

DAVID

*Hajdu*

LUSH



ONE OF THE  
FINEST OF JAZZ  
BIOGRAPHIES.

—WILL FRIEDWALD

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

*Life*

A BIOGRAPHY OF

BILLY

STRAYHORN

*Nominated*  
FOR A NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD

A portrait that is both full and convincing . . . It is a mark of the excellence of this biography that it leaves one wanting nothing so much as to listen to the music.

—JONATHAN YARDLEY, *THE WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD*

**BILLY STRAYHORN** (1915–67) was one of the greatest composers in the history of American music, the creator of a body of work that includes such standards as “Take the ‘A’ Train.” Yet all his life Strayhorn was overshadowed by his friend and collaborator Duke Ellington, with whom he worked for three decades as the Ellington Orchestra’s ace songwriter and arranger.

A “definitive” corrective (*USA Today*) to decades of patchwork scholarship and journalism about this giant of jazz, *Lush Life* is a vibrant and absorbing account of the “lush life” Strayhorn and other jazz musicians led in Harlem and Paris. While composing some of the most gorgeous American music of this century, Strayhorn labored under a complex agreement whereby Ellington took the bows for his work; until his life was tragically cut short by cancer and alcohol abuse, the small, shy black composer carried himself with singular style and grace as one of the few jazzmen to be openly homosexual.

*Lush Life* has sparked an enthusiastic revival of interest in Billy Strayhorn’s work. It is already acknowledged as a jazz classic.

*Lush Life* is a book as beautiful and intelligent as its subject. David Hajdu has brought all my dear memories of Billy Strayhorn to life.

—LENA HORNE

Hajdu invests his biography of Strayhorn with the kind of sensitivity and clarity which is the mark of his subject’s best work.

—*THE NEW YORKER*

**DAVID HAJDU**, who works as an editor with *Entertainment Weekly* in New York City, has written about music for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *The Village Voice*, among other publications.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: BILLY STRAYHORN, C. 1960,  
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN  
COVER DESIGN BY MICHAEL IAN KAYE

NORTH POINT PRESS  
A DIVISION OF FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

\$18.00 / \$20.50 CAN

ISBN: 978-0-86547-512-0



9 780865 475120

www.fsgbooks.com

PRAISE FOR  
**LUSH LIFE**

Almost 30 years after Strayhorn's passing, this seminal figure in American music has finally found the "representation" he deserves.

—Will Friedwald, The New York Times Book Review

Elegant, meticulous . . . *Lush Life* is by no means a book for jazz specialists only. It is a witty, moving account of a complicated life, which examines the man Ellington himself called "the biggest human being who ever lived," and it finally, tardily, nudges him into the spotlight.

—James Marcus, Newsday

*Lush Life* is an illuminating history of the black, and gay black, arts milieu as much as it is a heartfelt homage to its subject . . . [It] should go a long way toward entitling Strayhorn, if not to proper royalties, at least to the deference one customarily pays to a duke.

—Eric K. Washington, The Village Voice

[Makes] a seemingly ironclad case, with precise chapter and verse, to clarify . . . the fundamental significance of Strayhorn's contribution to Ellington's music.

—Don Heckman, Los Angeles Times Book Review

Arguably the finest biography yet written about a jazz musician . . . [It] will fascinate readers who have never heard a note of Strayhorn's music.

—Joel E. Seigel, Washington City Paper

That rare biography that not only illuminates a life, but evokes an era with such specificity that we can almost taste the gin and the genius that fueled it.

—Terry Lawson, Detroit Free Press

[David Hajdu] has done something extraordinary: He has made Strayhorn a living, breathing presence and created of his life a work of real art . . . [It] has the complexity, dimension and excitement of a fine novel.

—David Evanier, Los Angeles Reader

For a case study in biography at its best, one could not do much better than *Lush Life*. David Hadju spent a decade studying the life and career of Billy Strayhorn . . . and wrote a book that comes close to being a model biography. Whether you are interested in Strayhorn or not, you will find pleasure and illumination in Hajdu's exemplary craftsmanship.

—Jonathan Yardley, The Washington Post Book World