

DUKE ELLINGTON - Cotton Club - 1938



VOLUME TWO

“Three Blind Mice”

JA-13

JAZZ ARCHIVES

SIDE TWO
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731125

"Three Blind Mice"
DUKE ELLINGTON
Cotton Club-1938

1. THREE BLIND MICE
2. ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET
Vocal by Ivie Anderson
3. DINAH'S IN A JAM
4. IF DREAMS COME TRUE
5. LOST IN MEDITATION
Vocal by Ivie Anderson
6. ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM
Duke Ellington & His Orchestra

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1. ECHOES OF HARLEM
2. PRELUDE IN 'C' SHARP MINOR
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The music on this record and a companion (Jazz Archives JA-12) owes its existence to, in the first instance, Duke Ellington, composer-in-residence, chief arranger, and sometime piano player for the orchestra which bears his name, and in the second instance to the efforts of Joseph Schillinger, who recorded it from Cotton Club broadcasts. Schillinger had come to the States from Russia in 1928, bringing with him impeccable academic credits and a reputation as a minor composer. He lectured at the New School For Social Research and was for some time on the faculty of Columbia University, where he taught music, fine arts and mathematics. While at Columbia he devised the method of composition which bears his name and later set up business as a private teacher of composition.

The non-scientific orientation of people such as Mozart did not prevent their composing great music; it could be shown after the fact that their music was susceptible to mathematical analysis and that the mathematical relationships would be found to be fully as harmonious as the sounds. Schillinger's system took into account such mathematical considerations before the fact of composition; this approach would tend to make composition less of a chancey business.

If one were to evaluate the Schillinger system on a pragmatic basis, which is to say, on the number of worthy compositions which have resulted from the application of its principles, a judgment on the value of the method would have to be, on the whole, negative.

Schillinger's most prominent pupil was George Gershwin, and Schillinger adherents claim that *Porgy and Bess* was written entirely under the instruction and supervision of Joseph Schillinger. Gershwin, on the other hand, has said that only certain portions of the Storm Music were indeed written under the precepts of the Schillinger dicta, not the entire opera.

Schillinger did have a respectable number of students who normally worked in the popular field, including Mel Powell (who went on to study with Paul Hindemith at Yale), Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Hal Kemp and Mark Wrayton. In 1940 Schillinger published a slim volume, *Kaleidoscopic*, devoted to modern tone progressions; one suspects that many of the Schillinger pupils were as interested in arranging techniques as in actual composition.

In the mid-thirties, Schillinger was moved to acquire what was, by the standards of the time, very high quality recording equipment, and forthwith began the recording of substantial amounts of off-the-air material. The discs were later purchased from the Schillinger estate and thus commenced an odyssey, the end of which the reader knows.

Ellington's development as an arranger over the earlier days is quite obvious in this music. What is not so readily obvious is the change in his solos - there aren't all that many to be heard, but what there are show greater restraint, less of the diatymbaric character of the earlier solos. With the exception of a few display pieces from the forties, this move toward economy of statement has continued to the present day, and the current Ellington playing often has a muted, elegiac quality rarely found in examples from more youthful and exuberant times.

The piano player was also well on the way to becoming the entrepreneur by the time of the 1938 Cotton Club engagement. Irving Mills, who had provided the non-musical know-how in the earlier days was, within a year of a non-too-subtle slough, within an additional two years, Ellington would be his own publisher as well.

The grievances which led to these changes were, as of March, 1938, merely irritations, and did not affect the band at all. It was playing superbly, and having to suffer through playing *The Siren*; three times a night did not seem too high a price to pay for working in times when many excellent musicians were not.

There is often a feeling of joy in one's powers. This can be heard in a second rendition of *Harmony In Harlem* (the first will be found on Jazz Archives JA-12), this from the broadcast of March 24th. The notes do not vary greatly from one version to the next, but the feeling here is more festive. From the same broadcast, Ivie Anderson sings the vocal version of Edgar Sampson's *If Dreams Come True*; the trumpet solo is by Cootie Williams.

The April 17th broadcast contained another number never recorded by the Ellington band. Dressed up in a stockish-sounding arrangement, *Three Blind Mice* offers short solos by Lawrence Brown, Williams, and Johnny Hodges (once again on soprano sax).

