

Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

# Flirtibird

By Duke Ellington

As performed by the Duke Ellington Orchestra  
Transcribed and Edited by David Berger for Jazz at Lincoln Center

## Full Score

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's 2013-14  
Nineteenth Annual *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

Jazz at Lincoln Center and Alfred Publishing gratefully acknowledge the cooperation  
and support provided in the publication of this year's *Essentially Ellington* music series:

Founding leadership support for *Essentially Ellington* is provided by The Jack and Susan Rudin Educational and Scholarship Fund.  
Major support is provided by Alfred and Gail Engelberg, Ella Fitzgerald Foundation, Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation,  
Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, and the VossHall Family.

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## NOTES ON PLAYING ELLINGTON

At least 95% of modern-day large ensemble jazz playing comes out of three traditions: Count Basie's band, Duke Ellington's band, and the orchestration of small groups. Those young players interested in jazz will be drawn to small groups for the opportunity to improvise and for practical reasons (it is much easier to organize 4 or 5 people than it is 15). Schools have taken over the task (formerly performed by dance bands) of training musicians to be ensemble players. Due to the Basie Band's popularity and its simplicity of style and emphasis on blues and swing, the better educators have almost exclusively adopted this tradition for teaching jazz ensemble playing. As wonderful as Count Basie's style is, it doesn't address many of the important styles developed under the great musical umbrella we call jazz. Duke Ellington's comprehensive and eclectic approach to music offers an alternative.

The stylistic richness of Ellington's music presents a great challenge to educators and performers alike. In Basie's music, the conventions are very nearly consistent. In Ellington's music there are many more exceptions to the rules. This calls for greater knowledge of the language of jazz. Clark Terry, who left Count Basie's band to join Duke Ellington, said, "Count Basie was college, but Duke Ellington was graduate school." Knowledge of Ellington's music prepares you to play any big band music.

The following is a list of performance conventions for the great majority of Ellington's music. Any deviations or additions will be spelled out in the individual performance notes which follow.

1. Listen carefully many times to the Ellington recording of these pieces. There are many subtleties that will elude even the most sophisticated listener at first. Although it was never Ellington's wish to have his recordings imitated, knowledge of these definitive versions will lead musicians to make more educated choices when creating new performances. Ellington's music, though written for specific individuals, is designed to inspire all musicians to express themselves. In addition, you will hear slight note differences in the recording and the transcriptions. This is intentional, as there are mistakes and alterations from the original intent of the music in the recording. You should have your players play what's in the score.
2. General use of swing phrasing. The triplet feel prevails except for ballads or where notations such as even eighths or Latin appear. In these cases, eighth notes are given equal value.
3. There is a chain of command in ensemble playing. The lead players in each section determine the phrasing and volume for their own section, and their section-mates must conform to the lead. When the saxes and / or trombones play with the trumpets, the lead trumpet is the boss. The lead alto and trombone must listen to the first trumpet and follow him. In turn, the other saxes and trombones must follow their lead players. When the clarinet leads the brass section, the brass should not overblow him. That means that the first trumpet is actually playing "second." If this is done effectively, there will be very little balancing work left for the conductor.
4. In Ellington's music, each player should express the individuality of his own line. He must find a musical balance of supporting and following the section leader and bringing out the character of the underpart. Each

player should be encouraged to express his or her personality through the music. In this music, the underparts are played at the same volume and with the same conviction as the lead.

