

1999

# The Solo Vocabulary of Jazz Bassist Jimmie Blanton.

Robert Nash

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**THE SOLO VOCABULARY OF  
JAZZ BASSIST JIMMIE BLANTON**

**A Monograph**

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts**

**in**

**The School of Music**

**by**

**Robert Nash**

**B.A., Brooklyn College, 1980**

**M.M., Brooklyn College, 1990**

**May, 1999**

**UMI Number: 9925541**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Bill Grimes, my major professor, and the members of my committee, Dr. Griffin Campbell, Dr. Jan Herlinger, Dr. Jeffrey Perry, and Prof. Dennis Parker, for their assistance in the development and completion of this project.

Other people who contributed valuable information and advice along the way include: Milt Hinton, Prof. Richard Davis, Wendell Marshall, Rex Bozarth, Greg Sarchet, Mark Sonksen, Dr. Todd Coolman, Jamey Aebersold, Dr. Cornelia Yarbrough, Annie Keubler and the archivists in charge of the Duke Ellington Collection in the National Museum of American History.

Special thanks to John Mckellen for his assistance in obtaining permission to include copyrighted Duke Ellington compositions in this monograph.

Without the love and support of my wife, Judy; my daughter, Chloe; my parents, Harriet and James Nash; my in-laws, Harriet and Bernie Goldstein; and our family and friends, none of this would have been possible: God bless you all!

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Jimmie Blanton (1918-1942) is recognized today as a pivotal figure in the evolution of jazz double bass performance. His performances and recordings with the Duke Ellington Orchestra (and smaller ensembles connected with this unit) between 1939 and 1941 served to elevate the double bass from a limited role as time-keeper and "novelty" soloist in the rhythm section of the jazz orchestra to that of an identifiable solo voice, capable of supporting, contrasting, or blending with the reed, brass and percussion sections as dictated by musical needs. Blanton's approach to the instrument confounded the conventional notions of his era about almost every aspect of jazz bass performance; the clear, powerful tonal quality, superior pitch accuracy, technical freedom, and melodic inspiration that characterize his style immediately redefined the standards by which his contemporaries judged jazz bassists. His duo recordings with Duke Ellington at the piano, which featured extended improvised bass solos using both pizzicato and arco techniques, remain significant landmarks in recorded jazz.**

**The purpose of this study is to examine various aspects of Blanton's solo vocabulary by transcribing, analyzing, and comparing eighteen of his solo performances in their entirety. This approach identifies the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic components which comprise his vocabulary in their original context, and provides greater insight into his approach to jazz improvisation in a variety of musical settings.**

**The monograph consists of a review of Blanton's life and career; an overview of the development of jazz bass solos up to 1939, the year Blanton began recording; analysis and discussion of various aspects of Blanton's solo vocabulary and style; and**

**appendices containing 18 transcriptions of complete Blanton solo performances and composite scores of “Body and Soul” (three versions) and “Mr. JB Blues” (two versions).**

## INTRODUCTION; PURPOSE OF STUDY

Jimmie Blanton (1918-1942) has been cited by numerous musicians, critics, and historians as a significant contributor to the development of jazz double bass performance.<sup>1</sup> His enduring reputation is based on his musical contributions as a member of the rhythm section of the Duke Ellington Orchestra between 1939 and 1941, a period referred to by critic Grover Sales as the “golden age of Ellington” in recognition of the high quality of the band’s recordings and performances during that time.<sup>2</sup> Historian John Edward Hasse touches on a number of aspects of Blanton’s style and personality while describing his role in the Ellington band:

Ellington was . . . drawn by [Blanton’s] agility, unfaltering control of pitch, and masterful swing. [He] revolutionized jazz bass playing by expanding the instrument’s melodic role as accompanist and in solos, and by enriching the bass’s sound through an outsized tone. Blanton loved nothing more than playing his bass; when not on the stand, it seems as if he was always practicing, grabbing a quick lesson from the classical music teacher in whatever town the band was playing, or hunting up a late-night jam session. “His amazing talent,” [cornetist Rex] Stewart declared, “sparked the entire band.”<sup>3</sup>

Blanton’s ability to improvise extended solos on the double bass prompted Ellington to feature him as a soloist with the full band and collaborate with him for two sets of duo performances in which Blanton, rather than Ellington, was the prominent

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<sup>1</sup>John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 233 et seq. “. . . (Blanton) always spelled his first name ‘Jimmie’ in his autographs, though nearly everyone else has spelled it ‘Jimmy.’ ” The former spelling is employed throughout this document.

<sup>2</sup>Grover Sales, *Jazz: America’s Classical Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 83 et seq. Writers cited in this study are practically unanimous in their praise of Ellington’s music during this period and their acknowledgment of Blanton’s contribution to its quality.

<sup>3</sup>Hasse, *Beyond Category*, 234.

melodic voice. The release of six of these duo performances in 1940, according to Hasse, “set listeners on their ears.”<sup>4</sup> Among these listeners were Blanton’s peers: George Duvivier, Trigger Alpert, Slam Stewart, Doc Goldberg, and Bob Haggart, all well-known jazz bassists of the late 1930s and early 1940s, have cited Blanton’s rhythm section and solo performances as an influence.<sup>5</sup> He continued to influence post-World War II bassists, such as Ray Brown and Charles Mingus, even after his death in 1942, through their study of his recordings.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, various aspects of Blanton’s style have been absorbed so thoroughly into mainstream concepts of jazz bass performance that it is difficult to name a major bassist today whose style contains no element of his tonal, rhythmic, or improvisational contributions.

Previous research into Blanton’s life and music has been hampered by a scarcity of primary materials relating to him: consequently, limited scholarly attention has been paid to any aspect of his career.<sup>7</sup> To date, only one major paper, a master’s thesis by Rex Bozarth, has been written on Blanton, in addition to a modest number of articles about him and/or transcriptions of his performances.<sup>8</sup> These materials, having identified

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<sup>4</sup>Hasse, 234.

<sup>5</sup>Rex Bozarth, “An Assessment of the Role of James “Jimmy” Blanton in the Development of Jazz Bass,” (master’s thesis, North Texas State University, 1981), 59-68.

<sup>6</sup>*The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, s.v. “Jimmy Blanton.”

<sup>7</sup>In June, 1995, the holdings of the Duke Ellington Collection at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. were searched for information on any aspect of Blanton’s involvement with the Ellington Orchestra. No primary materials, such as sketches, scores, letters, or other memorabilia relevant to this study, were found within these holdings.

<sup>8</sup>Bozarth’s thesis is not devoted exclusively to Blanton. Considerable space is given to the development of jazz bass before 1939 and first-hand accounts of musical developments in the early 1940’s by bassists who were his contemporaries.

a number of general traits and typical patterns which characterize Blanton's solo style, tend to avoid deeper analysis. Thus, critical and historical assessments of his contribution to the development of jazz bass performance are presently based on partial or superficial examinations of his solo vocabulary.

#### PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine various aspects of Jimmie Blanton's solo vocabulary by transcribing, analyzing, and comparing eighteen of his solo performances in their entirety. This approach will illustrate the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic components which comprise his vocabulary in their original context and provide greater insight into his processes of selection and modification of these components within a variety of forms and structures.

The transcription of a sizeable number of complete Blanton solos and the comparison of alternate versions of a single composition would not have been possible without the reissue of the bulk of Ellington's studio material recorded between 1939 and 1941 (including all alternate takes of the Blanton-Ellington duos) in the early 1990s.<sup>9</sup> The inclusion of these recordings in this study makes it more comprehensive than any previous discussion of his style.

The comparison of alternate performances is especially important when discussing jazz improvisation as "a combination of predetermined and improvised

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<sup>9</sup>Duke Ellington, *The Blanton-Webster Band*, RCA-Bluebird CD 5659-2-RB; *Solos, Duets and Trios*, RCA-Bluebird 2178-2-RB.

elements,” the proportions of which change from performance to performance.<sup>10</sup>

Musical material carried over from one performance to another with little or no change indicates some degree of predetermination by the performer, especially when it appears at the same location in both performances: little or no resemblance between passages at the same point in different versions of a piece suggests a more spontaneous creative process. Thus, Blanton’s specific mix of planned and improvised performance can be studied as an element of his solo vocabulary and illustrated in simple graphic terms.

The conclusions reached by this study concerning the materials, organization, and character of Blanton’s solo vocabulary will serve to clarify the nature of his contribution to the development of jazz double bass performance by replacing generalities about his solo vocabulary and style with specific observations, supported by a variety of musical examples taken from the transcriptions contained in Appendix I.

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<sup>10</sup>*New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, s.v. “Improvisation (3).”

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jazz bassist Jimmie Blanton was born James H. Blanton Jr. on October 5, 1918 in Chattanooga, Tennessee.<sup>11</sup> Both of his parents were musicians and he showed considerable musical aptitude as a child, studying piano with his mother and violin and music theory with an uncle.<sup>12</sup> His performing career began at this time with bands made up of members of the Blanton family in the Chattanooga area. He studied alto saxophone while in high school and began formal study of the double bass during his attendance at Tennessee State College in Nashville. During the summers, he worked in Fate Marable's jazz groups which played on riverboats based in St. Louis, where his talent attracted favorable attention from the local musicians. Their encouragement led him to leave college and settle in St. Louis in 1937 as a full-time professional bassist. He eventually joined the Jeter-Pillars Orchestra, one of the busier local dance orchestras in St. Louis at that time, and continued to work in Marable's riverboat groups as well.<sup>13</sup>

While performing at an after-hours club in St. Louis in October 1939, Blanton greatly impressed Duke Ellington and members of his band who were in the audience. He was immediately engaged by Ellington for his orchestra and left St. Louis with the

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<sup>11</sup>Rex Bozarth, "Blanton," 1.

<sup>12</sup>Biographical information in this chapter is based on *Bozarth*, Chapter III, except where noted.

<sup>13</sup>Franklin S. Driggs, "Kansas City and the Southwest" in *Jazz: New Perspectives in the History of Jazz*, edited by Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1959, NY: Rinehart; reprinted by Da Capo Press, n.d.), p. 217.

group, sharing rhythm section duties with regular bassist Billy Taylor.<sup>14</sup> He quickly received recognition for his outstanding contributions as both rhythm section player and featured soloist. Ellington began to compose and arrange material to showcase Blanton's talent, as he had done for others in his band, and collaborated with him on two sets of bass/piano duets. Blanton remained in the Ellington Orchestra until the autumn of 1941, when the effects of advanced tuberculosis made it impossible for him to continue performing. After languishing for months in a California sanitarium, he died on July 5, 1942 and was buried in Chattanooga.

Blanton was considered a rising star in the field of jazz bass at the time of his departure from Ellington, as evidenced by his third-place ranking in *Downbeat Magazine's* 1942 Jazz Poll and the acclaim he was garnering from fellow musicians and critics.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the recognition proved to be very short-lived: the disruption of the American music scene caused by World War II, the appearance of long-playing records, which made 78 rpm discs (on which Blanton had recorded exclusively) obsolete, and the decisive shift in audience taste from pre-War big bands to small groups playing the new be-bop style severely diminished the public's awareness of his

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<sup>14</sup>Dr. Klaus Stratemann, *Duke Ellington Day By Day and Film By Film* (JazzMedia Aps: Copenhagen, 1988). Various sources are directly contradictory as to the exact timing of this event. W.E. Timmer, in *Ellingtonia* (a scholarly chronicle of Ellington's recording activities), lists Blanton as appearing on Ellington recordings as of October 14, 1939; Stratemann's detailed chronology of the Ellington band's day-to-day activities places the Ellington-Blanton encounter at the time of a St. Louis engagement commencing on October 20, 1939. In addition, Timmer lists the location of Blanton's first sessions as New York City, whereas Stratemann indicates that the 10/14/39 session took place in Chicago.

<sup>15</sup>Bozarth, 25 et seq.

achievements.<sup>16</sup> In the ensuing decades, writers who mentioned Blanton frequently mixed exaggerated praise of his performances with erroneous statements concerning his life and career.<sup>17</sup>

Though Blanton was quickly forgotten by the public, he was always held in the highest regard by Ellington: “Pitter Panther Patter” and “Mr. JB Blues,” compositions he and Blanton had popularized, were still in the band’s book at the time of the Duke’s death in 1974.<sup>18</sup> A number of notable bassists, including Oscar Pettiford, succeeded Blanton in the Ellington Orchestra, but none of them formed as close a musical relationship with Ellington himself. Ellington’s admiration for Blanton’s style remained undiminished after over 30 years as he recalled their collaboration:

Jimmy Blanton revolutionized bass playing, and it has not been the same since. No one had played from the same perspective before. He played melodies that belonged to the bass and always had a foundation quality. Rhythmically, he supported and drove at the same time. He was just too much. We were doing wonderfully with him. He had given us something new, a new beat, and new sounds. We made records of just bass and piano, and altogether it was a great period.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Hasse, *Ellington*, 258.

