

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XII, Number 1
JANUARY 2004

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor
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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

The President's Column: **2005 Will Be Our 50th Anniversary**

Imagine! You are holding the January 2004 edition of *Ellingtonia* in your hands. Doesn't time fly? Of course, time passes more quickly for Ellington fans because we hear more great music and have more fun than anyone else. But soon 2005 will be upon us, and 2005 will be the 50th Anniversary of our Society.

In the May 1997 issue of our newsletter, Ted Shell wrote an article about our history: The Duke Ellington Society of Washington, D.C., Ted wrote, "... started in 1955. Maurice Lawrence, a close friend of Duke who frequently traveled with the band during his vacations, was our first president; second was Juanita Hardwick, wife of the inimitable Otto, also a member of our Society.

"Our original name was The Duke Ellington Jazz Society. In deference to Duke's suggestion, we changed it to The Duke Ellington Society.

"Whenever the band was in Washington, we attended en masse and were always introduced to the audience by the Duke. We entertained him several times at birthday parties. On one memorable occasion he brought Stanley Dance with him and spent several hours while a taxi waited."

We, like our fellow Ellington societies, have a rich history. I can think of no better time to celebrate it than our 50th Anniversary. There is plenty of time to plan festivities, but let us all give some thought to preparing feature articles for our newsletter, *Ellingtonia*. Our history is well documented from the time of Terrell Allen's letters and Ted Hudson's newsletters, but written or tape-recorded recollections from our early and founding members would be wonderful additions to our archives.

So let us begin 2004 by first counting our blessings, but let's also give a thought about how to make 2005 a memorable year for our Society.

2004 Holiday Party

by Mac Grimmer & Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Our 2004 Holiday Party will be held at 8 pm on Saturday, 3 January in the downstairs party room (side entrance) of Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.

As in past years, we ask members to contribute something to the table if they can. If you don't have time to make anything, just come to the Party anyway. Members may of course bring a few guests. We also invite all of those on our mailing list who are not members.

Another group has the room until 8 pm, so you might want to plan to be a few minutes late.

We look forward to seeing you all there!

Elections

by Peter MacHare

We are running late with our elections this year. At our December meeting, a motion was proposed and passed unanimously by voice vote nominating all current officers and board members to continue in their present positions.

If you do not wish to continue at your present position, please call Peter MacHare at 301-982-4249. Likewise, if you would like to nominate someone to run for a position, call Peter as well. We will vote on the slate of candidates at our January Holiday Party.

Contact Information for Ellington '04 Stockholm, Sweden, 12-15 May, 2004

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Also, see pages 3-4 in our November 2003 issue.

Scheduled Conference Highlights

Here is an abstract of the latest information about the program for Ellington 2004 in Stockholm. Though not specified here, throughout there is time scheduled for open discussions and more breaks. For more and updated information, check the homepage of the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden: Ellingtonsweden.com

Wednesday, 12 May 2004

Registration

Get-together Party – Evening, Sergel Plaza Hotel

Thursday, 13 May

Opening ceremony

Ellington in Swedish – Jan Bruér

Unpublished Recordings from Ben Webster's Private Collection Made in 1941 by a Group of Ellington

Musicians Including Jimmie Blanton, Ray Nance and Ben Webster – Frank Büchmann Møller

Rolf Ericson—The Swedish Ellingtonian – Lars Westin

Lunch

Unconfirmed speaker

Break – Per Larsson at the piano

Harlem Love Song: The Relationship between Duke Ellington and James P. Johnson – Annie Kuebler

Ellington's IRS Blues: The Business of Music Isn't Just Black and White – Scott Schwartz

Evening program to be announced later

Friday, 14 May

"That's What He Says"—Charles Mingus as a Member of the Ellington School – Brian Priestley

Ellington, Strayhorn and the Standard Repertory of Jazz – John E. Hasse

Lunch

Form, Structure and Place in Duke Ellington's Togo Brava – Andrew Homzy

Break – Music by Bernt Rosengren Quartet

Ellington Behind the Scenes – Claire Gordon

Louie Bellson, Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington—Their Reciprocal Impact – Patricia Willard

Panel: *Working with the Duke* – Alice Babs and Nils Lindberg

Evening Concert – Celebrating Alice Babs

Holiday in Harlem big band

Alice Babs and Nils Lindberg with Third Saxes Galore

"Warm Valley" by Alice Babs with Kjell Öhman, piano

"Somebody Cares" by Alice Babs and Titti Sjöblom with Erling Eliasson, guitar

Togo Brava Suite – Nils Lindberg with Third Saxes Galore under direction of Andrew Homzy

Jam session may follow.

