JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER'S **ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON** LIBRARY

WYNTON MARSALIS, FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

WARM VALLEY

Composed by Duke Ellington
Transcribed by Mark Lopeman
Edited by Christopher Crenshaw
As performed by Duke Ellington and His Orchestra

FULL SCORE

This transcription was made especially for Jazz at Lincoln Center's
2026-27 *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program.

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ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

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 orchestrations 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 them. In turn, the other saxes and trombones must follow their lead players. When the clarinet leads the brass section, the brass should not overblow them. 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 their own line. They 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 their 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. We have included chord changes on all rhythm section parts so that students can better understand the overall form of each composition. It is incumbent upon the director to make clear what is a composed part versus a part to be improvised. The recordings should make this clear but in instances where it is not; use your best judgment and play something that sounds good, is swinging, and is stylistically appropriate to the piece. Sometimes, a student may not have the technical skill to perform a difficult transcription, especially in the case of one of Duke's solos, in that case, it is best to have the student work something out that is appropriate. Written passages should be studied and learned, when possible, as they are an important port of our jazz heritage and help the player understand the function of their particular solo or accompaniment. All soloists should learn the chord changes. Solos should be looked at as an 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. The drummer 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 lsraels 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.

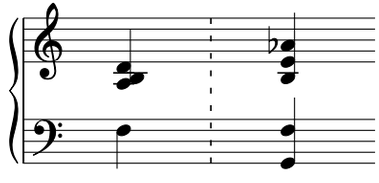
Soli • a harmonized passage for two or more instruments playing the same rhythm. It is customary for horn players to stand up or even move in front of the band when playing these passages. This is done so that the audience can hear them better and to provide the audience with some visual interest. A 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

WARM VALLEY

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

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Trombone 3

Guitar

Piano

Bass

Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Duke Ellington

Arranger • Duke Ellington

Recorded • October 17, 1940 in Chicago, IL

Original issue • RCA Victor 26796

Currently available as digital download • Amazon, iTunes (Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band, 1940-1942)

Personnel • Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwick (alto saxes); Ben Webster, Barney Bigard (tenor saxes); Harry Carney (baritone sax); Rex Stewart, Cootie Williams, Wallace Jones (trumpets); Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown (trombones); Fred Guy (guitar); Duke Ellington (piano); Jimmy Blanton (bass); Sonny Greer (drums)

Soloists • Duke Ellington (piano), Johnny Hodges (alto sax), Cootie Williams (trumpet)

REHEARSAL NOTES

- As with all rehearsal notes, this is a guide to help your group to have a great performance and an understanding of this piece of music. These notes illuminate essential details that were present in recordings or consistent in performances of it. However, the ultimate goal of Jazz was, is, and will forever be to take what was done and find a way to add yourself to it. You are encouraged to take the information in these arrangements and rehearsal notes and have your performers learn it as written but use it to discover their own way to play it.

- Johnny Hodges and Sherman Irby provide the perfect templates for successfully playing the alto sax solo on this tune with tenderness and understanding. Vibrato, to whatever degree it is played, is a must in order to convey the emotion that is present in this beautiful melody. With every chance that your soloist has to perform, challenge them to find something new to add to it, within good musical taste of course. It should never be too loud and should always dance.

- The drums must work on getting a lush “drag” sound from the brushes on beats two and four of the pattern, in order for it to have the tenderness it needs to match the mood of the song. There is no hi-hat here, which lends to the airiness of the feel. You’ll notice on the recording that Sonny Greer gives propulsion to the groove by accentuating the third triplet of beats two and four of his drum pattern.

- Although the piano is not very present in this composition, it is important that it sparkles when it does appear. Ellington (and Basie, for that matter) had the gift of knowing exactly when to play, and more importantly, when not to play. When they played, it was the perfect statement to ornament the arrangement. It should not sound like “Finally, I get to play something!”; rather, “Here’s a little sprinkle of beauty to add to this music that I have been enjoying”. Band directors, do not let your piano players sit on the bench looking bored while they are not playing for extended times—it’s very visible to the audience.

- While playing with the cup mute, the brass must produce a full, well-supported sound, or the tone will be lost. It’s a good habit to practice individually with each mute (both scales and technical exercises) so that students can learn how the mutes change the response to air flow and, in some cases, destabilize notes.

- The utmost care must be made to follow the lead trumpet on the muted passage underneath the alto sax melody in the beginning and the end of the piece. The accompaniment written by Ellington has incredible lyricism; the brass must follow the dynamic and emotional contours of the line for the performance to be a success. Add different nuances to the phrasing to make it your own.

- For example, in the 6th bar of the phrase, Ryan Kisor always adds the most beautiful two 32nd notes between the E and G in his Trumpet 1 part; it’s so smooth it sounds like a glissando. Knowing that Ryan is going phrase it that way, I add them to my Trombone 1 part (sometimes with a glissando), playing Gb and G to Ab in my part to match his articulation. The result is very effective phrasing.

- If you are playing with a guitar, the balance in the rhythm section is extremely important. Even if it is being played with a semi or fully electric instrument, the sensibility must match the way it would be played on an acoustic instrument. The guitar chords are meant to be mostly felt, and just slightly heard. This gives a bounce and propulsion to the quarter note.

