

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society

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MAY 2004

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Courtesy Carlyle Productions

New DEMS Bulletin Online

by Peter MacHare

The *Bulletin* of the Duke Ellington Music Society [DEMS] is a forum for collectors of Ellington's recordings. It contains news about new releases and corrections to the published discographies.

The latest *DEMS Bulletin* is available only at <depanorama.net>. This issue is the first to be published online only. There will be no hard copy mailed by DEMS, but of course you can print your own hard copy from the Internet.

I urge you to look into this wonderful publication if you are not already familiar with it.

More Sacred Concerts

It seems that spring, and rightfully so especially April, is the season for concerts of Duke Ellington's sacred music.

The Luckman Jazz Orchestra, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Faithful Central Bible Church Heritage Chorale, and others appeared in concerts on 7 and 9 March at Los Angeles' Disney Hall. Our member Charles Stewart writes that he found the performance "very good." The Los Angeles *Times*' reviewer felt that "There is no way to actually create an Ellington sacred concert; the music was written for Ellington's orchestra, a unique group of virtuostic improvisers who could play with a single spirit as well as individuality. . . . Still, the challenge was met."

In March a sacred concert took place at Peoples Congregational Church in Washington, DC featuring the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra, the church's Chancel Choir, and soloist Esther Williams. As a Jazz Appreciation Month event, the same performers are scheduled for free concerts at the Smithsonian's Carmichael Auditorium on Sunday, 25 April at 2:00 and 4:00 pm.

In celebration of Duke's birth, TDES is sponsoring a concert of his sacred concert at St. Peter's Church in New York City, its "home," on 24 April. It will feature the Julliard Jazz Orchestra, dance, and a choral group of forty to fifty.

May Program: Ellington Plus

Saturday, 1 May, 8 pm

Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW
Washington, DC

Open to the Public

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Our May program will be a member's choice. Each member is asked to bring two recordings. One recording must be by Ellington, but the other recording can be by anyone. Basie? Armstrong? Bach?

We know our members have wide tastes in music. Here is your chance to introduce a favorite artist to your fellow members. Please keep selections relatively short so that there will be time for everyone.

Looking ahead, our last program for the season will be Saturday, 5 June when Ted Shell will present an all video show of many different musicians performing the music of Ellington and Strayhorn.

Youth Project's Success Leads to A More Comprehensive Initiative

The 12-year, nationally influential Duke Ellington Youth Project, a collaboration of District of Columbia Schools and the Smithsonian Institution, has evolved into a new outreach enterprise, the Smithsonian Jazz Legacy Education Program. Our member Luvenia George, who headed the Ellington Project, will continue under the title Program Coordinator for the new program.

According to Dr. George, "the new Jazz Legacy Education Program will focus on a series of jazz innovators whose lives and music shaped the history of 'America's classic music.'" Thus, in addition to Ellington and Armstrong, it conceivably could focus on such luminaries as Goodman, Basie, Fitzgerald, Morton, Miller, Parker, Beiderbecke, and Gillespie.

A workshop in December for English, social studies, art, and foreign language teachers launched a Pilot Test of a Louis Armstrong Education Curriculum resource kit for grades 6-12. Another was held in January for music teachers.

Ruth Ellington Boatwright

Ruth Dorothea Ellington Boatwright died in New York City on 6 March 2004, after extended illness. She was born in Washington, DC on 2 July 1915. In a private ceremony on 8 March, she was interred in the family plot in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, NY. At the time of Ms. Boatwright's death, it was announced that a memorial service for her would take place at a later date at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City.

Mrs. Boatwright said that her first memory of Duke, 16 years older than she, was hearing him on the radio. She was still a teen-ager when he, having a modicum of success, moved the family from Washington, DC to live with him in the prestigious Sugar Hill section of New York City.

Ellington was very supportive and solicitous of her throughout his life. In an obituary posted on the internet, Steve Voce quotes Mrs. Boatwright as saying, "Edward was extremely protective of me, but in such a wonderful, sweet, luxurious way that one doesn't know one is being protected."

Ruth Ellington attended public schools in New York and then matriculated at Columbia University, majoring in biology. After completing her work there, she went to Paris to learn foreign languages and to write a comparative thesis on the teaching of biology in France and the United States. When she returned, she made New York her home for the rest of her life.

At one time Mrs. Boatwright had a radio show on New York's WLIB. She was active with the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) and helped establish a jazz ministry, pastored by Duke's friend the Rev. John Gensel, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Known for her graciousness and refined manners, she is remembered by friends and associates as a charming hostess.

When Ellington formed Tempo Music, Inc. in 1941 to handle his music business affairs, he named her president, in which position she continued after his death. She reportedly sold a majority interest of this business in 1995 to a New York publisher.

