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## Synchrony of the Sublime: A Performer's Guide to Duke Ellington's Wordless Melodies for Soprano

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SYNCHRONY OF THE SUBLIME: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO DUKE  
ELLINGTON'S WORDLESS MELODIES FOR SOPRANO

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MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the  
College of Fine Arts  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Lisa Michelle Clark

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Everett McCorvey, Professor of Voice

2017

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## ABSTRACT OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

### SYNCHRONY OF THE SUBLIME: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO DUKE ELLINGTON'S WORDLESS MELODIES FOR SOPRANO

This monograph provides an in-depth examination of the background, musical, and performance issues related to Duke Ellington's wordless melodies, as well as epigrammatic biographies of Ellington and three female vocalists whose voices he employed as instruments: Adelaide Hall, Kay Davis, and Alice Babs. As early as the twenties, Ellington innovatively used the voice as a wordless instrumental color—an idea he extended into both his secular and sacred works. His iconoclastic instrumentalization of the soprano voice in compositions such as “Creole Love Call”, “Minnehaha”, “Transblucency”, “On a Turquoise Cloud”, and “T.G.G.T.” merits consideration by scholars and performers alike, as these melodies are artistically complex and offer valuable insights into Ellington's organic and collaborative compositional process.

Although Ellington's wordless melodies for the soprano voice have fallen on the periphery of discussions on twentieth century American music, perhaps out of sheer obscurity, the need for alternative teaching and performance materials gives rise to a host of topics for further study regarding these pieces. Assimilating Ellington's programmatic and mood pieces for the instrumentalized soprano voice into the canon of chamber repertoire fosters a new arena of scholarly and artistic endeavor for the trained singer. Therefore, central to this study are the following considerations: context, pedagogical challenges (range, tessitura, vowels, phrase length, etc.) nature of accompaniment and instrumentation, form, and the nature of Ellington's vocal writing as it pertains to the wordless obbligato and concert works featuring the wordless voice including, “Minnehaha,” “Transblucency,” “On A Turquoise Cloud,” and “T.G.T.T.,” aka “Too Good To Title.”

This study evaluates Ellington's technique of casting the wordless female voice in unique musical contexts via musical analyses, as well as pedagogical and interpretive assessments of selected pieces. The resultant amalgam of musical identities, instrumental and vocal, fostered creative polyphony and epitomized the coined “Ellington Effect.” The following analysis centers on a chronological survey of Ellington's wordless melodies performed and recorded by Adelaide Hall, Kay Davis, and Alice Babs. The goal of this project is to present a study in historical context and significance, style, device, pedagogical and performance considerations for those works employing the flexibility,

technique, and aural training of the studied singer with instrumental jazz idioms in a cross-genre context.

**KEYWORDS:** Ellington, Duke; Wordless Melodies; Performer's Guide; Davis, Kay; Hall, Adelaide; Babs, Alice

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Lisa Michelle Clark

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May 4, 2017

SYNCHRONY OF THE SUBLIME: A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO DUKE  
ELLINGTON'S WORDLESS MELODIES

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May 4, 2017

To my grandfather, Joseph Myszak

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I am indebted to the staff, including Holly Nelson and Wendy Shay, at the Archives Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History for graciously assisting my research and audio digitization needs and answering all my questions and to Josie Walters-Johnston, reference librarian at the Moving Image Section in the Library of Congress, for her assistance with the original reel-to-reel films. Thank you to Anne Rhodes at the Yale Oral History of American Music for providing access to recorded interviews with Alice Babs and Kay Davis.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Intent

This monograph serves two purposes: 1) to present a chronological discussion of the provenance of Ellington's use of the wordless voice as an instrumental musical device and 2) to provide a performance guide and research tool for selected wordless melodies and vocal obbligatos. It is important to note that this is not a discussion about the jazz vocalese where improvisation and scat syllables reign. This paper focuses explicitly on Ellington's use of the soprano voice as an instrument as, at this writing, thorough research elicits no extant academic literature pertaining to this topic solely.

### Need for Study

The lexicons of Ellington research grant limited attention to those works in which Ellington employs the classical female voice as a means of artistic expression within his orchestra. In fact, most literature regarding Ellington's use of the voice centers on his song output; exploring his contributions to the American songbook, including titles such as "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing," "Satin Doll," "Prelude to a Kiss," "I'm Beginning to See The Light," "Take The A'Train," and other tunes immortalized by vocalists like Ivie Anderson, Betty Roche, and Ella Fitzgerald. Typically, these songs are sung in a non-classical style, incorporating chest voice dominance instead of head voice, improvisation, and oftentimes scat syllables—hallmarks of the vocal jazz idiom.

Preliminary searches through extant literature, including theses, dissertations, research databases, and peer-reviewed journals, such as the *Journal of Singing*, produced little, if any, information regarding Ellington's unique employment of the soprano voice.

The discovery of several Ellington recordings featuring an African-American classically trained soprano, Kay Davis, provided the impetus for this project. In particular, Davis's recording of "Creole Love Call," adapted from a King Oliver tune called "Camp Meeting Blues," and recorded by Adelaide Hall in 1927, prompted further research. "Creole Love Call" employs a call and response style indicative of the blues, evidencing the "primordial relationship between vocals and instruments."<sup>1</sup> Davis, who maintained a six-year tenure with Ellington, provided a unique contribution to the orchestra via wordless obligatos and her occasional interpretations of popular ballads. Recordings of Ellington repertoire by vocal performers such as Barbara Hendricks, Audra McDonald, Kathleen Battle, Kristin Chenoweth, and most recently Candace Hoynes, piqued further interest on the topic of cross-genre endeavors by classically trained singers.

### Methodology

This study blends historical, theoretical, and pedagogical analyses while exploring the possibility of inclusion, within the broader context of American song performance, practice, and study, Ellington's progeny of jazz idioms fused with classical vocalism as expressed in performances and recordings with soprano Kay Davis and with Swedish singer Alice Babs in the Sacred Concerts and other selected recordings.

At this writing, the Smithsonian Institute houses a vast amount of Ellington archival material, including original music manuscripts, sound recordings, recorded interviews, and a host of additional programs, posters, records, and other ephemera. Due to the lack of published musical scores, many of Ellington's works are transcriptions of recordings. The nature of this project mandates the inclusion of primary source material

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<sup>1</sup> Pierro Scaruffi, *Duke Ellington*. <http://www.scaruffi.com/jazz/ellington.html>

in the form of original manuscripts, recordings, and interview transcripts. With special permission, these materials are accessible through the Smithsonian archives and the Yale Oral History of American Music (OHAM).

Outlined below are the scope, limitations, resources, and organizational framework for my doctoral research project. To facilitate manageability, these carefully chosen primary and secondary resources have been assigned to categories: 1) books, articles, theses, and dissertations containing critical historical and biographical commentary and analytical information; 2) online resources, recordings, liner notes; 3) original manuscripts of the selected works, interviews with Kay Davis, Alice Babs, and Adelaide Hall (transcriptions provided by the Oral History of American Music at Yale), and transcriptions of recorded musical material with emendations.

For biographical information, I have chosen those books that frequently appear in the lexicons of Ellington music research as well as popular and jazz music bibliographies. Unfortunately, there are limited comprehensive sources of biographical information on Kay Davis. One such source comes in the form of a 2006 article from the *Shorefront* journal, authored by Carrie Moea Brown. The Northwestern University Alumni News website includes a very brief entry on Kay Davis—a disappointing discovery considering her professional achievements. Joining the band in 1944, Davis is remembered for her interpretations of Ellington's wordless songs. She also sang spirituals and ballads with the Ellington orchestra during her tenure. Similarly, Alice Babs's informal biography on Wikipedia seems the only extant accessible literature chronicling her life's work. In 1989

Babs wrote an autobiography titled *Född till musik* (“Born for Music”), however the only extant copy available is the Swedish translation.<sup>2</sup>

Of relevance are selected Ellington Carnegie Hall performances from 1945-1948, and his *Sacred Concerts*, where his unprecedented writing for the solo voice required “classical control [and] jazz finesse.”<sup>3</sup> Archival material, including programs, recordings, film, manuscripts, and transcriptions will form the foundation for pedagogical and theoretical analysis of a of the following titles: “Creole Love Call”, “Transblucency”, “On A Turquoise Cloud”, “Minnehaha”, and “T.G.T.T.”.

With regard to pedagogy, consider the following for each work: range, tessitura, rhythm, technical demands (agility, dynamics, phrasing etc.), texture, and vowel choice. To support these findings, I use original manuscripts and recordings in a comparative fashion with the intention of rendering a holistic and historically informed interpretation and assessment of the selected works.

### Review of Literature

Given the narrow focus of this topic, the quest for literature specifically addressing the wordless voice in the context of Duke Ellington’s Orchestra, *Sacred Concerts*, and other selected works, elicits few results. The primary searchable databases, including JSTOR, PQDT, RILM, and RISM, produced a vast amount of supportive material worth mention. This includes theoretical analyses of selected works, epigrammatic biographical content, but scarcely any commentary on works considered

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<sup>2</sup> Alice Babs. *Född till musik: memoarer*. Norstedt, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Lloyd, “The Revival of an Early” Crossover” Masterwork: Duke Ellington’s *Sacred Concerts*.” *Choral Journal* 49.11 (2009): 8-26.

here. This lit review is neither exhaustive, nor inclusive of all the primary sources (manuscripts, interviews, and recordings) necessary for this project.

Research produces vast amounts of biographical information on the life and music of Duke Ellington. Due to the astonishing and prolific achievements of the composer, as well as his complex, enigmatic persona, and his spiritual, and philosophical profile, no singular reference captures the fullness of Ellington's life and music. Each study presents a unique perspective. For the purposes of this essay, I have selected sources essential for establishing a comprehensive perspective. The first biography of Ellington is Barry Ulanov's 1946 book titled, *Duke Ellington*. Because of its early date, the narrative-style study focuses on Ellington's early career, with an emphasis on culture and racial tensions within society. Ulanov interviewed Ellington and existing band members extensively in his effort, though Ellington opined the attempt at a biography a bit premature.

*Duke: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* by Derek Jewell is a well-written account and thorough of Ellington's life, emphasizing the later years. Jewell, a British music critic, followed Ellington's career closely during the early forties and befriended him in the last decade of the composer's life. He weaves together a chronology of events, band member comings and goings, and profiles of the personal and public relationships Ellington maintained. Through personal conversations, Jewell crafted a timeline of Ellington's life that included personal touches. Unfortunately, there is little information regarding Ellington's creative growth or musical style.

James Lincoln Collier's 1987 book, *Duke Ellington*, offers an unabashedly biased interpretation on the Ellington legacy. His characterization of Ellington as an "improvising jazz musician" overtly ignores Ellington's stature as a serious composer,



established upon return from his first trip abroad in 1933 and maintained throughout the entirety of his career. Collier thrusts assumptions on his reader more firmly rooted in untenable arguments than in fact. In contrast to earlier biographers, he does include several musical analyses of selected works, though as Mark Tucker points out, they are marred with numerous errors.<sup>4</sup> Although there is some value in its oral history component and chronology, Collier's overall deeply skewed writing proves too contentious.

Any study of Ellington would be remiss if it did not include Ellington's 1973 autobiography, *Music is My Mistress*. Here, in addition to writing about his upbringing and development as a composer, Ellington offers commentary about each of the musicians, vocalists, impresarios, and other noteworthy individuals he worked with throughout his career. However, Ellington is not very forthcoming about his enigmatic personality and personal life, leaving much more to be uncovered and interpreted.

This document relies heavily on several texts, each providing substantive content specific to Ellington's compositional style, and complete discography, than found in any of the previously mentioned biographies. W.E. Timmer's *Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen* provides a critical catalog of every documented Ellington recording ever produced, as well as a list of all unrecorded performances. In addition to providing dates, locations, record labels for individual albums, and number of takes, the listings also detail the exact personnel involved with each record. For the purposes of this document, Timmer's work was extremely helpful in determining the number of studio recordings and live performances for each piece. Perhaps the only critical piece of information lacking was the breakdown of personnel for selected recordings that took place within the context of a larger program for the entire

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Tucker. "Notes." *Notes*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1989, pp. 499–502., [www.jstor.org/stable/940802](http://www.jstor.org/stable/940802)

orchestra. Particularly in those cases where the vocalist only recorded a tune once (Kay Davis's occasional ballad), this catalog provides an easily navigable source to find information about those rare recordings. Furthermore, as recordings were such an integral part of Ellington's legacy, Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* offers its readers a detailed look at specific recordings. In addition to providing historical context and epigrammatic biographies of sidemen, Lambert's guide, written in an accessible language, offers succinct, descriptive narratives of the music.

Though somewhat dated, Leonard Feather's 1960 volume titled *The New Encyclopedia of Jazz*, contains an introductory appreciation by Ellington himself, an historical survey of jazz, a succinct primer on jazz style, and a short, yet salient biographical entry on Duke Ellington. Collier's mention of "outstanding instrumentalists" heard during the 1940's, a time when Ellington's band personnel remained in flux, creates a meaningful perspective.<sup>5</sup>

James Lincoln Collier's *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History*, includes a chapter on Ellington, discerning the elements that helped foster the "Ellington Effect," namely sense of tone, command of dissonance, mastery of melody, and the ability to combine and effectively use his musicians in a manner that produced his unique sound—or the "Ellington Effect." Hosts of other books, articles, and journal entries include similar information regarding musical style. However, none of these readings explicitly focus on the use of the voice as an integral component to the orchestral texture. This deficit in research prompts further exploration and serves as the impetus for this project.

*Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* by Janna Steed Tull is one of the most definitive sources for information about Ellington's musical journey and the

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<sup>5</sup> Leonard Feather, *The New Encyclopedia of Jazz*, Horizon Pr, 1960.

manifestation of his spirituality in the Sacred Concerts. She chronicles the cultural, societal, and religious influences that shaped Ellington's career, beginning at age fourteen with his "Soda Fountain Rag." Additionally, she provides insight to the parallel movements in music, race, and culture evidenced in the composer's *oeuvre*. Steed writes of the progeny of sacred black music, from the blues to gospel, as well as how the Ellington orchestra fit uniquely into the context of sacred music. It is especially important to point out that Ellington referred to his sacred works as "contemporary sacred music" rather than sacred jazz.<sup>6</sup>

Of additional import to this study, Wilbert Weldon Hill's dissertation, "The Sacred Concerts of Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington," provides a thorough historical background and significance of the *Sacred Concerts*, Ellington's compositional style, as well as a complete structural and harmonic analysis of each concert. Ellington composed the second and third *Sacred Concerts* with the voice and artistry of Swedish born soprano Alice Babs in mind—a voice that encompasses a three-octave range and possesses unusual agility, control, and pitch centrality. Relying on the 1972 publication of "T.G.T.T.," Weldon explores what he describes as "the most difficult of the movements Babs was asked to perform."<sup>7</sup> Though purely theoretical in content, Hill's insightful analysis of Ellington's *Sacred Concerts* has been of the greatest value.

In a similar, yet less technical vein, Thomas Lloyd's article titled "The Revival of an early 'Crossover' masterwork: Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts," offers its readers a glimpse into what he refers to as the "central creative focus of the last decade in the life

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<sup>6</sup> Janna Steed Tull, *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 120.

<sup>7</sup> Wilbert Weldon Hill, *The Sacred Concerts of Edward Kennedy "Duke Ellington"* (PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of American, 1994), 260.

of one of America's greatest composers.”<sup>8</sup> Lloyd describes the emergence of sacred jazz in the 1960's and provides the historical and cultural context leading to the commission of Ellington's first concert of sacred jazz. In addition to providing an overview of each of the three concerts, Lloyd takes time to acknowledge Ellington's innovative approach to soloistic singing in the *Second Sacred Concert*. Noting Ellington's muse, the soprano Alice Babs, the author posits, “She allowed him to conjure up sinuous melodic lines with huge skips and chromatic intervals that required both the range and control of an opera singer and the flexibility and finesse of a jazz singer.”<sup>9</sup>

The Yale Oral History of American Music (OHAM) provided two important interview transcripts and audio files that helped render more substantive profiles of Adelaide Hall and Kay Davis. Owing to copyright, and estate permissions, I cannot include direct quotes from those interviews. Nonetheless, these primary sources of oral history contributed priceless amounts of depth and perspective. Wendy Shay, at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History Duke Ellington Archives, digitized several cassette recordings that contain interviews with Alice Babs and Kay Davis. These additional oral histories help render this research more meaningful, credible, and salient.

Without access to the Smithsonian's Ellington archives and the containers housing Duke Ellington's manuscripts, a project such as this would be impossible. Although the sheer bulk of his output makes for difficult perusal, I was able to locate manuscripts for each of the titles examined in this project. One of the biggest challenges in collecting these materials is the uncertainty of authorship. In many cases, Ellington collaborated with his musicians and with Billy Strayhorn. As such, portions of some or

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<sup>8</sup> Lloyd, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 7.

all sketches were extant not only in Ellington's containers, but in additional containers and notebooks as well. For certain pieces, I was not able to locate an entire score, rather, fragments of pencil or ink scores that appear to have been composed hastily. Some materials were in a fragile condition.

Sourcing credible and substantive biographical material for the three female vocalists at the crux this paper proved more difficult than anticipated. Several helpful sources were consulted to mine background information on the subjects. *Underneath A Harlem Moon: The Harlem to Paris Years of Adelaide Hall* by Ian Cameron Williams is a well-researched repository of information about the jazz and vaudeville chanteuse's eight-decade long career, with an emphasis on the early period of her career before her exile to Britain in 1938. Williams posits Hall as a "missing link" in the Harlem Renaissance's well-documented history.<sup>10</sup> His attribution with this biography confirms Hall to be a pioneer in vocal jazz, not a figure to be overshadowed or cast into the periphery of the Harlem Renaissance. Hall and Williams met in 1971 and remained friends until the Hall's death in 1993. Regarding Hall's connection to Ellington, specifically her famous wordless counter melody heard in the 1927 recording of "Creole Love Call," Williams points out that she was never properly credited for her contribution.

### Expected Outcomes

To date, academic discourse on the provenance, aesthetics, performance, and significance of Ellington's superimposition of classical vocalists and jazz instrumental idioms is evidenced in too few instances. This study will not strive to disseminate a

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<sup>10</sup> Iain Cameron Williams, *Underneath A Harlem Moon: The Harlem to Paris Years of Adelaide Hall* (London: Continuum, 2002), xiv.

comprehensive theoretical analysis, nor craft an ethnomusicological resource for academia, inasmuch as it aims to provide a resource of some utility within the context of vocal literature and performance.

Additionally, in providing a more in-depth look at not only the musical-theoretic devices Ellington used in his compositions featuring the wordless voice, but also the vocalists inextricably woven into some of Ellington's greatest live and recorded performances, this project serves to add breadth to the existing body of research on Ellington and his less well-known female vocalists. In the wider scope of vocal literature and voice pedagogy, this project serves to espouse and ignite interest in repertoire that holds implications for performance in today's recital faire.

### Overview

This document consists of five chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 offers a brief biography of Duke Ellington. Chapter 3 contains epigrammatic biographies of Adelaide Hall, Kay Davis, and Alice Babs, with an emphasis on their contributions to Ellington's wordless melodies. Chapter 4 contains the analyses of selected works including, "Creole Love Call," "Transblucency," "Minnehaha," "On A Turquoise Cloud," and "T.G.T.T." Each analysis includes a discussion of context, significance, musical content, and performance considerations. Chapter 5 provides a summary as well as recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2: DUKE ELLINGTON

The inimitable Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington is recognized as a cultural icon and seminal figure in twentieth century American music history. His many roles, including composer, pianist, arranger, and bandleader, fostered a panoply of creative and personal achievements over his lifetime. His six-decade long love affair with music left an interpretive legacy of African American history and culture, remaining, to this day, a hallmark of black pride and social awareness. Ellington’s professional and creative collaborations with his personnel and individuals such as composer-lyricist Billy Strayhorn and music publisher Irving Mills influenced the progeny of jazz music in ways too numerous to list. Ellington’s most profound genius was expressed in his ability to combine the distinctive musical identities of his musicians in unique chord voicings. He played his orchestra like an instrument; his talented musicians provided sounds to which he provided context.

From distinguished popular tunes like, “Mood Indigo,” “Sophisticated Lady,” and “Solitude,” to epigrammatic instrumental pieces, musicals, and large-scale concert works, the breadth and bulk of Ellington’s diverse body of work verges on some 2,000 titles, serving as a testament to his steadfastness and consistency through the years.<sup>11</sup> Ellington’s discography of records, which are legion, evidences the inherently collaborative nature of his work and the undiminishing nature of his musical-intellectual genius. In Ellington’s first article, “The Duke Steps Out (1931),” he wrote:

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<sup>11</sup> Marcello Piras. "Ellington, Duke." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Feb. 2017.  
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2249397>>.

