools in Love" in 1960 (Turner & Loder, 2007). Their partnership led to numerous chart-toppers, including the acclaimed "River Deep, Mountain High," a song that resonated particularly well in Europe and marked a departure from Ike's usual approach. Turner described the song as more raw, emotive, and deep, showcasing a shift in style (Turner & Loder, 2007). This venture into rock not only broadened her musical horizons but also garnered attention from influential figures like the Rolling Stones and other British rock bands, who would be crucial for rebuilding her career after leaving Ike (Mahon, 2020).

As the late 1960s approached, Tina intentionally steered her sound toward rock. Ike followed her lead. This decision was influenced by both personal preference and the need to remain relevant in the ever-evolving music scene (Mahon, 2020). In an industry where rock had become predominantly associated with White bands, Tina, and Ike as well, broke barriers by refusing to conform to preconceived notions. They resisted being confined to the categories of rhythm and blues or "funk" bands traditionally assigned to Black musicians (Mahon, 2020). This move not only challenged industry norms but also proved strategic for financial success. Tina's venture into rock allowed her to transcend gender and racial boundaries by covering songs from iconic bands like the Beatles and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

However, Tina and Ike's musical success was overshadowed by a profoundly unhealthy relationship. Ike's mistreatment of Tina was well-documented, yet she endured the turmoil for various reasons. Fear of financial instability, concerns about her career, and the complex dynamics of their relationship all played a role in Tina's decision to stay (Turner & Loder, 2007). However, she eventually did leave him after things got worse.

After leaving Ike, Tina Turner found support from British rock bands and figures like Mick Jagger, enabling her to restart her career and launch her own label. Her success under her label was particularly evident with the album "Private Dancer," which sold ten million copies and remained on the Billboard Top 100 for over two years. The Grammy-winning song "What's Love Got To Do with It" further solidified her success, drawing huge crowds during her subsequent tour. According to Mahon (2020), Tina's ability to traverse race, gender, and genre boundaries,

overcoming challenges that hindered other Black women, was in part due to her professional associations with White male rockers.

Feeling that her most loyal audience was in Europe, Tina made the decision to move there in the 1990s. Settling down with her boyfriend, later turned second husband, Erwin Bach, she chose Switzerland as their home due to Erwin's German roots and her comfort in the country. This move may also have served as a means of distancing herself from her previous life and ex-husband.

Tina Turner's legacy is characterized not only by her powerful singing but also by her pioneering presence as a Black woman in the rock music world. Her unapologetic fashion choices and distinctive, raw, deep voice left an indelible mark. Tina passed away at her home in Switzerland in 2023, where she had been living for some time with limited contact with her extended family (Mahon, 2007).

Brackett (2020), a cultural journalist, reflected on what he believes is Tina Turner's legacy:

Her legacy in a nutshell? Tenacity apart from the music itself and the presence of the person who gave it to us all as a collective gift: her refusal to be repressed, suppressed, or depressed and her inability to ever give up. She didn't give up in her difficult childhood, not in her challenging private relationship, not in the creative drought subsequent to her split, and not even in the life-threatening illness that eventually even someone as strong as she could not fully combat. But through it all and in her own words, "I stayed on course." Her legacy of tenacity is something lasting not only in the way it affected her many fans but also in the impact it had on the entire music industry and her fellow artists." (p. 184).

In Brackett's (2020) review of the Tina Turner musical, Brooks emphasizes how Tina Turner's music transcends generations and genres, revolutionizing the role of African American women in the music industry. Turner's impact has paved the way for subsequent Black women artists like Beyoncé, Rihanna, and Cardi B. Some feminists, including bell hooks, argue that Turner is not a feminist due to her provocative dress choices (amongst other things). However, others contend that her music, along with her dress and body language in performances, constitutes a feminist rejection or refusal to conform to traditional expectations for women in the music industry, especially for Black women (Mahon, 2020).

