
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

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Due Notice

If you haven't already, please promptly pay your dues for the 1995 calendar year. In case it slipped your mind, our dues schedule is: Individual, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5; and special First-time-ever Individual, \$20. What a bargain, regardless of category! (Notice how we resisted a "Beyond Category" pun here.)

Please make your check payable to Duke Ellington Society, Chapter 90, and mail it to PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787. Or bring it to the meeting on February 4; or send it to the Chapter by a friend or member.

Chuck Connors, 1930-1994

Charles "Chuck" Connors, bass trombonist who joined the Ellington orchestra in 1961, died December 11, 1994. Classically trained, he was an important member of the trombone section, contributing its "bottom" coloration. He was once described by section-mate Buster Cooper as "the man with the biggest sound in the band . . . the best bass trombone player I ever heard." After Duke's death, Chuck continued with the orchestra led by Mercer Ellington.

According to Duke, Chuck was the one who called him "Piano Red." In turn it seems, Duke can be heard on certain recordings introducing him as what sounds like "Stinky" Connors. Among the bands in which he played before joining Duke was Dizzy Gillespie's.

We extend condolences to the family of Charles Connors.

Hear Remastered World Transcriptions at the February 4 Meeting

At our next meeting, Jack Towers will present highlights of the historic World Broadcasting transcriptions of the Ellington Orchestra that were recently reissued by Circle on five CDs.

Because Jack was selected to remaster this wonderful music, we expect its sound quality to be absolutely as good as it can be. (See "*Chronology: From World to Circle*," page 2.)

For this meeting on **Saturday, February 4**, we will be back at our regular place, **Omega House, 1232 Harvard Street, NW (corner of 13th and Harvard)**. And don't forget, we start promptly at **8:30 pm**.

"Musical Pickpocket and Assembler"

"Ellington had a genius for making music out of other people's music" is the thesis of "Built Pieces" by David Schiff in the January 1995 *Atlantic Monthly*. Comparing Duke to Stravinsky as a "musical pickpocket," the author states, however, that Miley, Hodges, Tizol, and not even Billy Strayhorn . . . produced significant music when separated from him." Schiff contends, "To make complexity seem effortless is the hallmark of a great stylist. Ellington's music is as elegantly put together as were his suits, shirts, and ties—and his stage persona." He closes by saying that both Stravinsky and Ellington "treated tradition as a field they were free to reshape—call it historical chutzpah. How's that for a category?"

The Chronology: World to Circle

by Jack Towers

In late 1943, and in 1945, Duke and the band recorded for World Broadcasting, which produced music transcriptions for radio broadcasting. In 1989, owner George Buck issued the Ellington performances on nine LPs...And now, every note recorded by the band for World is out on five CDs.

When the project started, producer Wendell Echols began a search for the original recording discs. Some he found easily, but others seemed lost. We thought we would have to use some of the issued transcriptions as sources. However, Wendell searched for the World originals in various cities. Finally he found them all. The ones recorded in 1945 were on glass-based 16" discs. Usually the discs were aluminum-based, but then aluminum had gone to war as airplanes. For the Ellington sessions the cuts were made on two recorders. So we had two sources for the sessions. However, many of the glass discs were broken or cracked. Luckily, when a disc was damaged, the duplicate was OK. In a couple cases both were cracked, but we got good plays even so.

Most of the discs, however, were not the original acetates cut at the sessions. Some of the session's discs were processed into stampers and the pressings served as the sources for the transcription masters. They did this to avoid the wear on the tender acetates by the heavy playback arms of the day. The result was that the sound from the pressings were a bit noisier than from the acetates.

All this made it possible to include on the LPs and now on the CDs every bit of the music that Duke and the band recorded for World. This includes all the alternate takes, and all the breakdowns. Wendell Echols and George Buck debated a long time on what to include on the CD production—whether or not they should issue just the original World issues, or to include perhaps the complete alternate takes, or what. Fortunately, they decided to include everything as issued on the LPs.

When the project began in the early 1980s, Wendell got Eddie Lambert of England to write notes for the proposed LP issue. Eddie supplied the notes, but as you know, Eddie died in early 1987, so his notes were supplemented by Wendell as the issue moved ahead, with the final number nine LP issued in time for the Washington Ellington Conference in 1989.

The CD issue is good quality, sounding a bit brighter than the LPs.

Ed. note: We hope to have this momentous reissue by Circle Records reviewed here shortly.

