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# Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, and Ray Nance: Duke Ellington's trumpet soloists 1940-1942

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COOTIE WILLIAMS, REX STEWART, AND RAY NANCE:  
DUKE ELLINGTON'S TRUMPET SOLOISTS  
1940-1942

by

Bryan Wendell Bennett

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical  
Arts degree in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

December 2009

Essay Supervisor: Professor Emeritus David Greenhoe

Graduate College  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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D.M.A. ESSAY

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This is to certify that the D.M.A. essay of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee for the essay requirement for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the December 2009 graduation.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS



Slide (Glissando)



Scoop



Rip



Bend



Fall



Fall, with valves



Shake



Flip (Turn)



Growl



Plunger open



Plunger closed



Open to closed plunger, vocalization



Closed to open plunger, vocalization



Play note slightly flat



Play note slightly sharp



Half-valve

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington is considered by many to be one of the great American composers of the twentieth century. As the director of his own band between 1924 and 1974, Ellington had at his disposal a performing force through which he could continuously refine his compositional style.

When listening to his compositions, one is immediately drawn to the innovative use of timbres. During the 1940’s, a period when many bandleaders were experimenting with “sweet sounds,” Ellington was interested in exploring the array of timbres that were possible from a big band.<sup>1</sup> He accomplished this partly with innovative scoring and more importantly, through his careful selection of creative instrumentalists. Ellington did not compose for “choirs” of like instruments as was the tendency of his contemporaries; rather each member of his orchestra had an individual part written for their particular style and ability.<sup>2</sup> His brass writing, in particular, was varied through the use of mutes and other non-standard methods of tone production.<sup>3</sup> The following transcriptions are an attempt to document the unique styles that Ellington’s trumpeters applied to their instruments. Although Ellington’s trumpet soloists were an influential and important component of his band, there is limited documentation about their styles or of them personally.

A survey of all trumpeters used by Ellington over 50 years would be too vast for this essay; therefore this author has chosen to study the trumpeters employed between the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Tucker, ed., *The Duke Ellington Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 278.

years 1940 and 1942 as recorded on the RCA Victor label. This particular edition of the band is commonly referred to as the “Blanton-Webster Band” after saxophonist Ben Webster, and bassist Jimmy Blanton. According to Rattenbury, the time frame of 1939-1941 was a “...period of stability in the band and recordings of his works during this period benefited greatly.”<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Mercer Ellington states that these recordings represented a high point in the band’s creative output.<sup>5</sup> With the complete RCA Victor recordings from 1940-1942 available as a 3-disc set (RCA Bluebird 5659-2-RB)<sup>6</sup>, it was decided this document could represent the distinct trumpet styles found within this pivotal time frame.

The purpose of this paper is to present the reader with a single source of information about the trumpet soloists of the Ellington Band between 1940 and 1942, documented through solo transcriptions from the RCA Victor Blanton-Webster recordings. The trumpeters discussed are Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, and Ray Nance. It is this writer’s opinion these players formed a core group whose stylistic influence continued well past their tenure with the band.

Although biographical information will be discussed, the majority of this paper will focus on the unique performance style of each player. In order to assist in this goal, all trumpet solos from the RCA Victor recordings of the Blanton-Webster Band have been transcribed. Additionally, a system of notation has been adapted to indicate various extended techniques utilized by these musicians. Special attention will be given to any

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<sup>4</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 103.

<sup>5</sup> Mercer Ellington with Stanley Dance, *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Duke Ellington, *The Blanton-Webster Band*, Bluebird Records (RCA), 3-disc set, 5652-2-RB, 1990.

aspect of performance that point to the evolution of a particular technique. Topics addressed include muted-plunger technique, half-valve effects, shakes, slides, and note bending. This is not intended to be a manual for jazz improvisation, but rather a study of style.

There are several works that have been helpful in the development of this essay. Of great significance is Kurt Dietrich's dissertation *Joe 'Tricky Sam' Nanton, Juan Tizol, and Lawrence Brown: Duke Ellington's Great Trombonists, 1926-1951*<sup>7</sup>, which was expanded into the book *Duke's Bones, Ellington's Great Trombonists*<sup>8</sup> in 1995. Dietrich's dissertation focuses on trombonists Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, and Lawrence Brown. In *Duke's Bones* Dietrich expands his original research to include later players and their relation to the initial group. Ellington chose his trombones in a similar manner as his trumpet section. Both consisted of a lead player, flanked by soloists of contrasting styles. In his quest for different timbres, Ellington required unique musicians. Dietrich's book includes solo transcriptions and examples of Ellington's part-writing for the trombone.

Additional sources that have been consulted regarding transcription and notation include Ken Rattenbury's *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer*<sup>9</sup>, Mark Tucker's *Duke Ellington, The Early Years*<sup>10</sup>, Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era*<sup>11</sup>, and Al Grey's *Plunger Techniques*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kurt Dietrich, "Joe 'Tricky Sam' Nanton, Juan Tizol, and Lawrence Brown: Duke Ellington's Great Trombonists, 1926-1951." (Diss, D.M.A.: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's Bones, Ellington's Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> Mark Tucker, *Duke Ellington, The Early Years* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

Rattenbury's work provides detailed analysis of *Concerto for Cootie* as performed by Cootie Williams, and *Subtle Slough* as performed by Rex Stewart. Extended techniques are indicated through the use of specific notational symbols.

Tucker's *Ellington, The Early Years* presents the reader a detailed look at Ellington's personal and professional life through 1927. Although this work encompasses an earlier time frame, there is discussion regarding the genesis of several of his compositions, some of which were recorded for the Blanton-Webster sessions. Tucker also includes an index of Ellington's compositions, recordings, and arrangements. Also included are transcriptions of trumpet solos by Bubber Miley that features a key to special symbols used for notation.

Another source consulted for transcription assistance is Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era*. His book is a chronological survey that follows the development of jazz from 1930-1945. Included is an in-depth examination of bands, bandleaders, soloists, and composers that were active during this time. Though Schuller includes several transcribed solos, he does not include accompanying chord symbols.

A final source for notation of extended techniques is Al Grey's *Plunger Techniques: The Al Grey Method for Trombone and Trumpet*. In this book, Grey creates his own methodology for indicating various positions of the plunger. These are designated with the letters A, B, C, D, and E. He describes each of these positions in detail and presents a series of exercises to assist in this endeavor. Also included is a way

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<sup>11</sup> Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Al Grey and Mike Grey, *Plunger Techniques: The Al Grey Method for Trombone and Trumpet* (New York: Second Floor Music, 1987).

to prepare both the pixie and plunger mute for muted-plunger performance. Though interesting, it is this writer's view that his system is simply too cumbersome to be applied successfully to the trumpet transcriptions.

Personal accounts pertaining to the Ellington Band are found in Duke Ellington's *Music is My Mistress*<sup>13</sup>, Mercer Ellington's *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir*<sup>14</sup>, Mark Tucker's *The Duke Ellington Reader*<sup>15</sup>, Rex Stewart's *Jazz Masters of the Thirties*<sup>16</sup> and *Boy Meets Horn*.<sup>17</sup>

*Music is My Mistress* is Ellington's autobiography and provides recollections of his best known sidemen. Included are his thoughts on Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, and Ray Nance. In addition, this book features a bibliography of books containing chapters or essays on Ellington.

