

# Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of  
*The Duke Ellington Society*



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Web Site: [depanorama.net/desociety/](http://depanorama.net/desociety/)

## Members Enjoy Concerts By Asian American Orchestra

While the Asian American Orchestra was in town for concerts on 13 and 14 April, a number of members of our Society had an opportunity meet these artists. Immediately after each performance, they quickly made themselves available for conversation, interviews, photographs, and autographs. In the case of the leader, our member Dr. Anthony Brown, it was a matter of meeting new or seeing old friends.

DES members highly praised Anthony's adaptations and arrangements and the band's ensemble and solo musicianship. For example, Luvenia George commented, "Anthony Brown's concert was absolutely marvelous; such stunning sounds. Here is a man who *really, truly, knows what he's doing!* It was also good to see him again." Alan Schneidmill said, "I told my wife, Ferna, she should have been there. The music was magnificent, as were the musicians individually." Francis Arnold found the concert he attended "Outstanding! Better than I expected." For Mac Grimmer, "It was like hearing the *Far East Suite* for the first time. Listening to—and seeing played—the strange Asian instruments was an intense and thrilling experience. This updated *Suite* was a genuine collaboration between Ellington and Anthony Brown, and it worked on every level. Jazz as it ought to be." Patricia Willard recounted, "As I told Anthony after Monday's concert (which incidentally had a 'The Mooche' to end all 'The Mooches'): 'If Duke were here, he'd try to steal you!' Anthony's response was that theft would not be necessary; he'd go willingly."

After their Monday concert at the Carmichael Auditorium, the artists were guests for a brief introduction by Scott Schwartz to the Archives Center's collections. He supplemented his talk with a mini-exhibit, a sequence from a video, and audio excerpts of interviews, all of which they found of great interest. In particular they were intrigued by several pages from music manuscripts in Ellington's and Strayhorn's hands that Scott had on display for them. *Ed. note: See Bill Hasson's comments, p. 2, about the orchestra's Sunday concert at the Meyer Auditorium.*

## You Gotta Love Strays – June Program a Member's Choice Featuring Billy Strayhorn

by Mac Grimmer & Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

We will close out our season with a member's choice featuring Billy Strayhorn. Bring a performance of any Strayhorn composition. You might bring two performances in case we have extra time. The performance can be in or out of the Ellington fold, but tell us a little about your choice. We encourage everyone to participate.

The June program will be at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC, at 8 pm on Saturday, 7 June 2003.** The public is invited.

## Brown Earns Guggenheim Award

We congratulate Anthony Brown!

The Guggenheim Memorial Foundation has announced that he was selected in the 79th Annual United States and Canadian competition to be a Guggenheim Fellow.

These fellowships are appointed on the basis of distinguished achievement in the past and exceptional promise for future accomplishment.

During his fellowship, Anthony plans to "re-compose Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* for an international, intergender, and intergenerational jazz orchestra of 21 members, blending Western and Eastern instruments and concepts."

## Deal on Tickets to Jazz Drama

Gregory Charles Royal, author of *It's a Hardbop Life* that premieres 21-25 May at Howard University's Aldridge Theater, is offering 30% off coupons to our members and a special price of \$15 for seniors. Mr. Royal for several years was a trombonist in the Ellington orchestra led by Mercer. A publicity release says that all the actors are musicians who have played in Grammy Award winning bands.

Tickets are available through Ticketmaster and at the theater box office. For more information, go to the web site at < [hardbop2003@yahoo.com](mailto:hardbop2003@yahoo.com) >.

## Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra Performs the *Far East Suite*

Reviewed by Bill Hasson

While Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's *Far East Suite* pays homage to the sights and sounds of that region, Dr. Anthony Brown's *Far East Suite* pays homage to both Ellington-Strayhorn's brilliant interpretations and to his own ancient heritage. His band approaches the compositions with reverence and displays the same power as the Ellington Orchestra did on their 1966 recording. And the band swings.



Brown's interpretations give the *Suite* an expanded dimension by incorporating authentic instruments from the various Asian countries. The sheng (mouth organ) played by Mark Izu and Qi Chao Lui presented an outstanding depth to the "Mount Harissa" composition. And what was even more inspiring was that the concert on Sunday, April 13 was played in the Smithsonian's Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Auditorium, which gave the orchestra a unique acoustical ensemble sound. All sections of the orchestra and their individual solos could be highly appreciated. A special note should be given to pianist Jon Jang for his sensitive approaches to Duke's compositions. And while Anthony Brown's drum kit is the centerpiece of the orchestra, one has to realize that Rufus Jones did play a dominant role in the original recording.

