

## **William Russell: Jazz Lover, Collector, Musicologist**

### **An Annotated Bibliography**

Ben Wagner

Born Russell William Wagner in 1905, William (Bill) Russell was a violinist; an avant-garde composer deeply interested in percussion; accompanist to a touring puppet troupe; a meticulous musical-instrument repairman; a jazz-record producer; an archivist; a writer; and, above all, a New Orleans jazz collector of extraordinary breadth. More than anything else, he simply loved classic New Orleans–style jazz, which he called the “best music I’d ever heard.”<sup>1</sup>

He sought out obscure, old-time jazz players and was instrumental in the revival of the career of Bunk Johnson. Russell privately showed many kindnesses to jazz musicians down on their luck, encouraging their careers. In an age of segregation, Russell had many close associations with African Americans, organizing recording sessions in houses and rented halls because blacks were not allowed in New Orleans recording studios, nor could they play openly with white musicians. He did much to document and advocate New Orleans as the true birthplace of jazz. Although there were some inaccuracies in his early writings—and the debate continues about the many-faceted origins of American jazz—Russell’s overall analysis has stood up well against later scholarship. He certainly was one of the first to note the importance of place in the development of jazz.

From the early 1930s to the end of his life, Russell acquired and documented anything he could find related to jazz: oral-history recordings and transcripts, jam-session recordings, musical instruments, photographs, programs, postcards, ads, city guidebooks, correspondence, sheet music, magazines. He was the first archivist of the Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn, “Bill Russell: In His Own Country, an Honour Without Profit.”

University, where he personally recorded many of the early oral histories of jazz greats and of unknowns.

Bill Russell tended to work quietly in the background, equally willing to help the jazz novice and the expert musicologist. His obituary in *Jazz Journal International* noted, “Bill Russell was a gentle and selfless man with no interest in fame or financial gain. He lived very simply in a small French Quarter apartment that had no telephone, no air conditioning and a door bell that did not work.”<sup>2</sup> Russell freely and generously shared his knowledge and his collection with all who wrote him or came to visit him. He paid even the most famous musicians for anything that they did for him, eschewing any significant financial gain from his interest in jazz.

Later in life, he was a fixture at Preservation Hall in New Orleans: taking tickets, selling records, conversing with anyone interested in jazz, working on writing projects, and above all simply listening to the music; he has been called the club’s spiritual godfather. After his death, over 36,000 items from his personal collection—reported to weigh eighty-six tons—were transferred to the Williams Research Center of The Historic New Orleans Collection.<sup>3</sup>

A timeline of Bill Russell’s rich life in jazz precedes the annotated bibliography, which includes material written by and about Russell: interviews, notable scores, and books that use his jazz collection as a major resource. Audio recordings, most published under the American Music label, are not included, as these are already well documented elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Annotations focus on the information about Russell in each item. I am William Russell’s nephew, sharing his original surname, Wagner.

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<sup>2</sup> F. Levin, “Bill Russell [Obituary],” *Jazz Journal International*, 45 (10): 15, 1992

<sup>3</sup> H. Reich, “Saving Grace: New Orleans Violin Repairman’s Collection Is Rewriting the History of Jazz,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hazeldine, *Bill Russell’s American Music*.

## **Timeline of William Russell's Life**

### **1905**

February 26—Born Russell William Wagner in Canton, MO.

### **1915**

Began studying violin.

### **1920**

Entered the Quincy Conservatory of Music in Illinois.<sup>5</sup>

### **1923**

Graduated from Quincy Conservatory of Music and Canton High School.<sup>6</sup>

Entered Culver-Stockton College, Canton, MO, studying physical sciences (chemistry and mathematics).

### **1926**

Left Culver-Stockton College with a Teacher Certificate in Music Education, one course (in religion) short of a degree in chemistry.

Taught high school in Ewing, MO.

### **1927**

Taught at Yankton College in Yankton, SD.

Spent the summer in New York City attending many concerts, according to the best available information.

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<sup>5</sup> In his Oral History of American Music interview, Russell indicated that he started at the Quincy Conservancy at age fifteen. William Russell, interview by Vivian Perlis, Recorded March 1972, New York, NY. Transcript of the tape recording available from Major Figures in American Music Collection, Oral History of American Music Series 13 a-b; New Haven, CT: Yale University.

<sup>6</sup> Some sources incorrectly claim that Russell attended Culver-Stockton College before graduating from the Quincy Conservancy.

## **1928**

Moved to New York City.<sup>7</sup>

Continued violin studies under Max Pilzer, concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic.

Began studies at Columbia University Teachers College and stayed through 1934, receiving another music education teaching certificate.

## **1929**

Had a jazz epiphany when a student brought in a recording of “Shoe Shiner’s Drag” by Jelly Roll Morton. This launched him on a lifelong record collecting career.

Unofficially changed his name to William Russell (inverting his middle and first name). He was actively composing and felt that, in music, the name Wagner was already taken.

1929–1932

Taught music part time at the Staten Island Academy and two Long Island high schools.

## **Early 1930s**

Composed a major body of very modern (“New School”) percussion-focused music.

## **1932**

Visited Haiti for over a month to research voodoo drum rhythms, which inspired his Haitian ballet *Ogou Badagri* of 1933.

## **1934–1940**

Toured with the Red Gate Shadow Players, a Chinese-inspired puppet troupe, as a percussionist, which allowed him to continue collecting records all over the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sources have Russell arriving in New York City between 1927 and 1929. At different points in a single interview, Russell gave both 1927 and 1928 for his move to the city; see Gillespie and Young, “Interview with William Russell.” Russell left Culver-Stockton College in 1926. Since he taught school in two locations (Missouri and South Dakota) before going to NYC, probably for a minimum of one school term in each place, the summer of 1928 is the most likely date. However, there is some indication that he made an extended summer visit to NYC between the school terms in Missouri and South Dakota, which seems to be the only way to explain the earlier 1927 date. One source reports the date as 1929, which almost certainly is too late; see Slatter, “A Portrait of Bill Russell.”

### **1935 (1936?)**

Started the Hot Record Exchange in New York City with the painter Steve Smith.

### **1937**

February 26—Made first of many visits to New Orleans, on his thirty-second birthday.

### **1938**

Spring—First met Jelly Roll Morton in Washington, DC.

### **1939**

Wrote three chapters in *Jazzmen*, emphasizing and documenting New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz.

Completed a correspondence course from the University of Chicago and transferred these credits, finally receiving his BS degree from Culver-Stockton College.

Moved to California.

### **1939–1940**

Spent about a year at the University of California–Berkeley and then at the UCLA School of Music, studying with Arnold Schoenberg.

### **1940**

Closed the Hot Record Exchange.

### **1940–1947**

Worked as a chemist at Pennsylvania Transformer Co. in Pittsburgh during World War II.

### **1942**

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<sup>8</sup> Although a number of sources claim that he stopped touring with the Red Gate Shadow Players in 1939, Russell indicated that he participated in at least some of the performances in 1940, mentioning the 1940 World's Fair and performances in Los Angeles's Chinatown while he was studying at UCLA (William Russell, *Oral History of American Music Series 13 a-b*; Yale University, pp. 22–23).

Traveled to New Orleans (along with Eugene Williams of New York City and Dave Stuart of Hollywood) and made the first recordings of Bunk Johnson, who later became a fixture on Russell's American Music label.

### **1943**

Made a second recording trip to San Francisco, where he recorded Bunk Johnson, and then to New Orleans, where stayed about two weeks, recording George Lewis and his New Orleans Stompers.

### **1944**

Launched his record producing career by starting the American Music label, apparently a one-person operation for its entire existence.<sup>9</sup>

### **1947–1950**

Stayed at his parent's homestead in Canton, MO.

### **1950**

Moved from Canton, MO, to Chicago (he lived there until 1956) and continued to operate American Music.

