

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Greetings from Our New President, Peter MacHare

Much to my delight, I have been elected the sixth President of The Duke Ellington Society.

I have been an Ellington fan since my second year of high school (1970) and a member of The Duke Ellington Society since 1995. My daughter, Erica, who is the youngest member of our Society and has been with us since Kindergarten, has just turned nine. I have done a number of programs at our monthly meetings and a presentation at Ellington '99 on "Ellington and the Classics." The only time I saw Duke in concert I managed to sneak backstage and talk to Harry Carney.

I am webmaster for "A Duke Ellington Panorama" at <http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/2660/ell/> which advertises our monthly meetings and contains information about Ellington's recordings. Besides Duke, I am crazy about Louis Armstrong, J.S. Bach, Count Basie, Johnny Cash, Johnny Hartman, Billie Holiday, Howlin' Wolf, Janis Joplin, Julie London, The Rolling Stones, Big Joe Turner, Frank Zappa, and many others.

By the light of day, I am the Law Librarian at the US Department of Agriculture. During the school year, I also teach evening classes in legal research at the USDA Graduate School. I spend as much of my spare time as I can in my basement music room.

We have many knowledgeable and enthusiastic members. My goal as President is to facilitate our sharing and enjoyment of the glories of Ellington's music among ourselves and with others. More specifically, I'd like to (1) increase our membership, (2) better involve our out-of-town members, and (3) make our monthly meetings even more lively and enjoyable. I encourage you all to get in touch with me with any ideas you may have. My telephone is 301-982-4249, but am most easily reached via email at spmachare@yahoo.com or regular mail at 7330 Edmonston Rd, College Park, MD 20740-3018.

Now let's have some fun.

Annual Holiday Party on January 5

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Get ready for one last party to close the holiday season. The Ellington Society will have its annual winter fling at the Party Room of the Park Sutton Condominium on the 5th of January.

Each member is encouraged to bring a food contribution for the buffet, and may bring guests to join in the celebration. This promises to be a great evening of camaraderie, merriment, mouth-watering food, fun, and, of course, great music.

The address of the **Park Sutton Condominium is 1900 Lyttonsville Road, (at the corner of 16th Street) in Silver Spring.** Festivities will begin at **8 pm, Saturday, January 5** — the beginning of another year of Ellingtonia!

Directions:

The Park Sutton Condominium is about ½ mile from DC and from the Beltway. 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 Avenue meet). As you continue, you will see on your right the Spring Shopping Center. Lyttonsville Road will be the next street on your left.

From 495 (the Beltway)

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

Get Your Membership In Now

In you haven't already joined, use the enclosed form and send in your dues for 2002 right away. If you have already done so, encourage a prospective member to use it, or use it for a gift membership for a friend.

The King of All, Sir Duke: Ellington and the Artistic Revolution by Peter Lavezzoli

New York and London: Continuum, 2001. 207 p. \$26.95.

Reviewed by Peter MacHare

Peter Lavezzoli, who was only around five years old when Duke Ellington died, has given us a satisfying sketch of Ellington's influence on the world of music in the last quarter century. Lavezzoli states that he "especially wanted to communicate to people [his] age and younger, about who Duke Ellington is and what he represents."

The title of the book derives from Stevie Wonder's tribute to Ellington, "Sir Duke," and indeed there are chapters devoted to Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Sly Stone, Prince, Frank Zappa, Ravi Shankar, and ...well, you get the idea. This book might well be the perfect gift for a young person who loves music but has not yet discovered the glories of Ellington.

A few of the chapters consist of interviews with the likes of Butch Ballard, Morris Hodara, Jerry Valburn, and Luther Henderson. These chapters are especially informative and enjoyable. Ballard, for example, talks about how his drumming style differs from that of Louis Bellson and Rufus Jones. Henderson talks about his arranging projects with Ellington and his childhood friendship with Mercer Ellington. Lastly, several of our members are mentioned in the acknowledgments: Jack Towers, Maurice Lawrence, Ann Kuebler, and Morris Hodara.

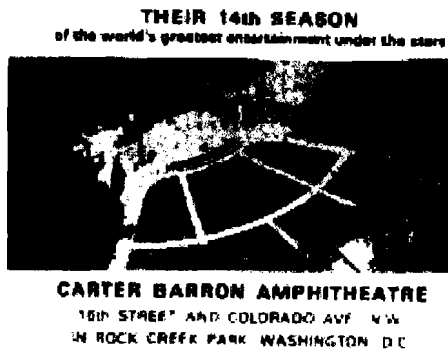
Notes on Granz and Ellington

Obituaries of recently deceased Norman Granz rightfully testify about such things as the impact he had as an impresario who mainly through his Jazz at the Philharmonic series broadened the appeal of jazz in concert settings and about his establishing of such labels as Norgran, Verve, and Pablo. Further they point out that the esteem in which musicians are held was elevated by Granz by the manner in which he regarded and promoted—and paid—those whom he employed and by the manner in which he represented those whom he managed. As his refusal to accept bookings that would involve discrimination of his musicians exemplifies, these accounts also stress his practiced insistence on the dignity and respect musicians deserved as artists and, more important, as human beings.

