

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library

Such Sweet Thunder **from "Such Sweet Thunder"**

COMPOSED BY DUKE ELLINGTON
AND BILLY STRAYHORN

TRANSCRIBED BY DAVID BERGER FOR JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for *Essentially Ellington 2002*:
the Seventh Annual Jazz at Lincoln Center High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival.

Major support for the *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival is provided by the Jack and Susan Rudin Educational and Scholarship Fund, Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Foundation, PepsiCo Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Verve Music Group, National Endowment for the Arts, Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation, and Gail & Alfred Engelberg (as of 6/20/01).



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 four or five 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 that 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 because 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 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 loudly in the loud part of the instrument and softly 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 1 of a measure would be released on beat 3.
9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat *fp*, accent and 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 overamplification, 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 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 that 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 just to 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 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 that 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 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 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 9th 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

Special thanks to Andrew Homzy for editing.

SUCH SWEET THUNDER

INSTRUMENTATION:

Reed 1	Alto Sax	Trumpet 4 (opt. cornet)
Reed 2	Alto Sax	Trombone 1
Reed 3	Tenor Sax	Trombone 2
Reed 4	Tenor Sax	Trombone 3 (valve)
Reed 5	Baritone Sax	Piano
Trumpet 1		Bass
Trumpet 2		Drums
Trumpet 3		

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION:

Such Sweet Thunder from “Such Sweet Thunder” by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn (3:22)
Recorded 4/24/57, New York City
Duke Ellington: Such Sweet Thunder (Columbia COL 469140 2/Columbia Legacy CK65568)
Matrix CO 57722

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

REHEARSAL NOTES:

- **Such Sweet Thunder** is the first movement of the “Shakespearean Suite,” also known as “Such Sweet Thunder.” The original title for this movement was **Othello**, referring to a very complicated character and the only black role conceived by Shakespeare. A noble and powerful warrior, Othello seduces and marries the beautiful Desdemona and is betrayed by Iago, his friend and confidante, which ultimately turns his love into uncontrollable jealousy and death. (Ellington dedicated another movement of the suite to Othello as well—**Sonnet in Search of a Moor**).
- This piece is essentially four choruses of 12-bar blues, a four-bar interlude and two more blues choruses. The real exploration is the juxtaposition of the pseudo-tango beat over the swing and the major/minor ambiguity of the tonality.
- The opening chorus sets the mood, so we must jump right on the groove. Careful attention must be given to a clear and concise count-off. The players need to get the rhythm in their bodies, not just their heads. If a two-bar count-off isn't working, try four or eight or sixteen.
- While we are all attracted to intensity, most players (and bands) do not know how to play with intensity softly. Once this is learned, playing softly is every bit as much fun as playing loudly. Practice this with **Such Sweet Thunder**.
- At letter **A** the ostinato pattern is joined by two trumpets and a trombone playing with pixie mutes and plungers. (Ellington called this trio the “pep section” and used this combination to add color for more than 40 years.) The players need to play loudly with a lot of intensity and let the plungers do the talking. The vocal nature of this color cannot be overemphasized.

- The trumpet (or cornet) solo at **C** is Othello's seduction of Desdemona—sweet, relaxed, and extremely tantalizing. **C13**, on the other hand, is loud and harsh—a complete contrast; an explosion. **D** is the aftermath—quietly picking up the pieces. The trombone solo is understated and somewhat formal but with a singing quality.

- Ellington did not write piano or drum parts, and his bass parts were very sketchy. He wanted his rhythm section to function as a rhythm section in a small group does—by improvising. Try to get your rhythm section to memorize this chart because it will help internalize the music. Then notice how much more they play music and not just notes. This is also true for the entire band. When Duke had steady personnel and 52 weeks of work a year (1924–1959), the music rarely came out of the travel cases. It became a matter of pride that you memorize your book in your first few weeks with a band. When the Count Basie band first came to New York, the entire band had the book memorized. Similar myths have sprung up about Duke Ellington. The trick is that written music should have the authority and wildness of improvised music and improvised music should have the structure and logic of written music. This may be the greatest illusion in all of music.