Saturday, 15 May

Taking the Duke to Church: Performing Ellington's Music in Worship – Janna T. Steed

The LP That Was Never Made—Louis Armstrong, Guest Artist with the Duke Ellington Orchestra – George

Avakian

Lunch

New Discoveries: An Assortment of Unreleased Ellington Recordings from the 1930s and 40s Plus Selected

Factual Surprises – Steven Lasker

Break – Music by Hot Jazz Trio

The Eternal Ellington Stockpile: The Story, Some Dilemmas Issuing Duke Ellington Posthumously, and

What to Expect Next – Bjarne Busk

Panel chaired by Lars Westin and featuring George Avakian and Patricia Willard sharing their experiences of working with Duke

Banquet in Nalen's Stora Salen – Live music by the Kustbandet orchestra

Sunday, 16 May

Depending on demand, an extra concert may take place featuring Alice Babs with Nils Lindborg's Third Saxes Galore.

This concert may also include Swedish alto saxophonist Arne Domnèrus and pianist Khell Öhman.

Short Sheets . . .

Duke Collaborator Honored Posthumously

Luther Henderson was among several artists given the opprobrium "Jazz Master" by the National Association of the Arts recently. From time to time classically trained Henderson worked with Duke on special projects, especially those for symphonic instrumentation. Well after Duke's death, he did the music for Grammy-nominated *Play On!*, based on a Shakespeare drama and featuring Ellington and Strayhorn music.

Bellson Earns Award, Celebration Planned

His home town of Rock Falls, Illinois will mark the 80th birthday of a favorite son, Louie Bellson, next summer with what has been described as a "Welcome Home, Louie Bellson" party.

In late summer, Bellson received one of the four Duke Ellington Master of Jazz Awards presented by Friends of Jazz at UCLA, a Kenny Burrell charitable initiative. The other awardees were Gerald Wilson, Horace Silver, and posthumously, Benny Carter.

Come Sunday: Sacred Concert At Metropolitan Baptist Church

by Gina Rollins

Bill Hasson and I were two of the lucky 3,500 jam-packed at Metropolitan Baptist Church in Washington to hear "Come Sunday," a performance of Duke's sacred music with dance.

The free-of-charge event was commissioned by the Smithsonian's Anacostia Museum and choreographed by Mercedes Ellington. Metropolitan's minister of music, Rev. Nolan Williams, conducted the church's choir and the Ellington Project Jazz Orchestra. The evening also featured performers from Expressions Dance Theatre and tap soloist Karen Callaway Williams from *Riverdance* on Broadway. Vocal soloists included Janice Chandler-Eteme, Lorree Slye, Gregory Watkins, a senior at the Ellington School of the Arts, and Nicole Williams, senior music major at Howard University.

Most of the selections came from the Second Sacred Concert, but there also was "Will You Be There?," "Come Sunday," "David Danced Before the Lord," and "My Love." The liturgical dance of Expressions members was graceful and inspired, but nothing compared with the youngest performers, a troop of very young ladies who looked professional beyond their years and every bit angelic in gossamer-winged costumes.

The evening was magical for people there primarily to hear Duke's music and those there to worship. Mercedes acknowledged both and said she hoped the performance would encourage both to venture into the other's territory. With performances like this, it's a definite possibility.

Steve Mokone Receives South Africa's Highest Award

Our member Dr. Steven Mokone was selected by President Mbeki of South Africa to be a recipient of the prestigious "Award of the Order of Ikhamanga in Gold." National Orders are the highest awards that the country may bestow to its citizens through its president.

Because of recent illness, Steve was unable to travel from his Virginia residence in the United States to South Africa, so his wife, Louise Mokone, made the trip to represent him and accept the honor on his behalf. She describes the occasion as "... an awesome event. It was very formal—reminded me of the way the British present awards. A scroll was read to the audience and then placed in my hands by the President along with a medal which symbolizes in part, 'the acknowledgment of exceptional achievement in various sporting and cultural activities.'" Additionally, he was presented a gold neck badge with various symbols and a lapel pin.

The award cites his "Exceptional Achievement in the Field of Soccer and an Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Non-racial Sport." During the ceremony it was noted that Steve Mokone is regarded as the greatest footballer South Africa has ever produced, was elected Europe's best soccer player, and was the first black professional footballer in Britain.

Congratulations, Steve! We are very proud of you!