This performance by Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra of the Ellington-Strayhorn *Far East Suite* allowed another generation the opportunity to hear and experience the continuing impact of Ellington's most enduring works on present day creative musicians and conductors.

*Ed. Note: The Sunday concert consisted of the entire Suite, with an instrumental "Come Sunday" as an encore. The shorter presentation on Monday at the Carmichael Auditorium consisted of selections from the Suite, an extended "The Mooche" based on that composition's transmutations over the years, and "Come Sunday," this time with a vocal by Arevivia Moss.*

## John Malachi on Duke Ellington

by Ken Steiner

*The following paragraphs are extracted from an interview of John Malachi by Ken Steiner on Duke Ellington Day at WPFW on Ellington's birthday, 29 April 1986. Malachi had just performed a solo concert that Ken believes had been sponsored by the Duke Ellington Society, perhaps only a week or two earlier. Ken adds, "Such a nice man, and a wonderful pianist, too."*

Duke Ellington was what I call a composer-pianist. He played the piano well. I don't think that's the thing he wanted to excel in. I think if he had wanted to go that route, he would have probably been an excellent pianist. He recorded some things—"Lots of Fingers"—composition of his, that and a lot of other things proved he could lay it down on the ivories when he wanted to. He always had a unique style, a very unique way of playing. I think his composing is what he really wanted to do.

[Duke's piano style] was percussive when it needed to be percussive. Things like "Sophisticated Lady" and the prettier things, "In a Sentimental Mood," "Prelude to a Kiss," are far from being percussive. I was attracted to Duke as a youngster by the way he played his ballads and the beauty of his chords. On the other hand, in the up-tempo things, I was always impressed by the way he played his comp in the band. He always had a very strong, demanding comp, percussive as you would say. Duke, being a composer, wrote all kinds of things, and naturally, the kinds of things he wrote he could play.

The Duke I really knew and loved played "Harlem Air Shaft," and one of the first things I heard was "Ring Dem Bells." Duke was one of my first inspirations. Duke was the first [big] band I heard. I was 12 or 13 years old. That started my weekly trips to the Howard Theater.

## Hurricane Redux: Try This at Home at Your Own Risk

At the close of her review of *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra at the Hurricane 1943* in our last issue, Patricia Willard good-naturedly wrote, "Steiner suggests Saturday midnight listening: 'Mix yourself a Hurricane . . . Put the CD in a boom box and place inside the console of a vintage radio. Turn the lights low and the music up.' But he neglects to reveal the recipe for a Hurricane." To the rescue of those who want to be thusly rescued, our ever alert prexy, Peter MacHare, with the interests of our members in mind, found one. We won't print it here (after all, we have underage members and readers), but here's where Peter suggests going: < [gumbopages.com/food/beverages/hurricane.html](http://gumbopages.com/food/beverages/hurricane.html) >. Gumbopages touts its Hurricane as "New Orleans' most famous (and infamous cocktail)," and from the looks of the ingredients, one likely can virtually go back to 1943 and be at the Hurricane in New York after imbibing such a concoction.

## Short Sheets . . .

### Ed Powell Dies

Ed Powell, who until the past several years was a member of our Society and who frequently attended the Annual International Ellington Conferences, passed away in January.

### Ellington '97 Materials Placed in Archives

Roger Boyes has lodged in the West Yorkshire Archives in Leeds, England, all the Ellington '97 papers that were in his possession.

### Steve Hancoff Performs in Latin America

Steve Hancoff was invited, "after seeing the important contribution you have made to the guitar world," to participate in the 14th Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano in Peru in March. He also performed in Ecuador. One of the greatest exponents of Ellingtonia on guitar, Steve has just about finished a new Ellington project. All the tunes have been recorded. Instead of liner notes for the CD, he is seeking persons who knew Duke to write short pieces about him. If this includes you or someone you know, by all means get in touch with Steve at: [Shancoff@aol.com](mailto:Shancoff@aol.com).

