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 **February News, 2024**

**JAZZ THAT MADE HISTORY: A MUSICAL CELEBRATION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

by Deborah Layman

Jazz Pensacola and the West Florida Public Libraries are partnering to present a series of free library concerts by Joe Occhipinti and the JazzAbouts to celebrate the rich African-American roots of jazz during the month of February.

The cultural heritage of jazz is deep and wide. During the years of slavery in the United States, the expressive musical sounds and rhythms of West Africa crossed the ocean with enslaved black people and thrived in their midst as work chants, call-and-response songs, folk tunes and spirituals.

After the Civil War, New Orleans became the hub of a new music that blended the African musical traditions with the sounds of blues, classical, marches, ragtime and popular songs. The result was jazz: a new style of music with the unique ability to express deeply-felt emotions through improvisation and musical call-and response.

Soon audiences were eager for this new musical genre in the cities of the north and Midwest. In the early 1920s, as musicians headed up the Mississippi River, they brought the sounds and rhythms of jazz to Memphis, St. Louis, Kansas City and ultimately Chicago, which became the second major jazz center. Soon jazz took hold in New York, and the city became the most important incubator of new styles of jazz like big band, swing and bebop in the 30s, 40s, and 50s. From its beginnings as black folk music in the south, jazz evolved over time into a sophisticated international art form in which African-Americans composers and musicians have continued to be major creative innovators.

Join us at your local library this month to experience the rich heritage of jazz and pay tribute to the great black composers and musicians who made jazz what it is today.

**JAZZ THAT MADE HISTORY CONCERT SCHEDULE:**

Pensacola Library, Tuesdays, Feb. 6 and 27, 12:00-2:00

\*\*plus a special Black History Month program for kids: Saturday, Feb. 24, 1:30-2:30\*\*

Bellview Library, Monday, Feb. 12, 12:00-2:00

Molino Library, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11:00-12:00

Southwest Library, Thursday, Feb. 15, 1:00-3:00

Tryon Library, Friday, Feb. 23, 1:00-3:00