

# JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

## MESSAGE

FROM AFRO/AMERICAN SKETCHES

ARRANGED BY OLIVER NELSON

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

## FULL SCORE

JLP-7938

MUSIC BY OLIVER NELSON

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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SARATOGA SPRINGS NY 12866 USA

# OLIVER NELSON SERIES

## MESSAGE FROM AFRO/AMERICAN SKETCHES (1961)

### **Oliver Nelson Biography:**

Oliver Edward Nelson was born on June 4, 1932 in St. Louis, into a musical family, as is often the case with jazz greats. His brother was a saxophonist who played with Cootie Williams and his sister was a singing pianist as well. He began to learn piano as a child, moving on to saxophone a few years later, and eventually played in what were then called "territory bands" in the St. Louis area. Johnny Hodges was his idol and he worked hard at becoming proficient at the alto saxophone before joining Louis Jordan's big band as an altoist and arranger as the 1950s began. During the bulk of the decade he served in the Marines in the Far East and then returned to St. Louis to study music. It was during these years that he was exposed to many kinds of music, apparently being especially moved by the Tokyo Philharmonic, and his endlessly curious and fertile mind was stimulated to begin creating what would be some of the greatest music in jazz history.

The next few years were extremely productive, as Nelson spent a lot of time in New York City, working as the house arranger at the legendary Apollo Theater, playing with Erskine Hawkins, Wild Bill Davis, Louie Bellson, Quincy Jones, and briefly with Duke Ellington and Count Basie, and leading several small group sessions for Prestige, which featured greats such as Kenny Dorham, Eric Dolphy, Roy Haynes, and others. His growing mastery of writing and arranging led to what was to become his crowning achievement, 1961's *The Blues and the Abstract Truth*.

When one listens to this timeless, phenomenal album, the beauty of Stolen Moments, the first and most famous track, instantly captivates, and starts the listener on a journey that is rarely equaled in the canon of jazz. The style and harmonies used on this record became Nelson's trademarks, combining rare originality and developing brilliance. As amazing as the compositions and orchestrations are, one is also enthralled by the lineup that seemingly only Oliver Nelson could assemble: Eric Dolphy, Freddie Hubbard, Bill Evans, Paul Chambers, and Roy Haynes, with George Barrow on baritone. A true all-star lineup; incredible virtuosity and diversity of styles, and with everyone in their prime. Building a lineup like this truly speaks to Oliver Nelson's ambition and dedication to creating truly unique and original sounds. Jazz Lines Publications is extraordinarily proud to publish this record's arrangements in their entirety, engraved from the original arrangements hand-written by Oliver Nelson.

Later in 1961 he recorded Afro-American Sketches, his first full recording of original big band material, exploring racial and political themes which would always mean a great deal to him. In 1967 he recorded the ambitious musical tribute to John F. Kennedy: *The Kennedy Dream*, a big band recording devoted to J.F.K. and using excerpts of his speeches.

During the 1960s he continued to create ambitious soundscapes as a leader as well as for others in the jazz world, as his talents had become incredibly in demand. He arranged for 'Cannonball' Adderley, Sonny Rollins, Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis, Johnny Hodges, Buddy Rich, Stanley Turrentine, Irene Reid, Gene Ammons, and others. Jazz Lines Publications has published some of his works that were done for Wes Montgomery as well as six of the songs he arranged for Thelonious Monk's big band album of 1968, which remain of singular importance as big band versions of some of Monk's most beloved compositions. Jazz Lines Publications also plans to publish the arrangements of from *Peter and the Wolf* as recorded by Jimmy Smith.

Nelson moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1960s, aspiring to break into the lucrative world of movie and TV scoring. He continued to perform and write in both the small group and big band formats, and also worked with such mainstream stars as Nancy Wilson, James Brown, the Temptations, and Diana Ross. His film and television work became more and more time-consuming, as his creativity, speed, and capacity for work were legendary. He is perhaps best-known in this idiom for his creation of the hugely well-known theme from the *Six Million Dollar Man*, but he worked on Columbo, Ironside, and many other projects as well, and also arranged Gato Barbieri's music for the film *Last Tango in Paris*.



Sadly, the pace and volume of his work during this period most likely contributed to the decline of his health, and in one of jazz's greatest tragedies, he passed away suddenly in late October 1975 at the very young age of 43. While the press reports claimed it was a heart attack, Kenny Berger cites Oliver Nelson, Jr. as claiming it was actually pancreatitis. He also left a great educational legacy, which is embodied by his landmark book *Patterns for Improvisation*. It is an exhaustive collection of improvisational jazz patterns in various meters and feels with his comments and suggestions, and it is a very popular book because it helps spell out some of the basic building blocks of the 'jazz language.'

Oliver Nelson was a musician whose work was beloved by jazz fans and also by his peers and the general public. So many of the era's greatest musicians clamored for his arranging skills. Hollywood and television treasured his amazing compositional and arranging abilities on multiple levels - not only could he create memorable scores and soundtracks, but he could do it in the grueling time frame required by that genre. His compositions were always unique, and often his style is instantly recognizable. He was grounded in the blues, but heavily influenced by classical music as well. He used whatever instruments and doubles that were necessary to bring to life the complex orchestrations he heard in his head; it has been said that his writing was very demanding on musicians, using various clarinets and flutes, oboe, English horn-whatever it took to carry out his complex visions.

