

CHAPPIE WILLET AND
POPULAR MUSIC ARRANGING IN SWING ERA NEW YORK

by

JOHN D. WRIGGLE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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Advisor: Professor Jeffrey Taylor

American popular music of the 1930s and '40s, commonly referred to as the Swing Era, saw established traditions of Broadway stage scoring and commercial dance band arranging intersect with the jazz tradition and the continued expansion of New York City's music publishing and recording industries. Music arrangers held an integral role within each of these fields, and the corresponding emergence of the large dance orchestra or "big band" as the primary vehicle for popular music resulted in significant visibility of their work. The music of these arrangers reflected and influenced popular culture through stage productions presented at the theater and nightclub venues of New York's Times Square district, where segregated black entertainment formerly offered in Harlem was now presented to largely white audiences on Broadway.

This study demonstrates the central position music arrangers held in New York's Swing Era music industry. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 examine the historical role of popular music arrangers, the technical education required of the profession, and historical practices in the context of live stage entertainment. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 analyze orchestration techniques and characteristics of different Swing arranging genres—including classics, concertos, novelty songs, vocal ballads, dance specials, and exotic

numbers—that comprised Swing’s cross-cultural aesthetic. The career and music of African-American freelance arranger Francis “Chappie” Willet (1907–1976) is examined to explore relationships between musical style and the contemporary entertainment industry. Additional technical and social context is provided through the author’s interviews with primary participants, analyses of archival manuscripts, and citations from contemporary press and trade publications.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies on American popular music of the 1930s and '40s, the decades commonly referred to as the Swing Era, have demonstrated the cultural and economic importance of New York City.¹ It was this entertainment center where established traditions of Broadway stage scoring and commercial dance band arranging intersected with recent developments of jazz and the continued expansion of the music publishing and recording industries. Professional music arrangers held an integral role within each of these fields, and the corresponding emergence of the large dance orchestra—or “big band”—as the primary vehicle for popular music resulted in significant public visibility of these musicians’ work. Commercially successful big band music stars such as Benny Goodman might commission or purchase hundreds of arrangements by many different arrangers within a single year.² This study aims to demonstrate the critical position held by music arrangers within New York’s Swing Era popular music industry through an examination of the different genres, styles, and techniques that characterize the era’s big band arrangements.

As with most freelance professions, the Swing Era music arranger needed to participate in a range of income-generating activities in order to survive. Creating piano leadsheets, setting lyrics, scoring band orchestrations, collaborating with dance choreographers, or merely copying orchestra parts for other arrangers’ projects were all part of the equation. Fortunately, an arranger was required on some level (or at many

¹ For example, see Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

² For statistics on Goodman’s repertoire, see Walter C. Allen, *Hendersonia: The Music of Fletcher Henderson and His Musicians* (Highland Park, New Jersey: Walter C. Allen, 1973), 319.

levels) in just about every music business enterprise in Swing Era New York, whether at nightclub stage shows, broadcasting studios, sheet music publishers, or theatrical productions. But even as many published histories of the Swing Era have highlighted the importance of arrangers, it is difficult to find detailed discussions of what arrangers set out to accomplish when they put pencil to paper. By examining some of the concepts and techniques of arranging that were so critical to defining the era's music, I hope to demonstrate that New York's music arrangers held not just an important role—along with performers, publishers, and composers—but perhaps the *central* role in American popular music at the time. More broadly (and admittedly extending beyond the scope of this study), I believe that this argument might be applied to the role of music arrangers in American popular music throughout the twentieth century.

Much of my study focuses on the legacy of Francis “Chappie” Willet (1907–1976), an African-American freelance arranger whose biography reinforces the fact that there is no such thing as a typical freelance musician. Willet was not simply an arranger for swing dance bands. He regularly provided the musical backdrop for productions at iconic New York venues such as the Cotton Club and the Apollo Theater; his business activity was not limited to composing and arranging, but included studio recording, talent management, music publishing, and running a music school. Due to a historically convenient penchant for self-promotion in the printed press—Willet tended to position himself as a “race man” of the entertainment world—his relatively well-documented career provides an attractive means of navigating the overwhelming scope of the period's popular music industry. These promotional efforts also reflect the efforts required of a black musician attempting commercial success across boundaries of cultural and

institutional segregation. Although Willet is frequently celebrated in the black press, his name is rarely cited in mainstream white media.

The fact that so little historical discussion of Willet's career has been published to date provides additional incentive to focus on his work, as the act of reconstructing a forgotten career invites an investigation into the full scope of the subject's legacy.³ It also requires consideration of the circumstances that may have led to such a figure's omission from many (if not most) popular music histories. It is not entirely coincidental that Willet colleagues Porter Grainger (1891–1954?), Donald Heywood (1897–1967), and Russell Wooding (1891–1960?) have suffered similar obscurity. The history of racial segregation in America continues to have repercussions, as chronicles of African-American figures and events inevitably reflect the limitations of contemporary news accounts (such as the mainstream print media), primary records (such as census data), and period politics (including a turn against 1930s integrationist politics in the critical decades of documentation that followed the Swing Era).

For Swing Era performers, the hiring of arrangers represented a significant locus of cross-racial interaction in an otherwise segregated performance world—Benny Goodman's ensemble providing the often-cited exception that proves the rule. Other efforts by white bandleaders to hire black performers (such as Charlie Barnet hiring Sidney DeParis and Al Killian, Stan Kenton hiring Karl George, Gene Krupa hiring Roy Eldridge, Artie Shaw hiring Billie Holiday and Oran "Hot Lips" Page, and Charlie Spivak or Harry James hiring Willie Smith) usually precluded tours of the South, or even

³ Exceptions regarding Willet's documentation include the author's own articles, "Chappie Willet, Frank Fairfax, and Phil Edwards' Collegians: From West Virginia to Philadelphia," *Black Music Research Journal* 27/1 (Spring 2007): 1–22; and "Chappie Willet: A Jazz Arranger in Swing Era New York," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 14 (2009): 101–88. Both articles include additional details regarding Willet's career that are not included in the present study.

involved instances of performers “passing” for white; in any case, most of these associations were short-lived.⁴ Off of the performance bandstand, the more “behind the scenes” nature of arranging allowed for white bandleaders to regularly hire black arrangers (such as Gene Krupa hiring Jimmy Mundy, Charlie Barnet hiring Andy Gibson, or Tommy Dorsey hiring Sy Oliver), and for black bandleaders to hire white arrangers (such as Chick Webb hiring George Bassman, Cab Calloway hiring Will Hudson, or Jimmie Lunceford hiring Roger Segure). The latter scenario, however, never seems to have garnered much attention in Swing Era mainstream media, where decisions and depictions of racial integration were generally conceived to be the province of white power brokers (such as music producer, critic, and NAACP board member John Hammond).⁵ In fact, efforts to promote swing dance bands as representations of American democracy at work may have proved more accurate than proponents of the metaphor intended.⁶ Black arranger Phil Moore provided his own observations of industry practice in the September 1946 issue of *Negro Digest*:

There are two musicians unions in practically every principal city in the country, except New York. ... [Jurisdiction] zones are set up more or less by the white

⁴ These early efforts at integration tended to be either publicized events, or else secrets. For example, see *Variety* magazine’s notice “Barnet’s Negro–Ofay Band for Pk. Central,” reprinted in Dan Mather, *Charlie Barnet: An Illustrated Biography and Discography of the Swing Era Big Band Leader* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2002), 79. An account of Hot Lips Page’s tenure with Shaw is provided in Todd Bryant Weeks, *Luck’s in My Corner: The Life and Music of Hot Lips Page* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 148–53. Stories of Willie Smith’s “passing” while in Harry James’s orchestra are included in Peter J. Levinson, *Trumpet Blues: The Life of Harry James* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 155–56.

⁵ Hammond, for example, was afforded ample space in the *New York Times* to explain the cultural strategy behind his 1938 Carnegie Hall *From Spirituals to Swing* production, which featured black folk and jazz performers. See John Hammond, “From Spirituals to Swing,” *New York Times*, December 18, 1938. A relevant discussion on the perceived role of booking agencies and white promoters appears in Jack Gould, “News of Night Clubs: Debut of a Band Leads to Some Notes on the Negro Musician in the Cabaret,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1938. See also Leonard Feather, “Retrospect of the Year in Jazz,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1941.

⁶ Regarding Swing Era efforts to equate swing music with “Americanism,” see Stowe, *Swing Changes*, 73–80.

locals. ... Whenever a [black] man wants to get a job that pays decent money he has to be okayed by the white local.⁷

The Swing Era is commonly defined in American music studies as a period when elements of the African-American jazz tradition were incorporated into mainstream popular music performance.⁸ The vague and often nuanced terms “swing” and “jazz” (as well as “big band,” “dance band,” or “jazz orchestra”) have been debated in a variety of musical and cultural contexts: their use remains loose and inconsistent, and often accompanied by critical dichotomies of “artist” improvisers and “craftsman” arrangers.⁹ It has been the period’s jazz music (a highly subjective label in itself) that has received the most scholarly attention. Gunther Schuller’s 1989 *The Swing Era* stands as one of the first musicological works to include significant consideration of music arranging in popular jazz music of the 1930s and ’40s.¹⁰ Twenty years later, however, the work of arrangers continues to receive little attention in historical studies of any genre or style. Detailed musical analysis of commercial arranging and orchestration remains a largely untread path, although some recent contributions by musicologists, including Mark Tucker, Walter van de Leur, Jeffrey Magee, and John Howland, have gradually begun to expand the scope of study.¹¹

⁷ Phil Moore, “Jim Crow on the Bandstand,” reprinted in *Jazz: A Century of Change—Readings and New Essays*, ed. Lewis Porter (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2004): 161–62.

⁸ For example, see Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25/3 (Autumn 1991): 533.

⁹ As one popular jazz history textbook attempts to explain: “though big bands went hand in hand with the swing era, big band style did not necessarily mean swing style. There were also jazz-oriented big bands before and after the swing era. Many of these sounded very different from swing bands. Big band style doesn’t necessarily mean jazz style, either.” Mark C. Gridley, *Concise Guide to Jazz*, 6th ed. (Pearson Education: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2010), 94. See also Max Harrison, “Swing Era Big Bands and Jazz Composing and Arranging,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 280.

¹⁰ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹¹ See Mark Tucker, “In Search of Will Vodery,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1 (Spring 1996): 123–82; Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford

As Magee noted in his 2005 study of arranger Fletcher Henderson, “only recently have scholars begun to mine written music as a viable and revealing source for jazz research.”¹² In *The Swing Era*, for example, Schuller limits his study to transcriptions of recorded works. There may be a couple of explanations behind this audio-centric tradition.¹³ Many significant sources of arranged material, most notably the vast archives of Swing Era performers Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Benny Goodman, were only made available to scholars in the late 1980s and '90s; the extensive legacy of historical transcription efforts made prior to the availability of such resources perhaps merits a study in itself. Coinciding with the relatively late appearance of archival sources was the academic phenomenon of the “new musicology” (ca. 1985–2000), which shifted the emphasis of academic study toward more interdisciplinary, extra-musical contextual studies. This was a beneficial move to be sure: many of the resulting new studies of the Swing Era, such as those by David Stowe and Lewis Erenberg, have provided invaluable groundwork for more broadly inclusive efforts.¹⁴ But the initial result of the corresponding “new jazz studies” movement was to place the study of notated music texts on the back burner.¹⁵

University Press, 2002); Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2009).

¹² Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 8.

¹³ Another example of the audio-centric tradition includes the 2000 *Oxford Companion to Jazz* article devoted to Swing Era big band arranging, where Max Harrison posits audio recordings against cultural and social histories as “our sole reliable witnesses” to the development of 1930s jazz music. Harrison, “Swing Era Big Bands,” 277.

¹⁴ Other Swing Era cultural studies include Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Kenneth J. Bindas, *Swing, That Modern Sound* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001); and Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture Between the World Wars* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

¹⁵ For example, the limitations of Stowe’s study regarding musical analysis are discussed in Scott DeVeaux’s review of *Swing Changes* in *American Music* 16/1 (Spring 1998): 90.

Although much written music from the Swing Era has been lost, the late date of my research does allow for at least one considerable advantage: more sound recordings from the Swing Era are available now than ever before. In addition to the continued unearthing of previously unissued commercial studio recordings, the release of live radio “air checks” (audio recorded directly off of radio transmissions) and transcription recordings (studio recordings designated for radio play) reveal performances and arrangements arguably heard by more contemporary listeners than those documented in contemporary disc releases. This development radically expands the breadth of texts available for study, and may even provide a more historically accurate reflection of period repertoire: a “popular” alternative to the studio-recorded “jazz canon” material repeatedly reissued in historical anthologies. Chappie Willet is a terrific case in point, as the number of Willet’s verifiable arrangements issued on record has roughly doubled since the arranger’s death in 1976, including a number of air check performances not made available until 2008.¹⁶

My analysis also includes archival scores or orchestra parts for music not documented in period sound recordings. In emphasizing the work of arrangers (versus that of the performers), I believe that this evidence should be given as much documentary weight as that of contemporary recorded performances. In addition, I have had the good fortune to present live performances of a number of Willet’s unrecorded works, as

¹⁶ Air check recordings of at least nine Willet arrangements were issued in 2008 on Louis Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show & Louis’ Home-Recorded Tapes* (Jazz Heritage Society CD 5289147, 2008). Hugues Panassié’s 1956 *Guide to Jazz*, perhaps the only reference source to include an entry devoted to Willet, is also notable for its prescient claim that “his best arrangements have not been recorded.” Hugues Panassié and Madeleine Gautier, *Guide to Jazz*, trans. Desmond Flower (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), 295.

interpreted by an expanded version of Vince Giordano's Nighthawk Orchestra (modern-day specialists in period jazz dance band performance).¹⁷

This study also proposes that the legacy of Swing Era music arrangers necessarily reflects the world of theater and stage show music, an integral component of the Swing Era that has often been overlooked, if not dismissed outright.¹⁸ For much of the short lifespan of jazz history, there have been significant efforts among historians and critics to exclude the theater tradition as too “commercial”—presumably to suggest that true or authentic art is immune to economic pressures.¹⁹ This is an especially frustrating phenomenon given the long-standing relationship between jazz and theater music. Hopefully, the struggle for jazz's legitimacy as an art form has progressed to the point where the tradition's legacy can now be examined in the context in which it was created. This consideration offers ample opportunity and motivation for revisiting previously historicized music. My focus on freelance arranging, for example, tends to avoid prior jazz historians' emphasis on the “head” arrangement: an unwritten or collectively improvised routine created by the performers that is an important component of the jazz tradition, but not particularly so for the vast majority of Swing Era big band music.

It is possible that the scant attention Swing Era music arranging has received in published oral histories or historical accounts of the period has been due less to matters of technical esotericism than the fact that the overwhelming pervasiveness and necessity of the job precluded discussion by the participants. A three-reel Smithsonian Jazz Oral

¹⁷ The Vince Giordano–Chappie Willet project was supported by the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund, and presented in concert at the City University of New York Graduate Center's Elebash Recital Hall on March 25, 2009.

¹⁸ One welcome exception is Lawrence Gushee's study of early jazz and theater, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Regarding these and other themes in jazz historiography, see DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition.”

History Project interview of the ubiquitous black New York arranger Tom Whaley, despite being conducted by the accomplished musician Milt Hinton, is frustratingly typical in providing little discussion of the arranger's craft, education, or artistic motivations.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Oral History transcriptions are a valuable resource, and also include interviews with black arranger Horace Henderson and white arranger Eddie Sauter; black swing performers Harry "Sweets" Edison, David "Panama" Francis, and Russell Procope discuss arranging-related issues as well. Stanley Dance's *World of ...* series of oral histories provides valuable documentation on the world of the music arranger, if also limited regarding discussions of technique. Dance's interviews and biographies focus on black musicians, including arrangers Benny Carter, Andy Gibson, Samuel Lowe, Jimmy Mundy, Fred Norman, Sy Oliver, Billy Strayhorn, Tom Whaley, and Ed Wilcox.²¹ Although these interviews are often edited and paraphrased, some of the original interview transcripts are on file at the Institute of Jazz Studies in Newark. Interviews compiled by Gene Lees in his book *Arranging the Score* (2000), though also heavily paraphrased, focus on white arrangers such as Les Brown, Bill Challis, Johnny Mandel, Billy May, and Mel Powell.²²

The Swing Era black press, including the *Chicago Defender*, *New York Amsterdam News*, and *Pittsburgh Courier*, provides significant sources of information that have often been overlooked in previous studies, especially in their coverage of black performers, venues featuring black entertainment, and entertainment industry news (both black and white). These publications' celebration of racial pride through professional

²⁰ Tom Whaley, interview by Milt Hinton [no date; 1972–84], Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

²¹ Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970); *The World of Earl Hines* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977); *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001).

²² Gene Lees, *Arranging the Score: Portraits of the Great Arrangers* (New York: Cassell, 2000).

accomplishment also provides an informative alternative to white news sources like *The New York Times*, *Billboard*, or *Variety*, which often emphasize reportage of commerce over culture (for example, citing a venue's box office grosses without identifying the featured entertainers).

A number of published bio-discographies provide fairly reliable arranging credits: those by Walter C. Allen on Henderson (1973), D. Russell Connor on Goodman (1988), Ed Berger on Carter (2002), and Dan Mather on Charlie Barnet (2002), for example, are notably well researched.²³ Reference sources such as the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* occasionally discuss specific arrangers and arranging traditions; the *Grove* entry on "Arrangement" provided by Gunther Schuller is typically provocative in reflecting highly subjective jazz history positions.²⁴ Many of these jazz-centered studies tend to overlook the pervasive vocal and "novelty" genres in favor of commercially recorded instrumentals featuring improvisation, a phenomenon of jazz historiography discussed in chapter 1.

The Swing Era has been described as the music industry's answer to American commercial mass-production.²⁵ Yet given the incredible amount of music created in this period, print media sources outlining contemporary arranging techniques are relatively limited. Instructional "how to" publications, originally intended as prescriptive sources of arranging technique, offer some descriptive documentation regarding contemporary

²³ Arranger credits have been omitted from the most recent edition of W.E. Timmer's *Ellingtonia* (2007), an otherwise valuable resource.

²⁴ Gunther Schuller, "Arrangement," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000): 32–39.

²⁵ See Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8–17.

practices.²⁶ Chapter 2 presents a brief overview of several instructional texts, with an emphasis on techniques relevant to music examples provided in later chapters.

Contemporary trade publications include columns and articles dedicated to the topic of arranging technique, such as those written by white arrangers Archie Bleyer, Jimmy Dale, and Otto Cesana for *Metronome*, and Will Hudson for *Down Beat*. These artifacts range significantly in their degree of usefulness or reliability, but provide a glimpse into mainstream Swing Era arranging pedagogy.

The work of an arranger goes far beyond the spelling out of chords and the execution of stylistic rhythmic patterns. A good arranger can interpret musical texts on a number of levels: issues of tempo, texture, register, vocal and text setting, and other factors must be considered. Arrangers may also make efforts to include their own trademark musical devices, a tradition revealing the professional competition and artistic pride of the era, as well as perhaps some of the jazz tradition's cult of individualism. In the biographical presentations of chapter 3 and musical analyses of chapter 4, I attempt to incorporate these individual concerns to a degree that is commensurate with their importance to the music. By focusing on the work of a freelance arranger such as Chappie Willet, as opposed to better-known performer icons like Fletcher Henderson or Duke Ellington (whose biographies also reflect decades of additional jazz history debate and criticism), I hope to reframe academic precedents of biographical interpolation and historical canon repertoire. Willet's efforts to inject his own individual style into arrangements created for a variety of clients known for *their* own individual styles

²⁶ It is perhaps revealing that even post-Swing Era efforts at describing Swing Era arranging techniques remain almost exclusively framed as instructional texts. For example, see Fred Sturm, *Changes Over Time: The Evolution of Jazz Arranging* (Rottenburg, Germany: Advance Music, 1995).

requires a reassessment of the arranger's role in the performer-centered world of jazz and popular music studies.

Another quality of Willet's music that makes him an attractive study is that, while his music has been vaguely described as "advanced for the period," it was not necessarily innovative as compared to the influential rhythmic or textural developments credited to more-celebrated black arrangers like Don Redman or Billy Strayhorn.²⁷ Willet, like most of his professional peers (Edgar Battle or Buster Harding come to mind as examples), worked firmly within established contemporary idioms. Chapter 5 continues the effort to identify characteristics of Willet's arranging through the broader context of Swing Era dance band repertoire genres, including "classics," instrumental "jazz concertos," and "novelty" vocal songs. Chapter 6 then refocuses on the relationship between swing and theater music, and presents a brief overview of some additional film and archival music sources relevant to the work of Willet and his colleagues within the stage entertainment medium.

The preference for excerpted score reductions in notated music examples follows a precedent set by Schuller and extended by the other musicologists cited above. Surviving manuscript orchestra parts or scores have been referenced where possible. In some cases I have had to create my own transcriptions from audio recordings; in other cases, I have referenced related written sources in combination with my own transcriptions (for example, scores or orchestra parts relating to the same piece and written by the same arranger, but commissioned by another orchestra). In all examples and figures, source manuscripts are cited in accompanying footnotes; in the case of

²⁷ The description of Willet's music as "advanced" is offered in Albert McCarthy, *Big Band Jazz* (London: G.P. Putnam, 1974), 286.

transcriptions, the audio source is cited (reference timings are also provided in the example titles). A listing of Willet's publications, manuscripts, and related audio sources discovered to date is provided in the Appendix.

An explanation regarding the chord symbols accompanying the notated examples is in order. Many of the surviving manuscript parts for Willet's arrangements include rhythm section guitar parts with chord symbol notation (a tradition discussed in chapter 2). These parts—along with the piano and bass parts—often incorporate enharmonic spellings of the corresponding voicing represented in the horn parts, and usually do not include chord extensions above the ninth degree (elevenths, thirteenth, etc.), regardless of the ensemble voicing. While the chords and symbol spellings provided to the rhythm section are perfectly functional for performance, they may or may not reflect the arranger's theoretical harmonic conception. One frequently recurring case is the instance of an ensemble voicing representing a sixth-chord: Willet (and many other arrangers of the period) rarely specifies the sixth of a major or minor sixth-chord in corresponding guitar part chord symbols (unless the sixth degree of the chord is being voiced by the bass), and instead provides the guitarist with a triad spelling (for example, Fmi instead of Fmi6). In most examples I have provided my own chord symbols representing the full ensemble voicing employed; exceptional instances are explained in footnotes accompanying the examples.

CHAPTER 1

THE BUSINESS AND POLITICS OF SWING ERA ARRANGING

Musical arrangers ply their trade behind the scenes, out of the spotlight's glare and away from the sound of applause. Though they make indispensable contributions to theater, radio, film, television, and recordings, most labor in obscurity, their faces unrecognizable and names unknown. Viewed more as industrious artisans than creative artists, arrangers have received far less attention and acclaim than their colleagues who compose, play, and sing for a living.

Parting the curtain of anonymity that has kept these musicians hidden from view reveals the central position that they have occupied on the main stage of American cultural life.¹

—Mark Tucker, “In Search of Will Vodery”

Mark Tucker's 1996 investigation of the career of African-American musician Will Vodery stands as one of the first academic efforts devoted to exploring the work of an American popular music arranger. Detailed discussions of the arranging discipline remain infrequent within popular music (or any music) histories. As Tucker suggests, this dearth may be due to the discipline's frequent exclusion from consideration as creative art, or simply the difficulties inherent in documenting the legacy of figures typically removed from the public spotlight. There also may be a perception of technical arranging topics as being too esoteric for general audiences; even among scholars, Tucker suggests that “no consensus has developed around aesthetic criteria and technical features that distinguish an arranger's art.”² Yet despite these potential obstacles, arrangers working in American popular music during the Swing Era have maintained a notable presence in contemporary and historical chronicles of the period.

¹ Mark Tucker, “In Search of Will Vodery,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1 (Spring 1996): 123; 171.

² *Ibid.*, 143.

The music arranger is often portrayed to represent the business side of music, as the individual largely responsible for making a piece of music marketable to a particular audience. Music arranging generally comprises the act of setting and interpreting a pre-existing composition for a specific performance format or ensemble, such as solo piano and voice, brass band, or dance orchestra. Orchestration is often incorporated into the arranger's job, though large-scale operations such as radio networks, film studios, or publishing companies may divide the disciplines of arranging and orchestration among specialists, reflecting a "production-line" approach.³ In the process of arranging, a composed music text is frequently manipulated to fit into a recognized idiom, genre, or style. These manipulations can be as potentially broad as the concept of "swing" rhythm, or as specific as the style of the John Kirby sextet—one of many Swing Era ensembles to feature a codified set of scoring techniques.⁴

Few Swing Era music stars were active composers or arrangers themselves; still fewer wrote large numbers of works for their own bands. Dance bandleaders Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, and Benny Carter are among the few exceptions, but even these writers ultimately turned to others for arrangements.⁵ Many performers relied on relatively anonymous freelance arrangers—occasionally found among the bandleader's own sidemen—for most of their repertoire. For dance bands, this material might take the form of a commercial "stock" arrangement printed and sold by the song's publisher, an aural transcription based on another band's recorded performance, or individually

³ For a contemporary Swing Era description of "production-line" arranging work in the music industry, see "The Boys That Make the Noise," *Time*, July 5, 1943, 65.

⁴ For a brief critique of the Kirby band arranging style, see Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 814–15.

⁵ Although arrangers such as Van Alexander, Jimmy Mundy, and Chappie Willet did lead Swing Era dance bands featuring their own music, their historical reputation remains focused on their freelance contributions to other orchestra leaders.

commissioned “special” arrangements designed for a specific client or occasion, sometimes including original compositions by the arranger.

Contemporary Swing Era accounts of the popular music industry document the arranger’s central role in the process of creating and marketing new songs. Articles in the music trade magazine *Metronome*, for example, cover such behind-the-scenes topics as “Evolution of Song Plugging” and “Seeing a Song Through the Mill”; the latter article describes the path a song takes “from the melody in the composer’s head to the printed dance orchestration.”⁶ Arranger Harold Rubenstein highlights the extensive infrastructure and personnel required by the music publishing industry of the period:

From [the composer or arranger’s] lead sheet the [arranger’s] piano part is made; often under pressure as the presses are crying for this new embryonic hit. When the piano part is completed, the guitar symbols are added and the lyric is checked for the correct division of words into syllables and punctuation. The piano part is then rushed over to the engravers to be engraved ... on a metal plate. This is a very slow process as the notes, stems and accidentals are all separate dies and have to be hammered into the plate by hand. When the plates have been completed they strike off green proofs that are sent back to the publisher to be proof read ...

Then the piano part is ready to go to print providing the title page has been completed ...

While all this has been going on, manuscript copies of the piano part have been made. One for the dance arranger, one for the vocal arranger and many for the recording companies ...

The vocal orchestration is scored [by an arranger], extracted [by a copyist] and autographed; a process of writing on yellow waxed paper with a brown or black acid resisting ink The autographed sheets are placed on a wet zinc plate and put under a great pressure which forces the ink notes and staff to leave the paper for the plate The plate is immersed in an acid bath which eats away the surface of the plate leaving the notes raised. The plate is now ready for the press from which printed orchestrations grow. ... Parts have to be proofread ...

When the dance arranger has completed his score, it is extracted [into orchestra parts by the copyist] and the parts are taken ... to a band for tryout. ... The dance arrangement then goes through the same steps as the vocal arrangement.⁷

⁶ Leo Edwards, “Evolution of Song Plugging,” *Metronome*, December 1932, 38; Harold Rubenstein, “Seeing a Song Through the Mill,” *Metronome*, March 1936, 63.

⁷ Rubenstein, “Seeing a Song Through the Mill.”

During the 1930s, music arranging was a steadily growing industry in New York, where arrangers enjoyed an integral role in virtually every corner of the entertainment world. Even orchestra booking agencies hired arrangers directly. Arranger Fred Norman was offered a job at the Rockwell-O’Keefe agency, whose office “was supplying [their bands] with arrangements written by specially hired arrangers. They needed someone to sit in the office and grind out the scores.”⁸ Rockwell-O’Keefe, one of the large dance band booking agencies (along with MCA and William Morris) that dominated the Swing Era landscape, represented performers both black (such as Louis Armstrong) and white (such as Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, and Woody Herman).⁹ Hidden from public view, arranging jobs in corporate booking or publishing offices could represent opportunities for black musicians like Norman to begin to cross lines of racial segregation in the entertainment industry, albeit under white management.¹⁰

New York also supported a large and lucrative nightclub and theater entertainment scene during the Swing Era. The Times Square district, located on and around Broadway in midtown Manhattan, was home to publishing companies, booking agencies, radio and recording studios, and scores of live performance venues ranging from the Pennsylvania Hotel on 33rd Street to the bars of 52nd “Swing” Street. In short, the name “Broadway” came to represent the geographic and cultural axis of the interwar American popular entertainment industry. During the Swing Era, Times Square not only featured traditional musical theater productions at venues like the Winter Garden, but

⁸ Fred Norman, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 235; see also 236–39. Norman did not accept the job offered him by Rockwell-O’Keefe, but turned to freelance arranging in 1938.

⁹ David Stowe, *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 105.

¹⁰ A brief account of black and white arrangers working for black music publisher W. C. Handy in pre-Swing Era New York is provided in Elliott S. Hurwitt, “W. C. Handy as Music Publisher: Career and Reputation” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2000), 96–99.

nightclub operators that had presented black vaudeville performers and dance bands in Harlem during the 1920s and early '30s also began to move into the district, where they catered to “a mass audience of moderate spenders, businessmen and their wives, and out-of-town visitors.”¹¹ This incorporation of black performers into midtown’s primarily white entertainment business structure was celebrated in floorshow production titles like *Harlem on Broadway* (presented at the Ubangi Club on Broadway at 49th Street).¹² It was these theater and nightclub venues where swing music was consumed by popular (and mostly white) audiences through the physical and visual constructions of the stage “production number” aesthetic. Tap dancers, singers, and chorus lines (black performers remained a premiere attraction throughout the period) represented a medium of expression that remains associated with the genre to this day.

The nationwide success of Swing “name” bands, such as Benny Goodman’s orchestra, bolstered the demand for new arrangements to be broadcast over radio “sustaining” programs or performed live at ballroom and hotel venues; “remote” broadcasts from these public dance performances merged the two mediums.¹³ Goodman’s high-profile residency on NBC radio’s weekly *Let’s Dance* program in 1935, for example, included a budget to commission eight orchestra arrangements per week for 13 weeks (followed by four per week for a second 13 weeks).¹⁴ Typical of performers well established in the industry, a significant portion of Goodman’s repertoire featured recently composed songs marketed by Tin Pan Alley publishers. These publishers looked

¹¹ Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 153.

¹² “Gala Opening: Harlem on Broadway” [Ubangi Club invitation, 1941], *The Eubie Blake Collection*, Maryland Historical Society, <<http://www.mdhs.org/eubieblake>> (accessed January 16, 2005).

¹³ For a discussion of radio’s importance to Swing Era dance bands, see Stowe, *Swing Changes*, 107–12.

¹⁴ Walter C. Allen, *Hendersonia: The Music of Fletcher Henderson and His Musicians* (Highland Park, New Jersey: Walter C. Allen, 1973), 319.

to dance bands to plug their material on radio, and working bands constantly needed new arrangements to stay up to date with the latest hits. Cultural historian Lewis Erenberg offers the following scenario:

Swing bands were in the driver's seat in the popular music industry. They rejected standardized arrangements and demanded exclusive charts tailored to their particular style. In addition, swing bands had their own arrangers, who recrafted popular hits into personalized statements. It proved expensive for publishers to hire special arrangers, but sheet music firms needed the bands to play their work and had to give them wider creative latitude.¹⁵

As a result, the services of arrangers—whether employed by publishers, radio networks, booking agents, or bandleaders—were at a premium. In a reflection of the steady demand for orchestral arrangers throughout the era, advertisements in trade magazines *Billboard*, *Down Beat*, and *Metronome* offered musicians opportunities to “increase your income by studying arranging,” “learn right at home to compose and arrange music” (“in ½ the usual time”), and enrollment in correspondence courses offering instruction in “modern arranging and orchestration.”¹⁶ Hungry freelance arrangers advertised “orchestral arranging of any kind: hot—sweet—concert.”¹⁷

Professional arranging and manuscript copy work were skills that commanded respectable wages, an especially attractive incentive in the Depression-era economy. A fee schedule for copyists contracted by publisher Chappell & Co. for work on the Schuberts' 1935 Broadway stage production *At Home Abroad* specified time wages of \$2 per hour (approximately \$30 in 2010 currency), or work by the page ranging from 25 to 50 cents per page, depending on instrument and transposition; the schedule includes a

¹⁵ Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream*, 165.

¹⁶ “Increase Your Income by Studying Arranging” [advertisement], *Billboard*, April 12, 1941, 7; “Learn Right at Home” [advertisement], *Metronome*, December 1932, 37; “Beihoff Music Co.” [advertisement], *Down Beat*, February 1937, 12.

¹⁷ “Arranging” [advertisement], *Metronome*, March 1934, 42.

stipulation for 10 cents extra per page for “all night work,” as well as coverage of additional expenses for travel from outside New York City.¹⁸

In March 1936, arrangers and copyists represented by New York’s American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 802 organized a strike over wage rates and work hours for full-time employees of 44 music publishers.¹⁹ Network radio arrangers and copyists had just accepted a union contract setting weekly wages for 800 employees at \$115 for supervisors, \$100 for arrangers and proofreaders (approximately \$1,500 in 2010 currency), and \$50 for copyists, with a 35-hour work week.²⁰ The publishing house employees (estimated to comprise about 150 workers) eventually settled for weekly wages of \$75 for arrangers, \$40 for proofreaders, and \$35 for copyists and studio pianists, with a 37-hour workweek.²¹ Included in the agreement was a stipulation for the continued “use of Local 802’s identifying stamp on all music manuscripts.”²² The 1938 AFM Local 802 directory lists 235 union arrangers and copyists (the category is combined, and does not include arrangers and copyists listed elsewhere in the directory as performing musicians); the ranks grew to 349 by 1941, and to 632 by 1947.²³

Some dance band arrangers commanded wages competitive with their publishing and radio counterparts. In 1943, for example, Billy Strayhorn received a weekly salary of

¹⁸ Chappell & Co. correspondence to Select Operating Corporation, July 8, 1935, “At Home Abroad,” Schubert Archives, New York. The Federal Reserve Bank Consumer Price Index cites a historical conversion rate of approximately fifteen 2010 dollars to one 1935 dollar. *The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, <www.minneapolisfed.org> (accessed February 6, 2010).

¹⁹ “Music Publishers Ask Strike Parley,” *New York Times*, March 31, 1936.

²⁰ “Radio Musicians Win Pay Increase,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1936. By comparison, current fee schedules for AFM Locals 802 and 47 (Los Angeles) still reflect wage scales roughly equivalent to the 1936 rates after historical currency conversion: approximately \$25 per hour for copyists, and between \$33–\$58 per hour for orchestrators and proofreaders, depending on the venue and medium. *Local 802 AFM*, <<http://www.local802afm.org/wage/orchestration.htm>> (accessed December 26, 2010); *Professional Musicians Local 47*, <<http://www.promusic47.org/wages/MusicPrepOnline47.pdf>> (accessed December 26, 2010).

²¹ “Music Strike Ends; Contract Signed,” *New York Times*, May 6, 1936.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ [American Federation of Musicians Local 802], *Directory and Instrumentation*, 1938; 1941; 1947.

\$100 working for Duke Ellington.²⁴ One of the most frequently cited—and probably least typical—arranging contracts was negotiated in 1939, when Tommy Dorsey offered to pay arranger Sy Oliver the equivalent of his former salary with Jimmie Lunceford, plus a yearly salary raise of \$5,000.²⁵ But the number of full-time, salaried dance band arrangers under exclusive contract appears to have been fairly small.

Well-established freelancers could sustain a lucrative career from the sale of individual arrangements—assuming that they could write fairly quickly. Benny Goodman’s 1935 *Let’s Dance* arrangers, presumably including Fletcher Henderson, were reportedly paid \$37.50 per arrangement (approximately \$550 in 2010 currency).²⁶ Additionally, some arrangers were offered a type of semi-salaried position loosely referred to as a “staff arranger,” whereby bandleaders could obtain arrangements at relatively low cost in exchange for the financial security of regular commissions. Freelance arranger Les Brown recalled his 1938 agreement with bandleader Rube Newman to provide four arrangements per week for \$75; that same year, arranger Billy May received \$70 weekly in a similar four-arrangements-per-week deal with Charlie Barnet.²⁷ As a white musician, May was later able to further raise his income by joining the Barnet orchestra as a performer sideman.²⁸

During 1935–1936, white arranger Lyle “Spud” Murphy enjoyed a four-arrangements-per-week deal with Benny Goodman, which also entailed temporarily moving to Chicago. In a 2004 interview, Murphy emphasized the freelance nature of so-

²⁴ “Duke Ellington, Inc. pay role [*sic*] for week ending Sept. 23, 1943,” held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

²⁵ Stanley Dance, *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 127.

²⁶ Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 191.

²⁷ Les Brown, as quoted in Gene Lees, *Arranging the Score: Portraits of the Great Arrangers* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 169; Billy May, as quoted in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 225.

²⁸ May, as quoted in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 225.

called “staff arranger” dance band jobs, as well as some general observations on the working life of freelance arrangers:

The way it usually worked out was you would do arrangements—two or three for somebody. And if they liked them, they tried to give you as many as they could. It *kind of* became a staff arranger, but nobody looked at it that way. In other words, I was Goodman’s “staff arranger,” but I was also Casa Loma’s “staff arranger,” you know? I was also arranger for Joe Haymes. It didn’t make any difference, you took whatever jobs there were. Unless somebody wanted to sign you to a contract. And nobody did, ‘cause they could get you any time they wanted anyway.

It kind of was a weird existence. ... You didn’t have time. Either you couldn’t get a job at all, or you were smothered in work. I mean, first you starve, and then you become successful: when you starve, you can’t get any work, you can’t get any food; when you’re successful, you can’t get any time. In other words, they don’t want to hear anything about you until you’re well-known—I don’t want to say famous—they don’t want to know anything about you until there’s a demand for you, then they all want to know all about you. ... When you’re trying to get somewhere, nobody wants anything from you. And when you *are* there, *everybody* wants something. It’s rags to riches, you know. And then back down again if you’re not careful.²⁹

Competition derived from a number of factors, including professional reputation, stylistic capabilities, and access to potential clients. Dance band performers such as saxophonist Jimmy Mundy, trumpeter Eddie Sauter, and pianist Mary Lou Williams built their arranging reputations writing for bands they performed with as sidemen prior to establishing themselves as dedicated freelance arrangers.³⁰ Billy May claims to have performed trumpet primarily to arrange, and believed that “to be a successful arranger, you had to be a decent player first to get recognized ... I played enough to be established,

²⁹ Spud Murphy, telephone interview by author, February 12, 2004.

³⁰ Mundy, Sauter, and Williams performed with the bands of Earl Hines, Red Norvo, and Andy Kirk, respectively. Regarding the careers of these three arrangers, see “The Man Behind the Band: Jimmy Mundy,” *Tempo*, on file at the Institute of Jazz Studies, Newark; Leonard Feather, “Men Behind the Bands” [Eddie Sauter], *Down Beat*, March 1, 1940, 17; Sharon Pease, “Andy Kirk’s Pianist Also Brilliant Arranger,” *Down Beat*, October 1937, 30.

so I could write.”³¹ Like other aspiring arrangers, May’s career aspirations also entailed moving to New York.

In 1941, the *New York Times* ran a story on white radio arranger Paul Baron, who complained that “the conductor and the vocalist stand up for the cheers—whether radio, vaudeville, the theatre—and the arranger slinks off to do another exacting job so that someone else can earn more cheers.”³² Baron’s perception of the “general public’s lack of knowledge of the art of orchestration and arrangement” does not appear to have been the fault of the media.³³ Despite the backroom nature of music arranging, Swing Era press coverage championing the work of arrangers is not rare. During the late 1930s, issues of *Metronome* magazine included sample stock arrangements with photos and brief biographical sketches of selected arrangers (“Your Arranger This Month”), including white arrangers Glenn Miller, Joe Lipman, Deane Kincaide, and Van Alexander, and black arrangers Fred Norman and Edgar Sampson.³⁴ In 1941, black arranger Don Redman was the subject of a three-page tribute, highlighting the arranger’s contributions as a “style-setter and a pace-maker” over the preceding twenty years.³⁵ Critic Leonard Feather presented spotlights on arrangers in *Down Beat* magazine’s “Men Behind the Bands” column during the early 1940s, including features on white arrangers Eddie Sauter, Jiggs Noble, and Lou Singer, and black arrangers Billy Strayhorn and Billy

³¹ May, as quoted in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 224.

³² Irving Spiegel, “Spotlight Wanted: Paul Baron Laments the Obscurity of the Arrangers Who ‘Fix’ Tunes for Radio,” *New York Times*, June 15, 1941.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ “Arranger” [Glenn Miller], *Metronome*, May 1937, 28; “Your Arranger” [Joe Lipman], *Metronome*, August 1938, 19; “Your Arranger” [Deane Kincaide], *Metronome*, October 1938, 26; “Your Arranger” [Van Alexander], *Metronome*, July 1939, 22–23; “Your Arranger This Month” [Fred Norman], *Metronome*, February 1938, 28; “Your Arranger” [Edgar Sampson], *Metronome*, September 1938, 14.

³⁵ Barry Ulanov, “Thanks Mr. Redman, for Modern Style,” *Metronome*, June 1941, 20–21, 25.

Moore Jr.³⁶ Parallel to the white music industry trade publications, the black press embraced successful black arrangers like Chappie Willet as “the unseen power behind the throne” and “unsung heroes of swing” who surreptitiously “make Broadway’s [i.e., white entertainment’s] top leaders.”³⁷

In recognition that the specific industry requirements of arrangers and their client bandleaders should be considered in discussions of popular repertoire, some media accounts emphasized the degree of cooperation presumed to lie within such relationships. In 1938, a two-part article published in *Billboard* magazine offered two professionals’ thoughts on “What the Band Leader Means to the Arranger” and “What the Arranger Means to the Orchestra Leader.”³⁸ Aside from predictably congenial accolade swapping, white arranger George Dunning and bandleader Kay Kyser offer some carefully delimited definitions of the arranger’s role in the dance band business. Discussing the issue of public recognition and the establishment of a band’s musical style, Dunning writes:

After all, what possible good can it do the arranger to get his name into print so that the public knows he arranges for a certain band? Of course, it is important that other people in the profession know what you are doing and with whom you are identified. The word gets around ...

No arranger goes to a leader and dictates style or policy ...

It takes considerable time after a musician graduates to the post of arranger before he assimilates the ability to gauge public taste—to know at a moment’s notice what is good and what is bad for public consumption ...

Arrangements, like clothing, can go “out of fashion.” Today we might be using an arrangement “lick” that is well liked. Tomorrow that same “lick” will go

³⁶ Feather, “Men Behind the Bands” [Eddie Sauter]; [Jiggs Noble], October 15, 1940, 7; [Lou Singer], November 15, 1941, 19; [Billy Strayhorn], October 1, 1940, 11; [William Moore Jr.], February 15, 1941, 12.

³⁷ Bill Chase, “Arrangers Are Real Originators of Swing: And Chappie Willet Is Near the Top of the List,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1937; “Unsung Heroes of Swing,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 9, 1938; Major Robinson, “Harlem’s Music Arrangers Make Broadway’s Tops Leaders” [sic], *Chicago Defender*, February 14, 1941.

³⁸ George Dunning, “What the Band Leader Means to the Arranger,” *Billboard*, June 4, 1938, 13; Kay Kyser, “What the Arranger Means to the Orchestra Leader,” *Billboard*, June 11, 1938, 13.

out of style. But how will the arranger know when it does? Simple enough—the band leader tells him, for his (the bandsman’s) is the finger on the public pulse ...

The intelligent leader will listen to his arranger. He will argue with him—providing there is a point in contention—but both leader and arranger are concerned with musical values, so inevitably the right side wins ...

Except for a few bands with recognizable styles, the public doesn’t know why it likes one band better than the other. More often than not it is the leader, thru [*sic*] sheer personality and showmanship.³⁹

Kyser responds:

The arranger, musically speaking, is the most important member of the band. ... From the creative viewpoint, he is the leader’s “other brain” ...

The arranger must be able to tell in a minute when a tune is good for a band and when it isn’t ...

I also believe that an arranger should never listen to other bands on the air or elsewhere. The temptation to copy a phrase or lick is often too great a temptation to resist ...

The arranger is at a loss to decide upon coming trends in music. The band leader can’t be—if he wants to stay up there ...

Arranging is a highly specialized field of musical endeavor which requires considerable study and technical knowledge far beyond that of the average—or even the above-average—musician.⁴⁰

Perhaps reinforcing Dunning’s argument, bandleader Benny Goodman appears to have resented the stylistic impositions of Eddie Sauter, one of his staff arrangers. In an interview with Richard Sudhalter, Goodman recalled:

I never liked that [1941] band as well as some others. To me it was—it was a rather affected kind of band. Good musicians—but with all respect to [arranger] Eddie Sauter, he wasn’t really a jazz man. Too involved, too fussy: you had to watch your P’s and Q’s so goddamn much you could never play.⁴¹

In an interview with Gene Lees, arranger Mel Powell complained of Goodman’s musical conservatism, and revealed arranging ideals quite different from those espoused by Dunning:

³⁹ Dunning, “What the Band Leader Means.”

⁴⁰ Kyser, “What the Arranger Means.”

⁴¹ Benny Goodman, as quoted in Richard Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 564. Sudhalter appears to agree with Goodman, claiming that Sauter’s 1939–42 arrangements for the bandleader “often suffered from chronic overwriting.” Sudhalter, *Lost Chords*, 601.

I thought that Eddie Sauter brought in some of the most inventive, imaginative things. Eddie was really devoted less to composition than he was to arranging, in the best, deepest sense of “ranging.” ... I can recall rehearsals when Eddie Sauter would bring music to us, and it would be rejected. A lot was lost. ... Benny would *thin it out*. And sometimes get the credit for it being a hit, getting it past the a&r men. I don’t think the thinning out was an improvement. Quite the contrary. I think that Eddie, and I to a lesser degree, were exploring harmonic worlds that ought to have been encouraged, rather than set aside.⁴²

Jeffrey Magee suggests that Goodman’s frequent alterations to his arrangers’ submissions reflected motivations ranging from “practical” (in the case of Henderson) to “aesthetic” (in the case of Sauter).⁴³ Indeed, many bandleaders appear to have made alterations wherever and whenever they felt it was necessary. Billy May described bandleader Glenn Miller to liberally revise his arrangers’ work: “he messed with everybody’s charts ... merciless. The intro would be *beautiful*. ‘Take that out.’”⁴⁴ Bandleader Artie Shaw, describing his own relationship with arrangers, claimed: “I played the role of an editor. If the same arrangement was handed to Dorsey, Goodman, Miller and me, it would have ended up four different arrangements.”⁴⁵

Ample forensic evidence of the thinning and cutting of arrangements is revealed in archival music collections. Some cuts were made for “practical” purposes, such as the time limitations of commercial disc recording. In Chappie Willet’s 1938 arrangement of “Jump Jump’s Here” for Red Norvo, for example, a 16-bar sax solo passage reflected in surviving orchestra parts and heard in the band’s radio transcription recording is omitted from a performance for commercial 10-inch record release.⁴⁶ Other alterations may have

⁴² Mel Powell, as quoted in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 241.

⁴³ Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 231.

⁴⁴ May, as quoted in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 230.

⁴⁵ Shaw also claimed, perhaps with some hyperbole, that he “must have gone through three dozen arrangers” during the Swing Era. Artie Shaw, as quoted in Patricia Willard, liner notes to *Artie Shaw and His Orchestra 1938*, vol. 2 (Hindsight Records LP HSR-140), 1979.

⁴⁶ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Jump Jump’s Here” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

depended on performance issues: Walter van de Leur identifies scores Billy Strayhorn wrote for Duke Ellington's orchestra revealing passages that "landed on the cutting room floor," possibly due to the technical limitations of vocal performers.⁴⁷ Surviving orchestra parts for Eddie Sauter's 1940 arrangement of "Superman" for Goodman reveal a number of cuts made to that arrangement, both as written and as recorded, suggesting that Goodman shortened the piece for both studio recording ("practical") and subsequent live performances ("aesthetic").⁴⁸

But arrangers could also exert a large degree of control over a band's performance, or even that of the bandleader. In some instances, instrumental solo passages that listeners might assume to have been improvised by a featured performer were in fact prescribed by the arranger. Louis Armstrong's opening solo trumpet break in Chappie Willet's 1938 arrangement of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," for example, was completely written out by Willet (see example 1.1; the asterisk in m. 7 identifies a note that Armstrong altered in his recorded performance—perhaps an error).

⁴⁷ Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70.

⁴⁸ Manuscript orchestra parts for "Superman" are held in the Benny Goodman Papers, MSS 53, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

Example 1.1: “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” mm. 1–10,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1938)⁴⁹

$\text{♩} = 104$

3

Solo Tpt.

Tpts./Saxes

Tbns.

Bass

7

*

3

Struttin’ with Some Barbecue

Words and Music by Lillian Hardin Armstrong and Don Raye

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Similarly, Benny Goodman’s solo clarinet passage closing Eddie Sauter’s 1941 arrangement of “’Tis Autumn,” with its improvisation-like sixteenth-note triplets, trills, and grace notes, was completely notated by the arranger (see example 1.2). Ironically, Sauter had originally scored this intricate passage for the entire woodwind section,

⁴⁹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” are held in Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

thereby revealing a case of the bandleader “thinning out” the arrangement to personal taste.

Example 1.2: “’Tis Autumn” mm. 71–74 (2:46),
arr. by Eddie Sauter for Benny Goodman (1941)⁵⁰

♩ = 100

71 Solo Cl. *tr*

Tpts.

Tbns.

Bass

73 *tr*

’Tis Autumn

Words and Music by Henry Nemo

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The above examples also highlight the historical debate over the relative importance of jazz improvisation in Swing Era big band music, or even the question of what exactly constitutes jazz improvisation. Is jazz limited to “real-time” performance

⁵⁰ The manuscript score for “’Tis Autumn” is held in the Benny Goodman Papers, MSS 53, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

creativity, or can an arrangement be considered a form of jazz?⁵¹ Related arranging and performance style designations of “sweet” or “hot” likewise range greatly in their application, during and after the Swing Era.⁵² Indeed, the perceived role of the arranger often appears to go to the very heart of the question “what is (or is not) jazz?”

The Music Arranger in Jazz History

The development of jazz styles would not be possible without the contributions from arrangers, who mark the music as much as its composers and instrumental soloists. The demands on the arranger are greater than those on the composer, however, simply because the arranger must be a skilled orchestrator and conductor as well as a competent composer in his own right. Leonard Feather in his *Book of Jazz* pointed out that even when the arranger is scoring a melody created by another writer, he may invest it with all the qualities of harmonic and rhythmic subtlety, or variations on the theme, that lead to the creation of a successful jazz performance. Thus, in effect, whether he wrote the original line or not, the arranger is also a composer. The converse is not true.⁵³

—Paul Serralheiro, *La Scena Musicale* (2003)

Appreciative descriptions of the music arranging discipline, such as that provided by Paul Serralheiro above, are not unusual in the field of jazz history. The Swing Era in particular is generally recognized as the period when the jazz tradition had its greatest impact on popular music, including arrangers. Early critical commentaries of jazz published by critics Stanley Nelson (1934) and Hugues Panassié (1936) include chapters

⁵¹ For example, Duke Ellington counters the argument that jazz cannot be written in “Where Is Jazz Going?” [1962], reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 325. For some definitions of improvisation that include music arranging, see Bruce Benson, *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26–30.

⁵² For example, *Metronome* columnist Jimmy Dale even ascribes specific scoring techniques (close harmony, melodic doubling, etc.) as indicators of “sweet” or “swing” arranging styles. Jimmy Dale, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, January 1935, 50.

⁵³ Paul Serralheiro, “Charting Musical Flights: The Arranger, Part 2,” *La Scena Musicale* 8/7 (April 2003), <www.scena.org/lsm/sm8-7/The_Arranger.htm> (accessed July 12, 2008).

devoted to the dance band arranging field or freelance arrangers.⁵⁴ These and later jazz-centric musical histories often allow the potential for an arranger's creativity to match that of composers or improvising performers.⁵⁵ And similar to the discipline of jazz performance, arrangers have been judged and placed into aesthetic categories, including the dismissal of some as forgettable “craftsmen” while others are elevated to the level of genius artist.

Critical judgments are inevitably based on subjective parameters, tastes, and—especially concerning jazz—concepts of artistic authenticity. *Metronome* magazine editor George T. Simon, for example, represents a well-established tradition of jazz criticism when he divides Swing Era dance band repertoire into categories of “stupid pop” tunes eliciting “mere craftsmanship” from the arranger, or “wonderfully fresh-sounding originals” revealing “artistic creativity,” more often than not presented in the form of “inspiring instrumentals.”⁵⁶ Typically, the professional requirements that prompted the arrangement's commission in the first place are rarely considered in these quests for artistic creativity: under the rubric of authenticity, arrangers who may have specialized in vocal settings of Tin Pan Alley songs have had little chance of faring well in jazz-centric narratives. Yet even the broader discipline of arranging itself has suffered criticism in the wide-ranging battles concerning jazz authenticity, and the corollary threat of cultural appropriation.

⁵⁴ Stanley Nelson, *All About Jazz* (London: Heath Cranton Limited, 1934), 63–70; see also 39–41; Hugues Panassié, *Hot Jazz: The Guide to Swing Music*, trans. Lyle Dowling and Eleanor Dowling (New York: Witmark & Sons, 1936), 192–220.

⁵⁵ For example, see Nelson, *All About Jazz*, 63; Panassié, *Hot Jazz*, 192–93. Similarly enthusiastic praise of arrangers' work in jazz can be found in Jerry Coker, *The Jazz Idiom* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 73–74.

⁵⁶ George T. Simon, *The Big Bands*, 4th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1981), 44.

Arranging has arguably been an integral component of instrumental and vocal jazz since its inception, including the legacy of the earliest New Orleans jazz bands. Lawrence Gushee's study of the 1914–1918 Creole Band examines the arranging capabilities of the group's members, and other arrangements they performed in the 1915–1916 *Town Topics* stage production in New York.⁵⁷ Early New Orleans jazz appears to have evolved from elements including printed arrangements of ragtime marching band music (such as the arrangements distributed by Chicago publisher John Stark), and a tradition of dance band performance requiring “note-reading ability in order to be able to play the latest hits from the New York publishers.”⁵⁸ Techniques of jazz performance gradually made inroads into a pre-existing, orchestral-based commercial entertainment industry, represented in New York City by successful bandleaders like James Reese Europe.⁵⁹

Race has played a central role in discussions of arranging in Swing Era dance band music, a genre closely associated with African-American traditions during a period of institutional racial segregation. One prevalent theme is exemplified by a 1941 article, “Harlem’s Music Arrangers Make Broadway’s Tops Leaders” [*sic*]: *Chicago Defender* correspondent Major Robinson highlights the dependence of “Broadway” (mainstream white entertainment) on the contributions of black arrangers and song writers including Fletcher Henderson, Edgar Battle, and Andy Razaf. Robinson cites the results of radio disc jockey Martin Block’s nationwide orchestra popularity contest to claim that “of the

⁵⁷ Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 33–38, 165–66.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁹ Regarding Europe’s career and the introduction of “jazz” in New York, see John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2009), 17–22, 27. See also Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 53–69.

majority of topflight white bands that copped choice spots, more than 75 percent of their arranged scores are turned out by colored arrangers.”⁶⁰ The sources of Robinson’s arranging statistics are not cited, but others shared his perception. A 1939 *Baltimore Afro-American* column by Lillian Johnson similarly raises the issue of black arrangers writing anonymously for white bands:

I certainly disapprove of the lily white bands that use the arrangements of the colored musicians, without giving them the chance to play.

By that, I mean that if a man is a good musician and a good arranger, I feel that it is unfair to himself and to his people to go over to a white band where he will be used solely in the back room of the band, and often at a salary that is much less than that paid any other person connected with the outfit.

If he is a professional arranger and has an office for that service alone, such as Chappie Willet has, then that is a horse of another color. . . .

The white boys may not have the native ability, but they have plenty of ambition and perseverance, and that’s a combination that’s hard to beat.⁶¹

The caveat for Chappie Willet is likely in deference to the arranger’s well-publicized work for white bandleader Gene Krupa. A 1938 *Pittsburgh Courier* article announcing Krupa’s invitation for Willet to join his “staff of arrangers” reveals the potential reservations behind such a relationship (as well as some of the self-promotion typical of Willet’s publicity during this period):

Should Willet accept the spot which is vacant for him, this will mark the first time in his career that he has done such for an ofay [white] leader. In the past he has devoted his talent to the colored field exclusively, not because of any difference of feeling said he, but just because the colored boys seemingly needed someone to devote their time to them and them alone, as everybody was doing such work for white bands.⁶²

Johnson’s comment regarding “native ability” references long-held conceptions of black performers as possessing innate musical talent, especially for jazz. This association carried over into conceptions of race and artistic authenticity as reflected in the repertoire

⁶⁰ Robinson, “Harlem’s Music Arrangers Make Broadway’s Tops Leaders.”

⁶¹ Lillian Johnson, “Light and Shadow,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 4, 1939.

⁶² “Chappie Willet May Arrange for Krupa’s New Band,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 2, 1938.

of dance orchestras, and what were loosely referred to as “special” arrangements: unpublished orchestrations often portrayed as focusing on the “hot”—often read “black”—jazz idiom highlighting syncopation and improvisation. David Stowe offers instances of performers making distinctions between the aesthetics of black orchestras, perceived as “loose and swinging,” and white orchestras, represented by “sophisticated arrangements and precise ensemble execution ... sweet bands not generally respected by swing critics.”⁶³ Likewise, waltz and ballad genres were “not associated with ‘race’ outfits”—at least in the imagination of jazz authenticity.⁶⁴ A 1944 *Billboard* magazine review offers some related opinions on the provenance of “special” arrangements:

Unlike most Negro bands around, [Claude] Hopkins’s doesn’t depend upon fancy and over-harmonized effects. Band, instead, dishes up very commercial type of dance music with little frill, fuss or trimming. ... Tunes in the books are current pops for the most part, another deviation from most colored jump bands around. Latter usually have plenty of specialties in the books.⁶⁵

Perhaps reflecting a corollary image of commercial “stock” arranging as the domain of white musicians, a 1941 *Billboard* magazine bandleader poll listed black arrangers Fletcher Henderson (then working for Benny Goodman) and Sy Oliver (then working for Tommy Dorsey) in the top two “best special arranger” slots, while all seven arrangers listed in the “best stock arranger” category were white.⁶⁶ Of course, Sy Oliver also provided stock arrangements (for publisher Embassy Music), as did black “special” arrangers Edgar Battle and Chappie Willet (Exclusive Publications, a subsidiary of Mills Music), Eddie Durham (Famous Music), Fred Norman (Broadcast Music and Paramount), Edgar Sampson (Southern Music), and Jimmy Mundy (Exclusive, Regent,

⁶³ Stowe, *Swing Changes*, 123–24.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁵ Paul Secon, “On the Stand: Claude Hopkins,” *Billboard*, November 11, 1944, 18.

⁶⁶ “Top Arrangers and Arrangements,” *Billboard*, April 12, 1941, 17.

Robbins, and Stasny). Nevertheless, it appears that the stock arrangers most heavily advertised in trade publications like *Metronome* were white (including Jimmy Dale, Charlie Hathaway, Will Hudson, Spud Murphy, Frank Skinner, and Johnny Warrington)—by a ratio of over ten-to-one.⁶⁷

Assumptions regarding race and commercial or stylistic practices, regardless of the reality, have prompted critics and historians to take different strategies in explaining the role of the Swing Era dance band arranger. In some jazz histories, the entire discipline of arranging is depicted as a “necessary evil” component of the music business, a task representing commercial pressures and a dilution of hot or performer-centered jazz ideals such as improvisation.⁶⁸ The industry saturation and very economic viability of swing made it the target of attacks by dogmatic traditionalists such as Rudi Blesh, who relegated “the arranged playing of instrumental sections,” as heard in the bands of Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, or Jimmie Lunceford, to the “outmost fringes” of jazz.⁶⁹ Blesh argues that “deceptive elements” of this music (presumably including the scoring of African-identified jazz techniques like “call-and-response” or “dirty tone”) make “present-day commercial swing falsely seem another form of that [jazz] music”—an ideal represented in its purest form by virtuosic New Orleans performers like Louis Armstrong.⁷⁰ In his emphasis of difference over similarity, Blesh

⁶⁷ The ratio offered is my own approximation based on *Metronome* magazine advertisements circa 1936–1939. To cite just a couple of examples, publisher Leo Feist advertised arrangements by Spud Murphy, Charlie Hathaway, Red Bone, Carmen Mastren, Dean Kincaide, and Bob Haggart in “Leo Feist, Inc.” [advertisement], *Metronome*, June 1938, 36; 37; arrangements by Spud Murphy, Larry Clinton, and Gordon Jenkins are advertised in “Miller Music, Inc.” [advertisement], *Metronome*, April 1939, 48.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of criticism surrounding large ensemble jazz from the Swing Era to the present, see Alex Stewart, *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 4–7.

⁶⁹ Rudi Blesh, *Shining Trumpets: A History of Jazz* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20, 7. See also Scott DeVaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25/3 (Autumn 1991): 529.

downplays Armstrong's extensive legacy of arranged ensemble performances, arguing that the trumpeter always remained "at work within the inmost core of jazz."⁷¹

In another version of this strategy, critics presented later generations of musicians who performed less extensively-arranged material as demonstrating a relative immunity to, or even reaction against, commercially imposed artistic constraints perceived as inherent to Swing. Under this theme, 1940s Bebop stylists Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker are often cited as figures antithetical to a heavily-arranged swing big band aesthetic, embodying a "revolt against big bands, arrangers ... against commercialized music in general."⁷² This tradition includes the *Grove Dictionary of Jazz* entry on "Arranging," where Gunther Schuller claims: "it is unthinkable that great improvisers and virtuoso players such as Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie should need an arranger or should need to write out an arrangement of one of their pieces. At most they might write out the theme statement."⁷³ Also emphasizing difference over similarity, Schuller's gloss sidelines both Parker's and Gillespie's repeated return to significantly arranged formats (big bands, string orchestras, vocal choirs) throughout their careers, and the prevalence of arranged introduction, interlude, and coda passages that typify Gillespie's music in particular.

In *Blues People*, Amiri Baraka's discussion of Swing Era dance band arrangers takes a similarly anti-orchestral turn, but emphasizes cultural stratifications of social and economic class. Baraka argues that jazz big bands "were largely middle-class Negro

⁷¹ Blesh, *Shining Trumpets*, 13.

⁷² Ross Russell, "Bebop," in *The Art of Jazz: Essays on the Nature and Development of Jazz*, ed. Martin Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959): 187–214; 202. See also DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition," 529.

⁷³ Gunther Schuller, "Arrangement," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000): 37–38.

enterprises,” and that the swing dance band arranger’s role as “one of the most important men in big-band jazz [was] demonstrating how far jazz had gotten from earlier Afro-American musical tradition.”⁷⁴ He casts the entire discipline of swing dance band arranging as reflecting the dilution of rural black folk values by white middle-class ideals, concluding that “swing music, which was the result of arranged big-band jazz ... had very little to do with black America.”⁷⁵ Yet Baraka also allows for the celebration of Duke Ellington’s work during this period, suggesting that this particular bandleader, composer, and arranger—generally accepted by historians as a representative of the black middle class—was able to “integrate so perfectly the older blues traditions with the ‘whiter’ styles of big-band music.”⁷⁶

Another theme in jazz history is the establishment of aesthetic ideals that legitimize favored arrangers as having transcended the artistic impositions of a racist, commercially-driven music business, and dismiss others as symptomatic of an oppressive industry controlling the masses. In *The Swing Era*, Schuller judges the artistic success of arrangers based on degrees of artistic authenticity, as he claims that “an arrangement is by definition a reworking of some other creator’s original material, and only in rare instances ... can it achieve the *authenticity* of full creation.”⁷⁷ The presentation of this theoretical framework is followed by a comparison of black bandleader Jimmie Lunceford’s college training, “retinue of arrangers,” and “exacting musicianship” to that of the financially successful white dance bandleader Paul Whiteman, a long-established

⁷⁴ Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1963), 160; 163. For an example of alternative analysis of black “middle-class values” and the emergence of arranged dance band jazz, see Thomas Hennessey, *From Jazz to Swing* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994), especially 82–83, 95.

⁷⁵ Baraka, *Blues People*, 164–65.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 162. Also regarding Ellington’s middle-class background, see Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 24–25.

⁷⁷ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 202. Emphasis added.

foil to “authentic” jazz ideals.⁷⁸ Krin Gabbard suggests that Schuller might be read to represent the so-called Frankfurt School, comprising “cultural critics who saw a large, benighted audience being denied the real thing by philistines.”⁷⁹ Yet Schuller also grants exceptions to his own standards, as he suggests that the departure of arranger Sy Oliver from the Lunceford orchestra resulted in nothing less than the loss of the group’s “creative force and imagination.”⁸⁰

This apparent potential for contradiction in the aesthetic frameworks and judgments of writers like Blesh, Baraka, and Schuller highlights the breadth of influence and variety of musical product that music arrangers are responsible for. To group the careers and motivations of Swing Era arrangers (or their client bandleaders) into a single social, economic, or stylistic category entails a significant degree of peril. While a figure such as Duke Ellington may have felt compelled to fight a cultural debate over “the theory that jazz cannot be written” (a crusade he continued well after the Swing Era), such questions do not appear to have significantly preoccupied other jazz and popular music arrangers during the period.⁸¹ Even the clichéd conclusion of a 1937 *New York Amsterdam News* article championing the career of Chappie Willet as a testament to the music industry’s “bottom line” may offer equally legitimate insight into the economic and artistic concerns of Swing Era arrangers:

[Willet’s] only formula for success is hard work—but definitely. An indefatigable person, he often puts in eighteen hours a day, sometimes going entirely without

⁷⁸ Ibid., 203–04. A “textbook” example of Whiteman criticism can be found in Earl Stewart’s history of African-American music, where Whiteman’s performances are described as “generally rigid, rhythmically and harmonically dull, and not oriented towards improvisation.” Earl Stewart, *African American Music: An Introduction* (Belmont, California: Schirmer, 1998), 120. Schuller’s own critique of Whiteman’s Swing Era orchestra can be found in Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 660–61.

⁷⁹ Krin Gabbard, *Jammin’ at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 24.

⁸⁰ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 222.

⁸¹ Ellington, “Where Is Jazz Going?,” 325.

sleep if he has a “rush” job to do. He fully realizes the music business is a “tricky” affair, and the public may soon tire of “swing” or any other fad in music. So, it’s his business to “keep in the know” as to what the public wants, prepare it, and serve it while it’s hot—and he does.⁸²

Scott DeVaux argues that “the narratives we have inherited to describe the history of jazz retain the patterns of outmoded forms of thought, especially the assumption that the progress of jazz as art necessitates increased distance from the popular.”⁸³ For jazz critics, musicologists, and cultural historians, the complexity of racial, economic, and political forces at work in the Swing Era popular music industry—“jazz,” “popular,” or both—have proven a rich and rewarding field of investigation.⁸⁴ The legacy of Swing Era music arrangers certainly offers as great a potential for study as that of their performing or composing counterparts.

⁸² Chase, “Arrangers Are Real Originators of Swing.”

⁸³ DeVaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition,” 553.

⁸⁴ Recent cultural studies of the Swing Era include Kenneth J. Bindas, *Swing, That Modern Sound* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001); Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture Between the World Wars* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream*; Stowe, *Swing Changes*; and Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SWING ERA ARRANGING

I get the lead sheet first ... containing the bare outline of the melody. I always ask for the lyrics in addition, since they usually give me ideas. ... I wait for ideas and as soon as they come, jot them down. I may get an idea for the first chorus, the last chorus and the coda, in which case I put them down. The rest of the piece then gradually slips into place in my mind so when I begin to score it, it is just a matter of writing it out. This mental work is easy for me.

As with most subjects, arranging can be divided into theory and practice. The first consists of fundamentals from study and books. The second consists in making practical application of the rules, working out new ideas and the like.