In 1991 the Smithsonian Institution acquired Tempo materials from Mrs. Boatwright, among them correspondence, business records, music manuscripts, sound recordings, news and publicity clippings, photographs, copyright papers, ephemera, and some Harry Carney materials that comprise the Ruth Ellington Collection, an entity that complements the Duke Ellington Collection. Both are available for research in the Archives Center in the Institution's National Museum of American History.

Ruth Ellington Boatwright's immediate survivors are sons by a previous marriage, Michael and Stephen James. Her husband McHenry Boatwright, an operatic baritone, died in 1994.

We extend sincere condolences to her family and other loved ones.

Alistaire Cooke and Duke Ellington

by Ben Pubols

As many of you must know by now, the British commentator/observer/critic Alistaire Cooke died [in late March]. He was once described as a gentleman who devoted his life to explaining Americans to the British and explaining the British to Americans. There is a lengthy and very well written obituary in the *New York Times* of March 30 (and I'm sure many British papers) in which his friendship with Duke Ellington is mentioned.

There is an excellent CD produced by Carl Hällström entitled *Duke Ellington: The Radio Years 1940-1946* (Jazz Unlimited JUCD 2043) which includes a simulated rehearsal of the Ellington orchestra recorded on a August 3, 1945, and broadcast on the BBC on December 28, 1945, with commentary by Cooke. Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Hamilton and Lawrence Brown are prominently featured.

Rob Bamberger devoted a portion of his WAMU Hot Jazz Saturday Night program of April 3 to a tribute to Cooke, including his comments to his BBC audience during live jam sessions broadcast in November, 1938 and January, 1939. Excerpts from the above-mentioned CD were also played.

The highlight for me, however, was Alistaire Cooke, himself, discussing the blues and accompanying himself on piano as he sings three choruses of a Jelly Roll Morton blues, the first chorus of which is:

Two-nineteen took my babe away,
Two-nineteen took my babe away,
Two-seventeen bring her back some day

Alistaire Cooke was obviously quite a jazz buff—a different side to the person most of us will remember as the host of "Masterpiece Theater!"

Ed. Note: This article has been modified and expanded from a post by Ben Pubols originally appearing on Andrew Homzy's Duke-LYM internet site.

Just Imagine . . .

Not feeling well, at first you consider staying home, but decide to go to school so as not miss the test scheduled for your 4th period class at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. You are absorbed in trying to ace the examination when suddenly a character authentically dressed as George Washington walks in accompanied by a gaggle of television technicians, reporters, and administrative types. A school official requests, "Can I have everyone's attention please."

One of the visitors asks, "Is there a Davie Yarborough here?"

Not knowing what's going on, you reply, "Yes. I'm Davie."

Then it's announced: "You have just earned a full four-year scholarship to the George Washington University." The stipend includes tuition, room, board, and all expenses—a total value of \$180,000.

As network television cameras roll, Davie, normally an articulate young lady, can only muster, "I'm very blessed...excited...I can't explain it!"

In like manner, several students in other high schools were surprised to receive similar offers from this university, whose Trachtenberg Scholarship Program seeks to encourage highly-sought students to stay in their home area rather than accept offers from high-profile, prestigious institutions elsewhere. Davie, for example, has applied at other institutions of higher learning.

Needless to say, students considered for Trachtenberg awards must be tops academically. Criteria just as important are leadership, recommendations, and community service. Davie Yarborough (one of our Society's student members, we proudly note) clearly excels in all these areas.

Volume 9 of Treasury Series Scheduled for May Release

Courtesy of Jack Towers, we have an advance copy of the *The Treasury Shows, Volume 9*, produced by another of our members, Jerry Valburn, with digital master by Jack.

The broadcasts are from 28 July, 4 August and 28 November 1945 at a time when Lawrence Brown was frequently the lyrical voice in the band, Al Sears' distinctive tenor saxophone was much in evidence, and Otto Hardwick's "creamy" alto (to use an apt term a critic many years ago used to describe it) could be enjoyed on "In a Sentimental Mood" and sometimes playing lead, and trumpeter Taft Jordan had considerable solo opportunities.

Other stalwarts were there, too—for example, Nance, Carney, and Hamilton with Brown on "Black Beauty"—but it's just that this 2-CD set gives us an opportunity to enjoy lesser heard renditions of Ellington and Strayhorn pieces.

Thanks again to "the two and only," our members Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn, for more must-have music.

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

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Answers to April's Quick Quiz

Last month we posed some questions based on Brad Bradbie's lecture on "Jazz and Broadway" at the East Coast Jazz Festival. Here they are with the answers:

(a) You can sing "Exactly Like You" along with a trumpet solo on one of the Ellington orchestra's best known recordings. What is the tune and who is the trumpeter? The tune is "Take the 'A' Train" and the trumpet soloist is Ray Nance.

(b) "I Got Rhythm" became what at the hands of Duke and Ben Webster?

