

I. Jazz: A Historical Perspective

II. Duke Ellington

III. Charles Mingus

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I. JAZZ: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It must be self-evident to everyone in this room that one cannot deal in any significant detail with the history of jazz in a *one-hour* lecture. Such a task could take several days, not hours; and therefore I would like to clarify that the title of this talk, “Jazz: A Historical Perspective,” with the emphasis on the final word, signifies a look at jazz history from a very *general* perspective and painted with a very large and broad brush—but aided and abetted by a few specially selected musical illustrations and personal points of view.

Since jazz is a musical language and since music is an aural art, it would be the happiest of options if we could now embark on a three-day listening marathon, with me acting as a kind of super disc jockey, presenting for your pleasure the great classics of jazz, past and present,

In that connection, I trust that you can all attend the listening session Professor Malcolm Longair has so kindly arranged on Wednesday afternoon. It might just be the most rewarding of all the planned Tanner events, as—I suspect—the discussant session earlier that day will also be. Now to the subject at hand!

The beginnings of jazz lie in obscurity somewhere in the past, say, about a hundred years ago, or perhaps somewhat later, one’s dating depending on what one wants to call—*properly*—jazz, as a clearly definable musical style or language. Historians have, of course, used a certain day in early 1917 as the beginnings of jazz, when a group calling themselves the Original Dixieland Jass Band—mostly spelled *jass* in those days—made a series of recordings in New York. Whether those recordings really represent jazz, or, at least, jazz at its purest and best, is highly debatable. But some form of jazz music making *was* taking place long before that chance recording event in various parts of the United States, no-

tably in New Orleans and the surrounding deep South, but also in the Midwest, around St. Louis and Kansas City, and very probably even in the far West, in places like Los Angeles and San Francisco. Several early tributaries to the eventual mainstream of jazz, such as the blues or ragtime or various kinds of popular dance musics, were, we know, practiced in many of these regions as early as the 1880s and 1890s. When all of this rich musical bouillabaisse coalesced into a more-or-less distinctive style and musical expression is shrouded in the past, and we shall probably never be able to date the actual beginnings of jazz in the precise way that we can now, for example, date the discovery of prehuman or animal skeletons millions of years ago, or the invention of the telephone, or the first visit to the South Pole. An art form does not lend itself to that kind of precise dating and defining.

The *origins* of jazz are a little easier to deal with, at least in relatively broad terms. There is little argument that the essential elements of jazz—those elements that make jazz jazz and separate it linguistically, stylistically, from any other forms of music-making—are of African, specifically West African, origin. Those elements are, above all, three primary ones: (1) a certain form of syncopation, rarely if ever heard in European music before, (2) that specific rhythmic pulse, which in jazz is called swing, and (3) the concept of improvisatory music making. However, those African elements, brought to America by the slaves, were fused in jazz with distinctly European elements, such as the European classical harmonic language (as it had developed into a relatively chromatic language around the turn of the century) and, of course, also a basically European instrumentarium.

Jazz is essentially an ensemble music, although admittedly it has, in its long evolution, also embraced the “solo,” as both a composed element and an improvised one. Certainly in its early stages it was almost entirely an ensemble music, best exemplified by the great collective ensemble playing of the so-called New Orleans style, as epitomized by, let’s say, King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band

[brief excerpt from “Dippermouth Blues”]. I would add that it was almost inevitable, given its primary West African sources, that jazz be an ensemble music, since West African tribal, ritual, and dance musics are also all performed in collective ensembles. Now, one of the immediate historical forerunners of jazz was ragtime, despite its pianistic origins soon to develop also into an ensemble music, involving a great deal of syncopation and a good deal —if played right— of swing. But ragtime was a composed, written-down, notated music —*not* improvised —to be played and performed more or less in a particular predefined way, very much in the same sense that classical music was defined and to be performed as notated by the composer. Other tributary sources, such as the white European-based dance and popular musics of the late nineteenth century and the light semiclassical fare that flourished in America, were a mixture of composition and improvisation, mostly composed, notated, published, but often played in a semi-memorized loosely and spontaneously re-created manner that one cannot quite call improvisation, but at the same time quite removed from the strictures and performance practices of “serious” classical music.

But the blues, the other important predecessor of jazz, *was* primarily an improvised, handed-down (not written-down) kind of music. It was sung and played by ordinary folks, not necessarily trained or professional musicians, existing in an infinite, spontaneously created plethora of forms and personal interpretations.

One can thus see that, in its various component source influences, jazz was from the outset a musical hybrid. On both its African and European sides, it was the result of an unpremeditated, spontaneous coming-together of musical expressions and styles that ranged, in greatly varying degrees, from fixed, notated to loosely, spontaneously semi-improvised forms.

I say “semi-improvised” —and here I come to perhaps the first possibly controversial point of view in my talk —because, although jazz historians and jazz musicians have long perpetuated, either

implicitly or explicitly, the notion that jazz always was an “improvised music,” a spontaneously, instantaneously created, off-the-cuff kind of music, the facts are that, at least in the first three or four decades of jazz, the music was *not* improvised, certainly not in the pure and simple sense of that term. I say “at least in the first three or four decades of jazz,” because it is true that eventually jazz —jazz musicians —*did* learn to improvise, to create truly spontaneously.

Indeed, today everybody in jazz worth even talking about improvises, *can* improvise, feels he or she *must* be able to improvise. How well, how creatively, is perhaps another matter. But if we could casually claim in the past that improvisation “is the heart and soul of jazz,” then that is only technically accurate and true in recent decades, say, since the 1940s and 1950s, and a rather inaccurate and imprecise claim as regards earlier jazz forms.

For the fact is —and this is now easily confirmed by the issuance of hundreds of second and third takes of recorded pieces in the 1920s and 1930s as well as by the existence of archival manuscript evidence of countless written-out “solos,” formerly thought to have been “improvised” —that the full flowering of truly spontaneous jazz improvisation did not, *could* not, occur until the technical virtuosic abilities of the players had reached a certain level of total command. Before that players prepared their “solos” —in a great variety of ways: everything from writing out to memorization and varying degrees of mental, musical, practical preparation. Some “soloists” *always* played previously premeditated “solos,” memorized —but, let’s say, in the case of the great Ellington trombonist, Lawrence Brown, so magically rendered, every time, that they sounded as if they were spontaneously created that moment. In the archives of the Duke Ellington collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington there are dozens of “solos” written in Duke Ellington’s hand, which were then rendered by a Johnny Hodges or Harry Carney or Cootie Williams. To qualify that statement a little, let me add that, as the various players’ abilities and technical command became more sophisticated and secure, they

would in varying but increasing degrees ornament, embellish, loosen up the preconceived solo —be it their own or Duke's or someone else's —thus making it more personalized and more spontaneous. But more often than not the actual notes, the notated pitches, were the bare-bones basis of the solo passages. A given player may then have varied or freed up the solo, for example, rhythmically, or with certain embellishments, scoops, pitch bends, glissandos, articulations, phrasing, and the like to make the solo even more "personal."

May I remind us all that in classical music, which is often maligned by jazz fans for not featuring improvisation, the ideal performance of a "solo" —say in a concerto or a major solo in a work by Johannes Brahms or Pyotr Tchaikovsky or Igor Stravinsky (or whoever) —is one that sounds *as if it had just been created*. That is, of course —and alas —a very rare occasion indeed, given the general state of classical performance and performance practices. But every once in a while one does hear a remarkable performer re-create, realize, a composed solo passage in such a way —and, incidentally, without distorting or recomposing it (that also happens, unfortunately much too often) —that one feels one has heard it for the first time and that the performer just made it up at that moment.

There is also the clear case in jazz of many so-called solos that were composed themes, deemed so central, so integral, to the piece and its performance that they were considered immutable. For example, Bubber Miley's so-called solos in some of Ellington's earliest compositions, such as "Black and Tan Fantasy," "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," and "The Mooche" —these themes were mostly composed by Miley or co-composed with Ellington —were played almost exactly the same way for nearly sixty years, even unto today. When Cootie Williams took over Miley's trumpet chair, he played the same solos the same way for ten years; and when Ray Nance succeeded Williams, he then played the same solo, as did later incumbents, such as "Money" Johnson, Clark Terry, Cat Anderson, and several others.

Furthermore, some of the truly great creative solos of the period were kept intact, *precisely* because they were so great, whether they had originally been improvised or partially prepared or not; they were considered so integral and perfect for the piece that they were retained in their original form. The feeling was that they could not be improved upon.

I am emphasizing this point to some extent because it was misunderstood and misused for *so* many years by jazz historians, jazz critics, and jazz fans that it will take considerable effort to correct this bit of jazz mythology. It is also disturbing to me that there is in that version of jazz history an assumption, either implied or sometimes explicit, that the “solo” in jazz is everything —that the composition and/or the arrangement are somehow inferior or secondary aspects of jazz. Countless books on jazz have been written that completely ignore the element —the very existence —of composition, of arrangement, of ensemble playing in jazz, also thereby ignoring the reality that thousands of jazz solos were —and are —not great or memorable, indeed very often inferior to the composition and/or arrangement in which they are enclosed.

The meaningful, stylistically and compositionally cogent integration of solos into compositions and arrangements was in fact one of Ellington’s primary concerns. He, as a real composer —a sitting-down, writing-out composer, not a mere arranger or tune-smith —held from the outset that a performance of his pieces should be above all a unified, fully integrated, fully thought-through effort, in which stylistic or compositional breaks should not occur, where the personality and individualism of the improviser should not disturb or override the basic conception of the total work. And that is why Duke for many years —admittedly less and less in later years —felt the need, with but a few exceptions, to control the “solos” in his pieces, even to the extent of most often writing them out for his soloists, at least in skeletal form.

The fact remains that all the early jazz musicians—even the great innovative creators, such as Louis Armstrong or Earl Hines or

Coleman Hawkins or Johnny Hodges — were involved to a high degree in prior preparation in advance of the event at which they produced their so-called solos. And why should we try to deny this, or regard it as a negative? I don't care how a solo was created or how long it took to create it; and I don't care whether it was improvised or not. All that matters in the end is whether it was any good or not, whether it fitted into the frame of the piece, whether it was an inspired, meaningful addition to the piece — or not.

