



Courtesy Granville Hurley, Jr.

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society

Volume IX, Number 3

MARCH 2001

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Burns' Jazz Evokes Spirited Reactions

While Ken Burns' 10-part television series *Jazz* had a high number of viewers, it is difficult to gauge its overall effect on the general public for whom it was purportedly produced. But among jazz lovers, it has elicited much analysis and opinionated commentary.

Several of our members participated in public forums. In a Smithsonian Associates program at the Department of Agriculture in mid-January, a crowded audience heard a panel that featured our member Patricia Willard with jazz authority Willard Jenkins; author, former White House lawyer, and former Woody Herman saxophonist Leonard Garment; pianist Sir Roland Hanna; and Burns himself. The week after the series, Luvenia George, John Hasse, Ted Hudson, Ben Pubols, and Scott Schwartz were discussants and Reuben Jackson was keynoter in "Beyond Burns' *Jazz*," a symposium hosted by the Archives Center for Smithsonian employees.

Sales of the video of the documentary and ancillary CDs and book are reportedly very high. The book, for instance, made the *NY Times* best-seller list quickly, and sales of jazz recordings in general have spurted since the start of the series.

[In our February issue, we invited comments. Two responses appear on page 2 of this issue.]

Norris Turney, 1922-2001

Ellington sideman Norris Turney, died in Ohio on January 17. He joined the orchestra in 1969 as an alto saxophonist. As flutist, he added a new tonal color. He also played a vigorous tenor. While the band was short a trombonist but with a full reed section during a 1970 European tour, he played trombone parts on saxophone. Among Duke's recordings on which he may be heard to advantage are "In Triplicate" (tenor), "Checkered Hat" (alto), and "Soul Flute" (flute).

Turney spoke and performed at the Annual International Ellington Conference in Leeds in 1997.

We extend deep condolences. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his wife, Marilee Turney, 3624 Marshall Street, Kettering, OH 45429, USA.

March Program: Jack Towers Plays Treasury Series Highlights

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

In April 1945, Duke Ellington began what was to be the largest single recording project of his career, the "Treasury Series." Consisting of complete broadcasts, and called "A Date With The Duke," the first of 22 (!) double CD albums has just been released. (Even Duke's sales pitches for war bonds are included.) The "sound quality is excellent" and the series was "one of the most exciting ever produced," according to Eddie Lambert in his *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide*.

Jack Towers, of course, did the remastering, and will give us a sneak preview. He'll play a few highlights from the series, although he says, "It sure was easy to pick out the numbers—any selection would have worked fine."

Our "Date With the Duke" is **Saturday, March 3**, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Sts., NW**, at **8 pm**. Vocals by Joya Sherrill and Kay Davis, and there might be some "Tootin' Through the Roof."

The Duke Ellington Society

Cordially Invites You to

An Evening of

Ellington and Strayhorn Music

Featuring

Ronnie Wells

with

Ron Elliston & Friends

Saturday, May 5, 2001, 8 PM

Grace Lutheran Evangelical Church

16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC

Proceeds Support The Society's Student Fund

\$15 Per Person

For Advance Tickets, Contact Patricia Braxton at:
202-269-5960 / pbraxton24@hotmail.com

Just a Signpost Along the Road

by Bill Hasson

Upon reviewing Ken Burns' *Jazz*, or the world of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, I am pleased that the story of jazz cannot be compressed into 19 hours. I even watched it twice and turned on the mute button to just view the photographs and let my own imagination take flight. The series will not please everyone but will evoke debate. There is so much more known about the history of this music and folks alive who could have made it more exciting, but this documentary was produced with built-in limitations from the start. There were "anointed" spokespersons for the series and therein lies the real challenge for the lovers and defenders of this music. We may never know why we didn't hear from Max Roach and others or why only thirty seconds was devoted to Bud Powell or more attention was not given to the contributions of female artists. I could go on and on.

But the debate is on. The whole story was not told. Much was going on in the States while the expatriates were overseas. The music never died. The series failed to give a more comprehensive backdrop to a lot of the social events occurring simultaneously while the music took its various forms and styles. There are many persons alive who lived the experiences and who could have added depth to the various periods. The script was contrived at best. The music has always been controversial and Mr. Burns' presentation is just a signpost along the road.

