

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER LIBRARY — BLUE ENGINE RECORDS

# CONGLOMERATE

FROM THE FIFTIES: A PRISM (2020)

Christopher Crenshaw  
**Full Score**



JAZZ  LINCOLN CENTER

## CONGLOMERATE • 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** • Christopher Crenshaw

**Recorded** • February 17-18, 2017 at Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Frederick P. Rose Hall

**Original issue** • Blue Engine Records BE0027

**Currently available as digital download and streaming on all DSPs**

**Personnel** • Sherman Irby, Ted Nash (alto sax), Victor Goines, Dan Block, Walter Blanding, Stantawn Kendrick (tenor sax), Paul Nedzela (baritone sax), Tatum Greenblatt, Kenny Rampton, Marcus Printup, Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Vincent Gardner, Chris Crenshaw, Elliot Mason (trombone), Dan Nimmer (piano), Carlos Henriquez (bass), Ali Jackson (drums)

**Soloists** • Paul Nedzela (baritone saxophone), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Stantawn Kendrick (tenor saxophone), Carlos Henriquez (bass)

*“The Fifties: A Prism” was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center with the generous support of the Howard Gilman Foundation and first performed by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis at Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall on February 17, 2017.*

## THE FIFTIES: A PRISM NOTES

There is perhaps no music that embodies the past, present, and future more than jazz. From the way much improvisation plays with meter to its creators’ commitment to forward-looking experimentation and innovation, every moment of jazz dances on the precipice of both the before and the after. Trombonist Christopher Crenshaw is a visionary member of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and through his unique musicianship dances nimbly between past, present and future. He explores the many facets of jazz’s rich idiom on *The Fifties*, lending his talent and perspective to what has been and what is to come.

It’s fitting that Chris Crenshaw chose the visual of a prism for *The Fifties*. This decade refracted and illuminated very different musical worlds, influences, and artists. The 50s beamed a rainbow of musical hues—including bebop, hard bop, cool jazz, modal jazz, Latin jazz, and free jazz—that forever colored and solidified the genre’s importance as a most comprehensive American art form.

To understand the 1950s is to truly know jazz music. At that time in the United States, jazz was a convergence of past, present, and future. This was a decade of revolution and traditionalism, a time of breaking down boundaries and the creation of new order. The invention and detonation of the atom bomb in 1945 forever changed our worldview, and we saw what was once whole become divided. A fragmentation of vision was seen in visual art (one can reference the representational work of artists like Pollock and Rothko evolving from figurative to abstract) as well as heard in the sounds of music as it moved from the sweet ease of the swing era to the frenetic and expressive sounds of bebop and beyond. The 50s continued the journey of both division and coalescence and forwarded new norms that voiced the friction of a restless evolution.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* furthered the slow march toward civil rights that was, and continues to be, so defining to the Black American experience, and, as such, for the sound of jazz. A period of economic prosperity and suburban comfort created a new kind of jazz fan who listened on a turntable at home rather than in the dance halls. Curiosity about cultures, styles, and sounds from other nations was offset by McCarthyism, and the tension between social progressivism and fear-based conservatism created a tectonic pressure that yielded artistic diamonds.

The unique gifts of the 50s created are even more powerfully evidenced by the sheer number of significant artists creating powerful work throughout that decade. The founding fathers of jazz—Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Nick LaRocca, to name a few—were working alongside modern innovators such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Lennie Tristano. Many of today’s living legends like Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter, Toshiko Akiyoshi, and Lou Donaldson were just coming on the scene at that time. The temptation of history is to define an era by one style, but the jazz music of the 50s defies such lazy categorization.

It takes an expert ear, discerning taste, and artistic assuredness to channel the multitudes of such a decade. Christopher Crenshaw’s talent is perfectly suited to the job. As Wynton Marsalis says of the trombonist’s work, “His arrangements and compositions are always so intelligent, pointed, and well-crafted.” While the compositions on this album have clear sources of inspiration, they expand on their references and tell new stories, refracting back through the prism to create a new kind of music fit for these current times...

...In “Conglomerate”, Crenshaw conjures up the cool West Coast style of Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker with impeccable contrapuntal writing. He uses the title both as a noun—different parts grouped together without losing their distinct identities—and as a verb: to bring together into a collective. The piano serves the function of a horn in the ensemble passages. Paul Nedzela and Marsalis give us a wonderful taste of the Mulligan/Baker style, improvising in thematically inspired counterpoint. Kendrick plays a very relaxed and mature chorus, effectively mixing short melodic statements with longer, flowing eighth-note lines. Bassist Carlos Henriquez ends his playful turn with a whole note rich with anticipation, handing it back to the horns to weave an intricate call-and-response. After a quick reprise of the melody, the piece concludes with a collective, unapologetic smile, rather than the expected fanfare...

—*The Fifties: A Prism* adapted liner notes by Ted Nash, 2020

## 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/thefifties](http://jazz.org/thefifties).



CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Blue Engine Records

# CONGLOMERATE

from The Fifties: A Prism

Christopher Crenshaw

Relaxed ♩ = 144

Musical score for the piece "Conglomerate" by Christopher Crenshaw. The score is arranged for a jazz ensemble and includes parts for Reeds (Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, Baritone Sax), Trumpets (1-4), Trombones (1-3), Piano, Bass, and Drums. The music is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 144 beats per minute. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score is marked with a dynamic of *mf* (mezzo-forte) throughout. The Reeds section features intricate melodic lines, with the Tenor Sax and Baritone Sax playing a triplet figure in the first measure. The Trumpets and Trombones provide harmonic support, with the Trumpets playing a similar triplet figure. The Piano and Bass play a steady accompaniment, with the Bass playing a walking bass line. The Drums play a brush pattern in the first measure, followed by a snare drum pattern in the second measure, and a fill in the eighth measure. The score is divided into measures 1 through 8.

Conglomerate

**A**

1. | 2.

Alto

Alto

Tenor

Tenor

Bari

Tpts. 1

2

3

4

Tbns. 1

2

3

Pno.

Bs.

Drs.

*mp*

2nd x only cup mute

*mp*

2nd x only cup mute

*mp*

2nd x only cup mute

*mp*

2nd x only cup mute

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

G G# A m7 D7 D# E m7 A7 B m7 B# Eb7 A#7(#11) B m7 B#m7 A m7 Ab7 G

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17