

The Case of Duke Ellington's "The Sheik of Araby": Complexities of Musical Borrowing in Sidney Bechet's and Johnny Hodges's Solos

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Johnny Hodges is considered one of the premier alto saxophonists in jazz history. His lush alto sound and heavy vibrato, embodying both romanticism and sensuality, were signatures of not only his playing, but of the Duke Ellington sound. Because he was so closely associated with the alto saxophone, Hodges's early soprano saxophone playing is often overlooked. Nonetheless, many of Hodges's contemporaries and fans greatly valued his contributions on the instrument. Writing to *Down Beat* in 1940, Alfred Porter, Jr., for example, claimed that "Hodges not only played soprano sax during the 1930's but also played it a hell of a lot better than [Sidney] Bechet did then or now."¹

This connection with Bechet is notable. Hodges started his career as a pupil of Bechet, serving as a substitute for him at Club Basha in 1925. Bechet also admired his pupil's soprano saxophone playing, naming Hodges his favorite soprano saxophonist on Leonard Feather's *Jazz Encyclopedia* questionnaire.² Despite his talent on the instrument, however, Hodges gave up the soprano saxophone by 1940. As he put it, the soprano saxophone is "a funny instrument," because "you just can't pick it up today and put it down tomorrow and go back and play it"—a common complaint about the soprano due to its inconsistent intonation and tonal production.³ I focus on one of Hodges's most famous soprano saxophone solos in the Duke Ellington Orchestra: "The Sheik of

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¹ Alfred Porter, Jr., "Bechet or Hodges," *Down Beat*, May 15, 1940, 11.

² Sidney Bechet's Questionnaire for Leonard Feather's *Jazz Encyclopedia*, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.

³ "Johnny Hodges—An interview with Henry Whiston," *Jazz Journal* 19, no. 1 (1966): 8.

Araby," which has a surprising connection to Bechet and his practice of crafting solos.

In this article, I examine the phenomenon of solo borrowing by comparing two recordings of "The Sheik of Araby": the 1932 Ellington recording featuring Johnny Hodges and Bechet's one-man band recording from 1941. On the 1932 version, Hodges plays a solo crafted by his former teacher, Bechet. Nine years later, Bechet would record almost the same solo. Transcriptions of the solo as Bechet taught it to Hodges are found at the Smithsonian Institution. These transcriptions demonstrate the beginning of Bechet's solo and represent the first place the solo appears on paper or on record. Drawing on these archival resources and my own transcriptions of the 1932 and 1941 recordings, I analyze the similarities and differences of three iterations of Bechet's solo to showcase two practices from New Orleans: gifting of music from teacher to student and crafting solos over time.⁴

While not necessarily ubiquitous, solo borrowing was not novel in jazz practices of that era. Louis Armstrong, for example, borrowed King Oliver's solo without permission on "Dippermouth Blues" (1925) when he recreated the song with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. In 1945, Ella Fitzgerald sang Illinois Jacquet's solo from the Lionel Hampton recording of "Flying Home" from 1942. Bechet's "The Shiek of Araby" example, however, stands out for several reasons. First, whereas the previous examples are transcriptions based on recordings, Bechet passed his solo to Hodges before he had the opportunity to record it. Second, Bechet and Hodges share a teacher-student relationship, unlike the musicians in the previous examples. Lastly, Bechet recorded the same solo almost a decade after he gave it to Hodges, suggesting a reclamation of the solo or, more likely, a gradual process of composition and recomposition.

BEFORE "THE SHEIK OF ARABY": ELLINGTON'S AND HODGES'S HISTORY WITH BECHET

Bechet joined Ellington's band in its infancy, probably in 1924. At this time, Bechet was arguably the rising star of Ellington's band and a centerpiece of its sound concept. In this section, I contextualize Ellington's early involvement with Bechet by exploring their first encounters. I also detail Hodges's introduction to Bechet and their work together at the Club Basha. These two relationships,

⁴ While the solo itself could be understood as a part of Bechet's arrangement, this conclusion would be contrary to how jazz solos operated in the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and other orchestras of the era, all of which encouraged individuality. In other words, arrangers anticipated that jazz musicians could and would improvise their own solos, making this circumstance unique.

albeit different and separate, reveal the basis for Bechet being invited back into the Duke Ellington Orchestra as an arranger for “The Sheik of Araby” in 1932.

