

**AN EXAMINATION OF MARY LOU WILLIAMS' CREATIVE  
RESILIENCE AGAINST RACISM AND PATRIARCHY**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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*A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in African Women Studies, University of  
Nairobi*


**NOVEMBER 2020**

## DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has now been presented for the award of a degree in any other University or Institution

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my inspirational Great Aunt Martha who lived to be 104 years old and left for “her glory seat in heaven” on June 2018, and my father, United States Army Staff Sergeant, Herman Grant Carter, who loved jazz and introduced it to my ears and heart when I was a young child.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, the African Women's Studies Centre for providing a ground-breaking platform and academic space that focuses on African women studies in Africa and around the world. I am honoured to be a student in this Centre and to benefit from this rich and rigorous academic environment.

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors, Professor Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira and Professor Henry Indangasi for sharing their considerable knowledge about women and literature as well as giving their invaluable guidance, input and mentorship during the entire study. Dr. Nkatha Kabira also shared important insights into the PhD process and I thank her too.

I would also like to acknowledge my late mother, Mrs. Bernice Partee Carter, who was my first and most loving teacher and my son Woodie Onkendi Mogaka for all the discussions that we have shared about poetry and our mutual love for jazz. My mother and my son have loved me well all of their lives.

I thank the Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee who provided the grant for my research and I thank my church/writer friends in Madison, Wisconsin who always encouraged me. Most of all, I am grateful to God for helping me every step of the way from Africa to America and back again.

## ACRONYMS

*(All words are using British spelling)*

AWSC	African Women Studies Centre
CD	Compact Disc
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
IJS	The Institute of Jazz Studies
L.A.	Los Angeles
MLW	Mary Lou Williams
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
UON	University of Nairobi
U.S.	United States
UW	University of Wisconsin-Madison

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## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Aficionado** is a person who is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about an activity, subject or pastime.

**African American**, also Black Americans or Blacks (used interchangeably) are a group of North Americans with ancestry from any of the black racial groups of Africa.

**A Spiritual** is a Christian folksong that sings the hope of the enslavement of African people in the American South.

**Black Nationalism** in the U.S. is advocacy of or support for unity and political self-determination for black people, especially in the form of a separate black nation.

**Bebop or bop** was developed in the early 1940s and marked a difference in jazz by its harmonic improvisations, often avoiding the melody altogether after the first chorus.

**Blues sing** about the difficulties of African American life. Most blues music is comprised of 12 bars or measures.

**Boogie Woogie** was a style of jazz with blues played on the piano with a strong, fast beat from the 1930's to the 1950's.

**Canon** is a body of musical works that society has accepted as influential. Canon has religious connotations, with the Oxford English Dictionary defining it as a "collection or list of sacred books accepted as genuine." In other words, a canon is a group of works deemed timeless and universal.

**Colourism** is prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group.

**Cool jazz** is a style of modern jazz music that arose in the United States after World War II. It is characterized by relaxed tempos and lighter tone.

**Gig** is a slang term for job, especially a booking for a musician.

**Hegemonic** Whiteness maintains the systemic and willful suppression by the dominant white culture of all other cultures, due to their normalization that whiteness is the standard to which all groups are expected to confirm.

**Hot Jazz** in 1925 was characterized by collectively improvised solos around a melodic structure that built up to an emotional "hot" climax.

**Improvisation** is the ability to repeatedly play the same melody in jazz in new and different ways.

**Intersectionality** is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Jazz** developed from both the spirituals and the blues, is a type of music of African American origin that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century, characterized by improvisation, syncopation, and usually a regular or forceful rhythm.

**Jazz buff** is someone who has a strong, special interest in jazz music.

**Jim Crow** Laws are statues named after a minstrel character called Jim Crow, when southern legislatures passed laws of racial segregation directed against blacks at the end of the 19th century.

**Lick** is a stock pattern or phrase consisting of a short series of notes that is used in solos and melodic lines and accompaniment.

**Liturgical** jazz is based on the Book of Common Prayer.

**Multiple Jeopardy** is a term used to describe the way in which oppressive barriers individuals face contribute to a life of oppression due to these multiple factors culminating to cause greater oppression.

**New Orleans** style or Classic jazz originated with brass bands that performed for parties and dances on land and on riverboats in the late 1899's and early 1900's.

**Patriarchy** is defined as a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are excluded from it.

**Racism** is defined as a system of prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

**Ragtime** was jazz evolved by black musicians in the 1890s in the U.S. and played especially on the piano, characterized by a syncopated melodic line and regularly accented accompaniment.

**Reconstruction** was the period after the American Civil War, 1865-1877, which planned for the reconstruction of the South and the betterment of newly freed slaves.

**Riff** is a repeated chord progression.

**Sacred Jazz** is contemporary jazz and Christian worship.

**Scatting** is an interpretation of jazz music using the voice as an instrument with sounds, not words.

**Segregation** was an institutional system of separation of access in the United States that set apart blacks apart from whites, in theoretically separate but equal access to facilities, services and opportunities.

**Spiritual jazz** is not necessarily Christian, but religious in the belief of God or gods.

**Stride is a jazz** piano style that was developed in the large cities of the East Coast of the United States in the 1920's and 1930's.

**Swing Jazz** refers to a particular lilting rhythmic style that is based on a triplet subdivision of the beat in the 1930's.

**Syncopation** is a general term for a disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm or a placement of rhythmic stresses or accents where they would not normally occur.

**The Black arts movement** was the artistic outgrowth of the Black Power Movement.

**The Black Power** Movement was a political and social movement of racial pride, self-sufficiency, and equality for all people of African descent.

**The Civil rights movement** was a decades-long movement to secure the same legal rights for African Americans that other Americans already held.

**The Civil War** was a war fought in the U.S. from 1851 to 1865 over the enslavement of African people.

**The Great Depression** was a severe economic depression that took place mostly during the 1930s in the United States.

**The Great Migration** was the movement of millions of African-Americans out of the rural Southern United States to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West that began in 1916.

**The Harlem Renaissance** was a cultural awakening and artistic explosion when African American arts and culture flourished with its centre being Harlem, New York.

**The Jazz Age** in the 1920s and 1930s when jazz music and dance styles rapidly gained nationwide popularity. The Jazz Age's cultural repercussions were primarily felt in the United States, the birthplace of jazz.

**The Red Summer** of 1919 was a summer and early autumn with hundreds of deaths and casualties because of racial riots that occurred in more than three dozen cities and one rural county.

**Vocal Jazz**, jazz singing or the art of composing a lyric and singing it in the same manner as the recorded instrumental solos.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation set out to find out why African American jazz genius, pianist, composer and arranger Mary Lou Williams (1910-1981) and her music are unknown, forgotten, or obscured despite her celebrity during her lifetime on a national and international scale. The thesis examines the historical context of the life and career of Mary Lou Williams against the backdrop of the Civil Rights and Black arts movements, her jazz career in the context of race, and gender, conducts a critical appraisal of scholarly writings to identify the gaps in the research, evaluates the surveys from the Mary Lou Williams' Birthday Centennial Celebration in Madison, Wisconsin in 2010 to reveal reasons for her invisibility and utilizes an artistic tool called ekphrasis to create six new poems in response to six of Williams' compositions. The study employs archival research, an analysis of scholarly writings, and primary research where key informants were interviewed, and surveys were conducted of audiences, to increase her visibility. These surveys were of major concerts, students, teachers, band directors, committee and partner organizations representatives, the impact of classroom learning, and an analysis of the collected data. The dissertation was guided by black feminist theoretical framework because of the convergence of race, and gender in Mary Lou Williams' life and career. The study has successfully argued, particularly in chapter 3 and 4 that Mary Lou Williams' lack of appreciation of the civil rights and black arts movements was as a result of multiple jeopardies and intersectionalities that perpetuate the alienation of black women in America. In addition, we have argued that the use of feminist research methods is an appropriate tool for studying the lives and experiences of African American artists and others in various disciplines. We have also demonstrated that appropriate strategies can be used to raise the consciousness of black people and other members of the society through education, exposure to her music, and connection with the African American community to show how visibility can be brought to the forefront.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

*Get that child out of here and bring on the pianist! (Men would say) I would surprise them with a hot solo.* Mary Lou Williams

Box 5, The Jazz Institute, Rutgers University

#### 1.1 Background

My love affair with jazz began when I was young like Mary Lou Williams, but as a child who appreciated jazz, not as a jazz performer. My father, United States Army Sergeant Herman Carter, while stationed at Fort Dreux Air Force Base outside of Paris, France, introduced me to jazz. Fort Dreux was an Air force base that started as an idea in the early 1950's and ended as a US operation in 1967 ("Dreux Air Base France Memories"). Every weekend my father would play his large collection of jazz records for a group of "jazz buffs," (Definition of jazz buff) and teach me, to "scat" to jazz ("Definition of scatting"). These men considered themselves jazz buffs because some played jazz, and all grew up listening to jazz. "Scatting" is when you interpret jazz music into your own voice, but as sounds, not words. Paris, as mentioned earlier, totally embraced jazz and black jazz artists. I grew up thinking everyone loved this beautiful music.

In 1999, Linda Dahl published *Morning Glory*, a biography about Mary Lou Williams, and my dad was the first person I telephoned to say "I checked out a library book on Mary Lou Williams. You never told me about her." My dad answered, "Mary Lou? Yeaah, she was one of the best." He didn't explain why we had never talked about her, like we had men jazz artists, but I know that listening to a black woman jazz composer and pianist, would have been inspiring to me as a little black girl. Later that same year in 1999, I met Madison jazz pianist Jane Reynolds and asked if she had read the new Mary Lou Williams biography. Reynolds was familiar with Williams' music, and



introduced me to compositions, while I introduced her to the biography. I shared with Jane that I wanted to write original poems based on Mary Lou Williams' life and music and invited her to join me by playing Williams' compositions in the 2000 Isthmus Jazz Festival. Jane Reynolds and I performed seven original poems, accompanied by seven of Williams' most famous compositions.

Mary Lou Williams, a child musical prodigy, was born in the United States (Williams 20) under a stifling system of racism and patriarchy. She persevered to mature into the most gifted pianist, composer, arranger and jazz innovator of her time. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines both racism and patriarchy with racism as a system of prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior, (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and patriarchy is defined as a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are excluded from it (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Both systems adversely affected the life and career of Williams, but her resilient use of jazz as her medium of creative expression helped to make her a jazz legend.

Jazz is indisputably one of African America's gifts to the world as an original music. Mark Gridley, an active jazz musician who lectures widely on jazz history, wrote in *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis (9<sup>th</sup> Edition)* that Williams was "the most talented woman in jazz history" (Mark 93). Note that Gridley wrote "talented woman" and not "most talented" musician. Williams played for sixty years, mastering more than thirteen styles of jazz, from Ragtime to Modern, yet writers and critics have given far too little credit to her.

Two of the best-known male jazz greats Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington were both contemporaries of Mary Lou Williams. She arranged and composed for both of their bands and played alongside them (Tammy 75-89), yet when jazz artists are heralded,

these two are always included, but she is not. Louis Armstrong ended his musical development while still in his twenties, and held to the same style from 1925 and 1930 to the end of his life in 1971 (Clair). Duke Ellington, a composer as well as a pianist, cemented a style in the early nineteen-forties and revealed little trace of new trends over the next thirty years (Clair). Williams kept growing, kept creating and kept playing all the styles of jazz, including creating a new kind of jazz, Sacred Jazz.

Noted film producer Ken Burn premiered his well-received documentary, **Jazz**, in 2010, for the U.S. Public Broadcasting Company that was a history of the genre in nine episodes that covered 44 years from 1917-1961 and one episode that covered 1962-2001 (Burns). Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington are the central figures, “providing the narrative thread around which the stories of other major figures turn” (Gilbert).” Burns highlighted Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington throughout all ten episodes and included Williams once, very briefly, in the episode 1937-1939 on **Swing: The Velocity of Celebration**. Ellington, himself, described Williams’ extraordinary abilities as a jazz artist, “Mary Lou Williams is perpetually contemporary. Her writing and performing have always been a little ahead throughout her career. Her music retains, and maintains, a standard of quality that is timeless. She is like soul on soul” (Ellington 169).

The other fifty-two years of her jazz career are missing and unacknowledged, but other male musicians highlighted in the documentary were Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, all men she mentored or played alongside as well. The only representation of African American women in the documentary was in the category of jazz singers; Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn and Billie Holliday. There was no other African American woman instrumentalist included, except Mary Lou Williams, which testified to gender bias in male-dominated jazz that still exists today. Instead of being prominently

acclaimed in this documentary or heralded as the originator of a new style of jazz, Williams is erroneously stuck in only one type of jazz, in one specific era. This suggests that when jazz history is produced, women jazz greats like Mary Lou Williams have their contributions severely marginalized. Ken Burns' documentary, **Jazz**, is the frequently referenced exemplar of dominant, institutionalized jazz histories that feature individual, male geniuses (whose creative arch usually follow a heroic or tragic narrative), decade-long stylistic periods and ideological distance from the commercials. These histories fetishize "progress" "virtuosity," and black, masculine "hipness." Far from being complete, universal, and of natural progression, dominant jazz narratives comprise few threads of the jazz tapestry (Hairston 6).

Williams invigorated the jazz world by melding her musical and spiritual roots into Sacred Jazz. All of her Sacred Jazz compositions were judged by critics as equally brilliant as any of her earlier, previous work that received acclaim over decades. Converting to Catholicism, she composed a Catholic Mass based on jazz, spirituals and the blues ("Mary Lou's Mass"). The Mass or Celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the central liturgical ritual in the Catholic Church where the Eucharist (Communion) is consecrated (Hardon), thereby making her Sacred Jazz ground-breaking within the Catholic Church. Critic C.J. McNaspy said that her mass "satisfied everyone...Power, authenticity, soul, all the right words kept popping into mind (McNaspy). When the styles of jazz are listed, there are no resources that list Sacred Jazz.

This dissertation traced the life and career of this extraordinary musician, juxtaposed against the civil rights movement and the black arts movement. These two historical and artistic movements occurred during Williams's development as an artist, and seem equally important as the examination of race and gender on her career. In discovering why her jazz legacy is obscured, ignored or forgotten, I also conducted

critical analyses of scholarly works about Williams as well as interpreted evaluations from audiences attending the 100th Mary Lou Williams Birthday Celebration in Madison, Wisconsin, in 2010.

Mary Lou Williams, pianist, composer and arranger, used creative resilience to become a major contributor to jazz, and an important part of this original African American art form, yet because she was both black and woman in a racist, patriarchal society, after her death, her contributions were marginalized and her music forgotten. In addition, Williams was an early pioneer in creating Sacred Jazz, a new category of jazz. Due to the deleterious effect and intersectionality of race and gender upon her career, she did not receive the accolades that she should have during her lifetime or even after her death. She mastered every genre of jazz for over 60 years and this should have cemented her reputation in this original African American art form.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Although Mary Lou Williams was internationally famous as a pianist, composer and arranger and was a major contributor to jazz, and an integral part of this original African American art form, nevertheless because she was both black and woman in a racist, patriarchal society, her contributions were marginalized and her music forgotten because of the multiple jeopardies of race and gender, and how they intersect. While it is generally held that she was brilliant, the problem of the deleterious effect of the multiple jeopardies of race and gender and how they intersect have never been examined in relationship to her life and career. This study will demonstrate that through the use of feminist research methodology, with the tools of black feminism and multiple jeopardies and how they connect through intersectionality, we can understand why despite mastering every genre of jazz for over 60 years, Mary Lou Williams and her music were forgotten.

### **1.3 Objectives**

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Analyze scholarly writings on Mary Lou Williams to identify gaps in the research.
- ii. Examine the life and career of Mary Lou Williams in the context of the civil rights and black arts movements.
- iii. Analyze the impact of race and gender on Mary Lou Williams' life and music.
- iv. Discuss strategies presented by the 2010 Centennial Celebration in Madison, Wisconsin that can promote Mary Lou Williams' visibility?
- v. Present an artist response using ekphrasis and narrative poetry to six Mary Lou Williams' compositions that expands and amplifies her life experiences through Feminist research methodology.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

- i. What are the views and concerns of scholarly writings on Mary Lou Williams and what gaps exist?
- ii. How did Mary Lou Williams relate to the civil rights and black arts movements?
- iii. What was the impact of race and gender in Mary Lou Williams' life and music?
- iv. What are the strategies presented by the 2010 Centennial Celebration in Madison, Wisconsin that can promote Mary Lou Williams' visibility?

### **1.5 Justification**

Mary Lou Williams was a musical prodigy, wildly creative composer, and a much sought-after arranger before she later became a teacher and a recognized authority on the history and legacy of jazz. African American women's voices are often disregarded and their impact is forgotten, making the field of African American art poorer

as a result. Williams needs to take her rightful place in the cannon of African American music for the good of the present and future generations. Williams' enormous contribution to the U.S. jazz world justifies the need for accurate scholarship, as well as to be included in the neglected history of African American women and black women world-wide.

There are four books about Mary Lou Williams, two biographies, two children's books, and one dissertation, but more accurate information about her life and the trajectory of her career is needed than what is provided in these few resources. Her written, unpublished biography, her newspaper clippings, personal notes and other memorabilia stored in the archives at the Institute of Jazz Studies provided some of the needed information that was missing about segments of her life.

The beautiful story of this woman, Mary Lou Williams, born in tumultuous times, needed to be understood. As an African-American woman born in the early twentieth century, she should have been shut down professionally and silenced personally, by both racial and gender constraints. Despite vitriolic racism and sexism, Williams' ability to have a career needs to be examined and celebrated. Williams persevered to write and arrange music and to always play her compositions in new and imaginative ways.

It has been forty-nine years since Mary Lou Williams died, too young, from treatable bladder cancer at age 71. In the jazz world and public domain, it is almost as if she and her music never existed. More extensive research needed to be conducted to expand the understanding of her life and the width of her career. There are fewer citations scattered in magazines referencing her work and her contributions, in comparison to her male contemporaries, men who never reached her level of expertise. She died after only four years of teaching jazz at Duke University and ironically, it was the first time

Williams ever had medical benefits as part of a job. Had she lived longer, I believe that Mary Lou Williams would have accomplished even more to advance jazz, and preserve its presence in the United States. Perhaps the new music that she was composing right before she died, would have cemented her rightful place as a giant in jazz.

Mary Lou Williams's artistic fate is similar to that of other African-American women artists. For example, Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston, who despite her advanced degrees and exceptional career, spent her last years in a welfare home and was buried in an unmarked grave (Walker 87). I visited Mary Lou Williams' grave in Roman Catholic Calvary Cemetery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There was a small headstone with her name, birth and death dates and a few musical notes. Her grave lay among the Catholic elite with bishops surrounding her diminutive headstone with huge, high and elaborate grave markers, making her grave look small and insignificant. Her paltry headstone and grave, instead of representing the significant, global influence of Mary Lou Williams, was symbolically and literally, a meagre tribute in words and size.

The relevance of this comparison is that all too frequently African-American women artists are dismissed from literary and musical canons. This disregard causes their contributions to be forgotten, and with the passage of time, to fade away from the public memory. Their works are no longer available for purchase or difficult to access. The remarkable Mary Lou Williams's music must not be forgotten because she was critical to the first sixty years of jazz development in the U.S. Evaluating her musical productivity, wide range of her instrumental skills at the piano, her intricate and beautiful compositions, her remarkable and fresh arrangements impress the importance of documenting her discography. This accurate documentation proves difficult because the rights to most of her early compositions were stolen by unscrupulous managers and

record producers, while other jazz men stole her compositions, and appropriated her melodies without acknowledging her as the composer.

Mary Lou Williams was also an entrepreneur, who founded her own label, **Mary Records**. She was the first jazz woman to do this. She also established the **Cecilia Music Publishing Company**, another first. She was amazingly prolific in her musicality, while she maintained traditional roles as wife, surrogate mother to two nephews, and for most of her life, provided the financial well-being for her extended family. This dissertation revealed more of her story within the framework of black feminist theory from Bell Hooks describes as “simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression” (Hooks 1), that includes examining how sexism and oppression impacted Mary Lou Williams as a black woman artist.

## **1.6 Hypothesis**

Child prodigy and genius pianist, composer and arranger Mary Lou Williams had a successful 60 year career and was internationally famous during her lifetime, yet after her death, despite her creative resilience, she and her music were marginalized and almost totally forgotten due to racism and patriarchy.

## **1.7 Archival Research**

The study employs archival research at Rutgers University, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Duke University. The study relies on both primary and secondary sources of information which include interviews with key informants such as Williams’ niece, Williams’ last jazz manager, a Pittsburgh historian who lived in the same neighbourhood Williams grew up in, and an African American Pittsburgh resident who at 103 was born a few years earlier than Williams. These interviews are all collected in an interview guide in the Appendix. I also conducted data from the Mary Lou Williams



Madison Centennial Committee through an evaluation process, also in the Appendix. The research was conducted in the following order:

**Step 1: Conducted archival study to find and examine Mary Lou Williams’s handwritten autobiography, notes, print clippings, papers and records stored at Rutgers University, The Marr Sound Archives at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and at Duke University.** Father Peter O’Brien, Mary Lou Williams’ last manager, created a repository for all her documents in the Jazz Institute at Rutgers University. Father O’Brien also followed her to Duke University where he assisted her with her classes and continued managing her career until her death in 1981. The Marr Sound Archives had information about her life in Kansas City and copies of her early recordings. Systematic research of the archival materials catalogued at these three universities assisted in understanding Mary Lou Williams’s contributions in her own words and from her own perspectives, as well as from jazz critics and writers over six decades. These notations are included in the dissertation.

### **1.7.1 Review of Literature and analysis scholarly writing in the two biographies, a dissertation, as well as two papers presented during the Centennial Celebration of Mary Lou Williams in Madison.**

The review of literature is divided into five categories; 1) Books on Mary Lou Williams by writers other than Dahl and Kernodle, 2) books on the Harlem Renaissance, Jazz Age, Civil Rights and Black arts movements to give historical context 3) Books on jazz to build a strong musical foundation, 4) Books on Women musicians and their role in jazz and 5) Books on Black Feminism for the theoretical framework. The analysis of two books by Linda Dahl and two books by Tammy Kernodle focused on the authors’ perspectives and the thematic content. Also, two papers were presented at a 2010 Symposium entitled “Reflecting on Mary Lou Williams: Envisioning the Future of Jazz.” Professor Sherrie Tucker from the University of Kansas presented “The Future of Jazz-

with-Women-in-It: An Imaginary Conversation with Mary Lou Williams” where she examines Williams’ gender identity issues with being termed a woman musician and what that meant to jazz and women. Professor Ted Buehrer from Kenyon College presented “Mary’s Ideas: Contextualizing Mary Lou Williams’ Compositions and Arrangements for Big Band” where he noted that very little of her music was published in her lifetime so he worked from original source materials to create an edition of each composition. Professor Buehrer’s work will allow Williams music to continue to be performed.

### **1.7.2 Primary Data Collection**

Interviewed key informants in a semi-structured format with guided questions. I interviewed Bobby Ferguson, Mary Lou Williams’ niece, to get a family member’s perspective. None of Williams’ brothers or sisters were still alive. This niece was willing to be interviewed and shared information based on her memories and what her mother shared as Williams’ youngest sister. She gave a viewpoint of Mary Lou Williams that was opposite to the portrayal by Linda Dahl. Her viewpoint was of a woman who never mentioned her talent or fame amongst her family and who was not only quiet, but humble in her demeanor. I interviewed Father Peter O’Brien who was the last manager of Williams. In 2012, he was also the director of the Mary Lou Williams Foundation. Father O’Brien didn’t add any new information or understanding about Williams. He did, however, confirm her genius and that even today, she is not as well-known as her talent should have made her. I interviewed John M. Brewer, Jr., a local Pittsburgh historian who was able to give context to the life Williams lived as a child. Lastly, I interviewed Mrs. Lillian Griffin, who was still alive in 2012 at the age of 103 years old and was a contemporary of Williams and had seen her perform.

### **1.7.3 Analysed contemporary perspectives from Centennial Committee.**

This was done through written evaluations. The Centennial Committee was a microcosm of a general society that did not know much about the life, career, and music of Mary Lou Williams. Their evaluations further supported the argument of this dissertation that Williams had been forgotten or was unknown as a jazz pianist, because although the committee members were artists themselves from various fields, including music, the only one who knew something about Williams' music was Jane Reynolds, a jazz pianist and music academic. Reynolds knew her music, but nothing about her complicated life or the highlights of her musical career. Once educated about Mary Lou Williams, all of the Centennial Committee became ardent fans.

### **1.7.4 Secondary Data Collection**

Conducted an internet search: An internet search assisted in filling in some of the gaps of the scholarship by helping with a complete listing of Williams' discography.

### **1.7.5 Analysed audience surveys at three major public concerts of Williams' music**

Audiences were given surveys on the Mary Lou Williams Birthday concert on May 2, 2010, Mary Lou Williams @100 and Mary Lou's Mass on October 2 and 3, 2010. They were asked 3 simple questions about their knowledge before the concerts, if the concerts increased their knowledge and if they were interested in learning more? Audiences were also surveyed about their prior interest in jazz, learning more about jazz and if they were interested in attending more events during the Centennial celebration.

### **1.7.6 Analysed contemporary perspectives from teachers and students at Toki and Cherokee Middle Schools:**

Toki and Cherokee were targeted schools because they had a significant African American population, 29% at Cherokee and 31% at Toki. Both schools were given poetry and music presentations, music presentations, classroom instruction and were tested. At Toki, students took a pre and post-test. At Cherokee only a post test was administered.

Youth programming was a focus of the Centennial Committee in keeping with Williams' wishes to produce future jazz artists and art appreciators. Classroom teachers were also surveyed for their personal knowledge of Williams and the impact of the presentations on their students.

#### **1.7.7 Analysed contemporary perspectives from students at Goodman, Packer, Nehemiah, Meadowood, and Lussier Community Centres.**

This was done through presenting a 7 week workshop and then conducting written evaluations by Johnson Brothers Entertainment. The students were middle, and high school. An overview of Williams' life and music was presented to them in a variety of ways; written biographies and discussion, Williams' music with original poetry about her music, playing selected pieces for band and invitations to write and record their original poetry on Williams and participate in the Youth Explosion. This was the Centennial Committee's effort to reach non-traditional students outside of the formal classrooms. These students were given a post test. See Appendix 6.

#### **1.7.8 Analysed Middle and High school Jazz Band Directors. One middle school and four high school jazz band directors were surveyed.**

Their student ensembles learned and performed Williams' music as part of the Centennial Celebration. Their students had the benefit of learning the history of her music, several jazz genres, listening to professional jazz musician and the UW Jazz Band play her music and finally working with band scores to learn and play her music in a concert with other student musicians. All the band directors deemed their interactions with the Centennial Celebration as an overwhelming success.

#### **1.7.9 Analyses the African American Community in Madison and their responses to programs, locations and publicity.**

Surveys proved that Centennial programs that featured African American performers and educators, were co-produced with an African American community-based

organization, were presented at venues frequented by large numbers of African Americans or located in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of African Americans, were promoted through local African American formal and informal communication channels and provided free or reduced cost admissions through black organizations, help attract a record number of African Americans in event audiences. African Americans were 20% of the 8,000 attendees and contributed 26% of the funding for the events. African Americans were only 8% of the Madison population in 2010.

The methodology utilized was a combination of archival methodology, field research, internet research and surveys. Archival methodology consisted of a thorough examination and analysis of written articles and presentations, stored archives, handwritten notes and an unpublished autobiography at The Institute of Jazz at Rutgers University, The Marr Sound Archives at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Duke University. It is also included records and digital texts. Field research included interviews with key informants such as a family member, her last professional manager, a woman who was her contemporary, and a historian who not only lived in the same neighbourhood, but whose family knew Williams' younger siblings.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework Black Feminist Theory**

This study utilizes Black Feminist Theory as a useful framework because of the layered, complex reality and convergence of Mary Lou Williams being African American, a woman and an artist in a racist, patriarchal, capitalist society. Two constructs are used, multiple jeopardies and intersectionality, to correctly access all the factors that adversely affect African American women.

## **1.9 History of the Women's Rights Movement and the Women's Suffrage Movement in the United States**

In the early history of the United States (U.S.), only white men owning property could vote (Clark-Pujara). During the 1820's and 1830's, all white men were given the right to vote, no matter if they had or did not have wealth or property. African-American men were given the right to vote in 1870 after the Civil War, during the Reconstruction period, and were able to legally vote for a brief time, anywhere in the U.S. (Clark-Pujara). The Women's Rights Movement came before the Women's Suffrage Movement since suffrage represented only one aspect of the Women's Rights Movement - the right to vote. The Women's Rights Movement began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when women advocated for equality in scattered protests across the U.S. (Giddings 299). The Women's Suffrage Movement's most controversial request was the right to vote in elections and this movement ended in 1920 when women were able to vote in every state.

The Women's Suffrage Movement was officially documented as starting in 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York, when women, along with some men, gathered to discuss the abolition of slavery ("History Net"). These abolitionists agreed, at the Seneca Falls meeting, that women deserved equal rights. They advocated for women to hold property, women to obtain higher educations and for women to be treated equally in New York, along with women across the nation, to have the right to vote. For the next almost one hundred years, women tirelessly campaigned and protested for this specific right. World War I slowed the campaign down, but because the war needed women workers to replace the men drafted into the war effort, the campaign began to advocate that women's patriotism deserved to be rewarded with citizenship too. The 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1920, gave all women the right to vote.

Mary Lou Williams was ten years old and living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania when the 19th Amendment was ratified. Having the legal right to vote did not automatically mean that African Americans were safe to vote. Even in Pennsylvania, a northern state, Williams' mother and grandmother might not have exercised their right to vote. They might have been afraid, having recently relocated from Georgia, where African Americans who exercised the right to vote were often killed. It would be after the civil rights movement that African Americans were able to freely vote across the U.S. without violence from white people.

### **1.9.1 The Feminist Movement in the U.S.**

Women's rights movement and the feminist movement are titles that are used interchangeably by many historians and writers. Some state that women rights activists fight for the rights of women, where feminists fight for the end to patriarchy, which frees both women and men (Hooks 28). Bell Hooks, a black feminist writer, adds to the definition of feminism by stating that "feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression-eradicate the ideology of domination but does not privilege women over men" (Hooks 28). A brief, chronological breakdown of the movement in the U.S. is:

- a) 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century activism that formally ended with the 1920 right to vote;
- b) 1960's to present day (first wave), which sought to end patriarchy and campaigned for many women's issues such as reproductive rights and equal pay;
- c) 1980's to present (second wave) which focused on women's issues with the insistence that modern feminism had achieved its goals for women; and
- d) 1990's to the present (current wave) represents feminists who are inclusive, women of colour, and global, rather than only white, middle-class leaders (O'Neill).

## 1.9.2 The Black Feminist Movement

The Combahee River Collective is a black feminist group in Boston that took their name from the famous raid led by Harriet Tubman in 1863 that freed hundreds of slaves and is the only military campaign planned and led by a woman (Moraga and Anzaldua 210). This collective was an early definer of black feminism. In 1977, the black women from this collective met to define the "her story" of contemporary black feminism and to discuss their major issues. In looking at the origins of black feminism, they said it began "in the historical reality of African-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation" (Moraga and Anzaldua 210). In other words, Black feminism began with women activists in the 1800's in the U.S. and evolved with the second wave of the American women's movement in the late 1960's. It was 1973 that Black feminists formed a separate Black feminist group in response to the racism that they found in the women's movement with white women. They founded the National Black Feminist Organization (Moraga and Anzaldua 211). The members acknowledged their connections to the civil rights and black power movements, as well as the gender bias apparent in both. Black feminism offered them racial, gender and class intersectionality and to understand the burdens of all these multiple jeopardies that is a reality in African American lives. Black feminism offered them political analysis and practice to dismantle their multifaceted oppression.

In *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), Patricia Hill Collins shares her perspective on the role of U.S. African American women within a racist, patriarchal society:

The overarching purpose of U.S. Black feminist thought is to resist oppression...for African American women, the effects of institutionalized racism remains visible and palpable...being Black and female in the United State continues to mean that, overall; U.S. Black woman as a group lie in a different world from that of people who are not Black and female (Collins 25-26).



These intersecting oppressions call for theoretical frameworks that address both race and gender in a patriarchal society. This research relies on black feminism theory for a theoretical framework that provides insight into the reasons that Mary Lou Williams, for all of her genius in jazz, could not achieve equal pay, fair treatment and the same notoriety as black and white jazz musicians in her lifetime and why her contributions are either devalued or ignored after her 1981 death.

### **1.10 Data Collection Tools and Analysis**

- i. Research of Archives, Papers at Rutgers and Duke Universities, Records at the Mar Sound Archives at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Magazines, Newspapers, Journals and Internet;
- ii. In-depth Interviews with pertinent people;
- iii. Analysis of scholarly writings;
- iv. Analysis of contemporary perspectives in 2010.

### **1.11 Chapter Breakdown**

**Chapter 1:** Introduction to Jazz and Mary Lou Williams

**Chapter 2:** Presents a critical analysis of scholarly writings on Mary Lou Williams

**Chapter 3:** Examines and contextualizes the life and musical career of Mary Lou Williams against the backdrop of the Civil Rights and Black arts movements

**Chapter 4:** Examines Mary Lou Williams' life in the context of race, and gender

**Chapter 5:** An Examination of the Madison Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration and Her Visibility as an Artist

**Chapter 6:** Poetic Interpretation of Six Selections from Mary Lou Williams

**Chapter 7:** Key Findings and Conclusion

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARLY WRITINGS ON MARY LOU WILLIAMS

*"...Mary Lou Williams was a genius without borders"*

Tammy Kernodle's Keynote Address, Madison Centennial Celebration 2010

#### 2.1 Introduction

The definition of genius, in both its literal and connotative meanings, totally applied to Mary Lou Williams and her abilities in jazz. She was born with an amazing aptitude for music. She quickly developed skill and professionalism as a child, exhibited great intelligence and artistry in her arrangements, had a rare brilliance that shone in her compositions, and near the end of her life, became a beloved teacher, and erudite jazz scholar while still an accomplished performer. She played with more strength and expertise at 71 than she had at 21. "Mary played the strongest music of her life when she was old and in great physical pain" (Dahl 360).

What also defined Mary Lou's genius was her insatiable curiosity to learn more and her commitment to never stop improving her artistry. This determination resulted in a broader range of accomplishments, including the creation of Sacred Jazz. Dr. Tammy Kernodle in her keynote speech at the Madison Mary Lou Williams 100th Celebration remarked that Williams was "a genius without borders." This was because:

She refused to conform to conventional ideas,  
She employed stylistic changes that allowed jazz to grow,  
Strongly influenced jazz and jazz musicians and  
She was an entrepreneur and an activist in jazz (Kernodle).

Four critical themes that are discussed in all of the writings about Williams are:

1) Race and how Williams defined herself as well as her group racial identity; 2) Gender and how Williams view of being a woman and views of other women existed inside a patriarchal system; 3) Music and the unique relationship she had with her craft until she

died and 4) Faith and how her new found Catholic faith informed her music and helped to create Sacred Jazz.

## **2.2 Literature Review**

The Literature Review includes books on Mary Lou Williams, the civil rights movement, the black arts movement, jazz, women musicians, and black feminism.

The literature reviewed here is placed into five categories: scholarly works about Mary Lou Williams, scholarly works on the civil rights and black arts movement, because these are the two major historical movements that Williams' lived through, scholarly works on jazz, a genre that Williams pioneered with her early use of unique arrangements, scholarly works on women musicians, and literature on black feminism. Williams, without ever defining herself publically as a feminist, promoted a distinct woman's worldview. She broke through racial and gender barriers by being an exceptional African-American woman pianist, who withstood prejudice, sexual bias and open hostility.

### **2.2.1 Scholarly Works on Mary Lou Williams**

Mary Lou Williams Notebooks, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, 1943. These notebooks, written in Williams' handwriting were the beginning of her life story, up until mid - career and are her unpublished autobiography.

Linda Dahl, in *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazz Women* (1989) highlights women in jazz and briefly included a chapter on Mary Lou Williams that was later expanded into a book (Dahl). She heralds Williams as one of the most forgotten women in jazz. While this is the first significant introduction of Mary Lou Williams and talks about women in jazz being ignored, its lack of detailed biographical information makes it more of a reference book.

In *Morning Glory: a biography of Mary Lou Williams* (1999), Linda Dahl gave Williams the attention that she deserved, but had been missing, as a phenomenal pianist who performed solo, with small groups and big bands, in vaudeville, clubs, festivals and on numerous records. In this book, Dahl expanded on the earlier reference to Mary Lou Williams with detailed research. While rich in biographical details, Dahl does not attempt any systematic analysis of her music in relationship to her life. The book focused on the fascinating life span and career of Mary Lou Williams, whereas my dissertation focuses on the historical context, experiences and music of Mary Lou Williams and how she used her creativity as a shield against racism and patriarchy. Dahl wrote a comprehensive book from the perspective of a white American. She downplayed the factor of race, mitigated the hardship of racism and lessened the impact that sexism obviously had in Williams' career. While revealing personal, prurient facts about Williams, she does not do the same explicit documentation about the sexual escapades of her white manager Father Peter O'Brien, but merely hints at his problems.

Tammy L. Kernodle, *Anything You Are Shows Up in Your Music: Mary Lou Williams and the Sanctification of Jazz*, (1997) Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ohio. This dissertation looks at Williams' sacred composition, the last twenty years of her life and analyzed these compositions from a musicians' viewpoint. While informative, this only offered a 20-30 year perspective of Williams and is limited to discussing Sacred Jazz, and doesn't include all the other genres of jazz Williams played, arranged and composed.

Tammy L. Kernodle, PhD, in *Soul on Soul: the life and music of Mary Lou Williams* (2004) researched Williams from an African American, womanist, pianist and faith perspective. Kernodle placed her within an African-American cultural context in the book and looks at Mary Lou Williams' as a major influence on her music in the

dissertation. While the dissertation highlights an important aspect of Williams' spiritual life, there is no analysis of the other jazz genres she played or their connection to what became the obvious display of her faith in her later years. My dissertation concluded that it was her renewal of faith, combined with her decision to incorporate and weave her relationship with God into every aspect of her life, particularly her music that caused her to compose Sacred Jazz. The truth is that Williams had a spiritual base in all of her jazz, due to its roots in Spiritual songs.

Ann Ingalls and Maryann Macdonald in **The Little Piano Girl** told the story of Mary Lou Williams who, like Mozart, began playing the keyboard when she was four years old and by eight was a professional musician who grew into a jazz legend (2010). It focused on her as a child prodigy and focused on her story as a child. The book, by its very existence, brought up the issue of "colourism" since a very dark-skinned Mary Lou Williams is portrayed as a light - skinned African American child. The book publishers refused to let the illustrator draw her as dark-skinned as she in reality, really was. I highlighted the issue of colour prejudice and how it detrimentally affected Mary Lou Williams' life from childhood through adulthood, as well as her career. Colourism still continues after her death with this book publication.

Sarah Bruce Kelly, in **Jazz Girl: a Novel of Mary Lou Williams' Early Life** (2010), wrote the story of Mary Lou Williams being born with a caul (the amniotic sac was not broken during

"I think the reason for this dearth of music-related historical fiction is the necessity for an author to not only be intimately familiar with musical terminology and techniques, but ideally to have experience themselves in the performing arts. Fortunately my long background in musical performance and education, along with my MA in music history and research, gave me the necessary tools to portray historical musicians convincingly within the context of the time and culture in which they lived" ("See Interview with Sarah Bruce Kelly").

The biographies, single children's book and the one young adult fiction novel, along with one dissertation only focus on specific aspects of Mary Lou Williams, instead of integrating her multifaceted life with her productive career. My dissertation seeks to give a holistic view of this artist. While novelist Kelly uses Williams' partial, handwritten autobiography as a basis for writing her novel, it is limited in the small portion of her childhood that it addresses and by its' highly fictionalize account of the reasons for Mary Lou Williams' feelings toward her mother and other family members. My dissertation gives better foundational information on why her relationship with her mother and her grandmother was difficult and how those two personal relationships influence her music.

### **2.2.2 Historical Perspectives including the Harlem Renaissance, Jazz Age, Civil Rights and Black arts movement**

Anna J. Cooper's "A Voice from the South," (1892) is the only book published by one of the most prominent African American women scholars and educators of her era (Cooper). Born a slave, Anna Julia Haywood Cooper lived to be 105. She became the fourth African-American woman to earn a doctoral degree, earning a Ph.D. in history from the University of Paris-Sorbonne and she wrote on a variety of issues from women's rights, racial progress and segregation. This book-framed history from an African-American Southern woman's perspective, and the intersectionality of race and sex, and it is useful to determine the historical context that Mary Lou Williams lived in. While it tells the story of the black middle class, it does not elucidate the story of the black lower class, i.e. the hardworking poor that Williams' family represented.

In his seminal 1972 work, *The Black Aesthetics*, Addison Gayle, African American critic and supporter of the black arts movement, notes that for artists there was no turning back from their position within the black arts movement. This book is a collection of 32 essays by black writers, arranged in five categories; theory, music, poetry, drama and fiction. The essays are written as critiques without editorial comments

and give the foundation on which African-American artists during the black arts movement created their work. Williams did not see herself as a black or woman musician but saw the black arts movement, the artistic arm of the black power movement, as a “back to Africa movement.”

Otto Lindenmeyer, in *Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed* (1970) delineates the omissions and distortions common to African-American history and African-American people. He places African Americans and African-American history back in its rightful place inside of United States and world history. His main argument is that black history must not be lost. Mary Lou Williams felt that the legacy of jazz was being lost, because it had been stolen by whites and not adequately acknowledged by African Americans.

Chancellor Williams, in *The Destruction of Black Civilization* (1971), writes a widely-read, classic exposition of the history of Africans on the continent, the people of African descent in the United States and in the Diaspora. Mary Lou Williams’ presentations on preserving the legacy of jazz had the same intent – to record the real history of jazz and its African-American origins.

Mitchell Newton-Matza, editor, *Jazz Age: People and Perspectives* (2009), provides a collection of essays encompassing a wide variety of topics that embodied the Jazz Age that is written by experts in history, music, literature, African American studies and religious studies. These essays give an extensive chronology of the Jazz Age, when Mary Lou Williams was only 10 years old, but neglects to include her or any other women in jazz. My dissertation includes her as a prominent person with a specific perspective.

David Robson, in *The Black Arts Movement* (2008), describes a legend that the Black arts movement was born on the day that Malcolm X died – February 21, 1965.

Robinson defines the black arts movement as the artistic branch of the black power movement. Mary Lou Williams did not significantly participate in either movement, but is quoted as having strong reactions to both. Jazzwomen and their perspectives are missing in this book.

J.A. Rogers, in *Africa's Gift to America* (1961), shares a documented, extensive historical context of black people from Africa to enslavement in America and archival research to give a balanced, mostly unknown view of Africans in America. Joel Augustus Rogers was a Jamaican-American author, journalist, and historian who contributed to the history of Africa and the African Diaspora. Born in 1880 and died in 1966, his books of historical facts were widely unknown, but had they been, would undoubtedly transformed Mary Lou Williams' and others' concept of themselves based on their history, as slaves, in America. The focus of this book is to give a well-researched, factual and accurate portrayal of African-American people in the United States and their contributions, even during slavery. In interviews with Mary Lou Williams, it is clear that she had a negative concept of Africa, similar to the prevailing times, and never acknowledged the important connection between African music and jazz.

Mark R. Schneider, *African Americans in the Jazz Age* (2006), analyses the dynamic 1920s that saw the enormous migration of African Americans to urban centres in the northern United States and the formation of important African-American religious, social and economic institutions. Yet, even with considerable efforts to promote civil rights and advancements in the arts, many African Americans in the rural south continued to live under conditions unchanged from a century before. Schneider's book recounts the history of this turbulent era, paying particular attention to the ways in which African Americans actively challenged Jim Crow and firmly expressed pride in their heritage. Mary Lou Williams' family was a part of the Great Migration and the folks who suffered



under segregation in both the South and North and were largely unable to circumvent racism and sexism in either region. I utilize Mary Lou's family as a concrete example of this specific family's migration and how jazz travelled with them to the North.

Mark R. Schneider, *We Return Fighting: The civil rights movement in the Jazz Age* (2006) connects the Jazz Age with the civil rights movement and delineates their historical overlap and connections. Mary Lou Williams composed tributes to civil rights leader the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King and composed music about the turbulence of the Civil Rights era. My dissertation looked at the overall representation of civil rights themes in jazz, while Williams as an artist, aside for a few compositions, was absent.

Reginald Martin, in *The New Black Aesthetic Critics and Their Exclusion from American "Mainstream" Criticism* (1988), talks about Black Art critics only reviewing African-American materials. He discusses Black aesthetics at the time-frame that affected Mary Lou Williams, but more importantly, uncovers the plethora of white critics who erroneously claimed to be jazz critics. Mary Lou Williams was extensively critiqued by white jazz critics for most of her career. Jazz critics like Amiri Baraka, for example, wrote on male African American jazz musicians, but unfortunately never included Williams.

In 1944 Angelyn Mitchell published an edited collection titled "Within the Circle: an Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present" with essays that either initiated or that gave critical definition to specific periods or movements. These essays addressed issues such as integration, separatism, political action, Black Nationalism, Afro-centricity, Black feminism, as well as the role of art, the artist, the critic, and the audience. Mitchell, as editor, delineated the connections between the movements that Mary Lou Williams lived through and played

through and that I use in my dissertation as historical context for the life and career of Williams.

Paula Wyatt Blair, *Wise and Funny Sayings of the Elders: An Anthology of Sayings* is a collection of African American folk sayings that were used in Mary Lou Williams' compositions.

### **2.2.3 Selected Literature on Jazz Music**

William H. McClendon's 1976 *Black Music: Sound and Feeling for Black Liberation* takes a cursory look at how Black Music aided in the Black Liberation struggle. The fact that jazz is considered as an original music form from African Americans draws a connection between jazz and Black liberation. He doesn't include the role of jazz women.

In *Black: a Tribute to Black Jazz Musicians* (1990) James Strecker and Harold Town offer tributes to 40 jazz musicians. Only six of them being women and none of the women is an instrumentalist. Most of the men are contemporaries of Mary Lou Williams, men she played alongside or even mentored. This collection is indicative of Mary Lou Williams' absence among the canon of jazz musicians. In 1990 when this book was published, she had only been dead for 9 years.

Alain Locke, Ph.D., *The Negro and His Music* (1936) looks at jazz and the jazz age, from jazz to jazz classics, and classical jazz and American music by including only a single woman artist, jazz singer Ethel Waters. Locke, one of the leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance represents the male perspective in a patriarchal system that refuses to include women instrumentalists alongside men instrumentalists which causes a gap in research.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), *Black Music* (1971). As a leading architect of The Black arts movement, Baraka discusses jazz and jazz greats, with the emphasis on men

and in his work does not include any women. While he include jazz pianist Cecil Taylor, he does not include a review of Mary Lou Williams and Taylor's famous concert. This males only focus creates a gap in the research that needs to be rectified.

Susan McClary, in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, (1991) edits a collection of essays in feminist music criticism. This book looks at problems of gender and sexuality in numerous musical styles.

Dempsey J. Travis, in *An Autobiography of Black Jazz* (1983), offers a jazz memoir as a friend of prominent jazz artists who shared their stories with him. He includes three brief references to Mary Lou Williams as an arranger, composer and pianist in a book that has over 500 pages of the stories of jazz musicians. Travis focused on women as jazz vocalists.

Frank Kofsky, in *Illuminating the History and Political Economy of Jazz* (1998), offers an account of the history and political economy of jazz and how African-American jazz artists were both creatively and financially exploited. It documents what Mary Lou Williams always complained about: the theft of performance payments and royalties on her arrangements, compositions and recordings.

#### **2.2.4 Analysis of Literature on Jazz Musicians**

Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles History and Analysis*, 9th Edition, is a textbook that has been continually republished as a jazz standard. His 2006 edition still limits Mary Lou Williams to the chapter on Swing jazz.

