

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FJ 2860

Mary Lou Williams

THE HISTORY OF JAZZ

Spiritual / Ragtime / Blues-Ballad / Kansas City Swing / Boogie Woogie / Old Style Blues / Modern or Bop / Avant-Garde or Free

MUSIC AND NARRATION BY MARY LOU WILLIAMS

EDITED AND COMPILED BY PETER F. O'BRIEN, S.J.



WOMEN ENCIRCLED BY THE FLIGHT OF A BIRD, 1940, BY JOAN MIRO

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Side 1

Medi I (Modern Blues/Jazz) 1:27
Medi I with Voiceover 1:18
Anima Christi Suite (Lord Have Mercy—a Spiritual)
2:14
Medi I with Voiceover 0:31
Who Stole the Lock Off the Henhouse Door
(Ragtime) 1:28
Medi I with Voiceover 1:09
My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me (Old Fashioned
Blues/Ballad) 4:07
Mary Lou Williams—Solo Piano and Narration
Total time with narration: 17:42
All Compositions by Mary Lou Williams
Published: Cecilia Music Publishers, Inc.—ASCAP

Side 2

Nite Life (Kansas City Swing) 2:26
Hesitation Boogie (Boogie Woogie) 1:31
Old Blues 1:01
New Blues (Bop or Modern) 1:02
A Fungus Amungus (Avant-garde or Free) 4:22
Medi I (Modern) 2:39
Total time with narration: 19:18
All Compositions by Mary Lou Williams
Published: Cecilia Music Publishers, Inc.—ASCAP

Piano solo, music and narration by
Mary Lou Williams:
Annotated by Peter F. O'Brien, S.J.

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43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A. 10023

PROFESSIONAL
FOLKLIFE PROGRAM
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Mary Lou Williams THE HISTORY OF JAZZ

MUSIC AND NARRATION BY MARY LOU WILLIAMS
EDITED AND COMPILED BY PETER F. O'BRIEN, S.J.
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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THE HISTORY OF JAZZ

Mary Lou Williams



Mary Lou Williams at the Cookery, N.Y.C.—1972.

Mary Lou Williams recorded this narration and this music tracing the history of Jazz in her apartment in New York City in late 1970. She wrote the narration and recorded herself using her Tandberg tape recorder. She then turned to her Hamilton (Baldwin) piano and delineated the various unfolding eras in the development of Jazz through which she herself has played. The apartment and the piano are famous in the history of Jazz. It was this apartment that functioned as a kind of salon for the musicians of the Bop Era. They gathered there nightly during the forties and played through the dawn well into the next day. Almost every important Jazz Pianist has played on this piano at one time or another and it was on this particular piano that Monk and Bud Powell explored almost daily in the presence of Mary Lou Williams.

Mary Lou Williams' narrations on the history and nature of Jazz have been preserved on NewsFilm and in the archives of many radio stations. But this is the only recording that I know of on which she speaks for any great length. The narration is carefully prepared and delivered. Miss Williams' well considered statements offer a succinct and comprehensive Jazz Story—the music speaks for itself.

Peter F. O'Brien, S.J.
January 8, 1978



Hits & Bits—Vaudeville on TOBA circuit-1925.
Mary Lou Williams lower right—her husband John Williams to her immediate right.

MARY LOU WILLIAMS, pianist-composer-arranger, is the only major Jazz Artist who has lived and *played through* all the eras in the history and development of Jazz. Critics indeed, have called *her* the History of Jazz. She is the only artist who has constantly changed and developed as the music grew. Nat Shapiro has observed: "Mary Lou Williams is the best example of a musician who has refused to be imprisoned by either style or tradition." Barry Ulanov wrote that "she has steadily met the demanding art of Jazz keyboard performance" . . . (progressing) . . . "from the early years . . . to great skill in all the modern idioms." She has absorbed and distilled all that she has heard. She has often influenced the development of the music herself. Today she is a modern pianist with roots in the entire Jazz heritage.



The Keith Time—with Seymour & Jeanette—Mary Lou Williams seated.

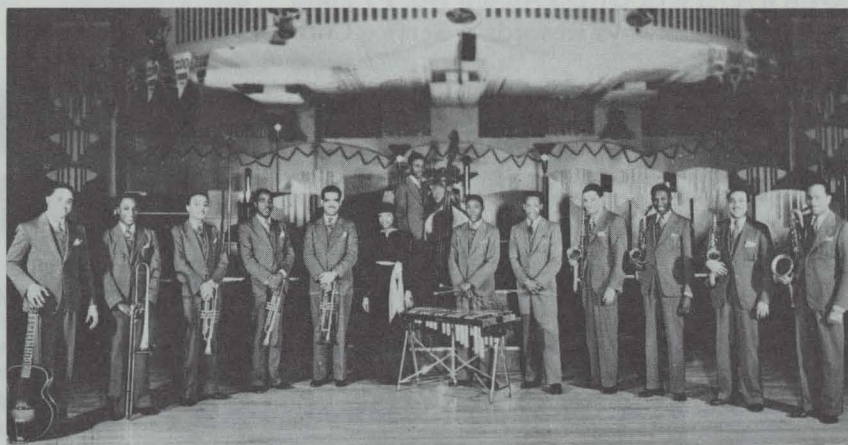
She has been playing the piano since the age of three. Self-taught, and highly observant, she was early exposed to the music of professional playing musicians. She never took a formal music lesson in her life. She is, in reality, a creative musical source, who never left the piano from the time she first approached it, and who spent ten to twelve hours daily at her instrument in search of the sounds she wished to express. That search continues to the present day and makes Mary Lou Williams the unique repository of Jazz History that she is. In her playing today there is heard an authentic compendium, stated or implied, of the entire sweep and development of this American musical art-form known as Jazz.