## Regional Events Coming in the Fall

While Ellington and Strayhorn devotees are known to travel far and wide to see performances of these two artists' works, our members and friends particularly in the Pacific Northwest can look forward to an "Ellington Week-End" sponsored by First United Methodist Church in Portland, Oregon, in October. And those in the Mid-Atlantic area will want to see the University of Maryland Department of Theater production of *Sophisticated Ladies*, also in October.

## Quotation of the Month

Contributed by Mac Grimmer

*Recited by Duke between the band's two numbers in the "Timex All-Star Swing Festival" at the Lincoln Center, October 22, 1972:*

Ladies and Gentlemen:  
When all our pulses beat ensem'  
We're swinging, chart or fake—  
But one tailgatin' false alarm  
Does not togetherness make.  
So take it from the top, and bop—  
And blow down through the bottom—  
Let not the jammin' ever stop  
Until you know you've got'em.

## Quick Quiz

In response to our invitation for readers to send us quick quizzes, Alan Schneidmill has sent this one about nicknames of well-known jazz musicians. Some of them, he hints, worked for the Maestro. How many can you name for each group: 1) Animals, 2) Buddy/Bud/Budd, 3) Sonny, 4) Colors and their cognates?

*Answers are on page 4, but no peeking first!*

## Gathering in a Clearing

When the Ellington band played for the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Mardi Gras dance, Feb. 5, in Washington, D.C., Washington Chapter 90 members had large tables with DEJS signs where they entertained band members from 2-4 a.m. while Milt Buckner finished the musical chores. One night wasn't enough for chapter president Maurice Lawrence so he went on the road with the band for several days the following week, according to Harry Carney.

*The above, including the headline, is from the Duke Ellington Jazz Society Newsletter, February-March 1960.*

*Were any of you Qs out there at one of those tables? If so, tell us about the event.*

## New Distribution Method for DEMS Bulletin Planned for 2004

Beginning next year, Sjef Hoefsmit's *DEMS Bulletin* will be published on Peter MacHare's popular "Duke Ellington Panorama" web site at <[depanorama.net/dems](http://depanorama.net/dems)>. In the current issue, Sjef Hoefsmit writes, "In this modern age it seems appropriate to use the Internet to publish future DEMS Bulletins." A great number of Duke Ellington Music Society [DEMS] members with access to the internet have volunteered to adopt fellow members and supply them with downloaded and printed copies of these bulletins. Sjef will continue to edit the publication.

The bulletin not only provides news, articles, reviews, and detailed discographical information but also serves as a lively forum for discussion and exchange of minutia by researchers, authorities, students, and aficionados.

*DEMS Bulletin* was founded in 1979 by authority Benny Åsland in Sweden. Membership in the Society was described as limited to 500 "Serious Collectors, Researchers, and Students of Ellingtonia" world-wide. Beloved Mr. Åsland died in 1996, after having published some 72 issues. His dear friend Sjef Hoefsmit assumed the awesome responsibility of continuing *DEMS Bulletin*, for which the international community of Ellington and Strayhorn enthusiasts is extremely grateful.

## Stay Informed Over the Summer Check These Internet Sites Regularly

**The Duke Ellington Society:**

[depanorama.net/desociety/](http://depanorama.net/desociety/)

**Peter MacHare's Duke Ellington Panorama:**

[depanorama.net/](http://depanorama.net/)

**Sjef Hoefsmit's DEMS Bulletin:**

[depanorama.net/dems/](http://depanorama.net/dems/)

**Anthony Brown's Website:**

[anthonybrown.org](http://anthonybrown.org)

**Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection Text Tour:**

[americanhistory.si.edu/archives/de-tour](http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/de-tour)

**Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection Finding Aid:**

[si.edu/organiza/museums/nmah/archives/d5301a.html](http://si.edu/organiza/museums/nmah/archives/d5301a.html)

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

### About Our Members

#### Priscilla Ramsey

Patricia Ramsey will present "The Harlem Renaissance Movement—Its Arts and Politics," a lecture and slide program in Baltimore, Maryland on 20 May. She has published and spoken extensively on this and related topics.

For details about Prof. Ramsey's appearance and other cultural events sponsored by the Maryland Humanities Council, call 410-853-3913 or check web site <mdhc.org>.

