

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

Memphis Blues

By W.C. Handy

Arranged by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn

As performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra

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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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 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 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 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

MEMPHIS BLUES • INSTRUMENTATION

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

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • W.C. Handy
Arrangers • Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn
Recorded • September 3, 1946 in Los Angeles
Master • D6VB2127-1
Original issue • Victor 20-2325 (78)

Currently available on CD • BMG 729084 (Duke Ellington: *The Complete RCA-Victor Mid-Forties Recordings, 1944-1946*)

Currently available as digital download • Amazon, iTunes (Duke Ellington, *Deep South Suite*)

Personnel • Duke Ellington (leader, piano); Shelton Hemphill, Taft Jordan, Francis Williams, Harold 'Shorty' Baker, Ray Nance, Cat Anderson (trumpet); Lawrence Brown, Claude Jones, Wilbur De Paris (trombone); Johnny Hodges (alto sax); Russell Procope (alto sax, clarinet); Jimmy Hamilton (tenor sax/clarinet); Al Sears (tenor sax); Harry Carney (baritone sax, clarinet); Fred Guy (guitar); Oscar Pettiford (bass); Sonny Greer (drums)

Soloists • Johnny Hodges (alto sax); Harry Carney (clarinet); Cat Anderson (trumpet); Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet)

REHEARSAL NOTES

• W.C. Handy, the father of the blues, was really more of a compiler than a composer. He traveled around the South listening to blues players, wrote down their music and got it published under his name. No matter what his contribution was, we owe him a great debt for exposing this great folk music to the world.

• In the mid to late 1940's Duke Ellington featured a segment in his shows called W. C. Handy's Big 3: **Memphis Blues**, *Beale Street Blues* and *St. Louis Blues* newly arranged by Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. In the case of **Memphis Blues** Ellington arranged the beginning and Strayhorn did the last chorus (letter G to the end).

• Although it is certainly a blues in form, it doesn't adhere to the strict 12-bar structure. Key of Bb: Letter A (16 bars), Letter B (12 bars), Key of Eb: Letter C (12 bars), Letter D (Interlude 8 bars), Key of Ab: E (12 bars). A is a normal 12-bar blues that is extended by 4 measures. Although Letter B is in the standard 12-bar format, the chord progression starts on G7 and goes around the circle of 5ths (G7 C7 F7) until it lands on the tonic Bb chord on bar 7 (the normal chord change at that point in the blues). The rest of the chorus uses standard blues changes. Letter C is fairly standard blues. The Interlude at D serves as a modulation to Ab major. The final chorus at E features a very sophisticated reharmonization of the blues. Note that the 2 modulations in the arrangement move down a 5th to the subdominant (Bb to Eb to Ab). This relationship echoes the characteristic tonic/subdominant chord change in the blues as well as the circle of 5ths progression in the first 8 bars of letter C.

• This chart is all about swing phrasing and blues inflections; much of it understated (like letter A9-16). Pay attention to the dynamics and work for a good blend within sections and overall ensemble balance, so that all the parts can be heard.

• A word about the baritone saxophone (the same goes for the bass clarinet): most players over-blow these instruments and get a harsh sound. Strive for a full sound with lots of overtones. You needn't have to play loud if the bass is unamplified and the drummer is a reasonable person. I recommend listening to 3 of the greatest players of all time for their tone and beauty of phrasing—Harry Carney, Gerry Mulligan and Joe Temperley.

• The trumpet pecks at B are short in direct contrast to the legato bari and bones. Incidentally, there were 5 trumpets on the Ellington recording. The trumpet solo that starts with the pickups to C was a separate solo part. Since there is no overlap, and most bands only have 4 trumpets, I condensed the 1st trumpet part and the solo part into one. Note that when the solo says tight plunger, that means totally closed, so that it sounds almost like a harmon mute. The alto solo at C must be played softly and lightly to blend with the muted trumpet. This is going to call for sensitivity from both players.

• Make sure the fp's in letter D are respected and are held out at a low volume. This should be a very dramatic effect, and the audibility of the muted trumpet solo will depend on everyone else's dynamics.

• The groove between the bass, drums, saxes and bones at E should get a solid rocking effect. I recommend rehearsing the bass and drums together before adding the horns.