Ken Burns' Requiem in Blues

by John Mason

Exhilaration! Exasperation! Night after night, in rapid succession, the peaks and depths of human emotion! Ken Burns' *Jazz* was nothing if not dramatic. In my house, however, much of the drama was not on the screen; it was in my living room. Would I or would I not throw a brick through the TV screen? (And not just when Stanley Crouch, with his combination of hyperbole and bombast, was speaking.)

The series' strengths were considerable. Burns unearthed an astonishing number of powerfully evocative film clips and still photos, illustrating the history of the music. Many, I suspect, were new to even the most knowledgeable viewers. Interviews with musicians, fans, and commentators were often moving and sometimes wonderfully insightful. And Burns' refusal to ignore the way that American racism shaped both the music and the lives of all who played it, whether black or white, can only be applauded. But by the end of the series what I felt most was exasperation, tinged with sadness. Despite twenty minutes of denials at the end of the last of the ten episodes, Burns' message was clear: The age of the titans is over. Jazz is dying or dead. The best thing that jazz has to offer is its past.

Burns devoted only two out of his twenty hours to jazz after 1960. In that final episode he spent more time on Louis Armstrong's death than on Charles Mingus' entire career. (Burns gave Mingus three minutes—I timed it.) The lamentations began with the Bop revolution in the next to last episode: Jazz ceased to be America's popular music, and, to Burns, nothing more clearly demonstrates that something is wrong than declining record sales. It was Bird who, despite his brilliance, first started jazz down the road to perdition. Coltrane, Mingus, Coleman, free jazz, and fusion were signposts along the way. Even the tender mercies of our young hero, Wynton Marsalis, will probably be unable to save it.

Burns is wrong, of course. The vitality of an art form cannot be measured by record sales. Jazz will live because of its diversity, not despite it. And, most importantly, it will live because of the passion of its fans and the energy, commitment, and creativity of musicians in clubs, schools, concert halls, and practice rooms all over the world.

A Winter Jazz Retreat

by Geneva Hudson

The Duke Ellington School of the Arts' New Washingtonians Jazz Ensembles, under the direction of Davey Yarborough, gave a spirited and accomplished performance at the school on Thursday morning, January 25 in "A Winter Jazz Retreat." A second concert took place the next night. Both featured a saxophone quartet, several small ensembles, a solo guitar, a vocalist, and the full orchestra. Among the repertoire were compositions by Cole Porter, Fats Waller, Billy Strayhorn, and Ellington. A highlight was an appearance by alumnus Daniel Moore III, who played piano and sang at the opening reception of Ellington '99. In a slightly up-tempo "Take the 'A' Train" he was joined by a rhythm section and invited "guest," his former teacher Davey Yarborough, who contributed a masterful, electrifying alto saxophone solo.

As always, it is heart-warming to see the level of sophistication and professionalism exhibited by these talented young people. It was especially gratifying for me to see a former student, Julian Lane, who had been an accomplished pianist in the second grade, now playing in the trombone section of the full band and taking (Brown and Tizol!) solos. Scheduled to play piano in the Friday concert, he is also is also proficient on saxophone.

The purpose of these concerts was to raise travel funds so that The New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra can commit to perform at a jazz festival in Europe during the summer. Last year their trip to play in the Marciac Festival in France was very successful, artistically and as a culture broadening experience.

Commendations to the musicians and to Davey Yarborough, who continues to bring out the best in his students. Through them Duke lives!

Short Sheets . . .

