It’s a long way from the Apollo Theatre to the Apollo program. And while his playing may have been “as lofty as a moon flight,” as Time magazine once suggested, that would be as close as Louis Daniel Armstrong would ever get to taking “one small step for man.”

But as the jazz musician of the 20th century, giant leaps were simply a matter of course for Satchmo. For no one has ever embodied the art form the way he did. It was he who helped make virtuoso solos a part of the vocabulary. It was he who was honored with the title “American goodwill ambassador” by the State Department. It was he who was the last jazz musician to hit #1 on the Billboard pop chart. Not bad for a kid whose first experience with the trumpet was as a guest in a correctional home for wayward boys. If only today’s schools were as enlightened and informed as that reformatory was.

Alas, the arts are dismissed as extravagant in today’s schools. This, despite all the studies that show parents believe music and dance and art and drama make their children much better students and better people. If you feel like your kids aren’t getting their fair share, make some noise. To find out how or for more information about the benefits of arts education please visit us on the web at americansforthearts.org. Just like the great Louis Armstrong, all you need is a little brass.