The numbers I write are never, I think you will agree, of the “corn-fed” type. Always I try to be original in my harmonies and rhythms. I am not trying to suggest that my tunes are superior to those of other writers. Because I think that the music of my race is something which is going to live, something which posterity will honour in a higher sense than merely that of the music of the ballroom...The music of my race is something more than the “American idiom.” It is the result of our transplantation to American soil, and was our reaction in the plantation days to the tyranny we endured. What we could not say openly we expressed in music, and what we know as “jazz” is something more than just dance music. You, as musicians, have your innate sense of rhythm...there is no necessity to apologise [sic] for attributing aims other than Terpsichore to our music and for showing how the characteristic melancholy music of my race has been forged from the very white heat of our sorrows and from our gropings after something tangible in the primitiveness of our lives in the early days of our American occupation.<sup>12</sup>

Ellington was born on April 29, 1899 in Washington, D.C. to James Edward, a butler and later blueprint maker, and Daisy Kennedy, a woman of high moral principle with whom Ellington maintained an extremely close bond. In 1969, thirty-four years after his mother’s death, he accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His speech began with, “There is nowhere I would rather be tonight but in my mother’s arms.”<sup>13</sup> Both his parents were musical; his mother played hymns and light-classical pieces at the piano. His father, too, played— though mostly operatic tunes by ear. During his middle-class upbringing during a time of racial divide and oppression, young Edward was imbued with a strong sense of character, class, and dignity. His urbane demeanor would remain with him into adulthood. Furthermore, in his youth his mother instilled in him a love for the Bible and an understanding of faith. This foundation of spirituality would have permanent implications throughout Ellington’s life.

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<sup>12</sup> Duke Ellington, “The Duke Steps Out,” *Rhythm* (March 1931) in *The Duke Ellington Reader*, ed. By Mark Tucker (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48-49.

<sup>13</sup> Smithsonian Museum of American History, <http://amhistory.si.edu/archives/d5301.htm> (accessed May 2016)



Though Ellington is largely self-taught, his early formal musical training included piano lessons with a woman fittingly named Mrs. Clinkscales. During this time, he was introduced to basic piano technique, fundamental harmony, and the mechanics of music, however, his momentum and enthusiasm for practicing dissipated and he turned his attention to other things. It wasn't until his teenage years that he became serious about music. He was a gifted athlete and artist, showing promise particularly in the sport of baseball. Prior to graduating from Armstrong High School, the Pratt Institute of Applied Arts in Brooklyn offered him a scholarship after winning a poster competition sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, however, he turned it down in favor of other interests.<sup>14</sup>

By this time, he had discovered the earning potential for booking bands and playing piano. During his teen years, ragtime was the popular music of the day and Ellington, in addition to discovering the correlation between musical talent and female attention, discovered his passion for stride piano and the ragtime pianists. By slowing down the player piano roll for James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout," Ellington learned to emulate the "Father of the Stride Piano." In 1914, inspired by this, other virtuosic ragtime rolls of East Coast pianists, and his job as a soda jerk, Ellington composed his first piece called "Soda Fountain Rag." This, along with a second piece, "What You Gonna Do When the Bed Breaks Down," marked the beginning of a lifelong, all-consuming drive to write music.

While attending "rent" parties he was introduced to the styles of premier D.C. rag pianists including Clarence Bowser, Lester Dishman and Oliver "Doc" Perry, the latter

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<sup>14</sup> Barry Ulanov, *Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), 8.

going on to provide free piano lessons to the budding musician.<sup>15</sup> In his autobiography, *Music is My Mistress*, Ellington refers to Perry as his “piano parent” and distinguishes him as one of the early critical figures in his musical development.<sup>16</sup>

In 1915 Ellington played his first professional gig and over time began booking more jobs, performing with small groups and cultivating his skills as a businessman. In addition to working as a pianist, Ellington also began painting advertisements and booking bands to increase his earnings and utilize his many skills. In 1918 he married high school girlfriend, Edna Thompson, and eight months later in 1919 their son Mercer was born. The marriage did not prove a happy one and after remaining together for several years, they eventually parted ways. Although they never legally divorced, and Ellington developed other romantic partnerships over his lifetime, he continued to provide her with financial support until her death in 1967.

In 1922, Wilbur Sweatman, a ragtime composer, bandleader and novelty clarinetist known for playing three clarinets at once, called Sonny Greer to come and play with his band in New York. Shortly thereafter, Greer, Hardwick, and Ellington jumped headfirst onto the New York music scene. The Washingtonians played theater shows, social dances at the Lafayette Theater in Harlem, and a Staten Island gig under Sweatman. Unfortunately, the group’s tenure under Sweatman did not last long and they began to fall on lean times, eventually returning to Washington.

In 1923, after receiving a call from Fats Waller, who had played with the Washingtonians in the spring of 1923, the group was convinced to return to New York and assured that jobs would be available for not only them but also Snowden and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 28.

Whetsol. From there, the second visit to New York proved more fruitful as the band secured first an engagement at Barron's, a popular spot at 134<sup>th</sup> and Seventh Avenue, and soon after at the Hollywood Club on 49<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, later renamed the Kentucky Club after a fire.<sup>17</sup> The original "Washingtonian" quintet consisted of banjo player and group leader Elmer Snowden, trumpeter Arthur Whetsol, saxophonist Otto "Toby" Hardwick, Sonny Greer on drums, and Ellington on piano. After a short time playing at Barron Wilkin's café in Harlem, the Music Box in Atlantic City, and occasionally Times Square's Winter Garden, the quintet was growing in popularity and Ellington sought to enlarge the band.<sup>18</sup>

In 1924, Ellington assumed Snowden's role as bandleader. Banjoist (later guitarist) Freddie Guy remained joined the band and remained with Ellington until retirement in 1949. In the later part of the year, Whetsol took a temporary break from the band to pursue medical studies at Howard University and was eventually replaced by Bubber Miley, a young trumpeter whose "growl" style and muted plunger techniques would prove an inextricable characteristic of Ellington's music from then on. It was during these years, leading the Washingtonians at the Times Square hotspot, that Ellington apprenticed and developed his skills as a bandleader, composer, and pianist. His unusual voicing of instruments (reeds against brasses), and reimagining of the blues seen in numbers like "The Blues I Love To Sing," and "Creole Love Call," ushered in a new American sound.

In addition to his role with the Washingtonians, Ellington found alternative ways of making money. Tin Pan Alley, the first "songwriting factory," includes Ellington in its

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<sup>17</sup> Eddie Lambert, *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Tucker, 21.

pantheon of songwriters, though the industry was largely dominated by whites and Jews.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, he sought income writing songs for Broadway publishers. Eventually, he was one of several individuals commissioned to write songs for the score of *Chocolate Kiddies of 1924*, a musical revue conceived by German impresario Dr. Leodino, who felt the German audiences hungered for an invigorating and fresh type of jazz music. Cabaret singer, Adelaide Hall, the show's featured vocalist, would later collaborate with Ellington on a number of tunes as a guest performer including the iconic "Creole Love Call," "The Blues I Love To Sing," and "Baby."

The mid to late 1920's brought about important changes within Ellington's musical and personal life, including the 1926 additions of trombonist Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton and bass player Wellman Braud, and the birth two new tunes, "Birmingham Breakdown," and "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," the latter, co-written with Bubber Miley, came to be the band's signature tune. In the same year, successful music publisher, band booker, and public relations guru Irving Mills heard the band perform at the Kentucky Club and quickly capitalized on their appeal. Upon hearing the group's *Black and Tan Fantasy*, Mills found the very group of musicians and their leader he was looking for. He described Ellington's music as having a "melodic and cohesive harmonic magic." Mills' role with the band was critical, yet problematic. Collier writes, "Mills had connections in the white-dominated music business that Ellington lacked."<sup>20</sup> However, he has been criticized for his propensity to take credit for and profit from Ellington's work. No matter the case, his presence served as a catalyst for the Ellington band's positive strides within

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<sup>19</sup> Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux, *Jazz* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 130.

<sup>20</sup> James Lincoln Collier, *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 244.

show business.<sup>21</sup> Ellington separated from his wife Edna in 1929 and, upon invitation, his immediate family including Daisy, James, Ruth, and Mercer Ellington came to live with him in New York.

In addition to encouraging Ellington to churn out songs, helping organize recording sessions, and publishing music, Mills ensured that Ellington profited from the royalties on his songs by helping affiliate him with the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP). Ellington's success owes largely to Mills' role in helping establish his residency at the Cotton Club, as well as securing a recording contract with Victor in 1927. Titles appearing on the four sides included: *Black and Tan Fantasy*, *Creole Love Call*, *The Blues I Love To Sing*, and *Washington Wobble*. These recordings were a critical factor in bringing the Ellington musicians sounds to a wider audience, in turn, creating new opportunities for money making and performing. For thirteen years, Mills profited from the success of Ellington, Inc., holding a forty-five per cent stake in the corporation until Ellington severed the association in 1939.

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1927, the Duke Ellington Orchestra opened at the Cotton Club. The Harlem nightspot was a segregated establishment clientele frequented to enjoy "primitive" entertainment acts. At the opening show, the band performed a fifteen-act revue that included big numbers like *Dance Mania* and *Jazz Mania*, both written by white songwriter Jimmy McHugh. Exotic acts like Earl "Snakehips" Tucker were accompanied by the jungle sounds of Ellington's band.

For Ellington, the Cotton Club was a venue where not only could his orchestra join the ranks of Harlem's premiere acts, but also where listeners worldwide could tune into the nightly radio broadcasts to hear his group. These broadcasts helped promote jazz

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<sup>21</sup> James Lincoln Collier, *Duke Ellington* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 68.

music nationally.<sup>22</sup> In his autobiography, Ellington describes the Cotton Club as “a rendezvous for all the big [white] stars and musicians on Broadway after they got through working.”<sup>23</sup> On one hand, the Cotton Club served as a catalyst for Ellington’s popularity, but on the other hand it put limits on his creativity.

Since the Kentucky Club, Ellington added Harry Carney on saxophone and Barney Bigard, a clarinet player who formerly belonged to King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band. However, Cotton Club years saw fluctuations in personnel, as well as the demand for a greater number of players. Temporary, short term players, including violinist Ellsworth Reynolds, trumpeter Louis Metcalf, and Chicago born saxophonist Rudy Jackson were gradually replaced with new ones. Among the additions were New Orleans-schooled clarinetist Barney Bigard, saxophonist Johnny “Rabbit” Hodges, and trumpeters Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams, and Puerto Rican trombonist Juan Tizol. Williams replaced Miley, who was let go from the band in 1929.

This expanded brass section allowed for unique voicings within the group. The idiosyncratic sounds, and individual tonal personalities of each player stimulated Ellington’s creative imagination. Ellington once said, “You can’t write music right unless you know how the man that’ll play it plays poker.” Johnny “Rabbit” Hodges is widely regarded as one of the, if not the, most important Ellingtonian. Hodges joined the group in 1928 and remained with Ellington for almost five decades, with the exception of a five-year break. In his autobiography, Ellington described Hodges with the following complimentary description:

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<sup>22</sup> Williams, 295.

<sup>23</sup> Ellington, 80.

He had complete independence of expression. He says what he wants to say on the horn, and that is *it*. He says it in *his* language, which is specific, and you could say that his is pure artistry. He's the only man I know who can pick up a cold horn and play in tune without tuning up. And I've heard plenty of cats who can't play in tune after they tune up all day.<sup>24</sup>

From the nucleus of musical talent he accumulated over time, Ellington mined some of his greatest creative output.

Ellington's five-year tenure at the Cotton Club was an important interval for his musical development, as well as his role as bandleader. During this formative period, he not only played the primitive "jungle" style, but also learned to write various types of show tunes that highlighted the popular dances of the time (text, 103). The "jungle style" made use of unusual sounds such as growling brass, pounding tom-toms, and idiosyncratic harmonies and melodies to evoke a jungle-like atmosphere.<sup>25</sup> His distinctive style and increasing innovation are evidenced in well-known works from the Cotton Club period including "Mood Indigo," "Creole Rhapsody," "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing," and "Creole Love Call." In 1931, Ellington's contract at the Cotton Club expired. Collier writes:

When Duke Ellington went into the Cotton Club in December 1927, he was known to New York sports and close followers of dance music as one of a number of black bandleaders; to the general public he was only a vague name and probably unknown to most. When he ended the Cotton Club stay in early 1931, he was well known, the leader of one of the most celebrated American dance bands and, moreover, someone intellectuals had come to consider a serious composer.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, during these years, he benefitted from the tutelage of individuals such as Will Vodery, a Broadway composer who worked as Florenz Ziegfeld's

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<sup>24</sup> Ellington, 118.

<sup>25</sup> Vivian Perlis and Libby Van Cleve, *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 354.

<sup>26</sup> Collier, 101.

orchestrator, and Will Marion Cook, a songwriter and violinist. From them, he learned the theoretical musical concepts that helped elevate his style and cultivate his mastery of melodic themes, such as voice leading and melody writing. Toward the end of Cotton Club Orchestra's residency, appearances in films such as *Black and Tan Fantasy*, and *Check and Double Check* reinforced Ellington's growing popularity and acclaim.

By 1932, Ellington had a successful band including Hodges, Carney, and Bigard playing reeds, Nanton, Tizol, and Brown on trombones, Whetsol, Jenkins, and Williams on trumpets, and Guy, Braud, Greer and himself comprising the rhythm section on guitar, bass, drums, and piano respectively. Ivie Anderson (1904-1949), the Ellington Orchestra's first and longest tenured female vocalist joined the group in 1932. Her metallic voice can be heard on the iconic recording of "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," which became the mantra of the big band swing era.

In 1933, the band, accompanied by several dance acts, ventured to London to begin a tour of England. The successful endeavor included a residency at the Palladium and several *Melody Maker* sponsored concerts. Tours in Holland and France ensued. European audiences, familiar with Ellington's work via recordings and film appearances, were impressed with the orchestra's live performances. From these performances and their positive reception, Ellington's musical convictions grew. His music was substantive, serious, and suited for something greater than social dances.

In the mid-thirties, there were challenges facing the Ellington enterprise. First, under the weight of the Great Depression, those in the entertainment business felt the effects of a straining economy on their careers. Upon his return to the states, Ellington, who had hitherto staunchly avoided the South, was encouraged by Mills to embark on



what would be the first of many profitable southern tours. Second, the swing era was underway. Couched between the Great Depression and the Second World War, the Swing Era was a salve, a distraction from the general malaise of the times. Names like Benny Goodman, Fats Waller, Bob Crosby, and Chick Webb dominated the musical atmosphere. Now, there were hosts of bands comprised of competent musicians vying for popular acclaim, so Ellington had more competition. During this time, Paramount studios released *Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life*. The 1935 film featured Ellington and his Orchestra and represents one of Ellington's earliest efforts in extended composition.<sup>27</sup>

As early as 1931, Ellington broke the barriers of three-minute time limits imposed by the 78. This is seen with recordings of "Creole Rhapsody," which spanned two sides of a 12 inch 78. In 1935, Ellington's mother passed away after a battle with cancer. Shortly thereafter, he composed another extended work titled "Reminiscing in Tempo," a reflective musical tribute elicited by his loss. The composition received mixed reviews from critics who deemed the suite too "pretentious" for a jazz band. His *Dimenuendo and Crescendo in Blue* of 1937, a two-part blues-based suite proved more successful and remained in his concert repertory for many years.

During the last nine years of Ellington and Mills' association, many of the tunes that were designed as instrumental works for the band were fitted with lyrics. Among these are some of Ellington's most well-known and enduring pop standards including, "It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," "Sophisticated Lady," "Solitude," and "I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart," the former embodying the chromaticism rich

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<sup>27</sup> John Howland, *Ellington Uptown* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), 102.

quality that has grown synonymous with his compositions.<sup>28</sup> In 1939, the association between Ellington and Mills came to its close. In exchange for Mills' shares of Ellington, Inc., the impresario received Duke's shares of the publishing company over Ellington's songs.<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter, a second transatlantic tour took place; the orchestra traveled to France, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and Sweden where Duke's fortieth birthday celebration marked his first encounter with young Swedish pop phenom, Alice Babs (Nilsson), who would later make her prolific musical mark with the Ellington Orchestra in the Sacred Concerts. Upon the group's return, Ellington composed some of his most enduring and complicated works, including "C-Jam Blues," "Warm Valley," "Never No Lament," and "Ko-Ko," which was originally composed as a number for the unfinished opera "Boola."

In the early forties, the Ellington Orchestra saw the addition of three newcomers: lyricist and composer Billy "Swee' Pea" Strayhorn, young prodigy bassist Jimmy Blanton, and Kansas City born tenor saxophonist Ben Webster. Strayhorn, a classically trained musician, first heard Ellington's music at a theatre show in 1934 and was flabbergasted. Five years later, Ellington returned to Pittsburgh and this time, Strayhorn initiated contact marking the start of a remarkable partnership that would last from 1939 through Strayhorn's death in 1967. Oral historian Stanley Dance describes the Ellington-Strayhorn connection as "...infinitely rewarding...a perfect artistic relationship."<sup>30</sup> In addition to writing pop tunes for the band, Strayhorn and Ellington worked collaboratively on arrangements. Soon, he was writing original pieces such as "Chelsea

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<sup>28</sup> Collier, 190.

<sup>29</sup> Collier, 193.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley Dance, *The World of Duke Ellington* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 28.

Bridge,” “Passion Flower,” and “Take The A Train,” the instrumental classic that quickly became the Duke Ellington Orchestra’s signature tune.

In 1941, a radio ban prevented music of ASCAP members from being broadcast. Unfortunately for Ellington, this meant a loss of income. Although the orchestra suffered important losses in the early part of the decade, including Cootie Williams, who was lured away to join the Benny Goodman sextet, and long-standing clarinet player, Barney Bigard, they gained someone who would be noted as one of jazz music’s future stars; trumpeter, dancer, violinist, and singer Ray ‘Floorshow’ Nance. Bassist, Jimmy Blanton, who joined the band in 1939, departed in 1942 due to terminal illness. Williams would return in 1962 and remain until Ellington’s death in 1974.

No longer under the thumb of Irving Mills, Ellington assigned publishing duties to Robbins Music, a Mills rival. The association lasted briefly. In 1941, he and his sister Ruth founded Tempo Music; from 1942 on, this company published all new Ellington compositions. The first compositions published by Tempo included Juan Tizol’s “Perdido,” and Billy Strayhorn’s “Take The A’ Train.”<sup>31</sup> Around this time, Ellington’s first full length musical, *Jump for Joy*, premiered in Los Angeles at the Mayan Theater in 1941. Billed as a “Sun-Tanned Revu-sical,” starring Dorothy Dandridge, Ivie Anderson, Joe Turner, and Herb Jeffries (who joined the Ellington orchestra in the early forties), the show was an attempt to eradicate the racial stereotypes that pervaded theatrical works in Hollywood and on Broadway. The show, though successful, ran for mere months and proved Ellington’s singular closest attempt at the Broadway musical.<sup>32</sup> His next

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<sup>31</sup> Tull, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, 108.

significant work, “Black, Brown, and Beige,” would serve as a markedly different musical profile and the composer’s next prolific social statement.

Though Ellington’s record labels fluctuated without consistency for some time, between 1940 and 1946 he remained with Victor Records. In the early forties, his record sales were largely unrivalled. Among titles recorded during this period include “Ko-Ko,” “Concerto for Cootie,” later renamed with lyrics “Do Nothin’ till You Hear from Me,” “Cotton Tail,” and “Main Stem.” Collier posits, “Only the very best of his earlier pieces, like “Mood Indigo, “and “Creole Love Call,” can equal them.” By this point, Ellington had come to supersede Fletcher Henderson as the leading black big band leader.

Ellington’s symphonic work “Black, Brown, and Beige” premiered at his Carnegie Hall debut in 1943. The program began with “Black and Tan Fantasy,” and ended with “Mood Indigo,” each a well-known and well-regarded gem from Ellington’s earlier compositions. Crafted as a “tone parallel to this history of the American Negro,” the multi-movement work comprised of spiritual, work song, and blues themes, received negative reviews and was regarded as musically indiscriminate by critics.<sup>33</sup> Ellington, however, refused to abandon the work, eventually distilling it from its original forty-eight minutes, to an eighteen-minute version that he performed again at Carnegie Hall in 1944. Howland writes, “It is with Ellington’s Carnegie Hall series that the idea of concert jazz is fully formed.”<sup>34</sup> For the next five years, Ellington would perform annually at Carnegie Hall, each time debuting a new extended work.

