INSIDE THE MUSICAL GUIDE

AFTER MIDNIGHT

AUGUST 5-24, 2025

Conceived by Jack Viertel
Selected text by Langston Hughes

A DEBUT PRODUCTION OF THE 5TH AVENUE THEATRE

Directed by Jay Santos
Choreographed by Pamela Yasutake
Music Directed and Conducted by William Knowles

This Inside the Musical Guide offers supplementary curriculum containing educational content, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the themes of the show *After Midnight*. This guide can be utilized before or after experiencing the show.
Questions? Reach out to educationprograms@5thavenue.org

Graphic Design: Stephon Dorsey

The 5th's Inside the Musical Guides are curated and developed by the Education and Engagement team:
Amberlee Joers — Director of Education and Engagement
Jessica Ellison — Senior Manager of Education and Engagement Programs
Miranda Quintanilla — Education and Engagement Coordinator
Beth Pollack — Dramaturg & Curriculum Specialist
Gemma Balinbin - Engagement Specialist

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SYNOPSIS

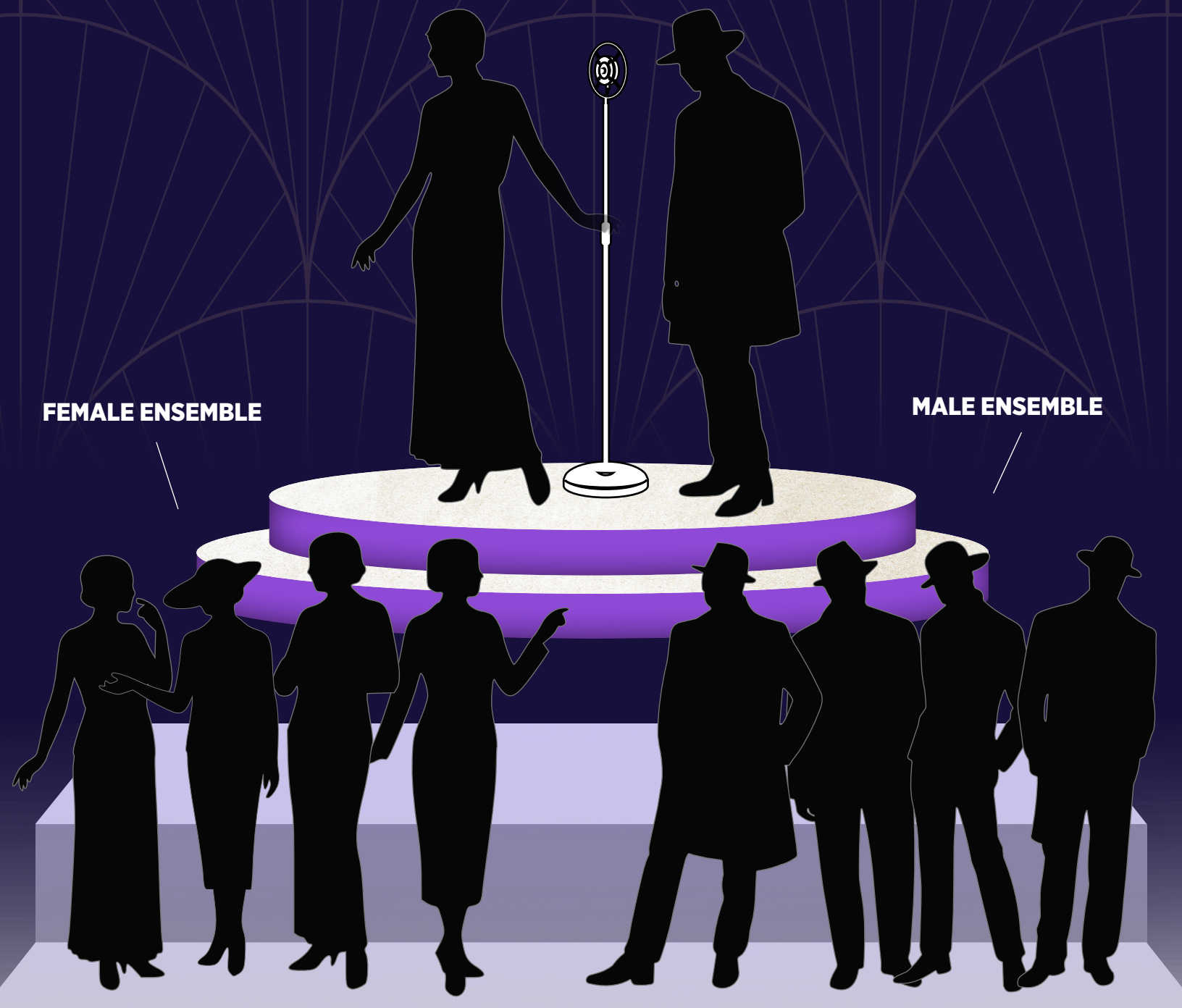
After Midnight takes the sexy, smoky glamour of the original Jazz Age and catapults it into a whole new era of heart-pounding, mind-blowing entertainment for modern Broadway audiences using his original arrangements that were first performed by a world-class big band of 17 musicians. The timeless tunes set against a narrative of Langston Hughes poetry provides an authentic backdrop for an array of cutting-edge performances by sensational vocalists and dancers, including special guest stars, whose interpretations will shatter everything you think you know about music, nightlife, and Broadway.

CONTENT ADVISORY:
After Midnight *is generally suitable for all ages 5 and up and includes depictions of smoking and theatrical haze.*

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

LADY
a beautiful woman who is our star singer

EMCEE
a singing host who transports the audience through time



FEMALE ENSEMBLE

MALE ENSEMBLE

HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A MUSICAL?

Did you know that over **217 people** people play an important role in making our production of *After Midnight*?

14
CAST
Principals, ensemble, external understudies

8
ORCHESTRA

16
CREATIVE TEAM
Directors, Choreographers, Designers, Intimacy Director, Music Department

5
PROPS

5
STAGE MANAGERS & PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

9
AUDITION & CASTING

2
HAIR & MAKE-UP

35
SETS
Carpenters, Builders, and Scenic Artists

70
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

5
SOUND

11
LIGHTING

15
COSTUMES
Costume shop, Wardrobe, Dressers

20
USHERS

2
FLY
Fly Operator

+YOU!

UP TO **1,886** PEOPLE CAN ATTEND EACH PERFORMANCE

Learn about the roles of The 5th's staff and *After Midnight* team members on our website or in the show program.

Behind The Show

with Jay Santos & Matthew Smith

Before rehearsals for After Midnight began, director Jay Santos sat down for an interview with M.V. Smith for an article with the Earshot Jazz Festival, an annual event in the fall, but the organization also publishes a magazine; Jay's interview appeared in Vol. 41, Number 6.

Q: What drew you to *After Midnight*?

Jay Santos: *After Midnight* is a love letter to the Harlem Renaissance, to Duke Ellington, and to the Black cultural explosion of the 1930s. Harlem isn't just a neighborhood—it's a heartbeat. It's an archive of brilliance, struggle, invention, and joy. Jazz, especially as Ellington lived it, wasn't just music; it was survival, resistance, and poetry. This show isn't just a revue—it's a living mural. And in this moment, when we're again reckoning with whose stories are heard and who gets to define American culture, *After Midnight* reminds us that Black artistry is American artistry.

