
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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N E W S L E T T E R

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**CORRECTION: BELLSON DID
PERFORM ON *A DRUM IS A WOMAN***

Our June issue article on "Ellington '94" reports that Louie Bellson "pointed out that though he was in the credits, he did not play tympani . . ." on the the soundtrack of *A Drum Is a Woman*. However, Patricia Willard correctly writes that "Bellson pointed out that although he himself was not in the credits, he did play tympani, augmenting the principal drummer, who was Sam Woodyard." Further, she recalls Louie telling her some time earlier that he had played tympani. The credited drummers always have been Sam Woodyard, Terry Snyder, and Candido. Thanks, Patricia, for setting the record straight.

[Your shame-faced Editor accepts responsibility for and apologizes to Mr. Bellson for the error.]

SMITHSONIAN ORCHESTRA SUPERB

Contributed by Mac Grimmer

Overflow crowds at earlier concerts forced the move of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra to larger National Theater for their season finale. Gunther Schuller conducted music of Calloway, Webb, Lunceford, and Ellington. Duke's tunes included "Azure," "Main Stem," "Caravan (original version)," and, to close the evening, "C Jam Blues." The mood of his "Mood Indigo" was completely changed by a fascinating Lunceford version.

A bonus was a brief talk between Anthony Brown and Webb vocalist Charles Lynton, who sang "September in the Rain" *a capella*. Lynton, who introduced Ella Fitzgerald to Webb, is still actively performing in New York.

**HEAR TREASURY SERIES
MUSIC AT OCTOBER 1 MEETING**

Jack Towers has prepared a special tape of highlights of Duke's music from the famous April 1945 to late 1946 Treasury broadcasts. Valued by knowledgeable collectors, the best of these Treasury gems are being prepared for release on CD, so in a sense we will have an advance, private hearing at our meeting.

See you promptly at **8:30 pm on Saturday, October 1**, at our regular meeting place, **Omega House, 1232 Harvard Street, NW (corner of 13th and Harvard)**.

**IF YOU WERE THERE, YOU KNOW
IF YOU WEREN'T, YOU MISSED IT!**

Contributed by Marian Shell

The day dawned bright and hot, but this did not deter the "faithful" members of our Chapter from coming to its Annual Picnic at the Lake Caroline home of Ted and Marian Shell on July 16. In fact, some members began gathering the Friday evening before for fun and games, but the real festivities began on Saturday.

Ted and Marian were happy to greet members and their guests as they arrived. Using their gourmet skills, members and their guests prepared a variety of delicious food to eat and share — an assortment of cakes, pies, cookies, ribs, salads, burgers, hot dogs, casseroles, other delectables, and drinks.

The great music of Duke Ellington filled the day and floated into the cool evening as the picnickers enjoyed games, water skiing, and boating on the lake.

LENA HORNE, *WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN*

Blue Note CDP 7243 8 28974 2 2

Reviewed by Reuben Jackson

Clearly one of the most daunting challenges for contemporary musicians wishing to perform the works of Duke Ellington or those of his arranging-composing partner Billy Strayhorn is the not inconsiderable task of maintaining the material's integrity while still managing to carve the much needed niche for the artist's personal stamp.

Far too often, recreations of Ellington titles have fallen into settling for bloodless, literal interpretations, all of which pleases "jazz purists" to no end, but ultimately does little to enhance either the original composition or the artist's growth.

Not so in the case of vocalist Lena Horne, whose recently issued collection pays homage to her longtime friend (Horne refers to Strayhorn, who died in 1967, as her "soulmate") in a manner resounding with arresting (but maudlin-free) emotionalism and the deceptive off-hand urbanity characteristic of his best compositions.

Horne's emotional and musical maturity is clearly evident during the opening title, the oft-performed ballad "Something To Live For," wherein the text's themes of reflective determination and yearning are captured in her vocals, which savor the melody like a slow walk through a forest.

By contrast, "Love Like This Can't Last" resounds with a rocking, funk-based arrangement James Brown might well envy, and Horne's vocal both questions the longevity of the relationship in question, yet is also clearly enjoying its presence.

Which isn't to imply that her infectious spirit is limited to the Strayhorn titles, as the unashamedly lyrical and discreetly wrenching reading of the collection's title track marvelously indicates.

