

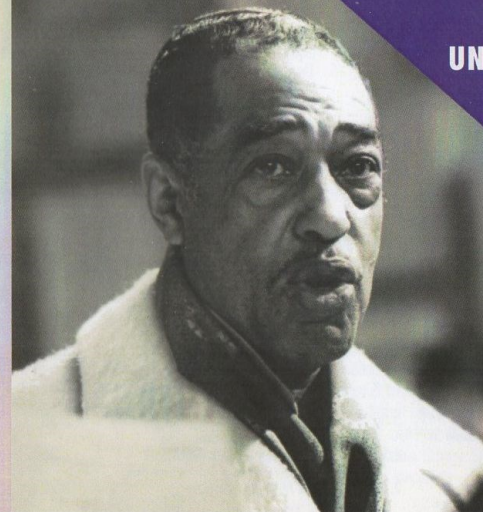
THE GREAT CONCERTS

# DUKE ELLINGTON

CORNELL  
UNIVERSITY

1948

2 CDs



Nimbus Records

# DUKE ELLINGTON

## 1948 – Cornell University

NI 2727/28

### CD 1 – First Set

1. Star Spangled Banner	1:08	14. The Tattooed Bride	13:13
2. Lady of the Lavender Mist Duke Ellington	3:19	Duke Ellington	
3. Suddenly It Jumped Duke Ellington	2:51	15. Dancers In Love Duke Ellington	2:29
4. Reminiscing in Tempo Duke Ellington	8:51	<b>Playing Time</b>	<b>75:04</b>
5. She Wouldn't Be Moved Mercer Ellington & Luther Henderson	4:36	<b>CD 2 – Second Set</b>	
6. Paradise Billy Strayhorn	6:08	1. Manhattan Murals Billy Strayhorn & Duke Ellington	5:07
7. The Symphomaniac Pt. 1 (Symphonic or Bust) Billy Strayhorn & Duke Ellington	6:08	2. Hy'a Sue Duke Ellington	4:48
8. The Symphomaniac Pt. II (How You Sound) Billy Strayhorn & Duke Ellington	3:59	3. Fantazm Duke Ellington	5:35
9. My Friend Duke Ellington	6:37	4. Tootin' Through The Roof Duke Ellington	3:39
10. You Oughta Duke Ellington	3:44	5. Brown Betty Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn	6:10
11. Creole Love Call Duke Ellington, Bubber Miley, Rudy Jackson	5:56	6. Humoresque Anton Dvorak/Duke Ellington	4:24
12. Don't Blame Me Jimmy McHugh & Dorothy Fields	2:52	7. How High The Moon Nancy Hamilton & Morgan Lewis	5:33
13. Lover Man Jimmy Davis, Ram Ramirez & Jimmy Sherman	2:49	8. Don't Be So Mean To Baby Peggy Lee & Dave Barbour	2:39
		9. Lower Come Back To Me Sigmund Romberg & Oscar Hammerstein	2:30
		10. It's Monday Everyday S. Robin.	3:26

11. Medley	8:16	Duke Ellington, Mitchell Parish & Irving Mills Caravan	
Don't Get Around Much Anymore Duke Ellington & Bob Russell		Duke Ellington, Juan Tizol & Irving Mills	
Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me Duke Ellington & Bob Russell		It Don't Mean A Thing Duke Ellington & Irving Mills	
In A Sentimental Mood Duke Ellington, Manny Kurtz & Irving Mills		I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart Duke Ellington, Irving Mills, Henry Nemo & John Redmond	
Mood Indigo Duke Ellington, Albany Bigard & Irving Mills		12. Limehouse Blues	4:51
I'm Beginning To See the Light Duke Ellington, Johnny Hodges, Don George & Harry James		Philip Braham & Douglas Furber	
Sophisticated Lady		<b>Playing Time</b>	<b>57:00</b>