But knowledge of these subjects will not make an arranger, particularly one of modern music. Experience and practical application of original ideas are important, probably more so than fundamental knowledge.¹

—Jimmy Dale, *Metronome*, November 1933

Although *Metronome* arranging columnist Jimmy Dale's explanation of "How He Makes an Arrangement" is fairly glib and uninformative (typical of much of Dale's advice published in the magazine), his emphasis on "experience" and "application" is a theme repeated by many professional Swing Era arrangers. The topic of specific theoretical knowledge, and the question of "what did they know and when did they know it," is much more difficult to find common ground on. Arrangers have been exceptionally spare in revealing the details of their arranging education in published histories, and it seems that biographers or interviewers have rarely pressed them on the issue. As a result, explanations like that of arranger Jimmy Mundy—"I just picked it up"—may have added to the reputation of arranging as an esoteric practice.² While many arrangers were formally trained as performers, their turn to arranging seems to reflect a personal

¹ Steve Kemp, "Jimmy Dale Joins Met. Staff," *Metronome*, November 1933, 45.

² Jimmy Mundy, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Earl Hines* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 198.

predilection rather than any systematic tutoring. In any case, more informative Swing Era arrangers do not appear to have embraced any single school, teacher, or pedagogical resource more than any other, though a couple of potential exceptions will be offered.

Some Swing Era arrangers emphasize their “hands-on” approach to education, claiming to have essentially learned the craft on their own. Samuel Lowe, who worked with the Erskine Hawkins orchestra, cited “trial, hit and error” as his method of learning: “I took orchestrations and spread ’em out on the bed to see what each instrument was doing ... I thought I’d get some formal training at Tennessee State, but I soon found out that I knew more about writing arrangements than the instructors.”³ Benny Carter, who played in a band while attending Wilberforce, describes a similar strategy: “take each part from an orchestration, put them on the floor, and study them, part by part ... It was many years before I learned to make a score.”⁴ Edwin Wilcox, who trained in music at Fisk University and was a founding member of Jimmie Lunceford’s orchestra, noted that “little of [the orchestration, harmony, and counterpoint courses at Fisk] meant anything where dance bands were concerned,” and also described his arranging education as “a matter of trial and error.”⁵ Although freelancer Fred Norman studied music at Howard University, he explained that he had “never had any training in arranging, and there weren’t many books available then [during the late 1920s], so I used to go to the Library of Congress and sit and study the books on music they had there.”⁶

Other aspiring arrangers picked up knowledge from their peers already working in the field. Older musicians such as Tom Whaley, who was active prior to the arrival of the

³ Samuel Lowe, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 215.

⁴ Benny Carter, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 138.

⁵ Ed Wilcox, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 111.

⁶ Fred Norman, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 233.

Swing Era, claimed that he had no formal training in arranging, and initially “made so many mistakes, leaving off sharps and flats I got [arranging fundamentals] from listening to [black arrangers] Don Redman, Joe Jordan ... Joe Steele, who was at the New England Conservatory nine years, used to tell me a whole lot of things.”⁷ Melba Liston, trombonist and arranger for Gerald Wilson and Count Basie, recalled picking up arranging skills by copying orchestra parts for Wilson’s orchestra.⁸ Horace Henderson, the younger brother of bandleader Fletcher Henderson, enjoyed a privileged position in receiving his informal training:

There weren’t too many books out ... My greatest experience came from being in New York, seeing these giants of jazz execute it, and being able to ask them questions and them givin’ me the correct answer ... We used to go up and have jam sessions at [Fletcher’s apartment] ... I used to borrow the stock [arrangements] ... [such as those by] the great Archie Bleyer ... Then when we finished that [performance], we would stop ... and discuss what had transpired during that session ... man, that was a lesson.⁹

Formal private lessons were another source of training. Saxophonist and aspiring arranger Hart Leavitt, a member of the white Yale Collegians dance band during the early 1930s, traveled to Boston to witness rehearsals of the Casa Loma Orchestra and take arranging lessons with clarinetist Clarence Hutchenrider; Leavitt also took lessons from Fletcher Henderson while freelancing as a union musician in New York around 1934.¹⁰ In the late 1930s, Chick Webb arranger and sideman Edgar Sampson took lessons from classical arranger John Sacco, even after Sampson had already established his own

⁷ Tom Whaley, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 47–48.

⁸ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 290–91.

⁹ Horace Henderson, interview by Tom McClusky, April 9–12, 1975, part 1, Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., transcript pages 20–22.

¹⁰ Hart Leavitt, telephone interview by author, January 7, 2004. Leavitt’s arrangement of “And Then Your Lips Met Mine” was recorded by the Yale Collegians in 1930, and reissued on *Stew Pletcher 1929–1937* (Harrison Records LP-X, 1985).

arranging career.¹¹ Jimmy Mundy likewise cited mid-career studies under classical and film composer Ernst Toch in California.¹² Johnny Mandel took lessons from arranger Van Alexander, who showed him his own scores and the resulting recorded performances.¹³ Alexander himself reported having taken lessons from *Metronome* arranging columnist Otto Cesana.¹⁴

Despite the experience of “self-taught” arrangers like Lowe and Wilcox, school music programs still represented a desirable means of education for arrangers, especially as the Swing Era progressed. Big band pioneer Don Redman followed his musical training at Storer’s College with “advanced studies” at the Boston Conservatory of Music; Dick Vance, sideman and arranger with Fletcher Henderson’s 1930s orchestra, went on to study composition at Juilliard.¹⁵ Gerald Wilson, arranger and sideman with Jimmie Lunceford, described his own pedigree in a prestigious high school program:

I never actually used anything [arranging books or magazines] ... I had studied harmony at Cass Tech in Detroit—studied writing with some private teachers in Detroit, Michigan, where I attended school for about five years, at Cass Tech there. It was a very ... recognized department. So I had studied harmony ... You had to [already have] a major instrument, that you could play [before entering Cass]. So it was quite an experience.¹⁶

Another eager student of composition during the Swing Era was Eddie Sauter. Prior to study with modernist classical composer Stefan Wolpe in the 1940s, Sauter had taken composition lessons from instructors associated with the Chicago Music College (Louis Gruenberg), Columbia University Teacher’s College (Howard Murphy), and

¹¹ “Your Arranger” [Edgar Sampson], *Metronome*, September 1938, 14.

¹² Mundy, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Earl Hines*, 200.

¹³ Johnny Mandel, as quoted in Gene Lees, *Arranging the Score: Portraits of the Great Arrangers* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 186.

¹⁴ Floyd Levin, “Reminiscing with Van Alexander,” *International Association of Jazz Record Collectors* 34/3 (Fall 2001): 25.

¹⁵ “Don Redman Dead; Leader of Band, 64,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1964. Regarding Dick Vance, see Leonard Feather, *The Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Horizon Press, 1955), 301.

¹⁶ Gerald Wilson, telephone interview by author, April 15, 2004.

Juilliard (Bernard Wagner).¹⁷ White arrangers Van Alexander and Salvatore “Tutti” Camarata also enrolled in “extension” courses in composition or arranging offered at Columbia University.¹⁸

Beginning in the mid-1930s, a significant number of New York musicians—including white arrangers Bill Challis, Franklyn Marks, Glenn Miller, Mel Powell, and Frank Skinner—followed the precedent of George Gershwin in studying the “mathematically” based compositional system of music theorist Joseph Schillinger.¹⁹ Instruction was available through Schillinger’s private studio, or through courses offered at Columbia and New York University.²⁰ The Schillinger system also attracted some black arrangers, as Horace Henderson recalled:

They had different systems in New York ... it got to be a fad around there with the guys ... [arranger] Dick Vance ... the Schillinger system, you know. [Arranger] Eddie Barefield ... They all went to school and studied this system so I got in on this.²¹

After World War II, jazz or “commercial” music education programs at Schillinger House (later Berklee College) and the North Texas State College (later University of North Texas) finally offered formal training in scoring for the dance band or jazz orchestra format.²² Higher education music programs of the 1930s, however, were

¹⁷ Eddie Sauter, interview by Bill Kirchner, August 11, 1980, Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., transcript pages 64–65, 187–88. See also Austin Clarkson, “Stefan Wolpe in Conversation with Eric Salzman,” *Musical Quarterly* 83/3 (Autumn 1999): 388–89.

¹⁸ Levin, “Reminiscing with Van Alexander,” 25; Sauter, interview by Kirchner, 65.

¹⁹ Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 160; Simon, *The Big Bands*, 4th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1981), 356; Paul Nauert, “Theory and Practice in ‘Porgy and Bess’: The Gershwin-Schillinger Connection,” *Musical Quarterly* 78/1 (Spring 1994): 9–10. A number of white “non-arranging” Swing Era musicians are also reported to have studied with Schillinger, including Will Bradley, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Hal Kemp, Red Norvo, and Alvino Rey. See Warren Brodsky, “Joseph Schillinger (1895–1943): Music Science Promethean,” *American Music* 21/1 (Spring 2003): 69 n20.

²⁰ Brodsky, “Joseph Schillinger,” 49–50.

²¹ Henderson, interview by McClusky, 34.

²² For discussions on the emergence of jazz orchestra programs in higher education, see Bryce Luty, “Jazz Education’s Struggle for Acceptance – Part 1,” *Music Educator’s Journal* 69/3 (November 1982): 38–39,

much more likely to provide a traditional “classical” music curriculum. It is little wonder that popular music of that era includes so many references to European repertoire, especially as represented by the output of arrangers like Chappie Willet.

Willet advertised his formal music education at West Virginia State College (formerly the West Virginia Colored Institute), which he attended during 1929–1933, as a matter of pride. The affiliation allowed him to cite a connection with violinist and composer Clarence Cameron White, a well-connected figure in the African-American community who taught at West Virginia State College (WVSC) during 1924–1930.²³ Likely representative of many college music programs of the period, the instructors at WVSC appear to have trained Willet solidly in the classical European tradition. Publicity for recital performances given by Willet’s piano and composition teachers Theodore Phillips and William Grider cite established European classical repertoire including Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*, Beethoven’s “Appassionata” Sonata in F Minor (Op. 57), Schumann’s “Romanze no. 2” (Op. 28), Chopin’s “Prelude no. 22” (Op. 28), Schubert–Liszt’s “Hark, Hark, the Lark,” and Wagner–Liszt’s “Tannhauser March,” as well as “Juba (Dance)” (1913) by African-American composer R. Nathaniel Dett.²⁴ A program for a recital of pieces written by Grider’s composition students includes Willet’s own “Binnorie,” whose European fairy-tale-inspired title suggests a work out of the

53; Ennis Williams, “Wilfred C. Bain: A Reminiscence in Memoriam,” *College Music Symposium* 38 (1998): 2; Kenneth Prouty, “The History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment,” *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26/2 (April 2005): 79–100.

²³ Allan McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular,” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 1936. Regarding the career of Clarence Cameron White, see Vernon Edwards and Michael Mark, “In Retrospect: Clarence Cameron White,” *Black Perspective in Music* 9/1 (Spring 1981): 60; Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 277.

²⁴ “Recital to Be Held,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 4, 1930; “Piano Recital to Be Given at Institute,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, March 22, 1932; “Recital at Institute,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, February 18, 1934.

European romantic tradition.²⁵ For his graduation recital, Willet performed Christian Sinding's 1896 "Marche Grottesque" (Op. 32, no. 1), and excerpts from Alexandre Tansman's more recent *Sonatine Transatlantique* (1930); the latter piece comprises the jazz-inspired movements "Fox-Trot," "Spiritual and Blues," and "Charleston."²⁶

Similar to other arrangers of his generation, however, Willet appears to have gone "extra-curricular" to explore the world of popular music and dance band arranging. By early 1932 he had formed his own local dance orchestra. Willet's Campus Revelers comprised 12 members, including a vocalist, and featured arrangements written by Willet and fellow WVSC student Richard Poore.²⁷ The Revelers did not travel far outside the Charleston area, but did broadcast regularly over radio station WOBV.²⁸ After graduation, Willet went on to serve as musical director for a West Virginia-based territory band named Edwards' Collegians (later renamed "Chappie Willet's Greystone Ballroom Orchestra"), where he further developed his popular music arranging skills.²⁹

Basic Arranging Techniques

In preparation for the examination of some specific Swing Era arranging strategies and trends, the remainder of this chapter outlines some of the most common techniques that were familiar to arrangers of the period. Later chapters will offer discussions of arrangements that adapt these techniques towards the representation of a

²⁵ *Program of National Music Week, West Virginia State College, Institute, West Virginia, May 7th to May 12th, 1933* ["Conducted under the auspices of the Music Department"].

²⁶ "Joint Recital," [West Virginia State College] *Yellow Jacket*, May 15, 1933.

²⁷ "W. V. State Band Clicks on Air," *Baltimore Afro-American*, February 6, 1932.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; Morrison Ryder, "'Chappie' and Band Score Hit at Daniel Boone Hotel," [West Virginia State College] *Yellow Jacket*, November 1, 1932; Al Baillou Jr., "Mixing Radio Mortar," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 23, 1933.

²⁹ Regarding Willet's career with Edwards' Collegians, see John Wriggle, "Chappie Willet, Frank Fairfax, and Phil Edwards' Collegians: From West Virginia to Philadelphia," *Black Music Research Journal* 27/1 (Spring 2007): 10–13.

specific style or genre, and demonstrate the powers of the arranger working within the cultural vehicle that is “big band swing.”

Arthur Lange’s pre-Swing Era text *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, (published in 1926, and already in its tenth printing by 1927), appears to have had a significant influence on similar works that emerged throughout the following decade.³⁰ Lange was an established white New York bandleader and composer who later enjoyed success working in the Hollywood film industry, including early synchronized-sound productions such as *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*.³¹ His dance band arranging text outlines the different dance orchestra sections, instrument ranges, and suggested routines of formal structure; notated examples demonstrate a number of harmonic voicing techniques, textural scoring effects, and score excerpts of his own arrangements.

Much of the organizational design and basic content of Lange’s book is reiterated in similar texts published by white arrangers during the Swing Era, including Paul Weirick’s *Dance Arranging: A Guide to Scoring Music for the American Dance Orchestra* (1934), Frank Skinner’s *New Method of Orchestra Scoring* (1935), and Claude Lapham’s *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band* (1937).³² Although Norman Ellis’s *Instrumentation and Arranging for the Radio and Dance Orchestra* (1936) addresses a broader range of commercial formats, and Glenn Miller’s *Method for Orchestral Arranging* (1943) focuses more narrowly on the Miller band’s individual style and

³⁰ Arthur Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra* (1926; reprint, New York: Robbins Music, 1927). For examples and discussions of Lange’s influence, see John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 119–20, 126, 153, 189.

³¹ See “Arthur Lange,” *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0486075>> (accessed February 13, 2010).

³² Paul Weirick, *Dance Arranging: A Guide to Scoring Music for the American Dance Orchestra* (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1934); Frank Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring* (New York: Robbins Music, 1935); Claude Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band* (New York: Pitman and Sons, 1937).

instrumentation, both of these works also retain Lange's basic design.³³ Other Swing Era publications include shorter texts like Spud Murphy's *Swing Arranging Method* (1937); additional publications are cited in trade magazines throughout the Swing Era.³⁴

Skinner's *New Method* stands as an exceptionally practical and informative resource. In addition to covering the basic techniques featured in competing publications (and often in a more succinct and better organized presentation), Skinner includes discussions of recommended balance ratios for string sections, voicing for "seventh chords with added sixths" (essentially dominant-thirteenth chords), analyses of score excerpt examples, and even orchestra part copying techniques. By the late 1930s, publisher Robbins Music followed up this mid-priced (\$2.00) paperback edition with Skinner's *Simplified Method for Modern Arranging* (\$1.50).³⁵

Despite the numerous options available to aspiring arrangers by the mid-1930s, few Swing Era veterans have gone on record as having ever referenced any of the works listed above. Some arrangers appear to have embraced a perceived lack—or their conscious avoidance—of "how to" publications as a source of pride, emphasizing their own artistic development. This concern over the recognition of individual arranging styles likely reflects the steadily growing competition of the period. Hart Leavitt, for example, criticized his own inability to successfully "project a really good style," and provided his own description of the emerging swing dance band aesthetic:

³³ Norman Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging for the Radio and Dance Orchestra* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1936); Glenn Miller, *Glenn Miller's Method for Orchestral Arranging* (New York: Mutual Music Society, 1943). Miller's relatively lavish publication is notable for including two complete arrangements in full score.

³⁴ Lyle Murphy, *Spud Murphy's Swing Arranging Method* (New York: Robbins Music, 1937). Regarding additional publications, see Jimmy Dale, "Arranging Questions," *Metronome*, July 1936, 36; November 1937, 48; Jimmy Dale, "Jimmy Dale Explains Voicing for Eight Brass," *Metronome*, January 1940, 48.

³⁵ "Robbins Presents" [advertisement], in Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring* [back cover]. In this printing (circa 1937–1941?), Spud Murphy's *Swing Arranging Method* and Xavier Cugat's *Latin-American Rhythms* were priced at \$1.00; reprints of Lange's (hardcover) book cost \$5.00.

Big bands, they were famous because of their arrangers ... dependant on a good arranger Each arranger, they had a particular style Sometimes the arrangers would play in the band, but he had a particular *style*. If the guy running the band liked [that style], then he'd buy the arrangements. And it was very competitive.³⁶

Perhaps reflecting concerns of competition and individuality, ubiquitous sources such as Cecil Forsythe's *Orchestration* (1914) (a standard text throughout the music world of the period) appear to be cited by arrangers more readily than any publications specifically devoted to arranging technique or dance band formats.³⁷ Additional sources like *Down Beat* or *Metronome* magazine, which featured columnist-arrangers responding to questions on arranging technique through letters from readers, are perhaps more reliable in providing historical context of public awareness than representing any widely accepted basis of arranging theory or practice. Yet a number of these "how to" books and magazine articles do reinforce some common techniques found in many contemporary arrangements, whether "specials" or published "stocks." Following is a brief summary of what I have found to be fairly standard Swing Era dance band arranging techniques, based on the examination of archival manuscripts, published stock arrangements, and sound recordings. Supporting citations from various trade publications are provided under the presumption that texts designed as prescriptive explanations of arranging—regardless of relative popularity or influence—hold some potential value as descriptive accounts of what some arrangers considered to be important elements of their art.

³⁶ Leavitt, telephone interview by author.

³⁷ For example, Bill Challis cites Forsythe as a significant source in Lees, *Arranging the Score*, 159–60; Glenn Miller recommends Forsythe's *Orchestration* in Miller, *Glenn Miller's Method*, 8; and Nelson Riddle cites Forsythe in Nelson Riddle, *Arranged by Nelson Riddle* (Van Nuys, California: Alfred Music, 1985), 82, 116.

Scoring for Rhythm Section

In his 1933 *Metronome* article, “It Must Have That Swing: Cardinal Points in Arranging,” white arranger Eddie MacDonald outlines what he observes as common attributes of contemporary dance band arrangements. In addition to his identification of “novel effects” and considerations of “orchestral weight” and “tone color,” MacDonald’s discussion of the rhythm section stands as particularly relevant to common practice of the period:

The essential features of a danceable arrangement must be a smooth and unbroken rhythm, a prominent melodic line and the total absence of any extraneous musical material.

The arranger must keep in mind at all times that the basic fox-trot rhythm is the familiar and much maligned “oom-pah.” ...

There have been evolved many interesting patterns on this elementary rhythm, such as the press roll rhythm and the ride rhythm.³⁸

In notated examples demonstrating the rhythm section “press roll” and “ride” patterns, MacDonald outlines the primary dance band rhythm section scoring techniques that had been widely established since the close of the 1920s, and which would dominate American popular dance music well through the 1940s (see example 2.1).³⁹ MacDonald defends the prevalence of these patterns, warning that the arranger should “forestall [the] tendency of the rhythm section to wander off by making his [written] parts as musically interesting as possible, within the bounds of sound rhythm.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Eddie MacDonald, “It Must Have That Swing,” *Metronome*, August 1933, 28.

³⁹ For earlier examples of these patterns, see Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 90–95.

⁴⁰ MacDonald, “It Must Have That Swing.”

Example 2.1: After Eddie MacDonald's August 1933 *Metronome* Examples I–II⁴¹

The image displays two musical examples, I and II, arranged in two columns. Each example consists of four staves: Banjo, Piano, Bass, and Drums. Example I, titled 'I: Press Roll Pattern', features a Banjo part with a 'C' chord symbol and a series of chords with accents. The Piano part has a two-beat rhythm with chords. The Bass part has a two-beat rhythm with quarter notes. The Drums part is labeled '"Press Roll"' and shows a pattern of eighth notes with accents. Example II, titled 'II: Ride Pattern', features a Banjo part with a 'C' chord symbol and a series of chords with slashes. The Piano part has a four-beat rhythm with chords. The Bass part has a four-beat rhythm with quarter notes. The Drums part is labeled '"Ride"' and shows a pattern of eighth notes.

As reflected in the above examples, the “press roll” pattern is often associated with a piano and bass two-beat or cut-time rhythm (the foxtrot “oom-pah” effect alluded to by MacDonald); the “ride” pattern is typically associated with four-beat rhythm.⁴² The prevalence of the two-beat foxtrot rhythm as “the outstanding representative of American Dance Music” during the Jazz Age appears to have resulted in the nearly universal application of the cut-time signature in dance arrangement scores through the 1940s (including MacDonald’s examples), regardless of the exact metric patterns assigned to the rhythm section instruments.⁴³ Howard Spring argues that the four-beat pattern,

⁴¹ Ibid. In MacDonald’s original published example of the “ride” rhythm, the banjo is assigned an alternating quarter-note and eighth-note/sixteenth-note pattern (similar to the drum part) that is not explicitly referenced in any of the other texts cited in this chapter. My own banjo “slash” shorthand notation and separate bass part have been added to MacDonald’s examples for the present demonstration.

⁴² See Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 90–91; Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 18–20, 37; Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 24–25; Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 45. Duke Ellington also discusses these rhythm section patterns in his 1931 article “The Duke Steps Out,” reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 47–48. See also Howard Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, Venue, Media, and Tradition,” *American Music* 15/2 (Summer 1997): 195–97. Mark Tucker specifically refers to 1920s dance band “oom-pah” piano scoring as period “standard accompaniment”; see Mark Tucker, “Count Basie and the Piano That Swings the Band,” *Popular Music* 5 (1985): 48. Ellis and Miller do not specifically discuss differentiation between two-beat and four-beat rhythmic patterns in their books.

⁴³ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 90; see also Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 109.

initially associated with slower tempo dance music, became more prevalent with the rising popularity of the Lindy Hop and related swing dances requiring “four movements for each measure of accompanying music.”⁴⁴ Relatively “sophisticated” Swing Era arrangements might juxtapose passages scored in cut-time rhythm against passages scored in four-beat rhythm.⁴⁵

Notational conventions in Swing Era dance band rhythm section scoring reveal the intricacy of period arranging routines and styles. Typical Swing Era piano and bass parts are fully written out in traditional notation (as reflected in example 2.1); period piano parts reflect especially painstaking labors in handwritten music copying. For piano rhythm parts, Will Hudson recommends a range for right-hand chords extending “from the A on the staff to E-flat [an octave-and-a-half] below,” a strategy which appears to be widely adhered to in dance band orchestrations throughout the era.⁴⁶ The piano left hand part supports the bass in unisons or octaves, though special passages (such as interludes or breaks) may interrupt this pattern to reinforce brass or wind scoring. Recordings reveal that some rhythm section players did occasionally add their own variations to a written part, but many performers also simply executed the arrangers’ original notation. A shorthand notation system comprising chord symbols and “slash” notation was an option in notating repeated phrases or rhythmic figures.⁴⁷ As Horace Henderson observed (with some understatement), “it takes time to write the notes”; the shorthand notation with

⁴⁴ Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop,” 187. See also Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 94–95; Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 45.

⁴⁵ Will Hudson, for example, advocates the “pleasing rhythmic effect ... produced by the constant variation of 2-4 and 4-4 style.” Will Hudson, “Will Hudson Answers Your Modern Arranging Problems,” *Down Beat*, December 1937, 29. These rhythmic variations often happen within the chorus form, as opposed to the later mainstream jazz practice of presenting the melody chorus in a two-beat feel, followed by solo choruses in a four-beat feel.

⁴⁶ Will Hudson, “Arranging,” *Down Beat*, April 1939, 24.

⁴⁷ See Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 34; Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 67; Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 18–19.

chord symbols “was helpful to the arranger as far as the time element was concerned.”⁴⁸

But standard notation remained prevalent for bass and piano parts well into the 1940s.⁴⁹

Developments in recording technology and the rising popularity of four-beat rhythm likely instigated the period adaptation from banjo to the “smoother sounding” guitar at the beginning of the Swing Era.⁵⁰ Arrangers incorporated shorthand slash notation and chord symbols into banjo or guitar parts earlier than for bass or piano: many banjo parts of the 1920s and early ’30s include a combination of standard notation, chord symbols, and slash notation (see example 2.1). Stock arrangements generally began providing parts for “guitar” instead of “banjo” around 1933; slash notation for guitar parts almost completely supplanted standard notation by end of the decade.⁵¹ The inclusion of chord symbols and slash notation in “ad lib” solo parts—including brass and woodwind instruments—occurred much more gradually, depending on the arranger or publisher.⁵² Earlier arrangements often provide melodic line references or chord tones as references for the performer, though there was no standard practice: Edgar Battle’s 1936 stock arrangement of Chappie Willet’s “Blue Rhythm Fantasy,” for example, provides soloists with a combination of melodic line references and chord symbols.⁵³

The different components of the modern dance band drum kit (including the hi-hat cymbal and bass drum foot pedal) were not standardized until the close of the 1920s,

⁴⁸ Henderson, interview by McClusky, 66.

⁴⁹ Perhaps reflecting a transitional phase in performance practice, Miller advocates the addition of chord symbols to fully notated piano and bass parts, and suggests that the bass player “should improvise freely except where it is marked to play as written.” Miller, *Glenn Miller’s Method*, 56.

⁵⁰ See Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop,” 193–94.

⁵¹ Murphy, for example, uses slash notation exclusively for his guitar part examples. Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 25.

⁵² Regarding the emergence of terms such as “ad lib” in jazz parlance, see Lawrence Gushee, “Improvisation and Related Terms in Middle-Period Jazz,” in *Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society*, ed. Gabriel Solis and Bruno Nettl (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009): 263–80.

⁵³ Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet, “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” [stock arrangement], arranged by Edgar Battle (New York: Exclusive Publications, 1936).

and continued to develop through the Swing Era.⁵⁴ Techniques for notating drum parts could range widely, especially in manuscript “special” arrangements; stock arrangements generally provide notation similar to the patterns demonstrated in example 2.1. The figure on the bottom space of the staff represents the bass drum pattern (usually reinforcing the string or brass bass part); the upper figure represents a snare drum or cymbal pattern.⁵⁵ Recordings reveal that drummers seem to have enjoyed a significant degree of latitude in the interpretation of their parts, depending on style and capability; Miller recommends that the drummer “should be allowed to improvise except where the arranger desires special effects.”⁵⁶ Skinner and Lapham, in addition to outlining the standard American fox-trot rhythm, provide sample Latin dance rhythm section notation for “rumba” or “tango” style arrangements.⁵⁷

Scoring for Brass and Woodwinds

Lange’s *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra* primarily discusses scoring techniques for a ten-piece dance band, including a four-piece rhythm section (piano, banjo, bass, and drums), a three-piece reed section (saxophones doubling clarinet), and a three-piece brass section (two trumpets and one trombone). His discussion of scoring for these “trio” wind sections, largely based on triad chord voicings, represents the basic technique of commercial dance band arranging during the 1920s. An increase in dance band ensemble size during the late 1920s and early ‘30s, however, offered potential for the expansion of the trio concept. The new scoring techniques that emerged—along with

⁵⁴ For a brief description of the drum kit’s evolution during this period, see Burt Korall, “Jazz Drumming,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 684–85.

⁵⁵ See Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 58.

⁵⁶ Miller, *Glenn Miller’s Method*, 56.

⁵⁷ Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 110–11; Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 121–123. Examples of Latin dance rhythms are also provided in magazine articles such as [Jerry Shelton], “Conga Is Cuban with the Sugar Scraped Off,” *Down Beat*, August 1937, 24.

development of a rhythmic interpretation emphasizing “forward momentum” and the emergence of “antiphonal” textural contrast in ensemble scoring (brass versus reeds)—traditionally marks the beginning of the Swing Era dance band arranging style.⁵⁸

In the expansion of trio scoring, arranger Benny Carter cites the influence of white arranger Archie Bleyer’s stock arrangements published during the early 1930s. Carter specifically notes Bleyer’s use of four-part harmony, often in the form of “sixth” chords: “I think Archie was the first one who made a four-part harmony common by use of the sixth in the major chord, and of course in the minor chord as well.”⁵⁹ Reed player Russell Procope credits Carter himself with popularizing “four-part harmony in 1929, 1930, which was, you know, just about unheard of. It just came into style . . . a complete turnaround because before that they were just playing triads mostly.”⁶⁰

In his *Metronome* column of January 1933, Bleyer describes his procedure for adding a fourth harmony part to triadic voicings, as opposed to scoring a fourth part that merely “doubles” one of the existing triad voices.⁶¹ Despite what may appear in hindsight to be an obvious solution in Bleyer and Carter’s approach, the technique of adding the sixth (or seventh) degree of the chord to the basic triad appears to have been an important development in the emergence of the Swing Era dance band sound. By the mid-1930s, sixth chords had supplanted the triad as the basic brass or saxophone ensemble harmonic

⁵⁸ Regarding the rhythmic and textural elements of the Swing Era dance band aesthetic, see Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop,” 185–86, 191–93.

⁵⁹ Benny Carter, interview by Gary Giddens [1987?], liner notes to American Jazz Orchestra/Benny Carter, *Central City Sketches* (Musical Heritage Society 922211F, 1988). See also Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 160–61.

⁶⁰ Russell Procope, interview by Chris Albertson, March 1979, reel 2, Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D.C., transcript page 11.

⁶¹ Archie Bleyer, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, January 1933, 42.

texture.⁶² While one can trace an expansion of harmonic extensions from the sixth and ninth chords outlined by Lange (1926) to the eleventh chords discussed by Weirick (1934) and Skinner (1935) to the thirteenth chords cited by Otto Cesana (1937) as merely codifications of techniques found in dance band arrangements dating to the 1920s, the Swing Era acceptance of the sixth chord as a “basic” sound appears to reflect the embrace of upper chord extensions as an inherent component of “modern” dance band arrangements.⁶³ Dominant ninth chords emerge as a particularly pervasive sound in big band Swing.

With the growth in ensemble size and emergence of four-part harmony, the trio voicing concepts outlined by Lange expanded into five-voice ensemble writing, typically built around scoring for a brass section of three trumpets and two trombones.⁶⁴ This five-voice texture frequently serves as the starting point in Swing Era dance band arrangements: while writers certainly explored other voicings as well, the standard five-voice ensemble technique seems to serve as a sort of *lingua franca* of Swing Era popular music from the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s.⁶⁵

In the standard five-voice scoring technique, the three trumpets and first trombone are scored in four-part harmony, with each instrument playing a different chord tone; the

⁶² Will Hudson, for example, recommends “the use of the sixth whenever possible when writing ensemble passages.” Will Hudson, “Will Hudson Answers Your Modern Arranging Problems,” *Down Beat*, June 1937, 18.

⁶³ See Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 8; Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 56–66; Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 33; Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Harmony,” *Metronome*, January 1937, 30. Cesana’s “Modern Harmony” column in *Metronome* was also published in booklet form as Otto Cesana, *Course in Modern Harmony* (New York: Modern Music Publications, n.d. [circa 1938]).

⁶⁴ For example, see Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 123; Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 91–97, 127–31; Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 79; Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 21; Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 98.

⁶⁵ Murphy suggests that “the Brass seems to be the most important section” in regards to “swing arranging”; Will Hudson suggests scoring “the five brass first” in ensemble voicings. Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 36–37; Will Hudson, “Will Hudson Answers Your Modern Arranging Problems,” *Down Beat*, September 1937, 30. See also Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Dance Arranging,” *Metronome*, June 1938, 32.

second trombone either “doubles” the lead trumpet in a lower register, or is assigned another harmony part—often simply the root of the chord.⁶⁶ The lowest four parts of the brass voicing are typically doubled by reeds, a strategy especially prominent in stock arrangements.⁶⁷

For example, this strategy of reed section doubling was applied to a passage in Spud Murphy’s stock orchestration of Chappie Willet’s “Grandfather’s Clock” arrangement (see example 2.2); in mm. 39–45, the reeds double the lower four voices of the five-voice brass parts. This passage also reflects the two basic approaches to five-voice scoring: a melodic passage in “close” ensemble voicing (the scoring of instruments with minimal intervallic range between individual voices) and the lead voice doubled one octave below in mm. 39–45; and a “rhythm” (or “percussive”) figure providing rhythmic accent or punctuation in “open” voicing (the scoring of larger intervals between voices) in m. 46.⁶⁸ The latter approach frequently appears in “fill-in” figures during the last one or two bars of an eight-bar phrase or 12-bar blues chorus—often in the form of a brief harmonic progression (V-I, ii-V-I, etc.)—adding finality to the passage, and building

⁶⁶ On scoring for five brass, or five brass and four reeds, see Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 93; Archie Bleyer, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, May 1933, 38; Will Hudson, “Will Hudson to Answer Your Modern Arranging Problems,” *Down Beat*, March 1937, 16; Jimmy Dale, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, June 1937, 53; Otto Cessana, “Course in Modern Arranging,” *Metronome*, June 1938, 32; Miller, *Glenn Miller’s Method*, 112.

⁶⁷ The technique of five-voice brass scoring with reed doubling often used in stock arrangements is outlined by Will Hudson in various contexts. See Hudson, “Will Hudson to Answer Your Modern Arranging Problems”; Will Hudson, “Arranging,” *Down Beat*, February 1, 1940, 17; March 1, 1940, 17.

⁶⁸ Approaches of “open” or “close” voicing also commonly depend on instrument range. For example, see Archie Bleyer, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, December 1932, 36; Jimmy Dale, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, August 1934, 28; Will Hudson, “Arranging,” *Down Beat*, November 15, 1939, 17. “Close” chord voicings are sometimes loosely referred to as “block chords” or “block voicing” textures; as applied to orchestral scoring techniques, the term “block” does not appear to have been prevalent during the Swing Era. Later texts provide other names for these techniques, such as “five-way close doubled lead”; for example, see Tom Boras, *Jazz Composition and Arranging* (Belmont, California: Thomson Schirmer, 2005), 159. In scoring ensemble melodic passages, passing tones are typically harmonized with dominant seventh chords or sixth chords—as in the “Grandfather’s Clock” example above—or diminished chords. See Will Hudson, “Will Hudson Solves Problems Submitted to Him by Arrangers,” *Down Beat*, January 1939, 22.

tension to lead into the following passage.⁶⁹ If not scored for the full ensemble, fill-ins usually reinforce antiphonal texture: a brass section fill-in closing a passage scored for reeds, or vice versa.

Example 2.2: “Grandfather’s Clock” [stock arrangement] brass scoring
mm. 39–46, arr. by Chappie Willet, scored by Spud Murphy (1939)⁷⁰

♩ = 110

39 Tpts. B^b6 F⁷ Gm⁷ Cm⁷

Tbns.

Bass

43 B^b6 F⁷ B^b6 F⁷

Grandfather’s Clock

By Henry C. Work

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Even “special” arrangements, such as Willet’s 1938 rendition of “Blue Skies” for Red Norvo, might alternate between the “close” melodic and “open” rhythmic five-voice

⁶⁹ Otto Cesana refers to this method as a “fill-in”; Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Dance Arranging,” *Metronome*, November 1937, 21. See also Will Hudson, “Your Arranging Problems,” *Down Beat*, February 1939, 20.

⁷⁰ Henry C. Work, “Grandfather’s Clock” [stock arrangement], arranged by Chappie Willet, scored by Spud Murphy (New York: Robbins Music, 1939).

scoring techniques almost exclusively in ensemble passages.⁷¹ But these basic scoring devices could also be one of the first elements of the standard technique to be disregarded or expanded upon by an arranger. As ensemble size continued to grow throughout the Swing Era, arrangers turned to “open” voicings for sectional “soli” passages scored in four-part (and even five-part) harmony. Glenn Miller, for example, demonstrates a method for scoring melodic passages where the second voice of the traditional “close” voicing is uniformly dropped an octave to create an “open” voicing, referred to in post-Swing Era texts as a “drop two” technique.⁷² The brass scoring in m. 46 of Example 2.2 also happens to represent a form of “drop two” voicing (applied to the E-flat), with the lead voice doubled two octaves below.⁷³

Spud Murphy’s text features notated examples of the sectional antiphony that dominates Swing Era big band music; the popularity of the device is traditionally attributed to Fletcher Henderson.⁷⁴ Jeffrey Magee refers to Henderson’s Swing Era antiphonal “call-and-response” style as representing a broader Swing Era aesthetic of “flow and cohesion,” perhaps reinforcing MacDonald’s description of the “essential features of a danceable arrangement” cited earlier.⁷⁵ Murphy’s notated examples of antiphonal call-and-response textures go as far as to differentiate between two approaches: the “Fletcher Henderson style,” marked by “accented notes falling on the

⁷¹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Blue Skies” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

⁷² Miller, *Glenn Miller’s Method*, 41. Earlier precedents for this technique include Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 27 (ex. 97). Later texts designating this technique as “drop two” include Boras, *Jazz Composition and Arranging*, 160.

⁷³ Willet even uses what might be termed a “drop-three” technique in scoring a brass section soli in the shout chorus of “Grandfather’s Clock” as recorded by Gene Krupa (through Murphy’s stock orchestration scores the passage somewhat differently).

⁷⁴ For discussions of Swing Era sectional antiphony, see Hsio Wen Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands,” in *Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World’s Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars*, ed. Nat Hentoff and Albert McCarthy (1959; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1975): 183; Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 195.

⁷⁵ Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 195; MacDonald, “It Must Have That Swing.”

off-beat most of the time” and brass rhythmic punctuations responding to reed melody figures (comprising two-bar phrases); and the “Casa Loma style,” marked by short reed figures “repeatedly” answering the brass section in rapid succession (comprising one-bar phrases).⁷⁶

Murphy’s Casa Loma example includes an antiphonal “fill-in” phrase ending, similar to that cited by Cesana. Another technique relating to the “fill-in” phrase ending is suggested in Murphy’s explanation of background riffs:

When there is a hot trumpet solo, you will generally find it to be backed up by the Reed section, playing usually a simple swing phrase, which may vary in each bar or be repeated three times during the first six bars. The seventh and eighth bars always being different to “send” the soloist, when the eight bar phrase repeats.⁷⁷

Combinations of five-voice ensemble scoring and antiphonal oppositions of brass and reed sections appear to comprise the vast majority of Swing Era orchestral textures, especially during the mid-to-late 1930s. By the 1940s, the further expansion of ensemble size—often six, seven, or eight brass, and five reeds—supported the practice of scoring orchestra sections in five-part harmony. Approaches to textural antiphony and formal routines, however, remained largely unchanged. Other combinations of brass and reeds, including “cross-section” scoring, appear to recede in prominence for much of the 1930s and ’40s; stock arrangements often assign players optional phrases to “cover” parts from other sections, but only as a means of necessary substitution.⁷⁸ In cases where arrangers

⁷⁶ Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 32–33.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁸ Skinner’s text is somewhat exceptional in including a number of examples of mixed reed and brass scoring. See Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 116–26, 135, 137–38.

worked outside of these basic parameters (Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn offer well-documented examples), the exceptions may well prove the rule.⁷⁹

Routines

Lange outlines a number of suggested “routines” in organizing the multi-chorus structures of dance band arrangements. The basic suggested routine includes an introduction, two choruses of varied ensemble texture (including a vocal chorus, verse, or “patter” section, if applicable), an instrumental “arranger’s” chorus (or interlude, or “development” passage), a final ensemble chorus, and a coda ending.⁸⁰ Little variation from this strategy is offered in later publications of the 1930s.⁸¹ John Howland suggests that Lange’s inclusion of introductions, interludes, modulations, and codas separating the recurring verse or chorus forms can be seen to represent cultural “glorifications” of the traditional Tin Pan Alley verse-chorus routine. Such glorifications marked a New York-based arranging aesthetic referencing symphonic concert music and stage production styles.⁸² Although smaller “combo” ensemble performances of the period are generally not associated with this approach, the “sophisticated” formal designs advocated by Lange (and later writers) became an increasingly prevalent element of popular music arranging during the Swing Era, regardless of ensemble size.

Lange specifies that an introduction “should be rhythmic and create the sense of the rhythm that is required throughout the entire arrangement,” among other

⁷⁹ Regarding Ellington and Strayhorn, for example, see Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1934* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 123–26; Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 76.

⁸⁰ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 207–14.

⁸¹ See Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 86–87; Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 153–83; Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 132–38.

⁸² Regarding relationships between formal routine and concert music references, see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 119–20.

requirements.⁸³ In addition to offering options of solo or ensemble scoring similar to Lange, Weirick includes a description of “vamp” style introductions “containing some form of trick rhythm”; Ellis also endorses the “tricky rhythm” strategy.⁸⁴ The recommended duration of an introduction varies, however: Lapham suggests that introductions “should, as a rule, be only four measures”; Lange suggests that “if length is required ... they may be long.”⁸⁵

After presenting the song’s melody and lyrics in the opening choruses, scored in unisons, duos, or the trio voicings referenced above (counter-melodies are also recommended), Lange recommends the insertion of an “arranger’s chorus,” where the arranger may “let his imagination take vent.”⁸⁶ A significant emphasis on the arranger’s chorus (also referred to as the “special chorus”) is maintained throughout the Swing Era; Lapham concurs that “this is the most special Chorus of all, and displays the ingenuity of the arranger.”⁸⁷ Writing in 1938, *Metronome* columnist Otto Cesana suggests different formal routines depending on the arrangement’s status as a “special” or “stock,” but preserves the arranger’s chorus even in routines that might comprise only three choruses (or fewer).⁸⁸

Lange follows the arranger’s chorus (or a comparable interlude passage) with the final chorus, also referred to as a “swing” or “shout” chorus. According to Lange, the

⁸³ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 210.

⁸⁴ Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 88; Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 163.

⁸⁵ Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 132; Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 210.

⁸⁶ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 211.

⁸⁷ Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 136. See also Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 112–24; Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 177; Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Dance Arranging,” *Metronome*, January 1938, 30. Skinner does not refer explicitly to an “arranger’s” or “special” chorus, but his sample routine only consists of two sixteen-bar choruses (plus an introduction, modulation, and ending). See Skinner, *New Method for Orchestra Scoring*, 144–45.

⁸⁸ Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Dance Arranging,” *Metronome*, June 1938, 32.

final chorus is to be “scored in ensemble form. ... A rhythmic impression ... can be done by employing occasional breaks or cymbal crashes.”⁸⁹ Ellis reinforces the climactic nature of the final chorus, warning that “it is not wise to have the Saxophones play soli [in a final chorus] as this has the tendency to cause a noticeable drop in the arrangement.”⁹⁰ Cesana, writing in 1938, specifies that in the final chorus “it is customary to modulate to the highest possible key and to arrange at least half of the chorus in four part harmony in swing style.”⁹¹

Cesana further suggests that a modulation leading to the final chorus “is best if it is in parallel harmony.”⁹² This directive highlights a key concept in dance band arranging style during the 1920s and ’30s. In addition to Swing Era discussions of diatonic or chromatic “parallel harmony,” such as that provided by Cesana (who advocates the use of “triads, 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th, or augmented 15th chords, as well as ... any other harmonic combination” in parallel harmony), Lange had outlined the use of chromatic modulations scored in “consecutive” (parallel) voicings.⁹³ This technique of chromatic parallel harmony in particular emerges as a hallmark of Swing Era arrangements by writers such as Will Hudson and Chappie Willet. On the broader subject of modulations in general, Lapham offers that “modulations are one of the most important features of modern dance-band arranging”; Murphy recommends that modulations “should be very spectacular.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 212.

⁹⁰ Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 167.

⁹¹ Otto Cesana, “Course in Modern Dance Arranging,” *Metronome*, February 1938, 28.

⁹² *Ibid.*, March 1938, 28.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, January 1937, 30; Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 200–03. See also Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 139.

⁹⁴ Lapham, *Scoring for the Modern Dance Band*, 124; Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 32.

Lange suggests the addition of a coda ending so that “the finish of an arrangement becomes more interesting.”⁹⁵ Ellis specifies that “a number may end double *piano* or double *forte*,” depending on “the mood and style of the arrangement,” and “may consist of four to eight bars.”⁹⁶ He also warns that “all the good work previously done in the arrangement may be wasted by a slipshod ending,” though—curiously—relatively little direction for endings is provided by any of the writers cited here.⁹⁷

Stock Arrangements

Commercial stock arrangements held an important role for the vast majority of working dance bands during the Swing Era. Although these publications are somewhat notorious for their varying degrees of quality and craftsmanship (due at least in part to the logistical pressures described in chapter 1), it is worth noting that some period stock arrangements are in fact very well crafted and presented. The emergence of dance band publications in American popular music has been traced to the late nineteenth-century marching band tradition, when publishers sought to expand their market by providing arrangements orchestrated in such a manner that ensembles of differing sizes and instrumentation might perform them.⁹⁸ Swing Era dance band stock arrangements are designed to be played by ensembles ranging from three to nine horns (including parts for five brass, four saxes, and a four-piece rhythm section); by the 1940s, most stock

⁹⁵ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 212.

⁹⁶ Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 159.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Regarding the emergence of popular music stock arrangements in the American marching band and ragtime tradition, see Thornton Hagert, “Band and Orchestral Ragtime,” in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985): 268–84.

arrangements included parts for up to eleven horns (including six brass and five saxes).⁹⁹ Presumably intended as publicity for more lucrative piano and vocal sheet music sales, stock arrangements comprising individual orchestra parts (an expanded violin or piano part often serves as a conductor's score) cost as little as 75 cents during the late 1930s.¹⁰⁰ Compared to the \$100 or more that top arrangers like Tom Whaley claim to have charged for a special nightclub arrangement, the attraction of stock publications for bands in lower income brackets is clear.¹⁰¹ *Down Beat* magazine offered regular "orchestration reviews" outlining the formal routines and performance styles ("blues," "hot," "Dixieland," etc.) of recently published stock arrangements.¹⁰² As *Down Beat* columnist Tom Herrick reported (or advertised) regarding the popularity of these stock arrangements, "the small time bandleader can now play big time stuff—and he loves it."¹⁰³

General categories of Swing Era stock arrangements might be identified to include: (1) arrangements commissioned by a song's publisher with no relation to a previously existing arrangement or recorded performance; (2) arrangements reflecting a well-known orchestra's "special" arrangement, but scored by one of the publisher's "in-house" arrangers (often in the form of a loose transcription based on a recording); and (3) arrangements explicitly referencing an orchestra's "special" arrangement, perhaps even scored by the arrangement's original creator, and specifically cited to represent a recorded performance (often advertised on the cover of the publication itself). The latter

⁹⁹ Earlier stock arrangements of the late 1920s and early '30s typically included parts for only six horns (three brass and three saxes).

¹⁰⁰ Prices are quoted in "Get an Earful From These Eyefuls" [advertisement], *Metronome*, October 1937, 7; "Swing With Feist" [advertisement], *Metronome*, November 1938, 46; "These Titles Belong in Your Books" [advertisement], *Metronome*, April 1939, 48.

¹⁰¹ Whaley, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 48.

¹⁰² For example, see Tom Herrick, "Orchestration Review of the Month," *Down Beat*, October 1937, 24.

¹⁰³ Tom Herrick, "'Stocks' Take the Band Spotlight in 1940 ...," *Down Beat*, June 15, 1940, 21.

category is often valued in terms of historical performance practice, especially if created by the original arranger. But the other categories of stock arrangements are also informative in documenting mainstream Swing Era dance band arranging techniques, as well as representing a vast portion of the music that was actually performed and heard in live performances across the country.

Chappie Willet scored at least three stock arrangements that do not appear to have been documented in any recordings: “I’m Tellin’ You in Front” (1937) for Handy Brothers Music, co-arranged by co-composer Russell Wooding; “You Can Count on Me” (1939) for Exclusive Publications (a subsidiary of Mills Music); and “Push Out” (1939), again for Handy Brothers Music.¹⁰⁴ The “You Can Count on Me” arrangement also includes scoring for a violin section in three parts, an option typical of many stock arrangements well into the 1940s. With the exception of Willet’s consistent omission of the verse, all of these publications parallel the suggested design of commercial arrangements outlined in Lange’s *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra* and later Swing Era dance band arranging textbooks, including an introduction, vocal “brace chorus,” modulating transition, instrumental “special” (or “arranger’s”) chorus, and a final shout or “swing” chorus.¹⁰⁵

The “brace chorus” form, a relic of earlier dance band publishing practices, remained the preferred method for scoring commercial vocal arrangements through most of the Swing Era. In brace chorus arrangements, elements of sectional orchestrations comprising the first two choruses can be omitted or even re-combined, depending on

¹⁰⁴ Different renditions of “Push Out” and “You Can Count on Me” were recording by a number of performers, but with no clear parallels to Willet’s stock arrangements discovered to date. The more obscure “I’m Tellin’ You in Front” does not appear to have been recorded in any form.

¹⁰⁵ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 208–12. Commercial arrangements are also referred to as “print arrangements” in Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 94–95, 169–73.

performance forces and durational requirements; the vocal melody is doubled instrumentally in either chorus to also allow the option of a non-vocal interpretation. Tom Whaley, for example, created an arrangement of “Push Out” based on Willet’s published stock arrangement brace chorus: Whaley retained Willet’s 8-bar introduction as published, then created a 32-bar AABA chorus that recombines the bridge (B section) of Willet’s first brace chorus with the A sections of Willet’s second brace chorus.¹⁰⁶ Suggestions for making alterations specifically to brace choruses are provided in Norman Ellis’s *Instrumentation and Arranging*, focusing largely around the issue of what key the vocalist will be performing the piece in: Ellis suggests that an additional modulation may need to be inserted.¹⁰⁷

A stock arrangement of “Jump Jump’s Here,” arranged by Les Brown for Robbins Music, exemplifies the second category of stocks. Willet’s original arrangement, recorded by the piece’s co-composers (Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey), clearly served as a model for Brown’s score at the end of the opening instrumental chorus. But the stock version also reflects significant variations, as Willet’s chromatic descent (example 2.3a, mm. 33–34) is replaced with a series of chord voicings that lay closer to the tonic key (example 2.3b).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Push Out” are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History. There is no indication of what production or ensemble this arrangement was designed for.

¹⁰⁷ Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 181–82. In discussing arranging practices for his 1930s dance band, Artie Shaw offers an exception to the rule in claiming that he and arranger Jerry Gray “didn’t believe in modulations before vocals. [The singer] comes in just like a horn.” Artie Shaw, as quoted in Patricia Willard, liner notes to *Artie Shaw and His Orchestra 1938*, vol. 2 (Hindsight Records [LP] HSR-140, 1979).

¹⁰⁸ For an entirely different arrangement of “Jump Jump’s Here,” listen to Benny Carter’s arrangement recorded by Charlie Barnet in November 1938. *Charlie Barnet and His Orchestra: Make Believe Ballroom 1935–1939* (Giants of Jazz 53274, 1997).

Example 2.3a: “Jump Jump’s Here” mm. 29–34 (0:36),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)¹⁰⁹

Cl. & Saxs
(3 oct. unison)

29 A^b Fm^7 Bbm^7 Eb^7 A^b Fm^7

Brass

32 Bbm^7 Eb^7 A^b7 G^7 G^b7 F^7 E^7 E^b7

Example 2.3b: “Jump Jump’s Here” [stock arrangement] mm. 29–34,
arr. by Les Brown (1938)¹¹⁰

Cl. & Saxs
(3 oct. unison)

29 A^b Bbm^7 Eb^7 A^b

Brass

32 Bbm^7 Eb^7 A^b A^b7 D^b D^bm

Jump Jump’s Here

By Mildred Bailey, Henry Nemo, and Red Norvo
Copyright © 1938 EMI ROBBINS CATLOG, INC.

¹⁰⁹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Jump Jump’s Here” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

¹¹⁰ Mildred Bailey, Dick Kline, and Red Norvo, “Jump Jump’s Here” [stock arrangement], orchestrated by Les Brown (New York: Robbins Music, 1938).

Edgar Battle's stock arrangement of Willet's composition "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," published by Exclusive Publications, is also significantly different from Willet's own "special" arrangements of the piece. It does, however, reflect the Exclusive Music piano score leadsheet (possibly arranged by Battle as well), which also reshuffles the usual order of Willet's introduction, theme, interlude, and coda passages.¹¹¹ As with other Exclusive stocks, the Battle orchestration includes optional scoring for a three-part violin section.

While the print versions of Willet's special arrangements "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" and "Grandfather's Clock" fall into the popular third category of stocks, both publications are quite unusual within the Swing Era publishing world. Distributed by Robbins Music, the works credit scoring to Spud Murphy, "based on Chappie Willet's arr."—a secondary attribution not duplicated in any other Swing Era stock publication discovered to date (most publications did not bother to cite the original arranger in any form). While undoubtedly related to Willet's "exclusive contract" with Robbins Music announced in April 1938, it is not clear why Willet did not score the stock arrangements himself.¹¹² Unlike Edgar Battle's arrangement of "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," Murphy's scoring matches the arrangements Willet provided to Duke Ellington and Gene Krupa quite closely. The "Grandfather's Clock" publication specifically cites Krupa's corresponding Brunswick release, a fairly common strategy in stock arrangement marketing (in addition to photos of scantily-clad models).¹¹³ Arranger Spud Murphy,

¹¹¹ Chappie Willet and Teddy Hill, "Blue Rhythm Fantasy" [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Exclusive Music, 1936); Chappie Willet and Teddy Hill, "Blue Rhythm Fantasy" [stock arrangement], arranged by Edgar Battle (New York: Exclusive Publications, 1936).

¹¹² Billy Rowe, "Chappie Willet Signed," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1938.

¹¹³ One example of female models advertising for stock arrangements includes Exclusive Publications' full-page spread "Get an Earful From These Eyefuls."

when asked about the project over six decades later, did not recall having Willet's scores to work from, claiming that such an occurrence was rare enough that he probably would have remembered it.¹¹⁴ But this instance may have been an exception, especially given the unusual crediting: there is little other explanation for "Prelude in C-sharp Minor's" reflection of an arrangement that had never been commercially recorded.¹¹⁵

In addition to outlining strategies for the creation of commercial stock arrangements, both Weirick and Ellis discuss approaches to altering published stocks, referred to in jazz lingo as "doctoring."¹¹⁶ The alteration of stocks is also addressed by *Metronome* arranging columnists; Archie Bleyer seems slightly dismissive of the practice, responding to one reader: "although it's a good idea to re-score a stock arrangement ... I should think you would find it worthwhile to write specials."¹¹⁷ As demonstrated by Jeffrey Magee in his examination of the work of arranger Don Redman, the degree of "doctoring" undertaken for or by a performing ensemble can vary greatly, arguably even resulting in a completely new arrangement.¹¹⁸

One example of a lightly "doctored" Swing Era stock is documented in bandleader Roy Eldridge's 1939 recording of "Muskrat [or "Muscat"] Ramble." The arrangement derives from a Melrose Music publication of Bob Haggart's arrangement as recorded by the Bob Crosby orchestra in 1936. Eldridge's alterations to the stock are

¹¹⁴ Lyle "Spud" Murphy, telephone interview by author, February 12, 2004.

¹¹⁵ To date, the only known period sound recordings of "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" are an air check of a Duke Ellington performance and a radio transcription made by Charlie Barnet; neither was issued commercially until the LP era. Murphy's scoring of "Grandfather's Clock" includes a sax soli passage not heard in Krupa's recording; the passage may have been an addition by Murphy, or possibly a remnant of Willet's original score that both Krupa and Murphy had cut.

¹¹⁶ Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 181–83; Weirick, *Dance Arranging*, 141–42.

¹¹⁷ Archie Bleyer, "Arranging Questions," *Metronome*, June 1933, 30. See also Jimmy Dale, "Arranging Questions," *Metronome*, August 1934, 28; Harold Rubenstein, "Making Specials for [sic] Stocks," *Metronome*, November 1936, 47.

¹¹⁸ See Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 41–46.

simple enough to suggest that they were made during the recording session; an awkward seven-and-a-half bar introduction additionally suggests the result of minimally rehearsed or verbally transmitted instructions (see figure 2.4; corresponding passages are listed in parallel, while dashes indicate passages of Eldridge’s arrangement where the published orchestration is maintained). The band merely adds an introduction and tag ending, and replaces one ensemble chorus with an improvised alto sax solo. Perhaps Eldridge purchased this relatively simple 75-cent stock arrangement as a sort of record-date insurance.

Figure 2.4: Eldridge Modifications to “Muskat [*sic*] Ramble” [stock arrangement], arr. by Bob Haggart (1936)¹¹⁹

	<u>Haggart stock</u>	<u>Eldridge recording</u>
		trumpet solo intro (7.5 bars)
reh. A (16 bars)	ensemble	—
reh. B (16 bars)	ensemble	—
reh. C (16 bars)	tenor sax solo	—
reh. D (16 bars)	trumpet solo	—
reh. E (16 bars)	ensemble	alto sax solo
reh. F (16 bars)	ensemble	—
reh. G (8 bars)	ensemble	—
reh. H (10 bars)	ensemble, tag	—
		additional ensemble tag (1 bar)

¹¹⁹ Edward Ory, “Muskat [*sic*] Ramble” [stock arrangement], arranged by Bob Haggart (New York: Melrose Music, 1936); Roy Eldridge, *The Varsity Sessions Vol. 1* (Storyville SLP 701).

* * *

The arranger should never display anxiety or nervousness when the band starts to play their arrangement, and above all, should never ask the musicians for their opinion of the arrangement as this will indicate a lack of confidence on his part.¹²⁰

—Norman Ellis,

Instrumentation and Arranging for the Radio and Dance Orchestra

Despite their occasional vagaries regarding orchestration technique or harmonic theory, these Swing Era publications also offer some brutally straightforward and practical business advice, such as that offered by Norman Ellis above. Overall, the arranging styles and strategies outlined above provided a fairly universal common aesthetic upon which arrangers could create—as suggested in the introduction to Eddie MacDonald’s article—“arrangements that are different and yet not too different.”¹²¹ A revealing descriptor of popular music ideals, this concept is especially critical in examining the legacy of music arrangers working within different professional contexts and requirements. If the “theory” behind Swing Era arranging remains prone to generalizations due to the overwhelmingly vast body of work created during the period, the “practice” of Swing Era arrangers is represented by a wealth of historical documentation that has only begun to be examined.

¹²⁰ Ellis, *Instrumentation and Arranging*, 192.

¹²¹ MacDonald, “It Must Have That Swing.”

CHAPTER 3

CHAPPIE WILLET AND THE BROADWAY MUSIC CLINIC

So last week one day I dropped in on Chappie Willet, the young arranger-partner of Russell Wooding, at their offices on West 44th Street just off Broadway. In shirt sleeves, open collar and with ink-stained fingers I found this youngest of Broadway arrangers seated behind a huge desk littered with score sheets. He was feverishly working on an arrangement of “I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music” which is to be used by Louis Armstrong.¹

—Allan McMillan, *Chicago Defender*

A *Chicago Defender* feature printed in February 1936 may be the earliest media documentation of Chappie Willet’s midtown Manhattan office space, located at 156 West 44th Street.² The address is the site of the Mayfair Theatre Building (still standing) located just east of Broadway in the Times Square entertainment district. Designed by theater architect George Keister in 1925 and built the following year, the Mayfair took the name of its 300-seat ground-floor theater; six upper levels catered to the Broadway entertainment industry, housing the offices of music publisher Harry Bloom, the American Federation of Actors, the Theater and Amusement Employees Union, the Theatrical Wardrobe Attendants Union, *New Theatre Magazine*, and various theatrical producers.³ After the Mayfair Theatre folded in 1928, the building’s owners split the

¹ Allan McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular,” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 1936. This excerpt may reveal some public relations maneuvering by the reporter or his subject: Armstrong had already recorded “I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music” on December 19, 1935; the disc, issued as Decca 672, was probably released around the time this article was published. See Jos Willems, *All of Me: The Complete Discography of Louis Armstrong*, Studies in Jazz, no. 51 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 96.

² McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular.”

³ “Mayfair Theatre Opens,” *New York Times*, February 20, 1926; “Sammy Lee a Producer,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1928; “A. F. of A. Gets New Quarters,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1934; “To Weigh Theatre Strike,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1934; “New Theatre Magazine” [advertisement], *New York Times*, April 5, 1936; Louis Calta, “Fonda May Return in ‘Mister Roberts,’” *New York Times*, November 1, 1947; Christopher Gray, “Streetscapes: Readers’ Questions,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1993. George Keister also designed the Apollo Theater, among other venues; see “George Keister,” *Cinema Treasures*, <<http://cinematreasures.org/architect/168>> (accessed October 25, 2008).

high-ceilinged hall into three levels. The new street-level space initially housed a Chinese restaurant, then a barbershop speakeasy; in 1937, Jimmie Dwyer's Sawdust Trail—a bar and performance venue providing “continuous entertainment ... 23 seconds from B[road]way”—moved into the quarters, where it continued operation into the 1950s.⁴ Willet worked in the new space directly overhead, in suite 203, through 1952.⁵

According to the stage entertainer Harold Cromer (“Stumpy” of the Stump & Stumpy act), Willet commuted from his hometown of Philadelphia during his early New York career, circa 1934–35.⁶ The new midtown offices may have coincided with permanent settlement in the Big Apple, though Willet provided various “care of” entities (including the Harlem YMCA) as residence addresses through the late 1930s.⁷ Willet did not join the AFM Local 802 until early 1938.⁸ Around 1941, Willet married New York stage performer Olena Mariella Hunter (1913–89), also known by the stage name Olena Williams; the couple settled at 561 West 147th Street, on the northwest corner of Broadway and a straight shot from Willet's office via the IRT subway line.⁹ The Willets'

⁴ “To Convert Old Theatre,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1928; “John the Barber Held,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1929; “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1937; “Jimmy Dwyer's Sawdust Trail” [advertisement], *New York Times*, May 19, 1937; “Jimmie Dwyer's Sawdust Trail” [advertisement], *New York Times*, August 27, 1938; [New York Telephone Company], *Manhattan Telephone Directory*, 1955. The folksinger Woody Guthrie was briefly among the featured performers at Jimmie (or Jimmy) Dwyer's; see Ed Cray, *Ramblin' Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 195.

⁵ [American Federation of Musicians Local No. 802], *Directory and Instrumentation*, 1952.

⁶ Harold Cromer, interview by author, May 7, 2004, New York City.

⁷ See [American Federation of Musicians Local No. 802], *Directory and Instrumentation*, 1939; “Francis Robert Willet,” Application for Social Security, Form SS-5, November 5, 1939.

⁸ Willet's union membership is first cited in February 1938; manuscript orchestra parts for “Struttin' with Some Barbecue,” recorded in January 1938, still reflect Willet's pre-union stamp. See Jack Oglesby, “Ol' Satchmo' is King, Says Mr. Winchell,” *Chicago Defender*, February 26, 1938.

⁹ “Olena Mariella Hunter,” Application for Social Security, Form SS-5, September 28, 1939. Olena Hunter performed in the theater productions *Dixie to Broadway* and *Swing It*. See “Big-Time Stars in N.Y. Project Play,” *Chicago Defender*, April 18, 1936; “The Play,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1937.

son, Robert Fredrick Willet (1943–83), provided the same home address in 1958; Olena Willet remained listed at this location through 1960.¹⁰

The opening of Willet’s offices and talent school—the Broadway Music Clinic—not only marked the arranger’s establishment on the Times Square entertainment scene, but also initiated a period of media coverage in the black press that easily rivals or eclipses that of his competitors. Few, if any, music arrangers were as favorably represented or regularly mentioned in print media as Willet was at the height of the Swing Era. Just how much of the coverage was legitimate documentation of a meteoric career, or merely evidence of Willet’s personal connections with entertainment columnists such as Dan Burley, Bill Chase, and Allan McMillan, remains open to speculation. In several instances, the publicity suggests a conscious campaign by Willet and his media champions to invent the role of “celebrity arranger.” For example, a 1938 *Amsterdam News* feature titled “Unsung Heroes of Swing”—just one of the generous photo spreads to hype Willet’s career during this period—positions Willet first in a list of celebrated arrangers that include Edgar Sampson, Jimmy Mundy, and Will Vodery, among others.¹¹ Even a series of *Amsterdam News* advertisements for the Garden Barber Shop, which featured photos and endorsements from performer celebrities like Louis

¹⁰ “Robert Fredrick Willet,” Application for Social Security, Form SS-5, June 11, 1958; [New York Telephone Company], *Manhattan Telephone Directory*, 1960. Although Chappie Willet’s own name is not listed in New York or Philadelphia telephone directories after 1952, the cited documentation for Robert and Olena Willet suggests that the family was still intact circa 1958–60.

¹¹ “Unsung Heroes of Swing,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 9, 1938. Other exceptional photo spreads featuring Willet include “Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition, Shows How He ‘Goes to Town,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 26, 1938; and Bill Chase, “Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 22, 1939. The papers also printed individual portraits of Willet, and publicity shots presenting him in the company of clients or entertainment celebrities.

Armstrong and Lucky Millinder, included an unlikely endorsement from Willet (“tools always SHARP; atmosphere never FLAT; courtesy ever NATURAL”).¹²

In keeping with the editorial tone of the 1930s black press, much of Willet’s publicity frames his business and artistic success as a “race” achievement, a view that appears to have been embraced by the arranger himself. Some reports present a supporting theme of Willet having “long been fired by a desire to do something really helpful for young Negroes,” and voicing concerns for “the future of Negro talent.”¹³ The following quote, first printed in a September 1940 *Amsterdam News* article, exemplifies the tenor of many of Willet’s media statements:

“I have a great many white students,” explained Mr. Willet, “but I am here primarily to aid undiscovered talent in my own race, many of whom aren’t aware of the fact that I am a Negro. It is time that we did something for our talent, instead of sitting idly by while countless white firms reap a fortune yearly from selfish exploitation of Negro entertainers. There is a great deal of new talent but white studios are not willing to train talented colored stars of tomorrow. If my efforts can do some little something to correct this present condition, I shall feel completely justified in my many sacrifices to build this organization.”¹⁴

The same article, titled “Chappie Willet’s Shoulders Broad Enough to Carry Load of Negro’s in Showlife,” summed up Willet’s operations to date:

Mr. Willet has wisely surrounded himself with the best possible staff to handle efficiently the various departments of his studio. Miss Derniece Harris, prominent pianist and vocal coach, is in complete charge of the music school which includes a hundred vocal and piano students. Russell Carrington assists Mr. Willet in the booking agency which has provided work for over fifty acts in the past three months. Many of these include not only some of our best talent, such as the Miller Brothers and Lois, Pete Nugent, Pearl Harrison, Myra Johnson, the Three Dukes, Norton and Norton, but many of the students trained in the music school.

¹² “Visit the Garden Barber Shop” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, August 7, 1937.

¹³ “Broadway Has All-Race Studios for Recording,” *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1940; “Plea for Training,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 4, 1939.

¹⁴ “Chappie Willet’s Shoulders Broad Enough to Carry Load of Negro’s in Showlife,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 14, 1940. The same quote also appeared in “Chappie Willet Has Studio and Agency in Heart of Broadway,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1940.

James Edwards, who handles amateurs, has formed a “Tomorrow’s Headliners Club,” which offers them a free audition and an opportunity to study at a cheaper, non-professional price. A new innovation of the Chappie Willet Studios is the “Song-Writers Club,” organized by Charity Bailey, who is herself an authority on theory. It affords embryonic tunesmiths an opportunity to study the technicalities of writing songs as well as a chance to have their efforts played by topnotch bands. And efficiently checking on a smooth office routine is Connie Scott, Mr. Willet’s private secretary.¹⁵

Music Clinic employee Derniece Harris (1906–1996), who also performed in theater productions organized by Willet, had studied music at Howard and Columbia University; she later toured with the USO during World War II, and eventually led a successful performance career in Seattle under the name “Melody” Jones.¹⁶ Russell

Carrington was a former stage performer (he had shared a bill with the Miller Brothers dance act) and later worked as a co-producer of stage shows at Murrain’s nightclub.¹⁷

Pianist and singer Charity Bailey (1904–1978) had studied at the Dalcroze and Julliard conservatories, and went on to a distinguished career in music education, recording folk songs and hosting pioneering children’s programs on New York public television.¹⁸

James Edwards managed weekly amateur talent shows sponsored by Willet in Brooklyn, and—during World War II—at the Harlem Defense Recreation Center.¹⁹ The later

¹⁵ “Chappie Willet’s Shoulders Broad Enough.”

