

Julie Wagoner  
French 448  
Final Project Reflection  
12/2/21

For my final Wikipedia Project, I chose to work on the article about Sidney Bechet. I chose Sidney Bechet because I already knew a little bit about him; when I thought I was going to complete a music minor I took Music 131 (History of Jazz) last fall and this is where I first learned about how influential Bechet was in the jazz industry. I have also been playing clarinet for my whole life so I had sort of a vested interest in learning more about him—don't get me wrong, I loved reading about Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Buddy DeFranco, etc., but Sidney Bechet was the first Black clarinetist that I have learned about and there was significantly less information about him in my History of Jazz textbook despite his wide influence.

Before I started really researching Bechet, I started editing my article by making small nitty-gritty changes that were likely missed by wiki editors who had previously worked on the page. I highlighted terms that had their own respective wiki pages and linked those to the article so that the reader could get the best experience. I scanned for information that made bold claims without citing a source, then researched that information until I found a source to back it up and linked the source to the page. I added a few outside links, and a section with a list of Bechet's albums. I looked for grammatical errors and rearranged sentences that did not flow nicely. I was frustrated when I found that the article's information had been put into essentially one large paragraph with no breaks, and this was dense and difficult to read. I created several new sections on the page and moved information around until it was in a place that made sense. I also found that there was a lack of media and added several images to the page. I used the UW libraries website to search for my peer-reviewed sources and found that

Julie Wagoner  
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12/2/21

there was generally a good amount of information on Bechet's autobiography, which was interesting.

Despite all of the changes that I have made, there are several things that I still want to address, depending on whether or not I have time to make these changes in the coming week. My peer reviewer suggested that I add a clip of some of his songs to the page, and I think this would be a great addition assuming that I can find one that adheres to wikipedia's policies; otherwise I could add a link to his music under the additional links section. I also wanted to address the "Personal Life" section that simply states "Bechet was Catholic." I'm not sure what to do with this section—if I should try to find more information to add to it, leave it as is, or if I should reroute that sentence and delete the heading. I think that if I were to do anything differently next time, I would probably start by drafting my changes in the sandbox rather than starting my sandbox edits after already editing the article itself. Also, I'm not sure where I went wrong with this but when I moved my work over, several of the citations were duplicated 2 or 3 times so I had to manually delete each duplicated source. It was an easy fix, but if I wasn't paying close attention I could have missed it easily.

Below you will find the final draft of my project with the edits I made highlighted, followed by the original draft.

# Sidney Bechet

**Sidney Joseph Bechet**<sup>[1]</sup> (May 14, 1897 – May 14, 1959) was an American jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer. He was one of the first important soloists in jazz, and first recorded several months before trumpeter Louis Armstrong.<sup>[2]</sup> His erratic temperament hampered his career, and not until the late 1940s did he earn wide acclaim. **Bechet spent much of his later life in France.**<sup>[3]</sup>

## Contents

### Biography

#### Early Life

#### Musical Development

#### Bechet in France

#### Later Life

#### Permanent Settlement in Paris

#### Autobiography & Death

#### Legacy

### Personal life

### Awards

### Discography

#### Singles

#### Albums

#### Movies

### Further reading

### References

### External links

## Biography

## Early Life

Bechet was born in **New Orleans** in 1897 to a

Sidney Bechet	
<span></span> <div>Photographic portrait of Bechet at Jimmy Ryan's Club in New York, 1947, by <u>William P. Gottlieb</u></div>	
Background information	
<span>Birth name</span>	Sidney Joseph Bechet
Born	May 14, 1897 <u>New Orleans, Louisiana</u> , United States
Died	May 14, 1959 (aged 62) <u>Garches, France</u>
Genres	<u>Jazz</u> , <u>Dixieland</u>
Occupation(s)	Musician, composer
Instruments	Clarinet, soprano saxophone

**Years active** 1908–1957

Ladnier

**Associated acts** Louis Armstrong,  
Tommy

middle-class Creole of color family. Bechet's father Omar was both a shoemaker and a flute player, and all four of his brothers were musicians as well.<sup>[4]</sup> His older brother, Leonard Victor Bechet, was a full-time dentist and a part-time trombonist and bandleader. Bechet learned and mastered several musical instruments that were kept around the house (he began on the cornet), mostly by teaching himself; he decided to specialize in the clarinet (which he played almost exclusively until about 1919).<sup>[4]</sup> At the age