## Duke Ellington and his Orchestra at Cornell University December 10, 1948

### Duke Ellington *piano*

Shelton Hemphill, Francis Williams, Harold Baker, Al Killian *trumpets*

Ray Nance *trumpet, violin & vocal*

Lawrence Brown, Quentin Jackson *trombones*

Tyree Glenn *trombone & vibraphone*

Johnny Hodges *alto saxophone*

Russell Procope *alto saxophone & clarinet*

Jimmy Hamilton *clarinet & tenor saxophone*

Al Sears, Ben Webster *tenor saxophones*

Harry Carney *baritone saxophone, clarinet, & bass clarinet*

Fred Guy *guitar* Wendell Marshall *bass* Sonny Greer *drums*

Kay Davis, Al Hibbler *vocalists*

#### CD 1 – First Set

1948 was a bad year for big bands. Another AFM recording ban gave singers a second opportunity to gain popularity at the expense of musicians and instrumental music. The Duke Ellington band, in fact, did not enjoy a regular record session in the entire year, the recorded evidence of its existence deriving from broadcasts or concerts such as this.

Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, was eighty years old in 1948, but it evidently had a hip, young student body, for it gave Ellington a warm, enthusiastic welcome. The previous month, his band had played its annual Carnegie Hall concert to a capacity audience, but in between there had been some disappointments. *Variety*, for example, reported 'bad biz' when the band played the big Syria Mosque auditorium in Pittsburgh, and questioned whether the public was losing interest in jazz concerts. Cornell's reception proved the contrary, and Ellington responded with a rich program.

After the *Star Spangled Banner*, the first selection (according to his own carefully preserved set of reference tapes) was Lady of the Lavender Mist, as first recorded in 1947 and publicly premiered at Carnegie Hall the previous month. The somewhat mysterious but scarcely diaphanous arrangement did not remain in the book long. Although this slightly tentative performance makes a subdued opener to the concert, it affords pleasing glimpses of Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown and Jimmy Hamilton as soloists.

*Suddenly It Jumped*, an immediate contrast, was written in 1944 and began life primarily as a showcase for Taft Jordan. Here the trumpet soloist is Shorty Baker, whose spirited exchanges with clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton in the second chorus precede twenty-four bars by the piano player. Then Sonny Greer's explosive accents command the ensemble's return.

*Reminiscing in Tempo* was written in 1935 and in his spoken introduction Ellington explains that it is expressive of both laughter and tears. What he does not explain is that it was written during a period of great personal distress soon after he lost his beloved mother. The first part, at slow tempo, is full of sad, tender memories, the music wandering and shifting as though these were unbearable to dwell on long. Then the mood and tempo change as the music assumes the brazen confidence and rhythmic emphasis of the Swing Era, in recognition of the fact that life goes on and a son has still to merit a mother's pride. A work seldom performed, its content baffled most critics then and now. Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era* (Oxford University Press) is strongly recommended for its illuminating consideration. Besides the composer's piano, several solo voices are heard, notably those of Shorty Baker, Ray Nance, Quentin Jackson, Russell Procope (soprano saxophone) and Johnny Hodges.

*She Wouldn't Be Moved* was written by Mercer Ellington and Luther Henderson. The former claims that, allowing for some double entendre, the title had to do with automobiles! It gets a happy performance with solos by Hodges, Baker,

Hamilton and trombonist Tyree Glenn. Bassist Wendell Marshall, who had joined the band the previous month, displays his ability on the instrument of his revered predecessor and cousin, Jimmy Blanton.

*Paradise* was written by Billy Strayhorn as a showcase for the unique majesty of Harry Carney's baritone saxophone, and it might well have been entitled Concerto for Carney! In addition to his big full tone, which no other musician has ever really succeeded in simulating, his technique enabled him to express himself with affecting emotional agility — and dignity — on numbers of this kind.