<sup>17</sup>Bozarth, 1-2; 18-19.

<sup>18</sup>Transcribed copies of “Pitter Panther Patter” and “Mr. JB Blues” (each corresponding to the version referred to in this study as #1) were located in the collection of Ellington Orchestra band parts currently held in the Duke Ellington Collection of the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. in 1995. It could be inferred that these compositions were still part of the band’s repertoire at the time of Ellington’s death in 1974.

<sup>19</sup>Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 164.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF JAZZ BASS SOLOS PRIOR TO 1939**

The double bass, or “string bass,” was not the preferred instrument for performing bass lines in jazz ensembles before 1930. Bands tended to employ either a tubist or double bassist depending on the requirements of the job at hand: the tuba was more effective in outdoor performances or where the instruments had to compete with large, noisy audiences; the double bass was used in quieter venues or situations where the instrumentation featured lower-volume string instruments such as the violin or guitar.<sup>20</sup> Many early bassists were proficient on both instruments: they transferred to the double bass simple patterns and rhythms that were typically identified with the tuba.<sup>21</sup>

As jazz spread from the South to larger cities in other regions during the 1920s, arrangers and bandleaders developed a more refined sonority and more subtle rhythmic style for their groups.<sup>22</sup> The double bass, due to its lighter tone and lower volume, became the bass instrument of choice for major commercial jazz bands after 1930, although bassists in these bands continued to double on the tuba.<sup>23</sup> The types of bass

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<sup>20</sup>George Foster and Tom Stoddard, *Pops Foster: The Autobiography of a New Orleans Jazzman* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 18 et seq.

<sup>21</sup>Mark C. Gridley, *Jazz Styles* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1985), 77.

<sup>22</sup>Hsio Wen Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands,” in *Jazz* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), 184.

<sup>23</sup>Leonard Feather, *The Book of Jazz From Then Till Now* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1965), 119-120.

patterns used by players and arrangers were still strongly influenced by the earlier generation of tuba players.

A small number of recordings made by jazz bands during the 1920s contain breaks or choruses which feature the double bassist as a soloist. Transcriptions of solos by Bill Johnson (with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band), John Lindsay (with Jelly Roll Morton), Steve Brown (with Jean Goldkette), and Wellman Braud (with Duke Ellington) illustrate typical solo vocabulary used by bassists during that time: a predominance of root/fifth patterns and arpeggiated triads moving in quarter-notes, ornamented by infrequent diatonic passing tones and/or eighth-note rhythmic embellishments.<sup>24</sup> These solos were relatively brief, ranging in length from four to 32 bars within a given arrangement.

At the same time, George "Pops" Foster, a veteran New Orleans bassist working in Luis Russell's band, was popularizing the percussive "slap" style of bass playing in his solos.<sup>25</sup> This style emphasized a strong, bright sound, rhythmic complexity, and an energetic presentation over melodic or harmonic variety. The rhythmic and visual aspects of slap bass playing were particularly appealing to audiences and served to gain jazz bassists a greater share of the spotlight in live performances.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>David Chevan, "The Double Bass as a Solo Instrument in Early Jazz," *The Black Perspective in Music* (Cambria Hts., NY: The Foundation For Research in the Afro-American Creative Arts, 1989), 77-83.

<sup>25</sup>Bozarth, 7.

<sup>26</sup>Chevan, 81-82.

The recordings and performances of popular swing dance bands introduced a new generation of jazz bassists to the public during the mid-1930s. These bands, which emphasized written arrangements and a controlled ensemble sound over improvisation, required a higher level of instrumental proficiency in terms of intonation, tone control, and technical dexterity: to meet these requirements, the bassists in these bands were generally better trained in bass technique and music theory than their predecessors.<sup>27</sup> They used the infrequent solo spots they were given as opportunities to explore and expand the bass's role beyond fundamental rhythmic support.

The introduction and conclusion to Gene Krupa's 1935 recording of "Blues For Israel" featured sixteen-year-old bassist Israel Crosby in a solo performance which anticipated Blanton's style in several important ways: he played with a rich, sustained pizzicato sound and a loose swing feel, using blues inflections and a variety of rhythmic figures to achieve the effect of an improvising horn player in his lines.<sup>28</sup> Despite Crosby's technical finesse and advanced solo vocabulary, "Blues For Israel" was to be his only featured solo performance from this era.

Other bassists developed specific aspects of bass playing to an advanced level and became known to the public for their specialized instrumental techniques. Leroy "Slam" Stewart was trained in traditional double bass technique as an adolescent: he executed rapid, perfectly-tuned bowed solos while simultaneously humming the pitches

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<sup>27</sup>Gridley, *Jazz Styles*, 86; 90-92.

<sup>28</sup>Chevan, 82-87; Bozarth, 13.

an octave above.<sup>29</sup> Milt Hinton, with Cab Calloway's band, extended and refined Pops Foster's slap bass patterns, turning numbers like "Reefer Man" and "Pluckin' the Bass" into virtuoso showpieces.<sup>30</sup> Walter Page, with the Count Basie Orchestra, played a particularly forceful walking style and often employed the upper register of the instrument to build tension in his accompaniment.<sup>31</sup> John Kirby, while technically limited as a bassist, led a commercially successful sextet in the late 1930s which featured original arrangements and unusual (for the era) techniques such as strummed double-stops and prominent melodic figures for the bass.<sup>32</sup>

The jazz public's growing interest in the double bass led to the release in 1938 of two recordings which featured it in a prominent solo role: "Big Noise From Winnetka" by Bob Crosby and His Bobcats (with Bob Haggart on bass) and "Flat Foot Floogie" by Slim and Slam (featuring bassist Slam Stewart) were "novelty numbers" which exploited the bassist's showmanship and the instrument's apparent awkwardness.<sup>33</sup> Both records were commercial successes which boosted the careers of Haggart and Stewart and helped to promote the bass as a legitimate solo voice in jazz.

Rex Bozarth, David Chevan, and Gunther Schuller have examined the solo vocabulary of a variety of early jazz and swing era bassists, including those mentioned

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<sup>29</sup>Bozarth, 15.

<sup>30</sup>Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 344-345.

<sup>31</sup>Bozarth, 9-10.

<sup>32</sup>Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 812-816.

<sup>33</sup>Chevan, 82-85.

above. Their transcriptions and discussions of these players' performances, depicting the types of patterns and techniques used by bassists up to the late 1930s, clearly demonstrate that the instrument was breaking free from concepts of bass line construction that had been carried over from ragtime, blues, and brass band music, the primary sources of early jazz. Players began to incorporate chromatic passing tones and inverted chord patterns into their bass lines and add embellishing figures to the rhythm. Most bass solos up to this time were still short phrases inserted into band arrangements for contrast rather than technical display, and players usually used the same vocabulary for their walking lines and solos. Slam Stewart was apparently the most fluent double bass improviser before Blanton: his solos contain motives and phrases similar to some of Blanton's typical devices, executed at fairly rapid tempos.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Bozarth and Todd Coolman, among others, have published transcriptions of Slam Stewart solos. Schuller rates his 1930s recordings as technically, if not musically, superior to any of Blanton's work, especially his arco playing. (*The Swing Era*, 112)

## METHOD OF STUDY

The term “solo vocabulary” (and variants such as “musical vocabulary” or “improvisational vocabulary”) suggests an analogous relationship between the use of musical sound patterns by creators of jazz music and the use of words by creators of literary works. Bill Dobbins, an active jazz performer and educator, makes this connection explicit:

We cannot learn any musical language, including jazz, by making up our own words. We must accept the vocabulary of a language as it exists, if we hope to utilize it as a means of genuine communication. Just as thousands of poets have forged individual styles from nearly identical English vocabulary, the great jazz improvisers have developed highly personal styles from remarkably similar musical vocabulary.<sup>35</sup>

The vocabulary available to any jazz improviser is enormous, ranging from discrete linear and rhythmic patterns less than a measure in length to sizable passages of jazz or non-jazz music quoted within a performance.<sup>36</sup> An individual performer’s frequent recourse to certain “personalized patterns and melodic motives” from this general vocabulary in a variety of improvisational situations further qualifies these elements as part of that player’s solo vocabulary.<sup>37</sup> Identifiable mannerisms in phrasing, articulation, tone color, inflections and dynamics are also important vocabulary

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<sup>35</sup>Bill Dobbins, “Teaching Improvisation: What You Know Is What They Get,” *Jazz Educators Journal* 18, no. 3 (1986): 14.

<sup>36</sup>Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking In Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 102-103.

<sup>37</sup>Richard J. Lawn and Jeffrey Hellmer, *Jazz Theory and Practice* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Inc., 1993; reprint, Los Angeles: Alfred Publishing Co., 1996), 244-245.

elements since, as Dobbins points out, “in jazz, the manner in which a musical idea is played is as important as the idea itself.”<sup>38</sup>

The process of transcribing recorded performances is an essential part of examining an improviser’s solo vocabulary. Jazz musicians have employed this technique since the late 1910s, when the first commercial jazz recordings became available to the public.<sup>39</sup> Lacking any type of study material for the mastery of the jazz style, aspiring players created their own scores of solos and ensemble passages in order to absorb the various patterns and characteristics of the music as completely as possible. Transcribing improvised performances has become an integral part of most young jazz musicians’ training, whether it is done independently or under the guidance of a teacher or mentor.<sup>40</sup>

The process of transcription involves aural recognition of intervals and rhythms, notated appropriately. In addition to conventional music notation, symbols are often devised to indicate various elements of jazz performance, such as pitch variation (bent or smeared notes) or rhythmic interpretation (i.e., swing feel), that cannot be shown clearly (or at all) using standard notation. The transcriber thus creates a score of an improvisation note by note and is able to determine a performer’s typical linear, rhythmic, and idiomatic devices, and their relationships, visually as well as aurally.

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<sup>38</sup>Dobbins, 16.

<sup>39</sup>*New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, s.v. “Transcription (1)”

<sup>40</sup>Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 97-99.

The following compositions which contain extended Blanton solos were transcribed as part of this study:

“Plucked Again”  
“Blues”  
“Pitter Panther Patter” (2 versions)  
“Body and Soul” (3 versions)  
“Sophisticated Lady” (2 versions)  
“Mr. JB Blues” (2 versions)  
“Sepia Panorama” (4 versions)  
“Ko-ko” (2 versions)  
“Pussy Willow”

The performances were transcribed and analyzed individually: alternate versions of each composition were compared with each other, followed by cross-checking of all the performances. The key criterion for the inclusion of a given composition was the availability of alternate performances: “Plucked Again” and “Blues” are included as essential examples of Blanton’s early solo style, even though no alternate takes of these pieces exist.<sup>41</sup>

The transcriptions contained in Appendix I were prepared using an inexpensive cassette tape recorder, headphones, music staff paper, and pencils to prepare the draft copies. The live performances of “Sepia Panorama” and “Pussy Willow” were additionally enhanced by digital noise-reduction in order to strengthen the indistinct notes of the bass. Double bass music is conventionally notated an octave higher than actual pitch; subsequent discussions of pitch and register refer to the pitches as notated, without applying any process of transposition.

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<sup>41</sup>W.E. Timmer, *Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen* (Metuchen, N.J.: Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University; London: Scarecrow Press, 1988), 388.

## **FORM AND STRUCTURE; ORGANIZATION OF THEMES AND SOLOS; SOLO VOCABULARY**

Eight of the nine compositions included in this study were written by Duke Ellington; "Body and Soul," credited to Heyman, Eyton, Sour, and Green, is performed in an Ellington arrangement. No reliable information exists on the origins or development of the themes and arrangements of these pieces, making it impossible to determine the exact nature and extent of Blanton's contribution to the preparation of the material.<sup>42</sup> It may be assumed, given Ellington's exceptional ability to create musical settings for his soloists that highlighted their individual styles, that Ellington's observation of Blanton's solo style strongly influenced his compositional choices.<sup>43</sup>

"Plucked Again" is a 32-bar A-A-B-A song form repeated once, preceded by a four-bar introduction and followed by a one-measure extension of the final tonic, a total of 69 bars. The introduction is performed by the piano alone; the double bass enters with a sixteenth-note pick-up to bar five, the start of the first A section, and plays to the conclusion of the piece, embellishing the final tonic chord with a series of notes in the tag measure.

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<sup>42</sup>Listings of composer credits for Ellington's repertoire compiled by Timner and Stratemann contain no mention of Blanton as either composer or co-writer of any Ellington work, either published or unpublished.

