

# Duke Ellington

Live At Carnegie Hall Dec. 11, 1943

STORYVILLE

**CD 1**

1. **STAR SPANGLED BANNER** 1:37  
(Francis Scott Key)
2. Introduction by Duke Ellington 1:04
3. **TAKE THE "A" TRAIN** 3:18  
(Billy Strayhorn)
4. **MOON MIST** 3:37  
(Mercer Ellington)
5. **TEA FOR TWO** 3:00  
(Vincent Youmans)
6. **HONEYSUCKLE ROSE** 3:47  
(Thomas "Fats" Waller)
7. **STAR DUST** 4:42  
(Hoagy Carmichael)
8. **"C" JAM BLUES** 4:42  
(Duke Ellington)
9. **WEST INDIAN INFLUENCE** 3:20  
(Duke Ellington)
10. **LIGHTER ATTITUDE** 4:01  
(Duke Ellington)
11. **NEW WORLD A-COMING** 14:11  
(Duke Ellington)
12. **FLOOR SHOW** 3:50  
(Duke Ellington)
13. **DON'T GET AROUND  
MUCH ANY MORE** 4:22  
(Duke Ellington)  
Total time 55:35

**CD 2**

1. Introduction by Duke Ellington 0:41
2. **RING DEM BELLS** 2:54  
(Duke Ellington)
3. Award Winning Compositions -  
A Duke Ellington Medley
  - a. **IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD**
  - b. **MOOD INDIGO**
  - c. **SOPHISTICATED LADY**
  - d. **CARAVAN**
  - e. **SOLITUDE**
  - f. **I LET A SONG GO OUT OF MY HEART** 6:40
4. **JACK THE BEAR** 3:43  
(Duke Ellington)
5. **DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME** 3:19  
(Duke Ellington)
6. **SUMMERTIME** 4:00  
(George & Ira Gershwin)
7. **COTTON TAIL** 3:50  
(Duke Ellington)
8. **BLACK AND TAN FANTASY** 5:57  
(Duke Ellington - Bubber Miley)
9. **ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM** 5:16  
(Duke Ellington - Harry Carney)
10. **SENTIMENTAL LADY** 3:53  
(Duke Ellington)
11. **TRUMPET IN SPADES** 4:45  
(Duke Ellington)
12. **THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE** 6:08  
(Mercer Ellington)  
Total time 51:09

**Personnel**

Duke Ellington, pianist, leader;  
Harold Baker, Taft Jordan, Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart, trumpets;  
Ray Nance, trumpet, violin, vocalist;  
Lawrence Brown, Joseph Nanton, Juan Tizol, trombones;  
Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, tenor sax;  
Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, alto saxes;  
Skippy Williams, tenor sax;  
Harry Carney, baritone sax, clarinet;  
Fred Guy, guitar;  
Alvin Raglin, string bass;  
Sonny Greer, drums;  
Albert Hibbler, vocalist;  
Billy Strayhorn, assistant arranger.

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The Duke Ellington Masters.

"I have two careers and they must not be confused, though they almost always are. I am a bandleader and I am a composer. Sometimes I compose for the band; sometimes I compose for other organizations; sometimes I compose in a vacuum. What I'm trying to do with my band is to win people over to my bigger composing ideas. That's why I pared down 'Black, Brown, and Beige.' You gotta make them listen first, listen to things like 'Don't Get Around Much' and 'Do Nothin.' Then, when they've heard that, maybe they'll say, 'Gee, this guy isn't so bad at all,' and they'll listen to the longer and more ambitious works and maybe even enjoy them."

Duke Ellington, 1946

#### 1943: To Carnegie and Back

*Our program tonight is not a very heavy one, as usual, of course...* Laughter comes from a packed Carnegie Hall, and for a brief moment, the elegant, unflappable Duke Ellington is unmasked. A bit unsettled, Ellington laughs nervously, then clears his throat. His audience - New York sophisticated, and with many musicians in the hall - is in on the joke. The master of the put-on has been caught, and his fans love it.

Ellington's disingenuous introduction to his second Carnegie Hall concert on December 11, 1943, was a reference to his historic debut at Carnegie Hall on January 23 of the same year and its controversial premiere of *Black, Brown, and Beige*. "Formless and meaningless," wrote Paul Bowles of the *New York Herald Tribune* of Duke's fifty-minute "tone parallel" to African American history. "The whole attempt to fuse jazz as a form with art music should be discouraged." Initially "withdrawn and quiet" over the reception to *Black, Brown, and Beige*, Ellington responded with characteristic optimism and hard work.

"Duke Ellington's first concert at Carnegie Hall," wrote *Billboard*, "started him off on the most successful year he's had in his 20 years of band leading." This was in spite of World War II, which changed everything. Rex Stewart recalled the era in his autobiography, *Boy Meets Horn*. "Because of the Musicians Union strikes or battles between the music societies (ASCAP and BMI) there was little or no recording either. This cut down on our income. The record

companies weren't even pressing the hits because shellac was hard to come by. Food rationing meant that the fare was even worse in the greasy spoons that catered to us. Going on the road was tough. Trains were commandeered; the armed forces, of course, took precedence, while we scrambled to get to our gigs however possible." Despite the disruptions, Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra thrived. Duke overcame wartime travel restrictions by staying close to home, primarily working ballrooms, dancehalls and theatres up and down the Northeast corridor: Worcester-Passaic-Wilmington-Philadelphia-Baltimore, and on and on. On April 1 he opened a 25-week engagement at the Hurricane Club at 49th and Broadway with radio broadcasts six nights a week. On October 14, the Orchestra began a month of record-breaking performances at the Capitol Theatre on Broadway. By November Duke was in the recording studio for the first time in 16 months. James C. Petrillo's American Federation of Musicians union started to allow radio transcriptions (recordings intended exclusively for airplay, available on CD Volumes 1-3 of *The Duke Ellington World Broadcasting Series* on Circle Records).

