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Wynton Marsalis, Managing and Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

Cotton Club Stomp

By Duke Ellington, Johnny Hodges, and Harry Carney

As performed by The Jungle Band Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center Edited by Christopher Crenshaw for Jazz at Lincoln Center Full Score

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2014–15 Twentieth Annual Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Program.

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essentially ELLINGTON

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 music 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 him. 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 vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. The vibrato can be either heavy or light depending on the context. Occasionally saxes use a light 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 on harmonized passages at times. Try to match the speed of vibrato. In general 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 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 ip (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 hard 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 mute/plunger combinations create a wonderful sound (very close to the human voice), but they also can create some intonation problems which must be corrected by the lip or by using alternate slide positions. 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' or 24' 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 release together.

17. 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 or they go from the subdominant and cycle back to the tonic.

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 climax 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 9th and a 13th. 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 • a tune or series of pitches.

Harmony • chords and voicings.

David Berger

Orchestration • instrumentation and tone col

COTTON CLUB STOMP · INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 · Alto Sax/Soprano Sax Reed 2 · Alto Sax/Bari Sax Reed 3 · Tenor Sax/Clarinet Trumpet 1 Trumpet 2 Trumpet 3 Trombone 1 Trombone 2 Banjo Piano Bass Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Duke Ellington, Johnny Hodges, and Harry Carney Arranger • Duke Ellington Recorded • April 22, 1930 in New York Master • E-32614-A Original issue • Brunswick 4887 (78)

Currently available on CD • Decca GRD-640 (Early Ellington: The Original Decca Recordings) [NOTE: Contains master take -A and alternate take -B]; Decca GRD-660 (Duke Ellington: The Best Of Early Ellington) [NOTE: Contains take -B] Currently available as digital download • Amazon, iTunes

(Duke Ellington, Early Ellington)

Personnel • Duke Ellington (leader, piano); Cootie Williams, Arthur Whetsol, Freddy Jenkins (trumpet); Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol (trombone); Johnny Hodges (soprano sax, alto sax); Barney Bigard (clarinet, tenor sax), Harry Carney (baritone sax, clarinet, alto sax); Fred Guy (banjo); Wellman Braud (bass); Sonny Greer (drums)

Soloist • Freddy Jenkins (trumpet)

REHEARSAL NOTES

• From 1927 through 1931 Duke Ellington and his Orchestra served as the house band at the Cotton Club in Harlem, returning for several extended stays during the 1930's. The job consisted of playing for singers, dance acts and for the social dancing of the patrons with an occasional band number thrown in. Although Ellington arranged all the music and composed the dance music, white composers, such as Jimmy McHugh and Harold Arlen, were hired to compose the songs for the singers until Ellington was finally given the chance to compose the entire show in 1938.

• In 1929 Ellington arranged a piece credited to Jimmy McHugh named Cotton Club Stomp, which was a big hit in the show of that year. The following year Ellington composed an entirely new piece with the same title for a dance act in the 1930 Cotton Club Revue. The 2 pieces bear no resemblance to each other. For the sake of clarity, we call them Cotton Club Stomp #1 and #2 (in chronological order). • Although Irving Mills is credited as co-composer, he didn't write a note. He was Ellington's manager and publisher. It may sound unjust that Mills received 75% of the royalties for this tune and a piece of the band's earnings, but Ellington never complained because he understood that Mills made him world famous. In 1939 Ellington felt that he no longer needed Mills and amicably dissolved their partnership.

• When Duke Ellington came to New York City in the early 1920's, he was soon influenced by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. In **Cotton Club Stomp** we hear the New Orleans influence especially in the occasional tailgate figures in the trombones as well as in the multi-strain form: key of C: Intro, A (16 bars aaba) B (key of F, 32 bars aaba) B (key of Ab, 32 bars) B (key of F, 32 bars) Interlude (key of Fm, 8 bars) B (key of Ab, 32 bars) B (key of Ab, 32 bars).

• A curious thing about this piece is that there is almost no improvisation and the melody of the B section repeats in every chorus. This is unusual for Ellington who liked to intersperse written development with improvised solos. The repetitious melody never becomes boring due to the change in orchestration and key of each chorus.

