

REMEMBERING DUKE ELLINGTON

RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Dublin • Richard Hayman

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REMEMBERING DUKE ELLINGTON

Caravan • Sweet Georgia Brown • Sophisticated Lady

Take The 'A' Train • The Mooch • Love Scene

RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Dublin • Richard Hayman



Remembering Duke Ellington

'He moved with all the influences of the time, from blues to bebop and the moderns, and transmuted them into his own...'

Alistair Cooke

For most his long and illustrious career Duke Ellington was a major figure in jazz, and an active participant in an evolution which he helped graph in recordings spanning the years 1923 to 1973. In the history of jazz *qua* music, therefore, Duke remains an institution, a persona so monumental that he will never be forgotten. By the early 1930s he was already established as a top bandleader, and celebrated both as an arranger and a composer in his own right, and would in all probability have preferred the more creative route of 'serious' jazz (i.e. suites and the like). However, with the take-off of Swing inspired by Benny Goodman's 1935 breakthrough, the Ellington Orchestra, notwithstanding its great ensemble, virtually overnight joined a growing legion of bands vying to cash in on the new big band craze. From 1936 a combination of factors, some personal, some economic, constrained Ellington to a more commercial idiom. Willing always to adapt, Duke mirrored and often anticipated new directions and it is to this that we owe the existence of many of the great standards on this CD.

Born in Washington DC on 29th April 1899, the son of a White House butler, Edward Kennedy Ellington enjoyed the benefits of a genteel, respectable upbringing and education. Given his first piano lessons at seven, he mastered harmony and by his teens was already honing tunes for his instrument, and was haunting the Howard Theatre on a regular basis where he feasted his ears and eyes on the keyboard 'acrobatics' of Luckey Roberts and other exemplars of post-ragtime stride.

Recognising his son's extraordinary capacity for sketching, his father, James Edward, had hoped - vainly - that Duke would keep the piano as a hobby and devote himself to becoming a professional graphic artist

instead. Duke left technical college in 1917 and briefly ran his own sign-painting business but later that year made his solo piano debut and was soon gigging in Louis Thomas's band at society venues. In 1918, he formed a trio, Duke's Serenaders, which offered sophisticated jazz to Washington's 'select patrons' and in 1922 moved to New York where he could observe at closer quarters the dextrous finger movements of James P. Johnson and Willie 'The Lion' Smith.

By the close of 1923 Duke had formed the Washingtonians with trio colleague Elmer Snowden (1900-1973) and scored the revue *Chocolate Kiddies*. By the late 1920s the all-black Ellington outfit had become a society band par excellence, virtually exclusive to prestigious venues whose all-white clientele were not inclined to fraternise with Negroes. However, through his residencies at New York's Holiday Inn (and, briefly, the Kentucky on 49th Street and Broadway) and wider exposure on radio, he was able, without abandoning his 'Jungle'-style hot jazz trademark, to exploit the public's growing interest in dance music. Late in 1927 he began his first, five-year, sojourn at the Cotton Club and there his elegant twelve-piece largely satisfied a demand for both. A string of great jazz creations, beginning with *East St. Louis Toodle-0o* (1926), *Black And Tan Fantasy* and *Creole Love Call* (both 1927), *The Mooche* (1928) and particularly the best-selling *Mood Indigo* (1930), secured his name.

By the time 'Harlem's Aristocrat of Jazz' had quit the Cotton Club to tour the States in early 1931, he not only catered to the dance market but was also a top concert attraction. Salaried on a par 'approximately equal to the best symphonic wages' the Ellington Orchestra grossed almost \$50,000 per week and, while breaking all previous box-office records, offered the more thoughtful listener instrumental essays through which, Duke hoped, jazz might finally acquire its merited dignity.

1931 brought the first flowering of Duke's most

creative phase and his compositions, including *Rockin' In Rhythm* (1930), *Creole Rhapsody* (1931) and *It Don't Mean A Thing* (1932), viewed in retrospect, were heralds of the Swing Era. By late 1933 he was once more (this time briefly) ensconced in the security of the Cotton Club, and with a band now augmented to six brass, four reeds plus a four-man rhythm section, had traversed the United States from coast to coast and taken Europe and London by storm. And by 1934, so many outstanding Ellington numbers of the three-minute pop-tune variety were triggering almost equal sales of certain non-dance items more accurately classified as mood-music. From 1934 Duke's successes on shellac veered more significantly towards the commercial, with versions of *Cocktails For Two* and *Moon Glow*, as well as the first of several recorded versions of his own *Sophisticated Lady* (1932, in collaboration with Otto Hardwick) and *Solitude* (1934) proving top sellers. Additionally, a number of more esoteric Ellington jazz tone-paintings prompted John Hammond to remark (in *Downbeat* magazine) that his latest records on Brunswick 'had hardly any of the old-time Ellington sincerity and originality' while urging his fans to rush out and 'buy them all' - regardless.