Ellington was enamored by Bechet’s unique approach to the clarinet and soprano saxophone from the start. To Ellington, Bechet was the “greatest of all the originators” and “the symbol of jazz.”⁵ Shortly after they met, Ellington learned that Bechet’s sound was a result of his upbringing in New Orleans, and more specifically, as part of the city’s Creoles of Color community. When recalling this first memory and his lasting influence, Ellington remarked:

I heard him before I left Washington. He always played the same way—the same way then as just before he died. I remember hearing him play *I’m Coming, Virginia* in 1921 [*sic*—the greatest thing I ever heard in my life. I’d never heard anything like it. It knocked me out.... I consider Bechet the foundation. His things were all soul, all from the inside. It was very, very difficult to find anyone who could really keep up with him.⁶

His early admiration for Bechet shaped the way Ellington conceptualized woodwinds in his orchestra, in terms of both their timbre and assertive playing style. In the words of Mercer Ellington, his father was “very conscious of the value of the New Orleans style of clarinet-playing, probably ever since he first heard Sidney Bechet in Washington.”⁷

Very little is known about Bechet’s time with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, but a few facts and conjectures can illuminate his experience. He was first introduced to Bechet’s playing through the show *How Come*, which Bechet joined in 1923. Ellington had the opportunity to hire Bechet after an impromptu jam session with Ellington cornetist Bubber Miley and trombonist Charlie Irvis in 1924.⁸ It is possible that Bechet recorded with the Washingtonians in the

⁵ Duke Ellington and Stanley Dance, “The Art Is in the Cooking,” in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Oxford University Press, 1993), 337.

⁶ Ellington and Dance, “The Art Is in the Cooking,” 337

⁷ Mercer Ellington and Stanley Dance, *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 25.

⁸ Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (Da Capo Press, 2000), 66; Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (Doubleday, 1973), 47; Ellington and Dance, “The Art Is in the Cooking,” 337; John Chilton, *Sidney Bechet: The Wizard of Jazz* (Da Capo Press, 1987), 78–79; Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years* (University of Illinois Press, 1991), 295–96. The dates Bechet played with Ellington are highly debated, with 1926 often cited due to Ellington’s own suggestion of that date. Yet 1926 is not possible because Bechet was the musical director for *The Black Revue* at the time, touring throughout Europe. He likely played with Ellington during the summer of 1924, months before the recording of Ellington’s first two records, “Choo Choo” and “Rainy Nights” in November 1924. Mark Tucker suggests that his musical involvement began after Ellington’s tour of Massachusetts in April or May of 1924, and could have continued off and on throughout the spring of 1925 before Bechet opened his Club Basha. Further information about

summer of 1925, making two unreleased sides for Brunswick of "Twelfth Street Rag" and "Tiger Rag."⁹ Bechet's nephew, Leonard, suggested that he was originally hired to help the band learn popular New Orleans standards, like "High Society."¹⁰ An Ellington recording of "Tiger Rag" in 1925, a popular standard in New Orleans, would support Leonard's suggestion. While in the band, Bechet had a feature number titled "I'll Follow the Swallow Back Home."¹¹

Admiration between Bechet and Ellington was mutual, and Bechet remembered his time with the band fondly in his autobiography. In particular, he enjoyed his collaborations with Ellington's lead saxophonist, Otto Hardwick. Bechet recollected: "Otto, Duke and myself used to go over to Duke's place evenings to fool around on the piano, talk how we were going to build this thing with all the band.... From hearing Otto play to me, me playing to Otto—playing *for* each other—we were making up what the band was to be, how it was to feel itself."¹² Here, Bechet provides a testimonial to the collaborative environment Ellington continually fostered in his band by crafting arrangements to the individual voices he had available. Working arrangements at the piano was only a preliminary way to compose and arrange; for Ellington, the piece was truly shaped by how the musicians recreated or interpreted their parts.¹³