<sup>43</sup>See, for example, comments by Gridley, Megill and Tanner, Schuller, Rattenbury, Ulanov and Hasse. Almost every writer who has discussed Ellington's music could be cited concerning the direct influence of his players on his creative process.

“Blues” consists of five successive choruses of 12-bar blues preceded by a four-bar introduction by the piano, a total of 64 bars. As in “Plucked Again,” the bass enters with a pick-up to bar five and improvises continuously to the final note of the piece.

“Pitter Panther Patter” is conceived on a larger scale. The eight-bar introduction, played by the double bass and piano, is followed by two complete sequences of 32-bar A-A-B-A form; two new 16-bar sections designated C and D; and a concluding 32-bar A-A-B-A restatement of the first themes. The only difference between the two recorded versions is the concluding phrase of the final A section: version 1 is one measure longer than version 2 (136 and 135 bars respectively), due to a modification of the double bass’s concluding phrase.<sup>44</sup>

“Body and Soul” and “Sophisticated Lady” are both standard 32-bar A-A-B-A songs. Ellington employs the same basic plan for his arrangements of both pieces: after the completion of the first A-A-B-A cycle, a brief modulating passage is played by piano alone; this passage leads back from the tonic key of the preceding A section to the key of the B or “bridge” section (rather than leading to either another A-A-B-A cycle or new material), thus preparing a return to the bridge section by the solo bass. This

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<sup>44</sup>The formal scheme of “Pitter Panther Patter” shows Ellington’s unusual (for the 1930’s) methods for balancing structure and variety in his compositions. The presence of sections designated A, B, C, and D is reminiscent of multi-sectional ragtime, reflecting Ellington’s earliest musical experiences. On a deeper structural level, the sequence of new and repeated materials outline an A-A-B-A form “concealed” by the smaller sectional divisions, as follows:

Intro	A A B A	A A B A	C	D	A A B A
8	8 8 8 8	8 8 8 8	16	16	8 8 8 8
	A	A		B	A

This “macro-form” is the key to apprehending the pattern which determines the alternation of new and repeated material. Rattenbury and Schuller discuss these types of formal innovations in Ellington’s music of this period in considerable detail.

results in the following form: introduction-A-A-B-A-transition-B-A for all versions of both songs. The three versions of “Body and Soul” are all 56 bars in length and contain identical sectional divisions; version 1 of “Sophisticated Lady,” 54 bars long, is two bars longer than version 2 due to the reduction of the transition passage (beginning at m.35 in the score) from four bars to two prior to the return to the B section.<sup>45</sup>

“Mr. JB Blues” is based on standard 12-bar blues, but contains several features that are not typical of blues-based compositions.<sup>46</sup> An eight-bar introduction based on a G major triad is repeated, creating a 16-bar section with no apparent harmonic progression. This is followed by two choruses of 12-bar blues in G major. A four-measure transition passage played by both instruments modulates to D major, the dominant key area of G, followed by three choruses of 12-bar blues in D. After the third 12-bar progression is completed, the music returns to the original tonic of G without any preparation for a final series of 12-bar blues improvisations. The version that was originally released (version 1) contains three choruses in this final section and a total length of 116 bars; the alternate take (version 2) contains four choruses at the end and a total length of 128 bars. The placing of the dominant key in the middle of the piece

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<sup>45</sup>Careful listening to the recording suggests that this change was caused by ensemble problems between Blanton and Ellington in the passage and was not a planned modification of the arrangement.

<sup>46</sup>Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 145.

introduces an A-B-A type of design into the more static formal plan of successive blues choruses<sup>47</sup>:

Section	Introduction	A1	A2	trans.	B1	B2	B3	A3	A4	A5	(A6)
Length	16 m.	12	12	4	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Key Area	G	G	G		D	D	D	G	G	G	G
Designation		A			B			A			

“Sepia Panorama,” “KoKo,” and “Pussy Willow” are compositions for the full Ellington Orchestra that contain solo “breaks” and/or improvised passages for the double bass. The live performance of “Sepia Panorama” recorded on November 7, 1940 in Fargo, North Dakota is of particular interest in this regard: the relatively brief improvisations by the solo bass in the studio arrangement recorded earlier that year are significantly enlarged, making the piece an extended live showcase for Blanton.

“Sepia Panorama” is a symmetrical three-part form enclosing a series of 12-bar blues solos:

section	A - B - C		solos (12-bar blues)				C - B - A		tag		
measures	12	16	8					8	8	12	4
key area	F	F	Bb	Bb				Bb	F	F	

The double bass plays two unaccompanied solos in the A sections, answering the full band, while functioning as an obligato voice weaving freely around the piano during the first two solo choruses.

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<sup>47</sup>Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington*, 144-146. A symmetrical relationship is created by the fact that the introduction (16 bars) and first two blues choruses (24 bars) taken together equal the length of the transition to the V (4 bars) plus the three choruses in that key, both being 40 bars long.

“KoKo” is a series of seven 12-bar blues choruses arranged for the full band with various obligato soloists; in the sixth chorus, Blanton plays a pair of unaccompanied two-bar breaks which answer massive chords by the entire wind section.

“Pussy Willow” is a standard A-A-B-A song form, repeated five times. The studio arrangement of this piece, recorded prior to Blanton’s joining the Ellington group, did not include any type of bass solo<sup>48</sup>: Blanton’s eight-bar solo in final A section of the third repetition of the form during the 11/7/40 live performance may have been a spontaneous alteration to the band’s usual arrangement.<sup>49</sup>

### ORGANIZATION OF THEMES AND SOLOS

The two-bar phrase is a structural unit that appears frequently in Blanton’s various solos: it was commonly employed in ragtime and Tin Pan Alley songwriting, compositional precursors of the jazz style, and continued to be an important formal element within the themes, arrangements, and solos produced by jazz composers and improvisers of the late 1930’s.

In *Early Jazz*, Gunther Schuller observes, “The call-and-response permeates all African music. . . . Even in those instances where the formal scheme is not occasioned by an actual call with a specific response, African music is still basically antiphonal. . . . The

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<sup>48</sup>Timner lists one studio and two live recordings of “Pussy Willow” made between March and July of 1939, all with Billy Taylor, Blanton’s predecessor, as bassist. None of these performances include any bass solos. The eight bars taken by Blanton were usually filled by a piano solo.

<sup>49</sup>Ellington can be heard on the recording calling to the rest of the band to reduce their volume as Blanton begins his solo break.

call-and-response format persists in jazz even today in much modified extensions.<sup>50</sup>

Two-bar phrases are frequently employed in a call-and-response relationship within Blanton's performances.

In the sixth chorus of "KoKo," the arrangement alternates two-bar statements by the full ensemble and the solo bass to achieve a strong antiphonal effect:

The image shows a musical score for the piece "KoKo #1". It is divided into two sections: "2-measure call" and "2-measure response". The "call" section is marked for "Winds, Brass" and consists of a sustained chord. The "response" section is marked for "Solo Bass" and consists of a melodic line. The score is written on three staves, with the first staff labeled "310", the second "350", and the third "390".

**FIG. 1** Two-measure "call-and-response" between Blanton and full band, *KoKo* #1.

The arrangement of the A sections of "Sepia Panorama" is similar, except that the first theme played by the ensemble is extended to six bars before Blanton's two-bar response.

"Pussy Willow" places an eight-bar double bass solo, accompanied by light drumming, between two eight-bar statements by the ensemble in the final A section of the performance's third A-A-B-A sequence.

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<sup>50</sup>Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 27-28.

The “A” themes of “Plucked Again” and “Pitter Panther Patter” are constructed on the same plan: a two-bar thematic phrase is repeated three times by the piano followed by a two-bar improvised response by the unaccompanied double bass, dividing the eight-bar section into 6+2 bars:

The image displays two musical examples in bass clef. The first example, titled "Pitter Panther Patter #1", starts at measure 9. It features a piano part with a two-bar phrase repeated three times, labeled "Subordinate material". This is followed by a two-bar solo bass "break" indicated by a bracket. The second example, titled "Plucked Again", starts at measure 5. It also features a piano part with a two-bar phrase repeated three times, labeled "Subordinate material", followed by a two-bar solo bass "break" indicated by a bracket. Both examples show a 6+2 bar division of an 8-bar section.

**FIG. 2** Six-plus-two division of subordinate material and two-bar solo breaks.

This arrangement is maintained in subsequent “A” sections of both pieces, with a new improvised “break” by the double bass filling in the seventh and eighth bars each time. The “B” sections of “Plucked Again” change the phrase structure to imply a 4+4 division of the successive two-bar units: “Pitter Patter Panther” maintains the two-bar phrase as a basis throughout the length of the piece.

“Blues,” “Mr. JB Blues,” and the “C” sections of “Sepia Panorama”, all based on the 12-bar blues progression, are made up of four-bar phrases which fit the tripartite harmonic structure of the blues form (mm. 1-4: I-IV-I-I; mm. 5-8: IV-IV-I-I; mm. 9-12:

V-IV-I-V).<sup>51</sup> Patterns shorter than four bars in length occur in these performances, but they are subordinate to the larger design.

“Body and Soul” and “Sophisticated Lady” are instrumental paraphrases of pieces originally composed for a singer with accompaniment. Two-bar phrases appear in these compositions as smaller components which are linked together to form eight-bar melodies, rather than as independent or antiphonal entities. Blanton’s improvisations closely follow the phrase structure of the original melodic lines and supporting harmonies.

### SOLO VOCABULARY

Rex Bozarth has identified and categorized various melodic, harmonic, and idiomatic elements which comprise Jimmie Blanton’s solo vocabulary.<sup>52</sup> In his thesis, each of these elements is defined and illustrated by examples from transcribed Blanton performances, presented as isolated segments to illustrate what he considers to be typical features of Blanton’s style. Ken Rattenbury, in his transcription and analysis of “Mr. JB Blues,” concentrates on the harmonic and rhythmic interaction of the double bass and piano within the performance, and says little about the use of solo vocabulary in Blanton’s improvisations.<sup>53</sup>

The two-bar solo breaks in Blanton’s performances represent a microcosm of Blanton’s solo vocabulary, inasmuch as the linear, harmonic, and rhythmic devices that

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<sup>51</sup>Gridley, 416.

<sup>52</sup>Bozarth, 32-42.

<sup>53</sup>Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington*, 143-163.

comprise his style can be observed, in isolation or combination, within these concentrated improvisational statements. The prominence of these segments within the texture is emphasized by the cessation of any accompaniment, which allows the solo double bass to project effectively.

Many of the two-bar solos are diatonic scalar and/or arpeggio patterns based on the local harmonic structure, with little connection to the themes of the pieces they appear in. The notes of the tonic triad (root, third, fifth) are favored starting and ending points:

F Maj. 1 5 G Maj. 5 3  
Plucked Again, 11-12 Pitter Panther Patter #1, 15-16

G Maj. 5 1 3 5 1 3 5 1 D Maj. 1 1  
Pitter Panther Patter #1, 71-72 Mr. JB Blues #1, 59-60

**FIG. 3** Root, third, and fifth as prominent melodic pitches in two-bar solos.

The use of the sixth scale degree in solo lines introduces an element of pentatonic modality, even though the pentatonic scale (degrees 1-2-3-5-6) is not strictly employed as a compositional device:



**FIG. 4** Scale degree 6 as a prominent melodic pitch

Chromatic passing tones frequently fill in the intervals between chord tones:



**FIG. 5** Types of chromatic passing tones in two-bar solos.

The appearance of the lowered third, fifth, and/or seventh scale degrees in a major key, sometimes in combination with the diatonic forms of these intervals, represents an inflection of these pitches identified with blues music<sup>54</sup>:



**FIG. 6** "Blues" inflections in two-bar solos.

<sup>54</sup>Lawn and Hellmer, *Jazz Theory and Practice*, 17-18.

The double bass's upper register is frequently employed for repeated-note patterns:



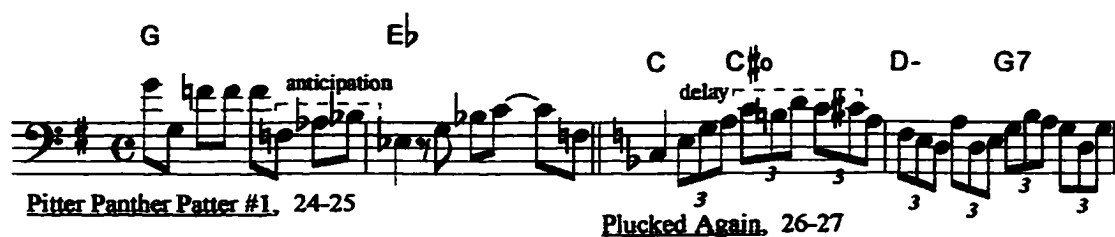
**FIG. 7** Typical upper-register patterns.

