

Ellingtonia



Newsletter of the Washington, D.C.
Duke Ellington Society

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Panel Will Feature Associates And Friends' Recollections of Duke

Our Society's first president, Maurice Lawrence, current president Ted Shell, and long-time member Dennette Harrod will be among speakers at "Remembering Ellington," at the 19th Street Baptist Church on February 11. Also featured will be Washingtonians June Norton and, tentatively, Rick Henderson, both of whom performed with the Ellington orchestra. Reuben Jackson will moderate the evening of memories of the man, his music, and the city that nurtured his art. The audience is invited to participate, so anyone with memories or stories of their own should be sure to attend.

Co-sponsored by the Washington Historical Society and the church, the event is free and open to the public. For more information call the Historical Society at 202-785-2068 or Barbara Matusow at 301-320-2058.

Dutch Band's Rhythm Is Fantastic

The Dutch Jazz Orchestra toured the Netherlands in October with a program called "Fantastic Rhythm." It consisted partly of unknown Strayhorn works and arrangements for the music theater, rediscovered by our Society member Walter van de Leur. Highlights were Strayhorn's 1934 Pittsburgh show *Fantastic Rhythm*, hitherto unknown music he wrote for *Beggar's Holiday*, and a couple of modernist pieces he wrote for a play by Federico Garcia Lorca.

Strayhorn estate executor Dr. Gregory Morris and his wife, Thelma, flew in from Pittsburgh to attend the try-out and the world premiere, test drive some of Walter's wife Ilona's chocolate, and spoil Floor and Heleen, the van de Leurs' daughters, ages three and four.

Ed. Note: We thank Walter for responding to our request for information for this article.

*Don't Forget Your
1999 (Centennial Year) Dues!*

End the Holidays With A Grace Church, January 2



by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

This is the way to end the holiday season, one last fling, a great evening of winter fun, the Ellington Society's annual winter party. We'll have mouth-watering food and drink, camaraderie and merriment, and of course you know about the music.

Members may bring guests, and are asked to bring a food or drink contribution for the buffet. The time - 8 pm, Saturday, January 2. The place - the **Grace Lutheran Church at 16th and Varnum Sts, NW**. End the party season with a party!

Long Commute to December Meeting Sets New Record

by Angela Grimmer

The success of the Smithsonian program was attested to by our English members Dennis Dimmer and Wendy Heuston, who set a new commuter record to make a rare surprise appearance just for this occasion. We're frantically searching the archives to discover the old record, but whatever it was, it has been shattered by their roundtrip of almost 7000 miles, which will go into the record books along with McGuire's 70 home runs. Wendy and Dennis agreed the Smithsonian program made every mile traveled worthwhile. We understand that any Christmas shopping was just an afterthought.

Duke's Type

Fortunately, Ellington is frequently the subject in print media these days. Increasingly there's variety in how he can appear to readers. Examples are Ducal fonts, or typefaces, available from Adobe for computer use, namely "Ellington," "Strayhorn," and "Conga Brava." We trust that they are in keeping with Duke's reputed words to the effect that beauty without utility is futility.

Brooklyn Plays Billy

A review by Angela Grimmer

Billy Strayhorn came to Brooklyn this fall, at least in spirit. He was there on November 14 in Brooklyn Heights at St. Ann's, a dark, imposing early 19th century church with soaring stained glass windows which proved to be a perfect setting for the Strayhorn effect.

An octet, playing as a unit and in different combinations, gave us a cross-section of the Strayhorn Repertoire, including one piece rarely performed, the *Suite for the Duo*. The original "duo" was Mitchell-Ruff, and the three-movement piece has been only rarely performed since it was written in 1967, one of Billy's last compositions. (For the story of this, see Willie Ruff's book, *A Call to Assembly*, where it is called *Suite for Horn and Piano*.) James Williams, piano, and Vincent Chancey, french horn, did the honors.

A real surprise and a treat—and probably a first—was "Tonk" as a drum solo, a virtuoso display by Joey Baron. It actually sounded like "Tonk." Ken Peplowski, clarinet, and Josh Roseman, trombone, were particular crowd favorites, although all the instrumentalists were excellent. In addition to those already mentioned, Marty Erlich was on reeds, Jon-Erik Kellso on trumpet, and Greg Cohen, the musical director, was the bass player. The only sour note was the vocalist, Andy Bey, who also sang at the recent Chicago conference to the same effect. With most jazz singers we eagerly anticipate variations and surprises, but Bey seems only to make listeners nervous about what may happen next.

