

Ellingtonia



Newsletter Of The
Duke Ellington Society

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Centennial Year Ends, Millennium Era Begins with Ellington '99 Past Financial Break-Even Point

by Ben Pubols, Ellington '99 Chairperson

Thanks to several generous contributions by members of our Society, as well as continuing sales of our conference memorabilia, Ellington '99 closes out the Centennial Year with a slight surplus.

Our total expenses were approximately \$81,000. About 80% of our income came from registration fees, 13% from memorabilia sales, and only 7% from contributions, primarily from our members. The immediate post-conference deficit of approximately \$1,300 (<2% of total expenses) has now been converted to a slight surplus (and counting).

Of further possible interest is a break-down of the total 264 registrants by place of origin: Washington, DC area, 31; other USA, 137; Canada, 23; United Kingdom, 30; and Continental Europe, 43 (led by Sweden with 11).

Quite a few items are still available for purchase, including Ellington busts, Centennial CDs, souvenir programs, portfolio tote bags, Ellington postage stamp sheets, and refrigerator magnets. Contact Ben if interested at PO Box 42504, Washington, DC 20015-9998, or by e-mail at <bhpubols@compuserve.com >.

Hoefsmit, Towers Donate Allen Letters

by Peter MacHare, Archivist

We have received an encouraging response to the request in the last newsletter for Terrell Allen's monthly letters to the Society. Sjef Hoefsmit of Belgium and Jack Towers of Maryland have donated many items. The letters are dated from August 24, 1986 to September 18, 1992. If you have any letters or other materials earlier than 1986, please let me know. *Ed. note: We plan to include in our next issue a description by Peter of some of the fascinating information in the documents contributed by Sjef and Jack. Peter plans to take on the project of indexing the letters and newsletters, which he will make available to members.*



Holiday Party To Celebrate New Century of Ellingtonia

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Cap the holiday season with a great evening of camaraderie, mouth-watering food and drink, superb music, and merriment—it's time for our annual winter party. This year it will be on **Saturday, January 8**, in the Party Room of the **Park Sutton Condominium, 1900 Lyttonsville Road, Silver Spring, MD**. We'll have lots of reasons to celebrate—the beginning of the second century of Ellingtonia, our successful international conference held here last April, and the world's successful navigation over the Y2K speed bump a week earlier.

Each current member may invite three guests and is asked to bring a food or drink contribution for the buffet. Festivities begin at **8 pm**, and hopefully the weather will cooperate this year!

Directions:

The Park Sutton is on the corner of 16th Street and Lyttonsville Road in Silver Spring, about ½ mile from DC. You can park on the street or lighted lot behind the building.

From DC

Go north on 16th St, NW, past the District line (the circle where North Portal Drive and Eastern Ave meet). As you continue, you will see on your right the Spring Shopping Center. Lyttonsville Rd will be the next street on your left.

From 495 (the Beltway)

Take the Georgia Ave exit south toward Silver Spring. After two lights, bear right onto 16th St. After the next light, the Park Sutton Condo will be at Lyttonsville Rd on your right.

Archives Acquires More Ellingtonia

Gaye and Edward K. Ellington, grandchildren of Duke Ellington, have donated a wealth of materials to the Smithsonian. Among them are music manuscripts, business records, lyrics, scripts, clippings, photographs, slides, and ephemera. Dating from the late 1920s to 1990, these items are a welcome complement to the Ellington and other, related holdings in the Archives Center of the National Museum of American History.

Reviews

Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography by Janna Tull Steed. New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1999.
by Geneva B. Hudson

Janna Tull Steed, an ordained minister of the United Methodist Church and a recognized authority on the sacred music of Duke Ellington, has written a reflective overview of Ellington's spiritual journey. It is a short biography of his early life in Washington, DC and the development of his career as a composer, band leader, good will ambassador, and, all the while, an optimistic "believer."

Ellington is shown to be a person with a strong religious background and belief in God, a belief nurtured early in life through his exposure to the church and his mother's teachings. Though he was a private person whose public persona did not allow many to know the "real Duke," it has become known that even as a young man, along with books on many subjects, he read the Bible, reportedly through and through. Ellington is quoted as having said that he had three educations: one from school, one from the pool hall, and one from the Bible. He felt the latter work made it possible to understand what was learned from the other two. The many translations and versions of the Bible and other materials of a religious nature acquired by the Smithsonian from Ellington's estate attest to the fact that he was quite a reader of such material.

