

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

LAURA

RECORDED BY ELLA FITZGERALD

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-9670

LYRICS BY JOHNNY MERCER

MUSIC BY DAVID RAKSIN

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A NOT-FOR-PROFIT JAZZ RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PRESERVING AND PROMOTING AMERICA'S MUSICAL HERITAGE.



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LAURA (1964)

Background:

Truly the First Lady of Song, Ella Fitzgerald was one of the greatest singers in American history. As her official website perfectly states, “Her voice was flexible, wide-ranging, accurate, and ageless. She could sing sultry ballads, sweet jazz, and imitate every instrument in an orchestra.” She enthralled audiences all over the world for decades, worked with everyone from Duke, Dizzy, and Count Basie to Nat King Cole and Sinatra, and left a recorded legacy that is second to none.

Born Ella Jane Fitzgerald on April 25, 1917 in Newport News, Virginia, Ella endured some rough times as a child. Following the split of her parents, she moved with her mother to Yonkers, NY, and sadly lost her mother at age 15. Fighting poverty, Ella eventually used these difficult times as motivation in life, and continued to harbor dreams of being an entertainer. She made her public singing debut at the Apollo Theater in Harlem on November 21, 1934 at age 17. Buoyed by her success, she continued to enter and win singing contests, and soon was singing with Chick Webb’s band. In 1938 she quickly gained acclaim with her version of *A-Tisket, A Tasket*, which was a huge success and made her famous at age 21; for over 50 years she remained a star.

Following Webb’s death in 1939, Ella briefly led the band, and soon struck out on her own as a solo artist, taking on various projects as well as making her film debut. While on tour with Dizzy Gillespie in the mid-1940s, Ella began to respond to the massive changes in the jazz world, as swing was giving way to bebop; she began incorporating scat singing into her repertoire as a reaction to the improvisational nature of bebop. As she recalled years later “I just tried to do [with my voice] what I heard the horns in the band doing.” During this period, she also met bassist Ray Brown, whom she was to marry and adopt a son with. Through Brown, she met jazz impresario and producer Norman Granz, and this relationship led to her greatest stardom and achievements.

Ella joined Granz’s Jazz at the Philharmonic Tour, recorded classic albums with Louis Armstrong, and from 1956-1964 worked on what may be her greatest legacy, the Song Book series, featuring the music of Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, the Gershwins, Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, and Johnny Mercer. It can be argued that along with the seminal work of Frank Sinatra, these records created some of the greatest and most definitive versions of a huge portion of what comprises the Great American Songbook. Ira Gershwin famously remarked, “I never knew how good our songs were until I heard Ella Fitzgerald sing them.” Ella also did what music can uniquely do in tying together many strands of American culture at a time when race relations were a major issue in American society. Critic Frank Rich expressed it so well shortly after Ella’s death, writing about her Song Book series: “Here was a black woman popularizing urban songs often written by immigrant Jews to a national audience of predominantly white Christians.”

Ella toured constantly during these years, and she and Granz did their part to help the burgeoning civil rights movement, fighting inequality and discrimination at every turn, bravely even in the Deep South. During the 1960s Ella continued to tour and record, also appearing in movies and being a regular guest on all of the most popular talk and variety TV shows. Throughout the 1970s, she kept touring all over the world, and became even more well-known through a series of high-profile ad campaigns. Anyone who grew up in the 1970s remembers Ella’s “Is it live or is it Memorex” commercials.

One of the lesser-known aspects of her life at the time was her charitable side. She was known as a very shy person who was protective of her privacy. As a way to help others avoid what she went through as a child, she gave frequent generous donations to all sorts of groups and organizations that helped underprivileged youth, and her official website even suggests that continuing to be able to this was a major driving force behind the unrelenting touring schedule she continued to maintain. She cared for her sister Frances’ family after Frances passed as well.

By the 1980s, she had acquired countless awards and honors, among them 13 Grammys including the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. But the endless touring schedule did begin to take its toll, and Ella began to experience serious diabetes-related health problems. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s she suffered a series of surgeries and hospital stays, and by 1996 she had tired of spending so much time in hospitals. She spent her last days enjoying being outdoors at her Beverly Hills home, sitting outside and simply being with her and Ray Brown's adopted son Ray, Jr. and her granddaughter Alice. Many sources report that during her last days she reportedly said, "I just want to smell the air, listen to the birds, and hear Alice laugh."

She died in her home on June 15, 1996 at the age of 79, and the tributes were instant, huge, and international. Befitting someone of her stature, who was at the pinnacle of the entertaining world for nearly half a century and left behind a legacy that will never diminish in its beauty and importance, her archival material and arrangements reside at the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian.

There are few figures in American history who left behind what Ella did. A shy, reticent woman from very humble beginnings, she thrilled countless millions all over the world with her beautiful voice and her singular way of interpreting a tune. She sang in so many styles, worked with so many of the best composers and arrangers in the music business, performed with most of the other greatest stars of her era, and left a body of work that truly enhances the American experience.

