

Charles Mingus

Kyle Etges

Signature Recordings

Fables of Faubus. This piece was originally recorded in 1959 on the album *Mingus Ah Um*, but without the lyrics written by Mingus. The song was first recorded with the lyrics in 1960 on a different label, and due to contractual obligations it had to be retitled *Original Faubus Fables*. Personnel included Mingus, Ted Curson on trumpet, Eric Dolphy on alto saxophone, and Dannie Richmond on drums. The lyrics are integral to this piece's significance in jazz history, as it documents Mingus' role as a social activist through his music. Mingus was a militant supporter of equal rights, and wrote this piece in dedication to Orval Faubus, the governor of Arkansas who called in the National Guard on the Little Rock Nine. Mingus does not pull his punches in his writing, referring to the governor as a "sick and ridiculous... Nazi/fascist/supremist," demonstrating Mingus' uncompromising attitude toward social change. This work reflects similar recordings made in the 1960's, when many jazz musicians used their music as a platform to call for social reform. The piece also contains several instances of Mingus' signature mass improvisation. Several years later, the Mingus Big Band recorded *Fables of Faubus* on their album *Gunslinging Birds*, which featured pianist Kenny Drew playing old Confederate military songs in the background, accentuating Mingus' contempt for racism.

Epitaph. Mingus' undisputed magnum opus, composed shortly before his death, was premiered through the work of his widow Sue Mingus. Gunther Schuller conducted this 130-minute long piece at its premiere in New York in 1989, with George Adams, Phil Bodner, John Handy, Dale Kleps, Michael Rabinowitz, Jerome Richardson, Roger Rosenburg, Gary Smulyan, and Bobby Watson on woodwinds; Randy Brecker, Wynton Marsalis, Lew Soloff, Jack Walrath, Joe Wilder, and Snooky Young on trumpet; Eddie Bert, Sam Burtis, Don Butterfield, Paul Faulise, Urbie Green, David Taylor, and Britt Woodman on trombone; John Hicks and Sir Roland Hanna on piano, John Abercrombie on guitar, Reggie Johnson on bass, and Victor Lewis on drums. The album-length work contains excerpts from some of Mingus' earlier work, such as "Better Get Hit in Your Soul," "Peggy's Blue Skylight," and "Monk, Bunk, & Vice Versa." Overall, *Epitaph* conveys Mingus' mastery as a composer, and stands as a culmination of Mingus' entire body of work. This piece especially cements Mingus as one of the finest composers in jazz history.

E's Flat Ah's Flat Too. This piece showcases Mingus' writing style, with elements of mass improvisation and scaffolding ostinatos. Much like its more-popular sister piece, *Moanin'*, the opening theme begins in the bari, and the trombones and saxophones pile their own repeating riffs on top. Both of these pieces were recorded in 1959 and released in 1960 on the album *Blues & Roots*. The idea behind the album, according to Mingus, was to present an entire album of "churchy, blues, swinging, earthy" music, in response to music critics proclaiming that Mingus' music did not swing hard enough. Personnel include Mingus on bass; Jackie McLean, John Handy, Booker Ervin, and Pepper Adams on saxophone; Jimmy Knepper and Willie Dennis on trombone; Mal Waldron on piano, and Dannie Richmond on drums.

Educational Resources

Goodman, J. (2013). *Mingus Speaks*. California, USA: University of California Press.

Jazz Workshop, Inc. (2011). *Charles Mingus: The official site*. Retrieved from <http://www.mingusmingusmingus.com>

- Contents: Information regarding Charles Mingus Jazz Festival, *Simply Mingus* jazz ensemble catalogue, biography, news and updates about the Mingus big band.

Mingus, C., Homzy, A. (arr.) (1976). *Moanin'*. Minnesota, USA: Hal Leonard.

- Grade 4. Includes full sax section, four trumpets, four trombones, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute, clarinet, and french horn.
- Part of the *Simply Mingus* series, a catalogue of big band arrangements commissioned by Mingus' widow, Sue Mingus.

Mingus, C., Homzy, A. (ed.) (1991). *Charles Mingus - More than a fake book*. Minnesota, USA: Hal Leonard.

Mingus, C., Mingus, S. (ed.) (2000). *Charles Mingus - More than a play-along*. Minnesota, USA: Hal Leonard.

Guided Listening Exercise

Moanin'.

As we listen to this Mingus masterpiece, listen for the following:

- Form
- Instrumentation
- Moments of Mass Improvisation

What is the form during the solos? How does it differ from the rest of the piece?

What is different about Booker Ervin's tenor sax solo, compared to the other two solos?

Mary Lou Williams

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Signature Recordings

Black Christ of the Andes. Released in 1965, *Black Christ of the Andes* is from Mary Lou Williams' four-year hiatus from professional music, in which she converted to Catholicism and devoted more time to the church. Joined by the Howard Roberts Singers, this piece seems more reminiscent of a catholic mass than a jazz tune, though it certainly contains elements of gospel and jazz. The remainder of the album is brimming with prolific writing and beautiful performances from Williams, Percy Heath on bass, Bud Johnson on tenor saxophone, and Grant Green on guitar, to name a few.