After years of one-nighters and constant travel, home cookin' suited Ellington and his musicians just fine. Ellington's adopted hometown of New York with its concentration of leading jazz musicians, was in an especially fertile period. Ellington was at the center. *The Chicago Defender* reported that during Ellington's stay, the Hurricane "became the gathering place for all the famous bandleaders in the city, among the regular attenders being Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James, Benny Goodman, and others."

Ellington, too, was checking out the scene, "I was an avid visitor on 52nd Street. I don't think I missed going there a night after we finished at the (nearby) Hurricane on Broadway. All the greats were performing - Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, Billie Holiday, Slim and Slam, and so many more." Young innovators Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk were working with established bandleaders like Earl Hines and Coleman Hawkins; after hours they were exploring the rhythmic changes and harmonic discoveries that would soon become known as Be-bop. Both Ellington and Strayhorn were observers at the late night sessions at Minton's. Music was changing and Ellington was one of many spanning swing-to-bop. Ellington, of course, hated categories, and was always ahead of everybody, anyway. Dizzy Gillespie substituted

for Harold Baker in Ellington's orchestra for the four-week engagement the Capitol Theatre. Shortly after the November 8 closing at the Capitol, Gillespie would open at the Onyx Club on 52nd Street with a quintet featuring Max Roach, Oscar Pettiford, Don Byas and Billy Taylor, "representing the opening of the bebop era," Dizzy later related to Martin Williams.

Music-goers had enough money in their pockets to support this vibrant scene. After a decade of depression, World War II meant full employment. The United States, out of range of the Luftwaffe's bombers, was confident. On the day before the Ellington's return to Carnegie, U.S. troops took the heights above Cassino half-way up the boot of Italy, and the chairman of General Motors announced a post-war "master plan" for re-conversion of its plants from war to automobile production.

Ellington, too, had post-war plans. Thanks to a change in December of 1942, men over 38 years of age would be ineligible for the military draft. The 43-year old Ellington would be far more valuable on the home front. Ellington boosted morale, promoted the sales of war bonds, and performed at military facilities and Red Cross, war relief and refugee benefits. The "black, brown and beige" as Ellington said at the first Carnegie concert, were for the "red, white, and blue." Ellington shared the opinion of actor Paul Robeson that "winning the war against fascism" was "the first requirement for realization of a democratic America," meaning an end to employment discrimination; segregation and inferior status, particularly in the armed forces; and eliminating the poll tax preventing voting rights. Ellington appeared at a Negro Freedom Rally at Madison Square Garden along with Robeson on June 7th, a Tribute to Negro Servicemen on June 27th, and performed with his orchestra at an NAACP benefit at Philadelphia's Academy of Music on September 30th. Ellington made headlines a month after his second Carnegie Hall concert when he joined Cab Calloway in refusing to play to a whites-only audience at the Great Lakes Naval Training Base. Duke fought for democracy abroad and at home.

World War II did provide its challenges. After a decade with remarkably little turnover, personnel changes were occurring. In 1943, over half the band members were eligible for the draft. Not even in the band for a year, clarinetist Chauncey Houghton was inducted into the Army in April of 1943. Lawrence Brown and Junior Raglin were classified 1-A and seemed on

the verge of being drafted, but weren't called up. Trumpet star Rex Stewart took a leave of absence in May to join his friend, guitarist Brick Fleagle, for engagements in Hollywood and Mexico City. Volatile tenor star Ben Webster left in August to start his own group at the Three Deuces club on 52nd Street. Reinforcements were on the way.

Taft Jordan, rumored to have been Cootie Williams' replacement back in 1940, finally joined the band, taking Rex Stewart's chair. Houghton's departure opened the door for Jimmy Hamilton who began his 25-year association with Ellington. Almost as soon as Ellington lost one star soloist, another returned. Ben Webster's departure was offset when Rex Stewart rejoined the band in October.

For the first time, Ellington had five trumpets: Ray Nance, Wallace Jones, and Harold Baker; along with Stewart and Jordan. Ellington's favorite section, the trombones, consisted of the same 3 members for the last 10 years: Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, and Lawrence Brown. The reeds, although in transition, were still anchored by Harry Carney on baritone sax. The altoists were none other than Dukes' childhood friend Otto "Toby" Hardwick and the incomparable Johnny Hodges who took the solos. Newcomer Hamilton also assisted on tenor for section work. Sonny Greer, like Hardwick an original Washingtonian, was in his 23rd year playing drums with Ellington. Guitarist Fred Guy went back to the days of the banjo, and bassist Junior Raglin had become an effective member of the rhythm team since taking over shortly before Jimmie Blanton's tragic illness forced him to leave the band. Billy Strayhorn, listed in the evening's program as "Assistant Arranger," was in his fourth year in the Ellington organization and had long since "cracked the code." Although impossible to determine the extent of Strayhorn's incalculable contribution, his influence is woven throughout, and is especially heard in two areas: the tunes that had their genesis in the Ellington small groups, and the vocals that he supervised. This was a strong band. As Harry Carney told Stanley Dance, "everyone seemed to think that the band was at its best (when Webster and Blanton were in the band from 1940-41), but it was still playing well when we were at the Hurricane and the Zanzibar...."

