

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library

BLUE SERGE

BY MERCER ELLINGTON
ARRANGED BY DUKE ELLINGTON

Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2007-08 Thirteenth Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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Annual High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival



Jazz at Lincoln Center

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 four or five 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 that 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, since 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 1 of a measure would be released on beat 3.
9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat **fp**; accent and 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 inflection 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. Kirkhill 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 that must be corrected by using alternate slide positions. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but part of the sound is in the

BLUE SERGE

INSTRUMENTATION:

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

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION:

Composer: Duke Ellington

Arranger: Duke Ellington

Recorded: February 15, 1941

Time: 3:20

Master Number: PBS-055286-1

Original Issue: Victor 27356-A

Currently Available on CD:

"Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band, 1940-1942" RCA Victor Bluebird 82876 50857-2;

"Masterpieces: 1926-1949," Proper 1025

Personnel: Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, Ray Nance, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombones; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster, Harry Carney, reeds; Fred Guy, guitar; Jimmy Blanton, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

Soloists: Ray Nance, trumpet; Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombone; Duke Ellington, piano; Ben Webster, tenor saxophone.

—Ricky Riccardi, for Jazz at Lincoln Center

REHEARSAL NOTES:

- Duke Ellington's son Mercer once told me that this piece came out of a composition lesson with his father in 1941. When I related this to Sonny Greer, Ellington's drummer of the time, he informed me that it was indeed Duke's chart, but that he assigned the composer credit to his son to get around the ASCAP radio ban that was in affect. No matter what the origin of this piece, it certainly stands out as one of the great jazz ballads of all time.
- Here is the form: 6-bar introduction, A (8 bars), A (10 bars cadences in the relative major), A (8-bar trombone solo), B (8 bars—6 bars of plunger trumpets and 2-bar piano solo lead in), C (8 bars piano), D (4 bars of trombone below tenor solo lead-in), E (8-bar tenor solo), A (8 bars ensemble). All material is closely derived from the introduction.
- This is a delicate piece. — the bass and drums should not overplay. Special attention should be given to dynamics and creating a thoughtful, romantic mood. Right away in the intro, make sure that the clarinet and two trumpets are smooth, relaxed, and in balance. The trombones are also smooth and grow out of the preceding trumpet figure.
- The solo trumpet at **A** should have a plaintive sound with no movement of the hat. It is purely for color, not expression.
- The clarinet has the lead at **B**, which then melts into a background at **C** for the plunger trombone solo. The reeds are subtone.
- The plunger trumpets (with pixies), in the pick-up to **D**, are nasty in contrast to everything we have heard so far.
- The piano solo is sophisticated and urbane. The succeeding trombone passage and tenor solo at **F** are warm and passionate.
- The brass background to the tenor solo at **G** is cool and detached (a foil to the tenor's heat).
- The final ensemble at **H** is warm (use vibrato, though not too much) and climaxes on the 3rd beat of measure 5. This is answered a half beat later in the crash cymbal. We then melt into a nice diminuendo for the final somber chords. For this ensemble passage, the baritone sax and 3rd trombone should bring out their parts to support the lead trumpet at the octave. The clarinet should be careful not to compete with the lead trumpet.

—David Berger

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

BLUE SERGE

By Mercer Kennedy Ellington

Transcribed by David Berger

Slowly $\text{♩} = 83$

Reeds 1 Alto Sax

2 Alto Sax

3 Clarinet *mf*

4 Tenor Sax

5 Baritone Sax

Trumpets 1 *mp*

2

3 *mp*

Trombones 1 *mf*

2 *mf*

3 *mf*

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums Brushes Cr. *p*

Solo - Hat *mf*

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Blue Serge

A

Alto

Alto

Cl.

Tenor

Bari.

Tpt. 1

2

3

Tbn. 1

2

3

Gtr.

Pno.

Bass

Drs.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

p

p

p

Cm Dm7-5 Cm7 Gb7 Dm7-5 G7 Cm Dm7-5 Cm Db7 D7 Db7 Cm

Blue Serge

B

Alto *f* *mp*

Alto *f* *mp*

Cl. *f* *mp*

Tenor *f* *mp*

Bari. *f* *mp*

Hat *mp*

Hat *mp*

Tbn. 1 *mf*

Tbn. 2 *mf*

Tbn. 3 *f* *mp*

Gtr. Cm6 Dm7-5 G7 Cm7 Gb7 Dm7-5 G7 Cm7 Dm7-5 Cm6 Db7 D7 G7 Cm6 B7-5 Eb Fm7 Eb G7

Pno.