Briefly studied violin with Chicago Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Ludwig Becker.

### **1953–1956**

Acted as an unofficial assistant to Mahalia Jackson, recording rehearsals and visits with musicians and doing many other odd jobs.

### **1953**

Conducted his last major recording session of jazz music.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Some sources claim Russell started the American Music label in 1940, but they appear to be confusing the date of his move to Pittsburgh with the beginning of the label. He ran the business out of his brother's house in Pittsburgh, and that address appeared on the record labels, so the confusion is understandable.

## **1956**

Moved from Chicago to New Orleans and opened a record shop, American Music Records, on Chartres Street.

## **1958–1965**

Founded, with Richard B. Allen, and served as first curator of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive of New Orleans at Tulane University.

Made extensive oral history recordings.

## **1960s–1970s**

Frequently traveled in Europe, collecting musical instruments and autographs.

## **1962–1965**

Moved back to Canton, MO, to care for his elderly parents, which required the closing of his New Orleans record shop.

## **1965**

Moved back permanently to New Orleans, where he developed a close association with Preservation Hall; he was there almost nightly, consulting, taking tickets, and selling records.

## **1967**

Was the inaugural violinist of the newly formed New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra.

## **1967–1992**

Focused on collecting jazz memorabilia, research, and writing projects.

Played, toured, and recorded with the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra.

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<sup>10</sup> Russell continued to sell American Music records until 1961. He licensed two firms to reissue his recordings, Dan Records of Japan, in 1960, and Storyville Records of Denmark, in 1972. His label released a few sessions recorded by others as late as 1957, which is why some sources report that Russell recorded jazz bands up through 1957, but he was personally involved in the actual record sessions only through 1953.

Consulted with many other jazz researchers and enthusiasts, providing them with material from his vast collection of pictures, interviews, etc.

Became a near nightly fixture at Preservation Hall, New Orleans, as a performer (with the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra), listener, and ticket taker.

### **1988**

May—Sold American Music label to the George H. Buck Jr. Foundation.

### **1990**

Two days shy of his eighty-fifth birthday, Essential Music, an all-percussion ensemble, performed a number of his compositions at a concert in New York City, to a standing ovation.

### **1992**

August 9—Died in New Orleans at age eighty-seven.

- September—His vast trove of jazz material was transferred to The Historic New Orleans Collection.



## **Annotated Bibliography**

The bibliography is arranged in the following categories:

- I. Articles about William Russell
- II. Reviews of Russell's composition work
- III. Russell's published music
- IV. Interviews with William Russell
- V. Works by William Russell
- VI. Selected scholarly works based on William Russell's research and jazz collection

### **I. Articles about William Russell**

“Bill Russell Moves to New Orleans.” *Second Line* 7, nos. 3–4 (March–April 1956): 5. A first-hand account by an anonymous reporter for the *Second Line* covering Russell's move to New Orleans and the opening of his record shop, American Music Records, at 600 Chartres Street.

Allen, Richard Binion. “An Introduction for Russell.” *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 3, no. 6 (1992): 6–8. Written by a good friend, the article is based on a brief introduction to Bill Russell's May 13, 1989, speech about Jelly Roll Morton. Includes highlights of Russell's life as a composer, writer, musicologist, and record producer, along with a number of personal recollections.

Anderson, J. Lee. “Exploring American Music: Part I.” *Mississippi Rag* 17, no. 1 (1989): 1–5. This article, which contains a number of historic jazz photographs, gives a detailed survey of Bill Russell's life from his childhood in Canton, Missouri, through his time in Chicago, New York City, traveling with the Red Gate Shadow Players staging puppet

shows, and finally moving permanently to New Orleans. There is a wonderful description of the massive collection of jazz material that Russell had accumulated over many years and stored in his apartment toward the end of his life. With this article, and its second part, published in the December issue, the author provides one of the most detailed looks into Russell's personal life other than the *Southern Quarterly* special feature in the winter of 1998.

Anderson, J. Lee. "Exploring American Music: Part II." *Mississippi Rag* 17, no. 2 (1989): 16–18.

This second part of the article focuses on Bill Russell's interest in and large collection of photographs. The collection is particularly eclectic, containing pictures not only of jazz musicians but also of buildings, many now gone, with any sort of relevance to jazz history, including saloons, houses, dance halls, churches, cemeteries, etc.

Anderson, J. Lee. "George H. Buck Acquires William Russell's American Music Label."

*Mississippi Rag* 17, no. 1 (1989): 1. A one-page announcement of the acquisition of the American Music label by George H. Buck, owner/operator of Jazzology Records and creator of a foundation bearing his name. Plans for new CD releases are discussed. The article extensively quotes Bill Russell.

Bethell, Tom. "Bunk Johnson, 1944" [recordings made for Bill Russell's American Music label].

*New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 11, no. 3 (2004): 6–10. Provides a history and musical critique of recordings of six nights with Bunk Johnson and one night with Kid Shots Madison that Bill Russell made for his American Music label in 1944. They were recorded in San Jacinto Hall, a dance hall in New Orleans, as African Americans were barred from New Orleans recording studios. The author opines that these recordings

are the standard against which everything else recorded in New Orleans should be judged. Includes the author's personal reminiscences of visits with Russell.

Berry, Jason. "Bill Russell's Explorations of the Origins of Jazz." *Offbeat: America's Roots Music Magazine from New Orleans and Louisiana* 9, no. 3 (1996): 51–52. This article contains a wealth of biographical information about Russell. Discusses his relationship with Bunk Johnson and reviews his posthumously published book, *New Orleans Style* (Jazzology Press, 1994), which provides profiles of twenty-four jazz musicians. Berry reviews Johnson's claim to have played with Buddy Bolden's band and notes the long-standing dispute of whether the origins of jazz were racial (from African and Creole roots) or simply geographical (created in New Orleans).

Berry, Jason. "Missing Piece: Bill Russell and the Big Book on Jazz He Never Wrote." *Chicago Tribune*, 5 October 1997. CN-3. A touching biographical sketch by an acquaintance and fellow jazz researcher/writer. It notes that his "thirst for raw information" and desire for complete accuracy meant that Russell found it difficult to actually sit down and complete a book. Handwritten notations—made by Russell's brother, William Wagner—in my copy of this article note two inaccuracies: he did study some science at the University of Chicago, but he never pursued a doctoral degree, and "the big book on jazz" that Jason Barry laments he never wrote is now available: his 720-page "*Oh, Mister Jelly*": *A Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook* was published posthumously in 1999, after this 1997 article appeared in print.

Berry, Jason. "William Russell and His Collection: A Historical Perspective." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 81–94. Assesses the historical importance of the William Russell Jazz Collection archived at the Williams Research Center of The Historic New

Orleans Collection. His record collection, music and oral history recordings, and photographs, all meticulously documented in diaries and notations, are highlighted, as are his significant correspondence with writers, collectors, producers, and scholars. Also covered are his important contributions to the book *Jazzmen*, his central role in reviving the career of Bunk Johnson, and his advocacy of New Orleans as the true birthplace of jazz. Contains a great many details on Russell's life and his relationships with musicians and writers.

Chapman, Don. "William Russell: A Tribute." *Coda: Canada's Jazz Magazine*, no. 281 (1998): 16–17. A clear and concise biographical sketch. Of particular interest is a personal account of the author's initial visit to Russell's record store in New Orleans during the early 1960s.

Russell, Bill, and Barry Martyn. *New Orleans Drumming: A Film*. New Orleans: American Music Records, 1999. Videocassette. A documentary on the various styles of New Orleans drummers. Russell participated by filming three of the five segments. 1. Baby Dodds (filmed by Bill Russell, Chicago 1953) — 2. Josiah Frazier (filmed by Bill Russell and Barry Martyn, New Orleans 1961) — 3. Alfred Williams (filmed by Bill Russell and Barry Martyn, New Orleans 1961) — 4. Abbey "Chinee" Foster (filmed by Richard Knowles, New Orleans 1962) — 5. Milford Dolliole (filmed by Barry Martyn and Emile Martyn, New Orleans 1986). [OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 44418026]

Fischer, Marjory M. "Composer's Search Proved Profitable." *San Francisco News*, 17 August 1940. I was unable to obtain the full text of this article for review, but it is known to contain a photo of Russell in Chinese garb.

