

# Chelsea Bridge

BILLY STRAYHORN

Researched and Edited by WALTER VAN DE LEUR

## INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor  
1st E♭ Alto Saxophone  
2nd E♭ Alto Saxophone  
1st B♭ Tenor Saxophone (Clarinet)  
2nd B♭ Tenor Saxophone  
E♭ Baritone Saxophone  
1st B♭ Trumpet  
2nd B♭ Trumpet  
3rd B♭ Trumpet  
1st Trombone  
2nd Trombone  
3rd Trombone  
Piano  
Bass  
Drums

JAZZ  
LEGEND  
SERIES

## NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

**Chelsea Bridge** is a bridge over the river Thames in west London connecting Chelsea on the north bank to Battersea on the south bank. According to Ellington biographer James Lincoln Collier, during a trip to Europe, composer Billy Strayhorn actually saw a James McNeill Whistler painting of Battersea Bridge and mistakenly named the song after Chelsea Bridge.

**"Chelsea Bridge"** is a jazz standard composed by Billy Strayhorn in 1941. The song has been recorded by countless jazz artists to include Duke Ellington, Ben Webster, Wynton Marsalis, Keith Jarrett, Lew Tabackin, Vince Guaraldi, Tony Bennett, and Ella Fitzgerald to name a few. Fitzgerald recorded it with Ellington on her albums *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Duke Ellington Songbook* (1957) and *Ella and Duke at the Cote D'Azur* (1967). In or around 1957–1958, lyrics were written for the song by Bill Comstock, a member of the Four Freshmen.

The intro suggests a light touch for the piano. With a light swing feel for all, the brass enter with the melody at measure 5. The unison brass line demands little or no vibrato. The saxophones should stay under the melody line as a harmonic pad. The piano can insert colorful yet tasteful fills over the sustained notes to add interest. The tenor saxophone solo at 14 should include vibrato in a lyrical and connected style reminiscent of the early 1940s era and Ben Webster. When the trombones enter in harmony at measure 21, the 3rd part has the lead. The section should play with vibrato to achieve an authentic "Ellington" sound. The saxes can accent the background rhythms to support and contrast the melody line.

The saxophone section soli at measure 30 features clarinet lead, with the section using vibrato in the Ellington style. The solo trombonist at 39 can stylize with vibrato and some incidental embellishments if desired. Brass should play with plungers as indicated at measure 63. The baritone saxophone solo at 71 should also be played with vibrato and with a clear singing tone and lyrical interpretation.

The bass and drums are playing straight swing time throughout the arrangement, the drummer using brushes. The piano should continue to insert fills throughout, but always in the Ellington style.

## WILLIAM THOMAS STRAYHORN

If you are familiar with the jazz composition, "Take the 'A' Train," then you know something about not only Duke Ellington, but also Billy "Sweet Pea" Strayhorn, its composer.

Billy was born in Dayton, Ohio, in 1915 and was attracted to the piano from the moment he was tall enough to reach the keys. The family soon moved to Pittsburgh where Billy began piano lessons. He played the piano everyday, sometimes becoming so engrossed that he would sometimes be late for school. He also played in the high school band. He then enrolled in the Pittsburgh Musical Institution where he studied classical music. As a result, he had more classical training than most jazz musicians of his time

Strayhorn joined Ellington's band in 1939, at the age of twenty-two. Ellington liked what he saw in Billy and took this shy, talented pianist under his wings. Neither one was sure what Strayhorn's function in the band would be, but their musical talents had attracted each other. By the end of the year Strayhorn had become essential to the Duke Ellington Band; arranging, composing, sitting-in at the piano. Billy made a rapid and almost complete assimilation of Ellington's style and technique. It was difficult to discern where Duke's style ended and Billy's began. The results of the Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration brought much joy to the jazz world.

The Strayhorn pieces most frequently played are Ellington's theme song, "Take the A Train" and Ellington's signatory, "Lotus Blossom". Among Strayhorn's many brilliant compositions, a few classics are: "Chelsea Bridge," "Day Dream," "Johnny Come Lately," "Rain-check" and "Clementine." Some of the suites on which he collaborated with Ellington are: "Deep South Suite," 1947; the "Shakespearean Suite" or "Such Sweet Thunder," 1957; an arrangement of the "Nutcracker Suite," 1960; and the "Peer Gynt Suite," in 1962. Strayhorn and Ellington composed the "Queen's Suite" and gave the only pressing to Queen Elizabeth of England. Two of their suites, "Jump for Joy," 1950, and "My People," 1963, had as their themes the struggles and triumphs of blacks in the United States. Both included a narrative and choreography. The latter, Strayhorn conducted at the Negro Exposition in Chicago in 1963. Another suite similar to these two was "A Drum Is a Woman." The "Far East Suite" was written after the band's tour of the East which was sponsored by the State Department.

In 1946, Strayhorn received the Esquire Silver Award for outstanding arranger. In 1965, the Duke Ellington Jazz Society asked him to present a concert at New York's New School of Social Research. It consisted entirely of his own work performed by him and his quintet. Two years later Billy Strayhorn died of cancer. Duke Ellington's response to his death was to record what the critics cite as one of his greatest works, a collection titled "And His Mother Called Him Bill," consisting entirely of Billy's compositions.



1. 2. 14

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

SOLO

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ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BAR.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

22

me

To CL.

SOLI

me

me (LEAD)

vis.

vis.

vis.

E9 E7 A7#7 C7 G6 G#6 D9 C9 C#9 B9(#11) B#9 A#9 B#9 A#9

TEN.

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

30

CL.

TRP.

SWING

SAXES

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

SOLO

me

TEN. SOLO

8<sup>9</sup>

E<sup>b</sup>7<sup>9</sup> LIGHT FILL

A<sup>b</sup>7

D<sup>b</sup>MA7

D<sup>b</sup>9

C<sup>9</sup>

B<sup>13</sup>

B<sup>7</sup>(<sup>9</sup>)

E<sup>MA</sup>7

E<sup>6</sup>

8<sup>9</sup>

E<sup>b</sup>7<sup>9</sup>

A<sup>b</sup>7

D<sup>b</sup>MA7

D<sup>b</sup>9

C<sup>9</sup>

B<sup>13</sup>

B<sup>7</sup>(<sup>9</sup>)

E<sup>MA</sup>7

E<sup>6</sup>

TEN. SOLO



ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

47



ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TPT. 1

TPT. 2

TPT. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

65

UNISON

OPEN

8<sup>hw</sup>6

A<sup>b</sup>7<sup>hw</sup>6

8<sup>bw</sup>9

E<sup>b</sup>7<sup>hw</sup>9

A<sup>b</sup>9

D<sup>b</sup>7<sup>hw</sup>9

PNO. FILLS

8<sup>bw</sup>6

A<sup>b</sup>7<sup>hw</sup>6

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BAR. 1

TPT. 1

TPT. 2

TPT. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

PLUNGER +

OPEN ^

8bw10 Abw10 gbw9 Ebw10 Ab9 Dbmaj7 Bbw10 Abw10

TENS >

ALTO 1

ALTO 2

TENOR 1

TENOR 2

BARI.

TRP. 1

TRP. 2

TRP. 3

TBN. 1

TBN. 2

TBN. 3

PNO.

BASS

DRUMS

71

SOLO

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