

# ESSENTIALLY ELLINGTON

High School Jazz Band Program

## Rehearsal Strategies: *I Like the Sunrise* by Duke Ellington By Prof. Ronald Carter – Northern Illinois University

“**I Like the Sunshine**” is the longest and opening part of Duke Ellington’s “**Liberian Suite**.” The suite itself is one of his early extended works even though over his life time he wrote over 30 jazz suites. It was commissioned by the African nation of Liberia (a nation founded by freed American slaves) to celebrate the country’s centennial. I encourage everyone to study the words of the vocal composition and try to come up with your own understanding of the intent of Duke Ellington. It is about a young man from the country side of Liberia traveling to the city to celebrate the centennial of Liberia. The song has a spiritual connection and the band has to find a way to transmit the emotion of the arrangement. The composition and arrangement has to be interpreted as more of a classical piece performed by a fine wind ensemble or orchestra. Be careful to use dynamics and not let the overuse of vibrato get in the way of the style and clarity of the intonation of the piece.

I encourage everyone to research and listen to as many performances of the piece as possible. I really enjoyed the sincerity of the 1947 Duke Ellington recording with Al Hibbler as vocalist. However, you may go to Youtube and find several other performances with the Ellington Orchestra, but not the exact arrangement as in 1947.

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Ella Fitzgerald (4:54) | “Ella At Duke’s Place” – 1965         |
| 2. Frank Sinatra          | “Francis A. & Edward K.” – 1967       |
| 3. Kurt Elling            | “Live in Bimhuis” – November 17, 2012 |

Time has to be taken by everyone to learn the melody by listening and singing along with the original recording until the style and phrasing is internalized.

### Listening to the Soloists:

This piece calls for very little improvisation, but is a showcase for the vocalist, bari sax and clarinetist. The clarinet part is technically and stylistically challenging. Learn the written part slowly, then sing and play along with the original recording until the style and intent is internalized. The baritone sax part has to have the same love and care to make sure the performance is convincing. The vocalist has to be the real star and the ensemble has to support that effort. Take the time to listen and study the various recordings suggested above, especially the original Ellington recording with *Al Hibbler*. Find a way to make a personal meaning for yourself. I always encourage vocalists to have the rhythm section make a practice recording to work on the style, feel and overall performance of the piece. It is also important to record your personal practice to evaluate as well as rehearsal with the band each time.

### Ensemble:

The most difficult aspect of this arrangement is to listen and make sure each line completes another melody line in the arrangement. Also, remember, that for the brass section, there are no slurs, just phrase markings. The only part slurred for the saxes is the first two measures of the arrangement. The form of the piece is *AABA*, with the vocalist using a triplet pulse swing throughout the arrangement. However, for the most part, the band only swings section **F**.

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The image shows a musical score for a jazz band, specifically the brass section. It consists of seven staves: four for Trumpets (Tpt. 1, 2, 3, 4) and three for Trombones (Tbn. 1, 2, 3). The music is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many eighth and sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *f* (forte), with slurs indicating phrasing. The score is divided into measures, with a vertical line separating the first two measures from the rest of the page.

The brass parts at measure 4-6 in the introduction have to have clarity and be in tune. Playing and singing along with the original recording helps a great deal.

## Example: du-da-du-du dot !

Always add dynamic contour to every line. That is how you create interest. Remember those are phrase markings and not slurs, articulate but keep the notes connected. Ending notes are always played ***Doo-Dot!***

Saxes, use very little vibrato except in measures 6 & 7 in the introduction on the long notes. The entire ensemble needs to sing and play their parts at measure 8-14 along with the original recording until the phrasing is understood. Each line is a connection and a call and response to the line before it in measures 8-14. Work to make sure each part is seamless and expresses a special intent leading to the vocal entrance at section A. Tonal blend, balance and good intonation have to be a priority throughout the performance. At section B, trombones balance and swing the eight notes as you respond to the vocalist. Saxes: make sure you understand that the half notes at B are part of the rhythmic motion of the arrangement, so tongue the half notes and add dynamics throughout.

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The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Clarinet and Bari Sax. The Clarinet part is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features a 'Solo' section with a dynamic marking of 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The Bari Sax part is written on a bass clef staff with the same key signature and time signature. It also features a 'Solo' section with a dynamic marking of 'mf'. The score consists of four measures of music, showing intricate melodic lines for both instruments.

**Example:** Bari sax and clarinet have to learn the original parts. If there were changes, you would improvise, but in this case you interpret and blend your parts as a call and response to each other and the vocalist. Everyone really listen to section **D** for the clarity of how parts are articulated and the presence of the clarinet.

## Rhythm Section:

Notice there is no piano on the recording, but one may be added if the intent is maintained. The bass and drums have to keep the time feel moving forward and not drag. Everyone feel the duple pulse except at section **F** where the entire group swings hard with a triplet pulse feel. Bass: make sure you enter with confidence and authority in the introduction. Listen, sing and play along with the original recording until the feel and style is internalized. There was never a drum part written for any of the Ellington music. Louie Bellson told me he used to just listen and look at the second trumpet and second trombone parts. Therefore, the drummer needs to spend a great deal of time listening and studying the recordings. Remember, this piece is more about the classical approach of the timpani and about creating colors on the drums. Bass and drums have to spend a great deal of time together working on the two feel starting at section **A** when the vocalist comes in. Section **C** does call for more aggressive playing for the entire rhythm section, and the bass has a pizzicato bass line. Section **D** has more a walking bass line and feel, adding the guitar playing rhythm guitar. The bass improvises octaves on the bass line at section **E**, leading to the entire band swinging at section **F**. Make sure the entire rhythm section spends time listening and studying the original Ellington recording as a section. This will assure that everyone will be on the same page if you are playing a two feel or a walking four beat feel. Also, talk through the arrangement and discuss how you plan on supporting the vocalist rhythmically and dynamically.