¹⁶ “Derniece Harris Joins Chappie Willette [sic] Staff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 6, 1940; Dan Burley, “Back Door Stuff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 29, 1941; Mary Elizabeth Cronin, “Unchanged Melody—Sharply Tuned Memories Span 65-Year Career of Jazz Pianist,” *Seattle Times*, April 18, 1993; Mary Elizabeth Cronin, “Local Jazz Great ‘Melody’ Jones Is Dead,” *Seattle Times*, August 16, 1996.

¹⁷ “Apollo” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, July 21, 1934; Dan Burley, “Back Door Stuff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 1, 1946.

¹⁸ “On Television,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1954; “Especially for Children,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1954; “Folk Music Program Offers Creative Fare,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1954; J. P. Shanley, “A Lesson From Charity,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1955; Dan Axtell, “Hello Ev’rybody, Yes Indeed: A Centennial Salute to Charity Bailey,” <<http://www.danaxtell.com/CharityBailey>> (accessed September 27, 2008).

¹⁹ “New Goodwill Tavern” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, September 28, 1940; “Harlem Defense Center Makes Annual Report,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 28, 1942.

activities of Connie Scott, herself the winner of an amateur competition at the Apollo Theater, remain more elusive.²⁰

Music Clinic staff members of the mid-1940s included the *Amsterdam News* columnist Bill Chase, and the Harvard-educated pianist and arranger Gerald Cook (1921–2006), a student of Nadia Boulanger and Roger Sessions.²¹ The histories of additional employees Susie Washington (pianist, lyricist, and arranger), Eulie Saunders, and Thelma Keith (singer) are more difficult to trace.²² Presumably, some of the music instructors and publicists worked on a freelance basis, or at least in shifts: a 1941 advertisement listed Willet’s studio hours as 10a.m.–10p.m.²³

Partnerships and Ventures

In addition to coverage of Willet’s efforts in the entertainment industry enterprises cited above, print publicity referenced other well-known composers and arrangers who shared residency in the Music Clinic suite. Following is a brief introduction to two of these figures, and a description of Willet’s assorted business ventures.

Russell Wooding

Willet’s publicity in the *Chicago Defender* and *Amsterdam News* of 1936–37 (including the barbershop endorsement) displays a concerted effort to laud his

²⁰ “Basie at Apollo,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 28, 1939.

²¹ “Willett [*sic*] Artists Bureau Newest Newsreel Feature,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1947; Marguerite Cartwright, “People You Should Know,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 11, 1954; “Requiem: Gerald Cook,” *Allegro*, December 2006.

²² “Miss Susie Washington,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 7, 1942; Tommy Watkins, “Escapading in Brooklyn,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 24, 1945. Some of Susie Mildred Washington’s lyrics were published in Margaret Nelson, ed., *Lyrics for Song Hits* (New York: Avon House, 1942), 442, 502.

²³ “Chappie Willet” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1941.

relationship with “his greatest inspiration,” the arranger Russell Wooding, who shared space in the Clinic offices through 1938.²⁴ Wooding’s musical accomplishments, first heralded in the black press during the late 1920s, may have been viewed by Willet as a model for his own career.²⁵ Alfred Russell Wooding was born in Hannibal, Missouri, on April 30, 1891, before his family moved to Washington, D.C.; he began service in the military around 1912, and eventually led Army bands during both world wars.²⁶ Following World War I, he returned to a day job as messenger for the State Department in Washington, helped found that city’s Crescendo Club for black musicians in 1919, led a band at the Republic Theater, and then moved to New York, where he worked with publisher Clarence Williams.²⁷ By the onset of the Great Depression, Wooding had established a successful career as a conductor and arranger of black Broadway productions and film musicals, including Connie’s *Hot Chocolates* and Lew Leslie’s *Blackbirds*.²⁸ He also continued peacetime military service as bandmaster of the 369th

²⁴ Willet’s citing of Wooding as “his greatest inspiration” was reported in McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular.”

²⁵ For example, see “Russell Wooding Continues Rise,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 1929; “Wooding Being Kept Very Busy,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 18, 1929.

²⁶ “Russell Wooding,” National Archives and Records Administration, NA Form 13164, December 3, 2004; U.S. Bureau of the Census. See also “Distinguished Harlem Regiment Protects Residents of Hawaii,” *Chicago Defender*, August 15, 1942. Wooding’s 1891 birth year is provided on a World War I draft registration card: “Alfred Russell Wooding,” reg. number 7665 [June 1917]. A World War II draft registration card provides a birth year of 1892: “Russell Wooding,” U.S. Selective Service Registration Card, D.S.S. Form 1 [circa 1945]. Similarities in age and early vocations make it worth noting that Russell Wooding’s younger brother, Samuel Garland Wooding, is not the jazz bandleader Samuel David Wooding.

²⁷ Mark Tucker, *Duke Ellington: The Early Years* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 49, 58; Kurt Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg, Germany: Advance Music, 1995), 52; “Russell Wooding Continues Rise.”

²⁸ Regarding Wooding’s Broadway and conducting career, see Bernard L. Peterson, Jr., *Profiles of African American Stage Performers and Theatre People* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2001), 312; “Russell Wooding Did a Good Job,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1929; “Activities of Musicians,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1930; Billy Jones, “That Shine,” *Chicago Defender*, January 10, 1931; “Four Orchestras Will Play at Big N.A.A.C.P. Ball at Harlem Savoy,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 14, 1931; “Wooding to Form ‘Red Cap’ Band,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1931; “‘Ol’ Man Satan at Lafayette,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 9, 1932; “‘Brain Sweat’ Due Here on Wednesday,” *New York Times*, March 29, 1934; “The Theatre’s Easter Parade,” *New York Times*, April 1, 1934.

New York National Guard Regiment band, the outfit James Reese Europe had famously led in France.²⁹

During the 1930s, Wooding served as musical director for the singer Ethel Waters, providing arrangements for her Broadway appearances in Irving Berlin's *As Thousands Cheer* (1933) and the Schuberts' *At Home Abroad* (1935), associations cited in Willet's publicity.³⁰ In 1935, Wooding worked on stage shows at Connie's Inn and the Ubangi Club.³¹ Although Wooding also did arranging work for the CBS radio network, his career was of relatively low profile at the time of his Broadway Music Clinic association.³² Willet's accolades may even reflect attempts to raise the stature of the elder musician, in addition to the obvious motive of connecting Willet's name to the Broadway establishment. Wooding appears to have retired following his service in World War II, and died around 1960.³³

Porter Grainger

Another established name that Willet could boast as a Clinic resident was the composer, lyricist, pianist, and playwright Porter Grainger. As a June 1937 *Amsterdam News* column announced, "Chappie Willet, brilliant young arranger, is bustin' his vest ...

²⁹ "Fifteen Thousand Witness 369th Review," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 19, 1936; "Jive in Barracks," *Time*, March 17, 1941, 52.

³⁰ Bill Chase, "Arrangers Are Real Originators of Swing: And Chappie Willet Is Near the Top of the List," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1937. The Schubert Archives contain no mention of Wooding regarding the *At Home Abroad* production, though his leadership of the orchestra that performed on Waters's 1935 Columbia recordings of songs from the show—"Hottentot Potentate" and "A Thief in the Night"—further supports the case for his involvement. See Tom Lord, *The Jazz Discography* (Vancouver, B.C.: Lord Music Reference, 1996), W255.

³¹ "Chocolates Cast Opens for Easter," *Chicago Defender*, April 20, 1935; "Pearl Baines Has New Song Hit for Show," *Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1935; "Connie's Inn Opens on Broadway with Hot Show," *Chicago Defender*, November 9, 1935.

³² "Unsung Heroes of Swing."

³³ Russell Wooding is listed in the "In Memoriam" section of the 1961 American Federation of Musicians Local No. 802 *Directory and Instrumentation*.

He's now with the Broadway Music Clinic with Porter Grainger."³⁴ Grainger was born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on October 22, 1891.³⁵ Details of his early life remain vague, but he reportedly grew up in Louisville and was co-owner of a music store; one account of Grainger's career claimed that he "became identified with the American stage somewhere between 1915–1919."³⁶ The composer was certainly connected to New York City by 1922, when Clarence Williams published Grainger's hit "Tain't Nobody's Biz-ness if I Do," written in collaboration with Everett Robbins.³⁷ A number of song publications followed, including "Beale Street Serenade" (1928) for Handy Brothers Music.³⁸ Other Grainger publishing affiliations during the 1920s included Zipf Music, Jack Mills, Rainbow Music, Broadway Music, and Gotham Music.³⁹

Grainger is credited as composing or arranging for theater productions including *Get Set* (1923), *Lucky Sambo* (1927), *Brown Buddies* (1930), *Hot Rhythm* (1930), and Zora Neale Hurston's folk project, *The Great Day* (1932).⁴⁰ In 1939, Grainger produced his own *Panorama of Negro Folklore* revue at the Alhambra Ballroom.⁴¹ Despite his considerable theatrical credentials, Grainger's name is most often cited as a piano

³⁴ "Entertainment World," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 19, 1937.

³⁵ "Porter Grainger," U.S. Selective Service Registration Card, D.S.S. Form 1 [circa 1942].

³⁶ Alvin Moses, "Footlight Flickers," *Atlanta Daily World*, February 7, 1939.

³⁷ Porter Grainger and Everett Robbins, "Tain't Nobody's Biz-ness if I Do" [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Clarence Williams, 1922). See also W. C. Handy, *Negro Authors and Composers of the United States* (New York: Handy Bros. Music, [1938?]), 12.

³⁸ Porter Grainger, Gene van Ormer, and W. C. Handy, "Beale Street Serenade" [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Handy Bros., 1923).

³⁹ For example, see Porter Grainger and Bob Ricketts, "I'm Gonna Get You" [stock arrangement] (New York: Zipf Music, 1923); Porter Grainger and Lena Wilson, "Sad 'n' Lonely Blues" [stock arrangement] (New York: Jack Mills, 1923); Porter Grainger and Bob Ricketts, "Mistreatin' Daddy" [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Rainbow Music, 1923). Regarding Broadway Music and "It's Gonna Be a Cold, Cold Winter," co-written with Jo Trent in 1924, see Mark Tucker, *Duke Ellington: The Early Years*, 262; regarding Gotham Music and "Song of the Cotton Field," filed for copyright in 1927, see Tucker, 168–69.

⁴⁰ Bernard L. Peterson, Jr., 118; 296; "Rare Negro Songs Given," *New York Times*, January 11, 1932.

⁴¹ "Panorama Friday Will Aid Nursery," *Chicago Defender*, February 18, 1939.

accompanist for blues recordings, notably with the singer Bessie Smith.⁴² He also appears to have worked as a vocal coach with a music studio other than Willet's at some point during the Swing Era.⁴³

In the New York nightclub world, Grainger worked at Small's Paradise, a Harlem venue for which he composed and arranged (and may have written scripts for) revues including *Harlem Swing Hotel* (1936) *Paradise on the Nile* (1937), and *By the Spell of the Moon* (1943).⁴⁴ Grainger also provided material for the Ubangi Club, and probably for Murrain's cabaret, as reasonably suggested by his composition titled "When You're at Murrain's."⁴⁵ Like Russell Wooding, Grainger appears to have left the music scene by the 1950s—Grainger so much so that even an approximate date of death remains difficult to establish.⁴⁶

Chappie Willet Recording Studios

In November 1938, Bill Chase's *Amsterdam News* column announced: "Chappie Willet, the arranger, is taking over the entire offices he formerly shared with Russell Wooding and Porter Grainger for one huge recording studio and music clinic."⁴⁷ In a feature article printed the following July—"Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field"—Chase unveiled the resulting makeover on Willet's headquarters. While the studio may

⁴² Porter Grainger's recordings with Bessie Smith are documented in Brian Rust, *Jazz Records 1897–1942*, 5th ed. (Chigwell, England: Storyville, 1982), 1444–45.

⁴³ "Ollie Mae Morris," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 21, 1946.

⁴⁴ "Smart Show at Small's Club," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 24, 1936; "It's 'Scronching' [sic] Now at Small's: Novel Dance Is Featured at Paradise," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 10, 1937; "Small's Paradise" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, December 11, 1943.

⁴⁵ Billy Rowe, "Billy Rowe Goes Into a Rave Over New Musical at the Ubangi Club," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1937; Porter Grainger, "When You're at Murrain's" [manuscript leadsheet], Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History (NMAH).

⁴⁶ Entries in *U.S. Copyright Renewal* publications suggest that Grainger was still living circa 1954: his name is provided as the claimant on an October 7, 1954, copyright renewal filing for Porter Grainger and Bob Ricketts, *How to Play and Sing the Blues* (R137236).

⁴⁷ Bill Chase, "All Ears," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 12, 1938.

not have been exactly “huge,” activities depicted in an accompanying photo spread (which was indeed large) include shots of Willet at a recording console outside a sound booth, the singer “Sister” Rosetta Tharpe behind a microphone, and “Willet’s capable secretary-accompanist, Miss Scott” at an upright piano. Willet explained that his new recording gear could be used for everything from “recording the songs of famous Broadway stars in rehearsal to visiting private parties and banquets where guests delight in having recordings of their voices made.” Chase also informed readers that the arranger-engineer could “record programs off the air,” and that “many prominent personalities have commissioned him to make a disc of their participation in recent broadcasts.” In Willet’s words (as reported by Chase):

“There are many recording studios such as mine along Broadway,” the youthful arranger confessed, “but their interest in Negroes is usually a monetary one, giving little or no care to the results. That is the main reason for establishing my studio—so that I can be sure that each record made here has had my individual attention to the point where I am convinced that the performer has been given the best possible results.”⁴⁸

Willet’s bottom line was also alluded to, as the article included more overt advertisements for the “House of Willet, dedicated to such people as you and me”:

“I wanted, too, to have a place where the amateur would feel at home as a professional. And it is surprising the number of every-day people who come in for recordings of their voices which they mail to the folks back home.”

More than anything else, Mr. Willet’s studio is an experimental laboratory, where amateurs lose all fear of being self-conscious or of making mistakes. . . . It’s a favorite spot of the “Cotton Club gang,” where they come between shows to make records “for the fun of it,” or listen to special numbers being recorded off the radio during the broadcasts of Cab Calloway’s orchestra. This is of immense value to the average musician who uses this means of checking on mistakes, arrangements, etc.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Chase, “Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field.”

⁴⁹ Ibid.

A September 1940 *Pittsburgh Courier* feature on Willet's office claimed that "Broadway's only Negro recording studio" had "been of invaluable aid to composers and song writers who use this new means of presenting their songs to publishers."⁵⁰ The same *Courier* issue printed a photo of the blues composer and publisher W. C. Handy shaking hands with Willet under a sign reading "Chappie Willet Recording Studios"; the photo is captioned, "Handy Gives Congratulations."⁵¹ A similar photo in the *Amsterdam News* depicts Handy and Willet examining a phonograph disc Willet "has just made of the voice of the 'daddy of the blues.'"⁵²

More opportunities for Willet to flaunt his professional associations are found in notices describing the social parties and jam sessions hosted at his studios. The *Amsterdam News* cited Willet entertaining composer-critics Leonard Feather and Adrian de Haas, the Cab Calloway and Erskine Hawkins orchestras, the Ink Spots vocal group, and—conveniently—*Amsterdam News* columnists Dan Burley and Bill Chase.⁵³

Donald Heywood

Despite both Grainger's and Wooding's Clinic spaces being bought out by Willet, another Broadway legend had moved into the office by 1942: the prolific composer, playwright, producer, and occasional bandleader Donald Gerard Heywood.⁵⁴ Born in

⁵⁰ "Chappie Willet Has Studio and Agency in Heart of Broadway."

⁵¹ "Handy Gives Congratulations," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1940. While it is difficult to draw conclusions from omissions, it is interesting that Handy's 1941 autobiography—which includes accolades for numerous contemporary music industry figures—makes no mention of Willet. W. C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan, 1941).

⁵² "Chappie Willet's Shoulders Broad Enough."

⁵³ Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 24, 1941; July 19, 1941; "Willet Is Host," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 16, 1941. Chase's attendance at the July 1941 event is specifically cited; Burley's attendance at the Calloway band party is surmised from Burley's description of the event as "roacheous." For the jive translation of "roach," see Dan Burley, *Dan Burley's Original Handbook of Harlem Jive* ([New York: Dan Burley], 1944), 146.

⁵⁴ Heywood briefly led the "Rhythmanics" orchestra. See "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, March 30, 1935.

Trinidad on October 24, 1897, Heywood reportedly gave up medical studies at Fisk and Northwestern for a career handling “pen and baton”; around 1920, he found work as a pianist with the Syncopated Orchestra of Will Marion Cook, with whom he collaborated in composing the Jazz Age standard “I’m Coming, Virginia.”⁵⁵ In 1923, Heywood wrote stage material for Harlem’s Lafayette Theater, and went on to compose, arrange, conduct, or script numerous black Broadway productions, including work with Porter Grainger on *Get Set* and *Hot Rhythm*, and a production featuring Ethel Waters, *Africana* (1927, with a revival in 1934).⁵⁶ By the late 1930s, Heywood was writing or producing stage shows for the Plantation Club (*Swing-Copations*, 1938; *See Harlem First*, 1939) and the Ubangi Club(s) (*Brevities in Bronze*, 1937; *Tan Manhattan*, 1941; *Top Hats and Tom Toms*, 1944)—the Ubangi’s 1937 revue represented another collaboration with Grainger.⁵⁷ Heywood also composed for the film *Moon Over Harlem* (1939), the Sky Club floorshow *The Mikado Jumps* (1939), the touring production *Tan-Americana* (1941), the Apollo revue *Tropicana* (1941), and the Carnegie Hall presentation *The Chocolate Soldier* (1942).⁵⁸

Described in one article as the “‘Little Caesar’ of Negro Theatre,” who “dresses in somewhat of an English style and is never seen without his cane,” Heywood served as

⁵⁵ “Donald Gerard Heywood,” U.S. Selective Service Registration Card, D.S.S. Form 1 [circa 1943]; Buster Vodery, “Donald Heywood Dropped Knife for Baton,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 19, 1938.

⁵⁶ Peterson, *Early Black American Playwrights*, 97–99.

⁵⁷ Dan Burley, “Barrington Guy, Valda Top Plantation Revue: Called Hottest Show in Town,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 5, 1938; “It’s Girls ... Girls ... Girls as Harlem’s Plantation Opens with Snappy Revue,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 12, 1938; Dan Burley, “Cubans, Chorines, Singers Pace Plantation Revue,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 13, 1939; Billy Rowe, “Billy Rowe Goes Into a Rave Over New Musical at the Ubangi Club,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1937; “Gala Opening: Harlem on Broadway” [Ubangi Club invitation, 1941], *The Eubie Blake Collection*, Maryland Historical Society, <<http://www.mdhs.org/eubieblake>> (accessed January 16, 2005); Louis Calta, “Night Clubs,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1944.

⁵⁸ “‘Harlem Moon’ Prevue Shows Stars at Best,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 27, 1939; “LeGon and Fletcher in Revue,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1939; “Roosevelt Theatre” [advertisement], *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 12, 1941; Dan Burley, “Heywood Vs. Strauss in the ‘Chocolate Soldier,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 11, 1942.

a board member of the elite Harlem Crescendo Club, which included established songwriters such as W. C. Handy, J. C. Johnson, and James P. Johnson.⁵⁹ In 1937, Heywood founded his own Negro Theatre Guild, which staged Heywood's short-lived production *How Come, Lawd?* at the Forty-ninth Street Theater.⁶⁰ Despite his impressive associations, Heywood's theatrical efforts through the following decade appear to have resulted in a string of commercial and critical failures. Whether by lack of funding, poor quality, poor management, or even audience sabotage, efforts such as *Black Rhythm* (1936), *Tune In and Swing* (1938), *Caribbean Cruise* (1939), *Tan Manhattan/Tan Americana* (touring production, 1941), *Swing a New Song* (1942), *Gospel Train* (1942, 1944), *More Powers to You* (1943), *Follow the Sun* (1943), *No Foolin', Susie* (1945), *Dwarf Long Nose* (1945), *Angels Over Broadway* (1947), *Calypso/Caribbean Carnival* (1947), the ("boperatic opera") *New Look Revue* (1949), and *Holiday in Paris* (1949) all appear to have folded within days of (if not prior to) opening; occasional revival attempts fared no better.⁶¹ By 1956, Heywood had reportedly "been off the scene for several years," though he attempted more productions before his death in 1967.⁶²

⁵⁹ Vodery, "Donald Heywood Dropped Knife for Baton"; "Crescendo Club Plans Carnival," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 5, 1939.

⁶⁰ "New Theatre Guild to Present Play," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1937; Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," *New York Times*, October 1, 1937; "Guild Theatre Drama Closes Two-Day Run," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 9, 1937. The Negro Theatre Guild was not connected to the Negro Actors Guild.

⁶¹ One Heywood production opening was reportedly sabotaged by the detonation of a stink bomb, per G. James Fleming, "Stench Bomb Strong, 'Black Rhythm' Weak," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 26, 1936; see also "The Theatre," *Time*, December 28, 1936, 33. It is possible that Heywood had enemies in Harlem, conceivably stemming from his involvement in projects such as the anti-Garveyite film *The Black King* (1932). Regarding announcements surrounding the other Heywood productions listed—which occasionally included pseudonymous collaborators—see "Donald Heywood Starts Casting for New Play," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 28, 1939; "Mixed Cast to Feature New Musical, 'Caribbean Cruise' at 44th Street," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 23, 1939; "News of the Stage," *New York Times*, August 22, 1939; April 2, 1942; February 1, 1943; Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," *New York Times*, March 6, 1941; Dan Burley, "Theatre 'Axis' Urgently Needed," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 8, 1941; "11 Stage Openings Listed for Month," *New York Times*, August 29, 1942; "H. H. Harris Play Departs Tonight," *New York Times*, November 25, 1944; "'Gospel Train' Coming to B'way," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 25, 1944; "'New Faces of '43' Here Tonight," *New York Times*, December 22, 1943; "'Follow the Sun' in Production," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 2, 1943; "College Unit to Do

Prior to the announcement of Heywood's affiliation with the Broadway Music Clinic, Willet had been credited for arranging work on *Caribbean Cruise*—which seems to have folded in rehearsal—and the Ubangi Club's "Harlem on Broadway" revue of 1941, *Tan Manhattan*, which featured compositions by Heywood, Eubie Blake, and Andy Razaf.⁶³ It is not clear who initiated Heywood's move into the Clinic, or exactly how long he remained there.⁶⁴ A *Chicago Defender* article of February 1942 offers (in typical Willet publicity trappings) the advantages behind Heywood having "recently aligned himself" with the arranger:

The Heywood-Willet tie-up, observers point out, should benefit promising sepia talent no end and should prove to be that springboard to success, which has long been lacking for our future stars. Heywood's fame as a producer and showman has placed him high in the opinion of Broadway bookers and producers, who are always on the lookout for new material and who will give young entertainers that "break" on his sayso alone, having known him as a shrewd picker of tomorrow's stars. Under Willet's handling the popular Bye Sisters were launched on their professional singing career and in two years have hit the top ranks of modern swi[n]gsters.⁶⁵

Shakespeare Here," *New York Times*, June 18, 1945; "'Candida' Tonight Stars Clare Luce," *New York Times*, August 6, 1945; Louis Calta, "News of the Stage," *New York Times*, September 13, 1947; "Donald Heywood Collaborates on New B'way Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1947; Sam Zolotow, "Lavery's Comedy Closes Tomorrow," *New York Times*, December 12, 1947; Louis Calta, "'Music in My Heart' Will Quit Jan. 3," *New York Times*, December 25, 1947; "Play on Theatre Listed by Gordon," *New York Times*, November 17, 1947; Louis Calta, "Calypso Program Faces Difficulties," *New York Times*, November 22, 1947; "'Boperatic Musical' Due," *New York Times*, January 5, 1949; Louis Calta, "Joseph Buys Play by Kronenberger," *New York Times*, December 31, 1949.

⁶² Izzy Rowe, "Izzy Rowe's Notebook," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 8, 1956; "Ethel Waters, Ingram in Cast," *New York Times*, July 30, 1959; "Heywood's 'Ol' Man' Revised," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 10, 1963; "Composer Donald Heywood Dies, 65" [*sic*], *New York Amsterdam News*, January 21, 1967.

⁶³ "Heywood's Pet Musical Finally Hits Broadway," *Chicago Defender*, May 4, 1940; "Gala Opening: Harlem on Broadway" [Ubangi Club invitation, 1941], *The Eubie Blake Collection*.

⁶⁴ A WWII Selective Service card citing Heywood's age as 45, and providing Willet's office address as Heywood's "place of employment," suggests a Music Clinic relationship as late as October 1943.

⁶⁵ "Network Singer Plans Aid to Young Singers by Scholarship," *Chicago Defender*, February 28, 1942.

Chappie Willet Artists' Enterprises

As suggested by the descriptor “handling,” the sister act cited above represents not only the efforts of the Music Clinic talent school, but also Willet’s booking and management agency: Chappie Willet Artists’ Enterprises (later billed as Chappie Willet Enterprises [*sic*]).⁶⁶ The Bye Sisters song and dance trio appears to have dropped Willet soon after landing a tour with Lionel Hampton in June 1942.⁶⁷ Similar to other “swingsters” coached or managed by Willet, such as the singer Belle Powell—who eventually performed with the Willie Bryant and Claude Hopkins orchestras, and had an ensemble role in the Broadway musical *Swingin’ the Dream* (1939)—the Bye Sisters appear to have enjoyed some success, but never hit the truly big-time.⁶⁸ Prior to the Heywood–Willet announcement, the Byes had appeared in Heywood’s spring 1941 *Tropicana* revue at the Apollo, and were featured in Willet’s own *Rockin’ in Rhythm* production, staged at the Indigo Room in New Rochelle.⁶⁹

The Willet-managed Indigo Room opened during the holiday season of 1941–42, accompanied by a flurry of publicity hyping an all-Artists’ Enterprises talent lineup. Located outside of New York City in suburban Westchester County (north of the East

⁶⁶ The “Enterprizes” with a “z” designation appears in a series of advertisements printed in the *New York Amsterdam News* from November 23, 1946, through May 31, 1947.

⁶⁷ Alvin Moses, “Alvin Moses Says,” *Chicago Defender*, March 28, 1942; Billy Jones, “Star Twinkles,” *Chicago Defender*, June 20, 1942; Major Robinson, “Through Harlem,” *Chicago Defender*, July 11, 1942.

⁶⁸ Regarding Willet’s association with Carrie Belle Powell (no relation to Adam Clayton Powell Jr.’s wife, Isabel “Belle” Washington Powell, also a stage performer) see Allan McMillan, “Hi-Hattin’ in Harlem,” *Chicago Defender*, November 27, 1937; January 8, 1938; “Star Talks Over New Song,” *Chicago Defender*, December 18, 1937; “Singing Find,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 8, 1938; ““Oh, Willie’ New Fan Cry,” *Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1938; Rollo S. Vest, “Detroit Topics,” *Chicago Defender*, October 24, 1942; “Swingin’ the Dream,” *Internet Broadway Database*, <<http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=13212>> (accessed September 18, 2008). Regarding the Bye Sisters, see “New Singing Sensations,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1941; “They’re Small’s Paradise Stars,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 10, 1942; “Cootie Williams, Bye Sisters at Apollo,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 27, 1943.

⁶⁹ “Donald Heywood’s Musical, ‘Tropicana,’ at the Apollo,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1941; Maurice Dancer, “Tan Manhattan,” *Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1941.

Bronx) Willet's "sin-den" (as designated by columnist Alvin Moses) was housed in the local Chauffeur and Domestic Workers' Club, at 4 Valley Place off Fifth Avenue.⁷⁰ Print publicity claimed an opening attendance of over 500 members at the 250-capacity clubhouse.⁷¹ The *Amsterdam News* provided Willet's explanation of the project:

"I've long been in search of a spot where I could break in young talent," he stated, "and now I feel that I have just the right spot. Unless we give embryo stars their chance they will never develop into stars of tomorrow. I intend to produce the entire revue using new material that has seldom been seen in nite clubs or theatres."⁷²

It is not clear if the suburban venue was meant to be a permanent establishment, or was merely a temporary arrangement: in any case, media coverage of Willet's production did not extend past a few weeks, and the Workers' Club itself is not listed after 1942.⁷³ A *Chicago Defender* advertisement plugging both Chappie Willet Artists' Enterprises and the Indigo Room ("home of continuous fun") listed the Bye Sisters, Tick & Tock, the Reeves Sisters, Alicia & Arnesto, Derniece Harris, and blues singer Inez Washington as resident acts.⁷⁴ Additional Indigo publicity cited performers Jack Meredith, Short & Shorty, Sandra & Lakeeta, and Lou [*sic*] & Bebe; the latter duo consisted of Helen Watkins and Llewellyn (or "Lew") "200 pounds of joy" Crawford.⁷⁵ Crawford was already an established comedian, emcee, and floorshow dance director, having worked on the 1935 *Ubangi Club Revue*, and the 1938 film *The Duke Is Tops*,

⁷⁰ Al Moses, "Alvin Moses Says," *Chicago Defender*, January 3, 1941.

⁷¹ "Chappie Willet Named Manager of New Rochelle 'Indigo Room,'" *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 27, 1941.

⁷² "Chappie Willet Takes Over Spot in Westchester for New Talent," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 6, 1941.

⁷³ [New York Telephone Company,] *Westchester County Directory*, 1941; 1942.

⁷⁴ "Indigo Room" [advertisement], *Chicago Defender*, December 27, 1941.

⁷⁵ "Willet Restores New Rochelle Nitelife," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 20, 1941; Maurice Dancer, "Tan Manhattan," *Chicago Defender*, December 27, 1941.

featuring Lena Horne.⁷⁶ In the mid-1940s, Crawford was affiliated with the Harlem talent agency Suntan Studios (located at 217 West 125th Street), an organization that cited Broadway songwriters Andy Razaf and Porter Grainger among its residents, and was possibly in competition with Willet's agency.⁷⁷

Few of the Indigo Room acts are traceable after World War II. Inez Washington eventually recorded two sides for the obscure Cincinnati label circa 1945–46, but does not appear to have been affiliated with Willet at that time.⁷⁸ Billie Hayes, another blues singer affiliated with Willet during the war years, may be the only Artists' Enterprises act documented on commercial recordings (Willet's affiliation with the higher profile Peters Sisters and Three Chocolateers, who both made film appearances discussed later, does not appear to have included a booking or management relationship).⁷⁹ In 1943, Hayes's recordings of "I Can't Get Enough," "Man Shortage Blues," "Blackout Blues," and "You Ain't Had No Blues" were released on Joe Davis's Beacon label; Bruce Bastin, a biographer of Davis, has suggested the possibility of Hayes's uncredited piano accompanist being Porter Grainger.⁸⁰ Archival manuscripts reveal that Willet arranged at

⁷⁶ "Armstrong Triumphs at the Apollo Theatre," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 7, 1935; *The Duke Is Tops* (1938; DVD reissue, Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005).

⁷⁷ "22 New Shorts for Soundies Completed," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 21, 1943. See also "Ollie Mae Morris," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 21, 1946.

⁷⁸ Inez Washington recorded "Soldier Man Blues" and "That Ain't Right," backed by the Four Kings of Rhythm. See Tom Lord, *The Jazz Discography* (Vancouver, B.C.: Lord Music Reference, 1996), W204.

⁷⁹ Howard Taubman, "Records: New Contract," *New York Times*, May 30, 1943; Billy Rowe, "Sepia Talent Flourishing on Broadway and in Harlem," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 10, 1943; "Latest Find," *Chicago Defender*, July 17, 1943. The Billie Hayes associated with Willet is of no relation to the 1950s singer and television actress of the same name.

⁸⁰ The 1943 Hayes recordings credit piano accompaniment to the pseudonym "Peter Pan"; two of the recorded compositions are credited to "Leslie Beacon," a pseudonym for Joe Davis. See Bruce Bastin, *Never Sell a Copyright: Joe Davis and His Role in the New York Music Scene 1916–1978* (Chigwell, England: Storyville, 1990), 99, 108. See also Robert M. W. Dixon, John Godrich, and Howard Rye, *Blues and Gospel Records 1890–1943*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 366.

least four other Hayes vehicles, perhaps including some of the singer's original compositions.⁸¹

The more prominent names on Willet's roster were dancers, such as the tap acts of Pete Nugent (1909–1973), and the Miller Brothers & Lois (Miller): both were featured in high-profile touring revues, backed by headlining bandleaders like Count Basie and Cab Calloway.⁸² It is not clear how exclusive or extensive Willet's relationship with the various acts on his booking roster was. The "adagio" (or, more generally, "ballroom") dancer Harold Norton, for example, performed with various partners in addition to the Norton & Norton (husband and wife) combination cited in Willet's publicity.⁸³

News of Willet's booking and management agency crested again during 1946–47, with press plugs for vocalists Mae Iris Davis (a former USO performer), Kathie McAdams, and Jimmie Anderson—none of whom appear to have achieved significant success.⁸⁴ Willet's office continued advertising into 1947, when All-American Newsreel reportedly distributed a film short covering Willet's activities. A *Pittsburgh Courier* description of the film reports Willet maintaining an office staff of six, including music teachers and publicity agents, although a reference to Willet's short-lived publishing

⁸¹ Willet's manuscript leadsheet arrangements for Hayes—"Know How to Do It," "Sister to You," "Stand for That Jive," and "Unlucky Woman"—are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

⁸² Gary Lambert "Pete" Nugent toured with Count Basie in 1947; he was also featured in the 1943 Irving Berlin musical, *This Is the Army*. See Cholly Atkins and Jacqui Malone, *Class Act: The Jazz Life of Choreographer Cholly Atkins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 78–80; Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1968; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 298. For a description of a Calloway revue including the Miller Brothers & Lois, see Don Marshall, "Vaudeville Reviews: Strand, New York," *Billboard*, April 12, 1947, 42.

⁸³ For an example of personnel changes in Harold Norton's act, see Al Monroe, "Swingin' the News," *Chicago Defender*, February 14, 1942. One of Norton's longest-running partnerships was with Margot Webb, whose career is examined in Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Waltzing in the Dark: African American Vaudeville and Race Politics in the Swing Era* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

⁸⁴ "Back on Broadway," *Chicago Defender*, December 7, 1946; "Talented Beauty," *Chicago Defender*, January 25, 1947; Billy Rowe, "Billy ... Rowe's Notebook," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 19, 1947. The Willet-affiliated Jimmie Anderson is of no relation to the Mississippi blues singer Jimmy Anderson.

ventures suggests that the film may have been made at an earlier date.⁸⁵ Also in spring 1947, All-American Pictures produced *Hi-De-Ho*, a film musical revue featuring Cab Calloway's orchestra, the Miller Brothers & Lois, and the Peters Sisters, among others. Buster Harding is the only arranger named in the film's credits, but the talent lineup and repertoire hints at Willet's hand somewhere in the production.

Duo Music and Text Music Publishing

Another expansion of Willet's Music Clinic came in 1944, with the inauguration of two publishing companies: Text Music and Duo Music. Text Music represented what appears to have been a one-time collaboration on the occasion of Adam Clayton Powell Jr.'s first congressional campaign. In October 1944, a *Chicago Defender* column announced: "Langston Hughes, world famous poet, and Chappie Willet, noted song writer and arranger, have collaborated in writing a rousing, militant new song."⁸⁶ The resulting "'Let My People Go'—Now!" publication, arranged in the style of a spiritual for four-part vocal choir and piano accompaniment, included the following dedication:

With thanks to ADAM CLAYTON POWELL, Jr. whose phrase "LET MY PEOPLE GO—NOW" inspired the writing of this song with the hope that it may help make this a free world for all mankind regardless of race, creed, or color.
The Publisher.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ "Willett [*sic*] Artists Bureau Newest Newsreel Feature," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1947. The *Courier* article describes Willet's staff as including "Berniece" [*sic*—Derniece] Harris, who was serving overseas during 1945–46 (see "'Jive' Units Back from USO Tours," *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1946), but was apparently back in New York in October 1946 (see "USAT Zebulon B. Vance," *Passenger List*, October 12, 1946); references to Willet's short-lived Duo Music and Text Music publishing companies may suggest an earlier date altogether, circa 1944. Regardless of the film's date of creation, the 1947 notice probably indicated the newsreel's first appearance in theaters: it is difficult to imagine Willet not inserting some notice of it in his publicity had it been released earlier. While a number of All-American Newsreel productions survive, a copy of the Willet feature has yet to be located.

⁸⁶ V. C. Bevenue, "Milwaukee, Wisc.," *Chicago Defender*, October 23, 1944.

⁸⁷ Langston Hughes and Chappie Willet, "'Let My People Go'—Now!" [publisher leadsheet], New York: Text Music Publishing, 1944. The Text Music copyright was filed on September 7, 1944 (E unpub. 389290).

The address provided for the Text Music Publishing Company is that of the Broadway Music Clinic. Hughes's and Willet's creation of a "spiritual" as Powell's campaign song reflects both the politician's prominent position in the Abyssinian Baptist Church, as well as what Jon Michael Spencer identifies as a broader "institutionalization of the [Harlem] Renaissance in the black church," a phenomenon that eventually included an embrace of the arranged spiritual as a suitable vehicle for Harlem Renaissance ideals following the atheism of the 1920s "New Negro" figures (notably exemplified by Hughes himself).⁸⁸ Willet's arrangement consists of a four-bar piano introduction, an eight-bar ensemble chorus, and four sixteen-bar verses decrying "Jim Crow" and "Uncle Tom" to be "spoken or sung" over ensemble vocal humming.⁸⁹ These lyrics are augmented by an additional typewritten page providing three "extra verses for Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.," extolling the subject's political virtues.⁹⁰ Press notices from the following year cited a radio broadcast performance by pianist Mary Lou Williams and vocalist Elwood Smith (a "stirring song that rings out with a message") and anticipated the possibility of Lucky Millinder's orchestra performing an arrangement of the piece.⁹¹

In July 1944, the *Chicago Defender* announced Willet's Duo Music Publishing venture in "Willett [*sic*] Heads Music Firm"; a columnist later cited Willet to declare that "of 1500 music publishers, only 15 are Negro-owned and most of these inactive."⁹² Duo

⁸⁸ Jon Michael Spencer, *The New Negroes and Their Music: The Success of the Harlem Renaissance* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 117; 117–25.

⁸⁹ Regarding the work of Langston Hughes and Civil Rights political movements in Swing Era New York, see Jonathon Bakan, "Jazz and the 'Popular Front': 'Swing' Musicians and the Left-Wing Movement of the 1930s–1940s," *Jazz Perspectives* 3/1 (April 2009): 35–56.

⁹⁰ A later (1955), alternate set of lyrics—with some verses re-ordered, and others rewritten—has been published in Langston Hughes, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, vol. 6, ed. Leslie Catherine Sanders (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 633–35.

⁹¹ Ted Yates, "New York Show Whirl," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 30, 1945; Al Monroe, "Swinging the News," *Chicago Defender*, May 26, 1945.

⁹² Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, November 25, 1944.

Music may have represented as few as two compositions, both vocal ballads relating to Lucky Millinder. “Darlin’,” composed by Frances Kraft Reckling, had been previously published by Douglas Publishing (BMI) in 1943.⁹³ The song’s 1944 copyright filing by Duo Music credits both Reckling and Millinder as composers, presumably including changes reflected in singer Judy Carol’s recent recording of the song with Millinder’s band (the melody and lyrics of their arrangement do diverge from the original Douglas leadsheet).⁹⁴ “A Rainy Sunday” was credited to Millinder, Art Franklin, and Blackie Warren.⁹⁵ I have not been able to trace the latter name (referred to as “Dr. Blackie Warren ... of Chicago” in one source); it seems likely to be a pseudonym for Chappie Willet.⁹⁶ An *Amsterdam News* photo of Willet surrounded by the Peters Sisters, titled “‘A Rainy Sunday’ Brings Sunshine to Composer,” included a caption stating that “the tune is *also* [emphasis added] published by a concern of which Mr. Willet is president, the Duo Publishing Company”—perhaps further intimating Willet as co-composer.⁹⁷ “A Rainy Sunday” was reportedly debuted by Cab Calloway’s orchestra at the Café Zanzibar in September 1944, and adopted by the Peters Sisters soon after.⁹⁸ The sisters eventually performed the number with Calloway’s orchestra in the 1947 film *Hi-De-Ho*.⁹⁹

Publicity for “A Rainy Sunday” peaked with a September 1944 *Amsterdam News* article, titled “U.S. Orders 250,000 Records of ‘A Rainy Sunday’ for Overseas.” Citing

⁹³ Frances Kraft Reckling, “Darlin’” [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Douglas Publishing, 1943).

⁹⁴ Millinder and Carol’s performance of “Darlin’” was recorded on May 25, 1944, and issued on Decca 18779; see Lord, *The Jazz Discography*, M846–47. The Duo Music copyright was filed on May 27, 1944 (E unp. 377881), with both words and music credited to Reckling and Millinder.

⁹⁵ Blackie Warren, Lucky Millinder, and Art Franklin, “A Rainy Sunday” [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Duo Music Publishing, 1944). The Duo Music copyright was filed on May 23, 1944 (E unp. 376106), and again on September 5, 1944 (E pub. 125215), with music credited to Franklin and Warren, and words credited to Millinder and Warren.

⁹⁶ “Willet [*sic*] Heads Music Firm,” *Chicago Defender*, July 29, 1944.

⁹⁷ “‘A Rainy Sunday’ Brings Sunshine to Composer,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 14, 1944.

⁹⁸ “‘Rainy Sunday’ New Hit Tune,” *Chicago Defender*, September 30, 1944.

⁹⁹ *Hi-De-Ho*, Classic Musicals (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005).

evidence of “a new spirit of inter-racial cooperation,” the paper claimed that a radio broadcast performance by the Peters Sisters had included an announcement of plans to record the song for free military distribution. The article’s un-bylined author additionally offered that “it is quite evident that if the present popularity of this latest Duo Music presentation continues, only the current paper shortage will prevent it from reaching the million mark in sheet music alone.”¹⁰⁰ Even if such a recording was planned, no evidence of its production or distribution has been discovered, and it is doubtful that Willet’s sheet music sales (nor those of any small publisher) were in danger of reaching the million mark. It appears that the first commercial recording of the song was not made until 1946, when Apollo Records recorded a performance by singer Lee Richardson with Luis Russell’s orchestra.¹⁰¹

For reasons unknown, Willet’s interest in music publishing appears to have been relatively fleeting: neither Duo Music nor Text Music appears to have published any material after 1944. Willet did, however, file another song for copyright in October 1944: “Japan: An American Battle Song” credits words and music to Willet and Andy Razaf. A patriotic World War II song with lyrics calling to “exterminate Japan,” the piece is written in a duple marching meter and includes a 16-bar verse, a 32-bar chorus, and a 16-bar refrain asking citizens to “buy, buy bonds.”¹⁰² The composition is likely connected to the committee of “outstanding colored personalities in the musical and theatrical world” assembled in fall 1944 to promote war bonds; members included New York composers

¹⁰⁰ “U.S. Orders 250,000 Records of ‘A Rainy Sunday’ for Overseas,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 30, 1944. See also “‘Rainy Sunday’ New Hit Tune.”

¹⁰¹ Russell and Richardson’s performance of “A Rainy Sunday” was recorded on October 19, 1946, and issued on Apollo 1139; see Lord, *The Jazz Discography*, R763. It is possible that the disc itself was not marketed until some time later; see “Lee Richardson Triumphs Again,” *Chicago Defender*, November 20, 1948.

¹⁰² Andy Razaf and Chappie Willet, “Japan: An American Battle Song,” copyright deposit, October 19, 1944 (E unpub. 394505), U.S. Library of Congress.

Razaf, Willet, Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, W. C. Handy, J. C. Johnson, Luckeyeth Roberts, James P. Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson, among others. Although the participants' efforts reportedly culminated in a recording and radio broadcast project in November 1944, no additional documentation of Willet's "Japan" has surfaced to date.¹⁰³

Floorshow Venues

Perhaps the most significant portion of Willet's arranging reputation and income resulted from his creation of musical accompaniment for nightclub and theater stage show acts. The Music Clinic's location was not only a short walk from several large Broadway theaters (including Loew's State, the Paramount, and the Strand), but also a number of lucrative nightclubs including Connie's Inn, the Cotton Club, and the Ubangi Club: white-owned Harlem establishments that had recently moved into the Times Square district.

Willet's move to New York in the mid-1930s was well timed for entry into nightclub work. With some degree of entertainment industry hyperbole, *Variety* critics Abel Green and Joe Laurie Jr. recalled:

Nineteen-thirty-six and 1937 were such boom years for Harlem [*sic*] hotspots like the Cotton Club, the Kit Kat, the Harlem Uproar House, Ubangi, Small's Paradise, Plantation, Black Cat, Dicky Wells and others, that there was a shortage of sepian [black] talent for the Negro theatres, which had to hire ofay [white] actors to round out their bills.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ "Songs by Razaf, Johnson to Open War Loan Drive," *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 18, 1944. See also Barry Singer, *Black and Blue: The Life and Lyrics of Andy Razaf* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), 313–14.

¹⁰⁴ Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr., *Show Biz from Vaude to Video* (New York: Henry Holt, 1951), 442. While the Kit Kat, Harlem Uproar House, and Black Cat featured black performers, they were not geographically located in Harlem. See also "8 More N.Y. Spots Open," *Billboard*, November 2, 1935, 11.

The clubs cited above all featured stage show acts out of the vaudeville tradition, a medium that required a fairly extensive support industry comprising musicians, composers, arrangers, scriptwriters, and choreographers. Margot Webb, one of Harold Norton's dance partners, recalled their act paying music arrangers \$50–\$75 per piece during the mid-1930s (approximately \$750–\$1,125 in 2010 currency), noting that “a good arrangement had a potential performance life of two to three years.”¹⁰⁵ New York nightclub arranger Tom Whaley boasted charging as much as \$150 per arrangement—“a whole lot of money,” as he recalled—during the late 1930s.¹⁰⁶ Dance directors represented another expenditure for stage acts: Webb cites established stage show choreographers or dance coaches charging as much as \$250 per routine.¹⁰⁷

Representative of many specialty vaudeville acts, the Norton duo maintained a relatively focused working repertoire of three to five numbers.¹⁰⁸ An act's accompanying arrangement might be performed by a backing band touring with (and often headlining) a revue comprising numerous acts, or by house bands attached to a specific venue. Nightclub floorshows might cycle through several acts or backing bands in the course of a season-long run; as cited later on, some nightclub productions occasionally made theater tours as well.

White Broadway arranger Robert Russell Bennett described the rigors of arranging music to dance choreography:

¹⁰⁵ Brenda Dixon-Stowell, “Between Two Eras: ‘Norton and Margot’ in the Afro-American Entertainment World,” *Dance Research Journal* 15/2 (Spring 1983): 14. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Consumer Price Index cites a historical conversion rate of approximately fifteen 2010 dollars to one 1935 dollar. *The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, <www.minneapolisfed.org> (accessed February 6, 2010). Regarding the monetary values cited throughout this chapter, the same approximate rate holds through 1940; the 1945 rate is approximately twelve to one.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Whaley, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 48.

¹⁰⁷ Dixon-Stowell, “Between Two Eras,” 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

Solo dancers and teams are the *bête noire* of the arranger. They seldom know what they want to dance to and, if they do, have no terms to communicate their wants to a musician. . . . Chorus dancing is staged by a director, who has names for all of the thousand and one tricky rhythms, steps, and formations he uses. Everything he creates should be echoed in the perfect orchestration, so, rather than spend months at a dancing school, this humble orchestrator takes down a sketch of every step, hop, twist, entrance, exit, stop, break, back-bend, split, nip-up or what-have-you—measure by measure.¹⁰⁹

Bandleader Gene Krupa provided his estimation of Willet's work in stage show productions:

I'll never forget how much [Willet] did for bands that had to play shows; invariably vaudeville acts brought in music that was worse to listen to than to play, and it was murder to play from those sad, cut-up, marked-up, beat-up stocks. Chappie had the knack of being able to put down on paper what the performer wanted, and yet make it sound good.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, it is difficult to match recordings or notated music to descriptions such as Krupa's: specialty act arrangements from period productions remain fairly scarce, and manuscript notation that does survive is difficult to trace without corresponding documentation of the specific venue, date, or program. Recorded radio broadcasts from theaters or clubs, such as Duke Ellington's recorded broadcasts from the Cotton Club, Hurricane Club, and Café Zanzibar, are not only devoid of the physical acts accompanying the music, but often represent a musical program separate from the regular floorshow.

The full programs of every theater or nightclub production are also difficult to trace, but intermittent media coverage sketches out a broad picture of Chappie Willet's Swing Era scene. Following are brief accounts of some of the nightclubs, theaters,

¹⁰⁹ Robert Russell Bennett, "Orchestrating for Broadway," in *The Broadway Sound: The Autobiography and Selected Essays of Robert Russell Bennett*, ed. George J. Ferencz (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1999), 281.

¹¹⁰ Bruce Klauber, *World of Gene Krupa: That Legendary Drummin' Man* (Ventura, California: Pathfinder Publishing, 1990), 46.

producers, choreographers, and performers that were connected with Willet's office. Performance fees and admission prices are provided to suggest the relative prestige of the different acts and venues. Many of the individuals identified will reappear in later chapters; others appear here in what may be their only historical resurrection, pending future research.

The Apollo Theater

Willet claimed to have received his first New York break in 1934, working with Luis Russell's orchestra at the Apollo Theater, on West 125th Street off Eighth Avenue.¹¹¹ Russell's "Old Man River" orchestra played the Apollo's week-long residencies twice in December 1934, including one week with the Nicholas Brothers tap dance act.¹¹² It is unclear for how long Willet worked at the theater, how regular this work was, or what his fees were. Arranger Tom Whaley, who worked at the Apollo around 1939–40, reported that he received "a hundred dollars" for directing shows with Duke Ellington's band; presumably this fee covered the week.¹¹³

Surviving payment records for the Apollo productions during 1934–35 do not reflect direct payments to arrangers or conductors; perhaps they were paid out of the bandleaders' fees. Weekly payments to featured orchestras ranged from \$1,200 (paid to Luis Russell for the December 1934 show with the Nicholas Brothers) to \$2,250 (paid to Lucky Millinder's orchestra the following month). A week's pay for headline acts such as the Nicholas Brothers ranged from \$525 (the December 1934 show with Russell) to \$650 (November 1935). Other specialty acts, including Bessie Smith (February 1935), Harold

¹¹¹ "Youth Creates for Armstrong," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 12, 1936.

¹¹² "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, December 1, 1934; December 29, 1934.

¹¹³ Whaley, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 48–49.

Norton's dance duos (June 1935), the Three Dukes (February 1935), or Pete Nugent's "Pete, Peaches, and Duke" trio (February 1935) received \$125 to \$350. Radio superstars such as the Mills Brothers (April 1935) commanded as much as \$3,000; but unproven singles such as Una Mae Carlisle (February 1935) or Belle Powell (debuting in December 1937) saw as little as \$18 to \$35.¹¹⁴

With a new revue program every week, Apollo arrangers like Willet and Whaley needed to tailor musical numbers to the needs of individual performers (which regularly included Willet-booked acts like the Three Dukes, Myra Johnson, the Miller Brothers & Lois, or the Nortons) on a tight schedule.¹¹⁵ As Harold Cromer declared of Willet, "he could write fast, I can tell you that!"¹¹⁶ Cromer also recalled witnessing Willet rehearse Lucky Millinder's orchestra in the Apollo basement; it is not clear if Willet also conducted Apollo performances, as Whaley had. Willet's arranging work was also cited in publicity for Jimmie Lunceford's Apollo residency in January 1943 (Willet's arrangement of "East of Sun," featuring Lunceford's vocalist Dan Grissom, may date from this engagement), and Earl Hines's residency in September 1943.¹¹⁷ A Millinder performance including a "stringless" 30-piece orchestra and 30-voice choir, with arrangements by Willet and William Johnson, was announced in June 1944.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ The Apollo Theater payments are cited from financial records held in folders 2–3, box 4, Frank Schiffman Apollo Theater Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

¹¹⁵ For example, see "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, March 14, 1936; "Basie's Band, Billie Holiday on Apollo Bill," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 6, 1937; "Waller at Apollo in Hot Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1939; "Lunceford and Peters Sisters Apollo Stars," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 16, 1940. Regarding the Apollo's weekly program policy, see bandleader Andy Kirk's testimony in Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 99.

¹¹⁶ Cromer, interview by author.

¹¹⁷ "Lunceford Answers Host of Queries on Arrangers of Music," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 16, 1943; "Earl Hines, After Losing Men to Army, Forms Sensational Mixed Band," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 11, 1943. Orchestra parts for "East of the Sun," dated 1942 and 1943, reside in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian NMAH.

¹¹⁸ "Millinder to Open with 'Panorama of Jazz,'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 24, 1944.

Another Apollo arranging task was to provide music for the chorus line routines. Dance historians Marshall and Jean Stearns claimed that the 1937 composition “For Dancers Only,” written by the Lunceford orchestra arranger Sy Oliver, was designed for the Apollo chorus.¹¹⁹ During the Swing Era, Leonard Harper (1899–1943) is most often credited as the Apollo’s “dance director” (a role roughly equivalent to the later title of “choreographer”) whose duties might range from the grouping of stage show scenes to the coaching of individual acts.¹²⁰ Clarence Robinson (1900–1979) occasionally served in the same capacity, or as producer: organizing the roster of acts and, perhaps, music arranging duties.¹²¹

The Apollo may have also been one of the last stage show work venues for Willet. Leonard Reed (1907–2004), a dancer and producer affiliated with the Apollo during the 1950s, recalled Willet working with Apollo “house band” leader Reuben Phillips.¹²² A 1958 production (from the period Reed is credited with Apollo productions) included Phillips’s band, the Miller Brothers, and Stump & Stumpy.¹²³ Tap dancer Charles “Honi” Coles (1911–92), a manager at the Apollo during the 1950s, praised Willet’s talents:

Finding an arranger who knew what we wanted was tough One of the best was Chappie Willett [*sic*]. We’d hum the crazy accents, along with the tune, and he put them in big-band arrangements.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 299.

¹²⁰ For examples of Leonard Harper credits, see “Claude Hopkins on Stage Again,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 12, 1936; “Basie’s Band, Billie Holiday on Apollo Bill,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 6, 1937; “Waller at Apollo in Hot Show,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1939; “Leonard Harper’s Death Recalls His Place in Showlife,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 13, 1943. Regarding the role and title of “dance director,” Marshall and Jean Stearns explain that “the title of choreographer came later”; see Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 161.

¹²¹ For example, see “Russell Band Heads Apollo Theatre Revue,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 15, 1935; “Duke Ellington to Top Apollo Theatre Show,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 1935. Regarding the career of Clarence Robinson, see Billy Rowe, “Clarence Robinson Dead at 79,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 8, 1979.

¹²² Leonard Reed, telephone interview by author, December 2, 2002.

¹²³ “Louis Jordan Next in Apollo,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 19, 1958; “Apollo” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, December 13, 1958.

¹²⁴ Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 299.

Coles's dancing partner, Cholly Atkins, recalled their duo performing Willet's music on a theater tour with Count Basie in 1947:

A guy out of Philadelphia, Chappie Willet, arranged the music for our whole act. We had some real pretty melodic saxophone passages, and Basie's band just loved to get to a certain part. There would be no brass in there, nothing but rhythm and saxophones. And the cats would start singing.¹²⁵

Connie's Inn

Russell Wooding was working on the *Connie's Hot Chocolates* floorshows at Connie's Inn during the spring and fall of 1935.¹²⁶ The spring production marked the belated return of the club after moving from Harlem (on Seventh Avenue off 131st Street, next to the Lafayette Theater) down to 200 West 48th Street on Broadway (a site previously occupied by the Palais Royale).¹²⁷ As Willet's work for Louis Armstrong dates from the trumpeter's residency at Connie's Inn that fall (where Armstrong was backed by Willet's Apollo Theater client, Luis Russell) an additional recommendation or approval from Wooding seems a likely catalyst for the two arrangers' relationship. The *Amsterdam News* reports that Willet's compositions "Blue Rhythm Fantasy" and "Jungle Madness" were featured in radio broadcasts from Connie's Inn during this period.¹²⁸

Connie's Inn was as a "black and tan" venue; as explained by Candice Love Jackson, "tan" was period slang for "whites who immersed themselves in black musical culture, pretending for a brief time that they belonged to the black community."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Atkins and Malone, *Class Act*, 80.

¹²⁶ "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, April 13, 1935; "Connie's Inn Opens on Broadway with Hot Show."

¹²⁷ "Chocolates Cast Opens for Easter." See also Allan McMillan, "Broadway Sees and Likes 'Hot Chocolates' Show," *Chicago Defender*, May 4, 1935.

¹²⁸ "Youth Creates for Armstrong."

¹²⁹ Candice Love [Jackson], "Black and Tan Clubs," in *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*, vol. 1, ed. Carl Wintz and Paul Finkelman (New York: Routledge, 2004): 122.

Although the designation implies some degree of racial integration, the performing ensembles and staff were typically black, and the management of some white-owned black-and-tans maintained an admission policy that “discouraged black patrons.”¹³⁰ Club prices at Connie’s were on the expensive side, though purchase of dinner was apparently not required (or perhaps depended on the patron!): an advertisement for the Armstrong–Russell show, including “97 sepia stars,” cites a cover charge of 85 cents, with a chicken dinner for \$2.50 (\$2.00 on weekends and holidays).¹³¹ Like many midtown nightclubs during this period, Connie and George Immerman’s establishment presented three shows nightly. Leonard Harper staged many of the productions, which toured theaters in addition to (or, in some cases, aside from) the club venue.¹³² Willet may have “discovered” the singer Belle Powell while she performed as one of the Three Melody Girls in a 1937 touring production of *Connie’s Hot Chocolates*.¹³³ The club venue itself appears to have folded around July 1936.¹³⁴

The fall 1935 production culminated in Armstrong hiring the Luis Russell orchestra as his regular backing ensemble. Willet’s relationship with Armstrong via Russell continued through the following decade, providing Willet one of his highest profile regular clients. “I’ve Got My Fingers Crossed,” recorded by Armstrong for Decca Records during his Connie’s Inn residency that November, was the first of many Willet arrangements to be recorded by the jazz icon.¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Places to Dine: Connie’s” [advertisement], *New York Times*, January 1, 1936.

¹³² A brief history of the *Connie’s Hot Chocolates* touring productions is provided in Dan Morgenstern, “Hot Chocolates,” in *Living with Jazz*, ed. Sheldon Meyer (New York: Pantheon, 2004): 605–16.

¹³³ “Three Melody Girls of Connie’s,” *Chicago Defender*, January 23, 1937.

¹³⁴ The last mention of a Connie’s Inn production in the *New York Times* “News of Stage” column was on June 25, 1936.

¹³⁵ “Youth Creates for Armstrong.” “I’ve Got My Fingers Crossed” was recorded by Armstrong on November 21, 1935, and issued on Decca 623. See Willems, *All of Me*, 94.

The Cotton Club

In September 1936, the Cotton Club moved from its East 142nd Street Harlem location to midtown Broadway, at 200 West 48th Street (previously the midtown location of Connie's Inn).¹³⁶ The club, managed by Herman Stark, continued to feature many of the same performers that had built the Harlem venue's reputation during the 1920s and early '30s, including Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and Ethel Waters. Different "Cotton Club Parade" productions, featuring original music by Broadway composers Ted Koehler and Jimmy McHugh, among others, were presented in the fall and spring, with an occasional third "summer" production staged in late spring.¹³⁷ Charlie Davis and Leonard Reed worked as producers for the club's programs during the late 1930s; Clarence Robinson often served as dance director.¹³⁸

Willet had cited the Cotton Club as a client by July 1937.¹³⁹ The arranger's exact position at the club is not clear. Leonard Reed recalled Willet working at the club when Reed first arrived (circa 1937) and still there when he left (circa 1939), suggesting Willet as a sort of fixture in the establishment. Reed even described Willet as the club's "house rehearsal pianist"; given the seasonal production schedule, though, it is not clear if Willet would have been on regular salary.¹⁴⁰ Quentin Jackson, trombonist with Cab Calloway's orchestra, recalled Willet's work at the venue, describing him as an "extremely good

¹³⁶ "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, July 4, 1936; September 26, 1936.

¹³⁷ A May 1940 Cotton Club production opening marked "the second time in its entertainment history that the sepian emporium has been open for the Summer," in "News of Night Clubs," *New York Times*, May 12, 1940.

¹³⁸ See Isadora Smith, "Cab Calloway, Nicholas Brothers Reach Peak in the Cotton Club's Latest Broadway Offering," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 22, 1938; Reed; Jack Gould, "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, March 13, 1938; "Cotton Club Parade: World's Fair Edition" [spring 1939 program], reprinted in James Haskins, *The Cotton Club* (New York: Random House, 1977), 150; "Cotton Club Closes," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 22, 1940.

¹³⁹ Chase, "Arrangers Are Real Originators of Swing."

¹⁴⁰ Reed, telephone interview by author.

arranger” who did “a lot of arranging for shows and for Cotton Club shows,” including dance acts like the Cotton Club Boys.¹⁴¹

Individual acts may have requested arrangers’ individual services outside of the club rehearsals: tap dancer Fayard Nicholas (1914–2006) of the Nicholas Brothers recalled working individually with Willet in developing a routine for one of their Cotton Club performances. The Nicholas Brothers’ biographer, Constance Valis Hill, related that “Fayard danced the steps and hummed the accents as Willett [*sic*], on piano, improvised the melody.” Their collaboration, perhaps created at the Music Clinic, was described as follows:

“It was like we were in a rehearsal hall with mirrors and everything,” Fayard recalls. “He [Willet] wrote down everything I said and showed him—I even sang some of it to him—Da da, dat-da dee do dee daa, like that. That would be the introduction. No music.” Unlike the thirty-two-bar musical structure the brothers most often used when working with big bands, Fayard’s more openly structured solo “was more of a classical thing,” he says, and it stretched past the eight-bar phrase. Instead of being episodic, with the B section following A, and so on, there was a more continuous weave of sound and movement. The resulting tapwork not only dovetailed with the melody but also included special accents that were reinforced by accompaniment. Fayard did not have a name for it, so he called it “Dance Specialty,” and he performed it after his and Harold’s “Specialty” act at the Cotton Club. Willett’s [*sic*] formal, written arrangement of the music for big band enabled Fayard to perform the dance not only in the intimate setting of the Cotton Club but also on bigger stages and with other big-band orchestras.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Quentin Jackson, interview by Milt Hinton, June 1976, tape three, transcript page 38, Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. Transcript on file at the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (Newark).

¹⁴² Constance Valis Hill, *Brotherhood in Rhythm: The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139–40. The rehearsal is described by Hill to have taken place “with Willett [*sic*] in his Harlem studio,” the only suggestion I have ever found of Willet maintaining a studio in Harlem. The Broadway Music Clinic, four blocks from the Cotton Club, seems a more likely location.

A printed program for the spring 1937 *Cotton Club Express* production (with Duke Ellington and Ethel Waters headlining) lists the Nicholas Brothers performing a number titled “Specialty,” possibly the routine described above.¹⁴³

In the spring of 1938, *Billboard* magazine announced: “Chappie Willet, whose scorings have highlighted the leading colored combos, is handling the arrangement assignment for Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club.”¹⁴⁴ Although Will Vodery is the only arranger credited in programs and other publicity for this show, Willet’s participation is confirmed in surviving Ellington orchestra parts for a number titled “Swingtime in Honolulu.”¹⁴⁵ However, both Willet and Vodery were credited in a *Pittsburgh Courier* review of the following fall 1938 production, with a lineup featuring Calloway, the Nicholas Brothers, the Dandridge Sisters, Rosetta Tharpe, and the Berry Brothers.¹⁴⁶ Harold Cromer recalled that, in addition to presenting the specialty act revue sequences, high-end nightclubs like the Cotton Club offered “middle numbers” for the “show girls” to model dresses with musical accompaniment provided by the floorshow arrangers.¹⁴⁷ The performance of these numbers likely fell to the smaller “house bands,” such as those led by Alberto Socarras (“Cuba’s Duke Ellington”) at the Cotton Club, Harlem Uproar House, and other venues.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1937; “Cotton Club” [spring 1939 program], reprinted in Horst J. P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, liner notes to *Live From the Cotton Club* (Bear Family Records 16340, 2003), 93.

¹⁴⁴ M. H. Orodener, “Orchestra Notes,” *Billboard*, March 26, 1938, 12.

¹⁴⁵ “Cotton Club Show Primed for Opening,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 5, 1938; “Hawaii” [“Swingtime in Honolulu”] [orchestra parts], Smithsonian NMAH, Duke Ellington Collection. The orchestra parts display Willet’s 1938 union stamp.

¹⁴⁶ Isadora Smith, “Cab Calloway, Nicholas Brothers Reach Peak in the Cotton Club’s Latest Broadway Offering,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 22, 1938.

¹⁴⁷ Cromer, interview by author.

¹⁴⁸ “Places to Dine: Harlem Uproar House” [advertisement], *New York Times*, September 22, 1937; Isadora Smith, “Cab Calloway, Nicholas Brothers Reach Peak in the Cotton Club’s Latest Broadway Offering,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 22, 1938; “Cotton Club” [spring 1939 program], reprinted in Horst J. P.

Willet's long-term relationship with the club and its elite performers provided a measure of professional prestige, as referenced in a plug for Willet's talent school titled "Plea for Training: Arranger Says Singers Need to Study":

"Yes, sir, the plight of the amateur performer nowadays is very sad, and the future of Negro talent seems even less promising," declared Chappie Willet, ace Broadway arranger and talent discoverer.

He made this declaration during the audition hours at the Cotton Club Wednesday, and aspirants were being turned down in droves either because they were just so-so or hadn't been properly rehearsed.¹⁴⁹

Air check recordings of the club's live radio broadcasts document Willet arrangements performed by Louis Armstrong ("Struttin' with Some Barbecue") and Duke Ellington ("Prelude in C-sharp Minor").¹⁵⁰ Other Cotton Club acts reported to have been arranging clients of Willet include the singers Avis Andrews, June Richmond (who worked with the Cab Calloway and Andy Kirk orchestras), and Rosetta Tharpe.¹⁵¹

The Cotton Club closed in June 1940, amidst investigations of tax fraud.¹⁵² In addition to the loss of untaxed income, the end of this prestigious venue relationship may have been a factor in prompting Willet to devote more efforts toward publicizing his music school and booking agency during 1940–41, or even undertake ventures like the Indigo Room production.¹⁵³

Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, liner notes to *Live From the Cotton Club* (Bear Family Records 16340, 2003), 93.

¹⁴⁹ "Plea for Training," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 4, 1939.

¹⁵⁰ Radio air check recordings of these titles have been issued on *Louis Armstrong Vol. 7* (Ambassador CLA 1907, 1995), and Duke Ellington, *Cotton Club 1938 Vol. 2* (Jazz Archives LP-13, 1973).

¹⁵¹ "Chappie Willet Has Agency and Studio in Heart of Broadway," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1940.

¹⁵² "No Cotton Club?," *Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1940; "Cotton Club Closes," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 22, 1940.

¹⁵³ Regarding nightclub bookkeeping practices, it is probably no coincidence that in 1939 Willet reported his occupation to the government as "unemployed." "Francis Robert Willet," Application for Social Security.

The Elks' Rendezvous Club

The Elks' Rendezvous Club opened in November 1937, at 464 Lenox Avenue off 133rd Street (south of the Elks' Henry Lincoln Johnson Lodge at 650 Lenox).¹⁵⁴ "America's Most Intimate Nite Club" presented floorshows staged by Leonard Harper and Lew Crawford, and featured Willet-roster acts like the Bye Sisters, the Reeves Sisters, Tick & Tock, Inez Washington, and Zaro & Lakeeta (formerly Sandra & Lakeeta), in addition to the "Rendezvouettes" dance chorus.¹⁵⁵ The multi-talented Ralph Cooper (one of Crawford's associates from *The Duke Is Tops*) occasionally served as producer, and also appeared in the club's spring 1942 revue that included Sandra & Lakeeta, and Myra Johnson (with the chorus "togged out in spiffy navy outfits").¹⁵⁶ The club operated until the mid-1950s.¹⁵⁷

The Kit Kat Club

Julie "Jules" Podell's Kit Kat Club, at 152 East 56th Street off Lexington Avenue, operated from 1935 until 1942.¹⁵⁸ Harold Cromer recalled George Immerman handling the Kit Kat talent booking; Chappie Willet's work at the venue was cited in March 1938.¹⁵⁹ The jazz critic and producer Hughes Panassié documented his viewing of the

¹⁵⁴ "Elks Rendezvous" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, November 20, 1937; Charles T. Magill, "In the Fraternal World," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1933. Advertisements in early 1940 cite the Elks' Rendezvous as "remodeled and enlarged"; see "Elks Rendezvous" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, March 9, 1940.

