

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

**SLOW DANCE**

COMPOSED AND ARRANGED BY ALEC WILDER

PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF AND ROB DUBOFF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-7301

MUSIC BY ALEC WILDER

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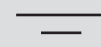
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# ALEC WILDER CHAMBER SERIES

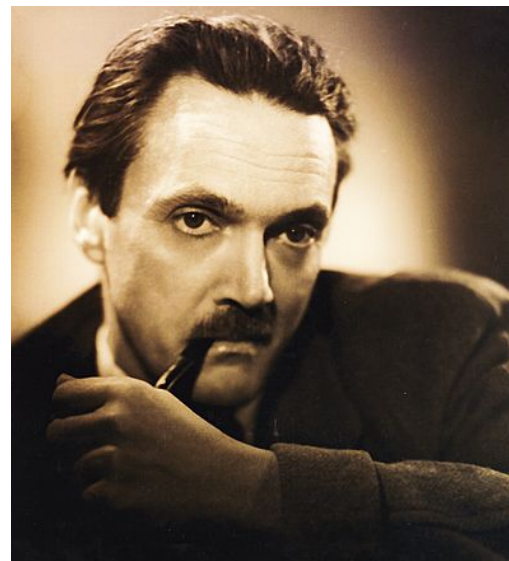


## SLOW DANCE (1945)

### **Background:**

It is with particular pride that we present edited and corrected publications of the library of octets and chamber pieces composed by Alec Wilder, written between 1938 and 1947. These were recorded for the Brunswick, Columbia, and Vox labels. A compilation of these octets is available on compact disc from the Hep label.

During the late 1930s several composers were intrigued with short-form composing using jazz rhythms and harmonies. Alec Templeton, Reginald Foresythe, and Raymond Scott had different approaches to such materials, Scott's being the most eccentric and successful partly because his pieces had unusual names such as *War Dance for Wooden Indians*. The works of all three were ultimately considered novelties and were modified and published as stock arrangements for dance bands. They were to be found in many big band libraries throughout this period.



During this time, Wilder was writing songs and arrangements for dance bands when he had a meeting with Joe Higgins, an executive with Brunswick Records. During this meeting the executive asked Wilder if he wrote instrumental music. Wilder said that he did, and Higgins suggested that he compose a series of short pieces for small ensemble. Due to the success of the Scott *Quintette* for Brunswick, Higgins envisioned a new series that would also become popular and sell records. Wilder suggested that the ensemble be made up of woodwinds (so he could include such fellow Eastman School of Music alumni as Mitch Miller and Jimmy Carroll) with bass and drums. He was listening to the harpsichord quite a bit during this time – his friend John Barrows was composing pieces for the instrument, and Miller was performing concerts with harpsichordist Yella Pessl - so Wilder added that instrument as well. Alec wrote a test piece for the ensemble, and Brunswick executive and Wilder friend Morty Palitz gave the go-ahead for a recording session to be held in December 1938. James T. Maher, a close friend of Wilder's, confirms that Wilder knew the Scott and Foresythe recordings and was influenced not just by the music but also by the titles. Wilder's titles for these octets are sometimes autobiographical, sometimes elusive.

Very early on, Wilder realized that swing rhythms could easily be played on the clarinet and flute, but not on the double-reeds (today many saxophone players double on oboe and bassoon, so this is no longer an issue). He successfully exploits this 'swing eighth vs. straight eighth' issue in his music, part of the reason why these pieces are even more popular today. He was also well trained in classical music theory and history and successfully used his skills in the creation of these pieces, perhaps most notably in *Sea Fugue, Mama* (Cat # JLP-7103), a swinging classical fugue.

The recordings got mixed reviews, but they obviously sold well enough so that additional recording sessions were held for more of them throughout 1939 and 1940. The attention Wilder received for these recordings led to work opportunities for the singer Mildred Bailey, for whom he would write songs and arrangements.



The Wilder octets and chamber pieces have had an interesting publishing history. Some were initially published by *Regent Music* (Harry Goodman, Benny's Goodman's brother, owned the company) but were slightly simplified. In the 1950s, publishing executive Howard Richmond took over Wilder's entire catalog so that, in his words to me, "all of his music would be in one place and he would have a home." For a time, Wilder's concert music was distributed by *Margun Music* and made available in the form of photocopies of the original hand-written scores and parts; these materials had discrepancies between the sources. Clearly a publishing project needed to be planned to prepare corrected scores and parts. These pieces occupy an important place in American music history and deserve to be made available in pristine form for performance and study. Judy Bell, Creative Director of *The Richmond Organization*, gave Jazz Lines Publications permission and licenses to make this happen.

