

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library

Half The Fun

COMPOSED BY BILLY STRAYHORN AND DUKE ELLINGTON

TRANSCRIBED BY DAVID BERGER AND MARK LOPEMAN
FOR JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for *Essentially Ellington* 1998:
the Third Annual Jazz at Lincoln Center High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival.

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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 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 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 subtone 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*; 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 rubber ones, like 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 and 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 also some intonation problems which must be corrected by the lip only. 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" 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 play 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, à la 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 or they go from the tonic to the sub-dominant 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 high 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 and a 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 of 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 ninth and the second voicing includes a b9 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.

— David Berger

HALF THE FUN

Instrumentation:

Conductor	Trumpet 3
Reed 1 (Alto Sax)	Trumpet 4
Reed 2 (Alto Sax)	Trombone 1
Reed 3 (Tenor Sax/Clarinet)	Trombone 2
Reed 4 (Tenor Sax)	Trombone 3
Reed 5 (Baritone Sax)	Piano
Trumpet 1	Bass
Trumpet 2	Drums

Original Recording Information:

HALF THE FUN by Billy Strayhorn (4:12)

Recorded 8/7/56, New York City

from *Such Sweet Thunder (The Shakespearean Suite)* (Columbia; COL 469140 2)

Johnny Hodges, Russell Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves, Harry Carney, reeds; Cat Anderson, Willie Cook, Clark Terry, Ray Nance, trumpets; Britt Woodman, Quentin Jackson, trombones; John Sanders, valve trombone; Duke Ellington, piano; Jimmy Woode, bass; Sam Woodyard, drums.

Rehearsal Notes:

- *Half The Fun* is the eleventh movement of twelve from Duke Ellington and Strayhorn's *Shakespearean Suite* also known as *Such Sweet Thunder*. Originally composed and recorded in 1957, this is one of the greatest big band albums ever recorded. *Half The Fun* was composed and arranged by Strayhorn and was first called *Perhaps*, then *Cleo* (for Cleopatra), and finally *Half The Fun* (from the bus slogan, "Getting there is half the fun"). The scene being described here is the very steamy seduction of Marc Antony by Cleopatra while floating down the Nile aboard her barge. As Ellington says, "The mood was specific."
- The percussion and bass play an ostinato throughout. These parts should be played as written and not varied in order to function as an ostinato (a short pattern that repeats while things change around it). Although Cleopatra was bitten by an asp, the thirty-second notes in on the snare rim have always reminded me of a rattlesnake.
- The half open plungers in the brass at letter **A** should be played with no vibrato or inflection. Nice and easy does it.

- Letter **B** in the reeds should be slurred with breath accents. The same goes for **C** but at a lesser volume. Everything remains calm and a bit restrained except for the alto solo at **C** and **D** which is very passionate.
- **F** is a tutti section written in four part harmony. It is warm and supple.
- The piano solo at **G** provides us with some quirky dissonance over the ostinato while we diminuendo. After playing Ellington's solo several times, your pianist may wish to try something similar of his or her own.
- The reed soli at **H** is somewhat unusual for the Ellington band. In keeping with the style of the rest of this piece, the vibrato is kept to a minimum (just a slight touch). This should sound transparent like a veil Cleopatra might have worn. If played in balance at an *mp* or *mf* volume, we should be able to hear all five parts. Note the 4th reed (tenor) starts on the bottom and winds up on the top (a step above the clarinet).

Notes from Wynton Marsalis:

This arrangement is perfect for teaching your rhythm section how to establish and maintain the groove. The bass and drum parts don't change, so the focus is on consistency. This piece teaches musicians how to arc the sound out into a hall - a non-specific technique that is akin to throwing your voice. Particular attention has to be paid to how the entrance of different instrumental choirs affect the dynamics of the arrangement. Because it has a lot of fast notes and the dynamic markings never exceed *mf*, you can focus on getting a warm, round ensemble tone. The overall effect of this arrangement should be sensuous, exotic and intensely consistent.

HALF THE FUN

Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington

Transcribed by David Berger and Mark Lopeman

Quasi Beguine ♩ = 92

A

Reeds 1 Alto Sax. *p*

2 Alto Sax. *p*

3 Clarinet

4 Tenor Sax. *p*

5 Baritone Sax. *p*

Trumpets 1 Large Cow Bell (pitched D \flat if possible) *mp*

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ plunger *mp*

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ plunger *mp*

4

Trombones 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ plunger *p*

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ plunger *p*

3 $\frac{1}{2}$ plunger *p*

Piano

Bass *mp*

Drums

Handles on rim Mallets on heads

mp H.H. foot

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Half the Fun

Musical score for 'Half the Fun' featuring Alto, Clarinet, Tenor, Bari., Tpt., Tbn., Pno., Bass, and Drms. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *sim.*, and first/second endings. A large red watermark 'Preview Only - Legal Use Requires Purchase' is overlaid on the page.

