

## Mary Lou Williams - Lady Piano (1955)

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1 *Fandangle* 02:02 2 *Mama, Pin A Rose On Me* 03:25 3 *Roll'em* 03:35 4 *Sweet Sue* 03:30 5 *Lullaby Of The Leaves* 05:14 6 *Taurus* 02:14 7 *Jericho* 03:27 8 *I Love Him* 04:40 9 *Amy* 03:58 10 *Talk Of The Tawn* 04:37 11 *I Love You* 03:26 12 *Easy Blue* 03:58  
Bass – Wendell Marshall Drums – Osie Johnson Piano – Mary Lou Williams

This date in 1910 marks the birth of Mary Lou Williams, an African American jazz composer, arranger, and pianist.

Mary Elfrieda Scruggs (her name at birth) was born in Atlanta, but was raised in Pittsburgh, where she learned to play piano by ear and was performing in public by age six. Williams appeared in a number of talent shows and by thirteen was working in carnivals and vaudeville shows. She was married three years later to John Williams, a musician, and together they moved to Memphis, TN, where she made her first record with his band, the Synco Jazzers. When John joined Andy Kirk's band, Mary Lou hired Jimmy Lunceford and began to run the group herself.

In 1929, the band moved to Kansas City, and by 1931, she was writing arrangements and playing as the band's regular pianist. It was clear at this point that her arrangements were ahead of their time; this is obvious in her 1936 arrangement, "Walking and Swinging," which contained the seed of Thelonious Monk's "Rhythm-A-Ning."

Williams remained with Kirk until 1942, working as a freelance arranger with Benny Goodman and others on the side. After her divorce, she moved to New York and led her own group that included Art Blakey and she also played with Duke Ellington's band as a staff writer.

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She began working under her own name and performed her "Zodiac Suite" with the New York Philharmonic at the Town Hall in 1945. She retired from music while living in Europe, although she made a guest appearance with Dizzy Gillespie at the Newport festival in 1957. Williams then toured Europe in 1968 and 1969, which included an appearance with Cecil Taylor in 1977, the Goodman Carnegie Hall anniversary in 1978, and Montreux festival in 1979. Her interest in astrological titles had few follow-ups until the "Age of Aquarius" made it acceptable.

Her Christian conversion and writing of religious works from the 60s set a tone for those jazz musicians who then began performing in church. Mary Lou Williams remained a close friend of Duke Ellington from their first meeting, and was an artist in residence at Duke University until her death on May 21st 1981. ---aaregistry.org

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