

JUAN TIZOL AND HIS INFLUENCES ON DUKE ELLINGTON

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Known as the first celebrated valve trombonist in the history of jazz and the most influential jazz pioneer from Puerto Rico, Juan Tizol was an invaluable asset to Duke Ellington and his Orchestra.¹ Although he was not considered a great jazz player, Tizol was an important section player in the famous trombone section that was later dubbed “God’s Trombones.”² For many years he was one of Ellington’s most relied upon music copyists, the primary source of the introduction of Latin rhythms to Ellington’s orchestra, and the only Puerto Rican member. He was also the composer of an entire songbook of works, several of which became some of Ellington’s most requested and performed songs.

Juan Tizol was born on January 22, 1900 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Tizol family was respected and well-known on the island. Members of the Tizol family were medical doctors, politicians and government officials and included numerous famous musicians. To this day, there are several streets and other venues that carry the Tizol name in Puerto Rico.³ His uncle, Manuel “Manolo” Tizol, was considered by Juan as “one of the best musicians in Puerto Rico.”⁴ Manuel was a respected conductor, teacher, arranger, and performer on the cello, bassoon, and trombone. He was young Tizol’s primary musical influence, teaching Juan to read music and to play the violin and

¹ Basilio Serrano, “Puerto Rican Musicians of the Harlem Renaissance,” *Centro Journal*, 19, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 97.

² John Edward Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington* (London, New York, Sydney: Omnibus Press, 1993), 157.

³ Basilio Serrano, “Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy,” *Centro Journal* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2006), 86.

⁴ Juan Tizol, Interview by Bill Spilka, Los Angeles, California (February 21, 1978); cited in Kurt Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 51.

euphonium. Manuel became adoptive father to Juan following the death of the 10 year old's natural father.⁵

In addition to the tutelage from his uncle, Tizol studied music education in the public school system. Participation in music was strongly encouraged for the children of Puerto Rico, as it was seen as a way to help keep them out of trouble, especially the young boys. Prior to and during World War I, Tizol and many other Puerto Rican musicians benefited from strong musical backgrounds. They were sought after to play in the United States because of their musicianship and ability to read music.⁶ Tizol was later to become known as Ellington's "best" sight-reader.⁷

After playing several instruments that were introduced to him by his uncle, Tizol was given a valve trombone to play in his school band. During this time in Puerto Rico, the slide trombone was primarily used in military bands rather than in school bands.⁸ In addition to playing in the various ensembles that his uncle Manuel conducted, Tizol had plentiful opportunities to play in local dance bands, as well as ballet and opera orchestras.

As Basilio Serrano noted in his article, "Puerto Rican Musicians of the Harlem Renaissance," numerous other aspiring musicians studied with Manuel Tizol and played in his various bands and orchestras to gain experience before they traveled to the United States. The musicians that Serrano discussed include: Rafael Hernández (an outstanding slide trombonist who also played the valve trombone), Rafael Duchesne Mondriguez (a

⁵ Serrano, "Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy," 86.

⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷ Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists* (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 53.

⁸ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 51.

fine clarinetist), Francisco Tizol (Manuel Tizol's son who played string-bass and cello), Carmelo 'Jejo' Jarí (played clarinet and saxophone), and Ariosto Cruz (a skilled cellist).⁹

As a result of Tizol's deep respect for his uncle Manuel and his early association with other professional musicians, Juan became known for his loyalty, honesty, commitment, and most of all - his punctuality.¹⁰ Stanley Dance described him as, "the most punctilious man in the world." As Tizol said about himself, "Punctuality has been my habit always. I want to be there on time, so that in case there's a kick, I'll be the one who'll kick, not the leader."¹¹

Juan Tizol would later develop a reputation as a "prankster" in Ellington's band despite his uncle's positive influence and leadership. He and Toby Hardwick became known for various stunts through the years such as stink bombs, inching powder, soap on the bow of a violin, and water being placed in a tuba.¹² On one occasion, just before the curtain was going to be raised, Tizol asked Ellington "Duke, what time is it?" and as Tizol lifted Ellington's arm to act like he was looking at his watch, he rubbed itching powder on Ellington's arm. This resulted in Ellington doing all kinds of funny things with his arms while trying to play the piano. In another incident Tizol put itching powder in some of the dancers' pants, only to discover later that someone had also put itching powder in his own jacket!¹³ Tizol admitted that his pranks ended the day someone put a

⁹ Basilio Serrano, "Puerto Rican Musicians of the Harlem Renaissance," 102-115.