To make money while doing justice to jazz and to his own creative status within the genre, would soon become a dilemma which Ellington solved in part by more overt displays of showmanship, living proof that not only was his a fashionable Swing outfit, but that his crew were all virtuosos a notch above the average. In March 1937 he made a further return to the Cotton Club (in a *Cotton Club Parade* revue featuring Ethel Waters), by July sheet-music and disc sales of *Caravan* had made it a top American best-seller and in September his recordings of *Diminuendo In Blue* and *Crescendo In Blue* reassured the buffs that his penchant for innovative tone-painting remained unattenuated.

During that year a wider audience sensed that Duke was *au fait* with Swing and could hold his own with

dance bands, when he appeared in the promotional film *The Hit Parade* (a behind-the-scenes drama for Republic) and around that time he embarked on a further series of best-selling commercial recordings of his own compositions. Various revived and re-recorded during the intervening decades in countless versions by bands and solo vocalists the world over, the greater part of these numbers, some originally 'instrumentals' with lyrics added later, subsequently attained the status of 'standards', beginning, in 1938, with *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* (a number which, despite its official credit as a collaboration with Irving Mills and Henry Nemo was, according to Rex Stewart, at least partly the creation of Johnny Hodges).

From 1940 onwards (when the US pop charts as we now know them became a yardstick for sales and overall currency) several Ellington compositions became known to the world through Ellington's own US chart hit-versions, notably *I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good* (No. 13, in 1941), *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* (written in 1942, No. 8 in 1943), *Take The 'A' Train* (composed in 1941, a No. 19 hit in 1943), *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me* (No. 10, in 1944), *I'm Beginning To See The Light* (co-written with Harry James, in 1944, an Ellington No. 6 in 1945) and *Satin Doll* (No. 27, in 1953), while lesser-known pieces such as *Alciabides* (from the incidental music he wrote on commission for the production by the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival, in July 1963) reflect Duke's more symphonic jazz inclinations.

Today, more than thirty years since his death, in New York, on 24th May 1974, the stature and popularity of Duke's musical bequest remains undiminished by time. Indeed, to paraphrase the late Alistair Cooke (ever an ardent Ellington fan): 'Bands may come and bands may go, but the Duke goes on forever.'

Peter Dempsey

The RTÉ Concert Orchestra

The Radio Telefís Éireann Concert Orchestra is one of Europe's most versatile musical ensembles. It is equally at home in the concert hall, broadcasting on radio and television, in the opera house, the recording studio and, in recent years, under canvas for the summer festivals at Farnleigh House. It also presents school concerts nationwide as part of the RTÉ/*The Irish Times* "Music in the Classroom" venture. Since its inauguration in 1948, the orchestra has grown from a small studio-based recording group to become an exceptionally active 45-strong orchestra that plays a unique and vitally important role in Irish musical life. It gives over ninety performances annually at home, and has toured the United States four times as well as appearing at Expo 2000 in Hanover in the presence of President Mary McAleese. The orchestra's repertoire is a wide one that embraces musical works from *Messiah* to *Les Misérables*, as well as most of what comes in between. It has played for seven Eurovision Song Contests and made many commercial recordings, including the phenomenally successful *Riverdance*. This success in the field of light entertainment and family-orientated events is as much a source of pride to the orchestra as its classical concert series and its work in the theatre for Opera Ireland. Since his appointment as Principal Conductor in 2003, French-born Laurent Wagner has significantly heightened the profile of the orchestra's classical music concerts. Proinnsias Ó Duinn, the man most responsible for the growth and development of the orchestra as its Principal Conductor over a remarkable 23 years, is the orchestra's first Conductor Laureate. Associate Conductor Gareth Hudson concentrates on the lighter part of the repertoire. All three, along with regular guest conductors, work under the administrative and artistic guidance of General Manager Anthony Long.

