

Ellingtonia

A Publication Of
The Duke Ellington Society

Volume XIII, Number 5

MAY 2005



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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No Ellington '06 in New York

In "A Note from the President," his regular column in the TDES' current newsletter, Ray Carman writes:

"I am compelled to direct the opening of this month's column to my international friends who gathered in Stockholm. When I left there, I left with a mandate to give it my best effort to host a 2006 International. A time line was established, and I have fallen behind. We believe that we will not be able to deliver a quality program because we cannot set up a stable financial base and key personnel. Regretfully, at this time, I must pull the plug on the conference. This has been a very painful decision."

News of Member Composers And Their Big Bands Is Impressive

In an e-mail to us, Georgia Brown, our newest student member, includes the following:

"My dad asked me to mention that Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra recorded our latest CD in January at Coast Recorders in San Francisco, where the Duke Ellington Orchestra recorded the last session for *...And His Mother Called Him Bill* on November 15, 1967. We recorded "Come Sunday" with guest David Murray on bass clarinet, "Tang" from *Afro-American Eclipse*, and my dad's Guggenheim project, *American Rhapsodies*, a re-composition of *Rhapsody in Blue* that includes an adaptation of Billy Strayhorn's arrangement for the DEO. Dad said that Duke's spirit was a presence felt throughout the session. He promised to send several advance copies next month when we receive test pressings. That's all for now!"

At our request, The Rev. Mark Harvey kindly sent us a copy of the following announcement:

"The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra recently gave the world premier of music director Mark Harvey's *Modern Invention*, commissioned by and performed as part of the National Conference of the American Kodaly Educators held on March 11 in Springfield, MA. The piece featured world renowned vocalist Jay Clayton, takes its inspiration from William Billings, a Revolutionary War-era Boston composer, and was funded in part by Meet the Composer and the New England Foundation of the Arts.

"*Modern Invention* and another recent original work by

Video for May: Battle of the Bands

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

That's our program for May, an old-fashioned "Battle of the Bands," just the way it was done in the heyday of the big bands. Well, not quite the same way, since it's all on video; that's how it has to be done now. Duke's band gets top billing, of course, but who knows what other bands may show up? Maybe Woody, maybe the Count, maybe Benny! Will they be playing their own tunes, or Duke's tunes? Will we have a winner? Is there such a thing as a winner? Who knows? We do know that there will be plenty of music!

Also, rumor has it that some vocalists may drop by, as well—just to put in their two cents. Who? Ella? Sarah? We'll have to wait and see!

The May program will be at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, at 8 pm on Saturday, May 7.** Don't miss the **Battle of the Bands!**

Harvey, 'No Walls,' inspired by Duke Ellington's reflection on 'Walls' [in *Music Is My Mistress*] and dedicated to Doctors Without Borders, will be included on Aardvark's spring concert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, part of national Jazz Appreciation Month. The concert will be held the day following the observance of Duke Ellington's birthday, and so, renditions of 'Come Sunday' and 'Almighty God Has Those Angels,' featuring the band's newest vocal sensation, Grace Hughes, will be given as well. This concert also marks the international release of Aardvark's eighth CD recording, *Trumpet Madness*, on Leo Records." For more information about activities of Mark Harvey and the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, visit: aardvarkjazz.everplay.net.

Mike Brockman, another of our members, is co-director of the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra (SJRO). Now in their 10th season, this absolutely first-rate big band performed its 16th annual Duke Ellington Sacred Concert in Seattle in December 2004. Then on 5 March 2005, SJRO gave a "Duke Ellington's Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" concert at the Nordstrom Recital Hall and repeated it the next day at the Kirkland Performance Center.

Mary Lou's Mass by Mary Lou Williams

Smithsonian Folkways (SFW CD 40815)

Review by Reuben Jackson

Like Duke Ellington's Sacred Concerts, pianist-arranger-composer Mary Lou Williams' religious works appeared toward the end of her career. But like Ellington, Williams continued to refine her already formidable skills—so the 24 titles heard on *Mass* are replete with the variety and conviction which marks her best efforts.