Q: What is your process when it comes to putting your own stamp on a well-known piece like this? How do you know when you've really found your way into it?

Jay Santos: I always say: no matter how familiar a piece is, we have to approach it as though it's brand new. That's the only way to truly listen to the material. My process starts with what's on the page—what does the text require of us? What does it invite us to imagine? And from there, I ask the creative team: what world can we build together if we suspend everything we think we know about this show?

With *After Midnight*, it was less about "stamping" and more about excavating. The show is a reverent celebration of Black brilliance, but that doesn't mean it has to live in a museum case. I wanted to find a way to make it feel alive, flirtatious, dangerous, and intimate—all at once. I knew I had found the heart of it when I could hear Langston Hughes's words and Duke Ellington's music in conversation...not as separate artifacts, but as part of the same spiritual landscape.

Q: How do you approach giving shape/pacing to a revue, without a narrative to guide you? Do you try to craft "characters" for each number with the singers/dancers by honing their stage presence accordingly? How important is the Langston Hughes text to setting the scene?

Jay Santos: Revue-style musicals can be deceptively tricky. Without a plot, your spine has to come from rhythm, breath, and tone. My job is to listen for that emotional arc—not just in the music, but in how one number hands the baton to the next. What needs release? What needs tension? What earns silence?

We've approached each number as a little universe. Every performer enters with an attitude, a status, a moment they are holding onto. Are they hunting love? Playing a game? Running from something? Those tiny character arcs matter. And Langston Hughes? He's our North Star. His poems provide breath between the beats—an exhale that reminds us why this world existed and for whom it pulsed.

Q: When you're directing a period piece do you try to immerse yourself in the era/scene you're depicting?

Jay Santos: Absolutely. But I think immersion goes beyond historical accuracy—it's about cultural resonance. I read, I listen, I research, yes—but I also try to feel what people were hungry for in that moment. What did joy look like? What did protest sound like in a trumpet solo? What was survival coded as on the dance floor?

For *After Midnight*, I've immersed myself not only in 1930s Harlem, but also in Seattle's own jazz lineage. That's why we're hosting community salons with elder

Black artists and inviting local musicians and dancers to shape the work with us. History isn't just something we look back on—it's something we inherit and move through.

Q: Have you started work with the costume designer, set designer, choreographer etc? Are you at a point where you can make public any of the singers/dancers that have been cast so far?

I'd say the scenic design, which has been crafted by the incomparable Carey Wong. Carey has this incredible ability to create stage environments that breathe—that feel less like backdrops and more like living, dreaming organisms. When we first spoke about *After Midnight*, we both knew that simply recreating a period-perfect jazz club wouldn't be enough. This show isn't just about one space—it's about the entire spirit of Harlem.

I asked Carey to imagine Harlem as the sheet music of a cultural revolution. What would it look like if the city itself had been painted in sound? What if the buildings, the sidewalks, the streetlights—everything—was vibrating with the pulse of jazz? Carey's design is inspired by Harlem after-dark, rendered almost like a dreamscape. It's lush, it's saturated, and it celebrates the ecstatic joy and community that defined the era. Because jazz isn't confined to a club—it lives in your bones. It moves you. And our set invites you to feel that movement from the moment the curtain rises.

Q: Do you have a background in music and jazz/swing dancing, or a personal connection to the music/dance of the jazz age?

My relationship to jazz—and really to music as a whole—goes back as far as I can remember. I grew up dancing, moving, expressing myself through rhythm before I even had words for what I was doing. Jazz, blues, and hip hop weren't just genres I listened to—they shaped how I understood the world, how I communicated, and how I created.

Jazz, in particular, taught me about improvisation—not just as a technique, but as a way of living and leading. It taught me how to listen deeply, how to find meaning in the pauses, the unexpected notes, the things that don't announce themselves right away. It's had everything to do with how I show up in space as a director, as a collaborator, as a human being.

Blues taught me how music can hold emotional weight even without words—that a horn or a slide guitar can tell you everything you need to know about grief, longing, joy. And hip hop showed me the power of voice—the courage to say what needs to be said, the urgency of truth-telling, and the beauty of speaking from exactly where you stand.

All of these influences live in me, and in this production. *After Midnight* may be rooted in jazz, but it carries the DNA of all Black music—and it moves me deeply to be part of honoring that legacy on stage.

Q: What difference does seeing performances live on stage make to the viewer's perceptions of the music/dance of that time?

Seeing *After Midnight* live isn't just about witnessing incredible music and dance—it's about stepping into the living, breathing legacy of Black artistry. The Harlem Renaissance was more than a moment in time—it was a declaration. A cultural explosion. A reclaiming of joy, beauty, and self-expression in a world that tried to deny all of it.

This piece is unapologetically about Black culture—its resilience, its brilliance, and its style. When you see this work on stage, you're not just hearing Ellington—you're seeing his spirit in the swagger of a two-step, in the velvet of a tuxedo, in the sparkle of a sly glance across the club floor. You're watching dandyism and defiance and delight, all in motion.

I think about how the Met Gala this year centered Black style and the Dandy as a theme. After Midnight is rooted in that same legacy—the permission to create with abandon, to be bold, extravagant, and fully yourself. Live performance makes that permission feel contagious.

And I hope audiences leave feeling that spark. I hope they want to learn more. If jazz wasn't already on their playlists, I hope they fix that immediately. I hope they look up the artists they just saw on stage and go support them in the work they do all around Seattle—especially our powerhouse jazz band, who live and play right here in our community. This isn't just history. It's happening now.

Tap Dance in *After Midnight*

with Pamela Yasutake

edited by Simran Kaur

We sat down with Pamela Yasutake, Choreographer for *After Midnight*, to talk about her Seattle roots and the choreography of the show. CLICK HERE to hear more from Pamela!

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

by JESS ELLISON

Harold Arlen (1905-1986)

Harold Arlen, born Hymen Arluck, is a songwriter known for creating "complex melodies and harmonies that somehow remained accessible to a broad popular audience." He was born to a musical family; Arlen's father was a synagogue cantor and the Music Director for the synagogue, so Arlen was immersed in music at an early age. As a child, Arlen studied music privately with Arnold Cornelissen and Simon Bucharoff, and by age 15 he worked as a professional pianist and entertainer in nightclubs. By his late teens Arlen organized and managed the music group, The Snappy Trio, which later became The Southbound Shufflers and moved Southeast to New York City. Arlen quickly became acquainted with the New York City performance scene and began playing both Broadway and Vaudeville circuits, and collaborated with some of the most well-known lyricists of Tin Pan Alley (a music publishing district in NYC between Broadway and 6th Ave).

One of Arlen's biggest hits, "Stormy Weather," was a surprise to him. He didn't think the song would perform well, but it went on to become incredibly well-known. But despite his work in New York City being well-known, Arlen never achieved a Broadway hit nor became a household name, and eventually made his way out to Hollywood to produce and write for film musicals. It was in Hollywood that Arlen found success with his work on *The Wizard of Oz* and *A Star is Born*. In 1982, Arlen received the Songwriters Hall of Fame's highest honor, and was the recipient of The Johnny Mercer Award for his excellence in lyric writing and composition.

