

From Swing to Bop (be-bop)

Where we've been:

1. **Dixieland** (early 20th century): small groups, early invention of jazz; originates in New Orleans—becomes the indigenous music of America
2. **Swing** (1930s and 40s) (Keep in mind: styles continue; just because a new style develops, doesn't mean the old styles disappear—jazz, like any other art form, has an ever-expanding language)

--Swing era sees the **rise of larger ensembles**, big audiences who dance, regard the music as a form of “escape” from difficult social/economic/political times (Depression, aftermath of WWI, going into WWII—a very popular style for the 1930s and 40s—continues to be popular with people who grew up in that era, attracts some new listeners, but most modern listeners going for contemporary pop music; my daughter asked once, when I had some jazz on the car radio, why we had to listen to that “old” music)

--played everywhere, drew large, large crowds, Benny Goodman's band invited to play Carnegie Hall to sell out crowds

--this new style meant the **development of new playing skills for the musicians**: tight ensemble playing, higher emphasis on reading music, necessity for big band arrangements; “head” charts (improvised arrangements) still exist, even with big bands, but ensemble complexity limited unless an arranger takes over; rhythm section has to learn new skills—more melodic bass lines, drums become more “melodic” in the sense that drummers have to “play the chart,” i.e., provide accents that reinforce what other sections are doing.

-- begins the era of artist/arrangers, like Fletcher Henderson

-- but swing music so popular that it loses its inventiveness—audience wants to hear the same thing all the time; the more adventurous musicians get bored with it—it's just a mechanical, money-making enterprise

Ex: Artie Shaw felt that his most popular record, “Begin the Beguine,” was an albatross—whenever his band played, people just wanted to hear that tune

- another limitation—if a band had to play for dancing, that immediately limited it to dance music; so some of the great swing bands were just commercial music machines with great musicians who had to limit their artistic adventurousness

As a result: move to Be-bop among African-American players:

Be-bop becomes a form of “art” jazz—a music for the musicians and an audience of cognoscenti (those “in the know”); becomes less and less a popular music, and has had to struggle to win even a small portion of the music audience to the present day

- be-bop players invent the modern jazz idiom, that constitutes the basic language of improvisation to this day (Louis Armstrong had invented jazz improvisation—this is a major new development in the improvisational language)
- -- develops from swing and adds “extensions” to the harmony
- -- depends heavily on standard songs and standard chord changes—you have be-bop players who compose new songs based on the harmony of standard songs
- --return to small groups
- --economically more feasible
- (example of a modern big band—Gordon Goodwin’s **Big Phat Band**--plays regularly in the area—check it out)
- --After hours groups, jam session groups; after the commercial gigs, musicians get together at places like Minton’s in New York, play all night, working out new ideas that are often “unacceptable” on the commercial bandstand

Major figures in the development of be-bop:

- Charles Mingus (bass)
 - Charlie Parker (alto sax)—“inventor” of be-bop—jazz archetype
 - Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet)—the teacher of be-bop
 - Max Roach (drums)
 - Bud Powell (Piano)
- Massey Hall Jazz Concert: epitomizes be-bop by its inventors (1953)
--much more emphasis on the artistry of the individual musician—everyone gets a chance for an extended solo, not just 8 or 16 bars, as with the swing bands, but many choruses; one of the marks of a virtuoso soloist is to keep coming up with new improvisational ideas over many choruses, to keep his inventiveness alive

-- **tempos** often very fast, very exciting, music not intended for dancing, but for listening; also a music that separates the merely good, reliable players, from the players who take pride in their ability to play both musically and fast

Early approach to jazz composition: inventing be-bop tunes to chord sequences of standard tunes—e.g. “Donna Lee” is a Charlie Parker solo played to the chords of “Back Home in Indiana”;
-- standard chord changes: rhythm changes (to the old tune “I Got Rhythm”), and any number of variations on the blues

--characteristics of solos—**double-timing**—playing twice as fast as the tempo, Parker, Gillespie, Powell all do this
“All the Things You Are”

--“quotes”—Gillespie quoting from Ferde Grofe’s *Grand Canyon Suite*
“Salt Peanuts”—example of a rhythm changes tune

“**Cool**” jazz—a reaction against the exuberant, wild, note-filled world of be-bop—a new evolution of jazz as an art music, developed by

Miles Davis: develops his own particular sound on the trumpet; develops a minimal approach to soloing

- “cool” style of jazz—
- modal—return to a type of music abandoned in the Renaissance search for a sequence-bound, resolution, “goal-oriented” music; modal music, as Davis remarks in his autobiography, doesn’t have the over-and-over-again feel of chord tunes; a much more open feel because it doesn’t depend on dominant-tonic sequences
- *Miles Davis + 19* (with Gil Evans) “The Duke”—more dissonant, experimental harmonies—innovative tonal palette (bass clarinet, tuba, French horn)—not limited to standard jazz instruments, includes symphonic instruments; generally true of Miles Davis—a more reflective, meditative quality to the soloing—a “minimal” approach to notes and melody in solos—Davis not a high-note player, not a really fast player
- Miles Davis a musician who will reappear, since he leads the way in many jazz innovations in the decades following the “birth of the cool” (title of one of his seminal albums)

FILM: Charles Mingus *Triumph of the Underdog*: film biography of one of the great jazz composer/musicians of the mid-20th century