

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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First Student Fund Awards Made At Annual Ellington Youth Festival

Thomas L. Williams, a visual art student at Anacostia High School, and Benjamin Williams, a graduating music major at the Ellington School of the Arts, are the first recipients of our Student Fund awards, presented at the Annual Duke Ellington Youth Project Festival on April 26 at the Smithsonian. Our Patricia Braxton conceived and worked efficiently and selflessly last spring to produce the concert by Ronnie Wells and Friends that raised the money to establish this Student Fund. Unfortunately, because of a demanding seasonal work schedule, she could not be there to see the first results of her idea and efforts.

At the ceremony Peter MacHare, our president, presented certificates for \$500 each to Benjamin and Thomas, both of whom received standing ovations for achievement and potential in their respective fields. During the evening's program, Benjamin performed on string bass with a small ensemble and a full orchestra. Thomas' art was exhibited at the Art Gallery at Eastern Market in connection with the Festival. Their selection from an impressive pool of deserving students had been coordinated by another of our members, Luvenia George, who serves as Director of the Ellington Youth Project.

The Festival events, for which Duke's grandchildren Edward and Gaye Ellington served as honorary chairs, showcased an array of promising, already accomplished poets, instrumentalists, dancers, and vocalists.

We heartily congratulate Benjamin and Thomas and wish them well as they continue their studies and further develop their creative talents.

☆ To Join The Duke Ellington Society ☆

If you see two ☆☆ stars on your mailing label, it means we invite you to join us. Just send your dues to:

The Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787, US. Membership's a bargain:

First-Time-Ever Member, \$20; Student, \$5

If your membership lapsed, we miss you—come back!

Renewing Member, \$30 Renewing Couple, \$50

June Program: Jazz Videos and Flea Market

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Our last regular meeting of the season will feature two very different events. During the first half, Ben Pubols will present a program of jazz video. Ben will have video of Ellington and of other musicians as well, so you will be sure to see something new.

The second half of our meeting will be our first-ever Flea Market. Members are encouraged to bring surplus albums (CDs, cassettes, or vinyl) and other music-related items to sell at reasonable prices. If you bring items to sell, please tag them with your name and the price. This is a good way to part with duplicates and acquire new materials. Ellington Society items such as mugs, stamps, CDs, and tote bags will also be for sale. The Flea Market will be a good opportunity for members to socialize before we break for the summer.

We want to see you all at 8 pm on Saturday, June 1, at our regular meeting place, Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Sts, NW. Don't be square.

DEMS Bulletin Going Online

In the latest *DEMS Bulletin*, Sjef Hoefsmit announces that "In order to reach more Ellington collectors in the world and to make it easier and less expensive for those who prefer the Internet to a printed Bulletin, we decided to accept gratefully Peter MacHare's offer to publish the *Bulletins* on his web-site, 'A Duke Ellington Panorama,'" at < depanorama.net >. Sjef intends to continue sending printed copies until such time as just about everybody has internet capabilities, and printing and mailing the publication is not feasible.

The notice continues, "We sincerely hope (and we will support this wholeheartedly) that when that time comes, there will be others who will take over the preparation of the *Bulletins* and they can with support of many Ellington collectors in the world concentrate on continuing Benny Aasland's 1979 initiative as long as there are questions to be asked, answers to be given, and important news to be circulated."

Concert of Billy Strayhorn Music a Delight

by Theodore R. Hudson

An overflow audience thoroughly enjoyed an orchestra of polished, visibly enthusiastic musicians playing music they thoroughly enjoy at a concert sponsored by TDES at St. Peter's Church in New York City on April 27. The attraction: music by Billy Strayhorn, and more specifically, recently unearthed music by him. Our member (now *Dr.*) Walter van de Leur, who made the discoveries in Strayhorn estate and Smithsonian music manuscript holdings during the ten years or so he spent researching for his recent book, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*, prepared charts and came over from The Netherlands for the event. The 15-piece "Billy Strayhorn Orchestra" was organized and led by Michael Hashim, who has made Strayhorn CDs. In this performance Hashim preferred to sit in the reed section, count off the tempo, and play lead alto while Walter conducted and provided running commentary. Attendees included Greg Morris, who spoke during the introductions, and other Strayhorn family members, Duke Ellington's granddaughter Mercedes, the culturally curious, and, of course, Strayhorn and Ellington aficionados.

