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*Cinema Changes:
Incorporations of Jazz
in the Film Soundtrack*
(pp. 219-238)

Dignity in the Twilight of Minstrelsy - Race, Nuance, & Aspiration in Duke Ellington's *Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life*

In 1935 Duke Ellington released his film short, *Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life*. Representations of blackness range from dignified characters to period stereotypes as Ellington navigates contemporaneous audience expectations to elevate his subjects beyond simple minstrel tropes and extend his ongoing investment in tackling racial themes—a hallmark of his early output. Ellington's approach ultimately carves out a space in which both his black and white audience may glimpse balanced racial treatment unfettered on film at a time when neither group could yet envision the fanciful ambitions of a Civil Rights Era still a quarter century away.