Still, what is perhaps most remarkable about compositions such as "O.W." is the seamless manner in which Williams fuses now sublime, now soaring wordless vocals, Roger Glenn's flute, and a rock-based rhythm section. Rock's "big beat" (to quote Alan Freed) neither intimidated nor inhibited Williams, who also incorporates driving yet tasteful rhythms in the infectious "Praise The Lord."

Lovers of her still-undervalued piano prowess will find much to savor in the brief but melodically rich "Old Time Spiritual," and the instrumental rendition of "Credo," while "Lazarus," which was part of a collaboration between Williams and Alvin Ailey, further highlights Williams' compositional range.

Needless to say, *Mary Lou's Mass* comes highly recommended!

My Unforgettable Jazz Friends by Claire P. Gordon

Arroyo Grande, California: Phase V Press, 2005

Review by Bill Hasson

Subtitled *A Personal Memoir of the Jazz People I Knew*, this book is indeed an unforgettable piece of literary achievement. Firsthand accounts are always the best when you can have an authentic impression of what the person saw, heard and knew. Claire P. Gordon gives us an imaginable look into the lives of some of the greatest artists who made a tremendous contribution to jazz. She knew Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Maxine Sullivan, Dizzy Gillespie, Mary Lou Williams, Dinah Washington, Rex Stewart, Benny Carter, Norman Granz, just to name a few. And all of her stories about them are fascinating. She was married at one time to a great song writer named Irving Gordon.

What makes this book such a reading adventure is that the author was turned on to jazz at the early age of fourteen and would make it her lifelong passion. The importance of how fundamental dancing was to the music of the 30's and 40's is detailed in the types of fast-paced tunes that were created by the artists of her day. Many of the compositions written during that period would develop into the standard repertoire of large and small ensembles, be sung by the most outstanding vocalists and can be heard on broadcasts today. It must have been truly exciting to have lived through that period and interacted with the greats of the music business.

Ms. Gordon gives the reader a personal insight into some of the historical moments while jazz was going through its creative stages. The recording industry, radio stations, night clubs and her work with Duke Ellington are also memorable topics of discussion. She also says that Duke Ellington societies and other independent organizations are making a tremendous contribution in keeping his legacy alive. Those of us who love and cherish jazz are extremely grateful to Claire P. Gordon for giving the reading public a personal view of our important past as well as adding a book for any serious literary jazz collector.

Wilbur Sweatman 1916-35

Oracle Records (BDW 8046)

A note by the Editor

Jazz historians, "mouldy figgs," and interested others will be happy to know that *Wilbur Sweatman 1916-35*, a 2-CD set with what is being described as "outstanding 42-page liner notes," has been produced by Oracle Records. This chronological treasure trove includes music from the Emerson to Vocalion labels.

During clarinetist and leader Sweatman's peak, his and like music was considered a novelty, but that perception was being replaced by consideration of it as a unique music called jazz by the time he opened at Connie's Inn in 1923, where he reportedly employed pianist Duke Ellington at one time.

The collection does not settle the question of whether Ellington recorded commercially with Sweatman. Among the 28 selections, the one that names Ellington among personnel is "Battleship Kate," recorded 18 September 1924 in New York City. For it, "Walter Hall *or* Duke Ellington" [emphasis added] is listed as pianist. For a brief discussion of this issue, see "Newly released [?!] 1924 Wilbur Sweatman Recording" by Steven Lasker in *DEMS Bulletin* 05/1.

Short Sheets . . .

Folkways Music To Be Available Online

The Smithsonian Institution has announced that its Folkways recordings will be offered online in June. The holdings include more than the American folk music for which the label is known, but also traditional music. To keep up with this project, interested persons may go on the internet to smithsonianglobaldound.org; the e-mail address is smithsonianglobalsound@si.edu.

Check Out TDES Web Site

TDES' attractive new web site is up and running. Among its features are articles, calendar, news, and especially for its members, exclusive audio interviews, an archive of its Newsletter, and a discount marketplace. You can access it at thedukeellingtonsociety.org.