The concert provided the first opportunity for an American audience to hear live "Swing Dance" and "Flame Indigo." The first, a vehicle for dancers, is from an annual Copasetics show, a group to which Strayhorn belonged and for whose productions he wrote music. Two other renditions were world premieres, "Hipper Bug," from 1942, and "Tiffany," a rouser that belied its title and gave several instrumentalists a chance to blow hot. A first, in a sense, was a vocal solo by Darius de Hass of "Pretty Girl," a song that became the wordless "Star-Crossed Lovers" in *Such Sweet Thunder* and a vehicle for Johnny Hodges. "Chelsea Bridge" was also a first in that the audience heard Strayhorn's four-minute-plus original composition, which had been shortened for its debut as a 78-rpm recording by Duke Ellington. For this rendition former Ellington sideman Art Baron played a piston trombone, *à la* Juan Tizol. The evening's offerings included as well non-Ellington/Strayhorn compositions arranged by Strayhorn, "I'll Buy That Dream" and "The Man I Love." A discovery that has been heard for several years and available on recordings was "Bagatelle," this one featuring Hashim on alto sax. Among Strayhorn standards on the program were "Midriff," "Absinthe," "Tonk," and "All Day Long," a number that Hashim's drummer, Steve Little, had recorded with the Ellington orchestra back in 1967 when he was its drummer.

TDES is to be thanked and applauded for producing this remarkable concert. Hashim's band and its soloists were absolutely first-rate and inspired. Above all, the music was Strayhorn-gorgeous!

Not a Secret Anymore

Secret Ellington: Previously Unrecorded Compositions by Duke Ellington (True Life Entertainment TLE 100002)

Reviewed by Peter MacHare

In 1958, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, with lyricist Herb Martin, wrote 22 songs for a Broadway show, *Saturday Laughter*, that was never produced. Here we have 12 of these songs (two songs are presented in alternate settings). *Saturday Laughter* was to be a musical set in South Africa. The main character, Xuma, leaves the country for the city and encounters apartheid for the first time. Though the story was compelling, Ellington had been frustrated before by the inability of producers to get the shows...well...produced. Ellington told musical director Abba Bogin, "If the show gets produced, I'll try to stop in and see what you did." With that vote of confidence, Ellington promptly took Strayhorn and the Orchestra on a tour of Europe. The songs from *Saturday Laughter* were eventually premiered in April 2000 at a concert sponsored by the New York TDES.

Secret Ellington presents these works in contemporary jazz settings featuring some of the best new vocalists and musicians working today. If you are like me, your knowledge of post-Ellington music isn't what it should be. This album offers the opportunity to do a little catching up with quite a few people on the current jazz scene, among them Eric Alexander, Joe Lovano, and Grover Washington, Jr. Yet, I thought the vocal highlights both came from Freddy Cole, Nat's younger brother, who has certainly been around a long time.

It would be illuminating to hear these songs in a "pop" rather than a jazz setting since that is how you would have expected to hear them on Broadway. A few of the songs are presented as instrumentals, yet I assume that all of them have words. Lastly, I want to hear all of them, not just 12. After all, 22 songs easily fit on a compact disc. So, I hope there is more *Saturday Laughter* yet to come.

We Are Kings!

Reflections Upon (Nearly) Six Months As President of the Duke Ellington Society, by Peter MacHare

Did it ever occur to you that we are kings? (Ladies, please bear with me on this.) Louis XIV of France, the Sun King, was certainly one of the grandest, most powerful monarchs ever to live. Yet each of us can command more riches than Louis XIV. At any time day or night, we can summon the world's greatest musicians into our homes to play music of the world's greatest composers.

I've heard historians say that the 20th Century was the American Century. Usually they refer to economic or military power. But when I read about the great civilizations of the past, historians stress the artistic and intellectual contributions of a civilization far more than its gross national product. I've always thought that something wonderful happened in the United States during the middle half of the 20th Century—wonderful music in great abundance. Not only did we develop the jazz of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, but rhythm 'n blues, country music, rock 'n roll, blues and the pop singing of the Great American Songbook. Needless to say, Duke Ellington is an important part of the richness of this music.

Our success in promoting the music of Duke Ellington and His Orchestra depends upon all of us, not just those who are officers in The Ellington Society. We have done some fantastic things of late. It was my pleasure to present two Ellington Society scholarships to DC high school students. We have two members to thank,

(Continued on page 4 under "We Are Kings!")

Short Sheets . . .