David Hajdu provided enlightening commentary on the program throughout, and the only missing thing during the evening was the song that provided the title for his book, "Lush Life," apparently still too beautiful to play.

Source of Euphony in the Trombone Section Revealed

We thank Sjef Hoefsmit for his kind permission for us to reprint the following from "Video News: A Duke Named Ellington" that appeared in DEMS Bulletin 98/4 (Dec. '98-Feb. 99):

I have a question about a TV Video "A Duke Named Ellington," apparently produced by KCET in Los Angeles in 1988

. . . At the 25 minutes mark there is footage of a concert (Denmark or Sweden?) that was being televised in which Jimmy Hamilton is taking his clarinet solo in "Ad Lib On Nippon," in the background all three trombonists are playing instruments that resemble small tubas. Then . . . during a performance of *The Opener*, Buster Cooper comes down to the front of the stage to take a solo on the same instrument. Later during a Cat Anderson solo in the same number, the trombonists, in the back, are playing trombones. I have looked everywhere — DESOR, Nielsen and Stratemann and can find no reference to these instruments.

— — **Bill Morton**

The instrument . . . is called a euphonium or baritone horn. The difference between a euphonium and a baritone is only in the manufacturing — one way of making it places the valves more-of-less parallel to the floor; the other has the valves perpendicular.

I suspect Duke's trombonists were given or loaned the euphoniums as a marketing ploy by the manufacturer.

— — **Andrew Homzy**

. . . These extracts in the documentary "A Duke Named Ellington" are taken from another, much older documentary, made in 1965 and called "Ellington in Europe." It was telecast in two parts. The recordings of the band in action were made on 16Feb and 18Feb65, both in the B.B.C. Studios. The telecast of Part 1 was on 26Mar65, Part 2 was on 10Apr65, both through B.B.C. 2. (See Klaus Stratemann page 505.)

During the "Ad Lib On Nippon," Chuck Connors and Buster Cooper both played euphonium. Lawrence Brown still played trombone.

This instrument was used on other occasions. Chuck Connors can be seen playing it during "Harlem" on 19Feb67 in the Royal Albert Hall in London. . . .

— — **DEMS**

Short Sheets . . .

After announcing the presence of several members of our Society in the audience, Dick Morgan led his Trio Plus One in a captivating medley of Ellington and Strayhorn tunes at the IMF/World Bank concert last month. ♪ ♪ During November-January, David Berger will be touring with an orchestra for *Harlem Nutcracker* shows in LA, Detroit, Chicago, Newark, and Brooklyn. ♪ ♪ In an internet posting, Sjef Hoefsmit notes that there are 306 known recordings of "Rockin' in Rhythm." ♪ ♪ The cover of the July issue of *Tailgate Ramblings* bears a photo of a Louis Armstrong bas-relief by sculptor Ferebee Streett. As we announced in a previous issue, she is preparing a limited edition bust of Duke especially for our Ellington '99. Numbered copies will be available at the Conference. ♪ ♪ Building upon the success of the outdoor photography exhibit at 13th and U Streets, the "Remembering U Street" project will continue with the collection of oral histories by the Historical Society of Washington, funded by a grant from the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation. ♪ ♪ The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra recently completed a three-day residency in Long Beach, CA, which included a radio program, concert, and master classes for youth and an improvisation workshop for teachers. ♪ ♪ The Southern California DES sponsors a scholarship program at LA's Ellington High School. ♪ ♪ Jazz at the Lincoln Center will present an "Essentially Ellington Workshop" at the International Association of Jazz Educators conference at Disneyland in January. ♪ ♪

Publication Notes

The latest report we have seen on Eddie Lambert's eagerly awaited *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* is that it is scheduled for release in December 1998.

Lush Life: The Billy Strayhorn Songbook (ISBN 0-8256-1600-X) has been published by Music Sales Corporation. The price is \$15.95.

"Band Leader Duke Ellington: He Became Great by Figuring Out How to Break the Rules" may be considered to have promised more than produced, considering its source, *Investors Business Daily* (Dec. 2, 1998). Rather than developed expository discourse, in large part it consists of quotations from sources familiar to Ellington aficionados.

"The Composer on His Work" in the current (90th anniversary issue) *Christian Science Monitor* is a reprint of a 1968 article with Ellington's byline published there. "I have always had a band to play what I wrote," he says. "It would be terrible not to hear what you've written."