The mid-to late forties marked a period of tumult, with departures and arrivals occurring on a frequent basis. WWII had a negative impact on bands, restricting travel

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<sup>33</sup> Ellington, 181.

<sup>34</sup> Howland, 255.

and drafting personnel. Heretofore, the only vocalist who maintained a long-standing engagement with the Ellington Orchestra was Ivie Anderson, who would continue singing with the group until her departure in 1942. Of the approximate thirty-one singers Duke Ellington worked with, Anderson held the longest tenure of any. Later, the “Bronze Buckaroo,” Herb Jeffries would lend his voice for a short while in the early part of the decade. In 1943, during the Ellington Orchestra’s long residency at the Hurricane Club, Ellington hired vocalist Al Hibbler, who would go on to record tunes such as “I Ain’t Got Nothin’ But The Blues (1944),” “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore (1947),” and “I Like The Sunrise,” from *The Liberian Suite* (1947). Hibbler remained with Ellington 1951.

After Anderson, the next female vocalist to make her mark with the orchestra was Betty Roché, a singer in her thirties who previously worked with the Savoy Sultans (1941-42) and made her career performing primarily blues and ballads.<sup>35</sup> In *Music is My Mistress*, Ellington offers the following compliment: “She had a soul inflection in a bop state of intrigue....The recordings she did with us are still considered great, and they still have the luster of originality.”<sup>36</sup> In addition to debuting and recording “The Blues,” from *Black, Brown, and Beige*, Roche’s other notable recordings with Ellington include, “Go Away Blues (1943), “I Love My Lovin’ Lover (1952),” and a remarkable interpretation of “Take the A Train (1952),” with Columbia Records.

Roche left the band in 1944 and was replaced with a trio of female singers: Joya Sherrill, Kay Davis, and Marie Ellington; bringing the total number of vocalists to four, with Hibbler. Sherrill, who originally met Ellington in 1941 Detroit when she was seventeen years old and still in school, rejoined later and is known for tunes such as, “I’m

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<sup>35</sup> Reg Cooper. "Roche, Betty." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Feb. 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Ellington, 222.

Beginning to See The Light (1944),” and “I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart (1945).” Marie Ellington (of no relation), was a member of the Ellington personnel until she left to marry Nat “King” Cole in 1948. Davis, a classically trained soprano, would find herself contributing wordless obbligatos, spirituals, and occasionally ballads during her five-year tenure with the orchestra. She inspired Ellington to write new compositions, in which her voice was utilized as a wordless instrument (a musical device not seen since Adelaide Hall’s famed performance of “Creole Love Call”) including, “Transblucency (1946),” “Minnehaha (1946),” and “On A Turquoise Cloud (1947).” Ellington, not recognized for being discerning when it came to selecting singers, drew criticism for employing four at once. Some found the girls and Al Hibbler less “groovy.” Ulanov writes:

It comes mostly from those who admire the unquestionable talents of the two trumpeters [Taft and Nance], who are first-rate rhythm singers, but find the girls and Al less attractive because they are less obviously “groovy”—that is, that they sing with less interest in the beat. That is as Duke wants it...he introduced the girls and Hibbler singing in new arrangements of such Ellington evergreens as *Solitude* and *It Don’t Mean A Thing*. Here they are used as vocal instruments, singing parts in a vocal section which has been added to the band as one might add violins or French horns. The effect is astonishing: it is another example of Duke’s ability to keep going forward, to keep from doing the hackneyed, the stereotyped.<sup>37</sup>

In the latter part of the decade, Ellington’s career took a slight turn for the worse. During these years, he focused on composing extended works both for his Carnegie Hall performances including, “New World A-Coming,” “Perfume Suite,” “Liberian Suite,” and “The Tattooed Bride.” He grappled with financial instability, brought on by the need to cover tour costs with recording royalties. The band no longer traveled in style by Pullman car, rather, they now traveled by bus. Fortunately, successful recordings such as

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<sup>37</sup> Ulanov, 273.

“Sophisticated Lady,” “Mood Indigo,” and “Solitude,” continued to bring in revenue via ASCAP.

In the fifties, the decline of the big band era and the rise of bebop paved the way for smaller, more cost-effective ensembles like those including Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonious Monk. Consequently, promoters were more apt to look for these types of groups.<sup>38</sup> Ellington also felt the impact of the second world war, as evidenced by a constant state of flux within his personnel. The successive losses of influential players like Webster, Tizol, Hardwick, and Joe “Tricky Sam Nanton, who died while the group was on tour in 1946, took its toll. What’s more, a recording ban introduced in 1948 prevented Ellington from recording for two years. Adding to the surmounting volatility of this period, Ellington shifted from one recording label to another, eventually signing with Capitol in 1953, where his orchestra recorded hits like “Satin Doll,” with lyrics by Strayhorn and Johnny Mercer, a remake of the 1927 “Black and Tan Fantasy,” and a reimagined version of Tizol’s “Caravan.”

In the spring of 1950, the Duke Ellington Orchestra set out for its first European tour since 1939. Later in the same year, saxophonist Paul Gonsalves joined the band and remained, for over two decades, a vital part of the ensemble. Perhaps Ellington’s greatest musical loss since Cootie Williams came with the departure of the unique musical voices of Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown, and Sonny Greer. This nucleus of irreplaceable talent left the Ellington band in 1951, shortly after a premiere of the newly commissioned “Harlem” suite at New York’s Metropolitan Opera House.<sup>39</sup> Hodges would soon find his way back to the band in 1955. Around this time, in addition to continue crafting longer

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<sup>38</sup> Derek Jewell, *Duke: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 108)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

works, Ellington materialized alternative endeavors like *Night Creature* written for combined jazz and symphonic orchestra, and works for television and film.

The Newport Jazz Festival of 1956 represented a sort of resurrection for the Ellington Orchestra. In what has been deemed a historic performance, the group elicited such a raucous, invigorating response from the crowd that concert promoters worried about the prospect of rioting. The concert included a new piece, written especially for the event titled, *The Newport Jazz Suite*, and standards like “Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue.” Of particular mention is the six and a half minute, twenty-seven chorus improvisation by Paul Gonsalves in “Dimenuendo and Crescendo in Blue.”

Jewell refers to the Newport Jazz Festival as a “turning point” marking the resurrection of Duke Ellington as a major force in the ever-changing music business.<sup>40</sup> In the wake of this success, Ellington began to see a surge in attention, particularly his concert pieces. Thus, works like “A Drum Is a Woman,” and “Such Sweet Thunder,” came to fruition. The latter, a suite of musical miniatures based on Shakespearean characters, represents one of Ellington’s most successful and publicized concert works. In 1959, Ellington and Strayhorn composed *The Queen’s Suite* for the Queen of England. The suite features a piano solo titled, “A Single Petal of A Rose,” which evokes the impressionistic feel of Debussy or Ravel. Throughout the rest of the late fifties, Ellington and his famous orchestra continued to travel across the states and conducted several European tours.

Ellington’s career in the sixties is highlighted by numerous international tours, the return of trumpeter Cootie Williams, and the genesis of his final musical creations, the Sacred Concerts. In addition, he composed for television and film during this time. *My*

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<sup>40</sup> Jewell, 122.



*People*, a full-length stage show composed for the Century of Negro Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1963, drew from material in *Black, Brown, and Beige* and included new titles such as “David Danced Before the Lord.” Some of these elements would find their way into his liturgical concerts which he spent the latter part of his career creating. Each sacred concert incorporates the use of chorus, orchestra, and soloists. Furthermore, his singular attempt at opera resulted in *Queenie Pie*, an unfinished composition that he continued to work on almost up until his death. Travels abroad to locations including South America, Japan, Africa, and all over Europe inspired such works as *Far East Suite* (1964) and *The Virgin Island Suite* (1965). In 1965, the music jury of the Pulitzer Prize committee recommended Ellington for a “special citation of achievement.”<sup>41</sup> To the dismay of many, the advisory board rejected his nomination. Ellington’s response was, “Fate doesn’t want me to be too famous too young.”<sup>42</sup>

In the closing years of Ellington’s life, he turned to his sacred concerts, which he distinctly referred to as “contemporary sacred works,” intended for performance rather than liturgical use. Sacred jazz was a phenomenon that emerged in the 1960’s when musicians like Mary Lou Williams, Duke Ellington, and John Coltrane began composing works that reflected their spirituality. Janna Steed Tull’s *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography*, describes the fertile cultural atmosphere of the mid-sixties that precipitated these new works. The civil rights movement fomented social unrest; political and religious changes unfolded. These events and others, precipitated, and were reflected in Ellington’s *Sacred Concerts*, the works toward which he committed his energies in the last part of his life. Kirchner describes the concerts as: “Theatrical, entertaining, didactic,

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<sup>41</sup> Terry Teachout, 325.

<sup>42</sup> Lambert, 261.

and ranging in mood from quiet reverence to brassy bombast...count[ing] among Ellington's last major creative acts."<sup>43</sup>

In a 1971 *Guideposts* article, Ellington referred to what he called a "heritage of belief" instilled in him by his upbringing.<sup>44</sup> (*Guideposts*) When he was young, he attended two church services each Sunday; a Methodist service with his mother and a Baptist service with his father. The religious milieu, consequently, exposed him to a wide variety of sacred music including European anthems, spirituals, and gospel.<sup>45</sup>

With the burgeoning acceptance of jazz music in cathedral settings and Ellington's popularity, it wasn't long before he received a commission to create a sacred work. Composed at the invitation of Rev. Canon S. John Yaryan and the Very Rev. Bartlett, Dean of the Cathedral, Ellington's First Sacred Concert premiered in 1965 at San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. Billy Strayhorn, diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 1964, was hospitalized in New York while Ellington worked on the First Sacred Concert. He and Ellington maintained contact via telephone, and worked collaboratively on the opening number of the First Sacred Concert, "In The Beginning God," based on the first four words of the Bible. Although Strayhorn had not heard any of Ellington's ideas, as fate would have it, their opening themes were almost identical—only two notes were different.

The concert integrated five pre-existing compositions with five new works. Among the revivals were four pieces from *My People* and "Come Sunday" from *Black, Brown, and Beige*, which was originally composed as a solo number for Johnny Hodges

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<sup>43</sup> Bill Kirchner, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 140.

<sup>44</sup> Duke Ellington, *Guideposts* (February 1971, 3-6), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Lloyd, 10.

and later assigned lyrics for gospel singer Mahalia Jackson in 1958.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, a calypso-style version of “The Lord’s Prayer” sung a cappella by vocalist Toney Watkins, Bunny Briggs tap dancing during “David Danced Before the Lord,” and two pieces sung in a gospel style by Esther Marrow were all components of the *First Sacred Concert*.<sup>47</sup>

(Steed, 120) In a Guidepost article, Ellington recalled the event:

At that first concert in San Francisco I told the 2500 people present, “In this program you hear a statement without words, but I think you should know that it is a statement with six tones symbolizing the six syllables in the first four words of the Bible, ‘In the beginning God...’” We opened and closed with Praise God. It was based on the 150<sup>th</sup> Psalm. In the program I tried new songs and instrumental works. *Supreme Being* and *Something About Believing* and *Almighty God*. The trumpet preached a solo. A fire-and-brimstone sermonette came from the percussion section. When we reached the closing *Praise God*, the audience was on its feet and stayed there through a whole a cappella rendition of *The Lord’s Prayer*.<sup>48</sup>

Steed makes clear that Ellington’s Sacred Concerts were not developed under the guise of European traditions of sacred music. Instead, he brought the Cotton Club revue to the pulpit.<sup>49</sup> He preserved the artistic integrity of his band with his continued reliance on his compositional foundations rooted in the blues, call and response, and improvisation.<sup>50</sup> The first Sacred Concert is considered unequivocally among the top milestones in black American composition.

In 1967, Billy Strayhorn, the man who Ellington referred to as his “right arm...left arm, all the eyes in the back of [his] head,” passed away.<sup>51</sup> Ellington was grief stricken. From that time on, he assumed all composing and arranging responsibilities for the band. In concerts, he would go on to include a solo piano version of Strayhorn’s

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<sup>46</sup> Lloyd, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Steed, 120.

<sup>48</sup> *Guideposts*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Giddins, 376.

<sup>50</sup> Steed, 138.

<sup>51</sup> Ellington, *Music is My Mistress* (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 156.

“Lotus Blossom,” as a closing tribute to his companion.<sup>52</sup> In 1967 Ellington recorded an album titled *And His Mother Called Him Bill*, as an honor to Strayhorn.

After the success of the first Sacred Concert, Ellington went on to premiere his Second Sacred Concert at New York’s St. John the Divine on January 19, 1968 in front of a crowd of 7,500. Comprised of thirteen movements, unlike the first Sacred Concert, this contained all new material. In the five years that following its premiere, the Second Sacred Concert was presented either in part or in full at churches, concert halls, and various other settings throughout the States and in Spain, France, and Sweden.<sup>53</sup> Ellington declared it the “most important thing I have ever done.”<sup>54</sup> Embedded with themes of forgiveness, freedom, and unity, the Second Sacred Concert expresses a broader, more ecumenical message of love and moral freedoms.

By the time of the Third Sacred Concert’s commission in 1972, Ellington’s lung cancer was in its advanced stages. He, nonetheless, accepted the invitation and worked toward the premiere which took place at Westminster Abbey in London during the fall of 1973.<sup>55</sup> Ellington opened the concert with a solo piano setting of “The Lord’s Prayer.” Alice Babs and Tony Watkins were the featured vocalists and the John Aldis Choir performed the choral selections. The American premiere took place on December 23, 1973 at St. Augustine Presbyterian Church in Bronx, NY. In this work, Ellington adopted the wordless vocal technique within a choral setting in the “Wordless Prayer,” from “Every Man Prays In His Own Language.” In this movement, the choir vocalizes on a “bm” while the soprano solo sings on the vowel [a]. Ellington gave a second performance

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<sup>52</sup> Lambert, 309.

<sup>53</sup> Hill, 430-431.

<sup>54</sup> Ellington, 269.

<sup>55</sup> Lloyd, 13.

of the concert at St. Augustine Presbyterian in Harlem in December 1973. At the age of 75, Duke Ellington passed away on May 24, 1974.

### CHAPTER 3: VOCALISTS

Adelaide Hall (1901-1993)

Adelaide Hall was not a regular member of the Ellington band; therefore, she is not considered an “Ellingtonian,” or someone who maintained a long tenure with the group. However, her inclusion in the study of Ellington’s wordless melodies is important for several reasons this document explores fully.

Trans-atlantic vaudeville performer Adelaide Hall, was born at the turn of the century in Brooklyn, NY on October 20, 1901. A major figure during the Harlem Renaissance, her eight-decade career included performances on Broadway, European tours, and collaborations with leading musical forces like Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, and Thomas “Fats” Waller, to name a few. Elizabeth, her mother, was a woman of mixed Dutch and North American Indian descent. Her father Arthur, a man of African descent, was a classically trained piano teacher; he often told his daughter, “sing to the moon, Addie, and the stars will shine.”<sup>56</sup>

With constant exposure to music at home, and encouragement from a school music teacher named Miss Corlias, Hall showed an affinity for expressing herself through music and performing at an early age, especially tap dancing. She and her older sister, Evelyn, performed as the “Hall Sisters” during school concerts where Adelaide’s onstage charm shone bright. They continued performing together until Evelyn died of influenza in 1920, at only sixteen years of age.

Hall’s professional career began in the early twenties on the precipice of the Harlem Renaissance. Legendary blues and jazz singer Ethel Waters heard Hall perform

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<sup>56</sup> Williams, 20.

during an amateur night at the bar where she worked as the resident vocalist. She saw Hall's potential and encouraged her to pursue a career in entertainment. Lew Leslie, a vaudeville impressionist and budding agent who was a friend of the Hall family, suggested she audition for the revue *Dixie*, later retitled *Shuffle Along*. Although she lacked formal training, her exuberant dancing earned her a spot in the Sissle and Blake revue.

In 1921, Hall made her Broadway debut as a chorine in the landmark all-black musical *Shuffle Along*, which broke new ground in entertainment and ran for a record fourteen months.<sup>57</sup> In 1923 the Charleston dance craze hit audiences thanks to *Runnin' Wild*, another all black revue featuring the same cast as *Shuffle Along*, produced by Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle. *Shuffle Along* helped usher in a "renaissance of sophisticated entertainment" and served as a catalyst for the next generation of black songwriters, and performers.<sup>58</sup> This time, Hall was elevated from her position as a chorister to that of a soloist. The revue toured and premiered successfully on Broadway, running until its finish in the spring of 1924. On June 18, 1924 Hall wed Betram Hicks, a Trinidadian-born actor who later became her manager.

In addition to *Shuffle Along* and *Runnin' Wild*, Hall performed in revues such as the wildly successful *Chocolate Kiddies of 1925* which toured extensively across the Atlantic and paved the way for American black performers in Europe. Duke Ellington was commissioned to compose for the show and Hall was featured singing his music during the opening of the fourth act on "Deacon Jazz." Also, "Jig Walk," another Ellington tune, represented the high point of the revue. It was during this number that

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>58</sup> Giddins, 130.

Adelaide Hall introduced the Berlin public to the Charleston.<sup>59</sup> Upon her return to America, Ms. Hall starred in several black revues exclusive to the Theatre Owners' Booking Association (T.O.B.A.), an organization formed in 1921 by white theatre owners to manage bookings for black vaudeville performers.<sup>60</sup> Her additional stage credits include *Desires of 1927* and Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds of 1928*, the longest running all-black review in history. *Blackbirds* toured in the states and across the Atlantic, catapulting Hall into stardom and securing her rank as a living legend.

From October 10, 1927 through October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Duke Ellington & His Orchestra maintained a two-week residency at Harlem's Lafayette Theater playing the Jimmy McHugh show *Dance Mania* and doubling at the Plantation Café in the revue *Messin' Around*.<sup>61</sup> On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Adelaide Hall, who was billed on the first half of the same program as Ellington's Washingtonians, stood in the wings listening to the Ellington group. The nascence of the "Creole Love Call" wordless melody traces back to Ms. Hall's impromptu offstage vocalizations which Ellington happened to overhear. Subsequently, she was onstage to repeat what she'd just done in the wings. The performance was a hit with the audience and Hall immediately received a request from Ellington to record the number in the studio. Three days later, on October 26, 1927, Adelaide Hall recorded both "Creole Love Call," and "The Blues I Love to Sing" at the Victor recording studio in Camden, NJ with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Williams, 75.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Riis and Howard Rye. "Theater Owners' Booking Association." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Feb. 2017.

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J445700>>.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, 408.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 113.



Duke Ellington and his Orchestra opened at the Cotton Club on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1927. “Creole Love Call,” recorded with Adelaide Hall mere months earlier was an instant hit and record sales skyrocketed. Due to the immediate success of “Creole Love Call,” Ellington decided to include Hall as a featured vocalist temporarily in the Cotton Club revue *Rhythm Mania*. Later, Hall went on to be featured as a vocalist on alternate recordings with Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra including, “Chicago Stomp Down” with Okeh Records in November 1927. Hall contributes experimental vocal stylings in the manner of humming, singing and chanting in “The Blues I Love to Sing” and “Chicago Stomp Down” in a less remarkable, less effective manner than “Creole Love Call.”<sup>63</sup> The collaboration prophetically marked the first of many instances for Ellington’s innovative method of casting the voice as a wordless instrumental device. In 1932, at the request of Brunswick Record manager Jack Kapp, she collaborated again with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Although she previously recorded “I Must Have That Man,” and “Baby” in 1928 with the Blackbirds Orchestra, Kapp insisted she record these titles again.

In the mid-thirties, Hall toured the Midwest, performing in various revues and solo acts. In the later part of 1935, she embarked on a European tour which included visits to Paris, London, Switzerland, and Germany. In 1937, Hall settled in Paris with her mother and husband. Here, she and Bert opened a nightclub called “The Big Apple,” which stayed open for a year. The following year, she travelled to Britain to perform at London’s Theatre Royale, Drury Lane, in *The Sun Never Sets*. Ms. Hall maintained permanent residency in Britain for over five decades.

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<sup>63</sup> Lambert, 20.

After the Second World War, Hall starred in a 1951 London production of Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*. Her return to the Broadway stage occurred in 1957, where she performed alongside Lena Horne in the musical *Jamaica*, with music by Harold Arlen. The production ran for over 550 performances before it closed in 1959.<sup>64</sup>

Between the 60's and 70's, Hall remained largely away from the public eye. After Francis Ford Coppolla's 1984 film, *The Cotton Club*, a renewed interest in the songstress kept her in high demand. She performed a one woman show at Carnegie Hall in 1988, as well as performances in London. Hall died at the age of 93 in London.

