



Better Git It in Your Soul: An Interpretive Biography of Charles Mingus

Krin Gabbard

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Charles Mingus is one of the most important—and most mythologized—composers and performers in jazz history. Classically trained and of mixed race, he was an outspoken innovator as well as a bandleader, composer, producer, and record-label owner. His vivid autobiography, *Beneath the Underdog*, has done much to shape the image of Mingus as something of a wild man: idiosyncratic musical genius with a penchant for skirt-chasing and violent outbursts. But, as the autobiography reveals, he was also a hopeless romantic. After exploring the most important events in Mingus's life, Krin Gabbard takes a careful look at Mingus as a writer as well as a composer and musician. He digs into how and why Mingus chose to do so much self-analysis, how he worked to craft his racial identity in a world that saw him simply as "black," and how his mental and physical health problems shaped his career. Gabbard sets aside the myth-making and convincingly argues that Charles Mingus created a unique language of emotions—and not just in music. Capturing many essential moments in jazz history anew, *Better Git It in Your Soul* will fascinate anyone who cares about jazz, African American history, and the artist's life.

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