

*Presents*

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

# **FLIGHT OF THE FOO BIRDS**

RECORDED BY COUNT BASIE

ARRANGED BY NEAL HEFTI

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

## **FULL SCORE**

JLP-8012

MUSIC BY NEAL HEFTI

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## COUNT BASIE SERIES

# FLIGHT OF THE FOO BIRDS (1957)

### **Background:**

The 1950s were a particularly productive era for William “Count” Basie. After a period of musical and financial uncertainty in the late 1940s, his reformed big band (known informally as the New Testament band) put out a number of recordings that would achieve tremendous levels of critical and commercial acclaim. This version of the band contained not just a stable of legendary instrumental soloists, but also a book of charts from what may be the best catalog of arrangers in jazz history. Even amidst the band’s high standards, Neal Hefti’s *Flight Of The Foo Birds* has emerged over time as one of the most popular and well-loved of the Basie band’s prolific output due to its infectious melody, memorable solo performances, and brilliantly exciting shout chorus.

### **The Music:**

The melody is initially stated in unison by a trademark Hefti sound: two trumpets in cup mutes, two trumpets in harmon mutes with stems in. The saxophones and trombones take over melody duties for the bridge at measure 11 before the trumpets make the final statement. The melody is irresistibly catchy, and should be approached with a cloying cuteness that borders on over-the-top without actually going overboard.

A C-to-C# pedal in the trombones and rhythm section underlies a cascading saxophone line before the full ensemble plays one mighty blast to set up a half of a chorus of a Frank Wess alto saxophone solo at measure 35. Some punchy trombone backgrounds lead into a brief ensemble riff to set up a slightly-less-than half chorus of Joe Newman’s trumpet at measure 49. The pedal sendoff is re-applied at measure 61 to lead into a brilliant full chorus of Eddie “Lockjaw” Davis’ fiery tenor saxophone, with the ensemble riff being recycled as the only background at measure 79.

The pedal sendoff is re-used once again, only this time a 2 bar Sonny Payne drum break sets up what is one of the most brilliantly written and executed shout choruses in jazz history at measure 103. The full power of the Basie band is on display with the corkscrewing main line being played by the band in full initially, then by solely the saxophones with a singing brass chorale fleshing out the harmony. A variation on the ensemble riff during the solo section serves as an interlude at measure 113 before the initial shout line returns for the grand finale at measure 121. The band continues to build toward the arrangement’s climax, increasing the intensity without losing control. A brief Basie piano break sets up the band’s final fanfare to bring the arrangement to an appropriately wonderful conclusion.

**Dylan Canterbury**

May 2017



## SCORE

## FLIGHT OF THE FOO BIRDS

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(MUSIC BY NEAL HEFTI)

ARRANGED BY NEAL HEFTI

PREPARED BY DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 200

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  
GUITAR  
PIANO  
BASS  
DRUM SET

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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11

A. Sax 1

A. Sax 2

T. Sax 1

T. Sax 2

B. Sax

Trpt. 1

Trpt. 2

Trpt. 3

Trpt. 4

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

Tbn. 4

Gtr.

Pno.

Bs.

Dr.

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Subtone

pp

mf

Am<sup>9</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7 Bm7 E7<sup>(9)</sup> C<sup>♯</sup>m7 F<sup>♯</sup>m7 Dm7 F<sup>°</sup>7 Em7 Am7 Dm7 G7<sup>(9)</sup> C7 F<sup>♯</sup>7 F<sup>♯</sup>m7

(4) (8)