

VOLUME 8

BIG BANDS

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2808

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

EDITED BY FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.

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Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra
Band 2: MONEY BLUES
Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra
Band 3: JACKASS BLUES
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Luis Russell and His Orchestra
Fredric Ramsey, Jr. - Editor

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Fletcher Henderson & His Orchestra
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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. RA 58-79

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701 Seventh Ave., New York, New York 10036
Distributed by Folkways/Scholastic Records,
906 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FJ 2808

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JAZZ VOL. 8

BIG BANDS BEFORE 1935 (1924-1934)

Introduction and notes on the recordings

by FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.

Joint Editor and Author of *Jazzmen*, *The Jazz Record Book*, *Jazzways*, and *Chicago Documentary: Portrait of a Jazz Era*

The large orchestra was not new to music, whereas jazz played by small bands was wholly fresh. Inevitably, as jazz moved away from its beginnings, arrangers attempted to score it for orchestra. Many were unable to do so, because they applied conventional, European harmonies and techniques to a music that was essentially a way of playing, not simply a tradition of melody or counterpoint.

But that did not mean it was impossible to score jazz for fairly large musical aggregations, although intelligent scoring of this sort was a long time coming, and possibly still has far to go. And as with classic music, it is perfectly possible for the large orchestra to co-exist with the small group of three or four. Chamber music has its trios, quartets, all the way up to nonets; the homogeneity of the small jazz band breaks down at just about the same point, and for the same reasons (lack of freedom to improvise, balance, dynamics, harmony). Roughly where more than nine instruments are working together, orchestration steps in; there are small chamber orchestras, then come the symphonies. With jazz, the chamber music of the small band gives way to the scoring for ensembles, and the large band comes into being.

As it happened, the workshop that developed scoring for large ensembles of jazz musicians was the large band itself. It could not come from outside, from standards set elsewhere and in pre-established ways. Like dramaturgy built on practical experience of stagecraft and road productions, big-band arranging grew out of those who lived and suffered with it. The Molières and Shakespeares who brought it to fruition

were, first of all, Henderson and Ellington, Luis Russell and Don Redman; they collaborated with the talented personnel of their orchestras to produce workable arrangements of jazz for large ensembles.

In a sense, the development of big band jazz parallels the development chronicled for individual jazzmen in *Jazz*, Volume 7, New York (1922-1934); a waste land where jazz was concerned in the early twenties, New York began to blossom, in the late twenties and middle thirties, with the arrival of talent from all over the country. To take one example only, the Henderson aggregation, adequate for playing dance music at Roseland before 1924, leapt into prominence as a musical organization when men like Louis Armstrong, Buster Bailey, Don Redman, and Coleman Hawkins joined its ranks. But still another kind of stream, aside from the one of individual talent, began to feed New York in the late twenties and thirties. That was of the regional orchestra, represented in this collection by bands such as those of Bennie Moten (the changed, re-vamped Moten band really took New York by storm when it came to town, late in 1936, as Count Basie's Orchestra), Jimmie Lunceford, and McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Then too, just as Harlem developed the parlor social piano style, it gave birth to one orchestra that, to many musicians of the twenties, meant New York alone. This was the band that played for so many years at Small's Paradise, home of many a fabulous "breakfast dance," where musicians from all over town vied to sit and play with their confreres.

It would be impossible to document, from a selection of only fourteen recordings of this era, all the early beginnings, false starts, and final emergences of varied big-band styles.

Fletcher Henderson is given most space, because his orchestra, aside from reflecting his own growing abilities as arranger, mirrors the musical coming of age of men like Don Redman, Coleman Hawkins, Rex Stewart, Cootie Williams, Buster Bailey, Benny Carter, and countless others. It also clearly foreshadows, as early as 1934, the arrangements that Henderson later gave to Benny Goodman, and through Goodman, to swing music at large.

Record Data

SIDE I

Band 1. COPENHAGEN, by Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra. Louis Armstrong, Elmer Chambers, Howard Scott, trumpets; Charlie Green, trombone; Buster Bailey, clarinet; Don Redman, alto saxophone; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Fletcher Henderson, piano; Charlie Dixon, banjo; Kaiser Marshall, drums; bass unknown. October 30, 1924. Vol4926, master 13928.

Band 2. MONEY BLUES, by Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra. Same personnel, except that Russell and Joe Smith take the place of Chambers and Scott, trumpets. May 19, 1925. Co383.

Band 3. JACKASS BLUES, by Fletcher Henderson and His orchestra. Same personnel as for Band 2. with Bob Escudero, tuba; Armstrong, trumpet, replaced by Rex Stewart. May 14, 1926. Co654.