Gillespie, Don Chance, and Donel Young. "Meet the Composer: William Russell: An American Original." *EAR: Magazine of New Music* 15, no. 5 (1990): 40–45. This is an abridged version of a February 26, 1990, interview published in fuller form as "Interview with William Russell by Don Gillespie and Donel Young" in *Percussive Arts Society Research Proceedings* 1 (cited below). However, this version includes a one-page overview of Russell's composing career and three interesting photos, including one showing Russell with his distinct Germanic features in Chinese garb along with the percussion instruments he used while touring in the 1930s with the Red Gate Shadow Players.

Hamilton, Francis. "Here's Real Dr. Rhythm: Authority in Chinatown." *San Francisco News*, 18 July 1940. I was unable to locate full-text for review. However, the article's title suggests that it discusses Russell's percussion work with the touring Red Gate Shadow Players.

Harvey, Brian. "Dobell's dilemma" [reasons for unauthorized dubbings of Bill Russell's American Music records sold at Doug Dobell's record shop on Charing Cross Road, London, England in 1950s]. *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 11, no3 (2004): 11–12. Harvey, a longtime employee of Doug Dobell's record shop in London, explains the great frustration of having a significant market for American Music recordings, yet finding it impossible to get any sort of reply, much less merchandise, from Bill Russell. This account exemplifies Russell's indifference to making money from his abiding interest in jazz. He did irreplaceable good by documenting New Orleans musicians, and yet may have also done some harm by preventing their work from reaching a much wider audience. The end result was that more than one record shop, including Dobell's, reluctantly cut and sold unauthorized copies.

Hazeldine, Mike. "Bill Russell." *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 3, no. 5 (1992): 6–8. An obituary, containing an excellent overview of Bill Russell's life and highlighting his contributions to New Orleans jazz documentation. Hazeldine was a friend of Russell's and they collaborated on a book, *New Orleans Style* (Jazzology Press, 1994). The chronology of Russell's life contains a few errors; for example, Russell attended the Quincy Conservatory of Music before going to Culver-Stockton College, not the reverse.

Hazeldine, Mike. "Dear Wynne..." *Footnote: Dedicated to New Orleans Music* 15, no. 5 (1984): 4–29. Reviews the events of 1945–46 concerning Bunk Johnson's Boston musical reunion with Sidney Bechet, which promised much, but ended unhappily. Some good music recordings came out of these sessions at the Savoy Café, but well below what many considered could have been produced. The breakup of this reunion had a significant effect on the career of both men. The article is based on interviews with Wynne Paris, Bill Russell, Eugene Williams, and others.

Hazeldine, Mike, and Barry Kernfeld. "Russell, Bill." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. 2nd ed. Edited by Barry Kernfeld. 2002. Also available to subscribers of *Oxford Music Online* at <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J390700> (accessed 13 October 2010). A two-paragraph biographical sketch with a short but helpful bibliography of key resources.

Jackson, Richard. "Maple Leaf Rag: Bill Russell and His Jazz Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 63–72. Provides an overview

of William Russell's jazz collection, held at the Williams Research Center of The Historic New Orleans Collection; he collected not just usual items like letters and recordings, but saved everything from street car transfers to advertisements to maple leaves from Sedalia, Missouri, birthplace of Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag." The author calls Russell a "quiet, soft-spoken, self-deprecating nice guy" and points out that he was generous with his time and knowledge and frequently loaned out items that were never returned. He points out that Russell's persistence in developing and maintaining many friendships and social contacts with African American musicians was unusual a time African Americans were prohibited from recording in New Orleans studios.. A categorized list of folders, essentially archive finding aids, shows the scope and extent of Russell's collection; for example, there are 2,200 pieces of sheet music alone. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature on Bill Russell.

Kennedy, John. "Russell, William [Wagner, Russell William]." In *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 2nd ed. Edited by Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell. 2008. Grove Music Online at [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo\\_gmo](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/public/book/omo_gmo). Also available to subscribers of *Oxford Music Online* at <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/49733> (accessed 13 October 2010). A two-paragraph biographical sketch with a list of his compositions and dates.

Kraut, Eberhard. "Foremost Authority of New Orleans Jazz: Bill Russell." *Hot Jazz Info*, no. 11/12 (1982): 2-7. I was unable to locate full text for review. Not known to be available from any U.S. library.

Kraut, Eberhard. "Ueberragender Kenner des New Orleans Jazz—William 'Bill' Russell." *Jazz Podium* 32 (1983): 18–21. In German. I was unable to locate full text for review.

Kukla, Jon. "Bill Russell: An American Ensemble." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 7–8.

This is the introduction to a ninety-four-page special issue devoted to Bill Russell. The entire issue with the same title was edited by Alfred Lemmon of The Historic New Orleans Collection, which houses Russell's significant jazz collection. Kukla notes Russell's significant role in the revival of New Orleans jazz that started in the 1940s, introduces the essays in the issue, and reviews his many interests.

Lawrence, John H. "Pictures Worth a Thousand Notes: The Photographic Holdings of the William Russell Collection." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 57–62. Lawrence notes that although William Russell is best known for his audio recordings and collection of print materials, he also assembled a significant body of photographs, many taken by him. Russell photographed not just jazz musicians, but all sorts of locations and buildings with any relevance to jazz history, many of which have since been destroyed. With few exceptions, he carefully documented all the salient information for each photo. The article discusses Russell's direct approach to making photographs and contains a categorized list of all the photographs in the Russell archive at The Historic New Orleans Collection. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature honoring Bill Russell.

Lemmon, Alfred E. "Bill Russell: An American Ensemble" [Southern Quarterly Special Feature-Issue]. *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 1–94. This special issue, edited by Alfred E. Lemmon, consists of 9 articles. Each article is cited and annotated separately in this bibliography.

- Berry, Jason. "William Russell and His Collection: A Historical Perspective"



- Gillespie, Don C. “William Russell: American Percussion Composer”
- Jackson, Richard. “Maple Leaf Rag: Bill Russell and His Jazz Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection”
- Kukla, Jon. “Bill Russell: An American Ensemble” [The introduction, which has the same title as the entire special feature of 9 articles.]
- Lawrence, John H. “Pictures Worth a Thousand Notes: The Photographic Holdings of The William Russell Collection”
- Lemmon, Alfred E. “The William Russell Collection: Providing Care and Access”
- Martyn, Barry. “Bill Russell as Record Producer: A Tribute”
- Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. “The Musical Worlds of William Russell”
- Wagner, William Frederick. “A Brother Remembers William Russell”

Lemmon, Alfred E. “The William Russell Collection: Providing Care and Access.” *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 73–79. This article discusses the special challenges undertaken by the staff of The Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC) in acquiring, appraising, and surveying William Russell’s unique and wide-ranging collection of jazz material. It details the agreement between Russell and The Collection, with a full discussion of how the collection was processed and preserved. The Collection’s efforts to make the archive available and usable by researchers is described. This article is part of a ninety-four page special feature on William Russell.

Levin, Floyd. “Celebration of a Life.” *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 3, no. 6 (1992): 10–11. Personal reminiscences of Russell’s vital role in awaking interest in New Orleans jazz, his involvement in Preservation Hall, and the cluttered, yet organized, collection of jazz memorabilia in his apartment.

Martyn, Barry. "Bill Russell: In His Own Country, an Honour Without Profit." *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 3, no. 5 (1992): 8–9. A brief eulogy for Bill Russell that relates a number of interesting anecdotes about Russell, especially during his last few years.

