

Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

SEPIA PANORAMA

BY DUKE ELLINGTON

As performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra

Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2011-12
Seventeenth Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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ESSENTIALLY
ELLINGTON

jazz

NOTES ON PLAYING ELLINGTON

At least 95% of modern-day large ensemble jazz playing comes out of three traditions: Count Basie's band, Duke Ellington's band, and the orchestrations of small groups. Those young players interested in jazz will be drawn to small groups for the opportunity to improvise and for practical reasons (it is much easier to organize 4 or 5 people than it is 15). Schools have taken over the task (formerly performed by dance bands) of training musicians to be ensemble players. Due to the Basie Band's popularity and its simplicity of style and emphasis on blues and swing, the better educators have almost exclusively adopted this tradition for teaching jazz ensemble playing. As wonderful as Count Basie's style is, it doesn't address many of the important styles developed under the great musical umbrella we call jazz. Duke Ellington's comprehensive and eclectic approach to music offers an alternative.

The stylistic richness of Ellington's music presents a great challenge to educators and performers alike. In Basie's music, the conventions are very nearly consistent. In Ellington's, there are many more exceptions to the rules. This calls for greater knowledge of the language of jazz. Clark Terry, who left Count Basie's band to join Duke Ellington, said, "Count Basie was college, but Duke Ellington was graduate school." Knowledge of Ellington's music prepares you to play any big band music.

The following is a list of performance conventions for the great majority of Ellington's music. Any deviations or additions will be spelled out in the individual performance notes which follow.

1. Listen carefully many times to the Ellington recording of these pieces. There are many subtleties that will elude even the most sophisticated listener at first. Although it was never Ellington's wish to have his recordings imitated, knowledge of these definitive versions will lead musicians to make more educated choices when creating new performances. Ellington's music, though written for specific individuals, is designed to inspire all musicians to express themselves. In addition, you will hear slight note differences in the recording and the transcriptions. This is intentional, as there are mistakes and alterations from the original intent of the music in the recording. You should have your players play what's in the score.

2. General use of swing phrasing. The triplet feel prevails except for ballads or where notations such as even eighths or Latin appear. In these cases, eighth notes are given equal value.

3. There is a chain of command in ensemble playing. The lead players in each section determine the phrasing and volume for their own section, and their section-mates must conform to the lead. When the saxes and / or trombones play with the trumpets, the lead trumpet is the boss. The lead alto and trombone must listen to the first trumpet and follow her. In turn, the other

saxes and trombones must follow their lead players. When the clarinet leads the brass section, the brass should not overblow him. That means that the first trumpet is actually playing "second." If this is done effectively, there will be very little balancing work left for the conductor.

4. In Ellington's music, each player should express the individuality of his own line. He must find a musical balance of supporting and following the section leader and bringing out the character of the underpart. Each player should be encouraged to express his or her personality through the music. In this music, the underparts are played at the same volume and with the same conviction as the lead.

5. Blues inflection should permeate all parts at all times, not just when these opportunities occur in the lead.

6. Vibrato is used quite a bit to warm up the sound. Saxes (who most frequently represent the sensual side of things) usually employ a heavy vibrato on harmonized passages and a slight vibrato on unisons. Trumpets (who very often are used for heat and power) use a little vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. Trombones (who are usually noble) do not use slide vibrato. A little lip vibrato is good at times. Try to match the speed of vibrato. Unisons are played with no vibrato.

7. Crescendo as you ascend and diminuendo as you descend. The upper notes of phrases receive a natural accent and the lower notes are ghosted. Alto and tenor saxophones need to use sub-tone in the lower part of their range in order to blend properly with the rest of the section. This music was originally written with no dynamics. It pretty much follows the natural tendencies of the instruments; play loud in the loud part of the instrument and soft in the soft part of the instrument. For instance, a high C for a trumpet will be loud and a low C will be soft.

8. Quarter notes are generally played short unless otherwise notated. Long marks above or below a pitch indicate full value: not just long, but full value. Eighth notes are played full value except when followed by a rest or otherwise notated. All notes longer than a quarter note are played full value, which means if it is followed by a rest, release the note where the rest appears. For example, a half note occurring on beat one of a measure would be released on beat three.

