

ESSENTIAL *Jazz* EDITIONS

SET #2: LOUIS ARMSTRONG, 1926-1929

# Tight Like This

COMPOSED BY LANGSTON CURL

AS RECORDED BY

LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS SAVOY BALLROOM FIVE, 1929

## FULL SCORE

TRANSCRIBED BY RANDY SANDKE / EDITED BY DAVID N. BAKER

CO-PRODUCED BY JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER,  
THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY,  
AND THE MUSIC DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*



Funding for this score is provided by The Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund in the Music Division, Library of Congress.

# Tight Like This

(LANGSTON CURL)

AS RECORDED BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND HIS  
SAVOY BALLROOM FIVE, 1928

## Instrumentation

Alto Saxophone/Clarinet  
Tenor Saxophone  
Trumpet/Spoken Word  
Trombone  
Banjo/Spoken Word  
Piano  
Drums

## Original Recording

Recorded by Don Redman (alto saxophone and speech), Jimmy Strong (clarinet and tenor saxophone), Louis Armstrong (trumpet, speech, and leader), Fred Robinson (trombone), Mancy Cara (banjo), Earl Hines (piano and speech), and Zutty Singleton (drums).

Recorded December 12, 1928. Matrix number 402226-C. First issued as OKeh 8649.

## Recommended Compact Disc Reissues:

*The Chronological Louis Armstrong and His Orchestra (1928–1929)* (Classics)

*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Legacy/Smithsonian)

*Hot Fives and Sevens*, Vol. 3 (JSP)

*The Majestic Years* (Avid)

*Essential Masters of Jazz* (PROPE)

*Vol. IV: Louis Armstrong and Earl Hines* (Legacy)

## Credits:

TRANSCRIPTION AND MUSIC PREPARATION:  
RANDY SANDKE

Randy Sandke is a trumpeter, composer, and arranger who has recorded several albums under his own name and has recently recorded an album entitled *The Rediscovered Louis and Bix*, which premieres nine original compositions by Louis Armstrong discovered in the Library of Congress. He is also the author of many articles on the history of jazz.

TRANSCRIPTION EDITOR: ERIC REED

Composer, conductor, and pianist Eric Reed has been a member of the Wynton Marsalis Septet and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and his album, *Pure Imagination*, earned him the 1999 Gavin Artist of the Year Award. He is currently the musical director for *Spirituals to Swing*.

MUSIC EDITOR: DAVID N. BAKER

David N. Baker is internationally renowned as a composer, conductor, performer, author, and educator. He holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Music and Chairman of the Jazz Department at Indiana University School of Music and is the Conductor and Artistic Director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra.

TEXT EDITOR: JOHN EDWARD HASSE

John Edward Hasse is Curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, a member of the New Orleans Jazz Commission, author of *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, and editor of *Jazz: The First Century*.

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## Reflections on Louis Armstrong

BY WYNTON MARSALIS

Louis Armstrong is what America is supposed to be about—he was self-made. He just sprang up out of nowhere, out of Storyville. He took the spirit of jazz music and brought it around to the world—he internationalized the feeling of jazz. And then he universalized it—in artistic terms.

Among Armstrong's many innovations was the creation of the coherent solo. Solos came from the conception of playing on breaks: matched phrases that could be played in the context of the rhythm section. Joining those phrases together created the long-form solo. He also extended the trumpet's technique and conception of sound: nuances such as bending notes and playing in the upper register with a certain body of sound. He also played with a great deal of emotion of his middle and lower register, adding something to the instrument in that way. The main thing, however, was the joy in his playing. He added humanity; he's always telling you "it's going to be all right." Musicians on every instrument imitated him. Ellington wanted Louis Armstrong on every different instrument in his band. Ellington wanted that spirit, that talent, that joy to pervade the music.

Louis Armstrong is also the father of the American jazz style of singing, from Billie Holiday to Frank Sinatra to Jon Hendricks. Whenever you're singing, you're worried about the pitches and rhythms and whether you're in tune. Louis Armstrong had perfect pitch—he was always in tune. He also possessed the greatest degree of rhythmic sophistication, so it allowed him a certain freedom in dealing with the music. He took instrumental phrasings and put them into his voice, and this became an imitation of an imitation: The horn started off imitating singing, and then because of the sophistication of the horns and the harmony and being able to play differently from singers, he then turned right around and, in his singing, imitated the horn.

