

Presents

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

COUNTER BLOCK

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

ARRANGED BY THAD JONES

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

JLP-7321

MUSIC BY THAD JONES

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THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

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COUNT BASIE SERIES

COUNTER BLOCK (1959)

Background:

Next to Duke Ellington, there is no more famous band in the history of jazz than that of William “Count” Basie. Although his economical piano playing was ahead of his time compared to several of his more stride-oriented contemporaries, Basie was always best known as the face of an organization that played a continuous role in shaping the trajectory of jazz for over 50 years.

Born on August 21, 1904 in Red Bank, New Jersey, even as a youth Basie was attracted to not just music in general, but the idea of being a bandleader specifically. Settling on the piano as his main instrument as a teen, Basie’s musical apprenticeship was fairly typical for the time. Most of his education stemmed from hanging around the Harlem stride piano scene of the 1920s. A series of tours with vaudeville troupes came next; when one of the troupes broke up in Kansas City in 1927, Basie found himself stranded.

This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it was not long before Basie found himself hired by bassist Walter Page to play with his now-legendary territory band, the Blue Devils. His notoriety rising, Basie eventually left the Blue Devils to take over the piano chair in the Bennie Moten Orchestra, considered to be the finest band in the Kansas City area. After Moten’s sudden death in 1935, rather than letting the band fall apart, Basie ended up taking over the reins himself, bringing in several of his former Blue Devils band mates, including Page himself, in the process.

It did not take long for this new band to make its impact on the world of jazz. The Basie organization specialized in arrangements that were fairly loosely organized and easy to customize on the spot, known informally as “head” arrangements. This allowed for a much more soloist-friendly environment than most of the other bands of the swing era. In addition, the band’s rhythm section was responsible for a distinctive shift in the way time is kept in jazz. Spurred by drummer “Papa” Jo Jones’ more free-form approach and guitarist Freddie Green’s steady “rhythm” style of playing, the innovations of this organization would play a key role in setting up the eventual rise of bebop in the 1940s. World War II was not kind to big bands for a variety of reasons, and Basie’s band was no exception. Financial considerations would force him to reduce his ensemble to an octet by the end of the 1940s. By the mid-1950s, however, Basie was able to reform his big band, aided in no small part to a series of hit recordings, including a particularly popular version of the jazz standard “April In Paris.” This new Basie band maintained the same relentless sense of swing as the earlier units, but was much more organized as a whole. Gone were the “head” arrangements of old in favor of a consistently expanding library of charts provided by what may have been the greatest stable of arrangers ever housed by a single band.

Basie’s celebrity firmly cemented by this point, his band remained true to this new format for the rest of his life. The 1960s and 1970s would see a string of successful albums backing singers such as Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Tony Bennett, among others. In addition, the band began to see an increased presence in Las Vegas and Hollywood; Basie’s famous cameo in Mel Brooks’ “Blazing Saddles” is no doubt a highlight of the now-classic comedy. Basie continued a busy touring and recording schedule even when he was wheelchair-bound in his final years. Basie passed away on April 26, 1984. The band that bears his name continues to tour to this day, performing both the favorites of the past as well as new arrangements and continuing to collaborate with some of jazz’s top vocalists, including George Benson and Diane Schuur. The list of notable artists brought to prominence through the ranks of his band include saxophonists Lester Young, Frank Foster and Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis, trumpeters Harry “Sweets” Edison, Buck Clayton, and Thad Jones, trombonists Dicky Wells and Al Grey, and drummer Sonny Payne. Notable arrangers who contributed to the band’s book include Foster, Jones, Neal Hefti, Quincy Jones, and Sammy Nestico.

Thad Jones was born in Pontiac, Michigan on March 28, 1923, into a family that must be considered along with the Marsalises to be among America’s greatest jazz clans. His older brother and pianist Hank lived to be 91 and played in his beloved lyrical style through every era and in every style; swing and big band and bop, backing vocalists and playing solo. Thad’s younger brother

Elvin was one of the most virtuosic and influential drummers in jazz history, also enjoying a long career shining in many different genres of jazz. Thad was self-taught, and clearly possessed genes and natural abilities that ran deep in this incredible musical family. After spending time in the military and honing his formidable trumpet skills while playing in bands centered in the Midwest, Thad joined the Count Basie Orchestra in 1954, becoming a featured soloist on some of the band's greatest tunes and soon becoming an arranger for the group as well, writing about two dozen arrangements in his near-decade with Basie. In 1963 Thad left the Basie Orchestra to become an independent studio musician and arranger in the thriving New York City jazz world. He and drummer Mel Lewis soon hit upon the idea of starting a working big band that would be a vehicle for some of NYC's best and busiest musicians to jam and work on ideas and compositions, and this eventually became the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. After playing at various clubs, in 1966 they approached Max Gordon, owner of the famed Village Vanguard, and began a regular gig there which amazingly continues to this day, as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, currently under the leadership of trombonist John Mosca.

Thad took a teaching position at William Paterson University in New Jersey in 1972, where he conducted the student big band and taught arranging and other classes. This was a pioneering move, as he became one of the first musicians at his level to embark on a career as a full-time professor, and continued until he decided to move to Europe. Thad spent most of the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s in Denmark, where many American jazz musicians had taken up residence. While there, he took over the Danish Radio Big Band and turned it into one of the world's best ensembles. He also composed, arranged, taught, and continued to study during this period. He moved back to the U.S. in 1985 to take over the leadership of his late mentor Count Basie's band. Unfortunately, he soon became ill and had to step down, and moved back to Europe where he was hospitalized for months. He passed away at the age of 63 in August 1986, leaving the world without one of the very best creators and interpreters of the jazz idiom.

