heard in the early New Orleans brass bands and black marching bands elsewhere at the turn of the century. The popularity of marching bands, comprised of either blacks or whites, playing frequent outdoor concerts or leading parades, was partly responsible for the ²⁄₄ meter of early jazz. Two (quarter-note) beats per measure corresponded to the marchers' feet.

Jazz accelerated its pace during the 1920's with Louis Armstrong and others, who made ⁴⁄₄ time—four quarter notes to the measure—more common. With Charlie Parker's dexterity and melodic complexity, measures seemed more frequently divided into eighth-note units. John Coltrane, creating what were called for a variety of reasons "sheets of sound," proved that improvising could presuppose a division of the melody into sixteenth or even thirty-second notes. Finally, free jazz, beginning with experimentation during the 1950's by Charles Mingus (Chapter 6), showed that metric patterns could vary within a given piece or could be disregarded altogether in favor of the somewhat looser notion of "pulse." At the same time, polyrhythmic complexity in jazz was increasing, growing closer to the African model from which it was derived.

Jazz: A Four-letter Word

Despite its historical connections with Africa and Europe, jazz is a distinctively American music form to which a uniquely American term has been applied. "Jazz" is, of course, untranslatable and, in that sense, is an international word, one that actually carries laudatory connotations abroad. Yet many American musicians resent its being used to label their work, fearing that the word conjures up the image of an "esoteric," "inaccessible" art of limited commercial appeal. Their point of view will be examined more closely in the introduction to Chapter 7, although their argument seems a bit obsolete in light of jazz record sales during the 1970's.

A more long-standing objection to the term, one often voiced by Duke Ellington, is based upon its origins in brothels and "sporting houses," where the music was played in its early years. Jazz, it seems, has a secret meaning. An itinerant composer and performer, Clay Smith, warned in a 1924 *Étude* magazine: "If the truth were known about the origin of that word, it would never be mentioned in polite society." As a matter of fact, Smith might have said the same for "jelly roll," "cat," "boogie-woogie," and several more covertly sexual terms in musicians' argot. It is commonly accepted among scholars that jazz in the early 1900's referred to sexual intercourse, although no concrete documentation of its use in this sense has been turned up. The word appeared in print for the first time in 1913, when it was mentioned rather innocently by an editor of the *San Francisco Call*, a black-owned newspaper. It caught on as a musical label when the Original Dixieland Jass Band, a white group (Chapter 3), used it on the first "jass" record in 1917.

Sources remote from the world of musical entertainment developed sim-

ilar associations to jazz. The title of a 1923 *Ladies' Home Journal* article boldly asked: "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his celebrated essay "Echoes of the Jazz Age," a work only peripherally concerned with the music itself, wrote: "The word jazz in its progress toward respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music." Herman Hesse expressed his reaction to the music's sound through the hero of his great Freudian novel *Steppenwolf*: ". . . its raw and savage gaiety reached an underworld of instinct and breathed a simple, honest sensuality."

There are still more competing derivations of the word. One of the most *un*likely attributes it to the names of black performers, like the dancing slave Jasper, known as Jass, or the Chicago musician Jasbo (Jass) Brown. "Jass" has also been identified as an Elizabethan slang term meaning "to do things with gusto and enthusiasm," which may well be the precursor to the contemporary expression "to jazz it up." A more likely candidate is the Creole verb *jaser*, meaning "to speed up, chatter, or make fun." But the *American Dictionary of Words and Phrases* considers *jaser* to be imported from the northwest coast of Africa, where its African predecessor *jaiza* is used to refer to "the rumbling of distant drums." [12] Perhaps jazz is not such an inappropriate word after all if its ultimate origins relate not to sex but to African drums. A conclusive etymology, however, is certainly lost to history by now.

The Unity of Jazz

The historical continuity of jazz is part of every musician's experience. Ideas and techniques are passed down aurally through personal instruction and by witnessing performances and listening to records. Duke Ellington readily attributed the development of his piano style to hearing James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith attempting to outdo, or "cut" each other at the Harlem rent parties of the early 1920's. Lester Young, whose tone on tenor saxophone was the earliest expression of "cool" jazz, openly credited Frankie Trumbauer's C-melody sax solo on Bix Beiderbecke's recording of "Singin' the Blues" (Chapter 3) with providing his initial spark of inspiration. Similarly, in the 1930's Charlie Parker's first great strides as a saxophonist were made by memorizing Lester Young's solos from records of Count Basie's band.

Even Cecil Taylor, despite his reputation as a musical revolutionary and iconoclast, has expressed his reverence for continuity and tradition:

> Right now we have Louis Armstrong playing at the same time as John Coltrane and Duke Ellington. . . . I can react emotionally to the things Louis plays, as well as know what they signify. . . . You cannot deny the validity of . . .