

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

STRIKE UP THE BAND

RECORDED BY ELLA FITZGERALD

ARRANGED BY NELSON RIDDLE

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-9982

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN, MUSIC BY GEORGE GERSHWIN

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



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STRIKE UP THE BAND (1959)

Ella Fitzgerald Biography:

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.

Nelson Riddle Biography:

(Adapted from the official Nelson Riddle website)

Nelson Riddle was one of the greatest arrangers in the history of American popular music. He worked with many of the major pop vocalists of his day, but it was his immortal work with Frank Sinatra, particularly on the singer's justly revered Capitol concept albums, that cemented Riddle's enduring legacy. He was a master of mood and subtlety, and an expert at drawing out a song's emotional subtext. He was highly versatile in terms of style, mood, and tempo, and packed his charts full of rhythmic and melodic variations and rich tonal colors that blended seamlessly behind the lead vocal line. He often wrote specifically for individual vocalists, keeping their strengths and limitations in mind and pushing them to deliver emotionally resonant performances. This is evidenced certainly in his work with Sinatra in the following quote from Charles Granata's book "Sessions with Sinatra,": "It quickly became apparent that Riddle, of all the arrangers the singer had worked with, complemented Sinatra's talents better than anyone else."

Born June 1, 1921, in Oradell, NJ, Nelson Smock Riddle studied piano as a child, later switching to trombone at the age of 14. After getting out of the service, he spent 1944-1945 as a trombonist with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, also writing a couple of arrangements (Laura and I Should Care). By the end of 1946, with the help of good friend, Bob Bain, he secured a job arranging for Bob Crosby in Los Angeles. He then became a staff arranger at NBC Radio in 1947, and continued to study arranging and conducting with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Victor Young. Soon he was occasionally writing for Nat 'King' Cole, initially as a ghost arranger. However, the successes of his arrangements for *Mona Lisa* (1950), *Unforgettable* (1951), and *Too Young* (1951) set him on his way to doing most of Nat's music at Capitol Records. By this time, Nelson Riddle had become conductor of the orchestra and had his name printed on the record label. He was no longer an anonymous arranger.

When Frank Sinatra signed with Capitol Records in 1953, the label encouraged him to work with the up-and-coming Riddle, who was now Capitol's in-house arranger. Though he had helped Nat achieve his biggest hit, *Mona Lisa*, Sinatra was still reluctant. He soon recognized the freshness of Riddle's approach and eventually came to regard him as his most sympathetic collaborator. The first song they cut together was *I've Got the World on a String*. When Sinatra and Riddle began to record conceptually unified albums that created consistent moods, the results were some of the finest and most celebrated albums in the history of popular music. Riddle's work with Ella Fitzgerald on the *Gershwin Song Book* album set in 1959 was considered one of the most elegant and unique interpretations of a most amazing body of work.

His motion picture and television credits include *The Young at Heart*, *High Society*, *Pal Joey*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *The Tender Trap*, *Can-Can*, *Li'l Abner*, *A Hole in the Head*, *The Great Gatsby* (for which he received an Academy Award for musical adaptation), *The Untouchables*, *Naked City*, and *Route 66*, the first TV theme to become a chart-topper.

His recording career tapered off in the 1970s and early 1980s with the continuing growth of rock 'n' roll and electronic instruments. However, in 1983, he received a phone call from Linda Ronstadt asking him to write an arrangement for the old standard *I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out to Dry*. His reply was that he would not consider writing a single arrangement, but rather a complete album. The first of his three-album collaboration with Ronstadt, *What's New*, went on to become enormously popular, selling over five million copies and spending 81 weeks on the Billboard pop charts.

Riddle's last performance was at South Street Seaport on September 13th, 1985. He died on October 6, 1985, surrounded by his six children.

The Music:

This is one of a series of arrangements written by Nelson Riddle for Ella Fitzgerald focusing on the Gershwin songbook. These arrangements constitute some of the most famous settings of classic songs for one of the greatest vocalists in American music.

Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Songbook was the high point in the series of songbook packages produced by Norman Granz for the Verve label. There had been four such projects beforehand: boxes of songs by Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington and Irving Berlin preceded it. Granz decided to make the Gershwin box the most ambitious of all of them; 5 LPs plus a 7" limited edition bonus disc that included Riddle arrangements of Gershwin instrumental compositions. This was the first songbook that was arranged and conducted by Nelson Riddle. Granz had wanted Riddle for the first songbooks, but he was unavailable at the time.

The Music:

Although the musical it originated from quickly fell into obscurity, the Brothers Gershwin's *Strike Up the Band* has become a rather popular entry in their vast catalog of songs. Nelson Riddle's arrangement for Ella Fitzgerald sees the former showcasing his humorous side while still providing a setting that allows the latter to shine at her brightest.

Notes to the Conductor:

Things begin, appropriately enough, with a military-style roll-off in the drums before a roaring fanfare in the brass enters at measure 13. Once the brass have had their say, the arrangement seems to settle into a more traditional swing feel, although the march tempo continues to peek its head out from time to time throughout the rest of the performance. The backgrounds, in typical Riddle fashion, provide enough support to spur on Fitzgerald's vocals without overwhelming or outshining her in the process.

Another bugle-call style figure in the brass announces the beginning of the very tongue-in-cheek ensemble shout chorus. The melody here is handled by the extreme registers of the ensemble - the piccolo and the tuba - with the rest of the brass section simply but effectively filling in the gaps. Fitzgerald returns at measure 75, accompanied by ensemble figures similar to what backed her earlier on. The last few measures of the melody are tagged, and although the listener may be expecting one last marching band reference, the final few measures are instead a hard-swinging ensemble riff that closes off the performance in a highly effective and enjoyable way.

This publication was based on Nelson Riddle's pencil score - this is not a transcription.

Acknowledgments:

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Doug DuBoff, Dylan Canterbury, and Rob DuBoff
July 2021

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SCORE

WORDS BY IRA GERSHWIN, MUSIC BY GEORGE GERSHWIN

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PREPARED BY ROB DUBOFF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

BRIGHT MARCH ♩ = 136

♩ = ♩

The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with the following parts:

- Vocal:** Empty staff.
- Woodwind 1:** Piccolo/Alto Sax. (Piccolo)
- Woodwind 2:** Flute/Alto Sax. (Flute)
- Woodwind 3:** Clarinet/Tenor Sax. (Clarinet)
- Woodwind 4:** Clarinet/Tenor Sax. (Clarinet)
- Woodwind 5:** Baritone Sax.
- Trumpet 1-4:** Four trumpet staves.
- Trombone 1-3:** Three trombone staves.
- Bass Trombone:** One bass trombone staff.
- Tuba:** One tuba staff.
- Violin I-III:** Three violin staves.
- Viola:** One viola staff.
- Cello:** One cello staff.
- Harp:** One harp staff.
- Guitar:** One guitar staff.
- Piano:** One piano staff.
- Bass:** One bass staff.
- Percussion:** Police Whistle/Xylophone. Includes a "police whistle" effect and a "To Xylophone" instruction.
- Drum Set:** One drum set staff, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*.

The score is divided into measures 2 through 12, with a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

SWING ♩ = ♩

13

♩ = ♩

Vox. Let the

Ww. 1 (Picc.) *f*

Ww. 2 (Fl.) *f*

Ww. 3 (Cl.) *f*

Ww. 4 (Cl.) *f*

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

Tpt. 1 *f* *fp* *cresc.* *f* To Straight Mute

Tpt. 2 *f* *fp* *cresc.* *f* To Straight Mute

Tpt. 3 *f* *fp* *cresc.* *f* To Straight Mute

Tpt. 4 *f* *fp* *cresc.* *f* To Straight Mute

Tbn. 1 *f*

Tbn. 2 *f*

Tbn. 3 *f*

Bs. Tbn. *f*

Tuba *f*

Hp. *f*

Gtr.

Bs. *mf* *N.C.*

D. S. *mf* (4)