

Ellingtonia



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Centennial Celebrations Underway; Conference Eagerly Awaited

Ellington '99 and the sheer number of celebrations internationally during Duke Ellington's one-hundredth birthday year indicate the love and esteem accorded the man many regard as America's greatest and one of the world's best musicians and composers. Washington, DC, is especially proud of its native son who went on to create a music that can be described only as Ellington's, with an aesthetic all its own, so richly multifaceted that it, too, defies category.

Commemorations such as scholarly symposia at Amherst College and U.C.L.A., a coordinated variety of programs in Italy, many all-Ellington concerts, Cleveland's extensive "Everything Ellington" series, lectures, exhibits, books, special-issue periodicals, recordings, and countless radio and television specials would certainly please him because of their diversity—their non-categorical nature, except for the subject, Ellington and his art.

Our Ellington '99, the 17th Annual International Duke Ellington Study Conference, April 28-May 2 at the Washington Marriott Hotel, promises to be the high point of the Centennial Year. Judged by early responses, registrations will meet expectations. It will be a truly international meeting; so far over a third of the registrants are from foreign countries.

The theme-centered program focuses on Ellington as a blessed Renaissance man. Sessions include such fresh topics as "New Discoveries of a Very Old Vintage," "The Spiritual Works of Duke Ellington and Mary Lou Williams," and "Retrospection: Ellington, Washington, and the Music of Memory." Among presenters are Peter Townsend (England), Sim Simons (Belgium), and the Rev. Mark Harvey (USA). From Italy, authors of the new *DESOR* will be on hand, and Eddie Lambert's *Listener's Guide* will be introduced. Washingtonians who knew Duke in special ways will share memories. The Conference will open on Wednesday afternoon at the Library of Congress; after the next day's morning session, registrants will go to

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April Members' Choice Program: Finds and Favorites

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

It's Duke's centenary month! And what more appropriate way to celebrate than a "members' choice" night, with each member bringing one of their favorite examples of Ellingtonia for the others to hear and appreciate. Each member, if possible, should bring two choices - the first, a "favorite." We all have our favorites, recordings we return to listen to again and again. Maybe it's the record that first interested us in the music, or it may be a particularly fascinating arrangement or solo. It may be an outstanding example from one of the many Ellington "eras." Or none of the above, maybe it's just a favorite record!

The second choice should be a "find." Something discovered more recently, not known or fully appreciated earlier, that the rest of us should know about too, but probably don't. Maybe from a new CD, suggested by someone else, or found browsing through your collection. We would all like to know about this "find!"

The program takes place at **8 pm, Saturday, April 3**, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Sts., NW**. This is your chance to play your "finds and favorites." Or just come and listen, you may find a favorite!

Music Community Mourns Passing of Four Ellington Associates

Centennial year celebrations are have been tempered by shared sadness over the deaths of three persons who had personal and professional ties with Duke Ellington.

Stanley Dance, 88, a biographer of Duke and other major musicians, died in California on February 23. Born in England, he moved to the United States at age 48 and began a career as critic-writer in the field of jazz. In 1963, he won a grammy for liner notes for the album *The Ellington Era*. Among his books are *The World of Duke Ellington*, *The World of Swing* and *The*

(Continued on page 4 under "Dance")

Centennial Notes: "All for the Love of Duke"

Edward, You Are Blessed! - - Daisy Kennedy Ellington

Once upon a time a beautiful young lady and a very handsome young man fell in love and got married. They were a wonderful, compatible couple, and God blessed their marriage with a fine baby boy (eight pounds, eight ounces). They loved their little boy very much. They raised him, nurtured him, cuddled him, and spoiled him. They raised him in the palm of the hand and gave him everything they thought he wanted. Finally, when he was about seven or eight, they let his feet touch the ground.

-- Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress*

My favorite comment about Duke comes from one of the many young people who have been introduced to his music through the Duke Ellington Youth Project.

At a recent Duke Ellington Youth Festival performance, an eighth-grade student in the combined Junior High School Band was interviewed by a TV news reporter who asked him what type of music he likes and what his favorite song is. He replied instantly, "Duke Ellington's 'Satin Doll.'" Startled, the reporter asked, "How long has that been your favorite?" The student replied emphatically, "Since I first heard it!"