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Bechet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Bechet) 1/8

12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia



Bechet's childhood

home in the 7th Ward of New Orleans

of six, he started to perform with his brother's band at a family birthday party, debuting his talents to acclaim. Later in his youth, Bechet studied with Joseph "King" Oliver, Bunk Johnson, Freddie Keppard,<sup>[3]</sup> Lorenzo Tio, "Big Eye" Louis Nelson Delisle, and George Baquet.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Musical Development

Bechet played in many New Orleans ensembles using the improvisational techniques of the time (obligatos with scales and arpeggios and varying the melody). While working with Louis Armstrong, Bechet was the first musician to develop the Swing style of jazz, and influence the widening difference between jazz

and ragtime.<sup>[3]</sup> Bechet liked to have his sound dominate in a performance, and trumpeters found it difficult to play alongside him.<sup>[6]</sup> He performed in parades with Freddie Keppard's brass band, the Olympia Orchestra, and in John Robichaux's dance orchestra. From 1911 to 1912, he performed with Bunk Johnson in the Eagle Band of New Orleans and in 1913–14 with King Oliver in the Olympia Band. From 1914 to 1917, he was touring and traveling, going as far north as Chicago and frequently performing with Freddie Keppard. In the spring of 1919, he traveled to New York City where he joined Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra. Soon after, the orchestra traveled to Europe; almost immediately upon arrival, they performed at the Royal Philharmonic Hall in London. The group was warmly received, and Bechet was especially popular.<sup>[5]</sup> While in London, he discovered the straight soprano saxophone and developed a style unlike his clarinet tone. Bechet was the first influential soprano saxophonist, and led to its rising popularity in jazz.<sup>[4]</sup> His saxophone sound could be described as emotional, reckless, and large. He often used a broad vibrato, similar to some New Orleans clarinetists at the time. In 1919, Ernest Ansermet, a Swiss classical music conductor, wrote a tribute to Bechet, one of the earliest (if not the first) to a jazz musician from the field of classical music, linking Bechet's music with that of Bach.<sup>[5]</sup> Bechet's first recordings were made in 1923 and 1924.<sup>[3]</sup> The session was led by Clarence Williams, a pianist and songwriter, better known at that time for his

music publishing and record producing, and his "Blue Five" (which included Louis Armstrong).<sup>[3]</sup> Bechet recorded "Wild Cat Blues" and "Kansas City Man Blues". "Wild Cat Blues" is in a ragtime style with four 16-bar themes, and "Kansas City Man Blues" is a 12-bar blues.<sup>[4]</sup> In 1924, Bechet worked with Duke Ellington for three months and made a significant impact on Ellington's early jazz style.<sup>[3]</sup> Duke Ellington also called him "the epitome of jazz."<sup>[7]</sup> Interestingly, Bechet never learned how to read music in his lifetime of being a musician.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Bechet in France

On September 15, 1925, Bechet and other members of the *Revue Nègre*, including Josephine Baker, sailed to Europe, arriving at Cherbourg, France, on September 22. The revue opened at the *Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*<sup>[9]</sup> in Paris on October 2. The show was an example of *negrophilia* in France at the time.<sup>[10]</sup> He toured Europe with multiple bands, reaching as far as Russia in mid-1926. In 1928, he led his small band at Chez Bricktop (run by the popular Ada "Bricktop" Smith) in Montmartre, Paris.

In France, Bechet found that he was appreciated by a wider audience and had more general freedom than he did in the United States.<sup>[8]</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Bechet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Bechet) 2/8

12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

He was imprisoned in Paris for eleven months.<sup>[11][12]</sup> In his autobiography ([https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/1780186.Treat\\_It\\_Gentle](https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/1780186.Treat_It_Gentle)), he wrote that he accidentally shot a woman when he was trying to shoot a musician who had insulted him. He had challenged the man to duel and said, "Sidney Bechet never plays the wrong chord."<sup>[13]</sup> After his release, he was deported to New York, arriving soon after the stock market crash of 1929. He joined with Lorenzo Tio and also came to know trumpeter Roy Eldridge.<sup>[6]</sup>

In 1932, Bechet returned to New York City to lead a band with Tommy Ladnier. The band, consisting of six members, performed at the Savoy Ballroom. He played in Noble Sissle's orchestra, which toured in Germany and Russia.

