

# JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

THE JEFFREY SULTANOF MASTER EDITION

## EZZ-THETIC

AS WRITTEN FOR CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS

ARRANGED BY GEORGE RUSSELL

EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

## FULL SCORE

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-8020

MUSIC BY GEORGE RUSSELL

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## EZZ-THETIC (1950)

### **Background:**

When Billie Holiday signed a new recording contract with Decca Records in 1944, she told producer Milt Gabler she wanted to record with strings. Anxious to establish Holiday as a pop singer, Gabler hired six string players for her first session, and the first song recorded was *Lover Man*, one of her biggest hits. Several years later, when Charlie Parker signed with impresario/manager Norman Granz' label Clef, Parker asked for strings as well.

Granz was obviously keeping costs down, as only five string players were hired for the first session (1949), but these were the very top New York session players; some were members of the NBC symphony conducted by Arturo Toscanini. As much as he'd dreamed of playing with strings, reportedly Parker walked out of a few sessions without playing a note (the number has never been authenticated). He later explained that the sound of the strings and the thought of working with such distinguished musicians scared him; he thought they were greater artists than he was. What finally took place was sheer magic. The parts for the string players were relatively easy, so they listened to and enjoyed Parker's improvisations. The arrangements for the first studio session were done by Jimmy Carroll and recorded on November 30, 1949. On July 5, 1950 there was another studio recording session, this time with arrangements by Joe Lippman. This second date featured a larger ensemble including oboe, French horn, 4 violins, 2 violas, cello, harp, guitar, piano, bass, and drums. Parker also appeared with his string group on at least 6 live occasions: *Birdland* (August, 1950 and March and April, 1951), *Apollo Theater* (August 1950), *Carnegie Hall* (September, 1950), *Rockland Palace Dance Hall* (September, 1952). In 1952 Parker recorded an additional 4 arrangements by Lippman featuring a full big band with a string section.



Parker would later say that the studio recordings with his string ensemble were his favorites of his own work, despite jazz critics' condescending reactions and their claims that he was 'selling out.' As it turns out, he was selling 'in.' The albums sold well, and brought Parker to a whole new audience. As far as his own playing, many of his solos on this first album were lovely and inspired. *Just Friends* is one of Parker's finest records and his solo is remarkable; I can't be the only one who can sing it by heart at a moment's notice. It is a pity that none of the alternate takes seem to have survived.

The *Bird with Strings* album arranged by Jimmy Carroll was so successful that a touring ensemble was put together for concerts. Examination of the arrangements in the *Charlie Parker with Strings* book revealed that Parker not only had settings of classic songs that were never recorded for Norman Granz, but also he had asked Gerry Mulligan and George Russell to arrange their recent (ca. 1950) compositions for him. Mulligan's version of *Rocker* is well known as a live recording has long been available. A private recording from 1952 has *Bird* roaring on another Mulligan composition that was previously unknown as a *Bird with Strings* arrangement, *Gold Rush*.<sup>1</sup> Even more interesting is that George Russell arranged *Ezz-Thetic* for the group. There are no live performances documented, and until the discovery of the string book, it was not known that Russell even wrote this version for *Bird*. Any previously unknown piece of music by this composer, especially from this era, is a major discovery.

A biography of George Russell is outside the scope of this publication. However, several essential pieces of biographical information must be conveyed here. George Russell was one of the most influential theorist/composers of the twentieth



century. This statement is not made lightly. His *Lydian Chromatic Concept* is a major contribution to music theory, influencing not only players and composers of jazz and fusion, but composers of concert music as well. It became the blueprint for modal jazz, and it is safe to say that Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* would not have been recorded were it not for Russell's treatise.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the composition of *Ezz-Thetic* (written to honor the heavyweight boxing champ and bass player Ezzard Charles), Russell was only a few years from completing the theory for initial publication; *Ezz-Thetic* itself is an early example of a modal jazz composition. He made several albums of his own music from 1956 until the 1990s, led ensembles all over the world, and was a recipient of numerous awards, fellowships and grants.

It is a great honor to have been granted permission to publish this important arrangement from Alice Russell. Very little of Russell's music has circulated over the years, and it is hoped that more of it will be available for study and performance in the years to come. Additionally, this is one of the few known works Russell composed for strings. As can be seen, that is our loss.

One further note: it seems that Charlie Parker never paid Russell for this arrangement. At the time of his passing in 2009, Russell was still owed \$25.00 for the score and extracted parts.

## **The Music:**

The score and alto sax part to *Ezz-Thetic* seem to be missing. Russell may or may not have written a harp part as there is none extant. But on the evidence that every other arranger supplied parts for harp for this ensemble, I have taken the liberty of compiling one that is based on the extant parts - no new music has been written for the creation of this part. The melody played by the alto saxophone is taken from a lead sheet supplied and authorized by Russell's publishing company, Russ-Hix Music.

The composition itself is based on Cole Porter's *Love for Sale* but Russell is very specific about what he wants in his music, so please use his chord changes. Please note that Russell wrote this setting with a key signature of four flats in concert, with the majority of the Ds written with naturals. Since this is clearly in C minor tonality, I have changed this to three flats. It is probable that Russell considered this piece to be in the Lydian mode, hence it should have the key signature for that mode.



## **Notes to the Conductor:**

No tempo marking was present on the parts. However, when this was written the maximum time an arrangement could run was 3 minutes (that's how long each side of a 78 rpm record would play). To get this arrangement in at 3 minutes or less it has to be played at 280 beats per quarter note. Additional evidence was supplied by listening to Russell's later recording of this same composition, which was played at approximately 300 bpm. We recognize that 280 bpm is rather fast for the string players as well as the alto saxophonist. This piece may be played a bit slower if necessary. In addition, it may be opened up for more solos. The 6/4 bars should not be played slower; the quarter note speed remains the same. Note that the figures are written 3+3 for these four bars.

**Jeffrey Sultanof**

- December 2010

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Gold Rush* and *Rocker* have also been published by Jazz Lines Publications.

<sup>2</sup> George Russell's *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* is available through [ejazzlines.com](http://ejazzlines.com)

# JAZZ-THETIC

## SCORE

(AS WRITTEN FOR CHARLIE PARKER WITH STRINGS)

MUSIC BY GEORGE RUSSELL  
ARRANGED BY GEORGE RUSSELL  
EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

BRIGHT SWING ♩ = 280

ALTO SAX. *f*

OBOE *f*

VIOLIN A *f*

VIOLIN B *f*

VIOLIN C *f*

VIOLA *f*

CELLO *f*

HARP *f*  
[C $\sharp$ , D $\sharp$ , E $\flat$ , F $\sharp$ , G $\sharp$ , A $\sharp$ , B $\flat$ ]  
*Gloss*

PIANO *f*  
LET RING  
PED.

BASS *f*

DRUM SET *f*

1 2 3 4

(Solo)  
Am<sup>9</sup>

A. SX. [Rests]

Ob. [Melodic line with accents]

VLN. A [Violin part with 'V' markings]

VLN. B [Violin part with 'V' markings]

VLN. C [Violin part with 'V' markings]

VLA. [Viola part with 'V' markings]

VC. [Violoncello part with 'V' markings]

HP. [Harp part with triangular patterns]

PNO. [Piano part with chords and a '\*' marking]

BASS [Bass line]

D. S. [Drum set part with '(PLAY TIME)' marking]

5 6 7 8 9 10