Mary Lou Williams first heard the *Spirituals* and *Ragtime* from her mother and soon became adept at playing them herself. She was widely known in Pittsburgh, Pa. (her hometown) as "the little piano girl" and was often heard at private parties, including those of the Mellons and Olivers, well before she was ten years old. A thorough professional by the time she was in her early teens, Miss Williams toured widely with John Williams (later her husband) when the *Blues* and the music of the small combos that played with a beat known as *Jazzbands* were beginning to be nationally known.

Miss Williams began a long association with Andy Kirk and the Clouds of Joy that lasted throughout the *Swing Era*. She remained with the Kirk organization as pianist, arranger, and composer of original material throughout the thirties and was



Mary Lou Williams—Publicity Still—1930's.



Andy Kirk and his 12 Clouds of Joy—Fairyland Park, Kansas City, Mo.—1936.



Mary Lou Williams, 3rd from left—Andy Kirk to her right—Pha Terrell, the band's vocalist, to her left.



At The Pearl Theatre—Philadelphia, 1930—Andy Kirk Band—fronted here by Blanche Calloway who does the split—Mary Lou Williams at the Tom Thumb—Marion Jackson was the band's regular pianist and Ms. Williams played specialty numbers on the Tom Thumb. During this same engagement, Ethel Waters appeared on the bill as its star. Ms. Waters' pianist, Pearl Wright, lost her mother. During Ms. Waters' engagement, Mary Lou Williams doubled as her pianist.

highly influential in developing the style of music that became known as *Kansas City Swing*. Possessed of a strong, swinging left hand, Miss Williams first gained wide recognition for the power, as well as the musical subtlety, of her playing. It has often been said that "she plays like a man". Many men are complimented if they are told that they play like Mary Lou Williams. During the Swing Era, Miss Williams wrote and arranged for all the *Big Bands* including those of Kirk (*Walkin' and Swingin'*, *Mary's Idea*, *Froggy Bottom*, *Cloudy*), Benny Goodman (*Roll Em* and *Camel Hop*), Jimmie Lunceford (*What's Your Story Morning Glory*), the Dorseys, Cab Calloway, Glen Gray and the Casa Lomas, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington (*Trumpet No End*).



1945—Glamour photo of Mary Lou Williams taken in conjunction with an appearance at Cafe Society Uptown, N.Y.C.

Mary Lou Williams successfully made the transition from the Swing to the *Bop* or *Modern* era. Her home in New York became a kind of salon or headquarters for all the young musicians who were, at that time, experimenting and creating *Modern Jazz*. She inspired and encouraged Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Tadd Dameron, Art Blakey, Kenny Dorham, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie. Always an experimentalist herself, Miss Williams developed into an expert modern pianist of exceptional taste and scope. She became widely known as a leader of small groups, especially *Trios*, playing at Cafe Society Downtown and Uptown, along 52nd street, in clubs and on the concert stage throughout the United States and Europe, continued to compose in a variety of situations, and recorded for every major record company.

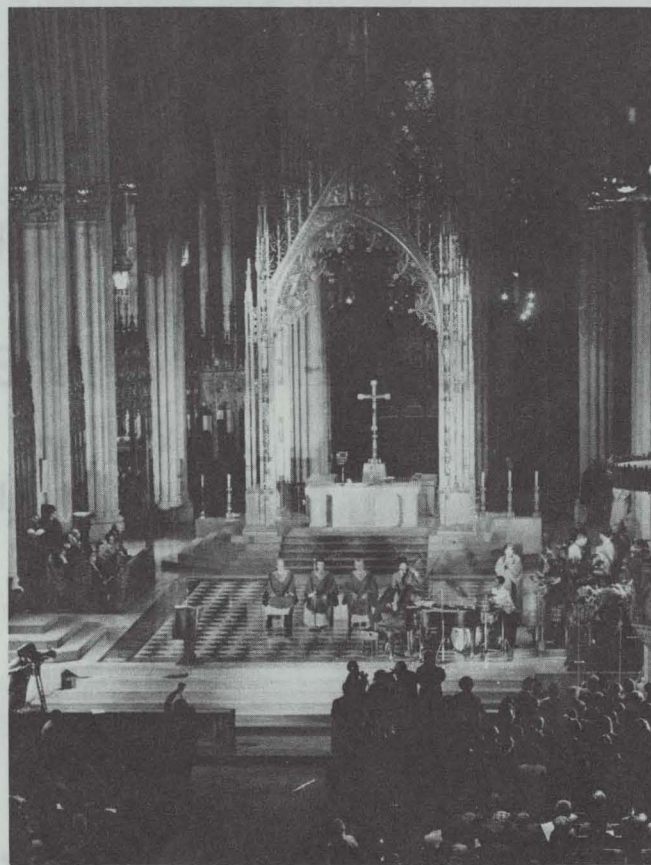


Don Byas, Mary Lou Williams, Buch Clayton, Paris, 1953.