There is another way to clarify this point. The very earliest jazz players — again with the historians' implication that this meant improvisers — weren't jazz players in the true sense at all. And most of them, if asked, would disclaim this. Bunk Johnson, one of the earliest of the renowned New Orleans trumpeters, was only one of many who claimed he was just "an old ragtime player." Quite so. Others called what they played merely "syncopated" music, with no implication of improvisation. In this connection it is well to recall the statement of Buster Bailey, the famous clarinetist who played from about 1915 into the 1960s and who, in commenting on his playing around 1917–18, said — and I quote — "I was embellishing around the melody. At that time I wouldn't have known what they meant by improvisation. But embellishment was a phrase I understood." And Buster Bailey was certainly not alone in making that admission; it was variously echoed by many other musicians.

The early players in the teens and twenties of the century all played the popular ragtime hits and syncopated dance tunes of the period. Ragtime was, after all, *the* popular music of the United States — and then, soon, in England and Europe as well — from about 1900 to 1918. And ragtime was, as I've mentioned, a composed, written-down, fixed music that was not meant to be improvised upon. Indeed, the idea of improvisation hardly occurred to anybody until the later years of that period. And the way that came about was a quite natural part of the transition from ragtime to jazz. Most of the players of that era, especially among the blacks

and Creoles, were *not* professional musicians. They played music as a hobby or a part-time avocation, and certainly were not schooled or conservatory-trained musicians; as such, very few of them, including some of the best and most famous ones, could read music. Someone like Bunk Johnson, for example, a contemporary of Armstrong, could not really read music; he hadn't been taught to read music, and in his kind of work, playing for dances and in night-clubs, he was never required to read music. But he and others like him had terrific ears: they could *hear* the music they couldn't read. They simply picked up tunes by ear, including the basic popular ragtime pieces of that time, such as "Maple Leaf Rag," "High Society," and "Tiger Rag," and, having more or less memorized those tunes, played them, but not exactly as written —embellished, ornamented, changed a little, thereby creating a more spontaneous, almost improvised effect. That is certainly what the earliest New Orleans trumpet players did, such as Bunk Johnson, King Oliver, and Freddie Keppard. Gradually, as the players' technical skills developed and as they became more versed in the new dance and blues repertory, they, of course, gradually became freer in their ornamentations and personal versions of tunes. And that practice eventually slid into something one could begin to call improvisation, at first rather tune-bound (i.e., merely embellishing the tune), until through the next decade or two the variations began to be done on the chord changes, not necessarily the melodies or themes, thus inventing their own melodies, imposed on the old chord changes. Clarinet players and trombone players, whose role was to provide obbligato or counter-lines to the main tune, were obliged to be a little more inventive. But they too did not, in an absolute sense, always improvise those obbligato passages, but worked them out beforehand, prepared them some way or another, and, as recorded evidence shows, played them, apart from occasionally adding a little new twist here and there, more or less the same way each time.

Of course, improvisation in jazz did eventually become a highly disciplined and technically extraordinarily demanding performing

art. But make no mistake about it: it first had to be learned, and that took several decades. A few very gifted musicians, such as Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Coleman Hawkins, and Sidney Bechet, developed some forms of improvisatory abilities earlier than most others. But even in those cases there is plentiful evidence that what appeared on a given recording to have been improvised had in most cases been prepared, worked on, thought about, wholly or partially predetermined, in some way or other. As late as 1934 Hawkins, in an article he wrote for the English popular music magazine the *Melody Maker*, warned against prematurely trying to “play hot,” the term that was coming into usage as a synonym for improvising a solo. He wrote: “Until a player has advanced himself to such a stage that he has more or less lost consciousness of the manual side of his instrument, it is wrong and foolish for him to worry about playing hot. Hot playing requires perfect control of one’s instrument, so that musical thoughts can be automatically and unhesitatingly translated into notes.” He added that “it required a complete knowledge of chords and harmonies, a super sense of rhythm and” —most importantly —“the gift of inventiveness.” Highest musical discipline indeed!

Thus one can describe the transition from ragtime to jazz as (1) a transition from a composed notated music to a memorized and more loosely reinterpreted music, and/or (2), if you like, a transition from reading musicians to nonreading musicians who through their ears and creative imagination —very sharp among the great, the best ones —develop a whole new way of playing, of creating, of inventing and reinventing.

Once the transformation of ragtime into jazz had taken place —with, to be sure, a healthy infusion of the blues, around 1919–20 (when the first blues recordings with the great blues singers such as Bessie Smith and Mamie Smith began to be made) —the advances in jazz, both technically and stylistically, came in rapid succession. By the end of the decade, a high degree of instrumental sophistication, of technical skill and virtuosity, and, above all, of

compositional creativity had taken over. It was in those years—say, 1924 to 1927—that we witness the first great flowering of Louis Armstrong’s art, both as a trumpeter and as a singer. One does not know where it came from—we cover such phenomena with terms like “innate talent” or “genius” or “the mystery of creativity”—but Armstrong discovered in his playing, as he was working with King Oliver (in Chicago) and Fletcher Henderson (in New York), a way to make the music swing [excerpt from “Big Butter and Egg Man” after Armstrong’s vocal chorus to end]. That was a whole new way of playing never heard before in Western music. Swing is not just playing something rhythmically well or accurately. It is something beyond that; it is a feeling—an infectious, irresistible feeling—and a way of articulating and timing notes that is unique to jazz, as descended from its African roots. It is painfully conspicuous in its absence, but delightfully captivating when it is present.

Before Armstrong no one swung, no one knew what swing was—except perhaps Jelly Roll Morton (to some extent) and Earl Hines. It is not an exaggeration to say that Armstrong taught the world to swing, taught jazz to swing. Even a greater player such as Hawkins, at first, in his early recordings before, say, 1925 and 1926, did not, could not, play with swing. His playing was initially very stiff—energetic, yes, but primitive and inexpressive, made all the worse by his (and all saxophone players’ of the time) penchant for “slap tongue.” Hawkins learned to play with swing from Armstrong, when Louis was for one year the star soloist of the Fletcher Henderson orchestra. He taught the rest of the band to swing as well, and by extension all the other then burgeoning jazz players and jazz orchestras in New York and Chicago.

Armstrong also, along with Earl Hines, was the prime mover in bringing into jazz the concept of the jazz “solo.” It was during those years, in the late 1920s, that jazz changed irreversibly from a collective ensemble music (with perhaps a few incidental solos here and there) into a music where the solo and the soloist became

the new, exciting featured attraction [excerpts from “Potato Blues” and “Muggles” and then “Mahogany Hall Stomp”].

This required a certain level of technical skill —also a compositional, creative talent —that then developed in the jazz world in the 1930s like wildfire. Due to the tremendous influx of young talented musicians to the field —jazz was, after all, a new, relatively attractive field economically —the resultant intense competition among musicians generated an artistic/professional climate in which the technical and creative skills spiraled upward at a tremendous rate. Once an Armstrong had achieved some technical breakthrough —an extension of the upper range, an exciting new way of swinging, a new double-time effect, some new ways of articulating and phrasing on his instrument —other players not only could no longer say “that can’t be done,” but actually had to shape up and learn those new skills and deal with those new ideas, if they wanted to stay professionally competitive.

In the midst of all this creative ferment, there arrived on the scene an extraordinary genius, Edward Ellington —known soon as “the Duke” or “Duke Ellington.” His talent lay in many directions: as pianist, as band leader, as arranger, but above all, as composer. Prodigiously creative —Ellington composed virtually day and night all his life —he produced nearly fifteen hundred compositions, many of them absolute masterpieces of the genre. He was innovative on many fronts, especially in regard to form and structure, but also in his harmonic explorations (years ahead of anyone else) and his sense, his ear, for instrumental/orchestral color. I will deal in more detail with Ellington the composer in tomorrow’s talk.

Ellington, because of these unique talents, was always a bit of an outsider in the jazz world. Greatly admired and respected, even revered, he nevertheless was not as much of a major influence in jazz as one might think, precisely because he was somewhat apart from everyone else and so far in advance of the rest of the field that many musicians (and audiences) found his music too sophisticated, too subtle, too rich —some even too incomprehensible.

The mainstream of jazz developed along rather different lines. These can be exemplified by, on the one hand, the early 1930s bands of Fletcher Henderson and Chick Webb, playing exuberant, free-wheeling jazz, loosely arranged, featuring a collection of soloist stars, a bit rough in style but tremendously exciting; and, on the other hand, the more disciplined, rehearsed-to-the-nines approach of the band of Jimmy Lunceford, a well-educated and trained musician who sought to combine technical ensemble perfection and a great “two-beat” swing with a high level of elegant showmanship.

That was in New York. Another line developed in Kansas City, in the American Midwest, first through the bands of Bennie Moten and Walter Page’s Blue Devils, both with Count Basie as pianist. Hear now the incredible virtuosity, arranging brilliance, and excitement of the Moten band as of December 1932! [Moten: “Toby”].

When Moten died in 1935, William Basie took over the band. That band had a tremendous aggregation of soloists: three outstanding trumpet players and two great saxophonists, Hershal Evans and Lester Young, and an incomparable rhythm section, which included the aforementioned Walter Page, as well as the greatest rhythm guitarist of all time, Freddie Green, and, of course, Count Basie himself, who had in the intervening years reduced his former exuberantly virtuosic stride-piano style to a highly economic, aphoristic manner. Eventually, by the 1950s, this became a formulaic mannerism, but in the early days it represented a completely original, refreshingly new style, soon to be much imitated [Lester Young/Basie: “Lady Be Good,” small group].

What seems astonishing now in retrospect, when we consider how many great jazz orchestras flourished in those years, is the fact that all this occurred during the great American Depression. This was due, in part, to the enormous influx of new young talent, both black and white, but especially blacks, who saw in jazz a whole new world of enticing artistic and economic opportunities. The competition among all this young talent was fierce, and thus the technical, artistic, and creative standards rose precipitously.

