

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER'S ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON LIBRARY

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

Harlem Congo

Harry White

Arranged by Charlie Dixon

As performed by Chick Webb and His Orchestra

Transcribed and Edited by Mark Lopeman for Jazz at Lincoln Center

Full Score

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2017-18
Twenty-Third Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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essentially
ELLINGTON

jazz

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 conditions 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. We have included chord changes on all rhythm section parts so that students can better understand the overall form of each composition. It is incumbent upon the director to make clear what is a composed part versus a part to be improvised. The recordings should make this clear but in instances where it is not; use your best judgment and play something that sounds good, is swinging, and is stylistically appropriate to the piece. Sometimes, a student may not have the technical skill to perform a difficult transcription, especially in the case of one of Duke's solos, in that case, it is best to have the student work something out that is appropriate. Written passages should be studied and earned when possible, as they are an important part of our jazz heritage and help the player understand the function of his particular solo or accompaniment. All soloists should learn the chord changes. Solos should be looked at as an 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 (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 sub-dominant and cycle back to the tonic.

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.

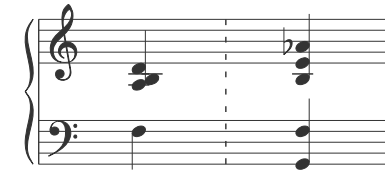
Soli • a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli sound particular to Ellington's music combines two trumpets and 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 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 9th and a 13th. 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 • a tune or series of pitches.

Harmony • chords and voicings.

Orchestration • instrumentation and tone colors.

—David Berger

HARLEM CONGO • INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 – Alto Sax/Clarinet

Reed 2 – Alto Sax/Clarinet

Reed 3 – Tenor Sax/Clarinet

Reed 4 – Tenor Sax/Clarinet

Bari Sax (Optional)

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Harry White

Arranger • Charlie Dixon

Recorded • November 1, 1937 in New York

Master # • 62740-A

Original Issue • DE 1681

Currently available on CD • *Spinnin' the Webb – The Original Decca Recordings* (GRP – GRD-635, 1994)

Currently available as digital download • *Chick Webb: Early Years of Ballroom Jazz* (Recorded September 10, 1934)

Personnel • Mario Bauza, Bobby Stark; Taft Jordan (trumpet); Sandy Williams, Claude Jones (trombone); Pete Clarke, Edgar Sampson (alto sax, clarinet); Elmer Williams, Wayman Carver (tenor sax, clarinet); John Trueheart (guitar); Joe Steele (piano); John Kirby (bass); Chick Webb (drums)

Soloists • Taft Jordan (trumpet), Louis Jordan (clarinet), Sandy Williams (trombone), Chick Webb (drums)

REHEARSAL NOTES

- Chick Webb made over 100 recordings with his band and there are only a handful of drum solos, making **Harlem Congo** all the more important. It was written by an undersung hero of early big band jazz: trombonist/arranger/composer Harry "Father" White. It was during his years in the early 1930s with Cab Calloway's band that White was said to have created the term "jitterbugs" for the fans who loved to swing dance, and although it was Webb's band that

recorded White's **Harlem Congo**, it was introduced by Calloway several months earlier, in the spring of 1937. This arrangement was written by Charlie Dixon, former banjoist with Fletcher Henderson, who wrote mainly for Webb in the mid-30s; Glenn Miller also used him.

- Harlem Congo** is what used to be called all sorts of funny terms, including flag-waver, barn-burner, or rabble-rouser; a tune too fast for the great majority of dancers, one played for people to gather around the bandstand and listen.
- It's easier for a band to take this at a very fast tempo and somehow settle for a ragged but exciting performance. That defeats in many ways the reason for playing it in the first place. Louis Armstrong was the first jazz player to create mightily swinging phrases at a fast tempo that could be adapted by all instruments. In a way, the great majority of big band music pre- to late-1940s is orchestrated Armstrong phrasing (and much that came after, as well).
- Have the band listen to Armstrong's *Swing That Music* to get a sense of his time and phrasing at a fast tempo. It might help to tap their feet—easily—along in half-notes throughout to feel how relaxed he is at that tempo. Once they have that down, you are ready to rehearse **Harlem Congo**.
- The best way to really nail this one down is to rehearse the horn and rhythm sections separately. This works for all charts, actually, but isn't practical, given what is available in your schedules. But it will help immeasurably with this one. Since the tempo is a real challenge, it might help to play a metronome loudly through a speaker to keep everything in line.
- The rhythm section's goal is to keep the fire going throughout the choruses, and to find small variations in texture and sound so that there is some variation. You can bring the intensity down for each soloist and then build. This will give the piece more shape and variety.
- Start with the horns at a slower tempo at which they can articulate cleanly and with consistency. Emphasize that they are all drummers—they have to make the rhythms snap and swing themselves without relying on the rhythm section to keep things in motion.
- Remind the band that the best way to get through this chart is by feeling the deep half notes of each measure, and to attack each half note in their parts squarely and fully on the beat with no anticipation. Refrain from tapping of feet in some frantic way to keep up with the quarter notes.
- Imbue each count off with a relaxed feel and a big breath as they start to play.
- Emphasize the dotted quarter on the third beat of the opening phrase, holding it for its full value, contrasting with the shorter, clipped notes that follow.

