



THE DEGAS SUITE (27:27)

Original Movie Score—N.Y. 1968
(Duke Ellington)
Tempo Music, Inc.

INTRODUCTION—Opening Titles

RACE

PIANO PASTEL → *01:20*
IMPROVISATION—Marcia Regina

PIANO PASTEL

DAILY DOUBLE

DRAWINGS

PROMENADE

SONNET

RACE

(New York, November 6, 1968
except "Daily Double," December 3, 1968)

Personnel:

DUKE ELLINGTON Piano
WILLIE COOK Trumpet
CHUCK CONNORS Bass Trombone
JOHNNY HODGES Alto Saxophone
RUSSELL PROCOPE Alto Saxophone and
Clarinets

PAUL GONSALVES/HAROLD ASHBY

Tenor Saxophones

HARRY CARNEY Baritone Saxophone

JEFF CASTLEMAN Bass

RUFUS JONES Drums

THE RIVER (43:47)

Original Ballet Score—N.Y. 1970
(Duke Ellington)
Tempo Music, Inc.

THE SPRING

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

THE RUN

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

THE MEANDER

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

THE GIGGLING RAPIDS

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

THE LAKE

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

THE FALLS

(New York, June 8, 1970)

THE WHIRLPOOL

(New York, June 3, 1970)

THE RIVER

(New York, June 3, 1970)

THE NEO-HIP-HOT

KIDDIES COMMUNITIES

(New York, June 3, 1970)

THE VILLAGE OF THE VIRGINS

(New York, June 3, 1970)

HER MAJESTY THE SEA

(New York, June 15, 1970)

THE SPRING

(Chicago, May 25, 1970)

Personnel:

DUKE ELLINGTON Piano
**CAT ANDERSON/COOTIE WILLIAMS/
MONEY JOHNSON/MERCER
ELLINGTON/DAVE BURNS/
AL RUBIN/FRED STONE** Trumpets
**BOOTY WOOD/JULIAN PRIESTER/
CHUCK CONNORS/CLIFF HEATHERS**

Trombones

RUSSELL PROCOPE Alto Saxophone and

Clarinets

NORRIS TURNEY Alto Saxophone and Flute

PAUL GONSALVES/HAROLD ASHBY

Tenor Saxophones

HARRY CARNEY Baritone Saxophone

JOE BENJAMIN Bass

RUFUS JONES Drums

ELAYNE JONES Tymp

WALTER ROSENBERG Glockenspiels

DAVE FITZ Xylophone and Marimba

PRODUCER: DUKE ELLINGTON

Executives In Charge of Production: Mercer Ellington/
Mel Fuhrman/Stanley Dance/Herb Moelis

Produced for Compact Disc by Harry Hirsch

Music Consultant: Bob Carlton

Cover Illustration: Nancy Stahl

Special Thanks To: Samuel J. Lefrak

THE DEGAS SUITE is the soundtrack of an art film conceived in 1968 by producer Sam Shaw, who worked with Duke Ellington on PARIS BLUES. Shaw had been impressed by an exhibition at Wildenstein's of the best racetrack pictures by the impressionists and post-impressionists, and he saw the opportunity to do a film without the kind of big-company interference he and Ellington had experienced in Paris.

Ellington was enthusiastic and quickly came up with the necessary music, tailoring it skillfully to fit the paintings and drawings shown in the film. Anthony Quinn had agreed to do the narration and in turn became enthusiastic when he saw the film and heard the music, so much so that he persuaded Charles Boyer and Simone Signoret to participate with him in the narration. Alas, all this came to naught when the project ran out of money. Ellington was given the soundtrack as some recompense for his work.

Although the music has come to be called THE DEGAS SUITE, Shaw himself referred to the film as DEGAS' RACING WORLD, and at other times it was more accurately called THE IMPRESSIONISTS AT THE RACETRACK, for the work of several other artists besides Degas was shown. Nevertheless, the Degas paintings of horses and racing scenes at Longchamp were central to the project, but there were others by such artists as Raoul Dufy, Kees Van Dongen and Jean-Louis Forain. Degas was, of course, also famous for his pictures of ballet dancers, which would have appealed to Ellington along with those, equally famous, of the *Café-Concert at the Ambassadeurs* and *Musicians in the Opera Orchestra*.

But Shaw felt the music was "perfection," too, for Van Dongen's *Longchamps* and Dufy's water-

colors. Ellington found Forain's painting of the crowd at Auteuil especially amusing. It showed a distant horse and rider, and a bearded gentleman in top hat close up who was holding the form sheet, but with his eyes fastened on the bosom of a nearby lady. "You see," said Ellington, "this cat's horse is winning and all his mind is on blowing the loot he wins on the chick." For *The Fallen Jockey*, a picture owned by Paul Mellon, he composed a solemn piece of music entitled PRAT. Some thought this had reference to the scholarship he won as a young man to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but it was, in fact, his typical abbreviation of "pratfull." Later he substituted gayer music in a witty twist, as much as to say, "C'est la vie—he'll get up and ride again."