Altered pitches, such as the flatted sixth and ninth, appear most frequently as chromatic upper-neighbor tones in the solo line, and are resolved downward:



**FIG. 8** Altered pitches resolving to chord tones

Changes of harmony in the accompaniment are sometimes anticipated or delayed in the solo line, either within or between bars:



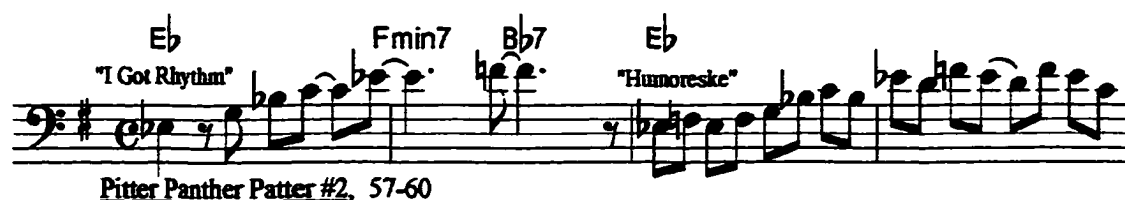
**FIG. 9** Anticipation and delay of changes in local harmony.

Pedal points created by alternating melodic pitches with open-string pitches suggest a polyphonic texture within the solo line:



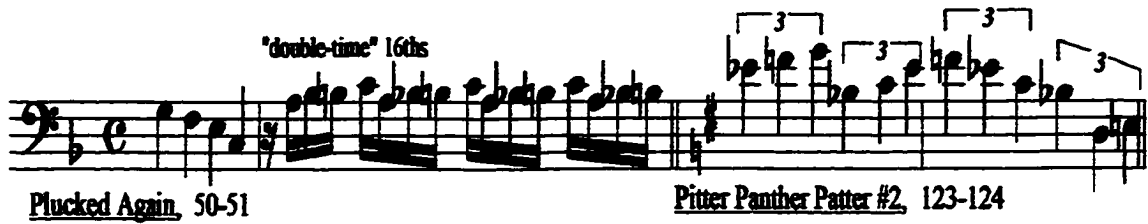
**FIG. 10** Open-string pedal points

Quotations of familiar melodies such as Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" and Dvorak's "Humoreske" are interpolated seamlessly, suggesting that they were planned, rather than impromptu, insertions:



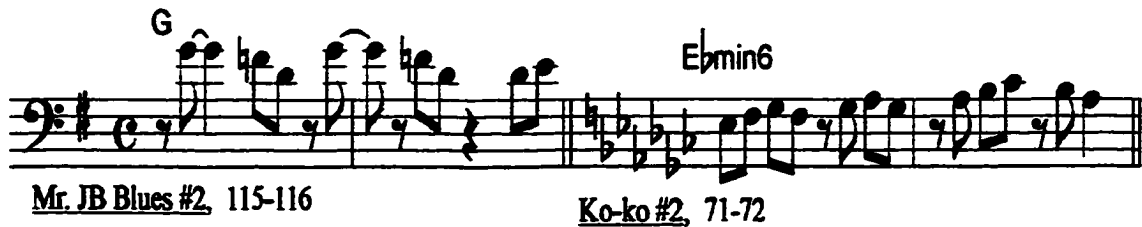
**FIG. 11** Quotations of popular musical material in an improvisation.

Eighth-notes and eighth-note triplets are the most frequently used rhythmic values in common time. Variety is introduced at points by the use of sixteenth-notes, giving a faster "double-time" effect, or slower-moving quarter-note triplets:



**FIG. 12** Rhythmic variety in two-bar bass solos.

Some solo breaks are based on syncopated rhythms created by the use of tied notes or rest values:



**FIG. 13** Syncopated motives in two-bar bass solos.

Blanton's longer improvisations are constructed from similar melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements to those employed in his two-bar solos: these elements tend to remain identifiable within longer phrase units. In the following example, shorter sub-phrases are connected into an uninterrupted line stretching over seven bars, rising to the double bass's upper register before descending to the starting point:

sub-phrases

$E\flat 7$   $B\flat 7$

$F 7$   $B\flat 7$   $E\flat 7$   $B\flat 7$   $F 7$

Sepia Panorama #1, 41-48

**FIG. 14** Extended solo line as an assembly of sub-phrases.

Diatonic scales are sometimes employed without embellishment as solo material:

$E\flat$  Major: 5 5 1 (1)

Pussy Willow, 57-58

D Major: 5 5 1

Body and Soul #3, 41-42

**FIG. 15** Diatonic scales as solo vocabulary.

Scale tones are often arranged in scale-tone/neighbor-tone patterns which form a sequence of thirds:

lower-neighbor upper-neighbor

Blues, 61-62 Mr. JB Blues #1, 27-28

**FIG. 16** Sequences of thirds.

In passages containing more complex harmonic relationships, such as descending cycles of fifths or chromatic root movement, the solo line often follows the chord changes closely, arpeggiating the chord structure:

Blues, 21-24

Body and Soul #1, 27-28

Sophisticated Lady #1, 25-26

FIG. 17 Broken-chord patterns as solo vocabulary.

The superimposition of triadic patterns in the solo line over a local harmonic progression suggests that the pitches in the solo line are upper extensions of the supporting harmonies, although the triads appear to result from chromatic voice-leading:

Sophisticated Lady #1, 13-15

Upper extensions result from chromatic voice-leading.

FIG. 18 Superimposition of non-harmonic triads over a chord progression.

The solo line sometimes anticipates changes in the accompanying harmony:

Db7 C/G G7

Plucked Again, 56-57

G anticipation of Bb, m.25

Pitter Panther Patter #1, 23-24

FIG. 19 Anticipation of changes in harmony within solo line.

Although Blanton's improvising style is not primarily based on development of short motivic fragments, this technique is used intermittently:

motivic fragment

Blues, 43-44

Sophisticated Lady #1, 40-41

Mr. JB Blues #2, 92-95

FIG. 20 Motivic fragments as vocabulary elements.

In blues-based pieces, the alternation of the diatonic and flatted third is sometimes employed as a repeated motive, whether the lower note is bent or smeared into its upper neighbor for a blue effect, or articulated in a traditional manner:



FIG. 21 Bent and articulated blue thirds as motivic fragments.

Use of glissando technique to “bend” blues-inflected pitches also appears in combination with other material:



FIG. 22 Blues inflections in combination with other material.

In chapter 4 of *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer*, Rattenbury defines and illustrates various types of syncopated patterns found in Duke Ellington’s compositions that can be traced to their origins in ragtime music: mid-beat (untied), designated Type

A; mid-bar (tied), Type B; cross-bar (tied), Type C; and secondary ragtime.<sup>55</sup> His subsequent discussion of “Mr. JB Blues” identifies the appearance and interaction of these patterns throughout the piece. His comments on Blanton’s rhythmic interpretation in a single solo performance can be applied generally as well:

Blanton *seldom* [Italics added] plays or directly implies four straight beats to the bar: even when he plays an eight-to-the-bar boogie rhythm and uses the raglike figure of a dotted eighth-note and a sixteenth-note, there are instances where syncopation is implied by the placing of offbeat accents on the sixteenth-note of each couplet.<sup>56</sup>

The “placing of offbeat accents” described above alters the perception of those patterns by a listener: the sixteenth-note in a dotted-eighth plus sixteenth rhythm is typically shortened to clearly depict the quadruple subdivision of the basic pulse. The syncopation resulting from the placement of these offbeat accents creates an ambiguous subdivision of the basic pulse, neither strict sixteenths nor strict triplets, resulting in a “swing” interpretation of the rhythms.

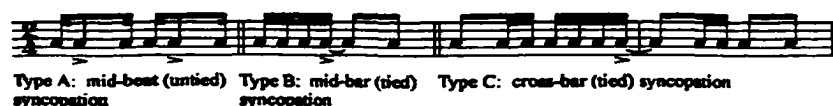
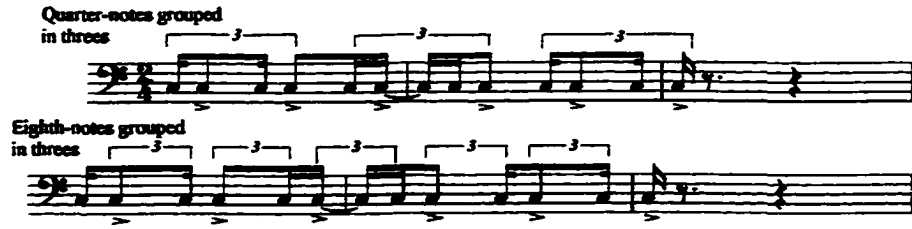


FIG. 23 Basic types of ragtime syncopation, after Rattenbury.

<sup>55</sup>Rattenbury, *Ellington*, 59-61.

<sup>56</sup>Rattenbury, 162.



**FIG. 24** “Secondary ragtime” (3:4; 5:4), after Rattenbury.



**FIG. 25** Blanton’s “hybrid” rhythm vs. traditional rhythmic interpretation.

Blanton’s “swing” interpretation of rhythmic figures is not applied mechanically to all situations: subdivisions range from a type of strictness associated with non-jazz performance to a propulsive style which represented an advanced concept of rhythm in the late 1930’s.

A strict subdivision is applied to the execution of quarter-note triplets in common time (6:4), with the notes evenly spaced and accented as they might be in a symphonic performance. This interpretation differs from the tendency among big-band performers of this period to drag the third quarter slightly.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>David Megill and Paul Tanner, *Jazz Issues* (Madison, WI and Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark, 1995), 61.

Sixteenth-notes and eighth-note triplets are played with a relatively even interpretation at slower tempos. The element of “swing” is introduced by the placing of accents on offbeats, rather than alteration of the note values:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the piece "Body and Soul #1, 17-18" and features two phrases: "Off-the-beat phrasing" and "'Straight' phrasing". The bottom staff is for "Sophisticated Lady #1, 50-51" and also features two phrases: "Off-the-beat phrasing" and "'Straight' phrasing". Various chords are indicated above the notes, including Ebmin7, AbMaj7, and Ao. The notation includes eighth-note triplets and accents on offbeats.

FIG. 26 Contrasting styles of rhythmic interpretation.

The type of “couplet,” or pattern previously described by Rattenbury appears frequently in “Plucked Again” and “Mr. JB Blues.” It is a hybrid rhythmic interpretation, lying between ragtime dotted-eighth plus sixteenth figures and “swing” eighth-notes, notated in the transcriptions as the former pattern to distinguish it from the latter. The use of this rhythm gives the performances a suggestion of ragtime rhythm without the rigidity associated with “authentic” ragtime performance practice:

The image shows a single staff of musical notation. The first part is labeled "Plucked Again, 67-68" and the second part is labeled "Mr. JB Blues #1, 93-94". The notation features a hybrid rhythmic pattern of dotted-eighth plus sixteenth notes followed by eighth notes.

FIG. 27 “Hybrid” rhythmic interpretation as vocabulary element.

A more modern rhythmic treatment, in which eighth-notes are performed with a subtle triplet subdivision, occurs often in Blanton's up-tempo improvisations:

Placement of accents suggests a triplet division of each pair of eighth-notes.

G G<sup>o</sup>7 Amin7 D7 D

Pitter Panther Patter #2, 9-10                      Mr. JB Blues #2, 55-56

FIG. 28 “Swing” interpretation of eighth-notes.

The “Scotch snap,” a sixteenth-plus-dotted eighth figure associated with both European and African-American folk music, is a favored rhythmic motive.<sup>58</sup> It also appears in various augmented forms:

Body and Soul #1, 19                      Mr. JB Blues #1, 46

Sophisticated Lady #1, 39                      Scpia Panorama #1, 47

FIG. 29 “Scotch snap” rhythm in various forms as vocabulary elements.

