

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

THE JEFFREY SULTANOF MASTER EDITION

LAURA

AS RECORDED BY CHARLIE PARKER, 1950

ARRANGED BY JOE LIPPMAN

EDITED BY JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

JLP-8031

LYRICS BY JOHNNY MERCER

MUSIC BY DAVID RAKSIN

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LAURA (1950)

Background:

When Billie Holiday signed a new recording contract with Decca Records in 1944, she told producer Milt Gabler she wanted to record with strings. Anxious to establish Holiday as a pop singer, Gabler hired six string players for her first session, and the first song recorded was *Lover Man*, one of her biggest hits. Several years later, when Charlie Parker signed with impresario/manager Norman Granz' label Clef, Parker asked for strings as well.

Granz was obviously keeping costs down, as only five string players were hired for the first session (1949), but these were the very top New York session players; some were members of the NBC symphony conducted by Arturo Toscanini. As much as he'd dreamed of playing with strings, reportedly Parker walked out of a few sessions without playing a note (the number has never been authenticated). He later explained that the sound of the strings and the thought of working with such distinguished musicians scared him; he thought they were greater artists than he. What finally took place was sheer magic. The parts for the string players were relatively easy, so they listened and enjoyed Parker's improvisations. The arrangements for the first studio session were done by Jimmy Carroll and recorded on November 30, 1949. On July 5, 1950 there was another studio recording session, this time with arrangements by Joe Lippman. This second date featured a larger ensemble including oboe, French horn, 4 violins, 2 violas, cello, harp, guitar, piano, bass, and drums. Parker also appeared with his string group on at least 4 live occasions: *Birdland* (August, 1950 and March and April, 1951), *Apollo Theater* (August 1950), *Carnegie Hall* (September, 1950), *Rockland Palace Dance Hall* (September, 1952). In 1952 Parker recorded an additional 4 arrangements by Lippman featuring a full big band with a string section.



Parker would later say that the studio recordings with his string ensemble were his favorites of his own work, despite jazz critics' condescending reactions and their claims that he was 'selling out.' As it turns out, he was selling 'in.' The albums sold well, and brought Parker to a whole new audience. As far as his own playing, many of his solos on this first album were lovely and inspired. *Just Friends* is one of Parker's finest records and his solo is remarkable; I can't be the only one who can sing it by heart at a moment's notice. It is a pity that none of the alternate takes seem to have survived.

David Raksin's *Laura* was already a jazz standard, a distinction it acquired because of its lovely melody and its interesting chord sequence. The story of its creation had been told many times by the composer but is worth repeating here. Raksin had been in Hollywood since 1936, working for Charles Chaplin orchestrating the master's score for the film *Modern Times*. Alfred Newman at 20th Century-Fox considered him a major talent and Raksin soon became part of the Fox music staff. The motion picture *Laura* was considered a run-of-the-mill whodunit when it was in production and Raksin was called in to write the score. Production began with the legendary director Rouben Mamoulian in the director's chair, but he was fired and Otto Preminger was signed to take over. Preminger wanted to use Duke Ellington's *Sophisticated Lady* as the musical theme of the picture, but Raksin felt that an original theme would suit the film better. He was given the weekend to come up with the theme. He labored over this for the better part of a weekend, and then remembered that he'd received a letter

from his wife that he hadn't really read when he had previously opened it. He took out the letter, which was in effect telling him that she was filing for divorce. He put the letter on the piano and improvised as he read it over and over. Soon his fingers were playing the theme we now know as *Laura*. The rest is music history: the theme was heard by moviegoers who wanted the sheet music, lyrics were added by Johnny Mercer, and *Laura* became one of the most popular songs of 1944. By the time of the 1950 Bird with strings date, the song was a standard.

The Music:

Laura was arranged by Joe Lippman. It would appear that there are more string players on this session than what is listed in standard discographies, as there are multiple viola parts and only one player cited.

A number of changes were made to this arrangement, presumably by Parker or Norman Granz:

- 1) The oboe solo at measure 12 was originally written for French horn.
- 2) The French horn solo at measure 14 was originally to be played by Parker.
- 3) At measure 44, strings originally had whole notes. The indication "Beguine" is handwritten in a few parts, indicating that this section was originally played straight-ahead.



Notes to the Conductor:

This is a lovely ballad setting that should pose few problems for ensembles. The transition between the swing and beguine section and back should be smooth and not labored, with no change in tempo.

Jeffrey Sultanof

- October 2010

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A TEMPO ♩ = 132

(A) $F^{\sharp}m^9$ $B7(\sharp 9)$ $E_m(m^{\sharp 7})$ E^6 $E_m^{\sharp 9}$ $C^{\sharp}m$

A. SX.

Ob.

Hr.

Vln. A

Vln. B

Vln. C

Vln. D

Vla. A

Vla. B

Vc.

Hp.

Gtr.

PNO.

BASS

D. S.

6 mp 7 8 9

$A_m^{\sharp 7}$ $[C^{\sharp}, D^{\sharp}, B, \flat]$

$A_m^{\sharp 9}$ $D7(\sharp 9)$ $G_m(m^{\sharp 7})$ G^6 $G_m^{\sharp 9}$ E_m

$A_m^{\sharp 9}$ (See Note) $D7(\sharp 9)$ $G_m(m^{\sharp 7})$ G^6 $G_m^{\sharp 9}$ E_m

$A_m^{\sharp 9}$ (Pizz) $D7(\sharp 9)$ $G_m(m^{\sharp 7})$ G^6 $G_m^{\sharp 9}$ E_m

(PLAY TIME BRUSHES)

(4)

NOTE: THE PIANO PART THAT JOE LIPMAN WROTE HAS BEEN INCLUDED.
HOWEVER, FOR THE RECORDINGS, THE PIANIST FREELY COMPED INSTEAD.

E \flat m⁹ A7(\flat 9) A7(\sharp 2) Dm⁹

A. SX. Db. Hn. Vln. A Vln. B Vln. C Vln. D Vla. A Vla. B Vc. Hp. Gtr. PNO. Bass D. S.

(Solo) *mf*

Gm⁹ C7(\flat 9) C7(\sharp 2) Fm⁹

Gm⁹ C7(\flat 9) C7(\sharp 2) Fm⁹

(8)

10 11 12 13

B

(Fr. Horn)

(Solo)

mf

3

HP. [Eb, Ab] [Cb]

Fm9 Abm7 Ebma7

PNO. Fm9 Abm7 Ebma7

BASS Fm9 Abm7 Ebma7

D.S. (4)

14 15 16 17