

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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An Ellington Festival Being Planned for 2002 in Hawaii; TDES Looking Into Resuming The Annual Conferences in 2003

The Hawaii Academy for the Performing Arts will sponsor a Duke Ellington Festival in Honolulu, April 26-29. The event, coordinated by Marsha Joyner, will culminate academic year "Duke 2002" activities already under way, including an Ellington-centered multi-disciplinary curriculum, an essay contest for students, a series of student band performances and broadcasts, and a dance curriculum with *Black, Brown, and Beige* as a focus.

The Festival in April will offer an Ellington revue at Honolulu Hale, day sessions with speakers and panel discussions, films, a concert on a beach and other live music, and a reception at the Academy.

Ms. Joyner hopes to have a travel and accommodation package available. Some presenters have already been lined up; however, prospective speakers, panel leaders, and performers are encouraged to get in touch with the organizers. The Hawaiian Academy of Performing Arts is located at 1088 Bishop Street, Suite 2506, Honolulu, HI 96813; phone 808-533-3015; fax 808-524-3313; internet site < hapa2.com >. Ms. Joyner's e-mail address is < mrjoy@hawaii.rr.com >. And for an Ellington website that contains information about the Academy and Ellington (including photos, articles, biographical material, picture book, and a guest book one may sign), go to < hapa2.com/duke/ >.

TDES, New York's Ellington society, is looking into hosting a conference in 2003. In their current newsletter, TDES president David Hajdu announces that a majority of their board voted in favor of "exploring the feasibility of holding a full-scale, multi-day event in the future. We haven't done one in New York since 1993, and the consensus of the board is that we're long overdue." This projected event would be a resumption, after a 2-year hiatus, of the annual meetings that began as the International Duke Ellington

November Meeting: Ellington and Poetry

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Bill Hasson will present an evening of Ellington music and poetry at our regular meeting on November 3. The poetry will consist of lyrics to Ellington tunes as well as works by established poets. Mr. Hasson will arrange for various members of our Society to perform the readings. This will be his first presentation to the Ellington Society.

We will meet at 8 pm on Saturday, 3 November, at our usual place, Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW. Be there!

Publications Focus on Jack Towers

Two major articles about our Jack Towers have appeared recently in print. "Such a Night" the lead story in the CP Arts section of the September 21 *Washington City Paper*, is a biographical sketch that, among other things, recalls and celebrates the 60th anniversary of his and Dick Burris' recording of Duke at Fargo and his long, close friendship with Ben Webster that began that night. It also describes his meticulous labor-of-love remastering of recordings and other sound engineering feats for which he is held in such high esteem by cognoscenti. In the October *Stereophile*, in a glowing review of the CD *The Duke at Fargo 1940* (Storyville 8316/17), for which Jack worked with his original acetates to produce new masters, critic Robert Baird declares that of the several Fargo releases over the years, it is "heard here at its best yet."

Study Group Conferences, the first of which we held in 1983 and the last of which was by the Southern California Ellington Society in 2000. In November of this year, TDES, with Rutgers' Institute of Jazz Studies, will hold its third annual conference of "scholarly papers and talks on all subjects Ellingtonian..."

**Monk's Moods — Music of Thelonious Monk
by Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra**

Reviewed by Patricia Willard

Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn and Thelonious Monk perennially expressed their mutual musical admiration.

Anthony Brown is of like mind. He has succeeded his Asian American Orchestra's Grammy-nominated *Far East Suite* with a mind- and ear-expanding interpretation, *Monk's Moods--Music of Thelonious Monk*, on Keeper Records/Emusic, veteran producer Orrin Keepnews's latest label.

Arrangements are by Brown, a versatile percussionist, and by trombonist Wayne Wallace, who integrates sensuous wahwahs into the lovely "Crepuscle with Nellie." (Crepuscle has been defined as twilight and/or a dusky illumination.) Four arrangements are adaptations of Hall Overton charts by Brown and reed player Jim Norton.

Soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy guest solos on five of the ten tracks. On "Pannonica," his plaintive exploration against Yang Qin Zhao's intensely Monkish Chinese hammered dulcimer is oceans away yet a logical navigation from Charlie Rouse's earlier tenor treatment with Monk.

