

*Presents*

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

**BLUEBIRD OF DELHI**

FROM 'IMPRESSIONS OF THE FAR EAST SUITE'

ARRANGED BY BILLY STRAYHORN

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY PETER JENSEN, DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

**FULL SCORE**

JLP-7402

BY BILLY STRAYHORN

COPYRIGHT © 1964 (RENEWED) BY TEMPO MUSIC, INC., MUSIC SALES CORPORATION AND FAMOUS MUSIC CORPORATION  
ALL RIGHTS FOR TEMPO MUSIC, INC. ADMINISTERED BY MUSIC SALES CORPORATION (ASCAP) INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT SECURED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. USED BY PERMISSION.  
LOGOS, GRAPHICS, AND LAYOUT COPYRIGHT © 2015 THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

PUBLISHED BY THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC., A NOT-FOR-PROFIT JAZZ RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING AMERICA'S MUSICAL HERITAGE.



THE JAZZ LINES FOUNDATION INC.

PO Box 1236

SARATOGA SPRINGS NY 12866 USA

## **DUKE ELLINGTON/BILLY STRAYHORN SERIES**

### **BLUEBIRD OF DELHI (FROM IMPRESSIONS OF THE FAR EAST SUITE) (1964)**

#### **Biographies:**

Duke Ellington influenced millions of people both around the world and at home. In his fifty-year career, he played over 20,000 performances in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East as well as Asia. Simply put, Ellington transcends boundaries and fills the world with a treasure trove of music that renews itself through every generation of fans and music-lovers. His legacy continues to live onward and will endure for generations to come. Wynton Marsalis said it best when he said, "His music sounds like America." Because of the unmatched artistic heights to which he soared, no one deserves the phrase "beyond category" more than Ellington, for it aptly describes his life as well. When asked what inspired him to write, Ellington replied, "My men and my race are the inspiration of my work. I try to catch the character and mood and feeling of my people."

Duke Ellington is best remembered for the over 3,000 songs that he composed during his lifetime. His best-known titles include: *It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *Mood Indigo*, *Solitude*, *In a Mellow Tone*, *I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart*, and *In a Sentimental Mood*. The most amazing part about Ellington was that he had some of his most creative periods while he was on the road. *Mood Indigo* was supposedly written while on a road trip.

Duke Ellington's popular compositions set the bar for generations of brilliant jazz, pop, theatre, and soundtrack composers to come. Though he is a household name for his songs, Ellington was also an unparalleled visionary for his extended suites, composed with Billy Strayhorn. From *Black, Brown and Beige* (1943) to *The Far East Suite* (1966) to *The Uwis Suite* (1972), the suite format was used to give his jazz songs a more empowering meaning, resonance, and purpose: To exalt, mythologize, and re-contextualize the African-American experience on a grand scale.

Duke Ellington was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1966. He was later awarded several other prizes: The Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969 and the Legion of Honor by France in 1973, the highest civilian honors in each country. He died of lung cancer and pneumonia on May 24, 1974, a month after his 75th birthday, and is buried in the Bronx, in New York City. His funeral was attended by over 12,000 people at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Ella Fitzgerald summed up the occasion: "It's a very sad day. A genius has passed."

William Thomas Strayhorn is hardly unknown, but his presence in the world of Ellingtonia has always been shrouded in a bit of mystery. It is only within the last ten years that mystery has been solved. The history of the family of William Thomas Strayhorn goes back over a hundred years in Hillsborough, NC. One set of great grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Craig, lived behind the present Farmer's Exchange. A great grandmother was the cook for Robert E. Lee. Billy, however, was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1915. His mother, Lillian Young Strayhorn, brought her children to Hillsborough often. Billy was attracted to the piano that his grandmother, Elizabeth Craig Strayhorn, owned. He played it from the moment he was tall enough to reach the keys. Even in those early years, when he played, his family would gather to listen and sing.

Originally aspiring to become a composer of concert music, he was heavily involved in jazz and popular music by the time he was a teenager, writing a musical while in high school and playing gigs locally with a trio. His father enrolled him in the Pittsburgh Musical Institution where he studied classical music. He had more classical training than most jazz musicians of his time. In 1938, he met and played for Duke Ellington, who was sufficiently impressed and invited Strayhorn to join him in New York. Neither one was sure what Strayhorn's function in the band would be, but their musical talents had attracted each other. By the end of the year Strayhorn had become essential to the Duke Ellington Band; arranging, composing, sitting-in at the piano. Billy made a rapid and almost complete assimilation of Ellington's style and technique. It was difficult to discern where one's style ended and the other's began. Strayhorn lived in Duke's apartment in Harlem while the Ellington Orchestra toured Europe. Reportedly, Strayhorn studied some of Duke's scores and "cracked the code" in Ellington's words. He became Duke's musical partner, writing original music and arrangements of current pop tunes. In the early fifties, Strayhorn left the Ellington fold briefly, arranging for Lena Horne and other singers, and writing musical reviews. By 1956, however, he was back almost full-time with the Ellington organization until his death from cancer in 1967.

