

KENDOR MUSIC PRESENTS

Big Dipper

style: straight-ahead blues
duration 4:40

by Thad Jones

INSTRUMENTATION

Full Score
Alto Sax I
Alto Sax II
Tenor Sax I
Tenor Sax II
Baritone Sax
Trumpet I
Trumpet II
Trumpet III
Trumpet IV
Trombone I
Trombone II
Trombone III
Trombone IV
Piano /Guitar (2 copies)
Bass
Drums

EXTRA SCORES & PARTS AVAILABLE

THAD JONES

Thad wrote his first jazz arrangement at age 13 when he was a trumpet player in his uncle's band in his native Pontiac, Michigan, along with brothers Hank (piano) and Elvin (drums). In the 1940's he served in the army, led a band of his own, and played with other bands before joining the Count Basie band in 1954. Nine years later he left Basie and began arranging for singers, small groups, and the big Harry James Band.

In 1965 Thad and drummer Mel Lewis formed their award-winning jazz orchestra. For the next 13 years this amazing band became an American jazz institution. They played Monday nights at the Village Vanguard in NYC on an almost continuous basis, won countless polls in "Down Beat," and recorded a series of albums that remain popular today, including "Consummation," "Central Park North," "Live At The Village Vanguard" and "Suite For Pops."

In 1979 Thad moved to and settled in Copenhagen, where he conducted the Danish Radio Big Band and later formed his own Eclipse big band featuring an illustrious mix of players from America and Europe.

TO THE DIRECTOR

Thanks for your interest in this great music. These rehearsal notes are meant as an adjunct to the most important work, fun really, of listening to the recordings or better still, attending a live performance. We've tried in this small space to give the student (that includes all of us) a few hints and awareness of opportunities to improve the performance.

First would be our primary objective, and that is to swing. This music is an out-growth of music that was meant for dancing and when it's right, it makes you feel like moving. All the harmonic and rhythmic sophistication of Thad Jones and the other great writers, from Fletcher Henderson to Jim McNeely, occur in the framework of great time. To this end, we need to be comfortable playing our parts so that we can concentrate on connecting with the other parts of the ensemble. The suggested tempo markings represent the tempo that the composition was played at the time of Thad's departure from the band in 1979 and generally are the upper end of the scale. The arrangement can definitely be played slower, and should be if that makes it easier to swing. The VJO doesn't always play these pieces at the same tempo, as it's fun to experiment.

The sax introduction is a great chance to get it going right off the bat. Dig in and play with a good solid sound, but since it's unison, you have to hold back enough to hear and be tight with the rest of the section. Trombones then need to really pop that first note and decrescendo from there. Try to make the audience jump. No band could do that like Basie. Trombones have an opportunity to define the time coming out of the tenor solo and should really lay down the time with the drums. Concentrate on the ride beat as you come into it and play that beat with the idea of forward movement. This is a simpler composition, however as such, presents great opportunity for creativity and attention to the details of articulation and dynamics.

One more note before turning it over to David Demsey for some particulars. Most all questions of balance, blend and dynamics can be answered by simply knowing as much as possible about the music you are playing. What's the form of the tune? Are you playing the melody, a counter melody, a background? Who are you playing with? What's the chord and your position in it? You'll find even more questions and answers, and if you stay with it, you'll know why we're still, after decades of playing this music, engaged and dedicated to it. And remember, it's supposed to be fun.

The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra



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HISTORICAL AND REHEARSAL NOTES

This historic arrangement was one of “the original seven” that formed the repertoire of the original Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra (now the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra). To this day, in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra band folders, *Big Dipper* is #4 in the book. This new edition is taken directly from the original ink parts that were on the stands at the band’s debut performance in February 1966, now housed in the Thad Jones Archive at William Paterson University, where Thad served as Founding Director of Jazz Studies.

These original seven charts were commissioned by Count Basie for an entire album of Thad Jones’ music – but Thad’s voicings and ideas were “modern” enough to Basie’s ears that he never made the record, instead suggesting that Thad start his own band. The rest is history! Nevertheless, *Big Dipper* still maintains that swinging Basie mindset, and should be rehearsed that way. Its basic foundations are a relaxed but powerful rhythm section with a driving ride cymbal beat and crisp hi-hat, underpinning saxes and brass that are tight, and always on the back of the beat. The saxes and brass play their upbeats as late as possible, locking in with the tight ride cymbal skip beat. A great description of the Basie time concept comes from the legendary Basie alumnus Frank Wess, who once said, “That accent is not on the upbeat of four, it’s just before one!”

