

**THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90**

P.O. BOX 15591 . WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003-0787

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

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**Lew Family History Featured  
In Massachusetts Exhibit**

In 1943, Ellington copyrighted "Barzallai-Lou" [as spelled in *MIMM*] in honor of that Revolutionary War era musician-soldier who served as a member of the English forces in the French and Indian War in 1760 and as a fifer at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775. The Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center for Lowell History included the Lew family in its recent "Profiles in Courage: African-Americans in Lowell," beginning with Barzillai's parents and continuing into this century.

The Lew family tree is impressive. An exhibit brochure notes that according to tradition, "about a dozen of the Lew Family combined valor, musical ability, and thrift to form a guerrilla fighting organization known as 'Lew's Band.'" A number of them have been characterized as "well educated, talented and skilled musicians." Pawtucket's Society Church, to which Lew and his wife, Dinah (whose freedom he bought before marrying her), belonged, organized the first anti-slavery meeting in Lowell, Massachusetts. In the 1840s and 1850s, the house of Adrastus and Elizabeth Lew was a station on the Underground Railroad.

To most Americans, Barzillai Lew remains an unknown or minor figure. But to Duke Ellington, he was important enough to be commemorated in a composition.

**Jellema Leaves for University Post**

David Jellema, who worked in the Ellington Collection at the Smithsonian and a while back contributed to our *Newsletter*, has accepted a position at the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University. Best wishes for a fulfilling career, David!

**February Meeting  
At Home of Ted Shell**

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Our president, Ted Shell, and his wife, Marion, will be the hosts for our next meeting, on **Saturday, February 3**, at their home. The address is **4326 Westover Place, NW**, which is one block east of Ward Circle, off Massachusetts Avenue near American University.

Ted will again dip into his endless supply of Japanese videos for a program of rarely seen Ellingtonia, an occasion that is always one of the highlights of the year. The show starts at **8:30 pm**, and if anyone needs further information or directions, Ted's phone number is **202-363-2446**.

**Yvonne Duke Back Home  
In Vancouver and Performing**

In a seasonal note to your editor, Yvonne Duke, who (then Yvonne Lanauze) sang with Ellington simply as Yvonne, sends greetings to her other Washington area friends. After a recent interlude in Mexico where she had a business, Yvonne is back home in Vancouver, Canada, singing and playing piano professionally again. Originally a Washingtonian, she was "discovered" here by Ellington. Several years ago while here to visit her father, she, vivacious as ever, attended one of our Chapter meetings and favored us with piano and vocal selections. Yvonne asks that we send her our *Newsletter*, so that she can keep us with us, which we will do, of course.

**If You Have Already...**

paid your 1996 dues, pass the membership form along to a prospective member.  
**Dues ♪ Dues \$ Dues ♪ Dues \$ Dues ♪ Dues**

## In Celebration of Benny Åsland's Birthday A Letter...

Hallo,

I just want you to know that our great Benny Åsland has had his 75 year birthday celebration here in Stockholm with his family. We were there, of course, and gave him flowers and thanked him for everything he is doing for and with DEMS. Also we had two letters to Benny, from Alice Babs and Sjef Hoefsmit. In these letters they told Benny what we all feel for him and his work. And I hope that it is of interest for you to know what Mr. Hoefsmit said in English.

Benny has been ill for a few weeks but is now better, and during his birthday November 12 he was in a very good mood and looked forward to finishing the next DEMS bulletin. We hope that he will come to our meeting now, November 27, when we have Nils Lindberg, piano, and Anders Paulsson, sopran (they made an LP with Ellington music) and a bass playing for us. We will also show video from 1959 with Duke Ellington, 35 minutes, and Ben Webster with Oscar Peterson piano, NHOP bas from 1972. It is a German TV show, 60 minutes.

As soon as we have our next Bulletin I will sent it to you.

Best regards from a cold Sweden.

We love you madly  
Gören Wallén

### ...and a Tribute

Benny Åsland celebrated his 75th birthday on November 12.

This is the unique opportunity to thank him and to pay him tribute for everything he has done for us during the many years, devoted to Duke Ellington's music.