## Later Life

In 1938, "Hold Tight, Hold Tight (Want Some Seafood Mama)", commonly known as "Hold Tight", was composed by Bechet's guitarist Leonard Ware and two session singers with

claimed contributions from Bechet himself. The song became known for its suggestive lyrics and then for a series of lawsuits over songwriter royalties.



instruments: clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, piano, bass, and drums. A hitherto unissued master of this recording was included in the 1965 LP *Bechet of New Orleans*, issued by RCA Victor as LPV-510. In the liner notes, George Hoeffler quoted Bechet:

In 1939, Bechet and the pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith led a group that recorded several early versions of what was later called Latin jazz, adapting traditional méringue, rhumba and Haitian songs to the jazz idiom. On July 28, 1940, Bechet made a guest appearance on the NBC Radio show *The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street*, playing two of his showpieces ("Shake It and Break It" and "St. Louis Blues") with Henry Levine's Dixieland band. Levine invited Bechet into the RCA Victor recording studio (on 24th Street in New York City), where Bechet lent his soprano sax to Levine's traditional arrangement of "Muskrat Ramble". On April 18, 1941, as an early experiment in overdubbing at Victor, Bechet recorded a version of the pop song "The Sheik of Araby", playing six different



Bechet in 1922

"I started by playing The Sheik on piano, and played the drums while listening to the piano. I meant to play all the rhythm instruments, but got all mixed up and grabbed my soprano, then the bass, then the tenor saxophone, and finally finished up with the clarinet."

In 1944, 1946, and 1953, he recorded and performed in concert with the Chicago jazz pianist and vibraphonist Max Miller; private recordings from Miller's archive have never been released. These concerts and recordings are described in John Chilton's biography *Sidney Bechet: The Wizard of Jazz*.<sup>[14]</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Bechet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Bechet) 3/8

12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

With jobs in music difficult to find, he opened a tailor shop with Ladnier. They were visited by musicians and played in the back of the shop. In the 1940s, Bechet played in several bands, but his financial situation did not improve until the end of that decade. By the end of the 1940s, Bechet had tired of struggling to make music in the United States. His contract with Jazz Limited, a Chicago-based record label, was limiting the events at which he could perform (for instance, the label would not permit him to perform at the 1948 Festival of Europe in Nice). He believed that the jazz scene in the United States had little left to offer him and was getting stale.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Permanent Settlement in Paris



November, 1947--Bill

Reinhardt (clarinet), Danny Alvin (drums), Sidney Bechet (soprano sax), Mel Grant (piano), and Munn Ware (trombone).

In 1951, he migrated to France permanently,<sup>[3]</sup> after his performance as a soloist at the Paris Jazz Fair caused a surge in his popularity in that country, where he easily found well-paid work. Also in 1951, he married Elisabeth Ziegler in Antibes.

In 1953, he signed a recording contract with Disques Vogue that lasted for the rest of his life.<sup>[6]</sup> He recorded many hit tunes, including "Les Oignons", "Promenade aux Champs-Élysées", and the international hit "Petite Fleur". He also composed a classical ballet score in the late Romantic style of Tchaikovsky called *La Nuit est une sorcière* ("The Night Is a Witch"). Some existentialists in France took to calling him *le dieu* ("the god").<sup>[15]</sup>



## Autobiography & Death

Shortly before his death, Bechet dictated his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*, to Al Rose, a record producer and radio host. He had worked with Rose several times in concert promotions and had a fractious relationship with him. Bechet's view of

himself in his autobiography was starkly different from the one Rose knew.

