

Presents

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING

ARRANGED BY BILLY STRAYHORN

PREPARED BY ROB DUBOFF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

JLP-7375

COMPOSED BY BILLY STRAYHORN

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A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING (1946)

Background:

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.

The Music:

The song *A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing* was written in 1941 and first performed by Ellington during a radio broadcast on June 1, 1946. The arrangement published here is an all-out alto saxophone feature and has been derived from an incomplete set of parts, a lead sheet, and a condensed score. Most of this arrangement was cut for the 1946 performance and subsequent performances from that same year as well as those from 1947. For this publication Strayhorn's original arrangement has been completely restored.

Jeff Sultanof, Doug DuBoff, and Rob DuBoff

- June 2015

A FLOWER IS A LOVESOME THING

RECORDED BY THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA

SCORE

COMPOSED BY BILLY STRAYHORN

ARRANGED BY BILLY STRAYHORN

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

SLOWLY ♩ = 80

(5)

The score is written for a jazz ensemble. It includes parts for five reeds (Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, Baritone Sax), four trumpets, three trombones, piano, bass, and drum set. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo is marked 'SLOWLY' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line with a repeat sign. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. Dynamics include *mf*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. Performance instructions include '(HI HAT)', '(OPEN)', and '(BRUSHES)'. The bass line features a walking bass pattern with 'N.C.' (No Chords) markings. The drum set part uses brushes in the first system and sticks in the second system.

