

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

THE JEFFREY SULTANOF MASTER EDITION

**THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME**

AS ARRANGED FOR 'CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS' 1949

ARRANGED BY JIMMY CARROLL

EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-8044

MUSIC BY JEROME KERN

LYRICS BY HERBERT REYNOLDS

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# THEY DIDN'T BELIEVE ME (1949)

## **Background:**

When Billie Holiday signed a new recording contract with Decca Records in 1944, she told producer Milt Gabler she wanted to record with strings. Anxious to establish Holiday as a pop singer, Gabler hired six string players for her first session, and the first song recorded was *Lover Man*, one of her biggest hits. Several years later, when Charlie Parker signed with impresario/manager Norman Granz' label Clef, Parker asked for strings as well.

Granz was obviously keeping costs down, as only five string players were hired for the first session (1949), but these were the very top New York session players; some were members of the NBC symphony conducted by Arturo Toscanini. As much as he'd dreamed of playing with strings, reportedly Parker walked out of a few sessions without playing a note (the number has never been authenticated). He later explained that the sound of the strings and the thought of working with such distinguished musicians scared him; he thought they were greater artists than he. What finally took place was sheer magic. The parts for the string players were relatively easy, so they listened and enjoyed Parker's improvisations. The arrangements for the first studio session were done by Jimmy Carroll and recorded on November 30, 1949. On July 5, 1950 there was another studio recording session, this time with arrangements by Joe Lippman. This second date featured a larger ensemble including oboe, French horn, 4 violins, 2 violas, cello, harp, guitar, piano, bass, and drums. Parker also appeared with his string group on at least 4 live occasions: *Birdland* (August, 1950 and March and April, 1951), *Apollo Theater* (August 1950), *Carnegie Hall* (September, 1950), *Rockland Palace Dance Hall* (September, 1952). In 1952 Parker recorded an additional 4 arrangements by Lippman featuring a full big band with a string section.



Parker would later say that the studio recordings with his string ensemble were his favorites of his own work, despite jazz critics' condescending reactions and their claims that he was 'selling out.' As it turns out, he was selling 'in.' The albums sold well, and brought Parker to a whole new audience. As far as his own playing, many of his solos on this first album were lovely and inspired. *Just Friends* is one of Parker's finest records and his solo is remarkable; I can't be the only one who can sing it by heart at a moment's notice. It is a pity that none of the alternate takes seem to have survived.

The entire book of *Charlie Parker with Strings* arrangements were previously thought to exist as studio or live recordings made for Norman Granz's Clef label, airchecks (radio broadcasts recorded on either a disc or tape recorder), or on tape machines snuck into clubs or concert halls. One of the exceptions seem to be this setting of Jerome Kern's *They Didn't Believe Me*. This song is cited as the first to change key in the middle of the chorus. It was always assumed up to then (1914) that the 'common man' would not be able to negotiate a sudden change in key in the middle of a song. Kern does this so elegantly that the public took to the song immediately, and this freed songwriters to become more experimental. The song was a tremendous influence on many musicians who later became important songwriters themselves, and was cited as an important milestone in the life of a young pianist/composer who came to idolize Kern and later to work with him: George Gershwin.

## **The Music:**

Jimmy Carroll's arrangement probably dates from 1949, and was perhaps written for the first *Charlie Parker with Strings* album (as with *Just Friends*, it includes celeste and vib parts). Neither Parker nor Granz were happy with Carroll's arrangements, and further additions to the book for the touring unit were made by Neal Hefti (re-scoring his own composition *Repetition*, the side recorded with a Parker solo when Bird showed up unannounced to the recording session), Jimmy Mundy, Gerry Mulligan and later Joe Lippman.

Based on the markings on the parts, it would seem that the arrangement was run through a couple of times, some changes made (noted in the errata below), put aside and then forgotten. The markings on the parts do not match the hands that show up on such arrangements as *Just Friends*, and there are few instances where bowings are marked, another sign that the ensemble did not spend much time on this arrangement. Another possibility could be that it was gone over during one of the recording sessions where Bird showed up and then walked out; these cannot be accurately documented at this late date, as only the master takes used on the album survive, and they all seem to have been recorded on the same date, November 30, 1949.

The following is an errata listing of salient issues to be noted:

- Bar 4, Harp, Beat 4: The run found in Violin I is deleted here to give the harpist enough time to make all of the necessary pedal changes (as has been noted in the notes to the Jazz Lines publication of *Just Friends*, Carroll seems to have had little experience with strings and harp writing at this time of his career).
- Bar 9 (and elsewhere), Strings:
  - 1) Beats 1-2 and elsewhere - Originally eighth rest-eighth-quarter note, which became quarter rest-two eighths.
  - 2) The two-beat triplet is a very elegant way to indicate a relaxed swing figure, and works very well for strings in particular. Johnny Richards used this figure frequently in his ballad arranging, and Carroll may have gotten the idea from him, as I have never seen this figure used by any other commercial arranger besides Richards from this period.
- Bar 27 to the first beat of bar 28: Originally two half notes arco in bar 27; first quarter note in bar 28 was also arco.
- Bars 37-38 and 91-92: Originally an octave lower.
- Bar 44, Second half-note: Originally tremelo.
- Bars 95-96: Strings deleted here. Engraved in cue size for reference.



## **Notes to the Conductor:**

It is quite a novelty to perform an arrangement written for Charlie Parker that was never recorded. In a way this is good for your soloist, as he/she will not be influenced by a pre-existing solo. The chordal sequence of this song is classic Kern, and warrants study and analysis by the soloist. Simply, this is one of the songs that every soloist or student of popular harmony should know. Because this is a ballad, the string ensemble should have an easier time playing with the rhythm section. But it is still possible to play somewhat behind the beat if the strings have had little experience in this musical context. A good exercise is for the strings to listen to the rhythm section playing by itself so they get used to the sound, and they should even be encouraged to pat their feet so that they can internalize the rhythm. All of these suggestions have been tried with my own ensembles, and with a little patience, string players will be hungry for more such music.

**Jeffrey Sultanof**

- October 2010



(Solo)  
C9(#11) F#7(b5) B9 F7(#9)

A. SX.

VLN. A

VLN. B

VLN. C

VLA.

VLC.

HARP

GTR.

PNO

BASS

Dems/  
Vbs.

(4) (6)