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<sup>64</sup> Scott Fredrickson and Barry Kernfeld. "Hall, Adelaide." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J184500>>.

Kay Davis (1920-2012)

Lyric soprano, Kathryn “Wimp” Davis’ musical journey is a remarkable one. An honor’s student at Northwestern University in the forties, she earned bachelors and masters degrees in vocal performance. A turning point came when she was invited by Duke Ellington to join his band. She remained with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra from 1944 to 1950, when the incessant travel and one-nighters got the best of her. Her ethereal lyric soprano lends itself to numerous musical assignments, including wordless obbligatos, ballads, and appearances in two short films of the forties, *Salute to Duke* and *Symphony in Swing* during her tenure with the organization from 1944 to 1950 when she decided, after a four-week European tour, the incessant traveling and one night gigs proved too taxing and she could no longer stay with Ellington.<sup>65</sup>

From an early age, Kathryn MacDonald knew she wanted to sing. Born in Evanston, IL on December 5, 1920, Davis was raised in Bushnell, IL until the age of twelve when her father, a chiropractor, built a house in Evanston, IL. Wimp began taking piano lessons at the age of six, often playing by ear. She credits her father’s participation in a Catholic choir as a major factor in her decision to pursue music professionally.<sup>66</sup> In her last two years of high school, Wimp began taking private voice lessons and developing a musical relationship with teacher/mentor Roy Schulzer who was, at the time, a music student at Northwestern University. Brown’s journal article recounts Davis’s experiences dealing with segregation and racial disparity encountered in her high school choir.

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<sup>65</sup> Carrie Moea Brown, *Shorefront* (Vol. 7. No. 3. Spring 2006), 15.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

At Evanston Township High School, Davis joined a choir newly formed by the head of the music department. She recalled walking into the rehearsal room to find the entire choir was comprised of black students. “They were all perplexed,” she said. The head music teacher, a white woman from Texas explained that she thought forming an all-black choir was a good idea because she felt the black students sang so well.<sup>67</sup> Needless to say, the students refused to participate.

One of only six black students in Northwestern’s music program at the time, Davis studied voice under Walter Allen Stolzman. Despite the racially oppressive climate of the forties, Davis thrived at the prestigious institution and even sang a duet in 1942 with fellow classmate Jack Haskell (’42) in the annual Waa-Mu Show, despite the social taboo of an onstage interracial relationship. Davis graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in voice from Northwestern University in 1943 and completed her Master’s degree the following year.

In 1944, Duke Ellington and His Orchestra performed at a theatre on the south side of Chicago. Davis, a fan of Ellington’s records, was sent on a dare by a friend to audition for Ellington. Her audition took place not in front of Ellington, rather, Tom Whaley, Ellington’s chief copyist from 1941 to 1968. A week later, Ellington attended her recital and subsequently invited the young lyric soprano to join the band in Baltimore, MA. With that, she “went home and packed her little trunk,” thus beginning the start of her career with Ellington. She describes her initial impressions of Ellington’s music as a

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 11.

strange and unique sound, unlike anything she ever heard.<sup>68</sup> Ironically, the young singer wondered what Ellington would do with a classical singer like herself.

In the beginning of her career with Ellington, Davis grew frustrated because she was resigned to humming along with the band. She would often call home in tears over her lack of opportunities. Ellington heard her humming an obbligato during Al Hibbler's rehearsal of "I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues," and decided to keep it in. On December 1, 1944 at Victor studios in New York, she and Hibbler recorded the track with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra.

On the December 1944 Carnegie Hall concert, Davis's wordless vocal was featured in "Creole Love Call." This was the first time the band performed and recorded the tune with a singer since Adelaide Hall in 1927. Davis recalled receiving a one hour notice before the performance while in the greenroom. Able to draw upon her recollections of the old recordings she heard as a young girl, she performed the music at sight. Thus, Davis's Carnegie Hall premiere with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra was an unrehearsed, spur of the moment event. It turned out to be a lovely performance, despite her nervousness. Her interpretation of the countermelody didn't feature the guttural vocalism of Adelaide Hall's. Rather, Davis sang with a legitimate, classical tone.

In early April 1945, Ellington was commissioned by the United States Treasury Department to broadcast a series of hour-long radio shows titled "A Date With The Duke."<sup>69</sup> On April 15, 1945, the Saturday following President Roosevelt's death, a memorial broadcast took place on the radio in the place of the second scheduled D.E.T.S.

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<sup>68</sup> Kay Davis, interview by Marsha M. Greenly, tape recording, 13 October 1989, Chicago, IL, Smithsonian Institute Ellington Oral History Project.

<sup>69</sup> Lambert, 122.

program. Ellington's band was allowed on the air and the program featured familiar Ellington tunes and spirituals. Kay Davis sang "A City Called Heaven" and "Creole Love Call." Her performances garnered attention from listeners, who called in to find out who the singer was. Initially, many thought famed operatic soprano, Marian Anderson was the singer they heard on air.<sup>70</sup> Following this success, Davis began receiving more regular assignments from Ellington. Additionally, he tasked Strayhorn with the assignment of writing arrangements to feature Davis. She would go on to perform Billy Strayhorn's sophisticated, line-within-a-line ballad, "Lush Life," with Strayhorn at the piano during a 1948 Carnegie Hall concert.

In 1948, Ellington embarked on his first postwar trip abroad enlisting only Davis and vocalist-violinist-trumpeter Ray Nance to heighten his vaudeville credentials.<sup>71</sup> England was attempting to unionize, therefore, there was not a demand for big bands. Hence, Ellington's decision to travel with three musicians. In England they participated in a six week tour of the provinces, appearing with Pearl Baily and local musicians at the London Palladium and other venues. Ellington hired an accompanist to play with Davis for a group of classical songs, but the audiences were not interested in that type of music. It was her first trip abroad. In the spring of 1950, Ellington and his entire orchestra returned to Europe for the first time since 1939. By this point, a jazz singer named Chubby Kemp had joined the group. In a recording of the Zurich program, Davis is

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<sup>70</sup> Ulanov, 272.

<sup>71</sup> Brian Priestly, "Ellington Abroad" in *The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington*, ed. By Edward Green (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 60.

featured on a revamped rendition of “Creole Love Call.” Her performance was described as a “caressing” and feminine delivery of the melody.<sup>72</sup>

Although Davis’s tenure with the Ellington Orchestra didn’t last as long as Ivie Anderson or Al Hibbler’s, her contributions to the music are well documented and leave a legacy of great recorded performances. Though the wordless vocals are her most enduring musical artifacts, she successfully performed and recorded many ballads including, “Brown Penny,” from *Beggar’s Holiday*, “Lover Man,” “Embraceable You,” and other popular tunes of the time. In 1950 after a four-week European tour, Davis grew tired of the lifestyle and being relegated to singing “ah” all the time. That year, she married Edward Wimp, and left the Ellington Band. She and her husband eventually settled in Florida, where she attended culinary school, became a cordon-bleu chef, and turned the kitchen into her stage. Davis died in 2012 in Apopka, FL. She was 91 years old.

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<sup>72</sup> Anthony Brown, “Duke In the 1950’s: Renaissance Man” in *The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington*, ed. By Edward Green (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 135.

Alice Babs (1924-2014)

Alice Babs, one of Sweden's most celebrated artists, sang pop tunes, folk songs, opera, lieder, and jazz. She is regarded by many as legend among female jazz vocalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington describes Alice Babs as, "...the most unique artist I know....a composer's dream..."<sup>73</sup> Although Babs and Ellington's collaborations number too few, in titles like "T.G.T.T.," "Heaven," and other selections from the Second and Third Sacred Concerts, as well as the album *Serenade To Sweden*, our ears are greeted with evidence of her artistry, innate sense of jazz phrasing, and pure tone quality.

Although Babs is perhaps the most talented vocalist to ever collaborate with Ellington, she did not become a regular with his orchestra. Among the provisions in his will, Ellington asked that Babs sing at his funeral. Too overcome with grief, she was unable to accommodate this request. As an alternative last minute plan, a recording from the Second Sacred Concert of Johnny Hodges and Ms. Babs performing the "Heaven," wafted through the cathedral, where some 10,000 mourners gathered to remember the incomparable Ellington.

Alice Babs, née Alice Nilsson, was born in Kalmar, Sweden on January 26, 1924. She grew up in a musical family and her parents worked to cultivate her musical skills at an early age. Her father, an orchestra conductor and silent film pianist, was the first to introduce her to the jazz idiom.<sup>74</sup> In Stanley Dance's *The World of Duke Ellington*, Babs recalls her early attraction towards jazz, especially recordings of Louis Armstrong.<sup>75</sup> At the age of twelve, she made her first public appearance and debuted on the radio at age

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<sup>73</sup> Ellington, 288.

<sup>74</sup> Dance, 229.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 230.



14. Her recording career began at fifteen years old with a rendition of Judy Garland's "On The Bumpy Road to Love."

In 1940, she had a breakthrough, appearing in the full-length feature film *Swing It, Magistern*. Subsequently, she became a Scandinavian teen idol, appearing on film and with top orchestras. In 1943, Babs married Nils Ivar Sjöblom. Six years later, in 1949 she performed at the Paris Jazz Fair with an all-star Swedish band and the following year received an invitation to perform at Gröna Lunds Tivoli (an outdoor amusement park) with famed Swedish tenors, Set Svanholm and Jussi Björling.<sup>76</sup> In the 1958 Eurovision Song Contest, a tradition that began in 1956, Babs placed fourth with her performance of "Lilla Stjärna." In addition to these performances, Babs was contracted as a gramophone singer and for various Swedish radio programs and concerts with jazz orchestras.<sup>77</sup>

In 1962, Ms. Babs made her first appearance in the states with a jazz-pop group called the Swe-Danes. The trio consisted of Babs, violinist Svend Asmussen, and guitarist Ulrik Neumann. The Swe-Danes made quite an impression on American audiences through their performances on the Ed Sullivan Show and via exposure on the radio, where their records were played for audiences that didn't have access to purchase them. Among the trio's most popular records were *Scandinavian Shuffle* (1960), and *Swe-Danes på Berns* (1961).

In addition to singing, Alice Babs was a fine pianist and often accompanied herself on original compositions. It was these original tunes that originally caught

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<sup>76</sup> Erik Kjellberg and Lars Westin. "Babs, Alice." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. Ed. Barry Kernfeld. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.uky.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/J020100>>.

<sup>77</sup> Alice Babs, interview by Marsha M. Greenly, 9 April 1990, San Pedro de Alcántara, Málaga, Spain, Smithsonian Institute Ellington Oral History Project.

Ellington's attention. Later, her 1958 album, titled *Alice and Wonderband*, which featured performances of jazz tunes piqued his interest even further. Subsequently, in 1963, Babs appeared as a guest on Swedish TV with the Ellington Orchestra. She sang "Come Sunday" and "Take The A' Train." During this performance, Babs interpolated parts of phrases she'd heard on older Ellington recordings including those of Rex Stewart's solos on "Boy Meets Horn," and Ben Webster's "Cottontail."<sup>78</sup> Soon after, Ellington invited her to Paris to record an album. The sessions utilized only Ellington and Strayhorn from the original band, bringing in players from Paris and drummer Kenny Clarke. From these two sessions, sixteen titles were recorded including gems like "Come Sunday," "Azure," "C-Jam Blues," and "Take Love Easy." Ellington ensured that Babs' expansive vocal range and unique vocal displays served as the focal point of the recording, on which she sings both wordlessly and with lyrics. Ellington required a "natural sound...sometimes instrumental...singing with a closed mouth..." and would communicate to Babs by "pointing up and down" required her to sing in the upper and lower registers of her voice at his whim.<sup>79</sup> Most surprising is Babs' ability to sing idiomatically although English is not her native language. *Serenade to Sweden*, recorded for Reprise, was issued only in Europe.

Ellington's *Second Sacred Concert* includes four themes for Babs' soaring lyric voice: "Almighty God," "Heaven," "T.G.T.T.," and "Praise God and Dance." At the composer's request, she flew from Europe to New York to participate in the event. The *Second Sacred Concert* debuted at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on January 19,

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<sup>78</sup> Dance, 227.

<sup>79</sup> Alice Babs, interview by Marsha M. Greenly, 9 April 1990, San Pedro de Alcántara, Málaga, Spain, Smithsonian Institute Ellington Oral History Project.

1968. In addition to its St. John the Divine debut, the concert was presented at St. Mark's in New Canaan and New Britain. Following the premiere, Babs' performance received glowing reviews. John S. Wilson, of the *New York Times* commented: "Her voice proved to be a magnificent Ellington instrument—pure full-bodied, amazingly lithe...with warmth and strength at both ends of a broad range."<sup>80</sup> Ellington's *Third Sacred Concert*, subtitled "The Majesty of God," featured Babs in several movements including: "My Love," "Is God A Three-Letter Word for Love," and the final movement titled "The Majesty of God." In a 1990 interview, Babs recalled Ellington's formal, yet uninhibited approach to music that allowed for freedom and improvisation.<sup>81</sup>

By 1980, Babs retired from full time performing. However, at the age of 74 she recorded two more albums for Swedish RCA *A Church Blues for Alice* and *Don't Be Blue*. Even at this age her voice was still unimpaired. Babs's last years were spent grappling with Alzheimer's disease, which she succumbed to in 2012. She died, aged 90, in Stockholm.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>81</sup> Alice Babs, interview by Marsha M. Greenly, 9 April 1990, San Pedro de Alcántara, Málaga, Spain, Smithsonian Institute Ellington Oral History Project.

## CHAPTER 4: PERFORMANCE ANALYSES

*I always say that we are primitive artists, we only employ the materials at hand. And when someone comes in—just like when Kay Davis came in, she was a soprano, so we employed her in her natural character....The band is an accumulation of personalities, tonal devices. As a result of a certain musician applied to a certain instrument, you get a definite tonal character. – Ellington on the Air in Vancouver*<sup>82</sup>

The following content contains analyses of Ellington compositions that feature the wordless voice as an instrumental color with regard to musical elements, context, significant performances, and pedagogical/performance considerations.

### Creole Love Call (1927)<sup>83</sup>

Original Key: BbMajor

Instrumentation (as per *Sophisticated Ladies* score): Clarinet, 2 Tenor Saxophones, Baritone Saxophone, Trombone, Trumpet, Piano, Bass, Drums, Soprano

Range: Bb<sup>3</sup> – D<sup>5</sup>

Tessitura: Bb<sup>4</sup> – G<sup>5</sup>

Form: Ternary

Duration: approx. 3:00

Tempo: Moderately Slow

Meter: 4/4

Mood: Relaxed

Representative Recordings: Victor 39370 (1927); Columbia CO41689 (1949)

In the mid to late twenties, the Washingtonians began to distinguish themselves from other dance bands. Pieces like “East St. Louis Toodle-oo” of 1926 displayed Ellington’s developing “exploitation of tonal coloring,” later coined the “Ellington Effect.”<sup>84</sup> The first Cotton Club band consisted of Bubber Miley (trumpet), “Tricky” Sam Nanton (trombone), Nelson Kincaid, Harry Carney, and Rudy Jackson (reeds), Ellsworth Reynolds (violin), Fred Guy (banjo), Wellman Braud (bass), Sonny Greer

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<sup>82</sup> Tucker, 339.

<sup>83</sup> Duke Ellington, “Creole Love Call from Beggar’s Holiday,” copyist’s manuscript (1899-1974), Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

<sup>84</sup> Tucker, 62.

(drums), and Ellington on piano. This augmented ensemble allowed Ellington to demonstrate his remarkable ability to voice instruments in unusual ways, providing a timbral palette yet unplumbed. Written in the same year as “Black and Tan Fantasy,” “Creole Love Call” is derived from Joseph “King” Oliver’s “Camp Meeting Blues.”

As a tune on Oliver’s 1923 discography, “Camp Meeting Blues” is one of the numbers that breaks from the ensemble emphasis ubiquitous in early jazz and features soloists.<sup>85</sup> It is said to have been introduced to Ellington via Rudy Jackson, a clarinetist who previously played with King Oliver’s Creole Jazz band and joined Ellington’s band briefly from June 1927 until December when he was replaced by Barney Bigard. The original 1927 Victor recording features Adelaide Hall’s guttural vocal responses to the clarinet melody. In program notes from the 1944 Carnegie Hall concert, British composer, journalist, and jazz historian Leonard Feather describes “Creole Love Call” as, “one of [the] most enduring works of the Cotton Club years in Harlem,” (Feather, Program Notes) while others deem it a “veritable masterpiece of its genre.”<sup>86</sup> Lambert describes the original 1927 recording as follows:

The singer here is Adelaide Hall, and the first chorus presents the main theme sung by her over three low-register clarinets, a delicious tonal combination; in sharp contrast to the second chorus is an astringent solo improvisation by Miley, and the third, again contrasting, presents a second theme played by Jackson on clarinet in a singing New Orleans style. From this point the music deteriorates abruptly in quality, the performance ending with two very ordinary antiphonal choruses of reeds against brass and one of solo singing by Adelaide Hall. Although her ethereal voice had been effective in the first statement, a chorus of wordless singing by Miss Hall to end the piece is less satisfying and not sufficiently substantial to give the world the formal balance of “Black and Tan Fantasy,” or even

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<sup>85</sup> Lewis Porter, Michael Ullman with Edward Hazell, *Jazz From Its Origins to the Present* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall), 43.

<sup>86</sup> Tucker, 26.

“East St. Louis Toodle-oo.” But the first three choruses constitute a superb sequence, with Miley’s great solo the high spot.<sup>87</sup>

Several extant recordings of “Creole Love Call,” demonstrate how performances of the piece evolved over time depending on the personnel and desired aesthetic. These recordings include the original Victor recording of 1927 with Adelaide Hall’s vocals, instrumental only performances, such as those featured on the early Carnegie Hall concerts, and those performances featuring soprano Kay Davis. In addition, there is an alternate, undated manuscript by Ellington and Strayhorn, replete with lyrics, in the Smithsonian archives. Per Timmer’s complete Ellington discography, *Ellingtonia*, there is no documentation of this version having been recorded.

For the purposes of this analysis, I will rely on Ellington’s truncated and reconfigured arrangement of “Creole Love Call,” excerpted from the unfinished *Queenie Pie* score, as it most closely resembles the 1949 recorded version. The recording upon which this analysis is based is the 1949 Columbia recording (CO41688)—the first studio recording of “Creole Love Call” in fifteen years.<sup>88</sup> This performance features Ray Nance in the role of Bubber Miley’s iconic trumpet solo and utilizes Davis’ wordless vocal in lieu of Rudy Jackson’s 1927 original clarinet solo in the third chorus, while eliminating the final instrumental chorus.

“Creole Love Call,” co-authored by Ellington, Rudy Jackson, and Bubber Miley, incorporates simple melodic themes based on a slow 12-bar blues pattern. The tune begins with a trio of chalumeau registered reeds that introduce a unifying rhythmic motive (Fig. 1.1). The reeds play in thirds which results in a tight-knit harmony that pulls

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<sup>87</sup> Lambert, 20.

<sup>88</sup> Lambert, 152.

toward tonic in measure 2. The phrase ends with a sustained tonic chord for five beats. Once the tonic is firmly rooted, the female “call” enters in measure 2 at the first vocal statement and continues in an antiphonal exchange with the reeds. Within the call and response, each statement bleeds into the next, due to the sustained rhythms and lithe rhythmic gestures.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece "Creole Love Call," measures 1-4. The score is organized into several systems. The first system consists of five staves, numbered 1 through 5, representing different reed parts. Each staff contains rhythmic patterns with slurs and dynamic markings such as *p*. The second system features a vocal line with the syllable "AH" written below it, and a piano accompaniment with chords  $B^b$ ,  $B^b$ ,  $B^b$ , and  $B^b7$ . The third system includes a conga part labeled "CONGELL - SOFT STICK" and a bass line. The notation is in common time (C) and includes various rhythmic values and articulations.

Figure 1.1 “Creole Love Call,” mm- 1-4

The vocal countermelody is built on a four-note motive that provides a contrast to initial motive by augmenting the rhythmic idea and incorporating a wider melodic interval of a perfect fifth. Harmonic movement to the subdominant ( $E^b$ ) is accompanied by a slight bending of the melody with an added  $b3$  (blue note) in the place of the original pitch. This melodic inflection is a defining characteristic of the blues. The vocal line

moves smoothly and in predominantly conjunct fashion while tracing a very wide melodic compass. Aside from the portamento in m. 47 ( $Bb^5-Bb^4$ ) a fourth is the largest consecutive interval in the melodic line. The only dynamic marking in the score is piano at the beginning. In m. 11, a decrescendo is marked beneath the sustained  $F\sharp$ . At the reprise of the A theme, the vocal line indicates a “wa-wa” effect on the initial note bending the melody briefly down to the subtonic scale degree. This is a clear instance of Ellington indicating the voice to be “played” as an instrument.

