



Marian McPartland

The Single Petal Of A Rose

The Essence Of Duke Ellington





Marian McPartland with Duke Ellington



Marian McPartland and Duke Ellington
The Blue Note, Chicago, IL

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What we've got here on this disc is wonderful, mesmerizing jazz; it's also sensuous, definitely soul music.

The essence of jazz, to me, is in the intimacy that an expressive musician can establish with the listener—often a one-on-one situation. And were it not for the habit of recording established moguls who create otherwise irrelevant commercially identifying names for every new musical concoction, we might justifiably identify all jazz as "soul music" — music that comes from a performer's soul and touches the listener's innermost soul.

In typical classical music—where instrumental or vocal perfection is judged on technique and impeccable score-reading and the like—it is up to the conductor or ensemble leader to initiate the composition and guide the musicians under his baton, bow, or hands toward his or her concept of what the composer had in mind.

In most jazz groups, such interpretations are in the hands of the performer or performers. The musical scores, if used at all, are often sketchy charts; the leader-conductor, if there is one (usually a bandleader), is more a guide than a drill-master—indicating direction but not, precisely, how to get there.

It is no wonder that pianist Marian McPartland has attained the highest ranks of jazz performers in her keyboard interpretations of, among others, Duke Ellington's music.

Although he often underrated his own piano abilities, Ellington's playing (and his compositions) revealed a delicate, sensitive musical soul that was often—in public appearances—camouflaged by his hip, classy showmanship and astonishingly accomplished bandleaders and soloists.

One selection on this disc, **Cerulescence**, is a McPartland composition; another, **Take The 'A' Train** is Billy Strayhorn's.

The set's title track, **The Single Petal Of A Rose**, is a 1959 Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration designated "For solo piano" —a movement within the "Queen's Suite," dedicated to Elizabeth II of England.

The CD's remaining ten compositions are Ellington's own, from the 70 year old **Mood Indigo** to **Take The Coltrane**, a chart Ellington sketched out at a 1962 recording session which featured tenor saxophonist John Coltrane and the Duke in collaboration.

Throughout that recording date, Ellington was trying to get deeper into the music while Coltrane attempted to take it further out.

The consistent effectiveness of the music on this CD comes from pianist McPartland's and bandleader Bill Douglass's collective and individual ability to search out the Duke's musical soul and play it what might well be called a soul-on-soul manner.

A few of us among McPartland's audience of 50 in Maybeck Studio for the Performing Arts had heard Ellington and his Famous Orchestra (as 1930s Brunswick Records labeled it) perform most of these selections, live, many a time over the years; to hear and absorb McPartland's soul-to-soul interpretations was akin to spiritual reflection and enlightenment, especially in the chapel-like surroundings of the redwood paneled hall.

Thanks to engineers Brian Walker and Bud Spangler, this crystal clear, beautifully balanced recording captures and communicates both the sound and the soul of that spring evening high in the Berkeley, California, hills.

Although presented in reorganized format, all the tracks on this disc were recorded on location, and with the exception of one false start (bassist Douglass's stool squeaked) each selection was played only once; none was re-recorded.

Since most of the Ellington book is familiar, my usual suggestion on first playing a disc—"go from the known to the unknown"—may be inappropriate, but for starters I would recommend treating your ears (and soul, of course) to the glories of McPartland's playing of **Mood Indigo**.

Starting with a lacy Gershwin-like chorus, McPartland moves into the familiar theme, suggesting all three of the instrumental lines involved—trumpet, trombone and bass clarinet. She then spins off on what originally was Barney Bigard's clarinet solo (becoming a tune of its own later on) and weaves improvised chorus after chorus into the basic theme's fabric.

On **The Single Petal Of A Rose** she establishes a running left-hand line which continues through most of the performance. The sophisticated major/minor variations on the tune's delicate, airy theme help to create a fascinating salon-style performance.

McPartland's commendable resurrection of **Everything But You**, a beautiful but virtually forgotten ballad from 1945 (the first of a number of bad years for mainstream jazz bands), also displays her ability to be both fascinating and innovative. Beginning with the piano, then adding the bass, the performance style moves from a typically Duke-ish keyboard introduction into one of the best duets (à la Ellington and Jimmy Blanton) on the disc, and then into a notably fresh, avant garde, closing chorus or two.

The pop song **Just Squeeze Me** first appeared as a segment of "Subtle Slough" (pronounced sluff, a contraction of "sluff off") on a small-combo "Ellington Unit" recording featuring a young Jimmy Blanton on bass. Here, McPartland's piano—strongly supported by Douglass' off-beat-accented bass line—swings through a couple of choruses, giving way, finally, to a solo bass lead.

Instrumentalists who stay together play comfortably together, and no pair of musicians confirms this judgement better than McPartland and Douglass, who have worked and played together for years. His rich, full-bodied bass tones have never been recorded more accurately than on this disc. He's all over **Take The Coltrane**—a bop-blues riff-soloing here, filling between McPartland's open-ended phrases, sometimes playing syncopated off-beats to off-beats.