¹⁰ Serrano, "Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy," 87.

¹¹ Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 115.

¹² Derek Jewell, *Duke: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 61.

¹³ Stuart. Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999), 171-173.

firecracker under his chair at a Christmas party, which almost sent him through the roof with anger.¹⁴

Tizol visited New York as early as 1917, but he did not remain permanently in the United States at that time. A few years later, he and other musicians joined a band in Puerto Rico which was formed by band leader Marie Lucas with the intent of finding work in Washington, D.C.¹⁵ They bribed their way aboard a British steamer that was heading to New York, traveling as stowaways. They arrived at Ellis Island on September 21, 1920 only to discover that they had arrived earlier than needed to begin their job.¹⁶ It was said that Tizol lost everything he had, including his trombone, due to gambling on the ship, but fortunately he was able to move in with his cousin. It is thought that Tizol worked several factory jobs to save enough money to purchase another valve trombone.¹⁷ However, Kurt Dietrich mentioned in his book, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, that Tizol's valve trombone may have been purchased with money sent from home.¹⁸

When the Marie Lucas Orchestra was eventually called to Washington, D.C., Tizol left New York and began playing in the pit orchestra of the Howard Theater and the T.O.B.A. Circuit (Theatre Owners Booking Agency).¹⁹ Since playing at the Howard Theater was not a full-time job, Tizol secured additional playing opportunities to supplement his income. He played in numerous ensembles including a group led by

¹⁴ Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 116.

¹⁵ Edward Kennedy Ellington, *Music is my Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1973), 55.

¹⁶ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 51.

¹⁷ Serrano, "Duke Ellington and Juan Tizol: Cross-Cultural Collaboration," 787.

¹⁸ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 51.

¹⁹ Ellington, *Music is my Mistress*, 55.

Russell Wooding at the Republic Theater, the White Brothers band, with Bobby Lee's Cottonpickers, Gertie Wells's band, and with Cliff Jackson's band in New Jersey.²⁰

While in Washington, D.C., Tizol met his future wife, Rosebud Browne who was an African-American. During this time interracial marriages were far less common and socially accepted than they are today. Nevertheless, Juan was very devoted to Rosebud throughout his life and they remained together for more than 50 years until her death.²¹

The music that was performed at the Howard Theater required both classical and jazz musicians. In the pit, the Marie Lucas Orchestra played "classical-style overtures" and in one of the theater boxes, a jazz group would play "jazz music." One of the jazz groups performing at the theater was Duke Ellington's five-piece combo. It was during one of these occasions, when the two bands collaborated, that Tizol first met Ellington.²² According to Tizol's wife Rosebud, his first gigs with Ellington's orchestra were a recording session and a radio broadcast from the Cotton Club.²³ He got the job on a recommendation from Arthur Whetsol, who had been playing with Tizol at the Howard Theatre. Some time later, when Ellington was playing at the Cotton Club and doubling for Ziegfeld's *Show Girl*, he realized that he had more payroll to afford to add a new member and that he needed a good reader to play the new arrangements that the band faced each night at the show.²⁴ Ellington had previously been impressed with Tizol's

²⁰ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 52.

²¹ Basilio Serrano, "Duke Ellington and Juan Tizol: Cross-Cultural Collaboration," 789. Basilio says they were together for more than 60 years in "Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy," 87.

²² Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 113.

²³ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 52.