5. Blues inflection should permeate all parts at all times, not just when these opportunities occur in the lead.
6. Vibrato is used quite a bit to warm up the sound. Saxes (who most frequently represent the sensual side of things) usually employ vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. The vibrato can be either heavy or light depending on the context. Occasionally saxes use a light vibrato on unisons. Trumpets (who very often are used for heat and power) use a little vibrato on harmonized passages and no vibrato on unisons. Trombones (who are usually noble) do not use slide vibrato. A little lip vibrato is good on harmonized passages at times. Try to match the speed of vibrato. In general unisons are played with no vibrato.
7. Crescendo as you ascend and diminuendo as you descend. The upper notes of phrases receive a natural accent and the lower notes are ghosted. Alto and tenor saxophones need to use sub-tone in the lower part of their range in order to blend properly with the rest of the section. This music was originally written with no dynamics. It pretty much follows the natural tendencies of the instruments; play loud in the loud part of the instrument and soft in the soft part of the instrument. For instance, a high C for a trumpet will be loud and a low C will be soft.
8. Quarter notes are generally played short unless otherwise notated. Long marks above or below a pitch indicate full value: not just long, but full value. Eighth notes are played full value except when followed by a rest or otherwise notated. All notes longer than a quarter note are played full value, which means if it is followed by a rest, release the note where the rest appears. For example, a half note occurring on beat one of a measure would be released on beat three.
9. Unless they are part of a legato background figure, long notes should be played somewhat *fp* (forte-piano); accent then diminish the volume. This is important so that the moving parts can be heard over the sustained notes. Don't just hold out the long notes, but give them life and personality: that is, vibrato, inflection, crescendo, or diminuendo. There is a great deal of inflection in this music, and much of this is highly interpretive. Straight or curved lines imply non-pitched glisses, and wavy lines mean scalar (chromatic or diatonic) glisses. In general, all rhythmic figures need to be accented. Accents give the music life and swing. This is very important.
10. Ellington's music is about individuality: one person per part – do not double up because you have extra players or need more strength. More than one on a part makes it sound more like a concert band and less like a jazz band.
11. This is acoustic music. Keep amplification to an absolute minimum; in the best halls, almost no amplification should be necessary. Everyone needs to develop a big sound. It is the conductor's job to balance the band. When a guitar is used, it should be a hollow-body, unamplified rhythm guitar. Simple three-note voicings should be used throughout. An acoustic string bass is a must. In mediocre or poorly designed halls, the bass and piano may need a bit of a boost. I recommend miking them and putting them through the

house sound system. This should provide a much better tone than an amplifier. Keep in mind that the rhythm section's primary function is to accompany. The bass should not be as loud as a trumpet. That is unnatural and leads to over-amplification, bad tone, and limited dynamics. Stay away from monitors. They provide a false sense of balance.

12. Solos and rhythm section parts without chord changes should be played as is or with a little embellishment. Solos and rhythm section parts with chord changes should be improvised. However, written passages should be learned because they are an important part of our jazz heritage and help the player understand the function of his particular solo or accompaniment. Soloists should learn the chord changes. Solos should not be approached as opportunities to show off technique, range, or volume, but should be looked at as a great opportunity to further develop the interesting thematic material that Ellington has provided.
13. The notation of plungers for the brass means a rubber toilet plunger bought in a hardware store. Kirkhill is a very good brand (especially if you can find one of their old hard rubber ones, like the one I loaned Wynton and he lost). Trumpets use 5" diameter and trombones use 6" diameter. Where Plunger/Mute is notated, insert a pixie mute in the bell and use the plunger over the mute. Pixies are available from Humes & Berg in Chicago. Tricky Sam Nanton and his successors in the Ellington plunger trombone chair did not use pixies. Rather, each of them employed a Nonpareil (that's the brand name) trumpet straight mute. Nonpareil has gone out of business, but the Tom Crown Nonpareil trumpet straight mute is very close to the same thing. These mute/plunger combinations create a wonderful sound (very close to the human voice), but they also can create some intonation problems which must be corrected by the lip or by using alternate slide positions. It would be easier to move the tuning slide, but part of the sound is in the struggle to correct the pitch. If this proves too much, stick with the pixie – it's pretty close.
14. The drummer is the de facto leader of the band. He establishes the beat and controls the volume of the ensemble. For big band playing, the drummer needs to use a larger bass drum than he would for small group drumming. A 22" or 24" is preferred. The bass drum is played softly (nearly inaudible) on each beat. This is called feathering the bass drum. It provides a very important bottom to the band. The bass drum sound is not a boom and not a thud – it's in between. The larger size drum is necessary for the kicks; a smaller drum just won't be heard. The key to this style is to just keep time. A rim knock on two and four (chopping wood) is used to lock in the swing. When it comes to playing fills, the fewer, the better.
15. The horn players should stand for their solos and solis. Brass players should come down front for moderate to long solos, surrounding rests permitting. The same applies to the pep section (two trumpets and one trombone in plunger/mutes).
16. Horns should pay close attention to attacks and releases. Everyone should hit together and release together.
17. Above all, everyone's focus should remain at all times on the swing. As the great bassist Chuck Israels says, "The three most important things in jazz are rhythm, rhythm, and rhythm, in that order." Or as Bubber Miley