Richard Hayman

One of America's favourite "Pops" conductors, Richard Hayman was Principal "Pops" conductor of the Saint Louis, Hartford and Grand Rapids symphony orchestras, of Orchestra London Canada and the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, and also held the post with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for many years. His original compositions are standards in the repertoire of these ensembles as well as frequently performed selections by many orchestras and bands throughout the world. For over thirty years, Richard Hayman served as the chief arranger for the Boston Pops Orchestra during Arthur Fiedler's tenure, providing special arrangements for dozens of their hit albums and famous singles. Under John Williams' direction, the orchestra continues to programme his award-winning arrangements and orchestrations. Though more involved with the symphony orchestra circuit, Richard Hayman served as musical director and/or master of ceremonies for the tour shows of many popular entertainers: Kenny Rogers, Johnny Cash, Olivia Newton-John, Tom Jones, Englebert Humperdinck, The Carpenters, The Osmonds, Al Hirt, Andy Williams and many others.

Richard Hayman and His Orchestra recorded 23 albums and 27 hit singles for Mercury Records, for which he served as musical director for twelve years. Dozens of his original compositions have been recorded by various artists all over the world. He has also arranged and conducted recordings for more than fifty stars of the motion picture, stage, radio and television world, and has also scored Broadway shows and numerous motion pictures. In 1960, Richard Hayman was honoured with his own star in Hollywood's Walk of Fame. Other awards have included a Certificate of Recognition from *Cosmopolitan* Magazine for Achievement in Bettering Popular Music, the Edison Award for Creative Achievement in Recorded Arts from the Academy Of Musical Recorded Arts and Sciences and the National TV Festival and Forum Award.

Zur Erinnerung an Duke Ellington

„Er hielt Schritt mit allen Einflüssen der Zeit, von Blues zum Bebop und den Modernen, und verwandelte ihre Sprache in seine eigene...“

Alistair Cooke

Während des größten Teils seiner illustren Karriere war Duke Ellington einer der bedeutendsten Jazz-Protagonisten. Seine Aufnahmen, die zwischen 1923 und 1973 entstanden, trugen dazu bei, die Evolution einer ganzen Musikgattung zu dokumentieren. In die Geschichte des Jazz als reiner Musik ist er als eine Institution eingegangen – als eine monumentale Persönlichkeit, die man nie vergessen wird. Bereits Anfang der 1930er Jahre hatte sich „Duke“, wie er sich schon früh nannte, als führender Bandleader etabliert und wurde als Arrangeur und Komponist gefeiert. Wahrscheinlich hätte er damals lieber den kreativeren Weg des „ersten“ Jazz (etwa mit Suiten u.ä.) eingeschlagen. Aber der Siegeszug des Swing, der 1935 nach Benny Goodmans Durchbruch einsetzte, bedeutete, dass sich das Ellington-Orchester, ungeachtet seiner großen Ensemblequalitäten, fast über Nacht einer wachsenden Legion von Orchestern anschloss, die Kapital aus der neuen Bigband-Rage zu schlagen versuchten. Eine Kombination von Faktoren, persönlichen wie kommerziellen, zwang Ellington ab 1936 zu einem stärker am Markt orientierten Idiom. Stets bereit, sich anzupassen, spiegelte er die musikalischen Trends der Zeit wider und ahnte neue Richtungen nicht selten sogar voraus. Dieser Fähigkeit verdanken wir viele der auf dieser CD dokumentierten Standards.

Geboren am 29. April 1899 in Washington D.C. als Sohn eines im Weißen Haus angestellten Butlers, wuchs Edward Kennedy Ellington in wohlgeordneten Verhältnissen auf. Er erhielt seinen ersten Klavierunterricht im Alter von sieben Jahren, lernte Harmonie und komponierte bald die ersten Stücke auf seinem Instrument. Als junger Teenager zog es ihn oft ins Howard Theater, wo er die „Tastenaerobik“ eines

Lucky Roberts und anderer Post-Ragtime-Größen bewunderte.

Der Vater hatte seine außergewöhnlichen Zeichentalent erkannt und hoffte – vergeblich –, dass sein Sohn das Klavierspiel nur als Hobby betreiben und einen Beruf als Graphiker ergreifen würde. 1917 verließ Duke die Kunstgewerbeschule und machte sich kurzfristig als Schilderdesigner selbstständig, doch noch im selben Jahr gab er sein Solo-Klavierdebüt und jobte bald mit Louis Thomas' Band in Gesellschaftslokalen. 1918 gründete er das Trio *Duke's Serenaders*, mit dem er in Washingtoner Etablissements für „auserwählte Stammkunden“ gepflegten Jazz spielte. 1922 ging er nach New York, wo er aus nächster Nähe die Fingerfertigkeit eines James P. Johnson und Willie „The Lion“ Smith beobachten konnte.

