



## Swing City: Newark Nightlife, 1925-50

*Barbara J. Kukla*

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When people think of the hottest cities of the Jazz Age and Swing Era, New York, Nashville, New Orleans, Memphis, Kansas City, and Chicago immediately spring to mind. But Newark, New Jersey was just as happening as each of these towns. On any given evening, you could listen to a legendary singer like Sarah Vaughan or laugh at the celebrated comedy of Red Foxx. Newark was a veritable maze of thriving theaters, clubs, and after-hours joints where the sporting folks rambled through the night. **There were plenty of jobs for musicians and entertainers, so the city was teeming with musical talent.**

*Swing City* reveals Newark's role as an undocumented entertainment mecca between 1922 and 1950. The book is based on interviews with musicians, singers, dancers, comedians, bartenders, waitresses, nightclub owners, and their families and is heavily illustrated with rare photographs from the author's personal collection. Barbara J. Kukla presents a musical tour of the city, covering the vaudeville acts, the musicians who started at Newark's Orpheum Theater and went on to join famous bands, and the teenage dancers who started as chorus girls and eventually toured with famous tap dancers. She also describes the house rent parties of the 1930s, the "colored only" clubs, the entertainment at Newark's 1,000 saloons during Prohibition, and the Coleman Hotel where Billie Holiday often stayed. Throughout the book, which concentrates on performers' lives and personalities, Kukla discusses music and other forms of entertainment as social and economic survival tools in Newark's Third Ward during a time of ruthless segregation.

***Swing City* includes several appendixes that provide a virtual "Who's Who" of 25 years of nightlife activities in Newark. Music and nostalgia buffs, students of African American history, and anyone who's ever been to Newark will find in this book fabulous entertainment.**

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