Band 4. KANSAS CITY BREAKDOWN, by Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra. Ed Lewis, Booker Washington, trumpets; Thamon Hayes, trombone; Woodie Walder, Harlan Leonard, Laforet Dent, Jack Washington, saxophones; Bennie Moten, piano; Leroy Berry, banjo; Walter Page, bass; Willie McWashington, drums. September 6, 1928. FV 21693.

Band 5. THE BOY IN THE BOAT, by Charlie Johnson and His Orchestra. Leonard Davis, Sidney de Paris, trumpets; Jimmy Harrison, trombone; Ben Whittet, clarinet; Edgar Sampson, alto sax and vocal; Ben Waters, tenor sax; Charlie Johnson, piano; Bobby Johnson, guitar; Cyrus St. Clair, bass; George Stafford, drums. September 19, 1928. Bb10248.

Band 6. HOT AND BOTHERED, by Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. Arthur Whetsel, Bubber Miley, trumpets; Joe Nanton, trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet; Johnny Hodges, alto sax; Harry Carney, bass sax; Duke Ellington, piano; Lonnie Johnson, guitar; Fred Guy, banjo; Wellman Braud, bass; Sonny Greer, drums; Baby Cox, vocal. August, 1923. Ok8623.

Band 7. SARATOGA SHOUT, by Luis Russell and His Orchestra. Henry Allen, trumpet; J.C. Higginbotham, trombone; Albert Nicholas, clarinet; Charlie Holmes, alto sax; Teddy Hill, tenor sax; Luis Russell, piano; Will Johnson, guitar; Pops Foster, bass; Paul Barbarin, drums. January 24, 1930. Ok8780.

SIDE II

Band 1. FOUR OR FIVE TIMES, by McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Langston Curl, John Nesbitt, trumpets; Claude Jones, trombone; Don Redman, Milton Senior, George Thomas, Prince Robinson, saxophones; Todd Rhodes, piano; Dave Wilborn, banjo; Bob Escudero, bass; Cuba Austin, drums; George Thomas, Dave Wilborn, vocalists. Arranged by Don Redman, July 11, 1928. FV21583.

Band 2. SIX OR SEVEN TIMES, by The Little Chocolate Dandies. Leonard Davis, Rex Stewart, trumpets; J.C. Higginbotham, trombone; Don Redman, vocal and saxophone; Benny Carter, alto sax; Coleman Hawkins, tenor sax; Fats Waller, piano; others unknown or disputed. September 18, 1929. Ok8728.

Band 3. BUY, BUY FOR BABY, by Ben Pollack and His Park Central Orchestra. Al Harris, Jimmy MacPartland, trumpets; Jack Teagarden, trombone; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Gil Rodin, alto sax; Larry Binyon, tenor sax; Bill Schumann, 'cello; Vic Briedis, piano; Dick Morgan, banjo; Harry Goodman, bass; Vic Moore, drums; Belle Mann, vocal. October 15, 1928. FV21743.

Band 4. BEALE STREET BLUES, by The Charleston Chasers. Ruby Weinstein, Charlie Teagarden, trumpet; Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, trombones; Benny Goodman, clarinet; Sid Stoneburn, alto sax; Larry Binyon, tenor sax; Arthur Schutt, piano; Dick McDonough, guitar; Harry Goodman, bass; Gene Krupa, drums. Jack Teagarden, vocal; Glenn Miller, arranger. February 19, 1931. Co2415.

Band 5. IN DAT MORNIN', by Jimmie Lunceford and His Chicksaw Syncopators. Personnel unknown, but thought to be members of a ten piece orchestra, including Willie Smith, sax; Edwin Wilcox, piano; Moses Allen, tuba and vocal. Recorded Memphis, June 6, 1930. FV38141.

Band 6. MOTEN'S SWING, by Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra. Joe Keyes, Dick Stewart, Oran Hot Lips Page, trumpets; Dan Minor, trombone; Eddie Durham, trombone and guitar; Eddie Barefield, Harlan Leonard, Buster Smith, Ben Webster, saxophones; Bill Count Basie, piano; Leroy Berry, guitar; Walter Page, bass; Willie McWashington, drums; Buster Moten, piano. December 13, 1932. FV23384.

Band 7. DOWN SOUTH CAMP MEETIN', by Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra. Russell Smith, Irving Randolph, Henry Allen, trumpets; Keg Johnson, Claude Jones, trombones; Hilton Jefferson, Russell Procope, Buster Bailey, Ben Webster, saxophones; Fletcher or Horace Henderson, piano; Lawrence Lucie, guitar; Elmer James, bass; Walter Johnson, drums. Fletcher Henderson, arranger. September, 11-12, 1934. De213.