Mercer Ellington's *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir*, paints a picture of the composer from the perspective of son to father that may be viewed as a companion to *Music is My Mistress*. This work contains a detailed description of how to produce the muted growl effect on the trumpet.

*The Duke Ellington Reader*, edited by Mark Tucker, is a source book consisting of writings on Ellington and his band. Useful information relating to this topic includes

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<sup>13</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> Mercer Ellington with Stanley Dance, *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> Mark Tucker, ed., *The Duke Ellington Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Rex Stewart, *Jazz Masters of the 30's*, Claire P. Gordon, ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> Rex Stewart, *Boy Meets Horn* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

various articles on his sidemen, an essay on the compositional style of *Concerto for Cootie*, and an article reviewing the Blanton-Webster recordings.

Finally, cornet player Rex Stewart wrote two books that contain insightful source material. His *Jazz Masters of the Thirties* includes perspectives of life in the early Ellington Band and has information about the early trumpet section. His second book, *Boy Meets Horn*, is his autobiography up until 1948. Although Stewart passed away before it was completed, it was finished some twenty years later by Claire P. Gordon who made use of the notes left by Stewart. Unfortunately, there is only brief mention of muted-plunger style and no mention of Stewart's own half-valve innovations.

Other related research includes *Duke Ellington, A Listeners Guide*<sup>18</sup> by Eddie Lambert, *Beyond Category*<sup>19</sup> by John Hasse, and *The Duke Ellington Real Book*.<sup>20</sup>

Lambert's work is an excellent source for information on the various members of Ellington's Band and for specific documentation regarding its recorded legacy. Included is a chronological record that details band personnel, compositions, and recording information for each session.

Additional information pertaining to compositions, recordings, and band personnel are found in *Beyond Category* by John Hasse. Related to this project include discussions of the Blanton-Webster recordings in addition to further discussion on the Ellington sidemen.

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<sup>18</sup> Eddie Lambert, *Duke Ellington, A Listener's Guide* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999).

<sup>19</sup> John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Duke Ellington, *The Duke Ellington Real Book* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2009).



*The Duke Ellington Real Book*, published by Hal Leonard, has served as a source for further clarifying some of the chord progressions in select compositions. This resource was used cautiously, as Real Books have a reputation of not being entirely accurate.

Finally, the *New Grove Dictionary*<sup>21</sup> and *Trumpet Kings*<sup>22</sup> by Scott Yanow have been consulted for additional biographical information.

The most recent writings pertaining to this subject may be located in dissertations by John Davis and Charles Dotas. The 1999 doctoral dissertation, *A Standardization of Jazz Nuances for Trumpet with Accompanying Compact Disc*<sup>23</sup>, by trumpeter John Davis, is an excellent source for this project. Though it deals primarily with trumpet style in a big band setting, the overall goal of developing a standard notation is one shared with this transcription project. Davis provides detailed descriptions of how to perform shakes, bent notes, falls, rips, and jazz articulation nuances.

The 2001 dissertation, *Techniques of Composition, Arranging, and Orchestration Utilized by Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington When Writing for Jazz Orchestra and Trumpet Soloist, 1936-1940*<sup>24</sup>, by Charles John Dotas, provides detailed analysis of select

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<sup>21</sup> *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/30344> (accessed June 28, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> John Scott Davis, “A Standardization of Jazz Nuances for Trumpet with Accompanying Compact Disc.” (Diss., D.A.: University of Northern Colorado, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Charles John Dotas, “Techniques of Composition, Arranging, and Orchestration Utilized by Edward Kennedy ‘Duke’ Ellington When Writing for Jazz Orchestra and Trumpet Soloist, 1936-1940.” (Diss., D.A.: University of Northern Colorado, 2001).

Ellington compositions in an attempt to ascertain the influence that his trumpet soloists, specifically Williams and Stewart, had on his compositional style.

## CHAPTER II

### COOTIE WILLIAMS, REX STEWART, AND RAY NANCE

Charles Melvin “Cootie” Williams was born in Mobile, Alabama in 1910. As a teen, his trumpet playing progressed to the point where he had the opportunity to perform in regional bands throughout Alabama.<sup>25</sup> In 1928, Williams moved to New York where he performed lead trumpet with the bands of Fletcher Henderson and Chick Webb.<sup>26</sup> The following year, Williams joined Ellington as a replacement for trumpeter Bubber Miley. It was Miley who started the tradition of plunger/growl trumpet in the Ellington Band, one that was initially passed on to trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton.<sup>27</sup> For the first few weeks with the band, Williams performed almost entirely without mutes at which time he “realized” whom he had replaced and promptly learned the muted-plunger style with the assistance of Nanton.<sup>28</sup> According to Williams:

A funny thing was that Duke never asked me to play like Bubber. Night after night I sat up there and nobody said a word. When Tricky Sam played, I laughed because it was funny. Funny sounding to me. But it dawned on me finally. This man hired me to take Bubber’s place. And he played with a plunger-like Tricky Sam.<sup>29</sup>

As his command of the plunger style grew, he quickly surpassed Miley in terms of skill.

According to Ellington, “When Cootie came into the band he picked up the plunger and

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<sup>25</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 382.

<sup>26</sup> J. Bradford Robinson. “Williams, Cootie.” In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/30344> (accessed June 28, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Don DeMichael, “Double Play: Carney to Hodges to Ellington,” *Down Beat* (7 June 1962): 20-21, 44.

<sup>28</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 382.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 105.

became an expert. He did things with greater range than Bubber Miley.”<sup>30</sup> Williams, who was initially inspired by Armstrong, went on to create a unique trumpet style that was a synthesis of Miley and Armstrong.<sup>31</sup> So impressed was Ellington with Cootie’s mastery of the muted-plunger technique, he integrated it into hundreds of compositions.<sup>32</sup> In 1940, Williams left Ellington to perform as a headliner with the Benny Goodman Orchestra. This collaboration lasted for a year. He followed this with the creation of his own big band which remained active until 1948. Williams rejoined the Ellington band in 1962 and remained until 1974. To commemorate his return, Ellington composed the *New Concerto for Cootie*.<sup>33</sup> Williams remains to this day one of jazz’s “greatest all time masters at playing both growl and open (non-muted) trumpet.”<sup>34</sup> Williams died in 1985.

Another key member of the Ellington Band during this period was cornet player Rex Stewart. Born in Philadelphia in 1907, Stewart maintained a relatively low profile before joining Ellington. His early style was a synthesis of Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke.<sup>35</sup> Of Stewart, Ken Rattenbury writes “...(Rex) could play in both hot and cool styles and employed a whole range of instrumental effects such as growls, glissandi,

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<sup>30</sup> Duke Ellington, in collaboration with Stanley Dance, “The Art is in the Cooking,” *Down Beat* (7 June 1962):13-15.

<sup>31</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 295.

