

Presents

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS
THE FIRST NOEL

RECORDED BY ELLA FITZGERALD

ARRANGED BY GRACE PRICE AND ROBERT BLACK

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY JEFFREY SULTANOF AND ROB DUBOFF

FULL SCORE

JLP-9716

TRADITIONAL

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ELLA FITZGERALD SERIES

THE FIRST NOEL (1967)

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 she 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:

Regardless of one's personal religious backgrounds, Christmas hymns have an undeniable beauty to them that lends to the heavy nostalgia that they continue to invoke to this day. It should come as no surprise that vocalist Ella Fitzgerald was a natural when it came to interpreting these timeless songs.

Recorded in 1967, *Ella Fitzgerald's Christmas* would focus exclusively on hymns rather than the largely secular material of her earlier *Ella Wishes You a Swinging Christmas*. Teaming up with arrangers Grace Price and Robert Black, and conducted by Ralph Carmichael, Fitzgerald sees herself accompanied by a mix of different configurations, ranging from small instrumental groups to full SATB choirs. These arrangements have an almost chamber-music feel to them at times, evoking a genteel warmth that is highly appropriate for the holiday season.

Although hers could never be mistaken for an operatic voice, Fitzgerald's performances on each track showcase an unmistakable reverence for the source material in addition to her flawless intonation and naturally gorgeous voice. It is clear that these songs were important to Fitzgerald, and she treats them with an appropriate level of reverence.

This publication has been prepared from the original score and the set of parts used during the recording session. We hope that this arrangement provides you and your audience with holiday joy and happiness!

Doug DuBoff, Rob DuBoff, and Dylan Canterbury

- June 2017

THE FIRST VOEL THE ANGEL DID SAY

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CER - TAIN POOR SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS AS THEY LAY, IN FIELDS - WHERE THEY LAY - KEEPING THEIR SHEEP ON A

Here is the first page of the original Grace Price and Robert Black 1967 score for O Holy Night.

THE FIRST NOEL

RECORDED BY ELLA FITZGERALD

TRADITIONAL

SCORE

ARRANGED BY GRACE PRICE AND ROBERT BLACK
PREPARED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF AND ROB DUBOFF

MODERATELY ♩ = 100

③

Solo Vocal

The first no-el the an-gel did say was to cer-tain poor shep-herds in fields as they lay; in
 looked up and saw a star shin-ing in the east be-yond them far; and

Flute

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Guitar

Celeste

Acoustic Bass

Percussion: Vibraphone/Bells

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10