¹⁵⁵ "Hello and Goodbye," *Chicago Defender*, October 11, 1941; Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 29, 1941; "Llewellyn Crawford," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 17, 1943; "Elk's Rendezvous" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, May 27, 1944.

¹⁵⁶ Dan Burley, "Elks Rendezvous Show Stars Ralph Cooper," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 7, 1942; "Elk's Rendezvous" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, May 27, 1944.

¹⁵⁷ Alvin Webb, "Footlights and Sidelights," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 23, 1954; [New York Telephone Company], *Manhattan Telephone Directory*, 1955; George Palmer, "Tavern Topics," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 6, 1957.

¹⁵⁸ "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, October 26, 1935; "Auction Sales," *New York Times*, September 11, 1942; Louis Calta, "News of Night Clubs," *New York Times*, November 8, 1942.

¹⁵⁹ Cromer, interview by author; "Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition."

Jimmie Lunceford orchestra at the Kit Kat in November 1938, a possible source of his claim that Willet's "best arrangements have not been recorded."¹⁶⁰ Perhaps a step down from the Times Square venues, the club charged a \$1.50 food and drink minimum at the time of Lunceford's residency.¹⁶¹ After closing, the Kit Kat site was home to the Café Life, and then the Blue Angel.¹⁶² Podell, the subject of numerous law enforcement investigations, also ran the Copacabana nightclub, originally located at 10 East 60th Street.¹⁶³

Loew's State Theater

Loew's State Theater, at 1540 Broadway off 45th Street, presented touring revues backed by bandleaders such as Lucky Millinder, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong.¹⁶⁴ A Willet arrangement of "There's a Lull in My Life," reported in July 1937, may be the version performed by Ella Fitzgerald with Chick Webb's orchestra during their Loew's State residency that August; Cab Calloway's orchestra presented Willet arrangements at this venue in December 1938, including "One Alone," a feature for the singer June Richmond.¹⁶⁵ Willet client Myra Johnson, a singer who built a

¹⁶⁰ Hugues Panassié, *Cinq Mois à New York* (Paris: Éditions Corrêa, 1947), 76; Hugues Panassié and Madelein Gautier, *Guide to Jazz*, trans. Desmond Flower (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), 295. See also "'Old Gray Bonnet' at the Kit Kat," *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 5, 1938.

¹⁶¹ Daniel Richman, "Night Club Reviews: Kit Kat Club, New York," *Billboard*, November 5, 1938, 21.

¹⁶² Louis Calta, "News of Night Clubs," *New York Times*, April 4, 1943.

¹⁶³ See "Actual Ownership of Nightclubs Is Goal of Investigation by City," *New York Times*, September 8, 1944; "Jules Podell, Showman, Dead; Owned Copacabana Since '40," *New York Times*, September 28, 1973.

¹⁶⁴ Romeo L. Dougherty, "Things Theatrical," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 7, 1935; "Duke Ellington Here; Tops Loew's Stage Bill," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 26, 1935; "Stage ... Screen ... Radio," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 27, 1937; Allan McMillan, "High-Hattin' in Harlem," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1937; Lou Layne, "Moon Over Harlem," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 12, 1938.

¹⁶⁵ Allan McMillan, "High-Hattin' in Harlem," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 10, 1937; Ken Vail, *Swing Era Scrapbook: The Teenage Diaries & Radio Logs of Bob Inman, 1936–1938*, Studies in Jazz, no. 49 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 238; Bill Chase, "All Ears," *New York Amsterdam News*,

significant reputation touring with Fats Waller's band, made appearances with Waller at Loew's State throughout the late 1930s and early '40s.¹⁶⁶

Murrain's Cabaret

John Murrain's Cabaret was located at 2237 Seventh Avenue off 132nd Street; it was previously the site of Bill Robinson's Club Mimo, established in early 1938.¹⁶⁷ Porter Grainger had provided music for Club Mimo revues in the spring and fall of 1941: a version of the Clarence Robinson-staged spring production, which included Pete Nugent and Norton & Margot, made an additional run at the Apollo; the fall revue, *Rhythm Bound*, was produced by Charlie Davis.¹⁶⁸ Murrain's appears to have been established soon after the Mimo closed in January 1942, and publicity that spring documents engagements for Willet-booked acts Tick & Tock and Sandra & Lakeeta (Sandra was replaced by Zaro around this time).¹⁶⁹

I have not been able to determine the production that inspired Grainger's song "When You're at Murrain's." Upon Leonard Harper's death, Lew Crawford took over the staging of a spring 1943 production that included Norton & Norton.¹⁷⁰ Pianist and composer Herbie Nichols recalled making Willet's acquaintance while working in the

December 17, 1938. Chick Webb was cited as a Willet client in "Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition."

¹⁶⁶ For example, see "News of the Stage," *New York Times*, January 9, 1937; "Fats Waller at Loew's State," *New York Times*, April 30, 1943.

¹⁶⁷ Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 19, 1938.

¹⁶⁸ "Mimo Show Friday," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 25, 1941; "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, June 21, 1941; Maurice Dancer, "Harlem Goes Broadway for Reopening of Mimo Club," *Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1941. It is not clear if Nugent and Norton were part of the spring 1941 revue prior to its theater tour.

¹⁶⁹ "Harlem's Famed Club Mimo ...," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 31, 1942; "Dine and Dance: Murrain's" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, April 18, 1942; "Sandra, Lakeeta Starred in New Harlem Cabaret," *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1942; Cleon Wilson, "Through Harlem," *Chicago Defender*, June 13, 1942.

¹⁷⁰ Dan Burley, "Newest Murrain Revue Sensational," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 27, 1943; "New Revue at Murrain's," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 17, 1943.

Murrain's house band from fall 1943 through spring 1944.¹⁷¹ Danny "Prince of Joy" Henry, a former manager at the Elks' Rendezvous, produced the spring 1947 floorshow, which continued to feature a number of specialty acts in addition to the "six lovely Murrainettes."¹⁷² The club operated at the Seventh Avenue address through at least 1949, when a second location opened in the Bronx.¹⁷³

The Paramount Theater

The Paramount, at 1501 Broadway off 44th Street, hosted residencies by "name" bands and touring revues, including a show with Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey in June 1938, Gene Krupa in July 1939, and an engagement for the *Cotton Club Revue* with Cab Calloway's orchestra, Avis Andrews, and the Three Chocolateers during August–September 1940.¹⁷⁴ The latter show was reportedly viewed by 192,000 patrons in two weeks.¹⁷⁵ Willet hosted a party for Erskine Hawkins's orchestra and the Ink Spots during their stand at the Paramount in August 1941.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ In a published interview, Herbie Nichols is paraphrased as stating: "in late 1943, I went to work with a combo led by altoist Walter Dennis at Murrain's club in Harlem. We played for the regular stage shows and for dancing. Continued at Murrain's until mid-year of 1944 ... Became acquainted with Chappie Willet and pianist Ellis Larkins about this time." A.B. Spellman, "Herbie Nichols," *Jazz*, October 1964, 12. The Dennis band is advertised as performing at Murrain's in the "Where to Wine and Dine" section of the *New York Amsterdam News* from October 23, 1943, through March 18, 1944.

¹⁷² Dan Burley, "Elks Rendezvous Show Stars Ralph Cooper," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 7, 1942; "Currently Starring at Murrain's Cabaret Opening," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947; "Where to Wine and Dine: Murrain's" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947.

¹⁷³ See "Murrain's" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, May 28, 1949. This advertisement lists both the Harlem and Bronx locations.

¹⁷⁴ More Swing, *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 1938; "Paramount" [advertisement], *New York Times*, July 1, 1939; "Cab Calloway's Tour Takes Him Into the West," *Chicago Defender*, September 14, 1940.

¹⁷⁵ "New Mark Set by Calloway at Paramount," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 7, 1940.

¹⁷⁶ "Willet Is Host," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 16, 1941.

The Plantation Club

Joe Springer's Plantation Club opened in June 1936, occupying the Cotton Club's previous location, at 644 Lenox Avenue off 142nd Street.¹⁷⁷ When the Harlem Ubangi Club closed in 1937, Grainger and Heywood's *Brevities in Bronze* show moved from there into the Plantation.¹⁷⁸ Teddy Blackman produced shows for the Plantation's "Tan Town Topics" productions, including the spring 1938 *Flirtation Fancies* revue featuring Pete Nugent.¹⁷⁹ Publicity citing Willet's own contributions to the Plantation productions appeared that same season; dance director Clarence Robinson worked at the club as well.¹⁸⁰ The Plantation closed in summer 1939, apparently relating to a liquor license revocation.¹⁸¹

Small's Paradise

Ed Small's Paradise, at 2294½ Seventh Avenue off 135th Street, was one of the few Harlem venues to enjoy success before, during, and after the Swing Era. Producer Al Richards and arranger Harry White worked with Porter Grainger on the club's fall 1936 and spring 1937 productions; Thelma Simmons served as producer for Grainger's fall 1943 show.¹⁸² The Reeves Sisters performed in the spring 1942 *Chock Full of Rhythm* revue, staged by Leonard Harper and backed by Earl Bostic's band; Myra Johnson was

¹⁷⁷ "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, May 30, 1936.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, May 8, 1937.

¹⁷⁹ Earl J. Morris, "Pete Nugent New Headliner at the Club Plantation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 12, 1938.

¹⁸⁰ "Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition"; "Cotton Club Show Primed for Opening," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 5, 1938.

¹⁸¹ Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12, 1939.

¹⁸² "Smart Show at Small's Club," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 24, 1936; "Say Harlem Is Home of Dance Craze, 'Susie-Q,'" *Chicago Defender*, December 12, 1936; "Where to Dine and Dance: Small's Paradise" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, December 11, 1943.

also featured at the club.¹⁸³ The ubiquitous Alberto Socarras occasionally led the Small's house band.¹⁸⁴ Admission price circa 1942 was \$1.50.¹⁸⁵

At least two hit Swing Era floorshow dances, the Susie-Q (or Suzy-Q) and the Skronch (or Skrontch), were reportedly introduced in Grainger's Paradise revues.¹⁸⁶ There is also a possibility that Grainger's composition "Bowling Green Skronch" (from the 1937 revue *Paradise on the Nile*, but no doubt referencing Grainger's Kentucky roots) evolved into Duke Ellington's 1938 *Cotton Club Parade* "Skrontch" via the Broadway Music Clinic, as Willet worked on Ellington's Cotton Club show.¹⁸⁷ As one columnist covering Ellington's revue reported, "'The Skrontch' ... it is said, was done a century ago in Kentucky."¹⁸⁸

The Strand Theater

Revue tours backed by headliners like the Count Basie and Cab Calloway orchestras were featured in the 2700-seat Strand Theater, located at 1579 Broadway off 47th Street, throughout the 1930s-'40s; Willet hosted a party for Calloway's musicians

¹⁸³ Dan Burley, "Small's Paradise Features Edna Mae Holly, Ray Sneed," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 14, 1942; "Dine and Dance: The New Small's Paradise" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, April 11, 1942; "Star Twinkles," *Chicago Defender*, April 18, 1942; "Small's Paradise Stage Set for 25th Year Celebration," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 25, 1950. The "new Small's" probably refers to the club's renovations, announced in late 1941, per "Building Plans Files," *New York Times*, November 1, 1941.

¹⁸⁴ "It's 'Scronching' [*sic*] Now at Small's: Novel Dance Is Featured at Paradise."

¹⁸⁵ "Places to Go: The New Small's Paradise" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, November 7, 1942.

¹⁸⁶ "Say Harlem Is Home of Dance Craze, 'Susie-Q'"; "It's 'Scronching' [*sic*] Now at Small's: Novel Dance Is Featured at Paradise."

¹⁸⁷ Regarding Willet's work for Ellington in the *Cotton Club Parade* revue, see Orodener, "Orchestra Notes."

¹⁸⁸ Gould, "Night Club Notes." As of this writing, I have not discovered any notated music or recording representing Grainger's "Bowling Green Skronch." Composer James Alston's "Memphis Scronch," recorded for Victor in 1927 by Williamson's Beale Street Frolic Orchestra (the Memphis Palace Theater house band that included Alston) is one potential inspiration for Grainger's "Skronch" title. Alston's chromatically descending chord progression also offers a potential musical inspiration for Ellington's "Skrontch," though the 1937 Small's Paradise was much nearer the 1938 Cotton Club than the 1927 Memphis Palace Theater.

during their July 1941 Strand residency, which featured Avis Andrews.¹⁸⁹ In April 1947, another Calloway-backed revue (presenting five shows daily) included the Miller Brothers & Lois act.¹⁹⁰

The Ubangi Club

The original Ubangi Club opened at 2221 Seventh Avenue off 131st Street in early 1934, in the space formerly occupied by Connie's Inn's, and the Immermans' short-lived Club Harlem.¹⁹¹ Before the Ubangi closed in mid-1937, residencies were held by orchestra leaders Willie Bryant and Teddy Hill (both occasional clients of Willet) backing floorshows with "a cast of 30" or "50 sepia stars."¹⁹² Lew Crawford and Leonard Harper served as dance directors for the Harlem *Ubangi Club Revues*; at least one of the productions was also presented at the Apollo Theater.¹⁹³

In 1941, Joe Springer opened his own incarnation of the Ubangi Club, at 1678 Broadway off 52nd Street (a site that later housed Birdland). Publicity for the establishment's 1941 opening gala presentation of *Tan Manhattan* offered dinner for a price of \$1.25, with "never a cover charge" for floorshows in which "coffee colored belles" offered "lusty entertainment."¹⁹⁴ An undated postcard advertising the club's midtown location cites the same price for "the hottest colored show on Broadway," and

¹⁸⁹ Maurice Dancer, "Tan Manhattan," *Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1941; "Cab Celebrates," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 19, 1941; Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 19, 1941; June 12, 1943.

¹⁹⁰ Marshall, "Strand, New York."

¹⁹¹ Roi Ottley, "This Hectic Harlem," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 21, 1934.

¹⁹² "Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition"; "Ubangi Club" [advertisement], *New York Times*, January 29, 1935; "Before and After Theatre: Ubangi Club" [advertisement], *New York Times*, March 7, 1936; "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, May 8, 1937.

¹⁹³ "Armstrong Triumphs at the Apollo Theatre."

¹⁹⁴ "Gala Opening: Harlem on Broadway" [Ubangi Club invitation, 1941], *The Eubie Blake Collection*.

includes photos of chorus dancers and dining room seating under fake palm trees.¹⁹⁵

Trombonist Clyde Bernhardt, who performed at the Ubangi Club with Cecil Scott's orchestra from fall 1943 through spring 1944, provides a brief but invaluable description of the nightclub:

Cecil had a six-month contract with the Ubangi but kept working there long after that. It was just a average looking club, some imitation pictures of Africa on the wall, but not a whole lot of them. The bandstand was suppose to be a old native hut or something ...

They had a good floor show there, almost two hours long. Chappie Willet wrote the music and Donald Heywood produced. Alan Drew was master of ceremonies and male comedian. Used to have this big cigar stuffed in his mouth all the time—that was his trademark. His jokes was kind of smutty but he had the people laughing.

[Jackie] Moms Mabley was the female comedian at the Ubangi. Mabel Lee, dancer Derby Wilson, and singer Myra Johnson was also on the bill. When Myra left, Margaret Watkins came in ... could sure holler them blues.

It was about January of 1944 that Joe Springer, the owner of the Ubangi, sent us down to the Center Street police station to get a cabaret card. There was a wartime rule in New York to make sure you didn't have no record of using dope and messing up. ...

After working the Ubangi for about five months, a rumor started going around that the club was cutting expenses. Something about a new war tax and they were going to drop a musician or two, maybe a couple chorus girls in order to break even. I thought they doing [*sic*] terrific business but heard that's what they were going to do.¹⁹⁶

New York Times publicity cited Charles Morrison as dance director for the production described above, *Top Hats and Tom Toms*.¹⁹⁷ An April 1944 *Times* article, "Tax on Night Clubs Costs 5,000 Jobs of Entertainers," cited the Ubangi as one of many venues "contemplating abolishing entertainment on May 1"—the date that a new, nationwide amusement tax on patronage of nightclubs offering live entertainment would take

¹⁹⁵ "Ubangi Club" [postcard circa 1941–44].

¹⁹⁶ Clyde Bernhardt with Sheldon Harris, *I Remember: Eighty Years of Black Entertainment, Big Bands, and the Blues* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 162–63.

¹⁹⁷ Louis Calta, "Night Clubs," *New York Times*, January 16, 1944.

effect.¹⁹⁸ While many clubs did continue their stage shows under the new tax, which was eventually lowered from 30% to 20%, the Ubangi appears to have ceased floorshow entertainment at that time.¹⁹⁹

The Café Zanzibar

After the Cotton Club, Joe Howard and Carl Erbe's Café Zanzibar may have been Willet's highest profile nightclub venue. Opened in June 1943, the Zanzibar's first location was on Broadway at 50th Street, above the Winter Garden theater (a space subsequently occupied by Ruby Foo's restaurant, and currently host to an Applebee's franchise); in December 1944, the club moved across the street to the Brill Building, on Broadway at 49th Street (a space that had been occupied by Dave Wolper's Hurricane Club since 1940); and in February 1947, the Zanzibar moved to a final, smaller venue, on Broadway "just above 47th Street."²⁰⁰ This last location presented a reduced floorshow, as the "Zanzibeauts" dance chorus took work at the Club 845 in the Bronx.²⁰¹

A fall 1943 production at the Winter Garden location, featuring Ella Fitzgerald and Don Redman's orchestra, charged \$2.00 for admission, dinner included.²⁰² Clyde

¹⁹⁸ James E. Powers, "Tax on Night Clubs Costs 5,000 Jobs of Entertainers," *New York Times*, April 22, 1944.

¹⁹⁹ The Coconut Grove nightclub also closed at the end of May, citing the cabaret tax. "We Regret to Announce" [advertisement], *New York Times*, May 29, 1944. Regarding the reduction of the tax, see "Night Club Business Back at Peak, With Spenders Less Aware of Tax," *New York Times*, October 6, 1944.

²⁰⁰ Jerome Robinson, "News Notes of the Night Clubs," *New York Times*, April 14, 1940; Louis Calta, "News of Night Clubs," *New York Times*, June 27, 1943; January 9, 1944; Al Monroe, "Swinging the News," *Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1944; "Levine-White Deal in Making for Old Zanzibar Location," *Billboard*, June 30, 1945, 30; "Zanzibar Location Goes Ruby Foo," *Billboard*, August 18, 1945, 27; "Mills Brothers, Eddie Heywood Zanzibar Picks," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947; Rob Roy, "Zanzibar's Closing Is Proof That 'Broadway Ain't What It Used to Be,'" *Chicago Defender*, February 22, 1947; Frank Gill, "Nightclub Reviews: Zanzibar, New York," *Billboard*, March 1, 1947, 38; Alvin Moses, "Nightlife in Harlem," *Chicago Defender*, May 24, 1947.

²⁰¹ "Former Zanzibar Chorines to Be Featured in Club 845," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947.

²⁰² "Hotels and Restaurants: Café Zanzibar" [advertisement], *New York Times*, September 16, 1943.

Bernhardt describes the contrast between the Zanzibar (where he performed with Claude Hopkins in fall 1944) and the seedier Ubangi:

The Zanzibar was very beautiful, and it had class ... There was a lot of mirrors in there, and all the reflections looked pretty ... Chappie Willet wrote the floor show as he did at the Ubangi. ... White sports people, movie stars, politicians, and money big shots always came in there. But no Lindy Hopper dancers. It was strictly the fox-trot crowd.²⁰³

Clarence Robinson and Jimmy Payne worked as dance directors on the different “Zanzibarian Nights” productions.²⁰⁴ Robinson, a native of Philadelphia, appears to have been a key associate in Willet’s career; Robinson’s wife, Cotton Club performer Hyacinth Curtis, was even included in Willet publicity photos.²⁰⁵ Chorus dancer Cleo Hayes fondly recalled working with Robinson, and remembered him working at the Zanzibar with Willet:

The last couple of days before the show would go in, [Willet] would come in and work with us and the band. . . . [Robinson] was the best, in every respect: he was easy to work with, you liked his work.²⁰⁶

Hayes, who had also performed at the Cotton Club, described the Zanzibar epoch as the beginning of the end for Broadway nightclub floorshows:

By the time Zanzibar came along, they were beginning to use popular music. They were not having things that were written especially for the show. That was Cotton Club. ... There was no repeat on that, black or white.²⁰⁷

An arrangement of “Stardust,” written by Willet for Louis Armstrong’s orchestra, was likely created for the trumpeter’s fall 1944 residency at the Zanzibar.²⁰⁸ The

²⁰³ Bernhardt with Harris, *I Remember*, 168–169.

²⁰⁴ “Sepia Talent Flourishing on Broadway and in Harlem,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 10, 1943; Izzy [Isadora Smith], “Duke Tops Jordan in Billing Row at Zanzibar,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1945.

²⁰⁵ Chase, “Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field.” The photo of Curtis in Willet’s studios was reprinted in “Comeback, Maybe,” *Chicago Defender*, November 1, 1941.

²⁰⁶ Cleo Hayes, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2006.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Willet’s work on the fall 1944 Zanzibar show was also cited in Bernhardt with Harris, *I Remember*, 168–69. The “Stardust” orchestra parts are copied in the hand of the guitarist Maceo Jefferson; Jefferson

Armstrong-headlined revue, which included the Nicholas Brothers, the Peters Sisters, boogie-woogie pianist Maurice Rocco, and the Delta Rhythm Boys, also made additional appearances at the Roxy theater.²⁰⁹ Willet was also cited in coverage of the Zanzibar's fall 1945 revue, directed by Robinson and featuring Duke Ellington's orchestra; "Low Down Guy," a Willet arrangement for Ellington dating from 1945, may have been connected with this production.²¹⁰ A souvenir program for the *Laugh-Lease Revue*, which ran from December 1945 through March 1946, credits "special arrangements by Chappie Willet"; performers included Ella Fitzgerald, the Cootie Williams orchestra, Maurice Rocco, the Ink Spots vocal quartet, Howell & Bowser ("number fun comedy team"), and Ray Sned.²¹¹ Willet appears to have had previous connections with both Sned (the "sepia Ray Bolger") and Buddy Bowser, though details are unclear.²¹²

In February 1947, as the Café relocated and reduced the size of its productions, Clarence Robinson was quoted to concede that "times are different now and we must cut down on overhead."²¹³ Willet reportedly did manage to obtain arranging work at Carl Erbe's Vanity Fair nightclub, which moved into the Zanzibar's Brill Building space.²¹⁴

was interned by the Nazis in Europe during World War II, but liberated and back in New York by the end of 1944. See Howard Rye, "Maceo Jefferson," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Music* <www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed July 9, 2009). The "Stardust" manuscript orchestra parts are held in the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

²⁰⁹ Izzy [Rowe], "New Café Zanzibar Show Top-Heavy with Name Stars," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 9, 1944; "Café Zanzibar" [advertisement], *New York Times*, December 19, 1944; Dan Burley, "The Show of Shows: What Performers Did," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 23, 1944; "Notes Pertaining to Stage, Movie, Radio," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 3, 1945.

²¹⁰ "Duke Tops Jordan in Billing Row at Zanzibar," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1945. A solitary third trombone part for "Low Down Guy," copied by Maceo Jefferson, survives in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

²¹¹ "Joe Howard Presents the International Laugh-Lease Revue" [Café Zanzibar program circa December 1945]; Ron Fritts and Ken Vail, *Ella Fitzgerald: The Chick Webb Years and Beyond* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 73–74.

²¹² In 1941, Willet cited both Sned and Bowser along with other acts that Willet booked at that time, including the Bye Sisters and the Miller Brothers & Lois. See E. Billingsworth, "Encores and Echoes," *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 27, 1941.

²¹³ Roy, "Zanzibar's Closing Is Proof That 'Broadway Ain't What It Used to Be.'"

²¹⁴ Bill Chase, "All Ears," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1947.

When the Vanity Fair and the relocated Zanzibar opened that winter, the *Amsterdam*

News noted:

An interesting commentary upon the difference between owners Joe Howard and Carl Erbe will have to meet in the two spots [*sic*], one with colored entertainers and the other with white, is in the salary roll which will call for \$8,000 a week at Zanzibar and \$15,000 weekly at the Vanity Fair.²¹⁵

Such extreme salary discrepancies (even considering the reduced scale of the Zanzibar presentations) reflect the cruel realities of the segregated entertainment industry. The fact that both clubs folded within a year is another indicator of the period, as even the lesser paying jobs were becoming more difficult to find.²¹⁶

Other Venues

Other venues named in publicity relating to Willet, his talent roster, or the other Music Clinic residents include the Harlem Uproar House (operating January–November 1937, at 209 West 51st Street off Broadway), Ben Marden’s Riviera Club (another regular target of law enforcement investigations, operating circa 1932–44 in Fort Lee, New Jersey), the Sky Club (operating circa 1937–40, at 2195 Third Avenue off 120th Street), and Chu Jor’s World Chinese Restaurant Cabaret (also referred to as “The World,” operating circa 1940–43, at 2387 Seventh Avenue off 139th Street).²¹⁷

²¹⁵ “Mills Brothers, Eddie Heywood Zanzibar Picks,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 1, 1947.

²¹⁶ Al Monroe, “Cocktail Bars Replace Cabarets in Many Cities,” *Chicago Defender*, October 25, 1947; “Business Records,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1948.

²¹⁷ Chase, “Arrangers Are Real Originators of Swing”; “Chappie Willet, New Luminary in Field of Composition”; “LeGon and Fletcher in Revue,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1939; “The World” [advertisement], *Chicago Defender*, January 4, 1941; “Sandra, Lakeeta Starred in New Harlem Cabaret,” *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1942. Regarding the lifespan of the Harlem Uproar House, see “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1937; “Night Club Fails to Open,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1937. Regarding Ben Marden’s Riviera, see “Fight Jersey Dry Raiders,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1932; Louis Calta, “Night Clubs Here and There,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1944; “Gossip of the Rialto,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1944. Regarding the Sky Club, see Archie Seale, “Around Harlem,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 6, 1937; Dan Burley, “Back Door Stuff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 13, 1940. Regarding the World, see “300 at Nifty Dinner-Dance,” *New York Amsterdam News*,

In January 1937, a *New York Times* review of the short-lived Harlem Uproar House described “a razzle-dazzle sort of place with an informal, hey-hey atmosphere and a thoroughly uninhibited show which boasts of several lively performers.”²¹⁸ In addition to meeting the various legal and financial regulations intermittently enforced during the Swing Era (racketeering, taxes, etc.), New York nightclubs were occasionally pressured by authorities to clean up such uninhibited presentations of “scantily-clad” chorus dancers.²¹⁹ A subsequent *Times* review that May reported that the Uproar House (“one of the hottest spots on Broadway”), under renewed pressure, presented “what was solemnly called the ‘funeral of the strip-tease’ ... and then discreetly passed out more wearing apparel to its comely dancing girls.”²²⁰ The following month, the *Times* reported the Cotton Club and Harlem Uproar House to be among the midtown nightclub venues cited by the New York City Police Department as presenting floorshows with “objectionable” content:

Complaints had been lodged against the shows by plainclothes men who viewed the shows and reported them objectionable.

[Police] Commissioner [John J.] Sullivan said:

... “Based on the contention and defense offered by the licensees they are given the benefit of the doubt with a warning that any repetition of the alleged occurrences would warrant drastic action being taken against them, with a view of revocation of licenses, and that in the future they may expect the same close supervision that they have been receiving in the past ...”

[Harlem Uproar House manager] Mr. [Jay] Faggen ... asserted that when his club opens in the Fall it will have a show that will be “99 per cent vaudeville.”²²¹

May 4, 1940; “World Restaurant Presents Top Show,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 11, 1942; “Tavern Topics,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 13, 1943.

²¹⁸ “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1937.

²¹⁹ “Night Clubs Told to Clean Up Shows,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1937.

²²⁰ “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1937.

²²¹ “Cabarets Warned to Change Shows,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1937.

Faggen may have attempted to redeem the legal status of his establishment. Another *Times* review in September described the Uproar House fall production to be a “somewhat warier and more chaste kermess than its predecessors,” but attempted to reassure readers that “still, the essential ingredients are there.”²²² Perhaps audiences were more discerning, or the club’s owners decided to simply cash out as their bookkeeping fell under closer scrutiny: the establishment filed for bankruptcy two months later.²²³

* * *

The Swing Era entertainment world that African-American musicians like Willet operated in was as inter-connected as it was extensive, and the entire scene remains extremely under-documented.²²⁴ Willet’s professional milieu included Broadway theaters and basement bars, exclusive super clubs and amateur talent shows. Few figures in the entertainment community roamed more widely than a freelance musician; this was especially true for a freelance arranger. Indeed, Willet’s position working in a white-dominated entertainment industry likely necessitated such movement—even as it also, to some degree, may have allowed for it. Between Harlem and Times Square, the music of an arranger like Willet would be heard by more varied audiences than that of many established performers or composers who might find their success limited to more specific markets. As discussed in the following chapter, Willet’s musical arrangements

²²² “Night Club Notes,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1937.

²²³ “Business Records,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1937; “Night Club Fails to Open,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1937.

²²⁴ Some efforts at documenting different aspects of the early twentieth century live entertainment industry of New York City include Kernfeld, “Nightclubs and Other Venues”; Haskins, *The Cotton Club*; and Samuel Charters and Leonard Kundstadt, *Jazz: A History of the New York Scene* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1962).

offer some potential reflections of this movement across different social strata and cultural backgrounds.

CHAPTER 4

ARRANGING STYLE AND STYLISTIC IDENTITY

Arrangements by [Jimmy] Mundy and Chappie Willett [*sic*]—he wrote for Chick [Webb], too—helped us achieve identity. People always said they could tell it was the Krupa band on the radio.¹

—Gene Krupa

The repertoire of Gene Krupa’s orchestra invites further examination of the bandleader’s statement above—especially regarding the concept of stylistic identity. Similar (or identical) versions of at least five of the Chappie Willet arrangements Krupa recorded during 1938–40 had been previously performed by other bands, including well-known standards (“I Know That You Know,” previously performed by Louis Armstrong) and original compositions (“Blue Rhythm Fantasy,” previously performed by at least four other New York-based orchestras).² Although Willet did create some scoring variations when he provided arrangements of the same composition to multiple clients, the musical similarities usually remained overwhelming.³ Perhaps it was the Swing Era dance bands that were helping Chappie Willet to “achieve identity.”

¹ Gene Krupa, as quoted in Burt Korall, *Drummin’ Men: The Heartbeat of Jazz: The Swing Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71–72.

² An air check recording of Louis Armstrong performing “I Know That You Know” has been issued on Louis Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show & Louis’ Home-Recorded Tapes* (Jazz Heritage Society CD 5289147, 2008). By 1938, “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” had been used as a radio theme song by the orchestras of both Willie Bryant and Teddy Hill; Hill had already recorded “Fantasy” twice. See Ken Vail, *Swing Era Scrapbook: The Teenage Diaries & Radio Logs of Bob Inman, 1936–1938*, *Studies in Jazz*, no. 49 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 223; Richard N. Mellor, *Spotlights of Fame: The World’s First Theme Song Book* (n.p.: Richard N. Mellor, 1953), 32; Alan Warner, *EMI Professional Song Catalog*, vol. 4 (New York: EMI Music Publishing, 1992), 12–13. The Mills Blue Rhythm Band under Lucky Millinder recorded a version of “Fantasy” in 1937, and manuscript orchestra parts for “Fantasy” also reside in the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

³ Willet originals “Jungle Madness,” “Prelude to a Stomp,” and “Rhythm Jam” had all been recorded by Lucky Millinder in 1937. Additional radio broadcast performances of these titles by Bryant or Hill are documented throughout Vail’s *Swing Era Scrapbook*; air check recordings of Louis Armstrong performing “Prelude to a Stomp” and “Rhythm Jam” have been issued on Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show*.

The derivative nature of Krupa's repertoire highlights the complexities behind the establishment of a band's individual sound and style, especially in regard to the legacy of orchestras that relied significantly on freelance arrangers for their music. Some bands succeeded in developing a signature ensemble style that may have overridden freelance arrangers' own musical concepts, such as Hal Kemp's "staccato brass" style (developed by white arranger John Scott Trotter), Jimmie Lunceford's "behind-the-beat" style (developed by Sy Oliver), Glenn Miller's clarinet and sax blend (developed by Miller himself), or Jan Savitt's "shuffle" rhythm (developed by white arranger Jack Watson).⁴ Bands that featured an individual or select group of solo performers, such as the clarinetist Artie Shaw within his own band, could certainly claim to have a recognizable audio identity independent of various arrangers' work. And freelance "for hire" arrangers, as compared to "staff" or in-house sideman arrangers, were less likely to have significant input as to exactly how their arrangement would be interpreted by the performing ensemble.

But the freelance influence could run the other direction as well. Benny Carter and Fletcher Henderson became successful freelancers after establishing a recognizable arranging style through writing for their own bands. In the case of Henderson, arrangements for his own orchestra ("King Porter Stomp" is a well documented example) were later sold to Benny Goodman, who altered Henderson's written music little (if at

⁴ Regarding Kemp's style (as heard in "Love for Sale"), see James T. Maher, liner notes to *Hal Kemp and His Orchestra, The Great Dance Bands of the '30s and '40s* (RCA Victor LPM-2041, 1959). Regarding the styles of Lunceford (as heard in "My Blue Heaven"), Miller (as heard in "Moonlight Serenade"), and Savitt (as heard in "And the Angels Sing"), see Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 207, 211–12; 672–73; 765. Also on Miller, see Jimmy Dale, "Background Arranging Varies According to Soloists," *Metronome*, February 1940, 40.

all) for his own performances and recordings during the mid-1930s.⁵ This freelance relationship became so integral to Goodman that Henderson was eventually hired as a pianist to fulfill a fulltime role as a sideman arranger. The influence of freelancers also emerged when bands were engaged to perform in nightclub or theater revues (lucrative engagements integral to many dance bands' survival), as the bandleader might be required to temporarily shed their established stylistic identity in order to perform music arranged to accompany the various stage acts featured in the program. In this case, a freelance arranger associated with the production might unify different stage entertainment elements by emphasizing their own musical style, providing continuity for a season-long show that might cycle through a number of backing bands.

Attempts to determine which aspects of a performance were most impressionable on a contemporary listener may be futile at this late date: competing musical elements such as the written arrangement, ensemble performance (including timbral qualities projected by individuals within the ensemble), featured soloist, or song lyrics would have to be considered alongside related visual stage acts or access to commercial markets restricted by geography, income, or racial segregation. But the considerable contributions freelance arrangers made toward the success of many “name” bands is a factor that has been overlooked in jazz and improvisation-based studies of the period. Despite what may appear in historical hindsight to be inconsistent or contradictory decisions expressing artistic originality and commercial marketing—perhaps exemplified by Gene Krupa’s claim to “achieve identity” through repertoire previously associated with other bands—a

⁵ Regarding Henderson repertoire performed by Goodman, see Walter C. Allen, *Hendersonia: The Music of Fletcher Henderson and His Musicians* (Highland Park, New Jersey: Walter C. Allen, 1973), 319–21. Regarding Henderson repertoire and alterations made by Goodman, see Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 231, 245–71.

bandleader at some point needed to choose which arrangers and which pieces to invest in, based on some concept of functionality and style.

Approaches to achieving identity can vary widely. Willet's arrangement of "I Know That You Know" for Louis Armstrong, for example, logically features a series of solo trumpet breaks; a modified version of the arrangement designed for Gene Krupa replaces the trumpet breaks with ensemble figures accented by the drummer-leader. Yet Willet's arrangements of "Rhythm Jam," as performed by Lucky Millinder, Armstrong, and Krupa, are nearly identical in their construction; even variations in solo assignments are minimal (see figure 4.1; lines indicate written passages identical or nearly identical to the earlier arrangement; bold type indicates significant variations from the earlier arrangement).⁶ Cases of a nearly complete re-arrangement of the same source composition, such as the different versions of "Washington and Lee Swing" (see figure 4.2) or "Prelude to a Stomp" that Willet provided to Armstrong and other clients, arise less often.

⁶ No evidence of a published stock arrangement for "Rhythm Jam" has surfaced to date.

Figure 4.1: Formal Structure of “Rhythm Jam,”
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937) and Gene Krupa (1938)⁷

	<u>Louis Armstrong (1937)</u>	<u>Gene Krupa (1938)</u>
	<i>4-bar brass intro</i>	<i>4-bar sax intro</i> ⁸
ch. 1	32-bar ensemble (melody; key of B-flat)	_____
	<i>12-bar interlude</i>	_____
ch. 2	16-bar tenor sax solo (key of E-flat)	_____
	8-bar ensemble	_____
	8-bar tenor sax solo	_____
	<i>4-bar interlude</i>	_____
ch. 3	32-bar trumpet solo (key of B-flat)	16-bar trumpet solo (key of B-flat)
		8-bar piano solo
		8-bar trumpet solo
ch. 4	30-bar trumpet solo over ensemble riffs	_____
	<i>10-bar trumpet solo coda</i>	<i>10-bar drum solo coda</i>

Figure 4.2: Formal Structure of “Washington and Lee Swing,”
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937) and Red Norvo (1938)⁹

	<u>Louis Armstrong (1937)</u>	<u>Red Norvo (1938)</u>
ch. 1	30-bar ensemble (melody; key of C)	32-bar ensemble (melody; key of C)
	<i>8-bar interlude</i>	
ch. 2	32-bar clarinet solo	32-bar clarinet solo [key of E-flat]
ch. 3	32-bar trumpet solo	32-bar trumpet section soli
ch. 4	16-bar sax soli	32-bar trumpet section soli (cont'd)
	14-bar trombone solo	
	<i>4-bar interlude</i>	
ch. 5	16-bar bass solo over stop-time ensemble	32-bar tenor sax solo
	8-bar ensemble	
	<i>12-bar interlude</i>	
ch. 6	16-bar ensemble (key of F)	32-bar vibes solo (key of D-flat)
	16-bar trumpet solo over ensemble	
ch. 7		32-bar vibes solo
ch. 8		16-bar ensemble (key of D)
		8-bar bass solo over stop-time ensemble
		6-bar ensemble
		<i>4-bar half-time coda</i>

⁷ Armstrong, *Fleischmann's Yeast Show*; Gene Krupa and His Orchestra 1938 (Classics CD 767, 1994).

⁸ The introduction to the Krupa version of “Rhythm Jam” differs from the Mills Blue Rhythm Band and Armstrong versions, but apparently did not reflect the written arrangement Willet provided to Krupa. Music critic George Simon explained that “this arrangement [of “Rhythm Jam”] by Chappy [*sic*] Willet originally had a different introduction, but it was too high for the trumpets, so, after 31 false starts, as Gene [Krupa] recalls it, Sam Donohue came up with this sax intro from an old Earl Hines record that Jimmy Mundy (also a Krupa arranger) had written.” George T. Simon, liner notes to *Gene Krupa: Drummin' Man* (Columbia [LP] C2L-29, 1963). The sax intro Donohue plays on the Krupa recording is a quote from the end of Jimmy Mundy's tenor sax solo on Hines's 1934 recording of “Copenhagen.”

⁹ Armstrong, *Fleischmann's Yeast Show*; the Norvo band “Washington and Lee Swing” manuscript orchestra parts are held in the Red Norvo Papers MSS48, the Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

Other Swing Era freelance arrangers were no less timid about duplicating routines, riffs, or other elements in writing for multiple clients, especially as the Swing Era wore on. Motivations for originality did not always outweigh other commercial considerations such as public demand, or performance and recording date deadlines. Arranger Andy Gibson, for example, duplicated the entire out-chorus of his 1945 “St. Louis Blues” arrangement for Cab Calloway (an arrangement which already included the Count Basie orchestra’s “One O’Clock Jump” riff) in his 1949 “D Natural Blues” for Lucky Millinder. Gibson similarly included the theme riff from “Leapin’ at the Lincoln” (recorded by Charlie Barnet in 1940) as interlude material in his arrangement of “Special Delivery” (recorded by Calloway the following year). Jimmy Mundy’s 1949 “Rank Frank,” arranged for Harry James, is a compendium of Mundy’s previous work for Basie, including passages from Mundy’s 1940 “Super Chief” and 1941 “Feather Merchant.”

Formal and aesthetic expectations of the Swing Era may have limited the degree of stylistic influence that a single arrangement exerted on an orchestra’s complete repertoire. Swing Era musical product offers a fluctuation between established convention reflecting a genre, style, or format, and a degree of recognizable individuality necessary to achieve commercial success in a competitive market. This dual requirement also reflects cultural dichotomies that might be interpreted by audiences or musicians in terms as potentially subjective as—to use Gunther Schuller’s freighted oppositions—a “vapid pop ballad” and “swinging jazz.”¹⁰ But established expectations of style or individualism could also work to the bandleader or arranger’s advantage, as an important

¹⁰ These descriptions are used by Schuller in praising the accomplishments of arranger Skip Martin’s writing for the Count Basie orchestra. Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 238.

element of the Swing Era sound was the jazz tradition's injection of musical humor and light-hearted subversion into established, recognizable commercial idioms.¹¹

There can be no meaningful “signification”—a term applied to the jazz dance band tradition by Jeffrey Magee as denoting “savvy, playful parodies of popular song and dance styles”—without an established model to signify upon.¹² For example, the late-1930s Count Basie orchestra's use of unwritten, collectively orchestrated “head” arrangements with unbroken chorus-form repetitions supporting extended solo presentations (“Jumpin’ at the Woodside” is a popular example) has been regularly cited by historians to represent a geographic Kansas City-based (or “Southwestern”) foil to the relatively intricate written arrangements of the established New York (“Eastern”) show band tradition, even viewed as a “brave departure from established norms.”¹³ While these broad assessments are often tenuous, their currency does advocate the existence of audience (or at least historian) expectations in dance band arranging.¹⁴

As “special” dance band arrangements are often defined by the individual needs or requests of the client, aesthetic judgment of an arranger's creations requires the same

¹¹ Regarding the “mildly deviant” element of jazz dance band arranging specifically associated with the 1920s “novelty” or “jazzing the classics” arranging tradition, see John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2009), 63.

¹² Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 41. Regarding the observation of these musical manipulations as an extension of signification theories outlined by Henry Louis Gates Jr., see Samuel A. Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4–8.

¹³ Max Harrison, “Swing Era Big Bands and Jazz Composing and Arranging,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 284. For other examples of the Kansas City-versus-New York dichotomy, see Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 222; Hsio Wen Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands,” in *Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World's Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars*, ed. Nat Hentoff and Albert McCarthy (1959; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1975): 185–86; David Stowe, “Jazz in the West: Cultural Frontier and Region During the Swing Era,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32/1 (February 1992): 55–56.

¹⁴ For example, the tenuous nature of generalizations surrounding the “departure” reflected in certain aspects of the Basie style might be supported by Magee's discussion of the New York-based Fletcher Henderson orchestra's use of head arrangements with multiple solo choruses as early as the 1920s. Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 131–35.

contextualization as any art form produced in a commercial setting. For example, arrangements representing the “jazz concerto” genre utilized by the 1940s Jimmie Lunceford orchestra (such as Willet’s arrangement of “Estrellita”) call for the inclusion of multiple solo cadenzas or meter and tempo shifts that are arguably less amenable to public dancing; by contrast, other genres may have called for a fixed-meter or single-tempo jazz dance vehicle.¹⁵ Indeed, a number of different arranging genres (including “concertos,” “ballads,” or “novelty songs”) emerged as a further means of codifying musical idioms intended to fulfill popular demand. As a result, the artistic effectiveness of a Lunceford jazz concerto lies not only in the concerto arrangement itself, but also in an identification or familiarity with the band’s *non*-concerto arrangements.

In cases where more “originality” might be available or desirable, arrangers expecting commercial success still needed to work within the confines of established popular styles. In order for the cultural identities that comprise the idiom (such as big band swing) or genre (such as a jazz concerto) to be effectively recognizable, they had to be codified by arrangers into sets of objective and reproducible musical devices. These musical signifiers might include concepts as broad or specific as formal routines, rhythmic patterns, melodic quotations, riff repetitions, meter changes, tempo shifts, or solo cadenzas. The artistry of popular music arranging emerges through the arranger’s use of formal, rhythmic, or harmonic devices that serve to fulfill the requirements of the popular idiom or genre, yet simultaneously identify the individual style or voice of the orchestra or arranger.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the preferred musical qualities for the popular Swing Era Lindy Hop dance, including “no two-bar breaks to interrupt the momentum of the music” and “consistent four-beats-to-the-bar rhythm,” see Howard Spring, “Swing and the Lindy Hop: Dance, Venue, Media, and Tradition,” *American Music* 15/2 (Summer 1997): 186; 188.

Given the degree of familiarity that might be referenced in different arrangements (and without being fully aware of a given client's specific requests), it is notable that the textural orchestration techniques of Chappie Willet tend to be fairly conservative, rarely veering from the basic techniques discussed earlier (fox-trot rhythm, five-part ensemble voicings, etc.). Granting a number of exceptions, Willet overwhelmingly relies on triadic or close-position voicings split antiphonally between the brass and saxophone sections, emphasizing relatively generic-sounding big band orchestral textures.¹⁶ How might a bandleader like Gene Krupa claim to “achieve identity” within the confines of such a framework? An examination of Willet's influences and experience working with stage shows offers a possible explanation.

From Broadway to Ballroom:
The New York Swing Era Sound

Theatre orchestration was undoubtedly the main source of ideas for dance orchestras, at first in its effect on the printed arrangements from which all dance bands played and, later, as the bands elaborated on these printed arrangements, in its more imaginative combinations.

Dance orchestration has long since taken its place as the most imaginative and productive of all arranging.¹⁷

—Broadway arranger Robert Russell Bennett, circa 1939

Broadway orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett may be a biased commentator on the primacy of theater arranging, but he does highlight the pervasive influence theater

¹⁶ Schuller criticizes the antiphonal “riff cum call-and-response formulas” of Swing Era arrangers as indicative of stylistic stagnation and representing the “Henderson formula's Achilles' heel.” Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 19; 10. As Magee notes, Henderson was certainly not the only arranger using antiphonal and block-chord scoring devices, though his high-profile work for Goodman did help to popularize the approach. Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 193.

¹⁷ Robert Russell Bennett, “Orchestration of Theatre and Dance Music,” in *The Broadway Sound: The Autobiography and Selected Essays of Robert Russell Bennett*, ed. George J. Ferencz (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1999): 288; 291.

music has had on other popular music genres, and especially Swing Era dance bands. Indeed, some contemporary professionals considered musicians working in orchestral theater music to be in a vocational class “above” that of touring dance bands or smaller nightclub ensembles, a view that offers the possibility that the “lower” class ensembles may have turned to theater-related musical forms as an exercise in upward mobility.¹⁸ Bennett’s own reputation as a formally educated white composer (versus merely “arranger”) reinforces notions of the theater world as at least approaching the more rarefied plane of “legitimate” music.¹⁹

Inevitably, some Swing Era arrangers were sought out by dance bands as a result of reputations established in the theater medium. Tom Whaley recalled his own nightclub floorshow arranging reputation as the basis for being hired by Duke Ellington; Billy Strayhorn was also hired by Ellington based on music Strayhorn had created for stage show productions.²⁰ Chappie Willet’s stage show work appears to have been a factor in impressing client Gene Krupa.²¹ Yet despite a longstanding relationship between jazz, dance, and theater music, the work of arrangers associated with the stage medium has long suffered the anti-“commercial” rhetoric of performer-focused jazz histories. Schuller, for example, finds it necessary to ask, “how did [Duke] Ellington, at first a musician with a decided leaning toward ‘show music,’ develop into one of America’s

¹⁸ See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 30–31.

¹⁹ Bennett’s reputation was spread in articles such as “The Boys That Make the Noise,” *Time*, July 5, 1943, 65.

²⁰ Regarding Ellington’s hiring of Whaley, see Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 48. Regarding Strayhorn, see Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23–25.

²¹ See Krupa’s testimony cited in chapter 3, as quoted in Bruce Klauber, *World of Gene Krupa: That Legendary Drummin’ Man* (Ventura, California: Pathfinder Publishing, 1990), 46.

foremost composers?”²² Jazz critic Barry Ulanov similarly criticized elements of stylistic variety in one of Ellington’s Carnegie Hall concert as reflecting a “glorified stage show.”²³

In tracing the development of urban entertainment genres combining music and theater that emerged during the early twentieth century, musicologist John Howland applies the term “glorified” as a specific genre identifier (not a pejorative adjective) to describe a widely prevalent popular music arranging aesthetic. Composers and arrangers working in New York during the 1920s and ‘30s developed a musical language of “expressive devices and gestures” and “idiomatic references” that crossed genres of “dance bands, big band jazz, and the orchestral idioms of Hollywood and Broadway musicals, interwar radio, and the deluxe movie palace prologues of the day.”²⁴ These “stylistically hybrid” arrangements promoted “black folk music idioms” in synthesis with “Euro-American classical form and style,” and placed “great emphasis on building variety in arranging routines through juxtapositions of different styles of popular music and other ‘characteristic scoring effects’ (textures) that referenced familiar ... musical styles.”²⁵ Stage revues comprising song, dance, and comedy acts out of the vaudeville tradition often incorporated music arranging techniques emphasizing contrast and variety

²² Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (1968; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 339. Schuller also derides selected Ellington works dating from the bandleader’s Cotton Club residencies as “slick trying-to-be-modern show music.” Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 330. See also Hsio Wen Shih’s assertion that “the show-bands ... had no wide influence [in jazz].” Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands,” 181–82.

²³ Barry Ulanov, “Ellington’s Carnegie Hall Concert a Glorified Stage Show,” *Metronome*, January 1944, 8, 48. Ulanov does not pair the terms “glorified” and “stage show” within the body of his article (he calls the program a “glorified one-nighter”); the title may also reflect the prejudices of his editor.

²⁴ Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 103–04; 119.

through programmatic tropes of high and low culture.²⁶ The strategy highlights musical variations in melodic theme, tempo, key, and meter, and was embraced by stage show arrangers in the creation of extended production sequences requiring controlled pacing and “spectacular” climaxes reinforcing visual choreography.²⁷

An oft-cited precedent for these “concert-style dance-band arrangements” is George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*, debuted by Paul Whiteman in 1924.²⁸ *Rhapsody*’s multi-part or “episodic” compositional form has been both celebrated and ridiculed as an attempt to introduce European concert music devices into the realm of American popular music.²⁹ The Swing Era offers abundant examples of a similarly “rhapsodic” (the label in part reflecting the influential success of *Rhapsody in Blue*) approach to composition and arranging.

Rhapsodic formal design and orchestration devices likely entered the world of dance band music as dance orchestras performed “glorified” concert-style arrangements created for stage productions, and as dance band arrangers searched for ways to expand their own formal language toward the establishment of an individual style. Andrew Berish, for example, identifies black arranger Eddie Durham’s 1935 “Avalon,” written for Jimmie Lunceford, as “a striking arrangement . . . in part, because of its adventurous digression from the conventional Tin Pan Alley [verse-chorus] form.”³⁰ Jeffrey Magee

²⁶ See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 102–10. Another discussion of “variety and contrast” in modes of popular music arranging—as it emerged in the work of Don Redman during the 1920s—is provided in Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 39–71, 195.

²⁷ See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 117–18. A relevant discussion of the rhapsodic-episodic production number arranging tradition as found in the “Harlem Is Harmony” nightclub sequence closing the 1938 film *The Duke Is Tops* is provided in chapter 6.

²⁸ See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 66.

²⁹ Regarding the reception of *Rhapsody in Blue*, see Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 319.

³⁰ Andrew Berish, “‘I Dream of Her and Avalon’: 1930s Sweet Jazz, Race, and Nostalgia in the Casino Ballroom,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2/4 (November 2008): 552.

similarly describes Fletcher Henderson’s influential arrangements for Benny Goodman to reveal a “flexible manipulation of highly commercialized idiomatic features,” and suggests that Henderson “worked comfortably within a set of stylistic conventions but continually found ways to refresh those conventions.”³¹ In addition to identifying specific orchestration devices, such as Henderson’s rhythmic “chains of syncopation,” Magee describes the formal design of a typical Henderson chart (arrangement) to:

Begin with a brief introduction ... [then] proceed directly to the first chorus featuring a swung version of [the song’s] melody close to its original, published form. It would continue with at least two more choruses, one featuring improvising soloists accompanied by ensemble riffs and one more featuring a written variation on the tune, a swing-era survival of what Arthur Lange had called the “arranger’s chorus” in 1920s dance music.³²

Walter van de Leur offers a similar argument regarding arranger Billy Strayhorn’s individual approach to established forms:

For most swing band arrangers, the obvious plan for an arrangement was the da capo form ... Structuring elements—introductions, codas, modulations, and transitory sections—were typically short and of scant musical significance. By contrast, Strayhorn’s pop tune arrangements have carefully worked out introductions, transitions, and codas, which he uses as structuring elements to secure the internal logic of an orchestration.³³

Van de Leur cites this structural design strategy, in addition to orchestration techniques such as dissonant counterpoint and repeating staccato rhythmic figures, as one of the ways that Strayhorn “combined a wide array of individual musical techniques—musical fingerprints—that in most cases leave little doubt as to the author of a given piece.”³⁴ In manipulating established forms or favoring specific orchestration techniques,

³¹ Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 193.

³² *Ibid.*, 194. What Magee describes as Henderson’s “chains of syncopation” approach was also recognized by Goodman arranger Spud Murphy, who describes this Henderson device more generally as “falling on the off-beat most of the time.” Lyle Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method* (New York: Robbins Music, 1937), 27.

³³ Van de Leur, *Something to Live For*, 67.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

arrangers like Durham, Henderson, Strayhorn, and others often relied on a recurring collection (or “bag,” or “fingerprint”) of arranging devices designed to give their creations a recognizable sound. It is a strategy that often prevails across different musical genres or client needs, despite the fact that many of these devices eventually became established conventions (or “commercialized idiomatic features”) themselves within the dance band arranging tradition that Swing Era orchestras depended upon to operate within the popular market.

The multiple-client work of a freelance arranger such as Chappie Willet, as compared to the legacy of more exclusively employed arrangers such as Henderson (working with “the Goodman sound”) or Strayhorn (working with “the Ellington sound”), further highlights the use of these recurring “fingerprints.” In the case of Willet, this strategy might even include tongue-in-cheek references to familiar musical clichés. Arrangements reflect an aesthetic discourse between the arranger’s individual style and audience expectations: written texts that I believe can be analyzed on their own merits, regardless of interpretation through performance (though documentation of interpretive performances is instructive as well). These documents should be included under what Lawrence Gushee identifies—along with both (unwritten) improvisation and (written) composition—as “evidence for rational thought processes of collective cultural import.”³⁵

³⁵ Lawrence Gushee, “Analytical Method and Compositional Process in Some Thirteenth and Fourteenth-Century Music,” in *Forum Musicologicum* [Basler Beiträge zur Musikgeschichte III] (Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag, 1982): 189. Gushee presents this description in the context of discussing cultural dichotomies between composed music and improvised music, including jazz.

The Chappie Willet Sound

There is something about the arrangement[s] of Chappie Willet which causes them to stand out.³⁶

—Allan McMillan, *Chicago Defender*

In order to avoid the vagaries of claims like that of entertainment columnist Alan McMillan, the term “idiolect” has emerged in popular music studies as a means of classifying musical traits identified with an individual musician or performing ensemble, including the identification of “intertextual reference and formal strategies.”³⁷ Musical idiolect is a “code” that comprises a set of musical strategies or devices more specific than the broader concepts that define an idiom or genre, features of which might apply to any number of (in this case) swing dance bands aspiring to popular success through a common use of instrumentation, formal routines, or jazz-inflected syncopation. Similar to a performer who has developed a sonic timbre that is immediately recognizable by their fans, composers and arrangers can be identified through a recognizable idiolect embedded in their work. Within the swing dance band genre, an arranger’s idiolect might include specific orchestration techniques employed across a range of established genres, or techniques intrinsic to an established idiom that are employed in an individualized manner. The following examination is an attempt to identify the arranging idiolect of Chappie Willet.

³⁶ Allan McMillan, “Hi-Hattin’ in Harlem,” *Chicago Defender*, January 11, 1936.

³⁷ Allan F. Moore and Anwar Ibrahim, “‘Sounds Like Teen Spirit’: Identifying Radiohead’s Idiolect,” in *The Music and Art of Radiohead*, ed. Joseph Tate (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2005): 139–58, 140–41. For an introduction to the term “idiolect” in academic popular music studies, see Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Bristol, Pennsylvania: Open University Press, 1990), 136–37, 174.

Chromatic Arranging Devices

In her study of American modernism, Carol Oja associates the application of the “modernist” label to early twentieth-century American music with the “arrival of European modernism in New York,” as artists and audiences were “struggling to maintain an edge of cultivation and currency.”³⁸ Composers incorporated musical representations of modernity, including concepts of industrialization and mechanization, through a collection of specific composition or orchestration techniques.³⁹ Willet’s early familiarity with “modernist” composers of the European classical tradition, such as Alexandre Tansman, appears to be significantly reflected in his later arranging career. One pervasive reflection of modernism common to the works of Willet and other Swing Era arrangers is the combination of contemporary European concert music signifiers with (or against) the musical invocation of African-American swing syncopation—the latter idiom often reinforced by traditional jazz performance techniques such as blue notes, lip slurs, or growls.⁴⁰ More specifically, Oja identifies tonal chromaticism as an important tool of critically and self-identified modernist composers working in New York City during the decade leading into the Swing Era. In George Gershwin’s 1925 *Concerto in F* or black composer William Grant Still’s 1926 *Levee Land*, for example, the juxtaposition of tonal chromaticism against more traditional diatonic, blues, or otherwise vernacular-based tonal structures is offered to represent the broad modernist technique of

³⁸ Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 46–47.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 59–70. Oja’s discussion also focuses on modernist musical conceptions of the machine.

⁴⁰ “Traditional” elements of African-American jazz—or, in dance band parlance, “hot music”—relevant to the following analyses include musical “features such as blue notes, slurring, bent notes, growls, and ... a loosening of the melodic line from the ground beat.” James Lincoln Collier, “Jazz (i); §II, 5: The Emergence of Hot Music,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000): 582. See also Samuel A. Floyd Jr., “African Roots of Jazz,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 13.

“juxtaposing an experimental voice ... with a traditional one.”⁴¹ In 1920s America, this juxtaposition of African-American jazz and European concert music ideologies meant nothing less than, in Oja’s words, “crossing racial barriers in an era of segregation and blurring distinctions between art and entertainment.”⁴²

Guthrie Ramsey offers an analogous account of “classic modernism,” positing a parallel “Afro-modernism” that emerged in urban America from the 1920s through the 1940s as a result of the Great Migration.⁴³ Ramsey defines modernity as reflecting processes including industrialization, urbanization, and the articulation of “something about historical actors’ self-conscious attitudes about and their responses to the relationship among the past, the present, and the future.”⁴⁴ Like Oja, Ramsey identifies an “antagonistic relationship between ‘high art’ and mass culture” and the recognition or reinforcement of “cultural hierarchies” among the discourses indicative of a modernist aesthetic.⁴⁵

Although Ramsey’s study focuses on post-World War II musical developments, his description of Afro-modernism could well apply to pre-war musicians such as Willet, who negotiated musical codes representing idioms of “high” European classical music and “low” African-American vernacular music (syncopated jazz, ragtime, show tunes, folk songs, or spirituals), as well as a new “middlebrow” aesthetic established by a

⁴¹ Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 19. Oja describes *Concerto in F* as fusing “a standard three-movement form with African-American traditions” and “rife with unorthodox juxtapositions” with “expectations for a [European] concerto ... realized at the same time as gestures of American popular music were delivered in various guises”; *Levee Land* is described to use the principle of “encircling popular African-American gestures with chromaticism.” Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 319–25; 332–34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 319.

⁴³ Guthrie P. Ramsey, *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 106.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 106–07.

preceding generation of black arrangers based in Harlem.⁴⁶ As Howland argues, Harlem musicians such as Will Marion Cook, Will Vodery, W. C. Handy, James Reese Europe, and Ford Dabney situated their careers and music between or across the high and low idioms, in part through “glorified” or revue-inspired arranging techniques.⁴⁷

By the 1930s and the arrival of big band popular music, many dance band composing and arranging traditions were firmly established, allowing for efficient reference (or even parody) through codified techniques. The recognizable lineage of the tradition was a critical component of most genres within the swing idiom, and further invited individual artistic commentary or manipulation by contemporary composers and arrangers. Willet’s modernist Swing Era dance band arrangements typically utilize established idioms to juxtapose elements of tonal chromaticism—a musical-cultural association with European “high” art or the sophisticated present—against orchestration techniques related to established vernacular traditions such as ragtime marching band music—a musical-cultural association with “low” popular entertainment or the quaint past.

For example, the chromatic alteration of chords through a lowered (flatted) or raised (augmented) fifth scale degree, employed as a harmonic reference to one of the symmetrical whole-tone scales (see example 4.3), is an especially prominent musical trope in 1920s Jazz Age and 1930s Swing Era popular music arrangements.⁴⁸ As Scott

⁴⁶ Regarding African-American approaches to the “highbrow” idiom and the emergence of the “middlebrow”—especially pertaining to the symphonic jazz style—see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 2–7, 21–22.

⁴⁷ Regarding the broader establishment of jazz orchestra arranging traditions in 1920s New York, see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 29–45. See also Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 318–29.

⁴⁸ The label “flat” or “flatted” fifth is used here in preference to the term “diminished,” which is often associated with chords composed of only minor third intervals. Thus, a dominant-seventh flat-fifth chord is presumed to include a major third interval between the first and third scale degrees.

DeVeaux observes, augmented dominant-seventh chords served as “a convenient way of inserting a whole-tone scale into a conventional harmonic progression.”⁴⁹

Example 4.3: Common Chord Alterations Referencing a Whole-tone Scale⁵⁰

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The first part is a whole-tone scale starting on C4 and ending on G#4. The second part shows four augmented triads: C+, D+, E+, and F#+. The third part shows four augmented dominant chords: C7+, D7+, E9+, and F#9+. The fourth part shows four flatted-fifth dominant chords: C7(b5), D7(b5), E9(b5), and F#9(b5). Each chord is represented by a chord symbol above a chord voicing on the staff.

The cultural role of the whole-tone scale in American popular music remained fairly constant through most of the twentieth century: the scale’s avoidance of a clear tonal or modal center provides a recognizable foil to traditional harmony (in this case, harmony derived from the Western diatonic scale and attendant relationships between tonic and dominant tonalities). While the whole-tone scale is identified by DeVeaux as “an indisputably ‘modern’ effect” in itself, the following analyses emphasize the modernist *juxtaposition* of this chromatic device against, or in combination with, other “easily grasped” musical tropes.⁵¹ As Lawrence Kart suggests, these techniques of “conscious modernity” are intended by composers and arrangers to be heard as “exotic exceptions to a norm that is, in effect, being reinforced.”⁵² Howland observes that approaches to popular music arranging described as “symphonic” or “classical” are typically marked by an avoidance of the traditional Tin Pan Alley 32-bar song structure,

⁴⁹ Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 107.

⁵⁰ Among Swing Era arrangers, there appears to be little *theoretical* preference between augmented or flatted-fifth alterations to the major triad when invoking the whole-tone effect; voicings may include one, the other, or both. Augmented dominant chords seem to be preferred in progressions resolving to unaltered chords, such as example 4.4.

⁵¹ DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 107.

⁵² Lawrence Kart, “The Avant-Garde, 1949–1967,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 449. Kart cites dance band works of the 1920s and ’30s as precedents for the later artistic movement described in the article’s title.

instead favoring “multithematic formal structures, and ... ‘sophisticated’ introductions, interludes, and codas” among other devices.⁵³ For example, the influential dance band arranger Bill Challis claimed to have been inspired by jazz trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke’s taste for European (and European-inspired) composers Debussy, Stravinsky, Delius, MacDowell, and Eastwood Lane, recalling that “in those days [1920s and early ‘30s] we did an awful lot with interludes, modulations ... [Beiderbecke] knew [Debussy’s] ‘Afternoon of a Faun’ backwards.”⁵⁴

Interludes that simultaneously function as modulations (changes of key) are among the most common passages of Swing Era arranging routines to utilize chromatic harmony. In his 1926 text *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, Arthur Lange describes interlude passages of chromatic modulation as embodying a tonal space “more or less neutral in relation to [diatonic] keys,” emphasizing the tonal ambiguity convenient for transitions between different tonal centers.⁵⁵ Lange goes on to cite the use of chromatic augmented-fifth chords in modulations as being “far more effective than common chord modulations,” arguing that a resulting “psychological effect” makes these passages “more noticeable” and “very interesting.”⁵⁶ Corollary to Lange’s observations, a number of 1930s swing dance bands’ radio theme songs, including “Chant of the Weed” (Don Redman’s orchestra), “Queer Notions” (Fletcher Henderson), “Jazznocracy” (Jimmie Lunceford), “Uptown Rhapsody” (Teddy Hill), “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” (Willie Bryant), and “Apuksody” (Gene Krupa)—the last three examples arranged by Willet—

⁵³ Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 2.

⁵⁴ Bill Challis, as quoted in Gene Lees, *Arranging the Score: Portraits of the Great Arrangers* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 158.

⁵⁵ Arthur Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra* (1926; repr., New York: Robbins Music, 1927), 200.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

employ the whole-tone effect at some point, presumably intended as an aural attention-grabber.

Historians and musicologists have similarly shown a preoccupation with the European influence, especially in citing the use of harmonic structures in attempts to identify divisions between (or fusions of) jazz and classical music.⁵⁷ DeVeaux, for example, extends a jazz history ritual of tracing connections from “the music of Debussy and Ravel” to Beiderbecke’s 1927 whole-tone based composition “In a Mist” and Horace Henderson’s 1933 arrangement of Coleman Hawkins’s whole-tone based “Queer Notions.”⁵⁸ Walter van de Leur suggests that Billy Strayhorn’s use of “whole-tone, autonomous dominant chords” in the arranger’s 1939 “Passion Flower” “point[s] up ... admiration for the French ‘impressionist’ composer Claude Debussy.”⁵⁹ Ken Rattenbury goes a step further, positing that Duke Ellington’s “use of bitonal clashes and whole-tone flurries” in the bandleader’s 1940 composition “Ko Ko” “may be an evocation of Debussy—perhaps an unconscious one.”⁶⁰

But musical efforts aimed at (or heard as) invoking relationships with European concert music have also been criticized as banal cliché. Harlem composer Will Marion Cook, writing to jazz composer James P. Johnson in 1936, lamented that “Debussy seems to have set the whole world mad on [the] whole tone scale and every composer tries to be more modern, more dissonant than his predecessor.”⁶¹ Swing Era critic Sayre Hillerson

⁵⁷ Some representative concerns surrounding the emergence of “jazz composition” are discussed in Harrison, “Swing Era Big Bands and Jazz Composing and Arranging,” 285–86.

⁵⁸ DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 107. See also Terry Teachout, “Jazz and Classical Music: To the Third Stream and Beyond,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Bill Kirchner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 345; William H. Youngren, “European Roots of Jazz,” in *The Oxford Companion to Jazz*, ed. Kirchner: 22.

⁵⁹ Van de Leur, *Something to Live For*, 29.

⁶⁰ Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 141.

