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**THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90**

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**N E W S L E T T E R**

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**Duke Ellington Youth Festival 1995  
A Great Success!**

by Luvenia A. George

An audience of over 800 enjoyed the Fourth Duke Ellington Youth Festival at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History on April 28. Festival participants were approximately 200 students from 18 D.C. public secondary schools who sang, danced and played Ellington's and Strayhorn's music in bands and other ensembles. The Festival, held yearly on the last Friday in April, the date nearest Ellington's birthday, is the culminating activity of a year's curriculum study about the life and music of The Duke.

The evening began in the Taylor Gallery with the formal opening of "Artistic Impressions of Ellington," an exhibit of student's art. Paintings, photographs, sculpture, collages, masks and art in a variety of other mediums inspired by Ellington will remain on display until May 31. Members of the Society are urged to go and see this wonderful visual expression of youthful exuberance in tribute to a great musician.

The Junior High School Band gave excellent renditions of standards such as "Satin Doll," "Flamingo" and "Perdido," followed by a combined string ensemble offering "Sophisticated Lady" and "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing." A Wilson High string quartet performed a captivating arrangement of "Mood Indigo." The Junior High School Choir opened with a swinging arrangement of "Duke's Place," followed by an "Azure"- "Daydream" medley, and ending with "Bli-Blip" from *Jump for Joy*. Not your usual fare for young teens, the songs were expertly performed and, according to their teachers, have already become favorites of

*Continued on page 4 under "Youth Project"*

**Hear Cornell Concert, a  
Favorite of Aficionados, at  
June 3 Meeting**

by Mac Grimmer, Programs Coordinator

Jack Towers will present the June 3 program: Duke's concert at Cornell University from the days of the "Tattooed Bride" and the "Symphomaniac." The band was there shortly after their 1948 Carnegie Hall concert, and the sound, thanks to newly discovered acetates, is superb. Ben Webster had recently rejoined the band and is featured on several numbers.

You don't want to miss the **June 3** meeting, **8:30 pm**, at our usual place, the **Omega Psi Phi** fraternity house, **1232 Harvard Street, NW** (corner of 13th and Harvard)!

**Chapter Members on  
Program at "Ellington '95"**

A good sized delegation of Chapter 90 members will attend the 13th International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference. As usual at the conferences, our Chapter will be well represented as presenters, among whom are Sjef Hoefsmit, Alexandre Rado, Scott Schwartz, Ted Shell, Walter van de Leur, and Patricia Willard.

Practically all delegates will contribute at least a few lines for the report of "Ellington '95" to be published in our *Newsletter*. This method worked well in our account of "Ellington '95," parts of which were reprinted in some other publications.

**Journal Focuses on Masterpiece**

Edited by Mark Tucker, volume 13, number 2 of *Black Music Research Journal* is devoted to Duke's *Black, Brown and Beige*. We hope to have a review in a fall issue of our *Newsletter*.

## Eanet Group Gives Fine Program of Challenging Ellington and Strayhorn Music

Reviewed by Angela and Mac Grimmer

Larry Eanet, in a marvelous performance at McCathran Hall in Washington Grove, Maryland on May 6, not only demonstrated an encyclopedic knowledge of Ellingtonia but also utilized it to produce an interesting and varied program of music.

Eanet went beyond the "sixteen most requested songs"—a current album title—and came up with interesting arrangements of such tunes as "Lady of the Lavender Mist," "Morning Glory," "Across the Track Blues," "Mood to Be Wooed," and "New York City Blues."

The quintet included two reed players, Ron Hocket and Jim Carroll, who convincingly soloed on the Jimmy Hamilton and Johnny Hodges tunes, respectively ("Flippant Flurry," "Blood Count," etc.). They were particularly impressive on the Soprano Summit arrangement of "The Mooche." Tommy Cecil, a virtuoso on bass, and "Dude" Brown, who played drums for Jelly Roll Morton at the Jungle Inn and, later, for the Louis Armstrong big band, rounded out a solid rhythm section.

Eanet's piano ranged from thoughtful, delicate versions of "Reflections in D" and "Solitude" to hard swinging on "Rockin' in Rhythm" and "Cottontail." He even aired out his pipes on "My Little Brown Book." A wonderful night for all concerned, dedicated to the memory of long-time Ellington Society member Ray Knight.

