

# Mozartian Perfection in Jazz

Module 9 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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# Outline

- Biography of Billy Strayhorn
- Analysis of *Satin Doll*

# Biography

- **Billy Strayhorn, 1915-1967**
  - **Grew up in Pittsburgh**
    - Born in Dayton, Ohio
    - Soon moved to Pittsburgh
    - Attracted to music while staying with grandmother in North Carolina.
    - Attended Westinghouse High School.
    - Studied piano.

High school yearbook photo

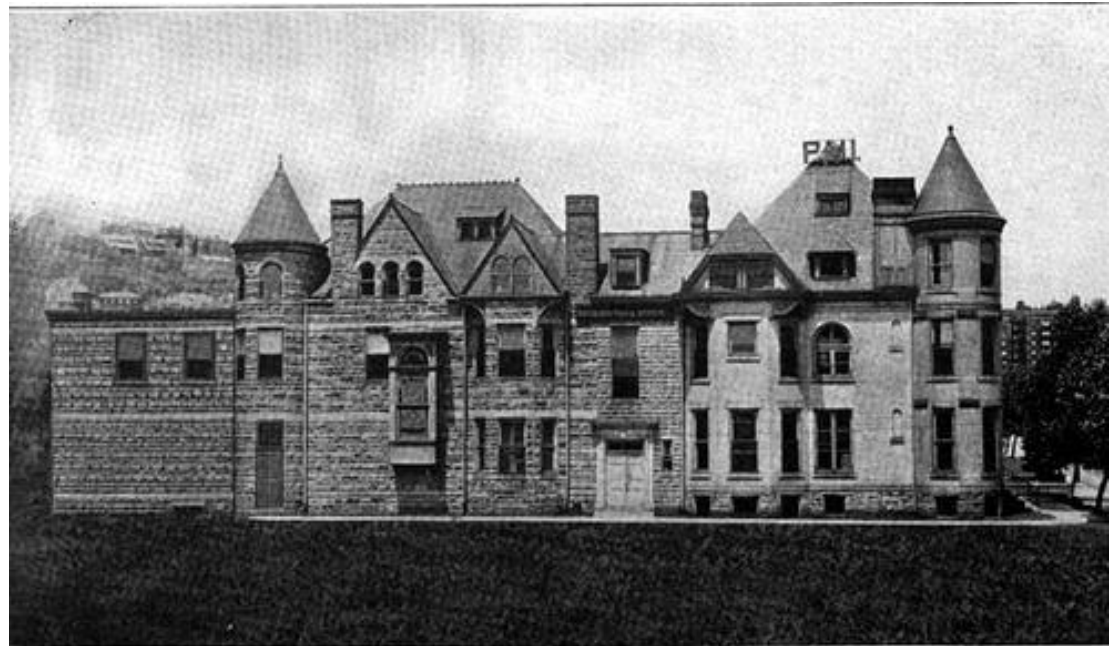


# Biography

- Professional development

- Studied at Pittsburgh Musical Institute

- PMI (est. 1915) was one of 4 top music schools in USA.
    - Located one block away on Bellefield.
    - Trained many jazz greats.
    - Merged with Pitt Music Dept, 1963.



Pittsburgh Musical Institute  
131-133 Bellefield Ave.

# Biography

- Professional development
  - Studied classical music at PMI
    - Preferred Ravel and Stravinsky
    - Encountered racial barriers in classical music
    - Turned to jazz and wrote [Lush Life \(1:33\)](#), age 19



# Biography

- Professional development
  - Met Duke Ellington, age 23
    - Backstage at Stanley Theater (now Benedum Center).
    - Showed Ellington *Lush Life* and his arrangement of an Ellington piece.
    - Ellington invited Strayhorn to join him in NYC to write for his band.
    - But Strayhorn had to follow up.



# Biography

- Professional development
  - Relocated to NYC
    - Ellington told Strayhorn to Take the A Train to reach his apartment in Manhattan.
    - This piece, written by Strayhorn, became the signature song of Ellington's band, also a jazz standard.