Throughout his life, as he pursued the many aspects of his creative genius, there is a spirituality that manifests itself in many ways, including his caring for people who were important to him and pride in his people. His deep devotional, or spiritual, nature is relatively apparent in such as "Reminiscing in Tempo," "Hymn of Sorrow," and "Come Sunday." Some has also discerned it in ostensibly "secular" works such as "Goin' Up," "New World A-Comin'," and "Azure." His spirituality is most public, of course, in what Ellington called his most significant statement, the Sacred Concerts. According to the author, "Writing and performing the three concerts represented a culminating achievement in which Ellington could bring together the widest range of musical elements; his own personal history and the African-American musical heritage, his religious faith—and his hopes for the world and its peoples."

Janna's commendable work provides a different and insightful approach to the life of The Maestro.

The Far East Suite, Asian American Orchestra directed by Anthony Brown. Asian Improv Records AIR 0053
by John Mason

As most readers will know, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn composed the *Far East Suite*, a series of aural vignettes, as a response to their travels after the band returned from its 1963 tour of Asia and the Middle East. This delightful result was inspired by the sights and sounds of the East, yet filtered through the African American musical tradition.

The CD under review (and playing on my stereo as I write) is an adventurous and loving reinterpretation of Ellington and Strayhorn's work. Anthony Brown and his West Coast colleagues in the Asian American Orchestra have in turn filtered the *Far East Suite's* impressions of the East through a musical sensibility that is rooted equally in jazz and the musical styles of Asia. There's much more Asia in Brown's version than there was in the original and, happily, almost as much swing.

Brown retains the 1967 LP's program order, and despite the addition of instruments from Iran, Japan, and China, the twelve-piece orchestra at times sounds remarkably like the Ellington ensemble, especially in the writing for saxes and trombones. But don't mistake similarity for imitation. While retaining much of the flavor of the original, Brown and company use Ellington and Strayhorn's suite as a catalyst that releases their own creative juices. Asian flutes, reed trumpets, and drums are at the heart of this Asian American reinterpretation of an African American classic.

The first cut, "Tourist Point of View," sets the stage, with Hafez Modirzadeh's wood flute soloing beautifully over Ellingtonian writing for brass and reeds. "Bluebird of Delhi" opens with the low, moody trombone sound of the original, but here Qi Chao Liu's sunny bamboo flute takes the part of the mynah bird, before giving way to Jim Norton's clarinet. On "Isfahan," Melecio Magdaluyo pays moving homage to Johnny Hodges, while the band restrains its adventurous side. The most surprising cut on the CD is "Blue Pepper." Long gone is Ellington drummer Rufus Jones's hard-driving groove. Liu opens with a seemingly free improvisation on the reed trumpet while soft hints of the melody appear underneath, until the trumpets and trombones lead the way to a clear statement of the theme in the saxes. If Ellington and Strayhorn's "Blue Pepper" had more to do with Memphis on the Mississippi, this one is Memphis on the Nile. Magdaluyo's bari sax solo in "Agra" deserves a nod, as does Dave Martells's trombone work in "Amad," which follows an atmospheric introduction that is vaguely reminiscent of a muezzin's call to prayer. The least successful (and longest) cut is the last, "Ad Lib on Nippon." It begins well with piano and bass, as on the original, but drags aimlessly until Norton's clarinet perks things up about three-quarters of the way through.

Anthony Brown and the orchestra have paid tribute to Strayhorn and the Duke in the best way possible—with a bold, imaginative, and respectful interpretation of their music. Highly recommended.

Ed. note: Dr. Mason, a history professor at the University of Virginia, is a first-time-ever member of our Society. While having an abiding love for jazz and for Ellingtonia, he performs avocationally on French horn, his primary instrument, with classical groups in his locality, including the Charlottesville Symphony.

Short Sheets . . .

Ed. note: This column will resume next month.