*Symphomaniac* relates, as Ellington explains, to the days of Paul Whiteman's 'symphonic' jazz, although it tends to swing much more. The first part, *Symphonic or Bust*, is a somewhat heterogeneous compilation held together by Ellington at the piano. Fragments of themes used in other compositions surface briefly, and finally there is a huge, Hollywoodish climax. So much for symphonic jazz? How You Sound, which was to have a slightly longer life, has solos from Nance and Hamilton, and seems to indicate Ellington's unimpressed awareness of activities in other jazz quarters.

*My Friend* offers a special example of the genial Al Sears's 'preaching' style on tenor saxophone as sinners become true believers and the ensemble moans and replies to his impassioned declarations. Sitting alongside him this night was the formidable Ben Webster, the man whose place he had previously taken and to whom he was about to relinquish it.

*You Oughta* features Al Killian, a wonderful successor at that time to Cat Anderson in trumpet exploration of the higher altitudes. His tragic death two years later certainly robbed jazz of an exceptional talent. After the band has created a heady atmosphere, with typical contributions from Hodges, Lawrence Brown and Hamilton, Killian makes a dramatic entrance and a truly climactic statement. Perhaps more impressive than his ascent to great heights was his ability to improvise there with a well-formed tone.

Ellington next introduces his attractive singer, Kay Davis, on *Creole Love Call*, to which she contributes a wordless vocal, thus evoking memories of Adelaide Hall's role on a 1927 recording of this enduring favorite. She answers the simple but very effective theme played by the clarinet trio (Hamilton, Procope and Carney) with ethereal grace, and returns to it alone after Ray Nance's vigorous twenty-four bar trumpet solo, the second part of which departs humorously from tradition.

Nance switches to violin to accompany the singer again on *Don't Blame Me*, a standard from 1933 written by Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh. Ellington remarks on her transition from soprano on the previous number to contralto on this one. The combination of her well-trained voice and personal charm so pleased the audience that Ellington calls on her for a third song, Ram Ramirez's big hit of 1942, *Lover Man*, which provokes another storm of applause.



*The Tattooed Bride*, 'our most ambitious work of the season' in Ellington's words, was the major piece of music premiered at Carnegie Hall the month before. He had several explanations of what it was about. Here it is 'the honeymoon weekend' and the nature of the bride's tattoo belatedly discovered by her athletic husband. The tattoo's four strokes of a repeated letter 'M' (or 'W') suggested four notes, which Ellington's men obligingly sound. Whether or not such explanations help listeners to appreciate the music, the fact remains that the music is very rewarding, especially the beautiful slow movement that Shorty Baker's trumpet introduces. The main protagonist is Jimmy Hamilton, whose superior technique is felicitously employed, right through to the final, long-sustained high note.

*Dancers in Love* is a number on which Ellington customarily invited audience participation. It had enjoyed a separate life before becoming the third part of *The Perfume Suite*, when it was retitled *Naivete*. (It was also known as *Stomp for Beginners?*) It featured Ellington's piano, accompanied by bass, drums and all who wished to join in 'the finger-snapping bit'. At its conclusion, he would usually thank and compliment the audience for its help in elaborately gracious terms. The number's final title is highly appropriate, its two themes being full of the zest, beat and good humor favored by pianists of the stride school, to which Ellington was essentially a lifelong adherent.

By this time — time for intermission — Ellington obviously had the audience in the palm of his hand. His programming was always responsive, and by 1948 he could read audiences with an accuracy probably unsurpassed by any bandleader in his field. He had, too, a library of material from which he could draw programs of unparalleled variety 'suitable for all occasions' — and all tastes.

#### CD 2 – Second Set

This second half of the concert at Cornell University begins with *Manhattan Murals*, which turns out to be a view of the city from north to south as seen by Duke Ellington from the windows of Billy Strayhorn's *A Train*. After the heavily orchestrated first chorus, the piano player takes one for himself before the band returns, with Al Killian flying high on the bridge. The whimsical coda by Harry Carney presumably indicates the end of the excursion 'way down at the end of the island'. Ellington's affection for trains had often been expressed in original compositions, so it was not surprising that he chose to fashion a variation on Strayhorn's.

