

Edward Kennedy Ellington

“Duke”



African American jazz bandleader, pianist and composer

Early Life

- Born April 29, 1899 in Washington D.C
- Both his parents played piano
- At the age of 7, he began piano lessons
- He took lessons from Henry Lee Grant, a classical piano teacher

Early Life

- He would visit burlesque shows to listen and learn tricks from the pianists
- Harvey Brooks showed Duke tricks and shortcuts
- Turned down a scholarship to continue playing music professionally

Career

- In 1917, formed “The Duke’s Serenaders” or “The Washingtonians”
- Irving Mills, a music publisher, agreed to produce and publish Duke’s music
- The band performed for black and white people

Career

- Duke was nominated for 22 Grammy awards, and won 11
 - “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got No Swing)”
 - The song introduced swing music years before it started
- Also wrote film scores, classical compositions, and even performed in several films

Technique

- Wrote his music to showcase the talent of his bandmembers
- The instrument combinations, arrangements, and improvising played a part in the evolution of jazz
- The blend of melodies and rhythms made his music enjoyable “Mood Indigo”
- Call and response: one section of instruments would play a musical phrase and be answered by another section

Death

- Died May 24, 1974
 - Lung cancer and pneumonia
- From when he started performing, to when he died, Duke had performed in thousands of performances
- “Music is how I live, why I live and how I will be remembered”

Significance

- Duke Ellington is the greatest, most important composer in the history of jazz music
- He played a huge role in the evolution of jazz music by the way he wrote his compositions