Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of The

Duke Ellington Society

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Archives Make Interesting Reading

by Peter MacHare, Archivist

Before we had *Ellingtonia*, our long-time President Terrell Allen mailed letters to every member each month that make interesting reading. His letter of September 18, 1992 begins "Hail and farewell, O beloved Ellingtonians." After more than thirty years as our president, Terrell Allen was stepping down. He relates several interesting stories. I cannot improve on his own words:

"I remember two big parties that we threw for the Band in which everybody had a fantastic time and nobody wanted to go home. One was at Jack Fauntleroy's house where the good judge donned his chef's hat and grilled T-Bone and Porterhouse steaks for his guests.

"The other big 'do' was at Ted Shell's in the early 70's when Ellington's band played at the Shoreham. All the Ellingtonians were there and Duke showed up with Stanley Dance about 3 a.m. and stayed 'til it was over. We had a time getting Don Byas and Paul Gon-salves poured into a cab to take them to their hotel! And that was about noon the next day. Duke was always gracious about attending our little affairs when he was in the area and one Saturday night he sat at the piano in Omega House and played solo piano for 'days' with Dick Spottswood egging him on. And not a tape recorder in the house!!"

The letters reveal many other interesting facts. The registration fee for Ellington '83 (the first conference) was only $20. We also had more frequent presenters from the local radio stations in those days. Here's a partial list: Ray Knight (formerly of Baltimore's WBJC) and Rusty Hassan (with WAMU then) in 1987; Dick Spottswood (WAMU) and Bill McLaurin (WDCU) in 1988; and Gwen Redding and Faunee (both with WDCU) in 1990.

The letters reveal more than a little of Terrell's personality. He was clearly a man of great heart and flowery prose. His favorite Ellingtonian was Paul Gonzalves. He voted for Ronald Reagan. His favorite Ellington pop song was "Satin Doll."

I promise to bring copies of the letters to the next few meetings for any of you who would like to see them.

Peter MacHare's February Program: "An Evening with Eddie Lambert"

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Finally, last year, one of the most impressive and important books in the world of Ellingtonia was published—Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide*. Eddie was one of the great Ellington scholars, articulate and witty, who, as Sjef Hoefsmit pointed out in a recent *DEMS Bulletin*, "takes you by the hand and walks you through Duke's entire career. He shows you the high spots—you will never find another author who can guide you through this wealth of beauty so intelligently, so knowledgeably and with such considered judgement as Eddie Lambert does."

Peter MacHare reviewed the book for *Ellingtonia* and presented it as a program at our millennial conference, Ellington '99. At our February meeting Peter will give us "An Evening with Eddie Lambert." We will hear the records, and Lambert's comments, as he—and Peter—lead us through the world of Ellington's music.

The time is **8 pm, Saturday, February 5**, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW.** Don't miss it! Remember. Peter MacHare, Eddie Lambert – and Duke Ellington.

Member's CD Among Grammy Nominees

The American Asian Orchestra's CD *Far East Suite* is a candidate for the "Best Jazz Ensemble Per-formance" Grammy award. It is led by our member Anthony Brown, also the band's percussionist. [*See our January 2000 issue for a review of the CD by John Mason.*]

Among nominees for the historical award is the Centennial Complete Edition of Duke's RCA Victor Recordings. Other CDs up for awards include *Take the 'A' Train: The Canadian Brass Plays Ellington*, for best classical crossover; and Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge," twice for best instrumental performance, on Wynton Marsalis and Tony Bennett's *Hot & Cool* and by Don Sebesky on *Joyful Noise: A Tribute to Ellington.*

Two Recommended Books

by Theodore R. Hudson

The Jazz Cadence of American Culture edited by Robert G. O'Meally. N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1998.

While not specifically about Ellington, O'Meally's book in significant ways speaks indirectly of Ellington's music as a trope, if you will, of America's culture in the broad sense of the word. Its inclusive selections address problems of defining jazz and the use of the term as a metaphor, consider parallels of the music and America's evolving beliefs and values, explore the impact of jazz on the visual arts, and—this is heavier stuff than the phrase suggests—see " jazz as a dance." In short, as its Preface avers, this "book represents [an] attempt at a comprehensive interdisciplinary reader that we need: a course packet for a seminar on jazz among the disciplines."