Dr. David Demsey, Coordinator of Jazz Studies and Curator of the Thad Jones Archive at William Paterson University, has referred to Thad as a "savant" when it comes to his jazz arranging abilities. He shares a story about a vocal session Thad had written charts for, and one of the arrangements was apparently not in the singer's key. So late one night Thad took the chart home, and while everyone expected it to be transposed for the next day's session, apparently he brought in a chart that was completely new and had been done in a few hours. And, of course it was spectacular. Few people have ever heard a great-sounding band in their head like Thad Jones did; every nuance of every instrument, every melody, every dynamic and shade of color played out vividly in his incredibly fertile mind, and these newly-discovered charts are more examples of this. They also show his singular ability to write music for others, which clearly reflected the style and sound of the artists he worked for, yet firmly reflected Thad's own very unique musical footprint as well. When one attends a jazz concert and hears a band playing a collection of songs by a group of jazz's greatest arrangers, Thad's still stand out. The professionalism is one thing, but what really sears the Thad Jones trademark in one's ears is the depth of his art: the charts exude what Dr. Demsey has so ideally termed "a rhythmic adeptness and an ingenious thematic coherence." His arrangements are full of life, often very complex, yet retain a playful exuberance that makes them so memorable and enjoyable to hear, to learn, and to play. They contain intricacies which are appreciated by the very best players yet at the same time have such harmonic richness and bluesy warmth that even the most casual listener can truly love them as well.

The Music:

First documented on the Count Basie Orchestra's 1959 live album *Breakfast Dance and Barbecue*, Thad Jones's *Counter Block* shows the trumpeter's arranging style really starting to come into its own, exhibiting early examples of several of what would become his signature arranging quirks.

Notes to the Conductor:

As is typical, the arrangement begins with a Basie piano solo - sixteen measures of solo stride followed by a few blues choruses with the rest of the rhythm section. Basie's stride solo has been transcribed and written out in full, though the piano player is encouraged to improvise his or her own solo. The entire band roars to life at measure 30, with the saxes carrying a triumphant unison line with bright brass hits urging them on. The delightfully disjointed melody commences at measure 38, with the brass and saxes trading off riffs around one another over a standard I Got Rhythm form. Everything comes together for the final two measures before launching into a tenor sax solo chorus at measure 63. The backgrounds should be punchy and aggressive. A four-bar drum break at measure 95 sets up a sax soli chorus. While not as complex as some of Jones's later work, it should still give your section a nice workout. The few holes in the sax lines are filled in by some playful brass hits. Another drum break, this time eight measures in length, brings the full ensemble together at measure 143. This shout section is typical Jones - thrilling, high energy, and abounding in creativity. The melody returns for the bridge at measure 159 and is played as before. The arrangement starts to finish up beginning at measure 175 with a four bar drum break, a quick horn fanfare, and more drum solo. The finale features a false start from the horns before one last hit-and-fall, with the drums soloing around it all. This publication is based on a set of parts created by Frank Foster for his 1994 recording with the SWR Big Band. This set was based on the original parts that were in the Basie Band library. The trombone 4 part was added by Foster and can be considered optional. A tuba part had also been added which is not included in this publication.

Doug DuBoff and Dylan Canterbury

- May 2019

COUNTER BLOCK

SCORE

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

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BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 160

Score for Counter Block, featuring instruments and piano accompaniment.

Instruments: Alto Sax 1, Alto Sax 2, Tenor Sax 1, Tenor Sax 2, Baritone Sax, Trumpet 1, Trumpet 2, Trumpet 3, Trumpet 4, Trombone 1, Trombone 2, Trombone 3, Trombone 4 (Opt.), Guitar, Piano, Bass, Drum Set.

Key Signature: Two sharps (F# and C#).

Time Signature: 4/4.

Tempo: BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 160.

Chord Progression (Piano):

- Measures 1-2: F⁶ Dm⁷
- Measures 3-4: Gm⁷ C⁷
- Measures 5-6: F⁶ Dm⁷
- Measures 7-8: G⁷ C⁷
- Measures 9-10: F⁶ Dm⁷
- Measures 11-12: G⁷ C⁷
- Measures 13-14: F⁶ Dm⁷
- Measures 15-16: G⁷ C⁷

Other markings: (SOLO) above measure 15, *mf* (mezzo-forte) below measure 1.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

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9

PNO.

Dr.

(9)

F⁶ Dm⁷ G⁷ C⁷ F⁶ Dm⁷ G⁷ C⁷ F⁶ Dm⁷ G⁷ C⁷ F⁶ B^b₆ B^o₇ C⁷

(Hi-Hat)

mp

sim.

(4)

(8)

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

17

OPEN PIANO SOLO

Gtr.

PNO.

Bs.

Dr.

F⁷ B^b₇ F⁷ B^b₇ F⁷ B^b₇ F⁷ Am⁷ D⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷ F⁷ B^b₇ B^o₇ C⁷ C⁷ (END SOLO)

mp

(4)

(8)

(12)

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

30 ON CUE

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx. 1

T. Sx. 2

B. Sx.

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Fl. 3

Fl. 4

Clar. 1

Clar. 2

Clar. 3

Clar. 4

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Bsn. 3

Bsn. 4

Eup. 1

Eup. 2

Eup. 3

Eup. 4

Tuba

Tim. 1

Tim. 2

Tim. 3

Tim. 4

Cym.

B.D.

Tr.

G.

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37