Kudos for the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden
 Congratulations are in order for the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden for a continuing fine program of activities spearheaded by Göran Wallén. Its very attractive quarterly *Bulletin* regularly contains well-researched and written articles in English as well as in Swedish. For information, contact Göran at Skogstorpsvägen 39, 191 39 Sollentuna, Sweden or by e-mail at goran.wallén@telia.com.

Ellington Festival in Hawaii

As we prepare this issue, we have received no news about the Duke Ellington Festival in Honolulu in late April. Some *Ellingtonia* buffs planned to attend, forming somewhat a caucus of persons who have attended the Annual Study Group Conferences. In a *Mellotone*, the Southern California DES' publication, reported that though the meeting "is still in flux as far as international programming is concerned A number of Ellingtonians are going regardless and they are coalescing around David Palmquist," the David in Delta who frequently posts on Duke-LYM.

Hopefully a Sign of Things to Come

DreamWorks Music has issued a promotional CD of Billy Strayhorn music. We eagerly look forward to commercial releases of his music.

Geneva Perry Lovingly Remembered

In keeping with her instructions, there was no funeral service for our member Geneva Perry, whose death we reported in our last issue. But a tribute was another matter in the minds and hearts of friends who, led by her dear friend and college classmate Frances Henry, gathered to pay cheerful and grateful tribute to her at the Sumner School Museum in Washington, DC on April 19.

Among those who spoke was Bill Hasson, on behalf of our Society; he had worked with her on governmental and civic projects. In turn, he called on Ted Hudson to add a few remarks. Others represented the LeDroit Park neighborhood where she lived, the League of Women Voters, and Third Church of Christ Scientist.

Friends and associates who made remarks included her caregiver, Sheryl Northern Braswell; a classmate from Geneva's Virginia State College days (she and Billy Taylor were there at the same time); and Ms. Henry, who recalled how she was so awed by the likes of student musicians such as Geneva and Billy Taylor that she decided to major in English rather than music. Constant themes in the tributes were Geneva's indomitable spirit, sense of civic responsibility and leadership, unstinting helpfulness, sense of humor, and love.



Check Out Our Web Site

at

depanorama.net/desociety/

New CDs Offer "Firsts"

Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington enthusiasts on the lookout for previously unreleased music are in for a treat.

The Dutch Jazz Orchestra Plays the Music of Billy Strayhorn (CHR 70106), Challenge's four-CD set of rare and previously unrecorded Strayhorn music is now available outside of Europe. In a review in *DEMS Bulletin*, Sjef Hoefsmit writes, "These four Challenge CDs are a must for every serious Ellington collector. They offer a wealth of gorgeous Billy Strayhorn themes. You have only to listen to 'Valse' to understand why Ellington was immediately impressed by Billy's great talent when they met for the first time. The presentation of the four CDs in one set is impeccable. I give this set the highest possible recommendation."

As to getting obtaining this set, Walter van de Leur recently posted on Duke-LYM the following: "Surf to www.challenge.nl, click on the logo, and click on the picture of the 4-CD set, which is their tip of the month. You come to a rather clumsy order screen, where you can order the set for Euro 61.02, which is about US\$55." In a follow-up, a satisfied customer said it worked. To contact the producer by snail-mail, one may write to Challenge Records, Noorderweg 68, 1221 AB Hilversum, The Netherlands.

Late May is the proposed release date by Blue Note of the first commercially available *Duke Ellington 1969: All-Star White House Tribute*, recorded there at the celebration of his 70th birthday, with performances by Clark Terry, Earl Hines, Dave Brubeck, Milt Hinton, and other luminaries.

RCA plans a June issue of a three-CD set, *Duke Ellington: Live and Rare*. It will include later-years music: some 1969-era music previously available on Readers Digest LPs; reissues of *The Duke and Tanglewood* and *Eastbourne Performance*, which many enthusiasts will already have on LPs; and, importantly, some previously unreleased performances. We have read that Bob O'Meally will write the notes for this RCA set.

Edward and Gaye Ellington Collection a "Generous Act"

To obviate misunderstandings, Annie Kuebler recently posted on the Duke-LYM website: "I do not want the fact to get lost that the Smithsonian did not purchase [the Edward and Gaye Ellington Collection]. This extremely valuable collection comprising scores of high research interest was a DONATION from Ellington's grandchildren. Duke physically presented the manuscripts to them over a period of time with no restrictions on their eventual resting place. In today's market, they could have auctioned them off one by one on ebay for a small fortune or shopped them around to the highest bidder. Instead they chose to place them with their grandfather's other music to build on his legacy—for the research community. . . . A generous act in a greedy world."