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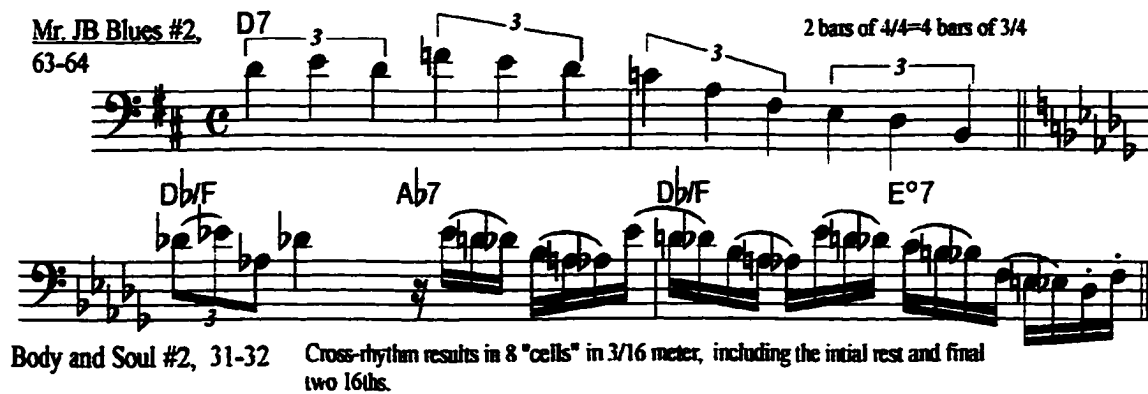
<sup>58</sup>Maude Cuney Hare, *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1994), 62.

Tied notes and/or rests are employed to create lengthier, less predictable syncopated passages:



**FIG. 30** Extended syncopation as a vocabulary element.

Melodic divisions of the line which run counter to the basic pulse create cross-rhythms between the solo and accompaniment:



**FIG. 31** Cross-rhythms as a vocabulary element.

Although Blanton is nominally the featured soloist in “Plucked Again” and “Pitter Panther Patter,” his bass line is subordinate to thematic material in the piano part for a considerable portion of these performances. The double bass parts supporting these

thematic statements are full-textured, rhythmically active lines with their own characteristic motives and are developed as the pieces progress:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for 'Plucked Again, 45-49' and the bottom staff is for 'Mr. JB Blues #1, 41-44'. Both are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). Above the top staff, the following chords are indicated: F, Dmin., Gmin., C7, F, Dmin., Gmin., C7. Above the bottom staff, the following chords are indicated: D, Bmin., Emin., A7, D, Bmin., A7. The first measure of the bottom staff has the text 'wrong notes' written above it. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of the bottom staff.

FIG. 32 Variation of subordinate material.

The double bass appears in its most traditional role as “walking” accompanist when the piano takes an infrequent solo break:

The image shows three staves of musical notation for 'Plucked Again'. The title 'Plucked Again' is written above the first staff. The first staff is labeled 'mm. 5-8', the second 'mm. 13-16', and the third 'mm. 37-40'. All staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The notation consists of continuous eighth-note walking bass lines.

FIG. 33 “Walking” bass lines as accompaniment to piano improvisations.

Bozarth categorizes two elements of Blanton's style as "idiomatic devices": his use of "pizzicato, arco, and slapping techniques" and "articulation with the bow" to achieve a breathy, "horn-like" sound on the double bass.<sup>59</sup> He also alludes to the idiomatic character of certain patterns, such as three chromatic pitches "fingered 1-2-4 on the bass between shifts of position."<sup>60</sup> In fact, Blanton's deployment of his vocabulary reflects a constant awareness of idiomatic effect: his choice of pitch, register, and articulation is always directed toward achieving maximum projection of a clear, sustained tone quality and a flexible, swinging rhythmic flow.

The double bass possesses inherent limitations that are formidable obstacles to jazz improvisation: the pizzicato sound is most penetrating in the lowest register, where the semitones are spaced furthest apart, while the upper registers, where the pitches are closer together, lack resonance. The arco sound is easier to hear but contains numerous powerful overtones and extraneous noises caused by the action of the bow on the strings. In addition, the amplification and recording technologies of the late 1930's were only partially effective in capturing the instrument's volume and timbre, even in controlled situations. The double bassist is thus limited in the types of patterns that are playable and will satisfy critical standards of clarity, accuracy of intonation, and musical expression under diverse circumstances.

Blanton's vocabulary has been criticized for its apparent technical limitations. Bozarth, for example, comments, "[Blanton's] technical skills were limited when

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<sup>59</sup>Bozarth, 41.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 36.

compared to classical virtuosi. . . . most of [his] solos were confined to the lower range of the bass. . . . many of his melodic patterns could be fingered in one position with little shifting involved.”<sup>61</sup> A direct comparison of Blanton’s technical skills to those of contemporary classical performers is only partially relevant due to the differences in the musical goals and standards of the jazz and symphonic genres: the fact that he used as vocabulary scales, arpeggios, and patterns which are part of every bassist’s elementary training does not represent a deficient level of musical sophistication. His improvisations, carefully tailored to fit Ellington’s themes and accompanying harmonies, always demonstrate an awareness of instrumental idiom, a factor which undoubtedly contributed to his influence on subsequent generations of jazz bassists.

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<sup>61</sup>Bozarth, 45-46.

## COMPARISON OF SELECTED PERFORMANCES

The arrangement of selected alternate Blanton performances into quasi-score format illustrates the intermingling of predetermined and improvised material within his solos. The predetermined component of the music does not compromise its validity as jazz in any way: the presence of a set structural plan and the reuse of motives, phrases, or even entire passages of an improvisation in subsequent versions were common practices in the jazz of the late 1930's and remain part of the mainstream of jazz performance practice today.<sup>62</sup>

The pieces to be compared are three versions of "Body and Soul" and two of "Mr. JB Blues," performed as bass/piano duets. All five performances are studio recordings made in Chicago on October 1, 1940 as part of the second (and final) Ellington recording project featuring Blanton as soloist. The third version of "Body and Soul" and the first of "Mr. JB Blues" were released together on a Victor 78-rpm disc catalogued as number 27406: the other versions were not released for decades after the session.<sup>63</sup>

The various versions were compared measure-by-measure according to a basic standard of resemblance between the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of each solo line: no precedence was given to any one performance in terms of musical superiority. A greater degree of resemblance between patterns or passages was assumed

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<sup>62</sup>*New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, s.v. "Improvisation"

<sup>63</sup>Dick Katz, accompanying notes to *Duke Ellington Solos, Duets and Trios*, CD BMG-Bluebird 2178-2-RB.

to indicate some degree of predetermination, while a greater degree of variation implied an improvisational treatment of the material.

The same layout is used for all three versions of “Body and Soul”: a four-bar introduction by the piano; the complete A-A-B-A form, with the melody bowed by the double bass; a four-bar piano interlude; the B and final A sections played pizzicato, resulting in a total length of 56 bars.

Material that is substantially identical in all versions is found in every section except the third A strain (mm. 29-36). The first A section (mm. 5-12) contains identical passages in five of its eight bars: bars 8, 9, and 12 contain minor variations in rhythm and/or pitch while maintaining the same contour within the line. In the second A (mm. 13-20), the three versions begin with divergent approaches in mm. 13-15 before returning to identical material in mm. 16-19. The two B sections contain identical material at mm. 23-24 and m. 46. The final A (mm. 49-56) begins and ends with identical passages in mm. 49-50 and 55-56.

**FIG. 34** Identical material in three versions of *Body and Soul*, mm. 17-18.

Material in the three performances that is similar in its basic content but varied in its treatment is found at various points. In bar 25, the same three-note “cells” are employed in three different rhythmic schemes: version 1 superimposes groups of three sixteenth-notes against the 4/4 pulse, creating a “cross-rhythmic” effect; version 2 begins with identical material before accelerating to sixteenth triplets on the third beat; version 3 moves in sixteenth triplets for three beats before slowing to eighth triplets at the fourth beat. In bars 28 and 48, several patterns used over the descending progression in version 1 are subsequently retained, but are placed in opposite locations: the material which appears in bar 28 of version 1 is found in bar 48 of versions 2 and 3, while the material in bar 48 of version 1 is placed in bar 28 of versions 2 and 3. In mm. 29, 34, and 51, the three versions begin with identical material, but develop independently after the middle of the bar.

**FIG. 35** Rhythmic variations of similar melodic material, *Body and Soul*, m. 25

The three versions are most independent of one another in mm. 21-22, 33-36, 41-45, and 52. The significant degree of difference in the development of the lines at

these points suggests that these passages were improvised anew during each successive performance. The types of melodic and rhythmic patterns used in these improvisations are typical of Blanton's vocabulary: their appearance is an apt illustration of his tendency to build solos by fitting his favorite formulas to the harmonic structure of a composition.

A major portion of the predetermined material consists of extended passages that move between the low, middle, and high registers of the double bass, such as mm. 10-12. These passages often begin in the lower register and ascend, by either arpeggios, scales, or a combination of these, to an upper-register pitch, followed by a rapid descent from the peak note. In mm. 16-19, three separate peaks are reached within the line before reaching the concluding Db in bar 20. The intricate run in bar 46 is surrounded by different improvised material in each performance, making the insertion of predetermined material sound spontaneous. The retention of these technically challenging phrases in all versions suggests that they may have been prepared well in advance of the recording session.

Predetermined material in "Body and Soul" accounts for 18 bars out of 56, or 32% of each version. Its distribution throughout each version is irregular: more than half of that amount is found in the opening and closing A sections, and includes the opening and closing bars. The presence of prepared material in the middle sections is concealed by its placement within phrases and its seamless integration into the flow of the improvisations.

The structural plan for both versions of “Mr. JB Blues” is identical in most respects: a sixteen-bar introduction by the double bass and piano; an A section consisting of two choruses of 12-bar blues; a four-bar transition to the dominant key, followed by three choruses of 12-bar blues in that key (B); an unprepared return to the tonic key for another series of blues choruses which conclude the piece (A). The final section of version 1 contains three choruses for a total of 116 bars, while the same section of version 2 contains four, a total of 128 bars.

The introduction (mm. 1-16) is the only material that appears in a substantially identical form and location in both versions. Similar material occurs at mm. 57-68 of both versions, where a series of two-bar solos are traded between the piano and bass: the double bass’s subordinate line and solo breaks differ in various details between versions while the underlying harmony, a series of non-functional parallel dominant chords, remains unaltered. Material duplicated in alternate versions of “Mr. JB Blues” thus comprises approximately 14% (25 bars out of 116), a much smaller percentage than “Body and Soul.”

The remainder of the material noted in both performances is a variety of blues-related motives and patterns drawn from Blanton’s vocabulary, assembled into improvised solos over standard 12-bar blues progressions. A number of recognizable patterns appear in both versions: a repeated-note figure in the upper register is found at mm. 27-28 in version 1 and mm.117-120 of version 2. Repeated triplets, played arco, appear in G major at mm.91-92 of version 1 and in C major at mm.21-22 of version 2.

The differences between the two versions are more conspicuous than their similarities. In chorus A1 of version 1 (mm.17-28), Blanton and Ellington exchange brief solos: Blanton is silent for four bars at the same spot in version 2 before entering suddenly with arco triplets, a jarring contrast to the preceding solo piano. The transition from G to D Major (mm.41-45) is supported by a “walking” bass line in version 1: the bass is tacet for the entire section in version 2. The first version begins with pizzicato double bass, switching to arco for the last three choruses: the second begins arco, switching to pizzicato after the first two choruses.

Although there is considerable variety in the content of both versions, the first places Blanton’s vocabulary in a more coherent musical setting. The performance steadily builds momentum and climaxes with the bowed “boogie-woogie” patterns in the final chorus. The second version, by comparison, seems disorganized and overextended: the abrupt switch from two choruses of fragmentary bowed improvisation to solo piano and the subsequent lack of an identifiable climactic point limit the impact of the performance.

“Body and Soul” and “Mr. JB Blues” represent the opposite poles of Blanton’s approach to jazz improvisation. “Body and Soul” closely paraphrases the melody and *harmonies of the original composition, adding linear and rhythmic embellishments to the existing structure.* The strong resemblances between the three versions indicate that some type of detailed arrangement, including sections of prepared passagework, was used for these performances. The two versions of “Mr. JB Blues,” on the other hand, are much freer in their organization, depending mainly on the harmonic underpinnings

of the 12-bar blues progression to unify the elements of the performances. Blanton's (and Ellington's) approach to these pieces suggests an informal "jam session" environment where the players' goal is relaxed interplay rather than intense personal expression. This genuine spontaneity involves risk-taking as well: version 2 of "Mr. JB Blues" is the least successful of the duo performances, in both conception and execution.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A number of consistent features can be observed in the construction of Blanton's solos. Some appear, in one form or another, in all of his performances; others are more evident in the duos, where the double bass carries a major share of the musical interest. Within the duo performances, a further distinction can be made between his improvisational approach to faster pieces such as "Pitter Panther Patter" and ballads like "Body and Soul."

Extended lines based on eighth-note and eighth-triplet subdivisions of the basic meter appear frequently in all of Blanton's solos, and form the rhythmic basis for "Plucked Again," "Blues," and "Pitter Panther Patter." In these pieces, rests are employed so sparsely within the solo line that a suggestion of perpetual motion is maintained throughout the length of the performances. Blanton's solos with the full ensemble ("Sepia Panorama," "Ko Ko," and "Pussy Willow"), though shorter, are similarly constructed.