Duke Praised for Business Acumen

Revisionist analyses indicate that Ellington was a far better businessman than commonly thought. As we reported in our December 1998 issue, a feature article in *Investors Business Daily* focused on his business skills. Recently Ben Pubols called our attention to "Leading with Style" in the August issue of *The Rotarian*. The article's sub-headings refer to lessons that persons in managerial positions can learn from Duke's example: "Don't knock the competition," "Collaboration is key," "Work hard and hire talent," "Keep staff turnover low," and "Trust yourself." The author, Robert J. Burke, concludes, "In the lexicon of today's business buzzwords, that's called 'empowerment,' and that's the mark of a true leader."



Ah, Love . . .

Reuben Jackson, whom we all know, and Theresa Esterlund, director of the National Museum of American History's Hands on Science Center, were married in Arlington, Virginia, on November 23.

We extend to the blissful couple our very best wishes!

Amenities Notes

Roland Hayes, who had to miss our last few meetings, gets out practically every day and walks a bit but will no longer be able to play tennis. He can, however, indulge in his other passion, listening to music.

Annie Kuebler has been away from work recently because of illness. She hopes, as do we, that she will be back in circulation soon.

We extend condolences to George Henderson and his family on the death of his mother at the age of 94.

United Kingdom Possible for Ellington '02

A committee has been formed in Great Britain to consider hosting the 20th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference there in the spring of 2002, probably in London or seaside Brighton.

No one has yet announced for the year 2001. Preparations for Ellington 2000 in Los Angeles have been under way for some time.

Reminder

*Membership in our Society is by the calendar year. If you haven't already done so, send in your dues now.
Thank you.*

"Take a Deep One!"

. . . as our hero was wont to say. We're talking about our members who have volunteered for committees and interest groups. Here they are, section by section, with their "first chairs" (a.k.a. chairpersons, coordinators, and conveners).

Our elected officers and at-large board (see page 4) tuned up and are already playing in creative harmony. Angela and Mac Grimmer and Jack Towers continue their exemplary service as secretary, program coordinator, and treasurer, respectively. In response to Jack's request re day-to-day tasks as treasurer, Ben Pubols has been appointed our co-treasurer. Jack continues an extra duty as our audio-visual technician. True to his word upon his retirement, our president emeritus, Ted Shell, continues to serve in two important respects, liaison with the church, including making sure everything is in order for each of our meetings, and the mailing of our newsletter. Betty Dennis, as we wrote in the last issue, is seeing to refreshments at our monthly meetings.

At our executive board meeting last summer, we made short and long-range plans, at the end of which our president emeritus, Ted Shell, wisely reminded that to achieve our goals we need an energetic membership. Subsequently, Angela and Mac, who had been taking the initiative on their own, agreed to convene the membership committee, for which Pat Braxton and Ted Shell had volunteered. Ted was chosen as chairperson.

To review our Constitution and By-Laws, Ben Pubols is conferring with volunteers Betty Dennis and George Henderson. As reported in our December issue, Peter MacHare is already active as our Archivist. Geneva Hudson was volunteered to convene a Member Relations group (mainly to take care of amenities and to coordinate social affairs), essentially the same persons who so magnificently handled registration and host duties at our conference: Liz Braxton, Betty Dennis, and Marion Shell, with Bernice Tillett an added volunteer. Luvenia George will chair an ad hoc Community Outreach Committee, including liaison with the Duke Ellington Youth Project. Harold Gray has volunteered to be our liaison with the Potomac River Jazz Club and the American Federation of Jazz Societies.

Our out-of-area members also have offered to serve: Lois Moody (who came from Canada a few days early and pitched right in on Ellington '99 chores) has written that she will do anything she can from a distance. Anthony Brown indicates that he can serve as our West Coast liaison. And, needless to say, Sjeff Hoefsmits always helps in whatever way he can.

Let's give them all a big hand!

Speaking of hands, lend yours. We need a chairperson and members for our standing Publicity Committee, and Jack Dennis seeks persons to convene as the Nominations Committee. All committees and groups will welcome you.