Sidney Bechet (1954)

"The kindly old gentleman in his book was filled with charity and compassion. The one I knew was self-centered, cold, and capable of the most atrocious cruelty, especially toward women."<sup>[16]</sup>

Although embellished and frequently inaccurate, *Treat It Gentle* remains a staple account for the "insider's view of the New Orleans tradition."<sup>[17]</sup>

Bechet died in Garches, near Paris, of lung cancer on May 14, 1959 on his 62nd birthday. He is buried in a local cemetery.<sup>[14]</sup> Several other major jazz musicians died this year as well: Billie Holiday and Lester Young.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Legacy

In 2013, a crater on Mercury was named after Bechet.<sup>[18]</sup>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Bechet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Bechet) 4/8

12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

On June 25, 2019, *The New York Times Magazine* listed Sidney Bechet among hundreds of artists whose material was reportedly destroyed in the 2008 Universal fire.<sup>[19]</sup>

In the novel *Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse, Bechet was inspiration for the character "Pablo."<sup>[8]</sup>

Bechet's music has been included in the soundtracks of about 60 films, including the following: *JFK* (1991), *Chocolat* (2000), *The Quiet American* (2002), and *Midnight in Paris* (2011).<sup>[8]</sup>

"Egyptian Fantasy", 1941  
"Muskrat Ramble", 1944

## Personal life

Bechet was Catholic.<sup>[20]</sup>

Bechet was known for having an abrasive attitude, which has been compared to that of Coleman Hawkins.<sup>[21]</sup> They were both incredibly sure of their relative importance in the music industry during a time in which jazz was losing popularity. They were stubborn and lacked patience for younger artists who had less experience or knowledge about the jazz industry.<sup>[21]</sup>

Bechet briefly took time off of the music industry in 1938, when he opened a tailor shop in New York.<sup>[8]</sup>

Bechet had three wives: Elizabeth Ziegler (1951-death), Marie Louise Crawford (1934-1942), and Norma Hale (1918-1929).<sup>[8]</sup>

## Awards

*DownBeat* magazine Hall of Fame, 1968<sup>[22]</sup>

Bechet was inducted into the Big Band and Jazz Hall of Fame, 1983.<sup>[8]</sup>

Awarded a blue plaque outside his former London home, 2014 (pictured).<sup>[23]</sup>



Bechet.

Plaque dedicated to

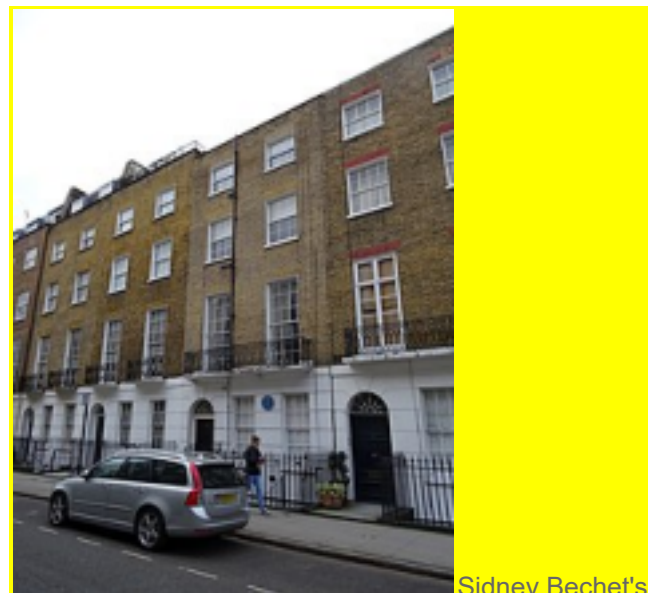
## Discography

### Singles

"Texas Moaner Blues", with Louis Armstrong, 1924  
"Cake Walkin' Babies from Home", with Red Onion Jazz Babies,

"Got the Bench, Got the Park (But I Haven't Got You)", 1930  
"Blues in Thirds", 1940

"Dear Old Southland", 1940



former home in London.

Sidney Bechet's



New Orleans.

