

*Presents*

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

**CHANT OF THE WEED**

RECORDED BY THE DON REDMAN ORCHESTRA

ARRANGED BY DON REDMAN

TRANSCRIBED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, EDITED BY ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-7717

MUSIC BY DON REDMAN

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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# DON REDMAN SERIES

## CHANT OF THE WEED (1931)

### **Background:**

The world of big band jazz would not be the same if it wasn't for the contributions of Don Redman. His arrangements would cement several of the cornerstones of the style as eventually codified by one of his greatest admirers, Duke Ellington. A native of West Virginia, Redman was a child prodigy. He was honking out notes on trumpet as early as age 3, and by the time he was a teenager he was proficient enough on all woodwind instruments that he was working professionally. Studies at Storer College and the Boston Conservatory followed, eventually leading to his moving to New York in 1923 to join the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra.

As Henderson's chief arranger, Redman was responsible for crafting some of the band's most memorable and innovative charts. In addition to being harmonically ahead of their time, they also incorporated revolutionary rhythmic and structural concepts. Rhythmically, Redman incorporated aspects of the burgeoning style of the band's star soloist, trumpeter Louis Armstrong, into his soli sections, infusing the band with an intense sense of swing and excitement. Structurally, he would often pit the sax and brass sections against one another in call-and-response, an idea that would become a hallmark of the great swing bands of the 1930s.

After leaving Henderson in 1927, Redman worked as the musical director for McKinney's Cotton Pickers before finally forming his own orchestra in 1931. The band experienced some surprise popular success, recording a Vitaphone short film for Warner Bros. in 1933 as well as providing the soundtrack for a *Betty Boop* cartoon the same year. Although he was forced to disband his group in 1940, Redman remained busy as an arranger for the bands of Count Basie, Jimmy Dorsey and Harry James, as well as serving as Pearl Bailey's musical director in the 1950s. He passed away in 1964, leaving behind an indelible legacy that continues to stand strong to this day.

### **The Music:**

It's hard to believe at times that Don Redman composed *Chant of the Weed* in 1931. It is significantly ahead of its time, both harmonically and rhythmically; it makes extensive use of the whole tone scale, and some of the unison saxophone figures could almost be described as proto-bebop. This publication has been based on a recording by the Redman Orchestra from 1931.

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

A plodding trombone and bass introduction sets up the dreamy melody at measure 5. The brass section provides muted backgrounds behind the slithering saxes during the more harmonically daring sections, while the parts where the saxes are left to themselves are much more conventional sounding. A brief diminished fanfare yields the spotlight to an alto sax solo (handled by Redman himself on the recording), with some simple background pads for accompaniment.

A four measure trombone/tenor sax chorus sets up a clarinet solo at measure 46. This solo essentially trades fours with the trumpet section, whose mini solis clearly invoke Louis Armstrong's revolutionary style. The final trumpet soli is cut slightly short at measure 76 to allow for a gradual dip in intensity, with a descending line in the saxes and one trombone setting up a four bar piano break at measure 80.



The shout chorus at measure 84 is truly a masterwork of musical craftsmanship. Redman's clever way of weaving the sax and brass sections around one another proved to be highly influential on every major big band arranger that followed him. Be wary that he wasn't afraid to give the sax section a workout, as some of the triplet passages are quite challenging.

It is highly recommended that you and your ensemble spend time checking out the original recording of this arrangement in order to properly interpret it. Some things to listen for are the clipped articulations of the brass, the heavy vibrato and slow smears of the saxes, and the heavy, somewhat chunky feel in the rhythm section. If you attempt to play this arrangement in a more modern way, many of the sections will not work.

**Dylan Canterbury**

*- January 2019*



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## SCORE

MEDIUM SWING ♩ = 140

The score is for a jazz ensemble in 4/4 time, medium swing tempo (♩ = 140). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The instruments and their parts are:

- WOODWIND 1: ALTO SAX:** Rests throughout.
- WOODWIND 2: ALTO SAX/CLARINET:** Rests throughout, with a "(ALTO SAX)" annotation above the staff.
- WOODWIND 3: ALTO SAX:** Rests throughout.
- WOODWIND 4: TENOR SAX:** Rests throughout.
- TRUMPET 1, 2, 3:** Rests throughout, each with a "(CUP MUTE)" annotation above the staff.
- TROMBONE 1, 2, 3:** Play a melodic line starting on the first measure, marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The line consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E-flat, D, C, B-flat. The line concludes with a measure marked "(TO CUP MUTE)".
- BANJO (OR GUITAR):** Rests throughout.
- PIANO:** Play a harmonic accompaniment, marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The right hand plays chords, and the left hand plays a bass line.
- BASS:** Play a harmonic accompaniment, marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The line consists of quarter notes: B-flat, A-flat, G, F, E-flat, D, C, B-flat.
- DRUM SET/BELLS:** Play a rhythmic pattern, marked with a forte *f* dynamic. The pattern includes a "FLOOR TOM" in the second measure.

2 3 4

⑤

Wm 1 (A. Sax) *mp* *mf* 1 2

Wm 2 (A. Sax) *mp* *mf*

Wm 3 (A. Sax) *mp* *mf*

Wm 4 (T. Sax) *mp* *mf*

Trpt. 1 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

Trpt. 2 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

Trpt. 3 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

Tbn. 1 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

Tbn. 2 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

Tbn. 3 *mp* (TO STRAIGHT MUTE 2ND X)

B.Jo. *mp* E<sup>9</sup>(#11) E<sup>b</sup>9(#11) D<sup>9</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>9 D<sup>b</sup>6 E<sup>o</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>13 D<sup>b</sup>6

Pno. *mp* E<sup>9</sup>(#11) E<sup>b</sup>9(#11) D<sup>9</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>9 D<sup>b</sup>6 E<sup>o</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>13 D<sup>b</sup>6

Bs. *mp* E<sup>9</sup>(#11) E<sup>b</sup>9(#11) D<sup>9</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>9 D<sup>b</sup>6 E<sup>o</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>13 D<sup>b</sup>6

Dr. (OPT. BRUSHES) *mp* (4) (8) (16)

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13