Half the Fun

B **C** solo

Alto
Alto
Tenor
Tenor
Bari.

slur (breath accents)
mp
slur (breath accents)
mp
slur (breath accents)
mp
slur (breath accents)
mp

p
p
p
p

Tpt. 1
2
3
4

Tbn. 1
2
3

Pno.

Bass

Drms.

Half the Fun

D

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. At the top, the vocal parts are listed: Alto, Tenor, and Bari. The Alto part features a melodic line with a fermata and a triplet ending. The Tenor and Bari parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns. Below the vocal parts are the brass sections: Tpt. 1 (with a cow bell part), Tpt. 2, 3, and 4, and Tbn. 1, 2, and 3. The piano part is shown in grand staff notation. The bass part and the drum part are at the bottom. A large red watermark 'Preview Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the score. A box labeled 'D' is positioned above the first measure of the Alto part. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. Dynamics include *p* and *mp*. The Alto part has a fermata over the first measure and a triplet ending in the fifth measure. The Tbn. 1 part has 'open' markings above the notes in the fifth measure.

Half the Fun

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. It includes the following parts:

- Vocalists:** Alto (two staves), Tenor (two staves), and Bari (one staff). The vocal lines feature complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.
- Brass:** Trumpets (Tpt. 1-4) and Trombones (Tbn. 1-3). The trumpet parts are mostly rests, while the trombone parts have melodic lines.
- Piano (Pno.):** Two staves (treble and bass clef) with rests.
- Bass:** One staff with a simple bass line.
- Drums (Drms.):** One staff with a drum set notation.

The score is marked with a large red watermark that reads "Preview Only - Legal Use Requires Purchase".

Half the Fun

Score for **Half the Fun**, page 6. The score includes parts for Alto, Tenor, Bari., Tpt. 1, 2, 3, 4, Tbn. 1, 2, 3, Pno., Bass, and Drms. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats). The score is divided into two sections, **E** and **F**. Section **E** begins with a key signature change to E-flat major. Section **F** begins with a key signature change to F major (two flats). The score features various musical notations including triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A large red watermark reading "Preview Only - Legal Use Requires Purchase" is overlaid on the score.

Half the Fun

This musical score is for the song "Half the Fun" and is arranged for a full band and vocal ensemble. The score is written in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time. It features the following parts:

- Vocalists:** Alto, Tenor, and Bari. parts. The vocal lines include dynamics such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). There are triplets in the vocal lines, indicated by a '3' below the notes.
- Brass:** Trumpets (Tpt. 1-4) and Trombones (Tbn. 1-3). The brass parts include dynamics like *mf* and *p*. Trumpets 1-4 and Trombone 1 have melodic lines, while Trombones 2 and 3 provide harmonic support.
- Piano (Pno.):** The piano part is mostly silent, indicated by a long horizontal line across the grand staff.
- Bass:** The bass line consists of a simple, rhythmic pattern of quarter notes.
- Drums (Drms.):** The drum part is also simple, featuring a consistent pattern of quarter notes.

The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. A large red watermark reading "Preview Only Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the entire page.

Half the Fun

G

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes staves for Alto (two), Tenor (two), Bari, Tpt. 1-4, Tbn. 1-3, Pno., Bass, and Drms. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score begins with a 'G' chord symbol. The piano part features a melodic line with triplets and trills, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The drum set part includes a cow bell, which is played in a rhythmic pattern starting in the fifth measure, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. A large red watermark reading 'Preview Only Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the entire page.

Half the Fun

H

Alto *mf*

Alto *mf*

Clar. *mf*

Tenor *mf*

Bari. *mf*

Tpt. 1 *mf*

2

3

4

Tbn. 1

2

3

Pno.

Bass

Drms.

Half the Fun

I

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes parts for Alto (two staves), Clarinet (Clar.), Tenor (Tenor), Bari. (Baritone), Tpt. 1-4 (Trumpets), Tbn. 1-3 (Tubas), Pno. (Piano), Bass, and Drms. (Drums). The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The first measure of the Alto parts is marked with a box containing the letter 'I'. The Tpt. 1-4 parts include a '1/2 plunger' instruction. The Pno. part is mostly silent. The Bass part has a few notes in the first measure. The Drms. part has a rhythmic pattern in the first measure. A large red watermark 'Preview Only' is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Half the Fun

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes parts for two Alto saxophones, Clarinet in Bb, Tenor saxophone, Baritone saxophone, four Trumpets (1-4), three Trombones (1-3), Piano (Pno.), Bass, and Drums (Drms.). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a 4/4 time signature. The music features a prominent melodic line in the Clarinet and Tenor saxophones, with the Baritone saxophone providing a harmonic accompaniment. The brass section (Trumpets and Trombones) plays a rhythmic pattern, while the Piano and Bass provide a steady accompaniment. The Drums play a simple, rhythmic pattern. Dynamic markings include *dim.* (diminuendo), *pp* (pianissimo), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). A *mp 8va...* marking is present in the Bass part towards the end of the piece. The score is marked with a large red watermark that reads "Preview Only! Legal Use Requires Purchase".

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