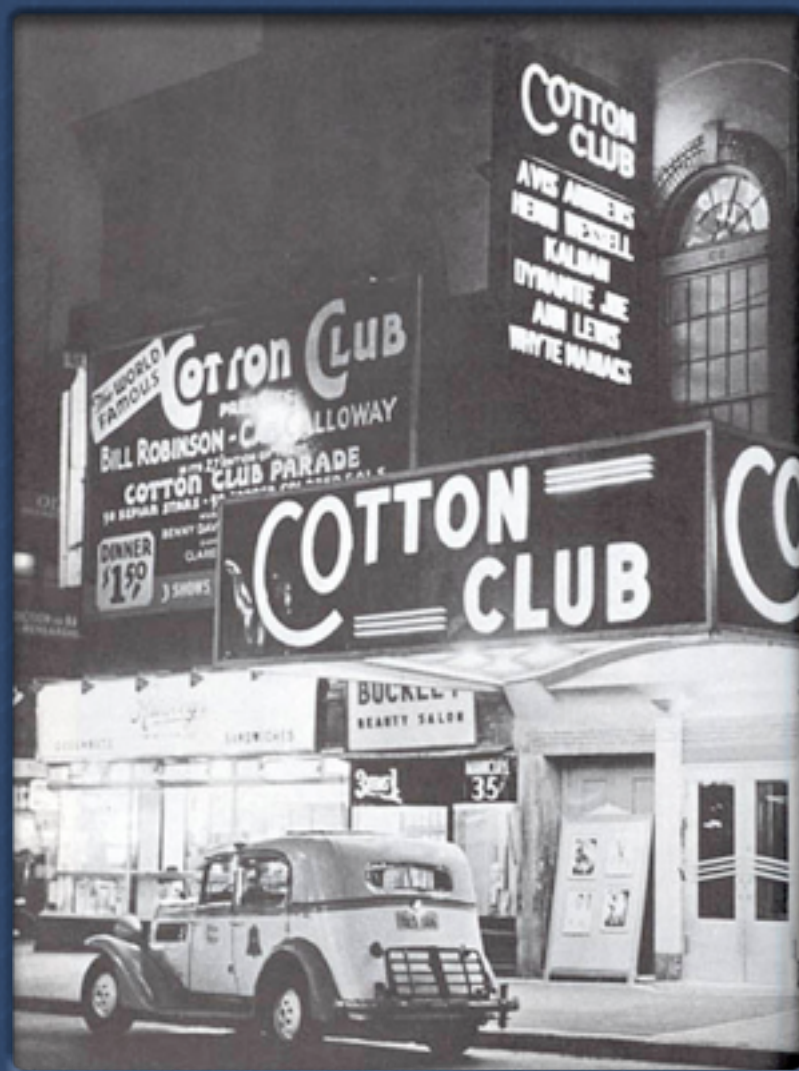




The Jazz Age

The Jazz Age

Cotton Club



In the 1920's, the neighborhood of Harlem, New York was rebuilt with new apartment houses. African-American realtors began buying and leasing property to other African Americans. As the blacks started moving in the whites started moving out. Harlem quickly became the center of black-America and the birthplace of the Harlem Renaissance. Along with many other entertainment clubs at the time, the Cotton Club was a huge place for entertainment and featured people like Duke Ellington and Bessie Smith who really introduced the 20's to jazz. Unlike many other entertainment clubs at the time that were segregated, along with black, white audiences flooded the club to hear the new music.



The Jazz Age

Bessie Smith



Bessie Smith is known as one of the most, if not the most, outstanding vocalists of the 1920's. She recorded with major record companies, and in 1927 became the highest paid black artist in the world. She was known as the "Empress of Blues", and sold a million recordings of her, "Down Hearted Blues." Bessie Smith sang, recorded, and performed all through the twenties. She performed at many famous clubs, one of which being the Cotton Club. However in the late 20's and early 30's alcoholism and the depression slowly started to dwindle her career, but she still kept going. Bessie Smith died in 1937 following an automobile accident. She was, and is still today, a major influence in jazz music.



The Jazz Age

George Gershwin *Rhapsody in Blue*

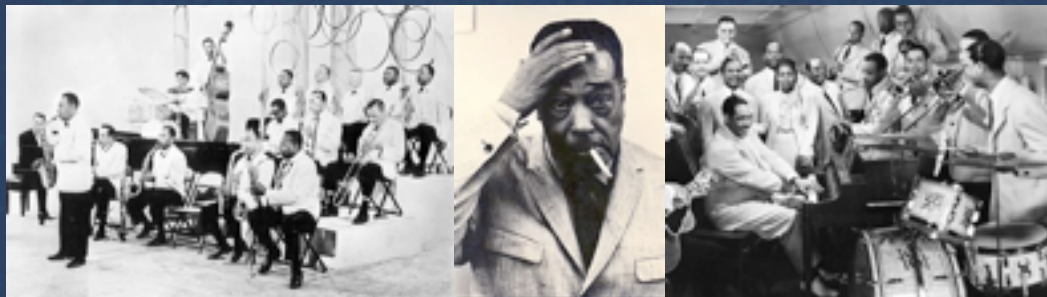
In the 1920's people wanted entertainment and the arts seemed unattainable, but the composer and pianist, George Gershwin, tried his best to quench their thirst. Gershwin combined classic European music of the 20's with the jazz of the 20's, which made this new sound, "identifiably American." He wrote most of his works, including more than a dozen Broadway shows. Between composing works for Broadway, the classical concert hall, and writing many popular songs, Gershwin became an icon of the 20's. The most famous classical composition of his was Rhapsody in Blue. This composition written by Gershwin was made for solo piano and jazz band. On February 12, 1924, Rhapsody in Blue premiered for the first time at a concert called An Experiment in Modern Music. This most classic and widely known piece of work created by Gershwin really established him as a serious composer.



The Jazz Age

Duke Ellington

Edward Kennedy Ellington, also known as "Duke" Ellington is probably the most widely known composer of not only the 1920's, but the 20th century. He is most known for being a self-taught musician, and he developed his skills by playing at family gatherings. At 15 he wrote his first song, "Soda Fountain Rag." For five years Ellington played the piano at the famous Cotton Club, and when he was 22 he started his first band. Through the radio and the Black and Tan film, The Duke Ellington orchestra was able to reach audiences around the world. Although Ellington played the piano for a number of years, he is more known for his band. Composing was really his passion.



The Jazz Age

Louis Armstrong

Along with Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, and George Gershwin; Louis Armstrong was a man who made a huge impact on the 1920's Jazz Age. In the beginning of the decade is when Jazz really began to take off. In New Orleans musicians started blending instrumental ragtime with vocal blues to create a new and exciting sound. Joe Oliver brought his Creole Jazz Band to Chicago in 1918, and in 1922 Armstrong joined the band playing the trumpet. This is where his talent would carry him to stardom in the jazz world. Armstrong was famous for his amazing sense of rhythm, and his ability to improvise. He believed that personal expression was the key part to jazz. In 1924 he joined The Fletcher Henderson Band, which at the time was probably the most important and influential band. Armstrong is still known today for many talents.

