

Chapter 1 : The Ellington Collection for Solo Guitar: Guitar Book & CD: Duke Ellington

The music of Duke Ellington / arr. Jerry Silverman. This series is built around beautiful and playable solo guitar arrangements of the greatest songs of all time. Each arrangement includes melody, lyrics, and chord frames on one line, and a complete, easy-to-play solo guitar arrangement in standard notation and tablature on a second line.

He moved to Washington, D. Ellington was born to J. Cuthbert, a prominent white physician, and he also worked occasionally as a White House caterer. Marietta Clinkscales who lived at Street NW. Daisy surrounded her son with dignified women who reinforced his manners and taught him to live elegantly. From his father, he absorbed self-confidence. It was the nickname that would forever be associated with the jazz legend. Though Ellington had been taking piano lessons from the age of seven, he failed to show much interest in them. At that time he was more concerned with baseball. He got his nickname "Duke" from childhood chum Edgar McEntree, a sharp dresser himself. In his autobiography *Music is my Mistress* Ellington comments he missed more lessons than he attended, feeling at the time that playing the piano was not his talent. Over time, this would change. Ellington began listening, watching, and imitating ragtime pianists, not only in Washington, but also in Philadelphia and Atlantic City, where he vacationed with his mother during the summer months. At the end of a summer he got together with Harvey Brooks, a hot pianist of the time. Harvey showed Ellington the tricks of the piano trade which spurred his interest in the piano. With the additional guidance of Oliver "Doc" Perry a popular Washington bandleader and Louis Brown, Ellington learned to read sheet music, project a professional style, and improve his technique. Ellington was also inspired by his first encounters with James P. Johnson and Luckey Roberts, early jazz piano giants. In , Johnson performed in Washington, and egged on by his friends, Ellington got up on the bandstand to "cut" the master, playing the difficult *Carolina Shout* which he had been practicing for a year. Ellington started to play gigs in cafes and clubs in and around Washington and began to realize his deep love for music. His attachment grew to be so strong that he turned down an art scholarship to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in and dropped out of Armstrong Manual Training School where he was studying commercial art just three months shy of graduation. In his decision to leave the academic world behind, he took the first steps in what would be an amazing life of professional musicianship that would forever change the world of jazz. From through , Ellington launched his musical career, painting commercial signs by day and playing jazz by night. He also had a messenger job with the Navy and State Departments. Otto Hardwick, who switched from bass to saxophone; Arthur Whetsel at the trumpet; Elmer Snowden at the banjo; and Sonny Greer at the drums. The boys thrived, performing for both black and white audiences, a rarity during the racially divided times. This will to succeed would eventually take his career to unforeseen heights and set him apart from all previous jazz composers. With his career taking off he felt secure enough to marry his high school sweetheart, Edna Thompson, on July 2 when he was . Shortly after their marriage, on March 11 Edna gave birth to their only son, Mercer Kennedy Ellington. Early career Edit When their drummer Sonny Greer was invited to join the Wilber Sweatman Orchestra in New York, Ellington made the fateful decision to leave behind his successful career in Washington and aspire to the challenge of Harlem. After the young musicians left the Sweatman Orchestra to strike out on their own, they found an emerging jazz scene that was highly competitive and hard to crack. They hustled pool by day and played whatever gig they could find. The young band met Willie "The Lion" Smith who showed them the scene and even gave them spare cash. They played at rent-house parties to get by. After a few months, the young musicians returned to Washington feeling discouraged. But in June of , a gig in Atlantic City, New Jersey led to a play date at the prestigious Exclusive Club in Harlem, followed by a move to the Hollywood Club and a four-year engagement which gave Ellington a solid artistic base. They renamed themselves "The Washingtonians". When Snowden left the group in early , Ellington took over as bandleader. In , Ellington made seven records, receiving composing credit on three including *Choo Choo*. For a short time, the great tenor saxophonist Sidney Bechet played with the group, imparting his propulsive swing and superior musicianship on the young band members. This helped attract to the Washingtonians the attention of some of the biggest names of jazz including Paul Whiteman and Tommy Dorsey. During these ten