*Ed note: Ray Knight, Ellington authority and dear friend of Chapter members, died in 1989. He is lovingly remembered as well by the people of Washington Grove, where he was active in community matters. A printed tribute distributed at the concert describes Ray as "an acknowledged expert on jazz" and a "man of immense kindness and understanding, an ambassador for all that to Ray was worthwhile and of good repute."*

## Duke Ellington Youth Festival: Program and Anthology, 1995

Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1995. 52pp. Free.

Reviewed by Theodore R. Hudson

The nature of this publication is twofold: program for performances at the Ellington Youth Project Festival on April 28 (reported in this issue of our *Newsletter*) and retrospective collection of the year's achievements by students involved in the Project. As did the performances, the booklet testifies to the students' knowledge and appreciation of the lives and creativity of Ellington and Strayhorn. As to the Festival, imagine junior and senior high school students spontaneously breaking into hearty applause during a dramatization by their peers of a scene from Shakespeare while Ellington's *Such Sweet Thunder* plays in the background, or imagine mid-teenagers gasping in delight at the grand jetés of dance students choreographing an excerpt from *The River*. Such was the atmosphere at the Festival.

The anthology contains impressive original poetry of various types (some even in foreign languages, as the one ending "Y no se compara él con ningun otro hombre"), biographical sketches, testimonials, a skit, informational pieces, and acrostics. It is further enriched by reproductions of some of the artwork and interpretative photography that are part of their exhibit at the Smithsonian.

One student lends a poem, "Ellington style / feel it." One senses that they must feel it, as another writes, "The Duke is gone, / But his music lives on." Indeed, it is likely that most of these youngsters feel, as one who titled her poem, "I'm Just a Lucky So and So" to have been exposed to Ellingtonia. For them, to adapt a current term that they use to convey supreme admiration and by which one student ends a poem, Duke is "The Man!" All in all, the anthology is compelling evidence of the intelligence, effort, sensitivity, and creativity of Washington, DC's public school students.

While a number of persons, organizations, and facilities made all of this possible, we would like to call attention to Niani Kilkenny, director of the Smithsonian's Program in American Culture, and especially our Chapter's own Luvenia George, coordinator of the Project. Most of all, though, the students made it possible.

On the basis of the Duke Ellington Youth Project, we take heart about the future of our youth and their values. As to artistic values, for example, they already know that "Duke is *The Man!*"

## All-Piano Concert Celebrates Ellington's Birthday Week

Reviewed by Ted Shell

A week or so ago in early April, I spent a pleasant time with Stanley Cowell on a TV show celebrating Ellington Week. It aired many times in April and was widely received. Stanley is the founder of the Piano Choir, a group of six pianists: Nat Jones, William Knowles, Hugh Lawson, Harold Mabern, Solenius Smith, and Stanley. The Choir gave a concert at the Lisner Auditorium, George Washington University, on April 28, and the concert was dedicated to Ellington.

Can you imagine a chorus of six pianos, Baldwins, playing together? What an experience. The first half of the program displayed their knowledge of "Come Sunday," featuring the Eastern High School Chorus and the tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath in splendid form. All of the arrangements were done by the leader, a professor of music at Lehman College of the City University of New York. The second half of the show featured each of the pianists accompanying Heath on duets, which included many of our favorites. They ended with a thunderous "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing." It was quite an experience to hear this group, and I hope they return soon so that more of us can become acquainted with them. "Such Sweet Thunder."

### Notes on Our Society's "Dramatis Felidae"

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

**Morris Hodara**, also a member of our Chapter, was recently elected corresponding secretary of TDES. For a number of years the president of the organization, he continues to edit its wonderful newsletter. ♪ ♪ ♪ Two of our members recently presided at special events, **Luvenia George** at the Duke Ellington Youth Festival and **John Hasse** at the April concerts by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. ♪ ♪ In a special issue of *Black Music Research Journal*, **Sjef Hoefsmit** provides a chronology of *BBB* performances by the Ellington orchestra. ♪ ♪ A week or so ago, **Jack Towers** went to the Valburns' new home in Massachusetts to help Jerry install his sound equipment. ♪ ♪ ♪ **Luvenia George**, having successfully defended her dissertation, is to be awarded a doctorate in ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus. ♪ ♪ ♪ Congratulations to **Don McCathran** for conceiving and coordinating the splendid Eanet concert!

