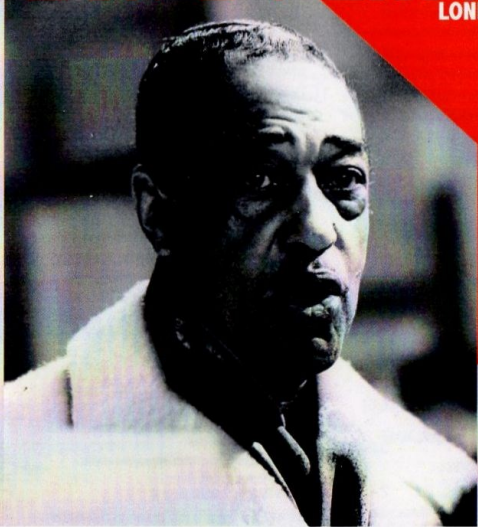


T H E G R E A T C O N C E R T S

DUKE ELLINGTON

LONDON & NEW YORK
1963 - 1964



2 CDs



DUKE ELLINGTON

1963, 1964 – London and New York

NI 2704/5

CD 1 – London

1. Take the "A" Train (instrumental introduction) Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	0:54	10. C Jam Blues Edward K. Ellington (Robbins Music Corp., ASCAP)	3:19
2. Duke Ellington: Introduction	0:23	11. Don't Get Around Much Anymore Edward K. Ellington, Sidney K. Russell (Harrison Music Corp., Robbins Music Corp., ASCAP)	3:12
3. Perdido Ervin M. Drake, Hans Lengsfelder, Juan Tizol (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	4:02	12. Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue Edward K. Ellington (Mills Music, Inc., ASCAP)	11:21
4. Caravan Edward K. Ellington, Irving Mills, Juan Tizol (Mills Music, Inc., ASCAP)	5:20	13. Single Petal of a Rose Edward K. Ellington (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	4:05
5. Isfahan Edward K. Ellington, Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	4:30	14. Kinda Dukish & Rockin' in Rhythm Edward K. Ellington, Irving Mills (Mills Music, Inc., ASCAP)	5:06
6. The Opener C. Williams, Elwyn Fraser (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	3:10	Playing time	66:40
7. Harlem Edward K. Ellington (G. Schirmer, Inc., ASCAP)	15:01	<i>Duke Ellington piano</i> Cat Anderson, Roy Burrowes & Cootie Williams trumpets Ray Nance cornet & violin (tracks 9 – 13) Cat Anderson, Rolf Ericson, Herbie Jones & Cootie Williams trumpets (tracks 1 – 8, 14) Lawrence Brown, Buster Cooper & Chuck Connors trombones Russell Procope, Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton, Paul Gonsalves & Harry Carney reeds Ernie Shepard bass Sam Woodyard drums Milt Grayson vocals (track 11) Ernie Shepard vocals (track 8)	
8. Take the "A" Train (vocal) Billy Strayhorn (Tempo Music, Inc., ASCAP)	3:24	Tracks 1 – 8, 14 recorded February 20, 1964 in London Tracks 9 – 13 recorded January 22, 1963 in London	
9. Mood Indigo Barney Bigard, Edward K. Ellington, Irving Mills (Mills Music, Inc., ASCAP)	2:49		

CD 2 – New York

1. Take the "A" Train Billy Strayhorn (Music Sales / Tempo Music)	3:55	8. Tonk Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn (EMI Robbins Music)	2:08
2. Satin Doll Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Johnny Mercer (Famous Music Corporation Music Sales / Tempo Music)	4:01	9. Things Ain't What They Used To Be Mercer Ellington, Ted Persons (Tempo Music / Music Sales Corporation)	2:29
3. Caravan Juan Tizol, Duke Ellington, Irving Mills (Famous Music Corporation EMI Mills Music)	2:57	10. Melancholia / Reflections in D Duke Ellington (Famous Music Corporation)	4:08
4. Skillipoop Duke Ellington (Famous Music Corporation)	6:04	11. Little African Flower Duke Ellington (Famous Music Corporation)	2:23
5. Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall (Duke's Poetry) Duke Ellington, Doris Fisher / Allan Roberts (Doris Fisher Music Corp. / Allan Roberts Music Co.)	0:33	12. Bird of Paradise Duke Ellington (Famous Music Corporation)	4:00
6. Blues Medley Happy-Go-Lucky Local Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn (Famous Music Corporation Music Sales / Tempo Music) John Sanders' Blues (E & D Blues) Duke Ellington / John Sanders (Famous Music Corporation Music Sales / Tempo Music) C Jam Blues Duke Ellington (EMI Robbins Music)	5:40	13. The Single Petal of a Rose Duke Ellington (Famous Music Corporation)	3:04
7. Carolina Shout (The Lion) James P. Johnson (MCA Inc.)	2:57	Playing time	49:16
		<i>Duke Ellington piano</i> Peck Morrison bass Sam Woodyard drums Willie "The Lion" Smith piano (track 7) Billy Strayhorn piano (tracks 8, 9) Recorded May 20, 1964 at the Wollman Auditorium, Columbia University, New York	
		Total playing time	1 hour 56 mins

