MARY LOU WILLIAMS

PRESENTS/Black Christ of the Andes · It Ain't Necessarily So · The Devil · Miss D. D. · Anima Christi' · A Grand Nite For Swinging

My Blue Heaven · Dirge Blues · A Fungus Amungus · Praise The Lord

MARY LOU WILLIAMS

presents

Side I

BLACK CHRIST OF THE ANDES
IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO
THE DEVIL
MISS D. D.
ANIMA CHRISTI'

This record marks the triumphant return of a major talent to the jazz scene. After many years of semi-obscurity, Mary Lou Williams — pianist, composer, arranger — is making music again. Since 1957, when Miss Williams was received into the Catholic Church, she has devoted most of her time to religious activities and charitable work. What made her return to the piano? She explains, "One reason I came out here again is the sound I hear in modern jazz. They're disturbed and crazy. They're neurotic, as if the Negro was pulling away from his heritage in music. You have to love when you play. Lord, I've talked talked talked music to young musicians, but they don't listen. So I've decided to show them, make them hear the soul."

Mary Lou Williams was a professional musician for more than thirty years before her retirement. On this record, listeners will recognize her witty, delicate touch and lyric grace, as well as her considerable abilities as composer and arranger. As jazz critic Whitney Balliett has observed, "Mary Lou Williams is the only first-rate female musician in an unsentimental and peculiarly male music." She is a born performer; happily her dedication started early and continues strong.

The long musical career of Mary Lou Williams, born in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 8, 1910, has spanned several eras of jazz. A prodigy, she remembers first playing the organ when she was three, sitting on her mother's lap. Only a few years later she was playing the piano at neighbors' parties in Pittsburgh, Pa., where her family had moved, and by the time she was twelve, she was working occasional gigs with union bands, including a week (when she was sixteen) with Ellington's Washingtonians. As early as 1928 Mary Lou had joined Andy Kirk's swing band, and she stayed with them until 1942; her first husband, John Williams, played alto and baritone with Kirk. She also began to compose and arrange music for Kirk's band, and later wrote for Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Tommy Dorsey, Louis Armstrong, and many others. In 1946 the New York Philharmonic performed her "Zodiac Suite."

In the 1940's, Mary Lou led many small groups of her own, including one which featured trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker, her second husband. She worked in the clubs along 52nd Street, developing from a swing to a bebop pianist. Touring Europe in 1952-54, she became deeply involved in the Church. When she returned to the United States she joined Adam Powell's church for the Sunday services; during the week she sat in Our Lady of Lourdes church to meditate. As she says, "Music had left my head, and I hardly remembered playing." Finally, several years after she had joined the Catholic Church, her teacher, the Jesuit Father Anthony Woods, persuaded her to go back to music. For one thing, the Bel Canto Foundation she had started to rehabilitate sick

Side II

A GRAND NITE FOR SWINGING
MY BLUE HEAVEN
DIRGE BLUES
A FUNGUS AMUNGUS
PRAISE THE LORD

musicians needed funds. But Father Woods was aware of something else. He told her, "Mary, you're an artist. You belong at the piano and writing music. It's my business to help people through the Church and your business to help people through music."

Part of the proceeds from this album will be turned over to the Bel Canto Foundation. After more than a decade, Mary Lou Williams' music is heard again — a beautifully authoritative, truly moving experience.

BLACK CHRIST OF THE ANDES (ST. MARTIN DE PORRES) is a composition by Mary Lou Williams, with words by Father Anthony Woods, which represents a new concept, a modern jazz hymn, written in a ballad form and dedicated to a Negro Saint, recently canonized. The simple lyricism of the melodic line is backed by intricate harmonies, superbly sung by the Howard Roberts chorus. This haunting composition is one of the highlights of the album.

The trio rendition of IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO and MISS D. D. (dedicated to socialite Doris Duke) are of a deceptive simplicity, and both are built on top of a catchy bass figure which continues all the way through. THE DEVIL is also done in a lighter vein, Howard Roberts and the chorus telling a musical story about the temptations of the material world.

ANIMA CHRISTI and PRAISE THE LORD were scored and conducted by Melba Liston, using Mary Lou's cool modern harmonies. A GRAND NIGHT FOR SWINGING and MY BLUE HEAVEN feature Percy Heath, one of the finest bass players around.

The title of A FUNGUS AMUNGUS was the suggestion of Lorraine Gillespie (Dizzy's wife), after the humorous story of a preacher who is trying to deliver a sermon while constantly being interrupted by a loud-mouth. Patient at first, the preacher goes on until it becomes unbearable, and then he shoults, "Everybody stand up! There's a fungus amungus!" This piano solo may baffle you the first time around. The unconventional keyboard artistry is like a modern impressionistic painting, where sound patterns have been used instead of colors and brushes. You will soon find there's more to it than meets the ear.

MARY RECORDS

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Mary Lou Williams

Several veterans of "Liner-Notes-Writing Fraternity" have often said that writing decent liner notes for many of the ill-inspired LP's thrown into their laps by overworked A & R men is a drag.

