Jazz at Lincoln Center Library

Curated by Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

HARLEM SPEAKS

COMPOSED BY DUKE ELLINGTON

As performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra

Transcribed and Edited by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2010–11 Sixteenth Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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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 ore 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 ore 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 f_p (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

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 port 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

which must be corrected by the lip only. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but port 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 lust 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 some 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 Bubber 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,2 or they go from the tonic to the subdominant 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 an 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 relaxation 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 13. 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.

HARLEM SPEAKS

INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 - Alto SaxTrumpet 1Trombone 1GuitarReed 2 - Alto SaxTrumpet 2Trombone 2PianoReed 3 - Tenor SaxTrumpet 3Trombone 3BassReed 4 - Alto SaxDrums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer: Duke Ellington Arranger: Duke Ellington

Recorded: August 15, 1933 in New York City

Time: 3:10

Master Number: B13802-A

Original Issue: Brunswick 78 6646

Not Currently Available on Domestic CD

Download Available: 'The Chronological Duke Ellington & His

Orchestra, 1933-1935' - www.amazon.com

Personnel: Duke Ellington (piano); Freddy Jenkins, Arthur Whetsel, Cootie Williams (trumpets); Lawrence Brown, Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol (trombones); Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick, Barney Bigard, Harry Carney (reeds); Fred Guy (guitar); Wellman Braud (bass); Sonny Greer (drums).

Soloists: Cootie Williams (trumpet); Johnny Hodges (alto saxophone); Freddie Jenkins, Harry Carney (baritone saxophone); Joe Nanton. (trombone). Lawrence Brown (trombone).

REHEARSAL NOTES

Harlem Speaks was Duke Ellington's answer to the 1930 film Africa Speaks. Although Ellington performed pseudo-African music at the Cotton Club, what he really knew and represented was the music of his home in the upper part of Manhattan. It is no coincidence that the word, "Harlem" appears in numerous Ellington titles including Harlem Airshaft, A Sad Night In Harlem, Harlem River Quiver, Drop Me Off In Harlem, Harmony In Harlem and A Tone Parallel To Harlem (also known simply as Harlem).

In the 1930's Ellington toured the United States playing dances and movie theaters. In those days movie theaters presented two feature films, a newsreel and a cartoon. If there was a band on the program, they would perform a set between the two features. This made for a long day at the theater for the band (basically noon until midnight), but the upside was that theater dates broke up the harsh travel involved in one-nighters. If the movie was a hit, you could stay in the same town for a while. In 1933 Ellington presented a show in theaters called Harlem Speaks. Directly following the movie, the theater was dark and following

the four-bar into, a spotlight would hit trumpeter Cootie Williams who came in with the theme. Dramatic stuff.

The form of Harlem Speaks is very straightforward. After the diatonic four-bar intro, there are four AABA choruses (trumpet, alto, muted trumpet split with baritone and muted trombone). Then there is an abrupt modulation up a minor 3rd to Eb major for a trombone chorus followed by a shout chorus (with clarinet and muted trombone soloing for added excitement).

When performing this arrangement make sure all quarter notes are played short. The opening oom-pahs get a little more accent on the pahs. The saxes at A should moan on the syncopated dotted half notes in the odd numbered bars. Make sure that the ensemble isn't too loud so that the trumpet solo (he's in his low register) sounds powerful. The style for the trumpet is Louis Armstrong - big, fat and heroic. The melody needs to be quoted pretty closely for the first 16 bars, but then the soloist can depart on his own. Similarly the alto may want to quote the melody to start his solo. This seems effective for the alto, but I don't think it is necessary.

Make sure that the soloists understand their call and response roles. Again the backgrounds need to be soft enough that the soloist can be heard clearly. This is especially important with the plunger muted trumpet and trombone solos.

In Ellington's original chart (as played live and on the radio) the muted trumpet played a whole chorus followed by a whole chorus (with sax backgrounds) of baritone sax solo (with brass backgrounds). These two choruses were combined as to shorten the piece so that it would fit on a 78-rpm recording. I've thought about expanding it back to the original length, but then we lose the great impact of the two-bar baritone break entrance. Also this split chorus breaks up the symmetry of full chorus solos.

The oom-pah piano should be played softly so as not to bog down the rhythm section. Whenever this sort of oom-pah accompaniment is used in jazz, it is played staccato and softly.

At **M** the trombone talks while the saxes moan.

Q is a call and response between equals - sax soli and trombone solo. I added a lick in the 7th and 8th bar of **Q** that Lawrence Brown played on an air check. I don't normally add material from other performances, but this sounds so hip and really helps with the forward motion.

Speaking of forward motion, the bass is playing in two throughout and slapping on two and four. Although slapping has pretty much gone the way of spats and blacksmiths, it can be most effective on a piece like this one. The bassist plays the note on one, then he slaps the strings against the fingerboard with his right hand on two. Repeat for beats three and four. In essence the slaps function like the drummer's high hat.

Two things the drummer needs to keep in mind: stay on top of the time (plenty of forward motion without rushing—we want to feel his energy), and occasional crash cymbal hits to create excitement.

Dynamics and accents are crucial to the performance especially the crescendo two before \mathbf{X} . The shout chorus from \mathbf{U} to the end is all about swinging.

Discovering the beauty of a piece like this and the fun in playing it is kind of like finding out that your grandparents were very cool in their youth. You didn't know that you are really a lot like them.

To view videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals of the Essentially Ellington 2010-11 repertoire please visit jalc.org/EssentiallyEllington.



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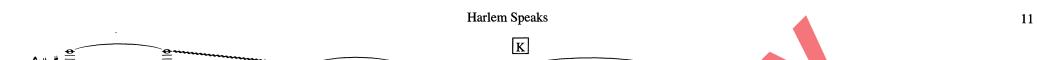














Tenor

Tpts. 1

Tbns. 1



Pno.















Alto

Alto

Clar.

Alto

Tpts. 1

Tbns. 1

Pno.

Bs.

Drs.

36078S