Even if you are not a lover of Strayhorn's body of work (and as a reader of this newsletter, you should be!) — there is a great deal to savor here.



MANUSCRIPT REVEALS MORE DETAILS ABOUT SIS QUANDER

[Your Editor thanks Att. Rohulamin Quander for sharing the subject draft manuscript with him. The Quander Historical Society at 1703 Lawrence Street, NE, Washington, DC 20018, USA, will appreciate any bit of information about Sis Quander. See our January 1994 issue for an earlier item on her.]

A manuscript of the chapter on Ann "Sis" Quander," one of Ellington's First Ladies of Song," for a Quander Historical Society book now under way reveals more about this somewhat enigmatic vocalist.

According to a locally published, late 1970s interview, Sis met Duke when they both worked in a Ninth Street jewelry store while Duke "was struggling to make a musical success of himself." The manuscript tells of a reported close relationship, to the point of his giving her gifts, including a ring "as a token of our never ending friendship."

More important to Ellington aficionados, however, is her claim to have recorded with Duke and several other musicians in New York, possibly before sessions now believed to be his first with a vocalist. Sis maintained that Duke did not record under his own name on

that occasion. The Quander Society is still searching for a photograph supposedly taken then of the recording group.

Ms. Quander said that she and other vocalists did gigs with Duke around Washington, including at the Poodle Dog, before he pursued his career in New York. She recalled regularly singing "M.T. Pocket Blues" [sic], which she considered a funny title, as were some of his other titles.

The story goes that later Sis Quander sang at various Washington and other Eastern venues. Locals may recall Sis at popular Dyke's Stockade, now gone, where she reportedly also had part-time managerial duties. Aside from with her church choir, Sis Quander's last public performance was in 1977 when at age 84 she sang for President Jimmy Carter when he visited her church.

"IT'S A GIRL!!!!!"

Begins the note announcing the birth of Heleen Sascha to proud parents Ilona Smeets and Walter van de Leur. The note continues:

Wednesday, August 3 [at] 5:50 AM we were at the hospital; 7:09 we had a daughter! No complications . . . Three hours later we were home again. Baby is a beaut! Mom is doing fine and dad is as proud as he can be. . . Pronunciation of her name: Heylane, but Helen is fine also . . .

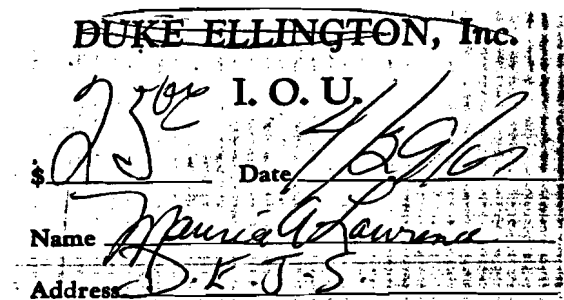
Congratulations from Chapter 90 and all your other friends, Ilona and Walter!

IN ADDRESSING THE DEVOTEES

of Ellington's music expressly, I ask, have any of you perceived that the syllables of his name when enunciated ring out a brief, sweet melody, Ellington? Moreover, do you hear in that piano chorus he composed as an introduction to Billy Strayhorn's "A Train," Duke's name? Lend me your ears as you read: Ellington Ellington...Ellington Ellington Ellington.

This is the opening passage of a manuscript copy of *A Train's Revelations*, a novelette-length fiction (autobiographical faction?) by Chapter member Bill Flemons. We aren't sure what Bill has in mind in regard to publishing this jazzily episodic creative work, but we'll let you know as he lets us know. Meanwhile, we won't reveal the ending, in which the narrator speeds homeward, where he "could play 'A Train.'" About twelve consecutive times."

WAS DUKE JOINING OR WAS MAURICE BORROWING?



Courtesy Ellington Archives, Smithsonian Institution

At the time, Maurice Lawrence was the president of our Chapter.

HASSAN PRESENTS HODGES SEMINAR; OFFICERS RE-ELECTED

Contributed by Angela Grimmer

Rusty Hassan's fascinating presentation of Johnny Hodges' career was the feature attraction of the June meeting. He used several approaches, such as Johnny's development of the same song through different periods of his career and comparisons of Johnny's conception with those of his contemporaries: Bechet on soprano, Carter on alto, etc. Rusty singled out several underappreciated Hodges performances which he emphasized should be amongst his better known works. Members agreed enthusiastically.