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

About Our Members

Jack Ladd Carr was winning bidder for a Smithsonian Masterworks score of "Sepia Panorama" at the silent auction sponsored by the Friends of the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra at its Concert of Tastes gala last month. Jack then gave it to Fred Geil, bassist with the symphony, who will perform it with a jazz orchestra that he conducts. **Geneva Hudson** was chairperson of the auction. ♪ ♪ **Walter van de Leur**, who was in the area briefly in September, is the recipient of a Netherlands government grant to study music arrangers of the 1940s through 1950s. ♪ ♪ **Mac Grimmer, John Edward Hasse, Morris Hodara, Ted Hudson, and Ted Shell** are among those acknowledged by Janna Steed in her *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* for help or contributions—Mac and Morris for information, John for contributing the annotated discography, Sjeff and Ted Hudson for critiquing parts of the manuscript, and Ted Shell for inclusion of some of his photographs. ♪ ♪ **Harold Gray** is the Jazz Outreach officer for the Potomac River Jazz Club. ♪ ♪ In a note to an item in the DES of Sweden's *Bulletin* about movies involving Duke and/or his music, **Patricia Willard** is indirectly quoted to the effect that Duke was happy about making films. ♪ ♪ **Dick Spottswood**, long-time member who rejoined us after a hiatus, continues his radio show at 10 pm Saturdays on WAMU-88.5FM. Because it conflicts with our regular meeting time, some of our members regularly tape the show, as they also do for Rob Bamberger's at 7 pm. ♪ ♪ **Peter MacHare's** review of *Joya Sherrill Sings Duke*, from our previous issue, is reprinted in the latest *DEMS Bulletin*.

Don't Miss This Timely Presentation

At noon on January 20, Reuben Jackson will give a lecture/demonstration, "Without a Deadline, Baby, I Wouldn't Finish Nothin': Duke Ellington's Relationship with Time." His will be the first in a series connected with the National Museum of American History's recently opened "On Time" exhibit. Reuben promises to be punctual.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY
Washington, DC

President	Theodore E. Hudson
President Emeritus	Theodore A. Shell
Vice President and Co-Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Secretary	Angela Grimmer
Treasurer	Jack Towson
Program Coordinator	Mac Grimmer
At-Large Board Members	
Alegra Allen	Patricia Baxton
John Dennis	Luvonis George
Mac Grimmer	Peter MacHare
Theodore A. Shell	

Society Members Enjoy Smithsonian Program

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Our December meeting was convened at the Smithsonian Archives Center, the home of the Ellington Collection. We were rewarded with a unique program by Scott Schwartz on the orchestra's Far East tour. Scott first read his paper on contemporary impressions of the tour by the Ellington band in 1963, then played a rare tape on which Duke introduced four of the band's numbers from the *Far East Suite*. These same four tunes were played alternately by a contemporary band, the Asian-American Orchestra, led by one of our west coast members, Anthony Brown. During intermission (and refreshments), we were able to view some of the Archives' collection of Ellingtonia. Then in the second half of the program, Ben Pubols showed some rare film clips from Duke's early days.

Thanks again to Scott, Ben, Deborra Richardson, John Fleckner and the rest of the Archives staff for another interesting evening.

ELLINGTON 2000 Update

Call for Proposals

The organizing committee of ELLINGTON 2000, The 18th Annual Duke Ellington Conference, in Hollywood, May 24 to May 28, solicits proposals for papers and presentations for its daytime sessions.

If you have an idea for either a paper or a presentation, the committee wants to hear from you. The theme is "Ellington and the Movies." Papers and presentations are not limited to this theme, however; all proposals will be welcomed and considered.

Your proposal should include: Title; A brief (no more than 200 word) abstract or summary; List of audio or visual equipment you need or other special requirements; Estimate of time required; and Information about yourself, including name, address, telephone, e-mail, and fax numbers.

Sign and date your proposal and sent it into the address below by 10 February 2000. (Please note that presenters must be registered to attend the conference.)

Ed. Note: This article was adapted by an internet posting by Lee Farley. For questions about proposals, you may contact him by e-mail at <lfarley1@earthlink.net> or you may contact the co-chair of the conference, Bill Hill, at <htm_wphill@telis.org>.

For Other Information

For information about registration, programs, etc., contact:
The Duke Ellington Society of Southern California
ATTN: Ellington 2000
PO Box 2652
Culver City, CA 90231

For reservations, contact the hotel directly, and state that you will be attending the conference.:

Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel
7000 Hollywood Boulevard
Hollywood, CA 90028

Phone: 213-466-7000; Fax: 213-462-8056