#### JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER LIBRARY

# KO-KO

## COMPOSED BY DUKE ELLINGTON Transcribed by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

## FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for *Essentially Ellington* 2003: The Eighth Annual Jazz at Lincoln Center High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival.

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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 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, 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.
- 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 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*, 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 under- stand 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

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 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 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 IV IV Gecond 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 narmony. 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  $\flat 9$  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 the score.

#### KO-KO

#### **INSTRUMENTATION:**

Reed 1 Alto Sax Trombone 1 Reed 2 Alto Sax Trombone 2

Reed 3 Tenor/Clarinet Trombone 3 (opt. Valve)

Reed 4 Tenor Sax Guitar
Reed 5 Baritone Sax Piano
Trumpet 1 Bass
Trumpet 2 Drums

Trumpet 3 (opt. Cornet)

#### **ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION:**

Composer: Duke Ellington Arranger: Duke Ellington

Recorded: March 6, 1940, in Chicago

**Time:** 2:40

Master Number: BS-044887-2 Original Issue: Victor 26536-A

Currently Available on CD: The Blanton-Webster Band, Bluebird (RCA/BMG) 5659-2 Personnel: Duke Ellington, piano; Wallace Jones, Cootie Williams, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Lawrence Brown, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, trombones; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Otto Hardwick, Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster, Harry Carney, reeds; Fred Guy, guitar; Jimmie Blanton, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

Soloists: Juan Tizol, melody statement; "Tricky Sam" Nanton, with mute; Duke Ellington;

Jimmie Blanton.

#### **REHEARSAL NOTES:**

- Poet and philosopher Eli Siegel defined beauty as "the making of opposites." Certainly in all great art we learn of the simultaneous one-ness and two-ness of the universe. Twentieth century art centers around the primitive and the sophisticated—consider Picasso, Hemingway, and Stravinsky. In jazz, Duke Ellington's music best exemplifies this aesthetic, and the singular piece that perhaps captures this relationship better than any other is Ko-Ko. Although Concerto for Cootie or The Mooche are sometimes cited as Ellington's greatest work, the majority of critics agree on Ko-Ko as Ellington's supreme masterpiece.
- This entire piece is built out of one rhythmic motif: three eighth-notes followed by a long note. This is the first sound we hear (in a floor tom-tom and low register baritone saxophone), the last sound we hear (in the high reeds, low baritone, bass and tom-toms) and is present in dozens of instrumental, melodic, and harmonic combinations throughout the piece.
- The simplicity of rhythm and form (basic three-chord minor blues) allows Ellington plenty of latitude when it comes to these lesser three elements.
- Although not recorded until March 6, 1940, Ko-Ko was composed in 1939 before Ben
  Webster joined the band as the fifth reed. Since the other four reeds—two alto saxophones, a
  tenor saxophone (switching to clarinet after the opening chorus), and a baritone saxophone—
  form complete harmonies, Ellington wrote an independent part for Webster, which is at once
  highly melodic, but contains almost entirely dissonant notes not found in the other parts. In the

ninth and tenth bars of letter **A** Ellington combines a blues melody in the tenor sax (B<sup>\(\bar\)</sup> to D<sup>\(\bar\)</sup>) with chromatic harmony (B7 to B<sup>\(\bar\)</sup>7) in the other reeds and rhythm section—the B<sup>\(\bar\)</sup> is the major seventh on the B7, and the D<sup>\(\bar\)</sup> is the raised 9th on the B<sup>\(\bar\)</sup>7. The consequent half-step rubs with the adjacent saxes and results in a raw sonority heretofore unheard in jazz.