Duke Ellington (1899-1974)

Born Edward Kennedy Ellington to a middle class Black family in Washington D.C., Duke Ellington is often regarded as "one of the most important creative forces in the music of the 20th century." As a young child, Ellington originally wanted to pursue painting and visual art, but as an early teen he learned James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout," caught the music bug, and formed his first jazz band, The Duke's Serenaders. In 1924, Ellington moved to New York, and by 1927 he and his band were hired to play regularly at the Cotton Club; they also changed their name to The Washingtonians. Their performances were broadcast on a nightly basis, which quickly led to fame. Through this fame, Ellington began to be recognized not only as an accomplished performer, but also as a serious composer. In 1931, The Washingtonians were invited to visit the White House and the following year in 1932, Ellington composed the song "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)", which would go on to become the anthem of the U.S. swing era. Just one year later, they embarked on their first European tour in 1933. This tour highlighted many of the challenges that The Washingtonians faced wherever they traveled, but there was more of a spotlight on them during the international tour.

The group faced racial discrimination almost everywhere they traveled. In the Southern U.S. specifically, Ellington

[1] "Harold Arlen." Songwriters Hall of Fame.

[2] "Duke Ellington." Songwriters Hall of Fame.

was known for hiring a private rail car so that the band could avoid the overcrowding of the coloreds-only train cars.

As a composer, Ellington focused mainly on the instrumentals, and the lyrics would be added later. As his band grew and Ellington grew into his own style and expertise, he began to break away from the more standard and traditional conventions of band-section scoring. Instead, he used new harmonies that allowed many of his musician's individual sounds to blend and emphasized congruent sections. Ellington's deep knowledge of his musicians has led him to become known as the originator of "big band" jazz – a style of jazz featuring a large ensemble of jazz musicians, usually around 10-25 people strong. After World War II, there was a sharp decline in big bands throughout all music scenes, and Ellington, committed to his craft and to his musicians, paid his band from his royalties as a composer.

Ellington also used his influence to support Black peoples' struggles for racial justice. When his career began, he was playing in segregated music halls, but later on in his career he refused to play for segregated audiences and demanded that dance and music halls provide equal access for Black youths. He saw himself as using his music as a more palatable and relatable form of activism. He shared both the joys and challenges of Black life through his music, and introduced white audiences to stories of racial injustice. He also held a benefit concert for the Scottsboro Boys – nine Black teenagers who were falsely accused of a violent crime in Alabama in 1931.

By the end of his storied career, Ellington had been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Richard Nixon.

Dorothy Fields (1905-1971)

Dorothy Fields has been called "THE woman songwriter," in response to her prolific career from the 1920s-70s. Fields was born to a showbiz family; her father, Lew Fields, was one half of the Weber and Fields vaudeville act and later became a theater producer known as being "The King of Musical Comedy." Despite, or maybe because of, his background in performing, Lew Fields disapproved of acting as a career for his daughter and tried to make that career impossible for her. Dorothy Fields pivoted, and began to focus more on songwriting as a career. In 1926, she collaborated with composer J. Fred Coots for the first time, and Coots introduced Fields to composer Jimmy McHugh. Fields also got a job at Mills Music, Incorporated and got paid 50 dollars for each lyric that she wrote. During her time at Mills Music, one of her more popular songs was a song commemorating aviator Ruth Elder's attempt to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

In addition to Coots and McHugh, Fields collaborated with composer Jerome Kern and her brother, Herbert Fields. With Kern, she won the Academy Award for "The Way You Look Tonight" and wrote for Fred Astaire's 1936 film *Swingtime*. She also worked with Kern and her brother on the musical *Annie Get Your Gun*. The musical was conceived by Fields and she pitched it to Oscar Hammerstein. Sadly, Kern passed before the project started. Irving Berlin stepped in to replace Kern and collaborated on the music and lyrics.

Throughout her career, Fields was known for keeping a very strict working schedule. Before a project started, Fields would spend no less than 8 weeks doing research, and when the writing process or rehearsals began, Fields would work from 8:30 AM to 4 PM daily until the project was completed. But, this schedule seemed to pay off. By the end of her career, Fields had created over 400 songs, 15 musicals, and 26 movies. She also has a legacy of writing lyrics that had strong characterization and "were inventive without being tricky."

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[3] Deborah Grace, On the Sunny Side of the Street: The Life & Lyrics of Dorothy Fields. Simon & Schuster, 1997.

[4] Deborah Grace, On the Sunny Side of the Street: The Life & Lyrics of Dorothy Fields.

Langston Hughes (1901-1967)

Langston Hughes was a well-known poet, who also wrote novels, short stories, essays, and plays. He was born in Joplin, Missouri in 1901, but prior to research that was discovered in 2018, Hughes was believed to have been born in 1902; new documentation put his birth at one year earlier. As a child, Hughes' parents divorced and he was raised by his grandmother until she passed. When he was around 13 years old, he went to live with his mother and her new husband in Lincoln, Illinois and he began writing. By the time he returned to the United States in 1924 he was well established in his career and was considered to be one of the first African Americans to make a living solely from writing and public lectures and appearances.In all of his work he "sought to honestly portray the joys and hardships of working-class Black lives, avoiding both sentimental idealization and negative stereotypes." Because of this portrayal, many working class Black people held Hughes' work in high regard, despite more negative comments from critics. While Hoyt W. Fuller, an author and critic during the Black Arts Movement, found that Hughes intentionally "chose to identify with plain black [sic] people... precisely because he saw more truth and profound significance in doing so," many other critics and intellectuals seemed not to understand Hughes' motivation for writing and criticized his work for highlighting a more unsavory depiction of Black life in America.

One of Hughes' most popular and seemingly relatable fictional character's was Jesse B. Semple, otherwise known as Simple. Simple was a poor man from Harlem who was often portrayed as a comedic ne'er-do-well. He would often tell his stories to a writer named Boyd, in exchange for a drink. Many of his stories revolved around common themes like work, women and relationships, money, and life. For many, Simple offered a realistic and unflinching view of life as a poor Black man living in a racist society. Simple first appeared in a 1942 column called "From Here to Yonder" that Hughes wrote for the Chicago Defender; that column would later become part of the New York Post.

Despite Hughes' early support for portraying authentic Black life, his popularity did begin to decline in his later years. As more of the younger authors of the time became more radical and militant, Hughes maintained a more neutral position, with many people left questioning if he had any political stance at all. As writers of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement made more pointed declarations that most people were prejudice or racist, Hughes kept his conviction that in his experience from all of the places that he had lived, most people, regardless of race, were good people.

Even with harsh feedback from critics and wavering public support, Hughes maintains a legacy as one of the most accomplished writers of his time and cemented himself in history.

[5]"Langston Hughes." Poetry Foundation.