For many, Tina Turner symbolizes a refusal to be confined to one genre or to conform to stereotypical expectations for Black women in music. In contrast to groups like the Supremes, who were often expected to adhere to a narrowly defined image, Turner's versatility challenged these norms. In her autobiography, Turner expressed frustration with societal double standards, noting how White women could freely engage in public displays of affection, whereas Black women doing the same were considered "shocking" (Turner & Loder, 2007). Turner's life and career serve as a powerful testament to her resilience and determination to break free from societal constraints imposed on Black women in the music industry.

Opera Singers: Robert McFerrin and Grace Bumbry

Grace Bumbry

Grace Bumbry is a famous operatic soprano and mezzo-soprano. She was born in St. Louis in 1937. Grace was obsessed with singing and classical music as a child and teenager. She practiced

often, without formal training as a child as the local conservatory schools were still segregated and refused to allow her to learn along with the white students. She attended Sumner High School and continued to practice with what resources she had access to. Bumbry trained under Billups and was part of the girls Glee Club. She also joined the Sumner a cappella choir. Billups spend extra time doing voice lessons for her.. She won a local radio contest that allowed her to perform on a talent show at the age of 16. Bumbry performed for the St. Louis music Association then she won first prize from the National Association of Negro Musicians.

Grace then began her studies at Boston University where she continued to practice and hone her singing voice. She also attended Northwestern University. And also the Music Academy of the west in Santa Barbara California. Eventually Grace was granted the opportunity to audition at the Paris Opera. After her audition she was signed onto the opera and became the first Person of Color to ever perform within the Paris Opera house.

Bumbry continued to break color barriers by performing in roles that a black person had never done before. She faced constant ridicule and criticism from those unhappy with her being cast in opera roles. In 1962 Bumbry was invited to perform at the White House for President Kennedy and the first lady. She became the first black woman to perform an opera within the White House.

Bumbry continued to perform around the world and was often sought after due to her fantastic talent. Eventually Grace retired from the stage and began a teaching career centered in Europe. In the 1990s Grace founded the Grace Bumbry Black Musical Heritage ensemble that is a choir

dedicated to preserving traditional black and gospel music. Grace currently lives within Austria where she continues to teach.

Robert McFerrin

Robert McFerrin is another well-known musician from Sumner High School. He was the first Black person to get signed with the Metropolitan Opera company. He was a member of the boys Glee club and the a cappella choir under Mr. Walton. Walton encouraged McFerrin to continue his education in music and Walton tutored him to continue his vocal training (Clotter, 1959). Walton organized a fundraiser concert to help McFerrin pay for his college at Fisk. He went to Fisk University and Chicago Music College. Mr. Walton helped to finance his education and another community member helped him to get him to New York. McFerrin performed in "Aida" and it was a big success. He credits his hard work ethic and that his achievements made him want to work harder. He was with the Metropolitan Opera for three seasons and ten operas. He is the father of Bobby McFerrin, another successful singer.

Other Sumner Alumni

Young (2023) remembers that when he was at Sumner, there were many talented musicians at Sumner (W. Young, personal communication, September 24, 2023). He attributes part of it to the fact that there were so many talented music teachers.

Another famous group was Fifth Dimension. They were founded by LaMonte McLamore who was a Sumner graduate. Ronald Townsend also is from the 5th Dimension who went to Sumner. They were a successful group.

Many other famous people graduated from Sumner. For instance, LaVida Easter. She was considered a child prodigy. She was a concert pianist when she was a student at Sumner she did a lot of accompanying various performance groups. She graduated from Sumner high school at age 15. She also went to Fisk after spending a couple years at Webster. She got her doctoral degree from the Chicago music college. Another successful musical person was Helen Phillips. She was in Sumner's choir. When she went to New York she was recognized as very talented. In 1951 the state department asked her to go on tour in Germany. She ended up touring a bunch of different countries and performing at many of the prominent opera houses. She was successful there. She was the first black person to sing in Barcelona. She also performed with the St. Louis Symphony. Another famous person is Gwendoline Bell who did very well at Sumner as a soloist. After Sumner she ended up going to Boston University and having lots of opportunities to be in very well-known performances. She got to perform at Carnegie Hall. She was in the performance of Carmen Jones; she also got a job with a professional opera company in Boston.

