

# Mozartian Perfection in Jazz

Module 9 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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Osher Course  
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# Outline

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

# Biography

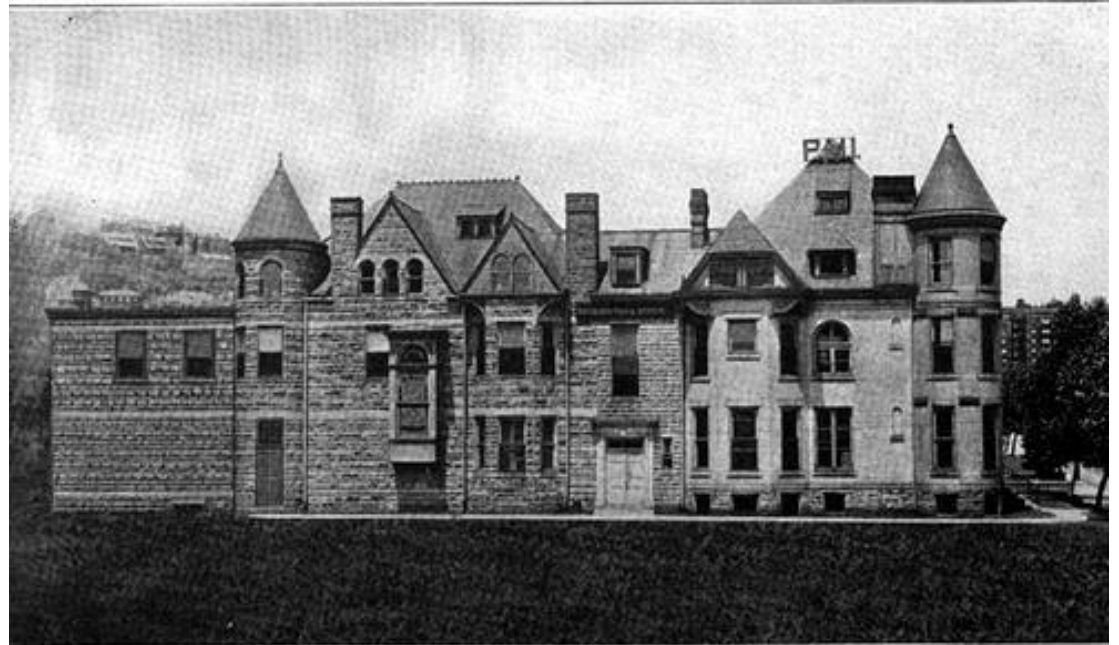
- **Billy Strayhorn, 1915-1967**
  - **Grew up in Pittsburgh**
    - Born in Dayton, Ohio
    - Soon moved to Pittsburgh
    - Attracted to music while staying with grandmother in North Carolina.
    - Attended Westinghouse High School.
    - Studied piano.

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 nearby in Oakland.
    - 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

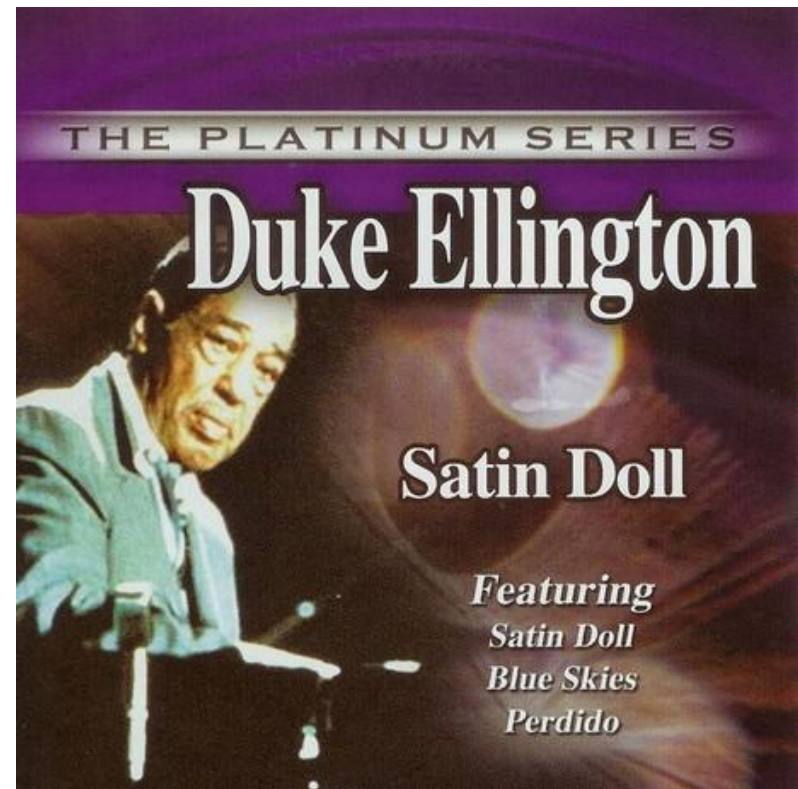
## – Some Strayhorn songs

- *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 score for the piano introduction of 'Satin Doll'. It features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand, marked 'Moderately, with a beat' and 'mf'.