Walkin' and Swingin'. This work, from Williams' years with Andy Kirk's 12 Clouds of Joy, demonstrates her mastery of composition and use of groundbreaking techniques. In later interviews, Williams states that she had wished there were four saxophone players in Andy Kirk's band, rather than the usual three. The middle soli of this piece features a trumpet taking the lead line, with the saxes harmonizing. This color mixing between sections is not seen in big band until much later through the work of Brookmeyer and Schneider. This piece was recorded on March 2nd, 1936 with John Williams, John Harrington, and Dick Wilson on saxophone; Paul King, Harry Lawson, and Earl Thompson on trumpet; Ted Donnelly and Harry Wells on trombone; Ted Robinson on guitar, Mary Lou Williams on piano, Booker Collins on bass, and Ben Thigpen on drums.

The Zodiac Suite. This solo piano piece is the finest showcase of Mary Lou Williams' composition and improvisational style. The title refers to the 12 movements, each named after the 12 astrological signs. Each movement is also said to be dedicated to a fellow musician born under the respective constellation, since Williams herself admitted that she did not know the supposed personality traits of each star sign. Interestingly, Williams only wrote the first three movements: Scorpio, Gemini, and Taurus. After this, Williams states that the "inspiration left," and the remainder of the pieces were each improvised live during her weekly residency at New York Café Society. After 9 weeks, she had moved through every sign, and upon receiving an enthusiastic audience response she recorded *The Zodiac Suite* for Asch Records in New York in 1945. The 1975 redistribution of this work features five alternate takes of certain movements, which shows the fluid state of these improvisations. While themes remain between takes, track lengths and approaches greatly differ.

Educational Resources

Bash, C. (Director, Producer). (2015). *Mary Lou Williams: The lady who swings the band* [Documentary Film]. United States: The Mary Lou Williams Project.

Ingalls, A. (2010). *The little piano girl: The story of Mary Lou Williams, jazz legend*. Boston, MA: HMH Books for Young Readers

McPartland, M., Williams, M. L. (2004). *Marian McPartland's piano jazz with Mary Lou Williams* [CD]. Beverly Hills, CA: Concord Records.

Williams, M. L. (1943). *Boogie-woogie piano transcriptions*. New York, NY: Robbins Music Corp.

Williams, M. L., Pach, M. (arr.). (1938). *What's your story, morning glory?* Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/What%27s-Your-Story%2C-Morning-Glory/10689527.item#/>

- Grade 3. Includes alto sax (clarinet double), tenor sax, baritone sax, 2 trumpet parts, french horn, trombone, tuba, piano, bass, drums, and vocals.

Charlie Parker

Kyle Etges

Signature Recordings

Donna Lee. Donna Lee is often cited, among several other Bird tunes, as bebop in its purest form. The first recording of this classic was May 8th, 1947 in New York City, and featured Parker on saxophone, Miles Davis on trumpet, Bud Powell on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, and Max Roach on drums. Donna Lee, like many of Parker's compositions, is a contrafact (in this instance, of "Back Home Again in Indiana"). In his autobiography, Miles Davis claims to have actually penned this jazz standard, and the melody lines do seem more conducive to trumpet than saxophone. Gioia disputes this claim in his book, saying that "it comes the closest of any of Parker's themes to matching his style of improvisation." If it was Miles' composition, there is a shred of irony to Parker's usurping. There is a long history in jazz of bandleaders taking credit for the work of sidemen, and in later years Miles would be identified as a repeat offender.

East of the Sun (and West of the Moon). One would be remiss not to mention Charlie Parker's dual sessions with Mercury records, often referred to as the "Charlie Parker with Strings" albums. Though it doesn't exactly represent Parker's development as a performer or composer, it is certainly his most commercially popular work, and was even inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1988. *East of the Sun* is from Parker's second session with strings in 1950, with Sam Caplan, Howard Kay, Harry Melnikoff, Sam Rand, on Zelly Smirnoff on violin; Isadore Zir on viola, Maurice Brown on cello, Joseph Singer on french horn, Eddie Brown on oboe, Verley Mills on harp, Bernie Leighton on piano, Ray Brown on bass, and Buddy Rich on drums. Verve records released a posthumous compilation of these two sessions in 1995, with additional recordings from a live Carnegie Hall recording from 1947 and 1950.

Parker's Mood. This piece marks Parker's return to the Savoy label in 1948, and was recorded at their studio in New York with the Charlie Parker All Stars in September of that year. Many incredible Bird compositions span this session, but Parker's Mood is remarkable for being a seeming return to the bluesy, soulful roots of Parker's Kansas City upbringing. Gioia states that Bird renounces his "virtuosity, the arcane chord substitutions, the fast tempos- the very trademarks of the Bird sound." Joining Parker on this record are Miles Davis on trumpet, Teddy Reig on piano, Curly Russell on bass, and Max Roach on drums.