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Duke Ellington 1963, 1964 – London and New York

CD 1 - London

"London was the first city we went to on the other side of the Atlantic", Duke Ellington wrote in his autobiographical *Music Is My Mistress*, "and we could not have had a better steppingstone to Europe". London made a big impression on him, just as he and his band did on London. But what with World War II and a protracted squabble between the British and American musicians' unions, it was fated that they should not return for a quarter of a century. After they played the Leeds Festival and Ellington had been presented to Queen Elizabeth II in 1958, younger musicians in the band were astonished to be confronted by fans bearing autographed programs of the concerts given in 1933. "You guys must really have been playing back then," they told their seniors.

On that first visit, the band had played at the Palladium, then probably the most prestigious variety theatre in the world. They were the major attraction, the thirteenth act on a bill that included comedians, singers and all kinds of entertainers. Although they were a huge success, they got to play only eight numbers in each show, and this was not enough to satisfy musicians and enthusiasts already educated in Ellington's music by records and critics in the jazz press. Dissatisfaction was such that two special concerts were organized at the Trocadero, the largest movie house in Europe. Both were sold out to audiences largely consisting of musicians, professional and amateur. For a warm reception and applause beyond applause, veteran Harry Carney once declared there was no comparison until the band went to Buenos Aires in 1968. The concerts were in fact the first genuine jazz concerts performed anywhere in the world, and they set a precedent Ellington was fully aware of when he was able to tour Britain regularly.

The program on this disc actually derives from two performances, one in 1963 and the other a year later. The selection has been made by Mercer Ellington to show how his father expressed appreciation of London audiences with numbers seldom heard and unusual treatments of others more familiar. The debonair humour of the maestro's announcements was always a big factor in gaining approval, but it is also evident that his band was very much on its toes – and ready to blow – on each occasion.

After he has been introduced, Ellington assures the Londoners that he and his men do indeed love them madly. Then he pretends they are so hip that he doesn't need to tell them the name of the opening number, which is **Perdido** in an arrangement they had probably never heard before. Taken at a bright tempo, it makes a good opener with enterprising choruses from Jimmy Hamilton (clarinet) and Rolf Ericson (trumpet) and two from Paul Gonsalves (tenor saxophone), who takes it out in his inimitable, volatile fashion over vigorous band backgrounds.

In complete contrast is Cootie Williams's conception of **Caravan**. The trumpet player had returned to the band in 1962 after an absence of more than twenty years, during which he had played in Benny Goodman's and led his own orchestra. He was fifty-two and the years had taken their toll, but he remained a formidable musician, always conscientious and serious about music as his transformation of a very familiar composition attests. Instead of a caravan totting happily through some exotic, oriental pleasure garden, he seems to visualize it out on a parched desert under a hot sun, desperately seeking an oasis. A sprightly interlude by Ellington and drummer Sam Woodyard may suggest that it was found in time, because in the last chorus Williams swings out triumphantly.

Isfahan, another sharp contrast, is part of **The Far East Suite**, on which Ellington and Billy Strayhorn collaborated after the band's tours of the Orient. Ellington remembered Isfahan "as a place where everything is poetry," so the number was understandably entrusted to his most poetic soloist, alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges. In this, the earliest recorded version, Hodges is all light and grace. In later versions, as though foreseeing Iran's future, he would invest the music with affecting dramatic tension.

As the audience applauds, a microphone picks up on the leader calling for **The Opener**. This was a flag-waver Cootie Williams brought with him on his return, and it is typical of Ellington that he used the arrangement not at the beginning of the program but in the middle! It has exciting choruses by Paul Gonsalves and Buster Cooper (trombone) before Cat Anderson (trumpet) enters for his customary exercises in skywriting.

