Johnson, Bunk,

byname of WILLIAM GEARY JOHNSON, also called WILLIE JOHNSON (b. Dec. 27, 1889, New Orleans, La., U.S.--d. July 7, 1949, New Iberia, La.), black American jazz trumpeter, one of the first musicians to play jazz and a principal figure of the 1940s traditional jazz revival.

Johnson claimed to have been born in 1879, to have played with the legendary Buddy Bolden, and to have taught cornet to the boy Louis Armstrong. It is known that he played with Frankie Dusen's Eagle Band, the successor to Bolden's band, among other New Orleans bands, and that he left New Orleans about 1914, touring and playing in jazz, dance, vaudeville, and circus bands. During the Great Depression he taught music and worked as a labourer in New Iberia, La. Discovered there by Armstrong, who directed jazz scholars to him, he resumed playing in the early 1940s and made his first recordings in 1942. He toured to the East and West coasts and recorded often, usually leading bands of veteran New Orleans musicians; in 1945 he worked with the Sidney Bechet band.

Johnson played largely in his middle registers, with a rich tone and clean, precise attack. A melodic improviser, he reflected both ragtime phrasing and more advanced, Armstrong-like concepts of melody and expression. He was a masterly blues player, and blues and early New Orleans jazz standards constituted his repertoire when playing with traditional New Orleans ensembles. In 1947, given the freedom to select his own sidemen and repertoire, he formed a band of somewhat more modern musicians to play more up-to-date popular songs and his arrangements of classic ragtime compositions, as in the album *Last Testament* (1947).