Call Issued for Papers on Music Information Retrieval

An International Conference on Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR) is scheduled for 11-15 September in London. The Conference solicits papers, including but not limited to such as: music libraries, archives and digital collections; intellectual property and business issues; Western and non-Western musicology; composition, forms and structures, notation; and social and ethical issues. Prospective presenters are encouraged to submit proposals in areas they feel relate to music information retrieval. For more about the conference and submission of proposals, go to <http://ismir2005.ismir.net/>.

Minton's Lives!

We thank Patricia Braxton for sending us an Associated Press article that states, "decades after its last note was heard" officials said that Minton's Playhouse will reopen later this year at the Cecil Hotel in the street-level space where it used to be. The AP item describes Minton's as "an incubator for the emerging bebop style championed by Parker and Gillespie."

IAJRC Articles of Special Interest

The current International Association of Jazz Records Collectors *Journal* includes "The Gladdest Tale: A Portrait of Duke Ellington" by Donald R. Hanson, not really a portrait but five personal, unique experiences related to Duke and his musicians. The author contends that not only he, but practically any enthusiast who got to know Duke would have such recollections. It all makes interesting reading.

The other is "Duke Ellington Material Recorded in the 1920s and 1930s" by Bjarne Busk, well known to Ellington discographers. It is indeed an impressive list, indicating exhaustive and patient research. Among those he recognizes for "contributions and good advice" for his project are our members Sjef Hoefsmit and Ken Steiner.

Quotation of the Month

Ben Webster taught me everything I know, but he hasn't taught me everything he knows.

— Bill Wood, clarinetist with Ben Pollack, Wingie Manone and Eddie Condon, in "A Man of Music Wit & Wisdom," *International Association of Jazz Records Collectors Journal*, Winter 2004.

Condolences

We extend to the families and friends of Miriam Ewing and Lillian Dicks our deepest sympathy.

Miriam Ewing passed away suddenly from a brain aneurism on 7 March while vacationing in Tucson, Arizona. She is fondly remembered as co-sponsor/producer of Ellington '98 in Chicago and the widow of Gordon Ewing, one of the compilers of the Ellington Itinerary, whom she accompanied to all of the conferences. She leaves a daughter, son, and two grandsons.

Lillian Strayhorn Dicks, the youngest sister of Billy Strayhorn, died on 4 April of multiple system failure. She attended a number and spoke at several of the International Ellington Conferences. She is survived by her husband, Howard; daughter, Leslie Demus, Esq., who often came with her to the conferences; and other members of the Strayhorn family, including nephew Gregory Morris, executor of the Billy Strayhorn estate.

Ellington Lives in The Legacy

Edward Ellington will be celebrating his grandfather's birthday with the New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra on April 21 at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

Edward Kennedy Ellington II was named after his grandfather, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington. He attended Howard University in Washington, DC and the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

In 2001, Edward started giving seminars in his grandfather's honor . . . Soon afterwards he founded "The Ellington Legacy," an 8-piece ensemble featuring 3 horns, 4 rhythm, and a vocalist. The Legacy has performed all over the U.S. and is in the process of recording their first record.

This fundraising concert is sponsored by the Duke Ellington School of Arts Jazz Studies Program and will take place at 10:30 am and 7:30 pm. The 10:30 am matinee will not feature "The Ellington Legacy." Admission is \$3 for the matinee and \$10 for the evening concert.

The concert is a celebration of Duke Ellington's birthday and part of the 30th Anniversary of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

Ed. Note: Reprinted from an Ellington School media advisory.

Looking Ahead

21 April

Eddie Ellington's "The Ellington Legacy" Orchestra
7:30 pm, \$10 Donation

To support New Washingtonians' Summer Travel
Duke Ellington School of the Arts
3500 R Street, NW, Washington, DC

Details: 202-333-2555 and www.ellingtonschool.org

25 April

Duke Ellington Goes to the Cotton Club
30th Anniversary of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts
6:30pm, Reception - 7:30pm, Dinner and Performance
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC
Questions: Alison Tullis at 202-237-0090, Ext. 14

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

Yvonne and James Condell

There is a James and Yvonne Condell Endowed Scholarship at Minnesota's Moorhead State University for entering freshmen and transfer students who meet established criteria. Academic-year \$2,000 stipends are renewable based on maintenance of a 3.0 average at the end of every spring semester. Both James, deceased, and Yvonne, retired, taught at the university.