Measures 13-24 are comprised of a trumpet solo accompanied by a sparse piano texture and walking bass underneath. In contrast to the lithe rhythmic gestures of the opening chorus, the second chorus presents a more highly rhythmic, syncopated style. Additionally, in measure 24 a moment of theatricality occurs when the squeeze glissando employed by the trumpet signals the solo’s end and anticipates the introduction of thematic material. Lambert describes the chorus as a “perfect example of musical architecture in miniature.”<sup>89</sup> The solo is to be played with the plunger mute, as indicated in the score. Bubber Miley’s original improvised solo was noted for its sparing use of the growl tone, and subtle plunger mute inflection; these techniques were assimilated by his successors Cootie Williams and Ray Nance.

In measure 26 the third section begins. Scored for voice, piano, and bass, the harmony waffles between the tonic and dominant. Through mm. 26-32, the piano vamps the following progression:  $I^6, V^7, I, V^7, I^7, ii^7$ . Beginning at measure 33, both the piano and bass become more active; the piano fills in with a  $I-I^7-IV-ii^7-V$  while the bass switches from plucking to bowed strings. the vocal line floats a swinging triplet figure.

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<sup>89</sup> Lambert, 20.



Measures 27-32 house the most stratospheric vocal writing (Fig. 1.3). The rhythmic contour, although notated precisely, maintains an air of spontaneity and improvisation while the high tessitura of the melody provides an interesting contrast to the registers of the supporting instrumentation.

The chorus takes over at measure 37 and the A melody and countermelody take over again. The trombone, up until now has blended seamlessly with the rest of the ensemble, however, in measure 49 it punctuates the texture with *sforzando* rhythmic interjections. Here, the voice mimics the instrumental “wa-wa” effect in measure 48 before it takes its final drifting descent toward the finish.

Interestingly, the score indicates the voice to sing on “ah.” Whether this was Ellington’s hand, or perhaps a copyist, is left to be determined. The  $I^7-IV^7-V^7$  harmonic progression throughout “Creole Love Call” evidences the influence of the blues. A slow-moving 12-bar blues pattern and antiphonal exchange between the woody reeds and high register female voice represent the defining characteristics of this tune. Ellington incorporated this version of “Creole Love Call” into his musical, *Sophisticated Ladies*. In the 1984 film, *The Cotton Club*, Priscilla Baskerville sings “Creole Love Call.”

### Performance Considerations

To preserve Ellington’s aesthetic, “Creole Love Call” should be performed with the scored instrumentation, or at least some configuration of the original instrumentation from the *Sophisticated Ladies* score. A 1928 score, published by Gotham Music shows a piano reduction of the original theme before the addition of the countermelody. Some of the challenges presented in “Creole Love Call” are purely vocal in nature, while others

are matters of style and nuance. The singer must be careful to maintain precise intonation throughout the scale and maintain consistency of the legato phrasing. Because of the relaxed, languid style, singers may tend to scoop into the onset of each phrase. There is no indication of Ellington desiring this approach to the vocal line; he indicates explicitly where such an approach should be incorporated for special effect (Fig. 1.2).

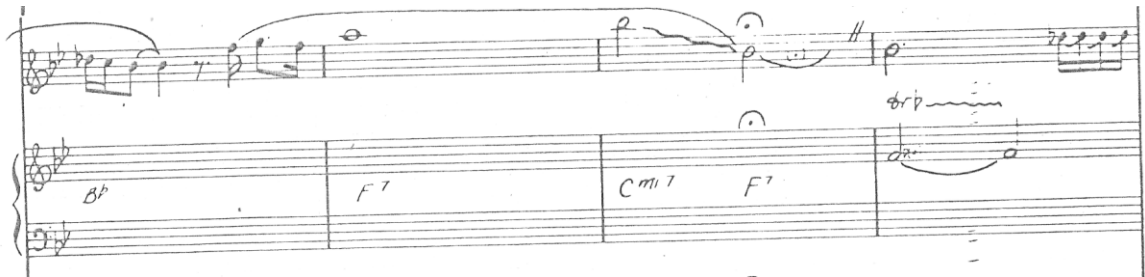


Figure 1.2 “Creole Love Call,” mm. 45-48

“Creole Love Call” should not contain much, if any, rubato and the tempo must not drag. The tempo marked as “moderately slow” uses swung-eighth notes and provides flexibility within phrases while the plucked bassline firmly girds the rhythmic foundation. The absence of dynamic markings suggests Ellington relied on his musicians for balancing each voice to produce a blend. Except for *tenuto* markings in measures 26 and 50, Ellington uses few expressive markings overall.

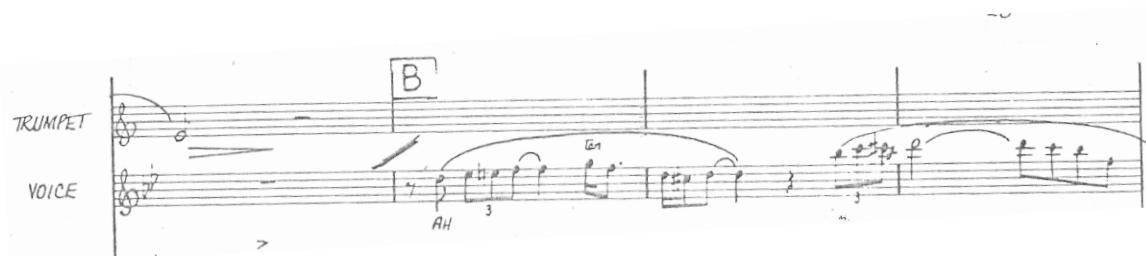


Figure 1.3 “Creole Love Call,” mm. 26-28

Ellington's exploitation of the upper register of the female voice requires an awareness of vowel purity and vowel modification (see above, Fig 1.3). The clarinet performed this solo in the 1927 version, therefore, performers may opt for the instrumental solo if they are unable to carry sustained phrases in the high tessitura with ease. Although the [a] vowel suffices for most of the vocal writing, mm. 27-32 may require vowel adjustments to efficiently tune the resonators and allow for proper breath and resonance balancing. Additionally, the entirety of "Creole Love Call" requires sustained, legato singing. The opening phrases allow for breaths at regular two-bar intervals, whereas in the third chorus, irregular phrase lengths, coupled with the sustained singing in the secondo passaggio requires more breath management and preparation.

An alternate 14-measure antiphonal duet for trumpet and voice, not indicated in the *Sophisticated Ladies* score, may be used instead of the Miley solo (Fig 1.4) for contrast, if desired.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece "Creole Love Call". At the top, it is labeled "trpt + vocal" and "Creole Love Call". The score is written on four staves, alternating between vocal and trumpet parts. The first two staves represent the first four measures, and the last two staves represent the next four measures. The music is in 4/4 time and features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with several triplet markings. The vocal line is written in a soprano clef, and the trumpet line is in a soprano clef as well. The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.

Figure 1. 4 "Creole Love Call," (trumpet & vocal) mm. 1-8

Transblucency (A Blue Fog You Can Almost See Through) (1946)<sup>90</sup>

Original Key: B $\flat$  Major

Range: B $\flat$ 3 – B $\flat$ 5

Tessitura: G4-F5

Form: Ternary

Duration: c. 3:00

Tempo: Moderato

Meter: 4/4

Representative Recordings: Victor D6VB2095 (1946)

In 1937, Ellington composed “Diminuendo and Crescendo In Blue.” Originally a through composed piece, it represents one of Ellington’s extended works that uses a series of blues choruses.<sup>91</sup> In 1945 Ellington began experimenting with the composition by inserting a slow movement between the two sections. Some of the initial insertions included Marie Ellington and Joya Sherrill offering their separate interpretations of “Rocks In My Bed,” Sherrill and Hibbler’s versions of “I Got It Bad,” and an instrumental number titled “Carnegie Blues.” During the Duke Ellington Treasury Series (D.E.T.S.) broadcasts Ellington utilized these compositions interchangeably until finally settling on “Transblucency” in 1946.<sup>92</sup> Later, tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves’ 27-chorus improvisation between the two movements became the staple transition.

Ellington presented five Carnegie Hall concerts between the years of 1943 and 1948. In January 1946, “Transblucency” was performed for the first time on the Carnegie Hall stage with Duke Ellington and His Orchestra and soprano Kay Davis. Subtitled “A Blue Fog You Can Almost See Through,” it is derived from an earlier piece called “Blue Light” composed in 1938. An adaptation of trombonist Lawrence Brown’s solo in “Blue

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<sup>90</sup> Duke Ellington and Lawrence Brown, “Transblucency” copyist’s manuscript (1899-1974), Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

<sup>91</sup> Lambert, 71.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 123.

Light” forms the basis of the theme. The piece, composed in an ABBCDA form, is built on a twelve-bar blues pattern in the key of B-flat. The 1946 recording begins with Ellington’s two-measure piano introduction which is excluded from the score and includes twelve measures of improvised piano solo material before the recapitulation of the A theme.

In the opening theme, soprano, low registered clarinet, and the dulcet trombone sound together, outlining a chromatic-rich harmonic progression. The chord voicing, which includes the voice on top, trombone in the inner voice, and clarinet in the low register on bottom, lends to a particularly warm and rich vertical sonority. The amalgam of timbres and slow blues pattern produces an evocative mood. This opening statement is comprised of three phrases of varied length. In mm. 1-2 the vocal line on its own follows the beginning of a descending whole tone scale (Fig 2.1). The tritone interval C#-G outlined creates an unexpected and colorful sonority and augments Ellington’s impressionistic reimagining of the blues. The voice leading uses primarily conjunct motion in the upper voices (trombone and soprano), while the clarinet line contains many chromatic leaps.

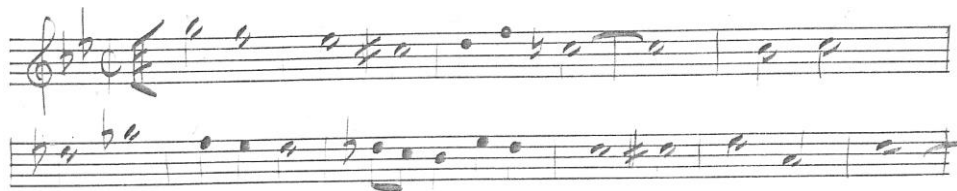


Figure 2.1 “Transblucency,” mm. 1-12

The first solo passage is introduced in mm 13-24 with a muted trombone solo (Fig. 2.2). The 1946 recording features co-writer Lawrence Brown in this role. The soprano interjects every so often during his solo with brief two or three note figures,

suggesting an improvised reactionary response to the gestures in the trombone solo (Fig. 2.3). The interval of a minor 6<sup>th</sup> in measure 18 adds a unique melodic inflection.



Figure 2.2 "Transblucency," mm. 13-25



Figure 2.3 "Transblucency," mm. 13-25 (vocal)

In mm. 25-35, Davis echoes Brown's solo up the octave, in a vocalized repetition of the trombone solo. In contrast to the sustained chords of the opening statement, the B section is more rhythmically active and most phrases are comprised of swung eighth note figures. Whereas the trombone solos without any harmonizing instrumentation, the voice harmonizes with the clarinet during the B statement while the piano and string bass subtly provide rhythmic context and harmonic support. The soprano and clarinet move in contrary motion, and at times, Ellington voices the clarinet at the top of the sonority, adding to the tonal interest. A tritone in the soprano line at measure 26 adds a unique color.

In mm. 37-48, the voice presents a new melodic idea that begins in a high tessitura and features a triplet figure and descending contour (Fig. 2.4).



Figure 2.4 “Transblucency,” mm. 39-40

The supporting instrumentation thickens, as more reeds are added to the texture. A polyphonic texture is created by the interpolation of the new material in the voice and the reeds playing the melody from the B theme. This use of motivic repetition is a technique often employed by Ellington and when combined with new musical ideas, it results in an unexpected organization of both familiar and new content. Here, the voice operates independently as the obbligato instrument introducing a third melodic idea. In the A theme, the voice is inextricable from the instrumental texture, as it functions as a component of the harmony.

In B, the voice doesn’t introduce new melodic ideas, rather it repeats, at a higher octave, the material introduced by the trombone. At C, however, the voice receives complete autonomy from the rest of the texture and functions as a solo instrument. Measures 42-43 present an embellished version of the melodic pattern present in mm. 18-19. Because of these devices, growth over time results from the changing function of the voice within the structural organization of the tune, as well as creative instances motivic repetition.

## Performance Considerations

“Transblucency” requires a floating tone and an ability to spin even, long phrases. Of importance is the tuning of the opening phrase, as the soprano enters on a G5 in the *secondo passaggio* where intonation is often prone to discrepancy in descending intervals. Ellington is known for his “mood” pieces that are evocative and paint images and feelings with sound—this piece is no exception, as aptly described by the subtitle “A Blue Fog You Can Almost See Through.” Because of the close-knit harmonies between voice, clarinet, and trombone, intonation is paramount. With regards to phrasing, careful attention must be paid as to where and how to renew the breath, so as not to disturb the rhythmic line. Some performers choose to breathe after the C# in measure two, however, Davis carries the phrase through until the cadence in measure four. From an aesthetic standpoint, the longer phrasing of the vocal line reinforces the idea of fog wafting through space. At too slow a tempo, this phrase may pose difficulty for even experienced vocalists.

The opening phrase may pose the most difficulty for singers as integrity of intervals within the descending line can be tricky. The A theme should be sung legato and rhythmically even, whereas the B theme has a swinging pulse that requires an emphasis on irregular beats. Additionally, although no vowel choice is indicated in the vocal part, an [a] vowel will provide ease throughout the range of this piece. Although no dynamic markings are provided, the piece works well if there is some dynamic contrast between the A and B statements.

The melodic contour—specifically the descending octave leaps in mm. 37 and 45-47, challenge the performer to navigate seamlessly through different registers, requiring



careful planning and execution. For this reason, only singers comfortable with quick transitions through the lower-middle and upper registers of the voice should attempt the vocal demands of “Transblucency.”

Minnehaha from *The Beautiful Indians* (1946)<sup>93</sup>

Original Key: B♭ Major

Range: F<sup>2</sup> – B♭<sup>5</sup>

Tessitura: G<sup>4</sup>-G<sup>5</sup>

Form: Binary

Duration: c. 2:50

Tempo: Moderato

Meter: 4/4

Representative Recordings: Musicraft 5824 (1946)

Contrasting his many epigrammatic pieces, Ellington's *oeuvre* includes a number of extended works as well like *Black, Brown, and Beige*, *The Perfume Suite*, *The Deep South Suite*, *Tattooed Bride*, and *A Drum Is A Woman*. Ellington's lesser known extended work titled *The Beautiful Indians* (1946) draws its subject from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1855 epic poem entitled *The Song of Hiawatha* and points to the European tone poem in its programmatic nature and design. Written as a feature for Kay Davis's wordless vocals and Al Sears' tenor saxophone, Ellington referred to *The Beautiful Indians* as a "tone-parallel."

"Minnehaha", the first of the two-part work, debuted at the Chicago Civic Opera House on November 10, 1946 and was recorded during the second Musicraft session on November 25.<sup>94</sup> "Hiawatha", the second movement of the tone-parallel features Al Sears's tenor sax in a "thinly veiled version of "It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing""<sup>95</sup> Though lacking any social statement, as was the charge for much of

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<sup>93</sup> Duke Ellington, "Minnehaha," copyist's manuscript (1899-1974), Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

<sup>94</sup> Lambert, 143.

<sup>95</sup> Scott Yanow, Naxos,

[https://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs\\_reviews.asp?item\\_code=8.120813&catNum=120813&filetype=About%20this%20Recording&language=English](https://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.120813&catNum=120813&filetype=About%20this%20Recording&language=English)

Ellington's music, the suite contains beautiful melodies and provides an opportunity to highlight some of the individual voices of his musicians.

From November 1946 to 1947, Ellington's two-movement suite *The Beautiful Indians*, appeared on programs at Chicago's Civic Opera House, Cornell University, in Denver, CO, and Portland, OR. The last recording and documented performance of "Minnehaha" took place on August 31 1947 at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. On this program, Kay Davis performed solos in "Transblucency," and "The Blues" from *Black, Brown, and Beige* in addition to her wordless vocals heard in "Minnehaha."

Extant manuscripts do not match the 1946 Musicraft recording, thus, this analysis uses a transcription rendered from said recording plus segments of a handwritten score from the Smithsonian archives. "Minnehaha," comprised of 54 bars with an optional four bar tag, is built around two themes in a bithematic ternary form (AABA) plus a six-bar introduction. The introductory measures feature the entire orchestra, with solo clarinet and saxophone taking turns with descending chromatic passages over an F pedal in the bass (Fig. 3.1) resulting in tonal ambiguity.

The image shows a musical score for the first six measures of "Minnehaha." It is written for piano in 4/4 time. The score consists of two systems. The first system has four measures. The bass line is a constant F pedal point. The right hand has a descending chromatic passage in the first two measures, followed by a more complex melodic line with triplets in measures 3 and 4. The second system has two measures, continuing the piano introduction. The score is written for piano with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

Figure 3.1 "Minnehaha," mm. 1-6

At measure 6, the  $Dmin^7$  chord on beat two creates an IAC to the tonic  $Bb$  chord in the following measure.

The opening melodic statement begins in measure 7 with an angular four note motive ( $A^4-Bb^4-A^5-G\#^5$ ) (Fig. 3.2).



Figure 3.2 “Minnehaha,” mm. 7-8

At measure 8, this motive sounds again, transposed down to a new pitch set ( $F\#^4-G^4-G^5-F\#^5$ ). Measures 9 and 10 are melodically and harmonically identical to the first two measures and at measure 11, the melody introduces a three-note descending figure beginning on an  $F$  natural and ending on an  $F\#$ , creating a moment of tonal instability in the otherwise static tonicity. See figure 3.3 below.



Figure 3.3 “Minnehaha,” mm. 11-12

In the B section the melodic line takes on an irregular contour and seems to mimic the patterns present in indigenous Native American vocalizations. The rapid sixteenth note leap of a perfect fourth evokes the sound of a wild call (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4 “Minnehaha,” mm. 23-24

A particularly angular contour in the four-note motif, a turn beginning with an ascending interval of a perfect fourth (A $\flat$ -D) returns to an A $\flat$ , outlining an interval of an augmented fourth. Underneath, the bass plays an ostinato pattern built on a six-note descending chromatic figure (Fig. 3.5). The resulting tonal instability provides a marked contrast to the A section.

At measure 25, the A theme returns, this time played by solo trombone. The voice re-enters in measure 47 with an exact repeat of the opening melodic idea and eight measures later, an optional tag spans a range over two octaves. The soprano sings a winding diatonic eighth note passage beginning on an A5 and ending on a sustained low F3, while the orchestra sustains a tonic pedal chord (Fig. 3.6). In the final measure of the tag, the orchestra punctuates the ending with a B $\flat$ m $^4_3$  chord.

Figure 3.5 “Minnehaha,” mm. 55-58

The juxtaposition of the D in the upper voice against the pedal D creates a jarring dissonance. One can only surmise whether Ellington was using this to foreshadow Minnehaha’s imminent death.

### Performance Considerations

Several pedagogical and performance challenges present themselves in Ellington’s “Minnehaha.” First, the composer does not indicate a tempo, however, the performer must select a tempo that allows for the sustained singing required in the reprise of the A statement, where two measure phrases link together via glissandi (not indicated in score but evident in extant recordings). Additionally, Ellington does not indicate a vowel choice for the singer. Thus, the singer should choose those vowels that elicit the most clarity and freedom of tone. In the case of “Minnehaha,” the singer would be best served to sing most passages on an [a] vowel, modifying as necessary above the *secondo passagio*.

Wide intervallic leaps, both ascending and descending (major 6ths, minor 7ths, octaves), permeate the vocal line. The highly disjunct contour poses a threat to intonation. From the treatment of the vocal line, it appears Ellington knew the technical limits and strengths of Kay Davis. Though she did not have perfect pitch, she did possess an astounding ability to navigate through highly angular melodic contours with ease, all the while preserving intonation.

Clearly suited for the singer who possesses a wide range, the melody encompasses more than two octaves. It is confusing that Ellington chose to write a melody that requires a light soprano to utilize the extremes of modal registration. Perhaps this is because he intentionally wanted the voice to lose power and clarity as the piece comes to its close, in a gesture of defeat. Having said this, the tag is optional. If the performer so chooses, they may conclude the piece at measure 54, though it sounds rather incomplete without the extra four measures.