#### THE BUILD UP

Ellington's return to Carnegie Hall on December 11, 1943 was eagerly anticipated. The

widely read African-American weekly newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, was one of several periodicals picking up on the press dispatches from Duke's management, the William Morris Agency:

November 13, 1943: "Ellington's Concert Set; Tune Inspired by Ottley," read the headline. "Seats are now on sale ... for the band's second appearance this year at the sacrosanct hall of classical music. Duke is at work on a new composition entitled *New World A-Comin'*, inspired by Roi Ottley's best seller of that name."

November 20, 1943: "Duke Closes Record Smashing Capitol Date - Ellington Grosses More Than \$200,000."

November 27, 1943: "Ellington to Present New Stars at Carnegie, Other Concerts Set." "It will mark the first performance in the famous hall of several outstanding artists who have joined the band since its Carnegie debut last January." Skippy Williams and Jimmy Hamilton are mentioned with special attention to Al Hibbler, "former Jay McShann vocalist whose version of Duke's latest hit *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*, will probably be one of the new items at the concert." Tickets "are selling rapidly."

December 4, 1943: "Duke Debunks: Ellington Says Jazz Does Belong in Concert Halls." "Carnegie Hall box office reports more interest in Duke Ellington's concert ... than in any other performance scheduled at the concert hall."

December 11, 1943: "Ellington Ideas Disc Album of *Black, Brown, and Beige*." "After the record ban is entirely lifted, and he can find time, Duke Ellington and his orchestra will devote an entire album to the disc version of Duke's famous *Black, Brown, and Beige*. In order to keep the much-discussed work in the public eye, he will feature several outstanding excerpts from it at his second Carnegie Hall concert."

"Concerts are the best medium for trying out new musical ideas on audiences," Duke was quoted in the *Baltimore Afro-American* one week prior to the concert. "All other channels

have some disadvantage. Records give you a good balance and plenty of rehearsal, but you can't get the audience's reaction on the spot. Regular theatre dates have the disadvantage that part of the audience expects a vaudeville show, with singers and dancers and acts, plus a movie, so that the band is limited in time and the type of material it can play. Dance dates get the band swinging ideally, but when you have to play for dancing, it's impossible to play numbers at certain tempos, or to include changes of tempo during a number. In a concert hall, you don't get any of these disadvantages, because you know everyone is there to listen to the music and nothing else." Ellington, here, could be describing his experiences at the Capitol Theatre and the Hurricane. Concerts were becoming a trend. New York's Carnegie Hall was one of seven stops on what was called Ellington's "concert tour" including Cleveland's Public Auditorium on November 29, Pittsburgh's Carnegie Hall on November 30, Philadelphia's Convention Hall on December 4, Washington's Uline Arena on December 6, Boston's Symphony Hall on December 12 and Chicago's Civic Auditorium on December 19. This is the only known recording from this holiday season tour.

"New World A-Comin'" read the header of a photograph in the Sunday *New York Times* a week before the concert. Author Roi Ottley peers over the Duke's shoulder as the Maestro demonstrates his new composition at the piano.

#### PROGRAM

In a program selected by the Duke himself, Ellington armed his troops with the familiar to "storm" Carnegie Hall (Duke's performances at Carnegie were often cast in the military terms of the day). Duke had learned from his first experience at Carnegie to be prepared for the intense scrutiny of this high-profile performance. The Carnegie stage had been recently graced by the likes of Rudolf Serkin and Andres Segovia. The standard was the highest, and Duke was going with his best. Seven of the twenty-three works listed on the evening's program were repeat performances from the first Carnegie concert. Ten of the works had received recent preparation for World's recording sessions of November 8 and December 1.

The sequence of Duke's selection of song hits, themes, classics, and current works flows like one of his suites. In a crisply paced program, Ellington would present current hits, both

his: *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*, *Do Nothing 'Til You Hear From Me*, and *Floor Show*, and other popular hits such as *Summertime* and *Stardust*. Three classics from the Jungle Band's Cotton Club days were presented: *Ring Dem Bells*, *Black and Tan Fantasy*, and *Rockin' in Rhythm*. Another classical era, the 1940-41 band was represented with *Jack the Bear*, *Cottontail*, and "C" *Jam Blues*. Yet what he played was not as important as where he played it.

Looking back, Ellington wrote in his autobiography that, "The annual Carnegie Hall concerts were really a series of social-significance thrusts." There was "prestige value" in presenting a representative sample of his work at Carnegie in 1943. Ellington would premiere a new extended work at each of the five annual Carnegie concerts that followed. "Our series there had helped establish a music that was new in both its extended forms and its social significance."

At the same time, Ellington the bandleader was a star, mentioned in the same headlines as the Inkspots and Lena Horne. Staying on top of the show business world gave Duke plenty to be concerned with. Duke didn't need the aggravation and harsh criticism that followed *Black, Brown, and Beige*. It is a sign of Ellington the composer's resilience and belief in his vision that he would mark his return to Carnegie Hall with the premiere of another "extended work," *New World A-Coming*, while keeping *Black, Brown, and Beige* alive, at least, with excerpts.

Ellington, the composer, needed to pay his talented band so he could keep writing. He had just lost Ben Webster, who had left the orchestra for the hope of more money leading a small group. Even at the height of popularity, the economics of leading an African-American orchestra were tenuous.