⁶¹ Cook’s letter to Johnson is reprinted in Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 43–44.

was even less charitable towards this harmonic device, panning the 1938 Gene Krupa orchestra's "screeching and ponderous chords and screwy runs, with loving and frequent use of the whole-tone scale."⁶² Gunther Schuller asserts that "nothing dates more quickly than whole-tone writing," and lightly mocks Don Redman's 1931 "Chant of the Weed"—an arrangement based largely on whole-tone scale melodies and altered-fifth chord voicings—as self-consciously "*meant* to be 'daring' and 'sophisticated,' representing the latest state of the jazz-tune art."⁶³

Whether sophisticated or cliché, the whole-tone trope remained solidly entrenched in American dance band arranging throughout the Swing Era. Examples of its use in the type of isolated instances outlined by Lange (where whole-tone voicings are employed in a brief introduction, interlude, or modulation passage separating choruses built on diatonic harmony) include Will Hudson's 1934 arrangements of "Wild Party" (for Fletcher Henderson) and "Jazznocracy" (for Jimmie Lunceford).⁶⁴ Another 1934 Lunceford vehicle, "Stratosphere," presents a sequence of parallel altered-fifth dominant voicings followed by unpredictable rhythmic breaks and scoring for timpani drum, offering further programmatic associations with European orchestral concert music.⁶⁵ In passages of "Stratosphere," altered-fifth dominant chord voicings include the ninth scale degree, a common harmonic extension that reinforces the whole-tone quality of the chord

⁶² Sayre Hillerson, "Krupa Shaping Outmoded Style," *Metronome*, July 1938, 30.

⁶³ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 211; 370. Emphasis added. Not atypically, Schuller goes on to laud Coleman Hawkins's 1933 "Queer Notions," a piece built on the same "harmonic modernity" of the whole-tone scale, as "one of the most advanced jazz instrumentals of the entire swing era," earning Schuller's highest accolade: "authentic jazz." Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 437.

⁶⁴ Regarding the application of instrumental effects to "forms and routines," see Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 207–12. Walter C. Allen claims that Hudson's composition "Wild Party"—itself largely based on Duke Ellington's 1930 arrangement of "Old Man Blues"—was arranged by Russ Morgan. Allen, *Hendersonia*, 316. Will Hudson (1908–1981) co-led the Hudson–DeLange Orchestra, and also arranged music for Cab Calloway ("The Man from Harlem," 1932), McKinney's Cotton Pickers ("I'd Love It," 1929), and Mills Blue Rhythm Band ("Mr. ^{Ghost} Goes to Town," 1936), among others.

⁶⁵ Transcribed excerpts and a brief discussion of "Stratosphere's" "startling modernisms" are provided in Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 208–09.

(see Example 4.3). This approach was also addressed by Lange (in a chapter on scoring for piano): his notated examples of chromatic scales demonstrate voicings for dominant-seventh chords, dominant-ninth chords, and dominant-seventh chords with raised or lowered fifths, including voicings with the flatted-fifth degree voiced in the bass.⁶⁶

Examples of Willet referencing chromaticism with whole-tone scales in similarly brief effect passages include “I’ve Got My Fingers Crossed” (coda), “Rhythm Jam” (interlude), “I Know That You Know” (introduction, modulation), “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” (interlude), “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” (interlude), “Sonata Pathétique” (interlude), and “You’ve Got Me Voodoo’d” (modulation). Similar to the Hudson, Lunceford, and Lange examples cited above, Willet’s use of whole-tone harmony often takes the form of sequentially parallel augmented or flatted-fifth dominant voicings—often with the flatted-fifth degree scored in the bass. A modulating interlude passage in “After You’ve Gone” (example 4.4), arranged for Louis Armstrong’s orchestra, is a typical example: ensemble dominant-seventh voicings with altered fifths are scored in half-note stop-time rhythm, making the passage’s modulation from the key of C to E-flat even “more noticeable” by temporarily disrupting the rhythm section’s established quarter-note dance rhythm.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 8–9.

⁶⁷ In this case, the modulation passage directly follows a four-bar break for the saxophone section, making the entire transition even “more noticeable.”

Example 4.4: “After You’ve Gone” mm. 129–33 (1:56),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937)⁶⁸

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 132$

After You’ve Gone

By Henry Creamer and Turner Layton

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This corresponding disruption of the rhythm section’s quarter-note pulse is one of the most immediately recognizable characteristics of Willet’s arranging idiolect. Cultural historian Joel Dinerstein cites examples of American streamline train imagery to suggest that the Swing Era big band aesthetic reflects the “gear-and-piston efficiency” of industrialization.⁶⁹ Dinerstein’s broader mechanical metaphor might well apply to Willet’s chromatic transitions. As reinforced by stop-time or half-time rhythm, I often hear these chromatic passages as suggesting the effect of an engine changing gears, as the clutch temporarily releases the drive mechanism before building to an even greater rate of intensity.

⁶⁸ Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show*. Regarding the chord spellings provided, Willet frequently voiced altered-fifth chords assigning the flat-fifth degree to the bass part; to judge from surviving orchestra rhythm section parts for other arrangements, Willet might have spelled the first chord in this “After You’ve Gone” sequence as C7♭5, despite the additional presence of a raised fifth (or lowered sixth—the pitch spelled as an A♭ in the first chord). Referencing the common addition of the ninth degree is another option, providing a possible spelling of the first chord as G♭9♭5.

⁶⁹ Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture Between the World Wars* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 165.

Another approach to the whole-tone effect is demonstrated in Willet's "Opening" fanfare for Jimmie Lunceford's orchestra, apparently written for a 1939 stage show production (example 4.5).⁷⁰ In addition to incorporating extensive half-step chromaticism, this rapid sequence of whole-tone chords is disrupted by a climactic tempo change and modal sequence (mm. 23–24) before descending chromatically from another whole-tone chord (m. 25) to the long awaited resolution to the tonic chord. The significant delay in the establishment of a tonal center, executed through the introduction of whole-tone chromaticism, suggests parallels with the European classical "fantasy" genre.

⁷⁰ The Lunceford manuscript orchestra parts for "Opening" are stamped 1939; a possible venue is the Apollo theater, where Lunceford performed in January, May, August, and December of that year. See "Lunceford at Apollo," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 31, 1938; "Apollo," *New York Times*, May 20, 1939; Stanley Dance, *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 410–13.

Example 4.5: “Opening” [piano/conductor part] mm. 13–26,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1939)⁷¹

Bright

13 $D7+$ $D^{\flat 9+}$ $C7+$ $B7+$ $B^{\flat 7+}$ $D^{\flat 7+}$ $C9+$ $B7+$ $B^{\flat 7+}$ $C7+$ $B9+$ $B^{\flat 7+}$

16 $A7+$ $A^{\flat 7+}$ $G7+$ $F\#7+$ $G7+$ $G7(b5)$ $G7(b5)$

19

Grandioso

23 C^{ma7} A^{mi7} E^{mi7} $D^{\flat}mi6(11)$ $D9+$ $E^{\flat 6}$

fff

Another approach taken by Willet is to present melodic themes derived from the whole-tone scale over a background utilizing chromatic half-step voice leading. In the bridge to Gene Krupa’s radio theme, “Apurksody” (example 4.6), dominant-ninth chords provide additional half-step voice-leading possibilities in the alternation between whole-

⁷¹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Opening” are held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian National Museum of American History (NMAH).

tone tonality (presented by the sax section theme) and altered diatonic harmony (presented by the brass section background).

Example 4.6: “Apurksody” mm. 19–26 (0:44),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Gene Krupa (1938)⁷²

♩ = c. 96

The musical score for 'Apurksody' is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 19 to 22, and the second system covers measures 23 to 26. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of approximately 96 beats per minute. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The saxophone part (Saxes) is written in a soprano clef and plays a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The brass section (Brass) is written in a bass clef and provides a harmonic background with sustained chords and moving lines. Chord changes are indicated above the staff: B⁹(b5) and B^{b9}(#11) in the first system, and A⁹⁺, A^{b9}(#11), and A^{b7} in the second system. The bass line (Bass) consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

Apurksody

By Gene Krupa and Chappie Willet

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Coleman Hawkins’s 1933 composition “Queer Notions” offers a precedent in whole-tone chromaticism that appears to have had repercussions in Willet’s later work. This piece references the whole-tone scale as melodic and harmonic material for the “A” sections of a 32-bar AABA popular song chorus form, with each A section resolving to a diatonic chord (example 4.7).⁷³ The Hawkins vehicle seems to have been a direct model for “Uptown Rhapsody” (example 4.8), composed by saxophonist (and Hawkins disciple-rival) Leon “Chu” Berry and recorded by Teddy Hill in 1936. While certainly fulfilling

⁷² *Gene Krupa and His Orchestra 1938.*

⁷³ It may be significant that the contrasting B section of “Queer Notions’s” AABA form also employs chromatically descending half-step voicings, not dissimilar to “Apurksody.”

a combination of whole-tone voicings and chromatic half-step motion.⁷⁷ This approach has a precedent in Don Redman's 1931 "Chant of the Weed," one of the first recordings made by Redman as a dance bandleader. "Chant" was released while Willet was studying music at West Virginia State College (where Redman's West Virginia roots would likely have added to the piece's already enthusiastic reception in local African-American music circles); to judge from Willet's later arranging techniques, Redman's "Chant of the Weed" disc may have received extensive play at Institute. Perhaps the introduction to Willet's "Blue Rhythm Fantasy," with its open-voiced muted brass punctuations against the saxes' three-note chromatic half-step phrases, even reflects a conscious reference to the bridge of "Chant of the Weed" (examples 4.9 and 4.10). The passages are also set in similar tonalities, built on an A dominant-ninth chord (somewhat unusual for big band orchestration).

⁷⁷ Oja describes musical traits of "unity, development, and organicism" as hallmarks of the European tradition—at least in the eyes of early twentieth-century American music critics. Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 324.

Example 4.9: “Chant of the Weed” mm. 21–24 (0:31),
arr. by Don Redman (1931)⁷⁸

♩ = c. 152

21 Saxes A⁹

Brass (str. mutes)

Bass

A⁹ A⁹(b5) A⁹ A⁹(b5)

Chant of the Weed

By Don Redman

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Example 4.10: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 3–6 (0:03),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)⁷⁹

♩ = c. 176

Saxes 3 (B^{b9}) A⁹

Brass (str. mutes)

Bass

A⁹ (B^{b9}) A⁹ A⁹

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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⁷⁸ Don Redman, *Shakin' the Africann* (Hep CD 1001, 2002). This and following notated excerpts of “Chant of the Weed” are transcribed by author, occasionally referencing Redman’s manuscript scores and orchestra parts reflecting later versions of the arrangement held in the Don Redman Papers at the Schomberg Center, New York Public Library. As a side note, the E-natural voiced by the trumpets in mm. 23–24 a minor ninth *above* the saxophones’ E-flat (the flatted-fifth of an A9b5 chord)—an exceedingly dissonant note—is consistently reflected in surviving scores, parts, and recorded performances of the piece.

⁷⁹ This and following notated excerpts of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” transcribed by author, occasionally referencing partially surviving manuscript orchestra parts from a version of the arrangement held in the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College. Hill, *Uptown Rhapsody*.

In “Fantasy,” Willet follows his chromatic introduction by reiterating the saxes’ descending half-step motive through a series of two-bar phrases *ascending* by whole-step (example 4.11). Perhaps reflecting the “fantasy” reference in the piece’s title, the establishment of a tonal center is delayed until the arrival of the theme riff in the tonic key (C minor), some 24 seconds into the recorded performance.

Example 4.11: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 11–18 (0:13),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

The musical notation shows a saxophone line in C minor, starting at measure 11. The chords are: D^{b13}₉, C¹³₉, B¹³₉, E^{b13}₉, D¹³₉, D^{b13}₉, F¹³₉, E¹³₉, E^{b13}₉, D¹³₉, D⁹, A^{b7}, G⁷⁺. A dotted line indicates a whole-tone ascent from D^{b13}₉ to E¹³₉. A dashed line indicates a half-step descent from E¹³₉ to E^{b13}₉.

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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The eight-bar bridge of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” features solo clarinet and saxophone over ensemble background chords alternating through half-step voice leading. This is followed by an eight-bar interlude combining a unison woodwind whole-tone melody with a brass background arranged in parallel chromatic half-step motion (example 4.12); an additional brass chromatic descent emerges in mm. 51–54. This combination of half-step and whole-tone chromaticism foreshadows the 1938 “Apurksody” example cited earlier; Don Redman would utilize a similar device in his 1940 “Cupid’s Nightmare” for Cab Calloway.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Transcribed excerpts and a critique of “Cupid’s Nightmare” are provided in Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 346–47.

Example 4.12: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 47–55 (1:02),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 176$

47 Saxes (octave unison) $D^{\flat 9}$ C^{13} $D^{\flat 9}$ C^{13}

Tpts. (hats)

Tbns. (hats)

Bass

51 $D^{\flat 9}$ C^{13} B^9 $B^{\flat 9}$ $B^{\flat 9+}$ $E^{\flat 6/9}$

wa wa
wa wa

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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“Blue Rhythm Fantasy’s” descending half-step motive continues in the first two sets of background riffs supporting solo improvisations (now in the key of E-flat major), and is further reinforced by a descending chromatic chord progression at the close of each 16-bar solo chorus. The third solo chorus concludes this closing descent with an augmented-fifth dominant chord leading into the ensemble shout-chorus (example 4.13).

Example 4.13: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 99–102 (2:12),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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In the “Fantasy” shout chorus, a climactic ensemble quarter-note triplet half-step descent further reinforces the descending chromatic motive (example 4.14).

Example 4.14: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 111–114 (2:28),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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Closing the shout-chorus, another augmented-fifth dominant-seventh chord signals a return of the original riff in C minor. A tag ending variation of this riff, scored in ensemble unison, outlines chord arpeggios (as well as a number of descending half-step intervals) suggesting a repeated progression of chromatically altered chords

(example 4.15). The unison scoring arguably foreshadows Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker’s chromatic bebop jazz aesthetic, as well as Gillespie’s eponymous 1945 composition (example 4.16).⁸¹ Gillespie himself was undoubtedly familiar with Willet’s work, as the trumpeter’s debut recordings with both Teddy Hill (“Blue Rhythm Fantasy,” 1937) and Cab Calloway (“I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast,” 1939) were Willet arrangements; Gillespie also performed with Lucky Millinder circa 1942, when that band performed Willet arrangements (including “Prelude in C-sharp Minor”).⁸²

Example 4.15: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 123–26 (2:44),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

123 Cmi {G7(b9)}/B07 Cmi {G7(b9)}/B07 Cmi {G7(b9)}/B07 Cmi

Ens. (octave unison)

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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⁸¹ For a definition of “altered” chords, see Evan Rapport, “Bill Finegan’s Gershwin Arrangements and the American Concept of Hybridity,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2/4 (November 2008): 514.

⁸² An anecdote reflecting Gillespie’s own recollections of Willet is cited in Alyn Shipton, *Groovin’ High: the Life of Dizzy Gillespie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 367n9. Gillespie may have even performed Willet’s music in the Philadelphia band of Frank Fairfax—the former manager of Willet’s own Greystone Ballroom Orchestra—circa 1935–36. See John Wriggle, “Chappie Willet, Frank Fairfax, and Phil Edwards’ Collegians: From West Virginia to Philadelphia,” *Black Music Research Journal* 27/1 (Spring 2007): 13–16. Regarding Lucky Millinder, see Panama Francis, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 380; Edward Berger, *Basically Speaking: An Oral History of George Duvivier*, Studies in Jazz, No. 17 (Metuchen, New Jersey: Institute of Jazz Studies Rutgers–The State University of New Jersey & Scarecrow Press, 1993), 49.

Example 4.16: “Bebop” mm. 5–8 (0:03), arr. by Dizzy Gillespie (1945)⁸³

Bebop

By Dizzy Gillespie

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Willet’s recurring efforts to combine whole-tone chromaticism with descending half-step voice-leading help to unify “Blue Rhythm Fantasy’s” different formal sections and themes (figure 4.17) into a melodically and harmonically cohesive work.⁸⁴

Figure 4.17: Formal Structure of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy,”
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

	<i>intro</i>	18-bar trombone solo over ensemble
	<i>transition</i>	4-bar riff transition (key of C minor)
(C minor theme)	ch. 1	16-bar ensemble theme
		8-bar (bridge) sax and clarinet solo over ensemble
(E-flat theme)	<i>interlude</i>	8-bar ensemble (whole-tone melody)
	ch. 2	16-bar clarinet solo (key of E-flat)
	ch. 3	16-bar trumpet solo
	ch. 4	16-bar sax solo
	ch. 5	16-bar ensemble shout chorus
(C minor theme)	<i>transition</i>	4-bar riff variation (key of C minor)
	<i>coda</i>	4-bar ensemble

The combination of whole-tone scales and half-step voice-leading is not the only approach Willet took to introduce chromaticism into his dance band arrangements. And, as found in “Blue Rhythm Fantasy,” modulations and interludes were not the only

⁸³ Dizzy Gillespie, *The Ultimate Collection* (Stardust Records, 2009).

⁸⁴ Different versions of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” that Willet provided for Louis Armstrong, Lucky Millinder, and Gene Krupa generally follow the same formal structure as the Teddy Hill version analyzed above. The leadsheet and stock arrangement scored by Edgar Battle for Exclusive Publications in 1936 reflect a significantly altered sequence of musical material.

passages available for the application of these effects. Willet also introduced ascending or descending half-step chromatic motion as a “substitution” harmony for a composition’s original chord progression. Arrangements of “Feelin’ High and Happy,” “Jump Jump’s Here,” “Persian Rug,” and “Washington and Lee Swing” offer harmonic substitutions occurring in the climactic out-chorus; again, Willet often scores the rhythm section in stop-time or half-note rhythm to reinforce the chromatic harmonic device. The “Persian Rug” excerpts below (example 4.18) reflect Willet’s ensemble orchestration of the melody, first using the original chord sequence, then later (in the out-chorus) using a substitute chromatic progression.

Example 4.18: “Persian Rug” mm. 109–11 and mm. 149–51,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)⁸⁵

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 100?$

109 F⁶ Ami⁷ Dmi⁷Ami⁷Ami⁷ Dmi⁷ Ami⁷ D⁷ whip

149 F⁷ E⁷ E^{b7} D⁷ D^{b°} C⁷ B[°] B^{b°} D⁷ whip

Ens.

Drums

Bass

PERSIAN RUG

Music by NEIL MORET Lyrics by GUD KAHN

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Another example of descending half-step chromaticism in “Persian Rug” includes the unison saxophone background accompanying a solo trumpet presentation of the song’s original melody (example 4.19). In this case, the rhythm section maintains the

⁸⁵ This and following notated excerpts of “Persian Rug” reference manuscript orchestra parts held in the Red Norvo Papers MSS48, the Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

original chord progression while the unison saxophone line suggests an alternate, descending chromatic progression.

Example 4.19: “Persian Rug” mm. 21–29,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)

[♩ = c. 100?]

21 Solo Tpt. F^7 B^b7 E^b7 A^b7
Saxes
Bass

25 D^b7 G^b E^b9 A^b7+ A^b7 Brass

PERSIAN RUG

Music by NEIL MORET Lyrics by GUD KAHN

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However, the frequent (and less subtle) reinforcement of chromaticism with stop-time rhythm is the more prevalent strategy in Willet’s idiolect. Jazz composers and performers of the 1920s had already explored the possibilities of similar rhythmic-harmonic relationships. In pieces like James P. Johnson’s 1929 “Riffs,” the prevailing quarter-note stride rhythm is disrupted by a passage of chromatic chords in half-note rhythm (example 4.20). There is also a precedent in Alexandre Tansman’s “Spiritual and Blues,” one of the pieces Willet performed at his West Virginia State College graduation recital. Tansman claimed his composition to be a reflection of the music he had heard

during his trip to America in the 1920s.⁸⁶ In one passage, the established quarter-note left-hand rhythm is disrupted to accent a syncopated “secondary rag” rhythmic figure (example 4.21, m. 22), reinforcing a sequence of chromatically descending parallel chord voicings.⁸⁷

Example 4.20: “Riffs” mm. 77–83, by James P. Johnson (1929)⁸⁸

Riffs

By James P. Johnson

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⁸⁶ Alexandre Tansman, *Sonatine Transatlantique* [solo piano score] (Paris: Éditions Musicales, 1930).

⁸⁷ For a brief description of secondary rag, see Frank J. Gillis, “Hot Rhythm in Piano Ragtime,” *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985): 229–30. See also Brian Harker, “Louis Armstrong, Eccentric Dance, and the Evolution of Jazz on the Eve of Swing,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61/1 (Spring 2008): 102–04. The resulting syncopated pattern was associated with the “Charleston” dance rhythm; see Eddie MacDonald, “Making Hot Arrangements,” *Metronome*, September 1933, 44.

⁸⁸ James P. Johnson, “Riffs” [publisher leadsheet], reprinted in *Jazz, Blues, Boogie & Swing for Piano*, ed. Ronny S. Schiff (Milwaukee: MCA Music Publishing, 1977): 28–33.

Example 4.21: “Spiritual and Blues” mm. 21–23, by Alexandre Tansman (1930)⁸⁹

Sonatine Transatlantique: Spiritual and Blues

Alphonse Leduc – Robert King, Inc.

A subsidiary of Editions Alphonse Leduc (Paris)

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The Tansman “Spiritual and Blues” movement may have also inspired the use of an unusual voicing that Willet favored in the orchestration of climactic held chords preceding rhythmic breaks, as found in his arrangements of “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” and “Sonata Pathétique.” This voicing again comprises a whole-tone dominant-seventh chord with the flat-fifth degree scored in the bass. In “Prelude,” Willet spelled this chord for the guitarist as a G7 \flat 5 (with the D-flat voiced by the bass), though the ensemble also provides an additional flat-ninth degree (A-flat) voiced a fifth above the bass voice—a note that falls outside the associated whole-tone scale (see example 4.3).⁹⁰ The final chord of the Tansman “Spiritual and Blues” movement invokes a chord potentially spelled as C9 \sharp 11 (or, using the guitar part nomenclature that Willet might have designated, F \sharp 7 \flat 5, with an additional flat-ninth degree), very similar to the D \flat 9 \sharp 11 (or

⁸⁹ Tansman, *Sonatine Transatlantique*.

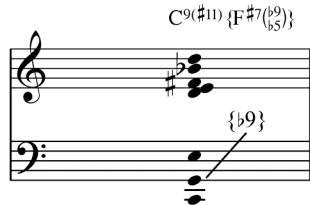
⁹⁰ A similar held G7 \flat 5 chord is used in the interlude to Willet’s 1940 arrangement of “You’ve Got Me Voodoo’d” for Louis Armstrong, but does not include the flat-ninth degree.


G7 \flat 5, with an additional flat-ninth) voicing in m. 61 of “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” and m. 141 of “Sonata Pathétique” (example 4.23).⁹¹

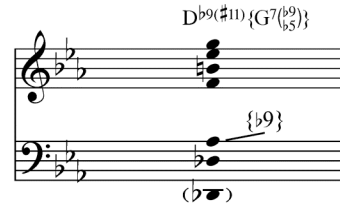
Example 4.23a: “Spiritual and Blues” m. 80, by Alexandre Tansman (1930)⁹²

Example 4.23b: “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” m. 61 (0:54), arr. by Chappie Willet for Duke Ellington (1938)⁹³

Example 4.23c: “Sonata Pathétique” m. 141 (2:23), arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)⁹⁴

a: 

b: 

c: 

Another common Swing Era chromatic device is the insertion of brief half-step harmonic “sideslips” into a composition’s basic chord progression. The sideslip is a technique that had presumably been incorporated into the popular music idiom to add musical interest (and perhaps a trope of chromatic experimentalism) to the relatively static chord changes in some Tin Pan Alley popular song forms. Especially prominent in the bridge of 32-bar forms, Swing Era examples of this device include Edgar Sampson’s 1934 “Stompin’ at the Savoy” for Chick Webb (example 4.24), where the sideslip introduces harmonic (and, in this case, melodic) motion into a common chord progression

⁹¹ The low D-flat in “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” m. 61 was spelled as C-sharp in the orchestra bass part. My own chord nomenclature in these examples—however potentially reflective of post-Swing Era jazz theory—is not intended as corrective to Willet’s spelling or theoretical intentions which, as discussed in the introductory chapter of this study, are not necessarily represented by guitar part chord spellings in any case.

⁹² Tansman, *Sonatine Transatlantique*.

⁹³ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

⁹⁴ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Sonata Pathétique” are held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian NMAH.

that traditionally sits on one chord for two measures at a time. Willet’s “Rhythm Jam” (example 4.25) and “Prelude to a Stomp” include similar chromatic shifts lasting for half a measure.

Example 4.24: “Stompin’ at the Savoy” mm. 21–24 (0:22),
arr. by Edgar Sampson for Chick Webb (1934)⁹⁵

Stompin’ at the Savoy

Words by Andy Razaf

Music by Benny Goodman, Edgar Sampson and Chick Webb

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Example 4.25: “Rhythm Jam” mm. 21–24 (0:21),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)⁹⁶

Rhythm Jam

By Chappie Willet

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⁹⁵ *Chick Webb and His Orchestra 1929–1934* (Classics CD 502, 1996).

⁹⁶ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937* (Classics CD 731, 1993). The corresponding passage in the published piano leadsheet for “Rhythm Jam” utilizes an Eb9 voicing instead of Eb7.

Willet occasionally takes advantage of the dominant-seventh flat-fifth chord voicing with the flat-fifth in the bass to create a chromatically descending bass line supporting a ii-V-I progression, referred to in post-Swing Era jazz theory as a “tri-tone substitution.” Musicians and historians have suggested this device as a modernist chromatic hallmark of the 1940s bebop movement.⁹⁷ Although often associated with improvisation, dance band arrangers were clearly using this device by the late 1930s. The bass part of the final harmonic resolution in Willet’s 1939 “I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast,” for example, descends by half-step from C to B-natural (supporting a “flat-fifth” chord) to B-flat, then F to E-natural (supporting a “flat-fifth” chord) to E-flat (example 4.26).⁹⁸ Similar analysis could be applied to the chromatically descending half-step chord sequences of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” shown in example 4.12 (mm. 52–54) or example 4.13 (mm. 101–02). A related approach to substituting a flatted-fifth bass voice to introduce chromatic half-step motion can be found in the bridge to “Stompin’ at the Savoy,” shown in example 4.24 (m. 23).

⁹⁷ For example, see the discussion of the tri-tone substitution and its role in jazz history offered in DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 104–10.

⁹⁸ Bebop pioneer Dizzy Gillespie asserted [circa 1938]: “we always looked on that [tri-tone substitution] as simply a half-step, not as a ‘flatted fifth.’” Dizzy Gillespie, with Al Fraser, *To Be or Not ... To Bop* (1979; repr., New York: Doubleday, 1985), 92. See also DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 109. A similar concept is suggested in Gillespie’s references to “the chord progression A-minor seventh to D seventh to D-flat”; see Dizzy Gillespie and Gene Lees, “The Years with Yard,” reprinted in *The Charlie Parker Companion*, ed. Carl Woideck (New York: Schirmer, 1998): 163. Regarding related improvisational approaches to this technique, see the discussion of Charlie Parker’s “Donna Lee” (take 2) in Carl Woideck, *Charlie Parker: His Music and His Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 146.

Example 4.26: “I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast” mm. 165–69 (2:41),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Cab Calloway (1939)⁹⁹

I Ain't Gettin' Nowhere Fast

By Cab Calloway, Porter Grainger & Chappie Willet

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Another device that recalls the concert music tradition is the insertion of quarter-note triplet rhythm, occasionally extending for multiple measures. Although not necessarily chromatic (nor especially “modernist” in itself), the rhythmic device aurally suggests a *rubato* slowing down of the established forward momentum associated with popular dance rhythm. Sometimes used as a programmatic caricature of pomposity, this device carries associations with the “legitimate” theater or concert-music orchestra sound (another dance band effect established by the 1920s, often marked by string section orchestration or the use of symphonic percussion instruments) and is prevalent in Willet’s arrangements of European classical material such as “Prelude in C-sharp Minor,” “Sonata Pathétique” (as discussed in chapter 5), and “Rustle of Spring.”¹⁰⁰ Some of Willet’s non-classical arrangements use this *pomposo* triplet device as well, including “Blue Skies,” “There’ll Be Some Changes Made,” and “Hallelujah” (example 4.27; note the ensuing half-step harmonic shift in m. 149).¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra 1939–1940* (Classics CD 595, 1991).

¹⁰⁰ Robert Russell Bennett equates the “legitimate” orchestra sound with “saxless” instrumentation in “Orchestration of Theatre and Dance Music,” in *The Broadway Sound*: 288–89.

¹⁰¹ I’ve borrowed the term *pomposo* from a “symphonic jazz” score written for Paul Whiteman’s orchestra; see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 154.

Example 4.27: “Hallelujah” mm. 141–50 (1:56),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1942)¹⁰²

♩ = 144

141 Tpts. & Saxes

Tbns. & Saxes

Bass

146

HALLELUJAH! (from “Hit the Deck!”)

Words by LEO ROBIN and CLIFFORD GREY Music by VINCENT YOUMANS

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Ragtime Arranging Devices

One of Willet’s most insistent programmatic orchestration techniques invoking the vernacular idiom is a ragtime marching band “bass-run” or “tailgate” descending countermelody figure, typically scored for the trombones, low saxes, or rhythm section.¹⁰³ Examples include “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” (example 4.28) and “I Know That You Know.”

¹⁰² *Jimmie Lunceford At His Rare of All Rarest Performances*, Vol. 1 (Kings of Jazz LP 20016, n.d.). Transcription by author, referencing partially surviving manuscript orchestra parts held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestration, Smithsonian NMAH.

¹⁰³ For additional examples of the “bass run” in the American marching band tradition, see Peter van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (1989; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 283–84.

Example 4.28: “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” mm. 11–14 (0:11),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1938)¹⁰⁴

♩ = 104

II Brass

Tbn. 2

Bass

Struttin’ with Some Barbecue

Words and Music by Lillian Hardin Armstrong and Don Raye

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Adept bass players like John Kirby used similar tailgate phrases as “fill-in” or “turnaround” material well into the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ The syncopated tailgate figure famously invoked by Duke Ellington’s trombone section in the introduction to his 1930 “Rockin’ in Rhythm” was a particular favorite of Willet; other big band precedents for this phrase include the introduction of Henderson’s 1936 arrangement of “Remember,” where it is perhaps intended as a programmatic reflection of the piece’s title.¹⁰⁶ The “Rockin’ in Rhythm” figure appears in at least ten Willet arrangements of the late 1930s, including “Fare Thee Well, Annie Laurie,” “I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast,” “Washington and Lee Swing” (Armstrong version; example 4.29), and “Them There Eyes.” The latter arrangement seems to make a joke of the figure’s pervasive presence in Willet’s

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” are held in Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

¹⁰⁵ For example, hear Kirby’s performance on Edgar Sampson’s arrangement of “Blue Lou,” recorded by Chick Webb in 1934. For an earlier dance orchestra example, hear Andy Kirk’s bass saxophone performance in his orchestra’s 1929 recording of “Blue Clarinet Stomp.”

¹⁰⁶ The trombone phrase opening “Rockin’ in Rhythm” long predates that arrangement. See also the notated figure provided to accompany testimony from trombonist Trummy Young, as quoted in DeVaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 57.

arrangements, as Willet repeats the phrase multiple times, first as an interlude, then continuing as a background riff.

Example 4.29: “Washington and Lee Swing” mm. 37–39 (0:30),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937)¹⁰⁷

Another ragtime signifier is the trombone section portamento, as heard in “The Trumpet Player’s Lament” and “Jubilee” (example 4.30). The introductory drum rolls and trombone portamentos of “Jubilee” reflect “parade” effects described by Swing Era arrangers Matty Matlock and Bob Haggart in the December 1937 installment of their “Dixieland Arranging” column in *Metronome*, including their suggestion that “the trombone or trombones play ... now and then a little glissando in the upper register of his horn to fill in a spot where the melody rests.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show*.

¹⁰⁸ Matty Matlock and Bob Haggart, “Dixieland Arranging,” *Metronome*, December 1937, 15.

Example 4.30: “Jubilee” mm. 105–08 (1:59),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1938)¹⁰⁹

Jubilee

From the Paramount Motion Picture EVERY DAY IS A HOLIDAY

Words by Stanley Adams

Music by Hoagy Carmichael and Stanley Adams

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Another programmatic reference to ragtime marching band music is the scoring of a syncopated “walking” bass line for brass or saxes. The out-chorus of Willet’s “Prelude to a Stomp” presents the trombones in a unison walking bass line scored polyphonically (New Orleans or “dixieland”-style) against the trumpets and saxes (example 4.31). Matlock and Haggart also cite this technique in their “Dixieland” column, and explain that “the trombones play a kind of a bass part with some notes anticipated”; in conformity with Willet’s technique in “Prelude to a Stomp,” they also advise to “not syncopate the bass part even though the trombones do.”¹¹⁰ Willet boldly extends this concept in “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” (example 4.32) and “Swingtime in Honolulu,” where he expands the walking bass line part into chord voicings scored for section or ensemble.

¹⁰⁹ Louis Armstrong, *The Complete Decca Studio Master Takes 1935–1939* (Definitive Records DRCD 11171, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Matlock and Haggart, “Dixieland Arranging,” 15; 54.

Example 4.31: “Prelude to a Stomp” mm. 137–40 (2:48),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹¹¹

♩ = 100

137 Tpts. Tpts. & Saxes

Tbns.

Bass

Prelude to a Stomp

By Chappie Willet

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Example 4.32: “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” mm. 103–10 (1:49),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937)¹¹²

♩ = 224

103 Tpt.

Tbns.

Bass

107

Alexander’s Ragtime Band

From ALEXANDER’S RAGTIME BAND

Words and Music by Irving Berlin

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¹¹¹ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937.*

¹¹² *Armstrong, The Complete Decca Studio Master Takes 1935–1939.*

Willet used sax section trills (a rapid alternation between two pitches) to invoke the sound of a marching band piccolo or high woodwind trill, either in reinforcement of other marching band effects (as in “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” and “Jubilee”), or simply as a climactic rhythmic embellishment, as in “I Know That You Know” (example 4.33), “I’ve Got My Fingers Crossed,” or “Rhythm Jam.”

Example 4.33: “I Know That You Know” mm. 151–54 (2:29),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1937)¹¹³

The musical score for Example 4.33 is arranged for Saxes, Brass, and Bass. The tempo is marked as 126 bpm. The Saxes part features trills (tr) and a forte (sfz) dynamic. The Brass part also features a forte (sfz) dynamic. The Bass part has a steady eighth-note pattern.

I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW

Words by ANNE CALDWELL Music by VINCENT YOUMANS

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Another common early jazz device was the implication of triple-meter rhythm against duple-meter rhythm, executed through a metric quarter-note or eighth-note 3+3+2 pattern related to secondary rag syncopation. The device is prevalent in the work of ragtime and stride pianists, such as James P. Johnson’s 1929 “Riffs” (example 4.34), and is often accentuated by a “change-step” pattern in the stride left-hand bass pattern.¹¹⁴

Willet uses this device in the shout-chorus to his arrangement of “Persian Rug,”

¹¹³ Armstrong, *Fleischmann’s Yeast Show*.

¹¹⁴ Regarding “change-step” metric displacement in the jazz stride piano tradition, see Ted Buehrer and Robert Hodson, “Metric Dissonance in Jazz: The Stride Piano Performances of Thelonious Monk and James P. Johnson” (paper presented at the Society for Music Theory/American Musicological Society conference, Seattle, November 2004); See also Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 218–21.

condensing the original melody into a syncopated rhythm that suggests an alternate triple meter over the underlying four-beat rhythm established by the rhythm section (example 4.35).

Example 4.34: “Riffs” mm. 29–32, by James P. Johnson (1929)¹¹⁵

Medium Jump

Riffs

By James P. Johnson

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Example 4.35: “Persian Rug” mm. 109–12,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)

[Original Melody]

PERSIAN RUG

Music by NEIL MORET Lyrics by GUD KAHN

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¹¹⁵ Johnson, “Riffs.”

The work of other arrangers, such as Matlock and Haggart (for Bob Crosby) or Spud Murphy (for Casa Loma and Benny Goodman), made extensive use of other ragtime or “Dixieland” techniques in swing dance band music. For example, a Dixieland “trio” effect (designated to feature clarinet, trumpet, and—curiously?—tenor sax) was especially popular, though Willet seems to have avoided it.¹¹⁶ By the 1940s, Willet appears to have dropped many of the ragtime references of his 1930s idiolect in favor of harmonic substitutions or concert music signifiers.

Other Arranging Devices

Additional vernacular devices that Willet juxtaposed against modernist chromaticism or other concert music signifiers include many of the basic orchestration techniques that comprised the jazz-inflected sound of the Swing Era. Beyond the use of syncopation and expanded instrumentation of early New Orleans jazz ensembles (trumpet, trombone, and clarinet or saxophone sections supported by piano, guitar, bass, or percussion) and the elaborate stop-time breaks or sudden shifts of timbre popularized by Don Redman’s 1920s dance band arranging for Fletcher Henderson, techniques including repeated-note sax section figures, the extensive use of hat mutes (or “derbies”), or Duke Ellington-style growl effects for brass instruments were ubiquitous Swing Era devices.¹¹⁷ Yet Willet and other arrangers refined some of these techniques into explicit orchestration styles that recur in similar musical contexts, again making it possible to identify an arranger’s specific idiolect.

¹¹⁶ For examples and discussions of the “dixieland trio” effect, see Paul Weirick, “Dixieland Chorus of Rockin’ Chair,” *Metronome*, March 1935, 18; Matlock and Haggart, “Dixieland Arranging,” 15; Murphy, *Spud Murphy’s Swing Arranging Method*, 29.

¹¹⁷ Regarding Redman’s 1920s arranging style, see Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 39–71. Schuller cites the repeated-note device in his discussion of arranger Gene Gifford’s influential work for the Casa Loma orchestra of the early 1930s. Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 635–36.

In the category of rhythmic devices, Willet often orchestrates an accented ensemble chord with a hold on the fourth-beat of a measure, reinforced by a tied hold in the rhythm section that provides a brief stop-time effect. Don Redman's "Chant of the Weed" provides a relevant precedent (example 4.36). This device was later popularized in "Skrontch," a 1938 Ellington novelty tune with lyrics directing dancers to "skrontch on the fourth beat"; the piece also features a sequence of parallel voicings in chromatic half-step descent (example 4.37).¹¹⁸ Willet had already used a similar hold device in his 1937 arrangements of "Rhythm Jam" (example 4.38) and "Prelude to a Stomp," and continued to use it through the 1930s, as in "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" (example 4.39), "Push Out," and "You've Got Me Voodoo'd." Other arrangers, including Horace Henderson ("Riffin" for Fletcher Henderson, 1936), Sy Oliver ("For Dancers Only" for Jimmie Lunceford, 1937), Eddie Durham ("Wham" for Glenn Miller, 1939), Benny Carter ("Slow Freight," 1940), and Samuel Lowe ("Holiday for Swing" for Erskine Hawkins, 1942) employed this technique as well.

¹¹⁸ Dancer Albert Gibson demonstrates an excerpt of the "Skrontch" dance in [Jane Goldberg,] *By Word of Foot I, Tap Masters Pass on Their Tradition, John Bubbles and Albert Gibson* [videotape], Jane Goldberg's Wandering Shoes Tap(h)istory Featuring Tip Tap Top Tapes, Tapalogues, Tapology and Tapperabilia (New York: Changing Times Tap Dancing Company, 1980), New York Public Library Performing Arts Library, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

Example 4.36: “Chant of the Weed” mm. 65–68 (1:41),
arr. by Don Redman (1933)

♩ = 76

65 Brass

Tbns. & Saxes

Bass

Chant of the Weed

By Don Redman

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Example 4.37: “Skrontch” mm. 42–48 (0:46), arr. by Duke Ellington¹¹⁹

♩ = 108

42 Saxes

Bar. Sax

Bass

* add Tbns.

Skrontch

By Duke Ellington, Irving Mills & Henry Nemo

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¹¹⁹ Manuscript score sketches for “Skrontch” are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

Example 4.38: “Rhythm Jam” mm. 65–69 (1:06),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹²⁰

♩ = 116

65

Ens.

sfz

Bass

Rhythm Jam

By Chappie Willet

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Example 4.39: “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” mm. 29–32 (0:37),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)¹²¹

♩ = 92

29

Ens.

sfz

Drums

Bass

A-Tisket, A-Tasket

By Van Alexander and Ella Fitzgerald

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One of Willet’s favorite techniques for scoring the ending of an arrangement was to employ a rhythm section stop-time pattern accenting beats two and four, usually in support of a vocal or instrumental solo cadenza passage. Long associated with theater or stage production music, this “vamp” device can be heard in Willet’s “I’ve Got My

¹²⁰ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937*.

¹²¹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” are held in the Red Norvo Papers MSS48, the Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

(example 4.42).¹²⁵ Willet generally assigns this device as a rhythmic accent on the downbeat of a measure; “Chant of the Weed” again provides a relevant precedent (example 4.43).

Example 4.41: “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” mm. 103–05 (2:17),
arr. Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)

Blue Rhythm Fantasy

By Teddy Hill and Chappie Willet

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Example 4.42: “Grandfather’s Clock” mm. 59–61 (1:00),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Gene Krupa (1938)¹²⁶

Grandfather’s Clock

By Henry C. Work

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¹²⁵ The stock arrangement of “Grandfather’s Clock” was orchestrated by Spud Murphy, but—to judge from Murphy’s stock arrangement scoring of Willet’s “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” arrangement—is likely representative of Willet’s original notation.

¹²⁶ Transcription by author, occasionally referencing the Robbins Music stock arrangement. Henry C. Work, “Grandfather’s Clock” [stock arrangement], arranged by Chappie Willet, orchestrated by Spud Murphy (New York: Robbins Music, 1939); *Gene Krupa and His Orchestra 1935–1938* (Classics CD 754, 1994).

Example 4.43: “Chant of the Weed” mm. 102–05 (2:40),
arr. by Don Redman (1933)

Chant of the Weed

By Don Redman

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The section or ensemble “whip” technique—slurring from a held note to a short accented note—seems to have held particular currency with Willet during 1938. “Chant of the Weed” provides another precedent (see m. 102 of example 4.43). Appropriately notated by Willet with the written indication “whip,” the effect is often reserved as a rhythmic accent for a climactic shout chorus or out-chorus passage. Examples include “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” (see m. 101 of example 4.13), “Prelude in C# Minor” (example 4.44), “Persian Rug” (see example 4.18), “Toy-Town Jamboree,” and “Blue Skies.”

Example 4.44: “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” mm. 171–76 (2:54),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Duke Ellington (1938)¹²⁷

The above excerpt of “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” also includes a percussive ensemble slur device (notated with wavy lines) highlighting the secondary rag figure in mm. 173–174. Willet used the same technique at the end of “Grandfather’s Clock,” and similar notation in “Low Down Guy,” where it is labeled in surviving parts as an “[air]plane effect”; recorded performances of “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” and “Grandfather’s Clock” make the engine-revving or Doppler-effect allusion fairly clear.

Similar to the “whip” device is the “rip”: a sudden slur or glissando ascent to a short accented note following a rest (or otherwise detached from the preceding note).¹²⁸ This differentiation between the terms “whip” and “rip” is not universal, and merely reflects Willet’s indications in surviving orchestra parts.¹²⁹ In “Apurksody” and “Blue Skies” (example 4.45), for example, Willet uses the “rip” device in the midst of a hat-muted brass passage, with the “ripped” note played open (without the mute) to accentuate

¹²⁷ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

¹²⁸ Arranging columnist Jimmy Dale describes a “rip” as a “quick glissando to the note and cut off short.” Jimmy Dale, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, March 1934, 42.

¹²⁹ Arranger Eddie Sauter, to cite one example, appears to label what Willet calls a “whip” effect as a “rip.” Eddie Sauter, “Heir to a Jersey Meadow,” Special *Metronome* Orchestration, *Metronome*, April 1938, 34–35. Jimmy Dale elsewhere described a “rip” as “a sort of fast glissando from one note to the actual note”; perhaps a “whip” could then be alternately defined as a fast glissando between two “actual” notes. See Jimmy Dale, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, March 1938, 53.

the effect. Similar scoring can be heard in “Harlem Stomp” and “I’m Tellin’ You in Front.” Again, “Chant of the Weed” provides a precedent (see m. 67 of example 4.36).

Example 4.45: “Blue Skies” mm. 81–84 (2:14),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)¹³⁰

81 $\text{♩} = 168$
Brass (Hat Mute) Open Hat
Bass

Blue Skies

From BETSY

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The piano “chime” technique, another component of the concert “legit” effect, is another favorite Willet device. As outlined in the April 1933 issue of *Metronome*, the piano mimics the sound of chime or bell sets that were a prevalent percussion accessory for dance bands of the 1920s and early ’30s.¹³¹ Don Redman used this instrument fairly extensively, as in his 1932 arrangement of “Tea for Two”; chimes are also used in “Chant of the Weed.” Willet’s early arrangement of “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” for Louis Armstrong includes scoring for percussion “bells”; chimes can also be heard in Willet’s arrangement of “I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music,” recorded by Armstrong in 1935. In

¹³⁰ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Blue Skies” are held in MSS48 the Red Norvo Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

¹³¹ Archie Bleyer, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, April 1933, 26. See also Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 183–84.

later arrangements, however, Willet assigns this effect to the piano in upper register three-octave unison voicings, as heard in “Jump Jump’s Here” (example 4.46).

Example 4.46: “Jump Jump’s Here” mm. 4–6 (0:03),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)¹³²

The musical score for Example 4.46 is arranged in four staves. The top staff is for Saxophones (Saxes), the second for Brass, the third for Piano, and the bottom for Bass. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 184. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score shows measures 4, 5, and 6. In measure 5, the piano part features a boxed-in section of three-octave unison voicings in the upper register, which is the effect described in the text.

Jump Jump’s Here

By Mildred Bailey, Henry Nemo, and Red Norvo
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An “accordion” effect, described by Archie Bleyer in the December 1932 issue of *Metronome* in connection with the Ted Weems orchestra, was not used frequently by Willet, but does emerge in a counter-melody passage of his 1939 stock arrangement of “You Can Count on Me” (example 4.47). Bleyer describes that the effect can be produced “either by clarinet and tenor sax in octaves; or better still, clarinet, alto and tenor in three octaves.”¹³³ Willet’s clarinet and alto sax unison counter-melody for “East of the Sun” (discussed in chapter 5) might be heard as an extension of this concept.

¹³² Manuscript orchestra parts for “Jump Jump’s Here” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

¹³³ Archie Bleyer, “Arranging Questions,” *Metronome*, December 1932, 36; July 1933, 34.

Example 4.47: “You Can Count on Me” [stock arrangement] mm. 75–78,
arr. by Chappie Willet (1939)¹³⁴

You Can Count on Me

By Robert Maxwell & Josef Myrow

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The popularity of arrangements like Horace Henderson’s 1936 “Christopher Columbus” (composed by Chu Berry) helped to usher in a swing band vogue for trombone ostinatos or riffs (often supported by low saxes) scored in a two-beat rhythmic feel.¹³⁵ This phenomenon was aided by the gradual expansion of the dance band trombone section during the 1930s from one or two to two or three trombones, a trend led by the bands of Ellington, Redman, and Lunceford. Willet’s 1936 arrangement of “I Got Rhythm”—and subsequent 1937 “Rhythm Jam” (example 4.48)—incorporates a syncopated two-beat trombone ostinato as an interlude and supporting riff. Arrangements such as Sy Oliver’s 1937 “For Dancer’s Only” (for Jimmie Lunceford), Benny Carter’s 1940 “Fish Fry,” and Richard Maltby’s 1942 “Six Flats Unfurnished” (for Benny Goodman) offer additional examples of this device.

¹³⁴ Robert Maxwell and Josef Myrow, “You Can Count on Me” [stock arrangement], arranged by Chappie Willet (New York: Exclusive Publications, 1939).

¹³⁵ For a notated example of the Henderson “Christopher Columbus” trombone ostinato, see Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 237.

Example 4.48: “Rhythm Jam” mm. 85–90 (1:27),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹³⁶

85

Saxes

Tbn.

Bass

Rhythm Jam

By Chappie Willet

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The insertion of “tricky” ensemble breaks or hocket figures is another traditional jazz device that Willet often utilized in his Swing Era arrangements. Arrangers, just as improvisers, utilized breaks—passages where the rhythm section briefly stops providing regular rhythmic pulses—as an opportunity to display virtuosic capabilities. Willet arrangements of “Washington and Lee Swing” (Armstrong version), “I Know That You Know,” and “Uptown Rhapsody” (example 4.49) feature particularly startling ensemble break passages highlighting rhythmic precision.

¹³⁶ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937.*

Example 4.49: “Uptown Rhapsody” mm. 153–56 (2:33),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Teddy Hill (1936)¹³⁷

♩ = 120

153 Brass

Saxes

Bass

Uptown Rhapsody

By Leon Berry and Teddy Hill

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Just as with the use of whole-tone chromaticism, Willet could not lay claims of ownership on any of these “vernacular” or “hot jazz” arranging devices, however regular their appearance in his work may have been. Different approaches to the devices described above can be identified in jazz and popular music before, during, and after the Swing Era, whether individually or in combination with other techniques. Redman’s 1931 “Chant of the Weed,” for instance, combines elements of the tricky break, three-against-four rhythm, and half-step chromaticism in a single interlude passage (example 4.50).¹³⁸ Benny Carter’s 1940 “Fish Fry,” to cite a later Swing Era example, utilizes the trombone two-beat riff concept in combination with fourth-beat holds, and chromatic half-step motion in the trumpet section (see example 4.51).

¹³⁷ Hill, *Uptown Rhapsody*.

¹³⁸ Gunther Schuller derides this break passage of “Chant of the Weed” as a “modulation to nowhere.” Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 370.

Example 4.50: “Chant of the Weed” mm. 83–86 (2:10),
arr. by Don Redman (1933)

Chant of the Weed

By Don Redman

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Example 4.51: “Fish Fry” mm. 9–12 (0:09), arr. by Benny Carter (1940)¹³⁹

Fish Fry

Words and Music by Benny Carter

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Exactly how these devices are incorporated by the individual arranger, especially in combination with other techniques and formal strategies, is significant. Especially during the late 1930s, the appearance of the devices discussed above in combination with the chromatic “modernist” harmonic devices cited earlier is not unreasonable grounds

¹³⁹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Fish Fry” are held in the Benny Carter Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

upon which to suggest Willet's participation in a given arrangement. Willet arrangements of the 1940s (discovered to date) admittedly tend to include far fewer of the devices described above, perhaps suggesting changes in Willet's idiolect, or reflecting changes in broader Swing Era stylistic practice. But Willet's work from the 1930s suggests a period of conscious effort to place an audible "stamp" in his arrangements, beyond the expected references to programmatic signifiers or genre characteristics. The fact that the work of Don Redman, more than that of any other arranger, reveals a similar use of many of these devices is no accident: as recalled by Willet's early 1930s dance band sideman Chico Hicks, it was understood that Willet "wanted to copy after Don Redman."¹⁴⁰ Even so, Redman's idiolect of constantly shifting textures and intricate phrasing as found in works like "Chant of the Weed"—variably critiqued as emphasizing either "variety and contrast" or "baroque doodling"—stands well apart from Willet's "clean cut" ensemble approach to comparable interlude stop-time patterns or sequences of parallel voicings (compare the interlude passages of example 4.4 and example 4.50).¹⁴¹

On the other hand, Willet's extensive use of introductions, codas, or interlude passages between choruses to introduce his chromatic harmonic effects clearly extends the broad tradition of 1910s–'20s New York arrangers, including Arthur Lange and Will Vodery.¹⁴² Similar influences abound in the work of Willet's Swing Era peers: Gunther

¹⁴⁰ Chico Hicks, as quoted in Wriggle, "Chappie Willet, Frank Fairfax, and Phil Edwards' Collegians," 11.

¹⁴¹ The description of Redman's arranging aesthetic as emphasizing "variety and contrast" is offered in Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 195; the less forgiving assessment of "baroque doodling" is in Gary Giddens, *Satchmo* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 81. The description of Willet's music as "clean cut" emanates from Hicks, as quoted in Wriggle, "Chappie Willet, Frank Fairfax, and Phil Edwards' Collegians," 11.

¹⁴² Regarding the 1920s arranging work of Will Vodery, musicologist Mark Tucker concluded: "when chromaticism [in Vodery's music] does occur, it is usually in introductions ... nodding in the direction of Paul Whiteman's 'symphonic' jazz. Once past the introductions, though, the 'chromatic tendencies' disappear and diatonicism reigns." Mark Tucker, "In Search of Will Vodery," *Black Music Research*

Schuller identifies elements of what could be described as the “glorified” aesthetic of dance band arranger Sy Oliver, whose “love for transitions, breaks, and modulations without benefit of rhythm section, usually in highly chromatic passages,” were introduced as elements of “orchestral surprise.”¹⁴³ Carol Oja connects these elements with the popular theater or stage band tradition, and argues that modernist composers’ allusions to chromatic musical theater scoring techniques in transitional passages, as found in Gershwin’s *Concerto in F*, may have been intended as a subtle or explicit programmatic representation of vernacular or popular music styles—the concert music trope come full circle.¹⁴⁴ However uncomfortable for some purist jazz or classical music commentators, the wide attraction of numerous bands, arrangers, and (apparently) popular audiences to this New York “stage” or “revue” sound is undeniable.

Like the strategies of Henderson and Strayhorn, Willet’s approach to form reveals efforts to set his work apart from established idioms, especially in his original compositions. The basic two-theme (or perhaps simply “two-key”) structure of the popular “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” (see figure 4.17) is used again by Willet in both “Jungle Madness” (figure 4.52) and “Prelude to a Stomp” (figure 4.53). In all three pieces, scoring for the first theme is essentially ensemble-based, while the second theme—built on a different chord progression and set in a different key—supports improvised solos (“Jungle Madness” ends with some additional brief chromatic modulations of the second theme material; the second ensemble “theme” of “Prelude to a Stomp” is essentially the culmination of riff backgrounds). With the exception of the first theme in “Jungle

Journal 16/1 (Spring 1996): 168. For further discussion of Tucker’s analysis of Vodery, see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 40–43.

¹⁴³ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 207.

¹⁴⁴ See Oja, *Making Music Modern*, 320–24.

Madness,” Willet relies on 16-bar chorus forms in all three pieces, as opposed to the usual Tin Pan Alley 32-bar AABA or ABAC forms. “Stomp” is also notable for the relatively unusual omission of any introduction.

Figure 4.52: Formal Structure of “Jungle Madness,”
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹⁴⁵

	<i>intro</i>	4-bar trombone and rhythm section ostinato (key of C Minor)
(C minor theme)	ch. 1	32-bar ensemble (AABA; melody 1)
(C major theme)	ch. 2	16-bar piano solo (key of C major)
	ch. 3	16-bar alto sax solo
	ch. 4	16-bar ensemble (melody 2)
	ch. 5	16-bar clarinet solo
	ch. 6	16-bar tenor sax solo
	ch. 7	8-bar ensemble riff
		8-bar piano solo over ensemble riff (key of D-flat major)
	ch. 8	8-bar ensemble riff (key of D major)
		8-bar piano solo over ensemble riff (key of E-flat major)

Figure 4.53: Formal Structure of “Prelude to a Stomp,”
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹⁴⁶

(C major theme)	ch. 1	16-bar ensemble (melody 1; key of C major)
		16-bar tenor sax solo (bridge or release)
	ch. 2	16-bar ensemble (variation of melody 1)
		16-bar sax section soli (bridge or release)
	ch. 3	16-bar ensemble (variation of melody 1)
	<i>interlude</i>	6-bar ensemble modulation
(D-flat theme)	ch. 4	16-bar alto sax solo (key of D-flat major)
	ch. 5	16-bar alto sax solo over ensemble riff
	ch. 6	16-bar alto sax solo over ensemble riff (melody 2?)
(C major theme)	ch. 7	16-bar ensemble (variation of melody 1; key of C major)

¹⁴⁵ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

* * *

Too much stress cannot be laid on the advisability of styling your band . . . Once you set your style, make all your arrangements in the same groove. Don't be afraid of repeating yourself because anything good bears repeating. If tune A happens to be the same type of tune as tune B, then arrange it the same way. Cut up your stocks in a certain definite pattern, do the same things in the same spots. And both you and your public will be pleased with the results.¹⁴⁷

—Harold Rubenstein, *Metronome*, November 1936

The most significant thing that can be said about swing music today is that it has become stagnant.¹⁴⁸

—Duke Ellington, *Down Beat*, February 1939

Was the continual return of Willet and other arrangers to the same orchestration techniques and formal devices, regardless of their stylistic manipulation or signification value, indicative of an artistic stagnation that Swing Era musicians and critics like Ellington warned of? Arrangers such as Nelson Riddle, whose arrangements backed popular singers Nat “King” Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, and Frank Sinatra, successfully continued many of these practices well into the 1960s—as long as the dance band orchestra format remained a viable vehicle for popular music.¹⁴⁹ The public’s thirst for inter-textual references in popular music idioms continues unabated in the twenty-first century, including hip-hop, rock, and electronic dance music.¹⁵⁰ While the prevailing idiomatic features of American popular music have adapted over time to reflect changes

¹⁴⁷ Harold Rubenstein, “Making Specials for [*sic*] Stocks,” *Metronome*, November 1936, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Duke Ellington, “Duke Says Swing Is Stagnant,” reprinted in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 132.

¹⁴⁹ Nelson Riddle discusses his own career and arranging philosophy in Nelson Riddle, *Arranged by Nelson Riddle* (Van Nuys, California: Alfred Music, 1985), 164–80, 193–95.

¹⁵⁰ John Howland has examined the influences of early twentieth-century dance band arranging on contemporary popular music in “Luxe Pop: The Six Degrees of Separation from Jay-Z and the Hustler Symphony Orchestra to Symphonic Jazz” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Philadelphia, September 14, 2009). For an example of contemporary popular music studies discussing intertextual references in post-Swing Era popular music, see Walter Everett, ed., *Expression in Pop-rock Music: Critical and Analytical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

in popular taste, the positioning of vernacular (often African-American) tropes against some form of established commercial idiom (itself a continually shifting framework) continues to define the art form.

What clients like Gene Krupa or Jimmie Lunceford probably heard in the work of Chappie Willet was the arranger's efficient and effective combination of established cultural signifiers, creating a sound that immediately called attention to itself while also clearly fulfilling the requirements of Swing Era style. In short, Willet's arrangements sounded familiar—but powerfully and immediately familiar. The following examination of different genres in Swing Era big band music highlights another layer of cultural associations that arrangers were able to exploit.

CHAPTER 5

GENRES IN SWING ERA ARRANGING

[Jimmie Lunceford's] showmanship is superb, and his constantly changing style keeps one's eyes glued on the podium. Swingeros, ballads, novelty numbers follow one another in rapid-fire succession, executed with the finesse that only first-rate swing musicians can bring to current musical modes.¹

—Daniel Richman, *Billboard*, 1938

The above review excerpt, describing a presentation at the Kit Kat Club in midtown Manhattan, highlights the importance of variety and contrast in Swing Era popular music programming. Whether the venue was a dance hall, radio studio, or theater stage, well-paced programs required a succession of individual pieces of varying tempo, mood, or formal design. Sustained audience interest in extended presentations was encouraged through the establishment of different arranging genres within the swing big band idiom. For freelance arrangers like Chappie Willet, commercial success depended upon the development of musical fluency across a number of genres, including classics, jazz concertos, novelty songs, vocal ballads, jazz dance specials (or “swingeros,” as described above), and exotic numbers. These genres served as vehicles for an array of theater-idiom and other cultural signifiers referencing high art, drama, virtuosity, exoticism, or visual spectacle. Following is an examination of some representative examples of these genres, including occasional discussions of their context in Swing Era culture.

¹ Daniel Richman, “Night Club Reviews: Kit Kat Club, New York,” *Billboard*, November 5, 1938, 20.

Classics

I wish that I could play like José Iturbi, instead of blowing notes into a derby.
 Someone who knows art takes something from Mozart to sing, instead of swing.
 —“The Trumpet Player’s Lament”

The Trumpet Player’s Lament

Words and Music by JOHNNY BURKE and JAMES V. MONACO

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Chappie Willet presumably had no part in creating the lyrics for “The Trumpet Player’s Lament” when he arranged the song for Louis Armstrong’s band in the late 1930s.² But the references to the sourcing of European classical repertoire (the song’s lyrics also cite Debussy and “Vesti la giubba”), its opposition to popular swing music, and even the performances of virtuoso classical pianist José Iturbi—whose naming in the verse passage above is programmatically accompanied by solo piano—must have been recognized by Willet as reflecting significant aspects of his own career. Willet was one of many Swing Era music arrangers who partook in “jazzing the classics,” a tradition that has long suffered the stigma of artistic inauthenticity within the highbrow/lowbrow discourse of American culture, despite—or perhaps due to—its consistent commercial viability.³

“Jazzing the classics” comprises the musical arrangement of, or the inclusion of some explicit musical reference to, European classical repertoire through use of jazz phrasing, idiomatic instrumentation, or popular song forms. This tradition of stylistic

² Johnny Burke and James Monaco, “The Trumpet Player’s Lament.” Armstrong recorded “The Trumpet Player’s Lament” in January 1938, issued as Decca 1653, reissued on Classics (CD) 515. Michael Ruppli, *The Decca Labels: A Historical Discography*, vol. 1 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 69.

³ David Stowe discusses contemporary media debate regarding the Swing Era “jazzing the classics” tradition in *Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 94–98.

hybridity within American popular music has been examined by musicologist John Howland in the context of the “symphonic jazz” tradition. Howland argues that:

During the 1930s and 1940s, most contemporary critics damned this miscegenation of concert hall culture, entertainment intent, jazz, dance band arranging, Tin Pan Alley tunes, and quasi-symphonic instrumentation as mongrel, middlebrow culture for the masses.⁴

Although the practice of “jazzing the classics” may differ from symphonic jazz in musical approach and intent—the label “symphonic jazz” is often applied to original composition, such as George Gershwin’s 1924 *Rhapsody in Blue*—it has resided in the same “middlebrow” battle-zone between cultural signifiers of high and low art. In its manipulation of venerated classic texts, the practice of “jazzing” or “swinging” the classics may be read as either an irreverent poke at the establishment, or a genuine adulation of the European tradition manifested through efforts to bring the music to a wider (popular) audience; oftentimes, it appears to have involved a little of both. There was also the convenience of “public domain” freedoms regarding composer royalties—a factor highlighted by the 1941 ASCAP strike—though the tradition does not appear to be dependant on this factor alone.⁵ Whatever the motivation, this hybrid strategy reflects the performer and arranger’s manipulation of audiences’ cultural values, a strategy critical to many successful commercial entertainment forms.

⁴ John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 3.

⁵ A brief discussion of the 1941 ASCAP strike’s connection to classical repertoire performance is offered in Stowe, *Swing Changes*, 98.

“*Sonata Pathétique*”

Gunther Schuller discusses the “jazzing the classics” tradition in revealingly provocative rhetoric.⁶ Swing Era precedents of jazzed classics are dismissed by Schuller as misguided commercial efforts “falling ineptly between jazz and classical music”; for example, the Claude Thornhill orchestra’s 1940s arrangements of Dvorak’s “Humoresque” and Schubert’s “Träumerei” are criticized as “corny and effete in the extreme.”⁷ Schuller also takes aim at Chappie Willet’s arrangement of the first movement of Beethoven’s 1799 *Sonata Pathétique* (Op. 13), recorded by Jimmie Lunceford’s orchestra in 1940.⁸ Citing this event as the key turning point in a meteoric rise and fall of Lunceford’s musical fortunes, Schuller writes:

[A]s if to underscore [Lunceford’s] by now almost obsessive insistence on variety . . . the band descends to the absolute depths in an unspeakable arrangement (*derangement* would be a better term) of bits and pieces of Beethoven’s *Sonata Pathétique*, a truly pathetic offering. From now on the band flounders erratically towards its ultimate decline.⁹

Although Willet’s connection to Lunceford’s “Pathétique” arrangement has been relatively well documented, Schuller—who otherwise praises Willet’s efforts for bandleaders Louis Armstrong and Gene Krupa—either does not connect or chooses not to

⁶ Schuller’s partisanship in the jazz-meets-classical arena must be acknowledged, given his participation in (and naming of) the 1950s “third stream” movement: an effort to blend contemporary jazz and European classical music. See Gunther Schuller, “Third Stream,” in *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): 114–18.

⁷ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz 1930–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 756. Treatments of Dvorak’s “Humoresque” in particular seem to have struck a nerve with Schuller, as he connects the title with the phrase “gullible public” twice in other chapters of *The Swing Era*. Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 485, 682. Nevertheless, contributions to the Thornhill orchestra by arranger and later “third stream” Schuller-associate Gil Evans (which include an arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s “Arab Dance” not mentioned in *The Swing Era*), are dubbed “sublime.” Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 757.

⁸ The February 1940 recording was issued as Columbia 35453, and reissued on *Jimmie Lunceford and His Orchestra 1939–1940* (Classics CD 565, 1996).

⁹ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 218–19.

name the arranger in reference to this piece.¹⁰ The attack seems to indicate less of a distaste for Willet's individual style than the Swing Era practice of "jazzing the classics" (including its often corollary lack of extended jazz improvisation) and the broader variety stage entertainment tradition, another recurring theme of Schuller's jazz history projects.¹¹

Contemporary media reactions to the arrangement are mixed, and reflect the high–low culture debates surrounding "middlebrow" crossings of European classical traditions and jazz. Not surprisingly, associated racial essentialisms emerge as well. A writer for the *New York Times* commented: "department of bad taste: Jimmie Lunceford has perfected a swing arrangement of Beethoven's 'Sonata Pathétique' which 'storms down the house whenever he plays it,' according to his representative."¹² In the black press, a *Chicago Defender* columnist wrote that "Pathétique" "doesn't fit the Lunceford aggregation, which may or may not suggest that he stick to swing and hot stuff."¹³ The *New York Amsterdam News* appears to have taken the Lunceford "representative" at their word, running a brief article titled "Jimmie Lunceford Knows His Musical History":

[Lunceford] knows his swing, but he knows the classics too. During a recent air interview, a music commentator mispronounced the name of Beethoven's "Sonata Pathetique." Jimmie politely corrected the abashed "expert." ... Lunceford has

¹⁰ Exceptionally, Willet had garnered public credit for the "Pathétique" arrangement two weeks before it was recorded. See Bill Chase, "All Ears," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 10, 1940. Regarding Schuller's critiques of Willet's work for Armstrong and Krupa, see Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 193, 724.

¹¹ See also chapter 1. For a pertinent example of Schuller's criticism regarding improvisation and "classic" repertoire, see his discussion of the John Kirby sextet in Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 815. Schuller's identification of Lunceford's turn to "variety" coincides almost precisely with the Lunceford's move from the Vocalion/Okeh "race record" label to the Columbia "pop" division at the top of 1940. While there is no evidence that Lunceford's commissioning of *Pathétique* was a direct result of this development, it could in part account for the band's choice of repertoire, even as Lunceford returned to the "dance band" label Decca the following year.

¹² "News of Night Clubs," *New York Times*, February 4, 1940. This installment of the column carried no byline.

¹³ Al Monroe, "Swingin' the News," *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1940.

perfected a swing arrangement of this famous classic which storms down the house whenever he plays it.¹⁴

The tone of these criticisms presumes an understanding on the reader's part regarding the cultural boundaries of swing and classical domains: exactly why the piece "doesn't fit," was in "bad taste," or why Lunceford's knowledge of "the classics" or Beethoven would be noteworthy apparently needs no explanation. It is even debatable whether any of the writers cited had in fact heard the arrangement, as Lunceford's management appears to have been hyping the piece as a publicity tool.

The reputation of the Lunceford ensemble as a virtuosic black dance orchestra is critical in exploring the context of Willet's "Pathétique," elements of which are designed to appeal to American audiences' fascination with technical showmanship out of the European classical tradition. "Pathétique" also invokes an African-American tradition of manipulating cultural texts embraced by the establishment.¹⁵ How consciously these elements are applied to an individual work like "Pathétique" (released on Columbia disc as "Sonata by L. van Beethoven") is difficult to assess without direct testimony from its creator. But any reading of this text requires a consideration of the style, techniques, and motivations of the musician who created it: the arranger.

Trumpeter Gerald Wilson, who performed on Lunceford's "Pathétique" recording, immediately recalled the piece when asked about Willet's work for the band:

It was a classical number, and he [Willet] had done a wonderful job with it. I have the recording ... It was great, I loved the little trumpet trio thing they had [Wilson sings passage] ... It was so neat, 'cause you hear all of that ... in the classical version, of course. And it was nice playing, and it was a difficult arrangement—I mean, you had to be really on your toes ... We played it very fast, too. I was very

¹⁴ "Jimmie Lunceford Knows His Musical History," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 9, 1940.