I am quite pleased to say that this is not the case with this album, which is one of the most provocative to reach our ears in quite some time. It marks the triumphant return of a major talent to the jazz scene. The musical contents are of the highest quality, varied and quite stimulating. There are plenty of unexpected and very rewarding surprises in this unusual collection, for which the sound engineer Tom Nola deserves to be lavishly praised.

In fact, I couldn't think of a better showcase to illustrate the very impressive talents of Mary Lou Williams as a pianist, as a composer and as an arranger. It is hard to conceive that such a great artist has been allowed to remain unnoticed by the music-minded public for the past ten years. Now that this album is out, I am sure that a great many jazz "buffs" will quickly come to realize how much they have missed.

The long musical career of Mary Lou Williams, has been an important part of several eras of jazz. From her days as a child prodigy of the piano (age 3) in Pittsburgh, Pa., to the present, Mary Lou has always found a way to stay abreast of the times and fads. Her stimulating musical approach and originality (and especially her way of handling chord progressions and harmony) have a marked influence on numerous jazz soloists as well as on contemporary stylistic developments.

Highly regarded by her fellow musicians all over the world, as a performer of great integrity, a brilliant pianist and an imaginative composer, Mary Lou played her first job in 1926 with the band of saxophonist John Williams, who later became her husband. She then joined the Andy Kirk Orchestra, as a pianist and arranger, and worked with them for over twelve years. She also wrote for Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Tommy Dorsey, Louis Armstrong and many others. From 1942 on, Mary Lou led many small groups of her own, including one which featured trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker, her second husband. Her "Zodiac Suite" was performed by the New York Philharmonic in 1946. In 1955, after her return from Europe where she had spent two years, Mary Lou Williams became a Roman Catholic, and devoted most of her time to religious activities and charitable work. This album is the first LP she has recorded in many years. Ten per cent (10%) of the proceeds from this album will be used for the rehabilitation of sick musicians.



BLACK CHRIST OF THE ANDES (ST. MARTIN DE PORRES), is a composition of great beauty, dedicated to the Negro saint. Recently canonized, the son of a Spanish nobleman and a Negro slave, St. Martin, who lived in Lima, Peru during the 17th century, spent his entire life helping the poor. Father Anthony Woods, S.J., wrote the tender and soulful words which fit perfectly with the character of the piece, and Howard Roberts conducts his singers through a magnificent performance of this most unusual composition. This is one of the highlights of the whole album, and a very moving one, musically, as well as spiritually. The melodic line is of noble simplicity, and yet it was very difficult for the chorus to perform, because of the clever, but complex harmonization devised by Mary Lou. Howard Roberts solved the problems involved in a brilliant manner. I predict that this haunting composition will grow on you as it has me.

THE DEVIL is also unusual. Done in a lighter vein, with a set of witty lyrics written by talented Ada Moore (vocalist), it tells a musical story about the traps and temptations of the material world. The melody and the words are both very clever, and the performance of Howard Roberts and his voices is again to be commended.

The trio rendition of IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO and MISS D.D. (dedicated to socialite Doris Duke)

are of a deceptive simplicity, and both are built on top of the catchy bass figure which persists all the way through. IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO is played as a long meter waltz, that is to say in 6/8 time, against a bass pattern originally conceived by bassist George Tucker. MISS D.D. undulates in and out of a double-time rhythm, somewhat like 2/4 against 4/4. Both compositions display Mary Lou's uncanny and smooth sense of time, as well as her fine playing and phrasing.

Bud Johnson's bass clarinet and the bass of Larry Gales set the rhythm pattern in 6/8 on ANIMA CHRISTI, with Grant Green on guitar. Behind the words of this traditional prayer, powerfully delivered by the George Gordon Singers (father and 3 children), an unabashed rhythm and full modern harmonies gives pulsating life to the proceedings. Jimmy Mitchell's singing is superb. Church music never had it so good.

A GRAND NIGHT FOR SWINGING, a brisk Afro-Cuban flavor, composed by pianist Billy Taylor (DJ), gets a most swinging treatment, with Mary Lou cookin' at her best, and Percy Heath, one of the finest bass players around (currently with the Modern Jazz Quartet), walking all over the place. Great Heath!

MY BLUE HEAVEN is a delightful treatment, hip and up to date, of a reliable "oldie". Compliments are due again to Mary Lou and Percy Heath for their imaginative and bouncing rendition of what anybody else would have considered to be a "hopeless case". Mary Lou handles chords in a very tasty way, and drummer Tim Kennedy's beat is pleasantly firm. The only trouble is that the track is much too short. Anyone who has heard Miss Williams' extended dealings with this number during one of her night club appearances will agree that we have been deprived of many inspired choruses.

DIRGE BLUES, somber and impressive, is a kind of funeral march, damp and heavy with the essence of the blues... almost classical. One is reminded of the years gone by, drifting farther away with each second, and of the great, soulful ones: "Bird", Lester, Tatum, Oscar Petiford, Billie Holliday... Mary Lou gives credit to bassist Eustis Guillemet (an up and coming bass-man) for inspiring this one. Miss Williams' deep rooted artistry is the major reason for it's appeal.