Jimmy McHugh (1894-1969)

James Francis McHugh was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1894. His mother taught him piano starting at an early age, and McHugh would go on to learn at St. John's Preparatory School and Holy Cross College, where he studied music. Following college, his first job was at the Boston Opera House as a rehearsal pianist. He then went to work at Irving Berlin's production company. In 1921, McHugh moved to New York and began writing for the Cotton Club. Eventually, by 1927, he would meet lyricist Dorothy Fields, and the two would become close collaborators. In 1928 they had an early hit with the song "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby," a song that was originally written for the all-Black Broadway revue, Blackbirds. With newfound success and fame as collaborators, the two moved to Hollywood and began writing for film. In 1935, Fields began new collaborations with Jerome Kern, and McHugh found a new lyrical collaborator in Harold Adamson. McHugh and Adamson began to write more patriotic-centered songs during World War II, and were awarded the Presidential Certificate of Merit by President Harry Truman for their work.

Outside of music, McHugh was a very community-minded individual. Towards the end of his career in 1951, he founded the Jimmy McHugh Polio Foundation, which became Jimmy McHugh Charities. From 1950-52, he also served as President of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce.

ALL THAT JAZZ:
AN ABRIDGED OVERVIEW

BY JESS ELLISON

The distinct style of jazz music that many of us know today is largely credited as being developed in the clubs of New Orleans, Louisiana in the early 20th century. However jazz – even more so than other musical styles – is a constantly evolving style, and its development began long before New Orleans nightlife. Known for its trademarks of instrumental solos, improvisation, syncopation, call-and-response, and polyrhythms, the early origins of jazz can be traced back to the mixture of West African rhythms and European musical structures that occurred during slavery in the United States.

During slavery, enslaved Africans were barred from performing the music of their tribes and cultures; however, many of these styles were able to be partially and more secretly maintained by those on southern plantations. Over time, the music that was preserved from many West African tribes encountered the European musical elements of the time. These musical encounters led to the early iterations of jazz as a gradual mix of both Black and African musical styles and European popular styles.

From here, jazz continued to evolve and shares similarity with other musical styles that developed around the same time. Many of the syncopations found in jazz are similar to the syncopations found in ragtime. However, to many non-Black people and communities, the syncopations and sounds of jazz were more novel because it was a musical element that didn't previously exist in classical European music. Many of the syncopations that we experience in *After Midnight* are a result of over 100 years of adapting and simplifying the multilayered and polyrhythmic designs of West African music. While syncopations have a more clear origin, jazz melodies developed in a more obscure way. Melodies likely developed as a mixture of West African and European vocals developed by slaves from field hollers and work songs. The emphasis on the pentatonic formations came from West Africa, while much of the diatonic melodic lines derived from European songs of the 19th and 20th century. Because of the deep ties to West Africa and the links between the blend of European musical styles and the musical styles of enslaved peoples, the development of jazz is almost inextricably linked to the slave trade in the United States.

Another unique element of jazz is that it blurs the line between composer and performer. In other musical styles of the time these two roles were very distinct. But in jazz, performers were more often than not, performing pieces of their own composition. Jelly

Roll Morton claimed to be the inventor of jazz. The early parts of his career consisted of playing ragtime in New Orleans' red light district, and eventually he began to play throughout the southern states and even ventured into Los Angeles. Morton was the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz and is widely known as being one of the first major composers of jazz music and mixed New Orleans style with other southern styles, the sound of Los Angeles, and other musical genres. He helped codify the distinct and more coherent New Orleans jazz style that was prominent from 1910 until about 1925 and featured systemized ensembles. During this time, only a limited amount of instruments were available to Black musicians and most ensembles featured the cornet, clarinet, trombone, tuba, bass, piano, banjo, and drums (the saxophone would be incorporated about a decade later). Each of these instruments had a distinct role and sound within the ensemble; for example the cornet was used to state the tune of a piece, while the clarinet would perform the obbligato in a higher register. Around 1925, as people became more comfortable with jazz as a musical style, improvised solos took off and slowly led to the decrease of the tight New Orleans ensemble.

From New Orleans, jazz spread to many other cities throughout the United States, and ultimately attained an international and global reach. Because of this, jazz is often called an American artform; but there can be dangers in naming it as such. The major innovators of jazz have been Black and their music tells the specific stories of their strife and resilience as Black people (amongst other things). Additionally, jazz's links to the sounds of West African tribes lead some to attest that it is irresponsible to name jazz as an American artform as the style should be credited as specifically an African American artform. Others believe that while Black and African American jazz musicians should feel a sense of ownership over the style and of their work, the fact that jazz is played and enjoyed universally means that it should be credited as a Northern American artform.

Jazz, who lays claim to it, and how it is labeled, are all in flux; but this speaks to the overarching essence of the musical style itself. There is no clear answer to how to describe jazz and there is no clear answer as to how jazz is received by dominant cultures. It continues to be both praised and criticized for being innovative and breaking tradition, for acting as a cultural expression of suppressed emotions, and for giving expression to non-European music.

As you listen to the music and the style of *After Midnight*, consider all of the history, praises, and critiques of jazz. Jazz is intended to make people feel something, pay close attention to the moments in the music that impact you deeply. What instruments are being highlighted in those moments? What do the rhythms seem to say? And how may you be able to find moments of similarity or shared expression in aspects of your own culture? These questions speak both to the history and to the everlasting legacy of jazz.

MUSICAL REVUE

BY BETH POLLACK

A musical revue is a collection of songs, dances, and other theatrical performance modes that usually lacks a central narrative but frequently has a connective theme; often, this theme comments on or satirizes the events or society of the time the revue was written.

The revue can trace its roots to many places and forms of performance. In the United States, the Broadway revue draws inspiration from variety shows, minstrelsy, and burlesque. The American variety show was a raucous program of music, acrobatics, magic, and dancing that was performed for tough, often intoxicated crowds. Burlesque, however, was a more respectable and even literary art form at the time, which featured music, spectacular effects, and comedic exaggeration of contemporary issues, well known figures, or famous literature. Minstrelsy was the racist collection of music and sketches built on stereotyped depictions of Black people, often performed by white performers in blackface. From these three forms came the building blocks of the Broadway revue: a succession of theatrical acts that included spectacle, satire, and comedy, all designed for mass appeal.

Precursors to the Broadway revue started popping up in New York City as early as 1866, but expert showman Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. captured the public with *Follies of 1907*, a revue featuring satirical sketches, music written by an abundance of composers and lyricists, and a multitude of chorus girls. In the wake of Ziegfeld's success, other producers created their own series of yearly revues; others created individual and stand-alone revues. However, as radio shows, movies, and television began to dominate the field of variety entertainment, the musical revue's often disjointed approach to creating a theatrical performance fell out of favor. Still, the Broadway revue was an essential part of the Broadway season for an arguably brief 50 years between 1907 and 1957, when the last touring production of *The Ziegfeld Follies* closed.

The musical revue was where some of the United States' most illustrious performers and composers learned or refined their art; household names like Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, and Lorenz Hart wrote for musical revues while performers like Fanny Bryce, Ed Wynn, W.C. Fields, Bob Hope, Gypsy Rose Lee, Will Rogers, Bea Arthur, and Josephine Baker could be found treading the boards.

The Harlem Renaissance

By Jess Ellison

The Harlem Renaissance is considered by many to be one of the most influential movements in Black artistic history. From roughly 1918 to 1937, there was an influx of Black artists and innovators in literature, poetry, visual arts, sculpture, dance, opera, theater, music, and more.