Rue Sidney Bechet in



"Blue Horizon", 1944

"Dutch Swing College Blues", 1954<sup>[24]</sup>

"Kansas City Man Blues", 1954<sup>[24]</sup>

"Petite Fleur", 1959

"Dans les Rues D'Antibes", 1960<sup>[24]</sup>

"Premier Bal", 1960<sup>[24]</sup>

"Who's Sorry Now", 1961<sup>[24]</sup>

"Weary Blues", 1979<sup>[24]</sup>

## Albums

"A Jazz Masterwork", 1948<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet & Claude Luter", 1950<sup>[25]</sup>

"Jazz Classics Vol. 1", 1950<sup>[25]</sup>

"Jazz Classics Vol. 2", 1950<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet - Bunk Johnson: Days Beyond Recall", 1951<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet, Claude Luter: On Parade", 1951<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet, Claude Luter, Andre Reweliotty et son Orchestre: Bechet-Souvenirs", 1951<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet, Muggsy Spanier: Jam Session", 1952<sup>[25]</sup>

"Sidney Bechet", 1952<sup>[25]</sup>

"Port of Harlem Six", 1952<sup>[25]</sup>

"Soprano Sax Solos", 1952<sup>[25]</sup>

"French Movies", 2014<sup>[25]</sup>

## Movies

Bechet was featured in three films and played a jazz musician.<sup>[8]</sup>

*Série noire*,<sup>[26]</sup>

*L'inspecteur connaît la musique*,<sup>[27]</sup>

*Quelle équipe!*<sup>[27]</sup>

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12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

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12/9/21, 3:31 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

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## External links

[Sidney Bechet \(https://syncopatedtimes.com/sidney-bechet-1897-1959/\)](https://syncopatedtimes.com/sidney-bechet-1897-1959/) at the Red Hot Jazz Archive

Profile with pictures (<https://archive.today/19991012225419/http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Delta/5853/sid.html>)

Sidney Bechet in Switzerland: A preservation project by the United Music Foundation (<http://www.unitedmusic.ch/index.php/en/projects/sidney-bechet-in-switzerland>)

Sidney Bechet recordings (<https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/names/103288>) at the Discography of American Historical Recordings.

[France: Jazz Musician Sidney Bechet Buried In Paris Suburb: No Farewell Blues. 1959 \(https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAWD1R02AFU4M6I3EWBDCMLTXX-FRANCE-JAZZ-MUSICIAN-SIDNEY-BECHET-BURIED-IN-PARIS-SUBURB-NO/query/sidney\)](https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAWD1R02AFU4M6I3EWBDCMLTXX-FRANCE-JAZZ-MUSICIAN-SIDNEY-BECHET-BURIED-IN-PARIS-SUBURB-NO/query/sidney)

[NPR: The Sidney Bechet Story \(https://www.npr.org/2011/06/17/4558038/sidney-bechet-the-sidney-bechet-story\)](https://www.npr.org/2011/06/17/4558038/sidney-bechet-the-sidney-bechet-story)

[10 Essential Recordings of Bechet's Tunes \(https://jazzfuel.com/sidney-bechet-essential-recordings/\)](https://jazzfuel.com/sidney-bechet-essential-recordings/)

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# Sidney Bechet

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**Sidney Joseph Bechet**<sup>[1]</sup> (May 14, 1897 – May 14, 1959) was an American jazz saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer. He was one of the first important soloists in jazz, and first recorded several months before trumpeter Louis Armstrong.<sup>[2]</sup> His erratic temperament hampered his career, and not until the late 1940s did he earn wide acclaim.

## Biography



Bechet was born in New Orleans in 1897 to a middle class Creole of color family. His older brother, Leonard

Victor Bechet, was a full-time dentist and a part-time trombonist and bandleader. Bechet learned several musical instruments that

## Contents

### Biography

### Personal life

### Awards

### Discography

### Singles

### Further reading

### References

### External links

**Sidney Bechet**



Photographic portrait of Bechet in New York, 1947, by William P. Gottlieb

#### Background information

**Birth name** Sidney Joseph Bechet

**Born** May 14, 1897 New Orleans, Louisiana, United States

**Died** May 14, 1959 (aged 62) Garches, France

**Genres** Jazz, Dixieland

**Occupation(s)** Musician, composer

**Instruments** Clarinet, soprano saxophone

**Years active** 1908–1957

**Associated acts** Louis Armstrong,

Bechet's childhood home in the 7th Ward of New Orleans clarinet (which he played

were kept around the house, mostly by teaching himself; he decided to specialize in the