Some of Strayhorn's compositions are: *Chelsea Bridge*, *Day Dream*, *Johnny Come Lately*, *Rain-check*, and *My Little Brown Book*. The pieces most frequently played are Ellington's theme song, *Take the A Train* and Ellington's signatory, *Satin Doll*. Some of the suites on which he collaborated with Ellington are: *Deep South Suite*, 1947; the *Shakespearean Suite* or *Such Sweet Thunder*, 1957; an arrangement of the *Nutcracker Suite*, 1960; and the *Peer Gynt Suite*, 1962. He and Ellington composed the *Queen's Suite* and gave the only pressing to Queen Elizabeth II of England. Two of their suites, *Jump for Joy*, 1950 and *My People*, 1963 had as their themes the struggles and triumphs of blacks in the United States. Both included a narrative and choreography. In 1946, Strayhorn received the Esquire Silver Award for outstanding arranger.

In 1965, the Duke Ellington Jazz Society asked him to present a concert at New York's New School of Social Research. It consisted entirely of his own work performed by him and his quintet. Two years later Billy Strayhorn died of cancer on May 31, 1967. Duke Ellington's response to his death was to record what the critics cite as one of his greatest works, a collection titled *And His Mother Called Him Bill*, consisting entirely of Billy's compositions. Later, a scholarship fund was established for him by Ellington and the Julliard School of Music.

Strayhorn's legacy was thought to be well-known for many years as composer of many classic pieces first played by Ellington. It was only after the Ellington music collection was donated to the Smithsonian Institute that Strayhorn's legacy was fully realized. As documented by musicologist Walter van de Leur in his book on the composer, several compositions copyrighted in Ellington's name were actually Strayhorn's work, including entire suites, and particularly *Satin Doll*. Ironically, perhaps his most well-known song, *Lush Life* was written during his years as a student in Pittsburgh. The Ellington band never officially recorded it.

In recent years his legacy has become even more fully appreciated following research and biographies by David Hajdu and Walter Van De Leur, which led to properly crediting Strayhorn for songs previously credited to Duke or uncredited. Billy Strayhorn wrote beautiful, thoughtful, classic, and timeless music, and was brilliant as both a composer and an arranger. While enhancing Ellington's style of striving to showcase the strengths of his band members, Strayhorn's classical background elevated the group and its sound even further and helped the name Duke Ellington become eternally synonymous with class, elegance, and some of the greatest American music ever known.

### **Background of The Far East Suite:**

*The Far East Suite* is one of the more interesting and unique creations in the Ellington/Strayhorn oeuvre. It's a reflective, evocative, virtuosic, impressionistic aural tour through the East (mostly the Middle and Near East as many have pointed out over the years) as seen through the eyes and ears of two men who were musical visionaries and who had musicians behind them who were capable of vividly enunciating their visions.

The Ellington Band went on a State Department-sponsored tour in 1963 which took them to Syria, Jordan, India, Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), Pakistan, Iran (then Persia), Lebanon, and Turkey. These travels-along with a 1964 tour of Japan-served as the primary inspiration for a musical suite. This concept piece had a long and complex development. The first iteration, then known as *Impressions of the Far East*, was initially performed in early 1964 in England and consisted of four movements: Ellington's *Amad* and *Depk*, and *Agra* and *Bluebird of Delhi* by Strayhorn.

By the time *The Far East Suite* was recorded in December of 1966 it had grown to its final length of nine pieces. These pieces had various origins and sources of inspiration; some were even previously written at least in part. The overall cohesiveness and maturity of the suite can partly be attributed to its long gestation period, as pieces were refined and re-worked over a lengthy period of time. They came together to form what is generally considered to be one of Ellington and Strayhorn's masterpieces; it can also rightfully be seen as the swan song of their historic collaboration, as Strayhorn was very ill when it was recorded and passed away just over five months later.

When completed, *The Far East Suite* was meant to convey the excitement and awe felt by the band when travelling to lands that were truly foreign-exotic and totally different from what most of them had experienced before. It's all there in the music-themes, motifs, form, harmonic progressions, and ideas that convey exhilaration joy, sadness, and various musical incantations of the mystery of life in the East.

