

JAZZ FOR KIDS

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

"MAN, YOU HAVE GOT TO CHECK OUT THAT VERSION OF 'BAA BAA BLACK SHEEP!' "

Now there's a sentence I never anticipated writing.

I laughed out loud listening to this album seven times within just the first three songs. This music is hilarious, adventurous, and playful. The arrangements are creative and clever, and listening to it is fun.



I knew I was in for a treat within the first seconds of the first song, when I realized that, while it sounded like a brass section was introducing "Baa Baa Black Sheep," what we're really hearing is a bleating herd of sheep.

As soon as the bass enters and settles into its steady, mysterious strut, I found myself, as I never had before, actually interested in that 17th-century English nursery rhyme. Just how did those three bags of wool get full?

While “Baa Baa Black Sheep” sounded life-like, “Old MacDonald” (1925) and “Pop Goes the Weasel” (1852) bring to life the uniquely ebullient, driving feeling that can only be brought to a melody through jazz.

It’s a refreshing reminder to hear how these arrangements can turn a seemingly plain, ordinary, and extremely familiar melody into a surprising, joyous, uplifting delight.

I love that my first reaction to “Itsy Bitsy Spider” was not a technical analysis of the alternating intervals shared by the bass clarinet and flute, but rather, a very real image of a kid—think Eddie Murphy in *Delirious*—taunting his buddy at the ice cream truck. That struggle to make it up the water spout? It’s

real. In fact, when first published in 1910, the words “blooming” and “bloody” took the place of “itsy” and “bitsy.”

1939’s “Wheels on the Bus” becomes much more than a simple children’s singalong for bus rides, as its composer, Verna Hills, intended. Both sophisticated and fun, “Wheels on the Bus” becomes both an epic reflection of and metaphor for the unlimited possibilities within reach—in music and in life—if we keep an open mind. And practice.

The uplifting swing of “I Like to Take My Time” reminds me of that which originally made me fall in



love with jazz: the irresistible ways in which melodies I already knew could be interpreted.

As I finished listening to this arrangement of the Fred Rogers classic, I was left wondering, for the very first time, why this song wasn't considered a standard.

Same with "It Ain't Easy Being Green": the full, lush arrangement here brings new perspective and meaning to the song's powerful, self-redemptive lyrics

Two Muppets songs serve as reminders that unique musicians and good music are timeless. "Mah Nà Mah Nà" becomes a swinging nod to the late, great Slam Stewart, who often hummed along to his own basslines. And Ernie's nod to his favorite toy, "Rubber Duckie," becomes our tour guide of sorts through jazz history, from the speakeasy to the supper club to the concert hall and back.

Elsewhere, the joyful, celebratory samba treatment given to "La Cucaracha" belies the political weight the song carried during the Mexican Revolution.

The song becomes a tribute to that great Johnny Griffin adage, "Jazz is music made by and for people who have chosen to feel good in spite of conditions."

Jazz for Kids is a perfect representation of another timeless adage: "jazz is life." There is seriousness in the fun, and there is joy in the seriousness. Music is at its most powerful when it makes one feel connected with the past, and *Jazz for Kids* breathes new life into songs we think we've known forever. It shows how jazz can elevate even the most minuscule events in life. *Jazz for Kids* takes simple folk songs and nursery rhymes and turns them into something that you never saw coming.

- JOE ALTERMAN



BAA BAA BLACK SHEEP

Traditional

Arranged by Sherman Irby

Solos: Kenny Rampton (trumpet), Vincent Gardner (trombone), Sherman Irby (alto saxophone), Marcus Printup (trumpet—fills), Chris Crenshaw (trombone—fills) Walter Blanding (tenor saxophone—fills)



OLD MACDONALD

Traditional

Arranged by Ted Nash

Solos: Sherman Irby (alto saxophone—fills), Dan Nimmer (piano), Vincent Gardner (trombone—fills), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Joe Temperley (baritone saxophone), Walter Blanding (tenor saxophone) Ali Jackson (drums)





MAH NÀ MAH NÀ

Edward B. Marks Music Company (BMI)

Written by Piero Umiliani

Arranged by Wynton Marsalis

Solos: Jonathan Russell (violin), Carlos Henriquez
(bass and vocals)

