I first encountered the music of Duke Ellington in secondary school. Our jazz band played a medley of Ellington tunes, and the trombonists all competed to play the gorgeous solo on *In a Sentimental Mood*. Later, we added *Mood Indigo* to our repertoire, and I was struck by how original – how different – that piece was from anything else we had in our extensive book. Even in watered-down versions for school band, Ellington’s music had a mystique that marked it as something special.

Over the course of 50 years, Ellington led what he claimed to be the longest continuously running big band, and composed over 1,000 pieces. Many of those pieces have become standards still performed today, 50 years after his death. In his memoir, *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington reminisces about his career, his influences and inspirations, his sidemen and competitors, and the music ‘beyond category’ that took him from the Cotton Club in Harlem to venues around the world.

Join me, Christopher Coleman, as we celebrate the music of this legend of American music in ‘Ellington’s Mistress’.