years, Ellington added three new members to his orchestra and composed some of his most well-known short works, including "Concerto for Cootie", "Ko-Ko", "Cotton Tail", "In a Sentimental Mood", and "Jump for Joy", his first full-length musical stage revue. An alcoholic, Miley had to leave the band before they gained wider notoriety, and died in at the age of twenty-eight. He was an important influence on Cootie Williams, another member of the orchestra basically his replacement in the early years and later. Mills arranged recording sessions on the Brunswick, Victor, and Columbia labels which gave Ellington popular recognition. At the Cotton Club, they were no longer strictly a dance band. Weekly radio broadcasts from the club gave Ellington national exposure. Noted composer Percy Grainger was also an early admirer and supporter. Radio exposure also helped maintain his popularity. Ivie Anderson was hired as their vocalist Sonny Greer had been providing occasional vocals. Normally, Ellington led the orchestra by conducting from the keyboard using piano cues and visual gestures; very rarely did he conduct using a baton. As a bandleader, Ellington was not a strict disciplinarian but he maintained control of his orchestra for decades to come with a crafty combination of charm, humor, flattery, and astute psychology. A complex, private person he revealed his feelings to only his closest intimates and effectively used his public persona to deflect attention away from himself. While their United States audience remained mainly African-American in this period, the Cotton Club had a near exclusive white clientele and the band had a huge following overseas, demonstrated both in a trip to England in and a visit to the European mainland. The English visit saw Ellington win praise from members of the "serious" music community, including composer Constant Lambert, which gave a boost to his aspirations to compose longer "serious" pieces. And for agent Mills, it was a publicity triumph, as Ellington was now "internationally famous". On their tour through the segregated South in , they avoided some of the traveling difficulties of Black musicians by touring in private railcars, which provided easy accommodations, dining, and storage for equipment, while avoiding the indignities of segregated facilities. Swing dancing became a youth phenomenon, particularly with White college audiences, and "dancability" drove record sales and bookings. Jukeboxes proliferated nationwide spreading the gospel of "swing". Ellington countered with two innovations. In , Ellington returned to the Cotton Club which had relocated to the mid-town theater district. After splitting with agent Irving Mills, he signed on with William Morris. Ellington in the s File: Duke Ellington at the Hurricane Club Some of the musicians created a sensation in their own right. The short-lived Jimmy Blanton transformed the use of double bass in jazz, allowing it to function as a solo rather than a rhythm instrument alone. Ray Nance joined in, replacing Cootie Williams who had "defected", contemporary wags claimed, to Benny Goodman. Nance, however, added violin to the instrumental colors Ellington had at his disposal. This recording is one of the first of innumerable live performances which survive, made by enthusiasts or broadcasters, significantly expanding the Ducal discography as a result. In this, he was helped by Strayhorn, who had enjoyed a more thorough training in the forms associated with classical music than Ellington. The first of these, "Black, Brown, and Beige", was dedicated to telling the story of African-Americans, the place of slavery, and the church in their history. Bebop rebelled against commercial jazz, dance jazz, and strict forms to become the music of jazz aficionados. In the face of these major social shifts, Ellington continued on his own course, but major defections soon roiled his Orchestra and he started to retire earlier works composed for now departed members. For a time though Ellington continued to turn out major works, such as the Kay Davis vocal feature Transblucency and major extended compositions such as Harlem, whose score he presented to music-loving President Harry Truman. In , Ellington suffered a major loss of personnel, with Sonny Greer, Lawrence Brown, and most significantly, Johnny Hodges leaving to pursue other ventures. Lacking overseas opportunities and motion picture appearances, Ellington Orchestra survived on "one-nighters" and whatever else came their way, even six weeks in the summer of as the band for the Aquacade in Flushing, New York. However by , after several years of recording for Capitol, Ellington no longer had a regular recording affiliation. Other festivals at Monterey and elsewhere provided new venues for live exposure, and a European tour in was wildly received. After a year gap, Ellington and Strayhorn again wrote film scores, this time for Anatomy of a Murder and Paris Blues. In the early s, Ellington was between recording contracts, which allowed him to record with a variety of artists mostly not previously associated with him. Musicians who had previously worked with Ellington returned to the Orchestra as members:

Lawrence Brown in and Cootie Williams two years later. His earlier hits were now established standards, earning Ellington impressive royalties. Richard Nixon and Duke Ellington This concert was followed by two others of the same type in and , called the Second and Third Sacred Concerts, respectively. This caused enormous controversy in what was already a tumultuous time in the United States. Increasingly, this period of music is being reassessed as people realize how creative Ellington was right up to the end of his life. Ellington was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in He was later awarded several other prizes, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in , and the Legion of Honor by France in , the highest civilian honors in each country. He died of lung cancer and pneumonia on May 24, , a month after his 75th birthday, and was interred in the Woodlawn Cemetery , The Bronx , New York City. At his funeral attended by over 12, people at the Cathedral of St. A genius has passed. He and his Orchestra continued to appear in films throughout the s and s , both in short films and in features such as Murder at the Vanities In the late s , his work in films took the shape of scoring for soundtracks , notably Anatomy of a Murder , with James Stewart , in which he also appeared fronting a roadhouse combo, and Paris Blues , which featured Paul Newman and Sidney Poitier as jazz musicians. Sophisticated Ladies , an award-winning musical revue, incorporated many of the tunes he made famous. Then, in Lyndon B. Johnson presented Ellington with the Presidents Gold Medal. Just three years later he was recognized by Richard M. Nixon with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

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The Single Petal Of A Rose, Duke Ellington For Solo Guitar, Volume 2 will be released in Spring, , so that at the end of this project there are 34 transcriptions recorded and published that will span the entire length of Duke Ellington's career, as well as a second book of Ellington transcriptions and a book of jazz solos based on his New.

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