Ellington Alumni Reunion in the Works

The American Jazz Institute is planning an "Ellington Band Reunion Concert" and related events in early February at Claremont College in California. Preliminary indications are that the Institute's Big Band will feature Ellington musicians in a concert on one of the days. Daytime oral history sessions with them will be moderated by Patricia Willard. We intend to print more details as we learn them.

Among those who have been located and confirmed for participation as we prepare this report are Art Baron, Buster Cooper, Louie Bellson, Butch Ballard, Barrie Lee Hall, John Lamb, Rocky White, Jeff Castleman, Milt Grayson, Vince Prudente, Joya Sherrill, Trish Turner, and Barbara Winfield.

Patricia Willard, who has been instrumental in locating alumni, is still searching for Lil Greenwood and Bobbie Gordon (aka Nell Brookshire), and would welcome information of their whereabouts.

For more information and updates about the project, the American Jazz Institute may be contacted by mail at: American Jazz Institute, PO Box 5716, Pasadena, CA 91117; via internet at: www.amjazzin.com; by phone at: 626-798-3127; and by fax at: 626-794-5453.

"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term in *MMMM*)**About Our Members****Charles Stewart, Patricia Willard**

We received a letter from Charles out in California in which he praised Patricia Willard, calling her interview with Louie Bellson "the highlight" of the Southern California Ellington Society's November program honoring Bellson.

Dick Spottswood

Dick Spottswood has co-edited *Goodbye Babylon*, a 6-CD gospel anthology produced by Dust-to-Digital. One of the CDs is devoted to sermons.

Quotation of the Month

by Mac Grimmer

When Cootie left the band to join Benny Goodman, he recommended that Duke hire Roy Eldridge. Roy declined the opportunity, and explained later:

I had my own little band in Kelly's. I was pretty happy with them, so I didn't make it, yet I would have loved to have played with Duke. Of course I've played with Duke in joints and clubs and places, but not with the band. It's a ball to play after hours with Duke behind you; he gives you a wonderful background. I dig him as a person. Play with him and you don't need drums, for he really knows how to back a cat.

— from Roy Eldridge—*Little Jazz Giant*, by John Chilton

Clinker Alert!

In our November issue, on page 5 we gave the incorrect first name of the bassist who was one of our two 2002 Student Fund winners. We should have identified him as Benjamin Williams.

In an upcoming issue, we will tell some of the good things that Benjamin is accomplishing.

(It's no excuse, but the surname for both of our 2002 Student Fund Awardees is Williams. We shamefacedly apologize.)

Looking Ahead

Saturday, 3 January

Our Annual Holiday Party, Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Sts, NW, Washington, DC, 8 pm
21-24 January

International Association of Jazz Educators Annual Conference, New York City
7 February

Duke's Place: A Young Boy's Request, described as a "fabulous fable . . . to introduce young audiences to the unforgettable sound of Duke Ellington," by the Brewery Troupe Puppets at the Smithsonian's Discovery Theater, 12 noon. More details later.

12-15 May

Nineteenth International Duke Ellington Conference, Stockholm, Sweden

December —**Nicknames and Clarinets**

by Gina Rollins, Secretary

In lieu of our normal December venue at the Smithsonian Archives Center, we had two treats: Alan Schneidmill's famous (or infamous?) quiz on nicknames of jazz musicians and a member's choice featuring clarinetists who performed with Duke.

Alan worked on and off for six months on the quiz, but he complimented the audience: there were just a few complete misses. He did character traits, A-to-Z names, double and triple nicknames, pet love names, physical characteristics, names that rhyme, names that involve modes of transportation and names with alliteration. This chronicler gave up trying to capture it all—the hints and guesses were flying too thick and fast to scribble. Suffice it to say the pressure's on, Alan, for more, and we're ready for the challenge.

Jimmy Hamilton was the featured performer during the clarinet segment. From Ted Hudson we heard Jimmy explaining how he wrote "Pretty and the Wolf"; from Bill Hasson, "Round Midnight" and "Tenderly"; from Mac Grimmer, "Blue Room" and "Rose Room"; and from myself, two selections from the Ellington Private Collection series, "Cottontail" and "Jump for Joy."

Dick Spottswood brought us Russell Procope and Barney Bigard playing in separate sessions with Jelly Roll Morton. The recording of Procope on "Deep Creek" was his first. From the West Coast, Ben Pubols sent us "Clarinet Lament," the theme from the Emerson Parker radio show, a program Ben listened to as a young man growing up in Washington.

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