Let's Hear It for Mrs. Clinkscapes

by Theodore R. Hudson

In his *Music Is My Mistress*, Duke names a Mrs. Clinkscapes as his boyhood music teacher. Given his fondness for wordplay, the question of an actual Mrs. Clinkscapes has persisted. In a recent issue of the *DEMS Bulletin*, Benny Åsland tells of recovering in his files an old note to the effect that an informant told him that this was a Mrs. Kingsdale, called "Mis'Klinker" by Duke. If this is true, then Duke likely transformed the name for his amusement and posterity's wonderment. In a response in the next/current issue, Charles Waters, Jr., argues for a Mrs. Clinkscapes, citing Mark Tucker's dissertation (which led to his superb *Ellington: The Early Years*), items from the defunct *Washington Bee* newspaper, and other factors.

All of this prompted me to begin poking around in basic genealogical sources—telephone directories, city directories, federal censuses, and oral history—with the following results. First, about Kingsdale and similar names: The 1907-13 Washington telephone directory has none of these names, but has several Clinkins. The same applies for *Boyd's City Directory* for 1899, 1905, 1910-11 [some years are missing in the National Archives' collection]. The same applies also for the 1900 and 1910 Washington censuses. Now about Clinkscapes: The 1907-13 telephone directory lists no Marion or Marietta Clinkscale. Of the available city directories, the 1907 edition lists a Marion Clinkscapes, lawyer, 739 4th Street, NW. The 1909 edition lists a Marietta L. Clinkscapes, teacher, at the same address. With the possible exception of the middle initial, her name is the same as that of music teacher Marietta (Mrs. M. Harvey) Clinkscapes identified by Tucker. The 1910 edition lists lawyer Marion T. Clinkscapes, but no Marietta. Interestingly, this same 1910 edition lists **John W. Clinkscapes**, police [sic], at 810 12th Street, NE. This is next door to 812, where U.W.'s older brother until his death in the 1980s lived and had a barber shop. (U.W. [for Uncle Wesley] is the source I cited during a presentation at "Ellington '94" as a member of Duke's boyhood social circle and friend of Artie Whetsol (*Continued on page 3 under "Clinkscapes"*))

Notes on Our Society's

"*Dramatis Felidae*"

(To Use Our Man's Term in *MIMM*)

Sjef Hoefsmit, one of our European members, has moved into his newly built home, which, as you might expect, has facilities for his wonderful collection and for listening. ♪ ♪ ♪ "Labor of love" describes just about everything Jack Towers does in relation to Ellington-Strayhorn music, but you can bet that he especially enjoyed working up the masters for the 4-CD reissue of the World transcriptions by Circle. (See his article on page 3.) Both Rhoda and Jack Towers missed our Holiday Party because they were recovering from rather severe flu. They're doing much better now. ♪ ♪ ♪ How-time-flies-when-you're-having-a-good-time department: Teddy Hudson received a service award for five years as a Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer in the Ellington Archives at the Smithsonian. ♪ ♪ ♪ We proudly report that the current issue of the *International DEMS Bulletin* contains "Cat Anderson: The Music and the Man" by Alexandre Rado, Chapter 90 member in France. Based on Alex's presentation at "Ellington '94," it is a valuable illumination of Cat the person and artist. ♪ ♪ ♪

Good News: DESUK Growing

David Fleming, Duke Ellington Society (UK) secretary, reports, "The launch of DESUK has gone very well indeed. It has certainly exceeded expectations: we hoped to enrol 100 members and our total membership has passed 120 already and is still rising."

Happy New Year!

by Angela Grimmer

Our January meeting was special. We welcomed the New Year with our annual party at the Park Sutton. The festivities lasted beyond midnight, and everyone enjoyed eggnog, champagne, and good food. A special thanks to Geneva and Ted Hudson—their efforts insured the evening's success. A good time was had by all!

We especially welcome first-time-ever members Wilbur Curry and William Robinson, guests who joined while at the party.

Thanks to Sjef Hoefsmit

Fellow Chapter members are grateful to Sjef Hoefsmit for keeping us up to date on the Danish radio broadcasts of Ellington/Strayhorn music.

We hope that Mercer Ellington will eventually arrange to have the music available for the public.

Benny Åsland Honored by DESS

In recognition of his distinguished scholarship and activities for over 50 years, the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden awarded Ellingtonia authority Benny Åsland SEK 10,000 for DEMS. The honor took place at the Society's September 1994 meeting.

DESS intends to make annual awards to arrangers, musicians, and others who have worked to enrich the knowledge of Ellingtonia.

We congratulate Benny, who is also a very special person.