I think that's what most of us could say about our introduction to any number of Ellington's compositions!

-- Luvenia George

After Duke Ellington and his orchestra had concluded a memorable war-time performance in 1943 at the then-Camp Lee, Virginia, a fellow soldier and I had the audacity to sneak into the makeshift dressing room behind the open-air stage, where we lingered while Duke's assistants helped him change from his perspiration-soaked clothing. Since my buddy and I were in such awe of the Duke, we shared the unforgettable and unexpected experience of being in such close proximity to the Master.

-- George Henderson

Duke was universal. He touched everyone. He made the young respect the old and the old feel young again. Ellington charmed the ladies and made the men feel important. Duke was blessed with a natural, wonderful, raw talent, placing his notes in a manner that required a new word to describe it—Ellingtonia."

-- Louis Bellson, *"The Maestro," DownBeat, June 1991; contributed by Bob Reny*

Duke Ellington would never begin any meal without taking a moment to give thanks. It may seem a small gesture in the grand context of Ellington's life, but I think it's a defining one. Keenly aware of the preciousness of his gifts and profoundly indebted for them, he demonstrated his gratitude in a lifetime of generosity toward the musicians he empowered with creative freedom and the public he enriched in half a century of service.

-- David Hajdu, *November 1998 TDES Newsletter; contributed by Ted Hudson*

This thought came to me when Duke passed in May 1974: "A true artist is one who can reveal to his fellow men some of the beauty that is of the essence of the very nature of God. Duke Ellington was such an artist in every sense."

-- Donald L. McCathran

Celebrations

(Continued from page 1)

to the Smithsonian for a program and display at the Ellington Archives. On Saturday night, the Conference will have its annual banquet-concert, with music by the Doug Richards' Great American Music Ensemble.

Two unique items will be available at the Conference. One is a bust of Ellington by sculptress Ferebee Streett, especially commissioned by Ellington '99. The other is *The Duke in Washington*, a CD produced in conjunction with the Conference by Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn, with notes by Ted Hudson, all members of our Society. There will be a show of Ted Shell's photographs, and a mini-exhibit prepared by Geneva Hudson of Duke-related Washington and local musicians who performed with him.

Also in conjunction with the Conference will be a special

optional tour of Ellington's Washington on Wednesday morning, coordinated by Mac Grimmer. On Thursday evening, Duke's birthday, registrants will be transported to the National Cathedral for a concert of sacred music by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. The next evening will be for the Annual Duke Ellington Youth Project Festival at the Smithsonian. On Wednesday morning, the students' art exhibit will formally open in the morning (to run until May 30), and they will read their literary works in a program at noon, both at the Smithsonian.

As advised by prior Conference conveners, there will be some time for informal discussion of individual projects and interests and for "schmoozing."

Centennial Observances Abound

Commemorations of Duke Ellington's one-hundredth birthday are taking many forms internationally. They include special media productions as well as events such as those in the Washington area listed below. *N.B.: Because dates, performers, et cetera can change, it is advisable to confirm details of events.*

Print Media

"Ellington: America's Greatest Musician," *American Legacy*, Spring 1999

"Ellington Hits 100" by Albert Murray, *The Nation*, February 22 issue

"Ellington Is Forever: A Centennial Salute" by Bret Primack and front cover photo, *JazzTimes*, March 1999

"An Evening with Ellington: Fargo, N.D., Nov. 7, 1940" (w/photographs) by Jack Towers, *Down Beat*, April 1999

Feature on Ellington, *American Visions*, April-May issue

"Happy Birthday, Duke! Centennial celebration edition with articles by Howard Reich, Ellington, Billy Taylor w/Ed Enright, and Jack Towers, *Down Beat*, April 1999

Life and Music of Ellington special edition, w/interviews from TDES archives, *Jazziz*, April 1999

Sculpture

Limited Edition Bust of Ellington, by sculptress Ferebee Streett, commissioned by Ellington '99 for the Centennial Year, available at the Conference site

See also, "Exhibits," below.