Martyn, Barry. "Bill Russell as Record Producer: A Tribute." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 27–32. Martyn reports that Bill Russell created his record label, American Music, because no one else wanted to issue his material and because it was the best music he had ever heard. He generally recorded "underground" music from older traditional jazz pioneers, many of whom had little, if any, national exposure. In the 1940s, he created 954 glass-based acetates. The article notes that Russell was not a good businessman and did little to market his product. Fortunately, through a number of later business deals noted in this article, nearly all of his masters have been reissued. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature on Bill Russell.

Norris, J. "American Music." *Coda: Canada's Jazz Magazine*, no. 167 (1979): 16–19. Itemizes and critically reviews some of the best of the American Music jazz recordings, as reissued on LP records in the U.S., Europe, and Japan. Helpful commentary is provided on individual tracks.

Nylund, Ed. "William Russell." *Jazz Information* 2, no. 2 (9 August 1940): 15–16. This is the earliest known published biography of William Russell, who at the time was thirty-five years old and in San Francisco for the summer. It describes his specific interests in jazz, gives dates for critical events, and describes the time he spent in New York attending concerts in 1927.

Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. "The Musical Worlds of William Russell." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 10–18. Highlights William Russell as a composer, record producer, jazz historian and collector, and violinist. His main passion was to document and thereby preserve New Orleans jazz. Reinforces how Russell's early writings on jazz, percussion compositions, revival of Bunk Johnson's career, recordings issued on his American Music label, and violin performances with the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra show his many talents and interests. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature on Bill Russell.

Ramsey, Frederic. "Grand Lama of Jazz." *HRS Society Rag* 8 (1941): 2–6. This is the only article that describes in detail Russell's extensive record collecting, for both his own collection and for the Hot Record Shop in New York, which he ran with Steve Smith. He is described as a shrewd bargainer and a voracious collector.

Reich, Howard. "Eccentric's Astounding Trove Backs Jelly Roll's Jazz Claim." *Chicago Tribune*, 2 November 1997, C-1. Much like the author's other *Chicago Tribune* article (see below), this article reviews Bill Russell's life and his motivations in his nearly lifelong pursuit to document early New Orleans-style jazz. Special emphasis is placed on the previously unknown documentation of Jelly Roll Morton's influence on jazz, often dismissed due to Morton's flamboyant personality and self-promoting claims. Reich reports that Russell's files include information on at least eighty-five New Orleans musicians who are not mentioned in major jazz reference works.

Reich, Howard. "Saving Grace: New Orleans Violin Repairman's Collection is Rewriting the History of Jazz." *Chicago Tribune*, 9 November 1997, C-6. This biographical sketch is devoted to explaining why and how William Russell collected a massive trove of jazz memorabilia, documents, interviews, and recordings during his life, all stored in his New

Orleans apartment. Discusses how archivists at the New Orleans Historic Collection processing this material after his death were amazed at the scope of the collections; one said, “No one seems to have collected as consistently or as comprehensively on early jazz as Russell did.” Provides an inventory of the highlights of the approximately 36,000 items in the archive.

Rose, Diana. “Guardians at the Gates of Dawn” [Jazz Special Section]. *Village Voice* (New York), 21 June 1988, 22–24. Gives many personal glimpses into the lives of Bill Russell and Al Rose, a jazz enthusiast and collector, from the perspective of Al’s wife, Diana, who shared his passion for jazz. Al Rose was a major donor to the Tulane Jazz Archive, of which Russell was the first curator. The two longtime friends met for the first time in New York City in 1938. By the early 1970s both lived in the same apartment building in New Orleans.

Rowbotham, Bob. “Great Day at Gypsy Tea Room.” *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 9, no. 5 (2001): 10–16. Provides details and reviews recordings made on May 16, 1943, of a pick-up band in the Gypsy Tea Room in New Orleans. The band consisted of Avery “Kid” Howard on trumpet, Jim Robinson on trombone, George Lewis on clarinet, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, Chester Zardis on bass, and Edgar Mosley on drums. Bill Russell produced ten masters and sold them to Blue Note; they were issued as 78s on the Climax label. The author sets this landmark recording session in the context of earlier jazz recordings and notes Bill Russell’s firm opinions on authentic New Orleans jazz and his attempts to capture it.

Slatter, Michael. “A Portrait of Bill Russell.” *Jazz Journal* 12, no. 9 (1959): 28–29. A particularly valuable biographical sketch of Russell’s education, travels, and personal life

as it was written in 1959, much closer to the actual events than later interviews and biographical articles. Notes his interests in string instrument repair, composition, recording and selling records, and documenting authentic New Orleans jazz.

Thompson, Butch. "The Extraordinary William Russell." *Mississippi Rag* 19, no. 11 (1992): 10–11. A wide-ranging obituary and biographical article noting Russell's many pursuits, written just after his death. Presents a particularly clear chronology of major events and where Russell was living during significant times in his career.

Tiug, R. A. "Shopping at Bill's." *Second Line* 15, nos. 1–2 (1964): 9–13, 20. A fascinating, detailed description of the experience of visiting Russell's New Orleans record shop, American Music Records, just before he closed it in order to return to Canton, Missouri, to care for his elderly parents. Every detail of the shop is described: from the records and Mardi Gras mementos to Russell's mannerisms to musical instruments scattered throughout the shop.

Van Vorst, Paige. "Bill Russell at One Hundred." *JazzBeat*, 26 May 2005.

<http://www.jazzology.com/jazzbeat.php?id=23> (accessed 10 March 2009). Written on the one hundredth anniversary of Russell's birth, this article provides a concise outline of his life. Also contains the author's personal reminiscences based on visits with the Russell and as an editor for *Jazzbeat* and *The Mississippi Rag*.

Wagner, William Frederick. "My Brother." *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 3, no. 6 (1992): 11–12. William Wagner, Russell's brother, provides personal reflections on Russell's many interests, personal characteristics, and commitment to jazz.

Wagner, William Frederick. "A Brother Remembers William Russell." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1998): 19–26. Russell's brother provides special insights into Russell's family

background and childhood years, inculcating family values that encouraged his desire for excellence and musical interests. The author discusses the development of Russell's interest in jazz music, traveling with his brother in Europe, and the encouragement Russell gave to his nephews and nieces to pursue musical interests, including music lessons, trips to Europe to purchase instruments, and some training in string instrument repair. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature honoring Bill Russell.

Welburn, Ron. "Jazz Magazines of the 1930s: An Overview of Their Provocative Journalism."

*American Music: A Quarterly Journal Devoted to All Aspects of American Music and Music in America* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 255–70. Author abstract: The jazz magazine, a phenomenon of the 1930s, displayed two stylistic persuasions: a serious scholarly bent exemplified by Europeans in *Der Jazzwereld* and *Jazz Hot* and in America in the *H.R.S. Society Rag* and *Jazz Information*; and the near-tabloid quality of *Metronome* and *Down Beat*, American "swing" organs whose editors instigated gossip and feuds by brash, young opinionated writers. George T. Simon, Marshall Stearns, George Frazier, Paul Eduard Miller, William Russell, and Hugues Panassie contributed to the development of these periodicals as a major force in American musical criticism.

## **II. Reviews of Russell's composition work**

Coulter, Tony. "William Russell: Made in America" (concert review). *EAR: Magazine of New Music* 15, no. 3 (1990): 46–47. A critical review of the Essential Music concert featuring his works on February 24, 1990, in Florence Gould Hall, New York City, in celebration of his eighty-fifth birthday. The reviewer noted his innovativeness and rhythmic inventiveness, however the reviewer felt his gift for melody, in pieces that had a melody, was lacking.

Gann, K. "Jailhouse Scholar: George Lewis, Barbara Held, William Russell" (concert review).