Monica Hairston, *The Wrong Place for the Right People? Café Society, Jazz, and Gender, 1938-1947*, is a 2006 dissertation that looks at how race and gender were mutually configured at one of the most historically important jazz venues of the mid-twentieth century, Café Society. Hairston focused on pianist Hazel Scott, and had very few references to Williams, except to say that she also played at Café Society and that

Williams and Scott were both Catholic. Scott used her art on behalf of political platforms promoted equal rights and justice. Williams did not.

Len Lyons, *The Great Jazz Pianists* (1983). Lyons is a journalist, who included Mary Lou Williams as one of the pianists he interviewed. In this book, he lets the pianists speak for themselves with their thoughts on their craft. With his commentary, Williams, once again, is not given an accurate portrayal.

Kristin A. McGee, in *Some Liked It Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1928 -1959* (2009), focuses on the plight of women in jazz and the effects of racism, patriarchy and other forms of discrimination on their art and presence in film and television. Mary Lou Williams is mentioned twice in the book as an example, but the discourse is brief and not comprehensive.

Eric Porter, *Out of the Blue: Black Creative Musicians and the Challenge of Jazz, 1940-1995*, is a 1997 dissertation that looks at the trajectory of jazz, culminating with the 1997 Pulitzer Prize awarded to contemporary jazz star, Winton Marsalis. Marsalis made history that year as the first jazz musician to receive the prize. It examines musicians' social positions as artists and thinkers. By charting major trends in intellectual history, his dissertation seeks to broaden our understanding of jazz history and the role of jazz musicians as intellectuals in American life and culture. Porter included Williams only in references to the bebop era.

Robert L. Doerschuk and Keith Jarrett, "88: The Giants of Jazz Piano" (2001). Doerschuk, also a pianist, ranks 88 jazz pianists and lists Mary Lou Williams in the section on Singing & Swinging as number eight. This book illustrated that even when Mary Lou Williams is included, she is relegated to a single jazz style-when she played all of the jazz styles. This is evidence of the gender bias she routinely experience.

Gene Rizzo, in *The Fifty Greatest Jazz Piano Players of All Time; Ranking Analysis and Photos* (2005), lists the top 50 pianists of all time and lists Mary Lou Williams as number 47 among black and white men and women. She is the only woman listed amongst the men which places her protégés, Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell, above her. He lists Mary Lou Williams as number one among the top ten women pianists with his assertion that there are not 50 top women pianists. These books give further evidence of gender bias.

### **2.3 Review of Scholarly Works on Women**

Linda Dahl and Tammy Kernodle are the two biographers of Mary Lou Williams. Their perspective on Williams differed greatly on the matter of race, gender and faith. What they both affirmed is that Williams was a genius at jazz.

#### **2.3.1. Review of Linda Dahl's two works on Mary Lou Williams**

The first biography, *Morning Glory*, by Linda Dahl was published in 1999. Dahl is an award-winning European-American writer of seven previous fiction and non-fiction books. She worked as a translator, in New York City, while writing for *Jazz* magazine and working on her first book about jazz women (Dahl). I met her when she travelled to Madison, Wisconsin to participate in 2010, Madison Centennial Celebration of Mary Lou Williams, with a reading and discussion of the book. Dahl has written three books about women's contributions to jazz: *Stormy Weather* (1984), *Morning Glory* (1999), and *Haunted Heart* (2006.) Dahl stated on her website, "I had been mostly writing for some twenty years about women in jazz. Writing about extraordinary, gifted women playing the music I love was bliss" (Dahl)." Dahl, as a white woman, has not faced racial discrimination, and this fact may have influenced her decision to ignore the complexities of race relations in Williams' life. Dahl avoids the subject of race in America and the impact that it has on Williams as a black woman. This omission is glaring and detrimental

to a well-rounded perspective. Her first book listed jazz women in general, and *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazz Women* (1984) delved into the history of the involvement of women in jazz. It covered how women participated in the music and included as in-depth interviews, and also included a discography of recordings by female artists. This book listed hundreds of jazz women up to the 80s and is a useful reference book. Mary Lou Williams is included briefly in this book and this small listing is what led Dahl to write the more extensive biography, *Morning Glory* (1999). *Morning Glory* (1999) detailed the history of Mary Lou Williams in jazz in detail, by researching her unpublished autobiography and papers, as well as interviewing dozens of her family, colleagues, jazz musicians, and friends. *Morning Glory* is meticulously well researched. Dahl's biography of the great African-American musician Mary Lou Williams was chosen by the New York Times Book Review as one of the 100 best books of 2000. She is in the process of writing a screenplay on *Morning Glory*.

### **2.3.2 Race**

*Morning Glory*, while admittedly a meticulously researched, traditional biography, the analysis of racist occurrences in Williams' childhood, adulthood and professional life was sparse. Williams recounted her feelings about racism in her handwritten notebooks. Even the few examples of racism in the biography seemed glossed over in terms of the deleterious effect that white racism had on African Americans in the U.S. and certainly also had on Williams' life and career, from 1920 to 1981. Lynching, segregation, and daily racist occurrences were documented as rampant in the lives of African Americans, no matter their social status, during this historical period that Williams lived. That history is neither described nor utilized as pertinent reasons for Williams' career stagnation.

Dahl used words like “some,” and “seemed,” to temper Williams’ statements that whites were unfair to black jazz musicians and reluctantly allowed: “She (Williams) was also distressed by what she saw as the opportunism of some white musicians, who seemed bent on eliminating competition from black musicians. All during the war when they were trying to learn bop and didn't have time to listen to the prejudiced talk, they were lovey-dovey...” (Dahl 221)

For all of her thorough research into Williams’ life, the same careful research is not replicated in examining the relationships between Williams with her two white managers, Joe Glaser and Father Peter O’Brien. Glaser was a gangster who once ran a prostitution ring (Jones) and Father O’Brien’s struggles with alcoholism and celibacy are only alluded to (Dahl 322). While he lived, Glaser occasionally controlled Williams’ career before dying in 1969. Father O’Brien met Williams and was her part-time manager from 1963, when she was 53. He later became her full-time manager. After her death, Father O’Brien became the “de facto” mouthpiece for her foundation and estate and controlling access to Williams’ archives. Based on my participation in the 2010 Madison Centennial Celebration, Father O’Brien gave permission for me to examine her archives in my own research trip in 2012.

Dahl also did not include how a form of racism called “colourism,” and the fact that Williams was dark black in complexion, undermined her career in both the black and white communities. Dahl over-emphasized a list of Williams’ white lovers to suggest that those relationships mitigated any racism she experienced from white men in general. This dismisses the racial incidents from white men like the white plantation owner who tried to kidnap her, the white train conductor who raped her, or the numerous white men who essentially stole her jazz compositions and the copyrights to her compositions and arrangements. Dahl believed that Williams was unfair in her interactions with whites,

when she pointed out that, Mary's conflicted emotions displayed themselves in seeming contradictions. On the one hand, she was an integrationist, choosing friends and lovers by character, not colour. Yet she could also write in her diary, "ofays (whites) made me nervous I could not stay around them or work with them" (Dahl 274).

Dahl wrongly surmised that in reality, "Mary's greatest difficulties with "race" concerned her own people" (Dahl 274). Dahl seemed unaware of the intersectionality of all the oppressive barriers Williams had to face, fight and overcome in her career. Dahl does not examine the interplay between multiple jeopardy such as race, class and gender. She does not assess or analyse how the racism Williams faced affected her as a woman, nor does she attempt to interpret Williams' exposure to gender bias and what role Williams herself might have played in perpetuating gender bias with her comments.

Williams' handwritten autobiography gave evidence of relationships fraught with tension between blacks and whites. During the time she lived, it would have been the reality for most African Americans to have dual interactions with whites. They would both get along with whites in certain set circumstances, and yet have specific times that they did not want to be around whites especially when blacks needed to survive despite inherent white racism. Dahl overlooks the financial reality that Williams needed to interact with white people to have any kind of reasonably successful career.

### **2.3.3 Gender**

Dahl's biography gives many examples of gender bias towards Williams, beginning with Andy Kirk who really didn't want her to be the band's pianist, when he told her, "I don't want you to get a head. Hot-headed. You are a pest" (Dahl 81). She led The Clouds of Joy to major success and yet Kirk sued her when she left the band after accusing him of not paying her full royalties (Dahl 123).



Another difficult area of gender bias was with her managers. Williams had dozens of agents, managers, publicity people and lawyers but she always returned to Glaser...who got her the best work. (Dahl 128). Glaser wore the paternalistic, father role by assuming the position of parent, instead of the professional role of manager, even advising her on her marriages. He told her to leave William, her first husband, but not to marry Harold Baker. According to Dahl, if Mary had listened to Glaser, he would have insisted that he be the only man in her life. She married Baker (Dahl 121).

The mask of the doting papa disappeared when she was left the band and Glaser wrote her "I'll bury you because you fucked the band. I have advised my attorney to take your case before the American Federation of Musicians" (Dahl 124). In a letter to another agent, Glaser wrote about Williams, "I realize she has been some sort of a problem child to you and regret the fact..." (Dahl 211) This paternalistic role indicated the entrenched patriarchy that Williams endured as an adult artist. Dahl described Father O'Brien and Williams as having a "quasi-marriage" (Dahl 320). Williams assessed their relationship totally differently. She told Father O'Brien at Duke University "I have taught you and gave you ideas to go on your own, to make millions because you are white..." (Dahl 355) Obviously Williams saw herself as guiding and helping O'Brien. Mary Lou Williams' entire career was marred by gender bias from most of the men in her adult life, whether their role was personal or professional. Dahl made that clear with numerous references to that bias, but for Dahl this gender bias was not the result of systematic oppression through a system of patriarchy, but rather it was symptomatic of how men treated women at that historical time.

#### **2.3.4 Music**

Mary Lou Williams is credited as a superb musician in the biography. Dahl wrote "...it was Mary's own innate vision of possibilities, her tremendous grit ...and an

innate sense of both the depth of her own talent and of the significance of the African American musical heritage” (Dahl 3-4) that made her who she was. None-the-less, throughout the book, Dahl hinted that Williams may have been too generous in her praise of herself at times and that in an effort to mitigate the harshness of her experiences took to “polishing and embellishing them in the telling and retelling” (Dahl 14).

Dahl might be referring to particular stories that Williams always told to interviews about how and when she began playing piano. The core of the story is that Williams was sitting in her mother’s lap and reached over and played what her mother had finished playing. Williams’ age when this exactly happened vacillates as well as other small details about her mother’s immediate response. Williams’ story, in her autobiographical notes, disagreed with the description that Dahl told (“MLW autobiographical notes”). With retelling the same story over fifty years, extraneous details might change, but the fact that Williams was very young when her mother recognized her as a child prodigy remains the truth.

### **2.3.5 Faith and the New Mary Lou Williams**

Mary Lou Williams arrived back to the U.S. in 1954 at age 44. She was completely without money and discovered that in the two years she had been in Europe, jazz venues changed. She was offered less salary for jobs than ever before. While she managed to cut a record, *A Keyboard History*, that included her “history of jazz” approach (Dahl 245), she wanted to turn from the corrupt world of entertainment to a devoted life to Christ. She began searching for a Christian way of life and reflected that “music had left...” (Dahl 247) The next few years were spent trying to balance her faith with prayer, meditation and extreme poverty. “...Mary on a portable keyboard began performing on street corners...sharing religious fervour” (Dahl 254).

It was a priest, Father Antony Woods who helped her to understand she could be a Catholic and still “use her music” (Dahl 262). The newly, saved and redeemed Mary Lou Williams returned to playing, and created Sacred Jazz, as she wrangled with the Catholic Church until she was able to present her three new masses in cathedrals. She started her own businesses to support addicted musicians and worked hard to reconcile with her family as she emotionally reassessed her purpose in life.

### **2.3.6 Conclusion**

Dahl did an excellent job in her biography with researching details of almost every aspect of Mary Lou Williams’ life. Yet Dahl’s perspective as a white woman, with her own cultural bias, seemed to have negatively influenced what she chose to emphasize and include in the biography. This evidence is “hegemonic whiteness” in describing Williams’ life and career. Hegemonic whiteness maintains the systemic and willful suppression by the dominant white culture of all other cultures, due to their normalization that whiteness is the standard to which all groups are expected to conform (“The Hegemonic Order of Whiteness in Society”). There is an inordinate amount of direct quotes in an effort to prove to the reader that this is Mary Lou Williams’ perspective and not Dahl’s bias.

This jumble of quotes in her book deter from smooth continuity in the writing and there is little positive in the interpretation of Williams’s life. Dahl admitted “nearly everything worked against her (Mary) ...her place and time, here class, her race, and her sex” (Dahl 6). This is her very brief statement about the tremendous impact and intersection of multiple jeopardies that intertwined class, race and gender oppressions in the life of Williams.

The chronology in the book is not straightforward or linear which causes problems in following the storyline as Dahl leaps back and forth over decades. All this

renders the book as an amalgamation of facts, however illuminating. Another problem area is that she does not discuss the gender subordinate role that Williams always was forced to play in her private and professional relationships. Even when she wasn't married to the men, they acted in the patronizing role of some kind of husband or father figure. These men were always controlling, abusive and dominating. These familiar gender roles prove disastrous to Williams' emotional and physical well-being.

Despite these major shortcomings, by writing this biography, Dahl reintroduced a forgotten Mary Lou Williams to the public and reignited the conversation about Williams as a premier jazz artist. Dahl chose to focus on what both she and Williams had in common as women. The next biographer, Tammy Kernodle, wrote her biography on Mary Lou Williams from a very different perspective.

#### **2.4 Review of Tammy Kernodle two books about Mary Lou Williams**

Professor Tammy L. Kernodle wrote a dissertation about Williams and a biography. The dissertation (1997), from The Ohio State University, is titled *Anything You Are Shows Up in Your Music: Mary Lou Williams and the Sanctification of Jazz*. The title includes a famous quote from Williams that essentially says you are what you play. The biography is *Soul on Soul: The life, and Music of Mary Lou Williams*, 2002. Kernodle earned a B.M. (Choral Music Education/Emphasis) in Piano from Virginia State University, and an M.A. and PhD in Music History/Musicology from Ohio State University.

Kernodle's area of specialty is 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American music (popular and classical). She was a Scholar in Residence –Women in Jazz Initiative at the American Jazz Museum (1999-2001) in Kansas City, Missouri, where she helped develop and implement programming that corresponded with Women in Jazz initiative. She was the Langston Hughes Visiting Professor at the University of Kansas, 2012, where she taught

in the American Studies Program in the area of black women's identity and the politics of performances/the intersections between the sacred and secular in black music practices. She is currently a Scholarly Consultant/Musical Crossroads Exhibits with the National Museum of African American History at the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. (Kernodle).

As a Professor of Musicology, Kernodle currently teaches at Miami University in Ohio, in the area of African American music (20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century); Gender studies in music; 20<sup>th</sup> century American music (classical and popular). Kernodle is an affiliate faculty member of the Black World Studies, American Studies, and Women, Gender and Sexuality Programs. Her scholarship has been featured in a number of journals and anthologies. Her work has focused on a number of women musicians including jazz musicians Mary Lou Williams, Melba Liston, Alice Coltrane, Nina Simone and funk/hip-hop artist Me'Shell Ndegeocello. She has also written and lectured on the role of women musicians in the development of contemporary gospel, the operas of composer William Grant Still and the connections between black women's lament traditions and the blues. Kernodle writes from her viewpoints as an African-American woman, an academic, a pianist, and as a woman of Christian faith (Kernodle). She uses life experiences, and professional training to add insight into Williams' biography.

#### **2.4.1 Race**

Kernodle's dissertation focused entirely on Williams' music, faith, and the conversion of Mary Lou Williams when she goes through a spiritual transformation. The dissertation focuses on a narrower slice of Williams' life while the biography includes more about race. In the biography Kernodle focused on the fact that the topic of race was missing from Dahl's biography. The reason Kernodle gives for her writing the biography was to include the "missing" topic of race. In a 2010 interview with the Capital City Hues newspaper, Kernodle said that she had read Linda Dahl's *Morning Glory* and although

she was inspired by Dahl's book, she also felt there was something missing, which was the context of the African-American experience in America (Kernodle). She continued,

“If you didn't know her, what would you want to know about her?” was the primary question Kernodle asked herself while writing *Soul on Soul*. “So I approached every chapter like that. Like I wanted you to smell, hopefully, what Kansas City was like. I wanted people to get a taste for what Harlem was like when she was there in the 1930s - 1940s and all of these great people were there. At these pivotal moments, she is in places that we associate with everyone else in jazz, all of these other great people like Duke Ellington. But we've never written women into that story. So I really wanted to contextualize her story” (Kernodle).

Kernodle discussed two major areas of racism in jazz; the difficulties of black musicians versus the successes of white bands in the early days of jazz and the continuing conflict between black and white jazz musicians in the 60s and 70s. Even when Williams was writing hits and playing piano for The Clouds of Joy, their experience was different from white musicians. Racial divisions were enforced with black bands seldom getting jobs at prominent hotels or on the radio. They were victimized by professional jealousy (from white bands) and they were excluded from advertising spots because hotel owners and radio sponsors feared southern backlash (Kernodle 67). This racial prejudice between black and white jazz artists increased during the 60's and 70's in more division “...between black and white musicians, black musicians and white agents and club owners, and black musicians and white critics” (Kernodle 197).

Kernodle placed Williams in the middle of the controversy, since in the 30 years of her being a jazz musician, she witnessed the denial of black performers and composers creativity, the appropriation of black music by white performers and despite the undisputed talents of Fletcher Henderson and others, Benny Goodman, a white man, termed the ‘King of Swing’ (Kernodle 196). On the issue of Williams' racial pride, Kernodle said that Williams “would be one of many notable jazz musicians and composers who would voice their criticism of the industry's attempts to negate the

African roots of jazz during the 60's (Kernodle 197). Kernodle continued: "There is no evidence that Mary was an open proponent of the black arts movement or the rhetoric of dissension developing among jazz musicians (Kernodle). The truth is that Williams never acknowledge the African roots, only the African American roots of jazz.

#### **2.4.2 Gender**

Kernodle speaks of gender and adds in the awareness of Williams' relationship with men; that whether these men assumed patriarchal roles as father figures or men who she mentored as a mother figure, she was subordinated in all these male relationships. No matter what critical role Williams played in their development or in their success, she was also the subordinate. With the young jazz musicians, and the age difference between them, she shared her enormous knowledge of jazz, she lavished them with love, gave them food and shelter and even tried to save them from drug addiction. In return, most took advantage of her.

Kernodle's perspective was that Williams was facing more discrimination in the jazz world as a woman, rather than because of her race. Kernodle also noted the paternalism of Joe Glaser and the patronizing relationships with Peter Father O'Brien. Glaser "seemed more like a father...than an agent" (Kernodle 144). In another correspondence to Father O'Brien, Glaser "...reminded Mary that he was the only person who had gone out of his way to help her. The heated discussion ended as most disagreements did between the two, with Mary apologizing and declaring her love for Glaser. Later she wrote to him "I know what agents have done to me, which leaves me thinking now, that the Jewish race does not like Negroes..." (Kernodle 144) Glaser was Jewish.

Kernodle's analysis in the biography was that near the end of Williams' life when her professional life was improving, "her personal relationship with O'Brien

suffered” (Kernodle 267). Duke University hired Williams, but not her manager. Father O’Brien made the decision to move to North Carolina with her, which seemed a strange choice for a manager. Once there “he had no steady income, health insurance and nothing to do outside of being her manager ...even though Williams had told him, “Yeah, you can go, but you’re on your own” (Kernodle 267). Father O'Brien expected that she would support him so the paternalistic relationship appeared to turn dysfunctionally maternalistic.

### **2.4.3 Music, Faith, and the New Mary Lou Williams**

Kernodle’s dissertation added three critically important components to understanding Mary Lou Williams. She contextualized Mary Lou within African-American culture and church by showing the many connections that in varying degrees, Williams, maintained with her culture and with the church over her sixty year career.

Kernodle emphasized the relationship with Mary Lou’s first husband, John Williams. She gave details about the intricacy of them both suffering for being dark skinned blacks, but when it came to gender, as a woman, Williams, suffered more. Finally Kernodle provided an in-depth musical analysis of Williams' Sacred Jazz by looking at the original manuscripts from the lens of a professional pianist.

Kernodle placed jazz in the context of the African American community at turn of the century when it was developing as a new musical form and increases the understanding of how jazz came to be and how it became “sanctified” (Kernodle). The beginning of the turn of the century was when the black church was the most important spiritual, political and social institution that existed for African Americans, literally meeting all the needs of newly freed black people. Not only could African Americans worship in freedom, the church was a class and gender equalizer, a gathering place for social activities, a safe place for political information exchange, a counselling centre, hub



for networking and a good location for meeting future marriage partners. In church, a person could share their gifts and talents whether they were oratory, organizational, teaching or musical skills and be acknowledged for their victories and successes. The Black church also set the standards for behaviour in relationships; personal, community-wide and across the race (Kernodle 9). Jazz began in places of illegal vice and profane activities, locations which no church could have endorsed. Kernodle used a quote from an African American church leader, Dr John Roach Straton from Calvary Baptist Church, who admonished,

“I have no patience with this modern jazz tendency...whether it be in music, science, or religion. Jazz music is just as much a revolt against the standards of modesty, and decency as is the jazz tendency in dress. Jazz with its discord, its appeal to the sensuous, should be stomped out. The jazz hound is an outlaw and a musical bandit and should be relentlessly put down. Jazz is bootleg music” (Kernodle 19).

Reverend Dr. Straton’s viewpoint illustrated the extensive influence of jazz since he mentioned jazz in science, religion, and music. His comments seemed like a fair representation from black churches whose Christian core belief systems supported conversion and living Christ-centred lives where drinking, prostitution, and violence were unacceptable. In the black church, the spirituals, were also considered protest music against an unjust American system, while also including the music’s Christian hope and belief.

Kernodle explains the cultural context of spirituals by illustrating that the Spirituals were first taken around the world by the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1871, which essentially elevated the music along with the black race. The original Jubilee Singers disbanded in 1878 because of their grueling touring schedule. Those singing Spirituals faced the same kinds of horrific touring schedules due to problems with adequate housing, payment, and harassment as did jazz musicians decades later. Mary Lou

Williams always insisted that jazz originated from the Spiritual, although the messages were radically different.

“...from suffering came the spiritual. Songs of joy. Songs of sorrow. The main origin of American jazz is a spiritual. ..” (Kernodle 17)

It is logical that the Black church would not have supported jazz, due to the places that it was performed. Up until the 1920s, jazz was primarily played in places where crime, violence, and promiscuity abounded. This caused a clear delineation between sacred and secular music.

When jazz became respectable, it was largely due to the music being co-opted by whites, who became jazz artists, promoters, agents, managers and record producers for white audiences for white events at white-owned venues. Jazz was scandalized again from the 1950s to the 1970s when marijuana usage became widespread and when heroin addiction killed many of the leading black jazz musicians and singers. Williams was not a drinker but smoked cigarettes and marijuana until her return to Christianity in 1956 when she stopped smoking both. Her close association with the bebop musicians, who were known to be addicts, caused her to be stigmatized as drug-addicted too, according to the Dahl (221).

Kernodle’s dissertation gave an overview of Williams’ life, but focused on Mary Lou Williams’ three year spiritual awakening, beginning in 1954. It emphasized when she stopped playing jazz and lamented her leaving jazz performance, before she created the Sacred Jazz that she focused on for the last twenty-eight years of her life.

Unlike the jazz critics of her time who felt bereft at Williams leaving the jazz scene, Kernodle believed that “Mary Lou William’ departure from the music scene...and changes were essential to her health and well-being” (Kernodle 86). Kernodle reiterated that at the time Williams converted to Catholicism, was in close proximity to Vatican II in 1958, an important meeting of Catholic leadership that instituted change in Catholic

ritual. This change provided an environment that made it possible for Mary Lou Williams to write religious compositions and have them performed in churches. The Catholic Church, as a whole, did not welcome jazz into the Mass and this controversy was symbolic of her challenging, through her music, the system of patriarchy that existed both in the Catholic Church and throughout her life.

Mary Lou's music proved to be innovative and timely, for it displayed many of the revisions that the American Bishops wanted for including the use of the vernacular into the Mass (Kernodle 86). Kernodle emphasized that it was Mary Lou Williams and her music that folded jazz into the church, worldwide, and dissolved the hundreds year old dividing line between secular and sacred music. What she accomplished was revolutionary by forcing the predominantly white, European institution of the Vatican to recognize and affirm the use of her jazz in particular.

During the 1960s Mary Lou Williams composed a body of work that combined sacred compositions with jazz influences. These pieces were produced at a time when the artist was growing in her musical expression and spirituality and solidified her career as a jazz genius. Her spirituality was apparent in her life and in her music. Kernodle's dissertation broke new ground in delineating how Mary Lou Williams' faith influenced a new kind of jazz and changed forever the sensibilities of both the Catholic and the black church. Kernodle cited E. Franklin Frazier and C. Eric Lincoln and their work on the "Black Church in America" before and after the Civil rights movement as the basic scholarship for her portrayal of the black church (Kernodle 9).

## **2.5 Comparison between *Morning Glory* and *Soul on Soul***

After reading her dissertation on Mary Lou Williams, the expectation was that Kernodle's biography on Mary Lou Williams would be the dissertation turned into a book. The biography, *Soul on Soul*, is more of a restating of biographical information

about Mary Lou Williams, but with two important additions, the inclusion of an African American context and the spiritual life of Williams was more equitably included and illustrated throughout Williams' entire life story. If read first, the reader would get limited, new information from *Soul on Soul*. *Soul on Soul* is, however, is a much easier read with a clearer chronology that does not move back and forth over decades, a literary device, confusing the reader in *Morning Glory*.

Utilizing both *Morning Glory* by Linda Dahl and *Soul on Soul* by Tammy L. Kernodle gave a more nuanced and balanced view of the inner life of the artist Mary Lou Williams and both biographies made her career choices clearer to understand. Each author focused on aspects of Williams' life and music seemingly in the ways that resonated more with one individual as a white woman writer and the other as a black woman academic.

While both celebrated Williams and bemoaned her contemporary obscurity as a jazz legend, Dahl was more critical of Williams, focusing on her sexual life and other titillating incidents, and emphasizing what she deemed were the many contradictions of Williams' life. Both writers interviewed John Williams, however, Kernodle inserted him more into both the dissertation and biography.

John Williams, Mary Lou's first husband, offered first hand, intimate testimony that illuminated specific areas of Williams' life. He offered another view of the same incidents and events that Dahl often incorrectly misinterpreted. He blamed Joe Glaser for the breakup of his marriage to Mary Lou (Kernodle 34). Dahl also interviewed John Williams but didn't include as much of his opinion and his rationale, for his former wife's personal and career decisions. Reading his comments shed light on many unexplained questions in *Morning Glory*.

Neither biographer discussed the issues and impact of racism and patriarchy on Williams' and her career, except in the vague sense that both systems existed and were perpetrated during her lifetime. Neither author delved into a thorough analysis of the embedded politics of jazz as unfair to black male artists and even more unfair to black female artists. What both books did well was bring Mary Lou Williams back to the forefront of public conversation as a great jazz artist. What both biographers agreed on was Mary Lou Williams's genius. Kernodle summed up Williams' belief with the quote from Mary Lou that "Real Jazz has love, and it has the spirit of God coming out of the sufferings of Black people. These are two things I express, the religious ideas and the musical ideas - both; otherwise, it would be cold and have no feeling (Mousouris 82).

## **2.6 The Future of Jazz-With-Women-in-It: An Imaginary Conversation with Mary Lou Williams**

Professor Sherrie Tucker from the University of Kansas gave a presentation at the Madison Centennial Celebration in 2010 that imagined a conversation that she could have with Mary Lou Williams. She referenced the 1946 album that Leonard Feather coerced Mary Lou Williams into doing with women musicians billed as *Girls in Jazz*. Tucker pointed out that "often times women were lumped together regardless of their musical ideas, backgrounds and without a chance to rehearse..." (Tucker) She also quoted Williams as she told interviewer Stan Bret near the end of her life "I'm not too good around women because of what happened when I was very young. Now, how many women do you know who can go out on the road and not eat properly for 30 days? And how many women do you know will go back for sandwiches in a town where they're lynching blacks?" (Tucker 1) Tucker would ask Williams two questions and they would be:

- i. I'd like to know what she would say today about continuing effectiveness of the concept "jazz" as a site for innovation and

- ii. I would want to ask her some of the ‘gender’ questions that she hated so much in her own lifetime...What needs to happen in order to achieve a future where the term "jazz" already means "jazz-with-women-in-it"? (Tucker)

Tucker answered the first question:

- a. Jazz history is full of denunciations of innovators like Mary Lou.
- b. Innovation genre is an oxymoron because Jazz is not a history of similar sound
- c. Even in jazz, often people don’t recognize innovation in the present...like critics and audiences often didn’t know what to make of Mary Lou Williams’ innovations (Tucker 3-4).

The second question Tucker answered concerned the term women-in-jazz. She referenced Williams’ insistence that she was a musician, not a woman musician. Tucker referenced Nichole T. Rustin, in an article entitled, “Mary Lou Williams Plays Like a Man! Gender, Genius, and Difference in Black Music Discourse” in which Williams characterized her musicality as masculine which is a black feminist reading of black masculinity as an available space for black genius. Apparently there was no corollary for black women and black femininity, in jazz, or anywhere else in culture (Tucker 5). Tucker reminded the audience that Williams admired Melba Liston with Dizzy Gillespie’s band with the statement “She rehearses the band like she’s one of the boys, but she is feminine all right” (Tucker 5).

Tucker ends her presentation with a commentary of Girls Jazz and Blues Camp which is only for girls interested in jazz and blues. She wondered what Williams would think of such a camp and mentioned that the girls believed they had more freedom to learn jazz and blues when they weren't around boys or hesitant to make mistakes in front of their band teachers who are most men too (Tucker 8).

## **2.7 Mary's Ideas: Contextualizing Mary Lou Williams' Compositions and Arrangements for Big Band**

Professor Ted Buehrer, from Kenyon College, gave a presentation on Mary Lou Williams and her compositions and arrangements for Big Band. He gave a definition of Big Band as a large group of musicians playing jazz or dance music (Buehrer 1). He noted that “very little of Mary’s music was published in her lifetime,” so his task was to work from original source materials to create a single, publishable edition of each composition (Buehrer 1). Buehrer worked from autographed scores in her own handwriting and on other cases, he worked from only a single score manuscript and had to piece together complete arrangements from these incomplete sources (Buehrer 2). He created 1,000 images of manuscript pages for his work. Even these pieces are not everything she composed and arranged and there are holes in the surviving written sources of her music. He knew of no surviving manuscripts prior to 1937. All her music for the Andy Kirk band remained in their possession after she left having worked with them for twelve years (Buehrer 3).

Buehrer explained that her arrangements covered three phases in her career: her earliest attempts in 1929-1930, her polished works from the late 1930’s and 1940’s and her fully mature return to the genre after years away from it, in the late 1960’s (Buehrer 4). He applauded Mary Lou Williams because she “pushed on the conventions of the day, using abnormal phrase lengths, interesting formal structures, and harmonies that were considered progressive for their time” (Buehrer 12).

He discussed that her style continued to evolve and she continued to experiment. He believed her ability “earned the respect of her peers, that transcended gender and race, and it is that same spirit that has been celebrated...Mary Lou Williams deservedly is beginning to take her place among the most significant jazz musicians to have lived and worked” (Buehrer 12). Mary Lou Williams’ abilities obviously didn’t transcend race and

gender in her life time and for an academician to make that untrue assertion is unsubstantiated, especially given the dearth of her early work that can no longer be found.

After this paper presentation, Buehrer published, in 2013, a critical edition of works by jazz pianist, arranger and composer Mary Lou Williams (Mary Lou Williams: Selected Works for Big Band, Music of the United States of America vol. 25, A-R Editions). This is important scholarship resulting in scores that will make Williams' work more accessible and allow bands to play her big band music.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This critical analysis of scholarly writings on Mary Lou Williams elicited very diverse views on who Williams was, including an imaginary conversation between a scholar and if Williams were alive today. In many instances, the two biographers Dahl and Kernodle, offered different views on who Williams really was—with Dahl focused more on the physical woman, while Kernodle, in her dissertation, focused more on the spiritual woman. Kernodle appears to offer a more balanced view of Williams in her biography by including Williams' last of her life spent as a devout Catholic. One example of a more balanced view, demonstrates Williams' insistence on a fair wage. When the Jazz Director from Duke University recruited Williams and asked what salary she wanted. "Her response was \$100,000...when told that faculty with Ph.D.'s didn't get that much, even with tenure, She responded, "I have an MLW." The Director said, "What's that?" "A Mary Lou Williams" (Kernodle 265). That quote epitomized the Mary Lou Williams, no longer shy, who knew her worth. In a 2010 interview with Father Peter O'Brien, he observed "Mary Lou Williams was always very centred and very determined" (O'Brien 1).

Likewise Tucker used a quote that suggested Williams wanted to be referred to in masculine terms only because there was no place for a woman to be a genius. Buehrer



believed Williams transcended gender and race. Her niece, Bobbie, had another very different perspective of who Mary Lou Williams was. Bobbie Furgerson summed up the seventy-one years of her life, “she was a very giving person and humble” (Furgerson 1). She remembered that if you didn’t know Williams was a famous pianist, she would never bring up her career, but rather, “when she came home, she would wear house dresses” (Furgerson 1).

Her family never knew the difficulties Mary Lou faced in her career. Everyone was struggling with race, gender and class issues, spoken or unspoken. All of these writers did a credible job in trying to decipher the mystery of Mary Lou Williams through her autobiography, numerous interviews and talking with the people who surrounded her at different periods of her life. Their analysis offers a peek into the brain of this superb jazz artist who, while she had definite flaws, always exhibited her humanity along with her musical prowess. Scholars need to analyze Williams through a Black Feminist perspective. The complicated Williams remains an enigma to scholars when the multiple jeopardies and how race and gender intersect are not used to understand her as both black and woman.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARY LOU WILLIAMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND BLACK ARTS MOVEMENTS

*“We...are the only people nobody wants and now you can see why many become bitter. They never have a chance to receive credit for all they create through their suffering.”*

Mary Lou Williams, Morning Glory, 326

#### 3.1 Introduction to the life and musical career of Mary Lou Williams

In this chapter, I examine Mary Lou Williams juxtaposed against two major historical movements for African Americans in the U.S., the civil rights and the black arts movements. These were two of the most important national battles in the history of black people, for equality and identity, in the U.S. One involved the struggle for equal rights as citizens and the other involved the struggle for self and collective pride in being African American. The juxtaposition looks at Williams’ choices, although she was not exempt from the same racism and sexism that African Americans experienced in the U.S., she made the decision to not publicly support civil rights or black arts, and with few exceptions, never did. Black feminist theory is a useful analysis towards understanding the matrix of power that she was born in, worked under, and most importantly for Mary Lou Williams, created, arranged and composed jazz.

Williams’ personal life; which included the instability of her childhood, a difficult relationship with her mother, abysmal poverty, growing up while travelling on the music circuit and the acute racism and sexism present in America, and within the jazz world, I believe, adversely affected her sense of racial and gender identity. The result was Williams was steadfast, from her earliest interviews to her last interviews, in maintaining a professional distance from both topics (Dahl 138). This distance also emphasizes, that during the time periods of these social and cultural movements, she was still raising her musical creativity as the shield and ultimate reason to remain uninvolved in politics and the popular culture of African American life. Williams’ long-time friend and admirer,

press agent Joe Morgan said, “She lives in a world all her own, a dream world, and she doesn’t want anything to spoil it,... many people who look at her askance because they cannot understand her high artistic level...her motive, her burning desire is for creation” (McPartland 2). This same interview included pianist Marian McPartland, who later interviewed Williams for Piano Jazz in 1978. McPartland noted that Williams hadn’t changed her views in 14 years (McPartland).

Williams’ “hands off” decision was directly opposite to other jazz artists who were also pianists and black women. In looking at the woman pianist whose life and career was most similar to Williams, Hazel Scott, there are, none-the-less, startling differences. A major difference is that Scott, as a black woman pianist, was heavily involved in the Civil rights movement and the Black arts movement. According to Dwayne Mack, a historian in African/African American Studies, “For a brief moment, Scott was a superstar, but her militancy and racial pride halted her ascent” (“BlackPast”).

In published articles and interviews, Williams was clear in her belief that artists didn’t make good politicians and that she neither understood nor supported the black racial pride inherent in the Black arts movement. Careful scrutiny of the racism and sexism in her private life, as well as her career illuminates her thought process behind her refusal to engage publically. Williams chose jazz to the exclusion of all else, including any significant participation in either movement.

### **3.2 Historical Context of Mary Lou Williams’ Birth**

Originally named Mary Elfrieda Scruggs, she was born on May 8, 1910, in Atlanta, Georgia, into a harsh adolescence. Racism in the south, according to her, meant that “every black person had a rough childhood” (Williams). Statistical research bears out the overt racism that victimized the majority of blacks born in 1910, included 69 reported lynchings of black people that continued and culminated in the Red Summer of 1919

“Lynching by Race”). It was termed the Red Summer of 1919 when white mobs lynched black people in several major cities throughout the U.S. Postcards were created to document these deaths which included white people smiling at the carnage (Litwack).

In Atlanta, Mary’s birthplace, and a major city in the south, 589 lynchings were reported from 1877-1950 in evidence compiled by the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama. The director, Bryan Stevenson, wrote that these racist attacks on people because of the colour of their skin were “terror lynchings that were horrific acts of violence whose perpetrators were never held accountable” compiled in an 80-page report, “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror.” He goes on to write that “Indeed, some public-spectacle lynchings were attended by the entire white community and conducted as celebratory acts of racial control and domination (“The Atlanta Journal”).

Williams’ immediate family consisted of her maternal grandparents, Andrew and Anna Jane Riser, her mother, Virginia (Ginnie), her sister Mamie and herself. She met her biological father, Joseph Scruggs, as an adult, since he abandoned his family before she was born. Detailed family history for most African-American families was scarce due to the slave experience, poor record keeping and the movement of family members trying to better themselves. “Everyone called her Mary” according to her niece Bobbie Furgerson in a 2012 interview (“Interview”).

She was born with a “veil” over her eyes, which literally meant a portion of membrane called a caul, attached to her face while she passed through the birth canal (Furgerson). African Americans in the South interpreted this veil to mean this child had extrasensory perception, “second sight” and Mary could see into the spiritual world. This pronouncement scared her mother, Virginia, who was called Miss Ginnie by her grandchildren, and who told all the family that “Mary saw “hants” (Furgerson). Hants are

supernatural being similar to ghosts and both hants and ghosts scared Mary since she saw them first as a child and for the rest of her life. Terrified by her visions, sometimes tied down to her bed, she was so agitated by them (Furgerson). After she became an adult jazz artist, she took this gift and used it on behalf of her music. She said her gift enabled her to compose some of her greatest arrangements spontaneously, to know what note a musician was going to play next. This special ability, whether it was second sight or extraordinary creativity, allowed her to also create Sacred Jazz by fusing jazz with a spiritual message (Williams).

Being born with a “veil” was a defining fact in Williams’ life, but the specific date and year of her birth were not as concretely known. She was born at a time when birthdates were not important, black people were even less important in the overall society, and record-keeping was inaccurate or haphazard. By talking to family members, she approximated May 8, 1910, as her birthday. Many facts about her family history are equally missing, especially about the men on her father's side. She could trace her mother's family back to her great-grandmother Matilda but did not know her paternal lineage at all.

Since Mary was born out of wedlock, as a child she was called by several different names; Mary Elfrieda Scruggs, Mary Lou Winn, and Mary Lou Burley. She forgot exactly when the “Lou” was added. Joseph Scruggs was her biological father, Mose Winn was her mother’s first husband, and Fletcher Burley was her mother’s second husband. She wrote in her unpublished, handwritten autobiography, “I never knew my father. I was born out of wedlock, a common thing not only for black people but also for whites in the South” (Dahl 11). When she was later called “the little piano girl from East Liberty,” she maintained that was the only name that mattered (Dahl 14).

Her mother had access to the church organ in Atlanta, Georgia where they lived for the first five years of Williams' life. The church was important to her family, starting with her grandfather, a church deacon. Mary Lou was baptized in the local church where her mother played the organ and was a liturgical dancer. Williams loved to explain the story of how she first played music from her mother's lap.

She was an active toddler, two, three or four years old, forced to sit in her mother's lap as she played the organ. Miss Ginnie didn't want the toddler crawling around. After she finished playing the tune, little Mary reached over and played the same song, note for note. Miss Ginnie jumped up, dropped her child as she ran to tell the family that Mary had played the same song by ear, by listening to her playing it first (Dahl 15). It is probable that Mary's talent would have remained hidden, like her mother's talent, if the family had not moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where many more opportunities opened to Mary Lou in a northern city.

The relationship between Williams and her mother was difficult for most of their lives. Mary Lou remembered that when she was young, her mother would take her to hear visiting pianists, but her mother showed no visible affection for her daughter who grew up seldom being told or showed that she was loved. Later as an adult, Williams rationalized that the hard work in menial jobs had beaten her mother down. Initially she worked as a domestic maid inside white homes, and later as a washerwoman who washed, dried, ironed and folded white folks' clothes for low wages. Mary Lou believed that her once beautiful mother bent her back permanently from carrying the heavy loads of white folks' clothes and that is why her mother retreated into drunkenness, on the weekends, to escape the horror of her day to day life. Her work and drunkenness left little time to properly raise her children (Dahl 11).

The circumstances of Williams' birth may have also caused her mother to distance herself emotionally from her daughter because Williams' father was a married man who had nothing to do with either of them after her birth. It might have been the caul over her daughter's face that scared her or even that she was jealous that Mary Lou's talent was greater than her own or that her daughter could be a musician. Whatever the reason for the harsh treatment of her gifted daughter, Miss Ginnie never heard Mary Lou Williams perform professionally, even when she could have easily attended a concert in Pittsburgh. It was her sister, Mamie, only four years older, who raised Mary Lou (Dahl 15).

Williams' family decided to move, like thousands of African Americans in the Great Migration, a journey from the rural south to the industrial north that began in 1915. The reality of their lives in the south was difficult and dangerous for them. Mary Lou, in an interview, recalled every day saw hardships in Georgia, such as "seeing a man's head split open with an axe" and she as a little girl, running over to kiss him" (Mousouris 82). She also wrote about family relationships that she "got beaten every day" (Mousouris 82). There was a close sense of black community in Atlanta, but due to strenuous economic and racial hardships, families suffered and children bore the brunt of adult frustrations by either being ignored or getting frequent beatings.

Dramatic increases in the African-American populations from the Great Migration caused racial tensions in Pittsburgh. Life in the dirty, smoggy city, with the best jobs going to whites, while black workers were, once again, excluded from labour unions, proved a great economic disappointment. Her family members were forced to take menial, low paying jobs and to continually struggle to survive. They had relatives living in Pittsburgh, but the family moved several times seeking decent, affordable

housing and they never found the welcoming community or the connection to the church that they had in Atlanta (Mousouris 17).

Williams grew up fast in the East Liberty neighbourhood, and forever called Pittsburgh her family home. John Brewer, a Pittsburgh historian, recalled “where Mary Lou Williams lived had railroad tracks. One side was poor and the other side was rich. Poor was East Liberty” (Brewer). They moved into a neighbourhood of Poles, Italians, and Germans.

In Pittsburgh, she was raised in poverty, experienced extreme racism growing up, and knew first-hand how gender bias intersected with racism because she was black and a girl. Mary Lou experienced life-threatening racism from white children and adults,

“My new home...was between two white families on both sides of us, in fact they were all around us. This was my first encounter with hate and prejudice. Bricks came our way several times...we'd have to run for our lives when a couple of German 'gentlemen' passed, because they always tried to kick the kids in the mouth or beat them up...” (Williams).

### **3.2.1 Colourism, Hierarchy and Value**

Like most African American families, due to the history of rape during enslavement, and intermingling with Native Americans, Williams had relatives with widely different skin colours. There were those who could physically pass for white, those with various shades of brown and those who were deep black. Her great-grandparents could pass for white, her grandparents were light skinned, her mother was brown and Mary was dark black (Dahl 10-11). She never wrote about the skin colour of her biological father.

The colour hierarchy, that values light complexions over dark, is called colourism. Colourism disadvantages dark-skinned people while privileging those with



lighter skin. Research has linked colourism to smaller incomes, lower marriage rates, longer prison terms, and fewer job prospects for darker-skinned people. Women with light skin experience greater success in relationships, education, and employment. Furthermore, they report higher levels of confidence (Mathews 1).

Colourism has roots in slavery when slave owners forced slave women into sexual intercourse and light-skinned offspring were the signs of these sexual assaults. Light skin was initially a badge of shame, until slave owners, while not officially recognizing their mixed-race children, gave preferential treatment to slaves with fairer complexions. Dark-skinned slaves worked outdoors, while light-skinned slaves worked indoors. As slavery continued, light skin came to be viewed as an asset in the slave community, another degrading form of discrimination (Quashie).

Due to her dark skin, physical violence began early in Williams' life. As a child, she was beaten faster, longer and harder by adult women. She acknowledged that her great-grandmother Matilda especially beat her harder and more often than the other children because she was dark-skinned (Dahl). To add insult to injury, middle class, light-skinned African Americans looked down upon these newly arrived blacks to Pittsburgh, by ridiculing and segregating themselves from dark-skinned African Americans. Mary Lou was also ostracized by African American children who judged her far too dark to play childhood games with them. Colourism was not limited to children, but included white immigrant adults too. Recently-arrived European immigrants fought for the same jobs and resources as African Americans, and they also victimized black adults and black children (Dahl 22).

### **3.2.2 Childhood: Growing Up in Jazz**

Mary Lou had a better relationship with the men in her family. She adored her grandfather, Andrew Riser and her stepfather, Fletcher Burley. They were both positive

male figures in her life who protected and counselled her. Her grandfather spent more time with her as a child and she had her stepfather's unfailing support early in her musical career, up until both men's premature deaths. Her stepfather gave her attention, treated her as his own child, and praised her talent. He would sneak her into gambling games under a huge coat, without telling Miss Ginnie, have Mary Lou play songs, and demand that the men give her tips that she could keep.

Burley also took her to see Lovie Austin, a black woman, who was a talented pianist who played with one hand while she composed music, simultaneously, with the other hand. Austin was a big influence on the young child because she was the rare woman pianist and Williams promised herself that she would learn to be like her too - able to play and compose at the same time. Burley also purchased a player piano which could function like a regular piano but included piano rolls so that she could learn songs from famous pianists. He was also the one who escorted her, when she was a child, to places she performed to make sure no man accosted her. Without her mother knowing, Mary Lou also visited neighbours and played their pianos, fulfilling their requests for marches, ballads, ragtime and other kinds of music. Soon she was making money at the age of seven or eight. Her family then understood how she could contribute to their household income (Dahl 23).

The musical career of Mary Lou Williams was intimately shaped by her very brief childhood since from the age of 10, she was the family's biggest wage earner. Her mother did laundry and her stepfather held two jobs – lifting concrete blocks and gambling – but with eight children, more money was constantly needed. It was this daughter's piano earnings that kept their family fed. The unloving relationship between mother and daughter might well have influenced Mary Lou to believe as an adult, "I can deal better with men than women..." (Dahl 341).

Most families in the 1900's felt that entertainment was an unsuitable career for a young lady and forbade their daughters to become involved, but Williams' family never did. Jazz was played in bawdy, rowdy, and dangerous places, and most families and friends, especially in the class- and skin-conscious African-American middle class, did not approve of jazz. There were not many female role models, and male jazz musicians didn't take women seriously as musicians; especially since there were few available jobs in this highly competitive field. Despite all these obstacles, the tiny Mary often earned more money in one performance than both of her parents did working at low-paying jobs for the week (Dahl).

As her fame spread, she played for dances, parties, churches, as an accompanist for silent movies, at whorehouses and even at wakes for a mortician. She was paid \$1 an hour and tips. Young Mary Lou accepted jobs on her own and her mother wouldn't know where she was. An extremely hard worker from an early age, she remembered: "I was booked playing churches, I worked as a maid and performing at afternoons teas and as a helper to a woman who made wigs" (Dahl). As a preteen, Williams handed most of her pay over to her mother and consistently would send money home to support her family for most of her life.