Duke was taking the risks. Carnegie Hall was strictly a rental hall, and in this case, the lessee was the William Morris Agency. More than 3,000 tickets for Carnegie's 2,729 seats, costing from 55 cents to \$3.30, were sold a week in advance. According to press reports, the "Ellington organization took no less than \$4,200 out of a gross of \$5,300." Despite a flu bug and

freezing gale wind that blew through Manhattan that afternoon, an overflow crowd, wearing heavy overcoats over their Sunday best or military uniforms, showed up.

#### THE REACTION

"ELLINGTON'S FANS APPLAUD CONCERT" read the headline in the *New York Times*. "The event proved a gala occasion for the city's jazz fans, who turned out in such large numbers that not only was the hall filled to capacity, but it was found necessary to accommodate several hundred of the eager listeners with seats on the stage." The episodes of *New World A-Coming*, "bound together by elaborate cadenzas for the piano...were well-contrasted, tuneful, and led to a rousing finale of especially optimistic nature."

*Variety* corroborated the *Times*' report. "Ellington's Carnegie Reprise Another Memorable Evening of Jazz." "Neither the illness of two key performers nor the sanctified atmosphere of Carnegie Hall put the brakes on Duke Ellington Saturday night when he and his coterie of standout jazz musicians played a return engagement at the 57th Street lair of longhairs. *New World A-Coming*...proved to be an unpretentious but pleasant and generous slice of Ellington."

Ellington's return to Carnegie even made a blip on the classical world's radar screen. In summarizing the season's performances of works by Beethoven, Chopin, and Mozart, the *Musical Courier* wrote that Ellington's "appeal is not only a 'popular' one, for he also woos the musician's ear with fine balance and niceties of tone, and his writings have both subtle harmonic coloring and adept construction."

The jazz press wanted more adventurous fare. Mike Levin, New York editor of *Downbeat*, was one of just a handful who had access to the recording of the first Carnegie Hall concert on January 23rd. Levin was disappointed that Ellington had begun the process of dismantling *Black, Brown, and Beige*. "After almost a year of listening to it on and off, I think now more than ever that (the critics) were dead wrong - that Duke was on the way here to something important. I disliked *New World A-Coming*, not as music, because it was very attractive, but because it didn't go any further along this road, instead it even backed down a piece."

Ellington biographer Barry Ulanov reviewed the December 11th concert for *Metronome*, and expressed thoughts similar to his rival from *Downbeat*, "The greatest disappointment of the program was that Duke did not play his *Black, Brown, and Beige*. For his second Carnegie Hall concert he should have been more, not less ambitious. Though he presented much wonderful music, the sum of the same was a glorified one-nighter. Whether he meant to or not, in this dance program Duke acknowledged the captious carping of his least well-wishing critics. By so doing, I think, he demeaned himself."

The entertainment journal *Billboard* concurred, "Duke Comes to Carnegie (or) Seems to Me Like I've Heard Those Tunes Before." Reviewer Elliott Grennard elaborates, "More is expected from those who look to Ellington for trail-blazing in the creative life of jazz, and incidentally, those who go to concerts. They expect to hear more than a stagershow."

The *New York Amsterdam News* headline read, "The Duke Back at Carnegie Hall for Concert But Fans Are Mostly Letdown On His Program." Dan Burley reported that "something was missing from this presentation of jazz in a serious setting. Hundreds of faithful Ellingtonians and many new converts ... were mostly disappointed. Save for the much talked-about *New World A Comin'*; the orchestra might have well been playing a theatre or night club engagement. It was a typical theatre date rundown, but staged in Carnegie Hall. It lacked the fullness of a serious concert." As for the concert's centerpiece, *New World A-Coming* "was spotty, it was felt, although the theme has infinite possibilities if developed further."

Some saw the significance of elevating the music of the dance hall on the concert stage. In 1931 Ellington had said "that the music of my race is something which is going to live, something which posterity will honor in a higher sense than merely that of the music of the ballroom". *PM Daily* understood. Henry Simon wrote that "the difference between these appearances and his more expected ones in dance halls, night clubs, stage shows and movies is that you get two solid hours of Ellington under conditions that make you concentrate on his music and that of his disciples - principally Billy Strayhorn and Pfc. Mercer Ellington. Like Gershwin, Ellington makes music that, I think, has enduring qualities and serious importance beyond serving as dance music". *The Pittsburgh Courier's* headline stressed the importance

of official validation for Duke's three-minute masterpieces. "DUKE LURES TOP CROWD TO CARNEGIE CONCERT - Ellington Proves Value of His Original Music." "For the second time, Duke Ellington brought his best tunes of all to Carnegie Hall. And for the second time, the hall was filled to the topmost rafters. The concert differed from the former in that it was in a much lighter vein, with the program being made up mostly of tunes that everybody has heard at one time or another, and consequently enjoys hearing again."

Yet Levin of *Down Beat* was not impressed, "When Ellington gives a concert wherein nothing happens, it's time for me to figure out whether we're not digging the Duke, or whether something is actually wrong with the 21st Century Band." Nothing happened?

