



City of Pittsburgh

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414 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Text File

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Committee: City Council

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WHEREAS, Mary Lou Williams, pianist, composer, teacher, mentor, arranger and humanitarian, was born May 8, 1910 in Atlanta, GA and died at the age of 71 in Durham, NC, May 28, 1981, as an artist in residence at Duke University; and,

WHEREAS, as a young child her family migrated to Pittsburgh, PA, settling in East Liberty during her formative years where her talent as a pianist prodigy was first discovered at the knee of her mother, being dubbed "the little piano girl" and regularly playing by the age of 8 for society parties, theatres and at Lincoln school, which she attended; and,

WHEREAS, Mary Lou started her career in vaudeville, leaving to perform with Andy Kirk's band until 1942, writing arrangements for Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Earl Hines, Jimmie Lunceford, Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong, penning some of her best known compositions "Walkin' and Swingin'", "Froggy Bottom", "Steppin' Pretty", and "Cloudy", and composing an album in 1945 of her interpretation of the astrological signs, titled the "Zodiac Suite"; and,

WHEREAS, Mary Lou became a devout catholic and was commissioned by the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace at the Vatican to compose the Music for Peace which included "Mary Lou's Mass"; and,

WHEREAS, May 20, 2010 will be the opening of the Mary Lou Williams' 15th Annual Women in Jazz Festival at the Kennedy Center, in honor of the "First Lady of Jazz" and creating a forum for young and seasoned female jazz musicians to showcase their art;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare Thursday, May 20, 2010 "Mary Lou Williams Day" in the City of Pittsburgh for her lasting contributions to the musical art form of Jazz.