In an oral history interview conducted by Patricia Willard for the Smithsonian's Ellington Collection, Granz says that he felt closer to Duke's music than to Duke the person. In the late 1940s when Duke's band was not doing so well at the box office, Granz approached him about giving up his band and touring with him, which would give Duke more time to write, but, as we know, the offer was to no avail. He understood, conceding that the band was necessary for Duke to hear what he wrote. As to the instances when he did have a professional relationship with Duke, Granz described it as easy rather than formally contractual. According to Duke in *Music Is My Mistress*, "Norman Granz is one of those guys I have spoken of as encountering at the various intersections of my road through life . . . The representation he gave me was great. . . . Although he was acting in effect as my manager, he never took a percentage or fee."

It is often noted that Duke wrote for specific musicians; however, Granz contended that Ellington's music could stand on its own; citing as an example "Come Sunday" having been written for Hodges, but still a great work when performed by others. By way of his concerts and recording companies, Granz gave Ellington sidemen Hodges, Smith, Gonsalves, Webster, Carney, Brown, and others opportunities to be heard in other contexts. In his opinion, Hodges best represented what Duke wanted to say musically but that there was only one indispensable person in the orchestra, and that was Duke.

In the interview cited above, Granz claims that to the very end, Duke made sure that he left behind nothing that let people know the real Duke Ellington, claiming that in doing so "Duke missed his last act."



Monday, July 3

Sunday, July 9

1947

1 Shows Only



Were You There? Tell Us About It!

Short Sheets . . .

Search for Cootie Williams Heirs In a recent letter, Karl Knudsen writes, “. . . I hope you may be able to help me trace the heirs of Cootie Williams as I have some records I want to release legally.” He may be contacted at Storyville, Dortheavej 39, DK-2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark; e-mail <storyvil@post8.tele.dk >. ♪ ♪

Michael Kilpatrick We were delighted to have among guests at our November meeting, Michael Kilpatrick, from the United Kingdom, who had been in the area for a couple of weeks, primarily to do research at the Smithsonian. ♪ ♪

Internet Riches The worldwide web continues to be a wonderful source of material on Strayhorn and Ellington. For instance, Andrew Homzy on his Duke-LYM site calls attention to <66.80.42.119/gate> for Ellington photos and to <thejukejoint.com/jukejoint/ahjamatage14> for a reproduction of the Westinghouse High School 1943-44 year-book signed by the entire band directed by Carl McVicker, who was Billy Strayhorn’s teacher there. ♪ ♪

Good News about Clark Terry Reports are that Clark Terry’s surgery at Sloan Kettering in NYC was successful. In another posting on the Duke-LYM internet site, George Avakian writes, “I saw Clark Terry on Wednesday (feisty as ever, and insisting that he wanted to go home that night!), and he was discharged from the hospital yesterday [23 November]. He looked good, and although he still has a way to go on the path to recovery, my money’s on him—and his wife, Gwen, who is a gem.” ♪ ♪

Dept. of Bet You Knew, Didn’t You George Avakian confirms that *Duke Ellington at the Bal Masque* is not a live performance. The audience effects and Duke’s script on the back of the LP are both afterthoughts. ♪ ♪

Hot Rotterdam In his biography of Ben Webster, J. de Valk points out that the following streets are in the Netherlands city of Rotterdam: Fats Wallerstraat, Art Tatumstraat, Coleman Hawkinspad, and – *tah dah* - Ben Websterstraat and Duke Ellingstonstraat. ♪ ♪

Did You Know?

by Patricia Braxton

The Westminster Church located at 400 I Street, SW, DC, offers jazz every Friday night from 6 to 9 pm. Admission is \$5. Many of the area’s best jazz musicians perform to an enthusiastic audience. Additionally, the Church serves dinners in the basement for a nominal fee. Rev. Brian and Rev. Ruth of the church say, “Jazz Night represents our commitment to real community and joy; we work to share it together for the benefit of all. Our gathering has been blessed by the talents of wonderful musicians and the inspiration received by those of us who are touched by their gifts. Spread the word—this brings us all much joy!”

✍ We Get Mail

November 4, 01
Sunday

Dear . . . Ellington Chapter Members,

We want to thank you very much for the Surprise Birthday Party at the meeting last evening [November 3]. And I do mean SURPRISE!!

Jack surely appreciated the fine comments . . . [wondering], “Why should they say such nice things!” Then here comes this beautiful cake decorated with the birthday tribute. . . .

If I had known about the surprise I surely would have brought my camera—but that would have tipped him off, wouldn’t it.

Thank you and love,
Jack and Rhoda

Dear Editor,

Thank you for announcing my upcoming book on Billy Strayhorn in *Ellingtonia*, Vol IX, Number 9. On the same page you ask your readers to celebrate Strayhorn’s birthday on November 25. My book will clearly fill a void: Billy Strayhorn was born on November 29, 1915. I hope your readership will play his music on that day too, as well as on all other days of the year.

