Kids don't get enough art these days. So you can see why some of them might accidentally confuse a jazz legend named Duke with royalty named Duke. But it’s finally time to set the record straight.

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington didn’t rule over a small English estate. Instead he reigned supreme over jazz institutions like The Cotton Club. He riffed powerfully on the piano, but it was the full orchestra that he considered his most compelling instrument. He introduced improvisation to his compositions — a process unheard of using a 15-piece orchestra. The result was a different approach to jazz that sparked a revolution and an evolution.

His music spread across the world with songs like “Sophisticated Lady,” “In a Sentimental Mood,” and “Take the ‘A’ Train.” His historical concert in 1933 at the Newport Jazz Festival has entered the lexicon of legendary live performances.

There is no doubt about it, Ellington’s brand of jazz has contributed significantly to the American songbook and to the lives of anyone who has ever tapped their foot to a beat.

Jazz is art, you dig? Art can really transform lives. In fact, the more art kids get, the smarter they become in subjects like math and science. And the more likely they’ll become well-rounded, cool members of society. For Ten Simple Ways to get more art in kids’ lives, visit AmericansForTheArts.org.

Art. Ask for More.

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