*Village Voice* (New York), 27 March 1990, 88. Another critical review of the Essential Music concert, *Made in America: The Music of William Russell*, on February 24, 1990, at Florence Gould Hall, New York City, where a number of William Russell's compositions were performed. Two other unrelated concerts are reviewed in this article.

Gillespie, Don. "William Russell: American Percussion Composer." *Southern Quarterly* 36, no.

2 (1998): 34–55. Gillespie notes that although Russell was principally known as a jazz scholar and collector, he was actively associated with the New York and West Coast avant-garde movement in the 1930s. Though he composed only a small body of percussion works, they are highly original and influenced John Cage and Lou Harris.

Provides a chronology of the major performances of Russell's music and explores his relationship with Henry Cowell and other students of the New School for Social Research. Though he stopped composing in 1940, he retained an interest in experimental percussion music and revised his compositions for a couple of "revival" concerts late in his life. This article is part of a ninety-four-page special feature on Bill Russell.

Kozinn, Allan. "A Composer Gets a Party for His 85th." *New York Times*, 2 March 1990: C31. A

one-page review of Essential Music's concert of Russell's percussion works performed in NYC on February 24, 1990. Contains brief biographical information and notes on the concert and people in attendance.

Santee, Clarke, and Wesley O. Brustad. "Fat Tuesday and All That Jazz." *In Performance at*

*Wolf Trap*. Performed 14 June 1977. Vienna, VA: WETA/PBS, 1978. DVD, 90 min. A ninety-minute musical play/dance performance with a storyline paying tribute to New Orleans jazz and Mardi Gras rituals. WETA/PBS taped the performance at Wolf Trap on

the night of June 14, 1977, and aired it nationwide on February 7, 1978. William Russell played an exquisite violin solo. Unfortunately, after the solo, Russell was not properly miked, so the rest of his playing is overshadowed when Harold Dejan's Olympia Brass Band of New Orleans came on stage. Dance sequences were provided by the Arthur Hall Afro-American Dance Ensemble of Philadelphia. The musical was produced by Wesley O. Brustad and the Tennessee Performing Arts Foundation. Other performances were given in Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Jackson, and Memphis. Neither PBS nor the Library of Congress archives contain this broadcast. It was nearly lost to history, but Mr. Brustad kindly sent me a high-quality DVD of the performance. The DVD is part of The Historic New Orleans Collection and the Arthur Hall Collection (Searsport, Maine, <http://www.ileife.org/ahc/fat.html>). The only copy that appears currently in the WorldCat database is a poor-quality 3/4-inch videocassette at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn.

Shales, Tom. "Fat Tuesday and All That Jazz" [TV review]. *Washington Post*, 7 February 1978, B5. A very favorable review of the PBS/WETA broadcast of *Fat Tuesday and All That Jazz*, performed at Wolf Trap June 14, 1977. William Russell played an extended violin solo. A picture of him appears with the article.

### **III. Russell's Published Music**

Russell, Bill. Percussion studies: In Cuban rhythms. Philadelphia: Free Library of Philadelphia. Includes three pieces: Havanera, Rhumba, and Tiempo de son. Scored for four percussion players using guiro, cow bells, maracas, claves, quijadas, marimbula, and bongos. First performance was in Seattle, May 19, 1939, John Cage conductor. [OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 53932399]



Russell, Bill. 1933. Fugue for eight percussion instruments. In *New Music Orchestra Series: No.*

6. San Francisco: New Music. Score: snare drum, xylophone, timpani, piano, triangle, cymbals, bells, and bass drum.

Russell, Bill. 1955. Three dance movements. In *New Music*. New York: New Music. Score: 3 percussion players and piano.

Russell, Bill. n.d. March suite [Manuscript]. Philadelphia: Free Library of Philadelphia. Score for percussion: cowbells, cymbal, woodblock, tam-tam, slide whistle, triangle, side drum, flat Haitian drum, bass drum. [OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 53932376]

Russell, William. 1936. *Three dance movements: For percussion instruments with piano*, New Music Edition. Bryn Mawr, Pa.: T. Presser. Score for 3 percussionists and 1 pianist

Russell, William. Date unknown. The first trumpet concerto. New York Public Research Library. For solo trumpet and percussion (four players; including prepared piano)./ Duration: 5:00. OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 80086793]

Russell, William. n.d. Fugue: Parts [Manuscript no. Mss C11]. In *John Cage Archive*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Music Library. Includes parts for snare drum, bells, cymbals, xylophone, tympani, and bass drum. [OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 122417176]

#### **IV. Interviews with William Russell**

Allen, Richard Binion. "Bill Russell: Extracts From a Conversation with Dick Allen." *Coda: Canada's Jazz Magazine*, no. 167 (1979): 14–16. The author presents excerpts of a conversation with Bill Russell. Russell discusses how he got into the jazz recording business with his American Music label, details of his travels, and his acclaimed 1940s

recording sessions. He recalls his contact with various jazz musicians including Bunk Johnson, George Lewis, Bertha Gonsoulin, Baby Dodds, Lawrence Marrero, and Louis Collins.

Gillespie, Don Chance, and Donel Young. "Interview with William Russell." *Percussive Arts Society Research Proceedings* 1 (June 1991): 15–25. This extensive interview about Russell's musical compositions and composing career was conducted on his eighty-fifth birthday, February 26, 1990, just two years before he died. It was recorded in New York City after the Essential Music concert on February 24, 1990, at Florence Gould Hall, where a number of his compositions were performed. In this very personal interview, Russell discusses this concert, as well as the few other performances of his works from 1933 through 1984, and his self-deprecating humor comes through. He discusses his 1932 trip to Haiti, where he researched voodoo drum rhythms, dispelling rumors that he attended real voodoo rites, though he did hear and document authentic voodoo drumming. This trip resulted in his Haitian ballet *Ogou Badagri*, composed in 1933. Russell recounts his early music education, experiences with the music scene in New York City during the depression, and contacts with John Cage and Arnold Schoenberg.

Hazeldine, Mike. "New Orleans 1943 (part 1): From the Diary of Bill Russell." *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 5, no. 3 (1995): 6–13. Part one of a detailed day-by-day account from Russell's personal diary of his 1943 trip to New Orleans, where he recorded George Lewis' and his New Orleans Stompers and met many traditional jazz players. He tried but failed to line up a recording session with Ann Cook. Published in two parts

Hazeldine, Mike. "New Orleans 1943 (part 2): From the Diary of Bill Russell." *New Orleans Music, Incorporating Footnote* 5, no. 4 (1995): 6–13. Part two of a day-by-day account

from Russell's personal diary of his 1943 trip to New Orleans. Russell ended up staying about an extra week with George Lewis, which gave him more time to rush about New Orleans visiting musicians and their families and collecting jazz-related material of all sorts. George Lewis provided many introductions and leads, of which Russell took full advantage. Published in two parts

Kay, George W. "Bill Russell Reminisces." *Mississippi Rag* 6, no. 11 (1979): 1–4. This interview was done when Russell was seventy-one years old. By the interviewer's own account, it is a "mere basic story structure of Bill Russell's life in jazz." Russell discusses his "hot jazz" record collecting days, contacts with several jazz musicians, recording Bunk Johnson, his oral history interviews, and current book projects.

Russell, William. Interview [Tape recording], 4 September 1962. New Orleans, LA: Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University. I was not able to locate a copy for review.

Russell, William, interview by Vivian Perlis. Recorded March 1972, New York, NY. Transcript of the tape recording available from Major Figures in American Music Collection, Oral History of American Music Series 13 a-b;. New Haven, CT: Yale University. The most extensive interview ever given by William Russell. It alternates between autobiographical sections, discussions about his compositions, and his contact with various jazz and classical musicians.