Ende 1923 gründete Ellington zusammen mit seinem Trio-Kollegen Elmer Snowden (1900-1973) die *Washingtonians* und schrieb die Musik zur Revue *Chocolate Kiddies*. In den späten 1920er Jahren genoss seine ausschließlich aus schwarzen Musikern bestehende Combo den Ruf einer Society-Band par excellence. Man trat in Clubs auf, die ausschließlich von Weißen frequentiert wurden. Durch seine Auftritte in New York (u.a. im Kentucky Club an der 49. Straße und Broadway) sowie durch Rundfunksendungen, die eine größere Hörerschaft erreichten, gelang es ihm, sich das steigende Interesse des Publikums an Tanzmusik zu Nutzen zu machen, ohne sein eigenes Markenzeichen des „Jungle-style“ Hot Jazz aufzugeben. Gegen Ende 1927 begann er sein erstes, fünfjähriges Engagement im Cotton Club. Mit einer Reihe von großartigen Jazz-Kreationen wie *East St. Louis Toodle-oo* (1926), *Black And Tan Fantasy* und *Creole Love Call* (beide 1927), *The Mooche* (1928) und besonders mit dem Bestseller *Mood Indigo* (1930) festigte er seinen Ruf.

Als „Harlems Jazz-Aristokrat“ den Cotton Club verließ, um Anfang 1931 zu einer US-Tournee aufzubrechen, hatte er nicht nur den Tanzmarkt mit Musik versorgt: er war auch eine Spitzenattraktion der

Konzertszene. Mit Honoraren, die sich hinter den besten sinfonischen Gehältern nicht zu verstecken brauchten, spielte das Ellington-Orchester an die 50 000 Dollar pro Woche ein, und während man alle bisherigen Kassenrekorde brach, bot man dem ernsthafteren Hörer Instrumentalaessays an, mit denen Duke dem Jazz endgültig die langverdiente Würde zu verschaffen hoffte.

1930 begann Ellingtons schöpferischste Phase mit Kompositionen wie *Rockin' In Rhythm* (1930), *Creole Rhapsody* (1931) und *It Don't Mean A Thing* (1932). Rückblickend waren sie die Vorboten der Swing-Ära. Ende 1933 kehrte er noch einmal (allerdings nur kurz) in den sicheren Hafen des Cotton Club zurück, nachdem er mit seiner inzwischen auf sechs Blechbläser, vier Holzbläser und eine vierköpfige Rhythmusgruppe angewachsenen Band Amerika von Küste zu Küste bereist und Europa im Sturm genommen hatte. Bereits 1934 verkauften sich zahlreiche Ellington-Titel der „Drei-Minuten-Popkategorie“ fast so gut wie gewisse „Non-Dance“-Nummern, die man akkuraterweise als Stimmungsmusik klassifiziert. Ab 1934 tendierten Dukes Erfolge auf Schellack-Platten deutlicher in Richtung Kommerz – wobei Versionen von *Cocktails For Two* und *Moon Glow* sowie die erste von verschiedenen eingespielten Fassungen seiner eigenen Titel *Sophisticated Lady* (1932, in Zusammenarbeit mit Otto Hardwick) und *Solitude* (1934) Bestseller waren. Einige eher esoterische Jazz-Tongemälde aus Ellingtons Feder führten zu John Hammonds Kritik (im Musikmagazin *Downbeat*), dass seine jüngsten Aufnahmen „kaum etwas von der vertrauten Ellington-Aufrichtigkeit und Originalität besitzen“, während er gleichzeitig die Fans aufforderte, die Läden zu stürmen und „alle zu kaufen“ – trotz allem.

Geld zu verdienen und gleichzeitig der Sache des Jazz und seinem eigenen Nimbus gerecht zu werden, stellte sich schon bald als Problem heraus, das Ellington zum Teil durch publikumswirksameres Auftreten löste, denn er wusste, dass er nicht nur modischen Swing produzierte, sondern dass sein Team auch aus überdurchschnittlich talentierten Virtuosen bestand. Im

März 1937 kehrte er erneut in den Cotton Club zurück (in der Revue *Cotton Club Parade* mit Ethel Waters), im Juli waren Noten- und Plattenverkäufe von *Caravan* Bestseller in Amerika, und im September überzeugte er die Fans mit seinen Aufnahmen von *Diminuendo In Blue* und *Crescendo In Blue*, dass er nichts von seiner innovativen Tonmalerei-Kunst eingebüßt hatte.