The purpose of music is to make people swing, to make them feel good, to keep the blues at bay—just as Armstrong did. There was never an ounce of fakery, of phoniness, in him. You didn't have to understand the words to his music; you didn't have to understand what he was doing. You just had to respond, and everyone did.

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WYNTON MARSALIS IS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER AND THE MUSIC DIRECTOR OF THE LINCOLN CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA. HE IS A WORLD-RENOWNED TRUMPETER, COMPOSER, RECORDING ARTIST, BANDLEADER, AND MUSIC EDUCATOR. IN 1997, HE BECAME THE FIRST JAZZ COMPOSER TO WIN THE PULITZER PRIZE, FOR HIS EPIC ORATORIO *Blood on the Fields*, COMMISSIONED BY JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER.

## Performance Notes

BY JAMES DAPOGNY

The music in the *Essential Jazz Editions* provides a foundation for the study and performance of all jazz. By the middle 1920s jazz had made its mark and developed its adherents and practitioners worldwide. This series presents, in notated form, music that is important both historically and artistically—performances that convinced the world of the power of this American music.

The first advice to performers of this music is to listen carefully to the original recordings. We can learn quickly, and a lot, through our ears. Nothing else can so readily and accurately transmit a sense of style because even the very best notation can convey only so much. There are worlds of nuance to be learned from the recordings themselves, whether the goal is playing these pieces just as transcribed or using them as a basis for stylistically appropriate improvisation.

The New Orleans style is the foundation for much early jazz. This music, even at its most joyous, is earnest and heartfelt, often simultaneously humorous and touched with sadness. It is this multidimensionality that demands repeated listening and playing.

Even at fast tempos, the great New Orleans musicians who recorded in the 1920s maintained an unhurried, relaxed sound. Although “relax” doesn't seem to be very specific, or perhaps even very good advice, you must try to relax. And it is necessary that each player try.

This music is sometimes technically demanding. Yet what, from a technical point of view, can you do to achieve a relaxed sound? First, bear in mind that as a music in which rhythmic precision and clarity are paramount, jazz gets much of its character from placement of attacks, and perhaps no single element is more important. But an enormous amount of style is projected by how and whether notes are held or shaped after that attack. New Orleans players held notes longer than might first be apparent, so try to be conscious of stretching notes as long as possible within their notated lengths.

A notable exception on some of these recordings is in the playing of trombonist Kid Ory: playing his punchy, emphatic lines, he was almost an extra member of the rhythm section. His conception of the trombone's role, particularly in ensembles, did not survive beyond New Orleans jazz.

Part of the reason this relaxation is apparent is the absolute solidity of the rhythm sections. In some cases only two instruments, piano and banjo, create this “section.” As played here, the banjo, despite its harmonic component, is a basic rhythm instrument, playing, almost always, on all four beats of the measure. That a bass instrument is not present is not atypical: Not until about 1930 did jazz practice in general decide that a bass instrument always had to be included.

In the earlier days of jazz drumming, some aspects of style were rather different from what is common in the twenty-first century. New Orleans musicians sometimes used to say that drummers should be “felt and not heard.” This is an overstatement, but it does capture a truth: Earlier drummers played more quietly, relative to the ensemble as a whole, than later drummers would. Part of this soft volume was because they played more on the drums and less on cymbals than would later drummers. Though bass drums were used in performance, in the earliest days of electrical recordings (starting

about 1925), drummers didn't bring bass drums to the studios, so we don't hear them in these records. And drummers had already been playing the snare drum with brushes since 1917 or earlier.

A New Orleans characteristic in general, relaxation is especially characteristic of Louis Armstrong, a part of whose mastery lies in the generous note lengths he plays, an important element in the graceful spaciousness of his playing. Throughout the 1920s, Armstrong's evolution into a soloist of unprecedented mastery was documented on recordings. They show not only his mastery of improvisation but also his development of specific ways of playing specific pieces.

## Performing “Tight Like This”

Near the end of his early series of recorded small-band performances, Armstrong produced “Tight Like This” in a version that forecast much that was to come, for himself and—because of his great influence—for others.

Armstrong's contribution dominates the performance.

A harmonic innovator, a musician who expanded the working range of the trumpet, one who had an extraordinary sense of swing, Armstrong also taught the jazz world much about improvising strategy in the larger sense. Here he shapes his solo as a three-chorus span of growing energy and power.