So Let's Just Listen to the Music

After internet opinions by several persons about the artistic worth of "Satin Doll" and whether or not the Strayhorn estate should take or should have taken legal action about its authorship, executor Gregory A. Morris responded with this posting:

FYI

The Estate of Billy Strayhorn did not initiate legal action over the rights to "Satin Doll"! The matter is closed.

Pleasant and Less Risky Than Brain Surgery, For Sure

We quote from the Southern California DES regular meeting notice:

*LA Times - Nov 9th front page
"Music may repair brain"
Group Therapy Session Leader
Wm. Fawcett Hill, Ph.D.
Magical Melodies & Potions
Rarely Played Ellington
Guaranteed You'll
Feel Better or \$ returned*

East Coast Festival Set for February

The Fish Middleton Jazz Scholarship Fund will again sponsor the Annual East Coast Jazz Festival, the eighth, at two venues, February 10-14th. Proceeds benefit the Fund's Jazz Education and Music Programs. The late Fish Middleton was a radio personality whose dedicated efforts helped area youths. He was a featured speaker at the First Annual International Ellington Study Group Conference, sponsored by our Society in 1983.



Ellington '99

"Edward, You Are Blessed."

P.O. Box 42504
Washington, DC 20015-9998, U.S.A.

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

About Our Members

Seven poems by **Brian Gilmore**, all informed by Ellingtonia, are included in Part I of the special "Emerging Male Writers" issue of the *Callaloo* series (Johns Hopkins University Press). ♪ ♪ **Jack Towers** and **Jerry Valburn** are preparing a CD especially for Ellington '99. It will consist of performances by Ellington in his hometown, Washington. **Jerry** is also planning a multi-volumed CD reissue of the series of Duke Ellington Treasury Broadcasts. ♪ ♪ **Angela** and **Mac Grimmer** attended the Billy Strayhorn program in New York in November. (See page 2.) ♪ ♪

Sideman Dies

Roy Burrowes, who played trumpet in the Ellington orchestra during Cat Anderson's absence in 1962-64, died in London in November. He also played with Count Basie and Ronnie Scott bands.

Course Will Celebrate Duke's 100th

Our Peter MacHare calls our attention to a three-session course by the USDA Graduate School, with the Smithsonian as co-sponsor, as a centennial observation of Duke's birth. During February-April 1999, students will attend a concert by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, attend a Billy Taylor program at the Kennedy Center with Dr. John Edward Hasse as guest, and join a walking tour of the Beyond Category exhibit and a slide lecture at the Smithsonian.

For more information, one may contact the USDA at its office or at its web site at <http://grad.usda.gov> and click on evening programs.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY *Washington, DC*

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A Night at the Smithsonian

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

With a night at the Cotton Club no longer an alternative, the Mecca of Ellingtonia is now the Smithsonian Archives Center, to which we made our traditional annual pilgrimage in early December. Our journey was rewarded by two presentations, the first by Deborra Richardson, in a reprise of the program she gave at the recent Chicago convention, "Three Lovely Ladies of Song." Kay Davis, Joya Sherrill, and Maria Ellington (Cole) were three very different vocalists with the band at the same time (the '40's). They shared their experiences with us through Deborra's multimedia presentation, which was based on their oral histories.

During intermission, between refreshments (the chocolate chip cookies were particularly good), we were able to view some of the Archive's materials. Besides Ellington, there were displays from the Cat Anderson and Woody Herman collections. For our last treat of the evening, webmaster Scott Schwartz gave us a sneak prevue of the next addition to the Archive Center's Ellington internet site, a more personal look at Ellington based on his son Mercer's oral history.

Annie Kuebler temporarily abandoned her extra-curricular role as internet guru to handle the technical end of the programs. Again our thanks go to John Fleckner, Deborra, Scott, Annie and the rest of the Smithsonian staff.

Danish Choir Seeks Orchestras for American Tour

An amateur choir that has been doing some Danish version (Høybye & Pedersen) concerts of Ellington's sacred music wants to do a "reverse" tour in the United States. To this end they are seeking local bands to accompany them in cities where Duke performed his Sacred Concerts. Interested parties may contact: Kirsten Sandberg Bloch, Kagerup Stationsvej 33, DK-3200 Helsingør, Denmark.

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, January 2 — Annual Holiday Party

Wednesday, February 10 - Sunday, February 14 — East Coast Jazz Festival

Thursday, February 11 — An Evening of Oral Histories:
"Remembering Ellington," 7:30 pm, 19th Street Baptist Church