²⁴ Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington*, 98.

playing and he had told him, “Well, one of these days I’m going to send for you.”²⁵

Ellington eventually made “the call” in the summer of 1929 and Tizol officially joined the Duke Ellington Orchestra.²⁶

From the moment Tizol joined the Ellington orchestra, he managed a very busy musical life. A typical day would have the Ellington orchestra start at the Cotton Club, then travel to perform *Show Girl* with the Ziegfeld Follies. They would then return to the Cotton Club to perform more shows, often working until 3 a.m.²⁷ Rehearsals would often begin immediately after the last show and last until daybreak. Tizol’s busy life was further complicated by his job as one of Ellington’s music copyists. Frequently, he would stay awake after the band’s all-night rehearsals, waiting on Ellington to compose new music for upcoming concerts. Tizol was quite adept at transposing and assigning parts for each individual player as a result of the music training he had received as a child in Puerto Rico.²⁸ Later, in the 1960’s, after Tizol was no longer in Ellington’s orchestra, he was frequently called upon to assist with his old duties as music copyist. He also assisted Ellington with his score for the 1966 film *Assault on a Queen*.²⁹

Even though Tizol was not a true jazz musician in that he was uncomfortable with improvising, his presence helped solidify the “Ellington sound.” He successfully managed to fit in with an instrument that had not traditionally been a member of jazz orchestras during this time – the valve trombone. In his book, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, Gunther Schuller described Tizol’s style of playing and

²⁵ A. H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 144.

²⁶ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁸ Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 114.

²⁹ Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington*, 127-128.

sound as “that of a classically trained musician in the Italian concert/military band tradition with a sound that was a thin-ish leathery tone with a fast throat vibrato.”³⁰ In contrast to Schuller’s opinion, Dietrich felt that Tizol’s sound was “richer and freer than might be expected on a valve trombone and that it was full and somewhat dark in timbre, with a characteristic vibrato that was fast and wide.”³¹ Contrary to what Dietrich may believe, I agree with Schuller’s description and feel Tizol’s tone sounded quite bright and that he had an uncharacteristic rapid vibrato that at times seemed out of place.

As mentioned earlier, Tizol played the valve trombone rather than the more common slide trombone. His instrument of choice had a larger bore size than the average valve trombone, giving it a fuller and darker sound. It was also pitched in the key of C instead of the more common key of B-flat.³² Playing an instrument pitched in C must have aided his ability to transpose music on the spot as according to Scott Yanow, “his [Tizol’s] facility often allowed him to fill in for an absent saxophonist without anyone’s noticing.”³³ Due to his unique abilities and his great section playing, Tizol was respected amongst his colleagues in the orchestra and was described by fellow trombonist Lawrence Brown as “the pivot, the solid rock of the [trombone] section.”³⁴

Ellington was extremely clever in the way he would write for the individual players in his orchestra. He was a master at featuring each player’s talents and masking their weaknesses. Tizol’s sound and style of playing were very different from the others in the orchestra, especially trombonists “Tricky” Sam Nanton and Lawrence Brown.

³⁰ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 88.

³¹ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 60.

³² *Ibid.*, 60.

³³ Scott Yanow, *Afro-Cuban Jazz* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 2000), 138.

³⁴ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 54.

According to Tucker, “what some band leaders might well consider a flaw [Tizol] could be put to effective artistic use.”³⁵ Since Tizol was already an excellent reader, combined with the advantage of having valves versus a slide, this enabled Ellington to showcase Tizol in new and innovative ways. Passages that can be performed with ease on the valve trombone may often be more difficult to perform on the slide trombone. In example 1, from Ellington’s *Ko Ko* (1940), there is a melodic passage for the third trombone (Tizol’s part) that has a B-flat to a C-flat (see the pickup notes into measure 1, and measures 2, 4, and 6).³⁶ On the slide trombone, this can be awkward and sloppy. However, when played on valve trombone, it is clean and smooth.

The image displays a page of a musical score for the jazz piece "Ko Ko" by Duke Ellington. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left include Alto Sax I & II, Clarinet, Tenor Sax, Baritone Sax, Trumpets I, II, III, Trombones I, II, III, Guitar, Piano, Bass, and Drums. The third trombone part (Tizol's part) is the focus, showing a melodic passage with a B-flat to a C-flat. The score is divided into two systems, with measures 1-3 and 4-7 shown. The third trombone part is highlighted with a solo and features a melodic passage with a B-flat to a C-flat. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics.

