



MUSIC IS MY MISTRESS

The Duke Ellington Orchestra

Conducted by Mercer Ellington

- 1 C Jam Blues**
Edward (Duke) Ellington (SBK Music)
Soloists:
Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*
John Longo, Sr., *Trumpet*
Patience Higgins, *Tenor sax*
Muhammad Abdul Al-Khabyyr, *Trombone*
William Easley, *Clarinet*
- 2 All of Me**
Gerald Marks/Seymour B. Simons
(Marlong Music Corp.)
- 3 Black and Tan Fantasy**
Edward Ellington/Bert Miley (Duke
Ellington Music Co./Mills Music Inc.)
Soloists:
Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Trumpet*
William Easley, *Clarinet*
- 4 Danske Onje (Danish Eyes)**
Mercer K. Ellington (Duke Ellington
Music Co.)
Soloist:
Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Trumpet*
- 5 Queenie Pie Reggae**
Edward Ellington (Duke Ellington
Music Co.)
Soloists:
Sayyd Abdul Al-Khabyyr, *Flute*
Ken Professor Philmore, *Steel drums*
- 6 Azure**
Edward Ellington/Irving Mills (Mills
Music Inc.)
Soloist:
William Easley, *Clarinet*
- 7 Jack the Bear**
Edward Ellington (SBK Music Co.)
Soloists:
Gerald Wiggins, *String bass*
William Easley, *Clarinet*
Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Trumpet*
Edward Neumeister, *Trombone*
- 8 Sweet Georgia Brown**
Ben Bernie/Kenneth Casey/Maceo
Pinkard (Warner Bros. Music Co.)
Soloist:
Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*
- 9 A Flower Is a Lovable Thing**
Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music Inc.)
Soloist:
Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*
Music Is My Mistress
Mercer K. Ellington/Edward Ellington
(Duke Ellington Music Co.)
- 10 Movement 1, Part 1**
Soloists:
William Easley, *Tenor sax*
Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Trumpet*

- 11 Movement 1, Part 2**
Soloists:
Art Baron, *Trombone*
Herman Riley, *Tenor sax*
- 12 Movement 2**
Soloist:
Edward Neumeister, *Trombone*
- 13 Movement 3**
Soloists:
Gerald Wiggins, *String bass*
Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Flugelhorn*
- 14 Movement 4**
Soloists:
Tony Barrero, *Trumpet*
Sayyd Abdul Al-Khabyyr, *Alto sax*
Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*
- 15 Movement 5**
Soloists:
Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*
Tony Gorruso, *Trumpet*
- 16 The Duke's Suite**
Onzy Matthews (Onzy Matthews
Music Co.)
Soloists:
Kenneth Garrett, *Alto sax*
Mulgrew Miller, *Piano*

Personnel:

Mercer K. Ellington, *Conductor/Arranger*

Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., *Co-arranger of "All of Me," transcriber of "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "C Jam Blues"*

Trumpets:

Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., John Longo, Sr., Tony Barrero, Tony Gorruso, Kamau Adilifu

Trombones:

Edward Neumeister, *Lead trombone*; Muhammad Abdul Al-Khabyyr, *Lead trombone, second trombone*; Britt B. Woodman, *Lead trombone, second trombone*; Raymond Harris, *Third trombone*; Charles R. Connors, *Bass trombone*

Reeds:

Sayyd Abdul Al-Khabyyr, *Lead alto sax, flute*; Kenneth Garrett, *Alto sax*; Victor Powell, *Alto sax*; Harold Minerve, *Alto sax*; Patience Higgins, *Tenor sax*; Herman Riley, *Tenor sax*; William Easley, *Tenor sax, clarinet*; Danny Bank, *Baritone sax*; Joseph Temperley, *Baritone sax, clarinet, bass clarinet*

Rhythm:

Quentin H. White, *Drums*; Gerald Wiggins, *Bass, Fender bass*; Sir Roland P. Hanna, *Piano*; Shizuko Yokoyama, *Piano*; Mulgrew Miller, *Piano*; Kenny Burrell, *Guitar*; Thomas James, *Synthesizer*; Rudolph Bird, *Percussion*; Ken Professor Philmore, *Steel drums*

As these words were written, Mercer Ellington and his orchestra were riding the crest of a success wave, the like of which he had never before celebrated since he inherited the band from Duke 14 years ago. The album *Digital Duke* had won Mercer his first Grammy award; the orchestra had enjoyed a rare opportunity to sit down, playing for more than four months with the Duke Ellington musical show *Sophisticated Ladies* in Atlantic City; the band was preparing to go on an extended tour of Japan.