Big Dipper is an extended 16-bar blues. The first ten measures of every chorus are normal blues changes, with what at first sounds like a V-IV-I cadence in measures 9-10 – but, instead of going to the I chord in the 11th measure, Thad continues down by whole-steps to a bIII7, then uses a gospel-like cycle-of-fifths progression to end each chorus.

As with many Basie arrangements, a number of key stylistic elements are not printed on the original chart. The rehearsal comments below are taken from recorded performances of the original recording by the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, and from later recordings and performances by the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. This arrangement can be performed at the deepest level when band members are hearing these great recordings in their minds as they play.

- The brass play the one-time theme in octaves starting 1 measure before Letter B. Give these lines shape by emphasizing the high notes in each phrase, and “ghosting” or de-emphasizing the lower notes. In measure 35, all three quarter notes are short. In measure 37, beat 1 is quiet, with an *oo-what!* crescendo to beat 2. The downbeat of measure 38, beat 4, and the downbeats of measure 39, beats 1 and 2 are all marcato.

- The shout choruses that happen at Letters C and E are identical, each with a lot of dynamic details. Measure 45, beat 2 is forte, then subito piano on beat 3; beat 1 should be left silent – no drum fill, for maximum contrast. There is a

crescendo in measure 47, a fortissimo/crescendo in measure 49, and another crescendo on the half note in measure 50. On beat 1 of measures 53-55, despite the fact that the short note of the triplet comes first, Thad’s band never performed it as written; the triplets are always played as a quarter-eighth. There is a space (not a breath) after the half note in measure 57, then another space after the dotted quarter in measure 58; the same spacing happens in measures 59-60.

- The trumpet solo is open for repeats at Letter D, then builds to the downbeat of Letter E. Again, leave the downbeat of E silent.

- In the transition at Letter H, measures 123-124 should be subito piano, measures 125-126 strong, and measures 127-128 screaming! Letter I can be a 4-bar decrescendo back to the silent first beat of the D.S..

- On the Coda, spaces are needed after the half note in measure 135 and the dotted quarter in measure 136.

Significant recordings of *Big Dipper*:

- Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, *Central Park North* (recorded 6/17, 18/69) Solid State SS18058

- Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, *All My Yesterdays* (2 CDs and 89-page booklet; recorded 2/7/66 and 3/21/66; released 2016 during the 50th anniversary week at Village Vanguard jazz club) Resonance HCD2023

David Demsey
Coordinator of Jazz Studies
Curator, Thad Jones Archive
William Paterson University

Big Dipper

MEDIUM GROOVE TEMPO ♩=152-160

64006

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B

1 2. (last x only)

Acto I

Acto II

Tenor I

Tenor II

B. Sn.

Trpt. I

Trpt. II

Trpt. III

Trpt. IV

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tbn. III

Tbn. IV

Pno./Gtr.

Bs.

Dr.

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21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

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Acto I

Acto II

Tenor I

Tenor II

B. Sn.

Trpt. I

Trpt. II

Trpt. III

Trpt. IV

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tbn. III

Tbn. IV

PNO./GTR.

Bs.

Dr.

37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50

Chord progression: D⁷ C⁷ B^{b7} A⁷ D⁷(#9) G⁷ F⁷ B⁷ E⁷ A⁷ A⁷ D⁷ B⁷ E⁷ A⁷ D⁷ G D⁷ G⁷ G⁷ C⁷ C⁷ G⁷ G⁷ D⁷ G⁷ C⁷

Rehearsal marks: (16) (4)

Dynamic markings: *f*, *p*, *sfz*, *sf*, *p*

Performance instructions: (SQUEEZE)

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51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76



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Acto I

Acto II

Tenor I

Tenor II

B. Str.

Trpt. I

Trpt. II

Trpt. III

Trpt. IV

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tbn. III

Tbn. IV

Pno./Gtr.

Bs.

Dr.

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Acto I

Acto II

Tenor I

Tenor II

B. Sx.

Trp. I

Trp. II

Trp. III

Trp. IV

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tbn. III

Tbn. IV

Pno./Gtr.

Bs.

Dr.

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D.S. AL CODA



Alto I

Alto II

Tenor I

Tenor II

B. Sc.

Trp. I

Trp. II

Trp. III

Trp. IV

Tbn. I

Tbn. II

Tbn. III

Tbn. IV

Pno./Gtr.

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FINE

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