Bass

Drs.

Blue Serge

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Plunger w/mute wa wa wa
mf wa wa wa
mf wa wa wa
mf

Solo - Plunger w/mute
 ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya ya

Gtr. Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6 F#7-9 Dm7-5 G7-9 Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6 C#7 D7-9 C#7 Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6

Alto *pp*

Alto *pp*

Cl. *p*

Tenor *pp*

Bari. *pp*

Tpt. 1

2

3

Tbn. 1

2

3

Pno.

Bass

Drs.

C

D

Alto

Alto

Cl.

Tenor

Bari.

Tpt. 1

2

3

Tbn. 1

2

3

Gtr.

G7-9 Dm7-5 G7-5 Dm7-5 G7 Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6 Dm7-5 Cm6 Fm6 Gm7-5 Dm7-5 G7 C7 F7 Bb7

Pno.

Bass

Drs.

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Blue Serge

Score for Blue Serge, page 7. The score includes parts for Alto, Tenor, Bari., Tpt. 1, 2, 3, Tbn. 1, 2, 3, Gtr., Pno., Bass, and Drs. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line. The first system is marked with a boxed 'F' and the second with a boxed 'G'. The Tenor part features a solo starting at measure 1, marked *mf*. The Gtr. part provides a harmonic accompaniment with various chords. The Bass part plays a steady eighth-note line. The Tbn. parts have melodic lines, and the Tpt. parts have rests in the first system and notes in the second. A large red watermark 'Preview Only' is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Chord progression for Gtr. (measures 1-10):

Ab	A	Bb	F7	Bm7	Cm7	F7	Fm7	Eb	G7	Cm7	D7	Dbmaj7	C7
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Chord progression for Bass (measures 1-10):

Bb7				Bb7									
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Chord progression for Tenor (measures 1-10):

C7	Dm7	G7	C4	F	A7	Dm7	E7	Ebmaj7	D7				
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Blue Serge

This musical score is for the piece "Blue Serge" and is page 8 of a larger document. The score is written for a jazz ensemble and includes the following parts:

- Alto:** Two staves, both of which are mostly silent with some activity at the end of the page.
- Cl.:** Clarinet part, mostly silent.
- Tenor:** Tenor saxophone part with a melodic line. Chord symbols above the staff include Gm6, Ab7, G7, D7-5, F6, D7, G7, D7, G7, Gm7/C, F, and A7 (ens.). Performance instructions include "No growl" and "mf".
- Bari.:** Baritone saxophone part, mostly silent.
- Tpt. 1:** Trumpet 1 part with a melodic line.
- Tpt. 2:** Trumpet 2 part, mostly silent.
- Tpt. 3:** Trumpet 3 part, mostly silent.
- Tbn. 1:** Trombone 1 part with a melodic line.
- Tbn. 2:** Trombone 2 part, mostly silent.
- Tbn. 3:** Trombone 3 part, mostly silent.
- Gtr.:** Guitar part with a rhythmic accompaniment. Chord symbols above the staff include Fm6, Gb7, F7, B7-5, Eb6, C7, F7, C7, F7, Fm7, Eb, and G7.
- Pno.:** Piano part, mostly silent.
- Bass:** Bass line with a rhythmic accompaniment. A Bb7 chord symbol is present above the staff.
- Drs.:** Drums part with a rhythmic accompaniment.

A large red watermark "Preview Only" is overlaid diagonally across the entire page. The dynamic marking "mf" (mezzo-forte) is used throughout the score.

Blue Serge

[H]

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes parts for Alto (two staves), Clarinet (Cl.), Tenor (Tenor), Bari. (Baritone), Trumpet (Tpt. 1, 2, 3), Trombone (Tbn. 1, 2, 3), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), Bass, and Drums (Drs.). The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Alto, Tenor, Bari., Tpt. 1, 2, 3, and Tbn. 1, 2, 3 parts contain melodic lines with various articulations, including slurs, accents, and triplets. The Gtr. part provides harmonic accompaniment with a sequence of chords: Cm6, Dm7-5, Cm6, G7, Cm, Gb7, G7, Dm7-5, G7-9, Cm6, Dm7-5, Db9, Cm6, Db9, D7-9, Dbmaj7, Db9, Cm6. The Pno. part is mostly silent, indicated by a large 'X' over the staff. The Bass part provides a steady rhythmic accompaniment. The Drs. part includes a 'Cr.' (Cymbal) effect. A large red watermark 'Preview Only - Legal Use Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the score.

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