## On A Turquoise Cloud<sup>96</sup>

Original Key: D $\flat$  Major

Range: E<sup>4</sup> – B $\flat$ <sup>5</sup>

Tessitura: B $\flat$ <sup>4</sup>-A $\flat$ <sup>5</sup>

Form: Ternary

Duration: 3:00

Tempo: Unmarked

Meter: Cut Time

Representative Recordings: Carnegie Hall, New York (1947)

“On A Turquoise Cloud”, the third and final tone-parallel where Ellington uses Kay Davis’s wordless vocals, was co-written in 1947, by trombonist Lawrence Brown and Ellington. The piece, following the pattern of earlier works like “Minnehaha,” and “Transblucency,” features the soprano voice, trombone, bass clarinet, and violin. First recorded on December 22, 1947 with Columbia Records, “On A Turquoise Cloud” uses a small ensemble comprised of the following: Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet, Ray Nance on violin and Harry Carney on bass clarinet, soprano Kay Davis, and Lawrence Brown, who solos elegantly on the track. The combination of unique tonal personalities makes for a beautiful, sonorous blend in what Lambert refers to as “the most successful” of Ellington’s three tone parallels that blend Davis’ vocals into the scoring.<sup>97</sup>

“On A Turquoise Cloud” made its public debut on the December 1947 Carnegie Hall program. Additional performances ensued at various east coast venues in New York, Philadelphia, as well as a 1950 concert in Hamburg, Germany—Davis’ final public performance with Ellington. The piece, featured in the 1949 short film titled “Symphony in Swing,” starring the Duke Ellington Orchestra, demonstrates the composer’s maturing

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<sup>96</sup> Duke Ellington and Lawrence Brown, “On A Turquoise Cloud,” copyist’s manuscript (1899-1974), Duke Ellington Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

<sup>97</sup> Lambert, 146.



style. In 1950, after Davis left the band, Ellington performed an alternate version with three singers: Marion Cox, Chubby Kemp, and June Norton.

Brown and Ellington use a bithematic form, motivic repetition, and contrapuntal textures in “On A Turquoise Cloud,” fostering musical growth and interest. The 1947 Columbia version is 59 measures long, including a four-bar piano introduction by Ellington and a two-measure extension in Lawrence Brown’s trombone solo. This analysis, derived from the 1947 Ellington/Brown presentation copy, does not include the additional measures, nor the fully scored instrumentation of the contrapuntal section. In addition to extra material, derivations from the notated score in the vocal line exist in Brown and Davis’s solos. The piece, composed in D-flat major, is laden with chromatic harmonies.

Measures 1-8 (Fig. 4.1) present theme A, where parallel motion between voices creates an arching and falling opening line through four bar phrases. The opening 8 bars are scored for voice, bass clarinet, and trombone.



Figure 4.1 “On A Turquoise Cloud,” mm. 1-8

Measures 9-16 contain the initial B theme (Figure 4.2), played by Brown, whose impeccable phrasing, ability to carry the phrase through bar lines, and muted tone augments the feeling of otherworldliness evoked by “On A Turquoise Cloud.” The repeat of the trombone solo, beginning after the repeat in measure 9, is augmented by four measures of highly chromatic material. The recorded version (CO38592-1) includes an additional two measures at the end of Brown’s solo that function as a turnaround into the next vocal entrance. This material is not included in the presentation copy of the score on which this analysis is based.



Figure 4.2 “On A Turquoise Cloud,” mm. 9-16

In the third statement of the B theme, the voice enters on a sustained A5 until joined by the clarinet at measure 28. Voice crossing between clarinet and soprano occurs with some frequency between measures 29-34. Measure 35 marks the beginning of the most complex and musically intricate passage in the entire piece. Here, the voice assumes a countermelody that soars atop the ensemble—now playing the B theme an octave lower. A strong bassline girds the counterpoint formed between the voice, clarinet, violin, and the rest of the ensemble and use of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic motivic

repetition acts as a unifier within “On A Turquoise Cloud.” At the close, the A theme returns, balancing the formal design of the piece and providing contrast to the preceding material. As suggested by its title, “On A Turquoise Cloud,” an evocative mood piece, takes themes and transforms them in a myriad of ways via unique voicings and instrument combinations. The effect is stunning and timeless.

### Performance Considerations

“On A Turquoise Cloud” requires a combination of *sostenuto* singing and agility in a high tessitura. For these reasons, a light lyric voice with a high extension is most appropriate. Not written idiomatically for the voice, the melody in the third B statement is laden with chromatic writing and the contour of the vocal line is highly irregular at times. This presents a challenge for the singer, as they are required to frequently negotiate unusual intervals with precision, clarity, and ease. Therefore, intonation, as per usual, remains a primary concern for the vocalist. In addition to the tuning factor, the pedagogical factors involved with singing wide intervals usher the advanced singer toward this piece.

Brown, nor Ellington indicate any dynamic or tempo marking, although definitive recordings line up around a metronomic marking of  $\text{♩} = 60$  and the eighth notes are swung, as is the norm in the jazz idiom. It is best to keep the phrases moving ahead of the beat to prevent them from sounding static. Although the meter stays consistent, the vocalist must possess a solid sense of rhythm to manage the irregular phrase patterns, especially in the B section. In the highly contrapuntal section, the independence of each

musical line must not become obscured by the thickened texture, therefore, performers must maintain a balance between instruments and voice.

## T.G.T.T. (Too Good To Title)<sup>98</sup>

Original Key: G major

Instrumentation: Soprano, Electric Piano

Range: C<sup>#4</sup> - B<sup>5</sup>

Tessitura:

Form: AA<sup>1</sup>Coda

Duration: 2:30

Tempo: Freely

Meter: 4/4

Representative Recordings: Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York (1968)

“T.G.T.T.,” a duet for electric piano and voice written for Swedish singer Alice Babs, represents one of the sonic climaxes of Ellington’s Second Sacred Concert. In 24 measures “T.G.T.T.” evidences Ellington’s return to an impressionistic style, made manifest via its evocative character, motivic repetition, and expressive use of dissonance. “Too Good to Title,” is preceded by “The Biggest and Busiest Intersection,” featuring percussion section and followed with the closing number “Praise God And Dance.” This analysis relies on both the 1972 transcription published by Tempo Music, and a handwritten score, undated, from the Ellington archives at the Smithsonian. The handwritten version differs somewhat from the transcribed version in that it does not include the introductory piano material, nor the final two measures of Ellington’s accompaniment featured on recordings. Therefore, measure numbers will refer to the 1972 transcription without the introductory and closing material.

Perhaps the most complex musically and pedagogically of all the pieces Ellington composed for Babs, “T.G.T.T.” possesses a wide melodic compass and highly chromatic, predominantly disjunct vocal line that sits vulnerably atop a thin-textured

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<sup>98</sup> Duke Ellington, *T.G.T.T.* (New York: Tempo Music, 1972) 35.

accompaniment. In the original program notes for the Second Sacred Concert, Ellington wrote:

(T.G.T.T. means *Too Good To Title*, because it violates conformity in the same way, we like to think, that Jesus Christ did. The phrases never end on the note you think they will. It is a piece even instrumentalists have trouble with, but Alice Babs read it at sight.)<sup>99</sup>

After the January 1968 studio recording, “T.G.T.T.” was not captured via recording until September 1969, when Yvonne Lanauze performed the solo. In addition to Babs and Lanauze, Trish Turner, and DeVonne Gardner (an original vocalist from Sacred Concert One) went on to perform solo movements in Ellington’s Second Sacred Concert.

Written in the key of G major, “T.G.T.T.” incorporates non-functional cadences and tonic by assertion rather than by root movement, creating a feel of tonal instability. Additionally, Ellington’s use of colorful harmonies, including  $\flat V$  and  $\flat VII$  lend to the overall harmonic interest. Twenty-four measures long (excluding the piano introduction and tag) “T.G.T.T.” is cast in an AA<sup>1</sup>coda form where A and A<sup>1</sup> consist of four four-measure phrases with the last eight bars representing an extension of the final phrase and prolonging the dominant harmony. The first and third phrases are identical, while the second and fourth contrast one another melodically and harmonically.<sup>100</sup> A harmonically generated, disjunct line characterizes the vocal line and chromatic pitches and angular, wide intervallic leaps pervade the writing, adding to the melodic and tonal interest and instability.

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<sup>99</sup> Duke Ellington. Program Notes for *Sacred Concert II*. Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. Duke Ellington. San Francisco: Grace Cathedral, April 16, 1968.

<sup>100</sup> Hill, 263.

The melody in A spans the range of an octave and an enharmonically spelled perfect fourth (D $\flat$ - F $\sharp$ ). Ellington writes intervals as wide as an ascending major 9<sup>th</sup> in measure 1 from E-F $\sharp$  in the melodic contour (Fig. 5.1). Expressive, coloristic dissonance results from the tonic chord in the accompaniment sounding against the F $\sharp$  in the melody.

The figure shows a musical score for two measures. Above the staff, three guitar chord diagrams are shown: G, Em, and C9(11+). The melody line features a wide interval from E to F# in the first measure, followed by a descending line. The accompaniment line provides harmonic support with chords corresponding to the diagrams above.

Figure 5.1 “T.G.T.T.,” mm. 1-2

Here, the melody outlines a harmonic arpeggiation, later filled out in the second half of the measure. Measures 1- 4 share similar rhythmic gestures and melodic contours, however, an arpeggiation in measure 3 replaces the stepwise semiquaver motion in measure. See figure 5.2 below. Ascending minor 7ths in mm. 3, 5, and an ascending major 7<sup>th</sup> in measure 13 are used in much the same fashion.

The figure shows a musical score for measure 4. Above the staff, four guitar chord diagrams are shown: Am7, F7, D7, and G(5b). The melody line features a descending line with a wide interval, and the accompaniment line provides harmonic support with chords corresponding to the diagrams above.

Figure 5.2 “T.G.T.T.,” mm. 4

The first and second phrases form an antecedent-consequent relationship, ending on a half cadence in measure 8. The third phrase expresses more chromaticism and includes an unusual resolution to a G $\flat$  (5 $\flat$ ). The resolution of the leading tone in the upper voice represents one of the most striking melodic features; rather than resolving to tonic, it consistently resolves downward to scale degree five. The harmonies within the accompaniment are colorful, but subservient to the melody in terms of activity. Extended tertian harmonies, particularly ninth and eleventh chords, permeate the accompaniment.

“T.G.T.T.” begins with a four-bar piano introduction and at measure 5, the melody enters with the A theme for eight measures. After this, the A<sup>1</sup> melody begins and introduces an altered harmonic extension of the first five measures. At measure 21, the nine-bar coda prolongs the dominant harmony while the melodic and rhythmic motive repeats in the voice (Fig. 5.3). In the coda, a three-note descending rhythmic motive sounds at different octaves creating a tiered falling effect. In measure 15 at the close of the third melodic idea, Ellington writes a Ger+<sup>6</sup>, creating a lack of closure. In addition to the use of augmented chords, manifestations of an impressionistic approach are evidenced by the sustained G pedal underpinning the final sonorities—D major to G major. Ellington’s voicing results in a tritone leap in the top voice from D to G.

Figure 5.3

“T.G.T.T.,” mm. 12-24



### Performance Considerations

Complex harmonies, wide intervals, and unusual phrase resolutions pose many challenges for the singer. “T.G.T.T.” requires the singer to negotiate chromatic leaps with little or no preparation. The performer must possess an innate sense of flexible phrasing, necessary to capture the essence of the piece. Although entirely notated, the melody should maintain an element of spontaneity and improvisation. Ellington’s writing allows the singer much freedom in terms of expressive phrasing, rubato, and dynamic calibration. Alice Babs utilized scat syllables in a subtle but highly effective manner in her reading of the melody, however, this approach may or may not be appropriate for everyone.

The accompanist must play with extreme sensitivity and nuance to support, but never overpower, the melody. Recordings demonstrate Ellington providing support on beats two and four rather than the typical strong beats. The thin textured accompaniment does little to provide a sense of tonal security, therefore, the performer should possess a strong sense of the unusually tuned intervals and phrase resolutions. A truly gratifying and challenging piece, “T.G.T.T.” proves a rewarding experience for the skilled classical singer, seeking “outside-the-box” repertoire.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Duke Ellington's creative output includes an abundance of styles, compositional methods, social commentary, and creative impetus. Within the context of twentieth-century American music, Ellington, represents a figure of immutable import given the sheer volume, variety, and cultural impact of his works. Embedded with a deep affinity for his culture, from concert works, to musicals, iconic big band masterpieces, and popular tunes, Ellington's music aptly expresses his undiminishing capacity; pushing musical boundaries and defying normative practices. Certainly, his use of the instrumentalized wordless soprano voice serves as indicative of this non-conformist artistic iconoclasm.

This monograph attempted to catalog and discuss Ellington's use of the wordless voice as made manifest in selected recorded works. Intended to provide some utility for performers, scholars, and creative enthusiasts, it provides context, as well as musical and pedagogical performance assessments of selected titles. One must consider that the approach to researching and analyzing Duke Ellington's music is not the normative "score study" method. In contrast, the scores oftentimes provide less insight into Ellington's musical eye than the historical recordings. In many cases, scores are incomplete, or scribbled almost illegibly on fragments of manuscript paper. Additionally, in some of the recorded instances where the voice is used as an instrument, it is not indicated in the score. One may surmise that in true Ellington fashion some of these were spontaneous additions or substitutions for instrumental parts.

With "Creole Love Call," Adelaide Hall's improvised vocals provided the impetus for Ellington's future inclusions of vocalise-type melodies and mood pieces that

harmonize the voice with other instruments. The tonal identity and musicianship of the singer was paramount; the unduplicable voices of Davis and Babs were the sounds to which Ellington provided context. One may ascertain, upon examination of these melodies, that Ellington was not writing idiomatically for just any voice. So attuned to the strengths and limitations of his musicians, he wrote idiomatically for the specific vocalist he employed; many times, resulting in a vocal line that requires the utmost musicianship, intonation, and technical abilities.

“Creole Love Call” merits praise for being the first use of the wordless voice in a jazz context. “Transblucency,” and “On A Turquoise Cloud,” demonstrate the sophistication with which unique instrumental and vocal personalities blend together in the context of Ellington’s unique, cross-sectional chord voicings. With “Minnehaha” his programmatic tendency comes to life through the juxtaposition of vocal display and orchestral commentary. In “T.G.T.T.” the non-conformist approach to melodic writing demonstrates his command of dissonance and is certainly, as Ellington would say, “beyond category.” These five titles do not exhaust the instances where Duke Ellington utilized wordless vocal melodies, however, they represent different phases of his compositional approach and tonal visions spread throughout his career. With “Creole Love Call,” Adelaide Hall created the countermelody, and Ellington secured its history via recording. In the two mood pieces, “Transblucency,” and “On A Turquoise Cloud,” his partnership with trombonist Lawrence Brown illustrates his collaborative method of work.

It is my hope that Ellington’s music in this genre may be introduced into the chamber music repertoire, thereby earning appreciation in a present-day performance

context, and propagating the tradition of the artists from whom we inherited these musical gems. The sublime voices of Hall, Davis and Babs, breathed life into Ellington's wordless melodies, representing an intangible vehicle of limitless expression unencumbered by words.

### Suggestions for Further Study

There are several areas of interest stimulated by this research. The history of the vocalise traces back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thus, a comparative analysis of vocalises by Ravel, Fauré, and Rachmaninoff with Ellington's wordless melodies to ascertain similarities and differences between the treatment of the voice may prove a fascinating area of research.

Extemporaneous vocals performed by Alice Babs on the album *Serenade to Sweden* and in her performances in the second and third *Sacred Concerts* represents another area begging further study. Both "Heaven" and "Almighty God" from the Second Sacred Concert demonstrate Babs's uncanny ability to spin complex melodic lines with ease. Transcriptions of her improvisations would prove a useful learning tool and offer insight into a classically-trained musician's approach towards jazz melodic and rhythmic phrasing.

A number of popular ballads, performed and recorded by Kay Davis and Duke Ellington and His Orchestra between 1945-1950, including "Lover Man," "Embraceable You," "If You Are But A Dream," "Brown Penny," and others, highlight Davis's tenure with Ellington. Billy Strayhorn often arranged these tunes for Davis, as per Ellington's instructions, for the Duke Ellington Treasury Series (D.E.T.S.) broadcasts. Manuscripts

exist in Strayhorn's hand for many of these tunes, however, few piano-vocal reductions. The makings of a lovely Treasury Series songbook compiled from orchestral reductions lie in wait.

Last, the issue of performance practice regarding Ellington's wordless melodies prompts a philosophical argument for preserving his work as it was originally intended for performance. Is it possible to interpret and perform these pieces in a manner paying them due respect? Furthermore, does deviating from Ellington's original scoring negate musical value? Ellington's gift was organizing individual voices in specific contexts, eliciting qualities no other band could reproduce. Without those personalities, is the aesthetic of Ellington's music usurped by our own nostalgic ambition? Questions such as these undoubtedly merit further study.

PART II

The University of Kentucky  
School of Music  
Presents

Lisa Clark  
In a DMA Voice Recital

With Cliff Jackson  
piano

April 2, 2011  
Memorial Hall  
3:00pm

PROGRAM

Vocalise	Wilbur Chenoweth (1889-1980)
Schlagende Herzen An die Nacht Malven Freundliche Vision Muttertändelei	Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
Les filles de Cadix	Léo Delibes (1836-1891)
Chère Nuit	Alfred Bachelet (1864-1944)
Villanelle	Eva Dell'Acqua (1856-1930)
<i>-Intermission-</i>	
Lament	Miguel Sandoval (1903-1953)
<i>Poema en forma de canciones</i> Nunca Olvida Cantares Los dos miedos Las locas por amor	Joaquin Turina (1882-1949)

Selections from *Genius Child*  
To be somebody  
My People  
Joy

Ricky Ian Gordon  
(b. 1956)

Acknowledgements: I'd like to thank Dr. McCorvey for his support, guidance, and encouragement. Thank you to Professor Jackson for his time, patience, and for sharing his priceless musical gifts and insight over the course of the last two semesters. Last, thank you to my friends at Russell Cave Church of Christ and St. Peter's Episcopal. Your support means so much to me.

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Voice Performance. Ms. Clark is a student of Dr. Everett McCorvey.

Note: Latecomers will be seated at intermission or at an appropriate time as arranged with performers.

### **Program Notes**

#### **Wilbur Chenoweth (1899-1980)**

American pianist, organist, and composer Wilbur Chenoweth was born in Tecumseh, Nebraska, June 4, 1899. He attended the University of Nebraska and later studied piano with Sigismund Stojowski and Alexander Lambert in New York. He served on the University of Nebraska's School of Music faculty as a professor of piano, organ, and theory from 1925-1931. In 1938, he moved to Santa Monica, CA where he served on the faculty at Occidental college from 1938-1945. He composed numerous effective piano pieces, choruses, and songs including "Vocalise," "The Arrow," and "The Song."<sup>1</sup> Chenoweth's vocal works are not often performed, however the charming "Vocalise" for soprano and piano would be well suited to any number of recitals.

#### **Vocalise**

#### **Richard Strauss (1864-1949)**

Richard Strauss was born June 11, 1864 in Munich, Germany. His father, Franz Strauss was a principal horn player in the Munich Court and introduced the young Strauss to the music of composers such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. Raised in a household where instrumental music was central to daily life, Strauss began piano lessons at the age of four. At six years of age, he began composing and two years later he began to study the violin. At the age of eleven, Strauss began to study composition more fervently. His earliest compositions consisted primarily of lieder, piano pieces, and chamber music and reflect his solid understanding of harmony and Classical form.

By the end of the nineteenth century the German romantic lied had progressed beyond the intimate chamber music context. Richard Strauss was a primary figure in elevating the lied to a more operatic style. "Strauss blurred the line between art song and opera with his expansive vocal lines, frequent reliance on coloratura, and dramatic demands on the voice."<sup>2</sup>

"Schlagende Herzen," a charming depiction of young innocent love, comes from Op. 29: *Drei Lieder nach Gedichten von Otto Julius Bierbaum* and demonstrates Strauss'

preference for the high soprano voice. From Op. 68: *Sechs Lieder nach Gedichten von Clemens Brentano*, comes the ethereal “An die Nacht,” which again, exploits the high floating tones of the soprano voice. In this song, melodic and harmonic ambiguity couples with a mystic text, creating an otherworldly, veiled atmosphere. “Malven,” Strauss’ last song, was published posthumously. Written for the soprano Maria Jeritza as a gift, this tender, wistful song “translates into the music the tallness of the mallows and their delicacy.”<sup>3</sup> “Freundliche Vision,” from Op. 48, is considered one of Strauss’ loveliest songs, while the charming and witty “Muttertändelei,” from the composer’s “*Mutterlieder*,” was written and orchestrated for his wife to sing at concerts.