• I know that a lot of bands like to open up charts for solos—especially blues charts. If you are going to open this chart up, I might suggest doing that at letter C, so that the soloists will be playing the blues in Eb. The written trumpet solo (including the pickups) would then be played on cue.

– David Berger

To view interactive videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals of the *Essentially Ellington* 2014-15 repertoire please visit jazz.org/EssentiallyEllington.

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

MEMPHIS BLUES

W.C. Handy
Arranged by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn
Transcribed by David Berger
Edited by Christopher Crenshaw

Slow Swing

Alto Sax Solo A

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The Reeds section (1-5) includes an Alto Sax Solo marked with a box 'A'. The Trumpets (1-4) and Trombones (1-3) are currently silent. The Guitar part shows a sequence of chords: Bb7, Eb, Ebm, Cm7-5, F7, Bb, and B°. The Piano part features a melodic line with triplets and a brush pattern. The Bass and Drums parts provide a steady accompaniment, with the drums using brushes.

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Memphis Blues

The musical score for "Memphis Blues" is arranged for a large ensemble. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Alto:** Two staves, both containing whole rests.
- Tenor:** Two staves, both containing whole rests.
- Bari:** One staff with a melodic line starting on a whole note, marked *pp* and *Solo*. It includes a slur over the first two measures and a fermata over the first note.
- Tpts.:** Four staves (1-4), all containing whole rests.
- Tbn.:** Three staves (1-3), each with a melodic line marked *mp* and *1/2 plunger*.
- Gtr.:** One staff with a rhythmic pattern of slashes, indicating a guitar accompaniment. Chord changes are indicated above the staff: F7, Bb, F7, Am, D7.
- Pno.:** Two staves (treble and bass clef), both containing whole rests.
- Bs.:** One staff with a bass line consisting of quarter notes.
- Drs.:** One staff with a drum pattern consisting of quarter notes and eighth notes.

Memphis Blues

B

The musical score for 'Memphis Blues' on page 3 features the following parts and markings:

- Alto:** Two staves, mostly rests with a final measure containing a forte (*f*) melodic phrase.
- Tenor:** Two staves, mostly rests with a final measure containing a forte (*f*) melodic phrase.
- Bari:** One staff with a melodic line throughout, including a forte (*f*) dynamic marking.
- Tpts. 1-4:** Four staves with rhythmic patterns, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking.
- Tbn. 1-3:** Three staves with rhythmic patterns, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking.
- Gtr.:** One staff with slash marks indicating guitar accompaniment. Chord changes are marked as G7, C7, F7, and Bb.
- Pno.:** Two staves, mostly rests.
- Bs.:** One staff with a rhythmic bass line.
- Drs.:** One staff with a rhythmic drum pattern.

Memphis Blues

C

The musical score is arranged for a jazz ensemble. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Alto:** Two staves, playing melodic lines with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tenor:** Two staves, playing melodic lines with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Bari:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tpts. 1:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tpts. 2:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tpts. 3:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tpts. 4:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mp* and *p*.
- Tbns. 1:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*.
- Tbns. 2:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*.
- Tbns. 3:** One staff, playing a melodic line with dynamics *mf* and *p*.
- Gtr.:** One staff, playing a rhythmic accompaniment with chords: F7, Bb, G7, Cm7-5, A7, Bb, Bb7, Eb, Eb7.
- Pno.:** Two staves, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Bs.:** One staff, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.
- Drs.:** One staff, playing a rhythmic accompaniment.

The score includes various dynamics such as *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A specific instruction "tight plunger" is noted for the Tpts. 1 part. A large red watermark "Preview Only" is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Memphis Blues

The musical score for "Memphis Blues" is arranged for a large ensemble. The parts include:

- Alto:** Two staves, with dynamics *mf* and *p* indicated.
- Tenor:** Two staves, with dynamics *mf* and *p* indicated.
- Bari:** One staff, with dynamics *mf* and *p* indicated.
- Tpts.:** Four staves (1-4), with the first staff containing melodic lines.
- Tbns.:** Three staves (1-3), with the first staff containing melodic lines.
- Gtr.:** One staff with a chord progression: A^b , $A^b m6$, $A^b 9$, E^b , $D^b 7$, $B^b 7sus4$, E^b .
- Pno.:** Two staves, with a melodic line in the right hand.
- Bs.:** One staff, with a bass line.
- Drs.:** One staff, with a drum pattern.