Non-Sumner Alumni Famous Musicians from St. Louis: Miles Davis and Josephine Baker

Miles Davis

Miles Davis was a very important jazz musician. He made jazz music sound different four times during his career. He also made the trumpet sound like a person singing sometimes. He was not a graduate of Sumner High School but did play around St. Louis. He played with many other famous jazz musicians in St. Louis, including Eddie Randle (Clotter, 1959). Randle made the choice to put Miles Davis in his band, Randle and the Blue Devils, which helped launch Davis' career. Randle was someone who helped many jazz musicians get their starts by including them in their band.

Miles Davis took his experience of growing up in East St. Louis and used that for his songs. He received many top awards for his skills as a trumpet player. He played throughout the United States and Europe and was an international phenomenon.

Josephine Baker

Josephine Baker was from the Mill Creek area of St. Louis. She was born in 1906 and grew up in relative poverty with her mother. She was known for her singing and dancing performances that would eventually bring her global fame. Josephine would be married 4 times, starting with her first at the young age of 13. Her marriages rarely lasted very long. While in St. Louis performed with the Dixie Steppers and the Jones Family Band. She then traveled to New York to find other opportunities to perform.

While in the United States Josephine was appalled by the racism she and other black men and women faced. Eventually, Baker moved to France to escape the racism of the United States to

perform and live in France. During this period Baker performed to French audiences and gained worldwide recognition of her skill. Her performances featured African themes and celebrations of black culture, even though her audiences were majority white. She was also known for her unique dancing and costume stylings.

During World War II Josephine lived in France during its occupation by the Nazis. She would often perform for them and then pass on overheard information to the French resistance movement. Some of her tactics included writing on music sheets with invisible ink.

After the second World War Josephine returned to the United States to perform as well as be a Civil Rights Activist. When she toured in the United States during the 1950s she would refuse to perform to segregated audiences, which forced club owners to desegregate their clubs if they wanted to feature her show.

Josephine dedicated her later life to the Civil Rights movement while also performing. Josephine adopted children from many different racial backgrounds and would often take them to her performances to demonstrate that racial and cultural harmony can exist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, music in St. Louis has had a long, rich history. Music in America owes a lot of thanks to Africans who came to this country and left a significant legacy. Their strong rhythms through drumming and other instruments, the banjo and guitar, and other musical elements that

morphed into spirituals during the time of their enslavement would lay the foundation for genres we listen to today: such as Gospel, Blues, Jazz, Ragtime, Syncopated Bands, Rock n Roll, and Rock (Jara, 2023). St Louis may not be as well-known as New Orleans or Nashville in terms of its music scene, but it has plenty of well-known people who have helped St. Louis be taken seriously. People like Scott Joplin, have made significant contributions to their respective genres and have left a lasting impact on music history and St. Louis. Not only do we have famous people, but local artists in the genres of Jazz, Blues, and Gospel continue to carry on the tradition of creating remarkable music in St. Louis today, and they serve as a reminder that St. Louis does have strong musical roots.

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National Association of Negro Musicians

Another way that black music was encouraged was through the National Association of Negro Musicians. This organization purpose was to foster more participation in the music field and two encourage those who are in the field to stick with it when it gets discouraging. Although the field was segregated it still proved really valuable. One of the ways that approved to be valuable is that people got to hear coris and instrumental programs so that people could see that music was a possible career. They held Weekly coral rehearsals and lectures on music once a month. There were also piano clubs that we're held once a month. National performers came and gave concert sponsored by this organization. Scholarships were also presented to help Black musicians afford future education. Monthly programs in St. Louis showcased Black Youth musicians so to help their career.