Not yet in her teens, Williams learned to play all of the masters like Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller and Earl Hines, right there in her parlour, before she later met them in person. The player piano, from her step-father, is how she learned all of the types of early jazz. Williams attended Lincoln grammar school, but it was at Westinghouse school, that her musical talent was recognized by her teachers and she was further encouraged to use her musical talents during school and after hours. Her education was frequently interrupted for travel on the road to performances at ages twelve and thirteen playing all over Pittsburgh for much needed-money for her family.

Williams used her creative resilience early in life by playing music for all of her neighbours, winning their respect and getting paid. Mary was relentlessly bullied as a child by a German neighbour's older daughter, but her superb piano playing halted the bullying by the Germans who harassed her; it also stopped the indifference in schools meted out to most black students. Her talent was recognized at school and nurtured by the time she was a teenager.

Her grandmother and mother worked hard at backbreaking work during the week, but on weekends resorted to heavy drinking and partying. Her stepfather was not just a concrete worker and a gambler, but also a drinker. Her grandfather was the stable non-drinker who tried to control the behaviour of the other family members, but after his early death, children were more ignored, drinking and violence were more pronounced and a normalized weekly occurrence. Williams recalled "I had to leave home as a child to get away from fear, alcoholism, and fights. And I left when I was 12, then again when I was 16. I thank God for letting me leave when I did" (Dahl 28).

### **3.2.3 Teenager Years**

As a teenager, Williams played stride jazz and even got to meet the legendary Fats Waller, who had also begun playing piano as a child, and who loved the way she played. At fourteen, Williams was a professional musician on the vaudeville circuit with a group called "Hits and Bits." Vaudeville was a program of variety entertainment. Williams went on the road, to never return home, except for short intervals and vacations, because she had a career that took her performing all over America and Europe.

Vaudeville was hard work, even though it was the life she chose to escape poverty and dysfunctional family relationships. She recalled that food was eaten on the run, accommodations were terrible, exercise and sleep were never enough, there was very little privacy, boredom and loneliness in between jobs, and too much exposure to

gambling, drinking, drugs and sex (Dahl 37). Vaudeville entertainers had a poor social standing. Away from home, she carried her family in her heart and one of her first blues composition was written in honour of her grandfather Riser, who nicknamed her Messy. In his honour, she wrote Mess-A-Stop as a teenager and recorded in 1929 when she was 19 years old (Dahl 44).

Though older artists protected the young Mary Lou, as she grew into an older teenager, she felt she needed the protection of one man to keep other men away. John Williams joined the show as a trumpeter and they married, not out of love, but out of convenience. In an interview with 90-year old John Williams, he remembered “Mary Lou was the greatest thing I ever seen. Her music and with that ear and all” (Kernodle 83). John promoted the shy, retiring Mary Lou and expanded her musical opportunities. He acted as a surrogate father, taking the role her stepfather and grandfather had provided.

Through her husband, Mary Lou became the pianist for The Clouds of Joy, a jazz orchestra band, led by Andy Kirk. The Clouds of Joy did not pay for her arrangements or compositions that launched them to fame, but sometimes she would get silk stockings for payment. Mary played with the Clouds of Joy for twelve years before leaving to expand her career. Critics wrote that little Mary Lou’s performances were fine. She was thin and short...but composing put her in the front of jazz writers of the Swing era and pushed The Clouds of Joy to success (Dahl 83).

Williams grew into womanhood while traveling and playing jazz on the back roads of small towns. Life on the road was mostly grueling and often financially unrewarding, but she maintained that those experiences taught her jazz from the inside out. Performers were poorly paid, or not often paid, frequently went hungry, accommodations were rough, exacerbated by curfews that made late performances especially dangerous for black people, but the young Mary Lou Williams persevered. She

never forgot the times the band was paid in fried chicken or frog legs instead of cash. Often the musicians would pick corn out of farmers' fields to roast for dinner. They pushed their cars when they ran out of gas between jobs, and once Mary Lou made herself a dress out of kitchen curtains because her one dress had become tattered. "Instead of getting' angry or quittin' or running off, we'd just laugh. I made a little extra money by manicuring the boys' nails. They paid me a nickel, and I'd take it out of the money they made from cards, which I held for them" (Dahl 84-85).

White jazz artists learned jazz from black musicians and had regular jobs as musicians, but black jazz artists did not have regular work and had to go traveling on the road to different cities to earn money (Dahl 83). Often they were stranded, as in 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt closed all the banks during the Great Depression. For Mary Lou Williams and other black musicians, the Great Depression, a ten-year economic disaster, was a continuation of the usual day-to-day poverty they endured. However, as the Depression continued, life became worse for African Americans, along with other Americans (Dahl 83).

Five years into the Depression, Joe Glaser, a new white booking agent, got the band a job in Buffalo, New York. It was the coldest part of winter and when they arrived the performance was cancelled. Once again, they were stranded without money or food. Andy Kirk hired Glaser as their agent, but he demanded fifty percent of the band fee as well (Dahl 102). They all knew that Glaser was skimming from their profits, taking more than his agreed-upon percentage, but as a white man, he was able to book them places that even the light-skinned Kirk could not. Despite jobs that fell through, Glaser got the band more work and eventually signed Mary Lou Williams to a separate contract, in view of her rising stardom and growing requests for her arrangements and compositions. Williams reflected,

“We were so glad to get a job and make money, and travel and live like human beings that we were making enough money, more than the average black anyway. They were skimming off of the top, but we knew it. Besides Joe Glaser stole from Louis (Armstrong) and all the black acts he had...” (Dahl 105).

### **3.2.4 Adult Years**

In the beginning of jazz, whites hated the music. Now it was white musicians playing jazz, white agents promoting jazz acts, white record producers recording jazz, white critics writing about jazz, white people owning the clubs where jazz was played, and white people filling up the audiences. Alleging that any of these white folks were stealing, would be dangerous for any black musician, who might lose his job, maybe even a limb or be killed (Dahl 106).

Arrangement requests began a new chapter in Williams’ life when she wrote arrangements for both black and white bands, and crafted hit songs, while she continued writing her own original music. Black bands paid her three to five dollars for an arrangement while white bands paid her fifty dollars for an arrangement (Dahl 89). Mary Lou wrote in the back seats of cars, in dressing rooms, bathrooms, park benches, by flashlight in the car, flat on her back at a park, looking up at the stars, but her favourite place to write was in bed.

“Her bed became her desk, indeed her office, containing her sheet music, her sharpened pencils, her ashtray, lighter and cigarettes, perhaps a plate of food and drink...”(Dahl 89).

She often stayed awake all night working at her arrangements. Jazz editor Barry Ulanov allowed that very few other people have been able to put jazz on paper because: "One of the difficulties about jazz is that it is very hard to notate, but Duke could and so could Mary Lou" (Dahl 99). Ulanov cited Ellington first, but acknowledged that very few other jazz artists have been able to put on paper the feeling of jazz. Due to her particular

genius, Mary Lou Williams could articulate a jazz pattern on paper, accent a measure and that is why Williams is considered one of the best arrangers and composers in jazz (Dahl 99).

During the Depression, the Williams husband and wife team went to Kansas City to stay with John's relatives and then try and find work. Mary Lou considered Kansas City to be a creative high point of her life. "I just loved it. I could live that life over once again. Because those that were playing were great musicians" (Dahl 85) She participated in nightly jam sessions where musicians would work hard to "outplay" each other. She learned Bebop in Kansas City and was a musical Godmother to the famous Bebop Boys; Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk.

Williams was competitive and would always play "hard" on the piano, giving each piece everything she had inside. Mary Lou Williams stayed with the Clouds of Joy for twelve years until she found out that she was not receiving all of her royalties. There were other difficulties like her dating men in the band, and more troublesome was the violent way these men beat her up.

When she left the band, she essentially left her marriage too because she planned to marry Harold "Shorty" Baker. She kept the name Williams and they immediately separated after Baker was drafted into the Army. The couple never lived together after that, yet they were never divorced. Baker was equally violent, and they fought whenever he was drunk, which was often. Baker became the reason that Williams always turned down future marriage proposals saying that divorce was too expensive and it seemed like lovers were more convenient and provided less disruption of her work. Williams moved to New York and was a long-time pianist at Café Society, where she continued creating music and began hosting her own radio show, the Mary Lou Williams Piano Workshop (Dahl 154).



As an adult, both racism and colourism were barriers to stop Mary Lou Williams from going as far she should have gone in the jazz world. For example, she wanted to appear in movies and to have her own television show in the 1940s, but despite being an acknowledged world-class pianist considered better, for example, than Hazel Scott, Hollywood chose Scott to be the one "Negro" jazz pianist in the movies because she was lighter skinned (Dahl 143). It would be brown Hazel Scott, not chocolate Mary Lou Williams who was called to Hollywood. Marian McPartland, a British woman, who immigrated to America and was also a pianist, went further than either of these two women because though her talent was less, her skin was white (Dahl 143).

As a twice-married adult, Williams developed a taste for men, marijuana, and gambling. She continued to split her pay check, sending half home to her family. As an artist, she kept the same endless curiosity and desire to keep moving her music forward, but personal issues intruded in negative ways. She aborted an unwanted pregnancy and her male relationships remained chaotic. Ten years earlier, Williams had begged her husband for a child. Later she thought that she could not get pregnant due to a traumatic scar in her uterus. Her dream of a child ended in abortion when lovers, marijuana, and gambling took over her life in New York.

She escaped it all by going to Europe in 1952 for a two-week engagement that lasted two years. She was initially reluctant to go because of her childhood experiences of racial prejudice, but Williams was an unqualified "hit" all over Europe (Dahl 22). She enjoyed a number of firsts: She was the first black woman to break the English ban that prevented American musicians from playing in England, she was the first black woman to join the American Federation of Musicians, although she later had to resign when she could no longer afford their dues. Later, after she returned to the U.S., she was also the

first black woman to produce a jazz festival of sacred music commissioned by the Catholic Church.

While in England, she wrote eleven articles for a London newspaper entitled, “Mary Lou Williams; My life with the Kings of Jazz.” If she called them the kings, she felt that she was the only Queen (Dahl 229). At 43 years of age, these articles inspired her to begin to write her autobiography all about her life spent dedicated to jazz and traveling one-night performances around the world from 1926 to 1953. When she was in Europe, she watched a pianist friend, Garland Wilson, die a painful death from what is now diagnosed as AIDS. This experience precipitated a personal crisis in Williams’ life and she walked away from the piano, while playing in a club in Paris, France. She refused to return to jazz for three years. In an interview when she was back playing jazz, Williams looked back at those years and asked “haven’t you ever walked outside of your life when you weren’t planning to?” (Mousoris 82)

In spite of all the adulation she received in London, she was still too poor to afford a return ticket to the U.S. Coupled with her grief at the deaths of many U.S. jazz musicians friends from drugs, and a concern that younger jazz musicians seemed to be unaware of their true musical heritage, she walked away from jazz. She decided never to play jazz again. In twenty-eight years of performing on the road, she had become a national and international jazz star, written hundreds of compositions and arrangements for all the jazz greats and played with them as well. Williams experienced a deep personal crisis when her love of jazz no longer fulfilled her. She saw that the answer for her was to reconnect with God and her spiritual self (Dahl 241-243). This search for deeper meaning testified to the level of courage Mary Lou Williams exhibited, when at 44, she sought out a new way to live.

In a 2012 interview, Williams' niece, Bobbie Ferguson stated that her aunt told the family that she had "a vision of the blessed Mary in Paris" (Ferguson) and knew that she needed to return to God. I was raised Protestant, but I lost my religion when I was about twelve. I joined Adam Powell's church. I went there on Sunday and during the week I sat in Our Lady of Lourdes, a Catholic Church...and meditated... (Ballet 107).

Mary Lou Williams devoted herself to God by being a servant to people. She helped her family even more by bringing her sister and her children to live with her. Williams brought homeless people, drug addicts, alcoholics, people released from mental hospitals, ex-convicts and anyone needing food or shelter to her apartment where she listened to them, fed them, gave them shelter, washed and ironed their clothes and when she could, found them a job (Mousouri 84).

Her dreams stretched even further when she rented more apartment space to house people and dreamt of a treatment facility in the country where addicted jazz musicians could find healing using prayer and musical therapy. To fund these ideas, she created Bel Canto, a non-profit organization, and two thrift shops where she sold items that her rich and famous friends gave her. The thrift shops did not bring in enough money, or did her royalty checks. Williams had no desire to return to the club scene with its drinking, smoking, late nights and low pay but she would occasionally take performance jobs to earn enough money to continue helping others.

Mary Lou Williams' meeting with two priests changed the trajectory of her service to God when they told her she could serve God best through her music. One was Father John Crowley who asked her to stop bringing drug addicts and mentally ill people into her home. The second was Father Anthony Woods with whom she began catechism classes and who baptized and confirmed her. Both these men loved jazz and with their

urging, she played with Dizzy Gillespie and his band, offering pieces of the Zodiac Suite at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1957.

When she became a Catholic, she prayed not to hate her mother (Dahl 68). Williams hated her mother for years because "...my mother never thanked me (for anything) but was always asking me for money" (Rubinstein 40). Williams even went so far as to call her mother "names, bad names, like a dirty old whore" (Dahl 18). At the end of her mother's life, all was forgiven and her niece recalled the transformation that "they were a very close family and Mary Lou and her mother would cook together (Furgerson).

Reviewers raved after her return to the jazz scene in this excellent performance before 10,000 fans. Williams was greeted by a huge ovation. She returned to jazz having lost none of her powerful ability to play. She would later go on to invigorate the jazz world by melding her musical and spiritual selves into Sacred Jazz (Dahl 258).

Father Peter O'Brien, another Catholic priest, became her manager in the 1960s. They found new venues for jazz performance at a time when only two clubs in Manhattan offered jazz full-time. During this time of spiritual awakening, she played colleges, formed her own record label, Mary's Records, and publishing company, Cecilia Music Publishing Company. She was also the first woman to organize the Pittsburgh Jazz Festival and she became popular through television appearances. Throughout the 1960s, her composing concentrated on sacred music, hymns, and masses (Dahl 284-291).

One of the masses, *Music for Peace*, choreographed by Alvin Ailey, was performed by the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre as *Mary Lou's Mass* in 1971. Ailey loved jazz and that Mary's Mass was rooted in the Christian tradition he had grown up in. He was also fascinated by her long history with music and dance in vaudeville days and her transition to sacred music. In April 1975, the widely-known *Mary Lou's Mass*, was the first jazz piece performed at New York City's St. Patrick's Cathedral (Mousouri 84).

Williams performed a revision of Mary Lou's Mass, her most acclaimed work, on The Dick Cavett Show, a popular talk show, in 1971.

She wrote and performed religious jazz music such as *Black Christ of the Andes* (1963), a hymn in honour of the St. Martin de Porres, a black, Igbo priest; along with two short works, *Anima Christi* and *Praise the Lord*. In this period, Williams put much effort into working with youth choirs to perform her works, including mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City before a gathering of over three thousand. As a 1964 Time article explained, "Mary Lou thinks of herself as a 'soul' player — a way of saying that she never strays far from melody and the blues, but deals sparingly in gospel harmony and rhythm. 'I am praying through my fingers when I play,' she said, "I get that good "soul sound", and I try to touch people's spirits" (Dahl 310). She performed at the famous Monterey Jazz Festival in 1965, with a jazz festival group.

Throughout the 1970s, her career flourished, producing more albums, and working as a solo pianist and commentator on the recorded *The History of Jazz*. She returned to the Monterey Jazz Festival in 1971. She could also be seen playing nightly in Greenwich Village at The Cookery, a new club run by her old boss from her Café Society days, Barney Josephson. That engagement was recorded. She had a two-piano performance with avant-garde pianist Cecil Taylor at Carnegie Hall in 1977 (Dahl 324). These are few of the most significant events, but give an indication of her prolific work in the U.S. and abroad and how her life circumstances were incorporated in her music.

Mary Lou Williams accepted an appointment at Duke University as artist-in-residence (from 1977 to 1981), teaching the History of Jazz with Father O'Brien and directing the Duke Jazz Ensemble. With a light teaching schedule, she also performed at many concerts and festivals, conducted clinics with youth, and in 1978 performed at the

White House\_under President Jimmy Carter. She participated in Benny Goodman's 40th anniversary Carnegie Hall\_concert in 1978.

Near the end of her life, she founded the Mary Lou Williams Foundation, which became the guardian of her musical legacy, directed by Father O'Brien, her manager. The Foundation, emphasized jazz education for the young. Williams was “diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1979. She had four surgeries and chemotherapy. She died in 1981 concerned about the history and legacy of jazz. Music is her enduring legacy” (O'Brien).

Since her death in 1981, Mary Lou Williams; legacy has slipped into obscurity, with the exception of the annual Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival in New York begun in 1996. I'm sure she would have preferred the festival titled to be the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival due to her always defining called herself as a musician, not as a woman musician. Williams' existence was replete with varied experiences that may have caused her to believe that she had already fought her own “civil rights” battles and that every time she advocated for herself and her rights with white men in jazz, she was exhibiting personal and racial pride.

Using jazz music as her creative shield against racism and patriarchy is the method she chose to remain creative and to extend her career for 60 productive years. Her deprived childhood explains why jazz was critically important to her. The jazz that she loved so much and devoted her entire life to play can be described in several ways and several categories that are synonymous with benchmarks in Williams' life.

### **3.3 Origins and types of jazz**

The origins of jazz are rooted in the memory and voices of West Africans forced into slavery in America who sang songs of hope and despair in spirituals and blues. The spirituals and the blues are the two types of African-American music created in the southern states from captured, enslaved people yearning to be free (Jones 16). A spiritual

is a Christian folksong that sings of the enslavement of African people in the American South as protest and hope. Slaves, not allowed to read or write or to have a lot of communication, sang spirituals. The African-American spiritual is one of the largest and most significant forms of American folksong.

The blues developed from spirituals. Blues sing more about the difficulties of African-American life and is comprised of 12 bars or measures. Jazz developed from both the spirituals and the blues, perhaps in the city of New Orleans or perhaps almost simultaneously in other North American areas cities like Kansas City, Saint Louis, and Chicago. These cities also formulated specific types of jazz that were called New Orleans jazz, Kansas City jazz, and Chicago City jazz (Jones 16).

Some jazz historians believe jazz started as early as 1895 or as late as 1917 (Jones 18). Early jazz was played in small marching bands or by solo banjo or piano. One of the consistent elements of every style of jazz is jazz improvisation. Improvisation is the ability to play the same melody in new and different ways each time. If New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, it began around the late 1800's or early 1900's because it was a port city with musicians traveling the entire U.S. to later spread jazz to other cities like Kansas City, Saint Louis, and Chicago. Initially, jazz was played in clubs, honky-tonk bars, gambling dens and houses of ill repute. It was a music known and appreciated by African Americans, the working poor, and lower classes. Middle-class blacks and whites rejected jazz as unfit and "devil" music (Ellington).

How the term jazz originated is not well documented, but early African-American musicians and singers did not call it by this name and resisted the title. White critics of the music continuously referred to the music as jazz and wrote about it in printed materials as jazz. Mary Lou Williams only "reluctantly accepted the designation 'jazz' for the music that was born of African Americans" (Ellington).

Duke Ellington, famous jazz artist, composer, and arranger, as well as a contemporary of Mary Lou Williams, said, “I use to have a definition, but I don’t think I have one anymore, unless it is that it is music with African foundation which came out of an American environment. It is an American idiom with African roots – a trunk of soul with limbs reaching in every direction” (Dahl 5).

It is widely believed that jazz began from West African folk music, carried light classical music influences of the late 18th and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to become the syncopated rhythms of an early style of jazz called Ragtime. This West African musical foundation, developed through spirituals and the blues, was shaped by certain European popular and classical music influences of the late 18th and early 19th centuries to evolve into the syncopated rhythms of Ragtime. Ragtime does not include improvisation, which is part of what defines jazz, thus there is a debate among jazz historians whether Ragtime is a precursor to jazz or a form of composed jazz (Dahl 26-27). Williams never completely accepted the term jazz for this music, but was unable to wrestle white critics into accepting any other name.

### **3.4 Mary Lou Williams and Different Types of Jazz**

#### **3.4.1 Ragtime**

The timeline of jazz evolved into dozens of distinct jazz styles during the lifetime of Mary Lou Williams who mastered all of the styles, beginning with Ragtime and ending with Modern Jazz, before she died in 1981. *A Passion for Jazz!* documents and describes all types of jazz (“Music, History and Education”). Ragtime was initially incorporated into cakewalks, coon songs and the music of jig bands. This music was vitalized by the opposing rhythms common to African dance and was set forth in marches, waltzes, and other traditional songs. The common characteristic was syncopation. Syncopation refers to an interruption of the regular flow of rhythm, a



placement of rhythmic stresses or accents where they wouldn't normally occur. In 1899, a classically trained Scott Joplin published the first of many Ragtime compositions that the child pianist Mary Lou learned, copied and played (“Music, History and Education”).

### **3.4.2 New Orleans or Classical Jazz**

The next two styles of jazz began almost simultaneously, New Orleans style or Classic Jazz and Harlem Stride, shortened to Stride. New Orleans style or Classic jazz originated with brass bands that performed for parties and dances on land and on riverboats in the late 1899's and early 1900's. Many of the instruments had been salvaged from the Civil War and they were the clarinet, saxophone, cornet, trombone, tuba, banjo, bass, guitar, and drums but only occasionally a piano. Musical arrangements varied considerably with improvisational solos. This new music combined the syncopation of ragtime with adaptations of popular melodies, hymns, marches, work songs and the Blues. Mary Lou Williams also learned Classic Jazz as a springboard into all other styles of jazz and would later compose and arranged for Big Bands using all of these instruments (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.3 Stride**

Stride is a jazz piano style developed in the large cities of the East Coast of the United States, mainly New York City, during the 1920s and 1930s. The left hand characteristically plays a four-beat pulse with a single bass note, octave, note major seventh or major tenth interval on the first and third beats, and a chord on the second and fourth beats. Occasionally this pattern is reversed by placing the chord on the downbeat and bass note(s) on the upbeat. Unlike jazz performers of ragtime popularized by Scott Joplin, stride players' left hands often used the left to span greater keyboard distances and they played in a wider range of tempos and with a greater emphasis on improvisation. James P. Johnson was known as the father of stride, and he was not concerned with

Ragtime's form because he even played pop songs of the day in the stride style (Music, History and Education).

#### **3.4.4 Hot Jazz**

Louis Armstrong ushered in Hot Jazz in 1925, characterized by collectively improvised solos around a melodic structure that built up to an emotional "hot" climax. The rhythm section usually consisted of drums, bass, banjo or guitar to support the crescendo, often in the style of a march tempo. Soon larger bands and orchestras imitated it and with the advance of records, Hot Jazz spread quickly around the country. Williams arranged for Armstrong's bands but seldom played with him even when their mutual agent Joe Glaser offered her several tours with the Armstrong band. She wouldn't perform because Armstrong played only one type of jazz and repeated the same style for almost fifty years. She wanted the artistic freedom to play whatever came out of her (Music, History and Education). This artistic integrity resulted in Armstrong dying a multimillionaire, while Williams never attained a one million bank account over her sixty year jazz career.

#### **3.4.5 Chicago Jazz**

Specific types of jazz originated in cities with large black populations. Chicago was a location for young, inventive players who created jazz characterized by harmonic, innovative arrangements and a high technical ability of its players. Chicago style jazz significantly furthered improvisation. Improvisation in jazz is when the artist makes up new melodic solo lines or accompaniment parts and improvisation is considered a key aspect of jazz. When jazz jobs dried up in New Orleans, many of those artists went to Chicago and were influenced by Chicago style jazz. Williams never did more than visit the city, although she played alongside Chicago's best jazz players (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.6 Boogie Woogie**

Boogie Woogie is historically considered a form of jazz that spanned the 1930s to the 1950s. It is one of the most impressive forms of jazz due to being the first exclusively piano music to issue from the blues. It originated in Texas with musicians who worked near lumber mills or laid railroad tracks. Boogie was another name for “house rent party” and again travelled in the Great Migration from Texas to the crowded tenements of Chicago, Detroit, New York, and every city with a significant black population.

Poverty was a way of life for most black people during this era, so they depended on each other to band together in the common goal of simply being able to pay the rent. With unemployment and layoffs at a high level for black men, they devised a technique of raising the rent and providing a fun method of socialization as well. Boogie was originally a party given by a tenant to raise rent money. For a small sum of money, per person, neighbours were treated to an evening of Boogie Woogie piano playing by a local musician, with dancing and southern soul food. Prohibition was in force and party-goers brought their own drinks. These parties were reciprocal and a pleasant and cheap way to help each other to meet their exorbitant rents.

This Boogie Woogie style of jazz moved from rent parties to mainstream listeners and is associated with dancing. Boogie Woogie jazz was Mary Lou William’s claim to fame. She not only played them but she wrote original, hip Boogie Woogie compositions and was often called the Boogie Woogie Queen. Williams admitted that some jazz artists were ashamed of playing Boogie Woogie, but she never was (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.7 Swing Jazz**

Swing Jazz refers to a particular lilting rhythmic style that is based on a triplet subdivision of the beat. The 1930s also were the Swing Jazz era. During the earlier Classic jazz era, most of the jazz groups were Big Bands. Swing involved smaller groups of jazz musicians and also served as dance music. Although it was a collective sound, Swing also offered individual musicians an opportunity to improvise melodic, thematic solos which could often be highly complex. Mary composed, arranged and played Swing Jazz. Her tremendous ability to improvise highly complex solos allowed her to successfully transition from one genre to another (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.8 Kansas City Jazz**

Kansas City jazz is a style of jazz that developed in Kansas City during the 1930s and marked the transition from the structured big band style to the musical improvisation style of Bebop. During the Depression and Prohibition eras, the Kansas City Jazz scene thrived as the Mecca for soulful, bluesy stylings of Big Band and small ensemble Swing. Kansas City Jazz showcased highly energetic solos and primarily played to “speakeasy” audiences. While the great alto saxophonist Charlie Parker was from Kansas City, this was one of Mary Lou Williams’s most creative times as a jazz musician and she loved Kansas City. She used the Kansas City sound for many of her new compositions and arrangements for the band, The Clouds of Joy, making this band one of the most popular of its day (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.9 Bebop**

Bebop or Bop, developed in the early 1940s, its main innovators' were alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. Bebop marked a difference in jazz by its harmonic improvisations, often avoiding the melody altogether after the first chorus. Until Bebop, jazz improvisation was derived from the melodic line. Usually under

seven pieces, Bebop was never dance music but established itself as an art form. Thought of as highly radical, it created a split amongst jazz musicians who were traditional players playing Ragtime, Classic, Hot, Chicago, Boogie Woogie, Swing and Kansas City styles of jazz. Due to it not being dance music, it lessened its commercial value for all those paying dance couples. Williams was designated a traitor to traditional jazz when she joined their camp and played Bebop too. Bebop later became the basis for all innovation that followed this style (Music, History and Education).

#### **3.4.10 Vocal Jazz**

Vocal Jazz, jazz singing or “vocalese” a term coined by jazz critic Leonard Feather is the art of composing a lyric and singing it in the same manner as the recorded instrumental solos. The singer can match the instruments in their stylistic approach to the lyrics, improvised or through scat singing. Scatting solos use nonsense words to interpret jazz music whereas vocalese uses words and lyrics set to instrumental solos. There are very few records with Williams herself scatting, although she did play as an accompanist to scat singers like Billie Holliday and Ella Fitzgerald (Music, History and Education).

#### **3.4.11 Mainstream Jazz**

The English critic Stanley Dance coined the term "mainstream" in the 1950s to describe the jazz style of swing-era players who fell between the revivalist and modernist camps. After the Big Band era, as large ensembles broke into smaller groups, Swing music continued to be played; only chordal improvisation took significance over melodic embellishment. One of the greatest trumpeters of Mainstream Jazz was Buck Clayton with whom Mary Lou Williams often played with at Café Society in New York (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.12 Cool Jazz**

Cool Jazz, also called “West Coast Jazz” was produced when jazz moved from the East Coast to Los Angeles evolved directly from Bop producing a smoothed-out mixture of Bop and Swing, tonal quality was again harmonic and the ensemble arrangement regained importance. Williams came back from a two-year tour of Europe only to discover that many jazz venues in New York had closed and jazz had gone out to L.A. (Los Angeles) (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.13 Hard Bop**

Hard Bop came to prominence in the jazz world in 1955 and is an extension of Bebop that the Cool Jazz interrupted. The melodies are more "soulful" than Bebop, borrowing at times from other musical themes. The rhythm section is more sophisticated and diverse than the Bebop of the 1940's. Mary Lou Williams mentions pianist Horace Silver, known for his Hard Bop, in her autobiography by saying that he was recording when she was in an eight-year drought of not recording anything (Music, History and Education).

### **3.4.14 Free Jazz**

Free Jazz, also known as avant-garde is a totally free impulse experience in the music. Ornette Coleman was considered the leader of Free Jazz, along with John Coltrane. Free Jazz was the only style that Mary Lou Williams was adamantly against. She thought that the avant-gardist had rejected established harmonic and tonal patterns which was a radical departure from the tradition. Despite her feelings, Williams chose to perform in a dual piano concert at Carnegie Hall with Cecil Taylor, considered the ultimate avant-garde pianist. The concert called “Embraced” produced a concert where the two pianists battled it out in completely different jazz styles that did not complement

each other (Music, History and Education). Once again Williams illustrated her mastery of jazz by playing well what she did not even respect as a genuine jazz genre.

### **3.4.15 Sacred Jazz**

The final category of jazz that Mary Lou Williams played and pioneered is not listed in any official jazz timelines. Williams was the first jazz artist to compose, arrange and play Sacred Jazz. Sacred Jazz carried a spiritual message but also was based on spirituals from the black church. Duke Ellington followed her as the second jazz artist to play this kind of jazz, but only after Mary gave him a copy of her record, “Mary Lou Williams Presents Black Christ of the Andes.” A friend of Mary Lou Williams recalled that she began writing sacred music in 1958, but after her death, among her papers, there was found a copyrighted “Lord Have Mercy” from 1945, “Elijah Under the Juniper Tree,” in 1948, along with a hymn in honour of St. Martin de Porres (Black Christ of the Andes), as well as three Masses (Dahl).

In all fifteen of the jazz styles defined here, Mary Lou Williams, not only mastered playing them, but brought innovation and creation into her interpretation as she arranged and composed in all of these jazz styles. Male critics opined that her ability to play all of the styles hurt her career since she could not be easily put into one category. Two examples from jazz men musicians are Louis Armstrong who was always a New Orleans style musician, while Dizzy Gillespie was always a Bop Jazz musician. Mary Lou Williams was a musician’s musician and while that genius should have earned her great fame and fortune, as a Black woman pianist, arranger and composer she ultimately was stigmatized for her artistic freedom in deciding to play every style of jazz and later found few avenues that allowed her be free as an artist. Had she been a man, she would have been praised as an accomplished musician able to play all jazz genres.

### **3.5 World War I and Segregation in the U.S**

World War I, fought from 1914 to 1918, was a global war originating in Europe that had a major impact on African Americans and jazz. Six major powers of Europe formed two broad groups; Britain, France, and Russia formed the Triple Entente, While Germany, Austria - Hungary, and Italy formed the Triple Alliance. The U.S. entered the conflict and most African colonies, Australia and India were also forced into the war to fight on behalf of imperial rulers. 370,000 African American men served in this war, with more than half serving in the French war zone and 107 African American soldiers were awarded the Croix de Guerre for bravery by the French government. This bravery spurred the U.S. fight to successfully integrate the armed services (Carillion).

What began as a war far away from the U.S. had repercussions for African-American families like Mary Lou Williams' family because of Segregation, Jim Crow laws and lynching in the South. Born in the southern region of the U.S. in 1900 meant ninety percent of all African Americans who lived there, experienced hard lives due to a system of segregation entrenched in that region. Segregation was an institutional system of separation of access in the United States that set blacks and all other races apart from whites, so that the races could not mingle in what was supposed to be separate, but equal access to facilities, services, and opportunities Segregation was an unjust system that offered inferior services to anyone who wasn't racially European-American.

Segregation was the law in the southern regions, but not implemented to the same harsh degree in the other regions of the U.S. African Americans were forced to use "Coloured Only" facilities and knew they could be killed at any moment for a perceived offense against a white person and even their relatives would face punitive consequences with no legal recourse (Carillio). Williams recalled being driven in a car to a performance



and the white driver said “There’s a nigger. Run over him. He’s too old to live” (Dahl 60).

Jim Crow laws were enacted after the end of slavery when the southern states lost the Civil War and slave labour. Jim Crow Laws were designed to separate the races by keeping them under racial control through a punishing system of laws. These unfair laws were finally dismantled by the Civil rights movement, which fundamentally altered relations between the federal government and the states. The federal government was forced many times to enforce its laws that protected the rights of African American citizens.

### **3.6 Mary Lou Williams, The Civil Rights Movement and Black Arts Movement**

Most historians mark the start of the civil rights movement in 1954 with the Supreme Court’s decision, in *Brown versus The Board of Education*, which ruled against the concept of separate but equal education. The end of the civil rights movement was the 1968 Voter’s Registration Law. There is, however, evidence that the struggle for civil rights in the United States actually began back in 1919 with the first organized resistance to the system of segregation and the call for reform of racist American institutions (Ladner 60).

The civil rights movement was a movement by African Americans to achieve basic civil rights equal to those of whites. The demands included equal opportunity in employment, housing, and education, as well as the right to vote, the right of equal access to public facilities, and the right to be free of racial discrimination. No social or political movement of the twentieth century had as profound an effect on the legal and political institutions of the United States. This movement sought to restore to African Americans the rights of citizenship guaranteed by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which were eroded by segregationist Jim Crow laws in the South.

Williams' stance in terms of involvement in the civil rights movement was that while she related many racist events that happened to her in her autobiography, as both a child and an adult, personally and professionally, she kept a low profile in assisting in the civil rights struggle. She did not participate in marches, she did not protest publicly, and her small contribution was that she played in a few fundraising concerts to raise money for the movement (Dahl 138).

She stated in her autobiographical notes "My music acted as a shield preventing me from being aware of many of the prejudices that must have existed" (Dahl 22). The operative words are "must have existed" since Williams gave numerous examples of racist discrimination in her community, immigrant neighbours, employment, schools and inside the world of jazz. What seems likely is that jazz was the most important facet of her existence, until she traded jazz for her relationship with God. God then became the most important in her existence.

Williams exhibited a single-minded trajectory with jazz being an all or nothing proposition, before she traded her jazz life for Christianity. It appeared to take her years to discover how to synthesize or integrate a few parts of her life. While she was successful in melding her faith and her music, she never identified herself publicly as African American and woman and jazz musician. She never spoke about melding these three parts of herself.

A fair assessment is that Williams was absent in any significant way from the civil rights movement as both an African American woman and as an artist. In looking at the timeline of the civil rights movement, most important events occurred between 1954 with the Brown vs. Board of Education case through the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which prevented the use of literacy tests as a voting requirement ("Timeline of the American civil rights movement"). Williams was in Europe from 1952 to 1954, but even before she

left, she “got into five years of hard times with gambling” (Williams). Her personal life was consumed by this addiction. When she returned to Harlem, she became a zealous Christian, removed herself completely from jazz and her previous secular life style, for three years until 1957.

As a woman searching for a spiritual relationship, for the next decade, she devoted herself to the poor, homeless people, along with drug-addicted musicians and became a devoted Catholic. Mary Lou Williams was fiercely preoccupied with saving her soul and helping others. At the request of a priest, after the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination, she wrote two songs in tribute to Rev. King (Dahl 298). It was a response to an external request by a priest, and not from any inner conviction or decision on what the death of this African American leader meant to herself, to her race, to her country or to the world. She did try to get the two songs recorded on an album with no success.

### **3.7 Mary Lou Williams and the Black arts movement**

Another historical, artistic period that Mary Lou William lived through, but did not contribute to in any public way was the black arts movements, 1965-1975. The black arts movement was “considered the artistic branch of the black power movement” (Robson 9). The black power movement had a worldview that put black people as the centre of everything. Willie Ricks, a civil rights activist, introduced the black power slogan during a civil rights march in 1966. In 1968, one of the younger leaders in the Civil rights movement, Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) defined Black Power as “the ability of Black people to politically get together and organize themselves so that they can speak from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness” (Ladner). Williams believed wholeheartedly in the jazz as an authentic creation from African Americans, as well as the need to preserve the legacy of jazz. Logically, this should have

meant jazz fit well into the concept of the black arts movement as authentic African American art. The black arts proponents, like Amiri Baraka, proudly claimed jazz as originated by African Americans, nonetheless, she complained "...Afro had nothing to do with jazz. Jazz grew up on its own here in America" (Dahl 271).

Williams found no point of connection with the black arts movement. According to Linda Dahl's biography, "naturals, dashikis, Black Power, all of which Mary viewed with suspicion" (Dahl 331). At the height of the black arts movement in the sixties, when Williams had been playing professionally for more than forty years, some African Americans criticized her when she did not jump on the nationalist bandwagon. Mary replied that she did not want to go back to Africa (Dahl 271).

### **3.8 Comparison of Mary Lou Williams and Hazel Scott**

It is not difficult to examine and contextualize Mary Lou Williams' life and career against the backdrop of the civil rights and black arts movements since she was a passive observer of civil rights and vehemently spoke against the Afro-centric focus of the black arts movement. As a black woman, she appeared through her interviews, to feel no connection to the protests, beatings, and deaths that African Americans experienced in the civil rights movement. Instead she dismissed the movement with the excuse, "I was so involved with music that I became strange to people" (Williams). As a black artist, she felt that it was not good for movements or for artists when artists tried to be political. Her position was "I think all musicians or people like me would get mixed up in something, looking for some people to help them and help the race. But they can never be anything but a musician (Dahl 138).

Mary Lou Williams was one of two internationally known women pianists at the time. The other was Hazel Scott. Both women were talented, however, Scott was afforded more opportunities for success. Hazel Scott was born in 1920, Port of Spain, Trinidad and

Tobago, ten years younger than Williams. She was the only child of R. Thomas, a West African English Professor from England, and Alma Long Scott, a classically trained pianist, and music teacher. Her family moved to New York City when Hazel, at four, was recognized as a child prodigy. She studied at the prestigious Julliard School from eight years old. An only child, Scott had a stable home, loving parents, an upper middle class background, dual citizenship in Trinidad and the United States and she spoke, sang, and performed in multiple languages (Hairston 232), including French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Spanish. She could also play classical music, boogie woogie, concert, bebop and many other styles. Both Williams and Scott shared the ability to play a variety of jazz genres and they shared their Catholic faith.

Scott was at the forefront of the civil rights and black arts movement. She exhibited the same disdain for racism and patriarchy in her private and public life. In 1949, she brought a suit against a restaurant when the waitress refused to serve her because of her race and her victory facilitated other legal challenges against racial discrimination. As the first black person to have their own television show in America, *The Hazel Scott Show*, in 1950, she had already exhibited a long commitment to civil rights (Dwayne 160), especially in Hollywood where she had appeared in several movies. In Hollywood, she refused roles, clothing and any actions that she felt stereotyped blacks. She also refused to perform in segregated venues when she was touring.

The Red Scare, generated by a general fear of the rise of communism between the Soviet Union and the United States, intensified in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It caused hysteria over the perceived threat posed by national or foreign communists infiltrating or destabilizing U.S. society and the federal government. Communists were suspected in the U.S. in the television industry. Scott voluntarily appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Scott's show was cancelled a week after her

testimony (“Testimony of Hazel Scott”). Once Café Society’s star (one of the best know jazz venue in New York) and biggest money maker<sup>215</sup> Scott was unable to get enough work and moved to Paris in the late 1950’s.

Hazel Scott, as a brown-skinned woman was also a victim of colourism. When she first auditioned at Café Society, owner Barney Josephson described her as “too dark,” and didn’t want her to play. It was the intervention of Billie Holiday, a light-skinned woman and famous jazz singer singing there, who told him to give her a chance (Holiday and Duffy 91). While Scott was lighter than Mary Lou Williams, she was described by a patron Marion Schwartz, in a personal interview, as having “the biggest breasts that ever existed! Beautiful. Very physical at the piano. Physical presence.” Schwartz also said “Well, she was an entertainer. She wasn’t really an artist like Mary Lou Williams, you know or Teddy Wilson” (Hairston 175). Further evidence that women are often discriminated by multiple sources of oppression. The oppressive barriers of race, gender, and sexuality combine to disadvantage a black woman no matter her skin complexion.

When Scott did return to the U.S., the Black arts movement had come and gone, but Scott had shown racial pride all of her professional life. A determined advocate for justice and equality, she utilized her talent on behalf of the ideals that she believed in. Her career suffered because of her political and racial stance. Both she and Williams died of cancer in 1981. Mary Lou Williams stayed behind the shield of her music and distanced herself from these two great social upheavals; the civil rights and the black arts movements. One, black woman pianist stepped forward to confront this type of oppression, while the other, Williams, remained myopically immersed in jazz.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Intersectionality and multiple jeopardies explain why Williams never participated in any significant way to the civil Rights or Black arts movements, although

she benefited from both movements legally and artistically. Williams consistently maintained that she was a musician and that's all, not a politician no matter how others wanted to her to be both, she was going to stay a musician. When multiple jeopardies are present and intersect in the life and career, as Williams' difficulties of being black and woman in the jazz world did, it renders the victim incapable of identifying systematic oppression. Williams never recognized that colourism adversely affected her. It was difficult for her to claim the same dark skin colour that has always been used to shame her.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE IMPACT OF RACE AND GENDER ON MARY LOU WILLIAMS' INVISIBILITY

*"I began building up a defense against prejudice and hatred and so many other miserable blocks by taking my aching heart away from bad sounds and working hard at music. Looking back, I see that my music acted as a shield."*

Mary Lou Williams, Box 5, The Jazz Institute, Rutgers

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore Mary Lou Williams holistically, in three critical aspects: as an African American, as a woman, and as a jazz musician through the black feminism lenses of intersectionality and multiple jeopardy. I am further exploring her refusal to identify herself or allow music critics to categorize her by either race or gender, due to her negative experiences with both. It is also imperative to show how she used her musical creativity to resist both racism and patriarchy and all of what she considered "miserable blocks...and bad sounds..." in her career (Williams). Williams did not see being black and female as a source of strength or resistance to the racism and patriarchy that she experienced. In her published statements, she never appeared to see herself globally, in terms of race nor gender, nor envision connections to those outside of her personal or family space.

This chapter examines the extent to which Mary Lou Williams was conscious of what Deborah King calls "multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness" (King 42-72). By "multiple jeopardy, multiple consciousness, in the context of black feminist ideology, King means that the multiple forms of discrimination that one experiences affects their ability to perceive any of the forms of discrimination when you are a victim of more than one system of discrimination. This means that the effect of race is multiplied when combined with the effects of gender, and further multiplied when combined with the effect of class. This chapter argues that despite the fact is a conundrum that previous



scholarship has not adequately explored or explained. There is a dearth of scholarship on the historical experience of any black, female, musician in twentieth century U.S. Despite the two biographies, dissertation, and the two papers written by jazz scholars who have scrutinized Mary Lou Williams' life and work, there still needs to be additional research to unravel the private Williams who is reflected in her autobiography versus the public Williams that media portrayed. This chapter looks at Williams' life in the context of race and gender, and how she viewed both. It also applies black feminism as a theoretical framework to help understand the choices she made or did not make, in her definition of herself as an African American woman musician.

The constructs of multiple jeopardy and intersectionality in the context of black feminist ideology helps to explain the limitations of Williams' understanding about the reality of race and gender in her life as a black woman musician in the U.S. Yet, her limitations do not diminish her brilliance as an artist. Williams' legacy as a jazz musician, arranger and composer is legendary. She did utilize her musical creativity as a shield against racism and patriarchy, although with limited success. In her entire life, she seemed unable to view herself as one integrated being who was black, woman and jazz genius.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first focuses on Mary Lou Williams' life in the context of race and the second part focuses on her life in the context of gender.

## **4.2 Racism**

Born into intense racial hostility in the south, the hostility lessened very slightly despite the family's migration to Pittsburgh during Mary Lou Williams' childhood. There are stories, in her autobiography and subsequent interviews, about being bullied as a child by white children. One German girl in particular, Amy Franks, bullied her the most, but

she was also physically attacked by white adults too (Dahl 6). It was during her childhood, for the first time, that her musical talent mitigated the racism she daily experienced. After she became known for her musical prowess, as the “Little Piano Girl,” the physical assaults stopped. As the “Little Piano Girl,” she was invited into white neighbourhood homes and paid to play piano. She was given respect. In this specific way, her creative talent, early in life, lessened the trauma of being black with the whites in Pittsburgh who were aware of her growing fame (Dahl). This newfound respect did not completely do away with the impact of racial prejudice in her life, because outside of this growing circle of admiring whites, was the bigger reality of racist whites who saw her as just another “nigger”.

In her autobiography, Williams shared more incidents of racism as she grew up, from a child of 12 to a young adult of 21, while performing at various jazz venues across the U.S. She wrote about a white man from Mississippi who paid the cook to kidnap her at 19 from the club and take her to his plantation, forcing her to stay at home until the threat passed (Dahl 61). She wrote about another incident on a streetcar, where tired from her jazz schedule, she fell asleep and didn’t move to the back of the bus when the front filled up. She was threatened with arrest by the conductor who asked if she “...was one of those Northern niggers...” (Williams).

Another horrific example of racism was once while being driven to a club, the white driver saw an elderly man on a bridge and yelled, “There’s a nigger, run over him, and he’s too old to live anyway!” (Dahl 60). Williams remembered that she was with too many white people in the car, and too far out in the woods, so she “kept quiet, counted to ten very fast, and thought of a beautiful composition (Dahl 60). She maintained that writing a composition in her head kept her alive in this racially charged atmosphere.

Outside of her personal life, she simultaneously experienced racism in her professional life too. She stated categorically that “white men in the music industry stole, misappropriated copyrights, and swindled black artists...” (Dahl 10). Calling them “ofays” a derogatory term for whites, Williams reflected “ofays make me nervous, I could not stay around them or work with them” (Dahl 274). This comment is from the same woman who contradicts this statement by working with white jazz musicians such as Jack Teagarden and Benny Goodman, along with having numerous white lovers, both in the U.S. and abroad. Williams knew white women who she termed her friends as well. When she wrote “friends” to reference white men in her autobiography, it was her personal code that meant they were her intimate lovers, like the sculpture and illustrator for her album, David Stone Martin. Martin’s favourite word for her was “pussycat” (Williams).

In discussing race in America, Williams continued her odd ideas about Africa and slavery, “We were sold into slavery by our African chiefs...perhaps if all Black Americans went to Africa, we’d be treated worse. We would perhaps be rejected by the native Africans and (who knows) even put us in concentration camps” (Dahl 332).

This extreme extrapolation of Africa and the enslavement of Africans indicated Williams’ internalized negative stereotypes. Despite her thinking that she knew all about jazz, she did not know that jazz was already on the African continent, in South Africa, brought there by black men serving on a Confederate warship in 1862, who entertained white sailors. These early jazz musicians were later followed by McAdoo’s Minstrels and an all-white New Orleans Band (Galeta).

For Mary Lou Williams, everything important in life, hinged on music and what she wanted from her race was for every black person to know and love jazz. “Our people don’t know anything about their own music” (Dahl 288). Her convoluted way of exhibiting her black pride was to be the best jazz musician that she could be yet she

refused to publically address the issue of racism in jazz or in the U.S., as her contemporary, pianist Hazel Scott consistently did.