Bechet's unreliability—he reportedly showed up to an Ellington gig a few *days* late, allegedly caused by a lost taxi—led to his dismissal from Ellington's orchestra.¹⁴ After parting ways with Ellington in 1925, Bechet opened his own club in Harlem on 145th Street and Seventh Avenue named Club Basha, a play on Bechet's own name. In newspaper reviews about the club, Bechet is frequently called "Sidney Basha," cementing the club as his idea. He had a business partner, however, named George Holmes, who had the connections to buy bootleg alcohol.¹⁵ The club received rave reviews, some calling it "the best revue of the

this club will be given later in this section. The year 1924 appears to be confirmed by Bechet's autobiography (Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle* [Cassell & Company Ltd, 1960], 141.).

⁹ Tucker, *Ellington*, 111.

¹⁰ Tucker, *Ellington*, 111.

¹¹ Tucker, *Ellington*, 117.

¹² Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 142–43.

¹³ See Thomas Brothers, *Help!: The Beatles, Duke Ellington, and the Magic of Collaboration* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2018) for more information on the collaborative environment within the orchestra.

¹⁴ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 70.

¹⁵ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 72.

uptown district” for its “bright tuneful melodies in scintillating color and in more of its share of pulchritude.”¹⁶

As with Ellington, Bechet habitually disappeared without notice at Club Basha, much to the chagrin of his patrons. To keep the show going, Bechet needed a protégé who could serve as his substitute, and he knew the perfect musician: a young Johnny Hodges. Bechet met Hodges on tour in the early 1920s in Boston through Hodges’s sister, who took her brother backstage and encouraged him to play “My Honey’s Lovin’ Arms” on his curved soprano saxophone for his idol.¹⁷ It is evident that Bechet heard potential, and perhaps some of himself, in Hodges because he decided to take him on as a pupil. As a Creole clarinetist in New Orleans, the practice of mentorship was a core part of Bechet’s musical training.¹⁸ New Orleans clarinetists, such as Louis Tio, Lorenzo Tio, and Alphonse Picou, mentored younger clarinetists and expected their pupils, such as Bechet, Barney Bigard, and Albert Nicholas, to follow this practice.

For Hodges, this mentorship with Bechet was career-defining. In Hodges’s words:

The best thing that ever happened to me was when I went to New York and was playing in a little cabaret on 135th St. He had his own club called Club Bechet [*sic*] on 145th St. He came after me and offered me a job. He would tell me to learn this and learn that. “The old man won’t be here long,” he’d say. I didn’t know what he was talking about then, but he would go away and get lost, and I was supposed to play his part. At the same time, I was learning, getting an education.... We put on our show, and that’s how I got to be known, through him.¹⁹

After Bechet left Club Basha in 1926 for the European tour of *Shuffle Along*, Hodges joined drummer Chick Webb’s band, eventually landing with Ellington in 1928. Ellington and Bechet would next collaborate on the bandleader’s 1932 recording of “The Sheik of Araby,” giving Hodges another opportunity to work with Bechet professionally.

¹⁶ George Tyler, “Harlem’s Happenings from George Tyler,” *Afro-American*, August 22, 1925, 3.

¹⁷ Con Chapman, *Rabbit’s Blues: The Life and Music of Johnny Hodges* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 13.

¹⁸ Hannah Krall, “The Creole of Color Clarinet Tradition and Its Influence on Duke Ellington’s Creative Legacy,” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2024).

¹⁹ Don DeMichael, “Double Play: Carney to Hodges to Ellington,” in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Oxford University Press, 1993), 474.