9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat *fp* (forte-piano); accent then diminish the volume. This is important so that the moving parts can be heard over the sustained notes. Don't just hold out the long notes, but give them life and personality: that is, vibrato, inflection, crescendo, or diminuendo. There is a great deal of inflec-

tion in this music, and much of this is highly interpretive. Straight or curved lines imply non-pitched glisses, and wavy lines mean scalar (chromatic or diatonic) glisses. In general, all rhythmic figures need to be accented. Accents give the music life and swing. This is very important.

10. Ellington's music is about individuality: one person per part—do not double up because you have extra players or need more strength. More than one on a part makes it sound more like a concert band and less like a jazz band.

11. This is acoustic music. Keep amplification to an absolute minimum; in the best halls, almost no amplification should be necessary. Everyone needs to develop a big sound. It is the conductor's job to balance the band. When a guitar is used, it should be a hollow-body, unamplified rhythm guitar. Simple three-note voicings should be used throughout. An acoustic string bass is a must. In mediocre or poorly designed halls, the bass and piano may need a bit of a boost. I recommend miking them and putting them through the house sound system. This should provide a much better tone than an amplifier. Keep in mind that the rhythm section's primary function is to accompany. The bass should not be as loud as a trumpet. That is unnatural and leads to over-amplification, bad tone, and limited dynamics. Stay away from monitors. They provide a false sense of balance.

12. Solos and rhythm section parts without chord changes should be played as is or with a little embellishment. Solos and rhythm section parts with chord changes should be improvised. However, written passages should be learned because they are an important part of our jazz heritage and help the player understand the function of his particular solo or accompaniment. Soloists should learn the chord changes. Solos should not be approached as opportunities to show off technique, range, or volume, but should be looked at as a great opportunity to further develop the interesting thematic material that Ellington has provided.

13. The notation of plungers for the brass means a rubber toilet plunger bought in a hardware store. Kirckhill is a very good brand (especially if you can find one of their old rubber ones, like the one I loaned Wynton and he lost). Trumpets use 5" diameter and trombones use 6" diameter. Where Plunger/Mute is notated, insert a pixie mute in the bell and use the plunger over the mute. Pixies are available from Humes & Berg in Chicago. Tricky Sam Nanton and his successors in the Ellington plunger trombone chair did not use pixies. Rather, each of them employed a Nonpareil (that's the brand name) trumpet straight mute. Nonpareil has gone out of business, but the Tom Crown Nonpareil trumpet straight mute is very close to the same thing. These mutes create a wonderful sound (very close to the human voice), but they also create some intonation problems which must be corrected

by the lip only. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but part of the sound is in the struggle to correct the pitch. If this proves too much, stick with the pixie—it's pretty close.

14. The drummer is the de facto leader of the band. He establishes the beat and controls the volume of the ensemble. For big band playing, the drummer needs to use a larger bass drum than he would for small group drumming. A 22" is preferred. The bass drum is played softly (nearly inaudible) on each beat. This is called feathering the bass drum. It provides a very important bottom to the band. The bass drum sound is not a boom and not a thud—it's in between. The larger size drum is necessary for the kicks; a smaller drum just won't be heard. The key to this style is to just keep time. A rim knock on two and four (chopping wood) is used to lock in the swing. When it comes to playing fills, the fewer, the better.

15. The horn players should stand for their solos and solis. Brass players should come down front for moderate to long solos, surrounding rests permitting. The same applies to the pep section (two trumpets and one trombone in plunger/mutes).

16. Horns should pay close attention to attacks and releases. Everyone should hit together and end together.

17. Brass must be very precise when playing short notes. Notes must be stopped with the tongue, ala Louis Armstrong!!

18. Above all, everyone's focus should remain at all times on the swing. As the great bassist Chuck Israels says, "The three most important things in jazz are rhythm, rhythm, and rhythm, in that order." Or as Bubba Miley (Ellington's first star trumpeter) said, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

GLOSSARY

The following are terms which describe conventions of jazz performance, from traditional New Orleans to the present avant garde.

Break: within the context of an ongoing time feel, the rhythm section stops for one, two, or four bars. Very often a soloist will improvise during a break.

Call and response: repetitive pattern of contrasting exchanges (derived from the church procedure of the minister making a statement and the congregation answering with "amen"). Call-and-response patterns usually pit one group of instruments against another. Sometimes we call this "trading fours," "trading twos," etc., especially when it involves improvisation. The numbers denote the amount of measures each soloist or group plays. Another term frequently used is "swapping fours."

