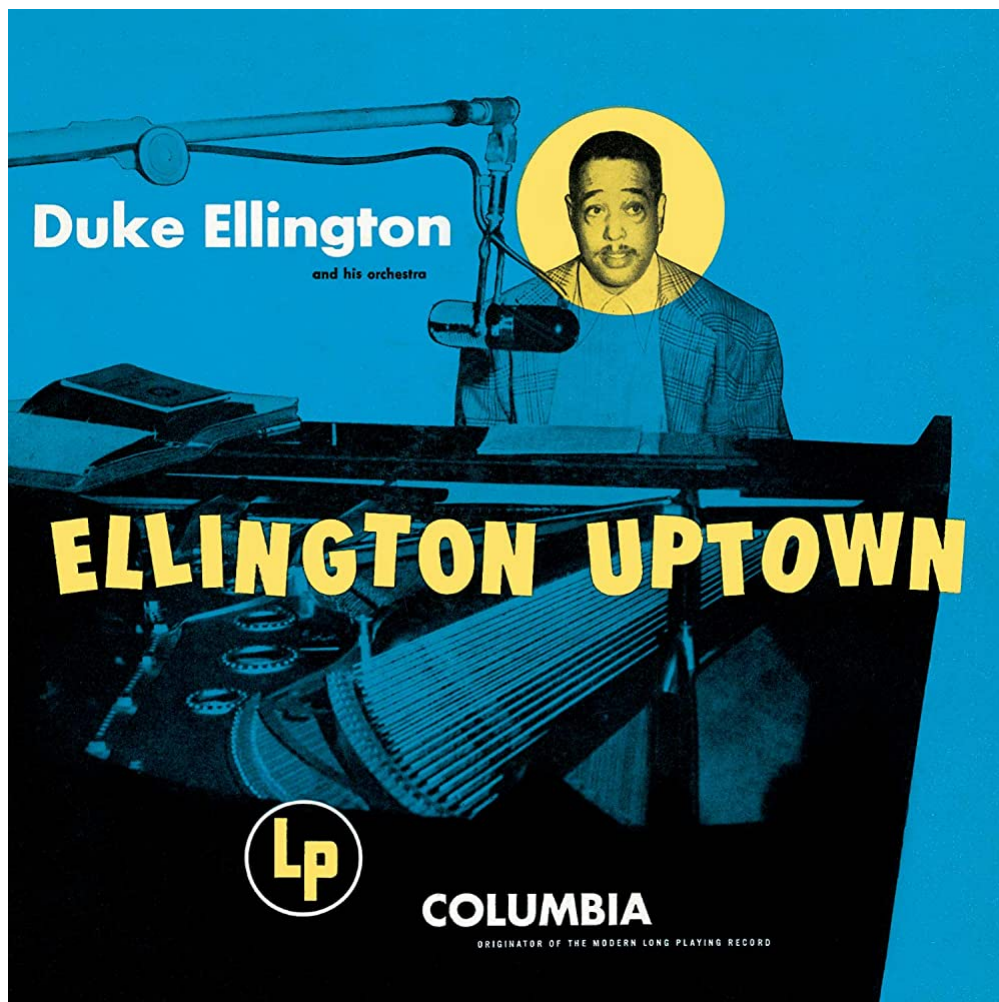


Throwback: Duke Ellington - Take The A Train



Billy Strayhorn wrote "Take The A Train" for Duke Ellington soon after he was hired by him in 1939. The song was inspired by travel directions Ellington gave Strayhorn on how to get to his home in New York City. Strayhorn's love of bandleader Fletcher Henderson's style influenced the genteel horn arrangement for the tune that had to replace "Sepia Panorama" because of expensive ASCAP fees. Lee Gaines of The Delta Rhythm Boys wrote the first lyrics for "Take The A Train" and vocalist Joya Sherrill wrote her own which she present to Ellington during her audition for the band in 1944. The song became a jazz standard and was covered by many including Ella Fitzgerald, Charles Mingus and Sun Ra. Ellington and his band performed it in the 1943 musical film *Reveille With Beverly*

with singer Betty Roche. "Take The A Train" became Ellington's signature song and it is considered one of the most important compositions of the 20th century. [The Duke Ellington Center](#) Big Band will perform a free concert on May 21st in New York City at the [Duke Ellington statue](#) to acknowledge the late bandleader's 124th birthday. Ellington's granddaughter Mercedes Ellington and Tony Waag who is the executive producer of the American Tap Dance Foundation will co-host the annual event.