Russell, William, interview by Vincent Plush. Recorded 20 August 1984, Aptos, CA. Transcript of the tape recording available from Major Figures in American Music Collection, Oral History of American Music Series 13 c, d, New Haven, CT: Yale University. This short interview is an update to the 1972 interview. It focuses on Russell's activity as a jazz violinist, his compositions, and his research on jazz history, jazz recordings and

performers. Russell discusses his collecting activities, including receiving much valuable material from Jelly Roll Morton's widow.

Schafer, William J., and Charlie DeVore. "New Orleans Memories I." *Mississippi Rag* 26, no. 2 (1998): 1–2, 4–6. Perhaps the most extensive reminisces ever published about Bill Russell and the New Orleans jazz scene of the mid-1950s. DeVore, a traditional jazz trumpeter, was a close friend and unofficial assistant to Bill Russell. Russell acted as a guide to DeVore, taking him to meet dozens of jazz figures, touring the town week after week in search of street parades, and visiting clubs and other venues for jazz bands. Contains insights into the lives of many famous jazz musicians, but even more important, the article gives a real sense of how Russell lived his life as an enthusiast and generous friend to DeVore and to down-and-out jazz musicians. Published in two parts.

Schafer, William J., and Charlie DeVore. "New Orleans Memories II." *Mississippi Rag* 26, no. 3 (1999): 23–24, 26–27. Part II continues Charlie DeVore's reminisces of the New Orleans jazz scene, recalling his music lessons with the well-known jazz teachers Manual "Fess" Manetta and Kid Punch Miller in the 1950s and 1960s. DeVore describes how Bill Russell mentored him. DeVore also describes how the clarinetist Raymond Burke and cornetist Johnny Wiggs influenced him. Published in two parts.

## **V. Works by William Russell**

Cage, John, and William Russell. "Percussion Music and Its Relation to the Modern Dance: Part 1 (Introduction) & Part 2 Hot Jazz and Percussion Music." *Dance Observer* (New York) 6 (October 1939): 266, 274. Published as a single article. Part 1 is a brief introduction written by John Cage. In Part 2, Russell discusses the characteristics of a good jazz

drummer and what a dance accompanist can learn from such a drummer. He highlights the variety of color and effects that can be achieved from a small drum set and the sheer enjoyment of playing. Russell notes that jazz drummers take their turn as soloists where “he can give free reign to his imagination.” Even their instruments are often improvised. Russell’s admiration and enthusiasm for hot jazz pervades this article.

Hazeldine, Mike, compiler and editor. *Bill Russell’s American Music*. New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 1993. Compiles a detailed history and complete discography of Russell’s American Music (AM) label, using Russell’s personal diaries and extensive interviews, from the early 1940s recordings of Bunk Johnson through the last recording session that Russell was directly involved in, a 1953 session with Natty Dominique and Baby Dodds. In all, the book covers fourteen recording sessions. The book is richly illustrated with many photographs, AM record labels, LP covers, and even seating plans showing placement of musicians during the recordings. A CD with several rare recordings of Wooden Joe, Bunk Johnson, Natty Dominique, George Lewis, Big Eye Louis Nelson, Kid Thomas, Emile Barnes, and the Original Creole Stompers was issued with the book. Eleven of the tracks were previously unreleased. The book contains many insights into the character and personality of Russell, as well as the jazz musicians he worked with, and documents Russell’s passion to capture what he saw as authentic old-style New Orleans jazz, which was being ignored by commercial publishers. An excellent biographical sketch begins the book.

Ramsey, Frederic, Jr., and Charles Edward Smith, eds. *Jazzmen*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939. *Jazzmen* was a seminal work in the annals of jazz musicology. Nearly one hundred

musicians and close relatives of musicians were contacted in person or by mail. William Russell wrote three chapters: “New Orleans Music” (with Stephen W. Smith); “Louis Armstrong”; and “Boogie Woogie,” which are listed separately in this bibliography. Other chapters explore King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band, the blues, the Five Pennies, and “hot collecting” (jazz record collecting). The book is divided into four sections: New Orleans, Chicago, New York City, and Hot Jazz Today. The book was instrumental in reigniting the New Orleans Revival and interest in New Orleans jazz, and also played an important role in returning Jelly Roll Morton to active recording sessions for RCA Victor. Although later research has found a number of errors in this pioneering book, it developed certain themes that shaped jazz research for the next several decades. In the view of the authors, New Orleans was definitely the birthplace of jazz.

Rockmore, Noel, Larry Borenstein, and Bill Russell. *Preservation Hall Portraits*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968. This book highlights the paintings of Noel Rockmore, who in 1962 began to nightly sketch and paint musicians playing at Preservation Hall, with biographical texts composed by Larry Borenstein and Bill Russell to accompany each full-page portrait. Borenstein’s brief history of the Hall, Russell’s chapter about the venue’s proprietors, and Russell’s in-depth interview with Rockmore, who gave much insight into his approach and technique in painting this series of portraits, are important contributions. All the portraits are reproduced in black and white, but they retain the impact of the color originals.

Russell, Bill. “Technical Aspects of Jazz.” Microfilm of typescript with corrections. 1940. New York Public Library. I was unable to acquire full text for review. This is a forty-page manuscript available only on microform at the New York Public Library. There is no

indication that the manuscript was ever published. [OCLC WorldCat Accession Number: 44845320]

Russell, Bill, compiler. *Oh, Mister Jelly: a Jelly Roll Morton Scrapbook*. Copenhagen, Denmark: JazzMedia, 1999. This massive opus three decades in the making was completed by William Russell just before his death. It contains over seventy interviews, many photos, business cards, posters, record labels, and correspondence. Although the large index helps, it surely is a scrapbook, and the organization is somewhat scattered. As a social history alone, it has much value. Musicians will appreciate the over one hundred pages of musical notation, including some full orchestral parts. This book goes far in documenting Jelly Roll Morton as one of the earliest and most significant jazz composers that ever lived.

Russell, Bill. *New Orleans Style*. Compiled and edited by Barry Martyn and Mike Hazeldine. New Orleans: Jazzology Press, 1994. Russell's goal was to complete four books before he died. He got only "*Oh, Mister Jelly*" done, and that just a few days before his death. Compiled and completed posthumously, this second of the hoped-for books is based on Russell's outline, introduction, and archival material. The book consists of interviews with twenty-four jazz musicians (mostly taped in the 1950s and 1960s) edited into first-person narratives, each preceded by a brief biographical sketch. Russell completed most of the sketches before his death. The pride that the musicians took in their origins, their fellow musicians, and the quality and uniqueness of their music is a unifying theme of these interviews, and delightful bits of history and anecdotes are scattered throughout. Too many of the photographs are undated and unattributed, perhaps the book's only major flaw. Many of the unattributed photos were actually made by Russell himself.

Russell, William. "Boogie Woogie." *Jazz Hot*, no. 26 (1938): 8, 10–11. The text of this article is provided in French and in English. Russell provides an overview of important musicians and compositions. He concludes that "Boogie Woogie is fundamentally instrumental and although originally dance music of the most rhythmic and danceable sort, it transcends any such secondary function as mere accompaniment to words or movement and today has come to be recognized as the very ultimate in hot." This article was the reason that Frederic Ramsey Jr. recruited Russell to write three chapters for *Jazzmen*, including one with the exact same title as this article.

Russell, William. "Boogie Woogie." In *Jazzmen*, edited by Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, 183–205. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939. Russell analyzes the development and characteristics of Boogie Woogie blues style in Chicago in detail, starting with jazz pianist Jimmy Yancey. He notes that Boogie Woogie is the most pianistic of all jazz styles, characterized by a rapid, incessant rhythm of the recurring bass figures. The chapter is filled with facts and descriptions of jazz personalities. Russell considered Boogie Woogie, along with pretty much all jazz, as derivative of New Orleans music. This is one of three chapters Russell wrote for this landmark book. In all, nearly one hundred musicians and their close relatives were contacted in person or via mail. See also Russell's other two chapters: "Louis Armstrong" and "New Orleans Music," co-written with Stephen W. Smith.