Father Anthony Woods, S.J. describes the contents of A FUNGUS AMUNGUS "like a lyric gal soprano in an all male jail, like the 13th tone in a 12 tone scale". We owe Lorraine Gillespie thanks for the title. This wonderful title comes from the punchline of a humorous story featuring a preacher who is trying to deliver a sermon, and is constantly interrupted by a loud-mouth urging him to continue it. Full of righteous indignation, the preacher tried until it became unbearable, and then he shouted

"Everybody stand up! There's a fungus amungus..."
(there's a fungus among us). A FUNGUS AMUNGUS is not a casual offering for easy listening, in fact, it's a pretty display of unconventional keyboard artistry, which may baffle you the first time around. It makes one think of a modern impressionistic painting, where sound patterns have been used instead of colors and brushes. You will soon find that there is more to it than meets the ear, and you will travel to the improbable Land of Oo-Bla-Dee on the flying carpet of notes provided by Mary Lou Williams.

The intensity of the mighty PRAISE THE LORD will bring everybody back to earth. PRAISE THE LORD was scored and conducted by Melba Liston, (who scored and conducted ANIMA CHRISTI), one of the greatest musicians (trombonist) and arrangers of our times. (Melba Liston has played and arranged for the Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, Dakota Staton, Milt Jackson, Gloria Lynn, Art Blakey and others.) A rocking and rolling tamborine leads us straight into the groove stuff, hip shaking, soul stirring and all. The venerable words of the poetic psalms acquire a new dimension when sung and recited by Jimmy Mitchell. A new sensation is felt by the prompting of a wailing Bud Johnson, the guitar of Grant Green and the strong and resilient back beat of Percy Brice, as well as the unbridled enthusiasm of every soul in the studio. Yes indeed! I can't think of a better incentive for the faithful to go to church and rejoice. Actually, it makes you feel so good that it should be included in every church service.

GERRARD POCHONET

Cover by: David Stone Martin

Recording: Cue Studios, NYC first three bands

side B; Nola Studios, NYC for all

the others

Mastering: Tommy Nola

PERSONNEL:

BLACK CHRIST OF THE ANDES and THE DEVIL: Mary Lou Williams (piano); Howard Roberts and his Choral Group.

MISS D.D.: Mary Lou Williams (piano); Theodore Crommwell (bass); George Chamble (drums).

ANIMA CHRISTI and PRAISE THE LORD: Bud Johnson (bass clarinet on Anima Christi and tenor sax on Praise the Lord); Grant Green (guitar); Larry Gales (bass); Percy Brice (drums) Mary Lou Williams (piano) Jimmy Mitchell (solo vocalist on Praise the Lord).

A GRAND NIGHT FOR SWINGING, MY BLUE HEAVEN and DIRGE BLUES: Mary Lou Williams (piano); Percy Heath (bass); Tim Kennedy (drums). wrong

IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO: Mary Lou Williams (piano), Ben Tucker (bass); Percy Brice (drums).

A FUNGUS MUNGUS: Mary Lou Williams (piano).

PRAISE THE LORD

Come Holy Spirit, in nature one With both the Father and the Son Shed forth Thy grace within our breast And dwell with us, a ready guest.

By every power, by heart and tongue By act and deed, Thy praise be sung: Inflame with perfect love each sense That other souls may kindle thence.

In this, Most Gracious Father hear Through Christ Thy equal Son our prayer, Who with The Holy Ghost and Thee Doth live and reign eternally.

Praise the Lord from Heaven, Praise Him in the heights, Praise Him, all you angels Praise Him, all you hosts Praise Him, Sun and Moon Praise Him all you shining stars.

Praise Him, you highest heavens,
And you waters above the heavens
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
For He commanded and they were created:
He established them forever and ever:
He gave them a duty which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth,
You sea monsters and all depths;
Fire and hail, snow and mist
Storm wind that fulfill His word:
You mountains and all you hills,
You fruit trees and all you cedars:
You wild animals and all you tame animals,

You creeping things and you winged fowl.

Let the kings of the earth and all peoples,
The princes and all the judges of the earth
Young men too, and maidens
Old men and boys
Priase the name of the Lord, for His name is
exalted.

ANIMA CHRISTI

Soul of Christ be my sanctification Body of Christ be my salvation Blood of Christ fill my veins Water of Christ side wash out my stains.

Passion of Christ my comfort be O good Jesus listen to me Lord have mercy on me

(N.B. Girls' voices shout
"Help!" a number
of times)

In Your wounds I would hide Never to part from Thy side Guard me should the foe assail me Call me when my life fails me.

Bid me to come to Thee above
With Thy saints to sing Thy love
Lord have mercy on me
*Lord I'm not worthy that You shouldst
enter under my roof
Say but the word and my soul shall have
been cleansed.

O God by Your name save me
For naughty men have risen up against me
They set not God before their eyes
They have prepared a net for my feet
The fool says in his heart there is no God.
Lord have mercy on me.

*Thanksgiving after Holy Mass

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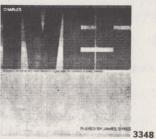
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