Harlem was written by Ellington as he returned from Europe on the *lle de France* in 1950. It had been commissioned as a concerto grosso for the band and the NBC Symphony during the reign of Arturo Toscanini, and it gave Ellington the opportunity, as he said, "to make some statements on the subject of Harlem, the music and the people." The result was unique in his oeuvre, a continuous composition, here fifteen minutes long. In his spoken explanation, he gives a cheerful account of what it is about. (There is a much longer and more detailed one in *Music Is My Mistress*.) Following Cootie Williams's opening pronouncement, the solo voices chiefly but briefly heard in this musical montage are those of Jimmy Hamilton, Harry Carney (baritone saxophone and bass clarinet), Russell Procope (clarinet), Lawrence Brown (trombone), Cat Anderson and Sam Woodyard, the last having a significant place in the coda.

Next, Ellington introduces on stage in typically generous terms his "writing and arranging companion," Billy Strayhorn, before playing the letter's **Take the "A" Train** which had long before been adopted, with similar generosity, as the band's theme. This "special operatic version" features bassist Ernie Shepard as vocalist. Although his conception owes not a little to earlier vocals by Betty Roche and Ray Nance, it has its own humour and swings effectively. "Our bass," Ellington notes dryly, "is a baritone."

Another unusual treatment follows when **Mood Indigo** virtually becomes a showcase for the nonpareil Johnny Hodges. The great saxophonist is very much at ease here, having undoubtedly heard the famous number on more than a thousand-and-one nights. He creates delightful variations within the traditional framework, and Ernie Shepard's bass – not his baritone – is heard to advantage.

The piano player then leads straight into the well-named **C Jam Blues**, which always serves to review the band's soloistic talents, in this case those of Ray Nance (violin), Cootie Williams, Harry Carney, Buster Cooper and Jimmy Hamilton. It is interesting to note how Ellington incorporated Cooper's extremely personal trombone style in appropriate contexts, just as earlier he had found the way to use Hamilton's adroit and more legitimate-sounding clarinet in ornamentation of the ensemble in the New Orleans manner, so that the clarinetist and band swung together joyously.

Don't Get Around Much Anymore, whose origin Ellington carefully explains, brings the deep voice of singer Milt Grayson to the fore, proving that the group's resources enabled it to provide music for all occasions and tastes.

Diminuendo and Crescendo, with Paul Gonsalves in the central "wailing interval," is an eleven-minute reprise of the

great triumph at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival, where Ellington liked to claim he was "born"! Gonsalves's epic ride is here considerably longer than that at Newport. Try counting out his twelve-bar choruses for yourself. The appeal of his feat was partly visual, like that of drum solos, for audiences enjoyed the spectacle of the impassioned, driven saxophonist pouring out his soul before them. Gonsalves did this well and conscientiously night after night with enormous success, using parts of the original marathon solo and improvising others according to his mood. If he faltered momentarily, he would invariably regain the rhythmic momentum that would carry him through the storming crescendo into a daring, heroic coda.

The program's intriguing contrasts continue with Ellington's solo performance of **A Single Petal of a Rose**, the beautiful, romantic ballad which, as he reminds the audience, he wrote after his presentation to Queen Elizabeth II in 1958. Nowadays, it is fashionable to emphasize the importance of Ellington as a composer. It is justified, of course, but (especially in academic circles) whatever can be pinned down on paper tends to have an exaggerated value, and in comparison Ellington as a performer is underestimated. He made no claims to virtuosity, but in terms of tones and colours, he drew an unique kind of expression from the piano.

The emotion and awe of *A Single Petal of a Rose* are immediately contrasted with the hard-driving rhythm of his role in **Kinda Dukish**, the preface to an old favourite, **Rockin' in Rhythm**. He was sometimes highly critical of the other members of the rhythm section, but not of this one, not of this "first-chair" rhythm section that Ernie Shepard and Sam Woodyard completed. Individually and together, the three musicians swing convincingly, building to such a point that the entry of the horns seems for a moment anti-climactic. Then everyone is gripped by excitement, and the performance roars to its conclusion with Cat Anderson soaring high overhead. Curiously enough, the same number, at a somewhat slower tempo and with dancer Bessie Dudley out front, had been a sensation at the Palladium nearly thirty years before.

Ellington must have found the audience response gratifying, but the respect and appreciation were mutual. "To me," he wrote in his book, "the people of London are the most civilized in the world. Their civilization is based on the recognition that all people are imperfect, and due allowances should be made for their imperfections. I have never experienced quite such a sense of balance elsewhere. What is cricket and what is not is very well understood by everybody".