- Listen to the original recording for the specific sound of the plunger brass at **A**.
- The brass dotted half note one measure before **C** is to be attacked and released very precisely.
- The physical part of the brass plunger figures at **C** should be set by either lead trumpet or trombone and rehearsed until everyone looks exactly the same as they fan the mutes.
- Again, precise attacks on measures 7 and 8 of **C** for brass, and throughout the chorus for saxes, aiming for all of the downbeat notes.
- The sax soli at **D** should be rehearsed as slowly as necessary to ensure maximum precision.
- The interlude at **E** depends on precise attacks and cutoffs—no lingering notes or anticipations—otherwise the effect will be ruined. Make sure the rhythm section is in perfect sync with the horns.
- Work on saxes at measure 7 and 8 at **F**—the downbeat attack at 7 and the specific rhythm at 8.
- The tenor saxes at **G** are really the third and fourth trombones—work on balance to ensure trombone lead sound.
- Encourage horns soloists to remember the way that Armstrong soloed on *Swing That Music*—relaxed with a firm half-note feel and not trying to force too many notes. It's about floating atop the fast tempo. This will make for a greater contrast with the more active backgrounds.
- Long note sax backgrounds at **H** must have an internal rhythm, made with the vibrato.
- As already noted, any ensemble hits that occur on a downbeat are to be emphasized and played with great precision in attack and release—you'll see how vital they are to creating the push and pull effect at **J**.
- Exaggerate at all of the various dynamic markings to make real contrasts; without them, the piece will lose much of its variety.
- Make as much as you can out of the reed entrances the measure before **J** and on the 8th bar of **K** (with the crescendo).
- The drums set up the slower tempo the measure before **M**—make sure everyone is confident about the new tempo and makes their entrances in perfect sync.

—Loren Schoenberg

To listen to original recordings, view interactive videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals, and obtain rehearsal guides for the *Essentially Ellington* 2017-18 repertoire please visit jazz.org/EE.

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

HARLEM CONGO

Harry White
Arranged by Charlie Dixon
Transcribed by Mark Lopeman

Fast ♩ = 295

The musical score is arranged for a conductor and a jazz ensemble. The conductor part is at the top, with a tempo marking of 'Fast ♩ = 295'. The ensemble includes:

- Reed 1: Alto Sax (marked *f*)
- Reed 2: Alto Sax (marked *f*)
- Reed 3: Tenor Sax (marked *f*)
- Reed 4: Tenor Sax (marked *f*)
- Trumpets 1, 2, 3: (marked *f*)
- Trombones 1, 2: (marked *f*)
- Guitar: (marked *f*)
- Piano: (marked *f*)
- Bass: (marked *f*)
- Drums: (marked *f*)

The score is in 4/4 time and features a variety of chords and melodic lines. A 'solo break' is indicated in the drum part towards the end of the page. The guitar part includes the following chord sequence: Eb, Gb°, Fm7, Bb7, Eb, Gb°, Fm7, Bb7, Eb, Eb7, Ab, Abm6, Eb, B7, Bb7, Eb.

Harlem Congo

A

The musical score for "Harlem Congo" is arranged for a large ensemble. It features the following parts and markings:

- Vocalists:** Alto and Tenor parts, each marked *mf*. The first Alto part includes a *soli* marking.
- Trumpets (Tpts.):** Three parts (1, 2, 3), each marked *mf*. The first two parts include a *plunger* marking.
- Trumpets (Tbn.):** Two parts (1, 2), each marked *mf*. Both parts include a *plunger* marking.
- Guitar (Gtr.):** Part with a rhythmic pattern and chord changes: Eb, Abm6, Eb, Abm6, Eb7, Ab7, B7, Bb7.
- Piano (Pno.):** Part with a rhythmic pattern.
- Bass (Bs.):** Part with a rhythmic pattern.
- Drums (Drs.):** Part with a rhythmic pattern, marked *mf*. A note indicates "time (bass in 2, drums in 4)".

Harlem Congo

Alto

Alto

Tenor

Tenor

Tpts. 1

2

3

Tbns. 1

2

Gtr.

Pno.

Bs.

Drs.

E \flat Abm6 E \flat Abm6 E \flat 7 Ab7 B7 B \flat 7 E \flat