So fresh are the AAO's performances of some of Monkdom's best known tunes that the immediate impulse is to return to Monk's seminal recordings to hear how he did it. The comparisons are exciting.

"Evidence" and the whimsical "Little Rootie Tootie" master big band resonance. Beboppers Brown and Lacy swing hard on "Hackensack," and the intricate percussion on "Misterioso" more than validates the title.

The Asian American Orchestra is a multicultural collaboration of 13 musicians and more than 26 instruments, including two Chinese mouth organs, a Chinese viola, the dulcimer and a cajon as well as two trumpets, two flugelhorn, seven saxophones, five clarinets, tuba, bass and a battery of percussion. Certainly the music is grounded--and it floats and swirls ethereally--in its aural merit but liner notes offering the history and physical descriptions of the lesser known instruments and backgrounds of the very accomplished artists would be a welcome adjunct.

This CD demonstrates that music is indeed the wellspring of international language. Dr. Anthony Brown is one of the truly original voices in jazz.

(c) Patricia Willard 2001

Duke Ellington for Fingerstyle Guitar by Steve Hancock

Warner Bros. Publications, 2001. \$19.95

Reviewed by Jack Ladd Carr

Steve Hancock has embarked upon a fascinating musical voyage—transcribing instrumental jazz into music for the acoustical guitar. His recent CDs include transcriptions of Jelly Roll Morton stomps, Harlem piano stride and, noteworthy for us, *Duke Ellington for Solo Guitar* (DGM 2000). His new 103-page book, *Duke Ellington for Fingerstyle Guitar*, contains transcriptions of eleven Ellington classics from "Awful Sad" (1928) to "Reflections in D" (1953). Of the latter Hancock writes: "While all the other pieces are transcriptions of band recordings, 'Reflections in D' is an intimate piano solo that Ellington composed when he was 54 years old. The introspection that comes with maturity and life experiences is evident here, so you feel that Duke is inviting you into a sort of inner sanctum."

Accompanying the book is a CD of all eleven transcriptions.

Ed. note: Jack Carr and Steve Hancock both graduated from St. John's College in Annapolis, Jack in 1950 and Steve in 1970. Jack has contributed an autographed copy of Steve's new book to The Duke Ellington Society archives.

Åslund Collection Donated to a Swedish Archives

On April 27th, it was exactly five years since Benny left us and his Ellington Collection. As you may understand, I have been very uncertain about what to do with these things to which Benny devoted all his life.

I now have decided to donate the whole Collection to Svenska Visarkivets Jazzavdelning in Stockholm (The Jazz department of the Swedish Song Archives.) The head of this institution is the Senior Archivist Mr Jens Lindgren, who will catalogue the items in order to improve ease of access.

I am convinced that my decision is right. I just had to

get this carried out in my lifetime.

The post address of the archive is

Svenska Visarkivet, Jazzavdelningen

Norr tullsgatan 6

Box 163 26

SE-103 26, Stockholm

Sweden.

Birgit Åslund

Ed. note: Åslund has frequently been Anglicized as Aasland. This excerpt is reprinted courtesy DEMS Bulletin, August-November 2001.

Short Sheets . . .

Bargain Books: Daedalus Books has paperback copies of Mark Tucker's *The Duke Ellington Reader* at \$6.95. And, at its website Scarecrow Press has offered Timmer's *Ellingtonia* for half price and Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* at a discount. ♪ ♪

Ellington and Strayhorn Music at Lincoln Center: On the calendar of Jazz at Lincoln Center: "Nutcracker Swing" with the NY Philharmonic and the LCJO, on Wednesday, December 19; 7th Annual Essentially Ellington High School Jazz Band Competition and Festival and Concert with LCJO and top three finalists in the competition, on Sunday and Monday, May 12-13. ♪ ♪

New Strayhorn Book: By now a new songbook, *Billy Strayhorn: An American Master*, which contains 17 titles, should be in stores. ♪ ♪

"Previously Unreleased" CDs: *Duke Ellington, Volumes I: Live 1953-1954* and *Volume II: Private Collection 1953-1954* have been released by J-Bird. They have been advertised as "stockpile" recordings discovered by his grandson, Paul Ellington. Most are well known, but two tracks on the second volume include, according to an Indianapolis *Star News* reviewer, an "unknown guitarist . . . remarkably like Wes Montgomery, which would be a historic collaboration." ♪ ♪

Smithsonian Designates April As Jazz Appreciation Month

Beginning in April of next year, the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution will launch an annual Jazz Appreciation Month. In addition to its own programs, the Institution will encourage and cooperate with other groups and organizations in celebration of this vital art form.