The Music:

In 1964 Ella Fitzgerald went back into the studio to further her songbook series by recording songs written by Johnny Mercer. Supported by Nelson Riddle's arrangements, this session featured a slightly different ensemble: this time the big band was augmented by 2 flutes, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, and 3 horns in F. The story goes that Norman Granz was concerned about the budget and refused to hire string players. Thus, Riddle saved some money and hired some additional woodwind players and probably relied on overdubs to complete the mix. This publication is presented as-written by Riddle but also included are optional string parts that may be used in place of - or in addition to - the woodwind and French horn parts. These additional string parts were arranged by Riddle probably in order to provide some flexibility to Ella should she wish to use this arrangement during a live performance.

Notes to the Conductor:

The arrangement's introduction is highly unusual by both Fitzgerald's and Riddle's standards, with an ominously dissonant ostinato carried out by the woodwinds and strings underneath a contemplative trombone solo. Surprisingly, this ostinato continues once Fitzgerald enters at measure 5, but in this context it comes off in a surprisingly much less sinister manner. Most of the rest of the ensemble accompaniment during the melody is fairly subtle, but the ostinato sneaks its way back in once again for good measure halfway through.

A chorale of trombones and horns take center stage for the melody's re-statement at measure 37, with some gentle responses from the strings and woodwinds to create a sublimely lush texture. The trumpets take over eight measures later, with a dramatic crescendo and drop off that brings Fitzgerald back out front for the finale. The ending at measure 67 seems to be a recap of the introduction, but it ultimately culminates in an ascending trombone line that resolves the harmonic tension beautifully.

This publication was based on Nelson Riddle's original pencil score and the set of parts used during the recording session - this is not a transcription.

Doug DuBoff, Dylan Canterbury, and Rob DuBoff

- April 2020

Handwritten musical score for "506 ELLA FITZGERALD" by Nelson Riddle. The score is written in pencil on aged paper and includes parts for various instruments and voices. At the top, there are handwritten annotations: "LAURA" and "LAURA" with a circled "C", and "# 506" with a circled "C". The title "506 ELLA FITZGERALD" is printed in large, bold letters. A red circular stamp is visible on the right side of the page. The score is divided into systems for different instruments and voices, with handwritten notes and markings throughout. The instruments listed on the left include Trumpets 1 and 2, Trombones 1, 2, and 3, Piano (P), Drums, Harp (HARP), Violin A and B, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The score is marked with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bottom of the page features the name "Nelson Riddle" and a small number "5-19" in the bottom left corner.

LAURA LAURA # 506

506 ELLA FITZGERALD

Trumpets 1, 2
Trombones 1, 2, 3
Piano (P)
Drums
HARP
Violin A, B
Viola
Cello
Bass

Nelson Riddle

5-19

Here is the first page of Nelson Riddle's original pencil score.

LAURA

SCORE

RECORDED BY ELLA FITZGERALD

LYRICS BY JOHNNY MERCER, MUSIC BY DAVID RAKSIN

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

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SLOWLY, STRAIGHT 8THS ♩ = 80

Score for Laura, featuring instruments and vocal line. The score includes parts for Vocal, Flute 1 & 2, Oboe 1 & 2, Clarinet 1 & 2, Bassoon 1 & 2, Woodwind 1-5 (Alto Sax, Tenor Sax, Baritone Sax), Trumpet 1-4, Horn in F 1-3, Trombone 1-3, Bass Trombone, Violin I & II, Viola, Cello, Harp, Guitar, Piano, Acoustic Bass, Vibraphone, and Drum Set. The score is in 4/4 time and includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *sim.*, *p*, *pp*, and *legato*. Performance instructions include "Harmon Mute" for trumpets and "Cup Mute" for trombones. The harp part includes a chord diagram: $E_4 \ F_4 \ G_4 \ A_4$ / $D_4 \ C_4 \ B_3$. The score is divided into measures 2, 3, and 4.

13

Vox. The laugh that floats on a summer night that you can never quite re-call. And you see

Ww. 1 (A. Sx.) *mp*

Ww. 2 (A. Sx.) *mp*

Ww. 3 (T. Sx.) *mp*

Ww. 4 (T. Sx.) *mp*

Ww. 5 (B. Sx.) *mp*

Tbn. 1 *Open*

Tbn. 2 *Open*

Tbn. 3 *Open*

Bs. Tbn. *Open*

Vln. I non-trem.

Vln. II non-trem.

Vla. non-trem.

Vc. unis.

Gtr. Cm7 F13(9) B^bma7 Gm7 E_m7(9) A7(9) A7(9) D_{ma}13 F13(11)

Pno. Cm7 F13(9) B^bma7 Gm7 E_m7(9) A7(9) A7(9) D_{ma}13 F13(11)

Bs. Cm7 F13(9) B^bma7 Gm7 E_m7(9) A7(9) A7(9) D_{ma}13 F13(11)

D. S. (4) (8)

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20