The opening tune, Ellington's *Tourist Point of View*, conveys the sense of wonder at arriving in the East after landing in Syria. Mainly a vehicle for tenor sax star Paul Gonsalves, the piece creates a wide-ranging and diverse introduction to the suite with a sense of excitement at the sounds, sights, and exotic differences they were experiencing.

Strayhorn's *Bluebird of Delhi* (originally titled *Mynah*) is a tribute to a mynah bird that often visited his room while the band was in India. Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet evokes the sound and spirit of the bird, with Hamilton mimicking the "pretty lick" (in Ellington's words) that the bird used to sing. According to Duke, the bird never answered Billy's banter until they were leaving, and "then it sounded off the low raspberry you hear at the end of the number."<sup>1</sup>

*Isfahan* was based on an earlier Strayhorn work called *Elf*, which was first performed in 1963. Named after Persia/Iran's former capital, it was inspired by what Ellington called "a city of poetic beauty."<sup>2</sup> *Isfahan* became the best-known piece on the record, in no small part due to Johnny Hodges's stunningly beautiful work on this cut; few players were more suited to mirror poetic beauty with their playing than Hodges. *Isfahan* also became the only popular standard from the suite, largely due to its more familiar form.

Ellington's *Depk* was inspired by a children's dance in Amman, Jordan, adding playfulness and a child's sense of hope and optimism to the suite. *Depk*, Ellington recalled, "involved a dozen boys and girls and was marked by a little kick on the sixth beat."<sup>3</sup> This "kick" is musically represented by the occasional use of tags and extended phrases throughout the piece.

Next comes Ellington's *Mount Harissa*, originally known as *Nob Hill*, which takes its name from a famous hilltop in Lebanon. This movement showcases his sometimes underrated piano playing. Once again is Paul Gonsalves on tenor, showcasing a more sprightly, upbeat approach than his earlier spots on *Tourist Point of View*. It's a particularly evocative piece, which continues to develop the themes of the suite while spotlighting the interplay between Ellington and one of his most trusted lieutenants.

Duke's *Blue Pepper*, originally known as *3D*, stands out somewhat with its shift to a rock-and-roll-style backbeat. It's almost an interlude on the record; a sort of upbeat palate cleanser for the ears. Highlights include Hodges's stellar alto sax and Cat Anderson's high note acrobatics over the melody recap.

Strayhorn's *Agra* is named for the Indian city which is home to the world-famous Taj Mahal. Indian motifs are clearly evident in this piece. It was written to feature Harry Carney's baritone sax, which brings to mind the majesty, beauty, and deep emotions extant in the legendary Indian landmark and its backstory.

Ellington's *Amad* works to convey the overall mystery of the region. Famed critic Stanley Dance drew attention to Lawrence Brown's trombone performance in particular, which is no doubt meant to evoke an Islamic "call to prayer."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, *Ad Lib on Nippon* was composed by Ellington and tenor sax/clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton after the aforementioned 1964 visit to Japan. This movement consists of four sections: *Fugi*, *Igoo*, *Nagoya*, and *Tokyo*. *Fugi* and *Nagoya*, largely piano pieces, showcase Ellington. *Igoo* was composed originally for an American Airlines short advertising film entitled *Astrofreight*. Hamilton's playing and his oral history comments on the *Tokyo* section strongly suggest that this was his composition. *Ad Lib* has a distinct Eastern feel, perhaps due to the legacy of Ellington's many visits to Japan; his piano solo is especially moving.

*The Far East Suite* is a landmark work. Aside from its beauty, creativity, originality, and cohesiveness-despite the diverse nature of the pieces-it stands out in many ways. As critics have noted, the "Eastern" feel is achieved with standard big band instrumentation familiar to the Ellington canon-they did not introduce Eastern instruments to more easily evoke the sounds of the region as many others in various genres of music have done. Instead, uses of themes, motifs, form, and vamps familiar to various Asian music traditions were subtly incorporated to create the unique sound palette. The individual musicians were used in the same way: Hamilton's clarinet represents the mynah bird, Hodges's alto evokes the poetic beauty of Isfahan, Gonsalves's tenor builds on Ellington's feelings about Mount Harissa, and Carney's baritone conveys the majesty of the Taj Mahal and its history.

In addition, this work, while clearly bearing all of the marks of its creators, also heavily reflects the freer trends and overall change coursing through the music world in the second half of the 1960s. In a new way, Ellington and Strayhorn reinforced their idea that big band music belonged in a concert hall. One might also be very tempted to consider this to be among Ellington's more accessible works, containing a range of universal emotions ranging from the exotic to the playful.