(Ellington's first star trumpeter) said, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing."

## GLOSSARY

The following are terms which describe conventions of jazz performance, from traditional New Orleans to the present avant garde.

**Break** • within the context of an ongoing time feel, the rhythm section stops for one, two, or four bars. Very often a soloist will improvise during a break.

**Call and response** • repetitive pattern of contrasting exchanges (derived from the church procedure of the minister making a statement and the congregation answering with "amen"). Call-and-response patterns usually pit one group of instruments against another. Sometimes we call this "trading fours," "trading twos," etc., especially when it involves improvisation. The numbers denote the amount of measures each soloist or group plays. Another term frequently used is "swapping fours."

**Coda** • also known as the "outro." "Tags" or "tag endings" are outgrowths of vaudeville bows that are frequently used as codas. They most often use deceptive cadences that finally resolve to the tonic or they go from the sub-dominant and cycle back to the tonic.

**Comp** • improvise accompaniment (for piano or guitar).

**Groove** • the composite rhythm. This generally refers to the combined repetitive rhythmic patterns of the drums, bass, piano, and guitar, but may also include repetitive patterns in the horns. Some grooves are standard (i.e., swing, bossa nova, samba), while others are manufactured (original combinations of rhythms).

**Head** • melody chorus.

**Interlude** • a different form (of relatively short length) sandwiched between two chorus forms. Interludes that set up a key change are simply called modulations.

**Intro** • short for introduction.

**Ride pattern** • the most common repetitive figure played by the drummer's right hand on the ride cymbal or hi-hat.



**Riff** • a repeated melodic figure. Very often, riffs repeat verbatim or with slight alterations while the harmonies change underneath them.

**Shout chorus** • also known as the "out chorus," the "sock chorus," or sometimes shortened to just "the shout." It is the final ensemble passage of most big band charts and where the climax most often happens.

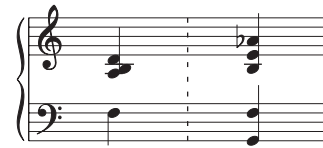
**Soli** • a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A soli sound particular to Ellington's music combines two trumpets and trombone in plungers/mutes in triadic harmony. This is called the "pep section."

**Stop time** • a regular pattern of short breaks (usually filled in by a soloist).

**Swing** • the perfect confluence of rhythmic tension and relaxation in music creating a feeling euphoria and characterized by accented weak beats (a democratization of the beat) and eighth notes that are played as the first and third eighth notes of an eighth-note triplet. Duke Ellington's definition of swing: when the music feels like it is getting faster, but it isn't.

**Vamp** • a repeated two- or four-bar chord progression. Very often, there may be a riff or riffs played on the vamp.

**Voicing** • the specific spacing, inversion, and choice of notes that make up a chord. For instance, two voicings for G7 could be:



Note that the first voicing includes a 9th and the second voicing includes a 9th and a 13th. The addition of 9ths, 11ths, 13ths, and alterations are up to the discretion of the pianist and soloist.

## THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

The following are placed in their order of importance in jazz. We should never lose perspective on this order of priority.

**Rhythm** • meter, tempo, groove, and form, including both melodic rhythm and harmonic rhythm (the speed and regularity of the chord changes).

