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**HARLEM IN MONTMARTRE: A Paris Jazz Story**  
Hits all the Right Notes on PBS' *Great Performances* Series

Documentary inspired by William A. Shack's book explores the lives of African-Americans who transported jazz music to Paris

Beloved American jazz singer and bandleader Cab Calloway once said, "You hear about the Duke Ellingtons, the Jimmy Luncefords, the Fletcher Hendersons, but people sometimes forget that jazz was not only built in the minds of the great ones, but on the backs of the ordinary ones." While far from ordinary, **Harlem in Montmartre** tells the story of the long-forgotten "extraordinary ones," who left America to create the jazz age in Paris between the First and Second World Wars. After peace was signed at Versailles, many black Americans remained in Europe rather than return to the brutal segregation and racism of America. Over the next two decades, they formed an expatriate community of musicians, entertainers and entrepreneurs, primarily congregating in Paris' hilly Montmartre neighborhood. Some achieved enduring fame, while others faded into history.

**Harlem in Montmartre** airs as part of PBS' *Great Performances* series on THIRTEEN Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> at 8 p.m. EST (check local listings). The documentary is a co-production of THIRTEEN for WNET.ORG, Vanguard Documentaries, Inc., Ideale Audience SAS, ARTE France and Independent Television Service (ITVS).

Inspired by the book "Harlem in Montmartre: a Paris Jazz Story" (University of California Press) by historian William A. Shack and utilizing rare archival material from both France and America, this remarkable performance-driven documentary features the stories and music of such key figures as **James Reese Europe, Josephine Baker, Sidney Bechet, Bricktop, Eugene Bullard, Django Reinhardt** and more. "The film explores a fascinating, yet often neglected, era in African-American cultural history" says producer Margaret Smilow. "It is a colorful, musical, poignant look at the contributions of a select group of black Americans, without whom the collective voice of jazz music around the world would sound entirely different." Vanguard Documentaries Executive Producer Charles Hobson reveals, "The French were the first people in the world to respect jazz as serious art form, and it all began in Paris with the arrival of the Harlem Hellfighters, a military band." Directed by Dante J. James, with performance sequences directed by Olivier Simmonet, and written by James and Simmonet with Allan Miller, the production was co-produced by Smilow with Hobson and Helene Le Coeur; S. Epatha Merkerson narrates.

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For ***Great Performances***, Bill O'Donnell is series producer; David Horn is executive producer. Visit **Great Performances Online** at [www.pbs.org/gperf](http://www.pbs.org/gperf) for additional information about this and other programs.

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