#### THIS RECORDING

Those of us in the 21st Century have two advantages over the critics: historical perspective, and a second chance to listen. Several commentators mentioned the poor public address system. Although this concert wasn't broadcast, we're fortunate that Duke had the concert recorded for his own purposes. Two overhead microphones and a microphone for the soloists and Duke's announcements were fed by phone line to nearby studios at Columbia Broadcasting System. Evidently, the overhead microphones were too far away. Producer Carl Hällström, who issued an abridged LP of this concert in 1965 on his Jazz Panorama label, is determined to do it right this time despite the less than optimal recording. To get the best possible sound, the original 16 inch glass acetate discs in the possession of Ellington collector Jerry Valburn were used for this CD. Jack Towers handled the delicate process of getting the most from the fragile discs and transferring the material to digital tape. From there, Björn Almstedt ran tapes through the CEDAR process, cleaning up and brightening without distorting the original sound. We can imagine ourselves among the lucky ones to land a bleacher seat on stage just a few feet from the band. For the first time on CD we can hear the entire concert, including Ellington's stage announcements. We can practically hear Ellington's footsteps as Duke makes his famous entrance to warm applause. Anticipation builds as Ellington's smile warms the chilly hall. Duke steps to the microphone.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the National Anthem.* Sonny Greer's crisp drum roll starts **The Star-**

**Spangled Banner.** Ellington says in his autobiography, *Music is My Mistress*, that pianist Lenny Berman from Hartford, Connecticut gave him the orchestration. We are reminded that despite the festive mood, this is wartime.

First, our radio theme. Take the "A" Train supplanted *East St. Louis Toodle-0* as the band's theme when the ASCAP recording ban spurred a flurry of writing from Billy Strayhorn, and ostensibly, Ellington's son Mercer. A-Train stuck as the theme after the ban (not to be confused with the union recording ban in effect at the time of the concert) had ended. Ray Nance, misses his high signature note. He was just getting warmed up, as it was a chilly 14 degrees Fahrenheit when the concert began at 8:45.

Written by my son, Private Mercer Ellington, a thing that we've used to introduce our 'Pastel Periods' in the last few months. **Moon Mist** was the theme for Sunday night broadcasts from the Hurricane devoted to reflective listening music. Here's how Mercer described the writing process: "I got a good deal of instruction on composition and arranging from Pop. He'd set problems for me, scratch out what was in poor taste, and preset harmonies for me to write melodies against." Soloists are Nance on violin, Hodges, and Brown. Although lowly ranked, Private Ellington was director of the band at Camp Croft, South Carolina. Imagine what that band sounded like.

And now comes a slight change of program. We've put in a section of things that we call 'Variations on Themes'. The sensitive valve-trombonist, Juan Tizol had been suddenly struck with the flu. Tizol was to have been featured on his own composition, *Pyramid*, with Ellington playing a hand drum. Two standards featuring new band members are substituted. They serve as coming-out parties for the newcomers.

**Tea for Two** is for trumpeter Taft Jordan. 28 years old, Jordan had been featured with Chick Webb and Ella Fitzgerald before joining Duke. It is easy to overlook Ellington performances of compositions from outside the band. In a remarkable arrangement, a trio of clarinets, including Harry Carney on bass clarinet, provides counterpoint to Jordan's muted trumpet. *Tea for Two* was new to the band's book, having been first recorded by Ellington for World transcriptions a month earlier. This live version is up-tempo and more spirited. Taft Jordan was

an excellent choice by Ellington. His Famous Orchestra sounds energized by Jordan's solo.

Fellow pianist-composer Thomas "Fats" Waller's **Honeysuckle Rose** is a showcase for another newcomer, 26 year old Jimmy Hamilton. Also recently recorded for World, we hear the swinging side of the academic Hamilton. Accompanied only by the rhythm section, Hamilton hints that bebop is emerging. Inspired, the band comes in at full swing. Little could they have known that Fats Waller, suffering from the flu, was about to board a train from Hollywood to return to his home in New York City. Waller was found dead from bronchial pneumonia as the train pulled into Kansas City on December 15. Fats Waller was only 39.

Our next arrangement is made by that great pianist, Mary Lou Williams. The solo is by her husband, Harold Baker. This is one of at least 15 arrangements contributed by Mary Lou Williams to the Ellington organization. Her arrangement of **Stardust** was a first anniversary gift from Mary Lou to "Shorty." The trumpeter takes his time, his lovely tone and phrasing beautifully wrapped in horns. Although this very personal rendition of the Hoagy Carmichael classic is dripping in love, the romance soon ended when Baker was inducted into the Army in April of 1944. They stayed married, remaining cordial until Baker's death in 1966. Williams hired Baker on several occasions for her own gigs.

One of our more trite things. "C" **Jam Blues** had its genesis in a small group recording led by Barney Bigard in 1940. Again, Duke is putting us on. There is nothing trite about the Kansas City style of blues in 4/4. Count Basie's friendship with Ellington is evident here. The full orchestra version of this dance tune was released in April of 1942. Tonight's string of solos are by Nance on violin, Jordan, Williams, Nanton and Hamilton, who each stretch out over an additional chorus.

Excerpts from **Black, Brown, and Beige.** We thought we wouldn't play it in its entirety tonight because it represents an awfully long and very important story and that I don't think too many people are familiar with the story. Author Ralph Ellison might call this "creative mockery." Ellington, both aggressive and defensive in stance, gets in a clean shot at his detractors. He proceeds to tell "the story," and in more detail than at the first Carnegie Hall



concert. *This is one we dedicate to the 700 Negroes who came from Haiti to save Savannah during the Revolutionary War.*

**West Indian Influence** is the opening portion of *Brown*. Whether in response to critics, or following his own muse, Ellington has broken *Black, Brown, and Beige* into segments. The band shows a greater familiarity with this dramatic sketch than at the first Carnegie Hall concert, having performed it at the Hurricane. Tonight we hear a sharp rendition. Ellington builds suspense with a piano intro to Rex Stewart's battle cry. Joe Nanton, himself of Jamaican parents and a follower of Marcus Garvey, orator and organizer of the Back to Africa movement, is appropriately featured on this militant theme.