- In letters **E** and **F** the tenor sax starts as the fifth reed and then joins the other sections. While the trumpets play melodic variations of the four-note motif at letter **E**, the reeds and trombones keep alternating the last two notes of the motif in a three-against-four pattern. The trumpets play four different unison pitches, while the trombones and reeds repeat their harmonized voicings. The added tenor sax starts on the 11th of the Ebm7 with the reeds moving to the 6th with the trombones two beats later. Ellington adds a subtle touch by having the tenor play a 16th-note trill, which acknowledges the melodic movement of the trumpets and trombones two beats later.
- Letter **F** is a further development of this orchestrational idea. The tenor plays the four-note motif with the saxes, then with the trombones and trumpets, and finally in contrary motion with the clarinet. Two other permutations follow with alternating bass solos, taking us from the highest and loudest sounds to the lowest and softest, setting up the climax at letter **G**.
- What is needed here is sheer power. What may seem at first listening to be brass versus reeds is really quite a bit more. The six brass plus the clarinet and second alto sax play the last two notes of the motif in dissonant voicings: the chord at **G** has the trombones on a tonic triad, the trumpets playing an upper structure triad (Gb), which includes the 7th of the Eb minor, the alto sax plays the 11th of the chord (a perfect 4th above the first trombone and a perfect 4th below the third trumpet), and finally the clarinet is on top with the tonic (which also happens to be a 4th above the first trumpet). With this harmonic richness in the background, the remaining three reeds play a rhythmically repetitive unison melodic development of the fournote motif incorporating the 16th-note turns from the tenor sax at letter **E**.
- The coda returns to the introduction with a four-bar extension allowing the tenor sax to roam between the horn sections one last time.
- Ellington reveals his late '20s jungle style that he created in the Cotton Club in the first eight measures of this chart. The drummer is encouraged to evoke that primal quality and the horns should maintain a raw energy. This demands severe accents and liberal use of extreme dynamics. This same material returns at letter **H.**
- On the intro of this original recording, the trombones play all the notes that are marked long as fp. Many bands play these notes short.
- At A the saxes should sound wild. They can swoop into the first note (optional), but it is essential that they crescendo into the second note of each phrase (this note should be rife with blues sensuality) and then diminuendo on the descending notes that follow. As a foil to this ferocity, the trombone solo should be played on the polite side—it was originally a valve trombone solo, so no slipping and sliding.
- Letters B and C pit the distant-sounding saxes and the savage, staccato brass (molto accentissimo) against the plunger-muted solo trombone, crying out with sounds that evoke the human voice.

- Letter D superimposes a wild, whole-tone scale piano solo over a diminution of the previous backgrounds. Duke's contrast of legato scale passages and staccato chordal jabs is a good model to follow. The pianist must be very intense in order to keep up the energy that preceded him/her.
- Care must be taken to get the balance exactly right in letter E so that we may hear each of the three horn sections and the bass and drums. Long notes should be held fiercely, but at a lesser volume than the attack. This enables us to hear the next entrance. Similarly letter F continues this practice but adds the elements of ascending crescendos and call-and-response with the bass. Although the bass is soloing, it is probably wise to have him play a walking solo with slight disruptions (in the manner of Blanton's recorded solo). Letter G demands accents and decreased volume from those playing long notes, legato intensity from the three saxes, and lots of cymbals and excitement from the drums.
- The tempo of this piece is crucial to its success. There is the temptation to play it fast because it is not technically difficult for the instrumentalists, and increasing the speed generates more excitement. This piece, however, needs time for the dissonances to sink in. The three basic things to remember at all times are swing phrasing, accents, and dynamics, all in the pursuit of a roaring performance.