Recordings

CDs scheduled for release during the Centennial Year:

Complete 1924-73 RCA recordings on 24 CDs, edited by Orrin Keepnews.

Anatomy of a Murder and *Such Sweet Thunder* 6-CD set, Columbia Records

The Duke in Washington CD, produced in conjunction with Ellington '99 by Storyville Records and our members Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn, with accompanying essay by Ted Hudson Reissue by Blue Note of the Capitol Recording Sessions that Mosaic released a few years ago.

Video

The American Songbook of Duke Ellington, a local performance by pianist John Eaton, with Buck Hill, tenor saxophone, Tommy Cecil, bass, and Dude Brown, drums

Exhibits

April 16 - May 18 - Photographs of Ellington and His Bandsmen sales exhibition, Parish Gallery, Canal Square, 1054 31st St, NW; 202-944-2310

April 27, 12 noon - Art Show Opening, works of art by District of Columbia students; Photo Gallery, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution; through May 31

Participatory and Spectator Events

April 28, 10:30 am - Tour of Duke's Washington in conjunction with Ellington '99; buses leave Washington Marriott; reservation, \$20

April 28, 7 pm - Ellington Celebration Swing Dance; Spanish Ballroom, Glen Echo Park, MD; music by Chantilly HS Jazz Band and Eric Felten Jazz Orchestra; \$8; 301-340-9732

April 29 - Ellington Commemorative Parade TBA

Festival

April 30, 7 pm - Annual Duke Ellington Youth Project Festival with bands, choirs, string ensembles, and dancers from DC elementary through senior high schools; Flag Hall, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Talks, Discussions, Demonstrations

April 5, 7:30 pm - Life and Career of Ellington discussion by Billy Taylor and John Hasse, music by Taylor Trio; Kennedy Center Terrace Theater; 202-467-4600

April 6, 7:30 pm - "Love You Madly: The Life and Music of Duke Ellington" by storyteller Bobby Norfolk; Corcoran Gallery of Art and Washington Storytellers Theatre, 500 - 17th St, NW; 202-639-1770

April 13, 7 pm - Viewing of Ellington Video Discs from private collection of Ted Shell, with discussion by Shell and commentary by Larry Applebaum; Borders Books, 18th & L Sts, NW; 202-466-4999

April 22 - "Ellington as Pianist" lecture by Reuben Jackson; Borders Books, 18th and L Sts, NW

April 23, 1 pm - "Styles and Music of Ellington" lecture and demonstration; panel includes our Rusty Hassan, Jack Towers, and Ted Shell; Prince Georges Community College

April 27, 11 am - Reading of Original Poetry and Performance of Ellington's Music by Ellington School of the Arts students; Hall of Musical Instruments, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

April 29, 11 am - "Happy Birthday, Duke!" celebration connecting students from Washington, DC, Cleveland, OH, and Kansas City, MO; special guest, Lisa Terry, jazz violinist and educator; Information and Technology Theater, Smithsonian

Live Music

April 3, 7:30 pm - Jon Faddis and an ensemble; Publick Playhouse, Cheverly, MD; Charlin Jazz Society, 301-277-1710

April 10, 11 am - Grand Ellington Jazz Festival, Meridian Hill Park, 16th St & Florida Ave, NW; Charlin Jazz Society, 202-686-2816

April 11, 4:30 pm - Ellington's Sacred Music by Tritonus Choir of Copenhagen; Union Baptist Church, 1225 W St, SE; Ellington Centennial Commission, 202-686-2816

April 17, 8 pm - First Night Annapolis presents "A Salute to Duke" with vocalist Ethel Ennis and 17-member Baltimore Jazz Orchestra; Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Annapolis, MD; contact Elizabeth Melvin, 410-268-8553 (Baltimore: 410-974-9332)

April 24, 8 pm - Piano Choice, Inc. presents New Washington Jazz Orchestra with Frank Wess, Jimmy Owens, Stanley Cowell, et al; John Addison Concert Hall, Ft. Washington, MD; \$20, seniors and students, \$18.