—David Berger

COMMENTS FROM WYNTON MARSALIS:

- Although the introductory material is very downbeat-oriented, be sure to pay attention to the syncopation on the “and” of beat 3 that occurs in measures 2, 4, and 6. Also note the importance of the piano's shuffle feel at one before **A**—it should be present and in the groove.
- Pep section parts must be played with a lot of power and stank. It's important to wait for the downbeat of one, for example at **A3**. Also note the tricky entrance on the “and” of four at **A7**.
- The delicate saxophone voicings at **B** can easily be out of tune, drag, or possess a reedy, unpleasant sound—be careful. Also, be sure not to peck on the “and” of four. It's important to really open up the sound at four before **C**.
- This arrangement allows the rhythm section to play some good, straight, quarter-note swing. The entire band should remember to open up at four before **D** and personalize the part, like a big shout section. At **D**, point out that the saxophone riff is a fragment of the introductory theme while the trombone plays a bel canto part. Finally, make sure that everyone hits the downbeat of the last bar together.

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library – Essentially Ellington

SUCH SWEET THUNDER

from "Such Sweet Thunder"

Composed by Duke Ellington
and Billy Strayhorn
Transcribed by David Berger

Medium swing ♩ = 99

Reeds 1 Alto Sax *mf*

2 Alto Sax *mf*

3 Tenor Sax *mf*

4 Tenor Sax *mf*

5 Bari Sax *mf*

Trumpets 1

2

3

(Opt. Cornet) 4

Trombones 1 *mf*

2

(Valve) 3 *mf*

Piano

Bass *mf*

Drums *mf* (rim knock)

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Such Sweet Thunder

A

Alto

Alto

Tenor

Tenor

Bari

Tpt. 1

2

3

4

Tbn. 1

2

3

Pno.

Bass

Dr.

Plunger w/mute

Wa Wa

Plunger w/mute

Wa Wa

Plunger w/mute

Wa Wa

15^{ma}

mf

3 3 3 3

mf

3 3 3 3

2

2

Such Sweet Thunder

This musical score is for the piece "Such Sweet Thunder" and is arranged for a large ensemble. The score includes parts for five vocalists (two Alto, two Tenor, and one Bari), three Trumpets (Tpt. 1, 2, 3), three Trombones (Tbn. 1, 2, 3), Piano (Pno.), Bass, and Drums (Dr.). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal parts feature melodic lines with lyrics "Wa Wa" and some triplet markings. The brass parts provide harmonic support and rhythmic patterns. The piano part includes a section marked "15ma" with triplet figures. The drum part features a steady bass drum pattern with snare accents. A large red watermark "Preview Only - Legit Use Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Such Sweet Thunder

B

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The vocal parts (Alto, Tenor, Bari) feature melodic lines with some triplet markings. The brass section (Trumpets 1-4 and Trombones 1-3) is currently silent. The piano part includes a 15-measure rest. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords G, D7, G, G7, C7, G, Bm7, and Bbm7. The drum part consists of a simple rhythmic pattern.

Such Sweet Thunder

C

Even 8ths

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

Open - Solo A7 D D⁹ A

A7

Am7 D7 G D7 G7 C C⁹ G G7

Dr.

Such Sweet Thunder

The musical score is arranged for a full band and vocal ensemble. It features the following parts:

- Vocalists:** Alto, Tenor, and Bari. The vocal lines are written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The vocal parts enter in the fifth measure with a dynamic marking of *mf*.
- Brass:** Three Trumpets (Tpt. 1, 2, 3) and three Trombones (Tbn. 1, 2, 3). The brass parts are written in treble clef for trumpets and bass clef for trombones. The trombone part includes an "Open" instruction in the eighth measure.
- Piano (Pno.):** Written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs).
- Bass:** Written in bass clef, featuring a walking bass line with various chords indicated above the staff.
- Drums (Dr.):** Written in a standard drum notation.