*Hy'a Sue*, a laconic greeting and a rocking blues at a perfect tempo, was written in 1947. The days of battles between big bands were coming to an end, but this was the sort of number Ellington's could always pull out when circumstances demanded a down contrast with, say, murderous flagwavers. Surprisingly, with Ben Webster and Al Sears sitting in the reed section, the main solo responsibility was given to clarinet virtuoso Jimmy Hamilton to play — on tenor. Hamilton's approach to his two instruments was so astonishingly different that it is hard to credit their being played by the same man. His tone on clarinet was as clean as it was dirty on tenor; similarly, his phrasing was energetic and inventive on the one, lazy and simple as a rule on the other. The first chorus introduces Tyree Glenn,

one of Ellington's favorite trombonists, blowing skillfully in the plunger-muted style originated by Joe Nanton. He and Hamilton share the next two, and then Ellington takes one, as though to prepare the scene for Hamilton's long, five-chorus flight. It is the kind of groove that might be extended even further to arouse excitement in a dancehall.

*Fantasm*, also known as *Fantazzamp*, was another 1948 Ellington original, but although of considerable interest its life was to be short. Prolific as he was, the composer could be ruthlessly selective in ensuring the survival of the fittest. But both in melodic and rhythmic terms, the number's character was of an exotic kind that had proved popular before, and as a vehicle for Lawrence Brown's trombone and Harry Carney's bass clarinet it was uniquely demanding. Sonny Greer uses his prize array of percussion instruments to good effect here.

*Tootin' Through the Roof*, an up-tempo brass extravaganza, dates back to 1939 when Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart were the band's trumpet stars. In this version, four of the five trumpets get moments in the spotlight: first Ray Nance, then Francis Williams in a chorus of four-bar exchanges with Shorty Baker that is climaxed by Al Killian, who 'comes on' in a chorus with the band before Lawrence Brown enters. Strenuously exhibitionistic, perhaps, but it was exciting to hear and watch, as the audience response shows. The high-flying Killian was, of course, in his element and indispensable. The fifth trumpet, the strong section leader, Shelton Hemphill? In all probability he was helping out at the end there, too.

Of the many beautiful numbers Billy Strayhorn wrote for Johnny Hodges, *Brown Betty* is quite undeservedly one of the least known. The great alto saxophonist's emotional range and instrumental command have never been surpassed on ballads of this kind, and the warm sincerity with which he plays this one endows it with what Ellington termed 'complete believability'. It is undoubtedly one of the concert's peaks, and an astute choice to follow the trumpet fiesta.

Dvorak's appropriately titled *Humoresque* is a vehicle for some light-hearted improvising by those two good buddies, Ray Nance and Shorty Baker. The former, introduced as 'our string section', plays violin for three choruses, and more in the manner of Stuff Smith than one might think respectful in the interpretation of a semi-classic. The band begins to roar, with comparable disrespect; Baker's well-mannered horn faces the heat for two choruses; Jimmy Hamilton gets sixteen bars; and then the band takes it out. Jazz musicians have long had a weakness for this number, Earl Hines and Art Tatum among them.

Surprise on surprise, Ellington finally brings out as 'an extra added attraction' one of the greatest tenor saxophonists, Ben Webster. By 1948, *How High the Moon* had become a kind of bebop anthem, but Webster, as was his wont, first gives the audience the song's attractive melody, lavishing on it at slow tempo the tender, emotional warmth that linked him stylistically to Johnny Hodges as well as to Coleman Hawkins. When the tempo first changes, it takes him into a

swinging mood, and when it changes again, becoming even faster, his mood and playing become more violent, so that some listeners possibly decided he was not nicknamed 'Brute' for nothing.