David Berger



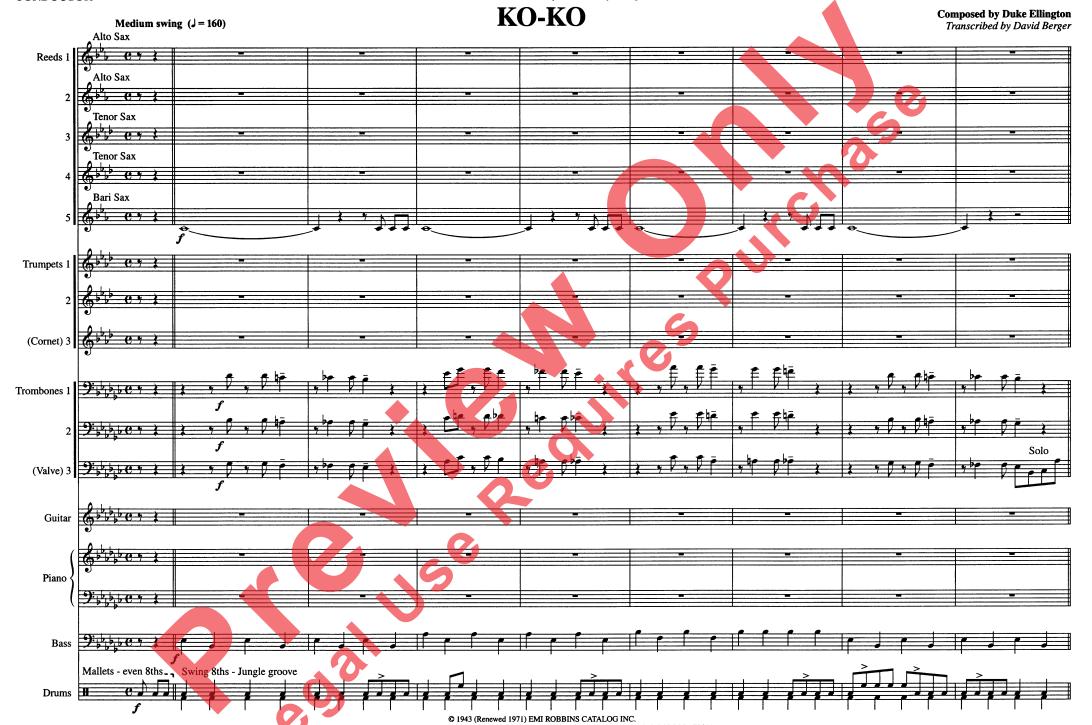
#### **COMMENTS FROM WYNTON MARSALIS:**

This piece evokes the African ritualized music and dance that took place in Congo Square from an American perspective. There are mallets on drums, popping trombones, and swooping saxophones. Much of arrangement is in the lower register, which implies the stomping of feet.

The trombone part at letter **B** is difficult; it's more important for it to sound like a shout above lower rhythmic activity than a perfect rendition of the written music. Biting brass at letter **B** should sound very vocal; these quarter notes are difficult because they are an eighth-note away from the rhythm section's quarter notes and the tendency is to drag. Pay attention to the good call-and-response at letter **B** between saxes and brass. The pianist plays throughout this section and must be careful not to get lost in all the sound.

The piano solo at letter **D** represents a fantastic dancer cutting intricate figures on top of the assembled participants. The orchestration opens up at letter **E** with a double response to the trumpet section; the reeds have a high response and the trombones have a low response. This should all sound human and vocal. Don't peck on the downbeat of three in the second measure of **F**. The bass player should project a big, deep sound throughout the arrangement and especially during this solo. Dynamics are very important at letter **F**.

Letter **G** is one of the greatest conceptual shout choruses ever written. We need a lot of power from our alto, tenor, and bari trio. The trumpet section must be careful not to overpower the clarinet, which is playing the lead. At letter **H** we return to the beginning with beautiful condensed version of the second theme. Wonderful arrangement.







