

ML 4418
MASTERPIECES BY ELLINGTON
Duke Ellington and his orchestra

MASTERPIECES
by
ELLINGTON

DUKE ELLINGTON
and his orchestra

MOOD INDIGO · SOPHISTICATED LADY ·
THE TATTOOED BRIDE · SOLITUDE

In Uncut Concert Arrangements

ML 4418

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**DUKE ELLINGTON and his
ORCHESTRA**

ML-4418
NONBREAKABLE

SIDE 1
"VINYLITE"

Band 1: **MOOD INDIGO**
Vocal Chorus by Yvonne
- Ellington - I. Mills - A. Bigard -
Band 2: **SOPHISTICATED LADY**
Vocal Chorus by Yvonne
- I. Mills - Parish - Ellington -

(XLP 5672)



LONG PLAYING
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**DUKE ELLINGTON and his
ORCHESTRA**

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SIDE 2
"VINYLITE"

Band 1: **THE TATTOOED BRIDE**
- Ellington -
Band 2: **SOLITUDE**
- E. DeLange - I. Mills - Ellington -

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MASTERPIECES BY ELLINGTON

Mood Indigo • Sepitimized Lady • The Tamed Brute • Solitude

DUKE ELLINGTON and his Orchestra

Hardly in popular music does a composition earn the status of a masterpiece. There is so much that is ephemeral, and so much that is worthless, that the few lasting and memorable pieces stand like the well-known stars in a singularly meagre world. Duke Ellington's contributions to this small galaxy are among the brightest and most secure, and four of the finest have been chosen for this collection. Although in his time the Duke has been responsible for an occasional outlier, the best of his work has been such, as to inspire the warm admiration and envy of other working composers and orchestra leaders, and his place among the post-humeral has long been assured.

Three of the compositions in this group are vintage Ellington, from one of his most creative periods: *Three for Three* and *Indigo* of 1931, *Sepitimized Lady* of 1932, and *Solitude* of 1934. *The Tamed Brute*, showing many contemporary influences, dates only from 1936, but, like the others, is completely Ellington in its conception. These recordings, incidentally, were the last made before extensive changes in orchestra personnel took place early in 1951. But most important in the consideration of the compositions is the fact that never before have they been available at full-length on records. At least, some eight minutes' worth of each arrangement has been obtainable for the edification and enjoyment of musician and public, but the complete, concert-type arrangements that have occasionally reached Ellington fans have simply been impractical for ordinary record purposes. Thanks to Long Playing records, these great Ellington settings can now be heard at last in their entirety.

Even the most casual listening attests to the fact that Ellington has again and again revised these settings. Not content to let them rest on their original merits, he has added and subtracted, using an artistic approach (in the better sense of the word) to polish and enlarge them. There is still to be found the supremely mature sound that is the Ellington touch-mark. There is the almost tangible mastery of a splendidly proficient orchestra. There are still the long, serene, evocative lines. But with all these, there is an subtle experimentation with harmonies and rhythms that increases the interest of already fascinating music.

Always an innovator, Ellington has clearly selected the best of the present-day trends and worked them into his own musical scheme. The modern slanting of *The Tamed Brute* is echoed again and again in other arrangements of the earlier

numbers, broadening their scope as both popular music and as music with recognizable claims to serious attention. Ellington once lauded George Gershwin, Stravinsky, Debussy and Ravel as his favorite composers, a significant group of modern (classical) music, an experimenter of the first order, constantly exploring rhythms and textures in his compositions. Debussy is the master of Impressionism, infusing delicate textures to a giddy web of articulate grace. And Ravel, who ever his claims as a composer, was a master of orchestration. These revealing choices give the clue to the basis of Ellington's music, and to its unconsciously immense appeal: melody, rhythm, delicacy and color.

Moreover, the Ellington orchestras have always been virtuoso groups, capable of superb ensemble playing and inspired solo feats. Through the years, from his initial success in 1927 up to the present, changes in personnel have been infrequent. This has given the group a continuity and a unity that is achieved generally only by the great symphonic orchestras. The musical thought has been congenial and general, and has given the orchestra's experiments a group origin and direction that are as polished as they are rare. For the Ellington orchestras has encompassed serious musicians to take note. Concerts in Carnegie Hall and at the Metropolitan Opera House have been reviewed by responsible critics, and the orchestra's European fame is of surpassing stature. Recently Ellington was commissioned by the Republic of Liberia to write a composition signifying its centennial, resulting in the progressive *Liberian Suite*. Other notable Ellington works include *Black, Brown and Beige*, and the score for the musical *Beggar's Holiday*.

Born in Washington, D. C. on April 29, 1899, he earned the name Duke in high school, for his successively neat dress and fastidious manners. Edward Kennedy Ellington took only a few piano lessons, but became proficient enough to acquire a job as jazz pianist in Washington clubs during the first World War. At the same time, he became a member of a large orchestra organized by Russell Weldon to give Sunday night concerts in the war-torn capital.

Later, he became the leader of one of Oliver "Doc" Perry's orchestras, and in 1932 he joined

Eller Sorensen's orchestra, where he met trumpeter Arthur Wernick, drummer Sonny Greer and saxophonist Otto Hardwick. Next to play with Willis Bowman's band, and sometimes obtained engagements with a five-piece group known as the Washingtonians, including the above-named players, with James Miley as second trumpeter and trombonist Charley Rivers.

In 1926, he moved to New York and began playing at the Cotton Club with his own orchestra. His fame began to spread, and soon publisher Irving Mills stepped in to foster the growth and promotion of the orchestra. On December 4, 1931, Ellington appeared at the then-famous Cotton Club in Harlem, and here the tingling excitement of his music really burst into the limelight. The startling arrangements, the unforgettable originals proved both in rich profusion, and the orchestra was securely established as one of the great organizations in music, a popular success, and a critical success. The record growth, for the first time in full-length recorded arrangements, four of the finest Ellington scores, typical of the advancement and lively intelligence that the Duke has brought to popular music. Each is genuinely a masterpiece, and each, obviously, could only have been created by Duke Ellington and his orchestra. —GARD

Recorded December 15, 1950

PIANO
Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn

SAZOPHONES
Kessel Procopo, Paul Gonzalez,
Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton

TRUMPET
Nelson Williams, Andrew Ford,
Harold Baker, Ray Nance, William Anderson

TROMBONE
Quentin Jackson, Lawrence Brown,
Tyne Clark

HOSE
Morris Ellington

DRUMS
Sonny Greer

BAR
Wendell Marshall

VOGALIST
Tynece

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