Hazel Scott was also a bandleader, composer, arranger and pianist like Williams, but who used her art as a political tool in the struggle against racial inequality (Denning 340). Both Mary Lou Williams and Hazel Scott performed in the All Star Victory Show to Re-Elect rising African American military officer Benjamin Davis Jr. to City Council (Sunday, October 28, 1943) at the Golden Gate Ballroom in Harlem. Williams was a part of an impressive roster of great black artists. This political rally was a unique undertaking for Williams, although a common occurrence for Scott. Scott, by 1943, had already appeared in the Benefit for the American Committee for Chinese War Orphans in 1940, The Amsterdam News Midnight concert at the Apollo on behalf of the Harlem Welfare Centre, the 1941 Benefit for the Medical Fund for Local 802 of New York and the 1942 Salute to Negro Troops at the Cosmopolitan Opera House. These were only a few of the causes she supported outside of being the headliner at Café Society Club (Hairston 65-66).

Hazel Scott was described by jazz vocalist Lena Horne as “Hazel is a beautiful West Indian and like most people from those islands she has the fiercest sort of racial pride” (Hairston 77). Scott’s racial socialization may have much to do with her perception of racism. She was four when she came to the U.S. with her two formally educated parents and her middle -class background. Scott’s childhood was very different from Williams. Scott grew up affirmed in her talent by her parents and cushioned by money, education and having enough resources.

Scott and Williams were two contemporary, formidable black women pianists who had similar career trajectories, but who utilized their talents in different ways in support of racial equality. One historian’s assessment is that Scott’s decision to promote

racial pride in the roles she took in Hollywood, her public stance on racism and suing and winning racial discrimination lawsuits, cost her an outstanding career and halted her ascent as a superstar (Dwayne). Promoting jazz, and focusing on her musicality through performance, arranging and composing, to the exclusion of all else, may have been one of the reasons for Williams' career lasting 60 years.

### **4.3 Gender**

Mary Lou Williams began her career, as a precocious, talented little girl, who moved quickly to the top of her profession as an extraordinary pianist. Just a few of the titles she earned were “The Little Piano Girl from East Liberty,” “The Lady Who Swings the Band,” “The Boogie Woogie Queen,” “The First Lady of Jazz,” and the “Queen of Jazz” (Dahl). Williams' opinion of herself was not that she was the best “woman” jazz pianist or that she competed with other women jazz pianists like Hazel Scott or Dorothy Donegan, but that she was the best jazz pianist period, as evidenced by her statement, “I've always been a leader of men” (Williams). Williams' statement that she was a leader of men, in her estimation moved her to the top of the jazz world.

Buzzin' Harris' Hits n Bits, in her first professional job as a teenager, continued his praise about the young Williams on the tough vaudeville circuit, I'd played with women piano players and they'd be just tinkling...I'm not lying...and musicians were kind of ruffians-drinking and hanging out and staying out all night...(society) looked down on us. There was no thought of a girl like Mary ever playing with a band” (Dahl 200).

Yet Mary Lou William did play with this band and lead other male bands for decades. When Williams began with another act, Seymour and Jeanette, she was asked to dress “like a man” which was the usual practice for women musicians. Her husband John refused that request, believing that the “oddity” of a woman pianist would bring crowds.

He was right. William was a draw as a pianist who wore dresses and shoes as expensive as her vacillating finances would allow (Dahl 49). As her career progressed, she bore the flip side of gender bias when white jazz critics categorized, and too often described her based on her physical looks, rather than focusing their writings on her playing.

Susan McClary's work in musicology with feminist music criticism, points towards ways in which musical narratives, techniques, rhythms, gestures, and codes may reflect, produce, or sustain embodied gendered meanings. McClary maintains that music is a space in which ideas about gender are negotiated, sustained, contained and contested (McClary). Published interviews by white critics described Williams in her 20's as "A kitten on keys, sinewy young Negro woman playing the solid, unpretentious, flesh and bone kind of jazz piano..." (Dahl 145). "Kitten" conjures up an animal and a pet image. "Sinewy" is not a description of her musicality, but rather describes the physicality of a muscular, brawny person. According to her niece, Williams was small and tiny (Furgerson).

Williams was described sexually in the same way that pianist Hazel Scott, was described, not by her musicality, but by her physical looks. Similar to Williams, Scott was a bandleader, composer, and arranger, who was beautiful. "Although she had serious keyboard chops that spanned genres and the ability to sing in multiple languages, she was remembered by white critics as an overly flashy entertainer who, by swinging the classics, did not play "real" (authentic) jazz" (Hairston 65). Racism, sexism and gender bias was evident in these depictions. The real Mary Lou Williams and the real Hazel Scott were neither seen accurately in describing their physical looks nor in defining the jazz musicians that they were. No male musicians, in any published interview, were ever described by their physical body parts.

Over decades, Mary Lou Williams, in interviews, was asked the too familiar question of what did it mean to be a woman in jazz and her answer was always the same with slight variations. In a 1957 article, Marian McPartland, asked her again, women to woman, “How does it feel to be a woman in a man’s world?” (McPartland 12). Williams gave her the same answer she had consistently given,

“You’ve got to play, that’s all. They don’t think of you as a woman if you can really play. I think some girls have an inferiority complex about it, and this may hold them back, but they shouldn’t feel that way. If they have talent, the men will be glad to help them along. Working with men, you get to think like a man when you play. You automatically become strong, though this doesn’t mean you’re not feminine” (McPartland).

There are many fallacies in her statement. It wasn’t enough that Williams played piano like other men pianists, she had to be better than men. An inferiority complex is revealed from the men who demanded more of women, even talented women like William, than they did of their own playing or other men’s musicality. The idea that a woman had to think like a man, when actually she is thinking like the woman she is, indicated that Williams didn’t realize that she was also perpetuating gender bias. In attempting to make sense of the hierarchy of male domination, Williams should have realized that men were dominating women, but her solution was to think like a man and to outplay men. It was not automatic that a woman’s talent created equality or that men would “be glad to help them along.” Even Williams’ prodigious talent had limited success in pushing aside patriarchy to make room for even her in the jazz arena.

A year later in 1958, jazz critic Barry Ulanov asked, basically, the same questions again in an article, “Women in Jazz: Do They Belong?” (Ulanov 17). He further clarified the question by asking specifically about women instrumentalists without realizing that the very question itself was sexist. He cited statistics that more than two-thirds of all pianists were men, and wondered if women are not seen as “oddities” strictly on the basis of merit when they played piano and other instruments as jazz artists. He

continued by wrongly assessing Williams as a women's rights advocate just because she was a talented woman,

Mary Lou has for years been a champion of women's rights in jazz. She hasn't picketed clubs or record companies for being unfair to her sex. She hasn't carried banners in parades or sent indignant letters to the papers, jazz or any other kind protesting the treatment accorded jazzwoman...

For all the progress made in jazz in the last couple of decades, women have not yet won a fair hearing, except as singers or pianists with male assistants and colleagues. They are still more looked at than listened too (Ulanov 17).

Williams was a reluctant pioneer who opened up the way for women pianists that followed her, and she did it grudgingly. Ulanov considered himself to be a Mary Lou Williams fan and believed that she was supportive to women by recording with "girls" of notable jazz skill, like bass player June Rotenberg, drummers Bridget O'Flynn and Rose Gottesman, guitarist Mary Osborne and vibist Margie Hyams. He commented that Williams played in clubs with all-girl outfits but added the caveat, "not, it must be said, with the success her other groups have had, but with sufficient musical accomplishment to remove from the whole undertaking any suggestions of the freakish or capricious" (Ulanov 17).

Ulanov gave what is referred to in the South as a "backhanded compliment," in that what seemed like a compliment was really an insult. He referred to the women jazz artists as girls, when no black man would have allowed himself to be referred to as a boy. He complimented Mary Lou as a great jazz pianist who helped other women in jazz by simply playing her instrument with those who had less skill. This sacrificial act alone, according to Ulanov proved that women do belong in jazz. Ulanov considered himself a supporter of jazz women, yet his gender bias is readily apparent. Decades later speaking, at Williams' funeral, he still didn't understand the patriarchal oppression of jazz, when he stated "...a basic truth about jazz that it is a driven, competitive music...that made it difficult for a woman to participate in as equals..." (Dahl 369).



What Ulanov viewed as competitiveness was an oppressive patriarchal system in jazz that worked to keep women out. Monica Hairston, an ethnomusicologist, wrote in her dissertation that “lumping the work of artists like Billie Holiday, Mary Lou Williams, Lena Horne, and Hazel Scott into taxonomies and hierarchies that were developed in many cases to highlight jazz great men, obscures women’s genius...” (Hairston 208).

Mary Lou Williams was the featured performer at the First Women’s Jazz Festival in Kansas City in 1978, a city that she had always loved, and in a newspaper interview at age 68, she declared

“As for being a woman, I never thought much about that one way or the other. All I’ve ever thought about is music. I’m very feminine, but I think like a man. I’ve been working around them all my life. I can deal better with men than women” (Dahl 341).

Williams could not have been more honest about her stance. Over the six decades of her career, she declared that she never thought about being a woman and that women were more difficult than men. Feminists in the city were enraged at her but didn’t see their own unconscious bias either. This festival focused on women, and was organized by women, yet the master of ceremonies was former record producer Leonard Feather, considered a foremost jazz critic and historian. According to the organizers, Feather was chosen because he was one of the first people to get behind female jazz musicians when, in the 1940s he produced record albums featuring all-female groups. It was Feather who hired Mary Lou Williams to be in his “all-girl band”. Feather disliked Williams’ remarks in the interview and disparaged what he called her “all-but-anti-feminist posture,” while he went on in the same interview to praise Marian McPartland, a white British pianist (Dahl).

Race and gender intersected in Feather’s disparaging comments about Williams. Feather didn’t see anything wrong in praising McPartland, who was white like him. He did not recall the true circumstances when he recorded Williams in the 1940’s. She

played with his all-girl band, but railed against his insistence that there be only women performers. Williams believed she was being used for his gimmick and ultimately that he was not serious about music. She did not want to pick “sidemen” to accompany her based on their gender, instead of picking them for their talent. When one of the women musicians didn’t show up at the studio, Feather had Mary Lou substitute male bassist Billy Taylor who masqueraded on the record notes as “Bea Taylor” (Dahl 181). Nothing was ever said about Feather’s exploitation of women jazzers in order to make money.

Feather wanted to keep working with her, but Williams refused. She had this to say about the women musicians chosen for the recording, “It was the cattiest session I’d ever encountered; the girls talked more music than they played” (Dahl 181). I wanted to see if they can think like a male (Dahl 181). She never recorded with Feather or this all-girl-band after playing a second session. Feather persuaded Williams to record that one more time and according to her, she gave the women one additional chance to play well, but they did not.

After reading Feather’s well-publicized criticism, Williams wrote him to ask if his mean-spirited comments were because she requested due payment for her compositions, in the 40’s” (Dahl 359). She was not happy with the bad press, though once again she was revealing the confusion in her mind on the matter of women in jazz and the issue of gender. Her comments lent support to the idea that all the other women musicians, with few exceptions, really were inferior to men. Another complicating factor is that although the members of the all-girl- band were women, they were certainly not black women. Why was Mary Lou Williams the only black woman invited to play in the all-girl band?

Black jazz musician Howard McGhee, a trumpeter from the Bebop generation, had a familiar biased male perspective about women musicians which included Williams.

“When a woman is on the scene, it’s different. Even with the grandmother of all the lady musicians, jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams, you really have to be extra respectful. She expects it. So if you hire women, it’s just going to mean hassles” (Dahl 183). His remarks are incredibly sexist in that he would rather miss her extraordinary playing than deal with his preconceived notions of whether he would be able to curse around her. Williams was the “Queen of Bebop” and excelled at playing this style of music. He was not the only biased jazzman. Miles Davis, a jazz trumpeter maestro told Mary Lou years later, with personal regret, “I should have asked you to be in my band” (Dahl 255).

Mary Lou Williams was highly competitive on the piano. In her early career, as a teenager, she was shy and retiring. Once she left the stage, she would not mingle with folks after her performance. On stage, she was fierce, playing her piano. African American pianist Billy Taylor recalled “She was very competitive musically, but she was never mean and off the bandstand, she was quite shy” (Dahl 220). One of the features of jazz is that jazz musicians like to get together in “jam” sessions after club dates, bring their instruments and play their personal style of music. Through a process called “chopping,” they tried to outplay each other and see who would reign supreme. Williams loved these jams and the pianist, Count Basie, revealed that when Mary Lou was on the piano, he would stay out of her musical territory because she was so good. “Anytime she was in the neighbourhood, I used to find myself another little territory, because Mary Lou was tearing everybody up” (Dahl 87).

Did this mean that the renowned Count Basie didn’t want a woman outplaying him, since he certainly competed in jam sessions with men? Her professional relationship with men was only slightly less difficult than her personal relationships. She never acknowledged that there was conflict with male jazz musicians because of her gender. “No one ever rejected me or my music,” she insisted (Dahl 80). She and her music were

both rejected until the sheer genius of her talent won most over, not all critics and players, but most.

Williams grew up getting love, advice and protection from her stepfather, and so her ex-husband, John Williams, took on that same paternalistic role. He recalled, “She was the type of person who needed fatherly guidance” (Kernodle 14). He also said in an interview, “I was a take charge person...Mary really needed to have a male to take care of her, look out for her...” She was a young fourteen when he met her and only sixteen when they married. Williams’ response to her also young husband of nineteen was “I feared John more than I loved him...” (Dahl 45). Her husband would take her around other men musicians to exhibit her talent. If she didn’t want to go, he would tell her, “If you don’t play, you are going to get a beating” (Dahl 46) and she hated the one dollar a day budget the put her on, since as the man, he must manage all of her money. Williams was dominated by men in all of her personal relationships but traded their domination for their protection and assistance in furthering her career.

The effort to get her royalties from records and her compositions, to earn decent money for bookings and expand her opportunities forced Mary Lou, as she grew older, to become more assertive with men. Later in life, she demanded what was her due from club owners, record producers, booking agents and the like. By the time she was in her 40s, touring in England, English jazz singer Annie Ross said as she watched Williams at business, “Women had to have a sense of aggressiveness to survive, it was absolutely necessary and Mary had that” (Dahl 369).

Unfortunately, as jazz artists, women only barely survived economically and professionally. Her relationship with her two white male managers was even worse. The first, Joe Glaser, had the role of “Big Daddy” in her life and he “stole from all the black acts he had” (Dahl 104-105).

Glaser was a crook in the truest sense of the word, but it was tacitly agreed and factually true that black jazz musicians had to have a white man working for them, in order to play venues and to earn any significant amounts of money. Father Peter O'Brien, a Catholic priest, was Williams' last manager. Their connection was Catholicism and then race, gender and religion became intertwined in a volatile relationship that only ended when she died. "The push-and-pull of their relationship ...as manager and artist was set..." (Dahl 305). While Williams still had a white man to advocate for her and her career, this particular white man twisted the roles when she became artist-in-residence at Duke University.

Father O'Brien demanded that Williams take him with her and pay him to help with her classes. In a letter to O'Brien in 1970, she wrote,

Peter, I think you have a grudge somewhere because you're telling lies. You see things in a very mixed-up way...When you accuse me of Stealing and abusing kindness, I began thinking-what have I done wrong? I tried to teach you the business...I have taught you and given you ideas to go on your own to make millions because you're white...Man, I'm a creative artist. The mind has to be clear at all times....You have done quite a few bad things to me and acted if you knew it all (Dahl 211).

From his perspective, O'Brien felt that he had revived Williams' career after she converted to his religion and subsequently stopped playing jazz for three years. He revealed their two diametrically opposed perceptions of the value of his role in her career. After one of her performances, he telephoned her and "I cussed her up and down. I told her she put me through shit. I said everything. Then I went to New York and disappeared for a few days" (Dahl 346).

Williams believed that because O'Brien was a Jesuit priest and that was the highest form of religion, she should forgive his failings. Others remarked on the ugly scenes caused by his behaviour and his cursing. O'Brien felt he needed more money from her for his commission and that he should be hired as staff too while she was teaching at

Duke University. He convinced her to give him a 20% commission on her earnings and to get the President to give him housing and a salary (Dahl 347-348). Williams made O'Brien the executor of her Mary Lou Williams Foundation when she died, a role he kept until his death in 2015.

Against the backdrop of her professional life, the Women's Movement was gaining momentum in the 1970's. Mary Lou Williams experienced about a decade of it before she died in 1981 (Dahl). She is not on record for a public response to feminism, yet her comments about women in the jazz world lead to the supposition that she was not a supporter of this movement either. Her lived response to gender bias was to overcome it in her personal and professional life by performing and thinking like a man, a process inherently impossible to do. Her position gives further evidence of patriarchal victimization and confusion about healthy relationships between women and men.

Williams' biographer, Tammy Kernodle, agrees with this assessment of her lack of involvement with the Women's Movement. "At times, Mary was pushed into the centre of discussion regarding women's place in jazz and criticized heavily for her claims that she had not experienced prejudice or discrimination because of her gender." Kernodle maintains that "Mary had no intention of being an activist or spokesperson for what could safely be termed feminist causes" (Kernodle 82). Bell Hooks notes that white women, in turn, were not promoting black women's rights either. She states about white women that "...many of these individuals move from civil rights into women's libation and spearhead a feminist movement...it did not mean that they were divested of white supremacy notions that they were superior to black females" (Hooks 55-56). Hooks analysis means that Williams had the option to be oppressed by white men or be oppressed by white women.

Mary Lou Williams' personal relationships with men were as difficult as her professional relationship with men. As a young woman, she wrote in her autobiography about growing up sexually while traveling the roads on jazz gigs. She described vaudeville as an "animal life" (Dahl 39) and she was on that circuit for five years. Her autobiography and later her diary are the places where she wrote her true, secret thoughts about what was happening to her sexually. In the 1930, when she was twenty, she had two searing experiences back-to-back, with a man who was "abnormal sexually" and who caused trauma to her uterus and the next night on a train to Chicago to record an album, she was raped by the conductor (Dahl 75-76). She never told her husband about these incidents.

She exercised sexual freedom in later relationships, more than most women of her generation. In her handwritten notes, Mary Lou Williams wrote a fascinating line about her liaisons with men, "I did the pickin and I never had more than one boyfriend at a time" (Dahl 220). All of these men, she chose as boyfriends could assist her in the pursuit of her art and each brought something Williams wanted professionally. They were brilliant musicians, capable agents or accomplished men in their vocations. She, in turn, assisted their careers by sharing her genius in jazz. The majority were musicians, but there was also a sculptor and a Booking Agent, and other men connected to art in some capacity (Dahl).

Mary Lou Williams appeared to define womanhood with an emphasis on her sexual self. She never gave any indication in her autobiography that she felt anything was exceptional about having all these numerous sexual partners she had over the years. These were men who were single, married and sometimes engaged. Her position on the matter was, "being around guys all my life, I knew they always felt they still loved their wives, even if they cheated once in a while" (Dahl 93).

Along with these lovers came a great deal of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Williams' childhood was fraught with violence and it continued into her adulthood. She excused the men who said they loved her, but also beat her, gave her black eyes, broke her nose, tore up her apartment and worse. Her ex-husband, John Williams commented years later, "Other guys treated her like so many men treat women. Fight 'em...cuss 'em and run them off. She hadn't been used to that..." (Kernodle). Her last know lover was in Paris, France who said "before she got religion, she was not a nun at all, I can tell you. But after that, the pleasures of the flesh fell away" (Dahl 242). She was forty-four and her last lover was thirty. When Mary Lou Williams returned to the U.S. from Paris she decided, "I was still looking for peace of mind, and I was determined to give up music, night life, and all else that was sinful in the eyes of God. After that, I wouldn't play anymore" (Dahl 243).

Bell Hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* asserts that sexism – which mostly affects women – is a form of oppression, perpetrated by institutional and social structures, by "individuals who dominate, exploit, or oppress; and by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo" (Hooks). This analysis speaks to the life of Mary Lou Williams who only saw her talents in masculine terms and her value in relation to, or in competition with men in jazz. Only with male references did Williams believe she was successful in the male-oriented jazz world.

In her work on intersectionality, Hooks looks at how race, gender and class combines in the lives of black women. Mary Lou Williams never gave an indication that she realized the connection between race, gender and class, despite being born black, female and poor, and that she represented the bottom of the racial, sexual and working populations in the United States. Poor all of her life, Mary Lou Williams struggled



financially except for four years at the end of her life when she was an artist-in-residence and teacher at Duke University in North Carolina. For the first time in North Carolina, she owned a home, had health insurance and earned enough money to purchase what she needed, pay her bills and still help others (Dahl 338). This was very different from her childhood when Williams went barefooted until she went to school because her mother couldn't afford to buy her shoes. She constantly gave the same example of her poverty by reciting an incident in grade school. She sneaked a pair of her mother's shoes and wore them to school. Her mother had small feet and Mary Lou's feet were much bigger. The children teased her because she had bent the back of the shoes down to turn them into slides. She had to fix them before she returned them, so her mother wouldn't know she had taken her shoes (Dahl 30).

Williams loved stylish shoes for the rest of her life, and that was one of the biggest arguments with her first husband, John Williams. He controlled Williams' money and felt that since people couldn't see her shoes as she played the piano, she didn't need beautiful shoes. Not having gorgeous shoes was a symbol to Mary Lou of her poverty as a child. As a hard-working musician, she was determined to wear the kind of shoes that she wanted. It is telling that she never shared that childhood story with her husband, who was an only child and who came from a middle-class background. Was she ashamed of coming from a poor, lower class family? Did shame indicate that she didn't understand that the systematic poverty of African Americans was bound to race and gender in the U.S.?

In addition to her parents holding low paying menial jobs, Mary Lou's aunts from the Riser side were domestic servants to the millionaire Andrew Mellon family (Dahl 31). One can only wonder how the aunts felt when their little great niece Mary began to play at afternoon teas for the Mellons and the Olivers, not just two of the

wealthiest families in Pittsburgh, but in the nation. In her autobiography, she recalled the story that the Mellons gave her, the “Little Piano” girl a huge check for a performance.

Williams told the story that her parents stayed up all night looking and holding onto the check until the bank opened because they had never seen that much money at one time (Dahl 107). While her biographies report the check as \$100 dollars, it would have been almost more than her great aunts earned as maids in a year, Williams said the check was for \$150, not \$100 as often reported. What it indicated was that Mary Lou Williams’ talent opened an opportunity to socialize with aristocrats, royalty, wealthy billionaires, and millionaires, yet as a jazz artist, she was considered, by society in general, and middle class blacks in particular, as the lowest of entertainers (Dahl 40-41).

Though a popular jazz artist, Williams’ music and the rights to her music were often stolen, which meant she seldom received royalties from most of her compositions. She fought for the publishing royalties but rarely won. It was always others who were making money off her talent, no matter how hard and brilliantly she worked. She recalled “I did 20 things for Decca Records. They were all hits and people stole like mad (Dahl 256).

Eventually she owed the Internal Revenue Department for back taxes and was constantly wrestling with managers, record producers and promoters for decent wages. Not understanding class structures inherent in capitalism, she thought that “All my life I’ve thought my greatest block to big success was my weakness in stopping along the way to help an unfortunate...” (Davis 6). Williams actually thought she was mired in poverty because she helped others in whatever ways that she could. She did not realize that an economically compressed life due to gender, race, and class was normal for African Americans in her lifetime since unfair legal, political, economic systems operated in capitalist America to the detriment of the majority of Americans.

In *Women, Race and Class*, Angela Davis discussed the peculiar situation of the black woman starting in slavery, where “the oppression of women was identical to the oppression with men, but women suffered in different ways as well, for they were victims of sexual abuse and other barbarous treatment that could only be inflicted on women” (6). Mary Lou Williams' great-grandparents and grandparents were slaves and she heard the stories of their cruel treatment by listening as a child when she was supposed to be sleeping or out of the room. Although later in her adult life, she would vehemently deny any connections with Africa, she felt deeply impacted by their stories of slavery. She talked about an incident at her grammar school.

“One day I went to school and grabbed a long ruler and hit my teacher...I said ‘You white people made slaves out of us.’ She (the teacher) was very upset...from that day on, she brought me presents every day---little things I liked...I use to return home with a lot of money tied up in my handkerchief” (Dahl 31).

That was a brave act for a child in the 1920's, but it seemed as if Williams never moved beyond the emotionalism to understand the structures that were in place to keep economic slavery in place and keep her family in poverty despite their hard and long work days. She did not appear to grasp although she was an artist, she did not control the product of her talent, which was why she was always waiting for a record deal, royalty payments or white men to provide opportunities to showcase her music. Anna Julia Cooper and Mary Church Terrell understood multiple jeopardy and how it uniquely applied to black women in the U.S. and wrote about it fifty years before Williams was born (King 42-72). Cooper and Terrell graduated from Oberlin College and became lifelong scholars, colleagues and women advocates. Williams was a high school drop out that, through her talent, spent her last years of life teaching at the university. Signing on at Duke University, she said “Ha ha ha-----look at me! A high school dropout. Now I'm a college professor” (Dahl 33).

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Mary Lou Williams acutely felt the harmful effects of the intersection and multiple jeopardies of race, gender, and class, yet she did not have a framework for understanding the reasons behind these biases or for working to dismantle them in her life. Williams had one constant presence in her life and that was jazz music. Due to the high regard she had for jazz, she coupled that with an insistence on artistic freedom despite the deleterious manipulations of race, gender and class on her career. A friend, Gray Weingarten, observed that Williams "... was determined to do what she wanted to do-which was bad for her career" (Dahl 256).

Williams lifted up high the shield of music to hide her artistry behind, only this shield was dented by heavy blows from race, gender, and class. Her last manager, Father Peter O'Brien summed up Williams' use of creative resilience to battle racism, gender bias and economic deprivation, even when she wouldn't admit she was in a war against them, "Here was a really intelligent person, a creative artist who did not produce on demand, but from inside herself. But this was not allowed in black women in that period" (Dahl 141). For Mary Lou Williams the issues of identity in race, gender, and class were summed up in simplistic sentiment, "I've worked all my life on my own merits" (Dahl 369). Personalizing race and gender issues is what happens when multiple jeopardies of oppression are not understood and they intersect in such a negative way that they obscure the real causes of the sexism and discrimination against women of colour in jazz. The black feminist theory helped us to understand the impact of multiple jeopardies on African American women as demonstrated in relation to Mary Lou Williams in this chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE MADISON MARY LOU WILLIAMS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AND HER VISIBILITY AS AN ARTIST

*“I am Mary Lou Williams. Remember Me.”*

Mary Lou Williams quote during her piano performances, Box 5, The Jazz Institute,  
Rutgers University

Mary Lou Williams wanted to be remembered so much so, that she would make the statement, “I am Mary Lou Williams. Remember Me,” during her performances. The Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration in 2010 in Madison, Wisconsin introduced Williams to thousands of people and caused Mary Lou Williams to be permanently etched in their memories. This chapter presents: (sec. 5.1) the objectives of Madison’s Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration; (sec. 5.1 and Appendix 5.2) an analysis of the impact of the 2010 Centennial Celebration’s year-long series of performance and educational programs (sec. 5.1 and Appendices 2, 3, 5 and 6), a review of what was attained with the accomplishments of the Celebration objectives and finally, the increase in public acceptance and appreciation of the work of Mary Lou Williams as an African American woman jazz pianist.

#### **5.1 Overview of Madison’s Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration**

May 8, 2010, marked the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mary Lou Williams, and special centennial celebrations were held in communities around the U.S. that year. Madison, Wisconsin, a mid-sized, predominantly white city (2010 Census) held perhaps the most robust of these celebrations, producing 51 special programs (86% of them with free admission) that spanned a full year (February 2010 to January 2011). Together, these programs reached a diverse audience of over 8,000 people and, in so doing, increased awareness and appreciation of Williams (sec. 5.1 and Appendices 2, 3, 5 and 6). The idea of the celebration began in a meeting between Howard Landsman, a consummate jazz

buff, and myself. The two of us grew into a committee of ten and a year-long event with Howard at the helm.

Madison's Centennial Celebration was produced in response to a 2009 invitation from the non-profit Mary Lou Williams Foundation led by Father Peter O'Brien, her last manager and director of her foundation. Father O'Brien invited us to participate in the national birthday celebration in memory of Williams' 1976 residency on the University of Wisconsin's Madison campus and in recognition of continuing local interest in her life and music. Father O'Brien's invitation was critical to the success of the celebration because by his permission Williams' archives were opened to committee members at the Institute of Jazz Studies and he facilitated getting Mary Lou Williams artists like Geri Allen and Carmen Lundy to perform in Madison. The Celebration was produced by a diverse Centennial Committee of ten local volunteers from different genders, ethnicities, and occupations<sup>1</sup>, with myself as Artistic Co-Director. The evaluations show the importance of the committee members because most people in the audience came to performances because of invitations from committee members and from performing artists. I was both a poet performer and a committee member.

At first, the Centennial Committee envisioned producing one major concert in May 2010 to celebrate Williams' 100th birthday. However, as concert planning proceeded, the Committee decided to use the opportunity posed by the centennial year to carry out one of Williams' central missions in life: motivating people to explore and develop a deep appreciation for jazz. The result was a wide-ranging menu of performances of her music, as well as an array of educational programs about her life, music, and legacy, as well as the recruitment of a group of partner arts and education organizations that assisted the Centennial Committee with program planning, promotion and delivery.<sup>2</sup>

The Centennial Celebration's programs included music and dance concerts, poetry readings and spoken word workshops, a scholarly symposium, and documentary films, culminating in a major Mary Lou Williams Fall Festival Weekend of events that ran from September 30 to October 3, 2010. Development of these programs was guided by the following five objectives:

- i. Increase public knowledge of Mary Lou Williams' contributions in order to secure her place in American Music History,
- ii. Increase the connection between jazz and the African American community, which gave birth to the music and virtually all of its greatest innovators,
- iii. Increase community understanding and appreciation of jazz while helping secure its future as a living art form,
- iv. Inspire young musicians to learn and play jazz by increasing their awareness and understanding of, and ability to perform, Mary Lou Williams' music, and
- v. Increase local capacity to produce more high-quality jazz programs in the future.

## **5.2 Data Presentation and Analysis**

The following narrative and appendices present, discuss, and analyse findings from the assessment of the Centennial Celebration's impact. Findings are delineated by Celebration objectives.<sup>3</sup> This section is therefore organized around the five point's objectives corresponding to the five objectives.

### **5.2.1 Increasing Public Knowledge of Mary Lou Williams' Contributions to American Music**

This section covers a variety of surveys designed to increase the public's knowledge about Williams. The section starts off with surveys of the three major public concerts, with questions on how audiences heard about the three concerts, which

performances had the largest audiences, and what was peoples' prior knowledge of Mary Lou Williams, their gain in knowledge about her after attending the performances and their interest in learning more about jazz. There are also surveys on the audiences' prior interest jazz, and their desire to get deeper into learning more about jazz. The Centennial Committee also enquired if people wanted to attend future events and if they would agree to be on an email list.

The overall programming included youth too. Students were surveyed at Toki and Cherokee Middle Schools. The surveys gauged the impact of a poetry and music presentation through a pre and post-test. Also there was a survey on middle students' knowledge and appreciation of jazz in general.

### **5.2.2 Major Concert Surveys**

The Centennial Committee conducted audience surveys at three major public concerts of Williams' music: the Mary Lou Williams Birthday concert (May 2, 2010) and two concerts during the Fall Festival Weekend (October 2-3, 2010): "Mary Lou Williams @ 100," and "Mary Lou's Mass." These surveys aimed to obtain a profile of audience members' current knowledge of Mary Lou Williams and to assess the concerts' impact on their desire to delve more deeply into her life story and music. The findings are presented below in Table 5.1 and show that audience members attending these three concerts knew very little about Williams before the concerts, yet afterwards, two thirds felt they knew a great deal about her and all of the surveyed participants wanted to know more.

As shown in Table 5.1 below, a large majority of the Centennial's major concert audiences, 67.2%, had not heard or had only minimal knowledge of Mary Lou Williams before attending the concert. However, 77.6% emerged from the concert knowing a great deal more about her music, with 91.4% wanting to learn still more about her and her music.



**Table 5.1: Impact On Concert Audience Knowledge And Appreciation Of Mary Lou Williams**

Question	Answer	# of respondents	# of respondents
Your knowledge of Mary Lou Williams before attending the concert	None/very minimal <sup>4</sup>	39	67.2%
	Moderate	15	25.9%
	Extensive	4	6.9%
	A great deal	45	77.6%
Has today's concert increased your knowledge of Mary Lou Williams and her contributions to jazz?	A modest amount	13	22.4%
	No	0	0.0%
Are you now more interested in learning about Mary Lou Williams and exploring her music?	Yes	53	91.4%
	No	0	0.0%
	Maybe	5	8.6%

Clearly one of the ways by which Mary Lou Williams could be remembered and remain visible is through regular performances of concerts on her work.

### 5.2.3 Mary Lou Williams 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert Audience Feedback Survey

The biggest event of all the Centennial events was the Birthday Concert and it was an opportunity to evaluate what events people had attended, and how they heard about the various events. This survey confirmed earlier data that for people who do not know about Mary Lou Williams, after being introduced to her at events, appreciate her music and most often want to know more.

Table 5.2: How people heard about the concert (due to some being performer, centennial committee member or/and friend, the percentages add up to more than 100%).

<b>Table 5.2: How people heard about the concert</b>	
Info Source	% of Respondents
Performer	38.6%
Centennial Committee Member	36.4%
Friend	20.5%
Other (NESCO, Pam Bracey, postcard, MJS program book, MMC/other email list)	18.2%
Isthmus	11.4%
Wisconsin State Journal article	6.8%
Capital City Hues	2.3%
WORT-FM	2.3%

Table 5.2 shows the best ways that the Centennial attracted its audiences. It is interesting to note that people helped attract the largest audiences. Money that was paid for media ads, such as the Isthmus, Wisconsin State Journal and Capital City Hues newspapers only brought in 22% of the audiences, versus word of mouth that brought in 60% of the audiences. The data in Table 5.3 shows that all performances were well-attended. The one held in UW First Wave Ensemble had large audiences with 81.8%, but the best attended was Jazz & Poetry (Fabu/Jane/John/Joan) with attendance of 90.9%.

Table 5.3: Performances attended (average was 3.4 of the 5 sets)

<b>Table 5.3: Performances attended (average was 3.4 of the 5 sets)</b>	
<b>Performance Attended</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
UW's First Wave Ensemble	81.8%
Middleton HS Jazz Ensemble	75.0%
Jazz & Poetry (Fabu/Jane/John/Joan)	90.9%
Sun Prairie HS Jazz Ensemble	61.4%
Richard Davis & Dave Stoler Duo	54.5%

#### **5.2.4 The Analysis of Performances Focusing on Young People**

There were five additional events that focused on a youth audience in a combination of words and music. The Jazz & Poetry presented by myself along with musicians Jane Reynolds, John Mesoloras, and Joan Wildman, who are all top rated jazz musicians, lead in attendance, followed by Spoken Word artists in UW's First Wave Ensemble. In the performances that were totally music, it is interesting to note that the smallest audience was for the professional jazz artists, jazz great Richard Davis and the keyboardist Dave Stoler. Youth preferred words and jazz.

Table 5.4

<b>Table 5.4</b>	
<b>Extent of Prior Knowledge of MLW</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
None/Minimal	68.2%
Moderate	25.0%
Great	6.8%

<b>Table 5.5: Gain in Knowledge of Mary Lou Williams</b>	
<b>Extent of Knowledge Gained</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
None/Minimal	0.0%
Moderate	20.5%
Great	79.5%

<b>Table 5.6: Interest in Learning More About Mary Lou Williams</b>	
<b>Interested in Learning More About MLW?</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
No	0.0%
Maybe	4.5%
Yes	95.5%

Tables 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 above measure student interest in Mary Lou Williams. First, the tables reveal that 68.2 % of the students didn't know about Williams before the five performances, and that almost 80% (79.5%) gained more knowledge about her during the performances, with an even bigger percentage 95.5% wanting to know more about her specifically. Before these performances, two thirds had a great interest in jazz, so Williams helped increase interest in jazz, getting students deeper into jazz and attending future events put on by the Centennial Committee. The fact that half left their email addresses for future contact, verified their interest.

### **5.2.5 The Impact of Jazz and Poetry Programs**

There were two types of Jazz and Poetry programs; one with music and narrative poetry and a second with music and spoken word poetry. Both were with students from elementary to high school and were both well received by students.

### **5.2.6 Student Surveys at Toki and Cherokee**

Music teachers designed and administered assessments of student knowledge of Mary Lou Williams at two Madison middle schools (Toki and Cherokee302) that hosted the Jazz-and- Poetry Program presented by pianist Jane Reynolds and myself and where these teachers provided contextual pre-program instruction about jazz and the life and music of Williams. Toki and Cherokee are schools (grades 6-8) with a majority of non-white students and they have a significant black student population which is why

they were chosen as sites to introduce Williams and her music. Table 5.11 below summarizes the impact of these efforts on student knowledge of Mary Lou Williams.

As shown in Table 5.11 below, post-program surveys conducted by middle school teachers who hosted the Mary Lou Williams Jazz-and-Poetry Program revealed that their students had learned many of the basics about Williams’ life and musical impact. (See Appendix 4 for the survey questionnaires used at each school)<sup>5</sup>

<b>Table 5.11: Impact On Middle School Student Knowledge And Appreciation Of Mary Lou Williams</b>						
<b>Subject of Question</b>	<b>Toki % Correct (N = 125)</b>			<b>Cherokee % Correct<sup>6</sup> (N = 170)</b>		
	<b>Pre-</b>	<b>Post-</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Pre-</b>	<b>Post-</b>	<b>Change</b>
Mary Lou Williams’ area of musical impact	81.1 %	97.3%	+16.2 %	N A	97%	NA
Reasons that Madison is honouring Mary Lou Williams in 2010	23.4 %	100.0 %	76.6%	N A	100.0 %	NA
Mary Lou Williams’ birth & death years	NA	NA	NA	N A	80%	NA
Mary Lou Williams’ city of birth	NA	NA	NA	N A	66%	NA
Mary Lou Williams’ main instrument	NA	NA	NA	N A	97%	NA
Name of Mary Lou Williams’ famous suite composition (“Zodiac Suite”)	NA	NA	NA	N A	57%	NA
Reasons for the importance of Mary Lou Williams’ legacy	NA	NA	NA	N A	57%	NA
Mary Lou Williams’ nickname as a child	NA	NA	NA	N A	83%	NA

The results of the survey indicated that when nothing is presented in the schools, then Williams is invisible. The Jazz & Poetry Presentation made Williams visible and students able to answer the reasons for honouring her.

### **5.2.7 Post-Program Student Learning Survey Report**

Mary Lou Williams Centennial Jazz and Poetry Program at Cherokee Middle School. During the Mary Lou Williams celebration, which included hosting the jazz-and-

poetry program by Fabu and Jane Reynolds, 8th grade students (N = 170) at Cherokee Middle School made significant gains in their knowledge of Ms. Williams and Jazz music. Pre-test data showed that students, in most cases, had no prior knowledge of Ms. Williamson Jazz. In the rare case that a student did answer a question correctly on the pre-test, it was on a question in which the answer could be inferred. For example, two students guessed that Jazz was most popular from 1930-1955. When interviewed, students with correct answers indicate no significant knowledge of either subject. Post-test data showed a 71% increase in knowledge overall. It is my belief that the scores would be higher, had the following not been factors:

Teachers at Toki and Cherokee provided contextual pre-program instruction about jazz and the life and music of Mary Lou Williams. The results of these assessments are shown in Table 5.12 below that what students knew best about jazz was improvisation in the pre -test. Toki was given pre and post-tests, and the increase in knowledge after the poetry/music performance is evident. Cherokee was only giving a post-test.

Subject of Question	Toki % Correct (N = 125)			Cherokee % Correct <sup>7</sup> (N = 170)		
	Pre-	Post-	Change	Pre-	Post-	Change
Period of jazz' greatest popularity	55.9%	95.3%	+33.8%	NA	51%	NA
Jazz styles	32.6%	81.3%	+48.7%	NA	71%	NA
Definition of jazz improvisation	75.7%	91.9%	+16.2%	NA	71%	NA
Reasons for under-recognition of women in jazz	23.	92.3%	+68.7%	NA	83%	NA
Instruments in jazz rhythm section	24.3%	95.5%	+71.2%	NA	43%	NA
Description of jazz piano styles	29.7%	80.5%	+50.8%	NA	NA	NA
Big band instrumentation	57.7%	74.6%	+16.9%	NA	NA	NA
Difference between "big band" and "concert band"	28.1%	64.0%	+35.9%	NA	63%	NA

### **5.2.8 The Impact of the Spoken Word Workshop on the Visibility of Mary Lou Williams**

Mary Lou Williams Jazz and Spoken Word Workshop Series at Goodman, Packer, Nehemiah, Meadowood and Lussier Community Centres.

This program provided a series of Jazz and Spoken Word poetry workshops at each of five after-school sites across Madison: Goodman Community and Packer Community Learning Centres (North and Near East Sides), Nehemiah Community Development Corporation (South Side), and the Meadowood Neighbourhood and Lussier Community Education Centres (West Side). These workshops were offered to middle and high school students (grades 8-12) in the areas served by these sites. To ensure an intimate learning experience, each workshop's enrolment was capped at 10.

As summarized in Table 5.13 below, these workshops offered sequential instruction via weekly 90-minute sessions over a 7-week period. These sessions introduced participants to jazz, poetry, and the life and music of Mary Lou Williams, and gradually building their ability to create and perform spoken word pieces inspired by Ms. Williams' story and her art. Each session included multi-media content delivery (via video, instructor presentations and performances, Power Point, etc.) on the themes shown below (including examination of the work of an important poet) as well as discussion and a creative writing exercise. Participants began developing their Williams-inspired poem in week 4, recorded them to CD in week 6, and performed them in week 7. Each workshop participant was invited to compete for a slot in the culminating "Mary Lou Williams Youth Explosion" concert at the Overture Centre in November.

These workshops were delivered by Johnson Brothers Entertainment, a local Black-owned company that had been delivering highly-rated spoken word workshops and poetry competitions ("slams") for our community's middle and high school-age kids over the past two years. The curriculum for this project was adapted from these workshops to

incorporate the subjects of jazz and Ms. Williams' life and music. During the workshops, the students used Workshop Student Learning Assessment Instruments. (See appendix 6)

<b>Table 5.13: Curriculum for Jazz and Spoken Word Workshops</b>			
<b>Week</b>	<b>Theme/Topic</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Poet of the Week</b>
1	Historical Overview of Jazz and Spoken Word Poetry in American Society	Understand jazz and spoken word poetry in relation to history and culture, their roots in the Black community, and their important innovators; examine the Black art movement.	Tupac Shakur
2	Comparing the Themes of Jazz and Traditional Poetry to Today's Spoken Word Poetry	Identify common themes and trends in jazz, traditional poetry, and spoken word poetry as practiced used by today's youth.	Langston Hughes
3	The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams	Understand the core elements of jazz, the piano and composition styles of Ms. Williams, and her life story and legacy.	Paul Laurence Dunbar
4	Your World, Your Dream, Your Poem	Understand the relationship between jazz and poetry and how the characteristic elements of each can be used to transform events, emotions, or ideas into works of art.	Nikki Giovanni
5	Voice of Action and Self-Expression	Learn how youth are using spoken word to tell their stories	Maya Angelou
6	Recording the Spoken Word and Using Poetic Technique and Figurative Language	Learn about poetic techniques and figurative language such as imagery, rhythm, rhyme, tone, mood, etc.	Amiri Baraka
7	Recording the Spoken Word and Effective Performance Technique	Learn communication and performance techniques and the art of slamming	James Weldon Johnson

Results of the analysis of Jazz and Spoken Word Workshops indicate that: 97 students (86% African American) participated in the workshops. Nearly all had little or no prior experience with jazz or spoken word poetry. Roughly 30% of all participating students completed the full 7 weeks and wrote and recorded their own spoken word poetry inspired by Mary Lou Williams' life and music. 11 of these students (8 from community center sites) perform their original poem on a compilation CD, while 7 had their poem published in a Youth Explosion Concert program booklet and 5 performed

their original poem at that concert. Their poetry presentations were a hit with the audiences and they received a standing ovation.

By the end of the 7 weeks: 55% of students completing the entire workshop had their work rated by their instructor as a “3” or “4” on a 4-point scale, while 82% rated their growth in jazz knowledge at least a “7” on a 10-point scale, and 77% rated their growth in deriving meaning from a poetic performance at least a “7” on this scale. The jazz self-assessments are in line with written pre- and post-assessments administered by the workshop lead teachers. Clearly, using the spoken word workshop will keep the name of Mary Lou Williams alive for young students.

### **5.2.9 Examining the Impact of Jazz Directors Working with the Students on Mary Lou Williams’ Visibility**

#### **i. Middle and High School Band Directors Surveys**

The Centennial Committee also surveyed the five band teachers whose students learned and performed Williams’ music as part of the Centennial Celebration. Among other topics, the survey assessed their pre- and post-program knowledge of Mary Lou Williams’ music and impact.

As noted in the following review of their responses, this survey revealed that none of the five teachers had been “very familiar” with Williams prior to the Centennial Celebration and only 1 of the 5 had been “somewhat familiar” with her. After working intensively with their students during the Centennial, and seeing their other responses to this survey<sup>306</sup>, I can safely assert that all five became quite intimately familiar with Mary Lou Williams’ music.

#### **ii. Middle and High School Jazz Band Director Evaluations**

Note: The following written survey questionnaire was completed by 4 high school jazz band directors and 1 Middle school jazz band director whose student



ensembles learned and performed the music of Mary Lou Williams as part of the Centennial Celebration.

A. How familiar were you with Mary Lou Williams prior to beginning your work with her music on this project?

#### **5.2.10 Voices of the Directors**

This was a response to the question to describe the growth they were able to observe in their jazz ensemble musicians.

These are some of the band director responses; “It was great to see the saxophone section and trumpet player be aggressive with learning the solo. I think in some ways, they “owed” it to the composer to play cleanly and with conviction. The band approached their other music with the same effort, and our concert in November was a great success.” “Students have a better historical view of the music we are playing. They understand the origins of big bands and how they performed.” “They grew in their ability to play softer to support a lower volume from the amplified instruments.” “My middle school students learned a lot about jazz rhythms and concepts. The triplet patterns in the saxophone parts were new, and my students were able to master that. They were also introduced to many new fingerings and accidentals in their music.” And one of my favourite quotes was, “It is inexplicable. From the start, the students latched onto her music with great enthusiasm. Several of them wrote articles about Mary Lou for our school newspaper and papers for some of their classes.” The responses from the band leaders were all positive about their students’ interaction with the music of Williams, as well as the fact that knowing the history about big bands in jazz in particular and the career of Williams were added bonuses.

What musical ideas/concepts did you introduce to, or review with, your students while working with her music. Please describe the ideas or concepts below.

The new ideas and concepts that the band directors introduced to their band students met were met with a willingness to try and to learn. Band directors shared musical concepts like “The incorporation of syncopation in a relatively straight-forward 2-beat song. Students were asked to “lay back” on the backside of the beat when playing the music.” They also looked at several jazz genres like Boogie-Woogie, Swing, and Kansas City Swing. “Since we started with ‘Roll ‘Em,’ we looked at Boogie-Woogie the most. We also concentrated on blues improvisation and style.” “Swing, of course, but also the difference between that era of swing versus today. Also voice combinations/colours of sound.” “They were able to understand facets of the Kansas City Swing style. After attending the clinic with the UW Jazz Orchestra, the band was very familiar with the Basie style of developing background riffs on the spot.” “We were able to learn much more about swing patterns, both how they are played and how reading and interpreting them is different from concert band literature. It was also great to be able to contrast the swing style of Mary Lou Williams with the style and needs of our funk tune.”

What aspect of this project do you believe will have the most lasting impact on your students’ musicianship?

The Centennial’s work of exposing students, to professional performances, the history of jazz and Williams, providing the actual band music sheets to play the music, and sending the UW Jazz Orchestra director to schools, was a winning combination. These comments on the impact on their students are enthusiastic. “The most lasting impact came from the concert itself. The kids really appreciated the opportunity to hear this music played on a professional level from the UW Jazz Orchestra and the clinicians.” “The clinic work will be what students remember the most. The students enjoyed working with the clinicians and picked up a great deal in the smaller sectionals.” “Performing at Overture Centre with other high school jazz bands, and performing with the UW Jazz

Orchestra.” “A new depth of understanding of ‘Active Listening,’ working and responding as a unit to a soloist or ensemble.” “Working with UW Jazz Orchestra director Jim Doherty will have the most lasting impact on my students. Jim came in and really “cleaned up” my middle school ensemble, and had excellent, memorable, and concise ways to explain to the students how to play together.”