For every reader of this bulletin of the Duke Ellington Swedish Society, it is true that Duke's music has been an important part of his or her life and a source of constant joy.

For Benny, this was not enough. He wanted to share his joy with other people. As a teenager, he was the leader of a quite successful band in which among others Rolf Ericson played an important part and in front of which Alice Babs sang English lyrics, before she understood the words. Rare recordings from this little group sound still these days very impressive.

In the 50s, he astonished everybody, including Duke, with his little blue book titled *The Wax Works of Duke Ellington*, written, produced and published under the erroneously spelled name Aasland, which became famous all over the world among Ellington collectors. This was the very first discography dedicated to only one single musician. It was not surprising that this world's first had to be with Duke's name on it, but it was a miracle that Benny managed to collect all the information about so many foreign labels while living in the northern part of Europe. In his discography one could see which was the title on the flip side of a 78-rpm record. This was very often different on various labels. Benny started from scratch. Every next Ellington-discographer started with Benny's *Wax Works* at hand.

When he went (I guess in 1958) to Duke's dressing room in Stockholm to present his discography, Duke's pants were down, but Duke admired Benny's little book before he did anything else. Since then Benny met Duke every time he came to Sweden. In the 60s Benny even made a trip to the USA and traveled with the band for quite a while. During Duke's last appearance in Stockholm in 1973, one can see on video both Duke and Harry Carney greeting the Aaslands in the audience.

At the end of the 70s he issued the first volume of a new series of *Wax Works* in agreement with Dick Bakker from Holland, who worked on the years prior to Duke's contract with Victor in early 1940. In these new series of *Wax Works*, a tremendous amount of fresh information was published based on the great number of unissued recordings that had surfaced in these years and the vast amount of information about broadcasts and live performances known to Benny thanks to his enormous files.

On the last page of this first volume was an invitation to join DEMS. For many people like me who enjoyed Duke's music in total isolation, the membership of DEMS opened a whole new world. First only on paper, but later in person, we finally encountered a great number of friends having the same interest in and love for Duke's great music.

The one who invented this way of bringing friends from all over the world together and who supplied us with the most incredible series of bulletins since 1979 full of the most unbelievable and precious information is 75 years old now. I know only one person who can stand in his shadow: his wife, Birgit. She supported him all these years and she actually worked every day for us, the members of the Duke Ellington Music Society.

We wish you, Birgit and Benny, many many years of happiness together, filled with joyful listening to Duke's music. We are extremely grateful for everything you did for us! Happy Birthday!

Sjef Hoefsmit



# Ellington '96

JUNE 19 - 23

Park Plaza Hotel  
Toronto, Canada

## The Intimate Ellington

presented by  
Toronto Chapter #40  
The Duke Ellington Society

**WARM GREETINGS TO ALL! JUST TO WHET YOUR APPETITE, A PROGRESS REPORT**

**REGISTRATION DESK:** Opens at 3:00 pm, June 19      **WELCOMING RECEPTION:** 6:00 pm, June 19

**DAYTIME PROGRAMS:** 9:00am - 4:30pm, Thursday June 20 through Saturday June 23

Presentations by Gene Lees, Claire Gordon and Regina Stewart Fraser, Michael Roeder, Klaus Stratemann, Martin Loomer, Helen Oakley and Stanley Dance are lined up with more to come. (Delegates wishing to present should contact the Program Committee as soon as possible).

**EVENING CONCERTS:** Showcasing Canadian and International stars June 20 through June 22.

Wray Downes/Dave Young Duo, Phil Nimmons Quartet, Time Warp,  
Keith Ingham/Harry Allen Septet and Archie Alleyne & Company Present *The Intimate Ellington*.

A special musical attraction is being planned for the afternoon of Sunday June 23.

**CONFERENCE REGISTRATION:**

\$250 (Cdn.) prior to April 30 - includes concerts and gala banquet.

**RESERVATIONS:**

Park Plaza Hotel 4 Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 2E8

\$135 (Cdn.) Single or Double )

\$210 (Cdn.) One-bedroom suite ) < Breakfast Included >

Hotel direct (416) 924-5471 Toll Free Canada/USA 1-800-977-4197 Overseas 1-800-323-7500

Fax (416) 924-4933. When booking mention Ellington '96 to receive preferential Conference rate.