<sup>32</sup> J. Bradford Robinson. "Williams, Cootie." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/30344> (accessed June 28, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 243.

<sup>35</sup> Barry Kernfeld. "Nance, Ray." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J321300> (accessed June 28, 2009).

and half-valve effects.”<sup>36</sup> As with Williams, Stewart began playing professionally at an early age and moved to New York in 1923. He joined the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in 1926, assuming the chair that had been held by Louis Armstrong only two years earlier.<sup>37</sup> Stewart quit the following year feeling he was not yet capable of living up to the Armstrong legacy. In 1928 he returned to Fletcher Henderson where he performed as third trumpet to lead trumpeter Cootie Williams. He remained with Henderson from 1928-1930 then again from 1932-1933. From 1933-1934, Stewart fronted his own big band. He joined the Ellington Orchestra in 1934 and remained until 1945. Of Rex Stewart, Duke Ellington wrote, “Rex Stewart has been taught the responsibility of commanding respect for his race and to this end he maintained an offstage image very deliberately, he was an exciting player who made big contributions during the years he was with us.”<sup>38</sup> Stewart quickly became a featured soloist with the band and became versed in a range of techniques and styles.<sup>39</sup> Of importance here was his development of half-valve effects. According to Lambert, “He (Stewart) developed a surprisingly accurate and elaborate manner of playing with the valves of his cornet only half-depressed. Rex Stewart is the only player to date who developed it into an exact science.”<sup>40</sup> When William’s left the band in 1940, Stewart temporarily assumed the muted-plunger role, a style he initially referred to as, “...a sound that could be likened to

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<sup>36</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 293.

<sup>37</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 353.

<sup>38</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 125.

<sup>39</sup> Eddie Lambert, *Duke Ellington, A Listener’s Guide* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 67.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

a baboon cursing his mate.”<sup>41</sup> With the addition of newcomer Ray Nance to the band, Stewart was free to return to his predominately open, half-valve approach. Upon leaving Ellington, Stewart spent time touring Europe with his combo, “The Rextet,” and performing in small groups throughout the United States. In 1957, he organized and toured with the Fletcher Henderson Reunion Band.<sup>42</sup> In his later years he wrote two books, along with several articles for professional journals. Stewart died in 1967.

Chicago native Ray Nance (1913-1976) joined the Ellington Band upon Williams’s departure in 1940 and quickly became one of Ellington’s most well-rounded musicians. Having studied piano from the age of six, he was self-taught on the trumpet. In addition to trumpet, he was an excellent violinist and singer. Prior to joining Ellington, Nance gained experience performing with the orchestras of Earl Hines and Horace Henderson.<sup>43</sup> A versatile performer, Nance continued the muted-plunger style and performed his open solos with a strong and vibrant sound. In 1941, after less than a year with the band, he performed a now legendary solo on *Take the “A” Train*.<sup>44</sup> On Nance, Ellington wrote:

Ray Nance never played a bad note in his life, so this makes him unique among artists who practice freedom of expression in music. He is a pure artist at heart, and no trumpet player ever takes an ad-lib chorus on *Take the A-Train* without falling back on some of the original licks introduced by Ray Nance on the first recording of it.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Rex Stewart, *Boy Meets Horn* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 148.

<sup>42</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 353.

<sup>43</sup> John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 243.

<sup>44</sup> Barry Kernfeld. "Nance, Ray." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J321300> (accessed June 28, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 162.

Ellington made extensive use of Nance as both a singer and violinist. According to Lambert, "...on violin he could swing in a fashion few other jazz violinists have equaled."<sup>46</sup> Several of his trumpet solos reflect this formal training. When improvising, Nance often chose to use the plunger without the metal pixie mute. Upon the return of Cootie Williams to the band in 1961, Nance switched from the trumpet to the cornet. From 1961-1963, both Nance and Williams were the main trumpet soloists, but were never recorded "against" one another.<sup>47</sup> Though often featured during his two decades with the band, Ellington had to let Nance go in 1963 due to substance abuse.<sup>48</sup> Post Ellington, Nance continued to perform in various bands and venues throughout the country. Ray Nance passed away in 1976.

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<sup>46</sup> Eddie Lambert, *Duke Ellington, A Listener's Guide* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc.), 110.

<sup>47</sup> Scott Yanow, *The Trumpet Kings* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001), 273.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### NOTATIONS FOUND IN THE TRANSCRIPTIONS

These transcriptions are documentation of the unique trumpet styles of Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, and Ray Nance. All attempts have been made to keep the representations of these solos as simple and straightforward as possible. In order to help accomplish this, some notations have been adapted from the works of Ken Rattenbury, Kurt Dietrich, and Mark Tucker. Editorial markings reflect this writer's personal opinion and it is suggested that the reader consult the original recordings to form their own views. Additionally, due to the audio quality of the Victor recordings, some of the chord progressions and improvised lines were difficult to ascertain and resulted in a small amount of guesswork to complete the harmonies. The following will elaborate on the individual effects highlighted in the course of this project.

As previously mentioned, Bubber Miley is credited with introducing muted-plunger technique into the Ellington Band. Direct influences on his style were King Oliver and Johnny Dunn. In 1921, while in New York, Miley replaced Dunn in a band that backed singer Mamie Smith. It is documented Dunn employed plunger (though without a pixie mute) while in this band and that Miley imitated Dunn's style.<sup>49</sup> It is also known Miley listened to Joe Oliver often while in Chicago and his style changed noticeably upon hearing Oliver.<sup>50</sup> From Miley, the muted-plunger lineage continued

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<sup>49</sup> Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's Bones, Ellington's Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1995), 22.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



through trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton, trumpeter Cootie Williams, and eventually trumpeter Ray Nance.<sup>51</sup>

In the course of this project, it was this writer's choice to take an approach similar to Kurt Dietrich and place plunger technique into two distinct categories. The first of these, designated "tight plunger," involves the plunger being held right up to the bell of the instrument. This is often used in conjunction with a pixie straight mute. The pixie straight mute, manufactured by Humes and Berg, is a small mute that fits far into the bell of the trumpet and allows room for the plunger to close completely over it. This combination of mute with plunger creates a distinctive timbre that conceals the characteristic tone of the trumpet. If using a hardware store plunger, the center hole must remain closed as this will assist in executing vocal-like effects. For a contrasting timbre, it may prove effective to cut a small opening at the end of the plunger, and then place a small coin in the opening. This will result in the creation of a subtle buzzing effect. Examples of muted plunger in a "tight" style include Cootie Williams solos on *Concerto for Cootie*, *Me and You*, *The Flaming Sword*, and the concluding solo on *Harlem Airshaft*. Additional samples of this technique may be heard in the solos of Rex Stewart, such as *John Hardy's Wife*, *The C Jam Blues*, and *Main Stem*.

A second style of plunger technique involves the plunger being held at a 45-degree angle to the bell of the instrument, or a "half-open" position. As is the case with the previous style, "half-open" plunger may be used with or without a pixie mute. This "half-open" position produces greater volume accompanied by a less covered timbre. Examples of this may be heard in Williams' solos on *Jack the Bear*, *Concerto for Cootie*,

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<sup>51</sup> Don DeMichael, "Double Play: Carney to Hodges to Ellington," *Down Beat* (7 June 1962), 20-21, 44.