Some orchestras, to be sure, went under in the Depression: Fletcher Henderson's, for example. But in a very interesting way Henderson's legacy was perpetuated in the orchestra and style (although somewhat modified) of Benny Goodman, when Goodman took over Henderson's compositions and arrangements and hired him as staff arranger.

Although the leading black orchestras had long ago learned to swing and to develop strong soloists as well as virtuoso ensembles, all this was more or less unknown to most of the white population until 1935, when "swing" was discovered by all America in the person of the Benny Goodman band. Jazz was renamed "swing" and hundreds of white swing bands came into being, both good and bad, ranging from truly creative, innovative ensembles such as Red Norvo's, Teddy Wilson's, and Billie Holiday's, to fairly dismal, more or less commercial dance bands. As the country went swing crazy with Goodman, the Dorseys, Harry James, Ben Pollack, the Casa Loma Band, Artie Shaw, Charlie Barnet, and dozens of others, the great black bands —of Ellington, Basie, Webb, Lunceford, Cab Calloway, Hines —struggled along, gradually playing more to white audiences but in general appreciated primarily by their black audiences. I can attest to this fact personally, because I began to hear and see those orchestras in the early forties, during the war years, and for me there is no question that the black bands, when they played in the black sections of the big cities, the ghettos, at the dance emporia of the time (the various Savoy Ballrooms, Cotton Clubs, Rhumboogies), and, of course, in the black theatres, played to a more understanding, appreciative audience, played a different (better) repertory, and played it better.

Feeding talent into the black bands were the numerous so-called territory bands of the Midwest —roaming through the entire region from Texas to North Dakota, from Colorado to Ohio, living impossible lives, constantly traveling in broken-down buses and cars, sometimes not being paid by unscrupulous dancehall and nightclub operators, but making great music nonetheless, almost

more as a hobby than as a profession. I'll name a few of these remarkable orchestras: Alphonse Trent, Troy Floyd, Boots and his Buddies out of Dallas; Nat Towles (perhaps the greatest) out of Omaha, Nebraska; Zach Whyte in Ohio (with Sy Oliver) ; Jay McShan (with the young Charlie Parker), Jesse Stone, and Harlan Leonard in Kansas City; and Jeter Pillars out of St. Louis. These bands were in effect traveling jazz conservatories, long before jazz musicians ever thought of going to music schools to study. You learned your craft in those territory bands, and if you were really good, the big name bands of Ellington, Lunceford, Calloway, etc., would soon hear about you in that wonderful, totally honest, black musical underground, and you'd be hired into the big time.

A tremendous center of jazz activity was Kansas City, a "wide open" city in the 1930s where "anything went," and jazz in this highly competitive, lucrative setting really flourished.

All this musical ferment, both black and white, grew into a gigantic stream during the years of World War II, in a country economically on the mend —wars strangely enough do that to countries —and eager for, indeed intensely craving, entertainment as relief from the war work.

With the arrival of such talents as Charlie Parker (from Kansas City), Dizzy Gillespie (originally from South Carolina, but later from Philadelphia and New York), Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Kenny Clark, and J. J. Johnson, and writer-arrangers such as Eddie Sauter, Ralph Burns, Neal Hefti, Gil Evans, Gil Fuller, and Gerry Valentine, a new brand of jazz developed and a new breed of jazz musicians suddenly appeared everywhere [Gillespie/Parker : "Shaw Nuff"]. From small combos — dozens of quartets and quintets and piano trios (Nat King Cole, Lennie Tristano, Monk, Bud Powell, etc.) —to big bands (such as Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, Boyd Raeburn, Claude Thornhill), they experimented in a wide range of styles and conceptions, collectively known as "bebop," or just plain "modern jazz" [Tristano: "I Can't Get Started," Herman: "Apple Honey," Monk: "Misterioso"]. These were musi-

cians who were creating music —more often than not for smaller and singerless ensembles —to which they wanted you to listen, not to dance or drink to. This was “serious” music, beyond mere entertainment, music of increasing harmonic, melodic/thematic, rhythmic, formal complexity, which fairly soon, as it forged stylistically ahead into new musical territories, lost most of its audience. To what? — well, to the popular singers of the day —the Sinatras, Bing Crobys, Billy Eckstines, and Ella Fitzgeralds and in the black communities to rhythm and blues and to so-called soul music. By the mid-1950s, when rock and roll started to come in —and even successful bands, such as Basie and Goodman, had to downsize in various ways—most of the great swing and modern jazz bands had disappeared. Jazz, on the one hand —real creative, innovative jazz —had found a smaller, younger, new and loyal audience; on the other hand, jazz was no longer America’s popular music, as it had been from 1935 to 1945, and as ragtime had been from 1900 to around 1920.

Nonetheless, great talents —both white and black — began to pour in from all corners of the country —hundreds, if not thousands of them: Ray Brown, Milt Jackson, Miles Davis, John Lewis, Roy Eldridge, Stan Getz, Bill Harris, Fats Navarro, Serge Chaloff, Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, Dave Brubeck, Vic Dickenson, Charles Mingus, Max Roach, Dodo Marmarosa, Sid Catlett, Lennie Tristano, Joe Mooney —the listing could go on for another three pages —creating a whole new universe of jazz styles and conceptions. That generation in turn spawned a new crop of musicians — here one would want to include Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, George Russell, Jimmy Giuffre, Thad Jones, Miles Davis of course, by then already a veteran, and so many more —too many even to mention, let alone discuss their varied and marvelous achievements.

Into these developments —in the late 1950s and early 1960s — came a new movement, called Third Stream, which sought a closer rapprochement between jazz and classical music, a true fusion of

the two musics in their contemporary manifestations: not a mere occasional or casual encounter, but fusion in such a way that a meaningful, balanced cross-fertilization could take place, music that would be performed (ideally) by musicians who would be equally versant in both musical mainstreams and skillful in both the written and the improvisatory traditions.

A rapprochement between classical music and jazz was, of course, not an entirely new idea. There had been various tentative attempts to bring some aspects of the two musics together—as early as Claude Debussy’s “Golliwog’s Cakewalk” (and some of his other ragtime-influenced pieces) or Charles Ives’s and Stravinsky’s encounters with ragtime; and, of course, a little later in the 1920s, there were fusionary experiments by Darius Milhaud, Aaron Copland, John Alden Carpenter, Louis Gruenberg, Kurt Weill, Ernst Krenek, Erwin Schulhoff, and many others.

Of these experiments, surely Milhaud’s “Creation du Monde” from 1923 is the most successful and important work of this category. But there was always one critical element missing in these pre-Third Stream liaisons: the element of swing and improvisation, of spontaneous extemporized creation. Those works were all written for classically trained musicians, who could neither swing nor improvise. And it was this lack that Third Stream attempted to correct, in order to achieve, however specifically it might be done, a more coherent and valid balance in the fusing of the two mainstreams. The real point was that now musical works could be created and produced that, but for the coming together of the two traditions in a deep and aesthetically equivalent fusion, *could not have existed before*.

Increasingly, musicians on both sides of the musical fence crossed over, learned from each others’ traditions and techniques. Increasingly, jazz musicians learned to cope with complex forms and structures, with complex musical notation; and, conversely, more and more classical musicians (although primarily wind and brass players) learned to assimilate such elements as syncopated

rhythms and swing, learned to free themselves from the written page and to improvise. Perhaps we can listen to an effort of mine from 1960, in which a certain type of fusion of classical and jazz techniques occurred. The piece is *Variants on a Theme of Thelonious Monk*, which features many superb jazz musicians of the time, including Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, Bill Evans, and Scott LaFaro, to name but a few [Schuller: *Variants on a Theme of Thelonious Monk*].

With the breakthrough of jazz into harmonic atonality in the 1960s —some isolated attempts at this had occurred even in the 1930s and 1940s— and the freeing-up of various rhythmic and structural constraints and conventions, the stage was set for a new kind of music and music-making, where the boundaries between classical and jazz eventually became quite blurred and indistinguishable; as a result, the former easy labeling of music as either “jazz” or “classical” became impossible and pointless. Indeed, that again was the idea of Third Stream: not to create Third Stream *jazz* or Third Stream *classical music*, but just Third Stream - a new amalgam made up of potentially equal and no longer separable parts of what used to be previously completely distinct traditions.

What is rather astonishing as we look back over the last eighty to one hundred years of jazz developments is that jazz, as a musical language, accomplished in that short time span more or less what had taken classical music about *eight hundred* years! Minor divergences apart, jazz more or less followed a course similar to that of classical music. If we pinpoint the beginnings of classical music with Perotin, around 1150, and the beginnings of jazz, say, with Buddy Bolden or Scott Joplin around 1900, then we can see that, although the one started conceptually as a sacred, religious music, the other as a secular entertainment music, linguistically jazz developed from its primitive melodic, harmonic (almost aharmonic) beginnings and its simple early forms and structures to about the same point where classical music landed late in our century —only jazz did it about ten times faster.

Another parallel way of describing the history of jazz is to say that it developed from a folk music (in its earliest predawn beginnings) to an entertainment music in the teens and twenties and thence to an art music.

Except for a few cosmetic or technical wrinkles that have been added since the 1960s, things are more or less where they left off at that time. Of course, brilliant new players have come along — both in Europe and in America and Japan — well-trained in all manner of styles and conceptions, allowing now for an extraordinarily broad spectrum of musical expressions and fusions. Into this already vast mix have come tremendous infusions of ethnic, folk, vernacular musical traditions, all jostling with jazz and classical concepts, not for priority, but for some form of integration and fusion. Gone are the days when one had to hunt far and wide for someone in jazz who could read and understand something in Schonbergian atonality, or a musician who could read and improvise in any style or tradition (see Wynton Marsalis and hundreds like him — more or less). This opens up a remarkably broad-based future, at least potentially/ideally — and it is impossible to predict any specific direction or directions.

I am *not* saying that a musical utopia has now arrived and that all these fusions and merging streams will automatically create a nirvana of great music. Far from it; but the scene today simply presents some remarkable new opportunities, options, choices, influences that potentially, given the required *creative* talent, offer possibilities never dreamt of before. For, as always, it is not a technique or a system or a tradition that produces great music; it is only a creative individual who creates something new, vital, important, inspiring, moving.