Members who had recently returned from the Ellington conference in Stockholm shared their photos and anecdotes.

During a brief business interlude, elections were held. The current officers were re-elected to another term.

FOR HELEN AND OTHERS

Stomp down those symmetrical backbeats, baby, so that Rab can smelt the melody to smoldering and over the hush let's hear the broads in the back whisper, "Tell the story, daddy."

-- Duke, as quoted by Robert G. O'Meally in "Johnny Hodges: An Appreciation," *Reconstruction*, Winter 1990

DEBORRA RICHARDSON CO-AUTHORS BOOK

Ulysses Kay, one of America's most prominent composers, and the most frequently commissioned African American composer, is the subject of *Ulysses Kay: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press) by Deborra Richardson and Constance Tibbs Hobson. You will recall that Deborra, an archivist in the Smithsonian's Ellington Collection, presented an engrossing program at one of our meetings last year. In addition to the biography, the book contains a listing of Kay's works, a to-date discography, selected performance notes, and an annotated bibliography.

We are proud of you, Deborra!

PUBOLS SPEAKS ON BAND

On July 20, Ben Pubols presented a two-hour lecture on Ellington's music to the group called Older Adult Service and Information System (OASIS) in Chevy Chase. Developing the topic "The Washingtonians 'Till Cootie Left the Duke," he played recordings ranging from the 1924 "Choo Choo" to the 1940 "Cotton Tail." Among his hand-outs were a discography, bibliography, lead sheets, a structural graph of "Ko-Ko," and photocopied excerpts from music manuscripts.

In a later meeting Ben will focus on the remainder of Duke's career. Last winter he lectured OASIS on "The History of Classic Jazz," using examples from Sam Morgan to Miles Davis.

AUSTRIA CELEBRATES DUKE

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Austria observed the twentieth anniversary of Ellington's demise with "Reminisce Duke," a tribute concert at the Mozart Saal of the prestigious Vienna Konzerthaus, May 24, by the Vienna Conservatory Big Band, led by international jazz educator and pianist Bill Dobbins with guest soloists Louie Bellson, Clark Terry, Britt Woodman, Jimmy Woode and Norris Turney. Prof. Heinz Czadek of the Conservatory researched and reconstructed the *Newport Festival Suite* and assembled the program, principally 1950s Ducal suites. On May 25, at the Conservatory, the Ellington alumni and Dobbins held a free music clinic for Vienna music students.

Spurred by Czadek's vision, Ingrid Karl, the producer-director of the Vienna Music Gallery, made the entire city of Vienna acutely Ellington-aware. The famous Ellington-with-cigarette portrait by Austrian photographer Josef Werkmeister became a poster seen throughout Vienna with the single line: 24. mai 1994. Television stations broadcast Ellington documentaries, radio stations played Ellington, record stores mounted Ellington-only window displays, and Helmut Weihsmann of the Österreichisches Filmmuseum produced all-Ellington cinema programs.

13th Annual
International Duke Ellington Conference
May 24-28, 1995

CELEBRATING THE ELLINGTON & STRAYHORN COLLABORATION

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BALLIETT ON ELLA AND STRAYHORN'S "LUSH LIFE"

Contributed by Bob Reny

Whitney Balliett, the *New Yorker's* gifted jazz writer, recently did a piece on Ella Fitzgerald and commented on her *Song Book* series as follows:

In many ways, the Ellington Song Book is the best, particularly her version of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life," which she does ad lib, accompanied only by Oscar Peterson. The song itself is an uneasy combination of delicacy and crudeness, yet she threads her way through easily, using little improvisation and making the music float, a trick Ella at her most relaxed could always do. It's a classic performance.

IN THE WORKS

James F. Condell is busy writing a psychobiography of Duke, the framework being psychologist Eric Erickson's theory of seven stages of human development.

Last winter, Jim, a professor emeritus of psychology at Moorhead State University, wrote and narrated the script for that institution's "Elegant Ellington" commemoration of Duke's historic Fargo dance date recorded in 1940 for posterity by Dick Burris and our Jack Towers.