*Cottontail, Never No Lament, Rumpus in Richmond, Sepia Panorama, In a Mello Tone, and I Never Felt This Way Before.*

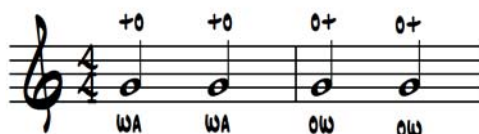
From either of these positions, alteration in sound may be produced through movement of the plunger. Traditional notation makes use of the “+” symbol to represent a closed position while the “o” represents open.

#### Example 1. Standard Plunger Designation



Additional manipulation of the plunger may be utilized in order to produce vocal-like effects. Such effects are heard prominently in the solo and section work of trombonist Tricky Sam Nanton. Rather than perform a series of notes with “Ta”, Nanton substitutes a “Yah” syllable. When combined with movement of the plunger from closed to open, and along with movement of the slide, a unique vocalization is created. This yields the best results when the mute is opened on the vowel part of “yAH”. Though such vocalizations seem to be most effective on the trombone, Cootie Williams attempts to emulate this style on several improvised outings. Unfortunately, this timbre is not easy to replicate. On the trumpet the following vocalizations seem to be the most effective.

### Example 2. Trumpet Vocalizations



The wa-wa sound is produced by moving the plunger from a closed to open position on a single note. This requires no additional alteration of the oral cavity. The opposite of this is moving the plunger from an open to a closed position. This creates an “ow-ow” syllable. Once again no additional manipulation should be necessary. Williams also makes use of plunger movement while holding out notes of longer duration. In many cases he will start a note in the open position and then gradually close the plunger over the bell. A growl, half valve, or shake may be added to any of the above plunger positions for additional emphasis.

There are several means through which Ellington’s trumpeters chose to color the characteristic sound of the trumpet. One such technique is the use of a “growl”. This is a favorite of Williams, though it was used to a lesser extent by Stewart.

### Example 3. The Growl



It is this writer's opinion that the growl is most accurately produced by singing while playing. The intensity of the growl is dependent on the relation of the pitch sung to the note being played on the instrument. In general, the closer the interval, the greater the intensity of the growl will be. It is interesting that Ellington did not mandate a player continue with this "plunger-growl" style, rather it seemed to be an organic process with each player developing their own version of the technique. Miley, who taught Tricky Sam his growling technique, was constantly asked by other brass players how he produced it. His response was, "I don't know how I do it, I'm just crazy."<sup>52</sup> Ken Rattenbury describes Miley's growl technique with the following:

Miley possessed a singular talent, unique in 1924, he had evolved a technique of producing a growling, vocalized sound by humming in his throat while producing the trumpets own sound, at the same time manipulating a plumber's rubber plunger cup in front of the bell of his horn, at varying distances from it, to manufacture nearly human, word-like articulations. To camouflage the basic trumpet timbre almost completely, a small metal mute was inserted into the bell.<sup>53</sup>

In *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir*, Mercer Ellington described a contrasting view on how the growl may be produced:

There are three basic elements to the growl: the sound of the horn, a guttural gargling in the throat, and the actual note that is hummed. The mouth has to be shaped to make the different vowel sounds, and above the singing from the throat, manipulation of the plunger adds the wa-wa accents that give the horn a language.<sup>54</sup>

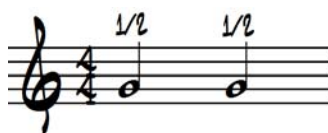
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<sup>52</sup> Inez M. Cavanaugh, "Three Interviews (1945), in Mark Tucker, ed., *The Duke Ellington Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 465.

<sup>53</sup> Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington, Jazz Composer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 46.

<sup>54</sup> Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's Bones, Ellington's Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1995), 24.

#### Example 4. Half-Valve



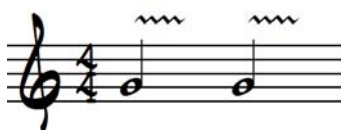
An additional tool employed by Ellington's trumpet soloists, of which Rex Stewart was the master, is the half-valve technique. This could be implemented with or without plunger. In order to produce this sound one must press the appropriate valves for a desired note but only to a midway position. As this occurs the air should remain steady and focused. This process results in the creation of a muffled or "covered" sound that keeps the harmonic series intact. Intonation may be controlled through slight adjustments of valve position. The addition of plunger movement to the half-valve note effectively creates a vocal-like timbre. Stewart often approaches half-valve notes from either above or below pitch through the use of bends and scoops. Examples of half-valve effect by Stewart in these recordings include solos on *John Hardy's Wife*, and *The C Jam Blues*. This technique may also be used in combination with a felt hat. Refer to Stewart's solos on *Morning Glory*, *Dusk*, *A Portrait of Bert Williams*, *Five O'clock Whistle*, and *The Girl in My Dreams Tries to Look Like You* for examples of this unique performance style.

### Example 5. The Slide (Glissando)



Closely related to half-valve technique is the process of sliding between two notes. This is heard in many of Stewart's solos, and is often used with a derby mute. The desired effect is that of a glissando that connects two consecutive notes. This technique may be assisted by holding the valves halfway down as the slide is performed.

### Example 6. The Shake



Another expressive device is the use of a shake or a lip trill. Though these skills share some similar characteristics they are two distinct techniques. The biggest difference between these involves the intervals that they span. In general, the shake encompasses a larger interval than the lip trill, usually a minor third or more.<sup>55</sup> In order to perform this technique, one must blow a focused air stream through the middle of the two notes being shook. When this is combined with alterations in the oral cavity through the

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<sup>55</sup> John Scott Davis, "A Standardization of Jazz Nuances for Trumpet with Accompanying Compact Disc." (Diss., D.A.: University of Northern Colorado, 1999), 30.

syllables “AH” and “EE” a shake is created. Davis further states, “...though the shake may be assisted with the hand moving slightly back and forth towards the lip, the changing pressure placed upon the lips serves to lessen the endurance and consistency of the player.”<sup>56</sup> The shake may also be combined with plunger, growl, or half-valve technique. In his trumpet solos, Williams made use of both, often treating them as a type of terminal vibrato. According to Schuller, “...terminal vibrato was frequently used on longer notes, which started relatively ‘straight’, and gradually ‘loosened up’ to end in a wide vibrato.”<sup>57</sup> Whereas the lip trill is more refined, the shake is more intense and dramatic.

The notation of harmony has been indicated through the application of standard chord symbols. This process has been accomplished through repeated listening. Sources such as *The Duke Ellington Real Book* have been consulted for comparison.

As one might expect, most of the improvised solos rely heavily on broken chords and arpeggios. This results in a vertical contour for many of the solos, and is particularly evident with improvisational styles of Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart. Ray Nance uses a slightly more linear approach including a greater use of scale fragments and chromatic lines.

A harmonic device consistently used by all three soloists is the use of the “blue note”. This is often used in conjunction with plunger, half-valve, or a sliding effect.

