

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER LIBRARY — BLUE ENGINE RECORDS

PASSING GAME (FOR BILL HOUGLAND)

FROM ROCK CHALK SUITE (2020)

Kenny Rampton
Full Score

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JAZZ  LINCOLN CENTER

PASSING GAME • INSTRUMENTATION

Reed 1 – Alto Sax

Reed 2 – Alto Sax

Reed 3 – Tenor Sax

Reed 4 – Tenor Sax

Reed 5 – Baritone Sax

Trumpet 1

Trumpet 2

Trumpet 3

Trumpet 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Piano

Bass

Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Kenny Rampton

Recorded • April 12–13, 2019 at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Frederick P. Rose Hall

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Currently available as CD, digital download

Personnel • Sherman Irby, Ted Nash (alto sax), Victor Goines, Camille Thurman (tenor sax), Paul Nedzela (baritone sax), Ryan Kisor, Kenny Rampton, Marcus Printup, Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Vincent Gardner, Chris Crenshaw, Elliot Mason (trombone), Dan Nimmer (piano), Carlos Henriquez (bass), Charles Gould (drums)

Soloists • Kenny Rampton (trumpet), Victor Goines (tenor sax), Ted Nash (alto sax), Elliot Mason (trombone), Charles Gould (drums)

“Passing Game (for Bill Houglund)” was commissioned by the Lied Center of Kansas as a part of the Rock Chalk Suite with the generous support of Brad & Linda Sanders and first performed by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis at the Lied Center of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas on October 11, 2018.

ROCK CHALK SUITE NOTES

As we prepared to celebrate the Lied Center’s 25th Anniversary throughout the 2018–2019 season, our goal was to create an indelible sense of community. It was decided that an anchor of this milestone season would be the debut of a new work. To avoid commissioning a piece that would be mostly forgotten after its premiere, we found inspiration in KU basketball. For the vast network of Kansas Jayhawks worldwide, there is a singular reverence for the sport. ESPN analyst Jay Bilas observed, “If you love basketball; if you love and respect the history of the game, every road leads back to Lawrence, Kansas.”

As a member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center family since 2000, I knew many members of the JLCO loved hoops, was aware of David Stern’s service on the board, and had heard Wynton philosophize about the parallels between jazz and basketball. So, in 2015, we pitched the idea of commissioning each member of the JLCO to compose a movement in a collective suite honoring 15 KU basketball luminaries. Wynton and JALC’s Concerts & Touring team agreed to pursue what would eventually become *Rock Chalk Suite*.

Our work within the KU community then began in earnest. Through extremely heated discussions, an advisory committee established a list of over 60 KU basketball luminaries before paring it down to 15. We then worked to engage individual sponsors for each of the 15 movements. The net proceeds of the commission would go towards our Expanding Performing Arts Access, an endowed fund that enables all 10,000 Lawrence Public School students to annually attend an age-specific performance for free. There was no precedent for a project of this nature, and the combination of the JLCO and Kansas basketball proved to be compelling to our community. We promised each sponsor one thing: the JLCO would approach this project with the deepest sense of integrity.

The JLCO’s residency at the Lied Center took place October 9–11 in 2018 and included two Jazz for Young People “Who is Thelonious Monk?” programs for all 3000 middle-schoolers in the Lawrence district the morning before the premiere. Later that day, members of the JLCO visited historic Phog Allen Fieldhouse and were greeted by KU’s head coach (and Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame member) Bill Self and his staff. Even KU alum and NBA champion Wayne Simien greeted the musicians and was very curious and collegial. Coach Self allowed the orchestra members to shoot some baskets on the historic court, and after the shoot-around the musicians examined Dr. James Naismith’s typed “13 Original Rules of Basket Ball.” It was a particularly powerful moment for Chris Crenshaw, who composed “The Y’s Guy” for Dr. Naismith and used a 13-bar form as part of his composition.

That evening, the JLCO met with commission sponsors, honorees, and their families. Over and over again, commission sponsors and associates of the honorees would remark how impressed they were with the intense research each JLCO member conducted on their respective KU legend. The seriousness of intent was felt by all, and the JLCO was now officially part of our community, even before anyone beyond the band had heard one note of the new work. These very personal, communal interactions perfectly set the stage for the world premiere of *Rock Chalk Suite* the next night.