Had the project succeeded, Shaw intended another similar film with pictures by Matisse, about whom he claimed, Ellington was "crazy." Moreover, after seeing a collection of some of the best painters of the American West, Ellington went so far as to write and record a piece to accompany pictures of Indians that stirred him, and this he entitled ELOUS ("soul" more or less spelled backwards, plus an "e"—a typical stratagem to confuse the inquisitive). Later, he used this theme in THREE BLACK KINGS.

After seeing the Degas material for the first time, he decided to use just four horns and piano, but the group grew in size when work began. Different versions and titles were recorded at sessions during November and December 1968, but the soundtrack, in this instance, solves the problem of deciding which takes Ellington himself considered definitive. Some performances were omitted altogether from the soundtrack and others curtailed; it is hoped that these can be included in later records in this series.

The soloists are easily identifiable from the listed personnel, but it should be noted that Harold Ashby takes over from Paul Gonsalves in the last, slower section of DAILY DOUBLE. Johnny Hodges, surely the greatest lyrical voice jazz has ever produced, exposes the beautiful main theme, RACE, at beginning and end. The piano player is in splendid form throughout.

THE RIVER is fully described on pages 201-203 of Duke Ellington's autobiographical MUSIC IS MY MISTRESS (Da Capo Press). It originally derived from a suggestion for a detailed musical description of a river whose characteristics resembled those of the Mississippi. Billy Strayhorn particularly liked the idea, but he was no longer alive to work on it when in 1970 the American Ballet Theatre commissioned a ballet score from Ellington. His proposal to write the *THE RIVER* was accepted, but by this time his mind dwelt as much on the spiritual as on the temporal, so he turned the whole thing into a sort of religious allegory dealing with birth and rebirth.

Here again, a great deal of new music was written and recorded. First, he recorded the main themes as piano solos for the guidance of choreographer Alvin Ailey. Then he took his men into the studio and made, with relatively little soloistic embellishment, band versions for the benefit of the dancers. *None of these were intended for release*, but today they are the equivalent of a great artist's sketchbooks, and as such are presented here. They were, to his mind, the blueprints on which the orchestrations for the ballet company's own orchestra would ultimately be built. Eventually, too, the fully-fleshed work was recorded by Mercer Ellington with the band and the Warsaw Symphony in Poland, and then by the Louisville Symphony Orchestra in this country.

THE SPRING, played by Ellington alone,

leads to *THE RUN*, a strutting theme already encountered in *THE DEGAS SUITE* in *IMPROVISATION*. ("It's all right to steal—from yourself" was one of Ellington's favorite maxims.) The solo responsibilities are taken care of by the piano player and flutist Norris Turney. Turney is also the main soloist on the leisurely *MEANDER*, where the orchestral textures suggest wooded banks. *THE GIGGLING RAPIDS* is a sprightly affair in which Ellington and his superb saxophone section excel themselves. *THE LAKE*, a beautiful melody, is introduced by Joe Benjamin's insistent bass, and against sonorous, trombone-dominated backgrounds, romantic activity is implied by flute, clarinet and trumpet.

For *THE FALLS* and *THE WHIRLPOOL*, extra percussion instruments were employed to exciting effect. The despairing voice heard in the former is that of Paul Gonsalves' tenor saxophone. For *THE RIVER*, variously known as "Riba" and "Mainstream," we are returned to straight-ahead jazz and a concept originated by Mercer Ellington. *THE NEO-HIP-HOT KIDDES COMMUNITY* was first cryptically entitled *STUD* by Ellington, because it was to accompany an eccentric dance in the ballet by a male dancer. It contrasts sharply with the respectability of *THE VILLAGE OF THE VIRGINS* on the opposite bank. Then the great river pours into *HER MAJESTY THE SEA*, where Harry Carney's baritone saxophone suggests rich fecundity. Rain drawn up from the sea falls on distant hills and brings us back once more to *THE SPRING*.

THE RIVER, like *THE DEGAS SUITE*, offers remarkable and exciting proof of Ellington's continued creativity in his later years.

STASIS DANCE
(author of *The World of
Duke Ellington*, Da Capo Press)

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This is one in a series of ten albums that, taken together, is the definitive collection of the significant compositions written by Duke Ellington and some other songs long associated with his body of work. These recordings were personally produced by Duke Ellington himself and have remained in his private collection since their completion. Documenting a large portion of his musical work, some of which had never been commercially released, these private recordings are being made available to the public by Ellington's family for the first time.

PRODUCER: DUKE ELLINGTON

These classic recordings have been transferred to digital from their original analog form. To keep as close to the original sound as possible, the best equipment has been utilized.

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