- In the saxes, the three unison notes before letter **D** are extremely important. They can come up slightly in volume from the accompaniment level to announce that a new texture is approaching. As the saxes state the now voiced-out melody at letter **D**, they should be conscious that the trumpet soloist is responding using a mute (a Harmon Mute with the stem), which can only play so loud. If you keep this in mind, you will find the correct dynamic balance between the two groups.

— Vincent Gardner

For original and reference recordings, interactive videos of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, and additional resources in support of the *Essentially Ellington* repertoire, please visit jazz.org/EE.

CONDUCTOR

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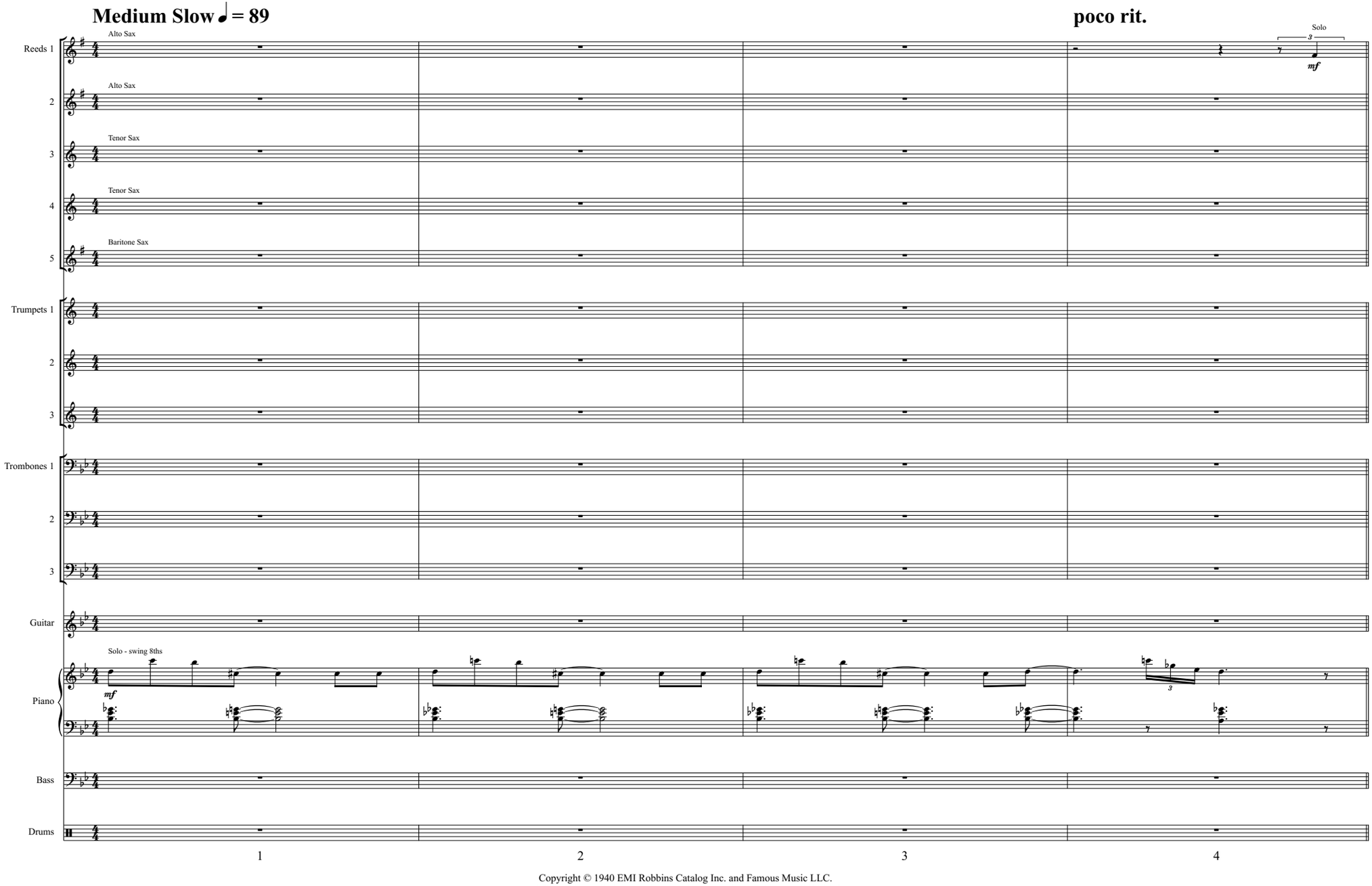

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Warm Valley

A **Slower** ♩ = 72

Alto

Alto

Tenor

Tenor

Bari

Tpts. 1 — cup mute — *mp*

2 — cup mute — *mp*

3

Tbns. 1 — cup mute — *mp*

2 — cup mute — *mp*

3 — cup mute — *mp*

Gtr. — B♭ | E7 Cm6 E7 | E♭9 Em7(♭5) A7 | D7 C♯dim D7 | Fm G7 | Cm7(♭5) | B♭/F G♭7/C Cm7/F | B♭ Cm7/F

Pno.

Bs. — *mp*

Drs. — brushes — *p*

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12