Among those already identified as collaborators or partners in the initiative are National Public Radio, International Association of Jazz Educators, the Grammy Foundation, and the ASCAP Foundation.

Also in the works is an internet site devoted to jazz, < SmithsonianJazz.org >.

Oops! Oops! Oops!

We erred not once, not twice, but thrice in the same item in our last issue about Davie Yarborough attending a special summer arts institute for secondary school students. First of all, the program was at Philips Academy in Andover, MA—not at Dartmouth College and not in Hanover, NH. Further, the sketch of her we included was not a self-portrait, but was done by a local caricaturist while she was traveling in France with the Ellington School of the Arts' student orchestra, The New Washingtonians, there to perform in a music festival.

Ed Notes: (1) Notice how convenient it is to hide shamefacedly behind the editorial "we." (2) Wanted, copy editor; splendid opportunity for immediate advancement.

Committee Prepares Slate For 2002 Officers and Board

At our October meeting, the Nominating Committee presented a list of members who have agreed to having their names submitted as candidates for the Society's officers and board for the year 2002. They are: President, Peter MacHare; Vice-president, Ted Hudson; Treasurer, Ben Pubols (with Francis Arnold as Treasurer understudy); Secretary, open; and for the Board, Mac Grimmer, Ted Shell, Patricia Braxton, Luvenia George, Bill Hasson, Joseph McMillan, and Olivia McMillan. In keeping with parliamentary procedure, at the election in November, additional nominations may be made from the floor.

Absentee Voting

Out-of-the-area members and those who otherwise will be unable to attend the November meeting can obtain mail-in ballots or proxy forms. Requests may be sent to our PO Box, or e-mailed to < thudson@aol.com >, or made by phone at 301-585-9204.

Anecdote of the Month

When Duke had a tenor vacancy, and a chance to add the flute color for the first time, he hired Tony [Scott] who opened with the band at the Apollo Theater [February 1953]. Another great clarinetist with the band, Jimmy Hamilton, along with Charlie Mingus and a few others, did their best to make him uncomfortable. Duke kept reassuring him, but one day Tony provoked Mingus who was making racial remarks. "Look Mingus," Tony said, "my skin is darker than yours. I'm Sicilian and I have more African blood than you do." Mingus was a big strong guy with a violent temper. He tried to strangle Tony and might have succeeded, if Clark Terry hadn't jumped in and saved him. When the Apollo month was finished, Tony quit the band regretfully, because he worshiped Duke, but unfortunately, he never recorded with the band.

- We thank Bob Reny for sending this excerpt from "Tony Scott: Some Reminiscences of a Best Friend" by Bill Simon in *IAJRC Journal*, summer of 1998.

Washington Tribune, May 24, 1919

Courtesy Tailgate Ramblings

Come out Decoration Day with

The Victory Club

BIG MATINEE AND RECEPTION

at ODD FELLOWS HALL, 1606 M Street, Northwest
Friday Afternoon and Evening, May 30, 1919

Duke Ellington's Jazz Matinee—3.45 to 7.45 P. M.
Admission 30 Cents

Doc. Perry's Section of Capital City Club at Night,
8.30 to 1.30 A. M.
Night Admission 50 Cents

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

About Our Members

John Hornsby and several other members of the Toronto Ellington Society presented "The Duke in Words and Music" at the Rotary Club there in July. ♪ ♪

Morris Hodara reported via its newsletter and DUKELYM that apparently no members of TDES were victims of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. Their post office box is in the building next to the Center, which is closed for the time being. Meanwhile, TDES mail may be directed to his attention at 30-20 Parson Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354. ♪ ♪

Janna Steed continues to recover from her surgery. She has medical approval to keep a commitment to speak at the Conference on Jazz and the Church at the Presbyterian conference center in Stony Point, NY in early October. ♪ ♪

