

John coltrane



To the public he is known just as another jazz musician but for those with a more in-depth music appreciation he remains one of the most significant saxophonists in jazz history. John "Trane" Coltrane's impact on the music world was quite considerable. By revolutionizing music with his own techniques Coltrane changed jazz music forever. Coltrane was an American jazz saxophonist, composer, bandleader, and iconic figure of the twentieth century. As a jazz singer and jazz enthusiast myself, Coltrane's techniques and music is not only impacting but created an emotional connection between jazz and me.

Author Lewis Porter says Coltrane was "one of the great musical artists of the twentieth century" (Porter 1) in his book "John Coltrane: His life and music". I chose to read about Coltrane because of his great influence on me involving my newfound love for jazz. His life and achievements amazed me just as much as the first time I heard his melodies come out of his tenor saxophone. His use of modes in jazz later helped pioneer new beginnings in free jazz and influence a plethora of future generation musicians. Lewis Porter, a professional jazz scholar and performer, meticulously researched Coltrane's life and wrote about his success despite having a very demanding lifestyle. Dedicating his life to music at a very young age by playing the clarinet and then eventually moving on to play in a band in Hawaii for a year after discovering the tenor saxophone was all the difficulties he faced early on in his life. The tasks themselves weren't difficult but experiencing them all at the age of twelve soon after his aunt, grandparents, and father passed away within a few months of the same year these tasks became almost impossible. After his father's death Coltrane's performance in school changed

drastically. Rather than being a top student, he became an indifferent student, earning many C's" (Porter 18). Although his determination for schoolwork declined it seems that after his father's death music was Chlorate's safety net. " He began playing music around this time and it may be true that perhaps music was too much on his mind. But more to the point, his obsession with music was a way of dealing with the tragedies in his life" (Porter, 18). Another obstacle Chlorate was forced to deal with was segregation. Although violence was not something commonly found in Chlorate's town " there were constant reminders of second-class status" (Porter 19).

Schools, restaurants, fountains, and more were segregated. " If the white schools got new books one year, the blacks might have got them a few years later. They got used books from the white schools" (Porter 19). Due to the hardships of segregation, Chlorate, his mother, and sister desperately tried to better their lives. After his father's death John Chlorate's family soon went from middle class to poor. Chlorate's cousin, who lived with Chlorate for many years, recalled, " after his father died, things changed. Our mothers had to go to work, and my aunt and my mother worked together at a country club.

John used to shine shoes there. No one really knew how we lived, but we had to rent our bedrooms and we all slept downstairs. My mother, John, and I all slept in the dining room. We had cots. And John was sick there, he had some sort of- not asthma, but we had to sit up with him at night. This went on for a long time" (Porter 20). During Chlorate's senior year of high school his mother decided to move to Philadelphia to obtain a greater income. Sure

enough Chlorate radiated from High Point High School along with the superlative "Most Musical".

After graduation he bought an apartment with his mother in Philadelphia. Along with the apartment Chlorate's mother bought a piano. "John's mother had a piano—a tall upright that housed a working player piano unit. John began to work toward becoming a professional jazz musician" (Porter 24). Many say that John Chlorate was destined to be a musician. He was surrounded by music as a child. Before his father's early death, Chlorate's father had a love for music. His father played several instruments and his interests later influenced him. Not only was his father passionate about music but so was his mother. Chlorate's mother was musical—she sang and also played piano' (Porter 25). John Chlorate's cousin said "we had a big radio in the living room that stayed on all the time. We listened to everything... We listened to Frank Sinatra, everybody, you name it. He and I would turn the radio up loud so that we could hear it in the kitchen" (Porter 26). Chlorate's first instrumental training was with a community band where he began on an alto horn. At that time Chlorate said, "I hadn't decided yet to become a professional musician. I learned a little bit haphazardly, without any system, just enough to play a song or two.

This was my first contact—so to speak—with music" (Porter 28). Around the fall of 1940 is when Chlorate first became interested in the saxophone. Chlorate chose the sax because of his admiration for tenor saxophonist Lester Young. Soon Chlorate mastered the tenor saxophone. "There was a room in his house he would use just to practice. He played everyday, all day long. And then he would stop to get ready to go to work that night. Music was really his

life" (Porter 254). Not only was Coltrane a hard working musician, he was in a thriving city for the arts at the time, Philadelphia. Philadelphia nurtured a thriving Jazz community in the 1940's" (Porter 35). Lucky for Coltrane, right by his apartment was the Woodbine Club, " where local musicians would Jam on the weekends" (Porter, 36). As of 1945, right after graduating high school at the age of sixteen, Coltrane started to pick up on professional gigs and performances in Philadelphia. He soon became close friends with a pianist and guitarist and formed a trio that performed in cocktail bars around the city. Soon after his trio formed Coltrane joined the 'musicians union'.

Unfortunately, with World War II raging Coltrane was forced to put his music career in Philadelphia on hold once he was drafted into the Navy. Once discharged Coltrane began to develop a new approach to music based off of multiple musicians he had encountered over the years. " Coltrane had been under the spell of Johnny Hodges, the celebrated altoist from Duke Ellington's band. Coltrane had a special penchant for romantic ballads that perhaps even dated back to his late father's taste" (Porter 1). Coltrane was outgoing and put himself out into the music scene at a young age. He was not, as one might have thought, a great talent who took a long time to get recognized. He was, rather, someone who did not begin with obvious exceptional talent, and that makes his case all the more interesting-one can become one of the great musicians of all time and not start off as some kind of prodigy' (Porter 44). John Coltrane came across many obstacles throughout his childhood and music career. Lewis Porter shared Coltrane's story wonderfully, showing that the struggle he faced were not strong enough to stop him from doing what he loved to do, play music. Coltrane

wanted his music to be a force for good, and I think it has been. One doesn't have to be religious to find Chlorate's expression of spirituality profoundly moving and important" (Porter 300). Even though Chlorate's death was over fifty years ago, through his music he remains alive. Chlorate will be forever one of the best because of his accomplishments in the study of Jazz music.