With regards to rhythm, exact notation of the rhythms used would make these transcriptions difficult to read. Therefore, it is the intent of a soloist’s line that has been

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<sup>56</sup> John Scott Davis, “A Standardization of Jazz Nuances for Trumpet with Accompanying Compact Disc.” (Diss., D.A.: University of Northern Colorado, 1999), 31.

<sup>57</sup> Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 97.

transcribed. Rhythmic manipulation is indicated through the use of phrases such as *on top* or *lay back*. These indicators are located above the phrase in question.

The only limit to developing these techniques is the performer's own imagination. When studying these transcriptions, I suggest that one begin with imitating the original performer, and then proceed to developing one's own interpretation. I hope that these transcriptions will serve as a useful pedagogical tool for jazz educators and performers, while providing a starting point for further transcription projects involving the trumpet players in the Duke Ellington Orchestra.



## APPENDIX A. TRANSCRIPTIONS

Example A1. *Jack the Bear*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 2 0:50)

Recorded March 6, 1940

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 open Duke Ellington

Swing  
♩=150

Note: This brief solo passage is an excellent introduction to half-open plunger with growl technique. Pay careful attention to Williams's use of pitch bending in measures 1-2, and again in measures 5-6. Crescendo through the growled note, and keep the air stream fast and focused. One may wish to experiment with different plunger positions to achieve different timbres. *Jack the Bear* was a Harlem piano player in the early 1900's. [Lawrence Gushee, "Duke Ellington, 1940", in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 428.]

Example A2. *Morning Glory*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 1 Track 4)

Recorded March 6, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute)

Duke Ellington

Swing

♩ = 92, swing 8th's, straight 16th's

Musical score for "Morning Glory" by Duke Ellington, featuring a trumpet solo by Rex Stewart. The score is in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major, and swing feel. It consists of 24 measures across eight staves. The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth note patterns, often beamed together. Chord changes are indicated above the staff, including Eb6, Bb6, B7, Bb7(#5), Eb6, G7, C7, F7, F#7, E7(b5), Eb6, C7(b9), Bb7, Eb6, Bb7, Bb6, B7, Bb7(#5), Eb6, G7, C7, F7, F#7, F7, E7(b5), Eb6, AbΔ7, Ab-MΔ7, Eb6, C7(#5), F7, Bb7, Eb6, Bb6, B7, Bb7(#5), Eb6, G7, C7, F7, F#7, F7, Eb7(b5), and Eb.

Interlude 3 Sax soli 6

E $\flat$ 6 C7(b9) B $\flat$ 7 B $\flat$ 7

Lay back

Sax soli 7 Open

A $\flat$ 7

53

A $\flat$ - E $\flat$ 6 C7(#5)

57

F7 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ 6 B $\flat$  B7

61

B $\flat$ 7(#5) E $\flat$ 6 G7 C7 F7 F#7 F7 E7(b5)

65

E $\flat$ 6

69

Note: *Morning Glory* was a feature for cornet player Rex Stewart. Though not improvised, it is an excellent example of melodic embellishment. It is my opinion that the first half of this solo uses a derby mute (hat mute), while the second half is performed open. Strive to emulate the different tone colors that Stewart achieves. Also listen for how he maneuvers from note to note. This is often accomplished through sliding and bending of pitch in order to create a fluid sound.

Example A3. *Conga Brava*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 1 Track 6 1:50)  
Recorded March 15, 1940

Solotone mute  
Latin  
♩ = 116

Duke Ellington/Juan Tizol

5

9

13

17

Note: This solo by Stewart is countermelody to a saxophone soli. Of interest here is the rhythm found in measure six. When listening to the solo at normal speed, this rhythm goes by so quickly that it sounds like eighth notes. However, upon listening to the solo at half speed, it is revealed that Stewart is playing triplets with some form of triple tongue. Rhythmically, keep the syncopated lines moving forward. A solotone mute, which was a popular mute choice in the 1930's and 1940's, seems to capture Stewart's tone color most accurately, though due to the recording quality it is difficult to say for certain that this is the mute heard here.

Example A4. *Concerto for Cootie*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 7)  
Recorded March 15, 1940

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Swing  
♩ = 96

Duke Ellington

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 open

(lip trill)

Pixie with plunger, tight

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 open

Pixie with plunger, tight



Open  
Broadly, with pronounced vibrato

49 53 57 61

Open  
Pixie with plunger, 1/2 open

66 70 74 78

Note: When performing this solo, strive to capture the distinct style of each section. In particular, make clear contrast between tight plunger and half plunger timbres. When performing in the tight plunger position, maintain expressiveness of tone. Use the plunger to create nuance. The open section should be full and soaring with much vibrato. “Shakes” found throughout are lip trills.

Example A5. *Me and You*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 8)

Recorded March 15, 1940

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Swing  
♩=190

Duke Ellington

5

9

13

Note: This solo is a presentation of the melody as interpreted by Cootie Williams. Shakes that are found at the end of phrases should be treated as terminal vibrato. In measures 9-10, strive to create a vocal effect using the “wa” plunger vocalization. For added clarity, one may wish to experiment with using the “yah” syllable. Be careful not to overblow when performing a solo with the “tight” plunger designation.

Example A6. *Cottontail*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 9 0:17)  
Recorded May 4, 1940

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 Open  
Swing  
♩ = 116

Duke Ellington

A

5

5

WA

Note: This solo occurs over the “B” section of the form, and should be performed with reckless abandon. Maintain a constant growl for the entire solo.



Example A7. *Never No Lament*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 10 1:45)  
Recorded May 4, 1940

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 open  
Swing  
♩ = 112

Duke Ellington

5

9

13

Straight eighths

Note: *Never No Lament* is the instrumental version of *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*. This solo covers the first two "A" sections of the form. Williams relies heavily on the melody as a basis for his improvisation. The plunger should be used in order to create a vocal quality in measures 8-11, and again in 16-17. Listen for distinct contrast in timbre between closed (+), and open (o) plunger notes.

Example A8. *Dusk*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 1 Track 11 1:03)  
Recorded May 28, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute) Duke Ellington  
Ballad  
♩ = 72

Note: This is Stewart's interpretation of the melody. The combination of derby mute and instrument (cornet) assist in creating a distinctive sound. The half-valve E's should be performed with the first and second valves depressed mid-way down. The choice of derby mute is this writer's opinion, as there is a lack of documentation pertaining to exact mute usage. However, the derby mute was a popular mute for this time, and was often used to soften the sound. Other possibilities might include a bucket, or even a plunger mute.

Example A9. *A Portrait of Bert Williams*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 1 Track 13 0:12)

Recorded May 28, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute) Duke Ellington  
Swing  
♩ = 96

5

9

15

50

Open

Swing

Straight

Chord symbols: C, C7, F7, F-, C/G, G7, E-, B7, E-, F7, F-, C/G, G7, C, F7, F-, C/G, G7, C, F, A7, D7, G7

Measure markings: 5, 9, 15, 50

Tempo markings: Swing, Straight

Articulation: accents, slurs, quintuplet (5)

Note: This solo is a prime example of the “sliding” style often used by Rex Stewart. The use of the derby mute further brings out this glissando-like effect. The half-valve triplets found in measure 50 and 52 should not be tongued; rather the articulation is created through a deliberate pulsing of the air stream. Listen closely for the pitch alteration that occurs during the half-valve notes. “Bert Williams was active in U.S. vaudeville and musical comedy for nearly 25 years, until his death in 1922.” [Lawrence Gushee, “Duke Ellington, 1940”, in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 430.]