**Do you believe there were any changes in the percentage of African American student participants in your ensemble or in your audience demographics based on this project? Please describe what you have observed and your opinions about why this program did or did not impact your participation or attendance percentage.**

Middle and high schools in Wisconsin have small percentages of African Americans. Black students make up just over 9% of Kindergarten to 12 grade students (Wisconsin Policy Forum). While black students engage in music in elementary school, by the time they reach high school, there are very few in bands. Therefore the high school band directors saw no change in participation or attendance percentages. While one middle school band director observed that, while the percentages didn’t change, “I did notice how much more engaged my African American band members were with Mary Lou’s music. They answered more questions, added more comments to the discussions, and contributed musically at a more significant level.”

### **5.2.11 Examining the Impact of Classroom Learning on Mary Lou Williams’**

#### **Visibility**

Cherokee and Toki Middle Schools were the only participating schools in which teachers provided contextual instruction around Ms. Williams’ life and music, complementing the special performance staged at their school (Fabu and Jane’s “Tribute ...” program). At Cherokee, music and language arts teachers collaborated on curriculum

development and instruction, while at Toki it was all on the general music teacher. At both schools, teachers conducted pre- and post-assessments to gauge student learning, with the following results.

### **Cherokee Middle School**

<b>Table 5.14: Post-Test of Cherokee Middle School Student Learning</b>	
<b>Subject of Question</b>	<b>% of Students Answering Correctly on Post-Test</b>
1. Time period of jazz' greatest popularity	51%
2. Instruments in the jazz rhythm section	43%
3. Definition of "improvisation"	71%
4. Jazz styles	71%
5. Difference between "big band" and "concert band"	63%
6. Reasons for under-recognition of women in jazz	83%
7. Mary Lou Williams' area of musical impact	71%
8. Reasons for Madison honouring Mary Lou Williams in 2010	100%
9. Years of Mary Lou Williams' birth and death	80%
10. Mary Lou Williams' city of birth	66%
11. Mary Lou Williams' main instrument	97%
12. Name of Mary Lou Williams' famous 12-part suite	57%
13. Historical importance of Mary Lou Williams' legacy (open-ended question)	57%
14. Mary Lou Williams' nickname as a child	83%

It is clear in Table 5.14 that when pre-test information was given by teachers about Williams, followed by a music and poetry presentation, facts about Williams were retained. Due to the performance on Williams, Cherokee Middle school Students retained more knowledge about her as an artist than they did about other aspects of jazz in general by scoring highest in facts about her life and her music. It is especially wonderful that 83% gave correct reasons for why women were not as recognized as men in jazz.

<b>Table 5.15: Post-Test of Cherokee Middle School Student Learning</b>			
<b>Subject of Question</b>	<b>Pre-Instruction % Correct</b>	<b>Post-Instruction % Correct</b>	<b>Change</b>
1. Identification of big names associated with jazz music (open-ended question)	23%	97%	74%
2. Role of women in the history of jazz (open-ended question)	Scant knowledge	Much more knowledgeable	--
3. Definition/concept and birth period of spoken word poetry	42%	87%	45%

Table 5.15 directly compares three questions in pre and post-tests. There is a 74% increase in being able to identify jazz greats. The students also scored high in being able to define spoken word poetry and its origins. The open ended question on the role of women in jazz showed the students had scant knowledge before the presentation and gained much more knowledge afterwards.

#### **Toki Middle School**

<b>Table 5.16: Gains in Student Learning at Toki Middle School</b>			
<b>Subject of Question</b>	<b>Pre-Instruction % Correct</b>	<b>Post-Instruction % Correct</b>	<b>Change</b>
1. Time period of jazz' greatest popularity	59.5%	93.3%	33.8%
2. Instruments in the jazz rhythm section	24.3%	95.5%	71.2%
3. Piano style description	29.7%	80.5%	50.8%
4. Big band instrumentation	57.7%	74.6%	16.9%
5. Definition of "improvisation"	75.7%	91.9%	16.2%
6. Jazz styles (open-ended question)	32.6%	81.3%	48.7%
7. Difference between "big band" and "concert band" (open-ended question)	28.1%	64.0%	35.9%
8. Reasons for under-recognition of women in jazz (open-ended question)	23.6%	92.3%	68.7%
9. Reasons for Madison honouring Mary Lou Williams in 2010 (open-ended question)	23.4%	100.0%	76.6%
10. Mary Lou Williams' area of musical impact	81.1%	97.3%	16.2%

At Toki, the pre-test was given in September 2010, and the post-test was given in December 2010 after a 4-week mini-lesson on Mary Lou Williams (1 class period of 50 minutes, and approximately 10 minutes out of 8 subsequent classes). As shown above in Tables 5.15 and 5.16, these lessons clearly had a positive impact on student knowledge of Ms. Williams, jazz, jazz styles, and women in jazz. Student scores raised between 16.2 and 76.6 percentage points from pre- to post-test.

#### **5.2.12 Impact of Tribute to Jazz Genius Mary Lou Williams on the Teachers and Students**

At Cherokee Middle School, chorus Teacher (Amy Maleug) shared that she was somewhat familiar with Mary Lou Williams' work before the project and the standards she addressed were Evaluating, Relating and Associating. According to her, the biggest impact this experience had on the quality of her instruction was the fact that it was a live performance. "Students learn much better from authentic experiences, and this was certainly the case for my students." In addition, students were able to evaluate the performance using vocabulary they had learned during preparation lessons. Students related the two art forms by comparing and contrasting music and poetry, focusing on the cultural aspects of the work. Students also explored the historical and cultural aspects of the work through discussion.

Also the student impact of the live presentation was inspiring. "I did hear from several students, though, that they were inspired by the poetry and liked how the music interpreted the mood of each poem, or rather how the poem brought words to the music." There were several examples of lasting impact such as "My students now have a good overall concept of jazz music. They have a contextual understanding of how jazz fits into the overall culture in the USA. Most importantly, though, they understand what it meant to be a woman, an African American woman at that, who was not only truly great but

accepted as such by the jazz community.” There were musical concepts and ideas introduced and reviewed; students studied aspects of jazz including instruments, styles, artists, and form. They also talked about the fact that music is a form of communication, even when lyrics are not present. There were other comments about the performance that indicate for each class, there were specific issues that popped up. For example, it was, at times, difficult to understand the words due to the nature of performance in a gymnasium. Another teacher observed, I feel that this project was a stretch for many of our students. While other teacher wrote, There was hardly any background knowledge whatsoever for most students on the subject of jazz. We serve a wide population of students and have a high rate of absences and mobility. This is especially challenging given the fact that music classes meet only three times per week, and once a week as a double class. However, what we were able to accomplish despite all these obstacles is, in my opinion, remarkable. Our test data showed a 71% increase in knowledge and includes all students regardless of academic ability, attendance, and language. This was an excellent experience overall.

Language Arts/Reading Teacher (Staci Uebersetzig) vaguely knew of Mary Lou Williams before the project and she had the following observations about the students in her class; “My students engaged in several reading activities that allowed them to gain knowledge of Mary Lou Williams, Fabu, and spoken word poetry. They also had the opportunity to see some spoken word performers (“Brave New Voices” DVD) and write their own original spoken word poetry.” “The presentation could have tied in well with the poetry unit I teach, but the timing was not right (I teach poetry in February).” “In Language Arts, students got really excited and motivated to write with spoken word. This aspect of the project will have the most lasting impact on my students.” More to the point, some of her students connected what they learned in music class to what they learned in

language arts/reading class. “We discussed jazz briefly and connected it to the reading activities we did. Some students were even able to connect to what they were learning in their music classes.”

Learning Coordinator (Jeff Horney) was also somewhat familiar with Mary Lou Williams’ work before the project and addressed music, language arts and social studies standards in his class. He thought that the performance primarily helped with music standards. He observed that “it was important that students were exposed to this style of music (jazz). It is slower than what they are used to. The juxtaposition of spoken word and jazz is new and it expanded their horizons. The performance contributed to their familiarity with blues, jazz, boogie-woogie, scat, et al. It was a unique opportunity. Ms. Williams’ music and life is worth sharing with the children and is of great value, both musically and as a biography.”

### **Toki Middle School**

Toki’s Band Director (Julie Verban) had never heard of Mary Lou Williams before the project. She didn’t have support from other staff for her class. “There was none. I worked with my eighth grade students on the MLW activities, the students who saw the performance were 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Due to the lack of additional support, she asked that we opt out of this activity, however our principal was asked again to host a presentation on Williams and then put me in charge. I had cancelled because no LA staff member had volunteered to work with the project. So the choir teacher and I took it on at our principal’s direction. Due to time constraints for the availability of the group, we were unable to have an appropriate grade level or give any preparation for the performance.” This teacher’s reluctance to host the presentation was obvious in her responses on student impact. “It was clear that this performance was not an activity appropriate for the students who saw it (6th graders). While half of our audience did a



pretty good job sitting still for over an hour, any middle school student would have been challenged to do so for that length of time, especially when they had very little understanding or preparation. My band students knew a bit about MLW, and learned a little more (if they were attentive) from the performance.” She did not introduce any new ideas or musical concepts but stated she worked with eighth grade students on the MLW activities, the students who saw the performance were 6th graders. She concluded that this performance and activity was more appropriate to 8th grade language arts, and would have been great if music and Language Arts could have worked together. Unfortunately, no one showed interest when asked. Her last comments were “I personally really enjoyed the performance. It was excellent and a delight to be in the audience. Not so much for the students who saw the program. The performance should have been hosted by Language Arts staff. The length and content of the performance was better suited for an 8th grade audience. The performance should have been preceded (by a month) by an introduction to Jane and Fabu, and a suggested curriculum or discussion format for teachers and students. This also would have fit in well with 8th grade Social Studies curriculum (race, women). Cherokee Middle School offered an introduction to jazz, and women in jazz. Toki did not and it is this teacher’s opinion that such an introduction was crucial, since she felt she was overworked. If we want to have a cross-curricular activity, the assignments shouldn’t fall on just one person (i.e. music staff). ”

Oregon High School (Leyla Sanyer, Orchestra Director and Music Composition Teacher, and President-Elect, Wisconsin Music Educators Association) had a different perspective about the Poetry and Music presentation. She noted that “The kids have not stopped talking about Jane and Fabu’s presentation, and the issues embedded in this woman’s history have raised questions and initiated many discussions in my classes about the nature of sexism and racism in the music industry and history. I have a poster that

shows the increase in women composers from 1900 to now. I have asked the kids, “Do you think there really were no women writing or thinking music during the times before 1900?” “Why do you think we mostly study music from dead white European males?” And then there was the question of “who influenced who” that I stepped into myself re: Mary Lou Williams and Duke Ellington. It was a wonderful week!

Thank you for your dedication, your finesse and your willingness to join us and share the music and poetry. You have helped to reshape how my students think about being a musician.”

Stoughton High School (Jim Keeney, Chairman, English Department) wrote “Thanks again for the great music on Friday. The response from my students has been very positive, both for the reading and the music. Please convey our thanks to Jane and Fabu. They brought a genuinely unique experience to Stoughton High School.”

### **5.2.13 Middle and High School Jazz Ensembles: Studies, Practice, and Performance**

This section highlights the voices of the audience who attended the middle and high school ensembles, studies, practice, and performances. Spring Harbor Middle School (Ben Jaeger, via Laurie Fellenz) as a band director, he had never heard of Mary Lou Williams before the project. “The observations on student growth were the music was challenging, but I feel that my middle school jazz musicians rose to the occasion, e.g., the “B” section of the tune (Walkin’ and Swingin’) was difficult, but a great challenge for the students. They learned a lot about jazz rhythms and concepts – the piano part alone was quite rich with new concepts. The triplet patterns in the saxophone parts were new, and my students were able to master that rhythmic idea. They also were introduced to many new fingerings and accidentals in their music.”

He introduced new musical ideas and concepts such as The Mary Lou Williams music was our first swing tune of the year. “It was great to be able to contrast that with

the style and needs of our funk tune. We were able to learn much more about swing patterns, both how they are played and how reading and interpreting them is different from concert band literature. We talked about and defined what makes up a rhythm section and what role each member plays. Improvisation was a main concept that we focused on throughout the work.”

His assessment of what would have the most impact was working with Jim Doherty and the UW Jazz Orchestra members. “Doherty and the UW Jazz members are what I believe will have the most lasting impact on my musicians. Jim came in and really “cleaned up” the ensemble. I especially liked his use of the concert “FAT/SHORT” to describe the articulations in different phrases. Jim has excellent, memorable, and concise ways to explain to the students how to play together. He worked on off-beat entrances. I also noticed how focused my students were for the entire clinic, and it was an excellent experience for them to see and hear from college kids.”

The Mary Lou Williams presentation didn’t actually impact African American participation in any significant way. “Participation did not actually change my enrolment of African American students, but what I did notice is how engaged they were in this content and her music. They answered more questions, added more comments to discussions, and they musically contributed at a more significant level. I also believe that because of the focus on Mary Lou’s music and having guest artists at our school, we brought in a much larger audience of many demographics who do not normally attend middle school jazz concerts. ”

West High School, Jazz West Band Director (Matt Rodgers) had also never heard of Mary Lou Williams and 3 of 4 responding students had never heard of her, and the other one student only vaguely knew of her. Despite their lack of knowledge, they were able to understand facets of the Kansas City Swing style. He noted “After attending

the UW Jazz Orchestra-hosted clinic, the band was very familiar with the Basie style of developing background riffs on the spot. They grew in their ability to play softer to support a lower volume from the amplified instruments. Some of the new musical ideas and concepts were building backgrounds to solos on the spot, matching volume of acoustic piano and bass to get a more “period” sound, Swing music of the 1930s and 1940s was DANCE MUSIC, and thus the need to make people want to dance.”

He hoped that his students receive a new depth of understanding of “Active Listening,” working and responding as a unit to a soloist or ensemble, that being able to focus on a small number of tunes and really get to know them can be very satisfying. He said “We are often doing more music, only up to a certain quality level, and it was nice to be able to dig into two pieces really heavily.”

He said, “In Jazz West, the composition of our group was already set before we performed and I have not seen a change in African American participation. I really hope there will be an increase in African American students involved in jazz moving forward. The fact that our band is overwhelmingly “white” is definitely a concern, given the high number of influential Black jazz musicians. While focusing on an African American woman was great, I have not seen a change in student enrolment/involvement in jazz. It is too soon to tell, but I sincerely hope that sufficient access and encouragement are given to African American youth that are interested!”

Stoughton High School Band Director (Craig Mason) only vaguely knew of Mary Lou Williams prior to the project, and 13 of 17 responding students had never heard of her, and the other 4 only vaguely knew of her. His observations on student growth are, “It is inexplicable. I introduced the idea in May, the recordings in June, and the actual music in August. From the start, the students latched onto her music with great

enthusiasm. Several of them wrote articles about her for our school newspaper and papers for some of their classes.”

“Swing, of course, but also the difference between that era of swing versus today and voice combinations/colours of sound were the new musical concepts that I introduced. The student impact was significant because of performing at the Overture Centre with other students, performing with the UW Jazz Orchestra and learning about Ms. Williams’ history and life. There wasn’t any impact on African American participant, as our black population is extremely small, however, it was nice for my students to be at the Overture with the diversity that was there. We are somewhat sheltered, but I try!”

East High School Band Director (Scott Eckel) didn’t know of Mary Lou Williams prior to the project. 17 of 27 responding students had never heard of her, 7 vaguely knew of her, and only 3 were “somewhat familiar with her work.” His observations of his students were they have shown a better historical view of the music we are playing. They understood the origins of big bands and how they performed. They also had a better concept of what their instruments can do in a jazz setting. “The musical ideas and concepts introduced were we looked at boogie-woogie the most, since we started with Williams’ composition, “Roll ‘Em.” We also concentrated on blues improvisation and style.”

While there was no impact on African American participation, he believes the clinic work will be what students remember the most. The students enjoyed working with the clinicians and picked up a great deal in the smaller sectionals. The concert with all the other bands was a very enjoyable experience for the kids. He said, “Overall, an excellent program! Thank you so much for inviting East High Jazz. We had a great time!”

Memorial High School Band Director (Jon Schipper) was “somewhat familiar” with the work of Mary Lou Williams prior to the project. None of the 9 responding

students had never heard of her, and the other 4 only vaguely knew of her. His observation on student growth was it was interesting to see the change in our band's approach to this music once he played recordings of Walkin' and Swingin', especially after the first rehearsal. "I had recommended that they log-on to iTunes in order to really interpret the style, and many of my students did. It was also great to see the saxophone section and trumpet player be aggressive with learning the solo. I think in some ways, they "owed" it to the composer to play it cleanly and with conviction. Overall, the band approached their other music with the same effort, and our concert in November (besides the Mary Lou clinic in December) was a great success. "

The new musical ideas and concepts he introduced were the incorporation of syncopation in a relatively straight-forward 2-beat song. Students were asked to "lay back" on the backside of the beat when playing the music. Rhythm section learned the importance of listening across the section and communicating even in the middle of a tune. Horn players were asked to interpret the light articulation of the recordings. We used scale exercises to work on this concept.

Student impact: "The most lasting impact came from the concert itself. The kids really appreciated the opportunity to hear this music played on a professional level from the UW Jazz Band and the clinicians. The live sound was really unmatched, and the performance of both the duo pieces and the massed piece "Scorpio" was captivating for many students. A few of my students even remarked that they were interested in purchasing "Zodiac Suite" after the concert."

Unfortunately there was no impact on African American participation since there was no change in the % of African American student participants in my ensemble based on the project. He noted, "While I believe that there was no change in the audience demographics based on the project, there were positives to learning more about this

African American artist and her role in American history. The history of jazz can sometimes include negative details about the lives of many great musicians. Mary Lou's story is unique, and I can see the benefit of having all students (regardless of race or ethnicity) learn about the life and legacy of this amazing woman.”

#### **5.2.14 Survey of Centennial Members and Partner Organization Representatives**

After completion of the Celebration, members of the Centennial Committee and representatives of the partner organizations were surveyed to assess their pre - and post-knowledge of Williams' life, music and legacy. See Appendix 7 for their detailed responses to the survey. Of the ten responding Committee members only two had known about her music, but did not know about the biographies or any other detailed information about her, before working on the Celebration, while eight members had not even heard of her prior to their involvement with the Centennial, and of the responding six partner organization representatives, none reported having significant knowledge of Mary Lou Williams' contributions before the Centennial Celebration. As their detailed survey responses reveal, all Committee members and partner representatives gained substantial knowledge of Ms. Williams and her contributions to jazz by the end of the Celebration.

The survey of Committee members and partner organization representatives revealed that, while highly motivated to increase public appreciation of Mary Lou Williams, most had scant knowledge of her before starting to work on the Celebration. They dramatically increased their knowledge as a result of planning and delivering the Centennial's programs.

Based on my previous research and assessment, and the minimal exposure to jazz music across all age groups in America, I surmised that the percentages of people unaware of Williams would be this high and these findings support my assertion in this dissertation that Williams was unknown or had been forgotten. Yet I did not expect to

find such scant awareness of Mary Lou Williams and her contributions to jazz among the teachers who directed the participating school jazz ensembles and other knowledgeable members of Madison's music community, prior to the Centennial Celebration.

Since the concerts and educational programs were essentially one-time interventions, their impact on audience knowledge and appreciation of Williams' contributions exceeded my expectations. Their impact, and the impact of the immersion of Committee members and community partners into Williams' music and legacy, supports my assertion that her genius will be remembered when people have more opportunities to learn about and hear her music.

### **5.3 Rebuilding the Connection between Jazz and the Black Community**

#### **5.3.1 Black Community survey**

With its programmatic focus on the legendary but under-appreciated African American artist, Mary Lou Williams, the Centennial Committee set out to engage African American audiences by producing programs that:

- featured African American performers and/or educators,
- were co-produced with an African American community-based organization
- such as Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Kujichagulia Centre for Self-Determination - Dane County and Johnson Brothers Entertainment,
- were presented at venues typically frequented by large numbers of African Americans and/or located in a neighbourhood with a high concentration of Black residents, e.g., Mt. Zion Baptist Church, public schools with a high concentration of African American students, and other venues on Madison's South Side, were promoted heavily through our local Black community's formal and informal communication channels, e.g., African American and multi-ethnic media,



listservs, church bulletins, etc., and/or provided free admission, or provided a substantial number of free tickets through black community organizations.

African Americans comprised 20.2% (1,614) of the 8,008 attendees at Centennial Celebration events. Table 5.17 below shows that at least one of these five strategies was employed for 49 of the 51 Centennial events, and it summarizes the extent to which the use of these strategies impacted African American attendance.

The Centennial also secured considerable financial support from Madison’s African American community. Prominent local African American leaders hosted three of its home-based pre-concert fundraising receptions, and 29 donors (25 individuals, two black community organizations, a local book club, and a popular black-owned barbershop) 163 contributed 26% of the charitable gifts (non-grant funds) secured by the Committee to support Centennial Celebration programming.

### 5.3.2 Impact of Black Community Engagement Strategies on African American Attendance

<b># of Key engagement Strategies in Centennial Event</b>	<b># of Centennial Events</b>	<b>% of Centennial Events</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>	<b>% African American Attendance</b>
All 5 Factors	13	25.5%	1,226	43.0%
3 or 4 of the 5 Factors	15	29.4%	3,427	28.4%
1 or 2 of the 5 Factors	21	41.2%	2,955	3.9%
None of the 5 Factors	2	3.9%	400	0.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,008</b>	<b>20.2%</b>

The aforementioned survey of Centennial Committee members and community partners drew responses from seven African Americans (two Committee members and five community partners). As noted in Appendix 7, eight of the ten had very little or no

prior knowledge of Williams' life, music and legacy. Their survey responses indicate that, through participation in producing the Centennial Celebration, these African American participants developed a considerable appreciation for Mary Lou Williams' music and cultural contributions and emerged with a desire to learn more about her and explore her music further.

The high rate of African American attendance and participation in the Centennial's programming was a remarkable achievement, with the aforementioned 20.2% attendance rate being 2.5 times the roughly 8% African American share of Madison's population in 2010, and at least 4 times the typical African American turnout 164, for jazz programming in Madison.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it was a stunning achievement to have such a large turnout of African Americans at the three Centennial concerts that were staged at the Overture Centre for the Arts, Madison's premier performing arts centre and a downtown venue that had been struggling to attract Black audiences.<sup>9</sup>

As Table 5.17 indicates, the greater the use of the above-noted engagement strategies, the greater the attendance of African Americans at Centennial events. Further, an analysis of the deployment of these programming and outreach strategies revealed that the three most impactful ones were those that (a) featured African American performers celebrating Mary Lou Williams, (b) had co-sponsorship by one or more African American organizations, and were presented at venues that typically attract large numbers of African Americans.

Subsequent local research<sup>10</sup> confirmed the effectiveness of these strategies in attracting African American audiences to jazz events, and shed additional light on the relative importance of each strategy.

Perhaps most illustrative of the Centennial Celebration's success in attracting Black attendance were three major autumn concerts: African Americans comprised 20%

of the audience at the Mary Lou Williams Birthday Concert (5/2/10), 35% at the Mary Lou Williams @ 100 concert (10/2/10), and 52% at the Mary Lou Williams Youth Explosion concert (11/22/10).

In June 2013, Madison Music Collective (the Centennial's fiscal agent) received a 30% response rate to its survey of the roughly 125 African Americans who attended the headline concert at that year's Isthmus Jazz

Festival regarding the reasons they attended the concert. The star of that concert was African American jazz vocalist Carmen Lundy, admission was free, and the Collective employed an intensive person-to-person promotional effort among African American music fans. The three factors considered most important by respondents in their decision to attend were "the fact that they received a personal invitation from a friend" (82.9% of respondents said it was a "very important" factor), "the fact that Carmen Lundy is an African American performer (75.0% said it was "very important"), and "the price of admission" (72.2% said it was "very important").

"Mary Lou Williams @ 100" concert, for which African Americans were 35% of the 500 attendees (prominent Black artists, with over 100 complimentary tickets distributed through African American community organizations);

"Mary Lou's Mass" concert, for which African Americans were 40% of the 600 attendees (prominent Black artists, hosted by Madison's largest predominantly Black church on Sunday morning, with free admission); and the "Mary Lou Williams Youth Explosion" concert, for which African Americans were 52% of the 270 attendees (performances by the largely Black youth from the Centennial's Jazz-and-Spoken-Word workshop series and teen-age vocalists from

Madison's largest predominantly Black church who performed Ms. Williams' music, with free admission).

As with the Centennial's attendees and participants in general, these findings support my assertion that the genius of Mary Lou Williams will be recognized, celebrated, remembered and acknowledged when African Americans have more opportunities to learn about and hear her music.

With African American philanthropy focused to a great extent on organizations and institutions that are indigenous to the black community (churches, community service and advocacy organizations, historically black colleges and universities, etc.), the degree of financial support for the Centennial Celebration from Greater Madison's African American community was remarkable and unprecedented for a local jazz producing organization, few of which have significant black participation at the leadership level.

### **5.3.3 Increasing Community Understanding and Appreciation of Jazz while Helping Secure its Future as a Living Art Form**

An important goal of the Centennial Committee was to connect jazz to the overall community so that people would understand and appreciate this original art form and when that happened jazz would be secure in its future as a growing, thriving and living art form.

Specific surveys were given aimed at increasing community understanding and appreciation of jazz. Attendees at three of the Centennial Celebration's major public concerts (Mary Lou Williams Birthday Concert, and the two Fall Festival Weekend concerts: "Mary Lou Williams @ 100" and "Mary Lou's Mass") were surveyed to obtain a profile of their current interest in jazz and to assess concert attendance's impact on their desire to delve more deeply into the music. The findings are presented below in Table 5.18.

Question	Answer	% of respondents		
		Birthday Concert (N=44)	Fall Festival Weekend Concerts (N=14)	TOTAL (N=58)
Interest in jazz before today's concert?	None/very minimal	2.3%	14.3%	5.2%
	Moderate	34.1%	42.9%	36.2%
	Great	63.6%	42.9%	58.6%
Interest in getting deeper into jazz after today's concert?	Yes	77.3%	85.7%	79.3%
	No	6.8%	0.0%	5.2%
	Maybe	15.9%	14.3%	15.5%

Assessments of student learning were also conducted at the Centennial's Jazz-and-Spoken-Word after-school workshops. These workshops were conducted at local community centres with students who had a strong prior interest in Spoken Word poetry but little or no prior knowledge of jazz. The lead teachers for these workshops designed and administered student self-assessment surveys to measure their participants' growth in their jazz knowledge. These surveys found that 82% of the 21 students who completed the full 7-week program (86% of whom were African American) reported growth in their jazz knowledge of at least "7" on a 10-point scale.<sup>11</sup>

As Table 5.18 indicates, just over 2/5 of audience members (41.4%) had at best only "moderate" interest in jazz before attending the Mary Lou Williams Birthday Concert and/or Fall Festival Weekend concerts. An even greater share of the Fall Festival Weekend concerts (57.2%) had at best only "moderate" prior interest in jazz. However, attendance at one or more of these concerts resulted in a doubling of interest in getting deeper into jazz, with nearly 4/5 (79.3%) expressing that desire. These results showed that concerts focused on the music of one legendary jazz artist could have significant impact not only in interest in that artist, but also more broadly in jazz.

## **5.4 The Importance of Youth Outreach in Promoting Williams' Visibility**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

The Centennial's youth outreach efforts were successful, as nearly half (49.5%) of the attendees at Centennial programs were under age 18. At the two Madison middle schools at which Jane Reynolds and I presented the Mary Lou Williams Jazz-and-Poetry

Program, the participating teachers' post-program assessments indicate that their students knew many of the basics about jazz. (See Appendix 4 for the survey questionnaires used at each school.)<sup>12</sup> In addition, self-assessments showed that participants in the Centennial's Jazz-and-Spoken-Word Workshop participants made significant gains in their knowledge of jazz.

With young people having so little exposure to jazz in their daily lives, the impact of the Centennial's youth programming can be seen largely as a successful opening of their awareness to the music. It created entry points and pathways for further exploration of the music, and a foundation onto which subsequent school- and community-based jazz programming can build.

### **5.4.2 Keeping the Wish of Williams Alive Through Inspiring Young Musicians to Learn and Play Jazz**

Nearing the end of Williams' life, all she would talk about is the legacy of jazz and how to inspire young musicians to learn, love and play jazz. With that in mind, the Centennial Committee worked hard to inspire up and coming musicians with Williams in mind.

The Centennial Committee and its partners produced a series of eight concert performances of Mary Lou Williams' music by jazz and classical student musicians at Madison middle and high schools, the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin (UW), and several community-based venues. In addition, through its partnership with the UW School of Music and the Madison Metropolitan School District's Arts Education

Division, the Committee produced a day-long instructional clinic for local high school jazz ensembles conducted by professional clinicians from New York City and Minneapolis as well as student musicians from the UW Jazz Orchestra. All of this effort was to influence young musicians to become jazz artists.

In the Middle and High School Band Leaders Survey, the Centennial Committee conducted a qualitative survey of the band directors at five participating middle and high schools to assess their students' knowledge of, and proficiency with jazz, through study, practice, and performance of the music of Mary Lou Williams. The survey questionnaire, as well as detailed observations from the band directors on the impact of these activities on their students are presented above. While only one Band Director knew Williams and her work, and few of their students did either, all five says that the Centennial Celebration had a positive impact on them and their students. Centennial Celebration programs and events engaged a total of 356 young musicians and significantly deepened their knowledge of and proficiency with jazz music.

While expecting that Centennial Celebration event attendees would have little prior familiarity with Williams' music and her significance in jazz history, I was surprised to learn that, prior to their participation in the Centennial Celebration, this was also the case with these five middle and high school band directors. The ability of the ensembles to deliver satisfactory performances of the challenging music of Mary Lou Williams is testimony to the professionalism of these teachers: their willingness to lead the exploration of unfamiliar music and their expertise in preparing their students to perform this music.

These school-based activities were made possible by resources provided to the band directors by the Centennial Committee. Through its partnership with the Institute of Jazz Studies (IJS) at Rutgers University, the Committee's Managing Director, Leotha

Stanley, identified the big band charts that would be available to our local band directors from the extensive collection of Mary Lou Williams' materials housed at IJS. Stanley then worked with each school band director to identify and secure copies of the charts that their students would be learning and performing. As with other segments of the Madison community, students and their teachers welcomed the opportunities to learn about Mary Lou Williams and to hear and perform her music.

Besides the short-term impacts described earlier in this chapter, the Centennial Celebration is viewed as having inspired creation of, and having laid the groundwork for, the Greater Madison Jazz Consortium. The Celebration (a) demonstrated what can be accomplished through collaborative planning and execution, (b) established cooperative relationships among local jazz organizations and venues that had been operating largely in their individual silos prior to the Centennial, and (c) identified a financial support base among state and local grant makers and private donors for new initiatives to strengthen the local jazz scene.

In its first eight years, the Jazz Consortium has pioneered an array of popular performance and educational programs. They included jazz mini-festivals in neighbourhoods throughout the Madison area, jazz artist residencies in the public schools, a fellowship program that commissions new works by local jazz musicians, a new concert series in two outstanding listening rooms (neither of which previously hosted jazz events) that showcases music composed and performed by local jazz musicians, and expansion of Madison's signature annual jazz festival from a two-day event on the UW campus into a 10-day city-wide celebration of jazz. Reflecting one of its founding principles, each of these Consortium programs pays the musicians a fair wage for their work.

Further, with the Consortium's initiatives as a catalyst, local private entrepreneurs have opened new jazz venues, and existing venues have added more jazz to



their live music offerings. Local musicians have brokered new performance opportunities with owners of these and other venues, e.g., restaurants and cafes, and weekly and semi-monthly jazz jam sessions now abound. In addition, jazz fans now have a central online site, the Consortium website's jazz calendar, which makes it easy to learn about upcoming local jazz performances. The Consortium also produces a monthly jazz newsletter (with over 1,500 subscribers) and hosts a Facebook page that helps local jazz fans stay apprised of new developments in the local scene.

Madison's Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration made substantial progress toward each of its five objectives. In fact, all five objectives were realized with various degrees of success. The partnership with Jon Gramling and the Capital City Hues newspaper was a major resource for educating the Madison public on Mary Lou Williams and what she contributed. Gramling featured all of the artists who participated in the Centennial Celebration. The Capital City Hues is a minority-owned, multicultural bi-weekly newspaper based in the city of Madison. Published and edited by award-winning journalist Jonathan Gramling, who was also a member of the Centennial Committee, The Hues is bilingual and features a diverse group of professional writers in the Madison area. The paper ran four articles featuring key participants in the celebration: Father Peter O'Brien, S.J., Ms. Williams' last manager; pianist Geri Allen, leader of the Mary Lou Williams Collective; guest soloists Carmen Lundy and George Shirley; Dr. Tammy Kernodle, who wrote her dissertation and a biography on Mary Lou Williams; bassist Richard Davis; and jazz pianist Jane Reynolds, co-Artistic Director of the Centennial Celebration.

#### **5.4.3 Key Intellectuals Who Contributed to the Mary Lou Williams Madison Centennial Celebrations**

There were several key intellectuals who contributed to expanding audience knowledge about Mary Lou Williams, with the first one being her last manager. Father

Peter O'Brien, (1940-2015) managed the career of Williams from 1964 until the time of her death on May 28, 1981. A year before her death, she set up The Mary Lou Williams Foundation which has a double purpose: to preserve and extend the music and life story of Mary Lou Williams and also to bring jazz to children. He has been the Foundation's Executive Director since 1981 and, during the Centennial's Fall Festival Weekend, he presented a 50-year, multimedia retrospective on her career. In a March 2010 interview he spoke of her being terrified that jazz would not survive. He said that she was a serious artist who had a sense of who she was, without ego, because she had a fire-proof safe where she kept copies of everything she recorded, caused her radio show to be put on acetate, and saved clippings on her career. He talked about Williams' first visit to Madison in 1976, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she conducted a residency that included a performance of Mary Lou's Mass on stage at the Wisconsin Union Theatre.

Pianist Geri Allen, (1957-2017) played the role of Mary Lou Williams in the Robert Altman feature film, *Kansas City*. She also directed the Mary Lou Williams Collective's recording of *Zodiac Suite: Revisited* (2006). Allen performed in Madison at a two-hour retrospective concert that featured the *Zodiac Suite* and a cross-section of other works from all phases of Williams' career. The concert also featured the Collective and guest vocalist Carmen Lundy. Allen led the performance of "Mary Lou's Mass," an hour-long concert, that presented Williams' signature sacred work performed by the Collective, Ms. Lundy, George Shirley, multi-instrumentalist Hanah Jon Taylor and a local choir directed by Leotha Stanley, Music Director at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. In addition, Allen, with the Mary Lou Williams Collective and Carmen Lundy staged hour-long lectures/demonstrations at Madison East and Sun Prairie High Schools. Allen grew up in Pittsburgh in the same neighbourhood as Williams, hearing jazz in her home. It was

not until Allen graduated from Howard University and began her graduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh that she discovered the music of Mary Lou Williams, and began to research her before she later came to know Father Peter O'Brien. Before she died in 2017, Allen was widely recognized as the foremost interpreter of Mary Lou Williams' music.

Vocalist Carmen Lundy, (1954) as with many great African American vocalists, got her start in her home church. She attended the University of Miami as a jazz major and then moved to New York. She was introduced to Mary Lou Williams' music through Father Peter O'Brien who was conducting a concert in her honour and invited Ms. Lundy to perform a few of her vocal pieces to be part of this repertoire. He also hired her to teach "Mary Lou's Mass" to young people. Lundy said "every time I sit down to refresh my memory and to get inside her music, I feel like I'm getting a private piano lesson, a private music lesson from the great Mary Lou Williams. Even to this day, her music is beautiful. It is profound. She is a treasure to the music."

Dr. George Shirley (1934) is a professor emeritus at the University of Michigan and had an operatic career that started in 1959. He was the first African American to sing lead tenor at New York's Metropolitan Opera, where he performed for eleven years. Dr. Shirley performed as the lead male soloist in "Mary Lou's Mass" on October 3, 2010, at Mt. Zion Baptist Church as part of the Mary Lou Williams Fall Festival Weekend. He also conducted two hour-long educational programs at Madison West High School. In his Capital City Hues interview, he shared "For me to sing 'Mary Lou's Mass' is a spiritual experience ... Mary Lou had a depth of creative understanding that is reflected in what she put on the page and how she performed what was on the page ..."

Professor Tammy Kernodle (1969) was discouraged as a Baptist from delving into jazz. She heard Mary Lou Williams and was so taken with her music that she started

researching her. She especially enjoyed that she was not just a performer but a composer who stretched the definition of jazz. She wrote her dissertation on her, as well as a biography that put Williams in the context of the African American experience in America. Professor Kernodle was keynote speaker at “Reflecting on Mary Lou Williams, Envisioning the Future of Jazz: A Symposium.” She explained in her interview that she felt “gender bias” was at play for Williams who mentored Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell and others that are called geniuses, but Williams watched them get the attention and acclaim she never received. She felt Williams was marginalized because of her gender. Also, Kernodle said one of the most important results of Williams’ life was that spirituality was reflected in her music, which she called music for the soul.

Bassist Richard Davis (1930) was young when he saw Mary Lou Williams, whom many consider to be the First Lady of Jazz, play in Chicago when she was playing with Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy. Little did he know that he would play with her decades later. He believes that she is the woman who had the most lasting impact on jazz. “I always thought that Mary Lou had a style that was unique to her own,” Davis reflected. “I can’t say that she sounded like anyone else I knew. Mary Lou was the first. Her music, to me, cannot be classified in any decade. It’s just good piano playing. And I don’t think there was anyone like that since.” Female jazz musicians faced a lot of gender bias back in those days. “Women were kind of alone out there,” Davis said. “They had the band guys expecting them to darn their socks and sew buttons on their shirts. Even the women singers, they looked at them as girl singers. The advice that Davis gives his female musical students now is “to be loud and take no stuff from those guys.” And let their talent speak loudly just like Mary Lou did.

Jane Reynolds, Ph.D., Jazz pianist, and composer; music educator; jazz radio programmer and host (1949) knew of Mary Lou Williams’ work but not that biographies

were written about her. She said of Williams. “Everything she does, whether it is a slow blues because she is feeling pain or the stride because she is feeling the joy, the sacred music she did, 175 it touches me in a very special way,” “There are not a lot of musicians who can really do that so much. She was just wide-ranging. But all of it, no matter what style that she was playing – and she played every single style – it came from the same place in Mary Lou. And it was one of those things that you can’t necessarily explain or put into words. It was her music that spoke and still speaks to me.” Reynolds played Williams’ compositions at the Weekend Festival and noted that Williams was still overlooked even by other women or/and jazz pianists. For Reynolds, Williams’ treatment to date by jazz history was symbolized by an earlier performance she attended in the Madison Civic Centre. “The opening act did a song the y had written about jazz pianists,” Reynolds recalled. “There were no women mentioned, not even Mary Lou. That was very disturbing because this was a jazz pianist doing this and not to recognize any women whatsoever was horrible.”

The Mary Lou Williams Jazz and Spoken Word workshop series was a part of the year-long observance of the centennial of Mary Lou Williams’ birth. Madison’s Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee contracted with Johnson Brothers Entertainment to connect jazz and spoken word. Derek Johnson and Monica Davidson, both spoken word poets, met with groups of youth over seven weeks to help them express themselves through spoken word and to understand the interconnectedness of rap, spoken word, and jazz within the context of African-American and American culture. According to Davidson, the young people were resistant at first to being introduced to a “foreign” musical form but ended up writing poetry that was performed at a Youth Explosion concert on November 22, 2010.

Editor Jon Gramling wrote a special column on the festival weekend, September 30 to October 3, 2010, that featured all of the luminaries above and me as a poet reciting poems about Williams accompanied by Reynolds placing her compositions. Gramling focused on a short synopsis of Mary Lou Williams' career and highlighted four days of the Festival Weekend. The synopsis on Williams was a celebration of the national scope on Mary Lou Williams, an unheralded jazz giant who created an enormous legacy in jazz during her sixty plus year career. He acknowledged that most people had never heard of Mary Lou when they had heard of Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Charlie Parker, all jazz musicians that Williams mentored before they became famous. These are along with Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman, band leaders that Williams created a lot of arrangements for their big bands and new compositions that were hits. Gramling also mentioned the vast collection of music that Mary Lou composed over her distinguished career that spanned every era of jazz including swing and Bebop. He ended the article with the fact that Mary Lou Williams remained in the background in a male - dominated field, but that Madison was trying to give her recognition in this the centennial year of her birth by hosting arguably one of the finest and comprehensive Mary Lou Williams commemorations in the country. The vast majority of the Centennial's events were free and open to the public.

## **5.5 Summary of the Issues**

### **5.5.1 Increasing Community Understanding and Appreciation of Jazz While Helping Secure Its Future as a Living Art Form**

The Centennial provided dozens of highly-accessible programs and events that offered multiple entry points for experiencing, and gaining insights about jazz. In response, the Centennial's concert attendees and educational program participants showed sizable gains in their understanding of jazz and in their desire to get more deeply into the

music. Williams' greatest hope was that jazz would assume its rightful place in the canon of American music and would continue to thrive as an art form.

### **5.5.2 Rebuilding the Connection between Jazz and the Black Community**

In terms of the entire U.S., there is still much work to be done, but the Celebration demonstrated what can be accomplished through more education about Williams and the opportunities to learn about her superb music.<sup>13</sup> When these opportunities are presented, Williams' genius is recognized, celebrated, remembered and acknowledged.

Compared with the African American share of Greater Madison's population and of the typical audience for local jazz programming, the Centennial Celebration engaged a disproportionately large number of African Americans. In so doing, the Celebration demonstrated a successful model that all local organizations can use in attracting Black audiences to jazz. By partnering with black community organizations and media, featuring performances by black artists, and staging events in African American neighbourhoods and venues, local organizations can help rebuild ties between jazz and the African American community. These ties between jazz and the African American community was emphasized by Williams nearing the end of her life. She wanted jazz acknowledged as an original, authentic American music that comes from black people and she wanted black people to be proud of being jazz creators.

### **5.6 Inspiring Young Musicians to Learn and Play Jazz**

The "Mary Lou Williams Fall Festival Weekend" included a symposium, "Reflecting on Mary Lou Williams, Envisioning the Future of Jazz" with papers presented by University of Pennsylvania Professor of Music.

Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., University of Kansas Associate Professor of American Studies  
Sherrie Tucker, Miami (Ohio) Associate Professor of Musicology  
Tammy

Kernodel, Kenyon College Associate Professor of Music Theodore Buehrer, and Columbia University Professor of English, Comparative Literature and African American Studies Farah Jasmine Griffin. In his comments evaluating the symposium, Professor Ramsey remarked that "...we are just beginning to scratch the surface of who Mary Lou Williams was and what she stood for. There was a lot of connecting going on through the quality of these connections, all of us (at the symposium) are going to take that and share it with our audiences, share it with our readership, and share it with our students." school band directors' professional expertise as they prepared their students for, and guided them through. Williams looked to young people as the future of jazz and included them in her performances. In honour of Mary Lou Williams the Celebration gave an African American music student a scholarship to study and play jazz. Williams believed youth were the key to preserving jazz for future generations.

### **5.7 Increasing Local Capacity to Produce More High-Quality Jazz Programs in the Future**

The Centennial Celebration provided the inspiration, and a model, for subsequent multi-faceted collaborative efforts to produce more high-quality jazz programs that are helping secure the future of jazz in the Madison area. As expressed in the Greater Madison Jazz Consortium's goals, these efforts are aimed at (1) creating a more supportive climate for local jazz musicians and venues, (2) expanding and diversifying the local audience for jazz, (3) helping cultivate the next generations of jazz musicians and fans, and (4) attracting more prominent touring jazz artists to perform at Madison area venues. Were Mary Lou Williams alive today, she would be ecstatic to see that she and her music were the catalyst for an invigorated jazz scene in Madison, Wisconsin.

The Centennial Celebration lifted Mary Lou Williams back into her rightful place as a jazz genius in the minds of thousands of people in the Greater Madison area.



Attendees at, and participants in, the Celebration's events increased their knowledge of her contributions, their familiarity with, and appreciation of, her music, and increased their desire to learn more about her. Another way that audiences were educated about Williams was a series of articles in the Capitol City Hues newspaper that all focused on Mary Lou Williams, but also included major players who were in Madison to educate the public about her and her music.

The Centennial Celebration used strategies of education about Mary Lou's life and career, along with exposure to her music, and connection to the African American community as a framework to make Mary Lou Williams visible again. The systematic racism and patriarchy that had such a negative effect on her career during her lifetime was thwarted by a new public acknowledgement of the sheer excellence of her music and her unique story as a black woman jazz pianist, arranger and composer. When people were educated about the dynamic Mary Lou Williams, she became-as she wished-unforgettable. Clearly, strategies that raise the level of consciousness have shown that it's possible for women to struggle successfully against multiple jeopardies.

## CHAPTER SIX

### POETIC RESPONSE TO SIX SELECTED COMPOSITIONS BY MARY LOU WILLIAMS

*“...to bring this jazz history to you, I had to go through the muck and mud”*  
Mary Lou Williams, *Morning Glory*, 279

#### 6.1 Introduction

Every composition Mary Lou Williams envisioned, through her self-proclaimed spiritual gift of “second sight,” before she ever played the notes, had meaning to her, deep meaning. In her unpublished biography, she wrote, time and time again, that “music is everything to me” (Williams). This chapter adds an additional level of original scholarship to the study of Mary Lou Williams’ music through an artistic process called “ekphrasis,” when one artist interprets another. For the purposes of this dissertation, as a poet, I am interpreting six specific jazz compositions by Williams that fit into two broad categories of race and gender, by creating six new, original poems.

I enjoyed poetry as a child, began writing in elementary school and studied it formally as an adult. I earned two Masters, one from the Department of African Languages and Literature and the second from the Department of Afro-American Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, that focused on the origins of African American poetry and the other that focused on the history of African American poetry. A practicing poet all of my adult life, I have four books published; one by the University of Nairobi Press and three by Publishing Companies in the U.S. In honour of my career commitment to poetry, I was selected as the Madison Poet Laureate (2008-2012) and became the first African American so honoured by the Mayor of Madison, the Madison Arts Commission and the city of Madison.

I grew up listening to jazz, first through my father’s extensive jazz collection and later listening to live performances. Mary Lou Williams visited the University of

Wisconsin-Madison in 1976, while I was an undergraduate student at the University of Memphis (Coyle 18). I consider myself to be a “jazz buff,” a person who knows a lot about and is very interested in the subject of jazz (“A Jazz Buff”). During my poetry career, I have written ekphrastic poetry numerous times on many occasions for various art forms, but this is my first unique opportunity to write original poetry about music and the composer in such an extensive manner.

## **6.2 Ekphrastic and Narrative Poetry**

The term ekphrasis derives from the Greek language, where it literally means "description" and was formed by combining the prefix ex- ("out") with the verb "phrazein" meaning to point out or explain. Ekphrasis is the practice of using words to comment on a piece of art, usually a piece of visual art, but it can be music or any art form as well (Merriam Webster). An ekphrastic poem, according to the Poetry Foundation is “description” in Greek. An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on the “action”..., the poet may amplify and expand its meaning (Poetry Foundation).

I chose to write the poems about Williams in the genre called narrative poetry. Narrative poetry is defined as having the form of a story or representing a story (Merriam Webster). In writing about her musicality and portraying her life and career, narrative poetry served best in expressing the complexities of a personality like Mary Lou Williams in story form. These original poems are written in narrative style, through ekphrasis. They are written as a poetic response to Mary Lou Williams’ music in order to expand the meaning of her music through the use of expressive words. In the introduction to the subject of ekphrasis, Jane Hedley, a Stapleton Emeritus Professor of English at Bryn Mawr College, has written extensively about ekphrasis that “in writing about someone

else's art, she (the poet) is engaged simultaneously and self-consciously in creation and interpretation" (Hedley 15).