Coda: also known as the "outro." "Tags" or "tag endings" are outgrowths of vaudeville bows that are frequently used as codas. They most often use deceptive cadences that finally resolve to the tonic, or they go from the tonic to the sub-dominant and cycle back to the tonic: I V/IV IV #IV° I (second inversion) V/II V/V V I.

Comp: improvise accompaniment (for piano or guitar).

Groove: the composite rhythm. This generally refers to the combined repetitive rhythmic patterns of the drums, bass, piano, and guitar, but may also include repetitive patterns in the horns. Some grooves are standard (i.e., swing, bossa nova, samba), while others are manufactured (original combinations of rhythms).

Head: melody chorus.

Interlude: a different form (of relatively short length) sandwiched between two chorus forms. Interludes that set up a key change are simply called modulations.

Intro: short for introduction.

Ride pattern: the most common repetitive figure played by the drummer's right hand on the ride cymbal or hi-hat.



Riff: a repeated melodic figure. Very often, riffs repeat verbatim or with slight alterations while the harmonies change underneath them.

Shout chorus: also known as the "out chorus," the "sock chorus," or sometimes shortened to just "the shout." It is the final ensemble passage of most big band charts and where the max most often happens.

Soli: a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli sound particular to Ellington's music combines two trumpets and a trombone in plungers/mutes in triadic harmony. This is called the "pep section."

Stop time: a regular pattern of short breaks (usually filled in by a soloist).

Swing: the perfect confluence of rhythmic tension and relax-

ation in music creating a feeling euphoria and characterized by accented weak beats (a democratization of the beat) and eighth notes that are played as the first and third eighth notes of an eighth-note triplet. Duke Ellington's definition of swing: when the music feels like it is getting faster, but it isn't.

Vamp: a repeated two- or four-bar chord progression. Very often, there may be a riff or riffs played on the vamp.

Voicing: the specific spacing, inversion, and choice of notes that make up a chord. For instance, two voicings for G7 could be:



Note that the first voicing includes a 9th and the second voicing includes a 19 and a 1 3. The addition of 9ths, 11ths, 13ths, and alterations are up to the discretion of the pianist and soloist.

THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

The following are placed in their order of importance in jazz. We should never lose perspective on this order of priority.

Rhythm: meter, tempo, groove, and form, including both melodic rhythm and harmonic rhythm (the speed and regularity of the chord changes).

Melody: what players play: a tune or series of notes.

Harmony: chords and voicings.

Orchestration: instrumentation and tone colors.

— David Berger

SEPIA PANORAMA

INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 - Alto Sax	Trumpet 1	Trombone 1	Guitar
Reed 2 - Alto Sax	Trumpet 2	Trombone 2	Piano
Reed 3 - Tenor Sax	Trumpet 3	Trombone 3	Bass
Reed 4 - Tenor Sax			Drums
Reed 5 - Baritone Sax			

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer: Duke Ellington

Arranger: Duke Ellington

Recorded: July 24, 1940 in New York City

Master Number: BS-054625-1

Original 78 rpm Issue: Victor 26731

Not Currently Available on domestic.

Available as digital download: Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band 1940-1942 – itunes.com

Personnel: Duke Ellington (piano, arranger); Rex Stewart (cornet); Wallace Jones, Cootie Williams (trumpet); Lawrence Brown, Joe Nanton (trombone); Juan Tizol (valve trombone); Barney Bigard (clarinet); Johnny Hodges (alto saxophone, soprano saxophone); Otto Hardwick (alto saxophone, clarinet); Ben Webster (tenor saxophone); Harry Carney (baritone saxophone, clarinet, alto saxophone); Fred Guy (guitar); Jimmie Blanton (bass); Sonny Greer (drums); Billy Strayhorn (arranger).

Soloists: Jimmie Blanton (bass); Juan Tizol (valve trombone); Cootie Williams (trumpet); Harry Carney (Baritone Saxophone); Duke Ellington (piano); Ben Webster (tenor saxophone)

REHEARSAL NOTES

Although not destined to become one of his popular hits, **Sepia Panorama** (Ellington's opening theme from his radio broadcasts in 1940) is top drawer Ellington from his most prolific and fertile periods—1940-1942. This era has come to be known as the Blanton-Webster Band due to the two new great soloists of that era (Jimmy Blanton on bass and Ben Webster on tenor saxophone). Their improvisational skills and great energy sparked the entire band to new heights. **Sepia Panorama** is a prime example of both men's contributions.

