

Historical Background:

Boogie-woogie is an African American musical genre characterised by piano-based blues which enjoyed its height of popularity during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Initially played on just one piano, the genre grew to be performed on three pianos at once and later to include various different musical instruments. It has had a lasting influence on many other genres including big band, country and western and even gospel music. Boogie-woogie is formed by a regular series of chords played by the left hand with accompanying improvisation by the right. Generally, boogie-woogie tunes are twelve-bar blues although much of the genre is written in common time (4/4) time using eighth notes (quavers). Not limited to the piano, boogie-woogie style is also used to accompany singers and as solo sections in band music.

The exact origin of the term boogie-woogie is unknown and although it is thought that the Boogie-Woogie first originated in Texas in the early 1870s, this is still a matter for debate. However, the city of Marshall in Texas claims to be the 'Birthplace of Boogie-Woogie'. It was also possibly originally known as 'Fast Western' music.

The first example of jazz band boogie-woogie is considered to be the George W. Thomas number 'The Fives' recorded by Joseph Samuel's Tampa Blue Jazz Band in February 1923. However, the first boogie-woogie commercial hit was 'Pinetop's Boogie Woogie', recorded by Pinetop Smith in 1928. It was this song that helped establish 'boogie-woogie' as the name of the style.

The genre garnered further popularity in 1938 and 1939 due to the From Spirituals to Swing concerts held at the Carnegie Hall. These concerts featured boogie-woogie musicians including Big Joe Turner, Peter Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis and Albert Ammons. These concerts led to swing bands using the boogie-woogie beat in some of their and several hit songs were later produced with a boogie-woogie beat. It was soon common for big bands to have a few boogie numbers in their repertoire as the dances of jitterbug and Lindy Hop needed a boogie-woogie beat. as the dancers were learning to jitterbug and do the Lindy Hop, which required the boogie-woogie beat.

The Hull Jazz Record Society's most famous member was Philip Larkin. An enthusiastic member, he gave several talks to the society including one entitled 'My Life & Death as a Record Reviewer' and one on clarinettist Pee Wee Russell as well as playing a selection of his records to the society. Initially the Society met in the Ye Old Black Boy on High Street but later moved to the White Hart on Alfred Gelder Street.

John Philipps Kenyon was born on 18 June 1927 in Sheffield and later became one of the foremost historians on Stuart-era England. He attended Sheffield University and took his doctorate at Cambridge, which he obtained in 1954. He was later made a fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge and became Professor of History at the University of Hull, where he stayed for 19 years. This was followed by six years at St Andrews University and between 1987 and 1994 he served as Distinguished Professor of early modern British history at the University of Kansas. During the 1960s and 1970s he also taught at Harvard and Columbia Universities. He died on 6 January 1996.

Custodial history: Donated by Professor J.P. Kenyon, September 1976

Description:

This small collection contains typed notes, written by Professor J.P. Kenyon, for a talk on the musical genre 'Boogie-Woogie'.

Extent: 2 items

Related material:

Papers of Philip Larkin [U DPL]

Philip Larkin's personal record collection (LPs and 78s)

Larkin's Jazz [L920 LAR]

Access conditions: Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DX120/1

Typed notes by J.P. Kenyon for his talk on the musical genre 'Boogie Woogie' to the Hull Jazz Record Society
There are some annotations and includes the tape cassette used in illustration
2 items

1976