Dick Spottswood's and **Rusty Hassan's** respective radio shows on WAMU-FM and WPFW-FM continue to inform and entertain. While Rusty's spotlights jazz, Dick's features blues and bluegrass as well. ♪ ♪

At a recent meeting of The Listeners, in an admirably scholarly and delivered manner, **Joseph "Tex" Gathings** spoke on the rise and demise of big dance bands. Beginning with the simple transposing of UM-pah rhythms to um-PAH, he traced the history of dancing in the Americas through early personal and communal expressions, ragtime, Lindy hopping, and the current resurrection of what is called hand dancing. All along, he spoke of how the confluences of dance fashions, social mores, music personalities, and music-world economics have influenced music and musicians and vice versa. ♪ ♪

For the Word Bank/IMF Staff Society, **Pat Braxton** sends out by e-mail a comprehensive jazz calendar for the Washington area. ♪ ♪

To Join the Duke Ellington Society for 2002

Send your check payable to The Duke Ellington Society at PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787, USA. Dues remain a bargain—Renewing Member: \$30; Renewing Couple: \$50; First-Time-Ever Member: \$20; Student: \$5. Note: If you have a star ☆ on your mailing label, you are being invited by an associate or friend to become a member.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

President	Theodore R. Hudson
President Emeritus	Theodore A. Shell
Vice President and Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Secretary	Angela Grimmer
Program Coordinators	Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare
At-Large Board Members	
Patricia Braxton	John Dennis
Luvia George	Mac Grimmer
Peter MacHare	Theodore A. Shell
Jack Towers	

A Memorable Tribute to Herb Jeffries

In a creatively conceived, multi-media program at our October meeting, Ben Pubols treated us to the talents and personnas of Herb Jeffries. He started with the Jeffries who is most familiar to us by playing several transcriptions of the Herb the vocalist on "Flamingo," "I Hear a Rhapsody," and two versions of "Jump for Joy," the second of which being a rare recording of a live performance in Hollywood in 1941 over KFI, with Ivie Anderson, Joe Turner, Jump for Joy Choir, and Duke on piano.

Then it was time for little known biographical facts about Jeffries, by way of a 1995 interview by Terry Gross over Philadelphia's radio station WHYI, during which he spoke of, among other things, his mixed heritage ("mongrel" he called it), how by prescience and persistence he introduced all-"colored" westerns to a ready audience, and how his famous recording of "Flamingo" with the Ellington orchestra and arranged by Strayhorn came about. "Most people come into this world by stork. I came by 'Flamingo,' and Duke Ellington delivered me," Ben quoted him. Then it was time for an ABC television news clip of the Bronze Buckaroo being honored in 1990 at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage. (Incidentally, Ben and Lillian Pubols' daughter, Louise, is the historian there.)

After announcements and refreshments, Ben showed us Herbert Jeffrey (yep, that's how it was spelled) the actor-cowboy in the vintage movie *The Bronze Buckaroo*, nowadays highly entertaining because of its Western movie conventions/cliches of plot and characterization. The evening closed reluctantly but happily for us with songs by the phoenix Buckaroo on a CD recorded in 1995, "I'm a Happy Cowboy," "Cow Cow Boogie," and "Back in the Saddle Again." We thank Ben Pubols for a delightful evening!

Jack the Bear

For our April 2001 issue, Bill Flemmons contributed a history and definition of "unbooted," a hipster idiom. We continue with another excerpt from a manuscript he has shared with us about such terms:

There was a hip craze going on among the teenagers and by a sartorial matter came another standard by which one could tell the hip person from a square. . . .

"Who was Jack the Bear?" Ralph Ellison, author of *Invisible Man* rhetorically asked. All hipsters knew who he was. Come on, you hip Ellingtonians. No! You know darn well he wasn't Jimmy Blanton. Don't over-see and over-shoot the target as did the media. . . . [I]n the forties, Jack the Bear was one who was making big tracks and getting nowhere. Jack the Bear was the country boy so anxious to be hip that he over did it. He cut the strips from the bottom of the pants' legs and inserted them in the knee sections, which made his pants bloom far out at the knees and constrict narrowly above the top of his shoes. . . . He entertained and mesmerized the public. The public could see nothing but him when they turned their attention toward jazz music and its relatives, the hipsters.