BECHET RETURNS: TEACHING THE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA AND TRANSCRIPTIONS AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

In 1932, Ellington solicited Bechet to arrange the standard "The Sheik of Araby" for his orchestra to record. Because Bechet's music reading skills were not strong, he showed up in person to teach his arrangement while the band was in Philadelphia, leaving Ellington's copyists to write down what he played.²⁰ Figure 1 is one example of these transcriptions from the archive, complete with detailed articulation markings.²¹ It is unknown who wrote this transcription, but the various copies in the Smithsonian Institution's Duke Ellington Collection suggest many transcribers were hired to write down Bechet's arrangement. More importantly, Bechet taught Hodges his own solo that he had crafted over many years, a practice common among New Orleans musicians. Bob Wilber, a student of Bechet's, remembered that Bechet had a large collection of precomposed solos for jazz standards and that "The Sheik of Araby" was among them.²² In this section, I compare the most complete transcription found at the Smithsonian Institution with my own transcription of Hodges's performance of the solo on the 1932 Duke Ellington Orchestra recording.²³

Figure 1 shows the Smithsonian transcription of the "Sheik of Araby" soprano sax solo, as noted above. To ease comparison and readability of the handwritten manuscript, figure 2 reproduces the figure 1 transcription exactly as written (top staff) alongside my own transcription of Hodges's solo as performed on the final recording (bottom staff). Placing the notation of the manuscript copy side by side with my transcription of the 1932 recording illustrates similarities and differences between the two versions. This comparison suggests Bechet and Hodges shared both creative influence and ownership over the solo.

²⁰ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 21, 91. Chilton even suggests that Juan Tizol was the one to copy what Bechet played, but the archival evidence cannot prove this.

²¹ By "most complete," I mean the transcription I included has the most information, which includes extensive articulation markings. The other examples include a similar transcription with only slurs or phrase markings.

²² John Lucas, "The Jazz Baton: Bechet to Hodges to Wilber," *Mississippi Rag*, January 1985, 2.

²³ Duke Ellington and His Orchestra, "The Sheik of Araby," recorded May 16, 1932, Brunswick 6336, 78-rpm recording.



Figure 1. Transcription of "The Sheik of Araby," Series 1, Box 339, Folder 11, Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian Institution.

Transcription

Hodges

5

10

15

20



Figure 2. Top staff: transcription of Bechet's solo as written, Smithsonian Institution. Bottom staff: Hodges's solo as recorded on "The Sheik of Araby," Duke Ellington Orchestra, May 16, 1932.

Figure 2 illuminates the musical choices Hodges made to make the solo his own. For example, Bechet's transcribed solo contains many fast-moving notes that Hodges eliminates, as seen in measures 10 and 11. This modification leaves Hodges with more space and flexibility to breathe. Bechet also uses a dotted-eighth and sixteenth-note pattern in measures 3 and 4, which Hodges replaces with swung eighth notes. The phrasing of the eighth notes in measures 13 through 16 differs. While Hodges groups them in four with accents on offbeats, Bechet groups them in two, accenting on the beat. Overall, Hodges retains the majority of the solo's substance provided to him by Bechet and introduces only minor personal variations in rhythm and phrasing. For those in the know, it acts as a significant homage on Hodges's part to his teacher, Bechet.

Bechet's influence on Hodges was sonically legible to his bandmates in Ellington's Orchestra. During an interview with Inez M. Cavanaugh, Otto Hardwick, prompted by hearing Hodges warming up in the background, remarked, "Sidney Bechet... you can hear Bechet in there.... Hodges always thought a lot of him."²⁴ Taking Hardwick's comment further, Bigard called Hodges "a disciple of Sidney Bechet" because "he had all of those Bechet licks down."²⁵ Ellington's son, Mercer, echoed Bigard, calling Bechet Hodges's

²⁴ Inez M. Cavanaugh, "Reminiscing in Tempo," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Oxford University Press, 1993), 462.

²⁵ Barney Bigard, *With Louis and the Duke: The Autobiography of a Jazz Clarinetist*, ed. Barry Martyn (Oxford University Press, 1986), 54.