Leaving aside the broader musical arena for the moment — and coming back to the jazz scene itself — we find ourselves in a brand new terrain. Something fundamental and unprecedented has happened in jazz, to jazz, in the last twenty or so years. There has been a remarkable tradeoff between the first sixty years of jazz and the

last twenty. Whereas the first period was dominated by highly creative, original, innovative, distinctive musical voices —most of them representing in their respective times unique, unquestioned leadership —today the scene is devoid of such single or distinctive leadership. There's a different type of talent today; and the trade-off is that, whereas Louis Armstrong or Ben Webster or Lester Young was uniquely himself, instantly recognizable, but *not* capable of stylistical flexibility, diversity, versatility, the best musicians of today can play any kind of jazz—indeed any kind of *music*. However, they are, with an occasional rare exception, not distinctively, stylistically unique, rarely instantly recognizable, shrouded in a kind of amorphous anonymity, but —and this is a big and very important *but* —incredibly versatile, linguistically flexible, technically adept. We have traded off the distinctive leadership voices of the past for a remarkable stylistic and technical diversity and versatility, where, by the way, the emphasis is more and more on composition and the integration of improvisation into composition: Ellington's dream coming to be increasingly realized and demanded.

As a result of this new versatility, an exciting new option in the present jazz scene is the development of the concept of jazz repertory. It is something I have personally been pursuing and doing for about forty years, and it is now beginning to catch on — modestly perhaps—everywhere. It is a concept resisted by some as Eurocentric, rather than Afrocentric, or even as antijazz, but in other quarters recognized as another serious, rewarding, educational, and entertaining option in jazz performance. The fact is that, as a result of the remarkable efforts of hundreds (if not thousands) of gifted jazz musicians, composers, and arrangers over the last six or seven decades, there exists now —and has existed for some time — a huge repertory of jazz masterpieces, a jazz canon, if you will, that is not only worthy of loving, authentic recreation, but literally cries out for it. For if a music is not kept alive in live performance, if it exists only on recordings or in other

archival forms —as wonderful as all those thousands of recordings are —such a music will eventually atrophy and die.

There is much more to be said on the subject of jazz repertory, but I see that I must bring this talk to a close. I hope that I've been able to present to you an overview, with a few tantalizing musical glimpses, of the history and development of jazz in this shamefully short hour and a quarter. I also hope that I may have succeeded in providing some stimulating thoughts here and there that may lead to some lively discussions later on.

II. DUKE ELLINGTON

I don't think there can be much argument that Duke Ellington was —or is (however you want to put it) —the greatest, the most important composer in jazz. One can measure that fact in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Ellington composed an enormous amount of music in his lifetime; no one has yet been able to count the number of his works. The estimates are anywhere from over 1,000 to nearly 2,000; probably the former is more realistic. That has Ellington competing, on the quantity front, with Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Philip Telemann —and Heitor Villa-Lobos. But mere quantity of production is certainly not the relevant issue when it comes to artistic creativity; it is the *quality* of the work that counts, and there Ellington ranks supreme in jazz history thus far. (The only possible other contender being Charles Mingus, whose work I will discuss in the third lecture in this series.) For among those many hundreds of Ellington compositions, many of them multimovement suites, there are, especially in the early period (say, from 1927 to about 1947), a vast number of what one can rightly call masterpieces, masterworks, compositions totally original in conception and realization —often original and unique not only in jazz, but in music in general — and, beyond that, *in* their originality almost always some ten to twenty years ahead of anyone else in the field of jazz.

Ellington was that rarity in jazz: a true composer. He was not merely an arranger or a tunesmith, a composer of popular songs (although he wrote a fair share of those too: “Sophisticated Lady,” “Solitude,” “Satin Doll”). From the outset, even in his earliest composition in the mid-to-late 1920s, one can hear his ability to create wholly original ideas and forms that went way beyond the idea of a mere functional dance music: rather, his music was coherent and through-composed and meant to be listened to. *If* it could serve several functions —as composition, as music to be danced to, as music accompanying dramatic tableaux or skits —so much the better; but his real interest from the outset lay in the direction of pure composition.

There was very little precedent for that in the mid-1920s: Jelly Roll Morton, perhaps, on the jazz side (as in his ragtime-inspired pieces), and George Gershwin on the more classical side (as in his *Rhapsody in Blue* of 1924). There was in those works and in Ellington’s early works (many of them co-composed with his trumpet player, Bubber Miley) an exploration of musical ideas that went beyond the basic 32-bar standard song and the 12-bar blues forms of the day, including new phrase structurings, new, more advanced harmonies, structural, dynamic, and orchestrational, sonoric contrasts, and early, very simple, attempts at varying or developing the musical or thematic materials.

Bubber Miley was already an accomplished and quite famous blues player at the time and in some of those early co-authored pieces, such as “Black and Tan Fantasy,” “East St. Louis Toodle-oo,” and “The Mooche,” one can hear the quite different approaches to musical creativity that Miley and Ellington represented. Ellington came from a piano ragtime and Broadway Musical show background, whereas Miley came from a by then already venerable blues and brass playing tradition. While one can readily hear and separate the two men’s contributions in those early pieces—Miley’s music earthy, harmonically simple yet saturated with blue notes; Ellington’s music “smart,” more harmonically sophisticated, rather

removed from any blues or collective ensemble conceptions, as in New Orleans jazz. And yet somehow these pieces have a high degree of coherence and unity. Some of that derives from the integrity of the performance, the way the various members of Ellington's ten-piece band listened to each other, reaching out sonorically to each other, bridging the gaps between the diverse stylistic elements of the pieces.

I might as well mention right now at the outset that when one speaks of Ellington's music, one has to include as co-creators the musicians in his orchestra, as unique and yet as varied a collection of players as has ever been assembled in music of *any* kind. There are several points to be made in this respect. First, the players in Ellington's band —especially from the early 1930s on, when the orchestra's size grew to fourteen with the addition of the great trombonist Lawrence Brown —were each highly individual, totally distinctive musical voices, creative artists in their own rights, in respect to both their individual sound and their styling and phrasing. You could not mistake one player for another, yet —and this is point two — when these players were required to play ensemble in sections or various orchestrational groupings, they would sound as one, so perfectly blended that often you couldn't — you still can't — tell who is playing what part.

This feature of the Ellington canon —what Billy Strayhorn, his longtime composing partner, called the "Ellington effect" —is so endemic to the character of his music that it is worth dwelling upon for a moment or two. A prime example of this chameleonlike ability to change colors, to subjugate their individual sounds and styles to a larger unity, was the trombone section of "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Juan Tizol, and Lawrence Brown. Never have there been three more divergent playing styles than those of these three players. "Tricky Sam" played with a rough, countrified, blues style and sound, including a complete mastery of the so-called plunger/growl technique, using the simple bathroom plunger as a mute and using a throat flutter to produce the growl. Nanton could literally talk

on his trombone; hence his name, “Tricky Sam.” You had the definite sense that he was speaking words on his trombone, much in the manner, incidentally, in which a lot of West African music is speechified music or musicalized speech, a tradition that is also perpetuated in scat singing. Nanton played with a full rich—almost thick—baritonal sound and tone, with no vibrato. He also had a limited range, barely more than an octave, and curiously—unlike any jazz trombonist of his day—that octave was positioned in the very upper range of his instrument, from middle Bb to high D and Eb. Furthermore, it was as if that octave-plus register was permanently nailed or screwed into his embouchure, because the man in some twenty years of playing with Ellington almost never missed or cracked a note. And it is in the high range where a brass player is most likely to miss notes. Well, not Nanton! He could play for hours in the upper range and never tire—again the upper range is, apart from being treacherous, physically very tiring. But not for Nanton!

So here we have this stentorian, rough-hewn colossus, Nanton, but next to him Juan Tizol, totally different, a Puerto Rican who played, as in Italian town bands, a valve trombone. Indeed, Tizol had grown up in the Italian band tradition and style of playing that had been imported from Italy to all Latin and South America and was prevalent in the entire region. A striking feature of that style, in total contrast to “Tricky Sam,” was a light, thinnish tone, a great deal of agility on the instrument, and—again in total contrast to Nanton—a pronounced, vivid, fast vibrato. When I first started playing the horn as a teenager, I used to play in the Italian parades in “Little Italy” in downtown Manhattan, and we non-Italian musicians from uptown used to call the Italian wind players’ vibrato a “nanny goat” vibrato. That should give you an idea of that sound and style, and the manner in which Tizol played, although he did this with great elegance and sensitivity, unlike some of those Manhattanite Italians of my youth. Furthermore, with his valve trombone Tizol could do things that you simply cannot do on a

slide trombone. And did Ellington ever exploit that special capacity, even to the extent of setting certain pieces in certain keys that were perfect for fast runs and technical manipulation on a valve trombone but either horrendous or downright impossible on the slide trombone! (The famous “Koko” from 1940 is a case in point. It is in E_b minor and the main theme contains a low C_b , which is easy to negotiate on the valve trombone, cumbersome or virtually impossible to negotiate on the slide trombone.) Ellington also often used Tizol as a third or fourth saxophone, so perfectly blended that it takes a really keen ear to note that there is a trombone in the midst of those saxophones.

The third member of that stellar trombone section and the last one to join to make it a trio —in 1932 — was Lawrence Brown. Here again, one cannot imagine a player and personality more different from Tizol or Nanton. Brown was ultimately the most all-around talent of the three. He was the lead trombone, he was a great lyric player —the only comparison that might be made in that respect would be with Tommy Dorsey —but he could also, as the occasion demanded, be a “hot” player, with technical virtuosity to burn, and was almost as good with mutes and plungers as Nanton, although that was not his preference. As a youngster, Brown had wanted to play the cello. But that meant playing in a symphony orchestra or a classical group of some kind, and in the 1920s and 1930s that was simply a social and professional impossibility. Black musicians definitely were not allowed to enter those sacred white musical precincts.