Russell, William. "Louis Armstrong." In *Jazzmen*, edited by Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, 119–42. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939. Russell carefully traces the rise of Louis Armstrong from obscurity to superstar status, attributing his success to help from others at key moments in his life and, above all, his sheer talent. He expresses



admiration for Armstrong's lung power, lip control, and throat relaxation, which accounted for his full tone throughout his entire range. The chapter is rich with details and contemporaneous quotes, providing a very readable biography of his life up to that point in time. Russell particularly stresses Armstrong's roots in New Orleans's cabarets. This is one of three chapters written by William Russell for this landmark book. In all, nearly one hundred musicians and their close relatives were contacted in person or via mail. See also Russell's other two chapters: "Boogie Woogie" and "New Orleans Music," co-written with Stephen Smith.

Russell, William. "Zue Robertson: King of the Trombone." *Jazz Information* 1 (1940): 3. A brief biographical sketch of Zue Robertson, who took up trombone at the age of thirteen. He was a member of the Olympia Band and played trombone with Manuel Perez, Richard M. Jones, and John Robichaux. In 1917, he moved to Chicago and eventually played with Jelly Roll Morton and King Oliver. Throughout the 1930s, he worked in California, playing double bass and piano. He died three years after this article was written. Some sources incorrectly cite this item as appearing in volume 2, pages 17–19.

Russell, William. "Bunk Johnson." *Jazz Quarterly* 1 (1942): 1–3. From a special issue providing short biographical sketches of six jazz renowns, this three-page sketch discusses Bunk Johnson's strong personality and vigorous trumpet playing style derived from Buddy Bolden's "hot tradition." Russell considered Bunk's style a perfect blend of simplicity and ingenious variations with "unpredictable rhythms, vitalizing accents, and independence of parts." He comments on specific performance numbers.

Russell, William. "Jimmy Yancey." *Needle: Record Collector's Guide* (Jackson Heights, NY) 2 (1945): 36–40. I was unable to locate this item for review, but Jimmy Yancey was a Chicago jazz pianist to whom Russell attributed the beginnings of Boogie Woogie.

Russell, William, and Stephen W. Smith. "New Orleans Music." In *Jazzmen*, edited by Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, 7–37. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939. Russell and Smith's contribution is the opening, and defining, chapter of *Jazzmen*, a seminal work in jazz history. The book's introduction, written by Ramsey and Smith, stated that purpose was "to relate the story of jazz as it has unfolded about the men who created it, the musicians themselves." The authors emphasize the geographical context—New Orleans—from which jazz emerged, giving a "sense of place" missing from many early histories. Included are discussions of black and Creole traditions and their interactions, Congo Square, lack of formal musical instruction among African American slave musicians, creativity, polyphony, and the sheer musical ability of New Orleans musicians. Though some information provided in the interviews has proved inaccurate, the main theme—the key role of New Orleans in the early history of jazz—has withstood the test of time. This is one of three chapters written by William Russell for this landmark book. In all, nearly one hundred musicians and their close relatives were contacted in person or via mail. See also the other two chapters: "Boogie Woogie" and "Louis Armstrong."

Russell, William, and Stephen W. Smith. "Birth of the Blues; 1890–1910." In *The World from Jackson Square: A New Orleans Reader*, edited by Etolia S. Basso, 316–34. New York: Farrar, Straus, 1948. Although Russell's contributions to the *Jazzmen* book are frequently cited, little notice has been given to this chapter on New Orleans blues, specifically

written for this anthology of readings about New Orleans. Although their chapter title suggests a sole focus on the blues, the authors actually trace the development of jazz and dance bands from the earliest arrival of slaves and the gatherings held at Congo Square, noting that dance hall orchestras played a large variety of music, and improvisation was often an essential component. Special attention is given to Buddy Bolden and Bunk Johnson. The role of Storyville, New Orleans's red-light district, and Mardi Gras is discussed.

Smith, Charles Edward, Frederic Ramsey Jr., Charles Payne Rogers, and Bill Russell. *The Jazz Record Book*. New York: Smith & Durrell, 1942. This guide, designed to introduce beginners to the world of jazz recordings, features a discography preceded by a survey of jazz history. This book was a cooperative enterprise, involving input from many "hot jazz" notables. New Orleans is highlighted as the "parent" of jazz. Providing detailed and incisive stylistic analysis, Russell wrote significant sections on Storyville, ragtime, and the relationship between jazz and dance, which significantly expanded his earlier writings on these topics. While *Jazzmen* still is cited in jazz history bibliographies, unfortunately this book is largely ignored, perhaps because of an assumption that it is merely a discography. Included are a selected bibliography of books and periodicals and an index of bands and other recording units. This book was republished by the same publisher in 1946 and reprinted by Greenwood Press in 1978.

Smith, Charles Edward C., and William Russell. "New Orleans Style" *Modern Music* 18, no. 5 (1941): 235–41. The article traces the complex origins of the New Orleans jazz style as a distinct entity. The authors see the most important factor in this style as "the folk music of the America Negro with its African roots." Storyville, the red light district in New

Orleans, plays an important role in their narrative, as many jazz musicians were employed there. The authors discuss the role of polyphony, instrumentation, and improvisation, as well as the spread of jazz to other urban centers.

## **VI. Selected Scholarly Works Based on William Russell's Research and Jazz Collection**

Bethell, Tom. *George Lewis: A Jazzman from New Orleans*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. This book challenges the opinion that jazz moved to Chicago after the closing of New Orleans's red light district, Storyville, in 1917. Performers like Lewis, a clarinetist, and trumpeter Willie "Bunk" Johnson kept jazz traditions alive. Recordings by jazz enthusiasts like William Russell during the New Orleans revival of the 1940s brought Lewis national recognition as a standard-bearer of New Orleans music. In the opinion of the author, New Orleans jazz began to decline around 1950, becoming more stylized and shifting to Dixieland to cater to public demand. The author includes personal interviews with Lewis, Lewis's description of New Orleans-style jazz, unpublished material from Russell's diaries, and a complete Lewis discography.

Carter, William. *Preservation Hall: Music from the Heart*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1991. This book provides a comprehensive and readable history of Preservation Hall and the scores of jazz musicians who played there. William Russell reviewed the manuscript and contributed an essay, "Music for all Occasions," to the book that highlights the characteristics of New Orleans style. Preservation Hall grew out of informal rehearsal sessions held in Larry Bornstein's art gallery at 726 St. Peter St., across the street from Russell's apartment in New Orleans. Eventually, this led to an official opening on June 10, 1961, of Preservation Hall, a music venue dedicated to preserving traditional New

Orleans jazz. The author notes that Russell “was also the ‘spiritual godfather’ of Preservation Hall,” never as a principal, but encouraging the effort behind the scenes. For decades, whenever he was in town, Russell would attend Preservation Hall and help out by taking tickets or selling recordings.

De Donder, J, “The second hundred years: 17. Arnold DePass.” *New Orleans Music* (June 2003): 16-19. A biographical profile of jazz bandleader and drummer Arnold DePass, based on two interviews. The first interview was conducted by Bill Russell and Dick Allen on June 20, 1960, with DePass’s widow, Lillian. The second was done by Bill Russell and Ralph Collins on May 31, 1961, with Rudolph Beaulieu, DePass’ half-brother. The interviewees cover DePass’s career and the various bands he played with in the early 1900s.

Fairbairn, Ann. *Call Him George*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1969. Written by a former newspaper reporter who traveled on road tours with George Lewis and his band, the book is based on extensive personal contact and interviews with Lewis and his family members. William Russell, whom Lewis considered a good friend, is cited in the acknowledgments and throughout the book. Russell, David Stuart, and Hal McIntyre were the three men who reunited Lewis with Bunk Johnson in 1942, which ultimately led to the historic 1944 recording session in San Jacinto Hall in New Orleans. Because of the personal nature of the biography, there are no footnotes or references.

