

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

**OL' MAN RIVER**

AS RECORDED BY THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA

ARRANGED BY JIMMY MUNDY

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, LILAH DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-5136

WORDS BY OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II, MUSIC BY JEROME KERN

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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# COUNT BASIE SERIES

## OL' MAN RIVER (1958)

### **Count Basie Biography:**

Next to Duke Ellington, there is no more famous band in the history of jazz than that of William 'Count' Basie. Although his economical piano playing was ahead of his time compared to several of his more stride-oriented contemporaries, Basie was always best known as the face of an organization that played a continuous role in shaping the trajectory of jazz for over 50 years.

Born on August 21, 1904 in Red Bank, New Jersey, even as a youth Basie was attracted to not just music in general, but the idea of being a bandleader specifically. Settling on the piano as his main instrument as a teen, Basie's musical apprenticeship was fairly typical for the time. Most of his education stemmed from hanging around the Harlem stride piano scene of the 1920s. A series of tours with vaudeville troupes came next; when one of the troupes broke up in Kansas City in 1927, Basie found himself stranded.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it was not long before Basie found himself hired by bassist Walter Page to play with his now-legendary territory band, the Blue Devils. His notoriety rising, Basie eventually left the Blue Devils to take over the piano chair in the Bennie Moten Orchestra, considered to be the finest band in the Kansas City area. After Moten's sudden death in 1935, rather than letting the band fall apart, Basie ended up taking over the reigns himself, bringing in several of his former Blue Devils band mates, including Page himself, in the process. It did not take long for this new band to make its impact on the world of jazz. The Basie organization had memorized many arrangements supplied to them by Eddie Durham. They also had arrangements that were fairly loosely organized and easy to customize on the spot, known informally as 'head' arrangements. This allowed for a much more soloist-friendly environment than most of the other bands of the swing era. In addition, the band's rhythm section was responsible for a distinctive shift in the way time is kept in jazz. Spurred by drummer 'Papa' Jo Jones's more free-form approach and guitarist Freddie Green's steady 'rhythm' style of playing, the innovations of this organization would play a key role in setting up the eventual rise of bebop in the 1940s.

World War II was not kind to big bands for a variety of reasons, and Basie's band was no exception. Financial considerations would force him to reduce his ensemble to an octet by the end of the 1940s. By the mid-1950s, however, Basie was able to reform his big band, aided in no small part to a series of hit recordings, including a particularly popular version of the jazz standard April In Paris. This new Basie band maintained the same relentless sense of swing as the earlier units, but was much more organized as a whole. Gone were the "head" arrangements of old in favor of a consistently expanding library of charts provided by what may have been the greatest stable of arrangers ever housed by a single band.

Basie's celebrity firmly cemented by this point, his band remained true to this new format for the rest of his life. The 1960s and 1970s would see a string of successful albums backing singers such as Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Tony Bennett, among others. In addition, the band began to see an increased presence in Las Vegas and Hollywood; Basie's famous cameo in Mel Brooks's Blazing Saddles is no doubt a highlight of the now-classic comedy. Basie continued a busy touring and recording schedule even when he was wheelchair-bound in his final years.

Basie passed away on April 26, 1984. The band that bears his name continues to tour to this day, performing both the favorites of the past as well as new arrangements and continuing to collaborate with some of jazz's top vocalists, including George Benson and Diane Schuur. The list of notable artists brought to prominence through the ranks of his band include saxophonists Lester Young, Frank Foster and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis, trumpeters Harry 'Sweets' Edison, Buck Clayton, and Thad Jones, trombonists Dicky Wells and Al Grey, and drummer Sonny Payne. Notable arrangers who contributed to the band's book include Frank Foster, Neal Hefti, Ernie Wilkins, Thad Jones, Billy Byers, Quincy Jones, and Sammy Nestico.



## **The Music:**

Jimmy Mundy's show-stopping take on *Ol' Man River* has an interesting and surprisingly long-winded origin story. It was initially conceived and arranged as a drum feature for Buddy Rich who was playing with Eddie Condon in 1949. Condon and Rich performed this live on TV for *Condon's Floor Show* (March 19, 1949). The chart was refined and developed over the next decade or so before making its way into the library of the Count Basie Orchestra to serve as a feature for drummer Sonny Payne. This publication is based on the Basie version that was recorded in 1958 and released on *Not Now, I'll Tell You When*.

## **Notes to the Conductor:**

Commencing with an ominous tom-tom roll, a series of thumping hits in the saxes and trombones surround a bugle-like trumpet fanfare to serve as a rather dramatic introduction. The saxes handle the first melody statement at measure 14, with some aggressive brass accompaniment. Most notable, however, is the frantic double-time feel in the rhythm section, punctuated by Payne's virtuosic-yet-musical fills. When the arrangement seems on the verge of bursting open with energy, the volume level sharply drops for a key change at measure 46, where the now-muted trumpets take over melody duties. The rhythmic and melodic quirks during this section will require a substantial amount of work for your section to get feeling comfortable and precise.

An interlude at measure 80 sees the trombones and saxes trade melodic barbs with each other around some short drum solos. Gradually building in volume, the whole band comes in for a raucous shout chorus that sees the double time feel dropped in favor of a hard-swinging backbeat at measure 92. This doesn't last long, as the trombones set up a return to the double time feel at measure 108. A melody recap from the piano and bass give way to a drum solo that dominates the remainder of the performance even when the rest of the band comes back in at measure 153. For the grand finale, the trombones hold a droning rhythm underneath a series of increasingly fast chords from the saxes and trumpets, with the drums serving as both soloist and director for a series of short blasts before a triumphant conclusion.

This publication was prepared from the original parts that the Count Basie Orchestra used for the 1958 recording session - this is not a transcription.

**Dylan Canterbury**

*February 2024*

# A-121 OLD MAN RIVER

I TROMBONE

A-121

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Above are the first two pages of the trombone 1 part that was used for the 1958 recording.

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## SCORE

DOUBLE TIME FEEL, STRAIGHT 8THS ♩ = 180

① ON CUE

The score is arranged for a jazz ensemble. It includes parts for Woodwind 1 (Alto Sax), Woodwind 2 (Alto Sax), Woodwind 3 (Tenor Sax), Woodwind 4 (Tenor Sax), Woodwind 5 (Baritone Sax), Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Trumpet 4, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Trombone 3, Trombone 4 (Opt.), Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drum Set. The music is in 4/4 time with a double time feel, straight eighth notes, and a tempo of 180 beats per minute. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score is divided into four measures, with measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 indicated at the bottom. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *sfz* (sforzando). The drum set part features a consistent eighth-note pattern.

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes five saxophone parts (Sax 1-5), four trumpet parts (Tpt. 1-4), four trombone parts (Tbn. 1-4), guitar (Gtr.), piano (Pno.), bass (Bs.), and drums (Dr.). The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The saxophone parts feature melodic lines with accents and dynamic markings such as *mp* and *f*. The trumpet and trombone parts include rhythmic patterns and some melodic fragments. The guitar and piano parts provide harmonic support with chords and arpeggios. The bass and drums parts are primarily rhythmic, with the drums including 'fill' markings. The score is divided into measures 5 through 12, with a double bar line at the end of measure 12.

5

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9

10

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12