The Hodges solo on Lionel Hampton's record of *On The Sunny Side Of The Street*, became (with innumerable minor variations) a staple in the Ellington specialty repertoire. It is heard here from the broadcast of April 24th and features, in addition to Hodges, a virile Lawrence Brown solo and the best Ivie Anderson vocal in the present collection, with a very tasteful Williams trumpet chorus behind her. *Dinah's In A Jam*, from the same broadcast offers a striking example of Rex Stewart's half-valve style in an extended, swinging solo; also heard are Lawrence Brown and Barney Bigard, working away at his embroidery.

Ivie Anderson is heard in two selections from the May 15th Cotton Club airshot. *It's The Dreamer In Me* has, in addition to the Anderson vocal, solos by the piano player, Brown and Bigard on another tune not recorded by the band. *Lost In Meditation* was a fair-sized hit; Ivie's vocal is enhanced by the commentary of Cootie Williams'

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trumpet, with other solos by Lawrence Brown and Johnny Hodges. *Every Day* (also known as *Demi-Tasse*) is another of the small-band offerings, a jaunty, modern-sounding conception with solos by Ellington, Bigard and Stewart.

The highlight of the May 15th broadcast (and it would be a high point on any broadcast by anybody) is the Cootie Williams specialty *Echoes Of Harlem*. Always a highly satisfactory piece, it is here played with a fervor and intensity which set it apart into the category beyond that of the merely great performance.

Rachmaninov's *Prelude In C-#p-Minor*, heard here in a Chappie Willert arrangement, is another first for Ellington fans. Although the arrangement was played frequently over a period of a couple years, it was never recorded by the band. Primarily section work, it offers short solo statements by Ellington, Billy Taylor on bass, and Cootie Williams. *Roxkin' In Rhythm*, a seldom-heard Ellington vehicle, is cast in much the standard mold, with the Ellington introductory solo and following offers by Cootie Williams and Joe Nanton. Both of these are from the Cotton Club broadcast of May 29th, a busy day for the Ellington forces and their leader; earlier in the day, the band had appeared at the Randall's Island Carnival of Spring, a benefit for AFM Local 822. This one of the earliest too-many-artists-over-too-long-a-time things; accounts would have us believe that during Ellington's band rendition of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* a preview of the Newport 1958 bacchanalia occurred, demonstrating that the arm of coincidence is long indeed.

J. H. IGO

SIDE ONE

ECHOES OF HARLEM	May 15th, 1938	(Ellington)
PRELUDE IN 'C' SHARP MINOR	May 29th, 1938	(Rachmaninoff)
IF DREAMS COME TRUE	Mar. 24th, 1938	(Sampson-Goodman-Mills)
HARMONY IN HARLEM	Mar. 24th, 1938	(Mills-Ellington-Hodges)
IT'S THE DREAMER IN ME	May 15th, 1938	(Van Heusen-J. Dorsey)
EV'RY DAY	May 15th, 1938	(Carney-Ellington)

SIDE TWO

THREE BLIND MICE	Apr. 17th, 1938	(Nursery Rhyme)
ON THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE STREET	Apr. 24, 1938	(Fields-McHugh)
DINAH'S IN A JAM	Apr. 24th, 1938	(Ellington-Mills)
IF DREAMS COME TRUE	May 1st, 1938	(Sampson-Goodman-Mills)
LOST IN MEDITATION	May 15th, 1938	(Ellington-Tizol-Singer-Mills)
ROCKIN' IN RHYTHM	May 29th, 1938	(Ellington-Carney-Mills)

PERSONNEL

TRUMPETS - Wallace Jones, Rex Stewart, Cootie Williams, TROMBONES - Joseph "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown, REEDS - Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Otto Hardwicke, Harry Carney, RHYTHM - Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, guitar; Hayes Alvis and Billy Taylor, bass; Sonny Greer, drums.

All vocals are by MISS IVIE ANDERSON. Small Group on "Ev'ry Day" consists of Rex Stewart, Juan Tizol, Barney Bigard, Harry Carney, Duke Ellington, Billy Taylor, Sonny Greer.

Cover Art: LORI VALBURN

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