The form of this piece is most interesting. It alternates between the blues and 8-bar phrases. The opening is a 12-bar chorus of F blues followed by 2 nearly identical 8-bar phrases that are variants of an 8-bar blues (omit the first 4 bars of a 12-bar blues—start on the IV chord). The big surprise is the D7 chord (V of ii) in place of the tonic. It's perfectly logical, but not at all usual in the blues. Letter **D** is most interesting. Here we start on a Bb chord, but it now is the tonic rather than the subdominant, and instead of a blues, we have 8 measures of Rhythm Changes. In actuality these 8 bars were written by Billy Strayhorn (also

a new recent addition to the band) as a brass soli in a 1940 arrangement of Tuxedo Junction that Ellington never recorded. From here we go on to two choruses of Bb blues (one of piano/bass duet and one of tenor) then we play the chart in reverse order—the Tuxedo Junction section, modulate back to F for the 8-bar blues (only once this time) and the opening 12-bar blues chorus with an added 2-bar plagal cadence (IV I). Because so much of this piece revolves around the relationship of the tonic and the subdominant, this ending feels ever so satisfying.

The opening chromatic run should crescendo and be slurred to the following short downbeat. Close attention to the count-off is essential from everyone to make this effective. The hardest thing to do in music is to go from resting to playing and be perfectly in time. Everyone needs to be in the playing mode during the count-off, so that when it comes time to play, we have already been playing in our heads. Notice the somewhat unusual phrasing in the first two beats of letter **A**. Normally eighth-quarter-eighth is played long-short-short. In this case the choppy short-short-short works better because it makes the previous run more dramatic. Also notice that starting on the 4th beat of measure 3 every note is legato (full value) except the up-beat of beat 3 of measure 4 and the last eighth note of measure 5. The relationships of rough to smooth and long to short is a major part of the beauty of this piece.

The saxophone figure in **A**8-10 should be slurred with breath accents where notated. Something to keep in mind is that the swing players tended to slur more than successors did.

The bass breaks throughout the piece need to define the time but avoid walking quarter notes. This is classic call and response. Try to match the intensity of the ensemble and make sure that you are so clear that the band will know when to come in without them having to think about it.

Letter **B** puts the smooth, suave and romantic valve trombone (slide will do if you don't have a valve) over the smooth, soft and sophisticated saxophone harmonies. The roughhouse plunger trumpet answers. All this repeats at **C** with the exception of the trombone reaching up to the luscious -5 of the D7 chord in the third measure.

The piano sets up all the brass figures in the *Tuxedo Junction* section at **D**. The second hardest thing to do in music is to shift gears. In jazz this happens every 8 or 12 bars. At letter **B** there is a tendency to slow down because of the long notes and smoothness and here at **D** there is a tendency to speed up due to the sudden shift to rhythmic attacks and the syncopations. It is essential to work on the seams in the music. Wherever there is a double bar line, make sure that the tempo stays constant.

Letter **D** and its repetition at **G** are the climaxes of the chart as well as being the most difficult sections to play. Six short accented notes in a row followed by a dotted quarter that needs to

moan and then two eighth notes (one long and then one short). The brass needs to spit out the notes with as much accent as possible. This should have a swagger and feel hair-raising. The quarter note triplets in measure 7 are all played full value, and the grace notes should be quick with a snap. The baritone needs to respond to the brass. He can overlap, but always keep the call and response form.

Letters **E** and **F** are Bb blues and can be opened up for solos. It's not essential to keep the piano/bass duet or the tenor as soloists if you have some other strengths, but I would make sure that the first soloist starts softly. Piano or bass are naturals here. Also the final soloist should end softly so that the ensemble at **G** is a loud surprise.

The bass break four bars before the end of the piece can be extended into a cadenza (I hope I'm not creating a monster). In any event when the rest of the band comes in with the final figure, we need to be in time. The eighth notes are all short and choppy with lots of accent. Give the eighth note in the last bar an extra goose so that it has a feeling of finality. Remember smooth/choppy, short/long and loud/soft. The more opposite they are, the greater the scope of the performance. After all this is **Sepia Panorama**.

— David Berger

To view videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals of the Essentially Ellington 2011-12 repertoire please visit: jalc.org/EssentiallyEllington.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

SEPIA PANORAMA

Transcribed by David Berger

Reeds 1

Alto Sax

2

Tenor Sax

3

Tenor Sax

4

Baritone Sax

5

Trumpets 1

2

Cornet

3

Trombones 1

2

Valve

3

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums

Brushes

Solo

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