



# Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans

*Charles B. Hersch*

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*Subversive Sounds* probes New Orleans's history, uncovering a web of racial interconnections and animosities that was instrumental to the creation of a vital American art form—jazz. Drawing on oral histories, police reports, newspaper accounts, and vintage recordings, Charles Hersch brings to vivid life the neighborhoods and nightspots where jazz was born.

This volume shows how musicians such as Jelly Roll Morton, Nick La Rocca, and Louis Armstrong negotiated New Orleans's complex racial rules to pursue their craft and how, in order to widen their audiences, they became fluent in a variety of musical traditions from diverse ethnic sources. These encounters with other music and races subverted their own racial identities and changed the way they played—a musical miscegenation that, in the shadow of Jim Crow, undermined the pursuit of racial purity and indelibly transformed American culture.

“More than timely . . . Hersch orchestrates voices of musicians on both sides of the racial divide in underscoring how porous the music made the boundaries of race and class.”—*New Orleans Times-Picayune*

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