The October 11 performance kicked off with the Voice of the Jayhawks, Brian Hanni, introducing each member of the JLCO as if he were announcing the starting lineup before a game at Allen Fieldhouse. The feeling in the house was electric. As each composer introduced their movement, the audience co-signed as key statistics and seminal moments in Kansas basketball history were mentioned. The diversity and sophistication of the music itself left the audience mesmerized. Victor Goines surprised everyone at the conclusion of the performance by including KU’s fight song in his composition “The Shot,” which honors Mario Chalmers. It proved to be the perfect celebratory ending to the evening.

Directly following the concert, we agreed that the *Rock Chalk Suite* had to be properly recorded. There was no question that this artistic content would have a profound and lasting impact on our community. Jazz at Lincoln Center was now firmly etched into the mythology of this town and the University of Kansas. Over the next few months, our two institutions worked diligently to carve out some time in the JLCO’s hectic schedule for recording the Rock Chalk Suite in the House of Swing, Frederick P. Rose Hall.

In the meantime, Wynton addressed KU’s men’s basketball team during their visit to New York for the NIT Season Tip-Off. On Thanksgiving morning, November 22, 2018, Wynton delivered a fiery talk elaborating upon the concepts of energy and breathing; the value of listening; the art of conscious repetition; the power of the collective; the supremacy of the invisible; respecting and embracing your opposition; and, finally, the transcendence of love. It was fantastic and profound. The next night, KU beat #5 ranked Tennessee in overtime to win the tournament.

Finally, in April of 2019, we recorded *Rock Chalk Suite*. Wynton graciously invited the supporters of the commission to attend the historic sessions in NYC. Jazz at Lincoln Center’s amazing hospitality made the entire Kansas contingent feel like we were attending a family reunion.

Wynton set the tone at the top of the first rehearsal when he welcomed everyone to the House of Swing. He also encouraged us to attend shows at Dizzy’s Club, which hosted groups led by Elliot Mason and Sherman Irby on consecutive nights. KU luminary and 10-year NBA veteran Walt Wesley and his wife Denise were in town and were particularly moved by the fact that Mason fought through illness to ensure his movement—“Walt’s Waltz”—was recorded well.

At Dizzy’s, Irby performed a one-of-a-kind arrangement of “Sweet Georgia Brown” that brought all-time great Lynette Woodard and her family to tears. The first female ever to be invited to join the Harlem Globetrotters, Woodard had heard this tune a million times—but never quite like this.

On Saturday, April 13, the last day of the recording session, Woodard and Wesley spoke on behalf of the Kansas contingent and expressed their deepest gratitude for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. There is no question that this project, built upon the foundation of great jazz music, has created a stronger sense of community in Kansas, in NYC, and for all of Jayhawk nation. We are truly grateful to Wynton and the entire Jazz at Lincoln Center family for their remarkable collaboration. Rock Chalk!

—*Rock Chalk Suite* liner notes by Derek Kwan,
Executive Director, Lied Center of Kansas

GENERAL PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

1. Rhythm Section and Balance • The rhythm section determines the style, groove, and feel of each piece. It is the section that can comfortably play alone, and regularly does. In a typical 3-piece rhythm section, there is one string instrument (bass), and two percussion instruments (piano and drums); in a 4-piece section (with the addition of guitar), there are two string and two percussion instruments. In order for the rhythm section to achieve a swinging balance, it is crucial that the string instruments are clearly audible. The voices of these instruments must be respected by the two percussionists.

The drummer acts as the ‘President’ of the group, with the quick power to make dramatic and definitive changes to every aspect of the music.

The bass is the ‘Judiciary,’ holding the responsibility of constraining the volume and power of the drums. Their second responsibility is to play the mobile, lower melody that defines the integrity of the rhythm/harmony progression.

The piano is the ‘Congress,’ and has the ability to function as drummer, bassist, soloist, and accompanist; weaving in, out, and in between all of these roles to represent the widest range of voices and possibilities.

In a 4-piece section, the guitar acts as the ‘conscience’ or integrity of the rhythm and volume of the entire ensemble. They prevent the drummer and bassist from rushing or dragging and forces them to play softer and listen more closely.