¹⁵ Regarding the observation of these musical manipulations as an extension of signification theories outlined by Henry Louis Gates Jr., see Samuel A. Floyd Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4–8.

interested in knowing this person [Willet] ... I was thrilled to death to play his music.¹⁶

Pianist Edwin Wilcox, the featured soloist in “Pathétique,” provides an anecdote relating to one of the band’s live performances:

I remember once when we were playing our concert arrangement of “Sonata Pathétique” in the Oriental Theater, Chicago. I didn’t know our light man ... was going to give the cue when I came in so that a pinpoint light hit me. ... It shocked me so bad, I don’t think I played five notes out of that first run. I felt so ashamed, but the band was tied up in knots. I had a brandy between shows and was ready the next time. It taught me a lesson, that you always had to be prepared.¹⁷

Either sideman’s account suggests a fairly lighthearted approach regarding any potential “cultural weight” lurking behind the European classical subject matter. But they also reflect a pride of musicianship regarding the technical performance of the arrangement. Lunceford himself had trained the core members of his band while teaching music in Memphis during the late 1920s. Lead saxophonist and clarinetist Willie Smith described the band’s routines of day-long sectional rehearsals, with additional preparations for bandstand choreography including a variety of curtain bows cued by number; the group was occasionally referred to as “the trained seals.”¹⁸

Lunceford’s “trained seals” were a perfect fit for Willet’s niche of the dance band arranging market in Swing Era New York. Musicians of the period have testified to Willet’s reputation for creating difficult scores designed to show off a client group’s technical prowess. Trumpeter Sweets Edison, describing his 1937 tenure with Lucky Millinder’s orchestra, recalled:

¹⁶ Gerald Wilson, telephone interviews by author, April 1 and 15, 2004.

¹⁷ Edwin Wilcox, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Swing*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 2001), 117.

¹⁸ Willie Smith, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 102.

It took a lot of rehearsals to get what you wanted to get. And they had one guy, Chappie Willet, he used to write such hard arrangements it would take so long to get these guys together. And musicians could read in those days.¹⁹

Millinder's drummer Panama Francis remembered a 1942 "band battle" at the Savoy Ballroom, when the band "opened with one of our big flag-wavers, 'Prelude in C-sharp Minor,' a great arrangement by Chappie Willet, to show off our musicianship."²⁰ Willet's arrangement of Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" was originally created for Duke Ellington, and performed during the Ellington orchestra's 1938 Cotton Club residency and 1939 European tour.²¹ The arrangement was also performed by the orchestras of Charlie Barnet (who recorded the piece for a radio transcription) and Louis Armstrong, resulting in one of Willet's most popular works.²² A commercial stock publication of his arrangement, scored by Spud Murphy, was distributed by Robbins Music in 1939.²³

The profitable emphasis on technical display in pieces like "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" appears to reflect the socio-economic fascination with European classical virtuosity that emerged in America during the late nineteenth century.²⁴ Amateur aspirations to technical proficiency, presumably linked with notions of upward mobility,

¹⁹ Harry Edison, interview by Dance, May 1981, cassette two, transcript page 18, Jazz Oral History Project, Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts, Washington, D. C. Transcript on file at the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University–Newark.

²⁰ Panama Francis, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 380.

²¹ Edgar A. Wiggins, "Duke Ellington's Band a Hit in France and Belgium," *Chicago Defender*, April 22, 1939. An aircheck recording of the Ellington orchestra performing "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" has been issued on *Live From the Cotton Club* (Bear Family Records 16340, 2003).

²² Dan Mather, *Charlie Barnet: An Illustrated Biography and Discography* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2002), 28; Ken Vail, *Swing Era Scrapbook: The Teenage Diaries & Radio Logs of Bob Inman, 1936–1938*, *Studies in Jazz*, no. 49 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 337; Francis, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Swing*, 380. Barnet's radio transcription recording of "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" has been issued on *Charlie Barnet and His Orchestra: Make Believe Ballroom 1935–1939* (Giants of Jazz 53274, 1997).

²³ Sergei Rachmaninov, "Prelude in C-sharp Minor" [stock arrangement], arranged by Chappie Willet, orchestrated by Spud Murphy (New York: Robbins Music, 1939).

²⁴ H. Wiley Hitchcock discusses the American adulation of "technical brilliance" and European virtuosi in *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 48–53.

resulted in large concert audiences and commercial success for touring European piano virtuosos like Rachmaninoff, Artur Schnabel, and José Iturbi.²⁵ The related emergence of the home parlor piano as a cultural status symbol had created a demand for publications by so-called “light classical” European composers, establishing in large part the basic repertoire supporting the “jazzing the classics” tradition in popular music.²⁶

Chappie Willet, reared in Philadelphia by “musical parents” prior to his piano and composition studies at West Virginia State College, was likely very familiar with the light classical genre (especially given the school’s recital repertoire cited earlier).²⁷ It is notable that in addition to established light-classical hits, Willet was familiar with Alexandre Tansman’s *Sonatine Transatlantique*, published in Paris in 1930.²⁸ The most convincing explanation for the latter piece to have found such a direct route to Charleston, West Virginia, is through its inclusion in José Iturbi’s repertoire during the pianist’s winter 1930–31 American tour; Willet even selected for his recital the same “Spiritual and Blues” movement that Iturbi had performed.²⁹

Yet it was Iturbi’s reputation for performing established “classic” repertoire that best represents the phenomenon of touring European virtuosos. A *New York Times* critic described Iturbi’s 1930 Carnegie Hall performance of Balakirev’s “Islamey” (Op. 18) as

²⁵ For another discussion on the emergence of the touring European virtuoso tradition, see R. Allen Lott, *From Paris to Peoria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), especially 289–94.

²⁶ For a discussion of the “light classical” publishing phenomenon in America, see Donald Krummel, “Printing and Publishing of Music §II, 4,” in *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <www.grovemusic.com> (Accessed 21 February 2008).

²⁷ Allan McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular,” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 1936.

²⁸ “Joint Recital,” [West Virginia State College] *Yellow Jacket*, May 15, 1933.

²⁹ Olin Downes, “Music: José Iturbi Applauded by Throng,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1931. Iturbi’s receptiveness to jazz influences is further exemplified by his later American premiere performance of Jean Wiener’s “Franco-American Jazz Concerto”; see Downes, “Music in Review: Iturbi and Musicians’ Symphony Present Wiener’s Franco-American Jazz Concerto,” *New York Times*, December 28, 1932.

“performed with breath-taking speed, clarity and virtuosity rampant.”³⁰ These were the musical values that helped drive the successful American tours of pianists like Rachmaninoff and Rubinstein, or soprano Lily Pons and violinist Jascha Heifetz—virtuosic performers who often shared a distinction as eccentric prodigies.

Howland describes the “ragging” or “jazzing” the classics tradition as “stylistic mixing ... characterized by signification, wit, and mildly deviant playfulness ... conducted at the expense of ‘high’ musical masterworks (regardless of the actual canonic status of light classics such as Rachmaninoff’s ‘Prelude in C-sharp Minor’ ...).”³¹ Given this need for familiar “canonic” material, it is probably no coincidence that many swing dance band arrangers selected material featured in the repertoire of early twentieth-century touring performers like Rachmaninoff. In addition to his own compositions, Rachmaninoff regularly performed selections from Chopin’s opus 10 etudes, opus 28 preludes, and opus 64 waltzes, along with occasional works by Paganini or Tchaikovsky.³²

The Chopin publications in particular provided short-length works attractive for amateur home piano performance, as well as expansion into repeating time-cycle forms for dance band arrangements; as Iturbi declared (perhaps revealingly), Chopin’s preludes and mazurkas represent “his greatest works ... because they are short.”³³ During 1939–41, for example, John Kirby’s swing sextet added to their repertoire of Schubert, Grieg,

³⁰ Olin Downes, “Music: José Iturbi Again Triumphs,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1930.

³¹ Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 63.

³² Rachmaninoff’s tour repertoire between 1918 and 1943 is documented in Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 387–95.

³³ Florence Leonard, “Outline and Atmosphere in Piano Music: An Interview with José Iturbi,” *Etude*, February 1932, 89. Significantly, “original” scores for all of the Willet-arranged classics identified in this chapter were published in the monthly amateur music magazine *Etude*, as were most of the classical repertoire referenced throughout this chapter. See E. Douglas Bomberger, *An Index to Music Published in The Etude Magazine, 1883–1957* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 286, 376, 378, 397.

and Beethoven Chopin's "Revolutionary Etude" (Op. 10, no. 12), "Prelude in E Minor" (Op. 28, no. 4) (re-titled "Prelude for Trumpet") "Minute Waltz" (Op. 64, no. 1); "Fantasy Impromptu" (Op. 66); and a loose interpretation of "Opus 5" ("Rondo à la Mazur"); Lunceford recorded a rendition of Chopin's "Prelude in A Major" (Op. 28, no. 7) (issued as "Chopin's Prelude No. 7") shortly after recording Willet's "Pathétique."³⁴

Kirby band arrangements like "Prelude for Trumpet" or "Opus 5" are typical in their extraction of one or two of the source work's themes; the themes are then modified as necessary to produce the eight-bar phrase units comprising popular song forms. For example, Billy Moore's arrangement of "Prelude No. 7" (example 5.1), Skip Martin's rendition of Paganini's "Caprice XXIV" for Benny Goodman (example 5.2), and Evan Young's version of Schubert's "Serenade" for the Kirby sextet (example 5.3) transform the original compositions' waltz or two-beat meters into swing dance rhythms, with melodies rescored for syncopated solo expositions or voiced as sectional "soli" passages.

³⁴ Kirby recorded versions of Schubert's "Serenade" (from *Schwanengesang*), Grieg's "Anitra's Dance" (from *Peer Gynt Suite*), and excerpts from Beethoven's seventh symphony ("Beethoven Riffs On"), among other classic-derived material.

Example 5.1: “Chopin’s Prelude No. 7” mm. 11–14 (0:27),
arr. by Billy Moore for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)³⁵

Very Slow
Solo Alto Sax *11* stick to melody but add your own stuff

Moore

Tbns.

Bass

Andantino
1

Chopin

Example 5.2: “Caprice XXIV Paganini” mm. 5–8 (0:05),
arr. by Skip Martin for Benny Goodman (1941)³⁶

[♩ = 184]

5

Alto saxes

Tenors & Bar.

Bass

Martin

Quasi Presto
1

Paganini

Violin

³⁵ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Prelude No. 7” are held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian National Museum of American History (NMAH); Frédéric Chopin, *Préludes Opus 28: An Authoritative Score, Historical Background, Analysis, Views, and Comments* [solo piano score], ed. Thomas Higgins (New York: Norton, 1973).

³⁶ The manuscript score for “Caprice XXIV” is held in the Benny Goodman Papers, MSS 53, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University; Nicolò Paganini, *Caprice No. XXIV, Variations* [solo violin score] (New York: Carl Fischer, 1922).

Example 5.3: [Schubert's] "Serenade" mm. 7–13 (0:07),
arr. by Evan Young for John Kirby (1939)³⁷

In addition to adaptations of Rachmaninoff and Beethoven, Willet created versions of Sinding's "Rustle of Spring" (Op. 32, no. 3) and Manuel Ponce's "Estrellita"—a work popularized by Jascha Heifetz.³⁸ All of these renditions reflect a relatively "completist" approach to the original repertoire in maintaining not only multiple themes, but the formal layout of the source works—even if significantly longer than the popular Chopin etudes or preludes (see figure 5.4; passages of the original works reflected in the swing arrangements are listed parallel, in the right-hand column). In fact, Willet's nearly complete representation of a Classic Era sonata-form first movement in "Pathétique" is unique to Swing Era dance band repertoire.³⁹

³⁷ Manuscript orchestra parts for "Serenade" are held in the John Kirby Band Book, Benny Carter Collection, Smithsonian NMAH; Franz Schubert, *Complete Song Cycles* [piano and vocal score] (New York: Dover Publications, 1970).

³⁸ A Heifetz arrangement of "Estrellita" was published by Carl Fischer in 1928; Heifetz also performed the song in the 1939 film *They Shall Have Music*.

³⁹ Single-movement performances or recital arrangements of Beethoven's *Pathétique* traditionally excerpted the *Adagio* second movement, though the *Allegro* first movement had been featured as an opening number by interpretive dance choreographer Ruth St. Denis during her extensive tours of the mid-1920s. "Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn," Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium program, December 8, 1925, <<http://www.oceanpark.ws/1924test.htm>> (accessed February 21, 2008).

Figure 5.4: Formal Structure of “Classic” Swing Adaptations

Chopin Op. 28, No. 7 (Prelude in A Major)mm. 1–16 (3/4 *Andantino*, A major)

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

Paganini Caprice XXIVmm. 1–16 (2/4 *Quasi Presto*, A minor)

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

mm. 1–16

mm. 9–14

{var. 1–11, finale omitted}

Rachmaninoff Op. 3, No. 2 (Prelude in C-sharp Minor)Pickup/m. 1 (4/4 *Largo*, C-sharp minor)

mm. 2–13

mm. 14–44 (*Allegro*)mm. 45–53 (*Tempo I*)

[mm. 54–61 finale replaced]

Beethoven Op. 13, I (Sonata Pathétique)mm. 1–4 (4/4 *Grave*, C minor)

mm. 5–10

mm. 11–112 (2/2 *Allegro*)[*Grave* theme, development (E minor) replaced]

mm. 187–220

[recapitulation theme 2 (F minor) replaced]

mm. 277–88

{*Grave* theme omitted}

mm. 303–09

Moore arr. (rec. Lunceford 1940)(Intro) mm. 1–10 (4/4 *Very Slow*, C major)

mm. 11–26 (D-flat major; sax solo)

(Interlude, modulation) mm. 27–30

mm. 31–48 (E-flat major)

mm. 49–64 (A-flat major)

Martin arr. (rec. Goodman 1941)(Intro) mm. 1–4 (2/2 [$\downarrow = 184$], A minor)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 5–20

mm. 21–36 (clarinet solo)

mm. 37–52 (clarinet solo)

mm. 53–68 (ensemble; clarinet solo)

mm. 69–84 (piano solo)

mm. 85–100 (sax solo)

(Interlude, modulation) mm. 101–04

mm. 105–20 (B-flat minor)

mm. 121–26

(Tag) mm. 127–28

Willet arr. (perf. Ellington 1938)⁴⁰($\downarrow/\downarrow = \circ$) mm. 1–4 (2/2 *Bright*, C minor)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 5–52(Interlude) mm. 53–64 (G7+/D \flat)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 65–126 (C minor)($\downarrow = \circ$) mm. 127–62

(Coda) mm. 163–76 (G7+, C minor)

Willet arr. (rec. Lunceford 1940)⁴¹(Intro) mm. 1–8 (4/4, D \flat 9, G7+)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 9–16 (C minor; piano solo)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 17–40 (2/2; clarinet solo)($\downarrow = \downarrow$) mm. 41–133 [9-bar repeat] (*Bright*)(Interlude) mm. 134–41 (G7+/D \flat)

mm. 142–175 (C minor)

(Interlude) mm. 176–81 (G9+/B)

mm. 182–193 (C minor)

mm. 194–200

(Coda) mm. 201–07

⁴⁰ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Prelude in C-sharp Minor” are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

⁴¹ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Sonata Pathétique” are held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian NMAH; Ludwig van Beethoven, *Complete Piano Sonatas* [solo piano score], vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1975).

“Pathétique” also represents the extension of Willet’s personal dance band arranging style, juxtaposing scoring techniques of ragtime marching bands with modernist chromaticism. Ragtime injections include trombone and baritone sax counterlines referencing brass band “bass run” fills (example 5.5, mm. 125–27; example 5.6, mm. 156–57).⁴² Whole-tone or augmented dominant-seventh voicings are featured in the two interludes (including example 5.7) that serve to replace the sonata-form development and part of the recapitulation with brief but harmonically unifying material. If one allows the jazz syncopations and occasional embellishments Willet adds (as in examples 5.5 and 5.6) as not straying from the essential melodic and harmonic design of the composition, the arrangement represents roughly two-thirds of Beethoven’s original work, in sequence. This represents a significant effort on the part of the arranger, considering the need to reduce the sonata’s potential eight-and-a-half minute duration (as performed by Vladimir Horowitz, for example) down to under three-and-a-half minutes for 10-inch disc release (admittedly, Willet does not repeat the exposition).

⁴² For examples of the “bass run” in the American marching band tradition, see Peter van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style: The Antecedents of Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (1989; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 283–84.

Example 5.5: “Sonata Pathétique” mm. 123–30 (2:10),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)

Bright Swing

123
Saxes

Willet

Tbns.

Bass

Tbns. & Bar. Sax

3

Allegro di molto e con brio

93

Beethoven

cresc.

126

Tpts. & Saxes

3

3

3

3

96

f

Example 5.6: “Sonata Pathétique” mm. 154–57 (2:36),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)

Tpts. & Saxes

154

Willet

Tbns. & Bar. Sax

Bass

3

3

199

Beethoven

cresc.

Example 5.7: “Sonata Pathétique” mm. 134–42 (2:23),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)

Willet also introduces a combination of devices to ensure the reception of “Pathétique” as a rendition of a classical work, independent of the audience’s identification of the source text. One of his more conspicuous alterations is the addition of a fanfare introduction that precedes the *Grave* solo piano theme (see example 5.8). Harmonically, this passage serves to introduce a version of the whole-tone chord (m. 8) referenced in the later interludes; rhythmically, the opening drum roll and *rubato*-inducing fermatas invoke theatrical drama, immediately alerting the listener to prepare to receive something spectacular. By following this fanfare with Beethoven’s original solo piano scoring of the *Grave* theme (m. 9)—likely interpreted by even the most uninformed audiences as classical-idiom “unaccompanied piano with no dominant-seventh chords”—Willet caricatures the dramatic atmosphere of a classical piano recital, the domain of virtuosi like Iturbi. The tempo change and rescoring for solo clarinet in the *Grave* variation (m. 17), including *rubato* cadenzas with orchestral *recitativo* accompaniment closing the passage (e.g., mm. 37–40), suggest a symphonic concerto setting. And the initial phrase of Beethoven’s *Allegro* exposition, performed by Lunceford’s orchestra at a tempo clocking over 300 beats per minute, is answered by Willet’s own rapid-fire chromatic eighth-note embellishment (see example 5.9) reinforcing the image of high-

speed “virtuosity rampant.” And in contrast to the prevailing rhythmic textures of swung eighth-notes, additional phrasing in quarter-note triplets provides a dramatic *pomposo* effect (see example 5.6, m. 129). Further ties to the symphonic orchestra tradition are established in Willet’s designation of timpani drum rolls at the climactic close of the piece.

Example 5.8: “Sonata Pathétique” mm. 1–40,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with a double bar line at the beginning.

- System 1 (mm. 1-7):**
 - Tempo: $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 80$
 - Measures 1-3: Treble clef (Tpts.), Bass clef (Saxes & Tbns.). A drum roll is indicated in the bass clef.
 - Measure 4: Treble clef (D^{b9}), Bass clef (Saxes & Tbns.).
 - Measures 5-7: Treble clef (Tbns.), Bass clef (Saxes). Measure 7 includes a G⁷⁺ chord.
- System 2 (mm. 10-16):**
 - Tempo: $\text{♩} = 104$, Solo Piano
 - Measure 10: Treble clef, Bass clef.
 - Measures 11-15: Treble clef (cadenza), Bass clef (Tbns., Bass).
 - Measure 16: Treble clef (Moderato $\text{♩} = 140$, Solo Clarinet), Bass clef (Tbns., Bass).
- System 3 (mm. 37-40):**
 - Tempo: [Rubato]
 - Measures 37-39: Treble clef (Saxes & Tbns.), Bass clef (En.).
 - Measure 40: Treble clef ([cadenza]), Bass clef (En.).

Example 5.9: “Sonata Pathétique” mm. 45–49 (1:19),
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1940)

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Sonata Pathétique" (mm. 45-49), arranged by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford in 1940. The score is divided into two systems. The top system, titled "Bright Swing", includes parts for Tpts., Cl. & Saxes (3 oct. unison), Tpbs. & Bar. Sax, and Bass. The bottom system, titled "Allegro di molto e con brio", includes parts for Treble and Bass clefs. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of two flats. The top system starts at measure 45 and the bottom system starts at measure 15. The bottom system includes a "cresc." marking.

The theatrical aspect of “Pathétique’s” function was specific: Lunceford did not consider the piece as part of his standard dance music repertoire. In a *Chicago Defender* report titled “Kirby, Lunceford Turn to ‘Heavy’ Stuff on Discs,” it is explained that “Pathétique” was presented by the band “in their theatre engagements and on occasions of intermissions at dance engagements.”⁴³ Wilcox’s description of “Pathétique” as a “concert arrangement” also indicates the piece’s special status within the band book. Audiences hearing “Pathétique” would presumably be seated (or at least not dancing) and focused on the performance area, potentially observing the choreographed lighting described earlier. As recorded for Columbia, Lunceford’s soloists did not improvise, but played their solo parts as written.

While popular music arrangers have generally left us with few explicit verbal or written explanations regarding their work, there are some exceptions. In his 1926

⁴³ “Kirby, Lunceford Turn to ‘Heavy’ Stuff on Discs,” *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1940.

Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra, Arthur Lange offers some opinions regarding the practice of “paraphrasing classics”:

The art of transcribing classical works for the modern dance orchestra requires more thought and *technique* in scoring than popular music. Therefore, the arranger must first be proficient in scoring popular dance arrangements before attempting to score classical fox-trot paraphrases.

Such works, if well constructed and well scored, may be considered works of art, but if distorted and poorly scored, they will invite unpleasant criticism. The original thought of the composer should always be respected and kept in mind when constructing and scoring.

When selecting material for classical paraphrases, the composition selected ... should be one with which the public is familiar. ...

The arranger should secure the orchestral score and ... should be thoroughly familiar with every detail of the original work.⁴⁴

For Lange, the division between popular and classical is clearly retained within the practice of popular dance band arranging. His emphasis on “thought and technique” (which non-classical repertoire apparently requires less of) and the “original thought of the composer” (also not seen as a requirement of pop song arranging) perhaps suggests elitist presumptions regarding musical training and the art of composition. Lange does not appear to have been alone in these beliefs: Chappie Willet’s regular citing of his own educational pedigree in his early publicity could be read as an effort to legitimize the artistic status of his work as an arranger.⁴⁵ In any case, Willet clearly demonstrates familiarity with Beethoven’s original *Pathétique* score.

Like its offspring “rocking the classics,” “jazzing the classics” would not have remained so prevalent a practice without audience appreciation.⁴⁶ Freddy Martin’s orchestra, for example, had a lasting hit with Ray Austin’s 1941 arrangement of

⁴⁴ Arthur Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra* (1926; reprint, New York: Robbins Music, 1927), 212–13.

⁴⁵ For example, see “Youth Creates for Armstrong: Willett [*sic*], Hot Tune Writer, Holds Music Degree—Russell Aided Him,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 12, 1936.

⁴⁶ For additional examples of Swing Era renditions of classical repertoire, see Stowe, *Swing Changes*, 94–95. Regarding examples of “rocking the classics,” see Janell Duxbury, *Rockin’ the Classics and Classicizin’ the Rock: A Selectively Annotated Discography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1," even prompting the addition of lyrics for vocal ballad performances.⁴⁷ The fascination of combining classical repertoire with dance band orchestration (or vice-versa) continued through the Swing Era. In 1944, Willet reportedly provided arrangements for a jazz-meets-classical concert presented by Lucky Millinder's orchestra at the Apollo Theater: publicity describes an augmented 30-piece orchestra (including two pianists) and a 30-voice choir performing "swing versions" of excerpts from Dvorak's *New World Symphony* and (presumably Gounod's) *Faust*, in addition to expanded symphonic orchestrations of popular repertoire.⁴⁸

Schuller's attack on swing musicians' "pitiful and naïve ... attempts at bridging the two [classical and jazz] fields," apparently at odds with his own concept of "full dedication to *both* the musics," parallels other critical charges of inauthenticity leveled at jazz styles ranging from "dixieland" to "smooth jazz."⁴⁹ It is difficult to identify a broad Swing Era artistic commitment to either bridge or separate jazz and classical music, as compared to the commercial or even artistic motivation to create material capitalizing on established cultural dichotomies such as classic and popular, black and white, or urban and rural. The continual return of dance bands to the jazzed classics genre demonstrates how the invention of Swing Era popular music arranging thrived upon this interplay between and among cultural binaries.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Freddy Martin had lyrics added to Austin's arrangement, re-titled "Tonight We Love." See George T. Simon, *The Big Bands*, 4th ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1981), 338–39.

⁴⁸ "Millinder to Open with 'Panorama of Jazz,'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 24, 1944; "Lucky Offers Waller Tribute at the Apollo," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 24, 1944.

⁴⁹ Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 815–16; Schuller, "Third Stream," 116. Regarding attacks on smooth jazz, see Christopher Washburne, "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?: A Case Study," in *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, ed. Christopher Washburne and Maiken Derno (New York: Routledge, 2004): 123–47.

⁵⁰ Regarding American cultural oppositions of race in music and art, see Ronald Radano's discussion of "race-complicating hybrids" and "modern-day minstrelsies," in *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 384 ff. Regarding concepts of "invention" in African-

“Sonata Pathétique’s” intended entertainment function as a trope of artistic discernment and showcase for technical virtuosity seems undeniable. How far removed are these motivations from Beethoven’s original objectives? No less an authority than José Iturbi rendered the verdict that “only Beethoven is worthy to match Beethoven.”⁵¹ Amidst controversial conceptions of cultural authenticity, industry marketing strategies, and hybrid entertainment traditions, commercial music arrangers have rarely enjoyed the same allowances.

Jazz Concertos

Another Swing Era arranging genre that reflects parallels with the symphonic jazz tradition is the “jazz concerto.” While Jazz Age performances of the 1920s occasionally focused on a single soloist, the expanding size of the Swing Era dance band offered more obvious parallels with the European symphonic orchestra concerto tradition, pitting soloist against a large ensemble. By the mid-1930s, Duke Ellington had begun to use the concerto strategy (and titling) to feature different soloists in his orchestra, such as “Clarinet Lament (Barney’s Concerto)” and “Echoes of Harlem (Cootie’s Concerto),” recorded in 1936. In later efforts, strategies of textural contrast are combined with formal designs that reinforce (or have been seen to reinforce) parallels to European classical genres. Jazz historian André Hodeir, for example, offers an analysis of Ellington’s 1940 “Concerto for Cootie” as essentially reflecting a classical sonata form, with a two-theme “exposition” in the key of F, a “middle section” (i.e., development) in the key of D-flat, and a “re-exposition and coda” (i.e., recapitulation) returning to the key of F—a formal

American music, see Denis-Constant Martin, review of *Lying Up a Nation*, by Ronald Radano, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59/3 (Fall 2006): 761–64.

⁵¹ “Liszt Rejected by Iturbi, Pianist,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1933.

design that Hodeir suggests is “the furthest thing from being customary in jazz.”⁵² The success of “Concerto for Cootie” (which remained a feature for Cootie Williams after the trumpeter moved on to Benny Goodman’s orchestra) appears to have inspired Jimmy Mundy’s similarly designed “Fiesta in Blue” (1941).⁵³

John Howland describes elements of a broader “rhapsodic” approach to arranging that emerged with the symphonic jazz vogue of the 1920s. In contrast to the standard Tin Pan Alley bi-partite verse-chorus form, the “rhapsodic” formal approach is marked by relatively “complex formal structures, and especially its ‘sophisticated’ introductions, interludes and codas, its unexpected modulations and dramatic cadenzas, and its emphasis on orchestrational and stylistic variety.”⁵⁴ These elements are found in another Swing Era jazz concerto feature for Cootie Williams: Eddie Sauter’s extended (four-and-a-half-minute) composition “Superman,” recorded by Benny Goodman’s orchestra in 1940.⁵⁵ In a parallel with Ellington’s “Concerto for Cootie,” Sauter occasionally disregards the typical eight-bar phrase groupings of popular song forms (see figure 5.10, rehearsal letters A and D). Combined with “rhapsodic” interludes, modulations, and meter shifts, the resulting formal structure can be disorienting for the listener; an otherwise innocuous move to the relative minor key in mid-chorus (rehearsal letter C1) adds to the unpredictability of the piece.

⁵² André Hodeir, *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*, trans. David Noakes (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 80–81. One might counter that Hodeir’s two-themed “exposition” is merely an AABA chorus form—the B theme being the bridge—though the chorus is not the typical 32-bar Tin Pan Alley duration, and never repeats in its entirety.

⁵³ Benny Goodman and Jimmy Mundy, “Fiesta in Blue” [stock arrangement], arranged by Jimmy Mundy (New York: Regent Music, 1941).

⁵⁴ Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 2.

⁵⁵ Goodman’s recording reflects some of the cuts Goodman made to Sauter’s arrangement, originally closer to five minutes in duration.

Figure 5.10: Formal Structure of “Superman,” arr. by Eddie Sauter (1940)⁵⁶

[intro deleted on recording] (18 bars)	[key of F] clarinet and trumpet solo
reh. A (14+14+16 bars)	trumpet over ensemble
reh. B (8 + 8 + 8 + 8 bars)	trumpet solo cont'd
reh. C (12 bars)	clarinet and trumpet interlude, modulation
reh. C1 (8 + 8 + 8 + 8 bars)	[key of B-flat] tenor sax solo (last 8 bars in key of G minor)
reh. D (22 + 20 bars)	[key of G major] trumpet over ensemble, chromatic interlude
reh. E (4 bars)	transition to half-time tempo in 4/4 meter
reh. F (8 + 4 + 6 bars)	[key of B-flat] trumpet solo over ensemble, tag

The stage revue-inspired rhapsodic (or “glorified” entertainment) characteristics of the jazz concerto genre fit perfectly with the needs of an arranger such as Chappie Willet, providing theatrical elements of variety and contrast that could be applied to a range of vocal, instrumental, theater stage, or radio broadcast needs.⁵⁷ Willet’s work for Jimmie Lunceford reflects Lunceford’s similar interest in exploiting the dramatic entertainment possibilities of the jazz concerto genre.

“Estrellita” and “Yesterdays”

“Estrellita” and “Yesterdays” were arranged by Willet in the early 1940s as extended instrumental solo features for individuals in the Lunceford orchestra. Live theater shows appear to have been the intended venue: sudden shifts in tempo and meter do not suggest intent as a dance vehicle, and the arrangements’ unusual length (each runs over five minutes) precludes the possibility for recording on the standard 10-inch popular disc format (the double-sided recording option was rarely made available). Performances

⁵⁶ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Superman” are held in MSS 53, Benny Goodman Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University.

⁵⁷ Regarding the emergence of the “glorified” stage entertainment tradition, see Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 117–118.

of both titles are documented in radio transcription recordings.⁵⁸ A similarly extended jazz concerto treatment of “Alone Together,” arranged by Edwin Wilcox, is likewise documented as a radio transcription from the same period.

The “Estrellita” arrangement dates from 1943; a radio transcription was broadcast the following year.⁵⁹ Due to the piece’s earlier association with classical violin virtuoso Jascha Heifitz, this arrangement might also fall under the “jazzing the classics” category. However, in comparison to Willet’s other “completist” classical arrangements, the short form of “Estrellita” conveniently allows for considerable expansion. In particular, the formal routine and relationship between the soloist and orchestra—including multiple solo cadenzas, tempo changes, and shifting meters—reflects alterations typical of rhapsodic-form jazz concerto arrangements (example 5.11).⁶⁰

Example 5.11: Formal Structure of “Estrellita,” arr. by Chappie Willet (1943)⁶¹

intro (12 bars)	[key of F] trombone solo and ensemble, <i>rubato</i> tempo
reh. A (8 + 8 bars)	trombone solo (begins with two-bar break), slow 4/4 meter
reh. B (8 + 8 bars)	trombone solo cont’d
reh. C (8 bar)	interlude (ends with two-bar break)
reh. D (12 bars)	ensemble hoquet scoring in double-time feel
reh. E (5 bars)	trombone solo over stop-time rhythm
reh. F (10 bars)	trombone solo over ensemble in 3/4 meter, uptempo
reh. G (12 + 6 bars)	trombone solo over ensemble in 4/4 meter (uptempo), modulation, transition to slow tempo
reh. H (11 bars)	[key of E-flat] trombone solo over ensemble in slow tempo, solo cadenza, ensemble tag

⁵⁸ The duration of “Estrellita” may be a little shorter than the issued transcription recordings suggest: most issues of the performance run a full half-step flat (in the key of E major instead of F major).

⁵⁹ The dating of radio transcription recordings is complicated by the occasional release of radio air check recordings documenting broadcasts of the transcriptions, often presented as “live” performances. In most cases, it is unclear how many times a single transcription may have been broadcast.

⁶⁰ The identity of the trombone soloist featured in the “Estrellita” transcription recording is unclear, as is the exact personnel.

⁶¹ *Jimmie Lunceford and His Orchestra 1944* (Hindsight Records 221, 1985). Manuscript orchestra parts for “Estrellita” are held in Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian NMAH.

Willet's arrangement of "Yesterdays," featuring trumpeter Freddie Webster, reflects a similarly expansive treatment of the 1933 Tin Pan Alley standard. Attribution of the arrangement to Willet is provided in a January 1944 press release sent out to the black press by Lunceford's management (or conceivably Willet himself, given his prominent position in the announcement), and published in the *New York Amsterdam News* as "Lunceford Answers Host of Queries on Arrangers of Music":

Jimmie Lunceford's New Year's week engagement at the Apollo in Harlem, the orchestra's most successful run at the famous theater, scored such a sensation that the management was flooded with inquiries regarding the writers of the arrangements of the band's new numbers. Harold F. Oxley, Lunceford's manager and amanuensis, supplies the following information:

Chappie Willet, former Gene Krupa staff arranger and stage production specialist, penned the Lunceford versions of "Hallelujah" and "Yesterdays," the latter featuring trumpeter Freddy Webster.⁶²

Most of "Yesterdays" is set in a slow dirge-like tempo; the routine comprises an introduction, verse, transition, 32-bar chorus, another transition and modulation, a second 32-bar chorus including passages of triple-meter and double-time tempo, a lengthy cadenza, and an ensemble tag ending.⁶³ Despite approaching six minutes in length Willet's application of different interlude passages, cadenzas, and changes in meter and tempo results in a convincingly well-paced arrangement. In its function as a solo trumpet showcase, "Yesterdays" survives as something of a "holy grail" for fans of the little-recorded Freddie Webster: jazz trumpeter Art Farmer celebrates "Yesterdays" as "a complete showcase for [Webster's] incredible tone [that] featured him throughout. ...

⁶² "Lunceford Answers Host of Queries on Arrangers of Music," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 16, 1943. A similar presentation of the same press release was published as "Lunceford Makes Musical History," *Chicago Defender*, January 30, 1943. Lunceford biographer Eddy Determeyer claims that "Yesterdays" was arranged by Edwin Wilcox. Eddy Determeyer, *Rhythm Is Our Business: Jimmie Lunceford and the Harlem Express* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 300.

⁶³ In the absence of surviving scores or orchestra parts, exact measure counts for some passages of "Yesterdays" are difficult to establish.

Some of the most phenomenal trumpet playing I've ever heard."⁶⁴ For Willet's relatively anonymous role, these accolades reflect the success of the arranger's own artistic invention and mastery of "virtuosic" presentation.

"Stardust"

Willet's arrangement of "Stardust" for Louis Armstrong, dating to Armstrong's fall 1944 residency at the Café Zanzibar, combines the jazz concerto genre with that of the vocal ballad.⁶⁵ Despite lacking definitive indication for its use within the Zanzibar stage show itself, the extreme length of the arrangement (presumably running over six minutes) suggests that the piece may have supported visual stage choreography.

Subsequent performances of the arrangement—without the nightclub floorshow—may have precipitated the arrangement's later transformation into a trombone feature with simple sax section backgrounds. The introductory ensemble fanfare is the only passage of Willet's original "Stardust" orchestration retained in an August 1945 air check recording.⁶⁶ With its ornamental quintuplet phrase and dramatic *pomposo* triplet figures supported by arco bass, this passage is a delicious example of rhapsodic form and "glorified" theater orchestration (example 5.12).

⁶⁴ Art Farmer, as quoted in Dan Miller, "Freddie Webster: 'The Best Sound on Trumpet Since Trumpet Was Invented,'" *Dan Miller*, <www.danmillerjazz.com> (accessed July 15, 2009).

⁶⁵ The dating of "Stardust" is based on manuscript orchestra parts held in the Louis Armstrong House and Archives and displaying Willet's 1944 union stamp. The parts are copied in the hand of Maceo Jefferson (1898–1974), who had been interned as a war prisoner in Germany during 1941–44; Jefferson's copy work for Willet first appears in manuscripts dating to October 1944. Howard Rye, "Maceo Jefferson," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Music*, <www.oxfordmusiconline> (accessed July 9, 2009).

⁶⁶ Louis Armstrong, *Masters of Swing* (Swing Mania, 1995). The performance was broadcast from the Trianon Ballroom in South Gate California, circa August 1945; the trombone soloist is Russell "Big Chief" Moore. Jos Willems, *All of Me: The Complete Discography of Louis Armstrong*, Studies in Jazz No. 51 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 152.

Example 5.12: “Stardust” mm. 1–8,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1944)⁶⁷

♩ = 120

3 Tpts. & Saxes
ff
Tbns. & Saxes
Bass (arco)

7 Tpts.
Tpt. 1
p Saxes (oct. unison)
Tbns. & Saxes

Stardust

Words by Mitchell Parish

Music by Hoagy Carmichael

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Following the melodramatic introduction, Willet’s “Stardust” arrangement presents two 32-bar choruses supporting an alto sax solo, a four-bar transition, a 15-bar verse, an 11-bar transition and modulation passage, a 32-bar vocal chorus, another six-bar transition and modulation (including chromatic diminished and whole-tone scale passages), an eight-bar trumpet solo, an eight-bar sax section soli, and another modulation leading to a 16-bar ensemble closing. It’s an exhaustive workout for the

⁶⁷ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Stardust” are held in the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

orchestra (if not the audience), another factor that may have led to the arrangement's alterations. Unlike the Lunceford concertos, the tempo and meter of "Stardust" appear to remain constant (the one possible exception being the introduction, per the air check performance), though the rhythm section drops out at various points during transitions.

Novelty Songs

Novelty song wanted for immediate publication. It must be a novelty song—with a new idea and a catchy tune. Don't waste time by sending in a ballad or patriotic song.⁶⁸

—Beacon Music advertisement, *Billboard*, 1941

Different incarnations of the "novelty song" genre have been a keystone of the American popular music publishing industry from "Daisy Bell (A Bicycle Built for Two)" to "Who Let the Dogs Out?" The trade magazine pitch cited above indicates the thirst of some Swing Era music publishers for the type of short-lived but potentially quick-selling hits that dominated the commercial market at the height of the Swing Era. A typical Swing Era novelty vocal arrangement presents a repetitive or familiar melody, a basic harmonic structure with few excursions from the tonic key (novelty songs rarely have a harmonic structure more complex than "I Got Rhythm" changes), and—most importantly—lyrics presenting a repetitive emphasis on a phrase or idea linked to contemporary popular culture.⁶⁹

As a popular music arranger working on nightclub and theater productions, Chappie Willet was well versed in the novelty genre. One common novelty strategy that Willet continually returns to involves dance-themed songs with lyrics describing a real or

⁶⁸ "Novelty Song Wanted for Immediate Publication" [advertisement], *Billboard*, June 14, 1941, 13.

⁶⁹ The Swing Era novelty song defined here differs somewhat from the "novelty ragtime" music industry genre of the 1920s. See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 151–52.

imagined new dance craze, such as “Flat Foot Floogee,” “Push Out,” or “Skrontch.” These pieces often include rhythmic devices related to popular dances, such as syncopated “Charleston” rhythm. Dance-themed numbers like “Flat Foot Floogee” and “Jump Jump’s Here” (both arranged by Willet for Red Norvo’s orchestra in 1938) were ideal material for vaudeville song and dance acts.⁷⁰ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Flat Foot Floogee” include a chorus of vocals to be sung by the band instrumentalists, another common novelty device (sometimes referred to as a “glee club” effect). The lyrics in Willet’s arrangement also call out “Red Norvo” by name, a strategy reflecting popular music’s cult of personality.

Another novelty strategy popular in the late 1930s was the adaptation of familiar children’s songs or nursery rhyme repertoire for swing dance numbers. The characters Mother Hubbard and Cinderella, for example, are cited in Jimmy Mundy’s 1938 arrangement of “Swingin’ the Nursery Rhymes.”⁷¹ Other composers took a broader (perhaps “musicological”) approach: despite being an instrumental composition, Raymond Scott’s “Twilight in Turkey” references the nineteenth-century hit song “Streets of Cairo” to novelty effect.⁷²

The fad for nursery-rhyme material was renewed and intensified following Ella Fitzgerald’s 1938 hit recording of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket,” arranged by Van Alexander.⁷³ Different arrangements of the song were quickly created by other arrangers, including Edgar Sampson (for Benny Goodman) and Chappie Willet (for Mildred Bailey and Red

⁷⁰ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Jump Jump’s Here” and “Flat Foot Floogee” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

⁷¹ Al Jacobs, Dave Oppenheim, and Jack Palmer, “Swingin’ the Nursery Rhymes” [stock arrangement], arranged by Jimmy Mundy (New York: Stasny Music Corp., 1938).

⁷² For example, hear the Teddy Hill orchestra’s 1937 recording of “Twilight in Turkey” issued on *Uptown Rhapsody* (Hep 1033, 1992).

⁷³ “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” had risen to the number one slot in *Billboard*’s sheet music sales charts by September 1938; see “Sheet-Music Leaders,” *Billboard*, September 10, 1938, 13.

Norvo).⁷⁴ Fitzgerald’s success likely encouraged the publication of songs like “Toy-Town Jamboree,” which combines references to traditional nursery figures (Jackie Horner and Red Riding Hood) with the currency of Walt Disney’s 1937 hit *Snow White*: Disney characters including the Seven Dwarves, Donald Duck, and Mickey Mouse are not only cited in the lyrics, but depicted on the cover of the leadsheet publication.⁷⁵

“Toy-Town Jamboree”

Willet’s arrangement of “Toy-Town Jamboree” was created for Bailey and Norvo, probably dating from around the performers’ August 1938 residency at the Pennsylvania Hotel.⁷⁶ Reflecting the novelty song elements of “familiarity” and the nursery room, the published lead sheet introduction features a triadic staccato phrase suggesting the sound of a wind-up toy mechanism. Willet scores his introduction with a similarly articulated effect, but quotes the melody of “Parade of the Wooden Soldiers”—a familiar children’s trope, as well as a favorite musical reference in the Broadway tap dance world.⁷⁷ The “Wooden Soldiers” quotation is presented in a typical Swing Era juxtaposition of idiom signifiers: staccato “straight” eighth-notes and scoring for muted trumpet, unison low saxes, and percussion woodblocks (representing the sound of the toy soldiers) are suddenly overtaken by a syncopated version of the same melody, scored for

⁷⁴ The score for Edgar Sampson’s arrangement of “A-Tisket, A-Tasket”—one of two versions of the song created for Goodman in 1938—is held in the Benny Goodman Papers, MSS 53, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

⁷⁵ Major Hurwitz, John Redmond, and Mary Schaeffer, “Toy-Town Jamboree” [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Red Star Songs, 1938).

⁷⁶ The dating of “Toy-Town Jamboree” is an estimate based on the presence of Willet’s 1938 union stamp on surviving orchestra parts, and the arrangement’s numbering in the Norvo band book. “A-Tisket, A-Tasket” and “Flat Foot Floogee” were released in June 1938: Willet’s arrangement of “Flat Foot Floogee” is numbered “285”; “A-Tisket, A-Tasket,” recorded by Norvo on July 28, is numbered “302”; “Toy-Town Jamboree” is numbered “330.” Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

⁷⁷ A number of references to the use of “Parade of the Wooden Soldiers” as a dance vehicle are included in Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1968; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), especially 167, 187.

the full ensemble with open brass and an indication for a “swing” feel (example 5.13).

The dramatic contrast between these two orchestration effects reveals Willet’s fluency in the stage entertainment tradition.

Example 5.13: “Toy-Town Jamboree” mm. 1–6,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)⁷⁸

[♩ = c.100?]
Solo Tpt.
(str. mute) *l*

Tenor & Bar. Saxes

Rhythm Section

woodblocks

B^b F⁷ B^b G^o

4 *Swing* *Ens. ff*

F⁷ *Swing* B^b7 *f* A^b7 G⁷

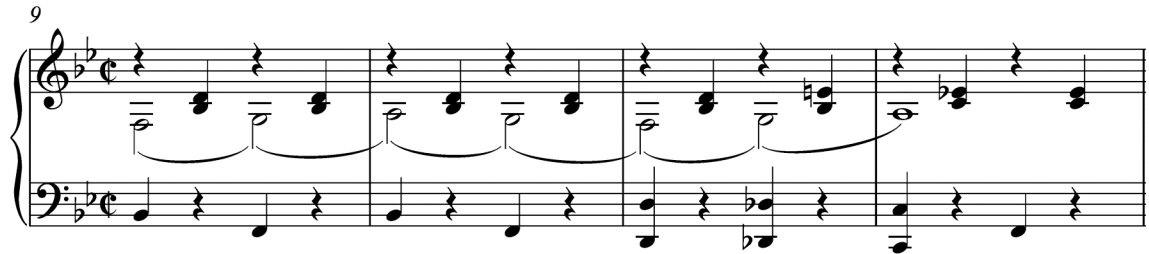
Toy-Town Jamboree

By Major Hurwitz, John Redmond & Mary Schaeffer
Copyright © 1938 Red Star Songs, Tone Music

⁷⁸ Manuscript orchestra parts for “Toy-Town Jamboree” are held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

In the chorus passage that follows, Willet further reinforces the nursery theme by scoring the piano in a manner recalling the “music box” orchestration effect outlined in Arthur Lange’s *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, where the device is described as “effective in an arrangement of a dainty composition.”⁷⁹ Willet utilizes an interlocking left and right hand pattern similar to that demonstrated by Lange, creating another mechanized (hence, “music box”) sound (example 5.14).

Example 5.14: “Toy-Town Jamboree” [piano part] mm. 9–12,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Red Norvo (1938)



Toy-Town Jamboree

By Major Hurwitz, John Redmond & Mary Schaeffer
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In addition to work as an arranger, Willet had a hand in the composition of at least two original novelty songs during the early 1940s. In both cases, he collaborated with vaudeville stage veterans to create performance vehicles with lyrics citing popular culture references in the form of Harlem “jive.” Musicologist Ingrid Monson observes that “the history of twentieth-century American popular music . . . is the history of an interracial encounter through music under asymmetrical economic, aesthetic, and political

⁷⁹ Lange, *Arranging for the Modern Dance Orchestra*, 15. See also Paul Weirick, *Dance Arranging: A Guide to Scoring Music for the American Dance Orchestra* (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1934), 118.

circumstances.”⁸⁰ Willet’s participation in the creation of “The Hicky Ricky” reflects several such encounters within the American popular music industry. Following is an effort to piece together just some of the individuals, events, and musical influences that comprise the “circumstances” of this document.

“The Hicky Ricky”

In the summer of 1940, Chappie Willet collaborated with the comedy song and dance trio “The Three Chocolateers” to create a novelty song titled “The Hicky Ricky.”⁸¹ “The Hicky Ricky” served as a vehicle for the Chocolateers’ in their stage revue tours, and is representative of the period’s popular novelty genre: lyrics feature phrases from contemporary popular culture and provide directions for the performance of an accompanying dance, typically comprising the visual stage routine itself.⁸²

Through the mid-to-late 1930s, the Three Chocolateers included Esvan Scott Mosby (c. 1910–1986) from Kansas City, Albert “Gip” Gibson (c. 1915–1990) from Peoria, and Paul (later “Fat Man”) Black (birth date and origin unknown, though still living as of 1982).⁸³ Mosby had appeared in Hollywood films as early as 1929, and served as the Chocolateers’ manager.⁸⁴ He was also the younger brother of California-

⁸⁰ Ingrid Monson, “Abbey Lincoln’s *Straight Ahead*: Jazz in the Era of the Civil Rights Movement,” in *Between Resistance and Revolution: Culture and Social Protest*, ed. Richard Fox and Orin Starn (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997): 175.

⁸¹ “NEW DANCE—As Usual It Started in Harlem and Is Called The Hicky Ricky,” *Chicago Defender*, September 14, 1940.

⁸² Esvan Mosby, Chappie Willet and Albert Gibson, “The Hicky Ricky” [publisher leadsheet] (New York: Leeds Music, 1942).

⁸³ Esvan Mosby and Albert Gibson’s birthplace and date are taken from a Seattle “Passenger and Crew List” of January 11, 1935, and the Social Security Death Index (both per *AncestryLibrary.com*). Paul Black and Albert Gibson participated in a New York City dance event in February 1982, as reported in Jennifer Dunning, “A Tap Extravaganza in Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1982.

⁸⁴ Esvan Mosby is credited with an appearance in MGM’s 1929 *Hallelujah!* in Rusty Frank, *Tap: The Greatest Tap Dance Stars and Their Stories, 1900–1955* (New York: W. Morrow, 1990), 298.

based bandleader and nightclub owner Curtis Mosby (c. 1890–1957).⁸⁵ Curtis, proprietor of the Apex Club and Club Alabam among other venues, was known in Los Angeles as the “mayor of Central Avenue,” though Esvan is referred to by the same title in a recording discussed later on.⁸⁶ Albert Gibson had grown up performing with his family’s vaudeville act prior to joining the *Olsen and Johnson* show on the Orpheum theater circuit; bandleader Buck Clayton remembered Gibson as “one of the best street corner dancers in Los Angeles.”⁸⁷ Paul Black was known for doing a “Chinese” walking splits stunt; he left the ensemble at the end of 1940 and joined the group “Paul, Slim & Eddie” (later “Paul, Dinky & Eddie”), but rejoined the Chocolateers at some point in the late 1940s.⁸⁸ Later versions of the Chocolateers, which underwent additional personnel changes following Black’s departure, included Albert Gibson’s brother Duke, Eddie

⁸⁵ Regarding Curtis Mosby’s career, see Michael B. Bakan, “Way Out West on Central: Jazz in the African-American Community of Los Angeles Before 1930,” in *California Soul: Music of African Americans in the West*, ed. Jacqueline Cogoell Djedje and Eddie S. Meadows (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 23–78; 65. Bakan states Curtis Mosby’s year of birth as 1895; the 1900 *Twelfth Census of the United States* suggests the year of 1890, while the Social Security Death Index suggests a date of July 7, 1888, and World War I draft records suggest July 6, 1892. *Grove Jazz* cites the 1888 date per Howard Rye, “Curtis Mosby,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Music*, <www.oxfordmusic.com> (accessed August 4, 2009).

⁸⁶ Bakan, “Way Out West on Central”: 64–67; Ralph Eastman, “‘Pitchin’ Up a Boogie’: African-American Musicians, Nightlife and Music Venues in Los Angeles, 1930–1945,” in *California Soul*, ed. Djedje and Meadows: 79–103; 82–83, 85–93. Trumpeter Clora Bryant clarified Esvan Mosby as “the second” mayor of Central Avenue in Clora Bryant et al., *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 358. Even while touring with the Chocolateers, Esvan was sufficiently involved in his brother’s nightclub ventures to be implicated in a 1940 lawsuit concerning the Classic Café; see Major Robinson, “Mosby of Chocolateers Sued by California Firm,” *Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1940.

⁸⁷ Harry Levette, “Coast Codgings,” *Chicago Defender*, July 14, 1934; Buck Clayton and Nancy Miller Elliott, *Buck Clayton’s Jazz World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 73.

⁸⁸ Dunning; Billy Rowe, “Billy Rowe’s Notebook,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 7, 1940; “Detroit Finds a Set of Comic Jewels in Paul, Slim and Eddie,” *Chicago Defender*, March 21, 1942; Kurt Albert and Klaus Bleis, “The Buster Brown Story: To Buster With Love,” *International Tap Association Newsletter* 13/2 (Fall 2002).

“Half Pint” West, James “Buster” Brown, and James “Chuckles” Walker.⁸⁹ The group continued to perform into the 1950s, including a 1955–56 tour of Europe.⁹⁰

The Three Chocolateers received their first national (and international) publicity in the fall of 1934, when they traveled to China to be featured with Buck Clayton’s orchestra at the Canidrome Ballroom in Shanghai.⁹¹ Their tour is one example of the lengths that vaudeville acts might take for a shot at mainstream success; Clayton recalled the trio’s condition upon arrival as “so ragged and tattered that if the wind had blown on them they would have whistled like a peanut stand.”⁹² Returning to California in 1935 for reported (but apparently uncredited) appearances in Hollywood movies (including the 1936 film *Can This Be Dixie?*), the Chocolateers’ finally obtained their big break with a featured appearance in RKO’s *New Faces of 1937*.⁹³ This picture closed with a stage routine titled “Peckin’,” resulting in a novelty hit that remained the trio’s primary vehicle for the next four years.⁹⁴ In the wake of their film success, the group traveled to New York City and performed in the spring 1938 *Cotton Club Parade*, a floorshow featuring Duke Ellington’s orchestra and arranged in part by Willet.⁹⁵ The Chocolateers also presented “Peckin’” at the Apollo Theater with Blanche Calloway and Jimmie Lunceford,

⁸⁹ Albert and Bleis, “The Buster Brown Story.”

⁹⁰ See “‘Smart Affairs of 1953’ Now on Stage at Regal,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 23, 1952; “3 Chocolateers Triumph Abroad After Setback,” *Chicago Defender*, July 7, 1956.

⁹¹ Harry Levette, “The Three Chocolateers in China for Long Engagement,” *Chicago Defender*, September 1, 1934; “Chicago Defender Photo-Chart Shows Nationally Known Stage Celebrities,” *Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1937.

⁹² Clayton and Elliott, *Buck Clayton’s Jazz World*, 73.

⁹³ “‘Can This Be Dixie?’ Will Open at Republic Friday,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 26, 1936; “3 Chocolateers Bring ‘Peckin’ to Apollo Bill,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 28, 1937; Al Moses, “Blanche Calloway Scores at Apollo,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 11, 1937; “‘Chocolateers’ in Republic Picture,” *Chicago Defender*, June 6, 1942; “Chicago Defender Photo-Chart Shows Nationally Known Stage Celebrities.”

⁹⁴ For example, see “Howard [Theater],” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1940.

⁹⁵ M.H. Orodener, “Orchestra Notes,” *Billboard*, March 26, 1938, 12; “Cotton Club Show,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 5, 1938. See also “Chocolateers, Dancing Demons, Cotton Club Hit,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1938.

and on tour with Cab Calloway's *Cotton Club Revue* shows of fall 1939 and spring 1940.⁹⁶

A *Pittsburgh Courier* review described the Chocolateers' "Peckin'" number to involve the group dancing with "their heads weaving and bobbing in the same manner a barnyard fowl pecks at his dinner."⁹⁷ Mark Knowles's *Tap Dance Dictionary* defines "Peckin'" as "an eccentric dance move which consists of pushing the head forward and then back in place."⁹⁸ As described by Albert Gibson in a 1980 documentary video, the trio's *New Faces of 1937* sequence incorporated barnyard scenery including chickens, pigs, dogs, and chorus girls: "I jumped up in the tree and pecked with the chickens. ... It was a fun picture."⁹⁹ Marshall and Jean Stearns observed that in the Chocolateers' "barnyard novelty" act, "clowning was emphasized as they ran all over the stage and up the walls, and it obscured the excellent dancing."¹⁰⁰ White bandleader Ben Pollack and trumpeter Harry James shared composer credits for the music that accompanied the Chocolateers' performance; lyrics were added by Edward Cherkose.¹⁰¹ James's instrumental riff for "Peckin'" was borrowed from trumpeter Cootie Williams's solo on "Rockin' in Rhythm," recorded by Duke Ellington in 1931.¹⁰² The "Peckin'" song went

⁹⁶ "3 Chocolateers Bring 'Peckin' to Apollo Bill"; "Lunceford at Apollo," *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 December 31, 1938; "Cab Calloway Now on Tour of Country," *Chicago Defender*, October 21, 1939; "Cab Calloway Opens Apollo for One Week," *Chicago Defender*, December 23, 1939.

⁹⁷ "'Duke Goes to Town' in His Latest Revue," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 17, 1937.

⁹⁸ Mark Knowles, *The Tap Dance Dictionary* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1998), 143. On the etymology of "eccentric dance," see Brian Harker, "Louis Armstrong, Eccentric Dance, and the Evolution of Jazz on the Eve of Swing," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61/1 (Spring 2008): 67–122.

⁹⁹ [Jane Goldberg,] *By Word of Foot I, Tap Masters Pass on Their Tradition, John Bubbles and Albert Gibson* [videorecording], Jane Goldberg's Wandering Shoes Tap(h)istory Featuring Tip Tap Top Tapes, Tapalogues, Tapology and Tapperabilia (New York: Changing Times Tap Dancing Company, 1980), New York Public Library, Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

¹⁰⁰ Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 246.

¹⁰¹ Ben Pollack and Harry James, "Peckin'" [leadsheet] (New York: Mills Music, 1937); Peter J. Levinson, *Trumpet Blues: The Life of Harry James* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25. Levinson claims that the "Peckin'" dance was created by The Charioteers, another black vaudeville trio.

¹⁰² Levinson, *Trumpet Blues*, 25.

on to enjoy a successful life of its own, published by impresario Irving Mills and recorded by celebrity performers including Calloway, Ellington (with Johnny Hodges), Benny Goodman, and Bing Crosby (with Jimmy Dorsey).¹⁰³

Perhaps the Chocolateers' wanted to share in some of the publishing royalties resulting from the success of their act. "The Hicky Ricky" was first registered for copyright on August 15, 1940, as composed by Mosby, Black, Gibson, and Willet.¹⁰⁴ The "Hicky Ricky" stage routine was reportedly developed at the Apollo Theater, a legendary focal point of black contributions to American popular music, and where Willet had initiated his New York career.¹⁰⁵ The trio unveiled their new song and its accompanying dance that fall, on tour with another Calloway-led *Cotton Club Revue*.¹⁰⁶ In September, the production broke attendance records at New York's Paramount Theater, where the venue's management reported the show to have been viewed by 192,000 patrons in two weeks.¹⁰⁷ Print publicity for "The Hicky Ricky" emerged the same month, including a brief *Chicago Defender* notice: "NEW DANCE—As Usual It Started in Harlem and Is Called The Hicky Ricky." The New York-dated article explained: "words for the new tune have been supplied by Paul Black and Al Gibbs [*sic*]. Music was composed by Esvan Mosby and arranged by Chappie Willet, ace Broadway Race arranger."¹⁰⁸ An article in the previous week's *Pittsburgh Courier* had already suggested the fairly presumptuous prospect that "Jimmie Lunceford, Cab Calloway, Tommy Dorsey, and the

¹⁰³ Publisher Mills Music also printed a stock dance band arrangement of "Peckin'" in 1937, scored by Jimmy Mundy.

¹⁰⁴ "The Hicky Ricky," copyright deposit, August 15, 1940 (E unpub. 228569), U.S. Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁵ "Chocolateers' Tune Used in Navy Film," *Chicago Defender*, April 5, 1941.

¹⁰⁶ Nell Dodson, "Chocolateers' Manager Named in Suit," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 7, 1940; "Cab Calloway's Tour Takes Him Into the West," *Chicago Defender*, September 14, 1940. Calloway's tours continued under the Cotton Club name despite the venue having been shut down the previous June. See Dan Burley, "Cotton Club Closes," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 22, 1940.

¹⁰⁷ "New Mark Set by Calloway at Paramount," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 7, 1940.

¹⁰⁸ "NEW DANCE—As Usual It Started in Harlem and Is Called The Hicky Ricky."

Three Peppers will record the [“Hicky Ricky”] number which will be released late this month.”¹⁰⁹ Any such recordings were never issued.

The following April, the *Chicago Defender* announced “Chocolateers’ Tune Used in Navy Film”:

When the Andrews Sisters appear on the screen in their latest film “We’re in the Navy Now,” sometime in the near future, they’ll be seen singing the Hickory Rickory [*sic*], composed and introduced by the Three Chocolateers a few months ago at the Apollo theatre.

In addition to the tune appearing in the Universal film it was also announced that the dance, also created by the originators of the popular dance and song, pecking [*sic*], will be executed. The popular singing sisters left the city last week for Hollywood to start work on the picture.

For usage of their brainchild the Chocolateers will be paid a sum said to exceed \$5,000. It was said that previous commitments prevented them from going West to appear in the “Navy” film. When they performed the dance ... observers predicted its fame would surpass that of the pecking [*sic*].¹¹⁰

In the Navy, a well-publicized “Abbott & Costello” feature, was a terrific opportunity for the Chocolateers to position “The Hicky Ricky” as their next “Peckin’.” The dancers’ unavailability for an appearance due to “previous commitments”—even if truthful—may have been overly optimistic: the only non-white character depicted in the final cut of *In the Navy* serves as the recipient of an anti-Asian slur. The Chocolateers (now including Paul Black’s replacement, Duke Gibson) had made their way to Los Angeles by the end of May, according to a *Defender* article titled “Chocolateers Are Held-Over in West”:

Dancers Albert Gibson, Esvan Mosby and Duke Gibson just about perform every known acrobatic dance step, with an added dosage of side splitting comedy, in anybody’s book of stage entertainment. And, do it swell. A film contract remains to be fulfilled by the trio, following their chores at the Paramount theatre.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Dodson, “Chocolateers’ Manager Named in Suit.”

¹¹⁰ “Chocolateers’ Tune Used in Navy Film.” Also see Dan Burley, “Boston Footlite Flickers,” *Chicago Defender*, June 7, 1941.

¹¹¹ Lawrence F. LaMar, “Chocolateers Are Held-Over in West,” *Chicago Defender*, May 31, 1941.

“The Hicky Ricky” is not heard or seen in *In the Navy* as released. The Andrews Sisters did, however, perform a dance sequence accompanying a new song by Gene DePaul, Red Mack, and Don Raye, titled “Gimme Some Skin.”¹¹² Registered for copyright on March 13, 1941, “Gimme Some Skin” (re-registered a month later as “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend”) fills *In the Navy’s* black-culture slot with lyrics such as “like they do it in Harlem” and “skin me, papa, skin me”; Patty Andrews sings a blues-inflected solo interlude.¹¹³ This work was published by Leeds Music, a well-established music publishing corporation based in Rockefeller Center above Radio City Music Hall. Leeds had previously turned out hits such as “Undecided,” “All or Nothing at All,” and another Andrews Sisters vehicle, “Rhumboogie”—the latter song’s lyrics also by Don Raye, and again citing Harlem.¹¹⁴

“Gimme” or “give me some skin” was an expression that, if newspaper accounts offer any indication, appears to have hit Harlem around the summer of 1940.¹¹⁵ The phrase had become a hot commercial commodity by the following year, and the Delta Rhythm Boys and Lionel Hampton each recorded songs titled “Gimme Some Skin” or “Give Me Some Skin” in December 1940 and April 1941, respectively.¹¹⁶ In September 1941, songwriter and Willet associate Porter Grainger included a “Gimme Some Skin”

¹¹² *In the Navy* (MCA Universal [VHS], 1991). The film was in production from April 8 through mid-May 1941, and released on May 30, per “In the Navy,” *Turner Classic Movies*, <www.tcm.com>.

¹¹³ “Gimme Some Skin,” copyright deposit, March 13, 1941 (E unp. 251362), *U.S. Copyright Report*. “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend,” was registered for copyright on April 8, 1941 (E unp. 254542), and again on June 17, 1941 (E pub. 95956); Red Mack’s name is omitted from these later registrations.

¹¹⁴ Don Raye, Hughie Prince, and the Ritz Brothers, “Rhumboogie” [leadsheet] (New York: Leeds Music, 1940). “Rhumboogie” was featured by the sisters in the 1940 Universal Pictures film *Argentine Nights*.

¹¹⁵ For example, Dan Burley cited the phrase “gimme some skin” as representative of recently emerging “Harlemese” in his column “Backdoor Stuff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 6, 1940. Additional sources date the phrase to the 1940s; see Clarence Major, ed., *Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African-American Slang* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 202.

¹¹⁶ Michel Ruppli, *The Decca Labels: A Historical Discography*, vol. 2 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 640; Lionel Hampton and James Haskins, *Hamp: An Autobiography* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 103. The Hampton disc would probably not have been issued before *In the Navy* was released, but the song may have been performed live prior to the recording date.

number in his *Rhythm Bound* revue at Harlem's Club Mimo.¹¹⁷ The Delta Rhythm Boys' record, released no later than March 1941, closes with the line: "my friend, gimme some skin."¹¹⁸ But the phrase "give me some skin" is also found in the lyrics to "The Hicky Ricky": a notable parallel to the Andrews Sisters' *In the Navy* number, given the reported plans to use the Chocolateers' song in the same film.¹¹⁹

The Chocolateers themselves did finally film the "Hicky Ricky" routine for a low-budget Republic Pictures production, *Moonlight Masquerade* (a/k/a *Tahiti Honey*), produced in April 1942 and circulated between June and October of that year.¹²⁰ The film was apparently received well enough to justify redistribution to Harlem and Brooklyn theaters at the end of 1943.¹²¹ However, the only surviving copies of *Moonlight Masquerade* discovered to date reflect a version of the film where the "Hicky Ricky" sequence has been excised: only a solo dance by Al Gibson (segregated by a wall from his dance "partner" in the number, Betty Kean) and a very brief shot of the complete Chocolateers trio (what appears to be the unintentional remnant of sloppy editing) remains.

The year 1942 also saw the printing of a piano and vocal leadsheet of "The Hicky Ricky," published by none other than Leeds Music.¹²² The degree of Leeds's involvement

¹¹⁷ Maurice Dancer, "Harlem Goes Broadway for Reopening of Mimo Club," *Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1941.

¹¹⁸ The release of the Delta Rhythm Boys' "Gimme Some Skin" disc was noted in "Delta Rhythm For Downtown Theatre," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 29, 1941.

¹¹⁹ The potential sexual innuendo behind the rest of *In the Navy*'s "Gimme Some Skin" lyrics was not lost on contemporary critics. See Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1941.

¹²⁰ "Chocolateers' in Republic Picture"; "Three Chocolateers Get Role in Republic's New Musical," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 6, 1942; "News of the Screen," *New York Times*, September 30, 1942; "Moonlight Masquerade," *Turner Classic Movies*, <www.tcm.com> (accessed September 12, 2009).

¹²¹ "Three Chocolateers Perform for Movies," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 18, 1943.

¹²² Mosby, Willet, and Gibson, "The Hicky Ricky."

in the music production decisions for *In the Navy* or *Moonlight Masquerade* is unclear.¹²³

But on April 12, 1941, during the production of *In the Navy*, Bill Chase's *Amsterdam*

News column claimed:

The Chocolateers' new song, "Hicky Ricky," recorded at Chappie Willet's studio, got into the hands of the publishers via the waxed disc which was submitted to Leeds Music Co. In turn, the Andrews Sisters will sing and record it!¹²⁴

The Leeds-filed copyright for "The Hicky Ricky" was not registered until July 20, 1942—well after the release of *Moonlight Masquerade*, and over a year after the release of *In the Navy*.¹²⁵ On the first page of the Leeds publication, the song title is followed by the somewhat belated descriptor, "the new dance sensation created by The 3 Chocolateers."¹²⁶ Only Mosby, Gibson, and Willet are named as composers; Paul Black, who had received co-composer credit in the original 1940 copyright registration, had left the group later that year.¹²⁷

Similar to Swing Era novelty numbers like "Peckin'," or Duke Ellington and Henry Nemo's "Skrontch" (which the Chocolateers had also performed in the ensemble finale of the 1938 *Cotton Club Parade*), the lyrics of "The Hicky Ricky" provide directions for execution of the title routine while also referencing the names of other popular dances. Just as "Peckin'" cites the "Truckin'" and "Susi-Q", and "Skrontch" cites the "Truckin'," "Susi-Q," and "Peckin'," "The Hicky Ricky" cites the "LaConga," "Susi-

¹²³ Charles Previn and Ted Cain are credited as the musical director and music supervisor in *In the Navy*. Cy Feuer is credited as musical director in *Moonlight Masquerade*.

¹²⁴ Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 12, 1941.

¹²⁵ "The Hicky Ricky," copyright deposit, July 20, 1942 (E pub. 106386), U.S. Library of Congress.

¹²⁶ The same descriptor is included in the 1941 Kaycee Music copyright deposit.