As jazz players developed a harmonic sense conditioned by the increasing complexity of popular music, they were increasingly preoccupied with harmonic accuracy. And Armstrong was among them. But one of his contributions to jazz performing aesthetics was the development of a strategy in which his improvised line floated above the changing harmonies—apparently ignoring them, apparently ignoring the meter, too, concentrating on just a few notes. This is only an apparent disregard for the changes and meter: Armstrong looks for the few notes that can be used most tellingly among several harmonies.

Here, in a harmonically simple tune, he begins with an almost timeless rhythmic feeling, created partially by returning repeatedly to the A's that the tonic and

dominant harmonies both contain. As the performance progresses, his rhythms more and more correspond to the meter as stated by the rest of the band, driving the performance along. Through his three choruses he also moves higher and higher in his range, creating a mounting intensity.

These three choruses generate much of the shaping of this five-chorus performance, but the band contributes importantly too.

With the exception of pianist Earl Hines, the band is present in this performance primarily to provide a setting for Armstrong. They do this well: Some of the carefully-paced shaping of the performance as a whole comes from what the band is doing and how Armstrong uses this. (The band was known as the Savoy Ballroom Five and on this recording included a sixth man, reedman Don Redman, who perhaps wrote this arrangement.)

On Hines' rhythmically incisive piano solo, simultaneously full of rhythmic fantasy and variety yet completely under control and poised, and on Armstrong's first chorus, drummer Singleton plays quietly and beautifully with brushes on just the snare drum. Helping to raise the energy level later, he then adds pop cymbals, played with sticks on afterbeats and with some additional accents. (The pop cymbals were a pair of small cymbals held in one hand with a spring device that opened and closed them, something like a miniature hi-hat.)

Whether from a written arrangement or a head arrangement, the horns fall in with this scheme of increasing activity, playing first one note per measure, then two, and then finally four in the last chorus.

Listening to the beginning and then the end of Armstrong's solo, one can hear the distance of mood and character that has been traveled in 48 measures.

## Louis Armstrong

BY JAMES DAPOGNY

Louis Armstrong was born August 4, 1901, in New Orleans, Louisiana, the birthplace of jazz. Despite humble beginnings, he became the most important improviser in jazz and he taught the world how to swing. As a youngster, Armstrong demonstrated his singing talents on the streets of the city and eventually taught himself how to play the cornet. He received his first formal music instruction in the Colored Waif's Home for Boys. After his stay there, he returned home and began to make his way into the New Orleans jazz world. Musically and socially he was helped by becoming a protégé of, and eventually a replacement for, cornetist King Oliver.

He worked on riverboats and in clubs, and by 1922, when summoned to Chicago to play second cornet in Oliver's band, was a seasoned enough musician to more than hold his own in this fine group. In 1924, he left Oliver to join Fletcher Henderson's big band in New York City, becoming the group's featured jazz soloist, before returning to Chicago in late 1925.

Back in Chicago, with his reputation already growing among fellow musicians, Armstrong inaugurated his series of numerous Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings, working (before pianist Earl Hines started recording with him) basically within a New Orleans format. These widely distributed records introduced Armstrong to the world, taking the first steps that would culminate in his eventual worldwide fame. They show that apart from his highly developed swing and improvising inventiveness, he continued to push his working range upward. He changed from the traditional cornet to trumpet to aid in this quest. His inventive and technically masterful playing clearly made him the star on this series and showed that the New Orleans style did not best suit his gifts as an improviser.

So, in 1929 he began fronting a big band, working as basically a featured soloist carrying whole performances himself with the band merely a backdrop. With this new format, which he maintained for nearly twenty years, he attracted the kind of attention no jazz musician

ever had before, and which few could have borne. He toured Europe. Working with popular songs as repertoire, featuring his singing and playing, he achieved wide renown outside the jazz world and became a major star not only through live appearances and recordings but also through films and radio.

In 1947 Armstrong formed the six-piece All Stars and returned to a small band and to a repertoire more centered on jazz itself. This band was his usual live performing medium for the rest of his life, though he continued to record more popular material with a variety of other groups. After a heart attack in 1959, he played the trumpet less and less in performance and sang more. When he died in 1971, he was mourned worldwide, but many of his mourners didn't realize that he had single-handedly changed the course of jazz history.

