

*Presents*

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

**DISCOMMOTION**

ARRANGED BY FRANK FOSTER

PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND ROB DUBOFF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-51217

MUSIC BY FRANK FOSTER

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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# **FRANK FOSTER SERIES**

## **DISCOMMOTION (1961)**

### **Background:**

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 specialized in 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’ 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’ “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 Foster, Jones, Neal Hefti, Quincy Jones and Sammy Nestico.



Saxophonist, composer and arranger Frank Foster (1928-2011) helped shape the sound of the New Testament edition of the Count Basie Orchestra, from 1953 to 1964. He wrote and arranged for played for the Basie band following his service in the Korean War. Foster earned his place in jazz history with tunes like *Shiny Stockings*, *Down for the Count*, *Blues Backstage*, *Back to the Apple*, *Discommotion*, and *Blues in Hoss' Flat*.

Frank Benjamin Foster III was born into Cincinnati's African-American middle class and began his musical studies on piano, later picking up the clarinet and the alto saxophone. Within a year, he was playing in a local dance band. Foster started arranging while still in high school, and attended Wilberforce University before moving to Detroit to pursue a career in music.

Foster played with and arranged for Benny Goodman, Elvin Jones, George Coleman, Joe Farrell, Duke Pearson, Johnny Richards, Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan and the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis big band. His career also includes stints with The Lloyd Price Orchestra, The Lionel Hampton Orchestra, and The Woody Herman Orchestra. Foster also led the Living Color and Loud Minority Big Bands and toured Europe as a member of Jimmy Smith's quintet in 1985. Foster succeeded Thad Jones as leader of the Basie band in 1986, where he remained until 1995.

After leaving Basie, Foster played in smaller groups, including those led by his wife's first cousin, the drummer Elvin Jones. The album "Well Water" features Foster and Jones leading the Loud Minority Big Band, with a decidedly modern mind-set. The album includes their take on *Simone*, Mr. Foster's best-known post-Basie composition.

Foster continued to write and arrange music, even after a stroke left him unable to play the saxophone in 2001. During a 60 year career, he received two Grammy Awards and was nominated for two others. He composed and orchestrated material for The Carnegie Hall Jazz Ensemble, The Detroit Civic Symphony Orchestra, The Ithaca College Jazz Ensemble, The Jazzmobile Corporation of New York City, The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, The Malaysia Symphony Orchestra, The Metropole Orchestra of Hilversum, Holland, and The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. He is the subject of the 2010 film, *Shiny Stockings*.

### **The Music:**

*Discommotion* was first recorded in 1960 by the Count Basie Orchestra for their album *Easin' It*. The band re-recorded the chart the following year for their live album *Basie at Birdland*. This is unquestionably one of Frank Foster's finest charts for the band, but be warned: it is quite the difficult blow, especially for your trumpet section. A strong set of brass players is needed to be able to pull this chart off with the energy and authority it requires.

### **Notes to the Conductor:**

Like much of Foster's writing during this time, the chart is largely based off of a 12-bar blues form, but with a twist. After the corkscrewing introductory chorus, the main melody is based largely around a series of dominant b9 chords in the saxophones, creating a slightly sour, unnerving quality. The trumpets and trombones play in unison at measure 13 before branching out into separate counter lines at measure 25.

The band yields the spotlight to its leader for two choruses of piano before putting the trumpet section on display for a stop-time soli section at measure 50. This almost bugle-like passage will require some work to get to maximum precision and cleanliness, as some of the rhythms can be quite tricky. Following this soli, the arrangement becomes a soloist spotlight, first with Budd Johnson's tenor saxophone for 3 choruses beginning at measure 74, then Benny Powell's trombone for 3 more beginning at measure 98.

From measure 128 out, the full band engages in one of Foster's most brilliantly orchestrated shout choruses. As usual, it begins at near nothing, cycling through some surprisingly modern chord alterations before slowly building in intensity through measure 147. The second trumpet takes over the ensemble lead at measure 159 to allow lead trumpeter Snooky Young to do some screaming, followed by an 8 bar drum solo before the full band comes together for the final chorus at measure 175. The corkscrewing introduction is alluded to for a moment once again at measure 183 when the bottom suddenly drops out for a Basie piano fill, one final triumphant band fanfare, and one last sudden drop off for the final chord, bringing this musical roller coaster ride to a close.

This arrangement is for big band. It is not a transcription - it has been prepared from Frank Foster's original score and parts.

**Doug DuBoff and Dylan Canterbury**

May 2018



# DISCOMMOTION

## SCORE

RECORDED BY THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA

MUSIC BY FRANK FOSTER

ARRANGED BY FRANK FOSTER

PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND ROB DUBOFF

BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 180

The score is arranged for a large jazz ensemble. It includes parts for Alto Sax 1 & 2, Tenor Sax 1 & 2, Baritone Sax, Trumpet 1-4, Trombone 1-4, Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drum Set. The music is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 180 beats per minute. The score is divided into six measures, with dynamic markings such as *ff*, *f*, and *p*. The piano part features complex chordal textures and arpeggiated figures. The drum set part includes a 'FILL' at the end of the sixth measure.

2 3 4 5 6

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A detailed musical score for the piece "Discommotion". The score is arranged for a jazz ensemble and spans measures 7 to 12. The instruments included are:

- Saxophones: Alto Sax 1 & 2 (A. Sax. 1, 2), Tenor Sax 1 & 2 (T. Sax. 1, 2), Baritone Sax (B. Sax.)
- Trumpets: Trumpet 1, 2, 3, 4 (Tpt. 1-4)
- Trombones: Trombone 1, 2, 3, 4 (Tbn. 1-4)
- Guitar (Gtr.)
- Piano (Pno.)
- Bass (Bs.)
- Drums (Dr.)

The score features complex melodic lines for the saxophones and trumpets, with intricate harmonic support from the trombones, guitar, and piano. The piano part includes dense chordal textures and arpeggiated figures. The bass and drums provide a solid rhythmic foundation. Dynamics such as *mf* and *p* are indicated throughout. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. Measure numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 are clearly marked at the bottom of the page.

13

A Sax. 1  
A Sax. 2  
T Sax. 1  
T Sax. 2  
B Sax.

Trpt. 1  
Trpt. 2  
Trpt. 3  
Trpt. 4  
Tbn. 1  
Tbn. 2  
Tbn. 3  
Tbn. 4

Gtr.  
Pno.  
Bs.  
Dr.

Chord changes: B7(9), Bb7(9), Eb7(9), Bb7(9), G7, F7(9), Bb7(9)

Drum patterns: (4), (8), (12)