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

Such Sweet Thunder

D

Alto *ff* *p*

Alto *ff* *p*

Tenor *ff* *p*

Tenor *ff* *p*

Bari *ff* *p*

Tpt. 1 *ff*

2 *ff*

3 *ff*

4 *ff*

Tbn. 1 *ff*

2 *ff*

3 *ff* Solo - Cantabile *mp*

Pno. *mp* 15^{ma}

Bass *ff* *mf* *p* Solo *simile*

Dr. *ff* *p* Ride 2

E7 A7 D7 G

JLCM01005C

Such Sweet Thunder

This musical score page includes the following parts and markings:

- Vocal Parts:** Alto (two staves), Tenor (two staves), and Bari (one staff). Dynamics include *mf*.
- Brass:** Tpt. 1-4 and Tbn. 1-3. Tpt. 2 and 4, and Tbn. 1 and 2 are marked "Plunger w/mute".
- Piano (Pno.):** Features 15-measure rests (*15^{ma}.....*) and triplets.
- Bass:** Includes triplets and a *mf* dynamic marking.
- Drums (Dr.):** Features a 2-measure rest (*2*) and triplet patterns.

Such Sweet Thunder

E

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes five vocal staves (Alto, Tenor, Bari), four trumpet staves (Tpt. 1-4), three trombone staves (Tbn. 1-3), a piano part (Pno.), a bass line (Bass), and a drum part (Dr.). The key signature is E major (three sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with dynamics such as *mf* and *f*. The vocal parts feature lyrics "Wa Wa" and "15 ma". The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes marked *mf*. The drum part features a pattern of eighth notes with accents and two measures of a 2/4 time signature.

Such Sweet Thunder

This musical score page includes the following parts:

- Vocalists:** Alto, Tenor, and Bari parts, each with two staves.
- Trumpets (Tpt.):** Four staves (1-4) with melodic lines and 'Wa' vocalizations.
- Trombones (Tbn.):** Three staves (1-3) with melodic lines and 'Wa' vocalizations.
- Piano (Pno.):** Two staves (treble and bass clef) with accompaniment, including a 15-measure section with triplets.
- Bass:** One staff with a melodic line.
- Drums (Dr.):** One staff with a rhythmic pattern.

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

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ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

The Jazz at Lincoln Center *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival is one of the most prestigious and unique educational programs available for high school jazz bands in North America. Its goals are to disseminate Duke Ellington compositions to high school jazz bands, encourage the study and performance of Ellington's music, and foster mentoring relationships between students and professional musicians. *Essentially Ellington* was introduced in 1996, has expanded every year, and is now open to every high school jazz band in the United States and Canada. Each year, Jazz at Lincoln Center produces original-arrangement scores of several Ellington works, which are sent along with other educational materials to all eligible bands expressing interest in the program. Bands can submit audition tapes of their performance of these works either for competition or "for comments only." Each band that submits a tape receives numerical and written feedback. From the competing bands, 15 bands are selected as finalists and receive free in-school workshops with J@LC musicians. *Essentially Ellington* culminates in New York City with a multiday festival comprised of master classes, a combo showcase, live competition, and a concert at Avery Fisher Hall featuring the top-placing bands, Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

For more information about *Essentially Ellington*, please contact Jazz at Lincoln Center Education Department, 33 W. 60th Street, New York, NY 10023, (212) 258-9800 (phone), (212) 258-9900 (fax), or ee@jazzatlincolncenter.org (e-mail).

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Jazz at Lincoln Center is the world's largest not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to jazz. With the world-renowned Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and a comprehensive array of guest artists, Jazz at Lincoln Center advances a unique vision for the continued development of the art of jazz by producing a year-round schedule of education, performance, and broadcast events for audiences of all ages. These productions include concerts, national and international tours, residencies, a weekly national radio program, television broadcasts, recordings, publications, an annual high school jazz band competition and festival, a band director academy, a jazz appreciation curriculum for children, advanced training through the Juilliard Institute for Jazz Studies, music publishing, children's concerts, lectures, film programs, and student and educator workshops. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Wynton Marsalis, Jazz at Lincoln Center will produce more than 450 events during its 2000–01 season. Currently, Jazz at Lincoln Center is building its new home—Frederick P. Rose Hall—the first-ever education, performance, and broadcast facility devoted to jazz, slated to open during the 2003–04 season.

Alfred Music is the official print publisher for Jazz at Lincoln Center.