"paramount influence" adding that "they had the same kind of intuitive flow, the same kind of ease on their instruments, so that they always seemed to be singing and you were rarely conscious of anything mechanical."²⁶ Similarly, Greer recognized Bechet as "Johnny Hodges' inspiration" due to their relationship as teacher and student.²⁷ Ellington remarked: "Hodges played soprano too, but Hodges learnt from Bechet, and Bechet taught Hodges who used to play closer to Bechet than anyone else ever played. They had, in fact somewhat of the same perspective, I think, at the time Hodges was blowing soprano."²⁸ These anecdotes confirm what is clear in comparing the two "The Sheik of Araby" solos in figure 2: Hodges's style of playing is deeply inspired by his work with Bechet.

BECHET'S ONE-MAN BAND: "THE SHEIK OF ARABY" BECHET'S WAY

It is often the case in jazz historiography that recordings, which have permanence, take precedence over live performances, which are often not documented.²⁹ This holds true for Bechet's "The Sheik of Araby" solo, which he not only taught to Hodges, but had been performing live and continued to perform live throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Nonetheless, having been first to record the solo, listeners frequently ascribed authorship of it to Hodges. Bechet even recalled that those familiar with the record in France accused him of copying Hodges.³⁰ Bechet finally recorded his solo in 1941.³¹ After briefly describing what was so novel about Bechet's one-man band recording, I analyze the revival of Bechet's solo alongside the taught version and Hodges's performed version.

²⁶ Ellington and Dance, *Duke Ellington in Person*, 65.

²⁷ Dance, *The World*, 66.

²⁸ Spike Hughes, "The Duke—In Person," in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. Mark Tucker (Oxford University Press, 1993), 70.

²⁹ See the following for a discussion of the prominence and issues of jazz recordings in recounting jazz history: Scott DeVeaux, "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography," *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (1991): 525–60; Jed Rasula, "The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History," in *Jazz Among the Discourses*, ed. Krin Gabbard (Duke University Press, 1995); Catherine Tackley, "Jazz Recordings as Social Texts," in *Recorded Music: Performance, Culture and Technology*, ed. Amanda Bayley (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁰ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 251.

³¹ Sidney Bechet's One-Man Band, "The Sheik of Araby," Victor 27485, recorded April 18, 1941, New York, 78-rpm recording.



Figure 3. Photographs of Bechet making his one-man band recordings.

Bechet formed the idea to do a one-man band recording in April of 1940 when John Reid showed him that it was possible to superimpose tracks.³² Reid had heard of a symphony superimposing an oboe part that was missing to prevent re-recording the entire piece.³³ Bechet tried it for himself on 78-rpm records, with the few instruments he had available at Reid's apartment, to make sure it was possible for him to do as well.³⁴ After a few weeks of practice, they proposed the session for "The Sheik of Araby" and "Blues of Bechet" to RCA Victor, later recorded with recording manager Stephen Scholes and recording engineer Fred Maisch.³⁵ It took over two hours to record "The Sheik of Araby" because of several mistakes, including a few "clinkers" on clarinet and the

³² Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 130.

³³ Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 179.

³⁴ Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 179.

³⁵ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 141.

headphones falling off mid-session (see figure 3 for marketing photos of his recording session).³⁶ For this reason, he ran out of time, and he could only complete four parts (piano, tenor saxophone, clarinet, and soprano saxophone) on "Blues of Bechet," which was released anyway.³⁷

The recordings received mixed reviews—some expressing awe and some exasperation. Bechet remembers that the newspapers were so enamored that the musicians' union made RCA Victor pay him wages for seven musicians, one for each individual instrumental performance.³⁸ Still, many considered the one-man band concept too much of a gimmick to be taken seriously. One critic called it a "unique stunt" that doesn't "add new luster to Mr. Bechet."³⁹ Another echoed this statement declaring that "the novelty of the whole idea is good box-office," but "for record buyers who seek more than that, it must forever be a worthy, but worthless effort."⁴⁰ Even though this was novel at the time, it foreshadows multitracking on other media with higher fidelity, such as magnetic tape.⁴¹

For Bechet, these one-man band recordings exemplified a longing for a band that could handle his creativity and power. Bechet was particular about the way music should be played and expected his sidemen to be dedicated to his way of performance—once, a duel over chord changes landed him in a Parisian jail.⁴² His exacting standards meant that his ensembles throughout the 1930s and 1940s were a revolving door of musicians who largely failed to deliver on his artistic vision. By recording with only himself, he could control the melody, harmony, counterpoint, and form.