CD 2 – New York

A Piano Recital At The Wollman Auditorium, Columbia University, New York, May 20, 1964

By 1964, when this recital was given, Duke Ellington had been a famous name in jazz for nearly four decades. He was probably best known as a charismatic bandleader and, in popular terms, as a songwriter. (The high title of "composer" was not yet so readily on the public's lips.) Some knew him, too, as an arranger, the greatest jazz had produced. Fewer, even more discerning, recognized him as a superior jazz pianist. Although it is seldom mentioned, it is a fact that during the so-called Big Band Era a high proportion of the better jazz bands were led by pianists. One may recall the brothers Fletcher and Horace Henderson, Earl Hines, Claude Hopkins, Bennie Moten, Count Basie, Luis Russell, Alphonso Trent, Jay McShann, Charlie and Buddy Johnson, and later Stan Kenton and Claude Thornhill. Even Fats Waller toured at the head of a big band periodically. And from the time

he opened at the Cotton Club in 1927 until his death in 1974, Duke Ellington led a big band from the piano almost continuously – longer than anyone else in his field.

He took solos in the course of his band's performances and occasionally made solo records during the 78 rpm age, but Ellington was not so prominent in terms of pianistic virtuosity as Fats Waller and Earl Hines, the two major influences on jazz piano in the 1930s. He, like all the other piano-playing leaders, saw nothing demeaning in their professional classification as "band" pianists, for theirs was a special role that required special skills – and much first-hand experience.

Ellington had arrived in New York at a time when the "stride" style of piano was paramount, and he played it well enough to be accepted by the giants of the Harlem school, such as James P. Johnson, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Fats Waller. **Carolina Shout** and other Johnson compositions were among the numbers he had first learned to play in Washington by the time-honoured method of slowing down the mechanism of a player-piano and following the slowly descending keys the piano rolls dictated.

The stride style and its exponents won Ellington's lifelong affection and admiration, but in his later years he responded to requests for performances in the idiom with mock diffidence and explanations about the necessity to "warm up" his left hand. A reluctance to give what might be termed a formal piano recital was also maintained modestly for years, but Capitol's release of an album of piano solos effectively blew his cover in 1953. It contained a handful of his past hits and a half-dozen new compositions, previously unrecorded, all in arresting performances that revealed him as a soloist of mature talent in virtually a new light. "What made him different," Earl Hines subsequently declared, "was that he was not just a stylist and an arranger, but a composer, too." The jazz stylist, improvising on someone else's composition or chord sequence, inevitably tended to transform it in his own image. The band pianist, on the other hand, had to furnish foundation, reminders and suggestions for the band as an ensemble and for its individualists as soloists. In an almost unique fashion, Ellington may be seen as combining and fulfilling three roles at the same time here. The recital given at the Wollman Auditorium in Columbia University on May 20, 1964, was largely instigated by the New York Chapter of the Duke Ellington Jazz Society, many of whose members were audibly present both to encourage their champion and to enjoy his banter and music.

Accompanied by bassist Peck Morrison and drummer Sam Woodyard, Ellington dutifully opens the program with his band's theme, Billy Strayhorn's **Take the "A" Train**, and follows predictably with two of its successes, **Satin Doll** and **Caravan**. Having as it were tested the waters, Ellington then explains the significance of the next title, **Skillipoop**. "One of its meanings," he says, "is trying to make what you're doing look better than what you're supposed to be doing." After a sprightly piano chorus, the main responsibility is then handed over to Sam Woodyard, whose long solo sequence is presumably offered as an example of successful skillipooing. Like all drum solos, much of its appeal may have been visual, but it is not overly exhibitionistic and, as always, Woodyard swings. The number, incidentally, had been known first as **Jungle Triangle** in Ellington's musical show, **My People**, but was retitled for incorporation in his **Timon of Athens** score.

At this point Ellington is clearly not taking the recital too seriously. He proceeds to recite a recent example of the humorous rhyming in which he took such pleasure, although he infers that Billy Strayhorn had fallen asleep when subjected to it, as follows:

Into each life some jazz must fall,
With after-beat gone kickin',
With jive alive, a ball for all,
Let not the beat be chicken!

Next, he plays an unusual blues medley of **Happy-Go-Lucky Local**, **John Sanders Blues** and **C Jam Blues**, to which the audience responds enthusiastically, possibly in recognition of the fact that so many of the greatest jazz hits have been blues. And then – surprise – he introduces his dear and much-esteemed friend, Willie "The Lion" Smith, to play **Carolina Shout** in honour of their mutual friend, James P. Johnson. It is a nice touch, thus linking past and present in a tribute to the stride tradition, and The Lion delivers with his customary grace and authority. Now he calls Billy Strayhorn forth from backstage. "I can't do this by myself," he cries. Of course not. "This" is **Tonk**, their uproarious party piece, a duet! Unlike most duets by jazz pianists, whose rumble-jumble pleases audiences the way a flashy drum solo does, this one has momentum and a satisfying beat.