## Exposition

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7

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

Musical score for the first line of the exposition. It includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated above the staff: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7. Roman numerals I and II are marked in red on the piano accompaniment.

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

Cm D7 Abm7 Db7-9 C C#dim

Out cat - tin' that Sat - in Doll.

Musical score for the second line of the exposition. It includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated above the staff: Cm, D7, Abm7, Db7-9, C, C#dim. Roman numerals V and Vb are marked in red on the piano accompaniment.

V slides through Vb  
(more on this later)

## Exposition (repeat)

Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7

Ba - by shall we go out skip - pin' care - ful a - mi - go, you're flip - pin'

Musical score for the repeated exposition. It includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. Chords are indicated above the staff: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7. Roman numerals I and II are marked in red on the piano accompaniment.

## Exposition (repeat)

Musical score for the Exposition (repeat) section. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a walking bass line. The melody is in the right hand. The lyrics are: "Speaks Lat-in that Sat - in Doll. She's". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The chord progression is: Cm, D7, A>b7, D>7-9, C, D9, G7-9, C. Red annotations 'V' and 'Vb' are placed in the piano part, and a red 'I' is placed in the melody part.

## Development

Musical score for the Development section. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a walking bass line. The melody is in the right hand. 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". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The chord progression is: Gm7, C7, Gm7, C7, F, Am7, D7, Am7, D7, G7, Dm7, G7 (Spoken). Red annotations 'IV' and 'V' are placed in the piano part.

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

## Recapitulation

Musical score for the Recapitulation section. The score is in 4/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a walking bass line. The melody is in the right hand. The lyrics are: "Tel - e - phone num - bers well you know, do - ing my rhum - bas with u - no, And that 'n' my Sat - in Doll.". The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The chord progression is: Dm7, G7, Dm7, G7, Em7, A7, Em7, A7, Cm, D7, A>b7, D>7-9, C#dim, D9, G7-9, C. Red annotations 'I', 'II', and 'V' are placed in the piano part, and a red 'I' is placed in the melody part.

# Repeated ii-V-I progression

[Audio file](#)

In the exposition & recap...

Chord progression: Dm7 G7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Em7 A7

Lyrics: Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - verher should - er, she digs me

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

Detailed description: This system shows the first two measures of a musical phrase. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff. Red arrows point from the ii<sup>7</sup> chords to the V<sup>7</sup> chords in both the C major and D minor systems. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure of the D minor system.

Chord progression: Cm D7 Abm7 Db7-9 C C#dim

Lyrics: Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll.

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

Detailed description: This system shows the continuation of the musical phrase. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in grand staff. Red arrows point from the ii<sup>4o57</sup> chord to the V<sup>7</sup> chord in G major, and from the ii<sup>79</sup> chord to the V<sup>7o9</sup> chord in G minor, which then resolves to the tonic (I). The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure of the G major system.



# Repeated ii-V-I progression

In the development...

Gm7 C7 Gm7 C7 F

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

Am7 D7 Am7 D7 G7 Dm7 G7 (Spoken)

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>

# Distinctive chromatic bass line

[Audio file](#)

The image displays a musical score for the song "Cigarette Hold-er". It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The bass line is highlighted in blue, showing a chromatic descent: D, E, Eb, D, Db, C. The notes are circled in blue, and arrows indicate the chromatic movement between them. The piano part includes a triplet of notes in the bass line. The score is divided into two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system covers the lyrics "Cig-a-rettehold - er which wigs me o - ver hershould - er, she digs me" and the second system covers "Out cat-tin' that Sat - in Doll, \_\_\_\_\_".

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 is a whole note chord with notes C4 and F4. The second measure is a whole note chord with notes G3 and B3. The third measure is a whole note chord with notes C4 and F4. The fourth measure is a whole note chord with notes G3 and B3. Above the second measure is the label 'C: V7' and above the fourth measure is the label 'G $\flat$ : V7'. The notes in the second and fourth measures are marked with an '8' below them, indicating they are the 8th notes of the chords.

B-F tritone

B = 3<sup>rd</sup>

C $\flat$  -F tritone

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

F = 7<sup>th</sup>

(C $\flat$  = B)

F = 3<sup>rd</sup>

of chord

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.

8

C: ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>o57</sup> I<sup>6</sup>      G $\flat$ : ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>o57</sup> I<sup>6</sup>      G $\flat$ : ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>o57</sup> C: I<sup>6</sup> (decep.)

no.

The musical score is for piano and consists of two staves. The first staff is in treble clef and the second in bass clef. The music is divided into three measures. The first measure shows a ii-V-I progression in C major. The second measure shows a pivot to G $\flat$  major, with the ii-V-I progression in G $\flat$  major. The third measure shows a deceptive resolution from G $\flat$  major to C major. The bass line is chromatic, moving from D $\flat$  in the first measure to C in the second measure, and then to C in the third measure. The notes D $\flat$  and C in the third measure are circled in blue, with an arrow pointing from the text 'Resolve to C major rather than G $\flat$  major' to the C note.

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