In editing *Brown*, Ellington has eliminated the transitory section between *West Indian Influence* and **Lighter Attitude**, the sound of the "rocket" signaling the onset of the Civil War. Again with another great Ellington piano intro, *Lighter Attitude*, also known as *Emancipation Celebration*, features Stewart and Nanton. The two brass players had developed a remarkable sympathy for each other. They contrast the feelings of the young with the irony of elderly slaves, suddenly free, but with nothing and no place to go.

Almost the entire *Brown* would have been heard if vocalist Betty Roche hadn't also caught the flu before the second Carnegie Hall concert. Her absence necessitated the cancellation of *Mauve* or *The Blues*, the final segment of *Brown*. Betty Roche would be out of the band's line-up until the concert the following Sunday night, December 19 at the Civic Opera House in Chicago. Her first tenure with Ellington, which coincided with the AFM recording ban, was one of unrealized possibilities. During the run at the Capitol, a group of students from Commerce High School presented her with a petition from 200 "boys and girls who want recordings of Betty Roche." The students would not get their wish. One of Ellington's finest vocalists, her few recordings on airchecks and radio transcriptions are worth seeking out. Betty can be heard at Langley Field Air Force Base on December 8, 3 nights prior to Carnegie on *The Duke in Washington* on Storyville, and on Treasury Star Parade Number 233 from June of 1943 on *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra - The Treasury Shows Volume 2* on D.E.T.S. Betty Roche would leave the orchestra in April of the following year. She returned to Ellington's orchestra

for a shorter stay in 1951 when she recorded a memorable "A" Train.

Why didn't Ellington perform the complete *Black, Brown, and Beige*? There is no easy answer. Barry Ulanov, a close observer, wrote in the first biography of Duke Ellington in 1946, that Ellington "has not found absolute musical security" and that "when most of the New York critics were so severe in their reviews of *Black, Brown, and Beige*, he quickly accepted their criticism." Ellington offered Ulanov this explanation (used as a preface to these notes). "What I'm trying to do with my band is to win people over to my bigger composing ideas. That's why I pared down *Black, Brown, and Beige*. You gotta make them listen first, listen to things like *Don't Get Around Much* and *Do Nothin*." An even closer observer, none other than Rex Stewart, cautioned against taking Ellington at face value, "a further exploration of the varied facets of this extraordinary man only confirms the contradictory aspects of his character. The multi-colored spectrum of the paradoxical Duke Ellington adds up to the conclusion that he is a true enigma." What else affected Duke's decision to dismantle and reassemble his 50-minute tone parallel? *The Black Music Research Journal* devoted its Fall 1993 issue to Ellington's masterpiece. In it, Mark Tucker discusses the work's long germination. *Black, Brown, and Beige* 'had been evolving in Ellington's mind as early as 1930 as a rhapsody, opera, or suite. It is not surprising then, that it would continue to evolve after its premiere. Andrew Homzy, who discusses the premiere and its evolution, cites Ellington's remarks to Ulanov, and also suggests the band's personnel changes and the time limitations of recording technology as reasons for Ellington to shorten his work.

Ellington would return to Carnegie Hall for a third concert a year later on December 19, 1944 with a 31-minute *Excerpts from Black, Brown, and Beige*. *West Indian Dance* and *Lighter Attitude* would merge with *Sugar Hill Penthouse* from *Beige* into *Three Dances*. The versions of *West Indian Influence* and *Lighter Attitude* heard here at the second concert in December of 1943 remain the best-realized versions of these two sketches.

*We accepted the title as a possibility.* Ellington's **New World A-Coming** was inspired by the book of the same name published in 1943. A reading of the book reveals author and composer to be of like-minded. Roi Otley (1906-60), describes his work as a "portrait of black

America". A journalist, his sharp observations are written in a style as immediate as the the news. Ottley focuses on Harlem, the "Capital of Black America," and surveys a range of African-American opinion. It was a time of anticipation. Ottley is sympathetic to the viewpoint that there is not much difference between the racism behind Hitler and lynchings in the United States. However, like Ellington, Ottley saw African-American salvation in supporting the US:

Negroes want tangible assurances that the loud talk of democracy is in fact meant to include them. He is against fascism, finally and inexorably, both at home and abroad. In a word, the Negro wants democracy - cleansed and refreshed. The Negro's cause will rise and fall with America. He knows that his destiny is intimately bound to that of the nation. America stands today as a symbol of freedom! The loss of this symbol will mean the loss of hope for white and black alike. This war, undeniably, belongs to the Negro as well as to the white man. To this extent, it may be called a "People's War" - for in spite of selfish interests a new world is a-coming with the sweep and fury of the Resurrection.

Thematically, *New World A-Coming* picks up where *Black, Brown, and Beige* left off. Duke tells us in his *Music is My Mistress* that he wrote *New World A-Coming* while at the Capitol Theatre (between October 14 and November 8). Richard Boyer, in his landmark profile of Ellington in *The New Yorker*, *The Hot Bach*, says that Ellington wrote it on a train between Ohio and Pennsylvania, which would have placed it three weeks after Duke closed at the Capitol. Probably Duke was putting on the finishing touches by then, for *New World A-Coming* is a polished work, showing none of the rough edges of *Black, Brown, and Beige*.