Example 1 – *Ko Ko* from Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*

³⁵ Lawrence Gushee, “Duke Ellington 1940 (1978),” in Mark Tucker, *The Duke Ellington Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 436.

³⁶ Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 110-111.

A favorite technique of Ellington's was to pair Tizol with the saxophones, since he could play sixteenth-note passages with precision and accuracy. In example 2, from Ellington's *Concerto for Cootie* (1940), he was treated as a fourth or fifth saxophone (with an individual part), while playing an octave lower than the clarinet (see measures 6-9).³⁷ His sound and impeccable technique blended so well that the listener could barely discern his presence.

Example 2 – *Concerto for Cootie* from Ken Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*

Tizol's meticulous attention to articulations must have been a desirable situation for Ellington, since he preferred his players to play precisely what was written on the page, and according to "Hoyle" as in rules governing card games.³⁸ Example 3 from Ellington's *Creole Rhapsody* (1931), displays Ellington's clearly defined articulations

³⁷ Rattenbury, *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*, 179-180.

³⁸ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 57.

when he was scoring for two trombones. You can hear Tizol’s attention to these articulations on Ellington’s first recording of *Creole Rhapsody* from January 20, 1931 as Tizol played the lead voice above “Tricky” Sam Nanton (see complete example).³⁹



Example 3 – *Creole Rhapsody* from Kurt Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*

According to Schuller, another innovative and commonly used scoring idea of Ellington’s can be seen in the way he created a sad and somber sound in his trombone section by scoring them in the lower register. Tizol was often given the lowest voice, even though his somewhat thin and piercing sound gave the harmonies an unusual tint.⁴⁰ In example 4 from Ellington’s *Black, Brown, and Beige* (1943), Tizol played the inner voice (see complete example).⁴¹



Example 4 – *Black, Brown, and Beige* from Kurt Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*

³⁹ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 196.

⁴⁰ Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, 69.

⁴¹ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 198.

Example 5 from Ellington's *Dusk* (1940) shows another sample of his unique use and treatment of Tizol in the lower register, while the other trombones are scored in the upper register (see measures 1-7).⁴² According to Schuller, "In these few measures Ellington and his orchestra produce musical sounds that had never occurred before in Western music and have rarely been heard even since then."⁴³

Example 5 – *Dusk* from Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*

Knowing that Tizol was such a great reader and that he was renowned for his consistent playing, Ellington would often write parts for him that were more demanding in terms of rhythmic complexity. Example 6 from Ellington's *Braggin' in Brass* (1938) shows what Schuller describes as amazing "hocket style" writing that was played at such

⁴² Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, 124-125.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 123.

a fast tempo that even today's trombonists listen with disbelief.⁴⁴ Notice that the other trombone players are on the beat when they begin the pattern, while Tizol (on the 3rd trombone part) has a more difficult entrance on the upbeat (see complete example).

Example 6 – *Braggin' in Brass* from Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*

Fortunately for Tizol, Ellington was a master at “reconciling improvisation with composition.”⁴⁵ Tizol had never studied and never claimed to be an improviser and as mentioned earlier, he was most likely hired by Ellington because he was such a great sight-reader. Perhaps Ellington hired Tizol and remained dedicated to him for so many years to pay homage to the two schools of players that inspired him as a young pianist: the “ear” players [most of the players in his orchestra], and classically trained players [Tizol]. Even Tizol questioned Ellington as to why he kept him in his orchestra and why he would want someone who was not a “jazz man.” Ellington’s response was “Well, Juan,” Duke said gently, “there are times when a writer wants to hear something exactly as it’s written. You want to hear it clean, not with smears and slides on it.”⁴⁶

Example 7 recorded January 14, 1931 is Tizol’s solo on *Twelfth Street Rag* as transcribed by Dietrich. According to Dietrich, it is not known whether Tizol’s solo was

⁴⁴ Ibid., 93-94.