♫ ♫ The American Music Group Sextet performed "Influences: Billy Strayhorn" at Carnegie Hall in late January. Dennis Mitcheltree wrote on the Duke-LYM website, "If any of you made [it] I want to thank you. I hope that you dug listening to it as much as I did arranging and performing it." ♫ ♫ Book news: This year marks the centenary of Adelaide Hall's birth. Word is that a "new, definitive" book about her is on the way, while another has been commissioned. An expanded *Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD, LP, and Cassette*, the fifth edition, is scheduled for distribution in the spring. Boasting over 1,600 pages, it not only lists but also describes and, by 1 to 4 stars, rates recordings. ♫ ♫ Internet sources: The purported website for the Ellington estate is: < cmgww.com/music/ellington >. During 1999, the centennial year, Stefano Zenni produced an international Duke Ellington conference in Italy. Papers from that event are available at < metastasio.net/jazz99 >. Some have illustrative music transcriptions and sound files. ♫ ♫

Look Forward to Youth Festival in April

The annual Ellington Youth Project Festival, which culminates the academic year, will take place at the Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution, April 23-28. See our next issue for details.

Jackson Presents Webster Program

"The Man I Love: A Celebration of the Music of Ben Webster" is the title of a program by Reuben Jackson at Borders, 18th and L Streets, NW, at 7 pm on Thursday, February 15. He will play seminal recordings and video clips of the saxophonist whom critic Whitney Balliett referred to as a "huge-toned airborne marvel."

Proposed Museum Gets Appropriation

Congress has awarded \$1,000,000 as a matching grant for the construction of a National Jazz Museum in Harlem. The institution could open late this year in temporary facilities, presenting exhibits and musical events. As envisioned, the permanent museum of some 80,000 square feet of exhibition and performance space would be more than a repository of artifacts, photographs, films, recordings. Registrants at Ellington 2000 last year will recall that Peter Andrews, the museum's executive director, spoke of plans for a non-traditional institution with strong outreach and interactive features for exposure, study, and performance.

A major treasure will be the Willis Conover Collection, bequeathed by this legendary authority who brought music and information about jazz to countless listeners overseas through the Voice of America.

Fortunate Deja Vu

At the Ellington '89 Conference hosted by our Society, Ronnie Wells, Ron Ellison, and University of Maryland vocal and piano students presented an afternoon session entitled "Program of Ellington's Music." Now Ms. Wells and Mr. Elliston will be back to perform as the featured artists in our first annual benefit concert on May 5 at Grace Lutheran Church.

Hampton Donates Vibraphone

In a happy ceremony at the Smithsonian in late January, jazz great Lionel Hampton gave the institution his famous vibraphone, one that, as the *Washington Post* reported, "he had hauled, pummeled, coaxed and caressed for at least 20 years of his long career." Luckily, it was not in his apartment during the 1997 fire that destroyed most of his things. His now joins other historically valuable instruments, for example, Dizzy Gillespie's and Harry James' trumpets, Benny Goodman's clarinet, and J.J. Johnson's trombone.

Bellsons Injured in Traffic Accident

While in a crosswalk, Louie and Francine Bellson were struck by a sports utility vehicle. Mrs. Bellson sustained lacerations, abrasions, contusions, and sprains, but Louie was more unfortunate, suffering a fractured pelvis. The prognosis for each is good; however, Louie must have daily physical therapy. The good news is that he can expect to resume playing after three months. Meanwhile, he was allowed to have his drumsticks in the hospital. Get-well messages may be sent to them c/o Remo, Inc., 28101 W. Industry Drive, Valencia, CA 91355, USA. [Ed. note: *We thank Patricia Willard for reporting this news to us.*]

Virtually Peter the Promoter

In a recent posting on Andrew Homzy's Duke-LYM web site, our Peter MacHare writes:

"Snooping around ebay, I found a company that will customize an old black and white photograph of the Apollo Theatre (or other places) by inserting whatever text you request on the marquee.

"On my photograph, I requested the Marquee to read:

'Peter MacHare Presents
Duke Ellington'"

He brought a copy of the finished photo to our last meeting. Looked like an authentic period photo, too. (For the internet address of this service(?), contact Peter.)

Quotation of the Month

Why do we need to think of Ellington as another Mozart or Stravinsky? He was the first Ellington, and that is quite enough.