#### Olivia and Joseph McMillan

Here are excerpts, concerning mainly the lack of Ellington music, from a diary of sorts that the Joe and Olivia McMillan kept while on a recent world cruise. They had anticipated, in vain it turns out, hearing some Ducal sounds here and there during their extensive travels.

"Honolulu gave us great sights, beautiful weather," he account states, "but no Duke music. . . . Papette [Tahiti] nor Moorea offered Duke music despite being identified as PARADISE!!" After no Ellington or Strayhorn in New Zealand, none in Tasmania, and none in Australia (including its famed opera house), they boarded a plane for Los Angeles, and guess what—Olivia "tuned in the jazz music channel and had Duke Ellington for thirteen hours before snoozing! It was great, did not watch movies, only listened to DUKE!!!"

#### Bill Flemmons and Brad Bradbie

Lois Moody, Jerry Valburn, Morris Hodara, Giovanni Volonté, Ken Steiner, Patricia Willard, Jack Towers, Peter MacHare, and of course Sjef Hoefsmit are among our members who contribute to or are referenced frequently in *DEMS Bulletin*. But a couple more are quoted in the current edition: Brad Bradbie for his definition of "Are You Sticking?" from our October 2001 issue and Bill Flemmons for his definition of an "Unbooted Character" from our April 2001 issue.

#### Jerry Valburn and Ted Shell

From a posting by Stan Slome on the Duke-LYM internet site: "Jerry: Like many on this site, I have several CD versions of the Webster-Blanton recordings. Yet—on "Jack the Bear" in the Duke Ellington 3LP set of Time-Life Records (1978) I keep hearing a sonic superiority on the LP version in terms of definition of instruments, reproduction of transients and ambience. You, along with Robert Altshuler, Michael Brooks, Mac Ginzburg, Theodore Shell and Richard Spottswood, are credited by the Time-Life editors for the use of the rare 78 rpm pressings."

#### Ben Pubols

During April, Ben Pubols presented in Portland, Oregon, an OASIS sponsored, four-session course on the history of classic jazz. Among those attending was Bee Pine, whom many remember as a frequent registrant at the Annual International Ellington Study Group Conferences, now a resident of Portland. Early on some others in the Pacific Northwest had indicated they would enroll, and we know of one query about the series from far away South Africa

## Ellington on Classics

by Gina Rollins, Secretary

Our May 3 meeting was filled with selections from Peter MacHare's extensive Classics collection. The French-based label has now reissued more than 800 CDs of jazz greats. Peter has all 41 of Duke's, and from them, he played three works, including a 1941 session of "Menelik the Lion of Judah" with Rex Stewart and His Orchestra, featuring Duke on piano and Rex as the growling lion on cornet. We heard three featuring other selections of Rex's, along with four from Cootie Williams recorded between 1942 and 1946. Peter also played selections from reissues of Taft Jordan, Ivory Joe Hunter, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, and Al Hibbler. One of the Hibbler pieces, "Fat and Forty," was the only song he ever wrote, according to DES member Patricia Willard, who interviewed Al. The piece later gained visibility when it was included in *Sophisticated Ladies*.

Peter rounded out the evening with a comparison of the Classics-reissued "I've Got Be a Rug Cutter" featuring Ivie Anderson on vocal with a Jazz Panorama release of Duke playing and singing the same tune. During the evening's social, we had the chance to look at some of Ted Shell's extensive collection of Ellington-related photos, which he had brought in earlier that day for a function at Grace Lutheran Church.

### Quiz Answers

Among possible answers given by Alan:

- 1) **Animals:** Dodo Marmarosa, "Hawk" (Coleman), Gato Barbieri, Cat Anderson, Frog Webster, Bird Parker, Rabbit Hodges, the Lion Smith, Bunny Berrigan
- 2) **Buddy/Bud/Budd:** Bolden/Tate/Morrow/Rich/DeFranco/Childers/Powell/Freeman/Powell/Johnson
- 3) **Sonny:** Stitt/Cohen/Rollins/Greer/Payne/Berman/Durham
- 4) **Colors:** Red Rodney/Allen/Norvo, Blue Mitchell, Brownie (Clifford) Brown, Whitey Mitchell

*Psst., Alan . . . And then there's Piano Red, a nickname for the Maestro.*

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