Strayhorn's services are retained for Mercer Ellington's **Things Ain't What They Used to Be**, a blues employed here as background for "the finger-snapping bit" that Ellington subsequently enacted for years to an original entitled Jones. The hip instructions on how to "establish a state of abandon," however, were to remain the same.

Hereabouts in our selection of excerpts from the recital, an intermission appears to have been reached, after which we come to the serious business and Ellington plays all alone, without the support of Morrison and Woodyard. **Melancholia** and **Reflections in D** were premiered in the aforementioned Capitol album; **Little African Flower** may well have been written in anticipation of his first visit to Africa in 1966; **Bird of Paradise** was a nostalgic glance at the distant past; and **The Single Petal of a Rose**, inspired by his presentation to Queen Elizabeth II in 1958, was a key part of **The Queen's Suite**, which he dedicated to her. In all of these, a soloist unique to jazz is heard. The strong, firm touch which sounded imperiously through so many raging orchestral ensembles, and which stimulated or even reproved his soloists, is still here. So is the love of colour, particularly in the sonorous bass notes that remember Harry Carney's indispensable baritone saxophone. Rhythmically, the music is positive and assured, not least on the slow, melodic masterpieces, **Reflections in D** and **The Single Petal of a Rose**. The dynamics are sometimes dramatic, but piquant rather than theatrical. The reflective or reminiscent element in these solos is moving, and in many respects it is singularly revealing of the piano player's inner man.

Stanley Dance

The Magnetic Recording Laboratory has prepared a master tape from the acetate tapes in the Library of Congress' Valburn collection. The source acetate tapes are on 7" and 10" reels recorded at 7.5 ips. The sound quality is generally good with some tape hiss. The transfer process involved compiling these tapes with minimum equalization in an attempt to avoid altering any musical content. This technical diligence necessitated retaining some of the tape surface hiss since our goal was to enhance what was originally recorded without sacrificing any of the higher frequencies of the music.

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DUKE ELLINGTON - THE GREAT CONCERTS
LONDON & NEW YORK 1963 - 1964

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THE GREAT CONCERTS

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CD 1 - London

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Take the "A" Train | 0:54 |
| 2. Duke Ellington: Introduction | 0:23 |
| 3. Perdido | 4:02 |
| 4. Caravan | 5:20 |
| 5. Isfahan | 4:30 |
| 6. The Opener | 3:10 |
| 7. Harlem | 15:01 |
| 8. Take the "A" Train | 3:24 |
| 9. Mood Indigo | 2:49 |
| 10. C Jam Blues | 3:19 |
| 11. Don't Get Around Much Anymore | 3:12 |
| 12. Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue | 11:21 |
| 13. Single Petal of a Rose | 4:05 |
| 14. Kinda Dukish & Rockin' in Rhythm | 5:06 |

Total playing time 66:40

The Duke Ellington Orchestra

Tracks 1 - 8, 14 recorded Feb 20, 1964 in London

Tracks 9 - 13 recorded Jan 22, 1963 in London

Total Playing Time 1 hour 56 mins

CD 2 - New York

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. Take the "A" Train | 3:55 |
| 2. Satin Doll | 4:01 |
| 3. Caravan | 2:57 |
| 4. Skillipoop | 6:04 |
| 5. Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall | 0:33 |
| 6. Blues Medley - Happy-Go-Lucky Local,
John Sanders' Blues, C Jam Blues | 5:40 |
| 7. Carolina Shout | 2:57 |
| 8. Tonk | 2:08 |
| 9. Things Ain't What They Used To Be | 2:29 |
| 10. Melancholia / Reflections in D | 4:08 |
| 11. Little African Flower | 2:23 |
| 12. Bird of Paradise | 4:00 |
| 13. The Single Petal of a Rose | 3:04 |

Total playing time 49:16

Duke Ellington *piano*Peck Morrison *bass* Sam Woodyard *drums*Willie "The Lion" Smith *piano (track 7)*Billy Strayhorn *piano (tracks 8, 9)*Recorded May 20, 1964 at the Wollman Auditorium,
Columbia University, New YorkCOMPACT
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