Ultimately, this piece, listened to in its entirety, is an adventurous musical journey away from the comfort zone of most listeners and even to some degree of the players. Still, the familiar instruments and easily-recognizable composer/arrangers and soloists firmly root this work in the Ellingtonian canon and within the jazz tradition as well. The influences of the East were mixed perfectly with the familiar style of the Ellington band as a group and the individuality of its members. *The Far East Suite* succeeds in blending old and new, different and familiar; presenting a truly singular musical look at cultures entirely foreign to most Westerners, yet conveying emotions every person could relate to and appreciate-and doing it all in a way that is also just plain fun to listen to again and again.

<sup>1</sup>Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For*, Oxford, NY, 2002. p 167.

<sup>2</sup>Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For*, Oxford, NY, 2002. p 169.

<sup>3</sup>Neil Tesser: <http://www.jazzhouse.org/library/index.php3?read=tesser2>.

<sup>4</sup>Neil Tesser: <http://www.jazzhouse.org/library/index.php3?read=tesser2>.

## **Notes to the Conductor:**

This publication is based on the original set of parts, Strayhorn's sketch score, a copyright deposit sketch score, and the 1966 studio recording. This is a clarinet feature throughout. The two-bar melodic figure played by the clarinet - meant to represent the mynah bird - is rhythmically complex. It is possible that due to this rhythmic complexity Jimmy Hamilton simplified the figure and played what is now recognized as the melody. For this publication the editors have decided to indicate the melody as-written by Strayhorn but also include the figure as-played by Hamilton (this is shown in the Reed 3 part and on the facing page).

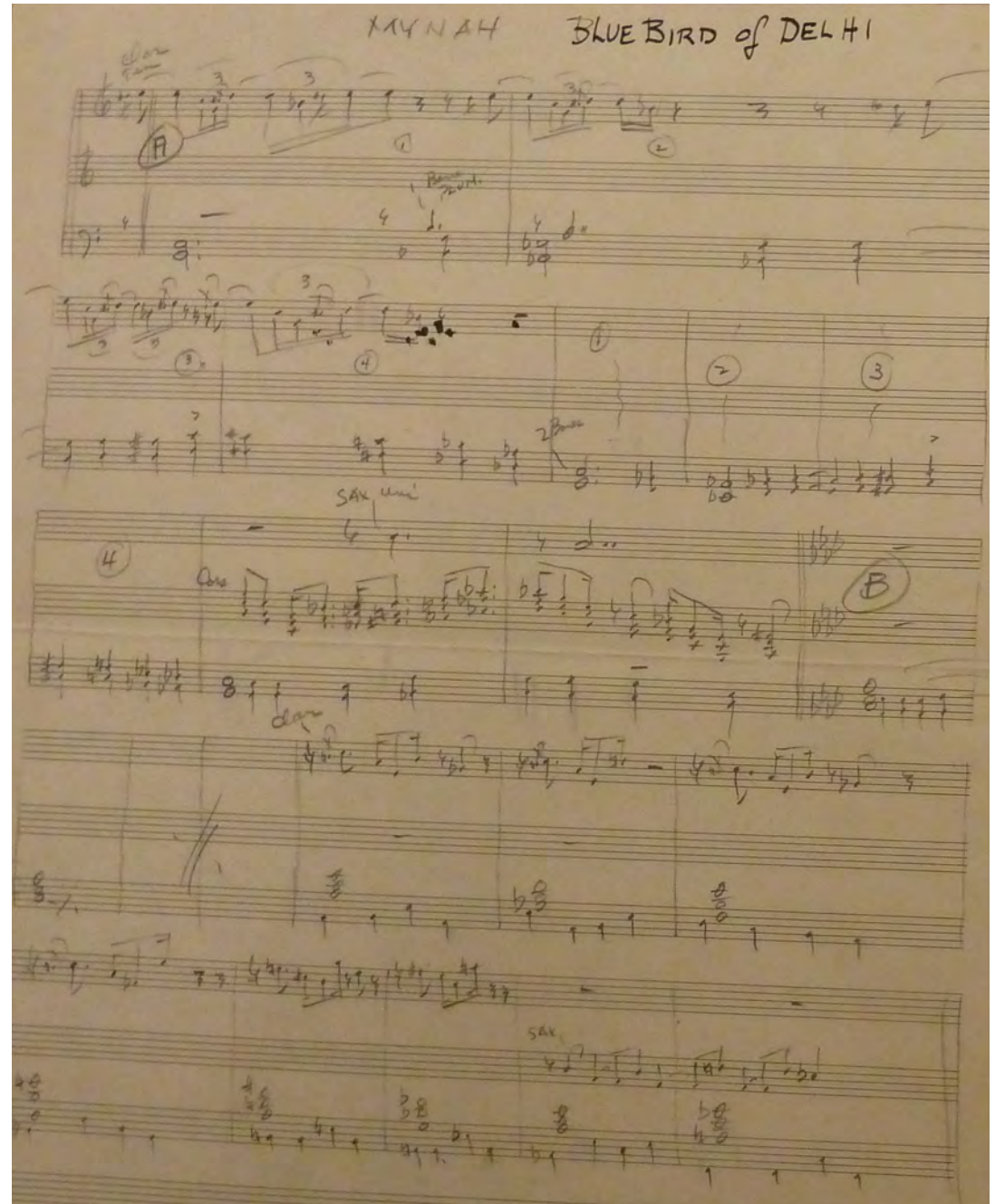
There were several copying mistakes in the parts. It was determined that Strayhorn's score was more accurate and in all cases of discrepancy the score was used as the basis for determining the correct note and/or rhythm.

