

Louis armstrong essay



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There were not so many people who were able to influence the culture of the United States of America by their music. Louis Armstrong was definitely one of them. He was an American jazz trumpeter, singer and band leader. During his life, he changed the focus of the music from the collective performance to the solo one. He had a significant influence on jazz music and he had deep and distinctive voice that many Americans and people all over the world could easily recognize. Autumnal, he was very famous and had the impact not only on popular music. He was the first African-American musician performer who was recognized by people as a musician, and not only as a black person. His great performance and individual features of his personality allowed him to be engaged with American elites. It was not accessible for black people at that time. Louis Armstrong had the greatest impact on the development of jazz and made a lot of efforts in order to popularize it around the world.

Louis Armstrong was born on August 4, 1901, in a poor African-American area of New Orleans. He was growing up in a troubled family. His father left the family when the boy was an infant. Mother sent him to the grandmother Josephine. She gave the education for Louis and his sister Beatrice. Later, mother took him back, but did not pay him much attention. In the age of seven, he moved to live in a family of Jews that has recently immigrated to America from Lithuania. They lived in the area that was known by its free customs, as well as bars, clubs, dance halls and brothels. Armstrong worked as a child, carrying coal, sold newspapers, etc. He has tasted the cruel, humiliating and terrifying that can only a person go through. Louis's childhood and youth were full of crying poverty, racial oppression, prosperity

of gangsters, corrupt police, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. In fact, he lived at the bottom of American society. People still supported each other and strived for a better life (Harrison). Therefore, in his early years of life Louis Armstrong could only think about surviving and he had no time for thinking about music. However, New Orleans opened him the path to music and gave the beginning for the great story of the great musician. “ Of particular importance to Armstrong’s story is the fact that New Orleans was without question the most musical city in the United States, and perhaps the whole western hemisphere” (Lincoln).

Armstrong began singing in small street vocal ensemble where he played drums. During several years, he trained his ear for music. The first musical education he received was in a prison camp for adolescents of color in 1913. There, he immediately joined the camp brass band and learned to play the tambourine, Alto, and then mastered the cornet. “ Band played the traditional repertoire of the time – marches, polkas and popular songs. In that time, he decided to become a musician. He started going to clubs and playing instruments lent in local orchestras” (Stricklin). King Oliver, who was considered to be the best cornet of the city, took him as a student. Louis Armstrong named him as his real teacher. After the departure of Oliver in Chicago in 1918, he played in ensemble “ Tuxedo Brass Band”, where such musicians as Paul Domingues, Zatti Singleton, Albert Nichols and Luis Russell played. He participated in jazz parade through the streets of his native city, and played in the band named « Jazz-E-Sazz Band». There, he received the first foundations of the music notation. Gradually, he had become a professional musician.

In 1922, Oliver needed a second cornet. He invited Armstrong to Chicago to play “Lincoln Gardens” in his orchestra «Creole Jazz Band». They played in a restaurant for seven hundred people. At that time, this band was the most striking jazz bands in Chicago and it played significant role in Armstrong’s future career development. As part of “Creole jazz band” in Chicago, Armstrong made his first recordings. In 1924, he married for the second time the ensemble pianist, Lil Hardin, and at the insistence of his wife begins an independent career (Stricklin, 2010). Armstrong went to New York, where he worked in the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. There he becomes famous. Jazz fans often came in order to hear his “hot” solo. By this time, Louis finally formed his own style of Louis Armstrong – bright, improvisational and inventive. In 1925, after the expiration of an engagement with Fletcher Henderson, Louis returned to Chicago. He worked successfully and showed his acting talent. One year later, he became a bandleader. In a short time, he had his own orchestra “Louis Armstrong and His Stompers”. At the same time, Armstrong refused to be a cornet and started to play only the trumpet that had more vivid sound. In 1929, Louis Armstrong finally moved to New York. It was the time of big bands with the concentration on the dance and sweet music. Armstrong enriched this style of music with a bright individual manner. He very quickly became the star of the national scale. “By the mid 50s, Louis Armstrong was one of the world’s famous musicians. The popularity of musician continued to grow due to his tireless and versatile creativity” (Raum). He often played with other jazz musicians, participated in the jazz festivals and performed in many countries of Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. In 1959, he had a heart attack. Since that time, the health did not allow him to perform at the full strength. However, he never stopped

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concert performances. Except music, Armstrong supported the movement of African-Americans for their rights. He was a financial supporter of Martin Luther King. However, he did not like to mix his musician career with politics. He fought for civil rights behind the scene (Harrison). In 1971, Louis Armstrong died. Armstrong's death caused a veritable flow of the most sincere and deepest condolences. The funeral was performed with the great ceremony.

Genius is a rare and exceptional phenomenon. Such people could perform in any field of human sphere like politics, science, art; being always stunning, he turns the so-called common sense, defying the established rules and regulations and present a new look at the world. This definition of the genius can be applied to Louis Armstrong. Thanks to him, the jazz music gained a new sound. In turn, jazz transformed the look of that time. This art is so unusual that it swiftly conquered the world and Louis Armstrong became its symbol. If there is a talk about Armstrong, it means it is about jazz, his difficult path, searching, victories and defeats. On the contrary, the history of jazz, from its origins to the present day, is impossible to imagine without the life and work of Louis Armstrong. The life of a musician constantly intersects with the course of jazz history. Armstrong and jazz are merged in the people's minds.

Armstrong was a pioneer of the jazz music. He was the most colorful and talented performer of early jazz. Armstrong created jazz, minted its original language and form. He maintained the immutability and eternity of the jazz that works till current days. He defined the artistic landmarks of jazz, primary reconstructed it and found a new impetus, expressive means that were not

discovered before. He raised jazz on a qualitatively new level, and thus had a decisive influence on the course of music, which later came out of it. It is rock and its derivatives. Jazz is a part of modern music, which is performed every day on television, in cinemas, theaters (Lincoln). The modern musical world would be different without the influence of Armstrong's work. That is why he can be considered as the greatest musical genius. He demonstrated the world that this art has a special aesthetic, his expressive resources are huge, that you can play jazz and explore endlessly, but did not reveal the secrets of jazz. Armstrong's story is typical of American society. It could not have happened in any other country. Society has left an indelible stamp on it. The life of a musician was just turned into reality.

Armstrong did not have proper education, no musical or philosophical concepts. It seems that his work contains the insight, enthusiasm and he happily played what came in mind. The inspiration, knowledge and experience were not the main features that influenced Louis's music. True art of this individual grew out of the identity and fate of the musician. He had in abundance the intense of the inner life, genuine joy and pain. Armstrong's life had no harmony, peace or comfort. However, his music was full of love, sincerity and simplicity (Raum, 2006).

The life of Louis Armstrong contained three typical dramas of the American society. It is the drama of a man, who stumbled his youth, and then reached the top of the fame and fortune. Armstrong had a difficult childhood, but he came out of the lower strata of the society. The difficult conditions have not stopped him to become one of the most famous and wealthy people in the world at the end of his life. The second drama is a drama of the gifted artist

who was caught in the nets of entertainment industry. He has known all its ugly sides and under the pressure of external circumstances he could not escape from it. It is, finally, a drama of a boy from a poor family who became the leading star of the stage. He tried to stay on this high level and followed all the requirements that apply to the situation. He is not among us, however, the unique sound of his trumpet and his voice are still with us (Lincoln, 1983).