

Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center

Dissonance in Blues

By Gerald Wilson

As performed by Gerald Wilson and His 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.

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jazz

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

DISSONANCE IN BLUES • 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
Trombone 4
Guitar
Piano
Bass
Drums

ORIGINAL RECORDING INFORMATION

Composer • Gerald Wilson
Arranger • Gerald Wilson
Recorded • 1947 in Los Angeles
Original Issue • United Artists 509 [78]

Currently Available on CD • VSOP 121 (*Otis Rene Story*) [2 CDs]

Download Available • Otis Rene Story • Amazon MP3

Personnel • Gerald Wilson (leader); Ernie Royal, Snooky Young, Hobart Dotson, James Anderson (trumpet); Trummy Young, Henry Coker, Melba Liston, possibly Isaac Livingstone (trombone); Willie Smith, Marshal Royal (alto sax); Dexter Gordon, Vernon Slater (tenor sax); Maurice Simon (baritone sax); Jimmy Bunn or Vivian Fears (piano); Irving Ashby (guitar); Red Callender (bass); Oscar Bradley (drums)

Soloists • Red Callender (bass)

REHEARSAL NOTES

- After trumpeter/arranger/composer Gerald Wilson left Jimmie Lunceford, he formed his own big band, which quickly gained critical notice and popularity in the mid-1940's just as many of the established big bands were disbanding. Gerald's band built on the styles of the Lunceford and Ellington orchestras while embracing the new sounds of bebop. **Dissonance In Blues** is a perfect example.
- A bass feature written for the wonderful Red Callender, **Dissonance In Blues** adds (what were for the time modern) creative chord progressions and voicings to the traditional 12-bar blues. For a point of reference, I recommend listening to the recordings that Ellington made in 1946 for Musicraft (*Happy Go-Lucky Local*, Billy Strayhorn's *Overture To A Jam Session*, et al) and Dizzy Gillespie's recordings of that period (*Oop Bop Sh'Bam*, *Cool Breeze*, *Things To Come*).

- After a 3.5 bar intro, **Dissonance In Blues** has 4 choruses of blues. The last chorus is cut short (it has only 10 measures) and is followed by a 9 bar coda. To take advantage of the natural fingerings of the bass (after all, this is a bass feature), Gerald wrote this arrangement in the key of E, which is most unusual for jazz bands, which usually cater to the overtone series that is more natural for the horn players.
- Although the primary opposites of the individual vs. the group, high and low and loud and soft are in the forefront, for me there is a great deal of interest in the integration of even 8th notes and swing 8th notes. The longstanding tradition for bassists to play even 8ths with the exception of syncopations, which are swung, is in force. This prevails until the saxes come in swinging with their pickup to letter **C**. Incidentally, the sax lick at **C** bears a strong resemblance to Dizzy's minor blues, *Birk's Works*, which Dizzy always played with staccato dotted 8ths and 16ths as opposed to the legato phasing in **Dissonance In Blues**. The sudden switch to swing 8ths at this point is shocking. I have added breath accents.
- Prior to letter **C** the saxes and rhythm section must obey the dynamics and play softly so that the unamplified bass solo can be heard distinctly and recognized as the focus of the piece. The use of acoustic rhythm guitar is essential. Electric guitar would be intrusive. The loud chord in the bar before **C** is the lone exception to the soft accompaniment. This is a surprise interruption, where upon the bass says, "Pardon me while I pick up where I left off before I was so rudely interrupted". It is essential that the saxes play *subito p* immediately at **B** to make this dramatic statement effective.
- The baritone sax has a couple of independent lines in **B3** and **B4**. Although the baritone is barely audible on the recording, those lines should be played with personality and brought out just a bit – not enough to overshadow the bass, but enough that we understand the ornamentation that they create in the saxes.
- The role of the bari sax is often misunderstood. In most student bands, the baritone is given to the weakest saxophone player. Most saxophonists (even professionals) want to play either alto or tenor. Few are drawn to the baritone as their voice, Harry Carney and Gerry Mulligan withstanding. So these wannabe alto and tenor players do not develop a distinctly baritone sound. When they listen to Ellington's band and hear the fullness of Carney's sound, they mistake fullness for volume.
- At **C** the saxes play 6 bars in swing style – swing players generally slurred 8th note lines as opposed to later players who tend to tongue more. The brass answers are played with plenty of accent and *subito p*. The extreme change of dynamics helps us to understand that the brass is playing call and response to itself as well as call and response to the saxes. The brass shakes should not get out of control. Hit the note hard with a ton of accent, hold it softly for a beat and then add the shake on the 4th beat while playing *subito f*. This is in the always tasteful style that the great lead trumpet player Snooky Young popularized first as Gerald's section mate in the Lunceford band and later with Basie and then Thad Jones.
- In **C9-10** and then later in **D3-8** the saxes play double time bebop figures. The brass also plays double time bebop in **D5-8**. The rhythm section must infer double time in their feel. At **D11** we are suddenly back to single swing

style. In order to do this piece justice, the whole band must turn on a dime every time there is a change of dynamic or feel – the #1 trademark of Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra.