To say that this book is no page-turner, read-through book is a high compliment. The essays are characterized by the sort of depth that encourages thoughtful, reflective reading. The range of thinkers, aestheticians, and scholars is impressive, such as Ellison, Kowenhoven, Baraka, Hurston. The same applies to the selections; for example, "Black Visual Intonation" by Jafa, "Jazz Music in Motion" by Jacqui Malone, "Other: From Noun to Verb" by Nathaniel Mackey, and the classic "The Blues as Folk Poetry" by Sterling A. Brown. *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture* has lasting value, a thought-provoking book to go back to and to discuss with those of similar interests.

Duke Ellington by Scott Yanow. N.Y.: Friedman/Fairfax Publishers, 1999.

This book's text and photographs, each complementing the other, comprise little of which serious Ellington aficionados are not aware. Thus, with the exception of completists, many will not find it essential. Well, maybe not so, for many will want the book because it has collected in one place so many familiar, and a few not so familiar, photographs. It will certainly be valuable for persons who want to know more of and/or are increasing their appreciation of the man and his times. Also, its large format and visual appeal make *Duke Ellington* ideal for a coffee table, where it can be picked up and savored from time-to-time.

The text is a hagiographic chronology of Ellington the artist and his times. While it is lucid, it does not give evidence of fresh research and resulting fresh insights derived therefrom. The considerable strength of this book is its treasure of photographs. They are impressive images, all in sepia or gray scale, generously sized and evocative. (My present favorite is of Johnny Hodges, warily alert yet all insouciance and sartorial hipness, on page 37.)

Factual purists will find a few clinkers in the book: relatively minor glitches such as an occasional mis-identification of persons in photographs and a glaring one, the misspelling of Billy Strayhorn's name in, of all places, the large print of a chapter heading! On a positive note, novitiates especially will find the Bibliography, Recommending Listening, and Filmography appendices useful. Particularly in respect to the second of these, knowledgeable readers will have an opportunity to compare Yanow's judgments with their own.

The final chapter, "Epilogue: The Legacy of Duke Ellington," is a succinct summation of what Ellington has and will mean; it ends with: ". . . there is no chance that he will be forgotten. The quantity of Ellington's output during half a century of constant writing is enormous, and the consistently high quality of these treasures ensures that his legacy will not dim with time."

All in all, Scott Yanow's *Duke Ellington* is an attractive and informative book that can take a rightful place among the commendable tributes to Edward Kennedy Ellington published in the centenary year of his birth.

Are You Seeing Stars?

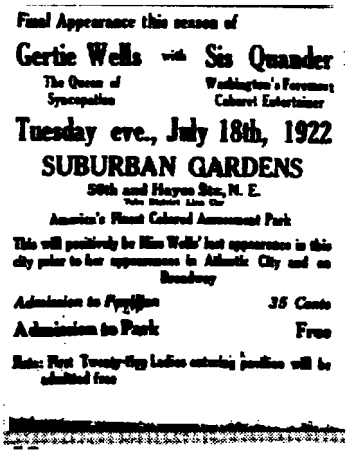
Look at your address on the envelope. If you see one or two stars beside your name, here's why:

☆ **A Gentle Reminder:** We miss you. Please renew your membership @ $30 individual / $50 couple.

☆☆ **A Cordial Invitation:** Because of your interest in the cultural arts, and likely Ellington and Strayhorn music in particular, we have been sending you copies of *Ellingtonia.* We want to continue sending them, but to you as a member. It's likely that you can take advantage of our first-time-ever membership offer @ $20.

Remember, dues are for the calendar year, so be with us in 2000. Send your check payable to: Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003. You and we will be glad that you did.

Thanks!


Final Appearance this season of

Gertie Wells with Sis Quander

The Queen of Syncopation — Washington's Favorite Cabaret Entertainer

Tuesday eve., July 18th, 1922

SUBURBAN GARDENS

50th and Hayes Sts., N. E.

America's Finest Colored Amusement Park

This will positively be Miss Wells' last appearance in this city prior to her appearance in Atlantic City and on Broadway

Admission to Pavilion 35 Cents

Admission to Park Free

Note: First Twenty-five Ladies entering pavilion will be admitted free

Quander Quandary

This Washington *Tribune* ad features two musicians associated with Ellington. Gertie Wells, we know, is mentioned and pictured in his *MIMM.* In a 1970 interview, vocalist Sis Quander, who said she had a close personal relationship with him when they were teenagers, told of going to New York with Duke and others in the early 1920s and making a recording. Quander family members say there was a now missing photo taken on the occasion, and that the trip may have been to make a test recording.

Short Sheets . . .