Example A10. *Blue Goose*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 14 0:54)  
 Recorded May 28, 1940

Swing Duke Ellington  
 ♩ = 92

Piano 8 Alto Sax 8 Bari Sax 7

A- D7 A#6 D7 G-7 D7 G-7 A#6 D7

25 29

Note: This solo is a rare example of Williams performing without the use of a mute or growl technique. His open trumpet style seems indicative of performance practice of the time. Many 1930's big band trumpeters played with a full sound that included large amounts of vibrato.

Example A11. *Harlem Air Shaft*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 15 0:15)  
Recorded July 22, 1940

Fast swing  
♩ = 192

Duke Ellington

5

9

15

17

21

25

29

Example A12. *Harlem Air Shaft*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 15 2:12)

Recorded July 22, 1940

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Fast swing  
♩ = 192

Duke Ellington

Note: This pair of solos shows Williams' diversity on the trumpet. The first displays his command of the upper register, in addition to a "bluesy" growl style. Additional techniques heard here include half-valve and the shake. With the exception of a few chromatic lines, much of the improvisational vocabulary is derived from arpeggios. The second solo occurs near the end of the composition, and is a good example of "tight" plunger style. Movement of the plunger should be minimal, and the effect subtle.



Example A13. *At a Dixie Roadside Diner*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (Disc 1 Track 16)

Recorded July 22, 1940

Solotone mute  
Swing  
♩ = 160

Edgar Leslie/Joe Burke

11

15

19

23

27

31

35

Latin, straight

Swing

Open

Chord symbols: C6, B7, A7, D-, G, F6, F#6, G7, E-, F, G7, C6, B7, A7, D-

Example A14. *At a Dixie Roadside Diner*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 1 Track 16 2:23)

Recorded July 22, 1940

Swing  
♩ = 160

Edgar Leslie/Joe Burke

Note: This is Rex Stewart's interpretation of the melody to *At a Dixie Roadside Diner*. As is the case with his solo on *Conga Brava*, a solotone mute seems to best duplicate his tone quality.



Example A15. *Rumpus in Richmond*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 18)

Recorded July 22, 1940

Freely Duke Ellington

Swing ♩=178

Pixie with plunger, nearly closed

7

55

F#- D7 G G- D A7

Example A16. *Rumpus in Richmond*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 18 1:52)

Recorded July 22, 1940

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 Open  
Swing  
♩=178

Duke Ellington

Note: The opening six measures of example A15 is a solo trumpet call, the band joins in the seventh measure. Intensity is created by over blowing with the closed plunger. This creates a quasi-growl effect through the entire passage. The use of a coin placed in the plunger may assist in duplicating this effect. In example A16, one must coordinate the motion of the plunger with the slide into the quarter note in the second measure. This creates a vocal-like effect that is magnified through the use of a growl. For the shakes in measures eleven and thirteen use a slightly closed plunger position. The passage in measure 21 is the return of the opening fanfare.



Example A18. *In a Mellow Tone*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 1 Track 22 1:14)

Recorded September 5, 1940

Pixie with plunger, 1/2 Open  
Swing  
♩ = 132

Duke Ellington

4 8 12 16 20 24 28

Note: Special effects used by Williams in this solo include wa-wa plunger, growl, and several bent/scooped notes. Williams does not stray too far from the melody, and frequently pairs “blue” notes with plunger motion.

Example A19. *Five O'Clock Whistle*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 1)

Recorded September 5, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute)

Kim Gannon/Josef Myrow/Gene Irwin

Swing

♩=138

The musical score is written for a trumpet soloist and a vocal part. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as Swing with a quarter note equal to 138 beats per minute. The score is divided into two main sections: a trumpet solo (measures 1-34) and a vocal part (measures 41-80).

**Trumpet Solo (Measures 1-34):**

- Measures 1-3: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 4-6: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 7-9: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 10-11: Fourteenth notes G4, A4, B-flat4, C5 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 12-13: Quarter notes D5, C5 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 14-15: Quarter notes B4, A4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 16-17: Quarter notes G4, F4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 18-19: Quarter notes E4, D4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 20-21: Quarter notes C4, B3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 22-23: Quarter notes A3, G3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 24-25: Quarter notes F3, E3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 26-27: Quarter notes D3, C3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 28-29: Quarter notes B2, A2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 30-31: Quarter notes G2, F2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 32-33: Quarter notes E2, D2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measure 34: Quarter note C2 (labeled *mf*).

**Vocal Part (Measures 41-80):**

- Measures 41-42: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 43-44: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 45-46: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 47-48: Rest, then a half note B-flat (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 49-50: Quarter notes G4, A4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 51-52: Quarter notes B4, C5 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 53-54: Quarter notes D5, C5 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 55-56: Quarter notes B4, A4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 57-58: Quarter notes G4, F4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 59-60: Quarter notes E4, D4 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 61-62: Quarter notes C4, B3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 63-64: Quarter notes A3, G3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 65-66: Quarter notes F3, E3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 67-68: Quarter notes D3, C3 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 69-70: Quarter notes B2, A2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 71-72: Quarter notes G2, F2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 73-74: Quarter notes E2, D2 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 75-76: Quarter notes C2, B1 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 77-78: Quarter notes A1, G1 (labeled *mf*).
- Measures 79-80: Quarter notes F1, E1 (labeled *mf*).





Example A20. *Warm Valley*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 2 1:02)

Recorded October 17, 1940

Tight cup  
Ballad  
♩ = 76

Duke Ellington

Note: In *Warm Valley*, Stewart creates another unique trumpet timbre through the use of a tight fitting cup mute. Strive for a fluid tone, and connect everything with a steady column of air. The obbligato in measure ten should be performed in a slightly free manner. An additional expressive device is his use of a steady and gentle vibrato on all sustained notes.

Example A21. *The Flaming Sword*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 2 Track 3 0:21)

Recorded October 17, 1940

Pixie with plunger, tight

Duke Ellington

Latin

$\text{♩} = 144$

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in 4/4 time, featuring a Latin rhythm. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a key signature of one flat. The second staff begins with a measure marked '5'. The third staff begins with a measure marked '9'. The fourth staff begins with a measure marked '13'. The music is characterized by syncopation and includes various musical notations such as chords (F6, C7, F, Fb7), accidentals (+0), and articulation marks (WA, WA). The notes are connected with a firm legato tongue, and the phrasing ends with terminal vibrato.

Note: In this excerpt, it is important to stay on top of the beat due to the syncopation. Keep all the notes connected with a firm legato tongue. Approach the shakes at the end of phrases as though terminal vibrato. Since this is performed in a tight plunger position, this excerpt should be performed at a fortissimo dynamic, though not overblown.