# Biography

- Relationship with Ellington
  - One of the strangest professional relationships in musical history.
    - Ellington never gave Strayhorn a contract or a salary.
    - But Ellington put him up in his huge apartment and paid all his bills.





# Biography

- Relationship with Ellington
  - Strayhorn was in many ways the brain behind Ellington's music.
    - Ellington described him as “my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head, my brainwaves in his head, and his in mine.”
    - Strayhorn was more interested in musical **development**.



# Biography

- Relationship with Ellington

- Strayhorn got *some* credit for his work.

- He was listed as a coauthor on some later pieces.
    - But most of his own work was credited solely or jointly to Ellington (this was common for big bandleaders of that day).
    - His name was omitted from many joint compositions.
    - Strayhorn was shy and modest about his contributions.



# Biography

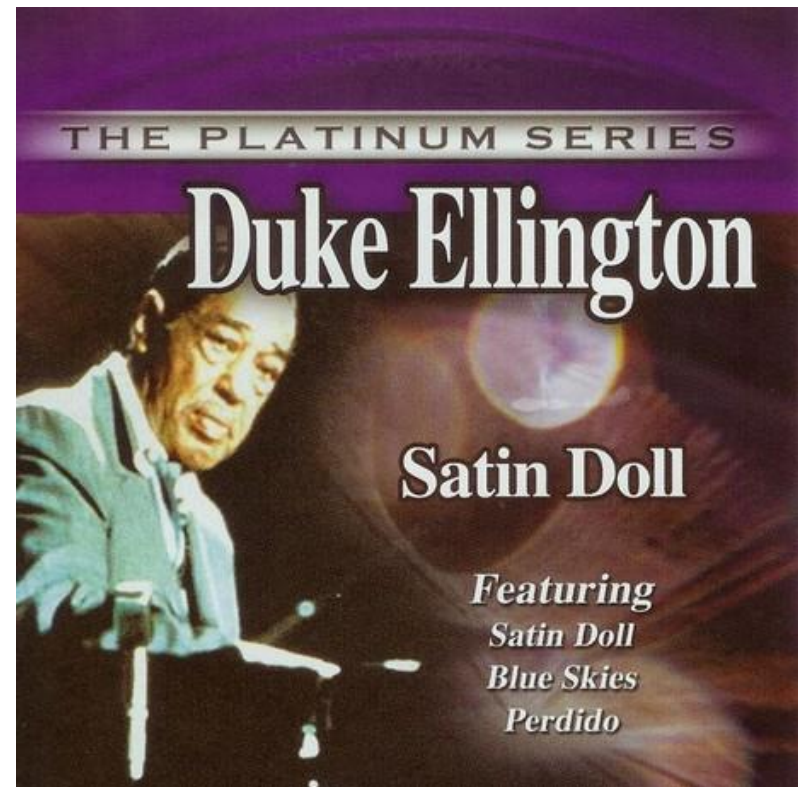
## – Some Strayhorn songs

- *Lush Life*, 1933-38
- *Take the A Train*, 1939
- *Something to Live For*, 1939
- *Chelsea Bridge*, 1941
- *Day Dream*, 1941
- *My Little Brown Book*, 1942
- *Lotus Blossom*, 1947
- *Satin Doll*, 1953
- *A Flower Is a Lonesome Thing*, 1957
- *UMMG*, 1959



# Satin Doll

- A song with Mozartian perfection
  - Has the elegance and behind-the-scenes cleverness of Mozart.
  - Ellington used it as closing number in many of his concerts.



# Satin Doll

[Audio file \(Ellington and orchestra\)](#)

- What makes it work? A guess...
  1. Classical form (AABA)
  2. Apparent simplicity (as in Mozart)
  3. Repeated **ii – V – I** progression
    - Large-scale and locally
  4. Distinctive chromatic **bass line**
  5. Clever **pivot** that combines 3 and 4.
  6. Counterpoint between melody and **bass line**.
    - Both rhythmic and melodic

# SATIN DOLL

Words and Music by  
JOHNNY MERCER, DUKE ELLINGTON  
and BILLY STRAYHORN

## Classic form

[Audio file](#)  
[\(original sheet music\)](#)

Moderately, with a beat

Musical notation for the piano introduction of 'Satin Doll'. It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both in a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Moderately, with a beat' and the dynamics are 'mf'.