Armstrong's career is unique in jazz and in popular music. He moved from being the most forward-looking and influential jazz musician worldwide in the late 1920s and early 1930s to being a pop musician known worldwide, well beyond the jazz community, in the last two decades of his life. Although his most influential and inventive conceptions were formed and disseminated before the middle 1930s, he remained ever-capable of expressive and inventive jazz performance and always had something to show the jazz world.

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JAMES DAPOGNY IS PIANIST/LEADER OF HIS CHICAGO JAZZ BAND, WHICH HAS TOURED THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1976, SPECIALIZING IN JAZZ OF ITS FIRST HALF CENTURY. PROFESSOR OF MUSIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR, HE IS EDITOR OF *The Collected Piano Music of Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton*.

## **Jazz at Lincoln Center**

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Jazz at Lincoln Center is the world's largest not-for-profit arts organization committed to promoting the appreciation and understanding of jazz through performance, education, and preservation. With its resident orchestra, the world-renowned Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and a variety of distinguished guests, Jazz at Lincoln Center celebrates and advances this distinctly American art form by producing a wealth of programs for audiences of all ages. These include concerts, national and international tours, lectures, film programs, master classes, student and teacher workshops, residencies, recordings, publications, television broadcasts, a Peabody Award-winning weekly radio program, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, and a jazz appreciation curriculum. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis and Executive Producer & Director Rob Gibson, Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce more than 450 performances, educational events, and broadcasts during its 2000–01 season—its tenth season as a year-round producer of jazz programming. Currently, Jazz at Lincoln Center is building its new home—Frederick P. Rose Hall—the first-ever education, performance, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz, which is scheduled to open in 2003.

## **Smithsonian Institution**

### **National Museum of American History Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra**

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The Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, comprises 16 museums, the National Zoo, and research facilities, and hosts 30 million visitors a year. In 1971, the Smithsonian established a presence in jazz that has grown to become one of the world's most comprehensive set of jazz programs. The National Museum of American History holds major collections of jazz memorabilia, artifacts, and oral histories, including famous icons such as Dizzy Gillespie's trumpet and the 200,000-page Duke Ellington archive. The museum's resident jazz band, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, under Musical and Artistic Director David N. Baker, tours nationally and internationally, conducts educational programs, and is heard on the Jazz Smithsonian public-radio series. The Smithsonian mounts exhibitions and traveling exhibitions on jazz and produces historical recordings, video programs, books, music editions, websites, and educational projects on jazz. The Smithsonian also undertakes research projects in jazz and offers fellowships for research in its holdings.

## **Library of Congress**

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In its historic role as depository for all copyrighted works, the Library of Congress is probably the oldest collector of jazz documents. In addition to its collections of manuscripts and printed music registered for copyright, the Library of Congress has sound recordings in all formats including the famous oral history of Jelly Roll Morton made at the Library. Since then, it has acquired an extensive archive of commercial disks as well as unique broadcast and studio recordings, which have been augmented by recordings of performances sponsored by the Library. Its jazz archives, which have been augmented in recent years by gifts from Ella Fitzgerald and Gerry Mulligan of their complete manuscripts, and purchases of the archives of Charles Mingus, photographer William Gottlieb, and Ellington recording collector Jerry Valburn, now comprise one of the most important collections of jazz documents anywhere.

CONDUCTOR  
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Essential Jazz Editions Set #2:  
Louis Armstrong, 1926-1929

As recorded by Louis Armstrong and His Savoy Ballroom Five, 1928

# TIGHT LIKE THIS

By LANGSTON CURL  
Transcribed by RANDY SANDKE  
Edited by DAVID N. BAKER

♩ = 116

Intro: Clarinet

5

E♭ Alto Saxophone  
B♭ Clarinet  
B♭ Tenor Saxophone  
B♭ Trumpet  
Trombone  
Banjo  
Piano  
Drums

*mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

(play 1/4 notes throughout:)  
Spoken: (high voice)  
Oh it's tight like this.  
I say it is tight like this.

Chords: F, Em7(b5), A7, Dm, E°7, A7

Drums: Brushes (snare)

\* Play Bass drum on beats one and three throughout, although inaudible on recording.

11 Verse:

Alto Cl.  
Tenor  
Tpt.  
Tbn.  
Bjo.  
Pno.  
Drums

*mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

Let it be tight like that then.

9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Chords: Dm, E°7, A7, (A+ Dm7), G7, E°7, A7, Dm