**Melody** • a tune or series of pitches.

**Harmony** • chords and voicings.

**Orchestration** • instrumentation and tone colors.

— David Berger

## FLIRTIBIRD • 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** • Duke Ellington  
**Arranger** • Duke Ellington  
**Recorded** • June 1, 1959 in Los Angeles  
**Master #** • RHCO 46261-5  
**Original Issue** • Columbia CL-1360 [MONO] / CS-8166 [STEREO]  
(*Anatomy of a Murder*) [LP]

**Currently Available on CD** • Columbia Legacy CK65569 (*Anatomy of a Murder*) [NOTE: MORE RECENTLY REISSUED AS SONY/COLUMBIA 866810]

**Download Available** • *Anatomy of a Murder* • [itunes.com](#)

**Personnel** • Duke Ellington (piano); Cat Anderson, Harold “Shorty” Baker, Ray Nance, Clark Terry, Gerald Wilson (trumpet); Quentin Jackson, Britt Woodman (trombone); John Sanders (valve trombone); Johnny Hodges (alto sax); Russell Procope (alto sax/clarinet); Jimmy Hamilton (tenor sax/clarinet); Paul Gonsalves (tenor sax); Harry Carney (baritone sax); Jimmy Woode (bass); Jimmy Johnson (drums)

**Soloists** • Johnny Hodges (alto sax); Duke Ellington (piano)

## REHEARSAL NOTES

• 40 years after Duke Ellington began his professional music career, he composed his first feature film score, *Anatomy of a Murder*, for director/producer Otto Preminger. Normally film scores are written after the film is edited, so that the music and action in the film are synchronized. This was not the case with *Anatomy of a Murder*. Ellington and Strayhorn composed, arranged and recorded a couple of hours worth of music (the average feature film has around 20 minutes of music), and the editors trimmed both the music and the film simultaneously creating kind of a ballet with dialogue. When this film is shown on TV in New York, the New York Times always says something to the effect of “great courtroom drama, but Ellington’s music just doesn’t fit”. The fact is that Ellington’s music fits great (the main character played by Jimmy Stewart is an amateur jazz pianist), but it is too good. It makes you want to listen to

the music rather than follow the action and listen to the dialogue. Never the less, *Anatomy of a Murder* is a fine film and thrilling to watch. It has also provided us with some great music, which works wonderfully on the concert stage.

- **Flirtibird** is Laura’s leitmotif. [Flirty+bird (English slang for a woman or, in American slang of that period, a chick.) Laura is incredibly sexy and flirtatious and played to perfection by a young Lee Remick. Ellington is at his sexist utilizing Clark Terry’s plunger trumpet lead answered by Johnny Hodges, the man who invented sultry saxophone playing. Written in standard AABA form, **Flirtibird** is really a one-chorus chart that gives the illusion of 2 choruses by adding an extra A section. After stating the A section, Clark and the saxes play 16 bars of harmonized bebop on the changes of the A section. This feels like a soli that normally would come in the 2nd chorus of A chart. For the first 8 bars the soli answers the piano melody. After these 2 A sections, Ellington could have gone to the bridge, but the soli suggested another 8 bars to finish its statement. In all this makes 3 A sections in a row. This is unusual, but it feels completely natural. Next comes the bridge, which is like a *Rhythm* bridge (E<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>), only it starts on the 2nd chord and finishes with a break on the tonic (A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C). This makes perfect sense since it is followed by a repeat of the A section melody from the top of the chart, which starts on the subdominant (F<sup>7</sup>). The final chord (C7<sup>\*9</sup>) is held out for 2 extra measures.
- The slow swing tempo demands a high degree of instrumental control and knowledge of the swing and bebop idioms. The rhythm section plays swing on all the A sections, but goes into a 12/8 groove with a backbeat on the bridge, returning to straight swing on the last A section (letter **E**). The bass and drum parts were improvised. I recommend checking out what they played and then create your own parts. The same goes for the alto sax solo. Starting at **B8** the alto paraphrases the melody. It is essential that the melody be somewhat recognizable and conform to the call and response with the trumpet/sax section.
- One of the outstanding elements of Ellington’s writing is his use of cross-sectional writing. That is, combing instruments from different choirs to create the sound of a new choir. His early success with *Mood Indigo* (trumpet and trombone in tight plungers over a clarinet) led to other innovations like his pep section (2 trumpets and a trombone – all in plungers). **Flirtibird** introduces a new section – plunger muted trumpet over 4 saxes. They play in 4-part close harmony with the 5th part being the octave doubling of the trumpet melody. Instead of having the bari play the bottom part (the octave doubling), Ellington assigns it to the tenor sax. This same orchestration re-appears in the *Asphalt Jungle Theme*. Incidentally Clark Terry wrote the lead line for that soli. Perhaps that was the same case for letters **B** and **C** of **Flirtibird**. It sounds like Clark to my ears.
- A major difference in the plunger playing of *Mood Indigo* and the pep section from **Flirtibird** is that in the first 2 the trumpets use pixie mutes under the plunger; **Flirtibird** does not use a pixie. Actually the true name of the mute is French straight mute. Pixie is a brand name used by Humes and Berg, the mute manufacturer. I recommend a 5 inch diameter Kirkhill rubber plunger. It should be kept about 1/3 open. Find the spot where