The only problem was: after the Grammy victory, what to do for an encore? Aided by Musicmasters' Jeffrey Nissim and producer Teo Macero, Mercer found the answer in this unique collection. Unlike its predecessor, which consisted entirely of rearranged works out of Duke's old library, here we have a perfectly balanced set comprising more of these earlier pieces (some in their pristine form, others brilliantly updated), along with the first examples in many years of Mercer's own too-often-neglected talent as composer and arranger.

Whether the writing is that of Duke, Mercer, Barrie Lee Hall or one of the other contributors, the results reflect, perhaps more than any other album since Duke's death, the collective tonal essence of the Ellington sound, interpreted by musicians who, with few exceptions, have contributed to that sound for years, even decades.

As Mercer remarked, "If we kept on recording nothing but re-creations, we'd never have a chance to show anything we're doing ourselves." What he didn't say was that Barrie Lee Hall and I, and no doubt many others, had been pressuring Mercer for years to get out some manuscript paper and bring to a new audience fresh evidence of his own writing gifts. The results are dazzling: "Danke Onje" (Danish Eyes) is his own showcase for Hall's trumpet; "Azure" is his arrangement of a tune by Duke (whom he still refers to as "the old man") that he feels was unfairly ignored; and most notable is the suite "Music Is My Mistress." Although this bears Duke's name along with Mercer's, all Duke contributed was the title, which is borrowed from his book; the themes and arrangements are Mercer's, and arguably his most ambitious, splendidly crafted

work to date.

Among the re-creations, possibly the most familiar is "C Jam Blues," originally recorded by Barney Bigard and a small group of Ellingtonians in 1941, but upgraded by Duke a few months later in a big band version to which the present revitalization bears a strong resemblance. The soloists are Roland Hanna, piano; John Longo, trumpet; Patience Higgins, tenor sax; Muhammad Abdul Al-Khabyr, trombone; and Bill Easley, clarinet.

"Black and Tan Fantasy" (1927) was one of the first examples of Duke's ability to interweave the traditional blues with other forms, modulating from minor to major and back. "This is probably based on the original arrangement," says Barrie Lee Hall, who shares with clarinetist Bill Easley the solo credits here. Hall joined the band June 8, 1973 (almost a year before Duke died) in Houston, Texas, and has been invaluable both as soloist, particularly in the growl idiom, and as transcriber of many works off the original recordings.

The 1937 "Azure," in this Mercer Ellington arrangement, uses the 16-bar theme (which at the time seemed to be a follow-up for the similarly structured "Mood Indigo") as a showcase for Bill Easley.

"Jack the Bear" is the tune that catapulted Jimmy Blanton to fame as the harbinger of a new era in jazz bass playing. Here the bass part is assumed by J.J. Wiggins, in whose success I take a personal pride, having recommended him to Mercer when the band needed a bassist in 1974.

Billy Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" was arranged by Vince Prudente, who has been a member of the trombone section off and on for some 14 years. "We wanted a creative vehicle for Roland Hanna," Mercer says. Surprisingly and successfully, it is translated here into 3/4 time, a meter Duke and Strayhorn very rarely used.

"All of Me" (recorded by Duke in 1959) is another unprecedented sample of Ellingtonia in that the sax soli passage is a harmonization (a la Super Sax) of Johnny Hodges' original solo. Aside from this and the trombone passage, the arrangement was Barrie Lee Hall's.

"Sweet Georgia Brown" is based on an arrangement from an album Mercer recorded some years ago backing up singer Diahann Carroll. Notice the splendid support given by J.J. Wiggins to Roland Hanna's first solo, and Hanna's energizing octave-unison lines.

"Danske Onje" (Danish Eyes) is a tribute to the country where Mercer and his Danish-born wife make their home when they are not in New York. "I'd been trying for 10 years to get Mercer to write something new," says Barrie Lee Hall, "and I'm happy he came up with this one for me." Hall is featured on trumpet in this evocative and skilfully arranged work.

"Queenie Pie Reggae" will probably emerge as the surprise delight of the album. Based on a theme that was to have been part of a musical Duke had been planning, it was assembled, Mercer says, from scraps of paper that were lying around the hospital room; however, in its present form it may well be unlike anything Duke envisioned, since the main solo role is taken over by a steel drummer from Trinidad, known as "The Professor." Between him and flutist Sayyid Abdul Al-Khabyr (father of the trombonist), plus some synthesizer effects by Tommy James and conga drums by Rudy Bird, along with typical Ellington voicings, this evolved into one of the most original and totally charming pieces the orchestra has played in many years. Of interest too is the presence on piano of Shizuko Yokoyama. Mercer says he discovered her at a jazz club in Tokyo; she worked with the band in Atlantic City.