Post-Civil War, many Black people in the Southern United States began to look at the Northern and Midwestern parts of the country as a small refuge from oppression and Jim Crow. These areas had industrial economies that were less racially segregated and were generally more racially tolerant than the South. At the turn of the 20th Century, the Great Migration occurred; this was a period when many Black southerners relocated to cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York City.

Harlem, New York is a formerly white residential city north of Central Park that's just about 3 square miles. During the Great Migration over 175,000 Black people relocated to Harlem, making it the largest concentration of Black people in the world at the time. Many of the people that relocated to Harlem shared a determination for a new cultural identity and Pan-Africanism ideals. These ideals of the Great Migration, along with rising literacy rates, helped lay the foundation for the Harlem Renaissance. While there were other artistic renaissances taking place throughout cities of the Great Migration, Harlem became the symbolic capital due to the concentration of people that Harlem was home to.

The Harlem Renaissance is considered by many to be one of the most influential movements in Black artistic history. From roughly 1918 to 1937, there was an influx of Black artists and innovators in literature, poetry, visual arts, sculpture, dance, opera, theater, music, and more, as well as an increase in Black-owned business and buildings. The artists of the Harlem Renaissance had the shared goal of hoping to reconceptualize the idea of "The Negro" apart from the white-created stereotypes that had influenced Black peoples' relationships to their heritage and to each other. While there were shared goals, the Harlem Renaissance is not recognized by one specific group of thought. Instead, it is recognized by hearty debates and conversations on Black consciousness by the artists and audiences of the time.

The Harlem Renaissance was also created in some ways, as a response to some of the cultural movements that came before. The New Negro Movement was spearheaded by W. E. B. DuBois and asserted the idea of a "New" Negro who was northeastern, urban, and middle-class. New Negros were both dedicated to creating public spaces that affirmed various Black cultural expressions and critiquing the meaning and the legacy of the American South.

The art of the Harlem Renaissance was focused on Black aesthetics, both ones that were conserved during slavery and new aesthetics that were being created for the first time. Many Black artists of the renaissance saw themselves and their art as the basis for innovation and self-expression for American culture. What many of the Harlem Renaissance artists asserted–especially DuBois and James Weldon Johnson–was that the only truly unique American culture and expression was Black/African American culture and expression. Their argument was that Black people in America had to completely reinvent themselves and create a new culture during and after slavery, when their previous traditions had been forcibly taken from them; but white Americans (who claimed that white culture was American culture) never had to deal with this trauma. The shared creation of African American culture made Black people artistic architects and leaders. This thought was supported by the globalization of blues and jazz music; as those Black-created genres gained international acclaim, many people in different countries referred to them as American genres of music, reinforcing the claims that Black culture is American culture.

The art and literature of this period was also united by the realistic portrayals of being Black in America; this was a throughline no matter the artistic medium. There was a perceived sense of militancy in this as many artists used their art to claim their civil and political rights. Many believed that the Black art and business achievements of the Harlem Renaissance would help revolutionize race relations in the United States and promote a healthier understanding of Black people for themselves.

The Black Queer Renaissance

An often erased part of the Harlem Renaissance is the vast amount of contributions and innovations from people who hold Black and queer identities. Historian Henry Louis Gates Jr. famously said that the Harlem Renaissance was "surely as gay as it was Black." During the renaissance much of the public consumed Black queer culture without recognizing it as both Black and queer, and while actively villainizing queer people, Black people, and people who were both Black and queer.

While the Harlem Renaissance did encourage new Black cultural expressions, queerness was something that was taboo for many people. Female performers (especially blues singers and dancers) had more flexibility to express their sexuality because it was seen as less legitimate and damaging to the patriarchy. Many queer Black women were very vocal about their same-sex relationships or affairs, and faced less retribution than Black gay men. Black gay men were seen as failing masculinity and posed a threat to the advancement of Blackness; because of this they tended to face more violence and limitations in how they could express themselves.

This is not to suggest, however, that Black gay women faced zero hostility and oppression for their sexual identities. Ma Rainey, a blues singer, was dropped from her label after the controversy around her song "Prove it on me Blues." The poster for the song featured Ma Rainey in butch clothing, flirting with two women, while a police officer looked on. The song also featured lyrics that described Ma Rainey talking to women just like men would, because she likes women and not men.

To avoid violence and other oppression, many Black queer people created private underground networks and gatherings. One of these networks was the ballroom and house scene. Ballroom houses created a new kinship structure and operate as safe spaces for those who have been ostracized from other spaces; they are domestic sites created specifically for survival and authentic expression. In addition to ballroom houses operating as family units, the drag ball events were events where attendees and houses could perform different categories

for trophies and cash prizes. While categories could be fun and based on a current trend, the first categories (and the ones that remain today) are based on expression. People could walk in the butch category, as a femme queen, and more.

Private house parties also became a popular escape for Black queer people during the Harlem Renaissance. Called either rent parties or pay parties, people would pay an entry fee for food, bootleg alcohol, dancing, music, and to contribute to the host's rent. These parties were often segregated by gender and race for maximum privacy and could range from just social gatherings to sexual parties that allowed people to explore their sexual identities. When not gathering in someone's home, many would also frequent queer-friendly cabarets and clubs like Harry Hansberry's Clam House on 133rd Street. Here, gay and trans performers could perform and create art, often with the comfort of knowing that a majority of the audience would be queer.

The Renaissance's Decline and its Enduring Legacy

The 1929 stock market crash that would ultimately lead to the Great Depression hurt many of the Black businesses of Harlem that had previously been thriving. There was also less passive income that audience members could spend on Black art, and eventually the Harlem Renaissance began to decline. During this time of decline some newer writers tried to differentiate themselves from the Harlem Renaissance and stated that some of the artists and their work had started to descend into white sponsorship and bourgeois attitudes. Some artists of the renaissance were able to continue their art through the Great Depression however, and the 1931 novel *God Sends Sunday* by Arna Bontemps (his first novel) is considered to be the last work of the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance has had a lasting impact both nationally and globally. It inspired the Negritude renaissance in many French-speaking countries, and continues to inspire future generations of Black art and academia. Many contemporary Black women writers credit the Black women of the Harlem Renaissance as laying the foundation for their work now and seek to uplift their work and bring it out from the shadows of many of the Black men of the renaissance. t

In many cases, the goals of the Harlem Renaissance were met. Artists created new forms of self and cultural expression that were able to challenge the harmful stereotypes of the Jim Crow era. Additionally the work of the Harlem Renaissance ushered in a new Black social consciousness and laid the groundwork for the political activism of eras to come.

The Cotton Club

By Jess Ellison

The Cotton Club was a Harlem staple and is still one of the world's most famous and well-known nightclubs. The Cotton Club is primarily known for laying the foundation for performer's careers and catapulting many performers to success–namely many Black performers of the time.

In 1920, Jake Johnson, the first Black heavyweight boxing champion opened Club Deluxe on the corner of 142nd Street and Lenox Avenue. This 400-seat club featured a variety of Black entertainers and had a predominantly Black audience as well. In 1922, Club Deluxe was bought by Owen "Owney" Madden and rebranded as the Cotton Club.

Madden redesigned the interior of the club, making room for 700 seats, and started weekly radio broadcasts to a national audience. Quickly, the Cotton Club became the most popular cabaret in Harlem.

