Europe, James Reese, byname JIM (b. Feb. 22, 1881, Mobile, Ala., U.S.--d. May 9/10, 1919, Boston, Mass.), American bandleader, arranger, composer, a major figure in the transition from ragtime to jazz.

Europe studied piano and violin in his youth and about 1904 settled in New York City, where he directed musical comedies and, in 1910, he helped organize the Clef Club, a union of African-American musicians. The 125-member Clef Club orchestra that he conducted at Carnegie Hall featured an extraordinary instrumentation, including 47 mandolins and bandores and 27 harp-guitars.

Europe's Society Orchestra was probably the first African-American band to record, as early as 1913, when it offered fast versions of ragtime works, typically in 2[Over]4 metre, with urgent rhythmic momentum. His band also regularly accompanied the popular white dance team of Irene and Vernon Castle, who popularized the fox-trot and a dance in 5[Over]4 metre, to scores by Europe and his collaborator, Ford Dabney.

During World War I Europe led the all-black 369th Infantry band, which toured France; it was noted for its syncopations and expressive colours. The band was nicknamed the "Hell Fighters" and was making a triumphal postwar tour of the United States when Europe was killed by one of his musicians.