### New York City Intersection Named after Ellington

Duke Ellington Circle is the new designation for East 110th Street and Fifth Avenue in New York City. The site was dedicated in a ceremony on May 1. (Would this be the corner where Madam Zaij met that policeman?)

### As The Man Would Say, "Everybody, Look Handsome!"

Ted Shell, our president, wants a group photograph of all Chapter members attending the Conference in Pittsburgh. Between the afternoon session on Friday and the evening activity may be good. Check with Ted for an exact time and place. Then, for posterity, be there looking your handsome self.

### Valburns Visit

by Marion Shell

The Valburns, Jerry and Barbara, enroute from their summer home in Florida to their winter quarters in western Massachusetts, spent a few days in Washington visiting with Jack and Rhoda Towers. While in town, Jerry spent some time at the Library of Congress, where his Ellington collection now resides. They spent a pleasant evening with Ted and Marion Shell, where they reminisced and watched Ellington video discs. Looking forward to seeing them again in Pittsburgh.

### Clinkers

In our April issue, errors were made (notice the passive voice, a la a former president): the time of the Eanet concert and the spelling of Luvenia George's first name by the addition of an "o." We apologize for the mistakes.

And, no, we are not working on a new, print media "Concerto for Clinkers."

## Youth Project (Continued from page 1)

the singers.

The Senior High School Choir started with a beautiful solo by a Woodson High baritone, the West Indian "Amen" with which, according to the late Roscoe Gill, Ellington frequently closed Sacred Concerts. The choir followed with a spirited medley of Ellington standards.

Dancers from the Ellington School of the Arts gracefully and energetically performed two selections from *The River*, "The Lake" and "Vortex." Two male tap dancers from Ballou High were reminiscent of Gregory Hines as they shook the boards to "In a Mellow Tone."

Shaw and Hart junior high students read their Ellington-inspired poetry in a dramatic setting, elegantly dressed as "sophisticated young ladies" surrounding two handsome young poetic Dukes! A dramatic interlude was an abbreviated performance of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, inspired by music from Ellington and Strayhorn's *Shakespearean Suite*. From a wheelchair, a young poet from Woodson High presented a touching reading of her Ellington poetry.

A clarinet ensemble from Coolidge gave a masterful presentation of "Come Sunday" arranged by their teacher. The concert ended with a bang, the Senior High Big Band in a driving, expert performance of the 1941 version of "Take the 'A' Train." Directly by Davey Yarborough, they literally "blew us away."

It was a remarkable evening. The young people showed an enthusiasm that was startling; their cheers when the "roll call" of schools was called at the start of the evening "raised the roof" of the Smithsonian and set the stage for an evening The Duke would have loved madly.

The Program in African American Culture, sponsor of the Project in collaboration with D.C. Schools, needs support if this Project is to continue. We urge the Society to assist by calling Ms. Niani Kilkenny, director of PAAC, at 202-357-4176; your input and encouragement would be invaluable. Put the kids on your calendar now for next year's Duke Ellington Festival 1996!

## Talley Beatty, 1919-1995

Choreographer Talley Beatty, who was to be on the program at "Ellington '95," died in New York on April 29. He danced in the televised version of *A Drum Is a Woman* in 1957. In *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington mentions Beatty's working on his *My People* in Chicago in 1963. His obituary in the *Washington Post* (misleadingly?) states that Beatty also "collaborated with Duke Ellington to create . . . *Black, Brown and Beige* for television."

## Record Company Errs On Date of "Subtle Slough"

On the new single CD release *Ella Fitzgerald "Day Dream": Best of the Duke Ellington Songbook* (Verve 314 527 223-2), comprised of selections from the original *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Duke Ellington Songbook*, with new annotation by Patricia Willard, she would like it known that her notes placed "Subtle Slough" ("Just Squeeze Me") accurately in 1941. The 1940 date printed in the notes came from Verve's editor.

## Conference Registration Still Open

In promotional brochures for the 13th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference, a March 30 cut-off date is given. This date applied to early mail-in, special-rate registration.

Conference registration is still open. Hotel reservations at the conference rate may still be open, subject to availability.

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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  
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Call or FAX:

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