— David Hajdu, "Not Quite All That Jazz"

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

About Our Members

♪♪ **Helen Frazier** is home after a brief stay in the hospital and a recuperating facility, and **Norma McCray** is also back in her home after surgery. We wish them the best. ♪
 ♪ On February 18, **Esther Williams** and **Davey Yarborough** will perform at the East Coast Jazz Festival. On February 24, Davey will play with the band, and Esther (as a soloist) and **Geneva Hudson** will sing in the choir at a concert of Duke's sacred music at Peoples Congregational Church in DC. ♪♪ In 1989 a young reporter named **Bill Hasson** wrote in *JazzTimes* "A Celebration of Greatness," an extended review of our Ellington '89 conference. He is the same (still young) Bill who led the tour of Duke's Washington for our Ellington '99 and has been an active member of our Society for several years. ♪♪ **Pat Braxton** edits a publication of the World Bank/IMF Staff Jazz Society. ♪♪ **Annie Kuebler** has left her temporary digs in East Orange and taken up residence in Newark, NJ. About her work as Project Archivist of the Mary Lou Williams Collection at the Institute of Jazz Studies, she writes, "I love the job..." ♪♪

Serendipity? Luck? Divine Intervention?

In a raffle sponsored by *JazzTimes* at the International Association of Jazz Educators conference in New York, among thousands who tried, Davey Yarborough won the prize—an Essex grand piano, a new line by Steinway. Davey says that just last year he had wanted a new piano but things didn't quite work out, so he put off buying one, telling himself that it might not be the right time anyway.



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PRESENTS
DUKE ELLINGTON'S
SACRED CONCERT
FEATURING
JACQUES "SAXMAN" JOHNSON

AN ELLINGTON SIZE BAND

THE CHANCEL CHOIR
CLYDE T. PARKER

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2001
3:00 PM

PEOPLES CONGREGATIONAL UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST
4704 - 13th STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC

TICKETS PRICES:
ADULTS - \$10.00
CHILDREN - \$5.00

TICKETS WILL BE AVAILBLE JANUARY 20, 2001
CONTACT ANY CHOIR MEMBER OR
JACQUES "SAXMAN" JOHNSON (301) 509-9409

Ehrenzeller's Entertaining Evening

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

At our February meeting, Richard Ehrenzeller presented a stimulating program on the Charlie Barnet-Duke Ellington connection. Duke's ideas were the primary role models for Barnet's band, and it was fascinating to hear Charlie's variations on the music. Starting as an imitator, in time Barnet moved away from the Ducal sound patterns. His interpretations of the music changed, as Rich illustrated with two versions of the same tune, "Rockin' in Rhythm." Other interesting effects included the changed chords in "The Gal From Joe's." In the late 40s, Clark Terry got his first big break in the Barnet band as a featured soloist, becoming an Ellingtonian without even realizing it and anticipating a later chapter in his career.

Rich received a standing ovation at the end of the program for a most enjoyable evening.

To Join the Duke Ellington Society . . .

Send your check payable to The Duke Ellington Society to PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787, USA. Dues are a bargain — Renewing Member: \$30 or Couple: \$50; First-Time-Ever Member: \$20; and Student: \$5.

Note: If you have a star ☆ on your mailing label, either you have been recommended for membership by an associate or friend, or else we are reminding you to renew your membership.

Calendar

Saturday, February 3, 8 pm

Regular monthly meeting, The Duke Ellington Society, Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Sts, NW

February 14-18

10th Annual East Coast Jazz Festival, Doubletree Rockville Hotel. Benefit of the Fish Middleton Jazz Scholarship Fund.

Sunday, March 4, Noon-7 pm

Potomac River Jazz Club's "2001 Jazz Jubilee" benefit for Alzheimer's Association, Hotel Old Town, Alexandria, VA. \$25 at door, \$20 advance. Info: 202-244-6636 and <www.prtc.org >

April 23-26

Annual Duke Ellington Youth Project Festival.

Saturday, May 5, 8 pm

The Duke Ellington Society's First Annual Concert, featuring Ronnie Wells with Ron Elliston & Friends. Benefit of the Society's Youth Fund. \$15. Tickets: Patricia Braxton at 202-269-5960 or <pbraxton24@hotmail.com >

