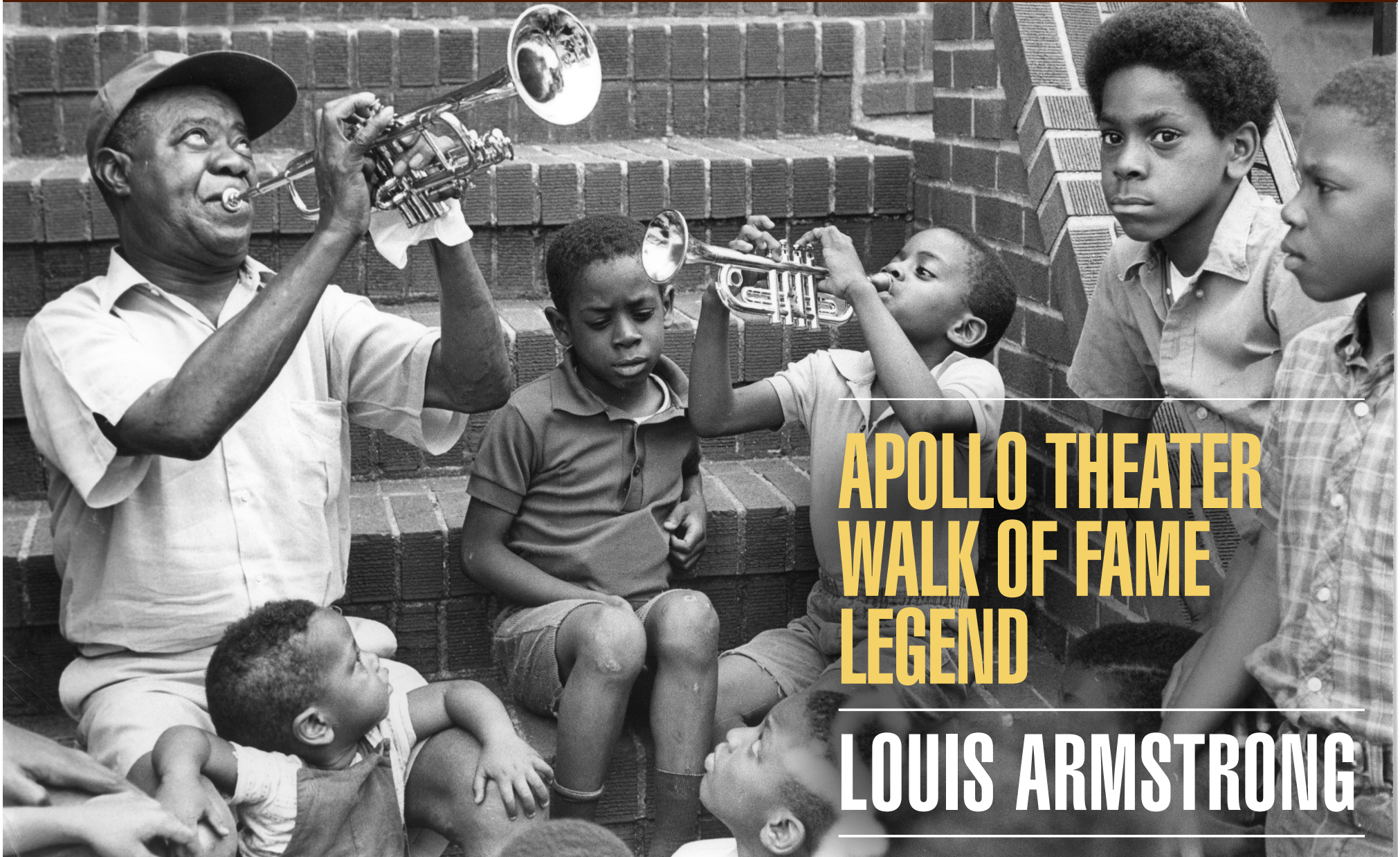


APOLLO

EDUCATION



APOLLO THEATER
WALK OF FAME
LEGEND

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

LOUIS ARMSTRONG



What a wonderful world it is thanks to the musical gifts left to us by Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong. Born in 1901 in New Orleans, Louisiana, Louis grew up in a neighborhood called “The Battlefield”, named for its reputation for crime and violence.

Even though he tried as best he could to stay out of trouble, at 12 years old, Louis was arrested for firing a pistol in the air on New Year’s Eve, a tradition in New Orleans. Sent to a boy’s home outside of the city to serve his sentence, young Armstrong experienced an incredible twist of fate. It was at the home where Louis was first introduced to the instrument he would one day become famous for playing: the trumpet.

Louis practiced his trumpet every day for nearly two years and at 14, started to play with **brass bands** on the streets of New Orleans as well as on the steamboats that traveled up and down the Mississippi River. It was in 1922, at the age of 19, that Louis received the first big break of his career. He was invited to join the band of his former mentor, trumpeter Joe “King” Oliver, who had left New Orleans during the **Great Migration** to find work in Chicago’s lively entertainment scene.

Louis accepted the offer and joined King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in Chicago where word of the young trumpeter’s talent spread quickly. So quickly in fact, that in 1924 Louis was invited to New

DO NOW!

Let’s Scat!

Scatting is a vocal style in which singers make up sounds with their mouths, rather than singing the words to the melody of a song. The sounds are called vocables. Also used when improvising in jazz music, scat singers often pretend to sound like instruments such as trumpets, trombones, and drums.