Longer note values appear in "Body and Soul" and "Sophisticated Lady" as references to the original melodies rather than as newly-created motifs, while the improvised passages tend to revert to the more typical extended lines. Much of the improvisation in both of these pieces is based on "double-time" sixteenth-note passages. The two versions of "Mr. JB Blues" are the only performances that make significant use of a variety of rests within the improvised line.

Rest values are most often used to emphasize the outline of a motive, phrase, or change of texture. Many of Blanton's lines begin on an off-beat following an eighth- or sixteenth-rest, while subsequent resting points tend to occur where a wind instrumentalist would place a breath pause while performing an extended passage. This minimal use of rests is an important part of what Bozarth and other writers refer to as Blanton's "horn-like" concept of linear construction, which was undoubtedly influenced by his saxophone studies as a youth and his association with the virtuoso soloists in the Ellington band.

The solo line frequently exchanges its function among thematic statement, improvisation, and harmonic support in "Plucked Again," "Pitter Panther Patter," "Mr. JB Blues," and "Sepia Panorama." Each function is depicted by its consistent association with one specific segment of the two-and-one-half octave range Blanton employed on the double bass: the lowest octave is used most frequently for support, the middle register for themes and subordinate material, and the highest register for solo passages. The variety of tonal qualities which result from this approach to the instrument effectively counters the stereotype of the double bass's tone as too dry and inexpressive for any use as a solo instrument and expands the limited timbral palette available within the bass-and-piano format. The extended live version of "Sepia Panorama" demonstrates Blanton's ability to create a similar effect in a large-band setting, weaving together walking bass line lines with brief unaccompanied solos and a continuous "obligato" accompaniment to Duke Ellington's piano solo.

Blanton's style does not include any of the specialized vocal or percussive techniques used by his contemporaries to add an entertaining aspect to their bass solos. The instrument is either plucked or bowed to achieve a clear, resonant tone. A percussive slap can be heard from time to time during some of the live performances, apparently incorporated to cut through the volume of the full band rather than as a virtuosic device.

Dynamic contrast is not a significant element of Blanton's solos. The double bass is heard at a steady volume throughout the performances and is played in a direct, forceful manner regardless of the specific musical setting. This is characteristic of jazz solo performance in general: the dynamic level of any solo instrument must be greater than its accompaniment in order to project clearly to a listener.<sup>64</sup> Also, the double bass's limited volume and resonance make the production of a penetrating, sustained sound at all times the highest priority in any jazz performance.

Gridley cites Blanton as a musician active during the late 1930s whose work incorporated "progressive" elements, such as altered chord tones, double-time rhythms in extended solos, and quotation of classical and popular melodies, which subsequently became part of the musical language of post-World War II "modern jazz."<sup>65</sup> In fact, these devices constitute a small part of Blanton's vocabulary and appear infrequently in his solos. His technical approach to the instrument, especially his tone quality, powerful

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<sup>64</sup>Gridley, *Jazz Styles*, 24.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.

rhythmic drive, and extended phrasing, is a more direct connection to succeeding generations of jazz bass performers than his solo vocabulary per se.

The individual melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of Blanton's solo vocabulary define his style as essentially conservative. His harmonic language is typical of jazz soloists of the late 1930s: common-practice functional tonality enriched by the use of altered "blue" notes and upper extensions, especially the major ninth and thirteenth.<sup>66</sup> Chromaticism and dissonance are employed sparingly as elements of contrast to the prevailing tonality. His rhythmic vocabulary is equally modest: the only time signatures employed in his solos are 2/4 and 4/4, and the rhythmic patterning within these meters is based on simple subdivisions. Cross-rhythms based on groupings of three sixteenths against four quarters represent the greatest degree of rhythmic complexity found in Blanton's solos: asymmetrical note groupings and complex meters (i.e., 5/4 or 7/8) are not part of his rhythmic vocabulary.

Blanton employed three basic style templates in his solos: up-tempo, blues, and ballad performances are each consistently associated with their own set of specific vocabulary elements. His up-tempo performances, such as "Plucked Again" and "Pitter Panther Patter," exhibit a two-bar phrase structure, minimal chromaticism and blues inflections, and a rhythmic interpretation influenced by ragtime syncopation. Compositions based on the 12-bar blues form, such as "Blues" and "Sepia Panorama," contain longer phrases, numerous blues riffs and inflections (including bends and smears which imitate vocal blues styles), and a subdivision of eighth-triplets in common

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<sup>66</sup>*New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, s.v. "Harmony(i)"

that suggests 12/8 meter. Ballads, arrangements of vocal compositions performed at slow tempos, are treated as florid paraphrases of the original melody and harmony, with frequent use of chromaticism and double-time sixteenth-note subdivisions, and a notable absence of blues inflections. This deliberate segregation of style elements prevents the vocabulary from being exhausted by repetition and gives each type of performance an integrated musical identity.

These stylistic templates are, in turn, associated with specific improvisational processes. The solos in the up-tempo and blues performances, which blend recognizable licks and new material, are typical of what is defined as formulaic improvisation, in which “diverse formulas intertwine and combine within continuous lines. . . . The formulas used do not call attention to themselves, but are artfully hidden, through variation, in the improvised lines.”<sup>67</sup> The paraphrase process of improvisation, where the original melody and harmony of the composition are either stated in a recognizable form, or retained as an outline within new material, is employed only in the slow-tempo ballad performances.<sup>68</sup>

Blanton’s performances received mixed reviews during his lifetime and after his death. Negative evaluations of his style have focused on technical flaws which are evident in his recordings, especially faulty intonation and a coarse tone in bowed passages, rather than musical inadequacies in his improvisations.<sup>69</sup> His colleagues and

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<sup>67</sup>*New Grove*, s.v. “Improvisation”

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Both Schuller and Rattenbury are bluntly unfavorable in their assessment of Blanton’s bowing technique: both are equally unstinting in their praise of his abilities as an improviser.

contemporaries were favorably impressed by his melodic and rhythmic concepts. The attitude of the previous generation of jazz bassists toward Blanton's style is illustrated by veteran performer Pops Foster: in his autobiography, Foster conceded that Blanton was "better at playing melody than me," but "had trouble keeping a rhythm foundation."<sup>70</sup> A veteran of jazz's formative years in New Orleans, Foster felt Blanton's expansion of the bass's role as a soloist was undermining the instrument's primary function as a key element of rhythmic support within a jazz ensemble.

Bozarth has characterized Blanton as a "major catalyst in the accelerated development of the bass as a solo instrument in the forties" and attributes his influence to the "versatility inherent in his fluid improvisational style."<sup>71</sup> This versatility is demonstrated by his mastery of techniques identified with various of his contemporaries, such as Walter Page's strong walking lines, Slam Stewart's arco solos, and John Kirby's melodic ensemble playing: his style, a combination of these borrowings with his own creativity, demonstrated that these previously disparate elements could be fused into a viable vocabulary which would place the jazz double bassist on a par with other instrumental soloists. Paradoxically, the musical conservatism and technical limitations of his solo vocabulary are precisely the factors which made his style accessible to his contemporaries and subsequent emulators: his tone quality, rhythmic interpretation, and characteristic patterns are based on sound principles of instrumental technique and a thorough musical education. His molding of elementary materials such as scales and

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<sup>70</sup>Foster, *Autobiography*, 147.

<sup>71</sup>Bozarth, 43-44.

arpeggios into an effective improvisational vocabulary provided a model which stimulated the creativity of several generations of bassists who came after him. A more virtuosic or idiosyncratic approach to the instrument would have undoubtedly increased his personal fame, but limited the scope of his contributions to the field of jazz bass performance.

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**APPENDIX I**

**TRANSCRIPTIONS OF JIMMIE BLANTON PERFORMANCES**

# PLUCKED AGAIN

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on November 22, 1939, in New York City by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Columbia no. WM-1121A.

1 Piano introduction  $\text{♩} = 72$  A F Dm

6 Gm C7 F Dm Gm C7

9 F Dmin. Gm C7 (Solo Break)

12 A F Dmin. Gm C7

15 F Dmin. Gm C7 Dm

18 Gm C7 (Solo Break)

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**B** C7 F7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ 7 A $\flat$ 7

21

D $\flat$ 7 C/G G C C $\sharp$ o

24

G6 G C7

27

**A** F Dm Gm C7

29

(Solo Break)

31

F Dm Gm C

33

35 F C7 F Gm

37 **A** F Dm Gm C F Dm

40 Gm C F Dm

42 Gm C (Solo Break) -----

45 **A** F Dm Gm C F Dm

48 Gm C F Dm Gm C



63 F Dm Gm C7

Musical notation for measures 63 and 64. Measure 63 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are F2, G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3. Measure 64 continues with G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4.

65 Dm Gm C

Musical notation for measures 65 and 66. Measure 65 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are F2, G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3. Measure 66 continues with G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4.

67 F

Musical notation for measures 67 and 68. Measure 67 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are F2, G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3. Measure 68 continues with G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4.

69 C7 F Rubato

Musical notation for measures 69 and 70. Measure 69 starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The notes are F2, G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3. Measure 70 continues with G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4.

# BLUES

Composed by Duke Ellington and Johnny Hodges; recorded on November 22, 1939, in New York City by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Columbia no. WM-1120A. (Copyrighted under alternate title, "Who Struck John").

1 Piano introduction ♩ = 92

6 C G

8 G7 C

10 G

12 D7

14 G

The musical score is written for a double bass in the key of G major (one sharp) and 12/8 time. It begins with a piano introduction marked '1' and a tempo of ♩ = 92. The first staff shows a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note. The second staff starts at measure 6 with a C major chord. The third staff starts at measure 8 with a G7 chord. The fourth staff starts at measure 10 with a G major chord. The fifth staff starts at measure 12 with a D7 chord. The sixth staff starts at measure 14 with a G major chord. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and slurs.

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17 G

Musical staff 17-18: Bass clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Staff 17 starts with a G chord. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, including a flat (Bb) in the second measure.

19

Musical staff 19: Continuation of the melody from staff 18, featuring various accidentals such as sharps and flats.

21 C

Musical staff 21: Continuation of the melody, starting with a C chord. The melody includes a flat (Bb) and a sharp (F#).

23 G

Musical staff 23: Continuation of the melody, starting with a G chord. The melody includes a flat (Bb) and a sharp (F#).

25 D

Musical staff 25: Continuation of the melody, starting with a D chord. The melody includes a sharp (F#) and a flat (Bb).

27 G

Musical staff 27: Continuation of the melody, starting with a G chord. The melody includes a sharp (F#).

29 G C G C

Musical staff 29: Continuation of the melody, starting with a G chord. The staff is divided into four measures, with chords G, C, G, and C indicated above the staff.

31 G

33 C Bb C D7

35 G

37 Amin D Amin D

39 G D

41 G

42

44 C7

46 G

48 D7

50 G D

52 G A7 D7

55 G

57 C D

59 G

Detailed description: This image shows a musical score for bass guitar, consisting of eight staves of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 12/8. The score is numbered 44 through 59. Chord symbols are placed above the staves: C7 at measure 44, G at measure 46, D7 at measure 48, G and D at measure 50, G, A7, and D7 at measure 52, G at measure 55, C and D at measure 57, and G at measure 59. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some rests and dynamic markings like accents.



# PITTER PANTHER PATTEN #1

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago  
by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor  
no. 053504-1.

Introduction ♩ = 175

1 G°7 G6 G°7 G6

5 G°7 G6 A7 D7

9 G6 G°7 Amin7 D7 G6 G°7

12 Amin7 D7 G6 G°7 Amin7 D7

15 G (Solo Break) A G6 G°7

18 Amin7 D7 G6 G°7 Amin7 D7

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21 G6 G°7 Amin7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

24 Eb6 B Fmin7 Bb7

27 Eb (Solo Break) ----- D6

30 Emin7 A7 D7 (Solo Break) -----

33 A G6 G°7 Amin7 D7 G6 G°7

36 Amin7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

39 G (Solo Break) ----- A G6 G°7

Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

42

G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

45

G6 G°7 Am7 D7

48

G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7

51

Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

54

E♭6 Fm7 B♭7 E♭6 (Solo Break) -----

57

D6 Em7 A7

60

63 D7 (Solo Break) ----- G G°7

66 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

69 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

72 C G B7 E7 (Solo Break) -----

76 A7 D7 G B°7

80 Am7 D7 G B7 E7 (Solo Break) -----

84 Am7 D7 G D7

88 G D7 C#7 G/D

91 C#7 G/D C#7

94 G/D Em7 A7 D7

97 C#7 G/D C#7

100 G/D C#7 G/D Em7

103 A7 D7 G D7 G6 G°7

106 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

109 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

112 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

115 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7

118 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

121 B Eb6 Fm7 Bb7 Eb (Solo Break) -----

124 D6 Em7 A7

127 D (Solo Break) ----- G6 G°7

130 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

133 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

135 G D7 G

# PITTER PANTHER PATTER #2

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor no. 053504-2.