Greene, Bob. “The World of Jelly Roll Morton.” Concert program guide for 15 January 1977 performance at *Carnegie Hall*, New York. A concert program for a performance of Jelly Roll Morton’s music at Carnegie Hall on January 15, 1977, that included Bill Russell on violin. The program guide provides biographical sketches of Mr. Morton and the performers, including Bill Greene, who played piano.

Hazeldine, Mike, and Barry Martin. *Bunk Johnson: Song of the Wanderer*. New Orleans:

Jazzology Press, 2000. This comprehensive biography relies on many archival interviews with early New Orleans musicians and the interviews, diaries, and letters of Bill Russell. Bunk Johnson might be unknown today, had it not been for the diligent efforts of Russell and a few of his friends. Formerly a successful trumpet player in New Orleans, in the late 1930s, Johnson, without his teeth or an instrument to play, had been reduced to working as a field hand. The revival reads like a fairy tale. Russell, knowing little more than the town where he lived and uncertain of his real name, sent a general delivery letter to New Iberia, Louisiana, and received a reply from Johnson. Russell was a prime mover in reviving his career, even arranging, with help from friends, for false teeth and a trumpet. Russell's enthusiasm for Johnson, in his opinion, one of the last living representatives of the real "old-time" New Orleans jazz, made it difficult for him to be objective about his playing abilities and personal flaws. This book presents a balanced approach to his life, noting the good and the bad. While making clear that while Johnson was a self-promoter, boaster, and con man, it acknowledges that he really was a very important historic figure in New Orleans traditional jazz and, at times, a very impressive trumpet and cornet player. The book includes a CD of music and various recollections by Johnson.

Kukla, Jon, Mark Cave, Carol Bartels, et al. *Jazz Scrapbook: Bill Russell and Some Highly*

*Musical Friends*. New Orleans: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1998. Published by The Historic New Orleans Collection (HNOC) in 1998, the book explores William Russell's relationship with the pioneering jazz musicians he especially admired. Eight biographical vignettes, including one on Russell, are enriched with sixty-six superb photographs. A final chapter provides additional biographical information about Russell and describes the

William Russell Jazz Collection at the HNOC, which is the primary source for the book. The seven musicians highlighted in the book are Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Bunk Johnson, Mahalia Jackson, Baby Dodds, Natty Dominique, and Fess Manetta. It is a most readable introduction to jazz personalities and history. Each vignette is written by a different essayist familiar with the Russell archive.

Miller, Leta E. "Art of Noise: John Cage, Lou Harrison, and the West Coast Percussion Ensemble," in *Perspectives on American Music, 1900-1950 (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Volume 2107)*, edited by Michael Saffle, 215–64. New York: Garland, 2000. As indicated by the title, this chapter discusses the development of the percussion ensemble as an important aspect of modern music. Although the focus of this work is on the activities, concerts, and music of Harrison and Cage, a number of other composers including Ray Green, Mildred Couper, and William Russell are discussed. Specific works are analyzed. Choreographers, such as Carol Beals and Bonnie Bird are also covered. Cage's interest in Russell's music is noted, as is Cage's performance of two parts of Russell's *Three Dance Movements* at his first Seattle concert in 1938.

Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. "New Orleans Style: The Awakening of American Jazz Scholarship and Its Cultural Implications." PhD diss., Tulane University, 1991. This thesis explores jazz historiography prior to 1956, a period described by the author as the "pre-academic" phase of jazz research. It traces the development of a community of hot jazz record collectors in the 1920's and 1930's which shared historical information about the music they loved and led to a group of writers publishing in magazines such as *Down Beat* and *Jazz Information*. These writers believed that jazz was born in New Orleans and should be seen as a non-commercial art form. The book, *Jazzmen* (Ramsey & Smith, 1939), was

a defining statement of this movement. During the 1940s, this viewpoint was challenged by revisionists and so-called “modernists” that focused on more contemporary developments, disputed the traditional chronology of jazz history, and even used different terminology. Raeburn notes that “ultimately, the conceptualization of jazz history deriving from *Jazzmen* found refuge in New Orleans and became an important part of the culture which it celebrated.” William Russell is the first person mentioned in the acknowledgments and is clearly a major source for Raeburn’s research. The work Russell did for *Jazzmen*, as a record collector and store owner, and his extensive documentation of jazz history is frequently noted throughout the thesis.

Raeburn, Bruce Boyd. *New Orleans Style and the Writing of American Jazz History*. Jazz Perspectives. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009. This book grew out of Raeburn’s dissertation in history at Tulane University, which he began in 1988. It explores in depth how the concept of the New Orleans style developed and by whom it was shaped. Although the reader certainly learns about jazz history, one learns even more about trends in the research studies of jazz history. Raeburn notes that the rise of the international network of “hot” record collectors and the New Orleans Revival movement were key events. The book follows the lengthy debate between the purists who favored unadorned traditional jazz and the modernists who readily accepted new styles like bebop and the technical and intellectual aspects of jazz. The author does an excellent job of explaining these two positions without taking sides. William Russell was in many ways a champion of the purist view, not because of a fixed ideology or commercial motive, but rather because he simply loved traditional jazz, to the exclusion of all else. The author mentions Russell and the Russell archive at The Historic New Orleans Collection in his



acknowledgments. He also notes that charges that he reaped any significant economic benefit from his association with jazz musicians are completely unfounded.

Reich, Howard, and William Gaines. *Jelly's Blues: The Life, Music, and Redemption of Jelly Roll Morton*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2003. This book's origins date back to a December 1999 investigative report published in the *Chicago Tribune* on Jelly Roll Morton's business affairs. The authors' research in primary sources convincingly demonstrates how Morton was swindled out of significant royalties by his publishers and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP). The book is dedicated to William Russell and is almost entirely based on his archive, housed at The Historic New Orleans Collection. Though he doesn't dispute the central thesis of the book, at least one reviewer has criticized the "numerous factual errors" and "inept musical analysis" that, for example, exaggerated the importance Morton's last big band arrangements (Butch Thompson, *ARSC Journal*, Spring 2005, 87–89). The book also cites relatively little previous research on Morton, other than Alan Lomax's *Mister Jelly Roll*. Appendices include a list of compositions written by Morton and an annotated discography of Morton playing his own music.

Rose, Al, and Edmond Souchon. *New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967. This is a reference book with short one-paragraph biographical entries, a who's who of New Orleans jazz. Separate sections are devoted to listing jazz band halls, brass bands, buildings associated with jazz, and classic Mississippi steamboats. What makes this work special is that it is filled with rare photographs, many courtesy of William Russell and most never before published. The preface states,

“Foremost among our allies has been the indefatigable Bill Russell who has freely supplied rare photographs and detailed information.”

Turner, Frederick W. *Remembering Song: Encounters with the New Orleans Jazz Tradition*.

New York: Viking, 1982. Rather than trying to write a comprehensive history of jazz, the author tries to convey the living circumstances within which jazz was created and show readers the relationship between jazz and the larger American life. Two chapters are devoted to the history of hot jazz and Bunk Johnson’s blues, including a detailed discussion of Russell’s efforts to record him. In the acknowledgments, he cites the assistance of Russell and other Preservation Hall associates. This book predates The Historic New Orleans Collection’s acquisition of the William Russell Jazz Collection.

Wyckoff, Geraldine. “Masters of Louisiana Music: Mahalia Jackson.” *Offbeat: America’s Roots Music Magazine from New Orleans and Louisiana*, 1 May 2003, 42–45. This biography recounts the little-known association between Mahalia Jackson and William Russell when he lived in Chicago, from 1953 to 1956. Though never officially employed by Mahalia, he recorded rehearsals and visits from musicians, and did many odd jobs, from holding cue cards to grocery shopping. Russell recounts that Mahalia never expected him to do any of these things; but that he was happy to, and he felt that listening to her great music was his reward.