Clinkscapes

(Continued from page 2)

and others associated with Duke. At age 95 he is remarkably active physically and sharp mentally.) When I recently asked him about Clinkscapes at 810 12th Street, U.W. vaguely remembered them as very light complexioned but did not go so far as to positively identify them by race. Further, this Clinkscapes address is in the immediate neighborhood of the church where Whetsol's step-father was pastor and where U.W. grew up. As to censuses, although no Clinkscapes show up in the 1900 and 1910 Soundex indexes (the 1900 and 1910 list several Clinkins), the 1920 census enumerates Clinkscapes at various addresses: Arthur P.; Julia Clenskale [sic]; Samuel J., with wife Marie and children; and a John W., white, 42, [occupation] police, with wife M. Blanche and two daughters. This 1920 listed John W. and family are at 310 7th Street, NE, not far from 810 12th where the 1910 city directory lists a John W.

While my preliminary findings are certainly inconclusive, they suggest support for the research of those inclined to believe there was an actual Mrs. Clinkscapes who taught Duke. Anyhow, I hope there was. Such a name deserves a confirmed place in the Ellington mystique.

New Ellington Journals Published

The Duke Ellington Swedish Society [DESS] and the newly formed Duke Ellington Society (UK) [DESUK] have distributed first issues of their respective publications. Both are quality additions to the several serial publications devoted to Ellington-Strayhorn discourse.

The handsome, 12-page (including cover) *DESS Bulletin*, printed on heavy glossy stock, includes a review of "Ellington '94"; timely news items; a special article on Stockholm resident and former Ellington trumpeter Willie Cook; a reproduction of a Cotton Club advertisement about the Peter Sisters, PegLeg Bates, and Duke, among others; and unusually interesting photographs. Except for an article on "Ellington '94" by Ken Rattenbury, the text is in Swedish. Hey, here's our chance to internationalize our language about Duke.

The United Kingdom chapter's *DESUK Newsletter* is a 24-pager featuring, among other things: news, of course; obituaries for Jimmy Hamilton, Leonard Feather, and Haywood Henry; record reviews; a recap of "Ellington '94"; several analytical/interpretative articles; a brief history of the Duke Ellington Societies and the annual Study Group Conferences; and a reprint of a retrospection of the Duke at Fargo in 1940, with special mention of our Chapter 90's Jack Towers.

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

CELEBRATING THE ELLINGTON AND STRAYHORN COLLABORATION

For Further Information, Write To:
The Billy Strayhorn Chapter of TDES
PO Box 10285, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

Call or FAX:
1-800-209-9696 (USA) / 412-681-3538 (Outside USA)

"Ellington '96" in Toronto

A note in *TDES News* announces that the 14th Annual Duke Ellington Study Group Conference is scheduled for Toronto, Canada, June 19-23, 1996. As before, the Toronto Duke Ellington Society will sponsor the event.

"Jazz Smithsonian" Radio Broadcasts Start January 12.

Recreations by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra of music by Calloway, Lunceford, Shaw, Ellington, and others will be broadcast:

WDCU-FM (90) - Thursdays, 11 a.m. and midnight, beginning January 12

WAMU-FM (88.5) - Saturdays, 10 p.m., beginning January 14.

In this series, hosted by Lena Horne, the Smithsonian promises that the "spirit of class jazz soars . . ."

Ellingtonians to Perform on Cruise

We thank Mac Grimmer for passing on the news that Clark Terry, Herb Jeffries, and the Duke Ellington Band are booked for the 13th Annual Floating Jazz Festival on the SS Norway for two 7-day cruises: October 28-November 4 and November 4-11.

New Address for DESS

In a note wishing us Happy New Year and expressing anticipation of seeing us all in Pittsburgh at "Ellington '95," Gören Wallén gives the Swedish Duke Ellington Society's new address: Skogstorpsvån 39, 191 39 Sollentuna, Sweden. Tel and Fax number: 00946-8-965234.

Brubeck on Ellington

Bob Reny (whom we've seen too little of lately) sent us an excerpt of an interview of Dave Brubeck in the December 1994 issue of *Cadence*. In it, Brubeck is quoted as saying:

I toured with him [Duke], played with him and talked with him quite a bit. We used to travel across the country by train and he always stayed up late on the trains. . . . He really liked to get in the last seat of a car, where he could feel the wheels of the train moving under him. He would sit there and talk with people, or write music. . . . He'd let me sit in with him and his band, or take the piano (chair) with his band. . . . I didn't bet to do this very often, but when I did I felt so honored. . . . Yeah [Duke was] a tremendous influence on both my piano playing and my arranging.

P.S. -- Dues!