Lawrence Brown, out of his own innate talents and in answer to his repressed cellistic ambitions, simply turned to one of the nearest sonoric neighbors to the cello, the trombone, and in his playing it virtually became a cello. He loved to play the trombone with a singing, lyric style and sound, an elegance of phrasing and articulation, that was clearly derived from the concept of the cello —or a string instrument in any case —and he brought into jazz a unique voice that had never been heard there before. In the

1920s and early 1930s trombonists had to be “hot” players: loud, boisterous, mostly rough, at times technically virtuosic, but never elegant, songful, romantic. Even Tommy Dorsey played “hot” trombone well into the mid-1930s and wasn’t, by the way, very good at it. He later *did* become one of the greatest lyric players of all time, but Brown was there some time before him.

So here you have these three totally divergent and distinct musical personalities, whose uniqueness Ellington certainly exploited time and time again —and let me add that no other band in the land had anything remotely comparable —and yet, when called upon to blend together into a refined, balanced ensemble trio, these three could do so instantaneously. Apart from occasional intonational problems, their ensemble playing over a period of ten years or so was as perfect as any in any symphony orchestra; indeed, I would say better.

The same could be said about the two other sections in Ellington’s orchestra: the trumpets and saxophones —again unique, distinctive personalities who nonetheless could be instantly integrated into perfect ensembles. Ellington’s four-man rhythm section took a little longer to homogenize and integrate. That didn’t really occur until Billy Taylor and Jimmy Blanton (especially the latter), both bass players, came along in the late 1930s.

The point to be made here —and this is my third point regarding the Ellington band and the symbiotic relationship between Ellington and his musicians —is that this aggregation of players did not come about by chance or accident. These players were individually *chosen* by Ellington —and chosen *for* their diversity. Any other band leader would have chosen —and did choose —section players of *like* style, of *like* sound, of *like* musical conceptions. Not Ellington. As a potentially gifted visual artist —in his youth he had shown a great talent for painting and design —he carried over into his music an extraordinary sense for the tone colors, the specific sonorities, of instruments. And to enrich that coloristic orchestral palette, Ellington with unerring acuity picked

his players precisely to give him the sonoric range that his musical imagination demanded.

The fourth point about Ellington and his orchestra is that, although he was a pianist —and a remarkable one —his real instrument was his orchestra. By hook or crook, in good times and bad times, he kept his orchestra going, often at his own personal financial expense. When there was no work for the orchestra, he paid his musicians out of his own pocket, realizing that if he didn't do so, sooner or later the musicians would be tempted to seek work elsewhere and he would lose them forever.

Ellington maintained an orchestra for nearly fifty years, right up to his death in 1974. This was unique in the history of jazz and can be compared with only a few situations in classical music, such as the relationship between Joseph Haydn and his Esterhazy orchestra, or Johann Sebastian Bach and his St. Thomas church musical forces in Leipzig. This longevity of relationship allowed Ellington to build, to experiment, to explore musical ideas and concepts on a virtually daily basis. In effect, anything he would write during the night, or on a given day, he could hear rehearsed the next morning. Not only that: his players would bring *their* creative input to the work — with Ellington, to be sure, the final arbiter in accepting, rejecting, or modifying such input. So from the outset there was an artistic, creative, collective collaboration at the basis of Ellington's compositional efforts, from which both sides learned and profited reciprocally. Of course, as Ellington's own creative powers grew, the direct influence on him from some of his players —such as Bubber Miley or Barney Bigard in the early days —waned, and Ellington certainly became increasingly the dominant creative force.

In 1927, by a fluke, Ellington and his band were hired by the Cotton Club in Harlem, the biggest and most successful club of its kind featuring black musical talent. They were so successful that they stayed on not for one week, but for three *years*. I have often referred to this engagement as a gigantic workshop period for Ellington. The financial and physical stability —no constant travel-

ing was necessary —and the consistent daily opportunity to practice, rehearse, compose, experiment, hone and refine, all while being gainfully employed, represented a tremendous opportunity for Ellington. There is no question that this long-term engagement played a significant role in Ellington's and the band's development and allowed his genius to flower steadily, to flourish in an unprecedented way.

As one sifts through the more than two hundred recordings Ellington made in that Cotton Club period, one sees —hears — Ellington *the composer* emerge increasingly. Little by little, piece by piece, phrase by phrase, he assembled, as it were, an original musical language, style, orchestrational skills, explorations in form and continuity, that led to ideas and concepts never heard before in jazz—or for that matter in any kind of music—and he soon began to reach beyond the then-known confines and category of jazz.

It is a little bit absurd to try to deal with the immensity and quality and importance of Ellington's output in one simple hour. One just has to leave out too many great pieces, moments —leave too many things unsaid. But if we begin now to hop around a bit through Ellington's huge catalogue, we will very early come upon a now famous piece that represents a major musical breakthrough and, in fact, turned out to be Ellington's first big hit, financial and popular. That composition is "Mood Indigo" (from 1930).

At the Cotton Club Ellington had begun to create and work in five categories of pieces, some virtually forced upon him by the nature of the shows that the Cotton Club presented. There were numbers for dancing, that is, for the club's customers' dancing; then the *de rigueur* performance (and therefore orchestral arrangement, often "recomposition") of the constantly changing popular songs of the day, most coming from Broadway musical shows; third, there were the club's production numbers, for the chorus line and other entertainment acts (dancers, jugglers, fire eaters, etc.). The Cotton Club presented tableaux and skits that were intended to reflect life back in "darkest Africa," in the jungle, of tribal

rituals and dances —all for the entertainment and, I assume they thought, edification of the *white* clientele that frequented the club. Slumming in Harlem was the most exciting entertainment you could find in those days, and only whites were allowed into this gangster-owned club; blacks were allowed only as hired help, including Ellington and his musicians and the beautiful leggy dancers. So Ellington, with the incalculable help of Bubber Miley and “Tricky Sam” Nanton, the two “plunger/growl” experts, developed a whole new musical genre, which soon came to be known as the “jungle style.”

As a fourth category, there were the “mood” or “blue” pieces, written mostly for the quieter choreographic tableaux or displays; and fifth —Ellington’s own vision —straightforward, “absolute” compositions that may have had a functional role at the club but that were meant to be primarily instrumental compositions, to be heard and listened to for their *musical* content, musical “tone poems,” as it were.

To this latter category belongs “Mood Indigo.” Apart from its utter simplicity, economy, stylistic integrity, and perfection —no foreign elements intruding here (as in some earlier Ellington pieces) —the most remarkable thing about the piece —and the reason I call it an innovative breakthrough —is that here Ellington took a venerable, almost ancient and worn-out musical convention and turned it into a wholly fresh, new idea and sound. For several decades in jazz the traditional New Orleans formation had featured a so-called frontline of trumpet, clarinet, and trombone. In this constellation, unalterably maintained, the trumpet played the tune, occasionally slightly embellished, but always recognizable as the main melody; the clarinet played high-register obbligatos, descant lines, above and around the trumpet; and the trombone gave off with baritone-register asides and commentaries, in part responding to the trumpet.

In “Mood Indigo” Ellington took that formation and in effect turned it upside down, putting the clarinet in its rich earthy *chalmreau* register on the bottom, keeping the trumpet where it was in

New Orleans jazz, but putting the trombone high up near the trumpet —here Nanton's high-register abilities come to the fore —and putting plungers or cup mutes on the brass, thus creating a brand new velvety, lyrical sound and instrumental color that had never before been heard in jazz and, beyond that, in any music whatsoever. A small radical breakthrough —and musical miracle. Later, soft brass, a low-register clarinet "solo," and three-part clarinet harmonizations complete the tone picture. Let us listen to "Mood Indigo" [Ellington: "Mood Indigo").

This mood piece —"blue" piece —the Germans called such things *Character stücke*—became the first of a whole series of similar Ellington works —dozens of them —with names such as "Blue Tune," "Blue Light," "Subtle Lament," "Dusk," "On a Turquoise Cloud." Another such work, from 1937, is called "Azure" —note always the reference to the color blue. Here, seven years after "Mood Indigo," Ellington has expanded and enriched his orchestral palette and, even more importantly, has passed through harmonic bitonality and polytonality to the very edge of atonality. In "Azure," you hear combined Ellington's most unique gifts: his ear for sonority (tone color) and his fantastic ear for harmony [Ellington : "Azure").

Another type of composition is represented by "Daybreak Express," dating from 1933, an extraordinarily early date, as you will hear, for such an outstanding jazz composition, not only remarkable *as* a composition but as a virtuosic performance *tour de force*. It is, again, a tone poem, depicting in sometimes very vivid, realistic sounds an express train ride in the early 1930s, in the days of steam engines (long before diesels), ingeniously capturing the train whistle sounds, the clickety-clack of the tracks, as the train hurtles through the countryside, the acceleration of the train as it leaves the station and slowing down when arriving at the next station, the strange wheezing sounds that locomotives used to make in those days, sixty years ago, and in the midst of all this a spectacular virtuosic four-way saxophone ensemble-chorus.

Another interesting aspect of the piece is that once the train has gathered full speed —after the introduction —Ellington builds his composition, very modern for its time, on *another* piece and chord progression, one as venerable as you could find in jazz — namely, the famous “Tiger Rag.” Thus a brand new composition is built on the harmonic skeleton of a very old one [Ellington: “Daybreak Express”].

One cannot speak about Ellington’s many wondrous achievements without mentioning the fact that from his very early days onward, he felt the constraints and artistic restrictions of the ten-inch 78 RPM disk to which jazz was relegated, permitting only three minutes of music per side, as very confining and limiting. (Classical music had the twelve-inch disk, with four minutes and twenty seconds of music available on each side.) Ellington soon overcame this limitation to become in time the greatest composer of three-minute miniature forms. But, at other times, he rebelled against this (as he saw it) limitation and stigmatization and soon found ways to expand and extend the forms and durations of his pieces. The first simple steps in this direction were taken in the recording of “Tiger Rag” (in 1929) and his “Creole Rhapsody” (in 1931), both presented on two sides of a ten-inch disk, thus comprising some six minutes of music —although you still had to turn the record over, of course, causing an unavoidable interruption of the music.

