

CBS 84405

# DUKE ELLINGTON

and his Orchestra



## SUCH SWEET THUNDER

(Dedicated to  
the Shakespearean Festival,  
Stratford, Ontario)



PHOTO: ROY DE CARAVA

CBS



One of the many surprising things about a suite by Duke Ellington based upon Shakespeare is that the news of this ambitious undertaking has not really surprised anybody. So seasoned are Ellington admirers to his talents, so prepared are they for the unexpected, that the announcements of this suite were greeted with enthusiasm, curiosity, and impatience, but seldom with surprise. It is, of course, idle to speculate upon what might have happened if Ellington and Shakespeare had been contemporaries, but there is no doubt that Duke, who calls himself an "amateur playwright," is a very professional showman. And there is also no doubt that the Bard had rhythm in his soul. The artistic meeting of two great creative men has achieved the results we all hoped for: a new major work by Duke Ellington.

While it is true that Duke visited the Hathaway cottage during his first tour of England in 1933, the spark that ignited Ellington's desire to create a work based upon Shakespeare's characters was his successful appearance at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival in Stratford, Ontario. Thrilled not only by the performances he witnessed there but by the warm welcome extended to him and his band by visitors to the Festival, Duke began to think, then threaten to write a suite. Another major work, his *A Drum Is A Woman*, was then being completed and took precedence over other composition. But once started, the new suite survived one nighters and was rushed to completion in time for the Music for Moderns concert at Town Hall in April 1957. Those who heard *Such Sweet Thunder* introduced will remember its unanimous public and critical acceptance that April Sunday. They will also remember that Duke had not had time to compose the final number in the suite. That number was recorded four days later and is the final selection of this recording.

In Act IV, Scene I, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appear the lines: "I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder." Be it Ellington or Shakespeare who leads you to listen to what Duke describes as his "attempt to parallel the vignettes of some of the Shakespearean characters in miniature—sometimes to the point of caricature," such sweet thunder it most certainly is.



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## SUCH SWEET THUNDER DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

SIDE 1

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MONO



33 T.

A

- 1 - SUCH SWEET THUNDER
- 2 - SONNET FOR CAESAR
- 3 - SONNET TO HANK CING
- 4 - LADY MAC
- 5 - SONNET IN SEARCH OF A MOOR
- 6 - THE TELECASTERS

(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn)

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## SUCH SWEET THUNDER DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

SIDE 2

CBS 84405

MONO



33 T.

B

- 1 - UP AND DOWN, UP AND DOWN  
(I Will Lead Them Up And Down)  
(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn)
- 2 - SONNET FOR SISTER KATE  
(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn)
- 3 - THE STAR-CROSSED LOVERS  
(B. Strayhorn)
- 4 - MADNESS IN GREAT ONES  
(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn)
- 5 - HALF THE FUN (D. Ellington)
- 6 - CIRCLE OF FOURTHS  
(D. Ellington - B. Strayhorn)

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