The Cotton Club helped launch many of the careers of the artists that are featured in After Midnight. The club featured house bands (like Duke Ellington's and Cab Calloway's) as well as chorus lines, dancers, and other rotating performers. 1922 through 1935 were the club's most successful and profitable years; following the Harlem Riots of 1935, the Cotton Club moved locations and settled on West 48th Street, but never found the same success and closed in 1940.

Despite the club's rich history, the overall narrative of the Cotton Club is fraught with conflicting information and a challenging racial history. When Madden took over in 1922, it was believed that he limited the Cotton Club to be a whites-only audience. If you google the Cotton Club or read some of the older historical recounts of the venue, most sources will state that it was a segregated club. However, memoirs and personal testimonies from some of the Black performers that worked at the Cotton Club tell a different story. Among these testimonies is a story from Cab Calloway, who claimed that the Cotton Club would admit wealthier Black patrons on a case-by-case basis. However, Calloway clarifies that this only occurred at the Harlem location. Once the club moved to West 48th Street on Broadway, the audience became whites-only.

Similarly, there are varying accounts when it comes to the relationships between the Black performers and the predominantly white audiences at the Cotton Club. Many reviews by white audiences members or music critics suggest that there was a healthy balance between performers and audiences. In a 1927 review of the club, Abel Green–a white journalist–stated that the Black staff and performers had agency over the club and in many cases, acted like they ran the place. On the other hand, Black performers like Dempsey J. Travis and Howard Eugene "Stretch" Johnson said that they were exploited by the Cotton Club's white management and even compared the club to commercial enslavement. Langston Hughes also felt strongly about these relationships and stated that it often felt as though white audience members were gawking at the perceived exoticism of Black performers.

Within these challenging relationships, however, many of the performers used their artforms as modes of resistance and as ways to subvert the expectations of the white gaze. Duke Ellington began to be credited as having "jungle-style" music. While the use of jungle evokes a sense of primitivity, Ellington's music was highly stylized and complex, which he used to undermine the primitive connotation. Many of the Black women dancers at the club were subject to the sexual fantasies of white male audience members during their performances. But while they played into these fantasies with dances, their dances also displayed immense bodily control and autonomy.

Today, the Cotton Club remains one of the most recognizable nightclub names across the globe. In 1978 the original club was recreated in Harlem, and many other clubs reuse the name for its notoriety. Part of the legacy of the Cotton Club is also its complicated history. The Cotton Club was an avenue of success for many Black performers and entertainers, and was also a site of exploitation for some. The Cotton Club did occasionally admit wealthy Black patrons, and was still a predominantly white audience that was fully segregated at some periods in its history. It can be easy to simplify the narrative of the Cotton Club by labeling it as either a good or bad place, but I encourage you to sit and grapple with its conflicting history and explore the nuance, ambiguity, and varying perspectives in its story.

Sittin' on the Stoop

By Jess Ellison

For many communities and cultures, a front stoop–or just stoop for short–is a multigenerational site of community and culture building. Oftentimes, stoops are seen as being synonymous with front porches, but the two have vastly different contexts. A front porch is a large platform that extends from the front of a house, and is usually found in a suburban setting. The size of a porch usually allows for additional furniture like chairs, or for decorations like plants and flowers. A stoop on the other hand, is a smaller, elevated platform with steps that leads up to a building entrance. Stoops are specifically found in more urban areas and are associated with row houses or brownstones. The suburban vs. urban distinction between these two structures are important when it comes to exploring how location and geography intertwine with race and cultural practices.

The stoop operates as a liminal space, or as a space that exists between two different entities; it is not one hundred percent its own space, but has some ambiguity to it. The stoop holds the space between the street and the home. It is both the sidewalk boundary and the entryway to one's home. For urban Black communities, stoops are also an informal institution of the Black public sphere; a concept that refers to the spaces where Black communities have engaged in discourse and collective action, both historically and contemporarily. Black women specifically have used stoops as a site for grassroots community organizing. For example, during the height of the AIDS epidemic, Black women passed out contraceptive methods to people on their front stoops. Discourse and conversation on the stoop could range from the latest neighborhood gossip to critiques about the neighborhood and community happenings to discussions on music and popular culture. The daily gossip could be either refuted or elaborated, and in many instances new pop culture trends in the city started on the stoop. Stoops were also multigenerational spaces and were often used by kids to play and to hang out before their next summer adventure.

With all of these uses in mind, stoops were seen as a place of comfort and relaxation, and relaxation has been (and continues to be) a form of resistance to the demands of society and to the daily racism and prejudice that people endured. There was a sense of ownership over stoops, largely due to the significance that they held in one's routine and daily life. Even if a home or building was being rented, an individual or family still "owned" their stoop and there was a shared knowledge that accompanied the culture of stoops. People within the neighborhood or community knew not to "post up" at someone else's stoop, and because stoops were multigenerational gathering places, it's understood that conversations remained respectful when children were around.

While the importance and cultural significance of the stoop has remained the same, its prevalence has decreased with larger cultural shifts like gentrification. As many long-time urban residents get priced out of their homes, demographics and neighborhood cultures change, and many are finding that stoops are becoming more isolated and private spaces, rather than open communal spaces. Despite current shifts, stoops remain a vital part of historical culture-building and speak to perseverance of many communities.

Create Your Own Cabaret Table

By Jess Ellison

The set design of After Midnight includes cabaret tables designed by local Washington artists! These tables portray the idea of "Black jubilee" and are expressions of Black art and culture from the perspective of members in our local communities. Now, take a moment to consider what you might design for your own cabaret table! How would you represent your culture and the things that bring you and your community joy and comfort? Consider some of these ideas and questions to help you get started: Does your family have a special holiday tradition? What does a typical day with your community look like? Do you have any favorite memories with your family and friends? What are some notable memories from your childhood?

Happy drawing!

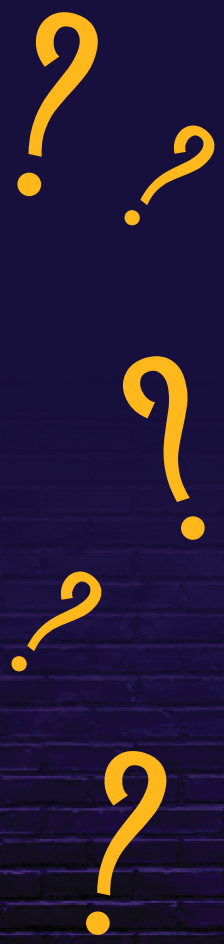
Artist Match!

By Jess Ellison

Each of these artists has an extensive body of work. Test your knowledge on these artists and see how well you can match the artist to their creations! Each artist will match up to 4 things listed on this page.