In 1935 we come to two major Ellington breakthroughs in extended form: a fifteen-minute film music, called *Symphony in Black*, and the fourteen-minute *Reminiscing in Tempo*, which was presented on *four* ten-inch sides. Whereas *Symphony in Black* was still a loosely strung-together sequence of separate musical episodes, geared, of course, to the film that it accompanied, *Reminiscing in Tempo* was a completely through-composed fourteen-minute work, which, remarkably, featured *no* improvisation. (Ironically and ludicrously, the executives at Columbia Records insisted on calling the piece a “Fox-Trot,” printing as much on the label on

each of the four sides.) Moreover, unlike any other extended Ellington works, it is a single movement work built as a series of variations on a main theme and two lesser transitional episodes. It is to be noted that thematic variation was something unheard of in jazz in those days—it didn't begin to make a really serious appearance in jazz until some twenty to twenty-five years later with players like Lester Young and Sonny Rollins. Ellington varies not only the main theme and its side motives, but some of the integral accompanimental material and countermelodies, and does so with a thoroughness almost comparable to that of Brahms—of whose work I am sure, by the way, Ellington knew nothing at the time.

There are fourteen variations in *Reminiscing in Tempo*, which are played without interruption and which (as one can readily imagine) cause the piece to undergo many tonal modulations, reaching into keys like D major and A major, keys that were unheard of in jazz at the time and that, incidentally, gave his musicians considerable trouble, especially in intonation, causing a kind of subtle discomfort being removed from the safe, tried-and-true keys of B $\flat$, F, and E $\flat$. Indeed, the highpoint and structural and emotional climax of the piece is in A major, but just barely, because it is polytonal, a powerful mixture of three keys—A major, C major, and F $\sharp$ major. But even in its less-than-perfect performance, *Reminiscing* exudes a powerful, deep, even weighty, tragic emotional quality, which was simply light-years removed from what anyone else was doing in jazz, not only at that time but for years and decades to come.

Ellington found in *Reminiscing in Tempo*, written in mourning after the death of his mother, to whom he was *very* close, a depth and power of expression that went way beyond the conventions and short-term entertainment values of the jazz of that time [Ellington: *Reminiscing in Tempo*].

Now a masterpiece from 1940, called "Cotton Tail," again a new composition built on an earlier piece, in this case—like hundreds if not several thousand pieces in the evolution of jazz,

not just by Ellington but hundreds of other arrangers and composers —superimposed on the famous changes of Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm." Here we have a totally matured integration of "solo" and composition, the solo in this case by the great tenor saxophonist Ben Webster, for a year or so a member of Ellington's band. Also one must mention the perfect integration of the rhythm section here, featuring the then newly acquired nineteen-year-old bass player, Jimmy Blanton. He and Webster, both from the Southwest, brought a new kind of deeper, earthier swing and drive to the Ellington band, exemplified here at its best. In fact, because of the tremendous impact these two players had on the Ellington band and Ellington's compositions, that orchestra has often been referred to in this 1940 period as the "Webster/Blanton band" — high and just praise, indeed.

Among the many musical wonders of this piece and its performance, you might note that the original theme Ellington composes here, heard right at the outset, seems to be in C minor, when actually the piece turns out to be in B $\flat$ major. It is just one of many such melodic/harmonic sleight-of-hand tricks Ellington played so often [Ellington: "Cotton Tail"].

And some people said the Ellington band didn't/couldn't swing. What a laugh!

I'd like to jump now another seven years to 1947 and have us listen to a most remarkable Ellington piece, "The Clothed Woman." It is primarily a piano-solo vehicle for Ellington, the composer-pianist (or pianist-composer), in a simple ABA form, the contents of which are, however, anything but simple, ordinary, or conventional. The A sections, played mostly on the piano alone, venture into the modern land of atonality (or in any case post-tonal music) *and* into free rhythm, free meter, unrhymed music, as it were. The B section, by the wildest of contrasts, harks back to ragtime and a simple, bouncy, early piano jazz that Ellington had learned in his youth from Willie "The Lion" Smith and Fats Waller. But even in its elderly style, this B section somehow receives a modern touch

from Ellington, an elegant sophistication, and, more amazingly, seems to integrate at a certain high level with the modern, free-association A sections that enclose it [Ellington: "The Clothed Woman"].

The final work I would like to present —and leave you with — goes back to another form or genre that Ellington helped to develop, as did his players: the small group, sextet, or septet —the combo, as it is often known. Ellington and some of his men began in 1937 and 1938 to record in small groups, primarily to feature some of his great players, like Hodges or Williams, in a kind of chamber setting. At various times in the long career of the band (with its changing personnel) Ellington returned to this small format —here in a piece curiously titled "Where's the Music," dating from 1958. It features Clark Terry on trumpet, John Sanders on valve trombone, Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet, Johnny Hodges on alto, and Ellington's at the time guitarless rhythm section.

I think I would like to have Ellington's wonderful, soulful, bluesish music have the last word [Ellington: "Where's the Music"].

III. CHARLES MINGUS

If Ellington is, as I suggested earlier, the greatest and most important composer in jazz —"composer" in the full traditional sense of the word —then the nearest contender, at least in my view, is Charles Mingus. Again, as with Ellington, there is extraordinary creative quality and originality as well as quantity, the latter not of the magnitude of Ellington, but still representing remarkably rich oeuvre and full catalogue.

I want to concentrate initially in this talk on Mingus the composer, but later also on Mingus the brilliant bass player and performer/band leader. But a few details about his life might still be in order —a life as varied and complicated as any one can think of in the realm of music, except perhaps for Carlo Gesualdo. Although one cannot necessarily believe everything contained in

Mingus's autobiography —which is in any case an incomplete and expurgated version of the complete Urtext —his life was, to say the least, a colorful, hectic, problematic one, which ran a wide gamut of human activities, from the noblest to the most degrading. Mingus became embroiled, like one of his idols, Jelly Roll Morton, in many of the seedier sides of life, everything from pimping and gambling, drug pushing, and street pugilism to joining street gangs—mostly as a kind of self-defense for surviving in Watts (the Los Angeles ghetto) — all the way to the loftiest forms of artistic creativity as a musician, poet, writer, and musical entrepreneur. In a parallel to his life, Mingus had a volatile temperament that could lead from one explosive extreme to another. I knew Mingus very well and can testify to the fact that he was at times a Jekyll and Hyde, a devil and an angel: one day as sweet and harmless as a little baby, the next day losing all control in terrifying, temperamental outbursts and physical assaults. Many musicians — Max Roach and Jimmy Knepper are the most famous among them —felt the wrath of his anger and capacity for physical violence. He would vacillate between feelings of high exuberance on the one hand and total depression on the other. He felt deep down that he was a hunted man, oppressed by his environment, and his feelings of vulnerability and hurt were often converted into uncontrollable rage and tyrannical behavior to others — at times even those closest to him.

I say all this not as a bit of amateur psychologizing, let alone as an attempt at character assassination, but rather because Mingus's music in its vast emotional range reflects all these varied sides of his personality —in all its extremes, from the most gentle and lyrical to the most violent and enraged. As he once said of himself, "I am a mongrel musician who plays beautiful, who plays ugly, who plays lovely, who plays masculine, who plays feminine —who plays all sounds, loud, soft —who plays music."

Mingus was born in Nogales, Arizona, in 1922, but grew up in the Watts area of Los Angeles. He showed a great interest in

music at an early age, particularly in the cello, but after realizing that his aspiration to play in the Los Angeles Philharmonic could not be satisfied under the existing social conditions and racial climate, he took up the larger relative of the cello, the double bass, studying both classical music and jazz bass, the one with a member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the other with Red Callender, one of the bass stalwarts of the Los Angeles jazz scene. Mingus also studied with Lloyd Reese, a much-sought-after teacher, arranger, composer, and trumpet player (in the Les Hite orchestra). But Mingus seems additionally to have studied the more advanced classical contemporary music of the time, of Bela Bartok, Arnold Schonberg, and Igor Stravinsky, at a time (in the late 1930s), be it noted, when the two first-named composers' works were still virtually unknown and unperformed in the United States. Some of Mingus's earliest compositions reflect this interest in and considerable knowledge of contemporary classical music, for which he, however, as a black musician could find very little professional outlet.

In and out of music at various times, Mingus worked with many bands as a bass player sideman — such as Barney Bigard, Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton — as well as leading his own *ad hoc* groups. For Hampton, he wrote and recorded in 1947 one of his early experiments in nontraditional forms, *Mingus Fingers*, a kind of virtuoso “Concerto for bass and jazz orchestra,” a complex, partly atonal work, which greatly puzzled Hampton and his musicians, resulting in a far from adequate or satisfactory recorded performance [Mingus: *Mingus Fingers*].

Mingus soon attracted a great deal of attention as a new breed of bass virtuoso, especially when he was heard and recorded with the Red Norvo Trio. In 1950 Mingus settled in New York, working with such greats as Art Tatum, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Stan Getz.

He soon formed what he called “Jazz Workshop sessions,” surrounding himself with many of the bright young talents of the

early 1950s. Here he began to experiment —almost in the Ellingtonian sense —with new and extended forms in jazz, advanced harmonic explorations, radically new and original ways of structuring improvisations (including bringing back collective ensemble improvisations) ; blurring the lines (i.e., by way of integration) between composition and improvisation; experimenting with extended pedal point and/or modal (i.e., nondiatonic) improvisations, sporadically abjuring writing out his compositions and instead dictating them line by line, almost note by note, to his musicians, and leading his groups not by conducting but from the bass by shouting, singing, haranguing.

With works such as *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *Faubus Fables*, *Meditations on Integration*, and *Mr. Jelly Roll Soul*, Mingus developed both a dramatic side to his music and a political edge, often resulting in biting musical satire and social/political commentary, as in the series of *Faubus* (the infamous governor of Arkansas of the late 1950s and early 1960s) pieces.

In 1960 Mingus teamed up with Eric Dolphy, and those two, along with drummer Dannie Richmond, became virtually inseparable, also touring a great deal in Europe. After Dolphy's death in 1964, Mingus withdrew for some years from public life, suffering from depression and severe financial problems.

