

# JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

*Presents*

## AGRA

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-7407

BY DUKE ELLINGTON AND BILLY STRAYHORN

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## **AGRA IFROM IMPRESSIONS OF THE FAR EAST SUITEI (1964)**

### **Background:**

Even though the name of William Thomas Strayhorn is hardly unknown, 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 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 enough to invite 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:**

This arrangement was written by Billy Strayhorn in 1963 and was first performed in Sweden on March 9, 1964. While on tour in Europe during that year Ellington introduced several pieces as *Impressions of the Far East*. At that time the *Suite* consisted of *Amad*, *Agra*, *Bluebird of Delhi*, and *Depk*. *Agra* and *Bluebird of Delhi* were written by Strayhorn and *Amad* and *Depk* were written by Ellington. As the notion for a full-length suite began to take shape several more pieces were composed: *Ad Lib on Nippon* and *A Tourist Point of View*, both composed by Ellington, and *Mount Harissa* and *Blue Pepper*, possibly composed by both Ellington and Strayhorn (scores have not been located for these two movements; hence, authorship is in question). *Isfahan* was recorded on December 20, 1966 to be included in the *Far East Suite*.

This is a baritone saxophone feature, written to showcase Harry Carney. The baritone saxophone part is as-written by Billy Strayhorn with the exception of the cadenza beginning at measure 34. We encourage the soloist to ad-lib freely at this point in the arrangement. However, the transcribed cadenza may serve as a model of what may be considered appropriate.

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

- December 2014

This is Billy Strayhorn's sketch score, completed in 1963. This was first performed on March 20, 1964 at a live concert in Sweden. This is actually page two of the score; however, it was later decided by the composer that the arrangement would begin at the 5th measure on this page. Strayhorn usually wrote his scores in this format and then turned them over to the Ellington band copiest Tom Whaley who would then extract parts.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on ten staves. The score is divided into three systems, each with two staves. The first system is labeled 'SAX UNI' and 'Bar 3'. The second system is labeled 'Bar 3' and 'Bar 3'. The third system is labeled 'SAX 3' and 'Bar 3'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are also some handwritten annotations and a circled number '16' in the first system. The score is written in ink on aged paper.



BAR:

AGRA

4

(17) START

This is Harry Carney's part. One will notice that the part was modified: a decision was made to start the arrangement at measure 17. In addition, the cadenza is not indicated. Often Ellington band arrangements were left seemingly incomplete. It was understood that direction by Ellington or Strayhorn would be provided in advance of performance or recording. Typically the musicians would commit instructions to memory and not necessarily transfer them to the printed page.



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## SCORE

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SLOWLY ♩ = 70

ALTO SAX 1  
ALTO SAX 2  
TENOR SAX 1  
TENOR SAX 2  
BARITONE SAX  
TRUMPET 1  
TRUMPET 2  
TRUMPET 3  
TRUMPET 4  
TROMBONE 1  
TROMBONE 2  
TROMBONE 3  
BASS  
DRUM SET

(SOLO)  
(IN HAT)  
(IN HAT)  
(IN HAT)  
(IN HAT)  
(2)  
(4)  
(TO PLUNGER)  
(TO PLUNGER)  
(TO PLUNGER)  
(TO PLUNGER)  
(TO MALLETS)

2

3

4

5

6

7

B. Sax. *trill*

TPT. 1 (CLOSED PLUNGER) *p* (TO HAT)

TPT. 2 (CLOSED PLUNGER) *p* (TO HAT)

TPT. 3 (CLOSED PLUNGER) *p* (TO HAT)

TPT. 4 (CLOSED PLUNGER) *p* (TO HAT)

TBN. 1 *pp*

TBN. 2 *pp*

TBN. 3 *pp*

Bs. *p* (2) (4) (6) (8)

Dr. FLOOR TOM *p* (2) (4) (6) (8)

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14