

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 4 Abolition and Segregation in the United States

[Music & Title...]

BOOGIE-WOOGIE IN MUSEUMS. MUSEUM BOOGIE-WOOGIE.

Hosts – ALL:

Have you ever been racist?
The way they behave, it's not right.
Boogie-woogie in museums.
A sound and transatlantic journey.
Against racism. Against racism. Against racism.

Hosts:

Hi, I'm Isaac. I'm Sofiane. I'm Marine. I'm Jade. I'm Havrunnisa. And I'm Sofia.

In 1860, one in seven Americans was owned by another American.

A newspaper, The Liberator wrote, "Slavery is a sin and those who practice it are criminals."

On 7 November 1837, the Reverend Elijah Lovejoy was murdered, and then a white man was assassinated for opposing slavery. This had a bombshell effect.

As tensions rose in the United States, Southerners suspected that the Northerners were inciting black people to kill them in their sleep.

As a result, they formed the Confederate army. War was inevitable. Slavery had to be abolished.

[Blues piano riff...]

Black and white people rise up and fought. In 1865, slavery was abolished in the United States. A fusion of work songs, blues, classical music, pattin' Juba, Irish music, boogie-woogie and ragtime prepared for their thunderous arrival, to fill the planet with new music and dances. These genres became the new stars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

All:

Gone were the orders from the foreman, the cries of the master, and the scolding of the mistress.

Boogie woogie in museums? More like boogie-woogie in the slums. It was played in gambling dens where people drank alcohol, danced and played music until dawn.

And then there was ragtime, played in brothels, in barrel houses.

And since it got a bit hot in those places, the mornings they would clear out the bodies and start all over again.

Joyce:

At the end of slavery, there was what we call Black Wall Street, meaning that there were people who were allowed to run business, for example, selling watermelon, but had to harvest it themselves in the fields. They were a free people, but they had no work, so they had to create a way to earn money. On the other hand, there was a musical aspect, which allowed many people to survive mentally, to play music, to put all their misery in the words of many songs.

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- Host: At the Tomi Ungerer museum in Strasbourg, you can see illustrations by the artist that testify to this era.
- Joyce: We see a man sitting on a sidewalk with an open door to his right. The side with the door is dark; there is only black, you can't see anything. So, the man has a hat, he's sitting on the sidewalk, and he's got some kind of can or glass.
- Dark as black, black as sadness, sadness as depression, depression as loneliness, solitude as emptiness and drunkenness.
- Slavery is abolished, yes, but exploitation, precarity, hatred and violence do not stop.
- This music, when it was created, emerged in the midst of segregation.
- Host: What is segregation?
- Segregation is the separation of people by certain criteria at every stage of their lives. White schools, black schools for example. Limited voting rights, for instance. Segregation is never equal.
- What is your image?
- Students: This image shows drums. There are trombones, I don't know the name at all, trombones, yes that's right. There are kubos if I'm not mistaken.
- Martine Debaene: These musicians don't have faces. You can see that they are indeed Black figures, completely anonymous, no faces, but all the instruments of a jazz quartet.
- Students: Yes. Behind you put a guitar or a banjo. Yeah, yeah, but it's not a guitar, it's not a guitar. I know the name, but I forgot.
- Double bass
- Yeah, double bass, that's it.
- MD: And you can see that they are dressed in suits. They have suits, white shirts, a bow tie. So, it's very jazz club, a bit chic. That means that people are paid to perform playing black music in a club.
- Student: The red ones here represent the blood of slaves to me, and so the yellow ones there represent wealth. So, people who play the instrument too, they are sad, they have to play to make a living. That's it.
- Student: The drawing is calm and harmonious. The musicians play harmoniously, they are linked by music. There is also a good contrast and mix of colors.
- Host: Soon, new inventions allow music to spread all over the planet. The mechanical piano, the gramophone, the camera, which will allow cinema to flourish.
- Jazz is taking advantage of this emulation. Dance floors and swing bands are in full swing. There is no place where we don't hear this new music, which is a rage among young people.

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- Joyce: And what was very common at the time, people who appreciated this music, regardless of if they were black or white, was that they were all poor. And so, at the Savoy Ballroom, this nightclub of the time, it was an opportunity for people from the lower social class to meet in one place. They paid \$.99 cents or \$1.99 to go out for the evening. And this was the time of the week when they could escape their daily lives; they found a way to put on their best clothes and attend the evening and dance. It's where the white people, the black people, the Latinos, all of these people came together. But it's just working class, really.
- Host/s: 1920, Broadway becomes a musical machine. 200 plays and musicals per year were played there. And you can hear ragtime, blues, jazz, freshly landed, and new compositions by the Gershwin brothers, Cole Porter, Eubie Blake or Jerome Kern.
- Young musicians are tired of playing in big orchestras or musicals.
- Yeah, because the swing of the beginning becomes animation.
- They will reinvent jazz until the end of the night.
- Thelonius Monk, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis.
- Joyce: The Savoy Ballroom was in opposition to the Cotton Club. The Cotton Club is a nightclub that is quite well known because it was the very famous black musicians who played for the wealthy whites. You see it a lot in the black and white films of that time with Fred Astaire, Cab Calloway, etc. But it's really in opposition because it was for the rich, for the elite. And in general, all the most famous artists preferred to play at the Savoy Ballroom rather than at the Cotton Club because they knew that people were really there for the love of music, the love of jazz. And that was the most important. So, when people get together around something cultural, it kind of blurs everyone's boundaries.
- Host: All of these musicians would produce bebop, cool jazz, electrified blues, rhythm'n and blues, rock'n'roll, funk, and free jazz from their instruments and musical journeys.
- From the 1940s to the 1970s, all of this music was born amidst the struggle for civil rights. African-Americans fought for their freedoms, their rights to equality, despite the violence they endured.
- Students: This is an image of a white cop killing a black guy. I feel like he's happy. There's blood.
- He has a gun in his hands and the person is bleeding.
- The background is black. The policeman is blue.
- With an orange helmet.
- That's it. The person is in green and white. And then there's blood.
- She's lying on a police car. She's dying.

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She has her mouth open. She is suffering rather, hands up, grasping.

Student: Racism is expressed in a picture. This image shows a police officer killing a person who is his victim. I feel there's injustice in this image. There's violence, and the atmosphere is stressful and scary.

Host/s: And all of these struggles, you can also hear them in the music. Even the music that we listen to today.

Seriously?

-But yes.

-Rap.

-And the whole hip-hop culture.

[Outro music plays...]

Host/s: Why is there racism?

Just because I'm black, they've hated me all these years.

It was episode 4 of the Museum Boogie Woogie.

In the next episode, we will talk about museums.

With the students of the Collège Solignac in Strasbourg,

Joyce: Martine Debaene

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