¹²⁷ Rowe, "Billy Rowe's Notebook." Paul Black's name is omitted in a subsequent November 1941 registration filed by Kaycee Music—probably a Mosby entity—as well as the 1942 Leeds registration and published leadsheet. "The Hicky Ricky," copyright deposit, November 7, 1941 (E unp. 274977), U.S. Library of Congress. In addition to the change in composer credits, the 1941 copyright deposit includes the complete verse and piano accompaniment later reflected in the 1942 Leeds publication. The 1941 deposit also reflects a change in the lyrics from the original 1940 copyright deposit: "tippy tippy tin wham" was replaced by "stand back and grin say."

Q,” “Ballin’ the Jack,” “Peekin’,” and “Skrontch.”¹²⁸ References to the jive “vout” language popularized by Slim Gaillard (creator of the novelty vocal hit “Flat Foot Floogie”) emerge throughout “The Hicky Ricky,” as words like “Susi-Q” and “Skrontch” are transformed into “Susi-ma-Q” and “Scrouch-a-ma-roo.”¹²⁹

“The Hicky Ricky” represents another example of Willet’s style juxtaposing ragtime marching band scoring with modernist chromaticism. To be performed at “jump tempo,” the chords of the Leeds publication’s four-bar piano introduction rise chromatically through altered dominant voicings; a similarly ascending eight-bar “send-off” passage closes the verse section (see example 5.15). These passages of flatted-fifth voicings are suggestive of the whole-tone chromaticism that was one of Willet’s favorite devices during the 1930s (see chapter 4).

¹²⁸ Cab Calloway, “Peekin’,” *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra 1934–1937* (Classics [CD] 554, 1991); Duke Ellington, Irving Mills, and Henry Nemo, “Skrontch” [leadsheet] (New York: Mills Music, 1938).

¹²⁹ Regarding Slim Gaillard’s style, see “New Jive Talk Rage of Harlem,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 25, 1938; Eugene Kinkead and Harold Ross, “Jive Men,” The Talk of the Town, *The New Yorker*, June 25, 1938, 9; Charles Herndon, “Slim Gaillard Coins New Jazz Language and Turns to Composition of Symphony,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1952.

Example 5.15: “The Hicky Ricky” [publisher leadsheet] mm. 13–20 (1942)¹³⁰

The musical score for "The Hicky Ricky" (measures 13-20) is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 13-16) features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Chord symbols above the staff are B7(b5) at measure 13, (C7(#11)) and C7(b5) at measure 14, (C#7(#11)) and D7(b5) at measure 15. The second system (measures 17-20) continues the piece with chord symbols D7(b5) at measure 17, D7 at measure 18, and (C7(b13)) and C7 at measure 19. Dynamics such as sfz and accents are indicated throughout the score.

Hicky Ricky

Words and Music by Esvan Mosby, Chappy Willet and Albert Gibson

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Copyright Renewed

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Measures 19–20 of “The Hicky Ricky” (see example 5.15) offer what might be described as a composed “tri-tone substitution,” in the form of a chromatically descending progression to the dominant C chord: an altered $\text{II}^7\text{--}\flat\text{II}^7\text{--}\text{I}^7$ sequence in the key area of C, with $\flat\text{II}^7$ substituting for V^7 (see chapter 4 regarding tri-tone substitutions).

Similar to the invocation of the whole-tone scale, this chromatic cadence has been argued

¹³⁰ Chord symbols for Example 5.3 not in parentheses reflect those provided in the published leadsheet. The inclusion of unaltered fifths in some of the left-hand voicings—accompanied by my parenthetical “corrections” to the chord symbols in m. 14 and m. 16—is exceptional considering Willet’s regular use of parallel or “planing” whole-tone dominant voicings throughout much of his work (see chapter 4). Whether the “Hicky Ricky” leadsheet is evidence of an unintentional printing error is open to conjecture pending discovery of “Hicky Ricky” piano music in Willet’s hand; surviving copyright deposits reflect only the vocal melody and lyrics.

to be among the musical devices embraced by jazz and popular musicians as a trope of modernity.¹³¹

The “Hicky Ricky” verse includes another staple Willet technique: an accent-and-hold on the fourth beat of a measure, reinforced by the rhythm section. This device (also a defining characteristic of “Skrontch”) is prominent in the send-off passage cited earlier (see example 5.15). In the “Hicky Ricky” leadsheet, the rhythm guitar part is designated “tacet” preceding this passage, presumably to highlight the accented rhythmic effect that follows.

The 32-bar AABA-form chorus section of “The Hicky Ricky” is built upon familiar ii^7-V^7-I progressions in the tonic key; the dominant-cycle bridge recalls that of “I’ve Got Rhythm,” except that the third and fourth measures of “Hicky’s” bridge are on minor vi instead of major VI^7 . At the end of the first two A sections, Willet includes another of his favorite orchestration devices: a descending diatonic bass figure recalling a ragtime brass band “bass run” fill (see example 5.16).¹³² This device is often introduced as a “fill-in” at the end of an 8-bar phrase, such as in Willet’s 1939 arrangement of “I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast” for Cab Calloway (see example 5.17).¹³³ In “The Hicky Ricky” leadsheet, the piano executes this figure in octave unison (m. 28); this instrumental element was deemed crucial enough to be included in a solo vocal rendition of the song, discussed later on. The rhythmic setting of the title phrase (a repetition of

¹³¹ Regarding the use of the tri-tone device and concepts of modernity, see Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 106–10. A variation of the tri-tone substitution, substituting D^{b7} ($^bVI^7$) for Gm^7 (ii^7), appears in example 5.17, m. 15.

¹³² See van der Merwe, *Origins of the Popular Style*, 283–84.

¹³³ Other examples of Willet scoring this figure include a commercial arrangement of “Push Out (Te-Huey, Te-Huey, Te-Huey)” published by Handy Brothers Music in 1939; see also the discussion of ragtime devices in chapter 2.

“Hicky Ricky, Hicky Ricky”) invokes a secondary rag pattern (see brackets in mm. 25–26 of example 5.16).¹³⁴

Example 5.16: “The Hicky Ricky” [publisher leadsheet] mm. 25–28 (1942)

Hicky Ricky

Words and Music by Esvan Mosby, Chappy Willet and Albert Gibson

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Example 5.17: “I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast” mm. 15–16 (0:15),
arr. Chappie Willet for Cab Calloway (1939)¹³⁵

I Ain’t Gettin’ Nowhere Fast

By Cab Calloway, Porter Grainger & Chappie Willet

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¹³⁴ For a definitions and discussion of secondary rag, see For a brief definition and discussion of secondary rag, see Frank J. Gillis, “Hot Rhythm in Piano Ragtime,” in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (New York: Schirmer, 1985): 229–30. The resulting syncopated pattern is related to the “Charleston” dance rhythm; see Eddie MacDonald, “Making Hot Arrangements,” *Metronome*, September 1933, 44.

¹³⁵ *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra 1939–1940* (Classics CD 595, 191).

A less extreme version of the fourth-beat accent, combined with another implied secondary rag syncopation, appears at the end of the “Hicky Ricky” bridge in support of the vocal interjection, “say ‘give me some skin’” (example 5.18).¹³⁶ Rhythm breaks in combination with rhythmic displacement were commonly used at the end of the bridge in Tin Pan Alley popular songs, and often in combination with augmented or whole-tone chords, such as Vic Schoen’s *In the Navy* arrangement of “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” (see example 5.19).¹³⁷ The accented final beat of the “Hicky Ricky” bridge (example 5.18, m. 44) suggests itself as an opportunity to perform a percussive hand slap following “give me some skin,” a gimmick used at different points in both the Delta Rhythm Boys and Andrew Sisters recordings cited earlier.

Example 5.18: “The Hicky Ricky” [publisher leadsheet] mm. 43–44 (1942)

Hicky Ricky

Words and Music by Esvan Mosby, Chappy Willet and Albert Gibson

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¹³⁶ Some relationships between “secondary rag” figures and the vaudeville jazz dance tradition are discussed in Harker, “Louis Armstrong”: 102–13.

¹³⁷ Schoen is the only music arranger cited in credits for *In the Navy*.

Example 5.19: “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” mm. 39–40 (0:43),
arr. by Vic Schoen for the Andrews Sisters (1941)¹³⁸

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for Vocals and the bottom staff is for Bass. Measure 39 features a vocal line with a G+ chord and a bass line with a (break) instruction. Measure 40 features a vocal line with C+, G, and C7+ chords and an ensemble (Ens.) line.

Gimme Some Skin Friend

Words and Music by Don Raye, Gene De Paul and Red Mack

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The cover of the Leeds “Hicky Ricky” publication asserts that the number was “featured by Harry James and his orchestra.” No recording or specific performance of the song by James has been discovered to date; James’s band may have performed the piece behind the Chocolateers during one of their theater appearances, or perhaps the bandleader had other ties with the publisher. Cab Calloway, a Willet client whose orchestra had certainly performed the song with the Chocolateers, is not mentioned in the publication.¹³⁹

A solo vocal performance recorded by Esvan Mosby, probably dating from 1940–42, was issued on CD in 1998.¹⁴⁰ While apparently not the disc sent to Leeds Music as described in the *Amsterdam News* (the issued track reportedly derives from one of the Chocolateers’ visits to the west coast) the performance may be representative of the

¹³⁸ The Andrews Sisters, “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” (Decca 3871, 1941).

¹³⁹ For example, Bill Chase cites Willet’s prior work for Calloway regarding performances at Loew’s State Theater. Bill Chase, “All Ears,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 17, 1938.

¹⁴⁰ Stanford [*sic*–Esvan] Mosby, “[The] Hicky Ricky,” *Too Late, Too Late, Volume 10: 1926–1951* (Document Records DOCD 5601, 1998). This issue incorrectly lists the performer as “Stanford Mosby,” and provides the less likely recording date of “circa 1938.”

demonstration recording created in Willet's office.¹⁴¹ The establishment of Willet's recording studio had been announced in the summer of 1939, in Bill Chase's *Amsterdam News* article "Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field." Chase explained that Willet's "attractively appointed studios ... are as completely equipped with [the] latest recording devices as those of the larger commercial companies, but naturally on a smaller scale."¹⁴²

Willet was quoted to suggest the following benefits:

"[The recording] not only enables the sponsor to get a perfect idea of how the auditioner will actually sound on the air or on records, but it also gives the applicant a chance to hear himself and to correct certain little faults that he little dreams he had. So the purpose is really two-fold."¹⁴³

Esvan Mosby's unaccompanied performance of "The Hicky Ricky," cut on a non-commercial, privately recorded disc, presents the song's chorus first, followed by the verse, and then a repeat of the chorus.¹⁴⁴ Aside from these basic alterations to the leadsheet routine, Mosby's first chorus and verse parallel the published arrangement fairly closely (Mosby misleadingly announces the verse as "second stanza")—though "scrouch-a-ma-roo" is replaced by a repeat of "Susi-ma-Q," and the additional syllables "then you" are occasionally added leading into the "Hicky Ricky" refrain. The singer also performs the "tailgate" figures of the leadsheet piano part *a capella*. Significantly greater melodic and rhythmic liberties are taken in the final chorus, including some comic vocal inflections. Given the competing references to the "give me some skin" phrase, the absence of a percussive hand slap in the break following the line is almost surprising. At

¹⁴¹ According to the Document Records release, the opposite side of this disc presents a performance by the Camp Acton Jive Cats—presumably a reference to California's substance-abuse rehabilitation camp by that name. The Three Chocolateers returned to California in summer 1941, per "Chocolateers Will Show Off New Dance," *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1941.

¹⁴² Bill Chase, "Ace Arranger Turns to Recording Field."

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ As issued, Mosby sings "The Hicky Ricky" in the key of E-flat, a whole-step lower than the leadsheet key of F.

the close of the performance, an unidentified voice announces: “Thank you, Mosby! Ladies and gentleman, that was ‘The Hicky Ricky’ by the one and only—Central Avenue’s Mayor—Esvan Mosby. Thank you, Mr. Mosby.” Although the recording quality is limited, it’s an energetic and convincing performance. Perhaps the disc is evidence of additional Chocolateer marketing efforts in California.

An undated manuscript score reflecting a single-chorus big band arrangement of “The Hicky Ricky,” written by New York City nightclub arranger Tom Whaley, resides in the Smithsonian Duke Ellington Collection. Orchestrated for a “stock” dance band instrumentation of four saxes and five brass, it is unclear if the arrangement was intended as a brief transitional *entreact* within a revue sequence, or was simply left unfinished. Ellington was in California for much of 1941–42, and held residency at New York’s Hurricane Club and Café Zanzibar on multiple occasions during 1943–45, where his band (in addition to the Claude Hopkins-led “house” orchestra) performed behind various stage acts.¹⁴⁵ The Chocolateers are not known to have appeared with Ellington during this period, but Whaley reportedly supplied material for the Hurricane floorshows, as did Willet for the Zanzibar.¹⁴⁶

The Whaley arrangement retains the “tailgate” turnaround figures of the chorus, scored for saxophones and bass in three-octave unison (see example 5.20), as well as the fourth-beat accent-and-hold at the end of the bridge. There are a few variations from the leadsheet regarding the harmonic structure: major II⁷ is used instead of minor ii⁷ in the

¹⁴⁵ W.E. Timmer, *Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen*, 5th ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 645–47; Paul Secon, “On the Stand: Claude Hopkins,” *Billboard*, November 11, 1944, 18. The Café Zanzibar’s 1945 location was that of the 1943–44 Hurricane Club (Broadway at 49th Street).

¹⁴⁶ Tom Whaley, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo, 1970), 48; Izzy [Rowe], “Duke Tops Jordan in Billing Row at Zanzibar,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1945; Clyde Bernhardt and Sheldon Harris, *I Remember: Eighty Years of Black Entertainment, Big Bands, and the Blues* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 169.

chorus A sections, and a major IV⁷ chord replaces the minor vi chord of the bridge. The latter variation coincides with yet another fourth-beat ensemble hold, though the accompanying bass part is unusually (or hastily?) out-of-sync with the ensemble harmony (see example 5.21; the troubling bass note is on beat 4 of bar 18).

Example 5.20: “The Hicky Ricky” mm. 7–8, arr. by Tom Whaley¹⁴⁷

Hicky Ricky

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Example 5.21: “The Hicky Ricky” mm. 17–19, arr. by Tom Whaley

Hicky Ricky

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¹⁴⁷ [Esvan Mosby, Chappie Willet and Albert Gibson,] “[The] Hicky Ricky” [manuscript score], Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH. My attribution of the score to Tom Whaley is based on handwriting.

Neither the fourth-beat hold device nor the diatonic tailgate figure is unique to Willet's or Whaley's writing: for example, the tailgate figure is heard as a trombone break in the same Duke Ellington "Rockin' in Rhythm" recording that Harry James borrowed the "Peckin'" melody from.¹⁴⁸ But it is notable that *both* devices appear in Vic Schoen's arrangement backing the Andrews Sisters' performance of "Gimme Some Skin" as heard in *In the Navy*, and recorded with Schoen's orchestra for the Decca label on May 29, 1941.¹⁴⁹ The fourth-beat hold is heard in the introductory verse, and twice again closing the first two A sections of the chorus (see one case in example 5.22); trombones provide a less obvious instance of the tailgate figure during a polyphonic instrumental passage (see example 5.23).¹⁵⁰

Example 5.22: "Gimme Some Skin, My Friend" mm. 24–26 (0:27), arr. by Vic Schoen for the Andrews Sisters (1941)

24 $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 100$

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Ens.' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Bass'. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 100$. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The Ensemble part begins with a rest, followed by a complex rhythmic pattern with a fourth-beat hold and a diatonic tailgate figure. The Bass part begins with a rest, followed by a simple rhythmic pattern.

Gimme Some Skin Friend

Words and Music by Don Raye, Gene De Paul and Red Mack

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¹⁴⁸ Duke Ellington, "Rockin' in Rhythm," *Early Ellington: The Complete Brunswick and Vocalion Recordings of Duke Ellington, 1926–1931* (Decca GRD [CD] 3-640, 1994).

¹⁴⁹ Ruppli, *The Decca Labels*, vol. 1, 145.

¹⁵⁰ Although the presence of the ubiquitous tailgate passage in "Gimme Some Skin" is—by itself—a tenuous connection to the "The Hicky Ricky," but I believe that the figure's citing here is justified in the presence of the other devices examined.

Example 5.23: “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” mm. 115–17 (2:18),
arr. by Vic Schoen for the Andrews Sisters (1941)

Gimme Some Skin Friend

Words and Music by Don Raye, Gene De Paul and Red Mack

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In the 1980 documentary video, Albert Gibson follows brief demonstrations of the “Peckin” and “Skrontch” dances with a short excerpt of the Chocolateers’ “Hicky Ricky” routine. Gibson dances and sings the first eight bars of the “Hicky Ricky” chorus; his recollection of the lyrics is slightly awry after forty years, but not far off. The demonstrated dance steps appear to reflect the choreography described in the lyrics of the second eight bars of the chorus: Gibson’s ankles and knees move in and out as if to “get way back and ball the jacky,” and his right foot advances forward to pat time while his shoulders pull back for “right foot front and shoulders backy.”¹⁵¹ At the risk of emphasizing potentially unintentional parallels, it might be noted that Patty Andrews appears to perform a similar “Ballin’ the Jack” motion during *In the Navy’s* “Gimme Some Skin” sequence.¹⁵² Any relationship between the dances may be another

¹⁵¹ The “Ballin’ the Jack” dance has been described as “bending over and putting the hands upon the knees and then swinging the knees from side to side in a crescent path”; Knowles, *The Tap Dance Dictionary*, 15. For a somewhat different account, see Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 98–99.

¹⁵² Patty Andrews’s movements here are possibly in combination with arm motions known as the “Eagle Rock” (followed by foot motions of the “Double Pigeon Toe”?), but my identification of these components falls outside my expertise. The “Eagle Rock” dance has been described as “an eccentric dance movement

coincidence, but these movements by Andrews (presumably choreographed by Nick Castle) stand out fairly distinctly against of the rest of her routine.¹⁵³

Gibson explained that “The Hicky Ricky” served as “the Apollo [theater] theme song [for] taking amateurs off [stage].”¹⁵⁴ Perhaps the piece accompanied the “Porto Rico” Apollo clown character as he chased unsuccessful amateur-night acts offstage, or was used in a more celebratory nature.¹⁵⁵ Every week, arrangers like Willet and Whaley created material for a new run of performances at the Apollo, where musical numbers were tailored to the needs of individual acts.¹⁵⁶ Harold “Stumpy” Cromer of the “Stump & Stumpy” comedy dance act recalled of Willet: “he could write fast, I can tell you that!”¹⁵⁷

The Chocolateers’ may have hoped that “The Hicky Ricky” would “be as great as ‘Peckin’,” but their new number never quite achieved the smash-hit status that they were aiming for.¹⁵⁸ Despite record-breaking national theater tours, the song’s potentially extended exposure as an Apollo Theater theme, Willet working his connections in the black press, representation by a mainstream publisher, and a Hollywood film appearance (though hardly the high-profile release the composers had initially planned) concern

which included rocking the body from side to side with wing-like arm motions and a variety of shuffle steps ... later incorporated as part of the popular dance ‘Ballin’ the Jack.’” Knowles, *The Tap Dance Dictionary*, 81; see also 145, where Knowles provides a description of the “Double Pigeon Toe.” The dance director credited in *In the Navy* was Nick Castle, who had choreographed Hollywood appearances by acts such as the Nicholas Brothers. See Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 281.

¹⁵³ At the time of this writing, the complete “Gimme Some Skin” sequence from *In the Navy* is available on the internet; the moment cited occurs at 2:09 into the posted video clip. See “Andrews Sisters - Gimme Some Skin, My Friend,” *YouTube*, <www.youtube.com> (accessed January 2, 2011).

¹⁵⁴ *By Word of Foot I, Tap Masters Pass on Their Tradition, John Bubbles and Albert Gibson*.

¹⁵⁵ Regarding the history of the Apollo Theater “Porto Rico” character, see Ted Fox, *Showtime at the Apollo* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 109–10.

¹⁵⁶ See bandleader Andy Kirk’s testimony in Jacqui Malone, *Steppin’ on the Blues: The Visible Rhythms of African American Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 99. Kirk also shared a bill with the Three Chocolateers at the Apollo; see “Apollo” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, September 30, 1944. Regarding Whaley’s work at the Apollo, see Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 48–49.

¹⁵⁷ Harold Cromer, interview by author, May 7, 2004, New York City.

¹⁵⁸ “Chocolateers Will Show Off New Dance,” *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1941.

surrounding “The Hicky Ricky” eventually faded. Except for the demonstration disc, there are no known commercial sound recordings of the song. When the Chocolateers filmed a “soundie” music video at the end of 1942, they retreated to a “boogie-woogie” style update of the their 1930s warhorse, “Peckin’.”¹⁵⁹

The circumstances surrounding “The Hicky Ricky” reflect one story from an industry that published hundreds of similar tunes competing for hit status.¹⁶⁰ In an era when sound recordings or films served to publicize an act’s live engagements, the creation of original musical material was recognized as a critical extension of its performers’ identity. At the same time, a wide variety of pop-culture music and lyric references were tapped in manufacturing a song’s “novelty” character. This tradition of borrowing recognizable elements from other cultural products remains a defining component of American entertainment. As the film industry became an increasingly important mainstream venue, Hollywood’s dependence upon the interracial transfer of products from sources like Harlem created a major avenue of commerce in the swing industry.¹⁶¹ Some of the resulting cultural transfers were more symmetrically negotiated than others: though I have found no accusations that the Chocolateers did not receive

¹⁵⁹ The 1942 version of “Peckin’” was released by Soundies Distribution Corp. on November 9, 1942, as provided in Stearns and Stearns, 416; [Three] Chocolateers, “Peckin’,” *Music Clips From the Swing Years: Dance Your Old Age Away* (Unforgettable UFG [DVD] 12122 B, 2004). The Chocolateers returned to “Peckin’” again in 1953; the resulting audio disc was reissued on *Rockin’ at Midnight at the Parrot Club* (Relic [CD] 7027, 1992).

¹⁶⁰ According to a 1941 study of American popular music, “industry estimates” reported an average of 35 to 40 new songs placed on the publishing market each week, including “novelties” and “rhythm numbers” such as “Flat Foot Floogee.” Duncan MacDougald Jr., “The Popular Music Industry,” reprinted in *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts 1919–1968*, ed. John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2004): 174–80; 176. As early as 1935, some music publishers reportedly discussed curtailing the number of songs being published in order to reduce costs of arranging and other “incidentals”; according to *Billboard* magazine, the publishers hoped that with fewer publications, “the life of an average number will be much longer than at present . . . the [current] duration of a hit is about three months at best.” “Music Notes,” *Billboard*, April 13, 1935, 15.

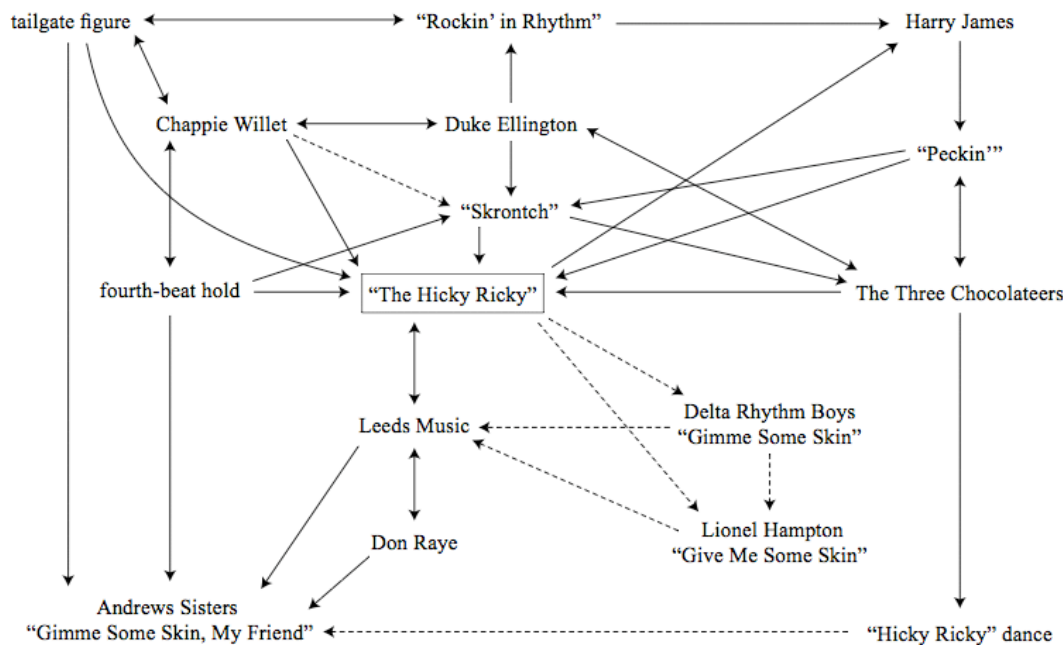
¹⁶¹ Another example of cultural transfer from *In the Navy* is the Andrews Sisters’ performance of Gene DePaul and Don Raye’s “Hula-ba-luau” (E un. 254543), another of the trio’s “fusion” numbers—again published by Leeds Music—combining boogie-woogie and, in this case, Pacific island influences.

their \$5,000 for “The Hicky Ricky” (perhaps, after all, simply a buyout), Leeds Music appears to have sat on the song for at least fifteen months. A chronological list of events (see figure 5.24) allows for any number of theories regarding a trail of relationships and borrowings (see figure 5.25).

Figure 5.24: Chronology of “The Hicky Ricky” and “Gimme Some Skin”

August 15, 1940	Composers’ copyright registration for “The Hicky Ricky.”
September 1940	Chocolateers take “The Hicky Ricky” on Cab Calloway tour.
December 16, 1940	Delta Rhythm Boys record title “Gimme Some Skin” in N.Y.C.
March 13, 1941	Leeds copyright registration for “Gimme Some Skin” by DePaul, Mack, and Raye.
April 5, 1941	<i>Chicago Defender</i> announces “The Hicky Ricky” to be performed by Andrews Sisters in <i>In the Navy</i> .
April 8–mid-May, 1941	Universal Pictures <i>In the Navy</i> produced in Hollywood.
April 8, 1941	Title “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” registered by Leeds.
April 8, 1941	Lionel Hampton records title “Give Me Some Skin” in Chicago.
April 12, 1941	<i>New York Amsterdam News</i> reports plans for Andrews Sisters to record “The Hicky Ricky” resulted from Willet’s demonstration disc sent to Leeds.
May 29, 1941	Andrews Sisters record “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend” in L.A.
May 30, 1941	Universal Pictures <i>In the Navy</i> released.
June 1942	Republic Pictures <i>Moonlight Masquerade</i> released.
July 20, 1942	Leeds copyright registration for “The Hicky Ricky.”

Figure 5.25: Potential Relationships and Borrowings of
 “The Hicky Ricky” and “Gimme Some Skin, My Friend”¹⁶²



Monson’s identification of “asymmetrical” relationships in a segregated economy can also be applied to the broader legacies of Willet and the Three Chocolateers. While technological developments such as private recording equipment were still emerging, an act’s potential publishing, recording, or film opportunities reflected the structures of a segregated entertainment industry. Although ambitious figures like Willet positioned themselves to take advantage of new mediums, strategies to overcome the limitations built into segregation necessarily remained a constant concern. It was following Willet’s short-lived relationships with white-owned publishers Robbins Music and Leeds Music that the arranger decided to create his own publishing entities: the inauguration of Text

¹⁶² The solid-line “arrows of influence” in figure 5.25 are entirely subjective; the dashed lines are intentionally speculative.

Music and Duo Music in 1944 was celebrated by the *Chicago Defender* as Willet's venture into "Negro-owned" enterprise.¹⁶³ Willet's publication "A Rainy Sunday" would go on to be featured in Cab Calloway's 1947 *Hi-De-Ho*, a film musical produced by another black-owned production company, All-American News.¹⁶⁴

These concerns and strategies also applied to an act's performance opportunities—which, for the Chocolateers, included destinations as distant (or desperate) as Shanghai.¹⁶⁵ And even as an act hoped to survive the Hollywood film censors, a vast array of other factors needed to fall into alignment to achieve mainstream success. Despite considerable efforts, the lightning of "Peckin'" struck only once for the Three Chocolateers.

"Eh! Now"

An additional entry in the "gimme some skin" chronicle includes Willet's 1941 composition "Eh! Now," with lyrics by choreographer and stage personality Llewellyn Crawford. The piece follows a novelty formula similar to "Hicky Ricky" and "Gimme Some Skin," including use of the line "gimme some skin"; additional jive references in "Eh! Now" include "au reet now," and a repetitive emphasis on a phrase that appears to read as "splank the blank."¹⁶⁶ It's a strong possibility that Willet misread Crawford's handwriting in creating the copyright deposit leadsheet, and that the intended reference

¹⁶³ "Willett [*sic*] Heads Music Firm," *Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1944; "Willett [*sic*] Artists Bureau Newest Newsreel Feature," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1947; Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, November 25, 1944. Regarding Willet and Robbins Music, see Billy Rowe, "Chappie Willet Signed," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1938.

¹⁶⁴ "Film Reviews: Hi-de-Ho," *Variety*, May 14, 1947, 15; *Hi-De-Ho* [1947]/*The Duke Is Tops* (Whirlwind Media WDVD 2019, 2000). Calloway made multiple films under the *Hi-De-Ho* title.

¹⁶⁵ Regarding opportunities for African-American performers and jazz musicians in 1930s Shanghai, see Andrew F. Jones, "Black Internationale: Notes on the Chinese Jazz Age," in *Jazz Planet*, ed. E. Taylor Atkins (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003): 230–31.

¹⁶⁶ Llewellyn Crawford and Chappie Willet, "Eh! Now," copyright deposit, September 3, 1941 (E unp. 268863), U.S. Library of Congress.

was “spank the plank”—a phrase that enjoyed some currency in the black press circa 1942–43, but never caught on to the degree of “gimme some skin.”¹⁶⁷ “Spank the plank” clearly suggests a dance move, though the possibility of an intended manipulation into “spank the blank” offers additional interpretations.¹⁶⁸

“Eh! Now” foregoes the fourth-beat holds or tailgate accompaniment figures found in “The Hicky Ricky,” but it follows the same general design.¹⁶⁹ Built on a 32-bar AABA-form chorus, the song includes a 16-bar introductory verse with harmony referencing whole-tone chromaticism, and lyrics describing a character who delivers the title phrase (this time set to “Charleston” rhythm) no less than seven times during the chorus (see example 5.26, mm. 31 and 37). The chord progression of “Eh! Now’s” chorus is a bit more sophisticated than “Hicky Ricky,” including some chromatic diminished chords (mm. 31 and 35). The end of the bridge, however, uses a similar augmented dominant chord device (m. 33) leading back to the final eight bars of the chorus.

¹⁶⁷ The phrase “spank the plank” emerges in various black press publications during this time, including Chester L. Washington Jr., “Ups and Downs: Reflections from Life,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 9, 1942; Dan Burley, “Back Door Stuff,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 19, 1942; “Camp Lee Has Own Tin Pan Alley Songs Show,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 17, 1943; Dan Burley, “Back Door Stuff,” September 25, 1943.

¹⁶⁸ Another potential ambiguity in the piece’s lyrics concerns the word “taken” versus “takem” (take ’em?).

¹⁶⁹ A manuscript piano accompaniment part for “Eh! Now,” copied in pencil by Willet, is held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

Example 5.26: “Eh! Now” [interpolation of copyright deposit leadsheet and piano part] mm. 30–37, by Llewellyn Crawford and Chappie Willet (1941)¹⁷⁰

The image shows a musical score for the song "Eh! Now". It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts at measure 30 and ends at measure 33. The second system starts at measure 34 and ends at measure 37. Each system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment with chord symbols. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is common time (C).

System 1 (Measures 30-33):

- Measure 30: spank the blank_ and Eh! Now_ has tak - en_ all the play._ Say,
- Chord symbols: Dm, G7, Em, Eb°, Dm, G7, C7, C+9

System 2 (Measures 34-37):

- Measure 34: it's a new twist you just can't miss_ all you say is Eh! Now_
- Chord symbols: F, Gm7, B°, F, Dm, G7(b9), C7

Eh! Now

By Llewellyn Crawford & Chappie Willet

© Copyright 1941

During the fall of 1941, “Eh! Now” served as a stage vehicle for the Bye Sisters, a song and dance act managed by Willet.¹⁷¹ That September, an impressive newspaper plug for the sisters (almost certainly based on a press release provided by Willet’s office) appeared in the *Baltimore Afro-American*:

Through a strange twist of fate, the Bye Sisters, radio’s newest trio, are casting their lot together when prior to being “stung” by the footlight bug, all had decided on widely separate careers. ...

Sisters all, Doris, Henrietta, and Frances were born and reared in New York. ... Harlem’s well-known Utopia House, a recreation center, became a meeting place for them ... and it was here ... that they received their first vocal instructions.

¹⁷⁰ The “Eh! Now” copyright deposit leadsheet reflects the vocal melody and lyrics only; a surviving piano accompaniment part, written in Willet’s hand and held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH, does not include the lyrics. The chords symbols provided in the above example are my own, referencing in part a manuscript orchestra score by Tom Whaley also held in the Duke Ellington Collection.

¹⁷¹ “New Song Wows Gang in New York’s Harlem,” *Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1941. See also “New Singing Sensations,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1941.

With a kazoo band they began appearing at various Police Athletic League centers, which was climaxed by a turn on “We the People” and “Gang Busters” radio programs. Little did they realize in winning a singing contest at the Elks’ Rendezvous in ’38 that three years later they would be back there as the stars of the show....

Last December, Broadway’s topflight sepia arranger and talent agent, Chappie Willet, heard them and realizing the heights to which they could ascend, took them under his personal management. Rehearsing diligently with them in the art of showmanship, Willet secured several Broadway night club engagements for them. ...

Now back at the Elks’ Rendezvous, they will soon leave for Detroit to headline a four weeks’ show at the Congo Club. Unlike the majority of swing trios, they feature popular ballads treated in their unique, sweet-swing type of voices. However, on the jump tunes, they swing and dance their way into a groove loved by all jitterbugs.¹⁷²

Relationships crossing between the Bye Sisters, Llewellyn Crawford, the Elks’ Rendezvous Club, and Willet’s 1941 Indigo Room production (featuring both Crawford and the Bye Sisters) provide a number of opportunities for the creation and performance of “Eh! Now.” The song was additionally reported to have been performed by the Peters Sisters in a 1941 Warner Brothers film short, though no such artifact has been discovered to date.¹⁷³

Nightclub dancer Cleo Hayes, who worked at the Cotton Club and Café Zanzibar, recalled the Bye Sisters act:

They were a young group of girls ... the odd person was not a sister. But they were very lovely girls, and they were talented. At that point in time, what they were doing, that kind of show business—it went out, you know.¹⁷⁴

In mid-1942, Willet apparently had a falling out with the Bye Sister act over the group’s contract for a revue tour with Lionel Hampton. A *Chicago Defender* columnist reported:

¹⁷² “Bye Sisters Say Bye to Early Ambitions as Stage Claims Trio,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, September 27, 1941.

¹⁷³ See “Peters Sisters in a Pix Made in New York,” *Chicago Defender*, October 4, 1941.

¹⁷⁴ Cleo Hayes, telephone interview by author, November 14, 2006.

Intimates of the arranger and talent scout Chappie Willet are saying that his singing finds, the Bye sisters, didn't do right by him when they joined with Lionel Hampton and his crew. He had them under contract and they didn't consult him at all.¹⁷⁵

In another parallel with “The Hicky Ricky,” the Duke Ellington Collection also holds an orchestra score for “Eh! Now” in Tom Whaley’s hand. Unlike the “Hicky Ricky” score, Whaley’s “Eh! Now” arrangement is complete, including a full set of orchestra parts that appear to have been used in performance. Scored for four saxes, three trumpets, three trombones, and rhythm section, the arrangement includes an introduction, verse, chorus, transitional modulation, an 8-bar “dance chorus” vamp (marked on the parts to be repeated six times), and a complete out-chorus; the parts also reflect directions for an additional 16-bar tag.¹⁷⁶ Although these documents are undated, the Hurricane Club or Café Zanzibar (where the Peters Sisters held multiple residencies) are again likely performance venues.¹⁷⁷

The brief lifespan of Willet’s novelty songs is not entirely surprising. As in other eras, the Swing Era novelty song market seems to have focused on quantity and fast turnover, with hopes of playing the statistical odds in finding a hit.¹⁷⁸ To compound matters for “Eh! Now,” coverage of the Bye Sisters in the black press immediately dried up following the Hampton tour dust-up. Aside from the unconfirmed Peters Sisters film, it is not clear if any other acts ever used the vehicle. To date, there is no known recording

¹⁷⁵ Major Robinson, “Through Harlem,” *Chicago Defender*, July 11, 1942. Regarding plans for the Hampton tour, see Alvin Moses, “Alvin Moses Says,” *Chicago Defender*, March 28, 1942; Billy Jones, “Star Twinkles,” *Chicago Defender*, June 20, 1942.

¹⁷⁶ The manuscript score and orchestra parts for “Eh! Now” are held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

¹⁷⁷ Bill Smith, “Nightclubs–Vaudeville: Zanzibar, New York,” *Billboard*, April 28, 1945, 30.

¹⁷⁸ An study in *Radio Research 1941* describes a popular song to be “classified as a hit” after achieving sheet music sales of 75,000 copies; for recordings, an “average hit” was marked by the sale of 250,000 discs. Duncan MacDougald Jr., “The Popular Music Industry,” reprinted in *Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts 1919–1968*, ed. John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2004): 176.

of “Eh! Now,” though a number of novelty songs using similarly phrased titles did find their way onto disc, including Henry Nemo’s “Ay Now” (1942), and Cab Calloway and Elton Hill’s “Hey Now, Hey Now” (1946). As with “The Hicky Ricky,” Willet appears to have been ahead of the curve, but unable to score a hit.

Vocal Ballads

Aside from novelty songs, the ballad genre—typically represented by “love songs” out of the Broadway musical theater tradition—remained the primary vehicle for popular vocalists throughout the Swing Era. Despite the popularity of up-tempo jazz dance material, much of the era’s best-selling sheet music and juke box hits remained vocal ballads popularized by “sweet” style bandleaders such as Xavier Cugat, Paul Whiteman, and Eddie Duchin.¹⁷⁹ Due to the songs’ popularity, the same material was often presented by “hot” dance bands as well, though perhaps performed at a faster tempo, louder volume, or as an instrumental. Yet the popularity of vocal features in dance band music (as opposed to instrumentals) seems to have only increased during the 1940s.¹⁸⁰

Chappie Willet’s own compositions and publications tend to reflect an early Swing Era (1930s) emphasis on instrumental dance numbers—Willet’s first four documented compositions are all instrumentals—followed by a later (1940s) emphasis on vocal features—including all of Willet’s original works composed or published after

¹⁷⁹ For example, see “Music Notes: 10 Best Records,” *Billboard*, November 2, 1935, 61. Prior to its famous weekly jukebox rating system, *Billboard* offered listings of the “10 Best Records” and “Sheet-Music Leaders” as “reported by ... record firms” or “leading jobbers and retail music outlets”: unspecified sources that were almost certainly as open to manipulation as the later “payola”-based disc jockey rating systems.

¹⁸⁰ The AFM recording ban of 1942–44 has been cited as one contributing factor behind a rise in the popularity of vocalists in the dance band music industry. See Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin’ the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 216–17.

1940. Although the performance designation “ballad” often carries connotations of relatively slow tempos, the requirements of different entertainment presentations or venues allowed for significant variation in this area: few of Willet’s recorded arrangements fall below a tempo of 100 beats per minute, ballad repertoire or not.

“Nothin’ to Do but Love”

One of Willet’s earliest documented ballad efforts features lyrics written by one of his Broadway Music Clinic partners, Porter Grainger. Their collaboration, “Nothin’ to Do but Love,” was filed for copyright on April 28, 1938, and cited in the *Pittsburgh Courier* two days later.¹⁸¹ The piece is representative of standard Tin Pan Alley popular ballads, with an eight-bar verse and a 32-bar chorus, and written in a genuine ballad tempo (the vocal and piano copyright deposit leadsheet designates “slowly”). “Nothin’ to Do but Love” also strongly reflects characteristics identified in music theorist Allen Forte’s study of the genre, including the assimilation of decorative notes in the form of sixth chords (example 5.27, m. 15), frequent use of half-diminished chords (mm. 9–10), parallel chord embellishment (especially m. 16), harmonic chains of fifths (especially mm. 9–11), an underlying Charleston dance rhythm in the melody (mm. 9–10, 13–15), and short “cellular” rhythmic motives throughout.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Porter Grainger and Chappie Willet, “Nothin’ to Do but Love,” copyright deposit, April 28, 1938 (E unpub. 165622), U.S. Library of Congress; Billy Rowe, “Chappie Willet Signed,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1938.

¹⁸² Allen Forte, *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era, 1924–1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7–8, 12–14, 16–17, 20–23.

Example 5.27: “Nothin’ to Do but Love” [copyright deposit leadsheet] mm. 9–16,
by Porter Grainger and Chappie Willet (1938)¹⁸³

9 **Slowly**

Now I find that fate was kind the night I picked up your glove,
Am⁷(b⁵) D⁷ Gm⁷(b⁵) C⁷ F

12
I saw my chance thru your smi-ling glance of
Am¹¹ D⁷ Gm¹¹ Bbm(maj⁷) Am⁷ E⁷

15
Noth - in' to Do but Love.
Gm⁷ C⁶ C⁷⁺ Eb⁷(b⁵) D⁷ Db⁷⁺ C¹³

Nothin’ to Do but Love

By Porter Grainger & Chappie Willet

© Copyright 1938

Grainger’s lyrics also represent the ballad tradition identified by Forte, including the element of “text painting.”¹⁸⁴ In “Nothin’ to Do but Love,” imagery of ascent

¹⁸³ Grainger and Willet, “Nothin’ to Do but Love.” No chord symbols are reflected in the copyright deposit leadsheet.

¹⁸⁴ See Forte, *The American Popular Ballad*, 32.

suggested in the lines “the heaven above,” “I picked up your glove,” and “sweet as a dove” are set to a melodic phrase ascending the compass of a ninth—arguably the most outstanding melodic feature of the song (see example 5.27, m. 11).

To date, no documentation has surfaced regarding who might have performed “Nothin’ to Do but Love,” or if it was connected to any stage production. The song does not appear to have been printed or recorded; perhaps the title was too similar to the 1933 Phil Harris hit “I’ve Got Nothing to Do but Love,” though the music reflects no obvious parallels.

“East of the Sun”

In 1942, two years after the release of Frank Sinatra’s influential recording of “East of the Sun (and West of the Moon)” with Tommy Dorsey’s orchestra, Willet created an arrangement of the song for Jimmie Lunceford’s popular “crooner” vocalist, Dan Grissom. Composed in 1936 by Brooks Bowman, “East of the Sun” was a musical theater piece that had only gradually established itself as “standard” repertoire, largely through Sinatra’s success.¹⁸⁵ Although the length of Willet’s arrangement would have precluded release on the 10-inch disc format (without making alterations), “East of the Sun” is not as extreme in duration or ambition as “Stardust,” and focuses much more exclusively on the vocalist.

Yet elements of “rhapsodic” form and orchestration are again applied in order to produce a theater-style work. In contrast to the rhythm section’s predominant two-beat feel, Willet’s orchestration includes a recurring syncopated figure in the bass and piano

¹⁸⁵ Sinatra’s alterations to the original “East of the Sun” lyrics are maintained in most later interpretations of the song. The vocal part reflected in the surviving conductor’s score and piano part for the Lunceford arrangement does not include the lyrics, leaving Willet’s preference unclear.

during the second four bars of the ABAC form's eight-bar A sections. This device highlights the chromaticism of the song's chord changes while suggesting a "Latin" rhythmic flavor (example 5.28, mm. 29–32); a similar figure unites the introduction and coda. A clarinet and alto sax *obbligato* countermelody in the second half of the first chorus (example 5.28) might be heard as an extension of the "accordion" effect referenced in Willet's ballad arrangement of "You Can Count on Me" (though scored in unison instead of octaves).

Example 5.28: “East of the Sun” mm. 25–32,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1942)¹⁸⁶

[♩ = c. 88?]

25 Vocal

Cl. & Alto Sax

Saxes & Tbns.

Bass

29

East of the Sun

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Similar to his approach in “Stardust” and “The Trumpet Player’s Lament,” Willet adds further variety by presenting the song’s verse (often omitted entirely in Swing Era dance band performances) as an interlude between choruses. At the end of the verse, dramatic *pomposo* triplet figures (example 5.29, m. 60) create a fanfare-like build into a four-bar climax that briefly slows in tempo (orchestra parts indicate “slower”),

¹⁸⁶ Manuscript orchestra parts for “East of the Sun” are held in the Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian NMAH.

highlighted by half-note drum accents and an ensemble quarter-note triplet figure (example 5.29, m. 61). A rhythmic break then transitions back into the original tempo and a return of the syncopated bass motive.

Example 5.29: “East of the Sun” mm. 59–65,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Jimmie Lunceford (1942)

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, starting at measure 59, is marked "Slower" and features a vocal line and instrumental parts for Trumpets & Saxes, Saxes & Trombones, and Bass. The instrumental parts include quarter-note triplet figures. The second system, starting at measure 62, is marked "[A Tempo]" and features an Alto Saxophone solo, Trumpets, Baritone Saxophone & Bass, and Bass. The Alto Saxophone part includes a dynamic marking of *sfz* and a triplet figure. The Bass part includes a triplet figure.

East of the Sun
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Jazz Dance Specials

As suggested earlier, the term “specialties” (or “specials,” also referred to as “killer-dillers,” “flag-wavers,” or “swingeros”) was sometimes applied not only to original arrangements commissioned for a specific band, but to jazz dance repertoire in general. By the height of the Swing Era, elements of the “glorified” aesthetic indicative of genres like the “jazz concerto” were just as likely to be applied to jazz dance arrangements. Even Willet’s short-length (three-minute long) dance arrangements often parallel his longer works in emphasizing “rhapsodic” form, merely reducing the length of various fanfares, transitions, modulations, and codas. Indeed, the formal design of Willet arrangements like “Jungle Madness” and “Prelude to a Stomp” play against conventional Tin Pan Alley formal design by introducing elements of variety out of the “glorified” theater or revue tradition. Not surprisingly, Willet’s favorite “modernist” chromatic orchestration devices also retain a role in his dance music arrangements.

“Struttin’ with Some Barbecue”

Willet’s three-minute dance arrangement of “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” (recorded by Louis Armstrong in 1938), retains parallels with the extended concerto genre despite its relatively short duration and inclusion of soloists other than the bandleader. Brief solo breaks (instead of open cadenzas), transitions, and chromatic modulations create a dramatic theatrical setting aimed at showcasing the trumpeter’s virtuosity. A more extreme example is Willet’s 1942 arrangement of “Hallelujah” for Jimmie Lunceford’s band: within this two-an-a-half minute up-tempo dance arrangement, Willet includes an eight-bar introduction, 24-bar interlude, six-bar transition, another 16-

bar interlude, and a 21-bar coda—passages that in combination (75 bars) rival the duration allotted to presenting Vincent Youmans’s original composition (88 bars).

One trait revealed in orchestra parts for Willet’s dance “specials” of the 1930s is the designation of a mid-arrangement transition from a two-beat or cut-time pattern to a four-beat pattern in the rhythm section (as discussed in chapter 2). “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” and other Willet arrangements often assign a two-beat pattern for the first two choruses (the “head” and the first solo chorus), then designate a four-beat pattern for a second solo (or “arranger’s” chorus) and climactic final chorus (see example 5.30).

Example 5.30: “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” mm. 11–14 [chorus 1] and mm. 91–94 [chorus 3], arr. by Chappie Willet for Louis Armstrong (1938)¹⁸⁷

The image displays two musical staves for drums and bass. The left staff, labeled '11 Drums' and 'Bass', shows a 2-beat pattern in cut-time (C) with a tempo marking of ♩ = 104. The right staff, labeled '91', shows a 4-beat pattern in common time (C) with a key signature of one flat (Bb). Both staves are in 8/8 time signature.

Struttin’ with Some Barbecue

Words and Music by Lillian Hardin Armstrong and Don Raye

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Some period performances of these arrangements, however, reveal little regard for this differentiation on the part of the rhythm section performers. In the Mills Blue Rhythm Band recordings of February 1937, for example, bassist John Kirby starts to introduce a four-feel during the second chorus, while the piano and bass are still in cut-

¹⁸⁷ Orchestra parts for “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue” are held at the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College.

time; recordings by the orchestras of Louis Armstrong and Red Norvo reveal a similar impatience by the performers in waiting for the four-feel rhythm as designated by Willet. In these cases, it appears that the preference of dance audiences may have overridden the calculated formal variety of the arranger's design.

Exotic Numbers

As an element of variety in Swing Era entertainment, exoticism could be represented by individual arrangements, but also entire orchestras. "Latin" style bandleaders such as Alberto Socorras and Xavier Cugat were paired with swing orchestras in revue stage shows such as those at the Cotton Club, or in multiple-orchestra radio programs like NBC's *Let's Dance* series.¹⁸⁸ "Sweet" bands, "hot" bands, "tango" bands, and other ensembles could be programmed in sequence for additional dramatic effect.

But even in productions with only one orchestra, the "exotic" arranging genre was a staple variety component of Swing Era nightclub revue programs. Popularized by Duke Ellington's "jungle" aesthetic developed for Cotton Club productions of the late 1920s, pieces like Ellington's "The Mooche" (1928) or Juan Tizol's "Caravan" (1936) could reinforce visual stage show imagery of foreign or "savage" narratives—commonly related to the performances of scantily-clad dancers.¹⁸⁹ The genre relies on combinations of a small but insistent collection of idiomatic orchestration devices: rhythm section ostinato patterns (often referencing "Latin" dance music patterns), long melodic lines

¹⁸⁸ For example, see Isadora Smith, "Cab Calloway, Nicholas Brothers Reach Peak in the Cotton Club's Latest Broadway Offering," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 22, 1938; "Radio Reviews: Let's Dance," *Billboard*, December 15, 1934, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Elements of Ellington's "jungle" style are described in Mark Tucker, *Duke Ellington: The Early Years* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 133, 216, 224. See also Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 339.

emphasizing held notes (in opposition to Tin Pan Alley’s preference for short, syncopated phrases), minor key tonality or whole-tone chromaticism (suggesting an ominous or other-worldly mood), or scoring for brass instruments with plunger mutes and throat “growl” or flutter-tongue technique (typically in combination with a “wa” effect).¹⁹⁰

“Jungle Madness”

Chappie Willet’s 1937 arrangement of “Jungle Madness” for the Mills Blue Rhythm Band opens with an ostinato passage scored for rhythm section and trombone, and growling brass scored in C minor voicings (example 5.31). Followed by a sudden shift to straight swing rhythm later in the arrangement, the piece’s title suggests that the introductory effects were intended to be heard as cliché.

Example 5.31: “Jungle Madness” mm. 1–8,
arr. by Chappie Willet for Mills Blue Rhythm Band (1937)¹⁹¹

$\text{♩} = 100$

I Tbn. & Piano

Bass

5 Brass *growl*
wa wa

Saxes (octave unison)

Jungle Madness

By Chappie Willet

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¹⁹⁰ For example, designations of “wa” brass mute effects (or “do-wa,” for closed-to-open mute manipulation) appear in Willet’s manuscript orchestra parts for “Flat Foot Floogee,” held in the Red Norvo Papers, MSS 48, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University.

¹⁹¹ *Mills Blue Rhythm Band 1936–1937* (Classics CD 731, 1993).

Tom-tom drum solos (referencing the timbre of lower-pitched “primitive” drum ensembles) are likewise associated with the exotic genre. Jimmy Mundy’s arrangement of “Sing, Sing, Sing” for Benny Goodman (1936/1937) famously features drummer Gene Krupa’s tom-tom drumming, reinforced by other “exotic” effects including minor key tonality and growling brass. Krupa’s own 1940 recording of Willet’s “Blue Rhythm Fantasy” features an extended tom-tom drum solo cadenza suggesting a combination of the “exotic” and “concerto” genres.

* * *

The elements of variety and contrast that Willet injects into arrangements across various genres is a testament to the pervasive influence of the theatrical or “glorified” aesthetic during the Swing Era. Successful dance bands and their arrangers embraced this dominant stage show production strategy for live performance, but competition from the technology-based mediums of radio, film, and audio recording similarly relied on theater-derived signifiers of drama, virtuosity, exoticism, or suggestions of expansive visual spectacle. Some examples of Swing Era entertainment presentations demonstrating this aesthetic through the mediums of stage and film are described in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

NIGHTCLUB AND THEATER REVUES

For an ambitious music arranger working in New York during the 1930s and '40s, work in large nightclubs was not simply a matter of prestige. The amount of money that flowed through successful nightclub operations during the Swing Era could be staggering. Exact statistics from mafia-connected establishments like the Cotton Club are (not surprisingly) difficult to obtain, but top-tier nightclubs like the Casa Mañana cited gross incomes of \$35,000 to \$40,000 per week in 1938 (approximately \$525,000 to \$600,000 in 2010 currency).¹ Nightclub business remained strong through World War II; in 1945, the Café Zanzibar cited patronage of 1,500 customers on weekdays and 2,300 on Saturdays, with a yearly gross of \$2 million (approximately \$24 million in 2010 currency).² Nightclub manager Carl Erbe explained:

During the war former \$25-a-week men making \$80 came to know and like us. Old-timers who never thought they could afford a club had to do something with money that formerly bought cars, refrigerators, and washing machines, so they gave a night to us and continued to do so.³

Arranger Tom Whaley cited an early 1940s income of \$400 (about \$4,800 in 2010 currency) per week working at a Times Square nightclub during preparations for a new season's revue.⁴ Chorus dancers working in the shows, by comparison, might earn \$50–

¹ “Big New York Clubs Struggle, Hope to Stick Thru Summer,” *Billboard*, June 11, 1938, 16. Tax fraud was commonly cited in connection with nightclubs; for example, see “Tax Frauds Laid to 9 Nightclubs,” *New York Times*, December 24, 1940. Historical currency conversions are calculated using rates cited by *The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis*, <www.minneapolisfed.org> (accessed February 6, 2010).

² Robert Dana, “Tips on Tables,” *New York World Telegram and Sun*, October 15, 1945.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Tom Whaley, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 48. Whaley cited the Hurricane Club as the venue providing him \$400 per week, but identified his employer as Joe Howard; Howard ran the Café Zanzibar, which moved into the Hurricane site in 1944. Duke Ellington, whom Whaley's testimony centers around, performed at both establishments.

60 per week.⁵ For the performers who worked the duration of multi-week (or month) engagements, a large nightclub's three-show-per-night schedule was well-paying but strenuous work. In correspondence written to Don Redman from the Café Zanzibar in 1945, Louis Armstrong complains about his performance schedule, but sounds grateful for the steady income:

I feel fine as ever ... Just the damn hours at the Club—are so long ... But one just has to get used to it—doesn't one? ... They've added four more weeks on to these other six we had here ... Nice huh?⁶

Duke Ellington's orchestra could earn a fairly modest \$3,200 during a week's residency at the Hurricane Club during the fall of 1943; the club's total receipts earlier the same year (as reported to Ellington) averaged around \$18,000 per week.⁷ While a top dance band might bring in receipts as large as \$1,500 for a well-attended "one-nighter" performance on tour, nightclub residencies like those offered by the Hurricane, Cotton Club, and Café Zanzibar offered the added bonus of regular radio broadcasts that helped to build publicity for the bands.⁸ The other revue performers received no such benefit, as the more visually-oriented acts were usually not featured in the audio broadcasts.

Theater work was another central component of many dance bands' income. Work in theaters could be exhausting, as larger venues presented as many as five revue programs a day. But as early as 1935, top names like Cab Calloway could earn as much

⁵ The chorus line wages are those cited for Leon & Eddie's nightclub as negotiated by the American Guild of Variety Artists. See "Entertainers Get Rise," *New York Times*, April 2, 1943.

⁶ Louis Armstrong, correspondence to Don Redman, January 2, 1945, Don Redman Papers, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

⁷ "Duke Ellington, Inc. pay role [*sic*] for week ending Sept. 23, 1943"; "Receipts, Hurricane Restaurant," held in the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History (NMAH).

⁸ Nineteen-thirty-eight touring performances by Benny Goodman in Pittsburgh and Gene Krupa in Virginia Beach grossed \$1800 and \$1490 respectively, with the latter cited by *Billboard* as a "heavy money-maker for all concerned." "6,000 Gaze at Goodman But Only 2,000 Dancing," *Billboard*, September 3, 1938, 13; "Krupa's 15C Plenty Gravy," *Billboard*, September 3, 1938, 13.

as \$10,000 for a week-long engagement.⁹ A 1940 Paramount theater revue, including Calloway's orchestra, reportedly grossed a record-breaking \$84,000 over two weeks.¹⁰ Although most performers may not have brought in as much money, and working hours could be long, theater and nightclub residencies offered the benefit of allowing performers a break from their road-trip touring schedules.

As the Swing Era began, revue presentations in nightclubs and theaters increasingly relied upon the services of music arrangers. If the producers of a revue did not hire arrangers, the individual acts may have hired one themselves. Dancer Al Williams of the "Four Step Brothers" act offers one explanation:

Before the thirties, when we played colored theaters, the pit band could fake the accents we needed ... but the bands in white theaters didn't know how to do it. Eventually, we had to hire arrangers and hand out our own charts.¹¹

John Howland has investigated the musical components of 1920s and '30s vaudeville variety presentations, which developed extended "production number" arrangements "governed by a formal interest in building internal diversity through contrasting themes, textures, tempi, keys, and variations."¹² Typical floorshow programs of the period (extending well into the 1940s) presented an instrumental overture, an extended opening "production number" arrangement, a series of specialty vaudeville acts (including a variety of comedians, dancers, and singers), and another extended production number serving as a finale. A printed program for the Café Zanzibar's 1945–46 *Laugh-*

⁹ "Calloway's 10 Grand," *Billboard*, November 2, 1935, 15.

¹⁰ "New Mark Set by Calloway at Paramount," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 7, 1940.

¹¹ Al Williams, as quoted in Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (1968; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 299.

¹² John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2009), 117.

Lease Revue indicates production-style arrangements positioned at the beginning, end, and mid-point of the program, separated by the specialty acts (see figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Café Zanzibar *Laugh-Lease Revue* Program (1945)¹³

Overture (featuring the Cootie Williams orchestra)
 “Night Life” (production number featuring Ralph Brown and the Zanzibeaunts)
 Ella Fitzgerald (singer)
 Howell & Bowser (comedians)
 “Dance Fantasy” (production number featuring Bert Howell & Ray Sneed Jr. with the
 Zanzibeaunts)
 Maurice Rocco (singer and pianist)
 The Ink Spots (singers)
 “House of Joy” (production number finale featuring the Cootie Williams orchestra and
 the entire company)

Cotton Club floorshow producer Leonard Reed described the importance of pacing and variety in revue programming: an extended opening production number might begin with a chorus line of twelve to sixteen dancers, transition into a new tempo for a singing act, and then return to the original tempo; a solo tap or ballroom dance act might follow.¹⁴ The “middle number” specialty acts that followed the production opener comprised the different dancers, comedians, and singers in relatively brief routines. For additional variety, Reed’s Cotton Club middle numbers included a troupe of “show girls” (as opposed to the chorus line dancers, or “ponies”): “the show girls did no dancing. They walked and turned and spun—just picture: walk here and pose, and walk somewhere else.”¹⁵ The most “spectacular” of the middle numbers, typically dance acts like the

¹³ “Joe Howard Presents the International Laugh-Lease Revue” [Café Zanzibar program circa December 1945].

¹⁴ Leonard Reed, interview by Fred Strickler [1997?], transcript page 71, Oral History Project, Dance Collection, New York Public Library; see also Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 118.

¹⁵ Reed, interview by Strickler, transcript pages 37–38.

Nicholas Brothers or Three Chcoolateers, would be placed in the penultimate slot, building up applause for a return of the full ensemble in the finale production number.¹⁶

Some revues utilized a script that served to tie together (if loosely) the different performances into a single plot or theme, a parallel to the Broadway stage musical tradition. Short dramatic sketches between acts often incorporated the program's specialty performers, requiring a range of performance skills. As dancer Honi Coles recalled: "you didn't just come into a show and do your dance routine. It was expected that you'd be in the comedy bits."¹⁷ Few scripts or scores from Swing Era revue productions survive, but some artifacts connected with the career of arranger Tom Whaley, who worked at the Apollo theater, Connie's Inn, Small's Paradise, and the Hurricane Club, provide a glimpse into the stage revue medium.¹⁸

The Tom Whaley Collection

The Tom Whaley Collection, now residing within the Smithsonian Duke Ellington Collection, contains a number of songs, orchestra scores, and partial scripts deriving from Swing Era stage show productions in New York. In addition to orchestra arrangements by Whaley, the collection includes a number of handwritten leadsheets of novelty songs and ballads composed by Chappie Willet's Broadway Music Clinic associates, Porter Grainger and Donald Heywood. A brief survey of the range of

¹⁶ "Cotton Club Presents" [programs, March 1937 and March 1938], reprinted in Klaus Strateman, *Duke Ellington: Day by Day and Film by Film* (Copenhagen: JazzMedia ApS, 2002), 694–97. Reed, interview by Strickler, transcript page 71; see also Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 118.

¹⁷ Cholly Atkins, as quoted in Mel Watkins, "That Vaudeville Style: A Conversation with Honi Coles," *Alicia Patterson Foundation Reporter* 2/6, <<http://www.aliciapatterson.org/APF0206/Watkins/Watkins.html>> (accessed August 6, 2009).

¹⁸ Whaley, as quoted in Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 48.

materials represented, along with potential relationships to venues and performers, follows.¹⁹

Many of Whaley's surviving orchestra scores demonstrate, and in some cases complicate, the different roles of "arranger" and "orchestrator." For example, the collection's piano-vocal leadsheets for "Stand for That Jive" and "Unlucky Woman" (no apparent relation to the Leonard Feather composition of the same title), scored by Willet in 1943 for singer (and possibly composer) Billie Hayes, include an introduction, a series of four or five choruses, and a closing tag. Whaley's corresponding orchestral scores for these titles represent the leadsheet music and routines almost exactly, duplicating Willet's bass line and filling out Willet's designated melodic lines in brass, reed, or five-part ensemble voicings. The resulting orchestration closely parallels Willet's initial leadsheet arrangement, though Whaley occasionally interjects his own decisions regarding instrumentation, register, and chord voicings.

Other scores by Whaley include a number of dance band orchestrations (scored for four or five woodwinds, and six or seven brass) designated "Opening" or "Finale." A brief fanfare orchestration labeled "Waters' Opening March 4 '38" coincides with the opening night of an Ethel Waters run at the Apollo theater, where she was backed by Eddie Mallory's orchestra. The score modulates through three keys in the space of twelve bars, including *pomposo* triplet rhythms and chromatic half-step harmonic motion. Another score titled "Opening Zanzibar Nov 24 '43" dates from the Don Redman orchestra's residency at the Zanzibar; the arrangement is fairly simple and appears to

¹⁹ All materials from the Tom Whaley Collection cited in this section are held within the Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian NMAH.

comprise two different 32-bar choruses.²⁰ Another “Zanzibar Opening” score, undated, represents an extended production number arrangement that includes excerpts of Duke Ellington’s “Daybreak Express,” Mack Gordon and Harry Warren’s “Chattanooga Choo-Choo,” Buddy DeSylva, Al Jolson, and Buddy Meyer’s “California, Here I Come,” DeSylva, Ray Henderson, and Bud Green’s “Alabama Bound,” and Billy Strayhorn’s “Take the ‘A’ Train.” This transportation-themed medley includes three interludes, five modulations, and a chorus of stop-time breaks almost certainly designed to accompany a tap dance performance (see figure 6.2). An additional brief reference to “Jumpin’ at the Woodside” may have been intended for comic effect.

Figure 6.2: Formal Structure of “Zanzibar Opening,”
arr. by Tom Whaley (circa 1943–46)

intro (16 bars)	[key of C] “Daybreak Express”/“Chattanooga Choo-Choo”
reh. A (32 bars)	“California Here I Come”
[reh. B] (32 bars)	[key of A-flat] “Alabama Bound”
reh. C (16 bars)	[key of C] “California Here I Come”
[interlude] (16 bars)	[key of E-flat]
(12 bars)	[Jumpin’ at the?] “Woodside 4 bars piano, chos 8 bars” (not notated)
[interlude] (8 bars)	[key of A-flat]
reh. A [<i>sic</i>] (32 bars)	“Take the ‘A’ Train”
(24 bars)	ensemble stop-time breaks
[interlude] (8 bars)	[key of C]
(18 bars)	“Daybreak Express” ending, brass train whistle effect

Whaley’s orchestra score for “Ubangi Rhythm” was likely designed as a production number for the eponymous nightclub. This arrangement reflects the “exotic” genre: it begins with a tom-tom drum and rhythm section ostinato in a minor key, includes brief passages of whole-tone chromaticism, and designates choruses for vocal and dance performance. A score titled “Tropical Madness” similarly includes passages

²⁰ “Broadcasting from the Café Zanzibar,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 4, 1943.

for drum solos, and a series of ensemble rhythmic breaks probably intended to accompany tap dance routines.

There is also a group of Whaley scores relating to one of Porter Grainger's revues at Small's Paradise, labeled "Small's Paradise March 26 '44."²¹ Included are the titles "Daddy of Rhythm Opening," "Can't Wipe Us Out," "Congo Gal," "Mr. Tough," and "Finale." An undated Grainger leadsheet reflecting a different arrangement of the same "Mr. Tough" song, along with corresponding orchestra parts copied by Whaley, includes indications for a slow tempo introduction, a "bounce" chorus, a vocal patter chorus, and a slow tempo transition; in the orchestra parts, this material is followed by pasted-in excerpts from a stock arrangement of Noel Coward's "Zigeuner" waltz, and further directions to continue into "St. Louis Blues."²²

"Mr. Tough" appears to relate to "Miss High Brow and Mr. Tough," a comedy stage routine written by Grainger. The author's typewritten script, along with a lyric sheet for a song titled "Harlem Has a Regiment for War," indicates intended use in a "Cooper-Pigmeat" production at the Apollo theater. Stage personality Ralph Cooper and comic dancer Dewey "Pigmeat" Markham headlined a number of Swing Era stage revues, including a tour of the South and appearances at the Apollo in summer 1940.²³

Another Grainger typewritten script indicates use in a production at the Club MIMO: "Slaves de Orient" [*sic*] is a vehicle for "oriental fanfare" music and a troupe of

²¹ No media documentation of the Spring 1944 program at Small's has been discovered to date.

²² The stock arrangement of "Zigeuner" appears to be the 1929 Chappell Music publication scored by Walter Paul. Noel Coward, *Zigeuner* [stock arrangement], arranged by Walter Paul (New York: Chappell, 1929).

²³ For example, see "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, October 26, 1935; "Over 1500 Fans Hear Jam 'Sesh'," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 22, 1940; Dan Burley, "Back Door Stuff," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 24, 1940; "Apollo" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, September 20, 1940; "Elks' Rendez-vous" [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, September 16, 1944.

almost certainly scantily-clad “slave” women (“buds from Allah’s garden ... queens of innocence”). Handwritten notes suggest elements of an appropriately exotic-styled arrangement: “intro ... 1 chos vocal, 2nd chos faster (growl), 4th chos vocal.” A lyric sheet for “Zanzibar,” composed by Grainger (no apparent relation to the Duke Ellington composition of the same name), is labeled “Clarence Robinson production Club Zanzibar”; a handwritten note naming “Miss Andrews” likely refers to singer Avis Andrews, who shared a bill at the Zanzibar with Ella Fitzgerald and Don Redman in the summer and fall of 1943.²⁴ A leadsheet and orchestra parts for “One Hour Mama,” one of Grainger’s more popular compositions (recorded by Ubangi Club and Elks’ Rendez-vous vocalist Margaret Watkins, among others), features an extended stop-time patten section between choruses, a popular vaudeville stage device.²⁵

An extended seven-page leadsheet arrangement of Porter Grainger’s “Sepia Sorrow Song (A Negro Lament)” is likely representative of the material Grainger presented at his 1939 *Panorama of Negro Folklore* production.²⁶ The arrangement opens with a “grandioso” instrumental introduction, follows with vocals presented in a “dolce” theme that modulates key three times, a 12-bar “tempo di Blues” chorus, an eight-bar transition and modulation, a “stomp” chorus, and a “grandioso” coda ending. The piece’s rhapsodic-style formal construction, coupled with blues scale tonalities and dialect parody (“lawd, I wish I could stop dis sorrow...”), reference the “entertainment spiritual”

²⁴ Louis Calta, “News of Night Clubs,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1943; “Café Zanzibar” [advertisement], *New York Times*, September 16, 1943.