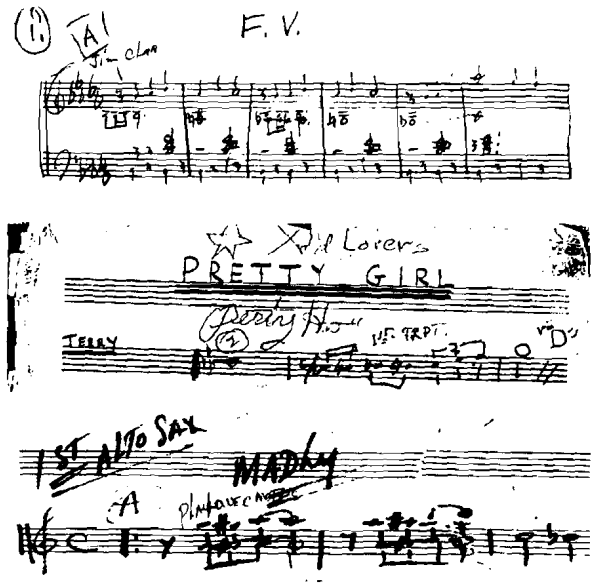
Annie Kuebler. staffer at the Ellington Archives, was nominated for the Peer Recognition Award at the Smithsonian. ♪ ♪ In response to a query on his Duke-LYM internet site, Andy Homzy listed over 30 books dealing with Ellington that are on one dealer's list. ♪ ♪ The Rev. Janna Steed's *Duke Ellington: A Spiritual Biography* has been nominated for *Rolling Stone's* Ralph J. Gleason music book award. Incidentally, in it she refers to several papers presented at our Ellington '99 conference. ♪ ♪ Vice principal Treva Lindsey will be the acting head of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts until a replacement is appointed for Okpara Nosakhere, who is resigning at the end of January. ♬♬ Ellington '99 conferencers who attended will remember the Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir that sang so movingly at the Ellington Youth Project Festival at the Smithsonian. The group can be heard on the CD *To Hope: A Celebration* along with the the Dave Brubeck Quartet and the Cathedral Choral Society and Orchestra. Recorded live at the National Cathedral, the work is a mass composed by Brubeck. A one-time student of Milhaus, he has composed a number of classical choral works. ♬♬ Another book is on the way, *Ellington on Stage: Music for the Theatre*, by John Franceschina. ♬♬ In a seasonal greeting, our Czech Republic friends Josef and Angela Mahdal write that "...times are changing. Can you imagine, even in my country, I could buy both 5 CDs of Columbia/Legacy and the Centennial RCA Victor set . . ." ♬♬ June Norton is a prominent commentator in "Something to Live For," the splendid documentary film on her friend Ella Fitzgerald that was telecast over PBS recently. ♬♬ *Jazz Times* magazine poll indicates that Duke was the Jazz Artist of the Century. ♬♬ In the company of Nobel and Pulitzer prize winners, among other literary notables, Reuben Jackson reads two of his poems on the CD anthology *Our Souls Have Grown Deep Like the Rivers.* ♬♬ Stating that such an event "would create a national interest in jazz orchestras that we have not seen for many years," Jeff Lindberg, director of the Chicago Jazz Orchestra, has challenged the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra to an "old-fashioned Battle of the Bands in the New Millennium." ♬♬

Quotation of the Month

When I painted his portrait, I put roses alongside his face. That was my own connection to him, my thanks for all the roses he used to send me whenever he 'd finish a new piece of music.

– Tony Bennett as quoted by John C. Tibbetts in "Tony Bennett: What His Heart Has Seen," *Guest Informant: Miami*, 1999-2000 Edition. According to Tibbetts, Bennett's personal affection for Duke is the reason for his having resisted selling the portrait.

Valentine's Day Puzzler



Courtesy Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, NMAH, Smithsonian Institution

The above score excerpts are apropos in some way of Valentine's Day. For each, the fun can be trying to identify the tune and the "hand" (writer of the music notation). Title answers are on page 4 under "Puzzler." Hands will be given in the March issue. *Ed. note: We thank Annie Kuebler for help in the preparation of this little puzzler.*

We Wish Hajdu a Speedy Recovery

Latest reports are that David Hajdu, TDES president, is progressing nicely following illness and a hospital stay during which he had a pacemaker installed. He has our very best wishes.

He Was "Actually an Excellent Speller"

Although she has no recollection of having so mis-spoken during her presentation at Ellington '99, Claire Gordon has been told that she said that Duke was a poor speller. She wants the record set aright–likely such a remark was meant to be a reference to Rex Stewart. Claire informs that Rex "was such a good writer but [his] spelling was of the original variety," but Duke "was actually an excellent speller."