Example A22. *The Flaming Sword*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 2 Track 3 2:27)

Recorded October 17, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute) Duke Ellington  
 Latin  
 ♩ = 144

15

Note: This is Williams' presentation of the melody. Recording quality makes the exact mute used difficult to determine with complete certainty.

Example A23. *Across the Track Blues*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 4 0:41)

Recorded October 28, 1940

Harmon mute with stem  
Blues  
♩=90  
Duke Ellington

Note: In this solo, note the tone color Stewart achieves through the application of scooped and bent notes in conjunction with the use of a harmon mute. Adding to this effect is his sparse use of vibrato.

Example A24. *Chloe*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 2 Track 5 1:30)

Recorded October 28, 1940

Blues  
♩=110  
Gus Kahn/Neil Moret

Note: This solo should be performed with a full tone, and with an even vibrato.

Example A25. *I Never Felt This Way Before*

Trumpet soloist: Cootie Williams (CD 2 Track 6 1:09)  
Recorded October 28, 1940

Tight cup  
Ballad  
♩ = 92

Al Dubin/Duke Ellington

Note: This solo features Williams performing with a tight fitting cup mute. During this short solo he makes use of half-valve effect, some sliding, and some bending of notes.

Example A26. *The Girl in My Dreams Tries to Look Like You*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 9 2:56)  
Recorded December 28, 1940

Derby mute (hat mute)  
Swing  
♩ = 96

Mercer Ellington

Example A27. *Take the "A" Train*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 2 Track 10 0:50)

Recorded February 15, 1941

Straight mute  
Swing  
♩ = 160

Billy Strayhorn

Chord symbols and musical markings include:

- D6
- E7(b9)
- E-7
- A7
- E-7
- A7
- E7
- E-7
- A7(b9)
- D6
- A-7
- D7
- G#7
- E7
- E-7
- A7(b9)
- E-7
- D6
- E7(b9)
- E-7
- A7
- D6
- Open
- 4
- 3
- G7(b9)
- G-7
- C7
- F6
- G-7
- G7(b9)
- G7
- C7
- F7

Measure numbers: 10, 15, 19, 22, 26, 31, 41, 46.



Note: This classic solo by Ray Nance was one of his earliest recorded solos with the Ellington Band. He plays the first part with a straight mute; the second half is performed open. Harmonically he does not stray too far away from the melody. His solo is well-crafted in that he presents clear melodic ideas which are then developed. His use of shakes is very similar to Williams in that they are treated as terminal vibrato.

Example A28. *John Hardy's Wife*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 12 1:41)

Recorded February 15, 1941

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Swing  
♩ = 164

Mercer Ellington

10 14 19 23 27 31

1/2 open

Tight position to end

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Note: This solo dates from the period where Stewart briefly assumed the role of muted plunger soloist for the band. This is an interesting amalgamation of Williams style merged with Stewart's.

Example A29. *Blue Serge*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 2 Track 13 0:15)  
Recorded February 15, 1941

Derby mute (hat mute) Mercer Ellington  
Ballad

$\text{♩} = 86$

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. The tempo is marked as  $\text{♩} = 86$ . The score consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. The third staff concludes the phrase with a final note. Chord symbols are written above the staff:  $D-7$ ,  $A\flat 7$ ,  $E\flat$ ,  $A7$ ,  $D-$ ,  $E\flat$ ,  $D-$ ,  $E\flat 7$ ,  $E7$ ,  $E\flat 7$ ,  $D-$ , and  $A7$ . The score is marked with a 'Derby mute (hat mute)' and 'Ballad'.

Note: In *Blue Serge*, Ray Nance performs the opening solo, making effective use of the mute in combination with the sliding style.



Example A30. *Just a Settin' and a Rockin'*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 2 Track 17 0:38)  
Recorded June 5, 1941

Swing  $\text{♩} = 120$  Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn/Lee Gaines

The musical score for 'Just a Settin' and a Rockin'' is presented in a single staff. It begins with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 120 beats per minute. The melody is written in a style that suggests a trumpet solo, with various articulations and slurs. The chords are indicated above the staff: D- (B-flat), Bb7, D- (B-flat), Bb7, D- (B-flat), Bb7, E-7, A7, D, D6, E-7, A7, C-7, F7. The score ends with a double bar line.

Note: The overall form of this composition is AABA, with Nance playing the melody over the “B” section. Nance performs it with open horn and makes use of sliding and some note bending.

Example A31. *Chocolate Shake*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 2 Track 19 0:33)  
Recorded June 26, 1941

Swing  $\text{♩} = 168$  Duke Ellington/Paul Webster

The musical score for 'Chocolate Shake' is presented in a single staff. It begins with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 168 beats per minute. The melody is written in a style that suggests a trumpet solo, with various articulations and slurs. The chords are indicated above the staff: E-7(b9), G-7, E7, D- (B-flat), A7. The score ends with a double bar line.



Example A32. *Clementine*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 2 Track 21 1:39)

Recorded July 2, 1941

Swing  
♩ = 165

Billy Strayhorn

The musical score for 'Clementine' is written for a trumpet soloist. It begins with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Swing' with a metronome setting of 165. The score is composed of eight staves of music. The first staff starts with a C7 chord and a melodic line. The second staff continues the melody with a D-7(b9) chord. The third staff features a G7 chord and a melodic line. The fourth staff has a D-7 chord and a melodic line. The fifth staff has a G7 chord and a melodic line. The sixth staff has a D-7 chord and a melodic line. The seventh staff has a G7 chord and a melodic line. The eighth staff has a D-7 chord and a melodic line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), indicating the key of C major. The time signature is common time (C). Above the staff, the chords C, D-7, G7, and C are indicated. The notation shows a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a half-valve style indicated by a 1/2 above the notes. The second staff continues the melody, also in common time, with a 1/2 above the notes. The notation is arpeggio-based, with a few chromatic runs.

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Note: Stewart's solo serves as an opportunity to demonstrate his distinct half-valve style. Most of his lines are arpeggio-based, with the exception of a few chromatic runs.

Example A33. *Five O'Clock Drag*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 3 1:06)

Recorded September 26, 1941

Swing  $\text{♩} = 140$  Duke Ellington

Chords: C, F, F#7, C/G, A-, D-, G7

Measures: 6, 10, 14, 18, 22, 26, 30

Annotations: Tutti, Lay back

Note: This solo is another example of Stewart's use of half-valve technique used in combination with "blue notes". Most of his improvisational vocabulary is arpeggio based, with a few chromatic lines. Starting in measure 26, Stewart begins to play noticeably on the back side of the beat.

Example A34. *Bli-Blip*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 5 1:22)  
Recorded September 26, 1941

Swing  $\text{♩} = 156$  Duke Ellington/Sid Kuller

The musical score for 'Bli-Blip' is written for a trumpet soloist. It consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Swing' with a metronome marking of 156. The key signature is D major. The first staff contains several measures of music, including a half rest, a quarter note, and a half note. Above the staff, the chords G7 and G7(#5) are indicated. A slur with a '5' indicates a five-measure rest. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a half note, a quarter note, and a half note. Above the staff, the chords E-7, A7, A-7, D-7, and D are indicated. The score ends with a double bar line.

