

Office of the Mayor

CITY OF NEW YORK



Proclamation

WHEREAS: ONE HUNDRED AND TEN YEARS AGO, EDWARD KENNEDY ELLINGTON WAS BORN TO TWO AMATEUR PIANO PLAYERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C. FROM A YOUNG AGE HIS STATELY AND COOL DEMEANOR WAS LAUDED BY HIS NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDS—GARNERING HIM THE NICKNAME THAT WOULD STAY WITH HIM THROUGH HIS LIFE AND CAREER, DUKE. AT THE AGE OF SEVEN, HE BEGAN TAKING PIANO LESSONS, AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE A YOUNG ELLINGTON WAS COMPOSING SONGS BASED ON HIS DAILY EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING HIS FIRST PIECE "SODA FOUNTAIN RAG" BASED ON HIS TIME AS A SODA JERK AT THE POODLE DOG CAFÉ. HIS TRUE MOMENT OF INSPIRATION CAME IN LISTENING TO THE RAGTIME STYLE OF THE POOLROOM PIANISTS OF HIS HOMETOWN AND ALONG THE EASTERN SEABOARD. IT WAS IN LEARNING TO IMITATE THESE SHOWMEN THAT DUKE ELLINGTON BEGAN TO HELP SHAPE MODERN JAZZ AS WE KNOW IT.

WHEREAS: DUKE ELLINGTON FULLY LAUNCHED HIS MUSICAL CAREER IN 1917 FOLLOWING CHANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH SUCH EARLY JAZZ GREATS AS JAMES P. JOHNSON, LUCKEY ROBERTS, WILL MARION COOK, FATS WALLER, AND SIDNEY BECHET. DESPITE FINDING SUCCESS IN WASHINGTON D.C., ELLINGTON WAS DRAWN TO NEW YORK CITY AT THE HEIGHT OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE. HE TOOK UP RESIDENCE IN HARLEM AND PERFORMED HERE MANY TIMES THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE—INCLUDING ENGAGEMENTS AT VARIOUS JAZZ CLUBS AND CARNEGIE HALL. HIS FAMOUS SONGS WRITTEN IN THE 1930S AND 40S, LIKE "IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING)," "IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD," "CARAVAN," AND "TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN," FURTHER ESTABLISHED HIS INTERNATIONAL POPULARITY, LEADING TO WORLDWIDE TOURS AND WIDE ACCLAIM.

WHEREAS: DUKE ELLINGTON ONCE SAID, "THE WISE MUSICIANS ARE THOSE WHO PLAY WHAT THEY CAN MASTER." HE CERTAINLY WAS A MASTER AT HIS CRAFT—EARNING 13 GRAMMY AWARDS, INCLUDING A LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN 1966. TODAY MARKS THE 110TH ANNIVERSARY OF DUKE ELLINGTON'S BIRTH, AND EVENTS WILL BE HELD ACROSS THE CITY TO CELEBRATE THE MANY FACETS OF THIS GREAT MUSICIAN'S WORK. I HOPE THAT EVERYONE HAS A WONDERFUL TIME WHILE THEY "TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN" WITH ELLINGTON'S GRANDSON, PAUL ELLINGTON, AND THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA TO CELEBRATE THE IMMORTAL MUSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF DUKE ELLINGTON AND ENSURE THAT HIS WORK LIVES ON FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

NOW THEREFORE, I, MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, IN HONOR OF THIS IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY DO HEREBY PROCLAIM WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29TH, 2009 IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK AS:

"DUKE ELLINGTON DAY"



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO
SET MY HAND AND CAUSED THE SEAL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK TO BE AFFIXED.


MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
MAYOR