Educational Resources

Aebersold, J. (). *Volume 6: Charlie Parker - All Bird*. Indiana, USA: Jamey Aebersold.

Eastwood, C. (Director, Producer). (1988). *Bird [DVD]*. Burbank, CA: The Malpaso Company.

Parker, C., Murtha, P. (1956). *My little suede shoes*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/My-Little-Suede-Shoes/10522952.item#/>

- Grade 1. Includes full sax section, 3 trumpet parts, 3 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute, tuba, and auxiliary percussion.

Parker, C., Bandman, D. (1957). *Scrapple from the Apple*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Scrapple-from-the-Apple/10277761.item#/>

- Grade 3. Includes full sax section, 4 trumpet parts, 4 trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums.

Parker, C. (1978). *Charlie Parker - Omnibook*. Santa Monica, CA: Atlantic Music Corp.

Woody Herman Big Band

Kyle Etges

Signature Recordings

A Child is Born. From the album *Giant Steps*, this recording comes much later in Herman's career, in 1973. Though the album was recorded in New York City, Herman's band never stayed in the same place for very long, and the younger age range of the group earned Herman the nickname "Road Father." This era of Herman's "Thundering Herd" is remarkable for his impact in the world of jazz education. As Gioia says, Herman was equally comfortable playing in Carnegie Hall as he was in a high school cafeteria hall. He was a mentor to so many musicians during that time, and to the countless young students that he performed for. *A Child is Born* is a stirring waltz ballad on an otherwise fast-paced album, featuring primarily Woody on clarinet and Greg Herbert on saxophone. Other personnel on this record include Frank Tiberi, Steve Lederer, and Harry Kleintank on saxophone; Bill Stapleton, Larry Pyatt, Gil Rathel, Bill Byrne, and Walt Blanton on trumpet; Jim Pugh, Geoff Sharp, and Harold Garrett on trombone; Andy LaVerne on piano, Joe Beck on guitar, Wayne Darline on bass, Ed Soph on drums, and Ray Barretto on congas.

Caldonia. This burning piece is a fine example of Woody Herman's "first herd," his first of many bebop big bands. Recorded in New York City on February 26th, 1945, the piece would go on to win an award in *Downbeat* magazine a year later for "best in big band." Personnel include Woody Herman, Sam Marowitz, John LaPorta, Flip Phillips, Pete Mondello, and Skippy DeSair on saxophone; Neal Hefti, Ray Linn, Sonny Berman, Pete Candoli, and Conte Candoli on trumpet; Bill Harris, Ralph Pfeffner, and Ed Kiefer on trombone; Billy Bauer on guitar, Tony Alles on piano, Chubby Jackson on bass, and Dave Tough on drums. The novelty vocals on the track are sung by Woody Herman himself.

Four Brothers. One of Herman's most popular hits, and the reasoning behind the name of his second herd, often referred to as simply "The Four Brothers Big Band." *Four Brothers* was recorded on December 27th, 1947 for Columbia Records in New York. Jimmy Giuffre penned this melody under the chords of "Jeeper's Creepers," but the real centerpiece of this recording are the aptly titled "Four Brothers sax section": Zoot Sims, Serge Chaloff, Herbie Steward, and Stan Getz. Together, they present what is mostly likely the most well-known sax soli of all time, and all four saxophonists take fantastic solos over this tune. These four musicians showcase the saxophone sound that would become synonymous with Woody Herman's second herd sound: three tenors and a bari, rather than the usual two altos, two tenors, and bari. Other personnel on this record include Stan Fishelson, Al Porcino, Ernie Royal, Charlie Walp, and Shorty Rogers on trumpet; Bill Harris, Earl Swope, and Ollie Wilson on trombone; Terry Gibbs on vibes, Gene Ammons on piano, Oscar Pettiford on bass, and Shelly Manne on drums.

Educational Resources

Bishop, J., Herman, W., & Lewis, M. (arr.). (1939). *Woodchopper's Ball*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Woodchopper%27s-Ball/2442937.item#>

- Grade 1. Includes full sax section, three trumpet parts, three trombone parts, guitar, bass, piano, and drums, as well as optional parts for flute and tuba.

Clancy, W., Kenton, A. (1995). *Woody Herman: Chronicle of the Herds*. New York, NY: Schirmer Books.

Giuffre, J., Blair, P. (arr.). (1994). *Four Brothers*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Four-Brothers/2307551.item#/>

- Grade 2. Includes full sax section, four trumpet parts, four trombone parts, guitar, piano, bass, and drums.

Radar, D., Herman, W., & Murtha, P. (arr.). (1965). *Greasy Sack Blues*. Retrieved from <https://www.jwpepper.com/Greasy-Sack-Blues/10775168.item#/>

- Grade 2. Includes full sax section, four trumpet parts, four trombone parts, guitar, piano, vibraphone, bass, and drums.

Woody Herman live in '64 [DVD]. (2009). *Jazz Icons*. San Diego, CA: Reelin' In The Years Production.