$\text{♩} = 175$

Introduction  $G^{\circ}7$   $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $G6$

1  $G^{\circ}7$   $G6$   $Am7$   $D7$

5  $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$

9  $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$   $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$

13  $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$   $G$  (Solo Break) -----

17  $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$   $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$

21  $G6$   $G^{\circ}7$   $Am7$   $D7$   $G$  (Solo Break) -----

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25 **B** Eb6 Fm7 Bb7 Eb (Solo Break)

29 D6 Em7 A7 D (Solo Break)

33 **A** G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

37 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break)

41 **A** G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

45 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break)

49 **A** G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

53 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break)

57 B Eb6 Fm7 Bb7 Eb (Solo Break)

61 D6 Em7 A7 D (Solo Break)

65 A G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

69 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break)

73 C G B7 E7 (Solo Break)

77 Am7 D7 G Bb°7 Am7 D7

81 G B7 E7 (Solo Break)

85 Am7 D7 G D7 G

89 D C#°7 G/D C#°7 G/D

93 C#°7

97 C#°7 G/D C#°7 G/D

101 C#°7 G/D Am7 D7 G D7

105 A G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

109 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

113 A G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

117 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G (Solo Break) -----

121 B Eb6 Fm7 Bb7 Eb 3 3 3

(Solo Break) -----

125 D6 Em7 A7 D (Solo Break) -----

129 A G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G6 G°7 Am7 D7

133 G6 G°7 Am7 D7 G D7 G

# BODY AND SOUL #1

Composed by Eyton, Sour, Heyman, and Green; recorded on October 1, 1940,  
in Chicago by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano);  
Up-To-Date 053505-1.

♩ = 76

1 Piano introduction

arco

A Ebm7 Ab7 Ebm7 D7

7 Db/F Ab7 Fm7 E°7 Ebm7

10 Ab7 A°7 Bbm7 Ebm7 Ab7

12 Db6 Bb7 Ebm7 Ab7 A

14 Ebm7 Ab7 Db/F Gb7

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16 Fm7 E°7 Ebm7

18 Ab7 A°7 Bbm7 Ebm7 D7

20 Db Em7 A7

21 DM7 B A13 D A7b9

23 D A7 D

25

Dm7 G7 CM7 Eb°7

27

Dm7 G7 C7 B7 Bb7

A 29

Ebm7 Bb7 Ebm7 D7

31

Dbm7 Gb7 Fm7 E°7

33

Ebm7 Ab7 A°7



48 C7 B7 Bb7 A Ebm7

50 Ebm7 Ab7 Db/F Gb7

52 Fm7 E°7 Ebm7

54 Ab7 A°7 Bbm7 Ebm7 D7 Db6 D7 Db



14 Ebmin7 Ab7

16 Db/F E°7 Ebmin7

18 Ab7 A°7 Bbmin7 Ebmin7 D7

20 Db A7

21 D B A7 D A7

23 D A7 D

25 G7

Musical notation for measure 25, bass clef, G7 chord. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, B2, D3.

26 C/E Eb7 Dmin7 G7

Musical notation for measure 26, bass clef. Chords: C/E, Eb7, Dmin7, G7. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, Bb2, D3.

28 C7 B7 Bb7 A Ebmin7 Bb7

Musical notation for measure 28, bass clef. Chords: C7, B7, Bb7, A, Ebmin7, Bb7. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, Bb2, D3.

30 Ebmin7 D7 Db/F Ab7

Musical notation for measure 30, bass clef. Chords: Ebmin7, D7, Db/F, Ab7. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, Bb2, D3.

32 Db/F E°7

Musical notation for measure 32, bass clef. Chords: Db/F, E°7. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, Bb2, D3.

33 Ebmin7 Ab7 A°7

Musical notation for measure 33, bass clef. Chords: Ebmin7, Ab7, A°7. The measure contains a triplet of eighth notes: G2, Bb2, D3.



51

$D\flat M7$   $G\flat 7$   $D\flat$   $E^\circ 7$

53

$E\flat min7$   $A\flat 7$   $A\flat 7$   $A^\circ 7$

55

$B\flat min7$   $E\flat min7$   $D7$   $D\flat$   $D7$   $D\flat$

# BODY & SOUL #3

Composed by Eyton, Sour, Heyman, and Green; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor 053505-3.

$\text{♩} = 76$

1 Piano introduction *arco* **A**

**E $\flat$ min7** **B $\flat$ 7** **E $\flat$ min7** **D7**

7 **D $\flat$ /F** **D $\flat$ /F** **E $^{\circ}$ 7**

9 **E $\flat$ m7** **A $\flat$ 7** **A $^{\circ}$ 7**

11 **B $\flat$ min7** **A $\flat$ 7**

12 **D $\flat$ /F** **B $\flat$ 7** **E $\flat$ min7** **A $\flat$ 7**

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14 Ebm7 D7 Db/F Ab7

16 Db/F E°7 Ebmin7 Ab7

18 Ab7 A°7 Bbmin7 Ebmin7 D7

20 Db A7

21 D A7 D Gmin7

23 D A7 D

25 **Dm7** **G7**

26 **C/E** **E<sup>b</sup>7** **Dm7** **G7**

28 **C7** **B7** **B<sup>b</sup>7**

29 **E<sup>b</sup>min7** **A<sup>b</sup>7** **E<sup>b</sup>m7** **D7**

31 **D<sup>b</sup>/F** **A<sup>b</sup>7**

32 **D<sup>b</sup>/F** **E<sup>o</sup>7**

33 Ebmin7 Ab7 A°7

35 Bbm7 A7 Ab7 Db

37 D A7 D Gm

4 pizz. B

43 D A7 D

45 Dm7 G7

46 C/E Eb°7 Dm7 G7

48 C7 B7 B $\flat$ 7 A E $\flat$ min7

50 A $\flat$ 7 D $\flat$ /F A $\flat$ 7

52 D $\flat$ /F E $^{\circ}$ 7 E $\flat$ m7 A $\flat$ 7

54 A $^{\circ}$ 7 B $\flat$ min7 E $\flat$ min7 D7 D $\flat$  D7 D $\flat$

# SOPHISTICATED LADY #1

Composed by Duke Ellington, Irving Mills and Mitchell Parish; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor no. 053506-1.

♩ = 84

1 Piano introduction

arco

Bbm Eb

4 Gb7 F7 E7 Eb7 Ab G Gb F

7 Bb Bbm7 A7

9 Ab F7b9

11 A Bbm7 Eb7 Gb7 F7 E7 Eb7

13 Ab G Gb F

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15  $B\flat 7$   $B\flat m 7$   $E\flat 7$   $A\flat M 7$

18  $A^\circ$   $D 7$   $B$   $G$   $E m$

20  $A m$   $D 7$   $G$   $G\sharp o$

22  $A m$   $tr$   $A\flat 7$   $G$   $E m$

24  $A m$   $D 7$   $G$   $C$   $F$   $E\flat$

26  $A\flat$   $A^\circ 7$   $A$   $B\flat m 7$

28  $G 7$   $F 7$   $E 7$   $E\flat 7$   $A\flat$   $A 7$   $A\flat 7$   $G 7$   $G\flat 7$   $F 7$   $B\flat 7$

32 Eb7 Ab Db Ab

35 B G pizz. Em

40 Am Ab7 G G#7

42 Am Ab7 G Em

44 Am D7 G C F Eb

46 Ab A°7 A Bbm7 Eb

48 Gb7 F7 E7 Eb7 Ab

50

Ab G Gb F7 Bb

3 3

52

Ab A7 Ab

3



16 **Bbm7** **Eb7** **Ab**

18 **A°** **D7** **B** **G** **Em**

20 **Am** **D7** **G** **G#°7**

22 **Am7** **D7** **G** **Em** **Am7** **D7**

25 **G** **C** **F** **Eb** **Ab** **A°7**

27 **Bbm7** **Eb** **Gb7** **F7** **E7** **Eb7** **Ab** **A7** **Ab7** **G7** **Gb7** **F7**

31 **Bbm7** **Eb7** **Ab** **Db7**

34  $A\flat$

37  $G$   $Em$   $Am$   $A\flat 7$

**B** pizz.

39  $G$   $Em$   $Am 7$   $D 7$

41  $G$   $Em$   $Am$   $D 7$

43  $G$   $C$   $F$   $E\flat$   $A\flat$   $A^\circ 7$

45  $A$   $B\flat m 7$   $G\flat 7$   $F 7$   $E 7$   $E\flat 7$

47  $A\flat$   $A\flat 7$   $G 7$   $G\flat 7$   $F 7$

49  $Bb7$   $Eb7$

51  $A^b$   $A7$   $A^b$

# MR. JB BLUES #1

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago  
by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor  
no.053507-1.

Introduction  $\text{♩} = 152$

1 G G

5 G G

9 G G

13 G G

17 A G C D G

21 C G

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25 **D7** **G7**

29 **A** **G** **C** **G** **G7**

33 **C7** **G**

37 **D7** **G**

41 **D** **A7** **D** **A7**

45 **B** **D7** **G7** **D7**

49 **G7** **D7**

53 A7 D7

57 **B** D Pno. solo (Solo Break)

61 G7 D7 (Solo Break)

65 A7 D7

69 **B** D7 G A7 D7

73 G7 D7

77 A7 D13

81 **A** G C G Arco

85 C7 continue arco to end G7

89 D7 G7

93 G7 A

97 C7 G7

101 D7 G7

105 G7 C7 G7 A

109 C7 G7

113 D7

# MR. JB BLUES #2

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on October 1, 1940, in Chicago by Jimmie Blanton (double bass) and Duke Ellington (piano); Victor no. 053507-2.

♩ = 152  
Introduction G

1 G

5 G

9 G

13 G

17 A arco C7

22 G

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25 **D7** **G**

29 **A** **G** **C** **G**

33 **C** **G**

36 **D7**

39 **G7** **D**

45 **B** **D** **G** **D**

*pizz.*

49 **G** **D**

53 A7 D

57 B D7 Eb7 D7 Db7 D (Solo Break)

61 G7 Ab7 A7 D (Solo Break)

65 A7 Eb7 D7 (Solo Break)

69 B D7 G7 D7

73 G7 D7

77 A7 D

81 A G7 C7 G7<sub>3</sub> 3 3 3

85 C7 G7

89 D7 G7

93 A G

97 C7 G7

101 D7 G

105 A G C G

109 C G

113 D7 G

A 117 G

121 C G

125 D7 G

# SEPIA PANORAMA #1

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on July 24, 1940, in New York City  
by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Victor no. 054625.

♩ = 108

1 A F7 B $\flat$ 7

Full band

3 F7 F7 B $\flat$ 7

6 B $\flat$ 7 F7

Solo bass

9 C7

Full band

11 F7

Solo bass

13 B 16 C 8 B $\flat$ 7 D 37

Piano solo with obbligato bass

38 E $\flat$ 7 B $\flat$ 7

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40  $E\flat 7$

42  $B\flat 7$

44  $F 7$

46  $B\flat 7$   $E\flat 7$

48  $B\flat 7$   $F 7$  12 C 8 B 8  
 Tenor sax solo

77 A 5  $B\flat 7$   $F 7$

84 C7 Etc.

# SEPIA PANORAMA #2

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on November 7, 1940, in Fargo, North Dakota by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Jazz Society nos. AA520/521.

$\bullet = 96$

1 **F7** **B $\flat$ 7**

3 **F7** **B $\flat$ 7**

6 **B $\flat$ 7** **F7**

9 **C7** **F7**

12 **B $\flat$ 7** **F7**

14 **E $\flat$ 7** **D7**

17

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20 **Bb7** **Eb7**

With piano

31 **Bb7** **Eb7**

34 **Bb7**

36 **F7**

38 **Bb7**

40 **Bb7**

42 **Eb7** **Bb7**

44 **Eb7**

46  $B\flat 7$

48  $F 7$

50

51  $B\flat 7$

54 11 8 8 4

85  $B\flat 7$   $F 7$

88 Unaccompanied

92 Unaccompanied

Detailed description: This musical score is for a bass clef instrument in a key with two flats. It consists of eight staves of music. The first staff (measures 46-47) features a  $B\flat 7$  chord and contains several triplet eighth notes. The second staff (measures 48-49) features an  $F 7$  chord and continues with triplet eighth notes. The third staff (measures 50-51) continues the triplet eighth note pattern. The fourth staff (measures 51-53) features a  $B\flat 7$  chord and includes a triplet eighth note followed by a quarter rest. The fifth staff (measures 54-55) contains rests of 11, 8, 8, and 4 measures. The sixth staff (measures 85-87) features  $B\flat 7$  and  $F 7$  chords and includes a triplet eighth note. The seventh staff (measures 88-91) is marked 'Unaccompanied' and contains triplet eighth notes. The eighth staff (measures 92-94) is also marked 'Unaccompanied' and contains triplet eighth notes.