The solo transcribed in 1932 while Bechet was consulting with Ellington's band is similar to the solo played by Bechet on his one-man band recording almost a decade later with a few notable differences (figure 4).

³⁶ P.E.M., "Famed for His Soprano," *Music and Rhythm*, September 1941, 30. I photocopied this article from a folder entitled "Sidney Bechet" at the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.

³⁷ Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 141.

³⁸ Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*, 180.

³⁹ "July Records," *Time*, July 14, 1941.

⁴⁰ "Famed for His Soprano," photocopied article in "Sidney Bechet" folder, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.

⁴¹ For information on multitracking using tape, see: Susan Schmidt Horning, *Chasing Sound: Technology, Culture, and the Art of Studio Recording from Edison to the LP* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 207–47; Mary Alice Shaughnessy, *Les Paul: An American Original* (William Morrow, 1993), 229–31.

⁴² Chilton, *Sidney Bechet*, 83.

This musical score is written for three parts: Bechet, Transcription, and Hodges, in 4/4 time. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 4, 8, and 12 indicated at the start of their respective systems. The Bechet part features a melodic line with a red highlight in the first measure and a green highlight in the fourth measure. The Transcription part includes chord symbols: Bb, Bb°7, and F7. The Hodges part includes chord symbols: Bb6, Bbmaj9, Bb°7, F7, F7+5, Bb6, and Bb°7. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, half notes, and rests, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. The bottom of the page features a small copyright symbol (©).

This musical score is for Duke Ellington's "The Sheik of Araby". It consists of four systems of music, each with three staves (treble, middle, and bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. Chord symbols are provided below the middle staff: F7, F7+5, Bb6, Bb7, F7, D7, Ab7-5, G7+5, C7, G7, C7, and F7. Measure numbers 16, 20, 23, and 26 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. There are three highlighted sections: a red highlight in measure 17, a green highlight in measure 23, and a yellow highlight in measure 26. The score ends with a double bar line in measure 29.

16

20

23

26

F7 F7+5 Bb6 Bb7 F7

D7 Ab7-5 G7+5

C7 G7 C7 F7



Figure 4. Top staff: Bechet's one-man band recording, April 18, 1941, tenor saxophone. Middle staff: transcription from fig 1a, for comparison. Bottom staff: Hodges's recorded solo, as in fig.1b.

The differences between the transcribed version of Bechet's solo that he taught to Ellington's band in 1932 and the version he recorded for the one-man-band project in 1941 have two explanations. First, these alterations reflect general aesthetic changes over the interim decade with the ascendance of swing. Second, many of Bechet's deviations from his own 1932 transcribed version of the solo bear the influence of Hodges's 1932 "The Shiek of Araby" recording with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Most notable is that the timing of several phrases has been altered to accommodate breathing and phrasing (shown using red highlights in figure 4). For example, Bechet starts the solo on the offbeat of one rather than on an anacrusis. The F7 arpeggios are offset by one beat in measures 19 through 21 to accommodate Bechet's finishing of the previous lick on beat one. Like Hodges, Bechet uses swung eighth notes in measures 3 and 4, but he ultimately resorts back to the dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm in measure 17, originally found in his taught version from 1932. He also experiments with a punchier rhythm filled with fewer eighth notes in measures 23 and 24, a marked difference from the abundance of eighth notes found in the original transcription. These changes are shown in green highlights in figure 4. Measures 27 and 28 (shown in yellow highlights in figure 4) at first seem to exemplify an interesting phenomenon found in the jazz tradition when a soloist breaks away from their plan. Both the transcription and Hodges's recording outline arpeggios on the C7 chord, but Bechet borrows a lick he played earlier in measures 7 and 8. Jazz improvisers often practice licks in many different keys so they can play patterns without too much thought on the mechanics.⁴³ Alternate takes of the tenor saxophone track at the Library Congress, however, reflect Bechet's change