A Guggenheim Fellowship and the publication of his autobiography in 1971 revived Mingus's creative spirits. He traveled again with his "Workshop" —a new crop of musicians now, including John Handy, the late George Adams, and his longtime associate Jimmy Knepper —but in 1977 he fell seriously ill and, partially paralyzed, was confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Mingus died in January 1979.

I haven't mentioned Mingus's *magnum opus*, *Epitaph*, a nineteen-movement nearly two and a half hour work for a 31-piece jazz orchestra, which remained mostly unperformed during his lifetime, but which I had the privilege of posthumously bringing to life, to acoustical reality, in 1989.

Because I was involved with *Epitaph* not only as the conductor of the premiere and the next thirty or so performances in the United States and Europe, but also as editor of the score from Mingus's manuscript, I would like to tell some of the history of the piece and to comment on certain aspects and movements of the work.

Unperformed in Mingus's lifetime, as I said, the score to *Epitaph* was found, quite by accident, some six years after his death, after resting peacefully for years in a box in a closet in his widow's apartment. The music was discovered by Andrew Homzy, the excellent Canadian jazz musicologist, who had been hired by Mrs. Mingus — Susan — to catalogue all of Charles's existing musical manuscripts.

Mingus seems rarely to have talked about *Epitaph* —and then only in cryptic, embittered terms. He once said to Susan: "I've been writing this big, goddamn symphony, but it'll never be played"; on another occasion, "that's music for my tombstone" —hence *Epitaph*.

The work is clearly inspired by and, in a way, a retroactive tribute to Duke Ellington, not at all in style or language —that is entirely Mingus's own —but in the concept of extended form and a multimovement work of "symphonic" proportions. An interesting sidelight to this aspect of Mingus's work is the fact that he discovered Ellington rather late, not until the mid-1940s. Oddly enough, he had studied Bartok, Schonberg, Stravinsky, and Maurice Ravel, but not much Ellington. He had written atonal, free-form pieces such as "Chill of Death" (he also gave it its German title, "Todeskalte") in 1939 and "Half-Mast Inhibition" in 1940, quite a few years before his immersion in Ellington's music and large-scale works. Mingus, who was not averse to making exaggerated claims — he often claimed that he had played in as advanced a style as Ornette Coleman years *before* Coleman, that is, in the early 1940s — may have embellished the truth somewhat in regard to the early creation of "Chill of Death" and "Half-Mast Inhibition."

What is more likely is that he first began to conceive of a piece like “Chill of Death” in 1939 and completed it over a period of time during the next decade. What argues for this scenario is that “Chill of Death” in its first version was more in a classical contemporary vein and also lacking in any form of jazz improvisation; what argues against this scenario is that none of Mingus’s other known early works (“This Subdues My Passion,” “Weird Nightmare,” “Shuffle Bass Boogie”) have any of the characteristics and originality of conception heard in “Chill of Death.” The work was shelved and not heard again until forty years later in the premiere of *Epitaph*.

I don’t think anyone really knows over what span of time this gigantic eighteen-movement work was written, nor when all the individual movements were composed. Indeed we may never know the full details of *Epitaph*’s creation. Some sections — “Better Get It in Your Soul,” “Freedom,” “Peggy’s Blue Skylight” — were composed in the late 1950s and early 1960s and are, in fact, known to us in other versions for smaller instrumentations (his Jazz Workshop quintets, sextets, septets) and then rescored and expanded for *Epitaph*. Others seem to have been composed specifically for *Epitaph* — pieces like “O.P.,” “Monk, Bunk & Vice Versa (Osmotin’)” — and later played in small group versions. Still other *Epitaph* movements, such as “Main Score,” “The Children’s Hour of Dream,” and certain originally untitled pieces, were surely conceived directly for the 31-piece ensemble.

But taking all we do know (or seem to know) into account, and taking the magnitude of the work, its ambitious grand plan, its vision and scope into consideration, my best guess is that Mingus worked on *Epitaph* intermittently over a period of many years — say, between the early or mid-1940s and 1962.

The manuscript score of *Epitaph* was discovered, as I mentioned, by Andrew Homzy in 1985, written mostly in Mingus’s own hand, with many pages smudged, frayed, worn, and torn and as a result in some places virtually illegible. Upon closer inspection,

the score, despite its 3,446 continuous measures —a stack of pages a foot high —seemed not to be entirely complete. For example, it seemed not to have any ultimate ending, and some short sections existed only in verbal description. Moreover, whatever instrumental parts may have existed (especially those for the abortive 1962 Town Hall concert and United Artists recording session) had all but disappeared. With no usable set of parts extant and only a far from presentable score to work with, it was immediately clear to Mrs. Mingus and me that before a performance of *Epitaph* could ever take place, the score would require extensive editing, occasional reconstructing, and even, in some movements, some construction and completing.

This is certainly not the appropriate place to list in detail all the editorial and reconstructive decisions that had to be made to make *Epitaph* performable. But a brief summary of the types or categories of editings is probably in order: (1) Apart from deciphering the often illegible manuscript, the correction of obvious note errors or inadvertent note misspellings (many of these by other copyists) ; (2) renotation of Mingus's many idiosyncratic rhythmic notations; (3) the correction of many faulty octave positions (particularly in timpani, trombone, and bass parts) ; (4) determining the use of percussion instruments, left mostly unspecified by Mingus; (5) resolving the profusion of shortcut "col" indications, many of which were technically impossible or unclear ; (6) adding or reconciling discrepancies of dynamics and phrasings; (7) clarifying the numerous doubling requirements in the nine-piece reed section; (8) determining the ultimate sequence of movements, which, despite Mingus's consecutive numbering of all the measures —up to 3,446 —and because of many contradictory verbal instructions, remained in many respects unclear and confusing in the score; and finally (9) creating an ending for the entire work, alluded to only rather cryptically (verbally) in the manuscript.

Obviously, as was his wont in performing his music, Mingus would have resolved all of these questions in rehearsals, fleshing

out missing parts or sections, refining balances, dynamics, phrasings, and many other performing details, directing and inspiring his musicians in performance with his bass playing and shouted instructions. Mingus was masterful at eliciting from his musicians the precise sound and character and mood he heard (and required) in his pieces, beyond the limited capacity of musical notation.

I regarded it as an honor and privilege to have edited and prepared *Epitaph* for performance, a truly awesome task, which I approached not only with profound reverence and respect for Mingus's creative talent, but also with an intimate knowledge of his music and performance practices, based on a close and extensive twenty-five-year professional association with him.

The first movement of *Epitaph*, its primary position unequivocally indicated by Mingus and confirmed by his titling, "Main Score," sets the tone for the entire work. The remarkable gutsy sound, driving energy, and powerful punctuations we hear at the beginning of the movement represent a substantial quotation of an earlier major work, Mingus's 1956 *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, here reorchestrated for the much larger 31-piece ensemble. Adding a particular excitement to the music is the prominent timpani part, imparting ominous subterranean rumblings to the music (incidentally, much of it originally written an octave too low by Mingus). The dark mixture of low brass and low reeds — a favorite Mingus sound — reinforces the sombre yet urgent, propulsive character of the music. Indeed, *Epitaph* is full of low-register sounds of incredible density and overtone-rich complexity, amassing instruments such as tuba, two bass trombones, contrabass-clarinet, baritone sax, bowed bass, timpani into powerful tonal conglomerates. Let us hear the opening section of *Epitaph* [excerpt from "Main Score"].

The second movement, "Percussion Discussion," was conceived originally in 1955 as a virtuoso drums-and-bass duet for Mingus himself and Max Roach. For *Epitaph*, "Percussion Discussion" was expanded and elaborated into a substantial work for a lo-piece ensemble of brass, saxes, and rhythm. It is one of the more unusual

pieces in *Epitaph*, more in the realm of “Third Stream” music, in that much of the piece, although jazz related, is in a modern classical and atonal vein, involving very few typical jazz structures but instead many tempo and meter changes.

A lugubrious-sounding opening marked “very slow, ad lib. with expression” for tuba and bowed string bass, soon joined by piano and baritone saxophone, sets the essentially stern mood of this piece. Much of its discourse pits the rhythm section against terse sustained harmonies in the “horns.” Eventually improvised bass/drum duets and alternating solos emerge. Then suddenly the music bursts joyously into full swing, dispelling the previous sombre mood [“Percussion Discussion”].

We skip now to the fourth movement, called “Started,” based on Vernon Duke’s great classic “I Can’t Get Started,” a song that Mingus dearly loved and played —improvised upon —hundreds of times in his life. Here in *Epitaph*, he conceives it as a gigantic series of variations, virtually a monumental classical *passacaglia*, conceived on a truly grand scale. I don’t know of anything quite as ambitious in jazz, certainly not prior to 1962, and it is hard to think of anything since then of similar scope. Designed in eight long 32-bar choruses, plus an expansively complex, bursting-at-the-musical-seams coda, at a moderately slow ballad tempo the piece lasts upward of a staggering sixteen minutes. But in our world-premiere recorded performance we cut two and a half choruses (nearly five minutes). It may draw a smile from the listener when Mingus late in “Started,” in the space of only six bars, quotes Anton Dvorak’s *Humoresque*, Aram Khatchaturian’s *Gayne* ballet “Saber Dance,” David Rose’s *Holiday for Strings*, and the ever-popular bugle favorite “Reveille.” A little later he quotes —though almost hidden in the densely opaque sonorities —Ellington’s *Reminiscing in Tempo*. As the movement progresses, and the gradually thickening textures preclude any individual “solos” from projecting above the orchestra, Mingus adds more and more layers of thick harmonies; all sense of Vernon Duke’s tune and its “changes” are

gone, buried in a veritable avalanche of atonal counterpoint. An almost agonizing chaotic outcry is suddenly, unexpectedly relieved by a brief cadenza of massive atonal held chords: the music has moved suddenly from polyphonic chaos to homophonic solidarity. The previous chaotic music returns briefly, only to lead this time to a quietly sad ending in five muted trumpets and low brass instruments, coming to rest on a tonally ambiguous final chord. Obviously we don't have time here to play even the full eleven minutes of "Started," but I would like you to hear the amazing sixth chorus and coda [excerpts from "Started"].