"Music Is My Mistress" is Mercer Ellington's first extended work for the orchestra, in the form of a five-part suite. Actually, the first part is virtually subdivided into two movements; the tenor soloist in the first segment is Bill Easley, in the second (the one using the "St. Louis Blues" quote) it is Herman Riley. The other soloists are Barrie Lee Hall and Art Baron, the latter playing effective plunger trombone in an age-old Ellington tradition.

The second movement, a melodically engaging theme with a high-note cadenza ending, brings trombonist Ed Neumeister front and center. Lloyd Mayers is the pianist on this and the next movement, which is primarily designed to feature

J.J. Wiggins, in a style that reflects Blanton and Ray Brown influences. "In this movement," Mercer says, "I was trying to do something reminiscent of Thelonious Monk, using various instrumental combinations as he might have done."

Tony Barrero (trumpet), Sayyid Abdul Al-Khabyr (alto), Roland Hanna and Tony Gorruso (trumpet) share the responsibilities in the fourth and fifth movements. All in all, "Music Is My Mistress" brings to the orchestra overtones of Duke's magisterial influence colored by the personal melodic and orchestral gifts that have been expanded, rather than simply inherited, by Mercer.

Yet another one-of-a-kind item is "The Duke's Suite." Recorded some eight years ago, this was composed and arranged by Onzy Matthews, who wrote for and with Duke in the early 1970s, and subbed at the piano during the maestro's illness. The alto saxophonist is Kenny Garrett; the pianist on this date was Mulgrew Miller.

With the 1990s looming up not too many months away, we are confronted by the amazing reality that the Ellington orchestra has been a major force in music during seven of this century's decades, from the 1920s through the late '80s, and promises to sustain that preeminent position during the decade just ahead. Most significantly, we are offered in this album, more accurately than in any preceding it, a true picture of where Mercer Ellington stands vis-à-vis the orchestra's contribution to the 1980s. Reactivating the old, creating the new, he offers a heady mix that reminds us of the grandeur and scope of big band music, a genre that I suspect will never fade away as long as there are artists among us like Mercer and his colleagues to keep the flame alive.

Leonard Feather

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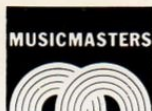
MUSIC IS MY MISTRESS
THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA/MERCER ELLINGTON

5013-2-C

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DDD

Produced by Teo Macero
Coproducers: Mercer Ellington
and Barrie Lee Hall, Jr.



1710 Highway 35
Ocean, New Jersey 07712



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THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA/MERCER ELLINGTON

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Conducted by Mercer Ellington

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|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | C Jam Blues (3:50) Edward (Duke) Ellington (SBK Music) | 7 | Jack the Bear (3:52) Edward Ellington (SBK Music Co.) |
| 2 | All of Me (3:35) Gerald Marks/Seymour B. Simons (Marlong Music Corp.) | 8 | Sweet Georgia Brown (3:20) Ben Bernie/Kenneth Casey/Maceo Pinkard (Warner Bros. Music Co.) |
| 3 | Black and Tan Fantasy (6:48) Edward Ellington/Bert Miley (Duke Ellington Music Co./Mills Music Inc.) | 9 | A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing (3:24) Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music Inc.) |
| 4 | Danske Onje (Danish Eyes) (5:48) Mercer K. Ellington (Duke Ellington Music Co.) | Music Is My Mistress Mercer K. Ellington/Edward Ellington (Duke Ellington Music Co.) | |
| 5 | Queenie Pie Reggae (4:51) Edward Ellington (Duke Ellington Music Co.) | 10 | Movement 1, Part 1 (2:10) |
| 6 | Azure (3:26) Edward Ellington/Irving Mills (Mills Music Inc.) | 11 | Movement 1, Part 2 (3:02) |
| | | 12 | Movement 2 (2:49) |
| | | 13 | Movement 3 (7:03) |
| | | 14 | Movement 4 (7:01) |
| | | 15 | Movement 5 (3:03) |
| | | 16 | The Duke's Suite (6:49) Onzy Matthews (Onzy Matthews Music Co.) |

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