TDES Inaugurates Answering Service

A calendar of events and other information can be accessed and messages can be left for TDES officers and board members on the organization's telephone service. The number is (212) 330-0737.

But Duke, Linguists Say It "Feels Nice on the Tongue"

We read that the American Dialect Society has chosen "jazz" as the word of the twentieth century.

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

About Our Members

Anthony Brown's book on modern drumming is slated for release by the University of California Press this coming summer. He lectures and teaches master classes in the history of jazz drumming; cross-cultural jazz composition, arranging and performance; and Ellington's contributions and compositional style. ♫♫ **Walter van de Leur** has been invited to give more lectures and prepare more papers, which he finds fun to do. He has been to Italy, German, and Atlanta, Georgia. We would not be surprised if he showed up at the IAJE Convention in New Orleans in January. For the *International Dictionary of Black Composers*, he wrote the entry on Strayhorn. Meanwhile, he continues to work with the Dutch Jazz Orchestra. ♫♫ In a three-page interview in *Black Issues in Higher Education*, **John Edward Hasse** discusses Duke's place in academia. ♫♫ We are accustomed to seeing the names **Jack Towers** and **Jerry Valburn** among credits on CDs and other recorded music. Among those acknowledged by Andrew Homzy for his *100 Years of Duke Ellington* are **John Edward Hasse**, **Anne K. Kuebler**, and "for his general and specific help with Ellington's recordings," **Sjef Hoefsmsit.** Kudos go to **Walter van de Leur** for editing Billy Strayhorn's arrangements of several of his compositions on the CD. This live recording of the European Broadcasting Union Jazz Orchestra, which Andrew directed, was comprised of musicians from over a dozen countries, especially assembled for concerts in Canada in celebration of Duke's100th birthday. ♫♫

Puzzler

The titles, respectively, are "My Funny Valentine," "The Star Crossed Lovers" (which evolved from "Pretty Girl" and is clued here by the doodles at the top), and "Love You Madly."

Because it is unusual, the third hand is given now: The excerpt is from an arrangement by Norris Turney in his own hand.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

Washington, DC

President	Theodore R. Hudson
President Emeritus	Theodore A. Shell
Vice President and Co-Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Secretary	Angela Grimmer
Treasurer	Jack Towers
Program Coordinator	Mac Grimmer

At-Large Board Members

Aledra Allen	Patricia Braxton
John Dennis	Luvenia George
Mac Grimmer	Peter MacHare

Theodore A. Shell

Millennium Merriment

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

We welcomed the new year, the new millennium and a new century of Ellingtonia with our annual end-of-the-holidays party at the Park Sutton's party room, made available to us through the good offices of President Teddy and First Lady Geneva Hudson. A large turnout of members and guests shared an evening of good food, conviviality and comradery, not to mention the incomparable music of Duke Ellington. Secretary Angela Grimmer presented certificates of appreciation to 1999 contributors to our newsletter, after which board member (and one of the Conference coordinators) Patricia Braxton presented special awards to President Emeritus Ted Shell for his many years of service and to Ben Pubols for his success as chairperson of Ellington '99. The president then presided over a quiz, testing our knowledge of Ellingtonia, and dancing was led by the first lady. We then adjourned the festivities for another year, unless we can get the holidays rescheduled to come more often.

ELLINGTON 2000

The 18th Annual Duke Ellington Conference
Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, Hollywood, California
May 24 - 28, 2000

The organizing committee is busy preparing a highly entertaining and informative conference. Some of our Society's members have already made their hotel and conference reservations and other plans.

Call for Proposals

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." Prospective presenters 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 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 send it into the address below by February 10. (Please note that presenters must be registered to attend the conference.)

If you have questions about proposals, you may contact Lee Farley by e-mail at < lfarley1@earthlink.net > or you may contact one of the co-chairs of the conference, Bill Hill, at < htm_wphill@telis.org >.

Registration and Accommodations

Registration postmarked by March 20 is $170 in U.S. funds; later registration is $195.

To register and for information about the program and related events, contact:

The Duke Ellington Society of Southern California
ATTN: Ellington 2000
PO Box 2652
Culver City, CA 90231
Fax: 323-933-2676; E-mail: < dukesplace@aol.com >

The committee has arranged special rates at the conference hotel, beginning at $99 per night, single or double. For reservations, contact the hotel directly, and state that you will be attending the conference.

Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel
7000 Hollywood Boulevard
Hollywood, CA 90028
1-800-950-7667 and 213-466-7000; Fax: 213-462-8056