### **Schlagende Herzen**

Über Wiesen und Felder ein Knabe ging;  
Kling klang, schlug ihm das Herz;  
es glänzt ihm am Finger von Golde ein Ring,  
Kling klang, schlug ihm das Herz!  
Oh Wiesen, oh Felder, wie seid ihr schön!  
Oh Berge, oh Täler wie schön!  
Wie bist du gut, wie bist du schön,  
du gold'ne Sonne in Himmelshöh'n!"  
Kling klang, schlug ihm das Herz.

Schnell eilte der Knabe mit fröhlichem Schritt,  
Kling klang, schlug ihm das Herz.  
Nahm manche lachende Blume mit;  
Kling klang schlug ihm das Herz.  
Über Wiesen und Felder weht Frühlingswind,  
über Berge und Wälder weht Frühlingswind.  
Im Herzen mir innen weht Frühlingswind,  
der treibt zu dir mich leise, lind.  
Kling klang schlug ihm das Herz.

Zwischen Wiesen und Feldern ein Mädels stand,  
Kling klang schlug ihr das Herz,  
hielt über die Augen zum Schauen die Hand,  
Kling klang, schlug ihr das Herz.  
Über Wiesen und Felder, über Berge und Wälder,  
zu mir, zu mir, schnell kommt er her,  
O wenn er bei mir nur, bei mir schon wär'.  
Kling klang, schlug ihr das Herz.

### **An die Nacht**

Heilige Nacht! Heilige Nacht!  
Sternengeschloßner Himmelsfrieden!  
Alles, was das Licht geschieden ist verbunden,  
Alle Wunden bluten süß im Abendrot.

### **Beating Hearts**

A boy was walking over meadows and fields;  
Cling-clang, his heart was beating; a gold ring was gleaming on his finger;  
cling-clang, his heart was beating!  
Oh meadows, oh fields, how are you beautiful,  
Oh mountains, oh valleys how beautiful!  
How are you good, how are you beautiful,  
you golden sun in heaven's heights!  
Cling-clang, his heart was beating.

The boy hurried quickly with a merry stride;  
cling-clang, his heart was beating.  
He brought many a cheerful flower with him;  
cling-clang, his heart was beating.  
Over meadows and fields a spring wind is blowing,  
over mountains and forests a spring wind is blowing,  
inside my heart a spring wind is blowing,  
which drives me softly, gently to you.  
Cling-clang, his heart was beating.

A girl was standing among meadows and fields;  
cling-clang, her heart was beating;  
she shaded her eyes with her hand to see better;  
cling-clang, her heart was beating.  
Over meadows and fields, over mountains and forests,  
he is quickly coming to me, to me!  
Oh if only he were already beside me, beside me!  
Cling-clang, her heart was beating.

### **To the Night**

Holy night! Holy night!  
Star-made peace of heaven!  
Everything that light has separated is now connected,  
all wounds bleed sweetly in the sunset's glow.



Bjelbogs Speer, Bjelbogs Speer  
Sinkt ins Herz der trunknen Erde,  
Die mit seliger Gebärde eine Rose  
In dem Schoße  
Dunkler Lüfte niedertaucht.

(Heilige Nacht! züchtige Braut, züchtige Braut!)  
Deine süße Schmach verhülle,  
Wenn des Hochzeitsbechers Fülle  
Sich ergießet;  
Also fließet in die brünstige Nacht der Tag!

#### **Malven**

Aus Rosen, Phlox, Zinienflor  
Ragen im Garten Malven empor,  
Duftlos und ohne des Purpurs Glut,  
Wie ein verweintes blasses Gesicht  
Unter dem goldnen himmlischen Licht.  
Und dann verwehen leise im Wind  
Zärtliche Blüten, Sommers Gesind

#### **Freundliche Vision**

Nicht im Schlafe hab' ich das geträumt,  
Hell am Tage sah ich's schön vor mir:  
Eine Wiese voller Margeritten;  
tief ein weißes Haus in grünen Büschen;  
Götterbilder leuchten aus dem Laube.  
Und ich geh' mit Einer, die mich lieb hat,  
ruhigen Gemütes in die Kühle  
dieses weißen Hauses, in den Frieden,  
Der voll Schönheit wartet, daß wir kommen.

#### **Muttertändelei**

Seht mir doch mein schönes Kind,  
Mit den gold'nen Zottelöckchen,  
Blauen Augen, roten Bäckchen!  
Leutchen, habt ihr auch so eins?  
Leutchen, nein, ihr habt keins!

Seht mir doch mein süßes Kind,  
Fetter als ein fettes Schneckchen,  
Süßer als ein Zuckerweckchen!  
Leutchen, habt ihr auch so eins?  
Leutchen, nein, ihr habt keins!

Seht mir doch mein holdes Kind,  
Nicht zu mürrisch, nicht zu wählig!  
Immer freundlich, immer fröhlich!  
Leutchen, habt ihr auch so eins?  
Leutchen, nein, ihr habt keins!

Byelobog's spear, Byelobog's spear  
sinks into the heart of the drunken Earth,  
which, in a blissful gesture, submerges a  
rose into the bosom  
of the dark air

Holy night! Chaste bride, chaste bride!  
Hide your sweet shame  
when the wedding goblet's fullness  
is poured out;  
thus day flows into the ardent night.

#### **Malven**

From among roses, phlox, and zinnias in  
the garden, all in a riot of bloom, mallows  
tower up without fragrance and without the  
ardor of purple, like a pale, tear-stained  
face under the golden heavenly light.  
And then tender blossoms, the rabble of  
summer, are quietly scattered by the wind.

#### **Friendly Vision**

I did not dream that in my sleep;  
I saw it there in front of me, beautiful in  
the bright day; a meadow full of daisies;  
a white house deeply immersed in green  
bushes, statues of ancient gods gleaming  
through the foliage. And I walk with  
someone who loves me, both of us in a  
tranquil mood, into the coolness of this  
white house, into the peace, that, full of  
beauty, is waiting for us to come.

#### **A Mother's Playful Bragging**

Just look at my child  
with the golden tassels of little curls,  
blue eyes, little red cheeks!  
Dear people, do you also have such a one?  
Dear people, no, you don't have any!

Just look at my sweet child,  
fatter than a fat little snail,  
sweeter than a sugar roll!  
Dear people, do you also have such a one?  
Dear people, no, you don't have any!

Just look at my lovely child,  
not too surly, not too fussy!  
Always friendly, always cheerful!  
Dear people, do you have such a one?  
Friends and neighbors, you don't have  
any!

Seht mir doch mein frommes Kind!  
Keine bitterböse Sieben  
Würd' ihr Mütterchen so lieben.  
Leutchen, möchtet ihr so eins?  
O, ihr kriegt gewiß nicht meins!

Komm' einmal ein Kaufmann her!  
Hunderttausend blanke Taler,  
Alles Gold der Erde zahl' er!  
O, er kriegt gewiß nicht meins! -  
Kauf' er sich woanders eins!

Just look at my good child!  
No little vixen  
would love her mommie so much.  
People, would you like to have such a one?  
Oh, you'll certainly not get mine!

Let a merchant come here one day!  
Let him pay a hundred thousand shiny  
dollars,  
all the gold in the world!  
Oh, he'll certainly not get mine!  
Let him buy himself one somewhere else!

### **Léo Delibes (1836-1891)**

French composer, Léo Delibes, was born February 21, 1836 in St. Germain du Val, France. After his father's death in 1847, his family moved to Paris and he became a student at the Conservatoire. At seventeen, Delibes became organist of St Pierre-de-Chaillot and also served as accompanist at the Théâtre Lyrique, the same theatre that premiered his *opéra comique*, *Le jardinier et son seigneur*, in 1863. In 1864 he became chorus master at the Opéra, where he was immersed in a world of new musical possibilities.

In 1870, with the success of his ballet, *Coppélia*, Delibes secured his place as a legitimate composer. He quit his job at the Opéra and decided to pursue composition full time. In the years spanning 1871-1883, he produced several important works including the *opéra comique*, *Le roi l'a dit*, his second full-scale ballet, *Sylvia*, and most famously, the opera *Lakmé*. Though his recognition was garnered from ballet and opera, Delibes youthful works include a number of comic chansons and *chansonnettes*, a lighter variety from the romance. "Just as his operas and ballets show vestiges of his early operettas, so the piquant tone and charm of Delibes' serious *melodies* may be traced to his *chansonnettes* dating from the Second Empire."<sup>4</sup>

*Trois Mélodies*, includes *Éclogue*, a setting by Victor Hugo, as well as two settings by Alfred de Musset: *Bonjour, Suzon* and the famous *Les filles de Cadix*. The latter bolero-inspired song sings of Spain and reflects the shared ability with Bizet to "spin local colour for Spanish pieces."

#### **Les filles de Cadix**

Nous venions de voir le taureau,  
Trois garçons, trois fillettes,  
Sur la pelouse il faisait beau,  
Et nous dansions un bolero,  
Au son des castagnettes;  
Dites-moi, voisin,  
Si j'ai bonne mine,  
Et si ma basquine

#### **The girls of Cadiz**

We'd just left the bullfight,  
Three boys, three girls,  
The sun shone on the grass  
And we danced a bolero  
To the sound of castanets.  
'Tell me, neighbour,  
Am I looking good,  
And does my skirt

Va bien ce matin,  
Vous me trouvez la taille fine?...  
Ah! ah!  
Les filles de Cadix aiment assez cela.

Et nous dansions un bolero  
Un soir c'était Dimanche,  
Vers nous s'en vient un hidalgo  
Cousu d'or, la plume au chapeau,  
Et le poing sur la hanche:  
Si tu veux de moi,  
Brune au doux sourire,  
Tu n'as qu'a le dire,--  
Cette or est à toi.  
Passez votre chemin, beau sire...  
Ah! Ah!  
Les filles de Cadix n'entendent pas cela!

Et nous dansions un boléro,  
Au pied de la colline...  
Sur le chemin passait Diégo  
Qui pour tout bien n'a qu'un manteau  
Et qu'une mandoline:  
La belle aux doux yeux,  
Veux-tu qu'à l'église demain te conduise  
Un amant jaloux?  
Jaloux! Jaloux! Quelle sottise!  
Ah! ah!  
Les filles de Cadix craignent ce défaut là!

### **Alfred Bachelet (1864-1944)**

Alfred Bachelet was born February 26, 1864 in Paris. He attended the Conservatoire and subsequently at the age of 26 went on to win the Prix de Rome in 1890. Sometimes referred to as a French Wagnerian, Bachelet was drawn to programmatic orchestral works early on in his career, though his success came from his operas. His three-act opera, *Scerno*, premiered on the eve of World War I, and sparked controversy due to its naturalistic subject matter. In addition to orchestral tone poems and opera, Bachelet also produced a body of choruses and songs. The vaguely impressionistic "Chère Nuit," composed in 1897 for Australian soprano Nellie Melba, is the work for which Bachelet is most widely known.<sup>5</sup>

**Chère Nuit**  
(Eugène Adenis)

Voici l'heure bientôt.  
Derrière la colline je vois le soleil qui décline

Suit me, this morning?  
Have I a slender waist?...  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz are rather fond of that.'

And we were dancing a bolero,  
One Sunday evening.  
A hidalgo came towards us,  
Glittering in gold, feather in cap,  
And hand on hip:  
'If you want me,  
Dark beauty with the sweet smile,  
You've only to say so,  
And these riches are yours.'  
Go on your way, fine sir.  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz don't take to that.

And we were dancing a bolero,  
At the foot of the hill...  
By the road, Diego was passing,  
All his possessions, a cloak,  
and a mandoline:  
'Pretty maiden with tender eyes,  
Would you like a jealous lover  
To take you to church tomorrow?  
Jealous! Jealous! How silly!  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz fear such a bad trait!

**Dearest Night**

Soon the hour will be here.  
Behind the hill I see the sun that goes

Et cache ses rayons jaloux ...  
J'entends chanter l'âme des choses  
Et les narcisses et les roses  
M'apportent des parfums plus doux!

down and jealously hides its rays. I  
hear the soul of things singing, and the  
narcissuses and roses send me the  
sweetest perfumes!

Chère nuit aux clartés sereines  
Toi que ramènes le tendre amant  
Ah! descends et voile la terre  
De ton mystère calme et charmant.

Beloved night of serene radiance,  
you who bring back my tender lover,  
ah, come down and veil the earth with  
your calm and charming mystery.

Mon bonheur renaît sous ton aile,  
O nuit plus belle que les beaux jours:  
Ah! lève-toi! Pour faire encore  
Briller l'aurore de mes amours?

My happiness is re-born under your  
wings, o night, more beautiful than any  
days are: ah, arise and again make the  
dawn of my love shine forth!

### **Eva Dell'Acqua (1856-1930)**

Belgian singer and composer, Eva Dell'Acqua was born in Brussels on February 25, 1856. Her compositions include mainly vocal music, including approximately fifteen operas and operettas. Her early operas were performed privately during the 1880's in Brussels and Paris, however five of her later operas were produced and performed more widely throughout Belgium—most notably, the opera in which Dell'Acqua performed the title role, *La ruse de Pierette*.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Villanelle**

(Frédéric van der Elst)  
J'ai vu passer l'hirondelle  
Dans le ciel pur du matin:  
Elle allait, à tire-d'aile,  
Vers le pays où l'appelle  
Le soleil et le jasmin.  
J'ai vu passer l'hirondelle!  
J'ai longtemps suivi des yeux  
Le vol de la voyageuse...  
Depuis, mon âme rêveuse  
L'accompagne par les cieux.  
Ah! ah! au pays mystérieux!  
Et j'aurais voulu comme elle  
Suivre le même chemin...  
J'ai vu passer l'hirondelle, etc.

I have seen the swallow fly over  
In the clear morning sky:  
She was flying by wing  
To the land to which she is called  
By the sun and the jasmine.  
I have seen the swallow fly over!  
I have followed for a long time with my eyes  
The flight of the traveller...  
Since then, my dreaming soul  
accompanies her through the skies.  
Ah! ah! to the mysterious land!  
And I would have wished like her  
to follow the same path...  
I have seen the swallow fly over, etc.

### **Miguel Sandoval (1903-1953)**

Pianist, conductor, and composer Miguel Sandoval was born in Guatemala City on November 22, 1903. He became a U.S. citizen in 1925. In addition to studying with Eduardo Trucco, Sandoval was an accompanist for Rosa Ponselle, Beniamini Gigli, and Grace Moore, among other talented singers. He wrote music for both film and radio and

work as staff pianist, composer, and conductor at CBS from 1941-49. Sandoval composed a symphonic poem, *Recuerdos en un paseo, Spanish Dance* for violin and orchestra, and numerous piano works and songs in the Latin American vein.<sup>7</sup> Sandoval's wordless vocalise "Lament," was written for Brazilian soprano, Bidú Sayão.

## Lament

### Joaquin Turina (1882-1949)

Joaquin Turina was born in Seville on December 9, 1882. After a stint in Madrid, where he unsuccessfully attempted to master the world of zarzuelas, Turina moved to Paris and became a student of D'Indy. Although he was strongly influenced by French music, especially Debussy, Turina also sought inspiration in the folk music of his native Spain. His extremely distinctive song style owes to use of Spanish elements such as dance rhythms, folk materials, and Andalusian melodic effects. In his songs, intense rhythms, lyrical melodies and heightened emotions combine with sensitive text settings. Additionally, he frequently uses guitar figurations (arpeggiated chords, repeated notes, and repeated chords) in piano accompaniments as an added element of Spanish flair.

Turina's *Poema en forma de canciones*, Op. 19, opens with a dramatic piano solo. The songs themselves contain "romantic lyricism, color, and dramatic interpretation of text," and demonstrate the intense lyricism, dramatic text declamation, and dance influences for which Turina's music is so well known.<sup>8</sup>

### *Poema en forma de canciones* (Ramón de Campoamor)

#### Dedicatoria

##### Nunca olvida...

Ya que este mundo abandono  
antes de dar cuenta a Dios,  
aquí para entre los dos  
mi confesión te diré.

Con toda el alma perdono  
hasta a los que siempre he odiado.  
¡A tí que tanto te he amado  
nunca te perdonaré!

##### Cantares

¡Ay! Más cerca de mí te siento  
cuando más huyo de tí  
pues tu imagen es en mí  
sombra de mi pensamiento..

Vuélvemelo a decir  
pues, embelesado, ayer,

##### Do not forget...

Since this world I leave,  
before the final reckoning with God,  
here between the two of us  
I shall make my confession.

With all my soul I forgive  
even those I've always hated.  
But you, whom I have loved so much,  
I shall never forgive!

##### Songs

Ah! I feel you closer to me,  
the more I flee from you;  
since I bear your likeness within me,  
as a shadow of my thoughts.

Tell me again,  
since yesterday, spellbound,

te escuchaba sin oír  
y te miraba sin ver.

### **Los dos miedos**

Al comenzar la noche de aquel día  
Ella lejos de mí,  
¿Por qué te acercas tanto? Me decía,  
Tengo miedo de ti.

Y después que la noche hubo pasado  
Dijo, cerca de mí:  
¿Por qué te alejas tanto de mi lado?  
¡Tengo miedo sin ti!

### **Las locas por amor**

Te amaré diosa Venus si prefieres  
que te ame mucho tiempo y con cordura  
y respondió la diosa de Citeres:  
Prefiero como todas las mujeres  
que me amen poco tiempo y con locura.

## **Ricky Ian Gordon (b. 1956)**

### **To Be Somebody**

Little girl, little girl dreaming of a baby grand piano,  
Not knowing there's a Steinway bigger,  
bigger...Dreaming of a baby grand to play...That  
stretches paddle tailed across the floor. Not standing  
upright, like a bad boy in the corner, But sending  
music up and down the stairs, And out the door, to  
confound even Hazel Scott Who might be passing, Oh

Little boy dreaming of the boxing gloves  
Joe Louis wore the gloves  
That sent two dozen men to the floor  
Knock-out! Bam! Bop! Mop!  
There's always room, they say at the top.

### **My People**

The night is beautiful  
so the faces of my people  
The stars are beautiful  
so the eyes of my people  
Beautiful also is the sun  
beautiful also are the souls of my people

I listened to you without hearing  
and looked at you without seeing.

### **The two fears**

At nightfall on that day,  
far from me she said:  
why come so close?  
I am afraid of you.

and after the night had passed,  
close to me she said:  
why move so far away?  
I am afraid without you.

### **Frantic for love**

'I shall love you, goddess Venus, if you wish  
me to love you long and wisely.'  
And the goddess of Cythera replied:  
'I wish, like all women,  
to be loved fleetingly and frantically.'

### **Joy**

I went to look for joy  
Slim dancing joy  
Gay, laughing joy  
Bright eyed joy  
And I found her driving the butcher's cart  
in the arms of the butcher boy  
Such company as keeps this young nymph joy!

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Baker, ed. Nicolas Slominsky. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Sixth Ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1978) p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Lorraine Gorrell. *The Nineteenth Century German Lied*. (New Jersey: Amadeus Press, 1993) pp.

<sup>3</sup> Beaumont Glass. *Richard Strauss' Complete Song Texts*. (New York: Leyerle Publications, 2004) p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes. *A French Song Companion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Langham Smith. "Bachelet, Alfred." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. 20 Mar. 2011

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48841>>.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Ann Smart. "Dell'Acqua, Eva." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. 20 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/54017>>.

<sup>7</sup> E. Ruth Anderson. *Contemporary American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary*. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1976. p. 380.

<sup>8</sup> Carol Kimball. *Song*. (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005) p. 509.

The University of Kentucky  
School of Music  
Presents

Lisa Clark  
In a DMA Voice Recital

with John Greer  
piano

and

Rachel White, oboe  
Chase Miller, clarinet  
Jennifer Oakes, flute  
Will Ronning, violin

October 30, 2013  
Singletary Center Recital Hall  
7:30pm

PROGRAM

Vorrei speigarvi, oh Dio	W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
Der Hirt auf dem Felsen	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Four Fragments from the Canterbury Tales	Lester Trimble (1920-1986)
I. Prologe	
II. A Knyght	
III. A Young Squier	
IV. The Wyfe of Biside Bathe	

*-Intermission-*

Who is Sylvia?	Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)
À Chloris	Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)



Les filles des Cadix

Léo Delibes  
(1836-1891)

La vie en rose

Louiguy  
(1960-1991)

For recording purposes, please hold applause until after each set/piece and have cell phones on silent. No flash photography, thank you!