The centerpiece of Ellington's second Carnegie Hall concert, *New World A-Coming* was an important work that Ellington would revisit. Ellington performed it both solo as in the First Sacred Concert (Ellington - "my most important work") and on other occasions, and with a symphony orchestra. Tonight we hear the piece as Ellington first conceived it. Duke described *New World A-Coming* as a "twelve minute piece for piano and band." It is one of a series of concertos Ellington wrote for his great soloists, this time for "the piano player". Truly symphonic in nature, the theme is developed and revisited through a series of solo piano passages

alternating with the orchestra. Moods progress as the music builds to a peak, goes into another direction, and builds again. None of the other members solo, although Jimmy Hamilton can be heard among the voices that shade the melody. Ellington appreciated Hamilton's "strong classical tendencies," and tonight we get perhaps a first glimpse of the collaborations between Ellington and his talented clarinetist/arranger/composer. A half page of original sheet music of *New World A' Comin* from the Carnegie Hall archives, although only seven measures long, once again proves that Ellington wrote specifically for individuals in the band. A two-bar passage of the melody, written in pencil in Ellington's own hand, is labeled "Tizol." According to Boyer, Ellington liked to say "New World A-Coming. And I mean it."

A little descriptive piece that we did in one of the currently appearing pictures, *Cabin in the Sky*. **Floor Show**, listed as *Goin' Up* in the movie, was director Vincente Minnelli's first Hollywood musical. The film opened in New York in June of 1943. Ramona Lewis, writing in the *New York Amsterdam News*, called *Cabin* "an insult because it pictures Negroes, heads tied up, with crap shooting inclinations and prayer meeting propensities at a time when Negroes are daily proving their heroic mettle in battle and defense plant." The cabaret scene featuring Ellington and his band was one scene beyond criticism. Soloists in this riff tune are Nanton, Hodges, Brown (reprising his feature solo from the film), Nance on violin, and Stewart. Ellington's performance was filmed in September of 1942 when Ben Webster was in the band. Webster's solo, heard but not seen in the film, is missed.

The Carnegie Hall audience was familiar with **Don't Get Around Much Anymore** from the nightly broadcasts from the Hurricane. Recorded as *Never No Lament* in 1940, Victor reissued it with the new title in 1943. It would be two years before the Bob Russell lyrics would be heard. But who needs lyrics with Johnny Hodges playing the melody? Lawrence Brown gets a solo before Hodges brings it home, then it's time for an intermission.

To start the second half off, we bring in to the solo role our drummer, Sonny Greer, who we call our reluctant drummer, because he never likes to play solos. **Ring Dem Bells** was first recorded for Victor on August 26, 1930, six months before the end of Ellington's three-year run

at the Cotton Club. The record label indicated *Ring Dem Bells* as being from the movie *Check and Double Check* of 1930, but it can't be seen on any prints of the film. Thirteen years later, Ellington stays close to the original. Solos by Hamilton, Carney, and Nanton precede interplay between Hodges and Nance (taking Cootie William's role as vocalist), then Nance's trumpet solo. Music created for the whites-only patrons of the Cotton Club's floorshow is being appreciated as the "classical" music it is before the racially mixed audience of Carnegie Hall.

The "fanfare" introduction that followed the National Anthem at the first Carnegie Hall concert this time introduces **Award Winning Compositions**. Much reviled by critics, the medley of Ellington's popular songs served the two-fold purpose of handling requests and increasing Ellington's income from royalties. We also get treated to Ellington's solo piano on melodies he knows inside out. For example, he captures the essence of *In A Sentimental Mood* by playing only its first eight bars. A small group with Carney, Nanton, Wallace Jones and Alvin Raglin recreates the plaintive *Mood Indigo*. The full band is used only on *Caravan* and *I Let a Song Go Out Of My Heart*.

And now comes our bass player, Junior Raglin, in the solo role, **Jack the Bear**. On this concerto written in 1940 for the genius of the modern bass, Jimmie Blanton, Junior Raglin shows what an underrated player he himself was. Raglin had played along side Blanton for brief period when it was known that Blanton was ill with tuberculosis. Raglin turns *Jack the Bear* into a tribute to the late bassist. Along with Raglin's superb tone and timing, we hear solos from Hamilton, Nance, Hamilton again, Carney and Nanton.

Our latest composition to gain popularity, **Do Nothin' 'Til You Hear From Me** was first introduced at the Hurricane in August of 1943. Originally the instrumental *Concerto for Cootie*, we hear Bob Russell's lyrics. Lawrence Brown's muted trombone sets the scene for the visually impaired vocalist Al Hibbler, whom Ellington loved for his enunciation, range of dramatic and tonal devices, and "ears that see."

Ellington's piano segues to **Summertime**. Hibbler is again featured with support from

Nance who both plucks and bows his violin. Hibbler's smoky vocal and sense of dynamics give the Gershwin lullabye a deeper and more ominous feeling than the original Gershwin take on African-American life. It was at the Hurricane where Mary Lou Williams brought vocalist Al Hibbler to Ellington's attention (Ellington and Hibbler's meeting eight years earlier didn't work out). Reportedly Hibbler auditioned with *Summertime*. Evidently moments like tonight's were what Ellington had in mind. Despite a few moments off-mike, Hibbler brings down the house.

*A little gallop especially designed for the super jitterbug who likes his rug cutting in the high velocity groove. Skippy Williams is in the driver's seat of Cottontail.* Elbert "Skippy" Williams, a capable tenor saxophonist had the unenviable task of taking the popular Ben Webster's spot - and solos. He acquits himself quite nicely in this feature for Ben Webster. Williams paraphrases more than he quotes Webster on this up-tempo romp. The saxophones, with Hamilton on tenor, cleanly articulate their famous unison line.