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12/9/21, 3:30 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

almost exclusively until about 1919). At the age of at a family birthday party, six, he started to perform with his brother's band Tommy Ladnier

debuting his talents to acclaim. Later in his youth, Bechet studied with Lorenzo Tio, "Big Eye" Louis Nelson Delisle, and George Baquet.<sup>[3]</sup>

Bechet played in many New Orleans ensembles using the improvisational techniques of the time (obbligatos with scales and arpeggios and varying the melody). He performed in parades with Freddie Keppard's brass band, the Olympia Orchestra, and in John Robichaux's dance orchestra. From 1911 to 1912, he performed with Bunk Johnson in the Eagle Band of New Orleans and in 1913–14 with King Oliver in the Olympia Band. From 1914 to 1917, he was touring and traveling, going as far north as Chicago and frequently performing with Freddie Keppard. In the spring of 1919, he traveled to New York City where he joined Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra. Soon after, the orchestra traveled to Europe; almost immediately upon arrival, they performed at the Royal Philharmonic Hall in London. The group was warmly received, and Bechet was especially popular.<sup>[3]</sup> While in London, he discovered the straight soprano saxophone and developed a style unlike his clarinet tone. His saxophone sound could be described as emotional, reckless, and large. He often used a broad vibrato, similar to some New Orleans clarinetists at the time. On July 30, 1923, he began recording. The session was led by Clarence Williams, a pianist and songwriter, better known at that time for his music publishing and record producing. Bechet recorded "Wild Cat Blues" and "Kansas City Man Blues". "Wild Cat Blues" is in a ragtime style with four 16-bar themes, and "Kansas City Man Blues" is a 12-bar blues.<sup>[4]</sup>

In 1919, Ernest Ansermet, a Swiss classical music conductor, wrote a tribute to Bechet, one of the earliest (if not the first) to a jazz musician from the field of classical music, linking Bechet's music with that of Bach.<sup>[5]</sup>

On September 15, 1925, Bechet and other members of the *Revue Nègre*, including Josephine Baker, sailed to Europe, arriving at Cherbourg, France, on September 22. The revue opened at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées<sup>[6]</sup> in Paris on October 2. He toured Europe with multiple bands, reaching as far as Russia in mid-1926. In 1928, he led his small band at Chez Bricktop in Montmartre, Paris.

He was imprisoned in Paris for eleven months.<sup>[7][8]</sup> In his autobiography, he wrote that he accidentally shot a woman when he was trying to shoot a musician who had insulted him. He had challenged the man to duel and said, "Sidney Bechet never plays the wrong chord."<sup>[9]</sup> After his release, he was deported to New York, arriving soon after the stock market crash of 1929. He joined Noble Sissle's orchestra, which toured in Germany and Russia.



Bechet in 1922

In 1932, Bechet returned to New York City to lead a band with Tommy Ladnier. The band, consisting of six members, performed at the Savoy Ballroom. He played with Lorenzo Tio and also came to know trumpeter Roy Eldridge.<sup>[10]</sup>

In 1938, "Hold Tight, Hold Tight (Want Some Seafood Mama)", commonly known as "Hold Tight", was composed by Bechet's guitarist Leonard Ware and two session singers with claimed contributions from Bechet himself. The song became known for its suggestive lyrics and then for a series of lawsuits over songwriter royalties.

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12/9/21, 3:30 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

In 1939, Bechet and the pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith led a group that recorded several early versions of what was later called Latin jazz, adapting traditional méringue, rhumba and Haitian songs to the jazz idiom. On July 28, 1940, Bechet made a guest appearance on the NBC Radio show *The Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street*, playing two of his showpieces ("Shake It and Break It" and "St. Louis Blues") with Henry Levine's Dixieland band. Levine invited Bechet into the RCA Victor recording studio (on 24th Street in New York City), where Bechet lent his soprano sax to Levine's traditional arrangement of "Muskrat Ramble". On April 18, 1941, as an early experiment in overdubbing at Victor, Bechet recorded a version of the pop song "The Sheik of Araby", playing six different instruments: clarinet, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, piano, bass, and drums. A hitherto unissued master of this recording was included in the 1965 LP *Bechet of New Orleans*, issued by RCA Victor as LPV-510. In the liner notes, George Hoeffler quoted Bechet:

I started by playing The Sheik on piano, and played the drums while listening to the piano. I meant to play all the rhythm instruments, but got all mixed up and grabbed my soprano, then the bass, then the tenor saxophone, and finally finished up with the clarinet.

