

Presents

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

JUST AN OLD MANUSCRIPT

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

ARRANGED BY DON REDMAN

PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND ROB DUBOFF

FULL SCORE

JLP-7715

MUSIC BY DON REDMAN

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COUNT BASIE SERIES

JUST AN OLD MANUSCRIPT (1945)

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 reigns 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.



The Music:

Just an Old Manuscript was originally written in 1943 for the Casa Loma Orchestra led by Glen Gray. Don Redman disbanded his own ensemble in 1940 and free-lanced, writing for several bands from 1941-46, when he brought an ensemble to Europe. The Casa Loma Orchestra had been in operation since 1927 and it remained an excellent ensemble during the war years. *Just an Old Manuscript* was just one modern compositions that was commissioned for and performed by the ensemble.

The original recording for Decca in 1943 remains unissued and may still exist (the Decca masters were donated to the Library of Congress); however, a 1946 recording was issued at the time. Several airchecks and a radio transcription have also been in circulation. When Gray was asked to make Hi-Fi recordings for Capitol in 1956, *Just an Old Manuscript* was recorded yet again.

Redman submitted the piece to Count Basie in 1945 at which time it was recorded for transcription and V-Disc. Basie later recorded it in 1949 for RCA Victor, one of the rare times that a piece was in the Basie book for several years before it was recorded commercially. Stylistically, the Casa Loma and 1945 Basie versions were performed with the bass playing in 4 beat swing style. For the 1949 Basie recording the bass player switched between 2-beat and 4-beat. In addition, the RCA Victor recording has a sizable cut of 32 bars.

Notes to the Conductor:

A bugle call from the brass cues the rest of the band into the simple four measure introduction before the melody proper begins at measure 5. Said melody is a basic riff played in unison by the trombones with a brief interjection from the saxes at measure 12. The saxes take over the melody at measure 21 and don't relinquish it for the rest of the form, with the brass taking on accompaniment role.

Measure 63 sees a key change as well as the arrival of a tenor solo, handled on the original recording by Buddy Tate. The background figures in the brass are fairly basic, but should have a little bit of propulsion to them. The trombones once again state the melody for the final A section at measure 81 with some sax long tones underneath before the band launches into its final salvo at measure 89. This section should be played at full volume, with the saxes playing the melody with a harmonized brass riff providing an ideal counterpart.

The arrangement enters a slow, gradual tailing off at measure 99 with an eight bar Basie piano solo. The same shout section figure returns at measure 107, this time with brass in cup mutes and an overall volume decrease. The saxes maintain the melody all the way through the end, with the trumpets dropping out at measure 115 and the trombones shifting to a lightly wah-ing background figure. A typical one bar bass break precedes a simple, clean ending figure to bring the proceedings to a tasteful close.

For the 1945 recording the bass played plays the entire arrangement in 4; however, for the 1949 studio recording he switched between 2 and 4 feels. We encourage you to experiment and determine which feel you prefer.

This arrangement is for jazz big band. It is not a transcription - it has been prepared from the set of parts used during the 1945 and 1949 recordings. On the 1949 studio recording there is a cut from measure 28 to measure 55. We have made a note of this on the score, but have included the entire chart if you wish to perform it in full.

Doug DuBoff, Jeffrey Sultanof and Dylan Canterbury
- January 2019

JUST AN OLD MANUSCRIPT

SCORE

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

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MEDIUM SWING ♩ = 120-160

①

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

1 2 3 4

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⑤

A. Sax. 1 *p*

A. Sax. 2 *p*

T. Sax. 1 *p*

T. Sax. 2 *p*

B. Sax. *p*

Tbn. 1 *mf*

Tbn. 2 *mf*

Tbn. 3 *mf*

Tbn. 4 *mf*

Gtr. *mp*

Pno. *mp*
(in 2)*

Bs. *mp*
(Hi-Hat)

Dr. *mp*

sim.

(4)

(6)

mf

5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

*NOTE: BASS PLAYED IN 2 FOR THE STUDIO VERSION AND PLAYED IN 4 FOR THE LIVE VERSION.

(13)

A. Sax. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*

A. Sax. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*

T. Sax. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*

T. Sax. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*

B. Sax. *p* *mp* *mf*

Trpt. 1 *mf*

Trpt. 2 *mf*

Trpt. 3 *mf*

Trpt. 4 *mf*

Tbn. 1 *mf*

Tbn. 2 *mf*

Tbn. 3 *mf*

Tbn. 4 *mf*

Gtr. B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_{maj7} A^b_6 F_{m7} $B^{\circ 7}$ B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_6 B^b_{m7} $A9^{(4)11}$ A^b_6 A^b_{13}

Pno. B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_{maj7} A^b_6 F_{m7} $B^{\circ 7}$ B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_6 B^b_{m7} $A9^{(4)11}$ A^b_6 A^b_{13}

Bs. B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_{maj7} A^b_6 F_{m7} $B^{\circ 7}$ B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} B^b_{m7} E^b_{13} A^b_6 B^b_{m7} $A9^{(4)11}$ A^b_6 A^b_{13}

Dr. \downarrow (4) (8)

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20