The Artists:

- Harold Arlen
- Duke Ellington
- Dorothy Fields
- Langston Hughes
- Jimmy McHugh



The Works:

1. "Where Are You?" by _____
2. "I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me" by _____
3. "In a Sentimental Mood" by _____
4. *The Big Sea* by _____
5. "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" by _____
6. "Mother to Son" by _____
7. "Seesaw" by _____
8. "Can't Get Out Of This Mood" by _____
9. "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street" by _____
10. "That Old Black Magic" by _____
11. "I Didn't Know About You" by _____
12. "The Way You Look Tonight" by _____
13. "Fun to be Fooled" by _____
14. "If My Friends Could See Me Now" by _____
15. "Prelude to a Kiss" by _____
16. "Over the Rainbow" by _____
17. "All Too Soon" by _____
18. "The Blues" by _____
19. *By The Beautiful Sea* by _____
20. "Harlem" by _____

Key

McHugh 2. McHugh 3. Ellington 4. Hughes 5. Arlen 6. Hughes 7. Fields 8. McHugh 9. McHugh 10. Arlen 11. Ellington 12. Fields 13. Arlen 14. Fields 15. Ellington 16. Arlen 17. Ellington 18. Hughes 19. Fields 20. Hughes

Write Your Own Jazz-azy Poem

By Jess Ellison

Many of the lyrics that we know and love in jazz music follow a structure similar to a cinquain poem. A cinquain poem is a five-line poem that has a specific syllable structure, usually following the syllable pattern of 2-4-6-8-2. Flex your writing skills and see how well you can jazz up poetry by writing your own cinquain poem!

Follow this structure:

Line 1: choose a 2-syllable noun (consider places, things, or activities that you enjoy)

Line 2: pick two adjectives to describe the noun (try to stay at 4 syllables)

Line 3: pick three verbs or adverbs to describe the noun (can you stay at 6 syllables?)

Line 4: write an 8-syllable phrase that relates to the noun

Line 5: repeat the noun that you started with

_____

_____, _____

_____, _____, _____

_____

_____

Example:

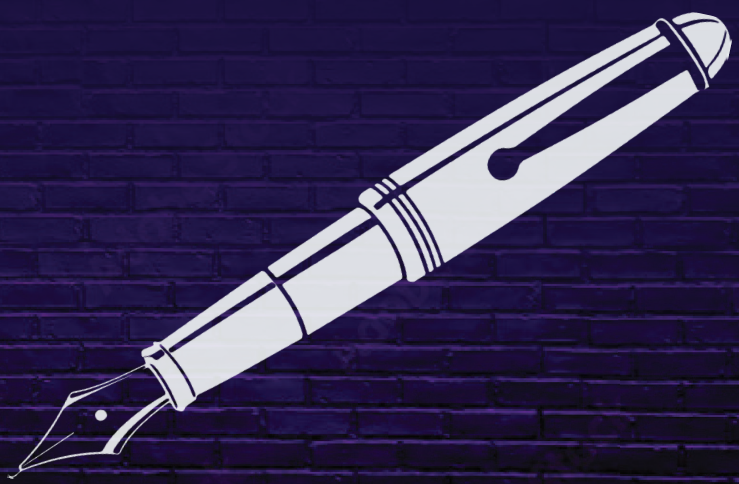
Theater

Joyful, adored

Fully, dearly, beloved.

Actors shining brightly on stage.

Theater



Sittin' on the Stoop Activity

By Jess Ellison

Think about all of the elements that go into making a front stoop a place of community. Now, consider what you may want your front stoop to feel like and design your own stoop below!

> *What kind of music do you listen to?*
>
> *Who visits you?*
>
> *What are some of the things you talk about?*
>
> *What are some games that you play?*

Now, design your stoop!

Further Listening Playlist

By Stephon Dorsey

Whether you're a lifelong fan of jazz or are just dipping your toes into the world of jazz music, revisit some old favorites or learn some new jazz songs with this playlist!

1. "Take The "A" Train" - Duke Ellington
2. "In A Sentimental Mood" - Duke Ellington
3. "Ain't Misbehavin'"- Fats Swaller
4. "Minnie The Moocher" - Cab Calloway
5. "Stormy Weather" - Lena Horne
6. "Harlem on My Mind "- Ethel Waters
7. "Some Day You'll Be Sorry" - Louis Armstrong
8. "What A Little Moonlight Can Do" - Billie Holiday & Teddy Wilson & His Orchestra
9. "One O'Clock Jump" - Count Basie His Orchestra
10. "Mother to Son" - Langston Hughes

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

After you experience the show, reflect on the following questions:

- Which performer did you relate to the most and why?
- How familiar were you with the music and poetry of *After Midnight* before seeing the show? Did the show bring up any memories for you? Are you inspired to explore more work by the artists of the Harlem Renaissance?
- If you were to assemble your own musical revue, what theme would you choose? Are there songs, dances, or sketches you'd want to incorporate? Who would be part of your dream cast?
- Director Jay Santos said that she worked to create through lines for each performer. What themes did you notice each character or actor pursuing through the course of the performance?

Seattle Resources and History

Did you know that Seattle's Black communities have a rich history in the city, and have contributed to the development of the Seattle jazz scene? Check out some of these local resources to learn more!

BLACK WASHINGTON

Black Washington is an award-winning app created by Washington State Historical Society that explores the vibrant statewide history of Black Washingtonians. You can look at the entries listed in the app to learn more about the people, places, and historical moments that shaped Black history in Washington State.

CENTRAL DISTRICT ON HISTORYLINK

Tour the Central District with HistoryLink! Central District has been a hub for Black business, culture, and art since the 1960s and is home to the oldest residential area in the city. You can learn more about the origins of Central District, its changing demographics, and its present history while visiting sites like Wa Na Wari, Medgar Evers Pool, the Second Headquarters of the Seattle Black Panther Party, and more!

MOHAI'S AL SMITH COLLECTION

The Al Smith Collection at Museum of History and Industry is a collection of photos from the Seattle jazz scene and community life in the Central District around the mid-20th century. Take a look at this collection for a more immersive look into Black life and culture.

Seattle Black Music History: A Timeline

By Reco Bembry

Black music is more than sound–it's memory, protest, celebration, and connection. In Seattle, music helped bridge communities and express truth during segregation, economic change, and cultural shifts. This timeline will take you on a journey through the decades of Seattle's Black musical evolution.

1950s:

Jackson Street Jazz & **The Club Scene**

Highlights: Jackson Street was filled with jazz clubs - notably the Black & Tan, a rare integrated space

Key Figure: Quincy Jones - Jones was a trumpet player, arranger, composer, and collaborator with Ray Charles

1960s:

Soul, R&B & **Civil Rights**

Highlights: Lots of new bands emerged during this time - check them out at this link

Soul: While Seattle had a vibrant music scene in the 1960s, it was more known for rock and garage bands than soul music. However, there were some soul and funk bands that gained local popularity like "Black on White Affair," "Cookin' Bag," and "Cold Bold & Together" particularly within the Central District neighborhood. These groups, along with others, were featured on the "Wheedle's Groove" compilation, highlighting Seattle's forgotten soul and funk music from the 60s and 70s. Some of these bands were on the cusp of national recognition with records deals and appearances, but the rise of disco led to the scene's decline.

Key Figure: Local soul singer and rock legend, Jimi Hendrix, revolutionized the electric guitar along with vocal groups, gospel choirs, and R&B bands such as The Majestics and Black and White Affair.

Social Impact: The music of this period echoed throughout the Civil Rights

1970s:

Funk Bands
& **Freedom Vibes**

Highlights: There were a variety of live shows with full costumes, choreography, and lots of community pride. Popular venues were The Encore, District Tavern, The Gallery, and more.

Key Figure: Black on White Affair, Cold Bold & Together, Acapulco Gold, Onyx the Majestics, and Cookin' Bag.