Während desselben Jahres erkannte eine größere Hörerschaft, dass Duke *au fait* mit dem Swing war und dass er es mit Tanzorchestern aufnehmen konnte, als er in dem Werbefilm *Hit Parade* auftrat. Um diese Zeit nahm er eine weitere Serie von Plattenbestellern mit eigenen Kompositionen auf. In den folgenden Jahrzehnten von Orchestern und Solovokalistin in aller Welt immer wieder neu aufgenommen, erreichten diese Titel, von denen einige ursprünglich Instrumentalnummern waren, die erst später mit Texten unterlegt wurden, Kultstatus. Den Anfang machte 1938 *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* (eine Nummer, die laut Rex Stewart zumindest teilweise von Johnny Hodges stammt, obwohl offiziell Irving Mills und Henry Nemo als Co-Autoren angegeben wurden).

Ab 1940 (als die US-Popcharts, wie wir sie heute kennen, zum verbindlichen Verkaufsmaßstab wurden) erlangten verschiedene Ellington-Kompositionen internationale Bekanntheit durch Dukes eigene Hitfassungen für die US-Charts, vor allem *I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good* (1941 die Nummer 13 der Charts), *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* (komponiert 1942; 1943 an Nr. 8 geführt), *Take The 'A' Train* (komponiert 1941; 1943 die Nr. 19 der Hitliste), *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me* (1944 an 10. Stelle), *I'm Beginning To See The Light* (1944 mit Harry James co-produziert; 1945 an Nr. 6 geführt) und *Satin Doll* (1953 die Nummer 27), während weniger bekannte Stücke wie *Alciabiades* (aus der Bühnenmusik, die Ellington 1963 für das Shakespeare-Festival in Stratford (Ontario) schrieb, eher seine sinfonischen Jazz-Neigungen unterstreichen.

Heute, mehr als dreißig Jahre nach seinem Tod in New York am 24. Mai 1974, hat Ellingtons Musik nichts von ihrer Popularität eingebüsst. Um noch einmal

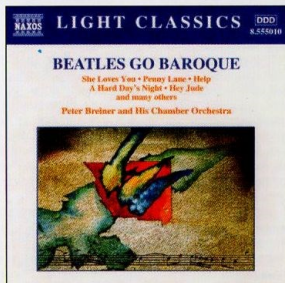
den kürzlich verstorbenen Journalisten Alistair Cooke (der selbst ein glühender Verehrer des großen Musikers war) zu zitieren: „Bands kommen und Bands gehen,

aber Duke bleibt für immer.“

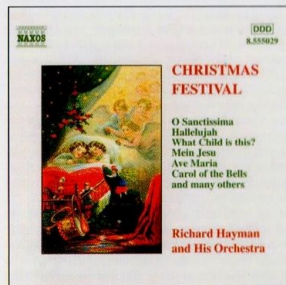
Peter Dempsey

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'He moved with all the influences of the time, from blues to bebop and the moderns, and transmuted them into his own...' (Alistair Cooke). For most of his long and illustrious career Duke Ellington was a major figure in jazz, and an active participant in the evolution of recordings spanning the years 1923 to 1973. By the early 1930s he was already established as a top bandleader, and celebrated both as an arranger and a composer in his own right. Always willing to adapt, Duke mirrored and often anticipated new directions and it is to this that we owe the existence of many of the great standards recorded on this CD in arrangements by Richard Hayman.

RTÉ Remembering Duke Ellington

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|----|--|------|
| 1 | Take The 'A' Train * | 3:45 |
| 2 | Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me * | 2:42 |
| 3 | I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good | 4:00 |
| 4 | Mood Indigo | 3:01 |
| 5 | I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart * | 2:46 |
| 6 | Caravan | 4:31 |
| 7 | Sophisticated Lady | 3:45 |
| 8 | Satin Doll | 2:34 |
| 9 | I'm Beginning To See The Light | 2:49 |
| 10 | Solitude | 3:14 |
| 11 | Sweet Georgia Brown * | 4:00 |
| 12 | Black And Tan Fantasy * | 3:43 |
| 13 | Alcibiades (from Timon of Athens) | 2:53 |
| 14 | The Mooch | 3:34 |
| 15 | It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing | 2:32 |
| 16 | Love Scene | 2:15 |
| 17 | Don't Get Around Much Anymore | 2:58 |

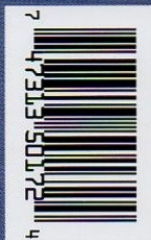
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All tracks by Duke Ellington except: 1) Strayhorn; 2) Ellington / Russell;
 5) Ellington / Mills / Nemo / Redmond; 11) Bernie / Casey / Pinkard; 12) Miley / Ellington
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