– 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

CONDUCTOR

Jazz at Lincoln Center Library - Essentially Ellington
DISSONANCE IN BLUES

Gerald Wilson
Transcribed by David Berger

Slow Swing ♩ = 80

Alto Sax A

Reeds 1 *mp*

Alto Sax *mp*

2

Tenor Sax *mp*

3

Tenor Sax *mp*

4

Baritone Sax *mp*

5

Trumpets 1

2

3

4

Trombones 1

2

3

4

Guitar

Piano

Bass *even 8ths*

Drums *sticks* *HH* *brushes* *p*

Dissonance In Blues

This musical score is for the piece "Dissonance In Blues". It features a vocal ensemble consisting of two Alto parts, two Tenor parts, and one Bari part. The instrumental ensemble includes four Trumpets (Tpt. 1-4), four Trombones (Tbn. 1-4), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), Bass, and Drums (Drs.). The score is written in a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The vocal parts have lyrics, and the instrumental parts include various musical notations such as rests, notes, and dynamic markings. A large red watermark "Preview Only" is overlaid diagonally across the score. The dynamic marking *ff* (fortissimo) is present at the end of several staves. The Drums part includes a notation for sticks (sticks HH) and a dynamic marking *ff*.

Dissonance In Blues

B

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes staves for Alto (two), Tenor (two), Bari, Tpt. 1-4, Tbn. 1-4, Gtr., Pno., Bass, and Drs. The Alto, Tenor, and Bari parts feature melodic lines with slurs and triplets, marked with *sub p*. The Bass part has a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and a *pp* dynamic. The Gtr. part shows a sequence of chords: E7+9, A7+9, E7+9, bb7, A7, F9+11, E7+9, and Eb9. The Pno. and Tbn. parts are mostly silent. A large red watermark 'Preview Only Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Dissonance In Blues

C

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The vocal parts (Alto, Tenor, Bari) feature melodic lines with dynamic markings of *f*. The brass section (Tpt. 1-4 and Tbn. 1-4) includes performance instructions such as *ff*, *p*, and "hat ready" or "plunger ready". The guitar part (Gtr.) is indicated by a slash and includes a chord chart: D9, F9+11, E7+9, B7+9, Eo, E7+9, C#7+9, E7+9, bb9, A7. The bass part (Bass) features a walking line with triplets and dynamic markings of *mf*. The drum part (Drs.) is indicated by a slash. A large red watermark "Preview Only Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Dissonance In Blues

D

Double Time Feel

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The vocal parts (Alto, Tenor, Bari) feature complex melodic lines with triplets and slurs. The brass section (Tpt. 1-4, Tbn. 1-4) plays a rhythmic pattern with dynamic markings of *ff*, *p*, *f*, and *mf*. The guitar part includes a series of chords: E7+9, C#7, E7+9, Bb7, Eb7, D7, F7, E7, F9, E9, E9, A9, E9sus4, and E9. The percussion part (Drs.) includes instructions for 'hat' and 'plunger 1/2 open' with specific rhythmic notations. The piano part (Pno.) and bass part (Bass) provide harmonic support. A large red watermark 'Legal Use Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the score.

Dissonance In Blues

Single Time

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The vocal parts (Alto, Tenor, Bari) feature melodic lines with dynamic markings such as *p* and *ff*. The instrumental sections include Trumpets (Tpt. 1-4), Trombones (Tbn. 1-4), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), Bass, and Drums (Drs.). The guitar part includes specific chord voicings: A7+9, A9, F7+9, E7+9, F9, E7+9, F#m7-5, Am7, Am6, F9, and B7+5. The piano part is marked *arco*. The drum part provides a steady single-time rhythm. A large red watermark reading 'Preview Only - Legal Use Requires Purchase' is overlaid diagonally across the entire score.

Dissonance In Blues

E

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Alto (top two), Tenor (middle two), and Bari (bottom). The next four staves are for brass: Tpt. 1-4 and Tbn. 1-4. Below these are the guitar (Gtr.), piano (Pno.), bass (Bass), and drums (Drs.) staves. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal parts feature dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo), *p* (piano), and *pp* *p* *pp* (pianissimo, piano, pianissimo). The piano part includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking and an *arco* (arco) marking. The guitar part has an *E7* chord marking and an *E7+9* chord marking. The drums part has a *8th* note marking. A large red watermark reading "Preview Only Requires Purchase" is overlaid diagonally across the entire score.

essentially ellington

The *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Program (*EE*) is one of the most unique curriculum resources for high school jazz bands in the United States, Canada, and American schools abroad. *EE* extends the legacy of Duke Ellington and other seminal big band composers and arrangers by widely disseminating music, in its original arrangements, to high school musicians for study and performance. Utilizing this music challenges students to increase their musical proficiency and knowledge of the jazz language. *EE* consists of the following initiatives and services:

Supplying the Music • Each year Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) transcribes, publishes, and distributes original transcriptions and arrangements, along with additional educational materials including recordings and teaching guides, to high school bands in the U.S., Canada, and American schools abroad.

Talking about the Music • Throughout the school year, band directors and students correspond with professional clinicians who answer questions regarding the *EE* music. *EE* strives to foster mentoring relationships through email correspondence, various conference presentations, and the festival weekend.

Professional Feedback • Bands are invited to submit a recording of their performance of the charts either for entry in the competition or for comments only. Every submission receives a thorough written assessment. Bands are also invited to attend *EE* Regional Festivals for an opportunity to perform and receive a workshop.

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Competition & Festival • The *EE* year culminates in a three-day festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall. Students, teachers, and musicians participate in workshops, rehearsals, and performances. The festival concludes with an evening concert that features the three top-placing bands, joining the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis in concert previewing next year's *EE* repertoire.

Jazz at Lincoln Center Band Director Academy • This professional development session for band directors is designed to enhance their ability to teach and conduct the music of Duke Ellington and other big band composers. Led by prominent jazz educators each summer, this companion program to *EE* integrates performance, history, pedagogy, and discussion into an intensive educational experience for band directors at all levels.

As of May 2013, *EE* has distributed scores to more than 4,200 schools in all 50 states, Canadian provinces, and American schools abroad.

Since 1995, over 309,000 students have been exposed to Duke Ellington's music through *Essentially Ellington*.

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