Henderson, Fletcher (1898-1952) Encyclopedia Article

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As a bandleader, composer, and arranger, Fletcher Henderson was one of the definers and shapers of jazz music in the swing era of the 1940s and 1950s. After graduating from Atlanta University with majors in chemistry and math, Henderson moved to New York in 1920 for post-graduate study. There he accepted a part-time job as a pianist with W. C. Handy, and his career goals changed. In 1923 he assembled a band widely recognized as the first large jazz orchestra, one that included such celebrated sidemen as Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and Benny Carter. His most lasting work came in the swing era as an arranger for the Dorsey brothers and Benny Goodman. His style of big band jazz featured the reeds pitted against the brass section as well as highly rhythmic passages of ensemble chords by the entire band. Typical Henderson arrangements can be heard on recordings of "King Porter Stomp" and "Sometimes I'm Happy" by the Goodman band.

Further Reading:

Atkins, Ronald, editor. *All That Jazz.* New York, Carlton, 1996.

Collier, James Lincoln. *Benny Goodman and the Swing Era.* New York, Oxford, 1989.

Simon, George T. *The Big Bands.* New York, MacMillan, 1974.