Al Hibbler, in his sixth year with Ellington, is then brought out to sing a song written by Peggy Lee and Dave Barbour, *Don't Be So Mean to Baby, 'Cause Baby's So Good to You*. His unorthodox style amused Ellington, who liked him personally and described him as a 'tone-pantomimist'. He sings the number in a quiet, almost conversational manner, and follows it up with a swinging version of *Lover, Come Back to Me* on which Killian takes off again for sixteen bars. Audience response justifies a third song and Hibbler is launched into *It's Monday Every Day*. He gives this his full dramatic treatment backed by an excellent arrangement, on which Lawrence Brown and the saxophones distinguish themselves. Although Hibbler's lurching dynamic contrasts disturbed many people, who found them too theatrical, his manifest sincerity usually won them over.

Next comes the customary medley, which served the purpose of answering requests and reminding the public of some of Ellington's greatest hits not otherwise in the program. The chief responsibility — linking and filling — is his in the nine short samplings played here. As always, the unhip in the audience indulge in self-congratulatory applause as they recognize familiar melodies. Ellington nevertheless appreciates this, for royalties from these tunes have long provided part of the foundation for his whole orchestral enterprise. He thanks the people cordially, remembering now to compliment them on their contribution earlier to *Dancers in Love*.

It is time to go, but there is one more surprise. Trombonist Tyree Glenn emerges from the wings with his 'electrical appliance' (the vibraphone) for a performance of *Limehouse Blues* quite unlike the near-masterpiece the band recorded in 1931. The band's role, indeed, is secondary here. After a slow, foggily impressionistic chorus, in which the piano accompaniment is noteworthy, Glenn and his leader swing with apparent enthusiasm at up tempo till the hard-working trumpet section effects a smashing finale.

Stanley Dance  
author of *The World of Duke Ellington* (Da Capo Press, Inc.)

PRODUCED BY MERCER ELLINGTON

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# DUKE ELLINGTON

The Great Concerts  
Cornell University, 1948



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NI 2727/28  
Disc 1

The Duke Ellington Orchestra

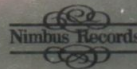
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# DUKE ELLINGTON

The Great Concerts  
Cornell University, 1948



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Disc 2

The Duke Ellington Orchestra

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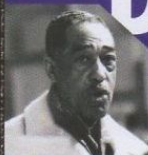
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DUKE ELLINGTON • THE GREAT CONCERTS  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY, 1948

NI 2727/28

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## CD 1.

1. Star Spangled Banner
2. Lady of the Lavender Mist
3. Suddenly It Jumped
4. Reminiscing in Tempo
5. She Wouldn't Be Moved
6. Paradise
7. The Symphomaniac Pt. 1
8. The Symphomaniac Pt. 2
9. My Friend
10. You Oughta
11. Creole Love Call
12. Don't Blame Me
13. Lover Man
14. The Tattooed Bride
15. Dancers In Love

Playing Time 75:04

## CD 2.

1. Manhattan Murals
2. Hy'a Sue
3. Fantazm
4. Tootin' Through The Roof
5. Brown Betty
6. Humoresque
7. How High The Moon
8. Don't Be So Mean To Baby
9. Lover Come Back To Me
10. It's Monday Everyday
11. Medly  
Don't Get Around Much Anymore; Do Nothing Till You Hear from Me;  
In A Sentimental Mood; Mood Indigo; I'm Beginning To See The Light;  
Sophisticated Lady; Caravan; It Don't Mean A Thing;  
I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart
12. Limehouse Blues

Playing Time 57:00

Duke Ellington *piano*

Shelton Hemphill, Francis Williams, Harold Baker, Al Killian *trumpets* Ray Nance *trumpet, violin & vocal*  
Lawrence Brown, Quentin Jackson *trombones* Tyree Glenn *trombone & vibraphone*  
Johnny Hodges *alto saxophone* Russell Procope *alto saxophone & clarinet*  
Jimmy Hamilton *clarinet & tenor saxophone* Al Sears, Ben Webster *tenor saxophones*  
Harry Carney *baritone saxophone, clarinet, & bass clarinet*  
Fred Guy *guitar* Wendell Marshall *bass* Sonny Greer *drums* Kay Davis, Al Hibbler *vocalists*  
PRODUCED BY MERCER ELLINGTON

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