"Cottontail"

(c) "Lullaby of Birdland" is based on what song? "Love Me or Leave Me"

First Time !



Advertisement for Howard Theater Show, 22-28 September 1950. Jimmy McPhail had won an amateur contest, the prize being a week's engagement at the Howard. This was his first, and for a number of years his only, performance with Duke and the band.

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

Powhatan "Brad" Bradbie

Brad Bradbie's seminar "Jazz and Broadway" was a highlight of the East Coast Jazz Festival. Worth noting is that a number of persons who attended his session on another topic last year came to this one.

Correction/Clinker Alert: If the above item seems familiar, that's because it appeared in our April issue, with Brad's name misspelled three times!!! He has very graciously accepted our apology, for which we are deeply grateful.

Janna Steed

Salisbury House in Des Moines, Iowa will host The Rev. Janna Steed's Readers Theatre presentation on Ellington's spirituality on April 25. She writes, "Many jazz musicians performed and stayed as guests at this 'American Castle' in Des Moines when it was a family home. I haven't yet researched whether Duke was ever there. If he was, he played on a marvelous Victoria Steinway built especially for the original owners of Salisbury House, an Iowa cosmetics magnate and his wife.

"The 42-room mansion was constructed between 1923 and 1928 with the considerable wealth Carl Weeks made from his women's face powder business. Set on a ten-acre estate, the structure is modeled after the King's House in Salisbury, England, and is furnished with European antiques."

On 5 April, she lectured to the History of Jazz class at Drake University in Des Moines.

Aridell Butler, Geneva Hudson, Esther Williams

Several of our members participated in the March concert of Duke's sacred music at Peoples Congregational Church in Washington, DC. Geneva Hudson sang with the Chancel Choir, Esther Williams was the featured soloist, and Aridell Butler was involved in promotion and ticket distribution.

Luvenia George, Ted Hudson, Davey Yarborough

Grammy in the Schools Day was hosted by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences at Washington, DC's Ellington School of the Arts in March. Among its events was an International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) panel that included Luvenia George and Ted Hudson, with Davey Yarborough as panel coordinator. Others on the panel were author-critic and National Endowment for the Arts official A.B. Spellman, IAJE vice-president Arthur C. Dawkins, and pianist Billy Taylor.

Sjef Hoefsmit

About the changeover of *DEMS Bulletin* from a print format to internet availability, Sjef Hoefsmit writes, "I bid you a hearty welcome. I hope that 'old' DEMS members have found their way to Peter MacHare's web-site and I hope that 'new' members will enjoy and participate in our continuing researches in Ellingtonia."

Ed. Note: See our page 1 about directly accessing the Bulletin on the internet, or obtain a copy from someone who can.

Duke and the Ladies

by Peter MacHare

Gina Rollins presented a delightful sample of Ellington's female vocalists at our April meeting, featuring many recordings that are not often heard. She began with wordless vocals by Adelaide Hall ("Creole Love Call") and Baby Cox ("Hot and Bothered"). We heard the mother of us all, Ethel Waters, sing "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" in a 1932 recording with Duke. In this recording Ethel does a credible imitation of Louis Armstrong!

Appropriately, Ivie Anderson was featured in many selections: "It Was a Sad Night in Harlem" (1936), "Me and You" (1940), "Jump For Joy" (1941), and in two video selections, "Stormy Weather" from the movie "Bundle of Blues" (1933) and "Oh Babe, Maybe Someday" from the movie *Record Making with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra* (1937).

After Ivie, Joya Sherrill, Kay Davis, and Marie Ellington entertained us until intermission. Suddenly it was the 1950s and Betty Roche was swinging through "Take the 'A' Train" (1952). We heard Yvonne Lanauze sing "Love You Madly" and Mahalia Jackson sing "Come Sunday" (both 1958). After Mahalia, Ella Fitzgerald, Rosemary Clooney, Sathima Bea Benjamin, and Alice Babs brought us to the finale, which was Trish Turner's rockin' "Cool and Groovy" from 1968.

I'm sure you'll agree that this was a splendid sampling both of Duke's vocalists and noted guests. Best of all, Gina told us that she had plenty of material that she couldn't fit in and volunteered to do another program. Gina, we'll take you up on that!

Looking Ahead

22 April

"In Mello Tone": A Birthday Tribute to Duke Ellington. The New Ellingtonians and Alumni Guests, dir. by Davey Yarborough. Ellington School of the Arts, 7:30 pm. Donation \$10.

25 April

Concert of Ellington Sacred Music. Blues Alley Youth Orchestra and Chancel Choir of Peoples Congregational Church. Carmichael Auditorium, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, 2:00 and 4:00 pm. Free.

12-15 May

Nineteenth International Duke Ellington Conference, Stockholm, Sweden

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