Can you sing the melody to one of your favorite songs without using the song’s words, and instead sing only scat sounds? From the vocables in the box below, combine as many sounds as you like together to fit to the melody of your song. Like Louis, pretend you are in a recording session and accidentally drop your music. So not to have to stop the recording and start over again, keep singing the melody using scat sounds instead of the song’s words, then improvise a scat solo of your own!

*Be! Baba! Boom! Bop! Chicka! Dat! Doo!
Da! Goo! Gaga! Me! Moo! Nee! Nana! No!
Nu! Oop! Op! Pippity! Pop! Sippity! Sap!
Tippity! Tap! Woo! Wa! Zip! Zap! Zoom!*

DID YOU KNOW?

Louis Armstrong had several nicknames throughout his career, dating back to his youth in New Orleans. In lighthearted fun, often these nicknames had something to do with his large mouth!

“Louie”

Is it pronounced Louis or Louie? While commonly referred to as Louie, Armstrong in fact pronounced his name Louis, with an ‘s’.

“Dippermouth”

Louis’ boyhood nickname was “Dipper”, short for “Dippermouth”, a reference to his large mouth.

“Satchmo”

Another boyhood reference to his large mouth, Louis’ nickname of “Satchel Mouth” was accidentally shortened to “Satchmo” while on his first tour of Europe in 1932.

“Ambassador Satch”

While “Satchmo” was sometimes shortened to “Satch”, Louis earned the title “Ambassador” for his serving as a Cultural Ambassador for the U.S. State Department in the 1950s.

“Pops”

Particularly to his close friends and trusted band mates, Louis was known and endeared simply as, “Pops”.

York City to play with the leading jazz band of the day, the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. Before performing with Henderson, Louis made his debut New York appearance at a small club housed in the basement of Hurtig and Seamon’s New Burlesque Theater on 125th Street, a venue which ten years later would be renamed, The Apollo Theater.

Louis returned to Chicago in 1925 to record with his band, the Hot Fives. During one of the recording sessions, which he played trumpet and sang on, Louis accidentally dropped his music with the words to the song “Heebie Jeebies” written on it. So not to have to stop the session and record over again, Louis kept on singing, even though he did not know the words! Instead, he made up silly sounds to the song’s melody, such as “Beep. Bop. Boop. Boo-Ba-Ba. Deep-Bop. Boop.” Armstrong’s ability to **improvise** on the spot helped popularize a vocal style, which became widely practiced in jazz music known as **scat singing**.

Due to the success of his Hot Five recordings, it wasn’t long before Louis’ growing popularity once again pulled him back to the entertainment capital of the world, New York City. In 1929, Armstrong moved into a small apartment in Harlem not far from the Apollo Theater. Between 1935 and 1947, Louis performed at the Apollo with his **big band** many times. Thanks in part to the recognition he received at these shows, Louis went on to star on Broadway, radio, television and in films and cartoons.

In 1943, Louis and his wife Lucille purchased a home in Corona, Queens where Louis lived until his death in 1971. In 1976, the house became a National Historic Landmark and opened to the public as the Louis Armstrong House Museum in 2003. Whether in the comfort of Louis’ home or sitting in the audience at the Apollo Theater, one can quickly gain a sense of Satchmo’s lasting legacy. If you close your eyes and listen carefully, you might even hear echoes of Louis in the distance, blowing his golden trumpet and singing in his signature gravelly voice... “What a wonderful world,” it is indeed.

Louis Armstrong was inducted into the Apollo Theater Walk of Fame in November of 2014.

BETWEEN 1935 AND 1947, LOUIS PERFORMED AT THE APOLLO WITH HIS BIG BAND MANY TIMES. THANKS IN PART TO THE RECOGNITION HE RECEIVED AT THESE SHOWS, LOUIS WENT ON TO STAR ON BROADWAY, RADIO, TELEVISION AND IN FILMS AND CARTOONS.





WORDS TO KNOW

Brass Bands

Developing out of military marching bands, African American musicians in New Orleans learned to mix their own sense of rhythm and dance into traditional European marching music, as well as to improvise on traditional European instruments including trumpets, trombones, saxophones, clarinets, tubas, and drums. The combining of these instruments to form brass bands, beginning in the late 1800s, led to African American musicians being hired to provide entertainment for parades, parties, and special events.

Great Migration

Beginning in the 1910s, nearly 6 million African Americans moved from country settings in the south to industrial cities in the Midwest, Northeast, and West, hoping to find jobs, education, and opportunity for their families. In cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York, African Americans introduced southern traditions including unique ways of cooking, dancing, and playing music, not commonly practiced in the north. These new influences contributed greatly to the development of a richer and more diverse cultural landscape in America.

Improvisation

To improvise is to react within a given set of rules, unrehearsed, and as a result make something up on the spot. While following the rules and musical characteristics of a song, when jazz musicians improvise they play what they feel, and express their musical ideas freely and in the moment.

Big Band

Popular during the 1930s and 1940s jazz era, big bands featured five saxophones, four trombones, four trumpets, and a rhythm section of piano, bass, and drums.

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Photo Credits

Louis playing for the neighborhood kids on the front steps of his Corona, Queens home. Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum. Louis Armstrong, 1954. Egill Oscar Gustafson photographer. Snapshot of Louis Armstrong's name on the Apollo Theater marquee. Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum.

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