Late 1970s-80s:

DJs, Disco
& **Sneco Productions**

Highlights: Clubs moved away from booking bands and moved toward booking DJs - the dance floor rules. Sneco Productions, founded by Steve Sneed and Reco Bembry, booked shows, managed events, mentored rising stars, and helped shape the music business culture in Seattle, all while pushing Hip Hop forward.

Key Figures: The Emerald Street Boys made their artistic debut - they were early pioneers of Seattle rap music. There were many Black music majors studying performance and composition at Cornish College of the Arts, including: Reco Bembry, Robert Damper, Michael Powers, and Marc Seals. Their instructors included Julian Priester, Gary Peacock, James Knapp, and more.

1990s:

Rise of Hip Hop
in the **Northwest**

Highlights: Local youth were inspired to speak their truths through rhyme; in this way Hip Hop intersects with jazz and spoken word. Reco was seen as a bridge between R&B, Funk, and Hip Hop, and Sneco Productions blended theater and music which had an influence on the Emerald Street Boys and many more. Read more about the rise of Hip Hop in Seattle in ***The Birth of Seattle Rap by Novocaine 132***.

Key Figures: Sir Mix-A-Lot made national headlines with "Posse on Broadway."

2000s-2010s:

Global Reach
& **Local Roots**

Highlights: Hip Hop continued to grow and many key figures were from Seattle..

Key Figure: Digable Planets (a.k.a. Ishmael Butler) blended jazz, Hip Hop, and poetry. Macklemore reached international success and often collaborated with local Black artists.

2020s-2025:

The Future
is **Now**

Highlights: The seeds planted by Sneco Productions, Sir Mix-A-Lot, Emerald Street Boys, and Digable Planets have grown into a garden of diverse new talent. Independent Rappers, singers, and producers are telling stories on TikTok, YouTube, and at local open mics.

Community Resource List

Curated by The 5th Avenue Theatre Staff

We recognize that the themes and experiences of the characters in *After Midnight* are relevant to the challenges and hardships existing throughout time in society. The list below is curated to contain both local and national resources for individual and community wellness.

KEY

- Local WA Organization
- National Organization
- Youth Focused
- LGBTQIA+ Focused
- Culturally Focused
- Community Partner Organization

King County information hotline for any or all of the below listings,

CALL 2-1-1

BULLYING

AACAP
Committee for Children
No Bullying
Stop Bullying
TeenLink

HOUSING INSECURITIES

Cascade Housing Foundation
Chief Seattle Club
Compassion Housing Alliance
Cocoon Housing
Communities of Belonging
Jubilee Women's Center
Lavender Rights Project
POCAAN
Northwest Justice
MLKHousing

LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES

King County Bar
Lavender Rights Project
QLAW Foundation of Washington
TeamChild

SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES

Velocity Taekwondo Center
Lotus Club Jiu Jitsu Seattle

MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE

Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Crisis Connections — County Based Hotline
Fairfax Behavioral Health
National Alliance of Mental Health Illness (NAMI)
TeenLink
Lambert House
Wa Therapy Fund

PHYSICAL & PERSONAL SAFTEY

Children's Hospital
Coalition ending Gender-Based Violence
Domestic Shelters
Futures Without Violence
Global Network of Women's Shelters
Northwest Family Life
Sexual Assault Hotline
Call 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

SCHOOL AND SYSTEMS NAVIGATION FOR PARENTS

Asian Counseling and Referral Service

SOCIAL NAVIGATION

Help Me See Myself
Lambert House
Youth Eastside Services (Y.E.S.)

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Crisis Text Line — Text 741-741
TeenLink
National Suicide Prevention Hotline — Call 9-8-8
Now Matters Now
Suicide Lifeline — Call 1-800-273-8255

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUPPORT

23rd & Cherry Fellowship
Fairfax Behavioral Health
Narcotics Anonymous
POCAAN
TeenLink
Washington Recovery Helpline — Call 1-866-789-1511 or Dial 7-1-1

TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

Crisis Connections — Ride United
King County Metro Services

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Reco Bembry is a distinguished community leader, musician, and visionary with a lifelong commitment to empowering youth and promoting equity. As the founder of Sneco Productions and Bembry Consulting Services, Reco has composed 13 original works, including his latest musical, "A Lion Tells His Tale." His deep roots in the arts are further highlighted by his studies in music performance and composition at the renowned Cornish Institute in Seattle during the 1980s.Reco's artistic career complements his extensive community service. He is the co-founder of the Teen Summer Musical program and the founder and executive director of the Late-Night Recreation Program, which operates in over 250 locations nationwide. His creation of the Teen Life Center and leadership with City Year Seattle King County demonstrate his commitment to creating safe, supportive spaces for youth.

Stephon Dorsey is a Seattle-based graphic designer and multidisciplinary artist with a strong foundation in music and visual storytelling. He currently serves as the Graphic Design Associate at The 5th Avenue Theatre, where he creates visually engaging materials that support theatrical productions and community engagement initiatives. Stephon holds a B.S. in Music Production from Full Sail University (2022), a background that informs his holistic and emotionally resonant design approach. His creative work explores themes of Black identity, nostalgia, healing, and empowerment for BIPOC and queer communities. In addition to his design practice, he continues to develop his next multimedia project, Phantoms, slated for release later this year.

Jessica Ellison (they/them) is the Senior Manager of Education & Engagement Programs at The 5th Avenue Theatre, as well as a freelance dramaturg and writer. Jess received their Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the College of William and Mary and their Master of Arts in Theatre Studies from the University of Houston. Their artistic practice seeks to uplift stories written by and for black queer communities, while also bringing anthropological theory into conversation with theatre studies. Their research focuses on black queer theater, and they had the pleasure of teaching Theater History and African American Theater at University of Houston-Downtown. Jess serves as the Vice President of Institutions for Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and as a Board Member for Washington Thespians. You can learn more about Jess' work at **jeedramaturgy.com**.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Simran Kaur is a digital strategist and creative marketer with a passion for transforming how audiences engage with content. She is the Digital Content Specialist at The 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle, where she originated the role and leads digital campaigns that bring energy, relevance, and measurable growth to the institution's online presence.

Simran is taking her expertise to the global stage as she begins a dual master's program at Hult International Business School, where she will earn an MSc in Marketing and an MSc in Business Analytics. She continues to share fun, informative, and dynamic content on her Instagram account @similation.

Beth Pollack (she/her) is a Seattle-based performer, dramaturg, and teaching artist. She is the Dramaturg and Curriculum Specialist at The 5th Avenue Theatre. As a dramaturg, Beth has additionally worked with Seattle Shakespeare Company, Noveltease Theatre, and Dacha Theatre, where she is the Associate Producer of Literary Management. As an educator, Beth has worked with Seattle's Young Shakespeare Workshop, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Jet City Improv, Book-It Repertory, ACT Theatre, and Seattle Rep's Public Works Program. As an actor, you may have seen or heard her work with Seattle Children's Theatre, Village Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Book-It, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, or Dacha Theatre. Beth graduated magna cum laude from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study with a degree in Theatre Studies and the Historicization of Dramatic Literature, and would be happy to explain what that means. More at **beth-pollack.com**.

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