## Exposition

I-II-V-I in exposition  
(major II allows for  
sequence, up 1 step)

V slides through V $\flat$   
(more on this later)

Musical score for the first exposition of 'Satin Doll'. It includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - verhershould - er, she digs me'. The piano accompaniment features a sequence of chords: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7. The piano part is marked with Roman numerals I and II. The lyrics continue: 'Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll.' The piano accompaniment features a sequence of chords: Cm, D7, Abm7, Db7-9, C, C#dim. The piano part is marked with Roman numerals V, V $\flat$ , and I.

## Exposition (repeat)

Musical score for the second exposition of 'Satin Doll'. It includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'Ba - by shall we — go out skip-pin' care-ful a-mi - go, you're flip-pin'. The piano accompaniment features a sequence of chords: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7. The piano part is marked with Roman numerals I and II.

## Exposition (repeat)

Chords: Cm D7 A♭m7 D♭7-9 C D9 G7-9 C

Lyrics: Speaks Lat-in that Sat - in Doll. She's

Annotations: V, Vb, I

This musical score shows the Exposition (repeat) section. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The chords are Cm, D7, A♭m7, D♭7-9, C, D9, G7-9, and C. The lyrics are "Speaks Lat-in that Sat - in Doll. She's". Red annotations mark a V chord in the piano part, a Vb chord in the piano part, and an I chord in the piano part.

## Development

Chords: Gm7 C7 Gm7 C7 F

Lyrics: no - bod - y's fool, so I'm play - ing it cool as can be, I'll

Annotations: IV

Chords: Am7 D7 Am7 D7 G7 Dm7 G7 (Spoken)

Lyrics: give it a whirl, but I ain't for no girl catch-ing me. Swich - E-Roo-ney

Annotations: V

This musical score shows the Development section. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The chords are Gm7, C7, Gm7, C7, F, Am7, D7, Am7, D7, G7, Dm7, and G7 (Spoken). The lyrics are "no - bod - y's fool, so I'm play - ing it cool as can be, I'll give it a whirl, but I ain't for no girl catch-ing me. Swich - E-Roo-ney". Red annotations mark an IV chord in the piano part and a V chord in the piano part.

Standard IV-V  
in development  
again allows for  
sequence, up 1 step

## Recapitulation

Chords: Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7 Cm D7

Lyrics: Tel - e-phonenum - bers well you know, do - ing my rhum - bas with u - no, And that 'n'

Annotations: I, II, V

Chords: A♭m7 D♭7-9 C#dim C D9 G7-9 C

Lyrics: my Sat - in Doll.

Annotations: Vb, I

This musical score shows the Recapitulation section. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The chords are Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7, Cm, D7, A♭m7, D♭7-9, C#dim, C, D9, G7-9, and C. The lyrics are "Tel - e-phonenum - bers well you know, do - ing my rhum - bas with u - no, And that 'n' my Sat - in Doll.". Red annotations mark I, II, and V chords in the piano part, and Vb and I chords in the piano part.

# Repeated ii-V-I progression

[Audio file](#)

In the exposition & recap...

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7

Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - ver her should - er, she digs me

C: *mf* ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> D: ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup>

Cm D7 Abm7 Db7-9 C C#dim

Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll.