⁴⁵ Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, 400.

⁴⁶ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 57.

improvised or not.⁴⁷ There are several of the “typical” jazz licks in this solo along with an inverted version of the original melody. In the first two measures of this solo, there is also a very tricky passage that modulates from A-flat to C that would seem beyond the classically trained Tizol’s lack of improvisational ability. This may indicate that Tizol’s solo was an example of Ellington’s “simulated improvisation” and was written out for him in advance.



Example 7 – *Twelfth Street Rag* from Kurt Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*

Tizol began composing music as a twenty year old, long before he composed for the Ellington orchestra. His first composition, *Julita*, was a dance number that was later arranged by his uncle and performed by the local municipal band in Puerto Rico.⁴⁸ Tizol, who was the only Puerto Rican in Ellington’s orchestra for many years, brought a wealth

⁴⁷ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 57-59.

⁴⁸ Dietrich, *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, 51.

of new ideas to Ellington with his influence of Latin rhythms and beautiful melodies. He is often considered a pioneer of the Latin-jazz genre and is credited with melding jazz and Latin styles into one.⁴⁹ According to Serrano, “Tizol’s music can be classified into four genres: Exotica, Latin-jazz, Ballads, and Swing.”⁵⁰ However, Tizol preferred to call his compositions “Spanish melodies.”⁵¹

Among Tizol’s works that became hits for the Ellington Orchestra were: *Caravan* (1936), *Jubilesta* (1938), *Pyramid* (1938), *Conga Brava* (1940), *Perdido* (1941), *Bakiff* (1941) and *Vagabonds* (1951). Additional works, including a few that were in his native Spanish language, were: *Lovely Isle of Porto Rico* (AKA: *Porto Rican Gal*) (1939), *Luna di Cuba* (Spanish version of *Lovely Isle of Porto Rico*) (1941), *Carnaval* (1942), *Chulita* (1942), *Fiesta* (1942), *Bagdad* (1943), and *Moonlight Fiesta* (AKA: *Porto Rican Chaos*) (1951).⁵² Inspired by his love and devotion for his wife Rosebud, Tizol also wrote two compositions in her honor: *Rosebud* (1942) and *Rosie* (1960).⁵³

Of his numerous compositions, *Caravan* and *Perdido* were Tizol’s most famous. According to Ellington, *Caravan* was the orchestra’s big hit in 1937, and “was the launching pad and vehicle to flights of popularity on the national and world charts.”⁵⁴ According to Tizol, in an interview in 1978, he initially received \$25 for contributing the main melody of *Caravan* and he credited Ellington for writing the bridge and for arranging it for the orchestra. Tizol stated: “Later in years, [Ellington] decided to give me

⁴⁹ Serrano, “Duke Ellington and Juan Tizol: Cross-Cultural Collaboration,” 792.

⁵⁰ Serrano, “Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy,” 89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵⁴ Ellington, *Music is my Mistress*, 87.

a percentage on the composition. Because I had sold it outright to Irving Mills, I didn't have no business getting nothing."⁵⁵

Caravan was probably Tizol's greatest contribution to the Ellington organization due to its success and the way it seamlessly melded the style of his "Spanish melodies" into Ellington's style of jazz composition. In July 1937, *Caravan*'s sheet music sales placed it among the nation's top fifteen best sellers,⁵⁶ and it won the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) quarterly award the same year.⁵⁷

Tizol's solo on *Caravan* and what is most likely another "simulated improvisation," which begins at measure 33, as transcribed by Dietrich from the recording on May 14, 1937 (see entire example).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Harvey G. Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 151.

⁵⁶ Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington*, 188.

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 263.

⁵⁸ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 60-62.

Example 8 – *Caravan* from Kurt Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*

Most of the compositions written by Tizol were in a Latin style, which had a beautiful melody that showcased his playing. In contrast to the majority of Tizol's writing style was *Perdido* (1941). It was his best-known “swing” chart and of all his works, it had the least Latin influence. Even though the sole credit for this composition goes to Tizol, it sounded like an Ellington-Strayhorn swing chart and it broke the typical pattern of Tizol's writing in that it did not feature him on the melody.