²⁵ Stan Stanley, “For Here the Blues Must ‘Jump,’” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 23, 1944. Another Grainger leadsheet, “Sexegenarian,” appears to be related to the “One Hour Mama” project.

²⁶ “Panorama Friday Will Aid Nursery,” *Chicago Defender*, February 18, 1939.

format described by John Howland in his examination of J. Rosamond Johnson's 1929 concert arrangement of "St. Louis Blues."²⁷

Manuscript leadsheets of songs written by Donald Heywood include more arrangements suggesting stage production use. "I'm Always on the Verge," designated as a feature for vocalist Joan Toner, includes a basic four-bar introduction, 16-bar verse, and a 36-bar chorus.²⁸ There are also instructions to add "4 bar 2nd ending, 8 hot of chorus," and the message: "Tom, please make these arrangements right away. Dough on the line Friday. If you need me call." Indeed, corresponding orchestra parts copied by Whaley include the additional eight-bar "hot chorus." "In My Well of Loneliness" was cited as a feature for singer Barrington Guy in connection with the Ubangi Club's 1937 *Brevities in Bronze* production, and again in the Plantation Club's 1939 *See Harlem First*.²⁹ The leadsheet includes an eight-bar introduction, two different 16-bar verses, and a 32-bar chorus; indications for the titles "Manhattan Serenade" and "Slumming on Park Avenue" appear as well, probably potential segues or interpolations. "Pigmeat for President" includes a 10-bar introduction, a two-bar repeating vamp, a series of odd-length vocal verse passages (12 bars, eight bars, and 11 bars), a 32-bar chorus, and a 36-bar "vocal-dance" chorus.

A Heywood stage script titled "Halloween: A Musical Sketch by Donald Heywood" includes speaking parts for boys and girls carrying pumpkin lanterns, "an old witch stirring her boiling pot," and "Satan," whose entrance is accompanied by "frightening screams ... lightening flashes and ... wind machine." Leadsheet sketches for

²⁷ See Howland, *Ellington Uptown*, 120–26.

²⁸ Details regarding the career of Joan Toner have not been discovered to date.

²⁹ "Depict Takeoff of 'Well of Loneliness,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 10, 1937; Dan Burley, "'One More Dip Will Get It' Hit Song of New Revue at Plantation Club," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 13, 1939.

related dance numbers include “Halloween” (24-bar verse and 36-bar chorus) and “The Witch’s Dance” (32-bar chorus), both featuring references to the classic “Mysterioso” theme of silent film fame.³⁰ There is also an indication in the script for some sort of “cat act.”

Other surviving music, including Heywood’s compositions “Here ’Tis” (no apparent relation to J. C. Johnson’s stage production of the same name), “Go Caribbean[-na],” “Someone,” and “Lush Life” (no apparent relation to Billy Strayhorn’s composition of the same name), and Grainger’s “To War in Rhythm” and “When You’re at Murrain’s,” elude clear connections to any specific performers or production date.³¹ Leadsheets for a number of songs composed by Heywood are labeled as relating to an otherwise undocumented production titled *Soucouyant Woman*, including “The Evening Is Just a Prelude to the Night,” “The Good Night Song,” “Soucouyant Woman,” and “When You Lose Your Man.” In another Broadway Music Clinic connection, a handwritten leadsheet for “Moanin’ Low” bears Russell Wooding’s 1940 union stamp.³²

Films

A number of feature films produced during the Swing Era document different facets of the era’s music industry. The “backstage” or “show musical” film formula allowed for the appearance of contemporary stage stars and a plotline that revealed

³⁰ Precedents for the “Mysterioso” theme include the popular silent film accompaniment publication by J. S. Zamecnik, *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music* (Cleveland: Sam Fox, 1913), 16.

³¹ Publicity for J. C. Johnson’s *Here ’Tis* includes no mention of Heywood; the show’s music arranger was cited as Joe Jordan, with no mention of Whaley. Dan Burley, “Show Business Is on Upgrade,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 1, 1941. “Go Caribbean” suggests a connection with Heywood’s ill-fated *Caribbean Cruise* production, though many of Heywood’s productions have a general “Caribbean” theme.

³² Among other items included in the Whaley collection, an orchestra score titled “Zanzibar Finale” and written in an unidentified hand—though possibly that of Chappie Willet—includes a list of musicians associated with Cab Calloway’s orchestra (though the names reflect a curiously asynchronous personnel), suggesting use during the fall of 1944, summer of 1945, or summer of 1946.

elements of the entertainment business to the lay public, albeit in glamorized “Hollywood” trappings.³³ *Swing Hostess* (1944), for example, features Benny Goodman vocalist Martha Tilton as a jukebox operator and aspiring nightclub singer; a key plot device involves a nightclub bandleader who has lost a trunk of orchestra arrangements in transit.³⁴ *Trocadero* (1944) presents the story of a quaint family-owned restaurant that evolves into a successful Swing Era nightclub presenting revue stage shows.³⁵ Films produced by All-American Pictures, such as *Killer Diller* (1948) and *Boarding House Blues* (1948), are largely built around the extended stage revue presentations that close the narratives.³⁶

Two films in particular offer recreations of black nightclub revues that also relate to many of the personalities discussed in previous chapters: *The Duke Is Tops* (1938) and *Hi-De-Ho* (1947). Both films close with extended revue sequences set on a nightclub stage, including a swing dance band, stage choreography, and a number of contemporary performers out of the vaudeville tradition. In the absence of complete surviving programs, musical scores, or descriptions of choreography from “real” Swing Era nightclub floorshows, these films offer at least some representation of contemporary production practices.

In order to highlight and take advantage of the abundant cross-relations between these film productions and discussions in previous chapters (including musical genres, organizations like Leeds Music, or figures such as Lew Crawford or the Peters Sisters),

³³ For a genre-based discussion of American “show musical” film characteristics, see Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 200–71.

³⁴ *Swing Hostess*, Classic Musicals (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005).

³⁵ *Trocadero*, Classic Musicals (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005).

³⁶ *Killer Diller*, Classic Musicals (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005); *Boarding House Blues* (Alpha Video ALP 4652D, 2005).

the following examinations are presented in something of a review format. More distantly tangential points are offered toward depicting the style and scene of Swing Era entertainment.

Hi-De-Ho

All-American Pictures, responsible for the presentation of more All-Negro events on your theatre screen than any other service is coming out with a killer-diller to be released soon. This one will feature Cab Calloway, Jeni LeGon, Ida James, Peters Sisters, Four Mills Brothers [*sic*], and “Dusty” Fletcher of “Open the Door Richard” fame. The various stars are being shot now and the film will be ready for release soon. The picture will be shown on most of the screens catering to Negro News scenes.³⁷

—*Chicago Defender*, March 1, 1947

The above notice, probably based on a press release from All-American Pictures, was one of few clues provided in contemporary media that such a production was underway. Titled *Hi-De-Ho*, this feature “race” film was released in theaters around May 1947. With its all-African-American cast, the film played primarily in black venues like Chicago’s Michigan Theater (South Side) and Broadway Strand (West Side), where it was paired with releases such as *Born to Speed* and *King of Wild Horses*; true to the *Defender* notice, the Michigan Theater also advertised “All-American Negro News.”³⁸ There were exceptions: a *New York Amsterdam News* ad for the film’s May 9 opening at the Squire Theater (coupled with *The Real Joe Lewis*) announced “the first time in history that an all-negro feature film hit comes to Times Square!”³⁹

³⁷ “All-American Films Will Feature Stars,” *Chicago Defender*, March 1, 1947. This notice incorrectly cites the Mills Brothers instead of the Miller Brothers & Lois act.

³⁸ “Michigan [Theater]” [advertisement], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 5, 1947; “B’dy Strand” [advertisement], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 5, 1947.

³⁹ “Squire” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, May 10, 1947.

That same spring, singer and bandleader Cab Calloway was also advertised as appearing in Astor Pictures' "all-Negro" production, *Ebony Parade*.⁴⁰ Probably filmed around the same time as *Hi-De-Ho*, *Ebony Parade* presented other top "name" black acts like Count Basie and the Mills Brothers.⁴¹ *Hi-De-Ho*, however, was very much Calloway's show: the film not only focuses on him and his orchestra throughout, but the closing revue sequence presents acts that Calloway's band had recently been touring with across the country.

It must be noted that currently available commercial reissues of *Hi-De-Ho* on DVD reflect one very significant omission: Dusty Fletcher's quasi-blackface routine (his signature costume included the top hat, white gloves, floppy shoes, and poorly-fitted trousers of minstrel tradition) on "Open the Door, Richard" does not appear, with no explanations offered by the reissue production companies.⁴² Regardless of motivation (historical revision?), the omission is a fairly radical alteration to the original text, as Fletcher's routine was one of the film's major selling points at the time of its release.

As of February 1947, Fletcher's novelty song vehicle "Open the Door, Richard" (a musical tie-in with his spoken comic routine) dominated disc sales and radio scripts. *Billboard* listed the title on its top ten "Honor Roll of Hits," citing recordings by Fletcher, Jack McVea, Bill Samuels, Count Basie, the Three Flames, the Charioteers, Tiny Grimes, and others; McVea and Fletcher's discs were ranked third and fourth, respectively, on the

⁴⁰ "Music—As Written," *Billboard*, April 26, 1947, 22.

⁴¹ *Ebony Parade* appears to have been released in July 1947, per "'Ebony Parade' at Loew's Theatres," *New York Amsterdam News*, July 12, 1947.

⁴² DVD reissues of *Hi-De-Ho* include *Hi-De-Ho/The Duke Is Tops* (Whirlwind Media WDVD 2019, 2000), and *Hi-De-Ho*, *Classic Musicals* (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005). A version of Fletcher's "Richard" routine can be seen in *Soundies Festival*, *Classic Musicals* (Mill Creek Entertainment, 2005).

“Most-Played Juke Box Race Records” chart.⁴³ *Billboard* also reported that publisher Leeds Music “has been caught short on printing and is rushing copies as fast as they come off the presses. Wednesday ([January] 29) 500,000 copies came off and were immediately shipped.”⁴⁴ The routine’s title phrase quickly invaded American popular culture: a cursory search of the phrase in newspapers of 1947 reveal its use in media ranging from cigar ads to political cartoons to student government elections to United States Marine Corps recruiting slogans.⁴⁵ While audiences of *Hi-De-Ho* might well be offended by such a stereotyped performance (Fletcher’s alcoholic character pleads to “Richard” to “open the door” for him because he’s too drunk to stand up), Fletcher’s appearance was a critical element of the film’s marketing and potential box-office draw.⁴⁶

Hi-De-Ho’s producer, E.M. Glucksman, was not a major Hollywood figure, and his name has not been found in connection to any other feature film. Director Josh Binney (1889-1956) was former silent film actor Harvey J. Binney, who went on to direct a handful of films in the late 1940s, including two other “race” revues in 1948: *Boarding House Blues* and *Killer Diller* featured Lucky Millinder’s orchestra, the Nat Cole trio, Stump & Stumpy, Moms Mabley, and other black vaudeville acts.⁴⁷

As noted in *Variety*’s un-bylined review of May 14, 1947, *Hi-De-Ho* was “working with an obviously low budget”; the review forecasted that while “such a film

⁴³ “The Nation’s Top Tunes: Honor Roll of Hits,” *Billboard*, February 8, 1947, 20; “The Nation’s Top Tunes: Most-Played Juke Box Race Records,” *Billboard*, February 8, 1947, 26.

⁴⁴ “Richard Opens Those Radio Script Conference Doors for Top Hooperated Air Plugging,” *Billboard*, February 8, 1947, 3.

⁴⁵ “Richard!” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947; Ed Holland, “Open the Door Richard,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 24, 1947; “Richard Rings the Bell and Opens the Door,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2, 1947; “Don’t wait for Richard to open the door . . .” [advertisement], *New York Times*, June 5, 1947.

⁴⁶ There was some controversy as to who originated the “Richard” concept: Jack Mason, who shared copyright credit, also gave stage performances of the routine. See “Cab Calloway Band Apollo’s Top Feature,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 3, 1947.

⁴⁷ “Josh Binney,” *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0083063/>> (accessed October 9, 2006).

will receive meager bookings in ofay houses, it's a natural for the 500-odd colored theatres throughout the U.S."⁴⁸ Indeed, the film does not appear to have received box office income coverage in subsequent issues of *Variety*, and there were few notices of the film's venues that summer in entertainment sections of black papers like New York's *Amsterdam News* and the *Chicago Defender*. *Variety's* brief summation of the budget's reflection on production values rings fairly accurate: "acting on the whole is static and Josh Binney's direction might have shown more results had the budget been larger. Production accoutrements and photography also reflects the low nut."⁴⁹ Dialogue audio suffers the same fate, as much of the already thin Hal Seeger script is garbled through crude editing. In one early scene, a club owner character auditioning Calloway's act is asked if "you want to hear another?"; the actor delivers his "sure ... why not?" response with such dejection that it might be taken as deliberately comic, were it not for the equally monotone elocution provided by the rest of the cast throughout (Calloway, Le Gon, and James occasionally providing the few exceptions).

But the film's *musical* performances appear to have been produced with the utmost care, and even possess surprisingly high audio quality, as "Cab croons a half-dozen songs as well as leading his band in a number of sequences."⁵⁰ Musical elements of the production were clearly a primary focus, as visual synchronization with Calloway's vocals and a number of instrumental performances featuring Calloway's sidemen, while perhaps not matching large-budget Hollywood productions, still come across as fairly respectable. Structurally, the film is in two parts: the genre-based "backstage musical"

⁴⁸ "Film Reviews: Hi-de-Ho," *Variety*, May 14, 1947, 15. Another one-line review on the same page summed similarly: "Cab Calloway musical should do okay in Negro houses."

⁴⁹ "Film Reviews: Hi-de-Ho."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

drama comprises the first half-hour, and a stage revue presentation (with only slight reference to the earlier plot) comprises the second half-hour. Overall, the musical performances significantly outweigh the dialogue scenes in time allotted; *Variety* cited the total running time (including the Dusty Fletcher sequence) as 72 minutes.⁵¹

The succinct summary printed in *Variety* provides an adequate run-down of the plot:

Story is just one of those things. Calloway starts from scratch at the Brass Hat Club through the efforts of his femme manager, Ida James ["Nettie"]. His gal friend, Jeni Le Gon ["Minnie"], disapproves of Miss James and in a fit of jealousy moves to have Boss Mason (George Wiltshire), operator of a rival spot, rub Calloway out. Later, overcome with remorse, Miss Le Gon attempts to prevent the attack but is killed herself. Cab then weds Miss James.⁵²

Ida James appears to have enjoyed her role as Calloway's bookish manager; her eventual transformation into the glamorous bride of the closing wedding sequence (including a small singing role) is a bit sudden, if formulaic. James had previously appeared in *The Devil's Daughter* (1939) and *Trocadero* (1944), and performed in the latter film as a member of the "Stardusters" singing group.⁵³ Jeni Le Gon enjoyed a more extensive film career, including *Broadway Melody of 1936*, *Ali Baba Goes to Town* (1937), and the *Amos 'n' Andy* television series of 1951–53.⁵⁴ Actor William Campbell is responsible for a sight gag running throughout *Hi-De-Ho*, as his character "Sparks" sits in

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Ida James," *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0416566/>> (accessed October 9, 2006).

⁵⁴ "Jeni Le Gon," *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0494335/>> (accessed October 9, 2006).

the back of most scenes quietly reading an issue of *Variety*; Campbell later appeared in Binney's *Killer Diller*, which also utilized Dusty Fletcher and a Hal Seeger script.⁵⁵

Calloway had previously appeared in a number of feature films, including the similarly titled *Cab Calloway's Hi-De-Ho* (1934), the identically titled *Hi-De-Ho* (1937), and *Stormy Weather* (1943).⁵⁶ Although Calloway undoubtedly carries the weight of the dramatic sequences in the 1947 production, his convincing musical performances—mostly novelty vocal numbers featuring “jive” lyrics—provide the backbone of the film. The amount of time given over to his sidemen is an added treat, as performers like saxophonists Sam “The Man” Taylor and Hilton Jefferson, trumpeters Jonah Jones and Paul Webster, bassist Milt Hinton, trombonist Earl Hardy, and pianist Dave Rivera get their turns. As described in a *Billboard* review of the orchestra's stand at Los Angeles's Avadon Ballroom later that summer, “a strong blend of fine musicianship and sock showmanship has kept the Cab Calloway tag in the ‘name’ brackets for more than two decades and it still is paying off.”⁵⁷ This formula is central to *Hi-De-Ho*.

An instrumental overture performed by Calloway's orchestra accompanies the film's opening credits, including an interpolation of Calloway, Buster Harding, and Jack Palmer's composition “Hi-De-Ho Man (That's Me).”⁵⁸ Jack Palmer (lyricist of “I've Found a New Baby”) and Buster Harding (an arranger whose clients included Roy Eldridge and Count Basie, among others) had been collaborating on material for

⁵⁵ “William Campbell,” *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0132933/>> (accessed October 9, 2006); *The Unofficial Hal Seeger Productions Homepage*, <<http://www.davemackey.com/animation/seeger/>> (accessed October 9, 2006). Hal Seeger also wrote the script for the Binney-directed *Boarding House Blues* (1948).

⁵⁶ “Cab Calloway,” *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0130572/>> (accessed October 9, 2006).

⁵⁷ Lee Zhito, “On the Stand: Cab Calloway,” *Billboard*, June 21, 1947, 26.

⁵⁸ The original *Hi-De-Ho* film composer credits are incomplete; composer credits for “Hi-De-Ho Man (That's Me)” and other songs in the film reflect ASCAP registrations.

Calloway since at least 1944 (including the novelty “For a Little Bally Hoo”). The first musical number in the film is Calloway’s solo vocal rendition of “Minnie Grew Up Overnight” (a/k/a “Minnie’s a Hepcat Now”), a Calloway, Harding, and Hal Seeger composition sung to Minnie in exchange for “freshening” the singer’s drink.⁵⁹ Seeger’s collaboration suggests “Minnie Grew Up Overnight” as one of only two songs composed specifically for *Hi-De-Ho*.

The following sequence, where hero Calloway (playing himself) demonstrates little hesitation in physically abusing Minnie, is a slightly bizarre action to open with since the attack places Calloway’s character into question; presumably Seeger thought Minnie needed sufficient motivation to jeopardize Calloway’s career later on. Nettie then enters, announcing the offer of an audition for various nightclub owners, and the film cuts to a performance sequence featuring Calloway and members of his band. In this apartment “audition” setting, Calloway sings and dances Eddie DeLange’s “Dawn Time,” and Calloway, Harding, and Palmer’s “We the Cats Shall Hep Ya.” The lineup of trumpet (Jones), tenor sax (Taylor), and rhythm section sounds to include an additional saxophone not portrayed in the visual sequence; this variety-inspired “band-within-a-band” was also an advertised feature of live performances with the full orchestra.⁶⁰ Like many of the Calloway band performances in the film, these arrangements represent the Bebop-influenced jazz idiom of the late 1940s. However, most of the songs performed in *Hi-De-Ho* had been recorded, or at least performed, by Calloway’s orchestra one or two years

⁵⁹ Cab Calloway and Bryant Rollins, *Of Minnie the Moocher and Me* (New York: Crowell, 1976), 282. “Minnie Grew Up Overnight/Minnie’s a Hepcat Now” is not listed in ASCAP.

⁶⁰ See “Regal Stage Show!” [advertisement], *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 17, 1947. The additional saxophonist was probably Hilton Jefferson. On May 1, 1947, this same lineup—including Jefferson—recorded two sides for Columbia under Calloway’s small group production name, the “Cab-Jivers.” “Record Reviews,” *Billboard*, July 19, 1947, 24; Tom Lord, *The Jazz Discography* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Lord Music Reference, 1992), C58.

earlier. This includes both numbers in the audition sequence, which had been in Calloway's book well before 1947 (though documented in full-band arrangements): "Dawn Time" had been recorded by Calloway for Columbia in April 1945, while "We the Cats" had been performed since at least July 1945 (and filed for copyright in 1944).⁶¹

A brief plot exposition by two of the club managers concludes the audition sequence, and with Nettie's plans falling into place, jealous Minnie approaches the evil Boss Mason, who wants a piece of the impending action. Another musical sequence follows, presenting three instrumental performances by Calloway's full orchestra at the "Brass Hat" club. Buster Harding sounds to be the likely arranger: the first two titles are unidentified, while the (partial) third number is "Lammar's Boogie," co-composed by Harding and trumpeter Lammar Wright (and performed by Calloway as early as January 1946).⁶² Although Boss Mason makes his threat, the bandleader is undeterred and performs "Hey Now, Hey Now," a vocal feature credited to Calloway and another dance band arranger, Elton Hill (and recorded by Calloway in May 1946).⁶³

Calloway then takes a break, meeting first with Nettie, then with Minnie. The bandleader realizes that Minnie was right about her earlier warning: "success means money, and money means trouble." But Calloway bravely takes to the stand (again) to lead his band in an instrumental arrangement of Juan Tizol's composition "Keb-Lah," an arrangement modeled on Tizol's exotic hit "Caravan."⁶⁴ It's not clear if this selection is meant to serve as any kind of plot parallel, but Boss Mason has sent his gunman Mouse

⁶¹ Calloway and Rollins, *Of Minnie the Moocher and Me*, 280; Lord, *The Jazz Discography*, C58.

⁶² Lord, *The Jazz Discography*, C59.

⁶³ Ibid. Elton Hill, an arranger for Gene Krupa and Count Basie, among others, was probably trumpet player Elton LeRoy Hill, who briefly played trumpet with Calloway and Lucky Millinder's bands in the early 1940s.

⁶⁴ "Keb-Lah" was originally performed by Harry James's orchestra.

to kill the bandleader. During another backstage break, Calloway easily disarms Mouse: Mason enters, tries to shoot Calloway, mortally wounds Minnie, and is shot by Calloway. At Minnie's dying request, Calloway sings one last solo rendition of "Minnie Grew Up Overnight"; the piece's similarity to "St. James Infirmary" is highlighted as Minnie's body is positioned in the typical *Romeo and Juliet* funeral layout.

Calloway recovers quickly enough, embarking on a visual montage of world travel and partying with Nettie. An accompanying medley played by Calloway's orchestra (the only instance of an underscore in the film) culminates with a reprise of the "Dawn Time" theme. This travel montage ends with Calloway's band appearing at a swank, unspecified "big time" club. The club scene is prefaced by an exterior shot of New York's Times Square district, clearly suggesting a venue such as the Café Zanzibar. At this point, the movie enters its extended nightclub sequence, as Calloway presents the Peters Sisters, an unnamed group of female dancers, the "Miller Brothers & Lois" act (incorrectly cited as the "Mills Brothers" in the March *Chicago Defender* notice) and, presumably, Dusty Fletcher.

This final production sequence of *Hi-De-Ho* is representative of the stage show productions Calloway toured with throughout the 1930s and '40s, and specifically his tour package of winter and spring 1947. In April, while the film was in post-production (however limited that process may have been) *Billboard* ran Don Marshall's review of Calloway's residency at the Strand; the stage show (paired with the film *Stallion Road*) included both Dusty Fletcher and the "Miller Brothers & Lois" act.⁶⁵ Calloway's live performance of "Hi-De-Ho Man (That's Me)" was noted by Marshall as "a comedy piece with a community pitch from the house," suggesting a call-and-response routine similar

⁶⁵ Don Marshall, "Vaudeville Reviews: Strand, New York," *Billboard*, April 12, 1947, 42.

to that popularized by Calloway with his theme song “Minnie the Moocher.” A description of the Miller Brothers & Lois act, which had been touring with Calloway since at least January 1947, also suggests a routine similar to that used for the film⁶⁶:

Their opening routine, done on a platform blocking out the letters of Miller’s name, was marred somewhat by team’s constantly looking down at their feet. This was probably a necessary measure, however. During trio’s stint on another platform, Lois almost went head first when she missed a couple of steps.⁶⁷

The presence of just such a near-fall in the film sequence suggests that the narrowly averted disaster may have been part of the act. An *Amsterdam News* notice describing the trio’s appearance at the Apollo theater in May claimed: “little change has been made in their routine since they last appeared ... audiences never fail to gasp at the [trio’s] dexterity ... on the high platforms.”⁶⁸

Of course, Marshall’s piece highlighted Dusty Fletcher’s “Open the Door, Richard” routine, judged as keeping “the laughs evenly paced. There was nothing hilarious in his bit but the chuckles kept coming. Comic opens with a pratt fall and works most of his drunk act from a prone position.” Marshall’s review pared the overall production down to: “Calloway carries the ball with a healthy assist from Dusty Fletcher.”⁶⁹

Marshall also noted that “Calloway’s new [vocal] quartet, the Ravens, didn’t show much.”⁷⁰ This group had apparently just taken the slot previously held by the Peters Sisters, who had been touring with Calloway as late as February 1947 (and who were

⁶⁶ “Regal Stage Show.”

⁶⁷ Marshall, “Vaudeville Reviews: Strand, New York.”

⁶⁸ “Cab Calloway Band Apollo’s Top Feature.”

⁶⁹ Marshall, “Vaudeville Reviews: Strand, New York.”

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* The *Amsterdam News* ran a slightly friendlier description of the Ravens, calling them “a quartette of wonderful and unusual singers.” “Cab Calloway’s Band Apollo’s Top Feature.”

obviously with the orchestra at the time of filming).⁷¹ Later, while Calloway was playing at the Strand, the Peters Sisters (Mattie, Ann, and Virginia) were being featured at New York's Roxy Theatre in preparation for a six-month tour to England.⁷² The Peters Sisters had previously appeared in *Ali Baba Goes to Town* (1937), at the Cotton Club with Duke Ellington (1938), and on other Calloway tours during the 1940s.⁷³ In the 1950s, the trio was featured at the Folies Bergère nightclub in Paris, and appeared in European films such as *Nous irons à Paris* (1950) and *Die Beine von Dolores* (1957).⁷⁴

In another parallel to the Strand revue, the *Hi-De-Ho* revue sequence begins with Calloway and his orchestra's performance of "Hi-De-Ho Man (That's Me)." The bandleader then introduces the Peters Sisters, dressed in white gowns and accompanied by Calloway's orchestra as directed by an uncredited "production" conductor—probably someone who toured regularly with the revue.⁷⁵ Their first number is Art Franklin, Lucky Millinder, and Blackie Warren's vocal ballad "A Rainy Sunday," a song performed by the sisters since its inception in 1944, when it was published (and likely arranged) by Chappie Willet.⁷⁶ The slow-tempo performance is followed by a mid-tempo arrangement of Gene De Paul and Roy Jordan's syllabic novelty song "Little Old Lady From Baltimore"; lyrics describe "a brand new dance," with space left open for comic patter. The routine closes with an up-tempo dance chorus incorporating one of the fictitious

⁷¹ Al Monroe, "Swinging the News," *Chicago Defender*, February 1, 1947. See also "Here With Calloway," *Chicago Defender*, January 18, 1947.

⁷² "Roxy" [advertisement], *New York Times*, April 5, 1947; "The Renowned Peters Sisters" [advertisement], *Billboard*, April 12, 1947, 42.

⁷³ "Peters Sisters," *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0803132/>> (accessed October 9, 2006); Jack Gould, "Night Club Notes," *New York Times*, March 13, 1938; "Vaudeville," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 3, 1946.

⁷⁴ Naomi Jolles Barry, "U.S.-on-Seine, Inc.," *New York Times*, May 20, 1951; "Peters Sisters."

⁷⁵ Although Calloway's fourth trombonist leaves the stage during the specialty production numbers, the conductor appears to be yet another musician; picture quality makes identification difficult.

⁷⁶ "'Rainy Sunday' New Hit Tune," *Chicago Defender*, September 30, 1944.

club's waiters. Although the Peters Sisters fall under the period "harmony" or "sister group" category, both of these performances tend to focus on solo vocals.

Following the Peters Sisters is an unidentified up-tempo instrumental (again directed by the production conductor) backing an ensemble of seven female dancers in minimal attire. One of the dancers appears to be a professional, and takes some solo turns; the other six appear only moderately rehearsed. The group is not announced, and no crediting in any publicity has been discovered to date. The act likely represented an attempt to emulate nightclub chorus lines such as the Café Zanzibar's six "Zanzibeauts."⁷⁷

Calloway then returns for a four-and-a-half minute production number on "St. James Infirmary," incorporating a "street dress" costume and special lighting. The introduction includes scoring for growling brass, and "Mysterioso" rhythm section figures backing Calloway's dance routine. Following the bandleader's vocal choruses, the arrangement quotes Chopin's "Funeral March" theme and closes with Calloway's interpretive dance response to a trumpet soloist.

The Chappie Willet-associated "Miller Brothers & Lois" act follows, as the production conductor returns to lead the band through a six-minute medley of instrumental backing numbers, including a brief interpolation of Andrew Sterling and Kerry Mills' "Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis" and an arrangement of Cole Porter's "Just One of Those Things."⁷⁸ The trio starts off with an up-tempo floor dance, then goes into a mid-tempo tap routine with the orchestra scored in stop-time rhythm. Following brief

⁷⁷ Regarding the Zanzibeauts, see "Former Zanzibar Chorines to Be Featured in Club 845 Show," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1947.

⁷⁸ It is not clear if Chappie Willet was still representing the Miller Brothers & Lois act as of 1947, but no evidence to the contrary has been discovered to date.

applause, the next segment moves to the “Miller” platforms described in Marshall’s review, again beginning with up-tempo music, and later transitioning back to mid-tempo for more stop-time breaks. A final section climaxes with the high platform dance backed by up-tempo stop-time rhythm. It’s a highly energetic, acrobatic, and dangerous performance of the style popularized by dance performers such as the Nicholas Brothers.

Skipping Dusty Fletcher’s appearance in the penultimate specialty slot, the nightclub sequence enters its final phase with another Calloway vocal feature, Calloway and Hill’s “I Got a Gal Named Nettie” (previously recorded by Calloway in May 1946).⁷⁹ A stage wedding sequence with Calloway and Ida James is accompanied by band vocals on Calloway, Harding, and Seeger’s “Don’t Falter at the Altar” (recorded by Calloway in New York in February 1947, but not issued until the 1980s).⁸⁰ Again, Seeger’s crediting suggests that “Don’t Falter” was composed specifically for the *Hi-De-Ho* finale. A preacher character, portrayed by Augustus Smith (another Binney revue regular) provides some rhyming “jive” vows, and the sequence concludes with a reprise of “Nettie” and ensemble choreography.⁸¹

Unlike the overture, an unknown studio orchestra plays under *Hi-De-Ho*’s concluding “end” card. Notable for the substantial representation of Calloway’s winter 1947 touring package, the film still manages to incorporate a couple of new songs. As the *Variety* film and *Billboard* theater reviews suggest, the audience likely expected Calloway and his “jive” dialogue as the main attraction, along with some comedy and dancing thrown in, though Calloway’s sidemen and the accompanying stage acts also

⁷⁹ Lord, *The Jazz Discography*, C59.

⁸⁰ Cab Calloway, *Cab Calloway and His Orchestra 1942–47* (Classics 996, 1988).

⁸¹ “Augustus Smith,” *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://imdb.com/name/nm0807383/>> (accessed October 9, 2006).

receive a fair helping of screen time. The alien qualities of Dusty Fletcher's blackface routine are distanced even further by the actual removal of his routine from available reissues, possibly a reflection of its discomfiting racist content. Yet the fact that the various acts in the production were segmented enough that one of them could be entirely excised attests to the vaudeville "variety" construction of the revue format.

The Duke Is Tops

The Duke Is Tops (later re-released as *Bronze Venus*) was produced in February 1938 by Million Dollar productions, a small Hollywood-based company run by Harry and Leo Popkin; director William Nolte had previously worked mostly on Westerns.⁸² Original music for the film was written by Ben Ellison and Harvey Brooks, who had previously worked on the 1937 film musical "Every Day's a Holiday" (which included a version of Chappie Willet's arrangement of "Jubilee" for Louis Armstrong).⁸³ The music arranger for *The Duke Is Tops*, Phil Moore, was just 20 years old and working on his first Hollywood project.⁸⁴ One of Moore's later compositions, "Shoo-Shoo Baby," was included in the 1944 film musical *Trocadero*, as performed by the Stardusters; the song was published by Leeds Music, and became a number one hit for the Andrews Sisters.⁸⁵ Choreography for the *Duke Is Tops* ensemble dance numbers was by Willet's associate Lew Crawford, in his only known film credit.

⁸² *The Duke Is Tops*, Classic Musicals (Mill Creek Productions, 2005); "William L. Nolte," *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0634524/>> (accessed August 5, 2009). Contemporary publicity claimed that *The Duke Is Tops* "should set some kind of record for the time it has been in production, less than a month." Harry Levette, "'The Duke Is Tops' Goes to Cutting Room," *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 5, 1938.

⁸³ "Defender Photo-chart Shows Worthwhile Flesh Artists," *Chicago Defender*, March 5, 1938.

⁸⁴ "Phil Moore," *Internet Movie Database*, <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0601749/>> (accessed August 5, 2009). For a brief biographical sketch of Moore, see Donald Bogle, *Bright Boulevards, Bold Dreams: The Story of Black Hollywood* (New York: Random House, 2005), 224–32.

⁸⁵ John Bush Jones, *The Songs That Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939–1945* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 240.

The Duke Is Tops presents the story of touring vaudeville singer Ethel Andrews (played by Lena Horne)—the character’s name undoubtedly references singers Ethel Waters and Avis Andrews—who reluctantly leaves her loyal manager, Duke Davis (played by Ralph Cooper), for a shot at the big time at New York’s “Century” nightclub. The nightclub show falters, however, and Duke is brought in to save the day with his stage production savvy. Headliner Cooper had previously appeared in *Dark Manhattan* (1937), another Million Dollar production with music by Brooks and Ellison. Lena Horne had previously worked as a chorus dancer at the Cotton Club, and as a vocalist with Noble Sissle’s band; she was flown in from the East Coast mid-production as a replacement for an ailing Nina Mae McKinney (who went on the following year to introduce the song “You Can Count on Me” in *Straight to Heaven*).⁸⁶ Horne reportedly refused to attend a June 1938 NAACP-sponsored premiere of *The Duke Is Tops* in Pittsburgh (in celebration of “Great Negro Movie Month”), on the grounds that she had not been fully paid by the film’s producers for her performance—a situation perhaps stemming from her role as a substitute.⁸⁷

The sixteen-minute nightclub sequence closing *The Duke Is Tops* is much more condensed than most large nightclub productions of the period, but features the same elements of variety pacing. The lavish program running at the Cotton Club at the time of the film’s release included an instrumental overture, opening production number, an orchestra feature, 12 specialty acts or “middle numbers,” and a finale production number;

⁸⁶ “Lena Horne Returns Home; Movie Finished,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, March 12, 1938; David Meeker, “The Duke Is Tops,” *Jazz on the Screen*, *Library of Congress Performing Arts Encyclopedia*, <www.loc.gov/performingarts> (accessed August 4, 2009).

⁸⁷ “Duke Is Tops Has Its World’s Premiere,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 11, 1938; “Refuses to Appear at Premiere of Own Film,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 18, 1938; James Gavin, *Stormy Weather: The Life of Lena Horne* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 67–68. *The Duke Is Tops* opened at New York’s Apollo theater in July 1938, supported by a live appearance of Ralph Cooper. “The Outstanding Theatrical Event of 1938” [advertisement], *New York Amsterdam News*, July 9, 1938.

the *Duke Is Tops* lineup includes only an opening production number (no overture), three middle numbers, and a finale.⁸⁸

An announcement by a master of ceremonies (Laurence Criner, portraying one of the film's sub-plot characters) introduces the *Duke Is Tops* nightclub sequence, which opens with a five-and-a-half-minute production number in multiple segments (see figure 6.3). The first section is a slow-tempo *a capella* vocal performance of "Harmony Is Harlem" by Cooper and the six Basin Street Boys, standing on the raised bandstand behind the main stage in white tuxedos. Then the "Harlemania" stage orchestra (likely composed of Los Angeles musicians), with Cooper leading as conductor, transitions into an up-tempo instrumental arrangement of the same song. Although the backing orchestra appears as nine pieces on stage (four brass, two saxes, and a rhythm section), the film's audio track is clearly performed by a larger big band ensemble. Sixteen male and 16 female dancers enter the main floor for a choreographed formation dance; male dancers are in dressed in black tuxedos, the females in matching "tuxedo" bathing suits. After the ensemble dance, another orchestra transition leads into a tap dance feature for Willie Cován (also in black tuxedo), backed by the ensemble dancers. Cován was a Broadway veteran, including a 1924 appearance in *Dixie to Broadway*, and had helped to popularize the "soft shoe" tap dance style.⁸⁹ His mid-tempo orchestral accompaniment in "Harmony Is Harlem" is scored in stop-time rhythm for "soft shoe" breaks. A brief up-tempo orchestra dance passage closes the number as the dancers clear the stage.

⁸⁸ "Cotton Club Presents" [program, March 1938], reprinted in Klaus Strateman, *Duke Ellington: Day by Day and Film by Film* (Copenhagen: JazzMedia ApS, 2002), 696–97.

⁸⁹ Stearns and Stearns, *Jazz Dance*, 51, 147.

Figure 6.3: Formal Structure of “Harmony Is Harlem,” *The Duke Is Tops*, arr. by Phil Moore (1938)⁹⁰

intro (4 bars)	[key of B] slow tempo <i>a capella</i> vocal
chorus (8+8 bars)	<i>a capella</i> vocal
verse (8+8 bars)	<i>a capella</i> vocal
chorus (8 bars)	<i>a capella</i> vocal
modulation (8 bars)	[key of D] orchestra up-tempo; ensemble dancers enter
chorus (32 bars)	up-tempo ensemble dance
chorus (32 bars)	up-tempo ensemble dance with instrumental solos
modulation (4 bars)	[key of B] transition to mid-tempo
chorus (32 bars)	Willie Covan dance, rhythm section stop-time
chorus (32 bars)	Willie Covan dance, orchestra stop-time
modulation (8 bars)	[key of D] transition to up-tempo
chorus (8 bars)	Willie Covan dance up-tempo

“The Cats and the Fiddle” vocal quartet (Austin Powell, Ernie Price, Chuck Barksdale, and Herbie Miles) enters next, performing a three-minute arrangement of “Thursday Evening Swing,” accompanied by one quartet member on guitar. Another member of the quartet executes a kazoo-like vocal effect as an “instrumental” solo in the middle of this novelty song; lyrics cite the “Truckin’” and “Suzy-Q” dances. The combo later recorded a version of “Thursday Evening Swing” for Bluebird in July 1939.

The stage orchestra then returns with an up-tempo instrumental transition accompanying dancers’ screams, signaling the beginning of an “exotic” number. Female dancers enter in feathered bikinis, accompanied by drummers in “native” dress beating tom-tom drums. Following an ensemble dance with special lighting, the minor key arrangement segues into a rhythm section ostinato pattern under long melodic lines played by clarinets: the exotic idiom popularized by Duke Ellington. With this transition dancer Marie Bryant (also in bikini) is carried in, and performs a solo dance routine under

⁹⁰ *The Duke Is Tops*, Classic Musicals.

spotlight. The exotic sequence lasts about three minutes, closing with a straight four-beat swing orchestration behind the solo dancer.

Stage lights come back up for Lena Horne's penultimate slot in the program. The stage orchestra provides a slow *rubato* accompaniment (conducted by Cooper) for the vocal ballad feature, "I Know You Remember," arranged with an eight-bar verse and a single 32-bar chorus lasting just under three minutes.

For the finale, the dance ensemble returns in black tuxes and evening gowns for a choreographed formation dance set to a mid-tempo instrumental reprise of "Harlem Is Harmony." Then the specialty performers join the ensemble; the number closes with Horne singing a brief reprise of "I Know You Remember" in slow tempo. This finale production number is quite brief, lasting about two minutes total.

* * *

The nightclub sequences of both *The Duke Is Tops* and *Hi-De-Ho* include intermittent shots of a black nightclub audience in formal evening wear enjoying the performance, likely reflecting the filmmakers' intentions of demonstrating the urbane nightclub experience to audiences outside of New York City. Both films' visual inclusion of the stage orchestras (a realist detail not deemed necessary in numerous film musicals) reinforces the documentary quality of these films, and recognizes the importance of the musicians' role within the revue medium. In both films, the identification of the films' music arrangers by name in the on-screen credits represents an all-too-rare opportunity for public recognition.

CONCLUSION

Show bands . . . needed dramatic qualities that the dance band could ignore . . . The show-band style died with the [onset of the] Depression . . . and had no wide influence.¹

—Hsio Wen Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and Big Bands”

Make [arrangements of “I Cover the Waterfront” and “Time on My Hands”] so I could play them on stage as well as at dances.²

—Louis Armstrong,
correspondence to arranger Don Redman, 1939

As with any historical narrative, descriptions of the role of the music arranger in American popular music of the Swing Era reflect the social context in which that history is being told. Neither of the above statements reflects a definitive account of Swing Era big band arranging history. Even in the effort to draw a comparison between the two, it must be allowed that Louis Armstrong or Don Redman’s conception of “stage” music may have been very different from Hsio Wen Shih’s conception of “show” music. Categories of “show band,” “swing band,” “dance band,” or “jazz orchestra” have meant different things to different people, at different times and in different places. But the testimonies above do suggest the degree to which historical generalizations and concepts of linear progression and style may overshadow some historical experiences. “Dramatic qualities” remained a critical component of dance band arrangements throughout the Swing Era, and arguably well beyond. Many dance bands never left the stage-based “show band” business, a medium that extended for some performers and locales as late as

¹ Hsio Wen Shih, “The Spread of Jazz and the Big Bands,” in *Jazz: New Perspectives on the History of Jazz by Twelve of the World’s Foremost Jazz Critics and Scholars*, ed. Nat Hentoff and Albert McCarthy (1959; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1975): 181–82.

² Louis Armstrong, correspondence to Don Redman, May 19, 1939, Don Redman Collection, Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

the 1960s and '70s (for example, the extended runs of the Count Basie Orchestra in Las Vegas, or Woody Herman at Lake Tahoe).

Of course, the reliance of performing musicians on stylistic idioms and arranging genres did not die out with the Swing Era. Even while the Swing Era was at its height, New York arrangers such as George Bassman and Jimmy Mundy had begun an entertainment industry migration to California, the emerging new capital of film, radio, and later television production.³ In Hollywood, swing continued as the primary vehicle for film musicals through the 1950s.⁴ And post-Swing Era jazz styles like bebop relied upon the same genres of novelty vocals (for example, Dizzy Gillespie's "Salt Peanuts"), exotic numbers ("A Night in Tunisia"), or ballads (Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight") that swing dance bands had, even as occasionally presented tongue-in-cheek. Commercial requirements in the industry certainly did not dissipate either, as bebop's airs of anti-commercialism became marketable as, in effect, a viable new commercialism (beatnik culture representing the most obvious example). So why did Chappie Willet—and so many other Swing Era figures—not continue with the music of the next generation? Was Willet *too* successful in identifying himself with Swing Era style to make an effective marketing transition?

Stylistically, Willet's turn toward the theater as a source for his arranging idiolect makes his music more representative than exceptional. The documented work of many of Willet's peers who built reputations in the dance band industry—figures such as Will

³ Bassman moved to Hollywood in 1936 for work at MGM (including *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939); Mundy moved to California in 1941 to arrange for Paul Whiteman's radio program. See Ross Care, "George Bassman," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Music*, <www.oxfordmusiconline> (accessed January 2, 2011); Jimmy Mundy, as quoted in Stanley Dance, *The World of Earl Hines* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 200.

⁴ For a discussion of Hollywood's appropriation of swing in film musicals from the Swing Era through the 1950s, see Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 49–60.

Hudson, Billy Strayhorn, Eddie Sauter, or Jimmy Mundy, for example—offers obvious parallels in their reliance on variety genre types and “show band” orchestration devices. Analyzing the musical strategy of Willet and other arrangers sharpens our focus on the inherent relationships between swing, jazz, and theater, and supports the case for identifying theatrically-inspired dramatic qualities as one of the primary elements of both jazz and American popular music.

In the consideration of Swing’s place within African-American history, it is perhaps tempting to relate Willet’s published press statements positioning himself as a politicized “race” man to his modernist-influenced arranging idiolect. Willet does appear to fit (or to attempt to fit) into the “middle- and upper-class black social circles” of musicians like Duke Ellington or James P. Johnson, whom John Howland suggests to have shared a pursuit of “multifaceted careers as bandleaders, performers, composers, and songwriters, the acquisition of a professional demeanor that commanded cross-racial respect, and the active promotion of ‘black vernacular idioms.’”⁵ It may be risky to pin Willet into such a category, but to ignore the parallels between his career and those of figures like Russell Wooding and Will Vodery—successful black Harlem arrangers whom Willet claimed to have been a “devotee” of—is to ignore the extension of music arranging traditions that had developed the very genres Willet worked within.⁶ A real or perceived socio-political connection between Willet and this elder generation of musicians may even offer a partial explanation as to why Willet’s career seems to have

⁵ John Howland, *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 36.

⁶ Allan McMillan, “Chappie Willette [*sic*] Tells How Songs Are Made Popular,” *Chicago Defender*, February 8, 1936.

diminished so rapidly at the close of the Swing Era: he was only in his forties when his Music Clinic associates retired from the scene.

But none of Willet's statements discovered to date offer any explicit links between his politics and his music; they instead focus primarily on his business acumen and reputation as an accomplished professional in the entertainment industry, regardless of discipline or field. Perhaps there is some yet-to-be-discovered document that will disclose Willet's conscious application of tonal chromaticism as a musical metaphor for racial integration or Roosevelt's New Deal policies—but artists are rarely so considerate.

Willet's career might be seen as representative of the typical Swing Era professional arranger: his work is not exceptionally innovative by historical standards, and he follows established idioms and genres in writing for clients who depended upon those conventions for their commercial survival. There may also be grounds for building a case that the range of “high” and “low” forms that are encompassed in Willet's work reflect the varying milieus of his own livelihood and experiences as an arranger working in New York City. But at the same time, efforts to analyze his musical works as either industrial products or a reflection of political aspirations risk overlooking a central facet of the art form: the day-to-day pleasure of creating music. Just as successful careers are rarely built for the convenience of historical representation, it should be obvious that there is no such thing as a “mere craftsman” arranger.

Deeper examinations of historical legacies constantly remind us that an arranger is very much an individual. Documentation of Willet's formal studies of European classics, his experience touring with jazz dance bands, his thirst for success in the field of stage entertainment, and his own perceptions of his position within the African-American

community counter historical narratives that dismiss arrangers as merely components of industry. Stories like that surrounding the “Hicky Ricky” novelty song, which might have been immortalized by the Andrews Sisters but was instead quickly forgotten, demonstrate the frustrations that accompany the successes in a fast-paced, commercially cut-throat, and racially segregated entertainment industry. They also remind us that Willet’s precarious position in chronicles of American music history—especially as an arranger—remains comparable to that of many of his professional peers before, during, and after the Swing Era.

In a discussion of the Hollywood film studio system of the 1930s–’40s, film theorist Peter Wollen applies a form of “auteur theory” to directors working under industry parameters of style and genre.⁷ Wollen attempts to find a place to celebrate the individual creativity of artists working in commercial forms, an effort that offers ample parallels to the world of popular music arranging (and the present study offered here):

We might say that popular culture, by definition, is repetitive, and the skill of the popular artist consists of fulfilling predictable expectations while introducing a renovatory degree of variation. By this definition, the auteur might almost be seen as the quintessential genre artist, accepting conventions and stereotypes while pursuing his or her own personal predilections within the permissible constraints.⁸

It is perhaps no coincidence that Wollen applies the auteur theory to works of the 1930s–’40s: a period that saw the international emergence, and eventual dominance, of American popular culture through industrial mass production.

A comparable “auteur” analysis of popular music arranging may be applied to any number of successful Swing Era arrangers. For example, Jimmy Mundy arrangements

⁷ Peter Wollen, “The Auteur Theory, Michael Curtiz, and Casablanca,” in *Authorship and Film*, ed. David Gerstner and Janet Staiger (New York: Routledge, 2003): 61–76. Wollen applies “auteur theory” through the writings of André Bazin and Andrew Sarris.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

like “Nagasaki,” “Bolero at the Savoy” (both recorded by Gene Krupa in 1938), and “Fiesta in Blue” (recorded by Count Basie in 1941) readily reveal Mundy’s own arranging idiolect, including unison trombone or low sax half-step figures alternating with ensemble phrases, unison brass scoring over rhythm section stop-time or vamp passages, and sax section figures that temporarily break away from full-ensemble voicings.⁹ While similar effects appear throughout Swing Era big band music, none of these devices were embraced by, for example, Chappie Willet. And similar to the strategy seen in Willet’s own arranging idiolect, the combined use of these chosen devices is virtually unique to Mundy’s writing.

The American Swing Era represents a period of extraordinary musicianship and accomplishment within the popular entertainment field. Perhaps not surprisingly, the fall of swing in the commercial music market remains as impressive as its rise. I have now been researching Willet’s activities for twelve years: almost the same duration as the arranger’s entire documented career in New York. And compared to Willet’s legacy, I have much less to show for my labors, as most of Willet’s work and life story has already been lost to the passage of time. Mingling with “old-timers” in New York, one hears stories (or, as time passes, stories of stories) of a time when musicians simply waited in line at the union hall if they needed a gig later that day. The very concept of someone making a living as a professional music arranger seems relegated to the twentieth century, as entire support industries (for example, the field of music copying) have fallen to changing tastes and technologies.

⁹ *Gene Krupa and His Orchestra 1938* (Classics CD 767, 1994); Benny Goodman and Jimmy Mundy, “Fiesta in Blue” [stock arrangement], arranged by Jimmy Mundy (New York: Regent Music, 1941). The out-chorus of “Nagasaki” also uses a favorite Mundy sax phrase that reappears in “Super Chief” (recorded by Count Basie in 1940).

But the work of arrangers continues, visible or not. Even older styles like swing continue to be referenced in new idioms and mediums, ranging from the Broadway revival of *South Pacific* to the television satire of *Family Guy*. It is still through the nuances of musical arrangement that complex cultural associations like “nostalgic,” “modern,” or “classical” may be most efficiently transmitted to audiences. And, of course, stylistic self-reference remains a cornerstone of popular culture. The apparently growing reliance of Hollywood upon past cultural signifiers offers the opportunity for powerfully effective music arrangements and orchestrations; listen to the stylistic references of film scores such as those created for the *Ocean’s Eleven* franchise, *The Incredibles*, or *The A-Team*.

At the close of his study of Will Vodery, Mark Tucker concludes that his examinations of surviving Vodery scores “do not reveal the vaunted abilities for which the arranger became legendary.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, Tucker appears to have successfully uncovered many of these abilities in his preceding musical analyses, as he discusses how Vodery provides vehicles that effectively accompany singers’ “expertly timed vocals,” chooses to orchestrate “impish giggles” for woodwinds, or carefully allots his harmonic “chromatic tendencies” within a predominantly diatonic tonal landscape.¹¹ In the establishment or execution of musical style, these types of details are critical for popular audiences and historians alike. The details are important because music arranging is an art.

¹⁰ Mark Tucker, “In Search of Will Vodery,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1 (Spring 1996): 169.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 148; 168–69.

APPENDIX

CHAPPIE WILLET ARRANGEMENTS AND RECORDINGS

This appendix provides an alphabetical listing of Chappie Willet compositions and arrangements (or other closely related material) discovered to date. Audio recording sources, where applicable, cite the earliest known commercial release (on 78rpm single, LP, or compact disc format); arrangements undocumented or unavailable on record are denoted “NA.” Additional notes include sources of attribution and the location of relevant manuscripts; all copyright deposit leadsheets are held in the U.S. Library of Congress. Dates prefaced by “Willet AFM” reflect the date on Willet’s American Federation of Musicians Local 802 stamp as found on music manuscripts. Author and date citations reflect publications or interviews listed in the Bibliography. Additional archive and newspaper abbreviations are provided below:

<i>AN</i>	<i>New York Amsterdam News</i>
<i>CD</i>	<i>Chicago Defender</i>
DEC	Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History
FDCJLO	Frank Driggs Collection of Jimmie Lunceford Orchestrations, Smithsonian National Museum of American History
IJS	Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University–Newark
LAHA	Louis Armstrong House and Archives, Queens College
NYPL	New York Public Library
RNP	Red Norvo Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University
UNT	University of North Texas Music Library

Title (Composer) Copyright Date	Client	Recording	Recording Date	Notes
After You've Gone (Henry Creamer & Turner Layton) 1918	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	April 30, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
Alexander's Ragtime Band (Irving Berlin) 1911	Louis Armstrong	Decca 1408	July 7, 1937	
Apurksody (Gene Krupa & Chappie Willet) May 7, 1938 [E unp. 165955]	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8296	December 12, 1938	
A-Tisket, A-Tasket (Van Alexander & Ella Fitzgerald) 1938	Red Norvo	Hep 1050 (take 1), Columbia 53424 (take 2)	July 28, 1938	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
		Circle LP3	September 9, 1938	Radio transcription.
Blue Rhythm Fantasy (Teddy Hill & Chappie Willet) October 16, 1936 [E pub. 57971]	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Exclusive Publications 1936.
	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Stock Arrangement. Arranged by Edgar Battle, 1936.
	Louis Armstrong	NA	NA	Band parts held at LAHA. Stamped "Arr. by-Chappie Willet."
	Teddy Hill	Vocalion 3247	May 4, 1936	
		Bluebird B6989	May 17, 1937	Performance includes second trombone part.
	Mills Blue Rhythm Band	Variety 503	February 11, 1937	
	Gene Krupa	Okeh 5627	January 2, 1940	
Joyce LP3002 (film soundtrack <i>Rhythm Romance</i>)		November 1938	Edited version of arrangement recorded for Okeh.	
Blue Room (Lorenz Hart & Richard Rogers) 1926	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
Blue Skies (Irving Berlin) 1926	Red Norvo	Circle LP3	September 9, 1938	Radio transcription. Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.

Darlin' (Frances Reckling & Lucky Millinder) May 27, 1944 [E unp. 377881]	Duo Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Duo Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Duo Music Pub. Co. 1944. Held in DEC.
	Lucky Millinder	Decca 18779	May 25, 1944	
East of the Sun (and West of the Moon) (Brooks Bowman) 1936	Jimmie Lunceford	NA	NA	Band parts held in FDCJLO. Copyist, Tom Whaley? Stamped Willet AFM 1942, 1943.
Eh! Now (Llewellyn Crawford & Chappie Willet) September 3, 1941 [E unp. 268863]	unknown	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet filed by Chappie Willet.
	Peters Sisters	Warner Bros. film soundtrack?	1941?	CD October 4, 1941, p. 20
	Bye Sisters	NA	NA	CD September 13, 1941, p. 20
	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Score and band parts held in DEC. Copyists, Chappie Willet (leadsheet) and Tom Whaley.
Estrellita (Manuel Ponce) 1912	Jimmie Lunceford	Festival LP146	Spring 1944	Radio transcription. Band parts held in FDCJLO. Stamped Willet AFM 1943.
Fare Thee Well, Annie Laurie (Mitchell Parish & Claude Thornhill) 1938?	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8139	May 4, 1938	
Feelin' High and Happy (Rube Bloom & Ted Koehler) 1938?	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8123	April 15, 1938	
Flat Foot Floogee (Slim Gaillard, Bud Green & Slam Stewart) 1938	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
Grandfather's Clock (Henry Work) 1875	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8124	April 14, 1938	Bruce Klauber 1990.
	Robbins Music	NA	NA	Stock arrangement. Orchestrated by Spud Murphy, 1939.
Hallelujah (Clifford Grey, Leo Robin & Vincent Youmans) 1927	Jimmie Lunceford	Festival LP146	May 1943	Radio transcription. Band parts held in FDCJLO. Copyist, Tom Whaley? Stamped Willet AFM 1942.

Harlem Stomp (Buddy Feyne, Irene Higginbotham & Jay Higginbotham) 1939	Louis Armstrong	Ambassador 1906	December 18, 1939	Radio air check from the Cotton Club.
		Decca 3092	March 14, 1940	
Hicky Ricky, The (Paul Black, Albert Gibson, Esvan Mosby & Chappie Willet) Aug. 15, 1940 [E unpub. 228569]	unknown	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Esvan Mosby	Document 5601	1940?	Performer listed as "Stanford Mosby."
Hicky Ricky, The (Albert Gibson, Esvan Mosby & Chappie Willet) Nov. 7, 1941 [E unpub. 274977]	Kaycee Music Co.	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Three Chocolateers	Film soundtrack <i>Moonlight Masquerade?</i>	1941	CD June 7, 1941, p. 21.
Hicky Ricky, The (Albert Gibson, Esvan Mosby & Chappie Willet) July 20, 1942 [E pub. 106386]	Leeds Music Corp.	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Leeds Music Corp. 1941. Held in NYPL.
	Harry James	NA	NA	Cited in leadsheet published by Leeds Music Corp. 1941.
	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Tom Whaley score held in DEC.
I Ain't Gettin' Nowhere Fast (Cab Calloway, Porter Grainger & Chappie Willet) May 29, 1939 [E unpub. 196815]	Lewis Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Cab Calloway	Vocalion 5195	August 30, 1939	
I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music (Dave Franklin) 1935?	Louis Armstrong	Decca 672 (takes A [B?] & C)	December 19, 1935	Allan McMillan, CD February 8, 1936, p. 8
I Know That You Know (Otto Harbach, Anne O'Dea & Vincent Youmans) 1926	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 21, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8124	April 15, 1938	Bruce Klauber 1990.
I'd Climb the Highest Mountain (Lew Brown & Sidney Clare) 1926	Red Norvo	Circle LP3	September 9, 1938	Radio transcription. Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
If You Were in My Place (Duke Ellington, Henry Nemo & Irving Mills) 1938	Duke Ellington	Brunswick 8093 (take 2), Raretone LP23003 (take 1/2)	February 24, 1938	Brooks Kerr 2004.
I'm Slappin' Seventh Avenue (With the Sole of My Shoe) (Duke Ellington, Henry Nemo & Irving Mills) 1938	Duke Ellington	Brunswick 8131	April 11, 1938	Band parts held in DEC. Copyist, Kaye Parker. Stamped Parker AFM 1938.
		Jazz Panorama LP14	May 22, 1938	Radio air check from the Cotton Club

I'm Tellin' You in Front (So You Won't Feel Hurt Behind) (W. C. Handy, Andy Razaf & Russell Wooding) 1937	Handy Bros. Music	NA	NA	Stock arrangement held at UNT.
I've Got My Fingers Crossed (Ted Koehler & Jimmy McHugh) 1935?	Louis Armstrong	Decca 623 (take A), Meritt LP19 (take D)	November 21, 1935	<i>AN</i> March 12, 1936, p. 8
I Got Rhythm (George Gershwin & Ira Gershwin) 1930	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 21, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check; Allan McMillan, <i>CD</i> January 11, 1936, p. 9
Japan (Andy Razaf & Chappie Willet) Oct. 19, 1944 [E unp. 394505]	unknown	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet filed by Chappie Willet.
Jubilee (Stanley Adams & Hoagy Carmichael) 1937	Louis Armstrong	Alamac LP2401 (film soundtrack <i>Every Day's a Holiday</i>)	November 1937	Edited version of arrangement recorded for Decca.
		Decca 1635	January 12, 1938	
Jump Jump's Here (Mildred Bailey, Henry Nemo & Red Norvo) 1938	Red Norvo	Brunswick 8202 (takes 1 & 2)	July 28, 1938	Edited version of arrangement recorded for radio transcription.
		Circle LP3	September 9, 1938	Radio transcription. Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
	Robbins Music	BMG 7432 18938825	2001	Stock arrangement held at IJS. Orchestrated by Les Brown.
Jungle Madness (Chappie Willet) May 25, 1937 [E pub. 62364]	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Exclusive Publications 1937.
	Louis Armstrong	NA	NA	Allan McMillan, <i>CD</i> January 11, 1936, p. 9
	Mills Blue Rhythm Band	Variety 503	February 11, 1937	
	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8400	April 17, 1939	
Joyce LP3002 (film soundtrack <i>America's Ace Drummer</i>)		Fall 1940	UM&M TV Corp. film short. Edited version of arrangement recorded for Brunswick.	

Know How to Do It (Billie Hayes) 1943?	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Piano leadsheet held in DEC. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1943.
Lesson in C, A (Duke Ellington, Henry Nemo & Irving Mills) 1938	Duke Ellington (Cootie Williams)	Vocalion 4086	April 4, 1938	Klaus Stratemann 1992.
"Let My People Go," Now! (Langston Hughes & Chappie Willet) September 7, 1944 [E unpub. 389290]	Text Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Text Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Text Music Pub. Co.
	Lucky Millinder?	NA	NA	Al Monroe, <i>CD</i> May 26, 1945, p. 17
Low Down Guy (Chappie Willet?) 1945?	Duke Ellington	NA	NA	Band parts held in DEC. Copyist, Maceo Jefferson. Stamped Willet AFM 1945.
Madam Swings It, The (Morry Olsen & Henry Russell) 1937?	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
	Gene Krupa	Classics 754	April 14, 1938	Initially unissued take.
	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8335	February 26, 1939	
Memories of You (Eubie Blake & Andy Razaf) 1930	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 7, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
Music Goes Round and Round, The (Edward Farley, William Hodgson & Mike Riley) 1935?	Louis Armstrong	Decca 685	January 18, 1936	Allan McMillan, <i>CD</i> February 8, 1936, p. 8
Nothin' to Do but Love (Porter Grainger & Chappie Willet) April 28, 1938 [E unpub. 165622]	Robbins Music Corp.?	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
One Alone (Oscar Hammerstein, Otto Harbach & Sigmund Romberg) 1926	Cab Calloway	NA	NA	Bill Chase, <i>AN</i> December 17, 1938, p. 20.
Opening (Chappie Willet?) 1939?	Jimmie Lunceford	NA	NA	Band parts held in FDCJLO. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1939.
Persian Rug (Charles Daniels & Gus Kahn) 1927	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.

Posin' (Sammy Cahn & Saul Chaplin) 1937	Peters Sisters	NA	NA	
Prelude in C-sharp Minor (Sergei Rachmaninoff) 1892	Duke Ellington	Jazz Archives LP13	May 29, 1938	Radio air check from Cotton Club. Band parts held in DEC. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
	Charlie Barnet	Giants of Jazz 53274	May 16, 1938	RCA Thesaurus radio transcription.
	Lucky Millinder	NA	NA	Stanley Dance 2001.
	Robbins Music	NA	NA	Stock arrangement. Orchestrated by Spud Murphy, 1939.
Prelude to a Stomp (Chappie Willet) June 7, 1937 [E pub. 62542]	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Exclusive Publications 1937.
	Lucky Millinder	Variety 546	February 11, 1937	
	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 28, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check; issued as "Will You Do a Stomp?".
	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8139	April 14, 1938	
Push Out (Te-Huey, Te-Huey, Te-Huey) (Alex Lovejoy & Nat Reed) 1939?	Handy Bros. Music	NA	NA	Stock arrangement held in Vince Giordano collection.
Rainy Sunday, A (Art Franklin, Lucky Millinder & "Blackie" Warren [Chappie Willet?]) May 23, 1944 [E unpub. 376106]	Duo Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Copyright deposit leadsheet.
	Duo Music Pub. Co.	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Duo Music Pub. Co. 1944. Held in DEC.
	Luis Russell	Apollo 1139	October 19, 1946	
	Peters Sisters	Storyville 16053 (film soundtrack <i>Hi-De-Ho</i>)	March 1947	
Rhapsody in Blue (George Gershwin) 1924	Lucky Millinder	NA	NA	Harold Cromer 2004.
Rhythm Jam (Chappie Willet) June 7, 1937 [E pub. 62540]	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Leadsheet published by Exclusive Publications 1937.
	Lucky Millinder	Variety 546	February 11, 1937	
	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 7, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
	Gene Krupa	Brunswick 8198	July 19, 1938	

Russian Lullaby (Irving Berlin) 1927	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
Rustle of Spring (Christian Sinding) 1896	Lucky Millinder	1942	Hindsight LP233	Radio transcription.
Satchel Mouth Swing (Louis Armstrong) 1938 (vocals to "Coal Cart Blues")	Louis Armstrong	Decca 1636	January 12, 1938	
Sister to You (Chappie Willet?) 1945?	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Piano lead sheet held in DEC. Copyist, Maceo Jefferson. Stamped Willet AFM 1945.
Skronch (Duke Ellington, Henry Nemo & Irving Mills) 1938	Duke Ellington	Brunswick 8093 (take 2), Raretone LP23003 (take 1)	February 24, 1938	DE score sketches held in DEC.
Sonata Pathétique (Ludwig van Beethoven) 1799	Jimmie Lunceford	Columbia 35453 (take C), Columbia LP16175 (take A?)	February 28, 1940	Band parts held in FDCJLO. "Chappie Willet" manuscript paper.
Stand for That Jive (Billie Hayes) 1943?	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Piano leadsheet held in DEC. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1943.
Stardust (Hoagy Carmichael & Mitchell Parish) 1927	Louis Armstrong	Swing Mania 682470 (partial)	August 1945	AFRS Magic Carpet radio transcription. Band parts held in LAHA. Copyist, Maceo Jefferson. Stamped Willet AFM 1944.
Struttin' With Some Barbecue (Lil Armstrong & Louis Armstrong) 1927	Louis Armstrong	Decca 1661	January 12, 1938	Band parts held at LAHA. Stamped "Arr. by-Chappie Willet."
		Ambassador 1907	April 15, 1940	Radio air check from the Cotton Club.
Swingtime in Honolulu (Duke Ellington, Henry Nemo & Irving Mills) 1938	Duke Ellington	Brunswick 8131	April 11, 1938	Band parts held in DEC. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
Them There Eyes (Maceo Pinkard, Doris Tauber & William Tracey) 1930	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	April 9, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
There'll Be Some Changes Made (Billy Higgins & W.B. Overstreet) 1923	Lucky Millinder	1942	Hindsight LP233	Radio transcription (AFRS?).

There's a Lull in My Life (Mack Gordon, Mort Howard, Harry Revel & Frank Skinner) 1937	unknown	NA	NA	Allan McMillan, <i>CD</i> July 10, 1937, p. 10
Tiger Rag (Harry DeCosta, Ed Edwards, James LaRocca, Henry Ragas, Anthony Sbarbaro & Larry Shields) 1917	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	April 9, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check; Allan McMillan, <i>CD</i> January 11, 1936, p. 9
Toy-Town Jamboree (Major Hurwitz, John Redmond & Mary Shaeffer) 1938	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
Trumpet Player's Lament, The (Johnny Burke & James Monaco) 1936?	Louis Armstrong	Decca 1653 (take A), MCA GRD649 (Take C)	January 12, 1938	
Unlucky Woman (Billie Hayes) 1943?	Duke Ellington?	NA	NA	Piano leadsheet held in DEC. Stamped Willet AFM 1943.
Uptown Rhapsody (Chu Berry & Teddy Hill) July 10, 1937 [E pub. 56289]	Teddy Hill	Vocalion 3294	April 1, 1936	Leonard Feather 1989.
Washington & Lee Swing (Thornton Allen, Clarence Robbins & Mark Sheafe) 1910	Louis Armstrong	JHS 5289147	May 14, 1937	"Fleischmann's Yeast" air check.
	Red Norvo	NA	NA	Band parts held in RNP. Copyist, Chappie Willet. Stamped Willet AFM 1938.
What a Difference a Day Made (Stanley Adams & Maria Grever) 1934	Jimmie Lunceford	Festival LP146	December 27, 1944	Radio transcription.
Wolverine Blues (Jelly Roll Morton, Benjamin Spikes & John Spikes) 1923	Louis Armstrong	Decca 3105	March 14, 1940	
Yesterdays (Otto Harbach & Jerome Kern) 1933	Jimmie Lunceford	Festival LP146	May 1943	Radio transcription. <i>AN</i> January 16, 1943, p. 14.
You Can Count on Me (Robert Maxwell & Josef Myrow) 1939	Exclusive Publications	NA	NA	Stock arrangement held in UNT.
You've Got Me Voodoo'd (Louis Armstrong, Cornelius Lawrence & Luis Russell) 1940?	Louis Armstrong	Decca 3092	March 14, 1940	

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