you get the plunger color but not so closed where the pitch gets funny. It’s around 1/3 open. Hold it pretty still. The style that Clark played this sort of thing does not involve hand inflections. All inflections (and there are many) are done either with the lip or half valve.

- On the top and through **A4** the trumpet slurs and uses breath accents on the upper notes (& of 2 and on 4). The saxes do the same when they play with him. This same style of accenting continues at **B** and **C**, but using doodle tongue. For this section the 8ths are swung and the 16ths are even, with the exception of the first note at **C**. This is marked with a ^, which means short, accented and even 8th. Don’t play this too loud. The accents add the volume and rhythmic impulse.
- The long notes in this piece (bones at **A**, all the horns at **D**, etc.) should be *fp* with a crescendo. This gives direction, makes it feel exciting and allows us to hear everything else that is happening at the same time. Add a little vibrato toward the ends of the notes (terminal vibrato). As the Maestro used to say, “Give me some personality”. Personality is what this piece is all about.
- All the fall offs in this chart are short. We don’t want to cover up the next section that comes in on the following beat. Every note in the entire piece is a gem. I wouldn’t want to miss any of them.

– David Berger

Courtesy of Tutti Dynamics, Inc., videos of Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in rehearsals of the *Essentially Ellington* 2013-14 repertoire can be downloaded FREE at [jalc.org/EssentiallyEllington](http://jalc.org/EssentiallyEllington)

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington

# FLIRTIBIRD

Duke Ellington  
Transcribed by David Berger

Slow Swing ♩ = 76

Reeds 1: Solo (Alto Sax), *f*, *pp*, *p*

Reeds 2: Alto Sax, *mf*

Reeds 3: Tenor Sax, *mf*

Reeds 4: Tenor Sax, *mf*

Reeds 5: Baritone Sax, *mf*

Trumpets 1: Plunger w/saxes, *mf*

Trombones 1: *mf*

Trombones 2: *mf*

Trombones 3: *mf*

Piano: Solo

Bass: F7, C, E7, Eb7, D7, Db7, C, Bb7, B, C

Drums: stick shots, Ride

Flirtibird

**B**

Alto

Alto

Tenor

Tenor

Bari

Tpt. 1

2

3

4

Tbn. 1

2

3

Pno.

Bass

Drs.

Solo

*mf*

F7 C E7 Eb7 D7 Db7 C7

Flirtibird

Score for Flirtibird, page 3. The score includes parts for Alto, Tenor, Bari, Tpt. 1-4, Tbn. 1-3, Pno., Bass, and Drs. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Chord symbols are placed above or below the staffs: D7, A7, C#7, C7, B7, Bb7, A, F7, C7, E7, Eb7, D7, Db7, C. The Alto part features a melodic line with triplets and a fermata. The Tenor and Bari parts have similar rhythmic patterns. The Bass part provides a steady accompaniment. The Drs. part consists of a drum pattern with accents. The Pno. part is mostly silent, with a few notes at the end of the piece.