Perdido was named after the legendary street in the Storyville section of New Orleans, inspiring Tizol as the orchestra passed that way traveling to a club date.⁵⁹ When Ellington's music publishing company, Tempo Music was founded in 1941, among the

⁵⁹ Serrano, “Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy,” 92-93.

first charts published were Tizol's *Perdido* and Strayhorn's *Take the 'A' Train*.⁶⁰ *Caravan* and *Perdido* both became perennials for Ellington's orchestra as well as many other bands, and are still played and recorded extensively to this day. Prior to researching this subject, I did not know that Tizol had composed either of these works; I assumed Ellington wrote them both.

In 1941, ASCAP banned the broadcasting of its songs, and as a result Ellington's orchestra relied heavily on the non-ASCAP composers Tizol, Billy Strayhorn and Ellington's son, Mercer Ellington. *Bakiff* was one of Tizol's compositions that was composed during this time and that later became one of Ellington's standards.⁶¹ It was also selected by Ellington to feature Tizol at the orchestra's first prestigious Carnegie Hall concert in 1943.⁶²

Bakiff was written in a style that sounded like *Caravan* and it featured Tizol in the same manner with his statement of the melody and his unusual tone and wide vibrato. Below is an example of *Bakiff* that shows its similarities to *Caravan* in its structure. As a non-jazz player, Tizol's performances had very little variation. If and when he changed anything, it was only a slight alteration of rhythm, a few added grace notes, or perhaps a phrase may have been taken up or down an octave. Example 9 from the 1990 compilation, "The Blanton-Webster Band" (1939-1942) and example 10 "Flying Home" (1952) provide a comparison of two recorded versions of the subtle differences Tizol employed when performing *Bakiff*.

⁶⁰ Janna Tull Steed, *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 87.

⁶¹ Cohen, *Duke Ellington's America*, 177.

⁶² Serrano, "Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy," 94.

Valve-trombone

Bakiff Juan Tizol Solo

1. As played on the 1990 compilation, *The Blanton-Webster Band (1939-1942)*

This is only a partial statement of the theme and it is followed by a violin solo

Juan Tizol/Duke Ellington
trans. Gail Robertson

A Moderato (♩ = 108)

B This is the very end of the work

C

followed by a violin cadenza

Example 9 – *Bakiff* by Juan Tizol
from the 1990 compilation,
“The Blanton Webster Band” (1939-1942),
transcribed by Gail Robertson
Conga Brava (1940), treated in the same style as *Caravan*, is an example of a

Valve-trombone

Bakiff Juan Tizol Solo

2. As played on *Flying Home (1952)*

(Begins with Ray Nance, violin. Followed by Juan Tizol, and then Ray Nance again until the end)

Juan Tizol/Duke Ellington
trans. Gail Robertson

A Moderato (♩ = 108)

B

C (The groove changes behind him, but Juan remains the same)

(original feel returns)

D

Example 10 – *Bakiff* by Juan Tizol
from the “Flying Home” (1952),
transcribed by Gail Robertson

Tizol composition in which he collaborated with Ellington. In John Storm Roberts’s book, *LATIN JAZZ – The First of the Fusions, 1880’s to Today*, he says that “*Conga Brava* is typical of Ellington’s forays into the field in being a piece of highly effective mood-music.” He also says “that it has a faint odor of *Caravan* about the solos by Juan Tizol, who was no improviser.”⁶³

⁶³ John Storm Roberts, *LATIN JAZZ – The First of the Fusions, 1880’s to Today* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1999), 62.