As at the first Carnegie Hall concert, we combined two requests. **Black and Tan Fantasy** was one of the first great compositions from the Ellington organization. Otto Hardwick reprises his role from 1927 at the beginning of the second section, the change of key and mood that first made Ellington's music so compelling. Wallace Jones, best known for his leadership of the trumpet section, takes a rare solo, nothing less than co-composer Bubber Miley's classic line. Joe Nanton, like Hardwick, revisits his work from 16 years earlier. Without needing to satisfy the needs of dancers, Tricky Sam slows the tempo, infusing even more drama into the composition that inspired the 1929 film, *Black and Tan*. Then Ellington's familiar piano introduction segues into **Rockin' in Rhythm**. This orchestra doesn't stray far from the original recording by The Jungle Band in 1931. Carney takes over Barney Bigard's clarinet solo. Nanton is again outstanding. The whole band stars in this classic that would remain in the Ellington book until Duke's passing in 1974.

And now comes Number One All-American saxophonist to the microphone, Johnny Hodges. **Sentimental Lady**, also know as *I Didn't Know About You*, or *Home*, was a feature for the band's most popular soloist, beautifully supported by Harry Carney and the interplay of the

different sections. Rex Stewart gets a brief solo before Hodges returns.

*A little musical street scene, set at the intersection of 47th and Parkway in Chicago. Trumpet in Spades*, a feature for Rex Stewart also known as *Rex's Concerto*, is a rarity first recorded for Brunswick in 1936. Tempos change and Rex gets an additional chorus in this superior live version, a real gem of evening's program.

*Everybody hums but very few people know the name of... Things Ain't What They Used To Be* had become the band's closing theme. This title would always be true. In a few years the dancehalls and ballrooms and vaudeville theatres would be closing. From tonight on, Ellington would be playing an increasing percentage of dates on the concert stage. One thing would stay the same: someone would complain about hearing the same old tunes. Tonight it is time for a victory lap around Carnegie. This Mercer Ellington composition was arranged by Billy Strayhorn and first recorded by a small group in 1941 group led by Johnny Hodges. The soloists are Hodges himself, Jordan, Brown and then one last shot of Hodges.

"More!" rings out the shout from the balcony. 57 years later, Jerry Valburn told me that is he we hear urging the Duke for an encore. But there would be no more music from Duke that night. It was only around 11:00 and the Saturday night was young. The 3000 music lovers in attendance would have to walk a brisk four short blocks south to 52nd Street, or take a short ride on the "A" Train north to Harlem to hear more. Perhaps Ellington, whose voice sounded a little hoarse, had a bit of the flu himself and was ready to call it a night. There was a train to catch for the following evening's concert in Boston. The showman knew it was better to keep them begging for more. After all, he had already accomplished a lot on that freezing night in Manhattan. The acceptance of *New World A-Coming* on America's most important stage further cemented Ellington's popular reputation as a composer of serious works, and ensured continued opportunities for more extended pieces. Far more than himself - Ellington promoted a humanitarian alternative to the massive killing and hatred of World War II. Duke, the painter with an orchestra, would spend another 30 years sketching a New World A-Coming. "More" we would get. And then some. Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra would not disappoint.

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KENNETH R. STEINER  
July 10, 2001

Ken Steiner was a college student in 1974 when he first heard Duke Ellington at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He has been studying Ellington's music ever since. Ken lives in Seattle with his wife and daughter.

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**Duke Ellington**

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Dec. 11, 1943  
Disc 1**



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**Duke Ellington**

**Live At Carnegie Hall  
Dec. 11, 1943  
Disc 2**



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DUKE ELLINGTON AT CARNEGIE HALL 1943

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# Duke Ellington

Live At Carnegie Hall Dec. 11, 1943

## CD 1

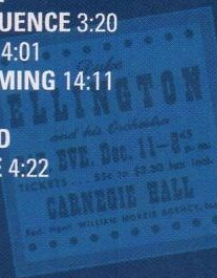
1. **STAR SPANGLED BANNER** 1:37
2. Introduction by Duke Ellington 1:04
3. **TAKE THE "A" TRAIN** 3:18
4. **MOON MIST** 3:37
5. **TEA FOR TWO** 3:00
6. **HONEYSUCKLE ROSE** 3:47
7. **STAR DUST** 4:42
8. **"C" JAM BLUES** 4:42
9. **WEST INDIAN INFLUENCE** 3:20
10. **LIGHTER ATTITUDE** 4:01
11. **NEW WORLD A-COMING** 14:11
12. **FLOOR SHOW** 3:50
13. **DON'T GET AROUND  
MUCH ANY MORE** 4:22

Total time 55:35

## CD 2

1. Introduction by Duke Ellington 0:41
2. **RING DEM BELLS** 2:54
3. Award Winning Compositions -  
A Duke Ellington Medley  
a. IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD b. MOOD INDIGO  
c. SOPHISTICATED LADY d. CARAVAN e. SOLITUDE  
f. I LET A SONG GO OUT OF MY HEART 6:40
4. **JACK THE BEAR** 3:43
5. **DO NOTHING TILL YOU HEAR FROM ME** 3:19
6. **SUMMERTIME** 4:00
7. **COTTON TAIL** 3:50
8. **BLACK AND TAN FANTASY** 5:57
9. **ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM** 5:16
10. **SENTIMENTAL LADY** 3:53
11. **TRUMPET IN SPADES** 4:45
12. **THINGS AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE** 6:08

Total time 51:09



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