The extemporaneous Douglass-McPartland collaborations on this disc are far more rewarding than any combinations on the Ellington-Coltrane LP. Note **I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart**, with McPartland initially playing the familiar melody against the bass line, then lowering the dynamics and providing openings here and there for delicate bass embellishments.

It Don't Mean A Thing, by McPartland and Douglass, does mean a thing, 'cause it does have that swing—and then some. The rendition, after a splendid, inventive, keyboard opening, comes off as an instrumental tap-dance full of surprises and swapping of licks; note McPartland's reference to the old jazz warhorse "That's A Plenty" early-on.

It's hard to imagine one of Ellington's best songs, **Warm Valley**, without the alto sax lead of Johnny Hodges, but McPartland's arrangement emphasizes not only the beauty of the melody but the complexities of the composition. On **All Too Soon**, which featured tenor saxophonist Ben Webster and trombonist Lawrence Brown on the 1940 Ellington recording, McPartland (solo) displays her remarkable ability to both acknowledge earlier versions and create a distinctive, intimate (soulful?) rendition of her own.

Her original, **Cerulescence**, which sounds like a witty, clever Ellington title (actually, it's a vivid blue glow) is a salon-jazz work which emerges from an early tone poem setting into a beautiful, wistful song full of fresh, nicely structured major/minor harmonies under fragile melodic lines.

A most worthy inclusion in a collection dedicated to an American musical genius who loved his fans almost as much as his music.

—Philip Elwood, *San Francisco Examiner*



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Marian McPartland, piano
Bill Douglass, bass
(tracks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13)

Produced by Nick Phillips
Executive Producers:
Glen Barros & John Burk

Recorded at
Maybeck Studio for the Performing Arts,
April 17, 2000, Berkeley, CA
Chief Recording Engineer:

Brian Walker
Remote Recording
Coordinator/Engineer: Bud Spangler
Assistant Recording Engineer:

Steve Uyeno
Assembled by
Phil Edwards at PER, Hayward, CA
Mastered by

George Horn
Director of Product Development:
Alexis Davis
Production Manager:

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Architectural Photography:

Jean Simmons
Additional Photography:
Courtesy of Marian McPartland's archives

Cover Illustration:
Marian McPartland (age 15)

Marian McPartland is a Baldwin Piano artist
and played a SD-10EBY 91 Baldwin on this
recording.

Special thanks to Greg Moore for opening
his doors for us to record at the Maybeck
Studio for the Performing Arts.

Marian McPartland's appearances
may be arranged through
Parsons Artists Management /
phone: 847-433-7374

1. *Take the 'A' Train* (5:45)

(Billy Strayhorn) Billy Strayhorn Songs Inc. I ASCAP

2. *Just Squeeze Me* (6:32)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) EMI Robbins Catalog Inc. I ASCAP

3. *All Too Soon* (4:51)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) Major Songs Co. / The Estate Of Mercer K. Ellington I ASCAP

4. *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* (5:18)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) Famous Music Corp. / EMI Mills Music I ASCAP

5. *Mood Indigo* (5:30)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington / Irving Mills / Barney Bigard) EMI Mills Music Inc. / Duke Ellington Music / Indigo Music I ASCAP

6. *Take The Coltrane* (4:03)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) Tempo Music Inc. / Duke Ellington Music I ASCAP

7. *The Single Petal Of A Rose* (5:00)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) Music Sales Corp. I ASCAP

8. *Everything But You* (4:10)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington / Don George / Harry James) Tempo Music Inc. I ASCAP

9. *Ceruleance* (5:25)

(Marian McPartland) ASCAP

10. *It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)* (5:26)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) EMI Mills Music Inc. / Duke Ellington Music I ASCAP

11. *Sophisticated Lady* (5:06)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) EMI Mills Music Inc. / Duke Ellington Music I ASCAP

12. *Warm Valley* (5:26)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) The Estate Of Mercer K. Ellington I ASCAP

13. *'C' Jam Blues* (6:29)

(Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington) The Estate Of Mercer K. Ellington I ASCAP







CONCORD JAZZ

Marian McPartland *The Single Petal Of A Rose*

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Marian McPartland, piano Bill Douglass, bass (tracks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13)

Produced by Nick Phillips Executive Producers: Glen Barros & John Burk

Chief Recording Engineer: Brian Walker Remote Recording Coordinator/Engineer: Bud Spangler

Assistant Recording Engineer: Steve Uyeno Assembled by Phil Edwards at PER, Hayward, CA

Mastered by George Horn

The first lady of jazz piano, MARIAN McPARTLAND, salutes one of the greatest of the great American composers, DUKE ELLINGTON, with **The Single Petal of a Rose** – an intimate solo piano and duo concert, recorded live at the historic Maybeck Studio for the Performing Arts. Marian's encyclopedic jazz piano vocabulary and colorful reharmonizations make even the most familiar Ellington compositions sound as fresh and new as the delightfully obscure Ellington pieces she has unearthed. This intimate, loving tribute to Duke is sure to be a McPartland instant classic.



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