A large red watermark "Preview Only" is overlaid diagonally across the score, with the text "Legal Use Requires Purchase" written below it.

Memphis Blues

D

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes staves for Alto (two), Tenor (two), Bari, Tpts. (four), Tbn. (three), Gtr., Pno., Bs., and Drs. The score is marked with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. Dynamic markings such as *fp* (fortissimo piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) are used throughout. A large red watermark reading "Legal Use Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the page. A box containing the letter "D" is located at the top left of the score. The Tpt. 1 staff includes a section with lyrics: "growl B7 wawa wa wa wawa wa".

Memphis Blues

E

The musical score is for the piece "Memphis Blues" and is marked with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The score is arranged for a large ensemble including Alto, Clarinet, Tenor, Bari, Tpts. (1-4), Tbn. (1-3), Gtr., Pno., Bs., and Drs. The score is divided into two systems of four measures each. The first system includes dynamics such as *mp* and *mf*. The second system includes dynamics such as *f*, *mp*, and *f*. Chord markings are present above the Clarinet and Gtr. staves, including Bb, B7, Bb, Cm7, Bb, A7, Bbm7, Bb7+5, Eb, G7, C7, Fsus4, B7-5, Bb, Cm7-5, Bb, BmC#, Ab, Amaj7, Ab, Bbm7, Ab, G7+5, Abm7, Ab7+5, Db, F7, Bb7, Eb7sus4, A7-5, Ab, Ebm7-5, Ab, and Am/B. A large red watermark "Preview Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Memphis Blues

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Alto:** Two staves, both showing rests.
- Clarinet:** A melodic line with triplets and slurs. Chords *C m7*, *Bma7/F*, and *Bb* are indicated above the staff.
- Tenor:** Rests.
- Bari:** Rests.
- Tpts. 1-4:** Four staves, all showing rests.
- Tbn. 1-3:** Three staves with melodic lines. Dynamics include *mp* and *mf*.
- Gtr.:** A rhythmic accompaniment with chords *bbm7*, *A m7/Eb*, and *Ab*.
- Pno.:** Grand staff with a *loco* marking in the right hand.
- Bs.:** Bass line with a *arco* marking.
- Drs.:** Drum set part with a *sn* marking.

A large, diagonal red watermark reading "Preview Only Requires Purchase" is overlaid across the entire score.

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The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program (*EE*) is one of the most unique curriculum resources for high school jazz bands in the United States, Canada, and American schools abroad. *EE* extends the legacy of Duke Ellington and other seminal big band composers and arrangers by widely disseminating music, in its original arrangements, to high school musicians for study and performance. Utilizing this music challenges students to increase their musical proficiency and knowledge of the jazz language. *EE* consists of the following initiatives and services:

Supplying the Music • Each year Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) transcribes, publishes, and distributes original transcriptions and arrangements, along with additional educational materials including recordings and teaching guides, to high school bands in the U.S., Canada, and American schools abroad.

Talking about the Music • Throughout the school year, band directors and students correspond with professional clinicians who answer questions regarding the *EE* music. *EE* strives to foster mentoring relationships through email correspondence, various conference presentations, and the festival weekend.

Professional Feedback • Bands are invited to submit a recording of their performance of the charts either for entry in the competition or for comments only. Every submission receives a thorough assessment. Bands are also invited to attend *EE* Regional Festivals for an opportunity to perform and receive a workshop.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Band Director Academy • Fifteen bands are selected from competition entries to attend the annual Competition & Festival in New York City. To prepare, each finalist band receives an in-school workshop led by a professional musician. Local *EE* members are also invited to attend these workshops.

Competition & Festival • The *EE* year culminates in a three-day festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall. Students, teachers, and musicians participate in workshops, rehearsals, and performances. The festival concludes with an evening concert that features the three top-placing bands, joining the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis in concert previewing next year's *EE* repertoire.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Band Director Academy • This professional development session for band directors is designed to enhance their ability to teach and conduct the music of Duke Ellington and other big band composers. Led by prominent jazz educators each summer, this companion program to *EE* integrates performance, history, pedagogy, and discussion into an intensive educational experience for band directors at all levels.

As of May 2014, *EE* has distributed scores to more than 4,200 schools in all 50 states, Canadian provinces, and American schools abroad.

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