



Chord Changes on the Chalkboard: How Public School Teachers Shaped Jazz and the Music of New Orleans (Studies in Jazz)

Al Kennedy

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The world's fascination with New Orleans stems from the allure of the music of the city—music that owes its origins and development to many sources. Until now, popular and scholarly books, dissertations, and articles that attempt to explain these sources have failed to recognize the unsung heroes of the New Orleans jazz scene: the teachers in its public schools. Through more than 90 original interviews and extensive research in New Orleans' historical collections, Dr. Kennedy documents ways that public school teachers pushed an often unwilling urban institution to become an important structure that transmitted jazz and the other musical traditions of the city to future musicians. Music legends from Louis Armstrong to Ellis Marsalis Jr.—who also provides the foreword—are just two of the many well-known former students of the New Orleans public schools. *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard* shows that, particularly after the 1920s, public school students benefited not only from the study of instrumental music and theory, but also from direct exposure to musicians, many of whom were invited to perform for the students. The impact the teachers had on generations of musicians and music fans is undeniable, yet their teaching techniques are only part of the story. In addition to the successes enjoyed with their students, the teachers' own musical experiences, recordings, and performances are also examined. The interaction between teachers and students in New Orleans public school classrooms opens a new field of research for music historians, and this book is the first to document ways in which public school teachers acted as mentors to shape the future of jazz and the music of New Orleans. An important addition to its field, *Chord Changes on a Chalkboard* will provide invaluable information for jazz fans and historians, music scholars and students, and it is also useful reading for any public school teacher. A must for any music library, it should also be a welcome addition to any collection supporting African-American history or popular culture.

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