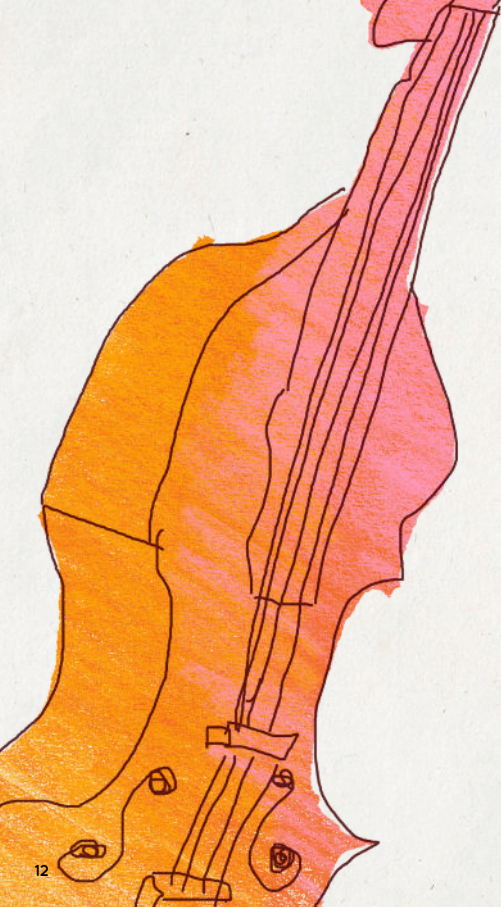


4. ITSY BITSY SPIDER

Traditional

Arranged by Wynton Marsalis

Solos: Ted Nash (flute), Chris Crenshaw
(trombone—fills)



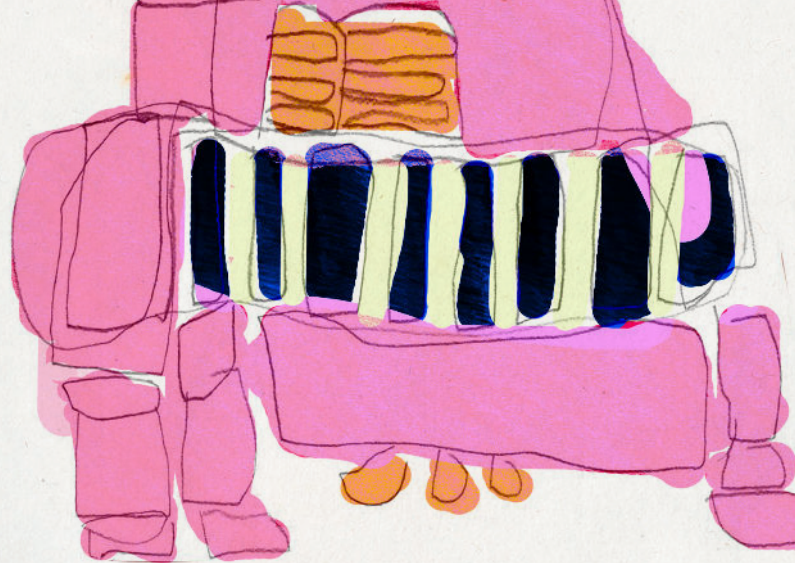
5.

LA CUCARACHA

Traditional

Arranged by Wynton Marsalis

Solos: Marcus Printup (trumpet), Victor Goines (clarinet), Chris Crenshaw (trombone), Dan Nimmer (piano), Carlos Henriquez (bass), Ali Jackson (drums)



WHEELS ON THE BUS (FEAT. HODA KOTB)

Traditional

Arranged by Sherman Irby

Solos: Hoda Kotb (vocals), Ali Jackson (brushes), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet)

7

IT AIN'T EASY BEING GREEN

The Joe Raposo Music Group, Inc. (BMI)

Written by Joe Raposo

Arranged by Ali Jackson

Solos: Vincent Gardner (vocals), Wynton Marsalis
(trumpet), Marcus Printup (trumpet)

8

I LIKE TO TAKE MY TIME

Fred M. Rogers (ASCAP)

Written by Fred Rogers

Arranged by Sherman Irby

Solo: Ryan Kisor (trumpet)



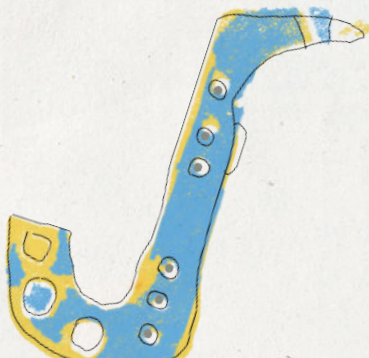
9. RUBBER DUCKIE

Festival Attractions, Inc. (ASCAP)

Written by Jeff Moss

Arranged by Vincent Gardner

Solos: Dan Nimmer (piano), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet),
Vincent Gardner (trombone), Sherman Irby (alto saxophone),
Ali Jackson (drums), Wynton Marsalis (trumpet—hollers)



POP GOES THE WEASEL

Traditional

Arranged by Wynton Marsalis

Solos: Ted Nash (alto saxophone),
Elliot Mason (trombone)

PERSONNEL:

The Jazz at Lincoln Center orchestra with Wynton Marsalis

REEDS

Sherman Irby (alto saxophone, clarinet, and flute)

Ted Nash (alto saxophone, clarinet, and flute)

Victor Goines (tenor saxophone, bass clarinet, and clarinet)

Walter Blanding (tenor saxophone)

Joe Temperley (baritone saxophone, bass clarinet)

TRUMPETS

Ryan Kisor

Marcus Printup

Kenny Rampton

Wynton Marsalis

TROMBONES

Vincent Gardner

Chris Crenshaw

Elliot Mason

RHYTHM SECTION

Dan Nimmer (piano)

Carlos Henriquez (bass)

Ali Jackson (drums)

SPECIAL GUESTS:

Hoda Kotb (vocals)

Jonathan Russell (violin)

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