

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

QUEER STREET

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

ARRANGED BY JIMMY MUNDY

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

FULL SCORE

JLP-7667

MUSIC BY JIMMY MUNDY AND COUNT BASIE

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

PO Box 1236

SARATOGA SPRINGS NY 12866 USA

COUNT BASIE SERIES

QUEER STREET (1945)

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 reins 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.



Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, Jimmy Mundy began developing his arranging skills in the 1920s while playing with local bands led by Erskine Tate, Tommy Miles, and Carroll Dickerson. In 1932 he wrote and sold a few arrangements to Claude Hopkins, and at about the same time joined Earl Hines' famous "Grand Terrace" ballroom band in Chicago. Hines hired him originally as a saxophonist, for whom he worked over the course of the next four years. During this period Mundy developed a reputation as a prolific arranger in the emerging "swing" style and began writing and selling arrangements to other bandleaders in order to supplement his income.

Late in 1935, Goodman and his band worked their way east to Chicago where they began their historic six-month booking in the Joseph Urban room of the Congress Hotel. After selling one of his arrangements to Goodman, Goodman hired Mundy on a full-time basis. Until 1938, Mundy became one of Goodman's principal staff arrangers, joining Spud Murphy and Fletcher Henderson. From the moment he was hired, it was Mundy upon whom Goodman relied to create up-tempo "flag-waving" musical numbers. Mundy's list of "killer-dillers" include the 1936 (revised) version of *Bugle Call Rag*, *Jam Session* (an original composition by Mundy), and the band's 1937 adaptation of *Ridin' High*. Mundy was adept at arranging standard popular tunes: *You Turned the Tables on Me* (1936) and *And the Angels Sing* (1939).

When Gene Krupa left the band in 1938, Mundy left shortly after as well to write for Krupa's new outfit, although he continued to contribute scores to Goodman on a free-lance basis. He briefly led his own band in 1939 and throughout the 1940s Mundy supplied a significant number of original compositions and arrangements to Count Basie (ca. 1940 to ca. 1947), Artie Shaw (1944–45), Dizzy Gillespie (1949), Harry James, Charie Spivak, Paul Whiteman and many others. He wrote the score to the 1955 Broadway musical *The Vamp* which starred Carol Channing. The 1957 musical *Livin' the Life* and the 2010 dance revue *Come Fly Away* also used some of his music. In 1959, he moved to Paris, where he was musical director for Barclay Records. He returned to the U.S. in the 1960s and continued an active career as a writer into the 1970s.

The Music:

Jimmy Mundy's *Queer Street* marks an interesting "tweener" entry into the Count Basie discography. Recorded in 1945, it finds the Basie band in a moment of transition between the looser head arrangement style of the 1930s and the more orchestrated direction it would move in within the next few years. Add in a pinch of bebop influence for good measure and you have a highly unique but tasty combination of musical ingredients. With regard to the title, the term "Queer Street" is an early 19th Century term that historically has been used to signify an imaginary street or place where people of lesser means, inferior social class, ill repute, or those in sudden shock now dwell, especially as a result of errors in judgment, sudden financial hardship, or daze due to temporary brain trauma. The term was often used in boxing circles (as early as 1825) to describe an imaginary place or state of mind that a boxer may be dispatched to as a result of being struck in the head by an opposing combatant. Our suspicion is that Mundy had this latter reference in mind when naming this arrangement, especially when taking into account the sudden and surprising harmonic movement at different points during the composition.

Notes to the Conductor:

A steadily pulsing bass line introduces the arrangement before a slightly off-key trumpet fanfare enters at measure 5. The arrangement features the unusual technique of the trumpets fanning their cup mutes with plungers. Eventually the trombones join in for a slight modification of the earlier bass line. Measure 17 sees an ominously ascending trumpet figure that eventually shepherds the entire band together. The trumpets perform an inverted fanfare to send the chart back to more familiar territory - a simple two choruses of Basie piano blues at measure 29. This is followed by a trumpet solo at measure 42 over a new 32-bar form that features some bebop-influenced chromatic harmony and simple saxophone accompaniment.

The trumpet solo is followed by what is essentially a lengthy send-off beginning at measure 72. The rhythmic motion comes largely from the trombones at first before the saxophones take the spotlight briefly at measure 88, setting up a key change four measures later with yet another new melodic motif. The brass play a simple descending cadence over a similarly descending harmonic structure, with a few quick tenor sax solo interjections to break things up. A classic Basie set-up riff at measure 106 launches the band into the concluding salvo, with a harmonic cadence that shifts downward in minor 3rds, first in increments of measures before speeding up to individual beats in the final two measures.

Doug DuBoff and Dylan Canterbury

- May 2019

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SCORE

BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 170

The score is for a jazz ensemble. The instruments listed on the left are: Alto Sax 1, Alto Sax 2, Tenor Sax 1, Tenor Sax 2, Baritone Sax, Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Trumpet 4, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Trombone 3, Trombone 4, Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drum Set. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked as 'BRIGHT SWING' with a quarter note equal to 170. The score is divided into four measures, numbered 2, 3, and 4 at the bottom. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The trumpet parts have a dynamic marking of *mf* and a performance instruction '(CUP MUTE AND PLUNGER)'. The drum set part has a dynamic marking of *mf* and a performance instruction '(HI-HAT)'. The guitar part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bass part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The saxophone parts are mostly silent in this section.

⑤

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.

(OPEN)
(OPEN)
(OPEN)
(OPEN)
mf
mf
mf
mf
(4)
(5)
(10)
FILL (12)

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

17

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.

mp cresc. ff

A C⁶ B⁷ B^bma⁷ A Gm⁹ C¹³

(6) FILL (10) (12)

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28