Skipping to the eighth movement, "Self Portrait/Chill of Death," we find what is in some ways Mingus's most original creation in *Epitaph*. Its basic premise is that during its multivariied course, some of it on the outer borderline of jazz, every one —literally every one— of the thirty-one musicians will have had several chances to "solo," to improvise, and thus significantly contribute to the final outcome of the piece. But even more unusual is the idea that most of these solos are very brief: four measures, six measures, three and a half measures, and so on, although a few are much longer. The uniqueness of this conception lies in the fact that this vast scattering of different-length and differently placed solos across the eleven minutes of this piece produces a complex, ever-changing kaleidoscope of instrumental textures and colors. Solos come and go at a rapid rate, more often than not overlapping with each other, and in highly varied combinations, everything from a single solo line to (at several points) as many as nine soloists improvising simultaneously. It is as if Mingus not only wanted to have improvisation lend a looseness, a sense of spontaneity, to the piece's continuity, but wanted even the point and order in which these improvisations occurred to be random and improvisatory —the improvisatory element built into the very architecture and structural fabric of the work.

As complex as this overall design of solos is structurally, the underlying harmonic scheme is all the more simple, consisting

mostly of prolonged pedal points in stationary harmonies. The contrast between these long harmonic expanses and the constantly busy, variable network of epigrammatic solos is a stroke of genius and makes this piece one of the most visionary and daring in conception in all of jazz [excerpts from ‘Self Portrait/Chill of Death’].

I’d like to make a big jump now to movement 14, “The Children’s Hour of Dreams.” This piece is certainly in some respects again one of the more unusual movements in *Epitaph*. It contains absolutely no improvisation, makes no attempt to swing, is indeed more contemporary classical than jazz (but acquires a certain jazz feeling by being performed by jazz players with their natural jazz inflections), and, finally, is built formally on the structural principle, first explored by such composers as Stravinsky and Edgard Varese, of composing a number of relatively short segments of music — themes, ideas, phrases — and then repeating and manipulating the sequence of these units (eight such separate, distinctive units in ‘Children’s Hour’) in constantly changing patterns. Indeed, the work seems to hark back again to Mingus’s early studies of classical twentieth-century music by Bartok, Stravinsky, Ravel, and Debussy. At times one hears subtle allusions to the *Sacre du Printemps*. Although in principle I hate to play only a short segment of a piece, since this piece is rather sectionalized and, in a wonderfully cumulative way, repetitive in construction, perhaps a minute or two will suffice [excerpts from “The Children’s Hour”].

Now we come to one of the strangest, most puzzling situations in Mingus’s *Epitaph* : an originally untitled piece — Susan Mingus and I have now called it “The Underdog Rising,” a near-quote from Mingus’s autobiography — a piece that almost did not get included in this (or any) *Epitaph* performance. Indeed, as editor I am proud of the fact that I was able to rescue this piece from oblivion, because the condition of this movement in Mingus’s manuscript score was so chaotic that not only could no instrumental parts be extracted from it but it seemed that even an intelligible score could not be assembled.

I don't know how it came to pass, but Mingus's score for this piece, as it was left after his death, for some reason contained numerous Scotch-taped partial overlays, which, unfortunately, made no musical sense whatsoever and in no instance fitted with the rest of the given score page. For example, a trumpet section overlay that was pasted onto pages 1–5 could not logically belong on those pages. Similarly, a reed section overlay of *five* bars was pasted onto another score page that, in all other instruments, had only *four* bars. In these and many other misplaced overlays harmonies did not line up vertically, musical ideas did not fit either horizontally or vertically, overlaid passages stopped abruptly and nonsensically, measure numbers in the overlays did not match those on the rest of the page, and so on. It was the strangest and most frustrating musical puzzle I had ever seen.

The thought occurred to me rather soon that I ought to dislodge all the paste-overs to see what was underneath them, hoping to find, presumably, some initial version that Mingus had attempted to revise with the overlays. To my utter surprise the staff lines beneath the overlays were all blank (!) and, therefore, yielded no useful information, not even a clue.

Wishing to trust and respect Mingus's score, I was truly puzzled as to what to make of this incomprehensible hodgepodge. But I was determined to solve the riddle, because I had by now seen that many of the disparate pieces of the puzzle contained remarkable musical ideas and that some of these related back to other movements in *Epitaph*, especially "Main Score." After studying and analyzing the movement for almost three full days, trying to make sense of it and trying to find logical relationships between and among different segments of the score, it dawned on me that Mingus (or somebody) for reasons unknown—whether in a drunken stupor or out of sheer incompetence—must have pasted the various revisions (overlays) onto the wrong pages. I further realized, since there were a dozen of these misplacements, that I would never solve the mystery of this movement unless I actually

cut up the score pages into all of the separate fragments —some forty or so snippets of paper— and, as in a picture puzzle, tried to match up the various pieces into a whole that made sense vertically and horizontally, harmonically and melodically.

It took me another two days to accomplish that. Finally not only was I able to line up the separate pieces properly, but I found a logical place for *every* piece, even the minutest scrap —an important clue, I believe, confirming the correctness of my editorial puzzle solving. Modesty compels me to admit that some other solution to the puzzle is theoretically possible and that Mingus may have had something else in mind, differing from my solution. But given all the imponderables of the situation —not even knowing anything about the origin of or reason for the overlays, and until some other better information is forthcoming —my edition will have to stand.

I am happy that I was able to rescue this piece, for it turns out to be one of Mingus's most remarkable creations. Tuba, bass, and contrabass clarinet, set in a very slow tempo and accompanied by bitonal piano and guitar chords, percussion, and low timpani rumblings, create a murky *misterioso* opening atmosphere. Muted trombones in unison add to the gloom and pessimism, but soon bluesish saxophones and woodwinds introduce a mild sense of optimism. Once again, dark timpani rolls keep the music temporarily anchored in the depths. Now a talking "plunger" trombone solo (played by Britt Woodman) — which will dominate the rest of the piece —tries to enliven the mood, but sliding plunger-muted trumpets and sombre saxophone harmonies keep the "intruder" down, at least initially. As the trombone "preaching" builds, heavy chords in the other trombones and low saxes form a potent counterargument. Very gradually the trombone's chattering lifts the overall mood. Almost like a ray of midwinter sunshine, brighter high-register sonorities in open trumpets and reeds now penetrate the gloom. The rhythmic surge and deep swing of the music finally become overwhelming. A series of highly chromatic trumpet chords

turn into close-voiced clusters, signaling the end of the movement (which in fact had no ending in Mingus's score). A brief free trombone cadenza (by Woodman) seemed an appropriate way to bring this remarkable movement to a fitting close ["Underdog Rising"].

I feel that I must now, in closing, present to the reader another side of Mingus's talents: his work as a bass player and improviser. There can be no better way to demonstrate his gifts in these areas than to play for you parts of a 1960 recording, "Stormy Weather" (the famous ballad by Harold Arlen), in which Mingus is brilliantly partnered with Eric Dolphy, the great alto saxophonist —and "conqueror" of several other wind instruments, especially the bass clarinet.

Your ears will certainly discern the greatness of this rendition. I would therefore like the music to speak to you directly. But I can't resist the temptation to mention two aspects of this one-take recorded performance. In view of the fact that in his lifetime, and even often now, thirty years after his death, Dolphy is underrated or maligned and/or ignored by many jazz critics and musicians, I want to say something on his behalf, not that he really in the long run needs my defense. This trashing and ignorance of Eric Dolphy's work is quite incomprehensible to me. But I guess when famous musicians such as Miles Davis blasted Dolphy, claiming that he had no ears, played artificial nonsense, and couldn't play on changes, many people, impressed by Miles, blindly followed suit with similar criticisms. Dolphy's performance on "Stormy Weather" — with its inspired devotion to Harold Arlen's harmonic changes, Dolphy's incredible melodic invention, never letting the original tune melody too far out of mind, and extraordinary technical and creative virtuosity, with his beautiful tone at times imparting the cry and anguish of the blues —should put all such aberrant criticisms to rest.

My second suggestion is to listen to how Mingus, in his bass playing, fulfills not one, not two, but three musical functions simultaneously. He is, first, in his bass lines the keeper of the fundamental harmonies of the song; second, he is the main rhythmic

keeper (the drums are often barely audible), and in his pulse and swing manages to achieve a tremendous amount of expressive and dynamic variety, from *pp* whispers to suddenly plangent outbursts ; third, he is —on his bass —a melodist, playing beautiful melodic countermelodies to Dolphy's alto. Indeed, I dare say, some of the counterpoint between the two players is so perfect —and remember that this was totally improvised —that it could not, cannot, be bettered by even the greatest contrapuntist taking, say, three hours or three days to achieve a similar high result.

I rest my case, and let the music now speak for itself.

Music Played

"Dippermouth Blues"	King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band	1923
"Big Butter and Egg Man"	Louis Armstrong	1926
"Potato Head Blues"	Louis Armstrong	1926
"Muggles"	Louis Armstrong/Earl Hines	1928
"Mahogany Hall Stomp"	Louis Armstrong	1933
"Toby"	Bennie Moten	1932
"Lady Be Good"	Lester Young/Count Basie	1936
"Shaw 'Nuff"	Dizzy Gillespie/Charlie Parker	1945
"I Can't Get Started"	Lennie Tristano	1946
"Apple Honey"	Woody Herman	1945
"Misterioso"	Thelonious Monk	1948

*Variants on a Theme of
Thelonious Monk*

	Gunther Schuller	1960
"Mood Indigo"	Duke Ellington	1930
"Azure"	Duke Ellington	1937
"Daybreak Express"	Duke Ellington	1933
<i>Reminiscing in Tempo</i>	Duke Ellington	1935
"Cotton Tail"	Duke Ellington	1940
"The Clothed Woman"	Duke Ellington	1947
"Where's the Music"	Duke Ellington	1958
<i>Mingus Fingers</i>	Charles Mingus	1947
<i>Epitaph</i>	Charles Mingus	1940(?)–1962