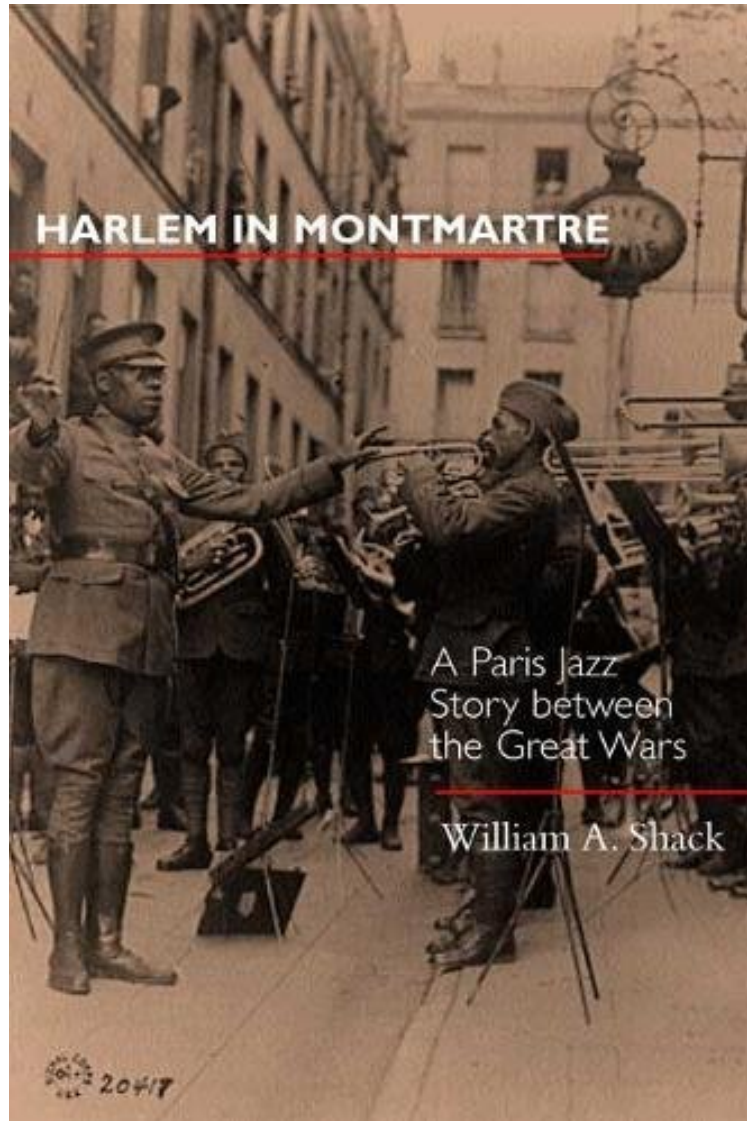


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Harlem in Montmartre: A Paris Jazz Story Between the Great Wars

William A. Shack

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size: 17.Mb

William A. Shack : Harlem in Montmartre: A Paris Jazz Story Between the Great Wars before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Harlem in Montmartre: A Paris Jazz Story Between the Great Wars:

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olaGreat book. Worth every cent !21 of 22 people found the following review helpful. A Brilliant story!By A CustomerWilliam Shack, late professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, has done a terrific job in bringing to life the Parisian jazz scene between the Great Wars. At the end of the First World War black Americans in the US Expeditionary Force, most notably James Reese Europe's Hellfighters Band, essentially introduced jazz to France and, by staying in Paris or returning thereto after demobilization, they formed the condensing nucleus of the black American jazz community that flourished in Montmartre between the Wars. Contemporary to the Harlem Renaissance in New York, the "Harlem in Montmartre" community provided black jazz musicians, entertainers, and entrepreneurs, an exciting environment, largely free from the racial bigotry and Jim Crow policies common in the US. This book goes a long way to become the standard work on the matter, describing the principal individuals, the clubs, the shows, the music, all interwoven in a lively and fluent style that helps to revive these exciting and by now long gone decades. Wonderful!

During the years between the world wars, a small but dynamic community of African American jazz musicians left the United States and settled in Paris, creating a vibrant expatriate musical scene and introducing jazz to the French. While the Harlem Renaissance was taking off across the Atlantic, entertainers in Montmartre, the epicenter of the Parisian scene, contributed enthusiastically to a culture that thrived for two decades, until the occupation of the city by German troops on June 18, 1940. In *Harlem in Montmartre*, William Shack takes a fascinating look at this extraordinary cultural moment, one in which African American musicians could flee the racism of the United States to pursue their lives and art in the relatively free context of bohemian Europe. His book is the first comprehensive treatment of the rise and decline of the African American music community in Paris; in it, he considers the international dimensions of black experience in the modern era and explores the similarities and differences of Harlem-style jazz and culture in Europe and America. Shack focuses on some of the principal actors who played critical roles in shaping the jazz scene in Montmartre--Josephine Baker, Sidney Bechet, and Bricktop--but he also discusses others who opened clubs, underwrote loans, and contributed their musical talents to this unparalleled experiment. As an anthropologist, Shack pays particular attention to the club culture. He describes the musicians' experiences, the settings in which they performed, and the response of French audiences. Shack's meticulous research and encyclopedic knowledge of Montmartre's jazz culture, including the people and places involved, make this a riveting, authoritative work. Seamlessly fusing biographical, sociological, and historical details, he brings this unique era to life and demonstrates how the Paris jazz scene played a crucial role in legitimizing jazz--both in Europe and the United States.

From *Library Journal*The late Shack (anthropology, Berkeley) here chose to write about a particularly fruitful time in jazz development. Between the Great Wars, a unique community of jazz musicians and fanciers arose in France, particularly in the Montmartre section of Paris. While never coming close to the vibrancy of Harlem, this community still allowed for the cross-fertilization of jazz with overt European influences. Black American musicians found the level of support inviting enough to move to Paris and often used the city as a base of operations while performing throughout Europe. Shack captures this cultural interaction in a short but powerful book that makes a valuable contribution to the publisher's "Music of the African Diaspora" series. Recommended for music and academic libraries and public libraries with strong music collections. William G. Kenz, Minnesota State Univ., Moorhead Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist*Paris was one of the first, and perhaps most important, foreign capitals swept by jazz in the early twentieth century. Shack, a late professor of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley, compactly illuminates the expatriate African American community of jazz musicians that thrived in the Montmartre district of Paris in the '20s and '30s and helped turn the "city of lights" into the major jazz capital it remains today. The catalyst for this transformation was James Reese Europe, leader of the "Harlem Hellfighters" troop regiment in the American Expeditionary Force in World War I. These musicians and soldiers, despite indignities inflicted by the U.S. military, impressed Europeans with their jazz concerts, and later the Hellfighters became the most decorated military unit in the American forces. After the war, many of them stayed in France, which lacked the segregationist laws and customs that plagued them at home. Shack profiles the leading figures in this community, including Josephine Baker, Ada "Bricktop" Smith, and Sidney Bechet. A brilliant account of an unsung chapter in American history. Ted Leventhal Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "A short but powerful book that makes a valuable contribution to the publisher's 'Music of the African Diaspora' series."--*Library Journal*