### **6.3 Mary Lou Williams Uses Words**

In 1964, at fifty four years of age, the album *Mary Lou Williams Presents Saint Martin de Porres* was released. Williams wanted to explore the nature of the music she was creating by writing about it, in order to share her legacy with the public. She distributed a single mimeographed page under the title of "Jazz for the Soul" everywhere she played. Here are specific things she detailed in that communication using masculine pronouns;

#### **6.3.1 Origin**

From suffering came the Negro spirituals, songs of joy, and songs of sorrow. The main origin of American Jazz is the spiritual. Because of the deeply religious background of the American Negro, he was able to mix this strong influence with rhythms that reached deep enough into the inner self to give expression to outcries of sincere joy, which became known as Jazz.

#### **6.3.2 Creative Process of Improvisation**

The creative process of improvisation cannot be easily explained. The moment a soloist's hands touch the instrument, ideas start to flow from the mind, through the heart, and out the fingertips. Or, at least, that is the way it should be. Therefore, if the mind stops, there are no ideas, just mechanical patterns. If the heart doesn't fulfil its role, there will be very little feeling, or none... at all.

#### **6.3.3 The Spiritual Feeling: The Characteristic of Good Jazz**

The spiritual feeling, the deep conversation, and the mental telepathy going on between bass, drums, and a number of soloists, are the permanent characteristics of good jazz. The conversation can be of any type, exciting, soulful, or even humorous debating.

And at the bottom of the page, entirely in capital letters, this followed:

YOUR ATTENTIVE PARTICIPATION, THRU LISTENING WITH YOUR EARS AND YOUR HEART, WILL ALLOW YOU TO ENJOY FULLY THIS EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, TO SENSE THESE VARIOUS MOODS, AND TO REAP THE FULL THERAPEUTIC REWARDS THAT GOOD MUSIC ALWAYS BRINGS TO A TIRED, DISTURBED SOUL AND ALL “WHO DIG THE SOUNDS.”

In middle age, the genius jazz composer Williams began to use words to augment and better communicate what she was saying through her music. I am using poetry to better communicate what Mary Lou Williams was saying through her music. The compositions selected here similarly fall into two major themes in this dissertation: race and gender. Out of her many compositions, I chose these particular six pieces of music because 1) these compositions have documented history that enable me to research when, where and why they were composed, 2) they constitute some of her most famous and well-known pieces and 3) they reflect various important musical periods in her career. Equally importantly, these six compositions produced an immediate, visceral poetic response when I heard them. All of these poems are written in the voice of Williams herself, in first person, as if she is speaking and they are analysed based on 1) how they reveal important connections to Williams’ life, 2) why the compositions became famous and 3) how and why the subjects of these compositions reflected critical musical periods.

Three selections that deal directly with the subject of race are “Roll ‘Em,” “Lonely Moments,” and “Little Joe from Chicago.” Three selections that reference gender are “Nite Life,” “The Zodiac Suite (Taurus)” and “Scratchin in the Gravel.” All six describe her struggles in being black in a racist, predominantly white country and being a woman in the masculine world of jazz, under an equally restrictive patriarchal system. Over a 60 year career, her struggles with race and gender remained, although there was

improvement for African Americans and women, in general in the U.S., due to the legal achievements won during the Civil Rights and the Women's Movements.

## **6.4 Race**

Mary Lou Williams seldom spoke publically about the subject of race and what she did say indicated she was reluctant to speak about how race adversely affected her life, career and personal world view. She did the opposite in her hand-written autobiography, and wrote honestly and frankly about racism. Williams never went far enough to recognize the historical, cultural or musical connection to Africa because of her insistence that jazz originated with African American spirituals. All her life she maintained, "I grew up out of work songs and the psalms of black people here. Black Americans don't have to go back to Africa to get their dignity..." (Dahl 271).

### **6.4.1 Roll' Em**

"Roll 'Em was Mary Lou Williams's first composition recorded by white jazz man, Benny Goodman. It was a clarinet solo inside of the big band sound in 1937. Andy Kirk, the bandleader of the Mighty Clouds of Joy where Williams was the pianist, was upset that Williams created a hit for another rival band. Williams, while still at the beginning of her career as a composer, was already maturing to the point that she was no longer satisfied with the subservient role that she was forced into under Kirk. She wasn't being well-paid for the compositions that she wrote for Kirk, which is why she was writing for other bands. "Roll 'Em" was consider an anthem of the Swing era. "Roll 'Em" also indicated Williams' mastery over this important era of jazz. She was not only famous for being a swing pianist, playing on the off-beat, but she was known in the band for her imaginative improvisations on the melody. Williams' fame was solidified when she wrote the composition, "Roll 'Em," that best symbolized the Swing era.

Williams felt she was overlooked by Kirk because she was a woman and a dark woman at a time when light skinned-musicians were favored and promoted in bands. Certainly she had a difficult time becoming a pianist with the band because of her gender and complexion. After years of proving her talent to Kirk, she later had a difficult time being acknowledged as an outstanding arranger and composer. Williams felt she was equally overlooked by Goodman primarily because she was African American and woman. Goodman, played jazz for decades before he would hire an African American musician. Goodman made allowances for hiring blacks as arrangers or composers, since they were the hidden geniuses. This racial and gender discrimination meant that Williams didn't reap the financial reward that was her due from royalties.

Williams and Goodman had an "on again and off again" professional relationship and she walked out of a Goodman recording in the late 1940's. Whenever Williams felt disrespected as an artist 'and words (including profanity) did not earn her respect to her satisfaction, despite being under contract, she would walk away from the job. There would always be financial fall out from her leaving and often she would be sued or fined. Never-the-less, Williams remained professional colleagues with both Kirk and Goodman and continue to work with them in different ways up until her death in 1981. Both men attended her funeral in 1981.

Roll 'Em is one of my favorite tunes in Mary Lou Williams's large repertoire. Williams is using swing and traditional jazz in the composition, so I imitate the beat with short words and short stanzas. The poem describes how I think she looked and felt both composing and playing this rocking tune. It also describes her philosophy as an artist experimenting and finding more success with her songs, yet still finding less and less money in her purse, due to lack of payment from her royalties. I use jazz vernacular in the

poem like “chops,” “riffs,” and the fact that Williams was becoming a “formidable” piano woman.

Roll ‘Em\*

Roll ‘Em, Roll ‘Em, Roll for me

Make those ivories jump

To a boogie woogie beat

Mary Lou Williams told her piano

as she experimented in the spring of ‘37

with more and more successful new songs

and less and less money in her pocketbook.

Roll ‘Em, Snap ‘Em, Slap ‘Em beat

Mary Lou Williams had the chops to keep rolling out those Jazz hits.

Jazz in one hand, Blues in the other

boogie woogie with cousin Blues

left hand continuous repeating 8th notes

right hand blues riffs and figures.

Roll ‘Em, Roll ‘Em, Roll for me

Make those ivories jump and shimmy

To a boogie woogie beat

Folks requested Roll ‘Em all the time

It became a Jazz standard

while Mary Lou Williams continued growing and changing

into a formidable piano woman.



## 6.4.2 Lonely Moments

Williams began seriously composing music in her 20's. In 1938, at age 28, she wrote "Lonely Moments" and it was recorded by Boots & His Buddies. She didn't personally record the piece until almost a decade later. She left Andy Kirk's band in 1942, and traveled with her husband, trumpeter Shorty Baker, who was a member of the famous Duke Ellington's band. This connection gave Ellington a more personal relationship with Williams.

"Lonely Moments" reflects Williams in mid-career when she left the big band scene and went solo. As a solo artist, she organized trios with other jazz artists and took more control of her own career. Arranging and composing for other jazz artists became an important component of her new direction as an artist. Williams loved composing and arranging in order to get her music out into the jazz world and to show everyone that she was phenomenal in both these areas too. Over her long career, she composed and arranged many pieces for Ellington, and as well as composing and arranging for Benny Goodman too. Both men were eager for the highly inventive work of Williams who was quickly becoming an expert in every area of jazz as a musician, arranger and composer.

Bebop was a form of jazz that was not danceable, but required close listening to for its complexities. Bebop usually had a fast tempo, complicated chord progressions, with changes of key and marked by improvisation and instrumental expertise. Once again, Williams quickly learned and excelled at playing Bebop before she began writing Bebop pieces. When she conquered Bebop as a pianist and played it as well or better than the younger Bebop musicians, the next logical step for her was to compose a BeBop composition like "Lonely Moments." After she composed "Lonely Moments," almost ten years later she arranged it in 1947 for Benny Goodman. This selection enabled Goodman to successfully transition from his familiar big band sound into Bebop in 1947

by using this Williams composition. "Lonely Moments" with its mix of major and minor modes, and its ability to give Goodman a comfortable bridge to sounding modern, was a commercially successful piece.

By 1948, Goodman broke up his big band and formed a new group that featured modern jazz. His decision excited Mary Lou since she was always looking for new and different ways to express her music. A young black woman's arrangements regularly being played by a white band was revolutionary. Williams was also responsible for Goodman hiring jazz guitarist Charlie Christian in his band, but only because Christian was an extraordinary musician. Goodman maintained he wasn't a racist because he never previously hired black jazz musicians. Goodman said, "it's not me; it's the guys. All this business of black and white guys upsets the band" (Dahl 192). Yet, when he heard Christian play, he immediately hired him. Christian had been with Goodman for a very short time, when he called on Williams' for help, "You got to stop him! Benny Goodman's stealing everything I do. One night I play a riff, and it's my riff, and the next night he's got it in his licks. This has been going on ever since I been here" (Dahl 195). Goodman believed he had a right to steal Christian's style of playing without acknowledging him because he was a black man who worked for Goodman. This is a prime example of the white jazz artists who stole from black artists and grew rich and famous from their thefts. Benny Goodman represented the whites who usurped the jazz music they historically hated when it first began, played it half as good as black artists and yet, were making tons of money off of this African American musical form. They often gave no credit to blacks, as in the example of Goodman freely stealing Christian's jazz notes.

Goodman loved Williams' compositions, although he had serious reservations about going into Bebop. He felt like this type of jazz "jarred his ear and that it was

nervous more than exciting music” (Dahl 196). Yet, he followed the lead of Williams into this new musical territory. She had to talk him into using the piece and “Lonely Moments” was a success with critics who applauded it as fresher and more adventurous than anything Goodman had previously done. This piece went to Goodman and from there into the jazz halls of fame.

When I heard “Lonely Moments” I felt like this particular piece was symbolic of a black person first stepping into racism through their birth, then running into racism all of their life. It reminded me of the words in her autobiography where Williams discussed the duality of how she began in life, juxtaposed in how jazz began in America. She wrote about the suffering that she personally experienced from racism as a child, along with the racist disdain that jazz was held in by white critics when jazz was in its infancy too. Mary Lou Williams maintained that “It’s the suffering that gives jazz its spiritual dimensions...only out of suffering is a true thing born” (Dahl 271). The composition, “Lonely Moments,” in the context of how and why it was written, typifies jazz coming out of the suffering of black people’s souls. The melody particularly typifies the anguish of Mary Lou Williams in her personal and professional life. Even the title “Lonely Moments” serves as a credible reason why a creative artist would use her music as a protective shield. I used the anguish in the composition in writing my poetic work as *Jazz and Others*, based on the composition, “Lonely Moments.”

*Jazz and Others (Lonely Moments)\**

I wrote these reflections

On a scrap of paper in between sets.

Jazz created for all people.

Jazz created through suffering.

Got beaten everyday

At school-Amy Frank.---Mary Lou Williams

Right alongside playing music

at an early age

Amy Frank, white girl, biggggg white girl

use to run me down and beat me bad

at school.

She had no appreciation

that I was a child prodigy,

a musical genius. Wonder why?

Do I owe whites anything

for capturing the music of suffering and hope

and its fascinating varieties?

Capturing it and name this Jazz

and that Blues and this over here, Bop?

Maybe they didn't name Jazz.

Maybe Jazz named Jazz.

Maybe a Black woman like myself

trying to make it in the music world

named the Blues.

I like it when Caucasians, Asians, Mexicans, men women, children, others love the music

I play. "Jazz is for all people."

I'd like whites better if I could live off

what I compose and perform and orchestrate.

I like it when others play the music I write.

I don't like it when they take mine, make it theirs and earn big bucks. I don't like that

or those kind at all.

No matter how brilliant the compositions,

The ideas, Decca made the hits and folks

Snatched tunes like mad. I rarely got

The publishing royalties for original work.

I kept right on playing,

Dreaming, playing, creating, playing, playing, playing.

“Jazz is truly for all people.”

Maybe colored play Jazz from the inside

out. I am Mary Lou Williams

and in my lonely moments, I reflect

that I have suffered enough

to play Jazz

in my sleep.

### **6.4.3 Little Joe from Chicago**

Another Williams’ final composition that I interpreted through poetry was “Little Joe from Chicago.” I utilize the African American folks saying, “The Blacker The Berry” in the poem I wrote, because this composition was written in honor of the egregious white manager, Joe Glaser. The African American saying continues with “the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice” and it is a positive affirmation of black beauty and world view (Blair 36). It is a saying that combats the negativism of colourism and its evil effect on the personal and professional lives of African Americans, particularly African American women that were very dark skinned like Williams.

There is also another contradictory African American saying “If you’re black, stay back; if you’re brown, stick around; if you’re yellow, you’re mellow; if you’re white, you’re all right” (Broonzy 36). I learned both of these rhymes in my own southern childhood and wondered about the battles over skin colour that were fought in my community. These folk sayings and children’s rhymes captured racial definitions quickly and succinctly in Mary Lou’s life time and still later in mine. My research uncovered many problems that Williams encountered related to her skin color, yet she wrote a song, “Little Joe from Chicago,” in honor of her controversial white agent, Joe Glaser. The answer to the question of why she composed a song in his honor is mired in the “hate-need” relationship that existed between black artists and white managers and that also existed between Williams and Glaser. Glaser in Williams’ estimation was a necessary evil.

Glaser was the son of a Chicago family of Russian Jews with a father who was a doctor. When Glaser didn’t make it in medicine, he became a boxing promoter and a club manager. In 1928, as a way to avoid pending criminal charges of rape and physical attack, Glaser attempted to marry a 14-year-old girl in Kentucky after kidnapping her from a convent. He was initially sentenced to a prison term, but the Illinois Supreme Court overturned his conviction after deciding that the girl's story could not be verified. She had mysteriously gone missing. A little later, she filed for divorce, saying that Glaser had abandoned her for another young girl (Jones 5).

Glaser shows up again in 1935 in a report about his being charged with involvement in the theft of a truckload of liquor, which subsequently turned up at the Sunset Café. During Prohibition, Glaser operated both the Sunset Cafe (a "black-and-tan" joint that had a connection to gangster Al Capone) and the Grand Terrace Ballroom on Chicago's South Side.

With the help of his alleged mob connections, he started managing Louis Armstrong in 1935. The success of their association caused other jazz musicians to join Glaser and his agency known as the Associated Booking Corporation, formed in 1940 by Joe Glaser and Louis Armstrong. His most famous clients were Armstrong and Billie Holiday.

The temperamental Mary Lou Williams was an “in and out” client of Glaser because she wouldn’t do what he said, when he said it, in managing her career. The biography, *Morning Glory*, explored the complicated relationship that they shared. Glaser was accused of stealing more than his contracted percentage, of being an avid racist, of regularly cursing Williams out when she angered him, but on the other hand, also supporting her in her experimental forays into various genres of jazz music. There were instances that Glaser seemed to recognize her prodigious talent and encouraged her daring and spontaneity.

Recent research into the life of Joe Glaser proves that he was not only racist, but sexist in his discrimination against women too. Evidence indicates that when Louis Armstrong was about to be arrested by Federal Agents for smoking marijuana, Glaser offered to exchange Holliday for Armstrong on a conviction for using heroin. He traded Holliday for Armstrong in a deal with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

When the federal agents broke in Holliday’s door in 1947, she called her trusted manager, Glaser. He advised her not to get legal counsel, she pleaded guilty and spent 10 months in prison. When she came out, she was no longer addicted, but also could no longer sing at any club serving alcohol, which effectively meant her career was over. FBI records showed his devious participation, that the FBI were after Armstrong, but Glaser gave them Holiday instead. Glaser stated he “did it for her own good.” Billie Holliday died shortly after her release (Jones 5). There is no question that Glaser turned Armstrong

into a household name, taking half of his grosses and encouraging him to record white-oriented songs like “Hello, Dolly” and Mack the Knife” and even to roll his eyes stereotypically for the delight of the white audiences. When Armstrong died in 1971, he left an estate worth 10 million dollars based on his talent, but also because of Glaser’s connections as a white criminal.

Glaser first met Mary Lou when she played with the Andy Kirk band, The Clouds of Joy. Glaser was the one who threatened to punish Williams for breaking her contract and leaving the band early in her career. Even then Kirk asserted that Glaser kept double books in order to cheat black jazz artists. It is alleged that Armstrong once told Glaser that if he found out Glaser was stifling him that way, he would kill him (Dahl 105). Black jazz acts couldn’t make the same standard of living without having a white manager to book performances and negotiate salaries. This factor necessarily lead to the exploitation of the artists.

All of Glaser’s criminal past remained hidden for decades. Later in his life, Glaser became one of the most famous artist managers in the world, even organizing tours for the U.S. State Department. He was an early adherent in the racist machine that pillaged African-American talent for white profit. All of his criminal past was forgotten by 1969, when Glaser lay dying and Williams contacted him once last time. On his hospital bed, she turned down his offer at the Plaza Hotel with an unlimited run, at a good salary, with a sextet of her choice. She made this decision because she hated the prospect of working in a nightclub (Dahl 306-307). Mary Lou Williams said when Glaser died that she sincerely mourned him, but by then she had become a devout Christian, praying and forgiving her enemies, even quasi-enemies like Glaser.

When Glaser was the new agent managing the Kirk band, the band members hoped he would lead them to fame and fortune, a hope that never materialized. “Little Joe



from Chicago” is a Boogie Woogie song for Joe Glaser written by Mary Lou Williams, with lyrics by Henry Wells. As mentioned before, Williams was adept at play boogie-woogie and was even referred to as the “Boogie-woogie Queen.” Henry Wells was a trombonist in The Clouds of Joy, and he and Williams penned this tune together, with Wells providing the words. The lyrics from “Little Joe from Chicago” are

Little Joe from Chicago  
He wears a big blue diamond ring  
Little Joe from Chicago  
He never wants for anything  
He has plenty money and he dresses up like a king!

Little Joe from Chicago  
He never spent a day in school  
Little Joe from Chicago  
He never learned a grammar rule  
But now he has money, he makin' things look like it's cool!

The rhythm is syncopated with a boogie woogie bass and unlike the other piece, has lyrics that accompanied it. As a poet, I created this poem by researching the true facts of the relationship between Joe Glaser and Mary Lou Williams’ professional lives. Glaser reportedly told Williams “you are the only woman that is a real musician.” For Mary Lou Williams to hear that in 1938, as a 28 years old artist, must have been like jazz music in her ears. On the basis of that one compliment, she wrote a song dedicated to this man who vacillated between being supportive and unscrupulous. In the poem, just as I surmised what might have actually occurred in real life, Williams had to know that Glaser was placating her ego, real or imagined. What his compliment seem to have indicated is the rarity of compliments and affirmations for black, women pianists. Mary Lou Williams, as one of a very few women pianists, was seldom publically praised to the degree of male pianists. I juxtaposed Glaser’s actual comment and this song with the traditional black folk affirmation of dark beauty inside and out.

The Blacker the Berry

How I Came to Write, Little Joe from Chicago\*

Born in 1910

skin color is a something fierce

rules your life transforms your destiny

if you let it

when you are the color of black satin

It's not just white folks,

Black folks too.

It's not just grown German men

who chased a little chile

through the neighborhood and hit me hard,

yelling curses at a "Blackie."

It was also my family members who whipped

the darker ones a mite bit harder.

Not just childhood

but adulthood too.

The Jazz pianist Hazel Scott

went further than me

cause she was beige while I was black satin.

Hollywood said beige was more becoming

on the big movie screen.

That pale woman

who played jazz piano some

yea, Marian McPartland

it wasn't only talent, it was skin color too.  
She went further than both of us darkies  
cause she lived inside the color, white.  
What did I do but change this skin thang  
into Jazz. I put all that black satin  
unnecessary suffering into my music.  
you know the riff on top of the chord,  
the feeling behind the melody.  
"You're the only woman that is a real musician"  
Agent Joe Glaser said to me. So I played a song for him for telling the exaggerated truth.  
I played a song, "Little Joe from Chicago."  
I know he was talking through his hat but  
hey, compliments are rare for a Black satin woman.  
That's all right cause the blacker the berry  
the sweeter the m-u-s-i-c.  
Can you hear the color of black satin  
in my compositions?

## **6.5 Gender**

Mary Lou Williams was a teenager when she travelled alone and to jobs as a young musician, usually without an escort. In earlier years when she was 14, her mother had made sure she was escorted by an older woman, but that was when her engagements were few. Williams' perspectives on gender and sexuality had to have been formed while on the road, with mostly men musicians, sometimes their wives and girlfriends. Even more seldom, did she have discussions with women who were dancers and singers, due to

the separations between different artists. In 1930, when she recorded “Nite Life,” it was the first record under her own name and it was a brilliant exposition of stride piano. Stride jazz comes from the strong left hand “striding” across the keys. Women pianists were thought to be “weaker” due to their smaller hands, but Williams was a stride expert who proved that her hands were equal in strength to any man.

The recording is also noteworthy because it was made immediately after two traumatic sexual experiences that left her feeling vulnerable, alone and victimized. In the 1930’s in the U.S., unescorted women were particularly vulnerable to sexual assault. Williams wrote about the two incidents, but never told anyone of the first incident of sexual experimentation gone wrong and later the same day of the attempted rape on the way to Chicago to record in a studio. She shared her pain in her unpublished autobiography as a hidden testimony to the gender bias and sexual exploitation that was always lurking for young black women. After both incidents, as she sat at the piano playing, out of this intimate pain came the composition, “Nite Life.”

In a chapter entitled Nite Life (1920-1931),” biographer Linda Dahl wrote directly from William’s diary about these two traumatic sexual occurrences. First, there was Williams’ sexual curiosity in Kansas City with an older black man that ended up causing trauma to her uterus and almost immediately following that experience, an attempted rape by a white conductor on a train to Chicago. She was 20 years old.

Mabel and I were out being daredevils and met a man. He was abnormal sexually. He expressed a desire to do something abnormal to the both of us...(we thought) this would be good to experience and we agreed...after having some wine to give ourselves courage (neither one of us drank!) The guy was a maniac and we couldn’t stop him. He held us and the only way I could get rid of him was to kick him in the head.

After this ordeal we could barely walk. I began thinking of all the tales people had told us about other women who ended up in a hospital after being chewed up (Dahl 75).

Williams had experienced two horrific sexual experiences of gender bias. Although married to John Williams, it was a marriage of convenience because they were both poor and two could eat and pay expenses as cheaply as one. It was a marriage of protection because she needed to be physically safeguarded, since she was a young woman in the midst of a band full of men. Both of them recall, that they didn't really have a sexual relationship in their marriage. Later in their marriage, he had his girlfriends and she had her boyfriends (Dahl 46).

She also married Williams because they were both devoted to music. As a young woman starting in jazz, she was shy and didn't feel empowered to advocate for herself. It was her husband who promoted her, organized their schedules and kept her money. She supported him in his career as a saxophonist and didn't complain about his gambling. Williams wrote arrangements that featured him and gave him solo performances. Her husband and the band left her behind in Kansas City, while they went to record in Chicago.

Musicians were often bored as they waited for the next "gig," their next employment opportunity. These reasons might explain her sexual curiosity and willingness to go with a strange man, but in the midst of the experience, she had to fight him off because he was physically battering her. More tragedy connected to this incident is that her medical records revealed years later that her body bore evidence of uterus trauma. She believed the problem in her uterus happened at that time of this violent encounter. Permanent damage to the uterus due to rough sex, or hard blows or kicks is not uncommon, according to medical doctors. Williams's wrote she thought she had a kind of protection by going into the sexual activity with another woman, a friend, but they both

were injured and this was not a good experience that held lifelong repercussions. It is part of her youthful innocence that she thought this experiment would have turned out differently. Right behind this first frightening encounter, the next night, a wounded Mary Lou, who found it difficult to even sit, boarded a train to record with the band in Chicago.

Williams was awakened by a second assault and while she does not give specific details, this white man was doing “the same thing” to her. It was the conductor on the train, she was all alone this time and once again, had to fight a man off. When she writes “I wasn’t fit for anything when I arrived in Chicago” her despair is evident, yet because of the time, she had to go directly to the studio to record. Despite two episodes of sexual brutality in two days, along with all of the emotional anguish, physical discomfort and personal embarrassment she was suffering, Mary Lou Williams went into the studio and produced two shining solos (Dahl 76), one of which was “Nite Life.”

This incident of gender bias escalates because the band was not ready when she arrived, so she sits at the piano and plays not knowing she was being secretly recorded. Musically she said “I had been in the habit of making up my own things when asked to play. Out of this training and the way I was feeling the beat, came Nite Life...” (Dahl 76). Despite the reissues of Nite Life through the years, she never earned any royalties, though she fought for them for years. Mary Lou Williams was victimized by men several times in many different ways; both personally and professionally. She was taken advantage of emotionally by an older black man who sought a sexual experience, physically when the white Conductor tries to rape her and financially when producer Jack Kapp records her solo without telling her. Kapp issues the records and she never receives any payment, only the notation that it is Mary Lou Williams in her first recording.

As an African American woman artist, Williams was plagued by gender bias both personally and professionally, yet she persevered in making a career in jazz. When I

listened to her playing “Nite Life”, on the surface of the music, I hear her determination to keep living, to keep creating in the lively upbeat tempo. Underneath the fast pace, I hear the pain and loneliness of being a woman open to sexual attack and abuse. I hear all the years of being around men when she wasn’t respected or protected and I try to capture these conflicting emotions in my poem with the same title.

I wrote this poem to capture her resolve as a woman wanting to be the best artist she can be and also to be able to live off of her earnings. She was denied the rights and income that her compositions should have given her, because she was cheated out of royalties. In this specific selection, I hear the duality of her experience; the joy in her ability as an artist versus the grief of her reality as a woman. I hear that her music was her voice in the world. Only by playing was she able to prove herself strong, by playing as good, most times better than other men musicians. Her arrangements and compositions were her way to be whole in the world, and not have to be subservient because of her gender, being a woman pianist in the world of jazz.

I entered into this particular piece culturally, through a familiar process, “Call and Response” (MasterClass). This African American creative process invites the audience to participate in the collective work. In staying true to my cultural roots, I employed this musical technique which works like a conversation. Williams’ struggle with gender discrimination was personalized by her and she gave little acknowledgement of the systematic nature of the bias. Williams was unwilling to face the reality of gender bias, just as she didn’t acknowledge racism. She was not a feminist, neither did she acknowledge gender or sexual exploitation. According to Bell Hooks, a preeminent feminist writer, the simplest definition of being a feminist, is understanding that “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation and oppression” (Hook 1). Williams never spoke publically about sexism, sexual exploitation and oppression,

although she was a victim of all three. She did, however, write about racism freely and extensively in her unpublished biography.

Nite Life\*

No words to explain

when horror happens

respectable people don't speak

nasty words even when nasty stuff hurts.

When a woman travels lonely roads

with male bands – nasty stuff happens

things and things happen under

the cover of evening

in the juke joints, smoky rooms, tired hotels

small towns and sophisticated cities like Chicago, New York in the night time.

I was married and he was a kind of protection

against male stuff

but I was choking from the marriage.

I struck out on my own

and found pieces of love here and there.

Little nasty, medium nasty, lots of nasty.

It's been done to women in the entertainment field.

Yes, horror happens

and I reel from the blows. I go quiet, sad, deep inside wondering about the choices I've made wondering will I be able to smile again wondering with who can I share my pain?

I won't lay down and die



no matter what horror happens  
the victory is in the living  
the victory is in getting up everyday  
and making that piano talk!  
I've look at Nite life from love's bottom.

### **6.5.1 The Zodiac Suite**

Another example of the complexity in understanding the role gender bias played in her life is the example of how Williams took years to compose “The Zodiac Suite,” 12 tributes to mostly men jazz artists. She began writing this long piece in 1945 as a tribute piece to jazz musicians who never once honoured her. In New York City, by 1945, she was hosting a radio show, and had a consistent job at the Café Society, where only the best jazz musicians played. If all that wasn't enough, she decided to compose a piece even more musically ambitious than any she had ever written. This desire led to one of her landmark works, The Zodiac Suite, which showed off her continuing development in mid-career. It is comprised of individual pieces devoted to each of the twelve astrological signs. Zodiac was ground-breaking and no other man or woman had composed such a piece. In addition, it was composed for a jazz chamber group, including woodwinds and strings, and was believed to be the first example of this type of composition (Dahl 160-161).

She wrote and arranged a set of twelve pieces based on the astrological signs of people that she knew. She wrote the first three, Scorpio, Taurus and Gemini right away and (Dahl 160-161) wrote the rest years later. Williams was a Taurus who was also interested in the inner parts of people that were unseen, such as their spirits. After she wrote and recorded “The Zodiac Suite,” other jazz musicians copied her with titled tunes

after sun signs including an English classical composer who wrote a suite about the zodiac.

She was writing harmonically advanced music, not usually associated with jazz but stayed true to the Mary Lou spirit of writing what she felt. Before she finally left The Clouds of Joy over artistic disagreements, she argued with bandleader Andy Kirk, who while he taught her the basics of music theory, would tell her that she was breaking the rules in her arrangements and compositions. She always responded that she was writing what was in her head, what she heard and what she knew to be right. Williams was brave when it came to creating and playing her music.

“The Zodiac Suite” was recorded for Asch Records with piano, bass and drums. She also scored the suite for small chamber orchestra and jazz instruments and premiered the work at Town Hall in December 31, 1945. The following June, she scored three sections of the suite for seventy pieces with piano and symphony orchestra and played these with the New York Pops Orchestra at Carnegie Hall.

This was not the first time jazz had appeared at Carnegie Hall, but it is the first time that a symphony orchestra performed music by a jazz composer. Williams refused to be considered less than any other composer because she wrote from the black jazz tradition. With this concert she felt she moved from the Boogie Woogie Queen to “the name of musicians’ musician.” This composition represented a synthesis of all of her musical knowledge plus her vision for future, unique sounds in jazz (Dahl 160).

The piece, Aires, reflected the qualities of both jazz artists Holliday and Ben Webster. She considered their personalities to be,” moody pioneers; people who create sounds and things you’ve never heard before.” Taurus was Mary’s and Duke Ellington’s sign and she described the two of them as creative, lovers of the arts, procrastinators, but folks who know where they are going and that they epitomized real jazz. Gemini was

Harold Baker who she describes as gentle, playful a person who does two things at one time.

The piece, Cancer, was dedicated to Lem Davis and reflected the order, peace and tranquility in the sign of the crab. The piece, Leo, was for her favourite trombonists, Vic Dickerson, because he was proud, strong and born to rule. Virgo generally was for jazz musicians who were more intellectual than emotional. Libra was the sign for several jazz artists; Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Art Tatum and was written as she viewed them as true lovers of beauty and art.

Scorpio was the sign of passion, creativity, and intensity and she connected that music to Ethel Waters, Katherine Dunham and Al Lucas. Sagittarius was for pianist Eddie Heywood and this one is considered one of the most interesting of all twelve. Capricorn was for dance Pearl Primus and trumpeter Frankie Newton, who she considered as people who are deep, good, but none-the-less sad. Aquarius was dedicated to Josh White and Eartha Kitt for their outgoing personalities. Pisces for bassist Al Hall and club owner Barney Josephson, which she considered a “tricky sign” and it is the only one that includes a vocal (Dahl 161-163).

A few noteworthy points about “The Zodiac Suite” are that Mary chose to select people she not only knew, but was intimate with enough to know, not just their birthdates, but personal details. These were people she respected as artists or/and associates of the jazz world, and most importantly, she composed music that was indicative to her of their exact personalities. She connected the sign to a specific person and to original music that she created as a response. For example, for Taurus she created music that was soft, understated with an underlying deep wistfulness, and the gorgeous chords of the 6-bar theme. Mary Lou was translating her own personality into music.

Gemini is the sign of the twins and reflected her lover Harold Baker, so she used two themes in discord, the bass moving in one direction and the piano in another. Scorpio was one of the most successful signs written where she stressed tonality and wrote and recorded several arrangements; for a piano, a fifteen-piece ensemble and a seventy-pieced orchestral version, as well as a score intended for Duke Ellington's orchestra.

What again is also noteworthy is that these pieces were for a majority men, and the women were only singers and dancers. Of all of all the women jazz instrumentalists that she knew personally or publically admired, or worked with, none are included here, pianists or otherwise. Also by composing the suites and attaching the jazz musicians to them, she is honouring them and promoting them and their musicality. Not one of these men ever wrote a piece in honour of her and her contribution in jazz. In listening to the many pieces of "The Zodiac Suite," I hear again the shining, soaring talent of a genius in this woman artist. I also hear her efforts in "leaning over backwards" with this tribute to promote black men jazzers.

In listening over and over to these 12 pieces, I also reflected on Williams' view of herself as a married woman portrayed in her music. She mentioned in an interview near the end of her life, "jazz musicians shouldn't marry, "he" can't be a great artist and have a marriage" (Dahl 177). The contradiction is that Mary Lou Williams married twice, and always insisted that she wanted children. She is reported to have become pregnant by one of her lovers and aborted the child. Clearly her career in jazz took a personal toll on who she was and what she wanted most in a balanced life as wife, mother and jazz pianist. The order that Williams' would have preferred to live; would have been jazz pianist, wife and mother.

The Zodiac Suite\*

I am a composer, a musician who has worked all my life to write serious music that is both original and creative. ---Mary Lou Williams

takes something strong

to name myself, who I really am:

composer and musician.

something even stronger inside

called discipline, dedication

my whole life long

to be about serious music

that has never been heard and that comes

from the womanheart of me.

I see these jazzmen who make music

men alongside me, young men following me

I see their connections to the zodiac signs.

I travel back some

to my spiritual days to glean their exact connections.

Me and Duke Ellington are creative,

lovers of the arts, stubborn and procrastinators.

Our zodiac sign is Taurus.

Duke understood, was never threatened by Mary Lou.

I worked well with him.

Duke said my music is "Soul on Soul."

Art, Dizzy, Bud, Thelonious, Charlie

and John. I composed like crazy to capture

these jazzmen in one Zodiac suite.

This is my acknowledgment of them  
and their impact on Jazz.

Where is their acknowledgment of me  
and my impact on Jazz?

I write serious, creative music  
from the womanheart of me.

By 1940, Williams was described as a jazz artist not easy to market, since she was playing all of the jazz styles, instead of remaining in one or two kinds of jazz. This meant that it was difficult for her to get a recording contract. Her achievements, according to critics, made her harder to place in the jazz market. Williams wasn't seen as the genius she was for mastering all styles of jazz, but rather, as one critic observed, "Partly because of her multitude of talents and genre switches, it has been difficult to identify a particular stamp of personal style in Mary Lou Williams (Gridley 92).

### **6.5.2 Scratchin' in the Gravel**

Even when the praises kept coming, Williams needed to earn more money. "Scratchin' in the Gravel" is one of many compositions by Williams which has stood the test of time, even though almost all recordings of the melody were performed by the pianist. This richly textured, very bluesy tune was first recorded in 1940 while she was still working with Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy, though she continued to perform this traditional swing piece throughout the rest of her life.

"Scratchin' in the Gravel" is also African American Southern slang that conjures up two images, chickens in rural area scratching dusty fields for corn or worms which symbolized the Black farmer in the South trying to make a living from poor, rocky soil and sexual innuendo for having sexual relations when a man is searching for a

woman. As a poet, I thought about the image of Mary Lou Williams and describing her as a “soulful chick.” I interpreted career like the hungry rooster that was looking and searching. It was Williams who was looking for good despite the hard life spent for jazz with plenty of empty, sorrowful times.

Scratchin’ In the Gravel\*

Scratchin’ in this here gravel

like the hungry roosters do

searchin for good

what was missed

to satisfy me.

Scratchin’ gravel everywhere

grittiness of a life spent for Jazz

go fill the emptiness

the huge hungry places

love and truth inside of me.

Scratchin’ in the gravel

small sorrowful stones

widenin places of regret

## **6.6 Conclusion**

In a 2019 interview with Madison pianist Lawren Brianna Ware, who played Mary Lou Williams’ compositions in an October 2019 tribute to Williams, Ware stated she is an artist who sees musical notes in colors (“Interview with Lawren Briana Were”). This is no different a gift than when Williams saw spirits assisting her with composing music. Ware, despite earning a Masters in Piano Performance from the Music Department

at UW Madison also in 2019, had never heard of Mary Lou Williams until I introduced Williams through these six poems.

In composing my poetry as I listened to these six Williams compositions, I saw the words forming a narrative through ekphrasis and through call and response. In performing these poems at the Isthmus Jazz Festival in 2000, Mary Lou Williams seemed to come alive through the intricate interweaving of my words partnered with her music. In performing these poems again in 2019, Williams was re-introduced to a new Madison audience.

As a poet, I write to encourage, inspire and remind. Writing these poems about Williams and her compositions highlighted the best of poetry's ability to synthesize and shrink a lot of information into poems that captured her essence and her music against the backdrop of her career. My extensive research into Williams' life and career made me more cognizant of the ways race and gender operated and impacted her life. The theme of Black Feminism is threaded throughout the poetry. By continuing to create, compose, arrange and performed piano over 60 years, Mary Lou Williams was a beacon of light against the heaviness of racism and patriarchy.

The inclusion of original poetry added additional creative depth and poetic perspective in translating Williams' life and music. As a poet who has enjoyed jazz since I was a child, I loved making my unique literary perspective intersect with the music of Mary Lou Williams and illuminate her compositions in new and different ways. My poetry was yet another creative translation/arrangement of her music and extends her reach beyond only her musical sounds. It was an invigorating challenge to hear her compositions, read her life story, research all the major places she lived and performed in the U.S. and then synthesize both into original, narrative poetry honoring Mary Lou Williams' complexity as an artist.



Feminist research methodology made this poetry possible because my poetry focused on her experiences and invisibility and place Williams as the center, the focus of each poem. Because feminist research methodology challenges the status quo and says that research should be conducted by a researcher who connects to who she is researching, I am able to amplify and expand on Williams' experiences. This chapter employs reflective, personal and private experiences from Williams in her hand-written autobiography. Most importantly because Feminist research methodology is transformative and seeks to correct imbalances and inequalities in society, it is a viable and valuable tool in this narrative poetry.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

*“Before I leave this world, I’d like to do many great things ...”*

Mary Lou Williams, *Morning Glory*, 287

#### 7.1 Key Findings

The key findings presented in this chapter are organized around the objectives of this thesis. They therefore cover the findings on: (i) Analyze scholarly writings on Mary Lou Williams to identify gaps in the research; (ii) Examine the life and career of Mary Lou Williams in the context of the Civil Rights and Black arts movements; (iii) Analyze the impact of race and gender on Mary Lou Williams’ life and music; (iv) Discuss the strategies used during the centennial celebrations and their possible impact on Mary Lou’s visibility; (v) Present an artist response using ekphrasis and narrative poetry to six Mary Lou Williams’ compositions that expands and amplifies her life experiences through Feminist research methodology

##### 7.1.1 An Analysis of Scholarly Writings: More about her Spiritual Dedication

One of the major gaps identified in the analysis of the scholarly writings by Dahl and Kernodle was the absence of race and gender and their implications in African American women’s lives, including Mary Lou Williams particularly because of their implications in relation to multiple jeopardies. These gaps are discussed in chapter 3 and 4. The key findings are discussed below. Another critical gap in the research is that there was very little focus on her new found spiritual life and the impact that it had on the rest of her life and the rest of her music. At the age of 43, Mary Lou Williams had a spiritual conversion, and devoted her life writing sacred music and serving God. This is an important finding considering that it’s her most unique contribution to jazz.

### **7.1.2 Life and Career in the Context of the Civil Rights and Black arts movement**

My key finding in examining her life and career during the civil rights and black arts movements is that Williams was severely damaged by racism and patriarchy. Rather than participate in the civil rights movement for legal, and racial equality or be a supporter of the black arts movement that espoused a positive racial identity, oppressed by multiple jeopardies, she walked through life surviving through these jeopardies. During the unfolding of both these movements, she was personally involved in a “born again” spiritual awakening and spend the years from 1957 to 1981, ministering to people in need on first a one-on-one basis and then through her Sacred jazz. While the civil rights movement benefited her as an African American and the lack arts movement benefited her by promoting jazz as an important form of black arts, Williams never publically or privately supported either movement.

### **7.1.3 The Impact of Race and Gender on Mary Lou Williams’ Life and Career**

Williams complained about racism and wrote about racist events in her autobiography, though she seldom spoke about racism publically. When she did, she contextualized it as a personal problem and not as a pervasive, systematic problem eroding every aspect of American life. She went to her grave still espousing that there was no gender bias in jazz and that to be accepted in jazz, all a woman needed was to “play. That’s all you need to do is play” (Dahl). She watched as Marian McPartland, a white woman pianist from England, clinched a five-record deal with Capitol records, Thelonious Monk, whom she mentored, recorded for Riverside, and pianists like Horace Silver, Errol Garner, George Shearing and Ahmad Jamal produced albums, when she was not able to produce another LP for eight more years (Dahl 246). In spite of witnessing all this happening around her, multiple jeopardies of race and gender, prevented her from seeing the depth of racism and sexism, and their impact on her life and that of other black

women. Black feminist theories, as presented by African American scholars such as bell hooks provide tools for analyzing the experiences of black women in the context of race, class, and gender. They help us recognize that the multiple jeopardies of gender, race, and colour, and their intersectionality, prevent individuals from seeing the difference between personal problems and political and racial problems.

#### **7.1.4 Strategies used during the centennial celebrations and their possible impact on Mary Lou's visibility**

The Centennial Celebration used strategies of education about Mary Lou's life and career, along with exposure to her music, and connection to the African American community as a framework to make Mary Lou Williams visible again. The systematic racism and patriarchy that had such a negative effect on her career during her lifetime was thwarted by a new public acknowledgement of the sheer excellence of her music and her unique story as a black woman jazz pianist, arranger and composer. When people were educated about the dynamic Mary Lou Williams, she became-as she wished-unforgettable. Clearly, strategies that raise the level of consciousness have shown that it's possible for women to struggle successfully against multiple jeopardies.

## **7.2 Conclusions**

This thesis argued that although Mary Lou Williams was internationally famous as a pianist, composer and arranger and was a major contributor to jazz, and an integral part of this original African American art form, nevertheless because she was both black and woman in a racist, patriarchal society, her contributions were marginalized and her music forgotten because of the multiple jeopardies of race and gender, and how they intersect. The study has successfully presented this argument throughout chapter 3 and 4 in particular, and also demonstrated that appropriate strategies can be used to raise consciousness of black people and other members of the society through education,

exposure to her music, and connection with the African American community on how visibility can be brought to the forefront. We have argued that Mary Lou William's lack of appreciation of the civil rights and black arts movements was as a result of multiple jeopardies and inter-sectionalities that perpetuate the alienation of black women in America. In addition, we have argued that the use of feminist research methods is an appropriate tools for studying the lives and experiences of African American artists and others in other disciplines.

## NOTES

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1. Five (50%) of the Committee's members had extensive connections with Madison's Black communities, and three of the five were prominent African American community leaders. Five (50%) of the Committee's members were women, and all ten had deep roots in, and/or connections throughout, Madison's jazz music communities. See Appendix 5.2 for a roster of Committee members, including their backgrounds and affiliations, and the Centennial Celebration programs for which they played a lead role in conception and/or execution.
2. Several of these partner organizations were indigenous to, and highly-regarded within, Madison's African American community, and made important contributions to the Centennial's outreach to audiences of color. See Appendix 5.2 for a list of these program partners, including their roles within the local African American community.
3. The appendices also include a summary of articles from the local *Capital City Hues* newspaper about leading figures and events during the Centennial Celebration.
4. Our survey questionnaire was multiple choice, intending to distinguish "low," "medium" and "high" levels of knowledge, and thus did not distinguish between "none" and "very minimal."
5. As seen in Appendix 4, the general music teachers at each middle school developed their own unique survey questionnaire. At Toki, but not at Cherokee, students also took a pre-program survey.
6. The music teacher at Cherokee did not report pre-program survey data for specific survey questions. In her report to the Centennial Committee, she observed that "pre-test data showed that students, in most cases, had no prior knowledge of Williams or Jazz." She also reported that "post-test data showed a 71% increase in knowledge overall" and that she believed that "the scores would be higher had the following not been factors: (a) frequent student absences, (b) students with learning disabilities, and (c) language barriers for English Language Learners.
7. Cherokee's general music teacher did not report pre-program survey data for specific survey questions. In her report to the Centennial Committee, she said that "pre-test data showed that students, in most cases, had no prior knowledge of Williams or Jazz." She also reported that "post-test data showed a 71% increase in knowledge overall" and that she believed that "the scores would be higher had the following not been factors: (a) frequent student absences, (b) students with learning disabilities, and (c) language barriers for English Language Learners.
8. At the time of the Centennial Celebration, and outside of band classes and jazz units taught during the school day by music teachers as part of the curriculum, African Americans rarely comprised more than 5% of the audience (and were often considerably less than that) at local jazz concerts and other jazz-related events.

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9. African Americans comprised 20% of the audience at the Mary Lou Williams Birthday Concert (5/2/10), 35% at the Mary Lou Williams @ 100 concert (10/2/10), and 52% at the Mary Lou Williams Youth Explosion concert (11/22/10).
  10. In June 2013, Madison Music Collective (the Centennial's fiscal agent) received a 30% response rate to its survey of the roughly 125 African Americans who attended the headline concert at that year's Isthmus Jazz Festival regarding the reasons they attended the concert. The star of that concert was African American jazz vocalist Carmen Lundy, admission was free, and the Collective employed an intensive person-to-person promotional effort among African American music fans. The three factors considered most important by respondents in their decision to attend were "the fact that they received a personal invitation from a friend" (82.9% of respondents said it was a "very important" factor), "the fact that Carmen Lundy is an African American performer (75.0% said it was "very important"), and "the price of admission" (72.2% said it was "very important").
  11. Table 5.13 reviews the content of the Centennial's Jazz-and-Spoken-Word Workshops, and contains the two student learning evaluation forms used by the workshop instructors to assess student learning relative to jazz and poetry. Each form was completed on a self-assessment basis by each workshop participant. The 82% of participants who reported growth in their jazz knowledge refers to their answers to question #8 on the first of the two self-assessment forms described above on page 8, while their responses to the second of the two forms confirms that workshop participation did indeed yield increased jazz knowledge for a high percentage of the participants.
  12. As seen in Appendix 4, the general music teachers at each middle school developed their own unique survey questionnaire.
  13. The "Mary Lou Williams Fall Festival Weekend" included a symposium, "Reflecting on Mary Lou Williams, Envisioning the Future of Jazz" with papers presented by University of Pennsylvania Professor of Music Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., University of Kansas Associate Professor of American Studies Sherrie Tucker, Miami (Ohio) Associate Professor of Musicology Tammy Kernodel, Kenyon College Associate Professor of Music Theodore Buehrer, and Columbia University Professor of English, Comparative Literature and African American Studies Farah Jasmine Griffin. In his comments evaluating the symposium, Professor Ramsey remarked that "...we are just beginning to scratch the surface of who Mary Lou Williams was and what she stood for. There was a lot of connecting going on through the quality of these connections, all of us (at the symposium) are going to take that and share it with our audiences, share it with our readership, and share it with our students."

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Key Informants

#### Family Questions:

How do you know Mary Lou Williams and her family?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh or any of the cities where jazz was played?

Any additional comments?

#### Manager Questions

How did you meet Mary Lou Williams?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What about her family?

Any additional comments?

#### Historian Questions:

How do you know Mary Lou Williams and her family?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh or any of the cities where jazz was played?

Any additional comments?

#### Pittsburgh Citizen Questions:

How do you know Mary Lou Williams and her family?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh or any of the cities where jazz was played?