### **The Music:**

Among Alec Wilder's many professional associates was Frank Sinatra, who recorded several Wilder songs throughout his career. Sinatra was under contract with Columbia during the recording ban of 1942-44. This strike, brought on by the musicians' union dissatisfaction with royalty payments, forbade union musicians from recording for record labels. During this time Wilder arranged several songs with choral accompaniment for Sinatra thus cementing their friendship. In 1944 Sinatra was appearing at the Paramount Theatre in New York. Due to his celebrity status and related security concerns, Sinatra was forced to stay in his dressing room during the long hours when he did not appear on stage. Wilder sent him a recording of one of his works taken off the radio (presumably *Slow Dance*), a short piece with winds, harpsichord and strings. Sinatra was quite taken with the music and asked Wilder if he had anything else that was similar. At the time, Wilder was writing a series of solo woodwind with strings pieces, and Sinatra said that he wanted to conduct them.

Sinatra never learned how to read music, but he had excellent musical instincts. Goddard Lieberson, head of Columbia records, agreed to allow Sinatra to conduct a small orchestra to record six Wilder compositions, realizing that the Sinatra name would certainly translate into sales and promotion for this series. In 1945, Sinatra conducted all six pieces (Mitch Miller and Wilder himself rehearsed them), and they were issued as a three 12" 78 set. They were subsequently reissued three times in the United States, twice on LP and once on CD.

Sinatra was apprehensive during his first time on the podium, and solicited the musicians' help to record the music. In later years, Sinatra became an assured conductor, fully in command of ensembles and able to explain what he wanted clearly. While with Capitol Records, he conducted another album of concert music called *Tone Poems of Color*, as well as albums with Peggy Lee and Dean Martin.

Even though these Wilder compositions have been published and performed many times over the years, they have had errors, omissions, and inconsistencies. These new publications have been edited carefully and many discrepancies have finally been resolved. We wish to thank Dr. James Adams for his several suggestions and corrections for *Air for English Horn and Orchestra*.

### **Acknowledgments:**

We would like to thank Judy Bell for her enthusiasm and support of this project. We are pleased to be able to play a part in the furtherance of Alec Wilder's legacy. This series is dedicated to James T. Maher, my late dear friend and colleague, who first planted the idea in my head that Wilder's music needed tender loving care. Thank you, James.

**Jeffrey Sultanof**

- September 2014

# SLOW DANCE

CONDUCTED BY FRANK SINATRA

MUSIC BY ALEC WILDER

ARRANGED BY ALEC WILDER

PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF AND ROB DUBOFF

## SCORE

Andante  $\text{♩} = 60$

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Woodwind 1:  
Clarinet in B $\flat$ /Flute

Woodwind 2:  
Oboe/English Horn

Woodwind 3:  
Clarinet in B $\flat$

Woodwind 4:  
Bass Clarinet

Woodwind 5:  
Bassoon

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Harpisichord

Rhythm Bass

Drum Set

Percussion

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9

WW I (Ob.)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Hpschd

Perc.

9 10 11 12 13

SWING 

WW 1 (B $\flat$  Cl.)

WW 1 (Ob.) *To English Horn*

WW 3 (B $\flat$  Cl.) *lead*

WW 4 (Bs. Cl.) *solo*

WW 5 (Bsn.)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc. *port.*

D.B. *port.*

Hpschd

Rhy. Bs. *pizz.*

D.S. *Brushes*

Perc. (6) (7)

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The woodwind section includes five parts: WW 1 (B $\flat$  Cl.), WW 1 (Ob.) which can also play English Horn, WW 3 (B $\flat$  Cl.), WW 4 (Bs. Cl.) with a solo section, and WW 5 (Bsn.). The string section consists of Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (D.B.). The keyboard section includes Harpsichord (Hpschd). The rhythm section features Rhythm Bass (Rhy. Bs.) with pizzicato markings, Double Bass (D.S.) with brush markings, and Percussion (Perc.) with specific rhythmic patterns labeled (6) and (7). Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (ff), with accents and crescendos used throughout. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).