Cordially,
Walter van de Leur

Ed. note: Thanks, Walter, for noting our typo-clinker. The book is Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). ISBN 0-19-512448-0.

Smithsonian Gets Pubols Items

Ben Pubols recently donated to the Archives Center of the Smithsonian materials from the “Pubols Jazz Collection.” Among them are concert programs, several of which are from Norman Granz’ Jazz at the Philharmonic series that Ben attended, including the 13th national tour featuring Ellington alumni Willie Smith and Ben Webster. (We thought that that was Ben we heard on the LP clapping and whistling and yelling and stomping his feet and carrying on.) Another program is for a 1953 Benny Goodman and Louis Armstrong concert in which Barney Bigard performed. And there’s even a Bop City menu, c. 1950s, replete with a listing of kiddies’ delectables.

For Stimulating News, Views, and a Great Ellington/Strayhorn Database

Regularly check our Prexy, Peter MacHare’s

Duke Ellington Panorama

at:

<geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/2660/>

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

About Our Members

Jack Towers

A major article, "For the Record: The Duke Was Here, November 7, 1940" by Martin Fredericks, complete with rare photographs, some by Jack himself, appears in *NDSUmagine*. The reference, of course, is to the historic Fargo concert that Jack and his buddy Dick Burris recorded. ♪ ♪

Teddy Hudson and Ben Pubols

At a staff ceremony in December, Teddy, for 12 years, and Ben, for 8 years, were presented Service Award pins for their work as Behind-the-Scenes Volunteers in the Archives Center, NMAH, repository of the Ellington and related collections. ♪ ♪

Yvonne Condell

Back in November 2000 we wrote of the 70-foot photograph of Yvonne Condell that graced the AARP headquarters building in Washington, DC and that concomitantly appeared in numerous publications. Well, it still goes on, appearing since then in, among others, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *Ebony*, and *US News and World Report*. ♪ ♪

Bill Hill

William "Bill" Fawcett Hill was responsible for the November meeting program of the Southern California Duke Ellington Society. ♪ ♪

Dave Yarborough

Dave Yarborough will present members of his Saxophone Study of the Ellington School of the Arts in a concert on December 14 at Peoples Congregational Church at 7 pm. Admission is free. ♪ ♪

Annie Kuebler

Happy news: Annie Kuebler is Granny Annie again. This heir to the family legacy is Kenneth, born 29 November, who joins his "big" sister "Maddie" as the second of Annie's daughter Blanche Ryder and her hubby. ♪ ♪

Since Our Last Issue . . .

We have heard nothing further about the Duke Ellington Festival in Hawaii in April. We will keep you informed.

**Smithsonian Highlights:
Duke's Travels, Benny Carter Collection**
by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Two separate programs were featured in our annual December visit to the Smithsonian Archives Center. The first was by Reuben Jackson on Duke's song titles associated with place names, and the second, by Scott Schwartz, presented a few highlights of the Smithsonian's new Benny Carter Collection.

Reuben, a longtime aficionado of Ellingtonia, made the observation that he is continually amazed at how such an iconoclast as Ellington was quickly transformed into and is now perceived as a deity. Many of his travel-inspired song titles and tunes were more or less tongue-in-cheek, and Reuben played several to illustrate his point — "Rock City Rock," "Suburban Beauty," "Sunset and the Mocking Bird," and "Sugar Hill Penthouse."

During intermission (and refreshments), we were able to view some of the new Benny Carter collection, recently acquired by the Smithsonian. Scott Schwartz then treated us to a multimedia presentation of some of the Carter material, a slide show coordinated with a 1992 interview. After the presentation we had a further treat; Scott phoned Benny in California, and we were able to wish him a happy holiday. After the exchange of greetings, someone asked Benny if he remembered making a record with Billy Eckstine, and what did he think of him? Benny answered, "I can't sum up anyone as important as Billy Eckstine in just a sound bite. It's impossible." To a similar question about Dizzy Gillespie, he said, "What could I possibly tell you about Dizzy Gillespie that everyone doesn't already know?" Before closing, Benny suggested that "everyone take a few moments to remember and think about Norman Granz," an indication of how deeply Carter feels about Granz, who had died the week before. Granz was not only an important figure in the history of jazz, but also was a pioneer in the civil rights movement, particularly as it affected jazz musicians.

Thanks again to Archives chief John Fleckner; presenters Scott Schwartz and Reuben Jackson; Mimi Minnick, who served graciously as hostess; Deborra Richardson, who had to be away at a conference; staff member Frank Robinson; and interns Jenifer Snyder and Nic Netzel for a fascinating evening. Just another routine night at the Smithsonian.

Ubiquitous Duke and Billy

Within the Smithsonian's Archives in the National Museum of American History is a vast and varied De Vincent Collection of Illustrated American Sheet Music, organized into hundreds of topics. In the series captioned "African-American Music" is instrumental and vocal music by Ellington. A few William Thomas "Billy" Strayhorn compositions are also in the DeVincent holdings. The collection has as well an ephemera file on Duke.