April 26, 7:30 pm - Tribute by Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra led by Wynton Marsalis; Washington Performing Arts Society and Charlin Jazz Society, 202-833-9800

Ellington '99

17th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference

April 28-May 2

Washington Marriott Hotel

Information: PO Box 42504, Washington, DC 20015-9998

E-mail: Phubols@compuserve.com

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

All this "wisdom" about jack-of-all-trades certainly does not apply to **Scott Schwartz**, for he is indeed a master of all that he engages in. He just authored *Faith, Serpents, and Fire: Images of Kentucky Holiness Believers* (Jackson:University Press of Mississippi, 1999), which he illustrates with his own photographs. A pre-publication assessment of the book credits him with "a sensitivity which allows him to enter objectively into the feelings and actions of others." In addition to being by profession an archivist at the Smithsonian (his "day" job), which includes work on the Ellington Collection, Scott is an accomplished guitarist who gives lessons, and is team teaching a WEB Development course at American University. And in all that spare time he has, Scott builds boats as a hobby. How's all that for eclectic interests and talents! ♪ ♪

Harold Gray has an article, "Ellington Centennial in Washington," in the March issue of *Mississippi Rag*. ♪ ♪ If you missed panelists **Luvenia George**, **Maurice Lawrence**, and **Ted Shell** at the "Remembering Ellington" program at 19th Street Baptist Church last month, do yourself a favor and hear **Jack Towers**, **Ted Shell**, and **Rusty Hassan** at upcoming events listed under "Talks . . ." on page 3 of this issue. ♪ ♪ In *Down Beat's* special "Happy Birthday, Duke! issue is an article, "An Evening with Ellington," by **Jack Towers** about Dick Burris and his recording of the famous Fargo concert in 1940. It is illustrated by some wonderful photographs that Jack took on the occasion. ♪ ♪

Dance (Continued from page 1)

World of Earl Hines. At one of the annual international Ellington conferences, he disavowed his reputed importance as a co- or ghost-writer of Ellington's *Music Is My Mistress*.

Dance's association with Ellington was mainly as a publicist and friend. Dance gave the eulogy at Ellington's funeral. Among the postings about his death on the internet was one that claimed Dance "led us all into the beauties of Duke's music and illuminated our path toward understanding the man as well as the music." He had often traveled with the band at Ellington's invitation, including the 1968 South America tour. His immediate survivors are his wife, Helen Oakley Dance (producer of a number of the classic Ellington small group recordings in the 1930s) and four adult children.

Known especially for her up-tempo vocal on "Take the 'A' Train," **Betty Roché** was with the orchestra during the 1940s and 50s, including Ellington's first Carnegie Hall concert. She died in Pleasantville, NY in February. Among the musicians with whom she sang are the Savoy Sultans, Earl Hines, Clark Terry, and Charles Brown. For the past several years she required residential nursing care. (See

Classically, Duke

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Peter MacHare's March program was a fascinating demonstration of the affinity of Ellington's music with traditional classical music. First by alternating symphonic and Ellingtonian versions of the same movements, Peter showed the main difference was instrumentation, not invention. Then with the piano pieces, he showed how smoothly one could segue from Debussy or Chopin to Ellington or Strayhorn. Followed by a demonstration of the parallel histories of jazz and classical music, Peter played a few of Duke's compositions as played by symphony orchestras, and led us to the unmistakable conclusion that the great triumvirate – Beethoven, Bach and Mozart – is now a quartet.

Short Sheets . . .

Because of space limitations in this pre-Conference issue, our regular feature "Short Sheets" will be suspended until the next issue.

Late News: As we were going to press, word came that **Malcolm Tillett**, who joined our Society in 1956, had just passed after an extended illness. There will be more about him in our next issue. His wife Bernice, other relatives, and friends have our deep sympathy.

the article "Betty Roché Welcomes Word from Friends, Fans-and COOKIES" by Patricia Willard in *Ellingtonia*, December 1997).

Jaki Byard, born in 1922, was found dead in his New York City home in February. Shortly before Ellington's death, he played with the orchestra as relief pianist.

Bessie Dudley, who was in *Bundle of Blues* and *Symphony in Black* movies along with Ellington, died in January. She was 88. A Cotton Club dancer, she appeared with Duke during his 1933 European tour.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY
Washington, DC

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