He composed for small ensemble and big band; he wrote symphonic works and authored a seminal jazz text; he wrote for film and television and worked with some of the biggest stars in the American musical pantheon. He did it all, and he did it all before he was even 44 years old. This was a true renaissance man of music, and one the world sadly misses, but one who left an incredibly rich, broad, and diverse catalog behind, which contains something for everyone. His music is majestic, beautiful, and powerful; it moves, enlightens, and educates; and perhaps most telling of all, it challenges not only the listener and the student, but also some of the greatest musicians in the world as well. Oliver Nelson is a giant figure in American music, and Jazz Lines Publications is proud to have the honor of publishing some of his most important creations.

### **The Music:**

Oliver Nelson's *Afro/American Sketches*, composed and recorded in 1961, began as an idea courtesy of Prestige Records' director of A&R, Esmond Emmonds. After spending time studying the musical traditions of nearly 200 tribes, Nelson composed the entirety of the suite in a little less than two weeks. Its seven movements follow a story that begins on the African continent, suffers the evils of slavery, experiences the temporary joy of rediscovered freedom, expresses the pain of societal oppression, and looks with optimism toward a future that embraces equal rights for all people.

This would be the first big band album of Nelson's career, and can arguably be considered his strongest. It features an impressive lineup of soloists such as flutist Jerry Dodgion, trumpeter Joe Newman, pianist Patti Bown, drummer Ed Shaughnessy, and conguero Ray Barretto, and the rest of the ensemble is made up of the finest studio musicians in New York at the time. *Afro/American Sketches* is a masterwork that has well withstood the test of time, as its deep and still-relevant themes, unforgettable melodies, and dense harmonies continue to sound fresh and innovative to this day.

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

The centrality of Shaughnessy's drums and Barretto's congas to this piece cannot be understated. Nelson describes in the album's liner notes that the steady drumming pulse is meant to announce the arrival of "men in boats coming up river in great number," and should create a general sense of unease. The gradual entrances of the brass instruments at measure 9 serve as an intense underpinning for a classically tricky Nelson melody in the saxophones. A brief moment of jubilation occurs at measure 25 before the more ominous tone returns a few measures later.

This main melody statement comprises the majority of this movement, played twice and sandwiching two solo sections. The first of these sections, featuring Dodgion's flute, becomes noticeably open-ended harmonically. The second is a showcase for Shaughnessy and Barretto, with bassist Art Davis employing some advanced techniques to contribute to the atmosphere. The second melody statement ends with the horns gradually fading out to leave the percussion to themselves once more, setting the tone of things to come.

This publication was based on Oliver Nelson's pencil score and the original set of parts used during the 1961 recording session - this is not a transcription.

### **Acknowledgements:**

Jazz Lines Publications is proud to continue its relationship with Oliver Nelson, Jr. in bringing the work of his father to print for performance and study.

**Dylan Canterbury and Doug DuBoff**

- January 2023

1. ARR. A ♩ = 190 message PAGE 1

Alto

tenor

Horns

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2nd  
TRUMPET

OLIVER NELSON

MESSAGE



JACKIE FIELDS  
F-1491  
LOCAL 802  
REGISTERED 1961 No. ....

To the left is the original trumpet 2 part from *Message* that was used for the 1961 recording session.



# MESSAGE

FROM AFRO/AMERICAN SKETCHES

MUSIC BY OLIVER NELSON

ARRANGED BY OLIVER NELSON

## SCORE

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

FAST SWING ♩ = 220

WOODWIND 1: ALTO SAX

WOODWIND 2: ALTO SAX/FLUTE (ALTO SAX)

WOODWIND 3: TENOR SAX

TRUMPET 1

TRUMPET 2

TRUMPET 3

TRUMPET 4

HORN IN F 1

HORN IN F 2

HORN IN F 3

HORN IN F 4

TROMBONE 1

TROMBONE 2

TROMBONE 3

TUBA

CELLI (2)

BASS

DRUM SET

CONGA DRUMS

mf

mf

mf

(4)

(8)

(4)

(8)

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9 <sup>LEAD</sup>

TPt. 3 *mf*

TPt. 4 *mf*

Hn. 1 *mf*

Hn. 2 *mf*

Hn. 3 *mf*

Hn. 4 *mf*

Tbn. 1 *mf*

Tbn. 2 *mf*

Tbn. 3 *mf*

Bs. *mf*

D. S. (4) (8)

C. Dr. (4) (8)

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16



17

Ww. 1 (Fl. Sax.) *mf*

Ww. 2 (Fl. Sax.) *mf*

Ww. 3 (Cl. Sax.) *mf*

Trpt. 1

Trpt. 2

Trpt. 3

Trpt. 4

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

Hn. 3

Hn. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

Tuba

Vc. *mf* unis. div.

Bs.

D. S.

C. De.