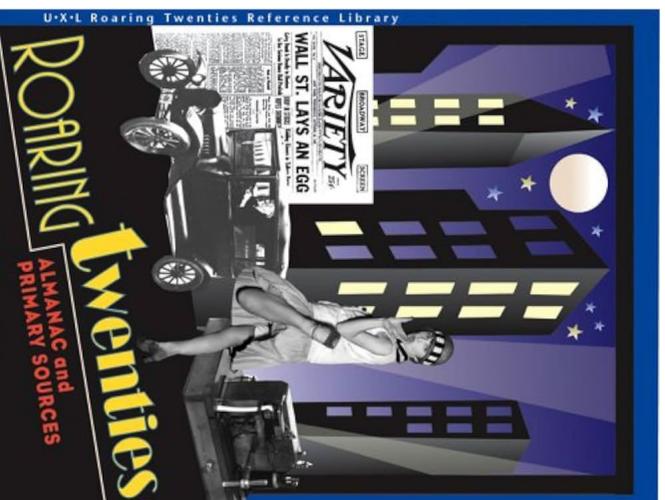


## Section 113P Notice

### Text, Artistic Works and Broadcast Notice

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Howes, K.K. (2006). *The roaring twenties almanac and primary sources*. UXL.

Harlem at its peak. Along with bandleader Fletcher Henderson (1898–1952), Ellington created the Big Band sound, which featured a jazz orchestra with more than one player on each instrument. During their long engagement at the Cotton Club, Ellington and his band performed their trademark “jungle” sound, using mutes and growl techniques in the horns. Even though most of Ellington’s greatest achievements came later, he wrote some of his most famous compositions during the 1920s, including “Creole Love Call” and “Mood Indigo.”

Other notable jazz musicians of the 1920s include Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904–1943), the leader among the Harlem Renaissance-era piano players who performed in fancy clubs and respectable musical revues as well as seedy dives and rent parties (late-night gatherings held to raise money for tenants). Waller’s best songs include “Honeysuckle Rose” and “Ain’t Misbehavin’,” which Armstrong sang in *Hot Chocolates*.

The popular music of the 1920s was heavily infused with jazz, as white bandleaders, especially the very popular Paul Whiteman (1891–1967), promoted as the “Jazz King,” brought “symphonic” versions of this innovative new music to white audiences. The finest and longest-lasting contribution made by Whiteman was the 1924 concert at which his orchestra introduced a jazz-tinged composition called *Rhapsody in Blue* by George Gershwin. Along with his brother Ira, Gershwin was among the most popular songwriters of the 1920s. He successfully incorporated into music written for Broadway elements from jazz, classical music, and even opera. The Gershwins wrote the scores for such hit Broadway shows as *Oh, Kay!*, and *Funny Face*.

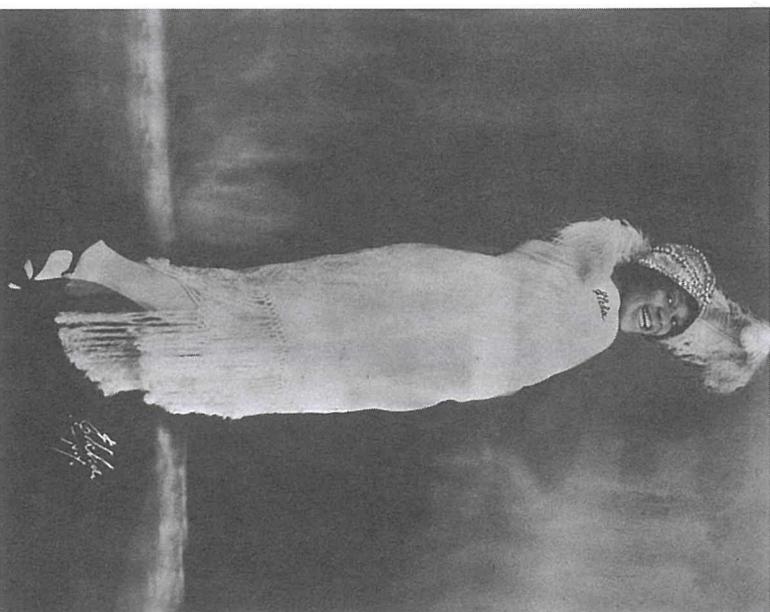
## Singing and playing the blues

A close relative of jazz, blues music originated in the work songs and spirituals (religious songs) of African American slaves in the southern United States. Blue was the color of emotional pain, and the blues provided a way both to express that pain and to rise above the sorrow, sadness, and troubles of everyday life. The influence of the blues stretches to the present, for it played a major role in the development of rock music.

Some of the earliest blues musicians include W.C. Handy (1873–1958), a cornet player who established a standardized notation pattern for this new musical form, becoming one of

the first to write down and publish blues songs. Another early, great figure was Gertrude “Ma” Rainey (1885–1939), who helped to establish a prominent role for women in this musical genre. Rainey toured with various bands, appeared in revues, and made many records. Her music was well known to the blues singers of the 1920s, many of whom performed in Harlem.

Perhaps the greatest blues singer of all time, however, was Bessie Smith (c. 1894–1937). Smith was a rough, tough, and physically large woman with a soulful, mournful voice. Her first record, “Downhearted Blues,” was a huge success, earning her the title “Empress of the Blues.” Smith generally performed only in the South, but her records were popular throughout the nation, and she influenced many blues singers who followed her.



Bessie Smith is perhaps one of the greatest blues singers of all time. (© Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.)

## Dance, both popular and serious

During the 1920s almost everybody was crazy about dancing, especially young people, who now made dancing, rather than games like charades, the main activity of their parties. Many popular dances originated in the African American community. It was in Harlem, for example, that the world got its first taste of the Charleston in the all-black show *Runnin’ Wild*. This fast-paced, jerky dance of flying arms and knocking knees would become symbolic of the Roaring Twenties. Flappers and their boyfriends, as well as more ordinary people, performed it with abandon in all kinds of settings. Other popular dances included the fox-trot, the camel walk, the tango, the toddle, the varsity drag, and the shimmy.

Serious dance also made major progress during the 1920s. Students of the Denishawn School in Los Angeles, California,