Any additional comments?

Questions for Family

Interview with Ms. Bobbie Anne Ferguson, August 29, 2012, niece of Mary Lou Williams.

How are you related to Mary Lou Williams?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh or any of the cities where jazz was played?

Any additional comments

Interview with Father Peter O'Brien, August 30, 2012, former Manager and Mary Lou Williams Foundation Director.

How did you meet Mary Lou Williams?

Tell me about her career?

Talk to me about her faith and Sacred Jazz?

What about her family?

5. Any additional comments?

Interview with John M. Brewer Jr., Monday, August 27, 2012, Pittsburgh Historian from a middle class family.

How do you know Mary Lou Williams and her family?

What do you know about her, her life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh or any of the cities where jazz was played?

Any additional comments

Interview with Mrs. Lillian Griffin Allen; Wednesday, August 29, 2012. Born in Tuskegee, Alabama, 1909. She was a business woman and owned a beauty shop.

Did you know Mary Lou Williams or her family?

What do you know about how life, her music and her career?

What do you know about jazz?

What do you know about Pittsburgh and the other cities jazz was played in?

Other Comments



## Appendix 2: Mary Lou Williams 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Concert Audience Feedback Survey

How did you hear about today's concert? \_\_\_\_\_

Which of today's performances did you attend? Check all that apply.

- UW First Wave Ensemble                       Sun Prairie HS Jazz Ensemble  
 Middleton HS Jazz Ensemble                       Richard Davis/Dave Stoler  
 Jazz & Poetry with Fabu, Jane Reynolds, Joan Wildman & John Mesoloras

How would you describe your knowledge of Mary Lou Williams before attending today's concert?

- None or Very Minimal                       Moderate                       Extensive

Has today's concert increased your knowledge of Ms. Williams and her contributions to jazz?

- Yes, a great deal                       Yes, a modest amount                       No

Are you any more interested in learning about Ms. Williams and exploring her music after having attended today's concert?

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

How would you describe your interest in jazz before today's concert?

- None or Very Minimal                       Moderate                       Great

Are you any more interested in getting deeper into jazz after today's concert?

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

Do you think you will be attending any of our upcoming Mary Lou Williams Centennial events?

- Yes                       No                       Not sure

Would you like us to add you to our email contact list to receive announcements of future Centennial events?

- Yes                       No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE LEAVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUR SEAT.**

**THANK YOU!**

**Appendix 3: Mary Lou Williams Festival Weekend Concerts Audience Feedback Survey**

How did you hear about today's concert? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which of the Festival Weekend's performances did you attend? Check all that apply.

- "Mary Lou Williams @ 100" concert at Overture Centre  
 "Mary Lou's Mass" at Mt. Zion Baptist Church

How would you describe your knowledge of Mary Lou Williams before attending today's concert?

- None or Very Minimal     Moderate     Extensive

Has today's concert increased your knowledge of Ms. Williams and her contributions to jazz?

- Yes, a great deal     Yes, a modest amount     No

Are you any more interested in learning about Ms. Williams and exploring her music after having attended today's concert?

- Yes     No     Not sure

How would you describe your interest in jazz before today's concert?

- None or Very Minimal     Moderate     Great

Are you any more interested in getting deeper into jazz after today's concert?

- Yes     No     Not sure

Would you be willing to participate in a more in-depth survey of your pre-concert and post-concert interests and attitudes toward Ms. Williams' music and jazz, including future opportunities to increase future audiences for jazz in our community? (If "yes," please give us your contact information below.)

- Yes     No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (with area code if not 608) \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE LEAVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE AT YOUR SEAT.**

**THANK YOU!**

## **Appendix 4: Teacher and Student Assessment Tools**

### **B) TEACHER EVALUATION FORM**

#### **Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration**

#### **Fabu Carter – Jane Reynolds Jazz-Poetry Program**

School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

How familiar were you with Mary Lou Williams prior to beginning your work with her music in this project?

\_\_\_ Very familiar with her work

\_\_\_ Somewhat familiar with her work

\_\_\_ Vaguely knew of her

\_\_\_ Had never heard of her

What academic standards were you able to address with your students through your work with this performance? To what extent did this help supplement your instruction?

To what extent did this performance aid in supplementing your instruction around specific academic standards?

What observations were you able to make about student impact (i.e. special discussions, individual students with increased interest, etc.) through your work with this project?

What musical ideas/concepts did you introduce to or review with your students while working with Mary Lou Williams' music? Please describe the ideas or concepts below.

What aspect of this project do you believe will have the most lasting impact on your students' understanding of Mary Lou Williams in the context of jazz history?

Please share any additional thoughts that you have about this performance or the Mary Lou Williams Centennial Celebration.

## **Appendix 5: Student Learning Questionnaire for Toki Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> graders**

### **Pre - Test**

#### **STUDENT LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TOKI MIDDLE SCHOOL 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS: PRE- AND POST-TEST (N = 125)**

Note: This questionnaire was administered by Toki Middle School's general music teacher to 8 of her 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes (N = 125) at the start and end of her unit on jazz and Mary Lou Williams. That unit included the jazz-and-poetry program conducted by guest artists Fabu and Jane Reynolds.

**Which of the following show the approximate range of years in which Jazz was most popular?**

1920-1930

1930-1955

1960-1980

1925-1935

**Which of these instruments is NOT part of a rhythm section:**

Bass

Piano

Trumpet

Drums

**A style of piano playing in which the left hand alternates between bass notes and chords, and the right hand plays melody and improvisation is called:**

Scat

Stride

Call & Response

Riff

**Which of the following instruments are Big Band instruments? Check all that apply.**

a) Flute

b) Recorder

c) Clarinet

d) Alto Sax

e) Trumpet

f) French Horn

g) Tuba

h) Piano

i) Harmonica

j) Violin

k) String Bass

l) Drums

**Which is the best definition of IMPROVISATION?**

Memorization

Inventing on the spot

Nonsense syllables

Writing out a solo

**List THREE specific styles of jazz.**

**How is a BIG BAND different from a CONCERT BAND?**

**List two reasons why more men than women are recognized as instrumental jazz artists.**

**Give THREE reasons that the city of Madison is honouring the work of Mary Lou Williams this year.**

**Mary Lou Williams made a significant contribution to what kind of music?**

Piano	Concert Band
Jazz	Spiritual

**Approximately which years was Jazz most popular?**

1920-1930	1930-1955
1925-1935	1960-1980

51% answered correctly. Most students with incorrect answers marked 1925 -1935.

**Which of these instruments is NOT part of the rhythm section?**

Bass	Piano
Trumpet	Drums

43% answered correctly. This surprised me because the most common incorrect answer was drums. I'm not sure what went wrong on this question.

**Which is the best definition of improvisation?**

- The memorizing of a piece of music.
- Using nonsense syllables in place of words in a song.
- Inventing or composing music 'on the spot'.
- Writing a solo right before a performance.

71% answered correctly.

**Which of the following is NOT a style of Jazz?**

Pop	Ragtime
Be-Bop	The Blues

71% answered correctly.

**What is one difference between a Big Band and a Concert Band?**

- A Concert Band plays many different styles of music, not just jazz.
- A Big Band is bigger.
- They are the same.
- A Big Band only plays at night.

63% answered correctly. The most common incorrect answer was a big band is bigger.

**What is one reason that men receive greater recognition as jazz musicians than women?**

Men are better at jazz.

Women weren't allowed to play instruments. o People like men more than women.

Most women weren't given the same performance opportunities as men.

83% answered correctly.

**Mary Lou Williams made a significant contribution to what kind of music?**

Jazz

Concert Bands

Piano solos

Singing

71% answered correctly. The most common incorrect answer was "piano solos". As recorded on number 11, 97% of students knew that piano was Mary's instrument.

**What is one reason that the city of Madison is recognizing the work of Mary Lou Williams this year?**

Madison was Mary's hometown.

Mary was a teacher at UW.

Mary would have celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday this year.

Mary's son lives in Madison.

100% answered correctly.

**Which are the correct years of Mary Lou Williams' birth and death?**

1910-1971

1910-1981

1835-1901

1900-1991

80% answered correctly. The most common incorrect answer was "1910-1971". Close.

**In which city was Mary Lou Williams born?**

Chicago

Madison

Atlanta

New Orleans

66% answered correctly.

**Mary Lou Williams' main instrument was:**

Trumpet

Alto Saxophone o Guitar

Piano

97% answered correctly.

**What is the name of the famous suite that Mary Lou Williams composed in 12 parts?**

The Mount Zion Suite

The Zodiac Suite

Black Christ of the Andes

### Summertime

57% answered correctly. I thought more students would have answered this question correctly as we spent 50 minutes studying the different aspects of the Zodiac Suite. Many students answered “Black Christ of the Andes”. At least they knew that was another one of her pieces.

**Mary Lou Williams’ legacy is important to music history because:**

---

---

57% answered correctly.

**What was Mary Lou’s nickname when she was a child?**

Buttercup

Lou Lou

Princess

Little Piano Girl

83% answered correctly.

## **Appendix 6: Jazz and Spoken Word Workshop Survey by the Johnson Brothers**

### **WORKSHOP STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS**

#### **Jazz and Spoken Word Workshops: Student Self-Assessment Form**

Instructions: Rate each of the activities for the workshop series on a scale of 1 -10, with 10 being the highest and/or strongest.

Opening creative writing exercises: \_\_\_\_\_

Poets of the week: \_\_\_\_\_

Group PowerPoint presentations: \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Lou Williams presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

Class discussions: \_\_\_\_\_

Preparing original poetry pieces: \_\_\_\_\_

Recording of poetry: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, I have a better understanding of the history, styles and elements of jazz: \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, I am more able to understand the meaning of a poetic performance: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Jazz and Spoken Word Workshops: Pre - and Post- Knowledge Assessment Form**

Name two notable woman jazz artists

Name three types of jazz style

Who was Mary Lou Williams?

Describe the Harlem Renaissance in your own words

Name a song you are familiar with from the Jazz era

#### **In which of these states was spoken word poetry founded?**

California

Illinois

Texas

New York

**Name two poetic terms**

**Name two famous poets**

**From what art form(s) did spoken word poetry emerge?**



## **Appendix 7: Responses to Survey of Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee Members and Community Partners**

This questionnaire, with the same four questions, was administered to the following committee members: Howard Landsman, Stephen Braunginn, Jane Reynolds, Betsy Stampe, Leotha Stanley, and Bobbette Rose.

### **A. COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONSES**

**Name :** Howard Landsman

**Age in 2010:** turned 63yrs on 12/20/10

**Profession:** Retired professional grant developer and fundraiser

What did you do on the MLW Committee?

What did you know about Mary Lou Williams before the celebration? Please be specific.

What did you learn about MLW because of the celebration? Please be specific.

**Name:** Stephen Braunginn

**Age in 2010:** 45yrs

**Profession:** Former President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Madison and Jazz radio programmer and host

**Name:** Jane Reynolds, Ph.D. (music composition & theory)

**Age in 2010:** 61 yrs.

**Profession:** Jazz pianist & composer; music educator; jazz radio programmer & host

**Name:** Betsy Stampe

**Age in 2010:** 72

**Profession:** Lawyer, Retired State Public Defender

**Name:** Leotha Stanley

**Age:** 56yrs old in 2010

**Profession:** musician, composer, author, event planner

**Name:** Bobbette Rose

**Age in 2010:** 53

**Profession:** Designer/Visual Fine Artist

### **B. PARTNER ORGANIZATION RESPONDENTS**

This questionnaire, with the same four questions, was administered to the following committee members: Annie Weatherby-Flowers, Derek Johnson, Li Chiao-Ping, and Rick Flowers.

1. What did you do on the MLW Committee?
2. What did you know about Mary Lou Williams before the celebration? Please be specific.
3. What did you learn about MLW because of the celebration? Please be specific.

**Name:** Annie Weatherby-Flowers (Kujichagulia)

**Age in 2010:** 51

**Profession:** Madison Department of Civil Rights professional staff; Madison Public Library Community Engagement Coordinator

**Name:** Derek Johnson (Johnson Brothers Entertainment)

**Age in 2010:** 27

**Profession:** Higher education administration (full-time); Creative Arts Director and Spoken Word Instructor (spare time)

**Name :** Li Chiao-Ping (Li Chiao-Ping Dance; University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Age in 2010:** 46

**Profession:** Choreographer, Performer, Dance Educator (University of Wisconsin-Madison and private studio practice)

**Name:** Rick Flowers (Kujichagulia)

**Age in 2010:** 53

**Profession:** Self-employed professional drummer and composer

## **Appendix 8: Interview, Tuesday, October 8 2019 with Lawren Brian Ware**

Bio: Lawren Brianna Ware is a native of Gadsden, Alabama. She graduated with a master of music degree in Piano Performance from UW Madison. In addition to being a pianist, Ware is an accomplished composer, dedicated piano teacher who runs her own piano studio, B. Ware Works Piano Studio and she is a violinist. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in music composition with a doctoral minor in historical musicology at UW Madison. Currently a teaching assist for the UW Mead-Witter School of Music, Ware performed a tribute to Mary Lou Williams with Poet Fabu for the Friends of the Library on October 11, 2019.

1. What did you know about Mary Lou Williams prior to being invited to play her music for the 2019 Tribute?
2. What did you learn about Mary Lou Williams while preparing for the Tribute?
3. Are you more interested in learning about Mary Lou Williams and jazz?
4. Other comments

**Appendix 9: Letter from The Mary Lou Williams Foundation, Inc. Cecilia Music Publishing Company – Mary Records**

*To Whom It May Concern: - November 4, 2009*

*It gives me great pleasure to write this letter of support on behalf of the Madison Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee.*

*I managed the career of Ms. Williams from 1964 until the time of her death on May 28, 1981. A year before her death, Ms. Williams set up The Mary Lou Williams Foundation which has a double purpose: to preserve and extend the music and life story of Ms. Williams and also to bring Jazz to children. I have been hard at that task since 1981 as The Foundation's Executive Director. 2010 marks the centenary of Ms. Williams' birth and events are shaping up by various producers around the country, but none more devotedly than by The Madison Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee.*

*I have been most impressed by the spirit and knowledge of the Madison Group. After hearing a recorded concert of Mary Lou's work by two of its member, pianist Jane Reynolds and the poetry about Mary Lou written and spoken by Fabu Carter, I fully understand how well they also 'understand' and even love Mary Lou Williams.*

*After a number of discussions that I have had with members of The Madison group, I am convinced of the sincerity and commitment they have to celebrate the centennial of Ms. Williams' birth on May 8, 1910. We have been in discussions to hold a four day event in Madison involving The Mary Lou Williams Collective (with Ms. Geri Allen as its musical director and pianist) and me in workshops with local musicians and children, in an academic symposium that would explore the impact Mary Lou Williams had on Jazz and a performance by The Collective of Mary Lou's music among other possible activities. The commemoration would be capped on Sunday by a performance of Mary Lou's Mass by The Collective (piano, bass, and drums) together with musicians, a chorus, and other singers from Madison.*

*Ms. Williams herself came to The University of Wisconsin in 1976 at the invitation of the late Professor Jimmy Cheatham. While there, Ms. Williams gave a piano trio concert, conducted one of her Masses with a chorus trained at the University at an actual liturgy, and visited classes. She was also interviewed for the University's radio station by Becca Pulliam, then a student, who now enjoys an important position as a Producer for National Public Radio.*

*It is my hope that you will give the Madison Mary Lou Williams Centennial Committee your moral and financial support.*

*Sincerely,*

*Peter F. Brennan S.J.  
Executive Director*

## **Appendix 10: A Selected Mary Lou Williams Discography**

Recordings were lost, stolen or never accredited to Williams making this only a partial list.

Chronological Order

### **1. Recordings by Mary Lou Williams on CDs**

Recorded: Chicago, ca. January 1927

Jeanette James and Her Synco Jazzers: MLW (as Mary Leo Burley) (p); Jeanette James (v); Henry McCord (t); Bradley Bullett (tb); John Williams (as, bars); Jo Williams (bj); Robert

2. Price (d).

### **Midnight Stomp / The Bumps**

Classics 630. Originally issued on Paramount.

Recorded: Chicago, February 1927

John Williams' Synco Jazzers: same personnel as above except Jeanette James out.

### **Down in Gallion / Goose Grease**

Classics 630. Originally issued on Paramount.

Recorded: Chicago, ca. March 7, 1927

Personnel same as above.

### **Pee Wee Blues / Now Cut Loose**

Classics 630. Originally issued on Gennett.

Recorded: Kansas City, ca. November 7, 1929 Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: MLW (p, arr); Andy Kirk (bars, bb, dir); Gene Prince (t); Harry Lawson (t,v); Allen Durham (tb); John Harrington (cl, as); John Williams (as, bars); Lawrence Freeman (ts); Claude Williams (vln); William Dirvin (bj, g); Edward "Crackshot" McNeil (d).

### **Mess-A-Stomp / Blue Clarinet Stomp**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Kansas City, ca. November 8,

1929 Personnel same as above.

### **Cloudy**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Kansas City, ca. November 9,

1929 Personnel same as above.

### **Casey Jones Special**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Kansas City, ca. November 9, 1929 and November 11,

1929 John Williams and His Memphis Stompers: same personnel as above.

### **Somepin' Slow and Low / Lotta Sax Appeal**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Vocalion.

Recorded: Kansas City, ca. November 11, 1929

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

### **Corky Stomp / Froggy Bottom**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Chicago, ca. April 24, 1930 MLW (p solos).

### **Nite Life\* / Drag'Em**

Classics 630. \*Also Decca 639. Originally issued on Brunswick.

[Note: MLW does not take part in the Andy Kirk session on April 29, 1930.]

Recorded: Chicago, April 30 1930

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as November 11, 1929, except Edgar Battle replaces Gene Prince (t).

### **Snag It / Sweet and Hot / Mary's Idea**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Chicago, May 1, 1930

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Billy Massey is added (v).

### **Once or Twice**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Chicago, July 15, 1930

Seven Little Clouds of Joy: MLW (p); Harry Lawson (t); Floyd Brady (tb); John Harrington (as); Andy Kirk (bb); William Dirvin (bj); Edward "Crackshot" McNeil (d).

### **Getting' Off a Mess**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Chicago, October 9, 1930

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as May 1, 1930.

### **Dallas Blues / Travelin' That Rocky Road / Honey, Just for You / You Rascal You**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: New York, December 15, 1930

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Dick Robertson (v) is added.

### **Saturday / sophomore**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Brunswick.

Recorded: Camden, New Jersey, March 2, 1931

Blanche Calloway and Her Joy Boys: MLW (p, arr); Blanche Calloway (v, dir); Harry Lawson and Edgar Battle (t); Clarence Smith (t, v); Floyd Brady (tb); John Harrington (cl, as); John Williams (as, bars); Lawrence Freeman (ts); William Dirvin (bj); Andy Kirk (bb); Ben Thigpen (d); Billy Massey (v).

### **Casey Jones Blues / There's Rhythm in the River / I Need Lovin'**

Classics 655. Originally issued on Victor.

Recorded: New York, March 2, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: MLW (p, arr); Andy Kirk (dir); Harry Lawson and Paul King (t); Earl Thompson (t, arr); Ted Donnelly (tb); John Harrington (cl, as, bars); John Williams (as, bars); Dick Wilson (ts); Ted Robinson (g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d).

**Walkin' and Swingin' (take A) / Walkin' and Swingin' (take C)\*\* / Moten Swing\*\*\*  
/ Lotta Sax Appeal\*\*\*\***

\*EMI 797 906-2. \*\*Decca 622; Classics 573. \*\*\*Decca 622; Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2.

\*\*\*\*Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca (US) and Columbia (UK).

Recorded: New York, March 3, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Pha Terrell (v) added on "All the Jive Is Gone."

**Git / All the Jive Is Gone**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca (US) and Columbia (UK).

Recorded: New York, March 4, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Froggy Bottom\* / Bearcat Shuffle\* / Steppin' Pretty**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca (US) and Columbia (UK).

Recorded: New York, March 7, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Christopher Columbus / Corky**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca (US) and Columbia (UK).

Recorded: New York, March 7, 1936

MLW (p, leader & composer); Brooker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d).

**Corny Rhythm / Overhand,\* a.k.a. New Froggy Bottom / Isabelle / Swingin' for Joy  
/ Clean Pickin'**

Classics 630; EMI 253 625-2. \*Also AJA 5073. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, March 11, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as on March 7, 1936.

**I'se aMuggin' / Until the Real Thing Comes Along**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca.



Recorded: New York, March 31, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Puddin' Head Serenade (take A)**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 2, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Until the Real Thing Comes Along**

Decca 642; Classics 573. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 3, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Blue Illusion / Cloudy**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 7, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Give Her a Pint**

Classics 573; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 9, 1936

MLW (p, cel & leader); Ted Robinson (g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d).

**Mary's Special**

Classics 630; EMI 797 906-2. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 10, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as on March 2, 1936.

**Puddin' Head Serenade (Take C)**

Decca 622; Classics 573. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, December 9, 1936

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Harry Mills (v) added.

**Fifty-Second Street / The Lady Who Swings the Band\* / What Will I Tell My Heart? / Dedicated to You**

Classics 573. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, February 15, 1937

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: MLW (p, arr); Andy Kirk (dir); Harry Lawson and Paul King (t); Earl Thompson (t, arr); Ted Donnelly (tb); Henry Wells (tb & v); Earl Miller (as); John Harrington (cl, as, bars); John Williams (as, bars); Dick Wilson (ts); Ted Robinson (g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d); Leslie Johnkins, Claude Hopkins (arr).

**Wednesday Night Hop\* / Skies Are Blue\* / Downstream\*\* / (Keep It) In the Groove\*\*\***

\*Classics 573. \*\*Classics 581. \*\*\*Decca 2-641; Classics 581. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, April 17, 1937

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Worried over You / Foolin' Myself / I'm Glad for Your Sake / I'll Get Along Somehow**

Classics 581. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, July 26, 1937

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**A Mellow Bit of Rhythm\* / In My Wildest Dreams / Better Luck Next Time / With Love in My Heart**

Classics 581. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, July 27, 1937

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**What's Mine Is Yours / Why Can't We Do It Again? / The Key to My Heart / I Went to a Gypsy**

Classics 583. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, December 13, 1937

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Clarence Trice (t) replaces Paul King.

**Lover, Come Back to Me / Poor Butterfly / The Big Dipper / Bear Down\***

Classics 583. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, February 8, 1938 Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**I Surrender Dear / Twinklin'\* / It Must Be True / I'll Get By**

Classics 583. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, ca. February 8 or 10, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Little Joe from Chicago**

Classics 583. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, September 9, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Bless You, My Dear / How Can We Be Wrong? / Messa Stomp\***

Classics 598. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, September 12, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Toadie Toddle / I Won't Tell a Soul / What Would People Say? / How Much Do You Mean to Me?**

Classics 598. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, September 14, 1938 MLW (p solos).

**The Pearls\* / Mr. Freddie Blues\*\* / Sweet (Patootie) Patunia / The Rocks**

Classics 630. \*Also AJA 5073. \*\*Also Hallmark 304062. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, October 24, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as on September 12, 1938.

**Jump Jack Jump / Breeze / Ghost of Love / What a Life**

Classics 598. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, October 25, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Sittin' Around and Dreamin' / What's Your Story, Morning Glory?\***

Classics 598. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, December 5, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except O'Neil Spencer (v) added.

**Honey / September in the Rain / Clouds / Julius Caesar / Dunkin' a Doughnut\***

Classics 598. \*Also Decca 2-629. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, December 6, 1938

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Goodbye / Mary's Idea\* / But It Didn't Mean a Thing / Say It Again**

Classics 598. \*Also Decca 622. Originally on Decca.

Recorded: New York, March 1939

Mildred Bailey and Her Oxford Greys: MLW (p); Mildred Bailey (leader, v); John Williams (b); Floyd Smith (g); Eddie Dougherty (d).

**There'll Be Some Changes Made / Gulf Coast Blues**

Topaz Jazz 1007. Originally issued on Columbia.

Recorded: New York, March 16, 1939

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as September 12, 1938, except Don Byas (ts) and Floyd Smith (g, el-g) replace John Williams and Ted Brinson; and June Richmond (v) added.

**You Set Me on Fire / I'll Never Learn / Close to Five\* / Floyd's Guitar Blues**

Classics 640. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, March 23, 1939

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: MLW (p & arr); Andy Kirk (leader); Clarence Trice, Earl Thompson, Harry Lawson (t); Ted Donnelly (tb); Henry Wells (tb, v); John Harrington (cl, as, bars); Earl Miller (as); Dick Wilson, Don Byas (ts); Floyd Smith (g, el-g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d); June Richmond, Pha Terrell (v).

**Then I'll Be Happy / S'posin' / I'll Never Fail You / Why Don't I Get Wise to Myself?**

**Classics 640. Originally issued on Decca.**

Recorded: New York, October 12, 1939 MLW (p solos).

**Little Joe from Chicago\* / Margie\*\***

\*Classics 630. \*\*Classics 655; Topaz 7234. Originally issued on Columbia.

Recorded: New York, November 15, 1939

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as March 23, 1939.

I'm Getting Nowhere with You / I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance / Please Don't Talk about **Me When I'm Gone / Big Jim Blues\***

Classics 640. \*Also ASV 51408. Originally Issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, January 2, 1940

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy. Same personnel as above, except Fred Robinson (tb) replaces Henry Wells.

**Wham / Love Is the Thing / Why Go On Pretending? / It Always Will Be You**

Classics 640. Originally on Decca.

Recorded: New York, January 26, 1940

Six Men and a Girl: MLW (leader, p, arr); Earl Thompson (t); Earl Buddy Miller (cl, as); Dick Wilson (ts); Floyd Smith (el-g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d).

**Mary Lou Williams Blues / Tea for Two / Scratchin' in the Gravel / Zonky**

Classics 630; Savory Jazz 2DS1202. Originally issued of Varsity.

Recorded: New York, June 25, 1940

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: MLW (p, arr); Andy Kirk (leader); Harold Baker, Clarence Trice, Harry Lawson (t); Ted Donnelly, Fred Robinson (tb); John Harrington (cl, as, bars); Rudy Powell (cl, as); Dick Wilson (ts); Edward Inge (cl, ts); Floyd Smith (g, el-g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d); June Richmond, Pha Terrell (v).

**Fine and Mellow / Scratchin' in the Gravel\* / Fifteen Minute Intermission / Take Those Blues Away**

Classics 640. \*Also Decca 622. Originally Issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, July 8, 1940

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Now I Lay Me Down to Dream\* / No Greater Love\* / Midnight Stoll\*\* / Little Miss\*\***

\*Classics 640. \*\*Classics 681. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, November 7, 1940

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Henry Wells (tb, v) replaces Fred Robinson.

**The Count\* / Twelfth Street Rag\* / When I Saw You**

Classic 681. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, November 18, 1940

Mary Lou Williams and her Kansas City Seven: MLW (leader, p, arr); Harold Baker (t); Ted Donnelly (tb); William Inge (cl); Dick Wilson (ts); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d).

**Baby Dear / Harmony Blues**

Decca 622; Classics 630. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, November 18, 1940

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as November 7, 1940.

**If I Feel This Way Tomorrow / Or Have I?**

Classics 681. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, January 3, 1941

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above.

**Cuban Boogie Woogie / A Dream Dropped In / Is It a Sin? / Ring Dem Bells\***

Classics 681. \*Also Decca 622. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, July 17, 1941

Andy Kirk and His Clouds of Joy: same personnel as above, except Earl Miller (as) replaces Powell.

**Big Time Crip / 47<sup>th</sup> Street Jive / I'm Misunderstood / No Answer**

Classics 681. Originally issued on Decca.

Recorded: New York, February 1944 MLW (p solos).

**Blue Skies / Caravan / Yesterdays**

Classics 814. Originally recorded for Asch but not released.

Recorded: New York, March 7, 1944 MLW (leader, p); Al Lucas (b); Jack Parker (d).

**Roll 'Em / Eighth Avenue Express / Limehouse Blues / Froggy Bottom / Marcheta / Medley (Cloudy/What's Your Story, Morning Glory? /Ghost of Love) / Yankee Doodle Blues / Taurus Mood / People Will Say We're in Love**

Solo Art SACD-43. Originally on World Broadcasting Systems.

Recorded: New York, March 12, 1944

Mary Lou and Her Chosen Five: MLW (p, leader); Frankie Newton (t); Vic Dickenson, (tb); **Edmond Hall (cl); Al Lucas (b); Jack Parker (d).**

**Lullaby of the Leaves / Little Joe from Chicago / Roll 'Em / Satchel Mouth Baby (and alt. take) / Yesterday's Kisses**

Classic 824. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, April 19, 1944 MLW (p solos).

**Mary's Boogie / Drag 'Em / St. Louis Blues**

Classics 814. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, prob. May-June, 1944 MLW (leader, p), with Nora Lee King (v).

**Until My Baby Comes Back Home**

Classics 814. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, June 5, 1944

MLW (leader, p, arr); Dick Vance (t); Vic Dickenson (tb); Claude Greene (cl); Don Byas (ts); Al Lucas (b); Jack Parker (d).

**Stardust, Part 1 / Man O'Mine / Gjon Mili Jam Session / Stardust, Part 2**

Collectables 5612; Classics 814. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, August 10, 1944

MLW (p, leader, arr); Bill Coleman (t, v); Al Hall (b).

**Russian Lullaby / Blue Skies / Persian Rug / Night and Day / You Know, Baby (v - B.C.) / I Found a New Baby**

Classics 814. Originally on Asch.

Recorded: New York, November 24, 1944.

Mildred Bailey with Paul Baron's Orchestra: MLW (p, arr); Charlie Shavers (t); Tommy Young (tb); Remo Palmieri (g); Al Hall (b); Specs Powell (d); (Bailey out).

**Roll 'Em / Gjon Mili Jam Session**

Classics 814. Originally issued on V-Disc (375-B).

Recorded: New York, December 11, 1944

MLW (p, leader, arr); Bill Coleman (t); Jimmy Butts (b); Eddie Dougherty (d); Josh White (v).

**The Minute Man / Froggy Bottom**

Classics 1021. Originally on Asch 2001.

Recorded: New York, December 15, 1944

MLW (p, arr, leader); Coleman Hawkins (ts); Bill Coleman (t); Eddie Robinson (b); Denzil Best (d).

**Lady Be Good**

Collectables 5612, Classics 1021. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, December 15, 1944

Same personnel as above, except Joe Evans (as) and Claude Greene (cl) added.

**Song in My Soul / This and That**

Collectables 5612, Classics 1021. Originally issued on Asch.

Recorded: New York, unknown date in 1944

MLW (p, leader); Bill Coleman (t); Al Hall (b).

**Carcinoma**

Collectables 5612, Classics 1021. Originally issued on Asch.



Recorded: New York, June 29, 1945

MLW (p, leader, arr); Al Lucas (b); Jack Parker (d).

**Aries (2 takes)\* / Taurus / Gemini\* / Cancer (2 takes)\* / Leo / Virgo (2 takes)\* /  
Libra (p solo)/ Scorpio (2 takes)\* / Sagittarius (p solo) / Capricorn (p solo) /  
Aquarius (p solo; 2 takes)\* / Pisces / Stars, a.k.a. Libra\*\* / Moon, a.k.a. Cancer\*\***

Zodiac Suite, Smithsonian/Folkways 40801, Classics 1021. Originally issued on  
Asch.

\*Previously unissued take. \*\*Different takes. Originally issued on Selmer (France)  
Y7134.

Recorded: New York (Town Hall), December 30, 1945

MLW Chamber Ensemble: MLW (composer, leader, arr, p); Milton Orent (cond, co-arr);  
Ben Webster (ts); Edmond Hall (cl); Eddie Barefield (cl, bsn); Irving Randolph (t);  
Henderson Chambers (tb, frh & vln); Al Hall (b); J.C. Heard (d); Hope Foye (v);  
unknown strings and flute.

**Aries / Taurus / Gemini / Cancer / Leo / Virgo / Libra / Scorpio / Sagittarius /  
Capricorn**

**Aquarius / Pisces (v-H.F.) / A Potpourri (What's Your Story, Morning Glory? / Cloudy  
Ghost of Love / Froggy Bottom) / Lonely Moments / Gjon Mili Jam Session /  
Roll'Em**

Zodiac Suite, Jazz Classics JZCL-6002. Previously issued on Vintage Jazz Classics VJC-  
1305.

Recorded: New York, July 24, 1946

MLW (leader, p, arr); Marjorie Hyams (vbs); Mary Osborne (g, v); June Rotenberg (b);  
Rose Gottesman (d).

**Boogie Misterioso\* / Harmony Grits\*\* / Conversation/ Jump Caprice**

Bluebird BMG 6755-2-RB. \*Also Bluebird 2192. \*\*Also Rhino 70722. Originally issued  
on Victor.

Recorded: New York, October 7, 1946

MLW (leader, p); June Rotenberg (b); Bridget O'Flynn (d).

**Hesitation Boogie**

Bluebird BMG 6755-2-RB. Originally issued on Camden.

Recorded: New York, ca. late 1947

MLW (leader, p, arr); Mary Osborne (g); June Rotenberg (b); Bridget O'Flynn (d).

**Just You, Just Me / Just an Idea, a.k.a. Mary's Idea**

Mercury/Verve 314 525 609-2. Originally issued on Mercury.

Recorded: New York, July 1948

Benny Goodman and bop combo: MLW (p, arr); Benny Goodman (leader, cl); Wardell Gray (ts); Billy Bauer (g); Clyde Lombardi (b); Mel Zelnick (d).

**Benny's Bop, a.k.a. Wardell's Riff\* / (There's a) Small Hotel / Mary's Idea (3 takes)\* / Bye Bye Blues (2 takes)\* / (There's a) Small Hotel (3 takes)\* / Blue Views\* / I Can't Give You Anything But Love\***

Hep 36. \*Originally issued on V-Disc 880-A. Recorded from AFSC (Armed Forces Radio Services) broadcasts and previously unissued recordings.

Recorded: New York, March 7, 1951

MLW (leader, p, arr); Carl Pruitt (b); Bill Clarke (d).

**In the Purple Grotto**

Atlantic 781 707-2. Originally issued on Atlantic.

Recorded: London, January 22-23, 1953.

MLW (leader, p & arr); Ken Napper (b); Allan Ganley (d); Tony Scott (bgs).

**Koolbongo / For You / Don't Blame Me / Lady Bird / Titoros (2 takes) / They Can't Take That Away from Me (2 takes) / 'Round about Midnight (2 takes) / Perdido**

Vogue 74321115162. Originally issued on Vogue.

Recorded: London, June 26, 1953

MLW (leader, p, arr); Ray Dempsey (g); Rupert Nurse (b); Tony Kinsey (d).

**Melody Maker / (New) Musical Express, a.k.a. N.M.E. / Sometimes I'm Happy / Monk's Tune, a.k.a. Monk's Mood**

Hallmark 303062, 391172 (multiple-CD that includes 303062). Originally issued on Esquire.

Recorded: Paris, December 2-3, 1953

MLW (leader, p, arr); Don Byas (ts); Alvin “Buddy” Banks (b); Gerard Pochonet (d).

**O.W. / Mary’s Waltz / Just You, Just Me / Lullaby of the Leaves / Moonglow / Why / N.M.E., a.k.a. New Musical Express / Chicka Boom Blues, a.k.a. Blues**

Vogue BM 720 (CD includes 2 sections from other sessions not on LP. “Yesterdays” and “Round Midnight.”) Originally issued on Vogue.

Recorded: London, unknown date in 1953

MLW (leader, p, arr); Lennie Bush (b); Tony Kinsey (d); Tony Scott (bgs).

**Azure Te / Twilight / Flying Home / Nickles / Yesterdays (2 takes) / The Man I Love (2 takes) / Just One of Those Things (2 takes) / Why**

Vogue 74321115162. Originally issued on Vogue.

Recorded: Paris, March 1954

MLW (leader, p, arr); Buddy Banks (b); Jean-Louis Viale (d).

**Nicole**

Smithsonian RD039. Originally issued on Blue Star.

Recorded: New York, March 1955

MLW (leader, p, arr); Wendell Marshall (b); Osie Johnson (d).

**Jericho / Sweet Sue / Talk of the Town / Amy / I Love Him / Roll ‘Em / Taurus / I Love You / Lullaby of the Leaves / Easy Blues / Mama, Pin a Rose on Me / Fandangle**

Many Lou Williams – Lady Piano, Blackbird CD (no number). Originally issued on Jazztone LP as A Keyboard History.

Recorded: Newport, July 6, 1957

MLW and Dizzy Gillespie and His Orchestra: MLW (composer, p); Dizzy Gillespie (leader, t); Melba Liston (arr); Paul West (b); Charli Persip (d).

**Virgo / Libra / Aries / Carioca**

Verve 314513754-2. Originally on Verve LP MGV 8244.

Issue, in CD compilation, of music recorded in New York 1970 and 1972

MLW (p, composer, arr, leader); for other personnel, see pp. 423-24.

### **Our Father**

In 3-CD set, Contemporary Anthology of Music by Women, compiled by James R. Briscoe, Indiana University Press, 1999. Previously issued on LPs Music for Peace, 1970 (Mary Records, no number), and Mary Lou's Mass, 1971 (Mary Records 104).

Recorded: New York (Overseas Press Club), January 31, 1971

All-Star Group: MLW (p); Dizzy Gillespie and Bobby Hackett (ts); George Duvivier (b); Grady Tate (d).

### **Autumn Leaves**

Giants of Jazz 53 180. Originally on Perception LP.

Recorded: New York, May-June 1971

MLW (p solos).

**Nite Life / Cloudy / Little Joe from Chicago / What's Your Story, Morning Glory? / The Scarlet Creeper / Scratchin' in the Gravel / Offertory / Blues for John (Hammond) / Marnier Mood / Gemma / For the Figs / Anima Christi\* (2 takes) / Chief\* / Nite Life Variations\* (A Swinging Meditation / A Full-bodied Portrait / A Modern Improvisation) / What's Your Story, Morning Glory? #2\* / Little Joe from Chicago #2\***

Chiaroscuro CR(D) 103. Originally on Chiaroscuro LP. \*Previously unissued.

Recorded: New York (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts), October 22, 1971

MLW (p. solos).

**Elite Syncopations / Pleasant Moments / Pineapple Rag / My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me / Fandangle**

Chiaroscuro CR(D) 103. Previously issued on Nonesuch.

Recorded: New York, probably 1971

MLW (narration).

### **Jazzspeak**

Chiaroscuro CR(D) 103. Previously unissued.

Recorded: New York (Newport Jazz Festival), July 3, 1972

MLW (p); Dizzy Gillespie (t); Benny Green (tb); Stan Getz (ts); Milt Jackson (vbs);  
unknown others.

**Bags' Groove / Night in Tunisia**

Atlantic REP 4381-WZ. Originally issued on Atlantic.

Recorded: New York, June 1, 1973

Buddy Tate and His Buddies: MLW (p); Buddy Tate, (leaders, ts); Illinois Jacquet (ts);  
Roy Eldridge (t); Steve Jordan (g); Milt Hinton (b); Gus Johnson (d).

**Rockaway / Medi II / Paris Nights / When I'm Blue Sunday**

Chiaroscuro CR(D) 123. Originally issued on Chiaroscuro.

Recorded: New York, January 17, February, and March 18, 1974

MLW (leader, p, arr, producer); Zita Carno (p); Bob Cranshaw, Milton Suggs (b);  
Mickey Roker (d); Tony Waters (cgs).

**Holy Ghost (MLW, B.C.) / Medi I (MLW, B.C.) / Syl-O-Gism\* (MLW, B.C., M.R.) /  
Medi**

**(MLW, M.R.) / Rosa Mae (MLW, M.R.) / Olinga (MLW, M.R.) / Intermission\*\*  
(MLW, B.C., M.R., Z.C.) / Zoning Fungus II (MLW, B.C., M.R., Z.C.) / Gloria\*  
(MLW,**

**B.C., M.R.) / Gloria (MLW, M.S., T.W.) / Praise the Lord (MLW, M.S., T.W.) / Play  
It Momma (MLW, M.S., T.W.) / Ghost of Love (MLW)**

Smithsonian/Folkways 40811. Originally issued on Mary Records. \*Previously unissued.  
\*\*Full-length version not included on original LP issue.

Recorded: New York, July 8, 1975

MLW (p); Buster Williams (b); Mickey Roker (d).

**Dat Dere / Baby Man #2\* / Baby Man / All Blues / Te mptation / Pale Blue / Free  
Spirits #2\* / Free Spirits / Blue for Timme / Ode to Saint Cecilia\* / Surrey with the  
Fringe on Top\* / Gloria\***

Free Spirits, SteepleChase 31043. Previously issued on SteepleChase LP. \*Previously  
unissued.

Recorded: New York (The Crookery Restaurant), November 1975

MLW (p; arr); Brian Torff (b)

**Praise the Lord /Blues for Peter / I Can't Get Started / Roll 'Em / The Jeep Is Jumping / My Funny Valentine / Waltz Boogie / The Surrey with Fringe on the Top / The Man I Love\* / All Blues\* / Mack the Knife\* / A Grand Night for Swinging**

Live at the Cookery, Chiaroscuro CD (D) 146. Previously issued on Chiaroscuro LP.

\*Previously issued.

Recorded: New York (Carnegie Hall), April 17, 1977

MLW (p, co-leader), Cecil Taylor (p, co-leader): Bob Cranshaw (b); Mickey Roker (d).

**The Lord Is Heavy (MLW, CT) / Fandangle (MLW, CT) / The Blues Never Left Me (MLW, CT) / K.C. 12<sup>th</sup> Street (MLW, C.T.) / Good Ole Boogie (MLW, C.T.) / Basic**

**Chords (MLW, C.T.) / Ayizan (MLW, C.T.) / Chorus Sud (MLW, C.T.) / Back to the Blues (MLW, C.T.) / I Can't Get Started (MWL, B.C., M.R.)**

Pablo Live PACD 2620-108-2 Originally issued on Pablo.

Recorded: New York (Carnegie Hall), January 18, 1978

Benny Goodman and various. MLW (p); Benny Goodman (leader, cl); unknown others.

**Roll 'Em / King Porter Stomp / That's A-Plenty / How High the Moon / Moonglow / Lady Be Good / Seven Come Eleven / Someone to Watch Me / Please Don't Talk about Me / Medley / Sing Sing Sing**

London 820-349-2 Originally on London LP.

Record: Montreux, Switzerland, July 16, 1978

MLW (p solos).

**Medley (The Lord Is Heavy/Fandangle/Old Fashioned Slow Blues/For the Figs/Baby Bear Boogie/Room 'Em) / Over the Rainbow / Offertory Meditation /Tea for Two / Concerto Alone at Montreux / Little Joe from Chicago / The Man I Love / What's Your Story, Morning Glory? / Honeysuckle Rose**

Pablo OJCCD-962-2. Originally issued on Pablo LP.

Recorded: New York, October 8, 1978

MLW (p); Marian McPartland (radio narrator, host, p); Ronnie Boykins (b).

**Space Playing Blues (MLW, RB) / Baby Man (MLW, R.B.) / What's Your Story, Morning Glory? / (MLW, R.B.) / Scratchin' in the Gravel (MLW, M.McP.) / Medi II (MLW, R.B.) / Rosa Mae (MLW, R.B.) / Caravan (MLW, R.B.) / I Can't Get Started (MLW, R.B.) / The Jeep Is Jumpin' (MLW, R.B.) / Exit Playing (MLW, M.McP., R.B.)**

Jazz Alliance TJA-12019. Debut NPR radio program, "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz, with guest Mary Lou Williams"

Recorded: Chicago (Rick's Café Americain), November 14, 1979

MLW (p, leader, arr); Milton Suggs (b); Drashear Khalid (d).

**Autumn Leaves / I Can't Get Started / You Can't Take That Away from Me / Satin Doll**

**The Jeep is Jumping / St. James Infirmary / Surrey with the Fringe on Top / My Funny Valentine / Mack the Knife / 'Round Midnight / What's Your Story, Morning Glory? / Without a Song / Caravan / A Grand Nite for a Swinging**

Storyville 8285.

**Recording by Mary Lou Williams on LPs, 78s, 45s, Eps, Tapes, Unissued**

Recorded: Chicago, January 1927

MLW (as Mary Leo Burley, p); Jeanette James (leaders, v); Henry McCord (tp); Bradly Bullet 9tb); John Williams (as, bars); Jo Williams (bj); Robert Price (d).

**Downhearted Mama / What's That Thing?**

Originally issued on Paramount. On Historical LP, ASC-5829, volume 2

Recorded: Chicago, May 20 or 21, 1927

Same personnel as above.

**Tiger Rag / San / Someday, Sweetheart**

Recorded for Gannett, unissued.

Recorded: New York, March 1939

Mildred Baily and Her Oxford Greys: MLW (p); Mildred Baily (leader, v) John Williams (b); Floyd Smith (g); Eddie Dougherty (d)

**Prisoner of Love / Barrelhouse Blues / Arkansas Blues / You Don't Know My Mind  
Blues / There'll Be Some Changes Made\* / Gulf Coast Blues**

On Columbia LP C3L22. \*Also on CD.

Recorded: Cleveland, January 29-February 6, 1937

MLW (p, arr); Andy Kirk (leader); Harry Lawson, Paul King, Earl Thompson (9t); Ted Donnelly (9tb); John Harrington (as, cl); John Williams (as bars); Dick Wilson (ts); Ted Brinson (g); Booker Collins (b); Ben Thigpen (d,v) Pha Terrell (v)

**Until the Real Thing Comes Along / Swingtime in the Rockies / Froggy Bottom /  
What Will I Tell My Heart / There, I Love You Coast to Coast / make Believe  
Ballroom / Sepia Jazz / Dear old Southland / Yours Truly / Medley from  
Golddiggers of the 1937 (Boo Hoo/One, Two, Button Your Shoe/Trouble Don't Like  
Music/One in a Million) / Trust in Me / All the Jive Is Gone / Never Slept a Wink  
Last Night / You're Slightly Terrific / Organ Grinder'd Swing / Until the Real Thing  
Comes Along**

Jazz Society AA503.

Recorded: Cleveland, Ohio, ca, January 29-February 6, 1937 Andy Kirk and  
his Clouds of Joy. Same personnel as above.

**You turned the Tables on Me / Good Night My Love / You Do the Darnest Things,  
baby / Spring Holiday / When I'm with You / I Went to the Gypsy / Piano  
introduction of the Untitled Blues / In the Chapel in the Moonlight / Honeysuckle  
Rose / Walkin' and Swingin' / Dedicated to You/ Untitled blues —MLW solo / King  
Porter Stomp / Liza**

Tape from aircheck; in MLK collection.

Recorded: New York, probably November 24, 1944

Mildred baily with Paul Baron's Orchestra: MLW (p) arr); Charlie Shavers (t); Trummy Young (tb); Remo Palmieri (g); Al Hall (b) Specs Powell (d); (Bailey out).

**Just a Blues Riff / It Takes One Deep Breath**

V-Disc 881-B

Recorded: New York (Carnegie Hall), June 22, 1945

MLW (composer, co-arr, leader, p); Milt Orent (co-arr); Carnegie Pops Orchestra.



Sagittarius / Aquarius / Scorpio / Boogie-woogie Jazz for Orchestra / The man I Love  
(solo p) Tape in MLW collection.

Recorded: New York (WENEW radio Broadcast), August 5, 1945

MLW (composer, leader, p); probably Bill Coleman (t); A. Hall (b); Specs Powell (d)

### **Sleep / Gjon Mili Jam Session**

Jazz Panorama LP 11.

Recorded: New York, 1946

MLW (p solos).

How High the Moon / The man I Love / Cloudy/ What's Your Story? / Blue Skies /

### **These Foolish Things / Lonely Moments**

Originally issued on Asch/Disc 78s and Folkways LP.

Recorded: New York, February 16, 1946

MLW and her "Girl Stars": MLW (leader, p, arr); Marjorie Hyams (vbs): Mary Osborne (g):

"Bea" (Billy) Taylor (b); Bridget O'Flynn (d).