A noticeable difference in the forms of *Conga Brava* and *Caravan* was that *Conga Brava*'s theme utilized a twenty bar form instead of the more predictable sixteen bar form. Schuller considered *Conga Brava* "fascinating and uniquely peculiar to jazz and its African rhythmic antecedents."⁶⁴ See example 11 as played by Tizol on "Les Tresors Du Jazz,"

the 20 bar form with Example 8, 1-16 for the 16 bar

Conga Brava (1898-1946). (See measures 1-20 for Juan Tizol Solo)

Juan Tizol/Duke Ellington
trans. Gail Robertson

1. As played on *Les Tresors Du Jazz* (1898-1946) (1940)

A Allegro (♩ = 120)

4 bars - Clarinet solo
3 bars shout
20 bars - tenor sax solo
4 bars - trumpet soli
10 bars - muted trumpet solo over sax soli
11 bars - trumpet soli
2 bars - rhythm section intro back into Tizol solo

B

and compare it with *Caravan*, measures 1-16 for the 16 bar form)

Example 11 – *Conga Brava* (1940) as played on "Les Tresors Du Jazz (1898-1946)," transcribed by Gail Robertson

After fourteen years of performing and touring with Ellington's orchestra, Tizol grew tired of being on the road and longed to be with his wife. According to Harry

⁶⁴ Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, 118-119.

Carney, “He just wanted to spend more time with his family” and “Juan had made the decision to live in California while we were in *Jump for Joy*.”⁶⁵ According to Tizol, while the band was working at the Zanzibar in New York, he received a call from Harry James to join him and his band. Tizol panicked because he had just signed a contract to join Woody Herman’s band.⁶⁶ Since James’s band was based on the West Coast and Tizol and his wife had moved their home there in 1942, the job with James’s band was a better gig for him.⁶⁷ He talked things over with Woody Herman who said, “Well, if that’s the case, you go with him, and we’ll tear up the contract.”⁶⁸

According to Hasse, on April 21, 1944, Tizol left Ellington’s orchestra and joined Harry James’s band, a move that came with a raise.⁶⁹ He stayed with James’s band for seven years from 1944 to 1951. Several of his compositions were recorded by James’s band while Tizol was a member of the group. *Keb-lah* (1946) was another chart that was often referred to as another piece very similar to *Caravan*. It was in the usual Tizol style that featured him on the melody, but it also featured an impressive solo by James on the trumpet.⁷⁰

When Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown, and Sonny Greer (the only drummer Ellington had ever had) left the Ellington orchestra, Ellington was faced with a huge problem. He knew that Tizol was not working year-round, so he offered him his job back. What eventually became known as the “Great James Robbery” occurred in 1951, when Tizol coaxed two other members from James’s band, drummer Louis Bellson and

⁶⁵ Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World*, 323.

⁶⁶ Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 114-115.

⁶⁷ Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, 259.

⁶⁸ Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington*, 114-115.

⁶⁹ Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, 278.

⁷⁰ Roberts, *LATIN JAZZ – The First of the Fusions, 1880’s to Today*, 68.

saxophonist Willie Smith, to join him in Ellington's orchestra.⁷¹ According to Dietrich, Tizol remained with Ellington for almost three years with some occasional absences when he went home to see his wife.⁷²

Tizol left Ellington a second time in 1953 and went back to James's band off and on until 1960. During this time, he also performed as a free-lance musician with other artists on the West Coast, such as Nelson Riddle, Woody Herman, Rosemary Clooney, Bing Crosby, June Christy, Louie Prima, Sarah Vaughan, Nat "King" Cole, and many others.⁷³

Tizol returned for his last stay with Ellington's group in 1960 and traveled back and forth to see his wife, who now had become very ill. According to Ellington, "when Rosebud became sick and was hospitalized, he [Tizol] buried his horn in a closet and stayed home rather than gamble on playing his music and running the risk of losing his wife. He could watch over her and be at her side whenever she might need help, or a word of prayer, or someone to call the doctor."⁷⁴ According to Scott Yanow, "Tizol, who had a hot temper that contrasted with his cool tone and style, spontaneously quit the band in the middle of Ellington's recording project with Count Basie, permanently retiring to Los Angeles in 1961."⁷⁵ In 1984, less than two years after Rosebud passed away, Tizol died. Due to the numerous letters that he had written to her and the collection of photographs that had survived his death, it was obvious to many that he died of a broken

⁷¹ Hasse, *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*, 303-304.