Example A35. *Raincheck*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 7 1:35)  
Recorded December 2, 1941

Fast swing  $\text{♩} = 210$  Billy Strayhorn

The musical score for 'Raincheck' is written for a trumpet soloist. It consists of two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Fast swing' with a metronome marking of 210. The key signature is D major. The first staff contains several measures of music, including a half rest, a quarter note, and a half note. Above the staff, the chords G, A-7, D7, and G are indicated. A slur with a '5' indicates a five-measure rest. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a half note, a quarter note, and a half note. Above the staff, the chords C, G, A-7, D7, and G are indicated. The score ends with a double bar line.

Example A36. *Perdido*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 10 0:36)  
Recorded January 21, 1942

Swing Juan Tizol  
♩ = 180

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a C6 chord, followed by an E7 chord. The second staff begins with an A7 chord, followed by a D7 chord. The third staff begins with a G7 chord. The melody is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 180 bpm. The style is Swing. The composer is Juan Tizol.

Note: This brief melodic solo occurs over the “B” section of *Perdido*. Nance performs this in a lyrical and singing manner.

Example A37. *Perdido*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 10 1:06)  
 Recorded January 21, 1942

Swing  
 ♩=130

Juan Tizol

1  
5  
10  
14

Note: This improvised outing features Stewart and his half-valve approach. His phrases are primarily created through the use of arpeggios. Shakes at the ends of phrases are treated as terminal vibrato.

Example A38. *Perdido*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 10 2:37)  
Recorded January 21, 1942)

Swing Juan Tizol  
♩ = 130

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in 4/4 time, marked 'Swing' with a tempo of 130. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of four staves. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, with chords C6, E7, and A7 indicated. A bracket labeled 'Straight eighths' spans measures 2 and 3. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8, with chords D7 and G7 indicated. The third and fourth staves contain measures 9 through 14, with chords D-7, G7, C6, and E-7 indicated. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with some notes marked with a '5' indicating a fifth finger fingering.

Note: In this solo, Nance displays his upper register. Rhythmically, he demonstrates a tendency to perform on the back side of the beat.

Example A39. *The C Jam Blues*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 11 0:54)  
Recorded January 21, 1942)

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Swing  
♩=180

Duke Ellington

Solo break

5

9

13

Note: Special techniques used in this solo include tight plunger style, several shakes, and a smear in measure 15.



Example A40. *What Am I Here For?*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 13 1:37)  
Recorded February 26, 1942

Derby mute (hat mute) Duke Ellington  
Ballad  
♩=100

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in 4/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first staff starts with a C major 7 chord (CΔ7) and a C# major 7 chord (C#Δ7). The second staff features an F major 7 chord (FΔ7) and a G major 7 chord (G7). The third staff includes an E minor 7 chord (E-7) and an A major 7 chord (A7). The fourth staff shows a D major 7 chord (D7), a G# major 7 chord (G#Δ7), and a G major 7 chord (G7). The music is characterized by sliding lines and arpeggio-derived patterns, typical of Rex Stewart's style with a derby mute.

Note: This is another example of Rex Stewart's sliding trumpet approach while using a derby mute. Although there are a few more horizontal lines in this solo, though there is still strong reliance on arpeggio derived lines.

Example A41. *Someone*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 15 1:03)

Recorded February 26, 1942

Swing  
♩ = 126

Duke Ellington

5 9 13 17 21 25 29

Note: It is this writer's opinion that this is one of the most musical solos found in this collection. Though he stays fairly close to the melody, Nance uses several of his own chromatic lines and scale fragments that he interweaves throughout. Nance plays on the back side of the beat, creating a nice amount of tension. This entire solo builds slowly until reaching its conclusion upon the arrival of the final high note.

Example A42. *Main Stem*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 17 0:16)  
Recorded June 26, 1942

Pixie with plunger, tight  
Fast swing  
♩=208

Duke Ellington

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in the key of E major (three sharps) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked as 208 bpm. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of eighth notes and chords, with E7 and A7 chord symbols. The second staff continues the melody with eighth notes and chords, also marked E7. The third staff shows a melodic line with eighth notes and a final phrase marked with an accent (^).

Note: This first solo is Stewart's version of the melody, and a nice demonstration of "tight" muted plunger technique.

Example A43. *Main Stem*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 17 0:41)  
Recorded June 26, 1942

Fast swing

Duke Ellington

$\text{♩} = 208$

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in the key of E major (three sharps) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked as 208 bpm. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a half-valve entrance (marked 1/2) on a whole note E5, followed by a melodic line. The second staff starts with a sixteenth rest (marked 6), followed by eighth notes and a quintuplet (marked 5). The third staff begins with a tenteenth rest (marked 10), followed by eighth notes and a quintuplet. Chord markings include E7, A7, B7, and E7.

Note: This is Stewart's improvised solo. It begins with an explosive half-valve entrance that is followed by melodic lines based on scales and chromatic fragments.

Example A44. *Main Stem*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 17 0:56)  
Recorded June 26, 1942

Pixie with plunger, tight

Duke Ellington

Fast swing

$\text{♩} = 208$

The musical score is written for a trumpet solo in the key of D major (three sharps) and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked as 208 bpm. The score consists of three staves. The first staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The second staff also begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The third staff begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note D5, a quarter note E5, and a half note F#5. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and accidentals.

Note: This example demonstrates how Nance gradually began to fill the void left by the departure of Williams in 1940. For this solo he performs muted plunger in a “tight” position.

Example A45. *Hayfoot Strawfoot*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 19)  
Recorded July 28, 1942

Straight mute  
Swing  
♩ = 160

Harry Lenk/Ervin Drake/Paul James McGrane

Note: In this example one should listen for the scoops in measure four that are followed with a series of bent notes in measures seven and eight.

Example A46. *Hayfoot Strawfoot*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 19 0:46)  
Recorded July 28, 1942

Swing  
♩ = 160

Harry Lenk/Ervin Drake/Paul James McGrane

Note: Listen for the shake in the first measure as well as the half-valve notes in the penultimate measure.

Example A47. *A Slip of the Lip*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 21 1:22)  
Recorded July 28, 1942

Swing  
♩=160

Luther Henderson/Mercer Ellington

6 10 14

Note: This is an excellent melodic solo by Nance. His approach is more linear and less vertical in contour than many of the earlier solos on these recordings.

Example A48. *Sherman Shuffle*

Trumpet soloist: Ray Nance (CD 3 Track 22 1:53)

Recorded July 28, 1942

Swing Duke Ellington  
♩=178

Note: This solo opens with a quote from *Stars and Stripes*. Though brief, it features a nice contrast between linear and vertical motion.

Example A49. *Sherman Shuffle*

Trumpet soloist: Rex Stewart (CD 3 Track 22 2:04)

Recorded July 28, 1942

Swing Duke Ellington  
♩=178

Note: Stewart continues the solo with an effective half-valve glissando.



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