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Voice Performance. Lisa Clark is a student of Dr. Everett McCorvey.

### **Program Notes**

#### **Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828)**

Franz Schubert was born on January 31, 1797 in Vienna, Austria. During childhood, young Schubert studied violin with his father, piano with his brother, and received lessons in organ, theory, and singing as well. Schubert's early works were composed while still a student at the Stadtkonvikt, however, in 1813, when he left the school, composer Salieri continued to teach the talented young man.

With the growing expressive capabilities of the piano, and the sudden influx of German verse by poets such as Heine, Schiller, Goethe, Müller, and Rückert, the artistic climate in nineteenth century Germany was ripe with inspiration and opportunity for Schubert. Often described as the "creator of the genre of strophic lieder", Schubert's first masterpiece, "Gretchen am Spinnrade" was composed at the young age of sixteen.<sup>1</sup> From 1815 to 1816 Schubert composed 250 songs. Schubert's "intuitive melodic gift", and imaginative "arsenal of piano figures used as tone painting" culminated in atmospheric works in which the piano often comments on action or anticipates or echoes the vocal phrase.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Schubert's "hair trigger" sense of inspiration led him to compose nearly one half of his entire output by age nineteen, which included a vast body of *Lieder*, chamber works, piano music, symphonies, operas, and choral music.

"Der Hirt auf dem Felsen", is a chamber work for voice, clarinet, and piano, set to four verses by Wilhelm Müller. Verses 5 and 6 are generally attributed to Helmina von Chézy. Schubert's melodic treatment of the poetry reflects the evolving mood of the piece, while the clarinet evokes the call of the shepherd.

**Der Hirt auf dem Felsen**

Wenn auf dem höchsten Fels ich steh',  
In's tiefe Thal herniedersch',  
Und singe:

Fern aus dem tiefen dunkeln Thal  
Schwingt sich empor der Wiederhall,  
Der Klüfte.

Je weiter meine Stimme dringt,  
Je heller sie mir wieder klingt  
Von unten.

Mein Leibchen wohnt so weit von mir,  
Drum seh'n ich mich so heiss nach ihr  
Hinüber!

In tiefem Gram verzehr' ich mich,  
Mir ist die Freude hin,  
Auf Erden mir die Hoffnung wich,  
Ich hier so einsam bin,

So sehnend klang im Wald das Lied,  
So sehnend klang es durch die Nacht,  
Die Herzen es zum Himmel zieht  
Mit wunderbarer Macht,  
Die Herzen es zum Himmel zieht  
Mit wunderbarer macht.

Der Frühling will kommen,  
Der Frühling meine Freud',  
Nun mach' ich mich fertig  
Zum Wandern bereit.

**The Shepherd on the Rock**

When I stand on the highest rock,  
Look down into the deep valley  
And sing,

The echo from the ravines rises up  
From the dark depths  
Of the distant valley.

The further my voice carries,  
The clearer it echoes back to me  
From below.

My sweetheart dwells so far from  
me, And thus I long so ardently  
For her.

I am consumed by deep sorrow;  
My joy has gone.  
My hope on this earth has  
vanished; I am so alone here.

So fervently the song resounded  
through the night;  
So fervently it resounded through  
the night;  
It drew hearts heavenwards  
With its wondrous power.

Spring will come  
Spring, my delight;  
Now I shall prepare  
To go a-wandering

## Lester Trimble (1920-1986)

American composer and critic Lester Trimble was born in Bangor, Wisconsin on August 29, 1920. With support from Schoenberg, Trimble was encouraged to attend the Carnegie Institute of Technology, where he earned degrees in violin performance and composition.<sup>3</sup> After studying with composers such as Milhaud, Copland, Boulanger, and Honegger, Trimble returned from Paris to secure a position in New York as managing editor of *Musical America*. In 1952, Virgil Thompson appointed Trimble as music critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, a position he remained active in for ten years. His works demonstrate an “inclination towards lyricism, with close knit thematic organization, intense harmonic and instrumental coloration, distinctive melodic contours and original formal structures.”<sup>4</sup>

Trimble’s *Four Fragments from the Canterbury Tales* was conceived as a narrative monodrama, where the individual sections add up to a formally balanced piece of chamber music. Beginning with the *Canterbury Tales* opening passage, the *Prologe* is a “highly decorated movement, evoking in lacelike filigree the sparkle of spring rains, burgeoning brooks, and the chirping of the forest birds.”<sup>5</sup> The second and third sections, *A Knyght* and *A Yong Squier*, depict father and son figures—the father a stately figure, while the son is portrayed as a handsome graceful figure with “formidable lovemaking” capabilities. The fourth section, an abbreviation of Chaucer’s *The Wyf of Biside Bathe*, is neither narrative nor descriptive. Here, the Wyf ruminates on her lively marital ventures and questions the necessity of monogamy.

A blend of modernism and archaism, the treatment of Chaucer’s poetry bears some resemblance to neoclassicism but avoids falling into the confines of categorization. Instead, Trimble’s composition points to the timelessness of themes and human behavior imbued in Chaucer’s poetry.

### Prologe

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne;  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open ye  
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages);...  
Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,  
Redy to wenden on my pilrymage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght was come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye

### A Yong Squier

...a yong Squier...he was  
A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,  
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in  
presse.  
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet  
strengthe...  
Embrouded was he, as it were a meede,  
Al ful of fresshe floures whyte and  
reede.  
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the  
day;  
He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
Short was his gowne, with sleeves long  
and wyde.  
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire

Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
 In felawshipe, and pilgrimmes were they alle,  
 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde....  
 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,  
 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,....  
 But...er that I ferther in the tale pace,  
 Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun  
 To telle yow al the condicioun  
 Of ech of hem,....  
 And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.

**A Knyght**

A knyght ther was, and that a worthy man,  
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
 To riden out, he loved chivalrye,  
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.  
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes were,  
 And thereto hadde he riden, no man ferre,  
 As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,  
 And evere honoured for his worthynesse...  
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
 And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
 He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde  
 In al his lyf unto no maner wight.  
 He was a verray parfit gentil knyght...  
 Of fustian he wered a gypon,  
 Al bismotered with his habergeon,  
 For he was late ycome from his viage,  
 And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.

ryde.  
 He koude songes make and wel endite,  
 Juste and eek daunce...  
 So hoot he lovede that by nyghtertale  
 He sleep namoore than dooth a  
 nyghtyngale.  
 La, la,  
 la,.....

**The Wyf of Biside Bathe**

Experienc, though noon auctoritee  
 Were in this world, is right ynogh for me  
 To speke of wo that is in marriage.  
 For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of  
 age,  
 Thonked be God.....  
 Housbondes at chirche door I have had  
 five,...  
 And alle were worthy men in hir degree.  
 But me was toold,...,nat long agoon is,  
 That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but  
 onis...  
 That I ne shoulde wedded be but ones...  
 Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,  
 Spak in repreeve of the Samaritan:  
 "Thou has yhad five housbondes," quod  
 he,  
 "And that ilke man that now hath thee  
 Is noght thyn housbonde;" thus seyde he,  
 certeyn...  
 But that I axe why that the fifthe man  
 Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?  
 How many myghte she have in  
 mariage?...  
 God bad us for to wexe and multiplye.  
 That gentil text kan I wel understonde.  
 Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn  
 housbonde  
 Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to  
 me;  
 But of no nombre mencion made he,  
 Of bigamy or of octogamy;  
 Why sholde men thane speke of it  
 vileynye?

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Austrian composer Wolfgang Mozart was born January 27, 1756 in Salzburg. As his father, Leopold, was an excellent musician, young Mozart was exposed to the sounds of music at an early age and began taking lessons in harpsichord and violin. During his childhood, he and his older sister, Nannerl, travelled extensively performing for royalty throughout Europe, including Louis XV in 1763 while in Paris. Having composed numerous works, including a symphony before the age of ten, Mozart's musical genius was undeniable. His father wrote: "Our great and mighty Wolfgang seems to know everything at the age of 7 that a man acquires at the age of 40."<sup>6</sup> A composer of opera, oratorio, symphonic works, instrumental chamber works, and keyboard pieces, Mozart's compositional style represents a "synthesis of many different elements...coalesce[ing] into an idiom now regarded as the peak of Viennese Classicism."<sup>7</sup> His contribution to the canon of classical music remains immutable and immeasurable.

Though the virtuosic demands of Mozart's concert arias preclude them from being widely performed, they offer singers and audiences the opportunity to experience his operatic writing, unhindered by plots, sets, and all the accoutrements of an operatic production. In "Vorrei Spiegarvi o Dio", a concert aria dating from 1783, a delicate orchestral introduction that features the oboe, sets the tone of the piece. As with many of Mozart's concert arias, the intended singer for "Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio" was Mozart's sister-in-law (and former girlfriend) Aloysia Weber. The difficulty of "Vorrei" illustrates the skill of the designated singer. The impression given by the singer is graceful agility that does not decline into empty showiness, but always maintains a core of genuine feeling served well by the music.

### **Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio!**

Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio!  
Qual é l'affanno mio;  
Ma mi condanna il fato  
a piangere e tacer.

Arder non può il mio core  
Per chi vorrebbe amore  
E fa che cruda io sembri,  
un barbaro dover.

Ah conte, partite, correte,  
fuggite lontano da me;  
La vostra diletta Emilia v'aspetta,  
languir non la fate, è degna d'amor.

### **I would like to tell you, oh God!**

Oh God, I would like to tell you  
of my suffering!  
but fate condemns me  
to weep in silence.

My heart is unable to burn  
for the one who desires my love  
what may cause me to seem severe  
is a cruel duty.

Ah Count, leave, run,  
flee far from me;  
your beloved Emilia awaits-you; do  
not cause her to languish, she is  
worthy of love

Ah stelle spietate! Nemiche mi siete.  
Mi perdo s'ei resta, oh Dio!  
Partite, correte, d'amor non parlate,  
è vostro il suo cor.

Ah, pitiless fate! You are hostile to  
me.  
I will die if he stays, oh God!  
Leave, run, do not speak of love,  
her heart is yours.

### **Adolphus Hailstork (1941-)**

Born in Rochester, NY in 1941, American composer Adolphus Hailstork has established himself as an important figure in contemporary concert music. Hailstork studied violin at the age of eight and by fifteen he was also learning piano, singing, and conducting. In 1959, he entered Howard University, where he studied composition with Mark Fax. Upon graduating with a bachelor's in music, Hailstork continued his musical studies, first in France with Nadia Boulanger and later at the Manhattan School of Music. After a two-year tour of duty with the United States Army, Hailstork assumed a teaching position in Ohio and concurrently pursued a doctorate from Michigan State University. Around this time, Hailstork's calling as a composer was confirmed by his awareness of a "black consciousness". The death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. inspired him to "create a part of the black repertoire".<sup>8</sup>

Hailstork's works include solo instrumental music, orchestral works, choral music, and literature for solo voice, among others. Described as a composer who fuses European musical conventions with African-American idioms to create "black" concert music, Dr. Hailstork's compositions have been performed by organizations ranging from the Boys Choir of Harlem to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In his own words the composer offers this summation of himself: "I just enjoy music....I write music to get performed. I don't write esoteric, Ivory Tower works to be played by a few people in a loft for an audience of a few people. That's just not me."<sup>9</sup>

Based on Shakespeare's poem *Who is Sylvia?*, a chamber work for coloratura soprano, violin, and piano was originally composed for soprano Louise Toppin. Here, Hailstork juxtaposes the elegant Shakespearean prose against a winding, swinging, jazz-

### **Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)**

French composer, music critic, and conductor Reynaldo Hahn was born in Venezuela on August 9, 1874. At the age of five, his family moved to Paris. There he studied singing and music theory. It is purported that Hahn's study of composition with Massenet at the Paris Conservatoire had a great impact on the compositional style he became known for. In addition to composing, he became known for his high standard of conducting opera.

Hahn's music is described as having a "facile, melodious flow and a fine Romantic flair."<sup>10</sup> Especially in Hahn's first *recueil* (1895), a collection of twenty songs, one sees the influence of Massenet. Like so many composers of his time Hahn was drawn to the poetry of Victor Hugo. His most popular song, *Si mes vers avaient des ailes* (Hugo), was written at the young age of 13.

À *Chloris*, which belongs to the second *recueil* (1921), represents the “summit” of Hahn’s skill as a “pasticheur”.<sup>11</sup> In this delicate work, based on the bass line of Bach’s Air on the G String, one hears a call to antiquity. The piano accompaniment almost stands alone as a complete piece and the vocal line provides an overlay that is initially, hesitant and ephemeral—gradually blossoming into a deliberate declamation of love.

#### À Chloris

S’il est vrai, Chloris, que tu m’aimes,  
Mais j’entends que tu m’aimes bien,  
Je ne crois pas que les rois mêmes  
Aient un bonheur pareil au mien.  
Que la mort serait importune  
À venir changer ma fortune  
Pour la félicité des cieux!  
Tout ce qu’on dit de l’ambrosie  
Ne touche point ma fantaisie  
Au prix des graces de tes yeux.

#### To Chloris

If it be true, Chloris, that you love me,  
(And I’m told you love me dearly),  
I do not believe that even kings  
Can match the happiness I know.  
Even death would be powerless  
To alter my fortune  
With the promise of heavenly bliss!  
All that they say of ambrosia  
Does not stir my imagination  
Like the favour of your eyes!

### Léo Delibes (1836-1891)

French composer, Léo Delibes, was born February 21, 1836 in St. Germain du Val, France. After his father’s death in 1847, his family moved to Paris and he became a student at the Conservatoire. At seventeen, Delibes became organist of St Pierre-de-Chaillot and also served as accompanist at the Théâtre Lyrique, the same theatre that premiered his *opéra comique*, *Le jardinier et son seigneur*, in 1863. In 1864 he became chorus master at the Opéra, where he was immersed in a world of new musical possibilities.

In 1870, with the success of his ballet, *Coppélia*, Delibes secured his place as a legitimate composer. He quit his job at the Opéra and decided to pursue composition full time. In the years spanning 1871-1883, he produced several important works including the *opéra comique*, *Le roi l’a dit*, his second full-scale ballet, *Sylvia*, and most famously, the opera *Lakmé*. Though his recognition was garnered from ballet and opera, Delibes youthful works include a number of comic chansons and *chansonnettes*, a lighter variety from the romance. “Just as his operas and ballets show vestiges of his early operettas, so the piquant tone and charm of Delibes’ serious *melodies* may be traced to his *chansonnettes* dating from the Second Empire.”<sup>12</sup>

*Trois Mélodies*, includes *Éclogue*, a setting by Victor Hugo, as well as two settings by Alfred de Musset: *Bonjour, Suzon* and the famous *Les filles de Cadix*. The latter bolero-inspired song sings of Spain and reflects the shared ability with Bizet to “spin local colour for Spanish pieces.”

### **Les filles de Cadix**

Nous venions de voir le taureau,  
Trois garçons, trois fillettes,  
Sur la pelouse il faisait beau,  
Et nous dansions un bolero,  
Au son des castagnettes;  
Dites-moi, voisin,  
Si j'ai bonne mine,  
Et si ma basquine  
Va bien ce matin,  
Vous me trouvez la taille fine?...  
Ah! ah!  
Les filles de Cadix aiment assez cela.

Et nous dansions un bolero  
Un soir c'était Dimanche,  
Vers nous s'en vient un hidalgo  
Cousu d'or, la plume au chapeau,  
Et le poing sur la hanche:  
Si tu veux de moi,  
Brune au doux sourire,  
Tu n'as qu'à le dire,--  
Cette or est à toi.  
Passez votre chemin, beau sire...  
Ah! Ah!  
Les filles de Cadix n'entendent pas cela!

Et nous dansions un boléro,  
Au pied de la colline...  
Sur le chemin passait Diégo  
Qui pour tout bien n'a qu'un manteau  
Et qu'une mandoline:  
La belle aux doux yeux,  
Veux-tu qu'à l'église demain te conduise  
Un amant jaloux?  
Jaloux! Jaloux! Quelle sottise!  
Ah! ah!  
Les filles de Cadix craignent ce défaut là!

### **The girls of Cadiz**

We'd just left the bullfight,  
Three boys, three girls,  
The sun shone on the grass  
And we danced a bolero  
To the sound of castanets.  
'Tell me, neighbour,  
Am I looking good,  
And does my skirt  
Suit me, this morning?  
Have I a slender waist?...  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz are rather fond of  
that.'

And we were dancing a bolero,  
One Sunday evening.  
A hidalgo came towards us,  
Glittering in gold, feather in cap,  
And hand on hip:  
'If you want me,  
Dark beauty with the sweet smile,  
You've only to say so,  
And these riches are yours.'  
Go on your way, fine sir.  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz don't take to that.

And we were dancing a bolero,  
At the foot of the hill...  
By the road, Diego was passing,  
All his possessions, a cloak,  
and a mandoline:  
'Pretty maiden with tender eyes,  
Would you like a jealous lover  
To take you to church tomorrow?  
Jealous! Jealous! How silly!  
Ah! Ah!  
The girls of Cadiz fear such a bad trait!



## Louis Guglielmi (1960-1991)

Guglielmi was born in Barcelona and is known by the nickname Louiguy. In addition to creating scores for over a dozen films, he wrote the melody for the lyrics to *La Vie en Rose*, which became the wildly famous hit of French singer Édith Piaf. Loosely translated as “Life in Rosy Hues”, the lyrics of the song were written by Piaf. The song, not initially embraced by Piaf’s songwriting team, went on to become the biggest selling single in Italy in 1948. In the 1948 French film, *Neuf garçons, un Coeur*, Piaf performed the song which was quickly becoming her trademark. In 1998 *La Vie en Rose* received a Grammy Hall of Fame award.

### La Vie en Rose

Des yeux qui font baisser les miens,  
Un rire qui se perd sur sa bouche,  
Voilà le portrait sans retouché  
De l’homme auquel j’appartiens.  
Quand il me prend dans ses bras  
Il me parle tout bas,  
Je vois la vie en rose.  
Il me dit des mots d’amour,  
Des mots de tous les jours.  
Et ça m’fait quelque chose.  
Il est entré dans mon Coeur  
Une part de bonheur  
Don’t je connais la cause  
C’est lui pour moi.  
Moi pour lui, dans la vie,  
Il me l’a dit, l’a juré pour la vie  
Et dès que je l’a perçois  
Alors je sens en moi  
Mon Coeur qui bat.

### Life in Rosy Hues

With eyes that make mine lower,  
A smile that’s lost on his lips,  
That’s the picture un-retouched  
Of the man to whom I belong  
When he takes me in his arms  
He speaks to me in a low voice,  
I see life as if it were rose tinted.  
He whispers to me words of love,  
Words of the everyday,  
And that does something to me.  
He has entered into my heart  
A piece of happiness  
The cause of which I know well  
It’s him for me.  
Me for him, in life.  
He said that to me, swore to me  
forever  
And as soon as I see him  
So I feel in me  
My heart that beats.

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Baker, ed. Nicolas Slominsky. *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Centennial Ed. (New York: Schirmer, 2001) p. 3217.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Kimball. *Song*. (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005) pp. 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> Allen Hughes. "Trimble, Lester." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28371>>.

<sup>4</sup> Lester Trimble. *Four Fragments from the Canterbury Tales*. (New York: Peters, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Baker, ed. Nicolas Slominsky. *Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Centennial Ed., Volume 4. (New York: Schirmer, 2001) p. 2529.

<sup>7</sup> Cliff Eisen, et al. "Mozart." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40258pg3>>.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel A. Floyd Jr., ed. *International Dictionary of Black Composers* (Chicago:Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers,1999) p. 521.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.522.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Baker, ed. Nicolas Slominsky. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, Centennial Ed., Volume 3.*(New York: Schirmer, 2001) p. 1415.

<sup>11</sup> Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes. *A French Song Companion.* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 239.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

The University of Kentucky  
School of Music  
Presents

Lisa Clark  
In a DMA Lecture Recital

with Patrick Ritsch  
piano

and

Kevin Callihan, trombone  
Gary Laughrey, clarinet

April 19, 2017  
Niles Gallery  
2:00pm

PROGRAM

LECTURE

- I. Duke Ellington (1899-1974)
- II. Adelaide Hall (1901-1993)

Creole Love Call

LECTURE

- III. Kay Davis (1920-2012)

Transblucency  
Minnehaha  
On A Turquoise Cloud  
Brown Penny

LECTURE

- IV. Sacred Concerts
- V. Alice Babs (1924-2014)

Come Sunday  
T.G.T.T.

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral Degree in Voice Performance. Lisa Clark is a student of Dr. Everett McCorvey.

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