In 1945 Mary Lou Williams composed the *Zodiac Suite*. It was originally heard with the Mary Lou Williams Trio on WNEW radio in New York on Miss Williams' own radio show *The Mary Lou Williams Piano Workshop*. She composed and played an interpretation of each of the astrological signs—one weekly—for twelve weeks. She then scored the entire work for an eighteen piece band, including strings, and performed the work with the band in a concert at Town Hall. The following year, 1946, Miss Williams scored three of the signs from *The Zodiac Suite* for the New York Philharmonic and played the music with that orchestra in Carnegie Hall, N.Y.C. That occasion marked the first time that Jazz and the *Symphony* met.

She is also the composer of the bop fairy tale *In the Land of Oo Bla Dee* recorded by the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band. Miss Williams has some 350 musical compositions to her credit.

Miss Williams broke new ground for Jazz in 1962 when she composed and recorded her *Hymn in Honor of St. Martin de Porres*. She was the first Jazz Composer to write for sacred purposed. Since that time she has composed three complete Masses including *Mary Lou's Mass* which received wide recognition and acclaim when it was performed by Miss Williams, at an actual liturgy, in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, in 1975. (see brochure on *Mary Lou's Mass*) The work also forms the musical basis for the series of dances, also known as *Mary Lou's Mass*, by choreographer Alvin Ailey.



Mary Lou's Mass—St. Patrick's Cathedral, N.Y.C.—January 18, 1975—A Jazz First.

Mary Lou Williams is, today, thoroughly involved in her music, and in the fight to expose Jazz and see that it survives and develops further. She most frequently finds herself involved in Concerts, Workshops, Residencies, Lecture-Demonstrations, Discussions, Radio, T.V., and Rehearsals, on the *College Campus*. A three or five day residency on a Campus will find her on stage in concert with her trio, in a music or black history class, in lecture-demonstrations in large halls detailing, on the piano and in question and answer periods, the

roots and history and course of Black American Music and Jazz, with the college archivist taping oral history for the future, in rehearsing the college band, or the college Glee Club for a performance with her of *Mary Lou's Mass*.

Miss Williams also appears in clubs, on the concert stage, in the recording studio, on radio and TV, in churches large and small in performances of her Mass, in grade and high schools playing and lecturing at assemblies—in short: she is in the forefront of music which is exactly where she belongs.

Mary Lou Williams recently teamed with Avant Garde Pianist Cecil Taylor in a concert at Carnegie Hall, NYC marking the first time that a musician of Miss Williams' background and an eminent musician from the Avant Garde attempted to make music together. The concert was called *Mary Lou Williams & Cecil Taylor Embraced*. In her performance of *A Fungus Amungus* on this recording might be heard Avant-Garde or Free Jazz replete with the history of Jazz that preceded that form. The formance of the Fungus is impressionistically beautiful and shaped with feeling.

In the Fall of 1977 Miss Williams began a stay at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina that hopes to prove somewhat permanent. As Artist in Residence there and a member of the music department, she is involved in teaching non-musicians a course introducing them to Jazz in all its forms. In addition, she writes for and directs Duke's Jazz Ensemble. In January of 1978, Miss Williams appeared with Benny Goodman in the 40th Anniversary of his 1938 concert—again this time, at Carnegie Hall. Her versatility and the scope of her abilities in this music might be made clear in just these two Carnegie Hall appearances within one year: with Goodman and, at the oppo-

site pole, with Taylor. A third appearance at Carnegie Hall is slated for June 1978 when Miss Williams will appear on a solo piano concert with Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner at the Newport Festival.

Miss Williams may be heard on the following two recordings from her own company—Mary Records, P.O. Box 32 Hamilton Grange, N.Y., N.Y. 10031.

M 102 — *Mary Lou's Mass*

M 103 — *Zoning*

as well as on the following titles on Folkways:

Mary Lou Williams - The Asch Recordings 1944-1947

a two volume boxed set of 35 recordings alone and with Don Byas, Coleman Hawkins, Frankie Newton, Bill Coleman, etc.—FJ 2966.

The Zodiac Suite 32844

Rehearsal Volume 2 (Roll Em & Little Joe From Chicago) 2292.

Piano Greats (2852)

with Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, Teddy Wilson, Meade Lux Lewis.

Mary Lou Williams Present St. Martin dePorres - Black Christ of the Andes - 2843 - 32843 Winner of the Grand Prix du Disque Francais.

New American Music 33901

with Milford Graves and others.

also recommended from the Folkways catalog in conjunction with the History of Jazz:

Jazz Volumes 1 through 11 — 2801-2811

The Story of Jazz by Langston Hughes — 7312

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