# SEPIA PANORAMA #3

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on September 7, 1940, in Chicago by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Jazz Guild no. 1006.

$\text{♩} = 108$

1 **F7** **B $\flat$ 7** **F7**

Full band

5 **B $\flat$ 7** **F7**

Solo bass

8 **C7**

11 **F7**

Etc.


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# SEPIA PANORAMA #4

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on November 7, 1940, in Fargo, North Dakota by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Jazz Guild no. 1006.


$\text{♩} = 96$

1 F7 B $\flat$ 7 F7



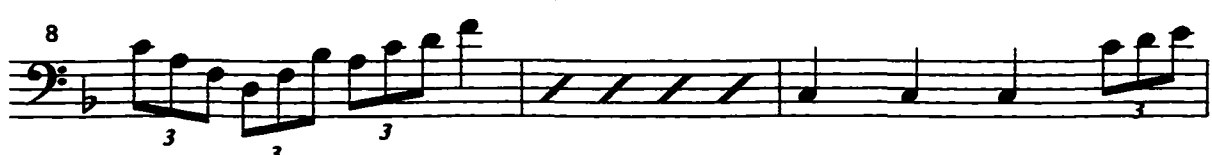
Full band

5 B $\flat$ 7 F7<sub>3</sub>




Solo bass

8 C7



11 F7



Etc.

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# KO KO #2

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on March 3, 1940, in Chicago by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Victor studio no. 044889.

♩ = 192

61 Ebmin6

(Full band) (Solo bass)

64 Abmin7

(Full band)

67 Ebmin6 Bb7(#5)

(Solo bass) (Full band)

70 Ebmin6

(Solo bass) Etc.

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# PUSSY WILLOW

Composed by Duke Ellington; recorded on November 7, 1940, in Fargo, North Dakota by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra; Jazz Society nos. AA520/521.

♩ = 196

89  $E\flat$   $Fm$   $B\flat$

91  $E\flat$   $Fm$   $B\flat$

93  $E\flat$   $Fm$   $B\flat$

95  $E\flat$   $A\flat$   $E\flat$

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**APPENDIX II**  
**COMPOSITE SCORES**

# BODY AND SOUL

## COMPOSITE SCORE OF ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3

7

9

Chord symbols: Ebmin7, Bb7, Ebmin7, D7, Db/F, Ab7, Db/F, E°7, Ebmin7, Ab7, A°7

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11  $B\flat\text{min}7$   $A\flat7$

12  $D\flat/F$   $B\flat7$   $E\flat\text{min}7$

14  $E\flat\text{min}7$

15 Ebmin7 Ab7 Db/F E°7

Musical score for measures 15-16, three staves, bass clef, Eb major key signature. Chords: Ebmin7, Ab7, Db/F, E°7. Includes triplets and slurs.

17 Ebmin7 Ab7 A°7

Musical score for measures 17-18, three staves, bass clef, Eb major key signature. Chords: Ebmin7, Ab7, A°7. Includes triplets and slurs.

19 Bbmin7 Ebmin7 D7 Db Emin7 A7

Musical score for measures 19-20, three staves, bass clef, Eb major key signature. Chords: Bbmin7, Ebmin7, D7, Db, Emin7, A7. Includes slurs and a key signature change at the end.

21 D A7 D Gmin7

23 D A7 D

25 G7

26 C/E Eb7 Dmin7 G7

28 C7 B7 Bb7 Ebmin7 Bb7

30 Ebmin7 D7

31  $\text{Db}$   $\text{Gb7}$

32  $\text{Db/F}$   $\text{E}^\circ 7$

33  $\text{Ebmin7}$   $\text{Ab7}$   $\text{A}^\circ 7$

35 **Bbmin7** **Amin7** **D7** **D<sup>b</sup>**

37 **D** **A7**

42 **D** **C#7** **D** **A7**

44 D Dmin7 G7

46 C/E Eb7 Dmin7 G7

48 C7 B7 Bb7 Ebmin7

50  $A\flat 7$

50

50

50

52  $D\flat$   $B\flat$   $E\flat min 7$   $A\flat 7$

52

52

52

54  $A\flat 7$   $A^\circ 7$   $B\flat min 7$   $E\flat 7$   $D 7$   $D\flat 3$   $D 7$   $D\flat$

54

54

54

# MR. JB BLUES

## COMPOSITE SCORE OF ALTERNATE VERSIONS

Version 1

1 pizz. G

Version 2

1 pizz. G

The first system of music shows two alternate versions, Version 1 and Version 2, for measures 1 through 4. Both versions are written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The notation includes a first finger pluck ('1 pizz.') and a G chord above the first measure of each version. The notes in both versions are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter).

5 G

The second system of music covers measures 5 through 8. It features two staves. The top staff begins with a fifth finger pluck ('5') and a G chord above the first measure. The notes for both staves are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter).

9 G

The third system of music covers measures 9 through 12. It features two staves. The top staff begins with a ninth finger pluck ('9') and a G chord above the first measure. The notes for both staves are: G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), F#2 (quarter), G2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), B2 (quarter), C3 (quarter), B2 (quarter), A2 (quarter), G2 (quarter).

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13 G

13

17 G7 C D G7

17 arco 3

21 C7 G7

21 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

25 A-7 D7 G7

25

29 G7 C7 G7

29 continue arco

33 C7 G7

33

37 D7 G7

37

41 D Bmin Emin A D Bmin Emin A

41 switch to pizz.

45 D G D

45 pizz,

49 G7 D

49

53 A7 D

53

57 D7 Eb7 D7 Db7 D7

57

61 G7 Ab7 A7 D7

65 A7 A#7 B7 Eb7 D7

69 D G D

73 G7 D

77 E-7 A7 D

81 G arco C G

85 C7 G7

89 D7 G

93 G

continue arco

93

97 C7 G7

97

101 Amin D G

101

105 G7 C7 G7

105

109 C7 G

113 Amin D7 G

117 G

Version 2 continues

121 C G

125 D G

**APPENDIX III**  
**LETTERS OF PERMISSION TO USE COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS**

# LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM HAL LEONARD CORP.



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October 30, 1998

Dr. Robert Nash  
2135 Pericles St.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808-1482

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December 7, 1998

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## VITA

Robert Nash is presently in his sixth year as adjunct instructor of double bass and electric bass at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette. From 1994 to 1997, he was also adjunct instructor of double bass at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and coached the university orchestra's bass section. He holds bachelor of arts and master of music degrees from the Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music in double bass performance. His past teachers include Julius Levine, Orin O'Brien, Kirk B. Smith, Dr. William Grimes, and Joseph Iadone.

Dr. Nash is active in the fields of symphonic, jazz, and popular music, performing on double bass, electric bass, and guitar. He is currently double bassist with the Louisiana Sinfonietta, and has been a section member of the Baton Rouge Symphony, Acadiana Symphony, Louisiana Philharmonic, Pensacola Opera Orchestra, as well as numerous other performing organizations in the Northeast and Gulf Coast regions. He has recorded for the Atlantic, Vestige, Centaur, and Binky record labels. Jazz and popular artists he has accompanied include Aaron Neville, Marvin Hamlisch, Tommy Tune, Ronnie Kole, Wess Anderson, Jeannie Bryson, and Governor Jimmie Davis. He is also a founding member of Contra Contrabass, an improvisational trio of bassists which has performed and recorded throughout the South at colleges, clubs, and festivals dedicated to experimental music.

DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

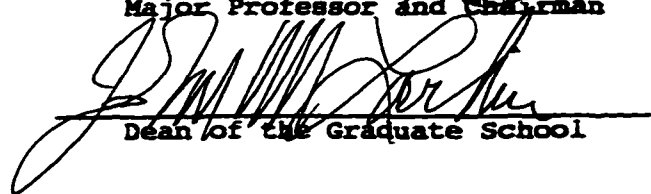
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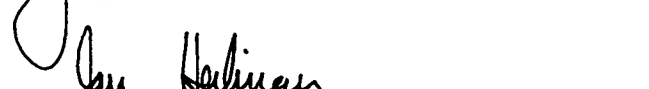


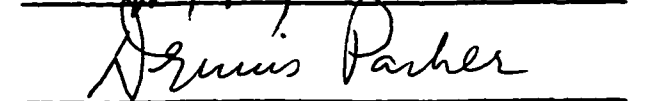
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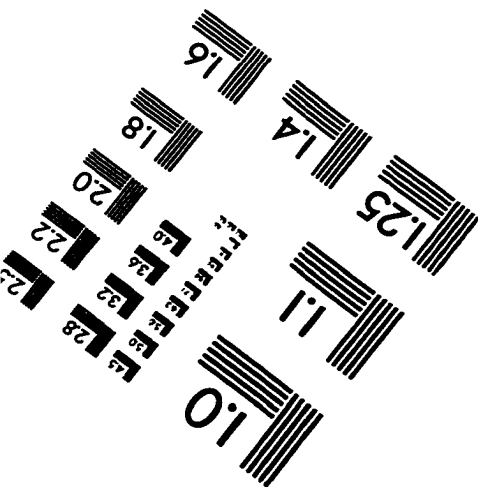
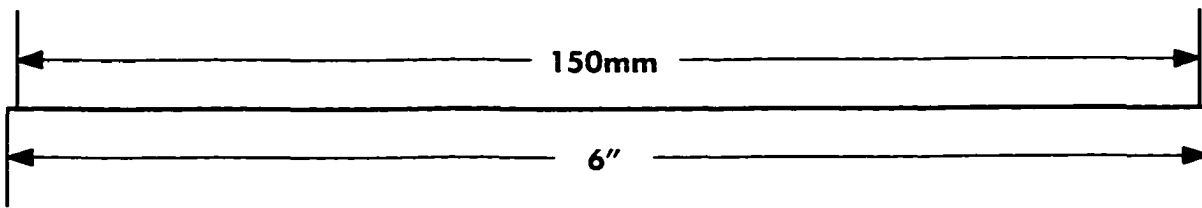
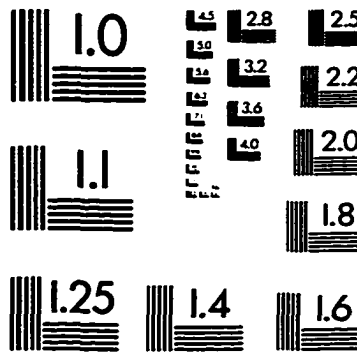
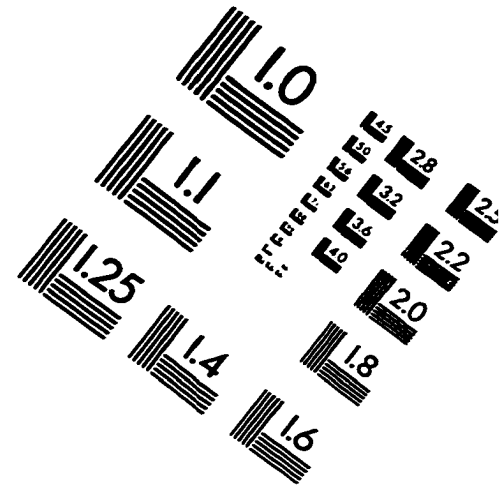
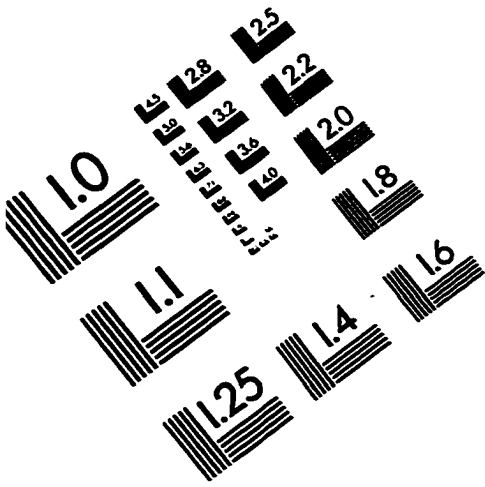
  
  
  
  


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