The members of the rhythm section should know exactly what the names of grooves mean: *boogaloo*, *12/8 shuffle*, *bossa nova*, *2/3 clave*, etc. Every groove has a detailed function and definition. The top and bottom parts of the groove (drums and bass) must work together; at the same time, the interlocking rhythms of the piano and guitar must cooperate, honoring the context of the groove while also not interfering with each other.

When improvising with the rest of the band, the rhythm section should create a clear, basic, and danceable groove. They should also feel a sense of accomplishment from swinging with consistency and emotion.

When accompanying, the rhythm section should not feel compelled to have a constant stream of dialogue with the band; just like a friendly conversation, the dynamic should feel natural, with give and take. The goal is not to create constant “chatter.” Be proud of accompanying and swinging—they remain essential elements to any successful performance.

Members of the rhythm section must remain conscious of constraining power. For balance to be maintained, one must give up their desire to play louder than the other members of the section. As in any relationship, it is the constraint of power that creates the equilibrium within the section.

On the bandstand, each musician should be aware of balance at all times. This requires constant adjustment. The most important relationship is the drums and bass. If they are out of balance, the band does not sound or feel good. Do not let the PA system become your default ‘balance’ position.

Like a good democracy, the big band functions best when adhering to a system of checks and balances. Ultimately, the band should balance to the dynamic of the bass (as the softest acoustic instrument). Each section in the big band should both follow and play under their respective lead player.

2. Improvisation • A solo is an opportunity to express your personality and to exert tremendous influence on the success of a performance.

Responsibilities of the soloist:

1. Know the melody.
2. Understand the rhythm in relation to the groove.
3. Understand the harmonic progression.
4. Solo with emotional commitment and try to develop thematic material or musical ideas that relate to some aspect of the song.
5. Understand the function of background or accompanying parts.
6. Create your solo inside, outside, and alongside the arranged parts.
7. Create an ending for your solo that either leads into the next written part, hands off something good for the next soloist to play, or finishes with the right mood.
8. Do your absolute thing!

3. Follow the Lead • Within each section, know who has the lead (it isn’t always in the “first” part) and always play under that part. Do not assume that the lead player can tell if you are too loud; constantly re-assess within your section, in relation to other sections, and across sections if you are under the lead. Follow their phrasing, style, articulations, dynamics, and breathing. Lead players: you have a greater responsibility than others—be definitive in your concept, but not dogmatic. You must know the arrangement, including how your part fits into the overall dramatic and thematic objectives of the piece. You have to make musical decisions that help your colleagues follow you.

4. Personalize Your Parts • When referring to the performance of parts, clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton once said, “This is Duke Ellington’s music; it’s not written in stone. Duke always told us, ‘Personalize your parts.’” When done tastefully, all of the various vocal expressions that we can muster (i.e. vibrato, bends, swoops, shakes, moans, and vocal effects) will create a warmer and more human performance. Your parts should be played with the feeling and vocal expression of an improvised solo. These elements allow an audience to feel your humanity, and also welcomes them into nuances of your feeling. (You can do this while also following the lead).

5. Internalize the Form • Form is your defense against chaos. Every member of the ensemble has a responsibility to understand the architecture of each piece they play. Ask yourself, *Is it a blues? AABA form? An extended form? Where is the coda?* Be aware of entrances, repeats, and endings in relation to the form of the piece. *Is this an interlude or a shout chorus?* Sections often hand off phrases to other sections with an almost psychic level of awareness and nuance. At the very first rehearsal, begin figuring out how the piece is structured to achieve the composer’s goals. Focus on understanding the total architecture and the function of your individual part within the context of the piece. Remember, everyone in the ensemble has the responsibility of understanding and fulfilling both the most complex and most basic requirements of the arrangement.

6. Have Integrity When Rehearsing • *Your time is too valuable to waste.* Always be professional. Arrive on time and pay attention to everything—whether it’s a general concept or the most minute details. Take yourself and the music seriously at all times, and you’ll be shocked to see how much better you get just by changing your attitude in rehearsal. Be conscientious about playing better each day, and over time the improvement will be exponential.

7. Listen to Jazz • Go to every conceivable performance of jazz possible—whether you like it or not—so that you can develop both a feeling and understanding of the music. There is an almost infinite amount of diverse and high-quality recordings of jazz at your disposal, which create a sonic history of the music that can inform, enlighten, and inspire you. The more music you know, the more you will enjoy.

To listen to the recording from Blue Engine Records, please visit jazz.org/rockchalk.