Davey Yarborough

Davey Yarborough dedicated his Washington Jazz Institute's set at the recent East Coast Jazz Festival to the late Rick Henderson, who informally mentored a young Davey and let him to practice with his "basement band." A highlight at the Institute's performance was Davey on alto playing "Day Dream," the arrangement having been written specifically for him by Rick.

Patricia Willard

A book on Juan Tizol to be published by Rutgers University Press is being written by Basilio Serrano, who presented a tribute to the trombonist-composer-arranger at TDES' 16 February meeting. In a report of the program in that society's newsletter, Frank McGarry writes, "Serrano referred regularly to Patricia Willard's 1978 Oral History Interview with Tizol and his wife and lifelong love, Rosebud. The interview is housed at the Institute of Jazz Studies and, according to Serrano, "is well worth the two days it takes to listen to all ten hours."

Geneva Hudson

During a vacation last month in Mexico, Geneva and Ted Hudson happily discovered that vocalist Cynthia Davis was appearing at La Palapa, on the compound of Club Internacional de Cancun, where they were staying. They and friends caught the show, and during her second set Ms. Davis invited Geneva to join her onstage for a duet on "Summertime." Urged on by "friends" and Ms. Davis, an embarrassed and reluctant but game Geneva did so and the pair received enthusiastic applause.

Sjef Hoefsmit, Ken Steiner, Lance Travers,

Jerry Valburn, Peter MacHare

Sjef Hoefsmit has published another excellent *DEMS Bulletin* (05/1 April-July 2005). How does he do it time after time! Contributors include Ken Steiner, who continues his revealing Ellington itinerary, a historian's delight. Lance Travers and Jerry Valburn keep us up to date with "New Releases on Compact Disc." Peter MacHare contributes a short item, and let remember that Peter is responsible for making the *Bulletin* available to all by publishing it online at his website, www.depanorama.net/dems.

Ted Hudson

Ted Hudson's article in our March 2004 issue on Duke's unfinished opera was reprinted in the April 2005 issue of *Tailgate Ramblings* as "Duke Ellington and Boola: The Boola Script at the Smithsonian."

April Meeting Focuses On Composers in the Orchestra

by Peter MacHare

Having recently celebrated Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn as composers in several member's choice programs, in April we turned our attention to the other composers in the band.

Peter MacHare played a wild version of Juan Tizol's "Caravan" sung by Johnny Mathis from his self-titled debut album of 1956 that was produced by George Avakian. Ted Hudson treated us to quite a few selections. "Frisolous Banta" featured Rick Henderson. Bill Berry was the composer of the trombone delight "Hello, Rev" and the tribute to Paul Gonsalves, "A Little Song for Mex." Louis Bellson composed the tender and beautiful "Tiffany's Corner" as a movement in his *East Side Suite*. John Anderson brought in an album by Johnny Hodges and Wild Bill Davis that featured compositions by Lawrence Brown ("L.B. Blues"), Wild Bill Davis ("Con Soul and Sax"), and Johnny Hodges ("Belle of the Belmont" and "Rockville").

These are only a few of the highlights from an evening that brought us all more than a little warmth on a cold, rainy night.

Other Nominees for JJA Awards

In last month's edition, we named several persons in our Society who were among nominees in various categories for Jazz Journalists Association's Jazz Awards for 2004.

Among other nominees in other categories are: both Strayhorn and Ellington for Lifetime Achievement in Jazz; Bluebird's *Centennial Edition* of Ellington for Jazz Reissue of the Year; Rob Bamberger (Hot Jazz Saturday Night) for Excellence in Jazz Broadcasting; and for books, Claire Gordon's *My Unforgettable Jazz Friends* and Bill Egan's *Florence Mills: Harlem Jazz Queen*.

To Join or Continue Membership in Our Society

Send a check payable to The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

to PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA.

Calendar-year dues remain a bargain: Renewing Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; student, \$5; Brand-New-Member, only \$20

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