### **Blues at Mary Lou's/Café Society Blues / DDT / DDT (alt. Take)\* / Rhumba Re -bop / (S)he's Funny That Way / Timmie Time**

Originally issued on Continental 78s 6021 and 6032. \*On Masterseal 78 75.

Recorded: New York, October 7, 1946

MLW (leader, p); Marjorie Hyams (vbs) Mary Osborne (g, v); June Rotenberg (b); Rose Gottesman (d).

### **Fifth Dimension\* / Humoresque\*\* / It Must Be True\*\*\***

\*Camden Cal 384. \*\*RCA (F) 741106. \*\*\*Unissued.

Recorded: New York, October 7, 1946

MLW (leader and p); June Rotenberg (b); Bridget O'Flynn (d).

### **Waltz Boogie**

Camden LP 384; CAL 306.

Recorded: New York, 1947

MLW Ensembles, a.k.a. Milton Orent-Frank Roth Orchestra: MLW (composer, arr, cond); Irving Kustin, Leon Schwartz, Edward Sadowski (t); Martin Glaser, Allen Feldman, Maurice Lopez, Orlando Wright (reeds); Frank Roth or MLW (p); Milt Orent (b); Jack Parker (d).

**Lonely Moments / Whistle Blues**

LP Verve MGV-8132

Recorded: New York, 1947

MLW and Group: MLW (leader, p); Kenny Dorham (t); Johnny Smith (g); Grachan Moncur (b).

**Mary Lou / Kool**

Folkways LP FA 2966. Originally on Asch/Disc.

Recorded: White Plains, New York, June 26 and July 3, 1948

Benny Goodman “bop” combo: MLW (p, arr); Benny Goodman (leader, cl); Stan Hasselgard (cl); Wardell Gray (ts); Red Rodney (t); Billy Bauer (g); Clyde Lombardi (b); Mel Zelnick (d).

**Mary’s Idea / Mel’s Idea / Swedish Pastry / Indiana**

LP Dan VC 5003. Originally a radio broadcast, “The Benny Goodman Show,” for WNEW Radio in New York City. Tape in MLW collection contains extensive playlist.

Recorded: New York, March 18, 1949

MLW and Group: MLW (composer, leader, p); Sulieman (t); Martin Glaser (b-cl); Allen Feldman (cl, as); Mundell Lowe (g); George Duvivier (b); Denzil Best (d); Kenny “Pancho” Hagood (v) on “Oo-bla-dee” and “Shorty Boo.”

**Tishersome\* / Knowledge\* / In the Land of Oo-Bla-dee / Shorty Boo**

King LP 295-85; King EP 279; King LP 540. Also issued on LP JS (F) 612, Vogue € V21247.

Recorded: New York, January, 1950

MLW (leader, p, or); Mundell Lowe (g); George Duvivier (b); Denzil Best (d).

**Bye Bye Blues (MLW, p & or)\* / Moonglow (MLW, p, &or) / Willow Weep for Me\*\* / I’m in the Mood for Love\*\*\***

King LP 295-85; King EP 280. \*Also King 78 4349. \*\*Also King LP 540; King 78 4349.

\*\*\*Also King LP 540. All titles also released on Parlophone (E) GEP8567.

Recorded: New York, March 7, 1951

Mary Lou Williams trio. Personnel: MLW (leader, p, arr); Carl Pruitt (b); Bill Clarke (d).

**In the Purple Grotto / Opus Z / Surrey with the Fringe / Pargliacci\* / From This Moment On\* / S'Wonderful / You're the Cream in My Coffee / Mary's Watz / Would I Love You\*\* / My First Date with You\*\***

Atlantic 114; Atlantic 1271. \*Also on Blue Star 78 236. \*\* Unissued.

cxv.

MLW (p solo).

Recorded: New York, 1951

**Yesterday / It Ain't Necessarily So / Why Evade the Truth, a.k.a. Monk's Mood / Mary's Waltz / It's the Talk of the Town / Stompin' at the Savory / Why / Caravan / Crazy Rhythm / Scorpio? The Man I Love / People Will Say We're in Love / The Man I Love / For You / Reprise**

Unissued Circle LP (Mary Lou at Midnight).

Recorded: New York, June 20, 1951

MLW (leader, p, arr); Billy Taylor (b); Al walker (d); Sabu Louis Martinez, Willie "bobo" Correa (bgs); Correa (v).

**Sheik of Araby\* / Lover Come Back\*\* / When Dreams Come True\*\* / Bobo\*\* / Kool\*\* / Handy eyes, a.k.a. St. Louis Blues\* / Tisherome\*\* / 'Sposin'\*\*\*\***

Circle LP 412; Circle 78 3008. \*\*Circle LP 412. \*\*\*Circle78 3009; unissued Circle LP 412 (Piano Contempo: Modern Piano jazz). Also on Blue Star 242.

Recorded: New York, June 15, 1951

MLW (leader, p, arr); Skippy Williams (b-cl); Billy Taylor (b); Al Walker (d); Willie de la

**Guerra (bgs); Dave Lambert, Norma Carion, Bill Crow, others (v). Walkin' (Out the Door)\* / De Function, a.k.a. The greatest MacBeth\*\* / Cloudy\*\* / I Won't Let It Bother Me\*\***

\*Circle 78 3008. \*\*Unissued. Rehearsal in MDW tape collection.

Recorded: New York, ca. June, 15 1951

MLW (leader, p, arr); Art Phipps (b); Bill Clarke (d); Dave Lambert Singers.

**Yes, We Have No bananas\* / Caravan\* / Lonely Moments\*\* / Untitled\*\***

\*Circle 78 3013. \*\*Unissued. Rehearsal in MLW tape collection.

Recorded: New York, July 11, 1952

MLW (leader, p, arr); Harold baker (t); Vic Dickerson (tb); Morris Lane (ts); Nevell John 9g); Eddie Safranski (b); Don Lamond (d).

**C-Jam Blues / Downbeat / Out of Nowhere**

Brunswick 54000.

Recorded: U.S., Mary-De Recording Studio, August 7, 1952

**Take the Wagon**

Unissued test recording.

Recorded: London, March 20, 1953

MLW (leader, p); Jack Fallon (b); Gerry McLaughlin (d).

**Laughing Rag / Rag of Rag**

London Records 78 1174.

Recorded: London, 1953

MLW

**Ca Ra Van, a.k.a. Caravan / Easy Blues**

Unissued test recording.

Recorded: London, 1953

LMW

**Nicknames / We Three**

Unissued recording for Brinson Records.

Recorded: Paris, March 1954

MLW (leader, p, arr); Buddy Banks (b); Jean-Louise Viale (d).

There's a Small Hotel / En Ce Temps La / Lover / Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea / **Carioca / Tire tire l'aiguille / Autumn in New York / Nicole**

Blue Star LP F BLP6841.

Recorded: Paris, 1954

MLW in various combinations: MLW (leader, p, arr); Nelson Williams (t); Ray Lawrence (ts); Buddy Banks (b); Kansas Fields or Jacques David (d); Beryl Bryden (v, wbd).

**Swingin' for the Guys / Club Francias Blues (p solo) / Freight Train / Memories of You / Leg'n Lou / Avalon / Gravel, a.k.a. Scratchin' in the Gravel / Rock Me / (I Made You) Love Paris (p solo) / Nancy Is in Love with the Colonel**

Club Francais du Disque LP (F) J12

Recorded: Paris, 1954

MLW (p); unidentified male and female vocalists.

**Untitled / Untitled / You Know, Baby / Blue Monday**

"Paris Material" tape in MLW collection.

Recorded: Paris, circa 1954

MLW (p solos)

**O.W. / Nicole / N.M.E. / Just You, Just Me**

Tape of radio broadcast in MWL collection.

Recorded: Baden Baden, Germany, November 29, 1954

MLW (p); the Kurt Edelhagen All Stars (big Bang).

**Perdido / The Man I Love / Yesterdays / St. Louise Blues / Untitled Blues**

Tape in MLW collection.

Recorded: Paris, circa 1954

MLW (p); Lucienne Delforge (p); Marjorie Duntun (radio host); Francois Valorbe (poet).

Radio broadcast tape in MLW collection. Also includes interview and improvised response by MLW to a surrealist poem dedicated to her.

Recorded: New York, 1957

MLW (p, leader, composer); Melba Liston (arr); unidentified (fl; b-cl; b; d)

**Waltz Boogie / Untitled / Morning Glory**

Unissued material recorded by Roulette Records, tape of test pressing in MLW collection.

Recorded: Toronto (Town Tavern), circa late 1957

MLW (p, leader); Tommy Potter (b); Denzil Best (d, bgs).

**Untitled blues / Easy Blues / Fine and Dandy/The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea /  
Chunkalunka (Jug) / Grand Night for Swinging / The Man I Love**

Aircheck of radio program, "Live jazz from Town," in MLW collection.

Recorded: West Point, New York, April 27, 1958

MLW (p, leader); Ali Muhammad (b); Ray Mosca (d); West Point Jazz Band.

**Untitled Original Blues / The Man I Love / I Can't Get Started / Caravan / Sweet  
Sue / St. Louis Blues/Duke's Place (MLW trio & West Point Jazz Band)**

Tape of concert in MLW collection.

Recorded: Philadelphia, 1958

MLW (leader, p, arr); Bruce Lawrence (b); Jack Parker (d).

**I Got Rhythm \* / Night and Day\* / Chunkalunka (Jug) parts I & II\*\***

Sue\* 45 715 \*\*Sue 45 724.

Recorded: Place unknown, circa 1960

MLW (leader, p, arr); Chris White (b); Ruby Collins (d).

**By Blue Heaven / Yesterdays**

LL Grandi di Jazz GDJ60.

Recorded: New York, October 10, 1962

MLW (p) Milt Hinton (b); Howard Roberts (v cond, with the Ray Charles singers).

**Black Christ of the Andes, a.k.a. At. Martin de Porres / The Devil**

MLW (p); Theodore Cromwell (b); George Chamble (d).

**Miss D.D.**

MLW (p); Melba Liston (arr, cond); Budd Johnson (b-cl, ts); Grant Green (g); Larry Gales (b); Percy Brice (d); Jimmy Mitchell (v); The George Gordon Singers (v group).

**Anima Christi / Praise the Lord**

MLW (p); Ben Tucker (b); Percy Brice (d).

**It Ain't Necessarily So**

MLW (solo p).

**A Fungus Amungus**

Mary 101; Folkways FJ 2843.

Recorded: November 19, 1963

MLW (p); Percy Heath (b); Tim Kennedy (d).

**Grand Night for Swingin\* / My Blue Heaven\* / Dirge Blues**

Mary LP 101; Folkways FJ 2843 \*Also Mary 45631. Originally issued on Mary Records LP M 101, Mary Lou Williams Presents St. Martin de Porres, a.k.a. Black Christ of the Andes. See also Mary EP3626, Jazz for the Soul.

Recorded: New York, October 1963

MLW (p, leader, arr); Percy Heath (b); Tim Kennedy (d).

**Unissued Mary Records sessions tapes.**

Recorded: Pittsburgh, June 20 1965

MLW (leader, p, arr); Larry Gales (b); Ben Riley (d). Also MLW with Earl Hines (p) and/or Willie "The Lion" Smith (p); Billy Taylor (p) George Wein (p); Larry Gayles (b); Ben Riley (d).

**45 Degree Angle (trio) / Joycie (trio) Rosetta (with pianists)**

RCA LSP 3499

Recorded: New York, 1966

MLW (leader, p, arr); Melba Liston (arr); Leon Thomas (v); unidentified rhythm.

**Chief Natoma from Tacoma / You Know, Baby / Joe / Pittsburgh**

2 Mary Records 45s. No numbers available.

Recorded: New York (Carnegie hall), January 1967

MLW (p, arr); Bob Banks (cond, co-arr); Clemens J. McNaspy, S.J. (narrator); Bill Salters (b); Percy Brice (d); Ralph MacDonald (cgs); Julius Watkins (flgh); Honi Gordon, Leon Thomas (v. soloist); Interfaith Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble.

**History of Jazz (solo p & narration by Fr. McNaspy) / Thank You, Jesus / Our Father / Praise the Lord / Joycie**

Praise the Lord in Many Voices, Avant Grade LP AVS 103.

Recorded: Pittsburgh, June 1967

MLW (p, leader, composer); Seton High School for Girls Choir (soprano and alto).

**O.W. / Praise the Lord/ Lord Have Mercy, a.k.a. Kyrie / Glory to God, a.k.a. Gloria / The Creed, a.k.a. I believe, a.k.a. Credo / Holy Holy Holy, a.k.a. Sanctus Benedictus / Our Father, a.k.a. Pete r Noster / Lamb of God, a.k.a. Angus Dei / Act of Contrition / Thank You, Jesus**

Tape of rehearsal of first jazz mass in MLA collection.

Recorded: New York (St. Thomas the Apostle Church), March 1968

MLW (leader, p, composer); Honi Gordon (v); choir (mixed: male-female, adult-child); Harold Ousley (s); Roger Glenn (f); Ted Dunbar or Grant Green (g); Major Holley (b); Robbie Mickles (d).

**O.W. / Clean My Heart O Lord / Kyrie, a.k.a. Lord Have Mercy / The Lord Is My Light / Offertory / Holy Holy Holy / Amanuensis / Amen / Lab of God / Martha Said to Jesus / Return of the Prodigal Son (Harold Ousley, composer)**

Unreleased tape of performance and rehearsals of the MLW's second mass, Mass for the Lenten season, in MLW collection. (The mass was performed each Sunday during Lent of 1968.)

Recorded: Copenhagen, Denmark, fall 1968



MLW, the Danish National Jazz Orchestra, and combo: MLW (leader, p, arr); Neils-Henning Orsted Pedersen (b); Svend Asmussen (vln); Timme Rosenkrantz (narrator); Inez Cavanaugh (v).

**Aries (not from Zodiac Suite but a reworked 'Thank You, Jesus') / You Know, Baby (IC,/ Scratchin' in the Gravel, a.k.a. Truth / Chunkalunka / OW!, a.k.a. O.W. / N.M.E., a.k.a. New Musical Express / Mary's Blues / My Blue Heaven / Yesterdays / It's a Grand Night for Swinging / Autumn leaves / Caravan**

Unreleased tape of air checks of broadcasts on Danish radio, in MLW collection.

Recorded: Rome, February 1969

MLW (leader, p, arr); Maltoni Quarto (fl); Maurizio Majorana (b); Orchestra and choir of Roman Catholic seminarians.

**I Have a Dream / Tell Them Not To Talk Too Long / Selections from Mass for the Lenten Season, a.k.a. Jazz for the Soul / Extemporaneous**

Unreleased tape of air checks of performances for Vatican Radio, in MLW collection.

Recorded: New York (Holy Family Church), July 15, 1969

MLW (leader, p, arr); Leon Thomas (v); Unidentified (b); Probably Roger Glenn (f).

**People In Trouble/ The Lord Say / Kyrie / In His Day / Peace I Leave with You / Alleluia / Turn Aside / Our Father / Blessed Are the Pe acemakers / Spring (Leon Thomas, v) / Exit (solo p, improve .)**

Tape of early version of Music for Peace, in MLW collection.

Recorded: New York, 1970

MLW, solo piano and narration.

**Medi / Medi I (MLW voiceover) / Anima Christi Suite / Medi I / Who Sole the Lock of the Henhouse Door / Medi I / My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me / Night Life, a.k.a. Night Life / Hesitation Boogie / Old Blues / New Blues / Medi I**

The History of jazz, Folkways LP FJ 286g, issued on 1978.

Recorded: New York, 1970

MLW (p, composer, arr, leader); Edward Flanagan (producer); various musicians (see below).

Ensemble #1: MLW (composer, o, arr); Bob Banks (c0-aar); David Amram (frf, f); Carlie Ray (b, v); Al Harewood (d); Leon Atkinson (g); Randy Peyton, Christine Spencer, Eileen Gilbert (v).

Ensemble #2 MLW (composer, p, arr); Chris White (b); David Parker (d); Roger Glenn (f); Sonny Henry (g); Abdul Rahman (cgd); Carl Hall, Milton Grayson, James Baily (v).

Ensemble #3 same as #2, plus Eileen Gilbert, Randy Peyton, Carline Ray, Christine Spencer (v).

Ensemble #4 same as #1, plus Carl Hall, Randy Peyton (v).

**O.W. (#1) / The Lord Says (#2) / Kyrie, a.k.a. Lord Have Mercy (#3) / Gloria (#1) / In His Day (#4) / Peace I Leave with You/Alleluia (#1) / Turn Aside (#1) / Holy, Holy, Holy (#3)**

**Creed, a.k.a., Credo (#1) / Our Father (#1) / People in Trouble (#2) / Lazarus (MLW p, leader, composer, arr; Leon Atkinson g; Carline Ray b, v) / The World, a.k.a. One (#1) / Praise the Lord (#2)**

Issued as Mary LP (no number), Music for Peace.

Recorded: New York, 1970, and January 1972

MLW (p, leader, composer, arr), various artists. Makeup of ensembles as above.

**Praise the Lord (#2) / Old Time Spiritual (MLW p, leader, composer, arr; Milton**

**Suggs b; David parker d; Ralph MacDonald cgs; Roger Glenn f) / The Lord says (ensemble #2, M.G v solo)\* / Act of Contribution (MLW p, leader, composer, arr; Milton Suggs b; Honi Gordon v) / Kyrie, a.k.a. Lord have Mercy (ensemble #3)\* / Gloria (Ensemble #1)\* / In His Day (Ensemble #4)\* / Lazarus (MLW p; Leon Atkinson g; Carline**

**ray b, v)\* / Credo (Ensemble #1)\* / Medi I (and Medi II, in a medley) (MLW p, leader, composer, arr; Milton Suggs b; David Parker d; Ralph MacDonald cgs; Roger Glenn f) / Holy (Ensemble #3)\* / Our Father (Ensemble #1) / Lamb of God (MLW p, leader, composer, arr; Milton Suggs b; Roger Glenn f; Honi Gordon solo v, screams; chorus conducted by Howard Roberts) / People in Trouble (Ensemble #2)\* / One (a.k.a. The World) (Ensemble #1)\* / Praise the Lord (Come Holy Spirit) (MLW p, leader, composer arr; Milton Suggs b; David parker d; Ralph MacDonald**

**age; Leon Atkinson g; Julius Watkins frh; Peter Whitehead v; chorus conducted by Howard Roberts)**

Issued in 19775 as Mary Lou's Mass Records 102. \*Included also on Music for Peace, Mary LP (no number).

Recorded: New York, 1970

MLW (p, leader, arr); Sonny Henry (g); Leon Thomas (v); unidentified rhythm.

**Let's Do the Froggy Bottom\* / Jesus Is the Best / Credo\*\* / Willis\*\***

Mary Records 45 MA5. \*\*Mary Records 45 MA6.

Recorded: New York (Overseas Press Club), January 31, 1971

All-star group: MLW (p); Dizzy Gillespie and Bobby Hackett (t); George Duvivier (b); Grady Tate (d).

**Love for Sale / Autumn Leaves\* / Caravan / jitterbug Waltz / Willow Weep for Me / Birks' Works / My Man**

Released as Giants, Perception LP 19. Also on Giants of jazz CD 53 180.

Recorded: New York, October 17, 1972

MLW (interview, narrator); Thomas More Society (producer).

Phonotape: Jazz and the Sprint.

Recorded: Durham, North Carolina, December 1977

MLW (p), with chorus.

**Christmas Celebration Interlude / Silent Night / Deck the Halls / Jingle Bells / O Come All Ye Faithful / Shoo be doo de doo, Santa Claus / its Old Saint Nick**

Recorded: New York, December 27, 1977

MLW (p, composer, arr); Buster Williams (b); Cynthia Tyson (v).

**B: PIANO SOLOS**

**The Blues / N.G. Blues / Dirge Blue / Baby Bear Blues / Turtle Speed Blues / Blues for Peter / My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me / Prelude to Prism / Prism / What's Your Story, Morning Glory?**

**C: TRIO**

**Prelude to Love Roots / Love Roots / Rhythmic Patterns / J.B.'s Waltz / The Blues / No Title Blues /**

My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me, Piano LP 2310-819

Recorded: Durham, North Carolina (Baldwin Auditorium, Duke University), December 12, 1977

MLW (leader, p); Buster Williams (b); Roy Haynes (d).

**Spiritual II / Fandangle / Old Fashioned Slow Blues / Nite Life / Baby Beat Boogie/Roll 'Em / On Green Dolphin Street / I Can't Get Started / Naturally / Olinga / I Love you / Caravan / A Grand Night for Swinging / Baby Man / Gloria / Somewhere Over The Rainbow / Surrey With the Fringe on Top / 45\* Angle / Bags' Groove (incomplete)**

Concert tape in MLW collection.

Selected Reissues/ Complications on CD Containing Work by Mary Lou Williams

Jazz Archives 15900 Mary Lou Williams' Story

Suiza JZCD 35 Greatest Lady Piano Player in Jazz

Topaz LC7234 Mary Lou Williams-Key Moments

Giants of Jazz 53180 First Lady of the Piano 1952-1971

Collectables COL 5612 Mary Lou Williams and orchestra/ Meade Lux Lewis

Pro Arte CDD 3408 Andy Kirk-Moten Swing

Living Era AJA 5108 € Andy Kirk: The Twelve Clouds of Joy with Mary Lou Williams

Black & Blue CD 59 2402 (F) Kansas City Bounce

Disky DCD 8004 Kansas City and the Southwest

LaserLight 17 171 Jazz Piano Anthology: The magic Touch, volume 4

It is beyond the scope of the discography to mention the many LP reissues of recording made by Mary Lou Williams, especially from the Clouds of Joy era, and her work as a soloist and leader in the 1940s. Several interesting LP's are:

Stash 109, 11 (a collection of female pianists); and Stash 113, jazz Women: A Feminist Retrospective

MCA 1308, Instrumental Speaking

Folkways FJ 2852, Piano Greats

## **D: Selected Appearances by May Lou Williams on Video**

I Have a Dream (1968) Documentary film on MLW by New York University Motion Picture Workshop, produced by Edward Flanagan.

Segment on Mr. Roger's Neighbourhood (1973) Program No. 1313.

Segment on Sesame Street, Children's Television Workshop (1970s, undated).

Mary Lou's Mass (1976) Documentary film of Mass and performance at the Cookery, produced by Thomas C. Guy, Jr.

"A Christmas Special with Mary Lou Williams at Duke University" (1977)

Taped on December 5 and aired on Christmas Eve 1977, this program includes MLW with bassist Freeman Ledbetter, and with Duke University students, singing her arrangement of Christmas carols.

Live performance for ETV-Nebraska (1980) Valuable documentation of one of her last filmed public performances; with Milton Suggs (bass), and Hugh Walker (drums). Portions excerpted for the 1983 TV program "Swinging the Blues," hosted by Dr. Billy Taylor.

Music on My Mind (1981) Documentary study of MLW by Joanne Burke. Distributed through Women Make Movies, New York.

See also Mary Lou Williams Archive at Institute of Jazz Studies for more listings.

### **Selected Available Recordings on CD of Mary Lou Williams Compositions Performed by Other Artists (various tunes)**

Dave Douglas (t, leader, arr, composer) and combo (personnel not known), Soul on Soul:

celebrating Mary Lou Williams, RCA Victor, forthcoming late 1999

Marian McPartland (p), Marian McPartland Plays the Music of Mary Lou Williams, Concord jazz 4605

Roll 'Em

Shirley Scott (o), Impulse GRP 147

Diva Big Band, Diva Ltd. CD-079602

Pretty-eyed Baby

Roy Eldridge, Dizzy Gillespie (leader, t, vcl), Verve Clef 34521647-2, October 29, 1954

Satchel Mouth Baby

Nat Cole (trio) (v, p, leader), Classic Jazz 8477 8477, 1944

Nat Cole (trio) (v, p, leader), Four Star "Master Series," FS-40047

Little Joe from Chicago

Nat Cole (trio) (v, p, leader), Four Star "Master Series," FS  
40047 Nat Cole, Delta Music LaserLight 15 746, Volume 1

What's Your Story, Morning Glory?

Ella Fitzgerald (v), Verve 517535-2 1958

Jimmie Lunceford Orchestra, Living Era AJA 5091, 1940

The American Jazz Orchestra, Music Masters Jazz 65072-2,01991

Anita O'Day (v), Verve Polygram 837939-2, 1963

Black Coffee

Sarah Vaughan (v), Columbia C2K 44165 (after MLW's Morning Glory)

In the Land of Oo-bla-dee

Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, RCA/BMG 09026-68499-2 1949

Benny Goodman septet, Capital 32086, and Mosaic MD 4-148, 1949 (also MLW, arr.)

Walkin' Out the Door

Nat Cole (trio) (p), Capital jazz CDP 0777 7

895452 Honi Gordon (v), Prestige PR 7230

Why

Honi Gordon (v), Prestige PR 7230

Lonely Moments

George Shearing (p), Verve 314 529 900-2 1951

Benny Goodman Orch. (leader, cl), Capital 32086, 1948 (also MLW, arr.)

Whistle Blues

Benny Goodman Big Band Orch, (leader, cl) Capital 32086, 1948 (also MLW, arr.)

Walkin' and Swinging'

Jim Galloway Big Band, Sackville (C) 3222, 1993

Steppin' Pretty

Jim Galloway Big Band, Sackville (C) 3222, 1993

Koolbongo

Billy Taylor (p), Original jazz Classics (Fantasy) OJCCD-1830-2, 1959

Swingin' Till the Guys Come Home

Lambert, Hendricks and Bavan (v), Bluebird 6282-2 R11, 1962

Mary's Idea

Benny Goodman combo, Dragon (Sweden) 183, 1948

Lullaby of the Leaves

Geri Allen (p), Somethin' Else CDP 72438 3000285 25 (arr, only by MLW)

**Recording of Mary Lou Williams Arrangements by the Duke Ellington Orchestra or by Small Ensembles of Ellington Personnel**

Trumpets No End- The best-known arrangement by Mary for Ellington Orchestra is "Trumpets No End," a.k.a. "Trumpet No End," an arrangement of "Blue Skies," It first appeared on record on November 8, 1943; there were many later recordings, from 1944 to 1953. CD Circle 101 includes five takes of "Trumpet(s) No End."

Sweet George Brown- Mary's composition of "Sweet Georgia Brown," recorded in June 1943, is available on CD Jazz Archives 15 8432, Kansas City Legends. In the band on the date was a young Dizzy Gillespie, subbing for Mary's then husband Harold Baker.

Chief (Natoma from Tacoma) Mary's composition, in a new arrangement, is on CD SAJA Records 791045-2, Duke Ellington, The Private Collection, Volume 5, The Suites, New York 1968 and 1970, in The River. A second arrangement of "Chief" is on CD Pablo OJCCD-446-2, The Ellington Suites, in the UWis Suite.

Chopstick- Mary Lou Williams is coarranger with Duke Ellington on this January 1945 recording, on circle CD-103

Variation on Stardust-Recorded at Carnegie Hall concert December 11, 1943, on LP Ember € EMBD2001.

Ghost of Love-Ben Webster (ts); Billy Strayhorn (p); Al Hibbler (v); unidentified rhythm.

IAJRC 30.

### **A Selection of Mary Lou Williams Composition Recorded by Other Artists of LPs**

Cloudy Red Garland (p), Moodsville LP MVPL10 (Japan), 1960

Steppin' Pretty Buck Clayton (t), Riverside R-353/9353

The Devil (Is a Women) Ada Moore (v), Debut Records 15

Walkin' and Swinging' (1) Gene Krupa and Orchestra, Ajax 110, 1938; (2) Les Brown and Orchestra, Decca 3167, 1940

A Mellow Bit of Rhythm (1) Les Brown and Orchestra, Decca 3167; (2) Red Norvo, Big Band Archives LP 2201, 1944

Lonely Moments (1) Gener Sedic and Orchestra, Harmonia H1806, 1946; (2) Edmond Hall and Café Society Orchestra (cl), Continental 6026 1946

Little Joe from Chicago Wingy Manone (t), Bluebird B-7622, 1955

What's Your Story Morning Glory? - Glenn Miller Orchestra, BB B10832/reissue RCA (F) LFMI-7516, 1940

Messa Stomp Dreamland Syncopators, Keith Nichols (leader), Stomp Off Records LP SOS 1150



WNEW Half-hour Weekly Program, "The Mary Lou Williams Piano Workshop": 1945

### **Tapes in Mary Lou Williams Collection**

4/12/45 With Al Lucas (b), Jack Parker (d), and Joe Carroll (v). Mary played and sang her composition "You Know, Baby." On "Put Another Nickle In," she provided bop accompaniment to Joe Carroll's vocals. Other tunes included "Sheik of Araby," "I Found a New baby," "Lullaby of the Leaves," "Roll 'Em," "Dark Eyes," and "Froggy Bottom."

4/18/45 With Lucas and Parker. Mary opened with an untitled and improvised theme, followed by "St. Louise Blues," "Sweet Lorraine," "I Know That You Know," "Limehouse Blues," "In My Solitude," "Blue Skis," "Mary Lou's Boogie," and "Honeysuckle Rose."

4/25/45 With Lucas and Parker. Mary played her theme, then "Marcheta," a medley of "Morning Glory"/"Cloudy"/"Ghost of Love," "Limehouse Blues," "Beloved Comrade" (Josh White, vocals), "You Know Baby," "Froggy Bottom," "When Dreams Come True," and "I Got Rhythm."

5/2/45 With Al Hall (b), Bill Coleman (t), Elwood Smith (v). The theme, "I Got Rhythm," "Persian Rug," "Let MY People Go" (with Elwood Smith), "I Know That You Know," "Night and Day," "Oh No Jon" (with Smith), "Blue Skies," "Lady Be Good," "Night and Day," "Oh No John" (with Smith), "Blue Skies" "Lady Be Good," "Night and Day," "Oh No John" (with Smith), "I Know That You Know," "Mary Lou's Boogie" (Mary and Hall only), "I Got Rhythm" (quartet).

6/24/45 With Johnny Williams (b), Art Trappier (d), Edmond Hall (cl). Opened with the theme, "Limehouse Blues," "Rose Room" (with Edmond Hall), "Gjon Mili jam Session" (with Hall), several bars of possible "Salt Peanuts," "After You've Gone" (with Hall), "In My Solitude," "Marcheta," "Roll 'Em" (with Hall), "Honeysuckle Rose" (with Hall).

7/1/45 Same personnel as above. Theme, "St. Louise Blues," "Carcinoma" (with Hall), "I Never Knew" (with Hall), "Stardust" (introduced but not on the tape), "I Know That You Know" (with Hall).

7/8/45 With Dose or Mose Dickens (b), Wally Bishop (d), Gene Sedric (cl). Theme, "Loney Moments"-misintroduced as "Lovely Moments"- (with Sedric), "Man of Mine" (with Sedric), unidentified tune (with Sedric), "You Know, Baby" (with Sedric and V by Mary), "After You've Gone" (with Sedric).

7/15/45 Same personnel as above. Theme, "Twinklin'" (with Sedric), "Sometimes I'm Happy" (with Sedric: interrupted by World War II news bulletin), "I've Got a Song in my Soul" (new MLW comp). Again a news bulletin interruption. "Lonely Moments" (with Sedric), "It Had to Be You" (v by Dickens with Sedric), "When Dreams Come True," "The Man I Love" (with Sedric), "The Sheik of Arby" (with Sedric).

7/22/45 With Curley Russell (b), Charlie Simon (d), Sylvia Syms (v). Theme, "When Dreams Come True," "Song in My Soul" (with Sylvia Syms), "Dark Eyes," "Mean to Me" (with Sims), "Marcheta," Gershwin Medley (piano solo), "I Got Rhythm," "St. Louis Blues," "Honeysuckle Rose," theme.

7/29/45 With John White (v and g), Bunny White (v). Theme, "Honeysuckle Rose" (piano solo), "Tea for Two" (piano solo), "I Want You, I Need You" (v and g by Josh White only), "Waltzing Matilda" (B. White, v), "Free and Equal Blues" (by Josh White), theme, piano solo.

8/5/45 Personnel unclear; probably Al Hall (b), Specs Powell (d), Bill Coleman (t). "When Dreams Come True" and "Lonely Moments" introduced, but only the last chorus is on the tape, "Roll 'Em." "Sleep" on LP (see p. 416).

8/12/45 Same personnel, also Ann Hathaway (v). “Gjon Mili Jam Session” (on LP: see p. 416), “Persian Rug,” news interruption, “Let My People Go” (Bill Coleman, v), “How High the Moon,” “The Man I Love,” “Ghost of Love” (Ann Hathaway, v).

On the WNEW program, Mary played the following signs of the Zodiac:

4/4/45 Gemini

6/24/45 Aquarius – incomplete sketch.

4/11/45 Cancer

7/1/45 Pisces

4/18/45 Leo

7/8/45 Scorpio

4/25/45 Virgo

7/22/45 Aquarius

5/2/45 Libra

7/29/45 Sagittarius

6/17/45 Capricorn (piano solo)

8/5/45 Pisces

## **WOR RADIO**

9/7/45 Interview and performance before a studio audience, Mary with Al Lucas (b), Jack Parker (d). “Waltz Boogie” and “Fifth Dimension.”

Mary also performed frequently on radio in the 1940s, early 1950s, and mid 1960s (WABC, circa 1964).

## **Compositions and Arrangements by Mary Lou Williams**

### **i. Mary Lou Williams’s Compositions and Co-compositions for Andy Kirk and the Clouds of Joy**

<b>1936</b>	Messa Stomp (rearranged version)
Walkin’ and Swingin’	Toadie Toddle
Lotta Sax Appeal	Ghost of Love
Git	What’s Your Story, Morning Glory?
Froggy Bottom (rearranged version)	Dunkin’ a Doughnut

Bearcat Shuffle	Mary's Idea (rearranged version)
Steppin' Pretty	<b>1939</b>
Corky	Close to five
Cloudy (rearranged version)	Big Jim Blues
<b>1937</b>	<b>1940</b>
In the Groove	Why Go on Pretending
A Mellow Bit of Rhythm	Scratchin' in the Gravel
<b>1938</b>	<b>1941</b>
Twinklin'	Big Time Crip
Little Joe from Chicago	

**ii. Selected Arrangements by Mary Lou Williams for Other Big Bands**

For Benny Goodman: "The Count," "Messa Stomp," "Toadie Toddle" (and see below)

For Cab Calloway: "Ghost of Love," "Toadie Toddle"

For Louis Armstrong: "Messa Stomp," "Walkin' and Swingin'," "A Mellow Bit of Rhythm," "Cloudy"

For Bob Crosby: "Steppin' Pretty," "Ghost of Love"

For Tommy Dorsey: "Little Joe from Chicago"

For Red Norvo: "A Mellow Bit of Rhythm," "Messa Stomp"

For Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra: "Walkin' and Swingin'," "What's Your Story, Morning Glory?"

For The Sweethearts of Rhythm: "St. Louis Blues"

**iii. Selected Compositions and Arrangements by Mary Lou Williams for Benny Goodman**

Most of the material that Mary Lou Williams arranged for Benny Goodman in the 1930s and 1940s, including many incomplete scores, is contained in the Benny Goodman Archive at Yale University; other material is at the Library of the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Centre in New York.

Benny's Bop MLW composer, arranger

Benny's Boogie MLW arranger

Blue Views (1948) MLW arranger  
Bye Bye Blues (1948) MLW arranger  
Camel Hop  
Conversation (1947) MLW arranger  
The Count (late 1930s)  
Donna Lee (1948) MLW arranger  
(In the Land of) Oo-bla-dee MLW composer, arranger  
Knowledge (1949)  
Kool (1948) MLW composer and arranger  
Lonely Moments (1946) MLW composer and  
arranger Lonely Moments (1947) MLW arranger  
(new version)  
Mary's Idea, a.k.a. Just an Idea (1946) MLW composer and  
arranger Mary's Idea (1948) MLW arranger  
(New version)  
Messa Stomp (late 1930s)  
Out of This World (1941) MLW arranger  
Riffs (1937) MLW composer and arranger  
Roll 'Em (1937) MLW composer, arranger  
Shafi (1977) MLW co-composer (with Shafi Hadid),  
arranger Shorty Boo (1949)  
Stealin' Apples (1948) MLW arranger  
(Sweet) Georgia Brown (late 1930s)  
(There's a) Small Hotel MLW arranger  
Tisherome (1949)

Toadie Toodle (late 1930s)

Untitled (1948) MLW arranger

Walkin' (Out the Door) MLW and Lindsay Steele co-composers, MLW arranger

Whistle Blues (1946) MLW and Milt Orent co-composers, MLW arranger

Whistle Blues (1947) MLW arranger (new version)

You Do Something to Me (1940) MLW arranger

You Turned the Tables on Me (1948) MLW arranger

You Were Meant for Me (1948) MLW arranger

**iv. Compositions and/or Arrangements by Mary Lou Williams for Ellington  
Orchestra, 1940s through 1960s**

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea MLW

arranger Blue Love MLW arranger, possibly composer

Blue Skies/Trumpet(s) No End MLW arrangement (Ellington archive) (recorded)

Body and Soul MLW arranger

Canteen Bounce MLW arranger

Chief (Natoma and Tacoma) MLW arranger (recorded)

Chopsticks MLW and Ellington coarranger (recorded)

Conversation MLW arranger

The Count MLW arranger

Don't Play the Mambo MLW arranger

Everything but You MLW arranger (recorded)

Fill the Cup MLW arranger

Flamingo MLW arranger

Ghost of Love MLW composer and arranger (recorded)

Giddap Mule MLW arranger

Gone with the Blues MLW arrangers

Gone with the Wind MLW arranger

He Should'a Flipped When He Flopp'd MLW arranger  
(recorded) Honeysuckle Rose MLW arranger  
I Love Coffee, a.k.a. Jave Jive MLW arranger  
Joe MLW arranger and Milt Orent co-composers, MLW  
arranger Knowledge MLW composer and arranger  
Little Joe from Chicago MLW composer and arranger  
Lonely Moments MLW composer and arranger  
  
Lota Mama MLW co-composer with Bob Russell (lyric), MLW arranger  
Mister Good Blues MLW arranger  
Move It Over MLW arranger  
My Blue Heaven MLW arranger  
My Gal Sal MLW arranger  
(New) Musical Express, a.k.a. N.M.E. MLW composer and  
arranger Ogeechee River Lullaby MLW arranger  
Otto, Make That Riff Staccato MLW arranger (recorded)  
O.W. MLW composer and arranger  
Perdido MLW arranger  
Scorpio (from Zodiac Suite) MLW composer and arranger  
Scratchin' in the Gravel, a.k.a. Truth MLW composer and arranger  
Seventy-one MLW composer and arranger  
Shiny Stockings MLW arranger  
Shorty Boo Blues MLW composer and arranger  
Sleepy Valley MLW arranger  
Somebody Stole My Gal MLW arranger  
Something to Live For MLW arranger

Spring's Swing MLW arranger

Star Dust, a.k.a. Mary Lou Williams's Stardust MLW

arranger (Sweet) Georgia Brown MLW arranger

(recorded)

We'd Be the Same MLW arranger

You Know, Baby ("rock-'n-roll" version)

MLW composer and arranger

#### **v. Selected Compositions by Mary Lou Williams**

Act of Contribution

The Adding Machine

Amy

Angel Love (with M. D. Foster)

Anima Christi, a.k.a. Anima Cristi Suite

Aquarius

Aries, a.k.a. Aries Mood

Babs

Baby Bear Boogie

Back to the Blues

Ballot Box Boogie (in the Key of Franklin D.) (with Bob Russell)

Basic Chords: Bop Changes on the Blues

Bearcut Shuffle

Big Jim Blues (with Harry Lawson)

Big Time Crip (with Harry Wells)

Black Christ of the Andes, a.k.a. (Hymn in Honour of) St. Martin de Porres (with Anthony Woods)



Blue Pastel, a.k.a. (In the) Purple Grotto, a.k.a. Mary's

Blues The Blues (with Cynthia Tyson)

Blues for Club Francais, a.k.a. Club Francais Blues

Blues for John

Blues for Peter

The Blues Never Left Me

Bobo

Bobo and Doodles

Boogie Misterioso, a.k.a. Flunga Dunga

Breeze

Camel Hop

Cancer

Cancer Mood, a.k.a. Carcinoma

Capricorn

Cee E. Larkins

Chant of the Jitterbugs (with Sharon Pease)

Chicka Boom Blues

Chief Natoma from Tacoma (with Milton Orent)

Chili Sauce

Christmas Celebration Interlude (melody)

Chunka Lunka

Clean Pickin'

Close to Five

Cloudy

The Colonel's in Love with Nancy, a.k.a. The Colonel Loves

Nancy Conversation, a.k.a. Jump Caprice Cootchie

Corky, a.k.a. Corky Stomp (with Andy Kirk)

Corny Rhythm

Deuces Wild

The Devil, a.k.a. Devil (with Ada Moore)

Dirge Blues, a.k.a. Don't Cry, Baby

Don't Do This – Don't Do That – That's How She's Treatin' Me (with Frank

Lewis) Drag 'Em

Du

The Duke and the Count

Dunkin' a Doughnut

Easy Blues, a.k.a. Easy

8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Express

Elijah (Under the Juniper Tree) (with Ray M. Carr and Milton Orent)

Exit Playing

Fandangle

Fannie

The Feller from Savannah

Fifth Dimension

Flying Solo (with Paula Stone)

For the Figs

Froggy Bottom (with John Williams)

Froggy Bottom (with lyric, 1938; and 1944 variation on melody)

A Fungus Amungus

Gemini

Gemma

Gerrard Street (with Albon Timothy)

Gettin' Off a Mess

Ghost of Love (with Sharon Pease and Jack Lawrence)

Gjon Mili Jam Session

Gloria (with Robert Ledogar)

Glory of God

Good Ole Boogie

Gootchie

Hesitation Boogie

Holy Ghost (with Larry Gales)

Holy Holy Holy

I Can't Go On This Way (with Cecil Doty)

I Don't Know

I Have a Dream (after words of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

I Love Him, a.k.a. I Love You

I Never Know

(I Went to a) Gypsy (with Dick Brooks)

(I) Won't Let it Bother Me

I'd Still Love You (with Morris Minton)

If I Thought You Cared (with Henry Wells)

If You're Around

I'm Fooling Myself

I'm Happy, I Guess (with Ada Moore)

I'm Not Complaining

In His Day

In the Land of Oo-bla-dee (with Milton Orent)

Isabelle

Jazz (Close Your Eyes and Listen with the Ears of Your Heart) (with Gracie Glassman)

J.B.'s Waltz (with Milton Suggs)

Jesus Is the Best (with Tom Virga)

Joe (with Milton Orent)

Joycie, a.k.a. Joyce, a.k.a. Watchers

K.C. 12<sup>th</sup> Street: Kansas City Swing

(Keep It) in the Groove (with Dick Wilson)

Knowledge, a.k.a. Elevation

Kool

Koolbongo a.k.a. Koolbonga

Lamb of God

Lazarus, a.k.a. Beggar Man

Laudle Leedle (with Leon Thomas)

Lazy Ginger

The Left Side Is the Right Side (with Milton Orent and Stuart Sprague)

Leo

Let's Do the Froggy Bottom (with Juanita Fleming)

Libra, a.k.a. Libra Mood

Little Joe from Chicago (with Henry Wells)

The Little Scotch Tailor (with Frank Lewis)

Little Willie & Stack O' Lee

Lonely Moments

Lord Have Mercy

Lord Have Mercy (with George Tucker)

The Lord Is Heavy, a.k.a. Spiritual II and  
Spiritual III The Lord Says

Lotta Sax Appeal (with John Williams)

Love

Love Lies (with Milton Orent)

Love Roots

Man O'Mine, a.k.a. Sweet Juice

Marnier Mood

Mary Lou Williams Blues

Mary's Boogie

Mary's Idea, a.k.a. Just an Idea

Mary's Waltz (with Herbie Nichols)

Mass for the Lenten Season, a.k.a. Praise the

Lord Medi

Medi II, a.k.a. Busy Busy Busy (New York) (with Gracie Glassman)

A Mellor Bit of Rhythm (with Herman Walder)

Melody Maker

Messa Stomp (revised 1938)

Midnite Blues

Miss D.D.

Misty Blues

Mr. Kennedy (with Paul Oakes)

Mu

My Brother Jim (with Robert Scott and Paul Oakes)

My Dreamer

My Favorite Memory (with Sharon Pease)

My Horoscope (with Milton Orent)

My Last Affair

My Mama Pinned a Rose on Me

N.G. Blues

Nickels

Nicknames

Nicole

Nirees (with Idrees Sulieman)

Nite Life, a.k.a. Express, a.k.a. Musical Express, a.k.a. New Musical Express

No Title Blues

Nursery Rhyme No. 2 (Mary's Lamb)

Ode to Saint Cecilia

Offertory Meditation

Old Time Spiritual

Out of My Dreaming (with Vic Dickenson and Tobie Kaye)

Overhand

Overture

O.W.

Pater Noster, a.k.a. Our Father

People in Trouble

Pisces

Pittsburgh (with Milton Orent)

Play It, Momma

Po-ta-be, a.k.a. Po0tabe (with Melba Liston)

Praise the Lord

Prelude to Prism

Pretty-eyed Baby, a.k.a. Piccola Baby  
(with William Johnson and Leo “Snub” Mosely)

The Pussy’s in the Well (Nursery Rhyme 1)

Rhythmic Pattern

Riffs

The Rocks

Roll ‘Em

Rosa Mae (with Larry Gales and Gracie Glassman)

Sagittarius

Satchel Mouth Baby

The Scarlet Creeper

Scorpio

Scratchin’ in the Gravel, a.k.a. Truth

Selas

Shafi (with Shafi Hadid)

She Went Up and Down on a Merry Go Round (with Frank Lewis)

Shoo be doo be doo, Santa Claus (with Cynthia Tyson)

Shorty Boo (with Milton Orent)

Show Business

Song in My Soul

Space Playing Blues

Special Freight

Steppin' Pretty (with B. Kaempfert and H. Rehbein)

Strange Fascination (with Ada Moore)

Strictly on the Know (with Paula Stone)

Sweet (Patootie) Patunia

Swingin' for Joy

Swingin' Tilt the Guys Come Home (with Oscar Pettiford)

Syl-O-Gism (with Larry Gales)

Take the Heat off Me

Take the Wagon

Taurus, a.k.a. Taurus Mood, a.k.a. Study in the Blues

Tell Him Not to Talk Too Long (after words of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Tell Me How Long Will the Train Be Gone? (with Paula Stone)

Terry Sanford (with Cynthia Tyson)

Thank You, Jesus

Theme from the Third World (with Herbie Nichols)

There's a Thing in My Heart (with Joseph Mangiapane)

This Is the Way to My Heart

The Time Is Now (with Paula Stone)

Timme Time

Timmie's Blue, a.k.a. Blues for Timme

Tisherome

Toadie Toddle (with Sharon Pease)

Turtle Speed Blues

Twilight

Twinklin'

Virgo



Votive Mass for Peace, a.k.a. Mass for Peace

Waiting (with Don Mickles)

Walkin', a.k.a. Walkin' Out the Door (with Lindsay Steele)

Walkin' and Swingin'

Waltz Boogie, a.k.a. Dunga

Wanderland (with Don Mickles and Manny Fernandez)

We Three

We're in Harmony

What I Really Like Is Loving You (with Paula Stone)

What's Your Story, Morning Glory?  
(with Paul F. Webster and Jack Lawrence)

Whistle, a.k.a. Whistle Blues (with Milton Orent)

Whose Little Who Are You? a.k.a. Whose Little Boy Are You? (with Ada Moore)

Why?

Why Go On Pretending? (with Roy Jacobs)

Willis

Yankee Doodle Blues (with lyric by Bob Russle)

Yarm (with George Tucker)

Yatcha Dubue

Yesterday's Kisses

You Are My Little One (with Paula Stone)

You Know Baby (with Frank Lewis)

You Locked the Door (with Vic Dickenson and Tobie Kaye)

Zoning, a.k.a. Intermission (with Milton Suggs)

Zoning Fungus II, a.k.a. Fungus Number

# Appendix 11: Turnitin Report

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**An Examination of Mary Lou Williams' Creative...**  
 By Fabu Phillis Carter

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