⁴³ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 115–16.

to the borrowed lick as well. This suggests that this was a deliberate part of the plan: a change made at some point over the course of a decade.⁴⁴

Bechet's inclusion of "The Sheik of Araby" in his one-man band session serves as an homage to his work with Ellington and Hodges in 1932 and reflects his ambitions as a composer and arranger. At the end of the session, Bechet allegedly remarked: "Man! That ends three months of torture. Thinking about this session was giving me nightmares; I dreamed I was playing the whole Duke Ellington band."⁴⁵ Given Bechet's prior connection with the Ellington arrangement of "The Sheik of Araby," his statement is further testimony to the relationship between the arrangement taught to Ellington's orchestra and recorded by Johnny Hodges (with some changes) and the version later performed by Bechet as a one-man band.

CONCLUSIONS: A CONTINUED LEGACY, NEW ORLEANS COMPOSING, AND PEDAGOGY

Crafting and perfecting solos through practice and performance was an important part of the New Orleans jazz tradition. As recognized by David Chevan, Louis Armstrong frequently included aspects of his improvisations in his copyright deposits, which makes "the border between composition and improvisation so narrow that without the evidence of the copyright deposit, we might imagine we were hearing an improvised solo."⁴⁶ This is not to say improvisation is not composition; as Gunther Schuller reminds us, a jazz recording often represents a "work in progress" for improvisers.⁴⁷ We can also see a similar phenomenon in alternative takes on recordings and in jazz musicians' improvisational practices. For example, similar licks on solos from Johnny Dodds and King Oliver can be recognized on the Okeh and Gennett recordings of "Dipper Mouth Blues." Louis Armstrong, as recognized by Lewis Porter, reused licks in multiple recordings, including "West End Blues," "Struttin' with Some Barbeque," and "I Miss My Swiss."⁴⁸ These examples, representing solos crafted over a day of recording in the cases of Dodds and

⁴⁴ John D. Reid Papers, National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, Library of Congress.

⁴⁵ "Recent Recordings," *N.C. Advance*, June 29, 1941.

⁴⁶ David Chevan, "Written Music in Early Jazz" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1997), 306.

⁴⁷ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Early Development* (Oxford University Press, 1968), x.

⁴⁸ Lewis Porter, "Louis Armstrong: Some History of His Intro to West End Blues," *Playback with Lewis Porter* (substack), December 21, 2022, <https://lewisporter.substack.com/p/louis-armstrong-some-history-of-his>.

Oliver or over a few years of practice in the case of Armstrong, illuminate this trend as an essential New Orleanian practice. “The Sheik of Araby” showcases this phenomenon over a decade. Given these smaller-scale examples, it is not surprising for Bechet as a New Orleans musician to continue this craft by slowly recomposing his solo for “The Sheik of Araby” over time.

The student-teacher connection that existed between Bechet and Hodges is arguably the strongest reason for this case. As revealed by another of Bechet’s students, Bob Wilber, teaching pre-composed solos was a part of Bechet’s pedagogical process: “He taught me all the set of choruses that he had on tunes: ‘I Know that You Know,’ ‘China Boy,’ ‘The Sheik of Araby.’...When I heard the solo that Hodges plays on ‘The Sheik of Araby’ with Duke Ellington, I said, why there’s the same chorus that Sidney taught me to play in 1946 when I was studying with him.”⁴⁹ Taking Wilber at his word, Hodges’s borrowing of Bechet’s solo was an important pedagogical and compositional tool for Bechet. As I have shown, the solo Hodges played in 1932 was played by Bechet during the teaching session for “The Sheik of Araby” and the solo Bechet performed in 1941 during his one-man band session. This article provides researchers with a viable method for future analysis of not only Bechet’s solos, but other jazz solos assumed to be improvisational.

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⁴⁹ Lucas, “The Jazz Baton,” 2.

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