• Two things to keep in mind when playing jazz from the 1920's and early '30's: lots of accent and stay on top of the beat. Absolutely no laying back. The music should be relentlessly energetic. Tap your foot on beats 1 and 3, and get a good '2' feel going. You can't play heavy long notes. Use (p rather than holding out the long note full volume.

• On 8th notes in pre-bebop jazz the players slurred more and tongued less. So for instance in the first measure of the piece the saxes should slur the first 4 notes and play the quarter notes staccato.

• If a banjo is not available, the next best thing is an acoustic rhythm guitar. Amplified instruments (guitars and basses) sustain the notes too much for this style of music.

•When the pianist is playing oom pah quarter notes, they should be very quiet. We should feel them more than hear them. The same is true for drummers feathering the bass drum. When the pianist has figures in his right hand, he should play those out.

• The bass plays in '2' throughout the piece. When you play in '2', you need to play with twice the intensity as you do when you are in '4'. Bassists who do this spark the entire band. When Jimmie Lunceford recorded Rhythm Is Our Business, Willie Smith sang, 'Mose plays on the bass in the band. Mose plays on the bass in the band. Now, when he picks on those strings, happoness to you he brings'. That's right, happoness! It's no wonder that band was loved for their 2 beat' feel.

• The long accents (wedges) in the brass at C, D and F are rude interjections as opposed to the short quarters in the 7th and 8th bars of each of those phrases. Notice that when the brass have the same figures at K, L and N the accents are short. • Long notes in this style are played with more vibrato than in later periods. The speed and width of the vibrato is determined by the tempo. Since the tempo of this piece is bright, and we are going for a hot aesthetic (rather than sweet), keep the vibrato on the slower and narrower side. The purpose of vibrato is to warm up the sound. Keep it subtle.

• Starting at **F8** the saxes play a series of skronches. A skronch is a syncopated 4th beat accent as Ellington's song says, 'Skronch on the fourth beat.' Skronches are always played with a heavy fp accent. They give the music tremendous forward motion. The saxes repeat these figures starting **O8**. The brass takes them over in the shout chorus starting in **S8**.

• At letter I there are only 2 trumpets playing on both takes of Ellington's recording. This is rather curious since there are 3 trumpets available and no need to have one of them rest. Also this bridge is very similar to the previous bridge at E played by the 3 saxophones. The 2-trumpet version at I is missing 3 ds and 7ths in some of the chords in a way that is unusual for Ellington. I suspect that this passage was originally written for 3 trumpets and for some reason, the bottom trumpet did not play those 8 bars. If this was a conscious decision by Ellington, I respect that, but if it was a copying error or a player's mistake, I would reinstate the 3rd part. I suggest that you play it both ways and decide. I've included the 3rd part and marked it optional.

• The reed chorus at K, L and N is one of the very few examples of questionable orchestration in all of Ellington's music. The sound he is going for would normally have been written for 3 soprano saxes, which was very common in the 1920's and early '30's. However Ellington's band in 1930 only had 1 soprano sax (Johnny Hodges), so Duke wrote clarinet and alto sax on the 2nd and 3rd parts below the soprano lead. The alto does OK in blending (although soprano would be better), but the clarinet does not hold his own in terms of volume. Had the clarinet been on the top part, the blend would be fine. I suggest that if you have 3 soprano saxes available, you play the clarinet part as is on soprano and transpose the alto part down a 5th for the 3rd soprano. If you have 2 sopranos, voice it soprano, soprano, alto.

• I can't say enough about the joyous feel of this piece. As they used to say, it should make you want to 'shake your hands, wiggle your ass and holler'. Even if no one is dancing, we should be able to imagine those Cotton Club dancers going through their paces. If you haven't watched the clips on YouTube of Ellington at the Cotton Club, they are most informative and enjoyable. You get an idea of what that era and music are about. Also you may want to watch Francis Ford Coppola's movie, "The Cotton Club", which stars Richard Gere as a cornet player and Gregory and Maurice Hines as a tap dance team that works at the Cotton Club circa 1931-32.

• Many years ago composer and scholar Ed Green said to me, 'You know, Dave, if Duke Ellington had died in 1930, we still would consider him the greatest jazz composer of all time'. I have to agree. Just listen to **Cotton Club Stomp.**

- David Berger

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