Ko-Ko



5 Ko-Ko C Pno.







9 Ko-Ko Clar. Tbn. 1 Eþm Pno. Cr Cym

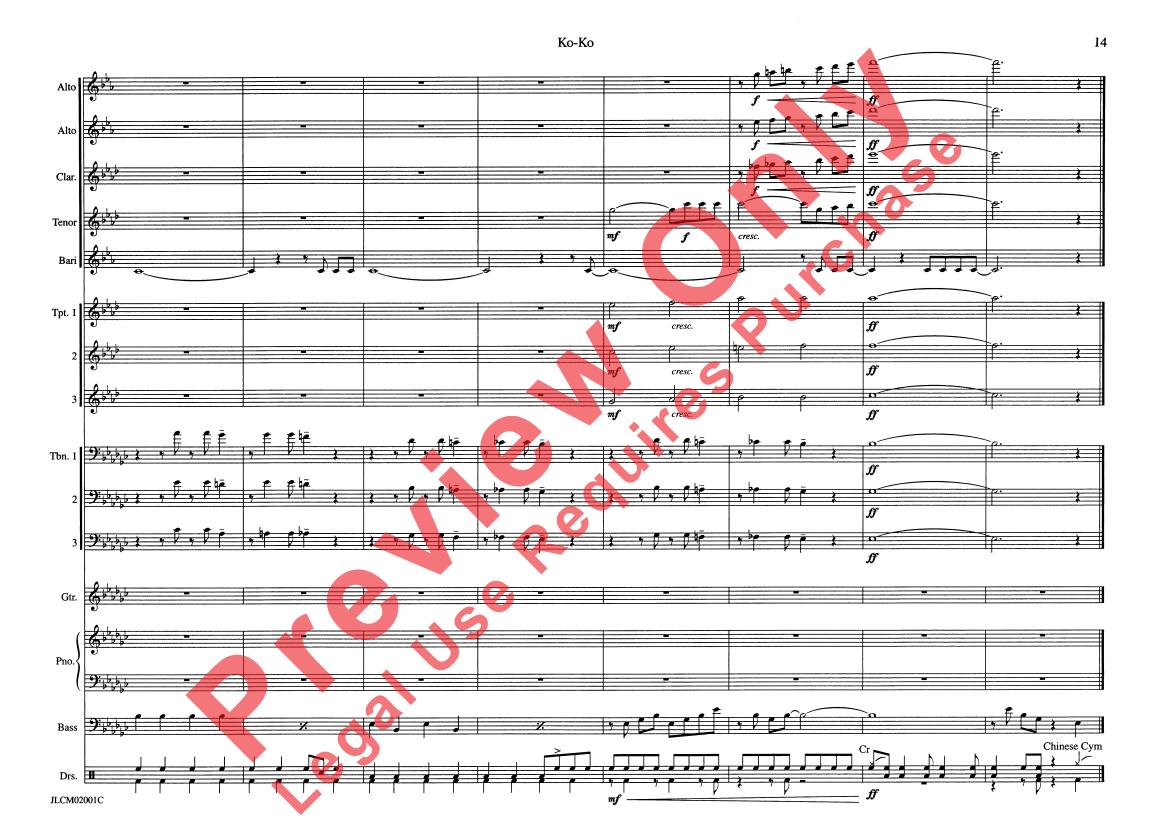
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### **Essentially Ellington**

The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival (*EE*) is one of the most unique jazz programs for high school bands in North America, Canada, and Australia. *EE* extends the legacy of Duke Ellington by widely disseminating his music, in its original arrangements, to high school musicians for study and performance. Utilizing Ellington's 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 (J@LC) transcribes, publishes, and distributes Duke Ellington charts (along with additional educational materials) to high school bands in the U.S., Canada, and American schools abroad.
- **Talking About Duke:** Throughout the school year, band directors and students correspond with professional clinicians who answer questions regarding Ellington's music. *EE* strives to foster mentoring relationships through e-mail correspondence, various conference presentations, and the festival weekend.
- Sharing Experiences: Students are encouraged to enter an essay contest by writing about an experience they have had with jazz music. The first-place winner earns the honor of naming a seat in Frederick P. Rose Hall the future home of Jazz at Lincoln Center.
- 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 written assessment.
- Finalists and In-School Workshops: Fifteen bands are selected from competition entries to attend the competition and festival in New York City. To prepare, each finalist band receives an in-school workshop led by a professional musician. Local *EE* participants are also invited to attend workshops.

- Competition & Festival: EE culminates in a threeday festival at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. Students, teachers, and musicians from across the country participate in workshops, rehearsals, and performances. The festival concludes with an evening concert that features the three top-placing bands, joining Wynton Marsalis and the LCJO in an all-Ellington performance.
- Band Director Academy: This professional development program 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 four-day program integrates performance, history, pedagogy, and discussion into an intensive educational experience for educators at all levels.
- Essentially Ellington Down Under: A partnership between Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts at Edith Cowen University, EE Down Under mirrors the model J@LC has produced successfully in the U.S. and Canada by bringing the music of Duke Ellington to secondary schools in Western Australia.





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For more information about
ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON, please contact:

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT
33 West 60th Street, New York, NY 10023-7999
(212) 258-9800 (phone), (212) 258-9900 (fax)
ee@jazzatlincolncenter.org (e-mail)
or www.jazzatlincolncenter.org (Web)