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

About Our Members

David Fleming

Having edited *Blue Light* since its inception in 1994, Dave Fleming is stepping down, but will remain active as associate editor. New editor Billy Bailey writes, "David will be a very hard act to follow. His deep knowledge and love of Ellingtonia, his felicitous use of the English language and his painstaking research are his trademarks. . . . I am sure that all members will join me in thanking David for all that he has done to date, and for the fact that [the Duke Ellington Society, United Kingdom] and *Blue Light* are so well regarded."

Harvey Cohen

We heard that Harvey Cohen (whom we have not caught up with) finished his dissertation on Ellington, passed his oral defense of it, and was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree in history from the University of Maryland this spring.

Jerry Valburn

Whether the weather knows it or not, Spring is here! The irrefutable evidence is this: Jerry Valburn has made his annual migration from Florida to Massachusetts.

Janna Steed

We are happy to hear that The Reverend Janna Steed has sufficiently recovered from surgery last year to resume preaching and is again accepting speaking engagements.

Ken Steiner

Typos are a dreaded fact of writers' lives, as Ken Steiner can testify. Several not of his doing pop up in his superb essay booklet for the CD *Duke Ellington Live at Carnegie Hall, December 11, 1943*. He states, ". . . we had a difficult time working trans-Atlantic. Storyville sent me a dummy booklet for my final review, and I mailed them my final edits on September 10, 2001. The package was mailed to New York just in time for the tragedy of September 11. The package of my final edits was evidently stuck there for about five weeks. In a rush to make our deadline, I had to e-mail my corrections one-by-one to Carl [Hällström]. By the time they made it to the production staff in Copenhagen, there were some things missed."

Clark Terry Redux

by Gina Rollins

Our May 4 meeting was the second half of a two-part series on Clark Terry, presented by Ted Shell. Drawing on his rich collection of Ellingtonia, Ted showcased five decades of Terry's virtuosity. Highlights included a '66 session of Terry doing a dead-on imitation of Louis Armstrong singing "Westchester Cathedral"; "Satin Doll" in duet with Oscar Peterson; and a soulful rendition of "Come Sunday" from *Duke with a Difference*, featuring in addition to Terry, solos by Billy Strayhorn and Johnny Hodges. We heard baroque with a beat in "Fugue Tune," while "Tepee Time" featured Terry using a varitone to follow his trumpet line one octave lower. The program-ending "C Jam Blues" showcased both Terry and Red Mitchell in rapid-fire instrument-switching, Terry almost simultaneously playing flugelhorn and trumpet, and Mitchell alternating between bass and piano.

All in all, it was an enlightening, entertaining glimpse of this versatile, superbly talented musician. *Merci*, Ted!

We Are Kings! (Continued from page 2)

Patricia Braxton for conceiving and producing the concert that raised the money for our Student Fund and Luvenia George for serving as director of the Duke Ellington Youth Project, among whose participating students were the first recipients of the awards. We have several members who volunteer at the National Museum of American History Museum's Ellington Collection or have even donated items to that and related collections. Our members Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn continue to be key to the release of CDs at an astounding rate (the 44-CD set of the Ellington Treasury Series is still being issued two CDs at a time). Recently Annie Kuebler and Ken Steiner have written lauded essays to accompany CDs. Our member Sjef Hoefsmits continues to produce *DEMS Bulletin*, which has recently gone online at < depanorama.net >, Peter MacHare's "A Duke Ellington Panorama" website. Our member Walter van de Leur published a new book about Billy Strayhorn. Our member Bill Hasson has alerted us to the possibility (remote at this stage) of an Ellington Museum being established in one of Ellington's former residences. Our member Gina Rollins took the trouble to let us know that Ellington has been mentioned on a radio show as a possible subject for representation in the US Capitol's Statutory Hall. Nothing may come of some of these endeavors, but we are alert to the possibilities and ready to lend our support.

We welcome your talents and your initiative. If you have a contact at a local radio station or a local newspaper, for example, maybe you can help us get our monthly meetings listed. You can encourage a new acquaintance to attend our meetings. You can write an article for *Ellingtonia* or prepare a program for one of our meetings. Join the fun and don't be shy because we all LOVE YOU MADLY!

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

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