In 1944, 1946, and 1953, he recorded and performed in concert with the Chicago jazz pianist and

vibraphonist Max Miller; private recordings from Miller's archive have never been released. These concerts and recordings are described in John Chilton's biography *Sidney Bechet: The Wizard of Jazz*.<sup>[11]</sup>

With jobs in music difficult to find, he opened a tailor shop with Ladnier. They were visited by musicians and played in the back of the shop. In the 1940s, Bechet played in several bands, but his financial situation did not improve until the end of that decade. By the end of the 1940s, Bechet had tired of struggling to make music in the United States. His contract with Jazz Limited, a Chicago based record label, was limiting the events at which he could perform (for instance, the label would not permit him to perform at the 1948 Festival of Europe in Nice). He believed that the jazz scene in the United States had little left to offer him and was getting stale.<sup>[10]</sup> In 1950, he migrated to France, after his performance as a soloist at the Paris Jazz Fair caused a surge in his popularity in that country, where he easily found well-paid work. In 1951, he married Elisabeth Ziegler in Antibes.

In 1953, he signed a recording contract with Disques Vogue that lasted for the rest of his life.<sup>[10]</sup> He recorded many hit tunes, including "Les Oignons", "Promenade aux Champs-Élysées", and the international hit "Petite Fleur". He also composed a classical ballet score in the late Romantic style of Tchaikovsky called *La Nuit est une sorcière* ("The Night Is a Witch"). Some existentialists in France took to calling him *le dieu* ("the god").<sup>[12]</sup>



Shortly before his death, Bechet dictated his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*, to Al Rose, a record producer and radio host. He had worked with Rose several times in concert promotions and had a fractious relationship with him. Bechet's view of himself in his autobiography was starkly different from the one Rose knew. "The kindly old gentleman in his book was filled with charity and compassion. The one I knew was

Sidney Bechet (1954)

of the most atrocious cruelty, especially toward women."<sup>[13]</sup> Although embellished and frequently inaccurate, *Treat It Gentle* remains a staple account for the "insider's view of the New Orleans tradition."<sup>[14]</sup>

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12/9/21, 3:30 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

Bechet died in Garches, near Paris, of lung cancer on May 14, 1959 on his 62nd birthday. He is buried in a local cemetery.<sup>[11]</sup>

Bechet played a jazz musician in three films, *Série noire*,<sup>[15]</sup> *L'inspecteur connaît la musique* and, *Quelle équipe!*<sup>[16]</sup>

His playing style was intense and passionate and had a wide vibrato. He was also known to be proficient at playing several instruments and a master of improvisation (both individual and collective). Bechet liked to have his sound dominate in a performance, and trumpeters found it difficult to play alongside him.<sup>[10][2]</sup>

In 2013, a crater on Mercury was named after Bechet.<sup>[17]</sup>

On June 25, 2019, *The New York Times Magazine* listed Sidney Bechet among hundreds of artists whose material was reportedly destroyed in the 2008 Universal fire.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Personal life

Bechet was Catholic.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Awards

*DownBeat* magazine Hall of Fame, 1968<sup>[20]</sup>

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"Texas Moaner Blues", with Louis Armstrong, 1924

"Cake Walkin' Babies from Home", with Red Onion Jazz Babies, 1925

"Got the Bench, Got the Park (But I Haven't Got You)", 1930

"Blues in Thirds", 1940

"Dear Old Southland", 1940

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12/9/21, 3:30 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

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12/9/21, 3:30 PM Sidney Bechet - Wikipedia

[Sidney Bechet \(https://syncopatedtimes.com/sidney-bechet-1897-1959/\)](https://syncopatedtimes.com/sidney-bechet-1897-1959/) at the Red Hot Jazz Archive

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