**AIRFARE DISCOUNTS:**

Fantastic savings by booking through Brotherton's Travel Service Ltd. in Toronto, and flying Air Canada/Continental. When booking mention Ellington '96.

Canadian/US delegates up to 35% - 40% off. Overseas delegates are guaranteed lowest available rates.

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Tel. (416) 425-1151 Canada/USA Toll Free 1-800-772-4101 Fax (416) 223-6141

**du Maurier Downtown Jazz Festival:**

Star-studded program promised to commemorate their 10th anniversary June 21 - July 1.

Watch Your Mail in January for the Official Ellington '96  
Brochure and Conference Registration Form

For further information please contact:

Eileen R. Ward  
Conference Coordinator, Ellington '96

## "Dramatis Felidae"

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

Jim Condell, who wrote and presented the commentary for "Elegant Ellington" by Moorhead State University (just across the river from fabled Fargo) last year, was kind enough to send us a copy of the program televised by Prairie Public Television. Although the camera does not pan to him, **Jack Towers**, honored guest on the occasion, is cited at the opening of the event for the now famous recording he and Dick Burris made for our everlasting pleasure of that November 7, 1940 Ellington date at Fargo. ♪ ♪ ♪ **Peter MacHare** and **Mac Grimmer** are having big fun surfing Ellington sites on the internet. ♪ ♪ ♪ Congratulations are in order for **Ilona Smeets** and **Walter van de Leur**, who proudly announce the birth of Floor Melissa on December 16.



♪ ♪ ♪ Our man in Paris, **Alexandre Rado**, will be the guest speaker at the April meeting of the Duke Ellington Society-United Kingdom (DESK) in London. Also, the current issue of the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden's *Bulletin* contains **Alex's** excellent appreciation of the late Wild Bill Davis. ♪ ♪ ♪ A photograph of **Louvenia George** with Stanley Crouch, Dan Morgenstein, Billy Taylor, and Reginald Martin, taken at the organization's convention, is in the Fall 1995 issue of *LAJRC Journal*. We reported in a previous issue that Louvenia was a presenter at that event. ♪ ♪ ♪

## Calendar

*Saturday, February 3*

Monthly Meeting

Home of Ted & Marion Shell, 8:30 pm

*TBA*

★ Program at Lillian and Ben Pubols' ★  
Special Reception and Meeting at  
Smithsonian ★ Member's Choice Night ★ Jack  
Towers Program ★

*June 19-23*

"Ellington '96," Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto  
Sponsor: Toronto Chapter, DES

## Blizzard Doesn't Stop Hearty Party-ers

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

On January 6th, the Blizzard of '96 arrived at the same time as a hardy core of Ellingtonians at our new meeting location, Grace Lutheran Church, for our annual holiday party. Undeterred by the storm raging outside, inside we shared good food, champagne, conversation and the incomparable music of Duke Ellington. We celebrated the new year well into the night.

## Quoted without Comment

*[Duke Ellington] composed works [all circa 1944] commemorating black freedom fighters: Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Crispus Attucks, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass. None . . . have been recorded, since the record industry is not concerned with portraying black history as much as with making a profit.*

-- from Ortiz M. Walton, *Music: Black White & Blue* (New York: William Morrow, 1972), page 75.

## Please Don't Read This Small Print.

In the first sentence of the item about the Smithsonian's SIRIS by Scott Schwartz in our last issue, there is a grammatical error (which we will not repeat lest children be reading this). The proofreader, who shall remain anonymous, assumes responsibility for the glitch.

## Chapter Chairpersons/Coordinators

As in most organizations, in our Chapter there are members whose acceptance of specific responsibilities is vital to its success. Here are some of our key persons:

Amenities	Helen Frazier
"Ellington '99" ( <i>Pro Tem</i> )	Ben Pubols & Bob Reny
Membership	Angela & Mac Grimmer
Nominating	Jack Dennis, Bill Flemmons, & another/others t.b.a.

Program	Mac Grimmer
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These "first chair" leaders will welcome your suggestions and active involvement.