⁷² Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 55.

⁷³ Basilio Serrano, "Juan Tizol: Latin Pioneer in Jazz." *Latin Beat Magazine* 16, no. 1 (2006): 31.

⁷⁴ Ellington, *Music is my Mistress*, 56.

⁷⁵ Scott Yanow, *Afro-Cuban Jazz* (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 2000), 138. (This is the only source that I have found anything about this particular incident)

heart.⁷⁶

Juan Tizol's legacy in the Ellington orchestra was one that could not be duplicated by others. Although Ellington tried to replace him, he was never really successful. Players like Claude Jones, Quentin Jackson, John Sanders, and finally Chuck Connors all attempted to try to fill Tizol's role.⁷⁷ Sanders even became one of Ellington's music copyists.⁷⁸ Ellington finally gave up trying to find a suitable valve trombone replacement and let Chuck Connors play the bass trombone. Sadly, this marked the end of the role of the valve trombone in Ellington's orchestra.⁷⁹ However, Tizol left an indelible mark on Ellington's orchestra with his numerous music compositions. His works added his own personal touch while they also expanded and influenced Ellington's style of composition. Both *Caravan* and *Perdido* have endured the test of time and continue to inspire contemporary jazz musicians to this day.

⁷⁶ Serrano, "Juan Tizol: His Talents, His Collaborators, His Legacy," 92.

⁷⁷ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 103-163.

⁷⁸ John Fass Morton, *Backstory in Blue – Ellington at Newport '56* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 38-39.

⁷⁹ Dietrich, *Duke's 'Bones: Ellington's Great Trombonists*, 163-164.

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Music Examples

- Example 1 – Rattenbury, Ken. *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*, “Ko Ko,” (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 110-111.
- Example 2 – Rattenbury, Ken. *Duke Ellington: Jazz Composer*, “Concerto for Cootie,” (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 179-180.
- Example 3 – Dietrich, Kurt. *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, “Creole Rhapsody,” (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 196.
- Example 4 – Dietrich, Kurt. *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, “Black, Brown, and Beige,” (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 198.
- Example 5 – Schuller, Gunther. *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, “Dusk,” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 124-125.
- Example 6 – Dietrich, Kurt. *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, “Braggin’ in Brass,” (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 202.
- Example 7 – Dietrich, Kurt. *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, “Twelfth Street Rag,” (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 59.
- Example 8 – Dietrich, Kurt. *Duke’s ‘Bones: Ellington’s Great Trombonists*, “Caravan,” (Rottenburg am Neckar: Advance Music, 1995), 61.
- Example 9 – Tizol, Juan. “Bakiff,” (1940) as played on the 1990 compilation, “The Blanton Webster Band (1939-1942),” transcribed by Gail Robertson.
- Example 10 – Tizol, Juan. “Bakiff,” (1940) as played on “Flying Home” (1952), transcribed by Gail Robertson.
- Example 11 – Tizol, Juan, Duke Ellington. “Conga Brava,” (1940) as played on “Les Tresors Du Jazz (1898-1946),” transcribed by Gail Robertson.

Discography

Bowman, Euday L., Jack S. Sumner-Spencer Williams-Andy Razaf. *Twelfth Street Rag* (January 14, 1931), CD.

Ellington, Duke. *Black, Brown and Beige* (January 23 and 28, 1931), CD.

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Ellington, Duke. *Creole Rhapsody* (January 20, 1931), CD.

Ellington, Duke. *Dusk* (May 28, 1940), CD.

Ellington, Duke. *Ko Ko* (March 6, 1940), CD.

Ellington, Duke, Juan Tizol, Irving Mills. *Caravan* (March 18, 1937), CD.

Tizol, Juan. *Bakiff* (June 5, 1941), CD.

Tizol, Juan. *Bakiff* (June 30, 1952), CD.

Tizol, Juan. *Conga Brava* (March 15, 1940), CD.

Tizol, Juan, Hans Lengefelder AKA Hank Lenk-Ervin Drake. *Perdido* (December 5, 1941), CD.