**Doug DuBoff, Rob DuBoff, Jeff Sultanof, Dylan Canterbury, and Sonjia Stone**

- March 2015



To the right is Billy Strayhorn's sketch score for Blue Bird of Delhi, originally titled Mynah. Notice the melodic figure written for clarinet. The example shown above is how Jimmy Hamilton played this figure.



CLAR

MY NABH

Handwritten musical score for clarinet, titled "CLAR MY NABH". The score consists of eight staves of music. The first five staves are in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with many triplets and slurs. A circled "A" is above the first staff. The sixth staff is a whole rest. The seventh staff is in B-flat major (two flats) and 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with slurs. A circled "B" is to the left of the sixth staff. The eighth staff is in B-flat major and 4/4 time, featuring a melodic line with slurs. A circled "C" is above the eighth staff.

Here is Jimmy Hamilton's clarinet part.

# BLUEBIRD OF DELHI

FROM 'IMPRESSIONS OF THE FAR EAST SUITE'

## SCORE

By BILLY STRAYHORN

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY PETER JENSEN,

DYLAN CANTERBURY, ROB DUBOFF, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

SWING ♩ = 116

The score is written for a jazz ensemble. It includes staves for:  
 REED 1: ALTO SAX.  
 REED 2: ALTO SAX.  
 REED 3: CLARINET  
 REED 4: TENOR SAX.  
 REED 5: BARIOTONE SAX.  
 TRUMPET 1  
 TRUMPET 2  
 TRUMPET 3  
 TRUMPET 4 (with a '(PLUNGER)' marking)  
 TROMBONE 1  
 TROMBONE 2  
 TROMBONE 3  
 BASS  
 DRUM SET (with dynamic markings of *mf* and *mf* and repeat signs with first, second, fourth, and fifth endings).

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

9

Rd. 3 (CL)  
Bs.  
Dr.

(2) (4)

This block contains the first system of music for measures 9-12. It features three staves: Rd. 3 (CL) with a complex melodic line including triplets and slurs; Bs. with a bass line of chords and notes; and Dr. with a simple bass line. Measure numbers 9, 10, 11, and 12 are indicated below the staves.

Rd. 1 (A. Sax)  
Rd. 2 (A. Sax)  
Rd. 3 (CL)  
B♭ CL.  
Rd. 5 (B. Sax)  
Tpt. 1  
Tpt. 2  
Tpt. 3  
Tbn. 2  
Tbn. 3  
Bs.  
Dr.

*mf*

(6) (8) (10)

This block contains the second system of music for measures 13-18. It features ten staves: Rd. 1 (A. Sax), Rd. 2 (A. Sax), Rd. 3 (CL), B♭ CL., Rd. 5 (B. Sax), Tpt. 1, Tpt. 2, Tpt. 3, Tbn. 2, Tbn. 3, Bs., and Dr. The saxophone parts (Rd. 1, 2, 5, B♭ CL.) have rests for the first four measures and then play notes with *mf* dynamics. The trumpet and trombone parts (Tpt. 1, 2, 3, Tbn. 2, 3) also have rests for the first four measures and then play melodic lines. The bass line (Bs.) continues with chords and notes. The drum part (Dr.) has rests with bar lines and measure numbers (6), (8), and (10) indicated below. Measure numbers 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 are indicated below the staves.