G: ii<sup>4o57</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> Gb: ii<sup>79</sup> → V<sup>7o9</sup> → (I)



# Repeated ii-V-I progression

In the development...

no - bod - y's fool, so I'm play - ing it cool as can be, \_\_\_\_\_ I'll

**F: ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → I**

The first system of music features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "no - bod - y's fool, so I'm play - ing it cool as can be, \_\_\_\_\_ I'll". The piano accompaniment is in F major and consists of a repeated ii-V-I progression: Fm7 (ii<sup>7</sup>) - C7 (V<sup>7</sup>) - Fm7 (ii<sup>7</sup>) - C7 (V<sup>7</sup>) - F (I). Red arrows in the piano part indicate the sequence of chords: F: ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → I.

give it a whirl, but I ain't for no girl \_\_\_\_\_ catch - ing me. \_\_\_\_\_ Swich - E - Roo - ney

**G: ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → I<sup>7</sup>**

The second system of music features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "give it a whirl, but I ain't for no girl \_\_\_\_\_ catch - ing me. \_\_\_\_\_ Swich - E - Roo - ney". The piano accompaniment is in G major and consists of a repeated ii-V-I progression: Am7 (ii<sup>7</sup>) - D7 (V<sup>7</sup>) - Am7 (ii<sup>7</sup>) - D7 (V<sup>7</sup>) - G7 (I<sup>7</sup>). Red arrows in the piano part indicate the sequence of chords: G: ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → ii<sup>7</sup> → V<sup>7</sup> → I<sup>7</sup>.

# Distinctive chromatic bass line

[Audio file](#)

The image displays a musical score for the song "Cigarettes and Wigs" by Duke Ellington. The score is presented in two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent chromatic bass line, which is highlighted with blue circles and arrows. The first system shows the bass line moving from D to E, and the second system shows it moving from E-flat to D to D-flat to C. The lyrics are: "Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - ver hershould - er, she digs me Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll. \_\_\_\_\_". The piano accompaniment includes various chords and a melodic line in the right hand. The bass line is marked with a *mf* dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes.

Chords: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7, Cm, D7, Abm7, Db7-9, C, C#dim

Lyrics: Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - ver hershould - er, she digs me  
Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll. \_\_\_\_\_

Bass line notes: D, E, Eb, D, Db, C

Chromaticism echoed in introduction!

# Pivot on tritone combines ii-V-I with chromatic bass

[Audio file](#)

## Underlying relationship:

Same tritone interval appears in dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords of keys a tritone apart (C and G $\flat$ )

Piano

The musical notation shows a piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first measure shows a whole note chord with notes C4 and F4. The second measure shows a whole note chord with notes C4 and G3. The third measure shows a whole note chord with notes B3 and F4. The fourth measure shows a whole note chord with notes B3 and G3. Above the second measure is the label 'C: V7' and above the fourth measure is the label 'G $\flat$ : V7'. A large brace on the left side of the staves is labeled 'Piano'.

B-F tritone

B = 3<sup>rd</sup>

F = 7<sup>th</sup>

of chord

C $\flat$  -F tritone

(C $\flat$  = B)

C $\flat$  = 7<sup>th</sup>

F = 3<sup>rd</sup>

of chord

The 2 notes of the tritone swap roles in the chord.

# Pivot on tritone combines ii-V-I with chromatic bass

[Audio file](#)

Pivot to  $G\flat$  and deceptive resolution to tonic preserves chromatic bass line.

The musical score is for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The piece begins at measure 8. The first section is in C major, showing a ii-V-I progression:  $ii^7$  (D-F-A-C),  $V^{o57}$  (G-B-D), and  $I^6$  (C-E-G). The second section is in  $G\flat$  major, also showing a ii-V-I progression:  $ii^7$  (A-C-E-G),  $V^{o57}$  (F-A-C), and  $I^6$  ( $G\flat$ -B $\flat$ -D). The third section returns to C major with a deceptive resolution:  $G\flat$  :  $ii^7$  (A-C-E-G),  $V^{o57}$  (F-A-C), and  $C$  :  $I^6$  (C-E-G). The bass line is chromatic, moving from D in the first section, to  $G\flat$  in the second, and to C in the third. The notes for the final two chords in the C major section are circled in blue, with an arrow pointing to the text 'Resolve to C major rather than  $G\flat$  major'.

ii-V-I in C

ii-V-I in  $G\flat$   
(after pivot)

Resolve to C major  
rather than  $G\flat$  major

Pivot to  $G\flat$  allows  
half step in bass!  
 $D\flat - C$