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## **Black American Music: Precursors of Jazz**

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by Willie J. Whipple

The music of James Bland, Gussie Davis, Scott Joplin, and W.C. Handy was well known in 1918, though many were unaware that black men had composed this music. The names of Harry T. Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, and J. Rosamond Johnson were less familiar to the general public except perhaps in New York. Black music has a long history of oral tradition, improvisation, harmonic variety and rhythmic perfection. This music enjoys a certain unique characteristic in its performance and acceptability. This unit traces the course of Black music from the 1900's to the beginning of the jazz age. It was necessary to omit much material because of the time span, while only the very most important events could be described and only the most significant persons or groups discussed. There are suggestions for planning activities at the end of this brief history which will aid in developing lessons in most subject areas with appreciation of the heritage of Black musicians as the primary goal. The section following the music appreciation procedures describes the nature of black expressiveness and procedures to liberate the artist in students through music.

### **Key Words**

*Afro-Americans Pre-Jazz Age Jazz Music History Appreciation*

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