

# Ellingtonia

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

**Though We Won't Be All Together On  
April 29**

**Wherever We Are, Let's All Sing:**

 *Happy Birthday To You,  
Happy Birthday To You,  
Happy Birthday,  
Dear Duke  
Happy Birthday To You!*

*Once upon a time a beautiful young lady and a very handsome young man fell in love and got married. They were a wonderful, compatible couple, and God blessed their marriage with a fine baby boy (eight pounds, eight ounces). They loved their little boy very much. They raised him, nurtured him, coddled him, and spoiled him. They raised him in the palm of the hand and gave him everything they thought he wanted. Finally, when he was about seven or eight, they let his feet touch the ground.*

– Edward Kennedy Ellington  
*Music Is My Mistress*

## **Ellington Orchestra At Blues Alley in April**

Ellington enthusiasts, especially in the mid-Atlantic area, will have an opportunity to hear the Duke Ellington Orchestra directed by Barrie Lee Hall, Jr. at the Blues Alley Supper Club in Washington, DC on 18-20 April. There will be two shows nightly.

Hall, a trumpeter and arranger, played with the last orchestra under Duke himself, then with the Ellington band led by Mercer Ellington, and has been a leader of successor ones.

## **April Meeting: Roots of Ellington Revisited**

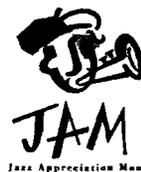
by Mac Grimmer and Pater MacHare, Program Coordinators

Our April program will be something of a mixed bag. The bulk of the program will feature a documentary about Sidney Bechet, *Treat It Gentle*. You may remember that some months back we began an exploration of musicians who influenced Duke Ellington with an evening spent with Willie "The Lion" Smith. Bechet had a tremendous influence on Johnny Hodges in particular. The rest of our program will be a gumbo of interesting jazz information and music.

**Saturday, April 5** is the date. **8:00 pm** is the time. And **Grace Lutheran Church**, at **16th and Varnum streets, NW** in **Washington, DC** is the place. Don't be square, be there!

### **It's JAM Time!**

As is well known, April is Jazz Appreciation Month worldwide. You can go online to its web site, [smithsonianjazz.org/jam](http://smithsonianjazz.org/jam), and click on links to "FAQ," "Resources," "Directory of Jazz Societies," "Partners," its "Logo" and "2008 Poster," "Events" in your area, and other goodies.



### **Swedish Bulletin Now More "Bi-Lingual"**

The Duke Ellington Society of Sweden's *Bulletin*, an excellent quarterly, has habitually included some articles in English in each issue. It recently announced that there will be more in order to make its content more available for foreign readers. (The same applies to [www.ellington.se](http://www.ellington.se), its web site.) This year's first issue, for instance, carries articles in English on Ivie Anderson, Ellington's Grieg adaptations, the recently released *Live in 1958* DVD, Ben Pubols' review of the Willis Conover biography, and an item about the society's Bubber Miley discography.

## Thank You Uncle Edward by Duke Ellington Legacy

Renma Recordings CD 6400 TT66:17

Reviewed by Bob Reny

*Duke Ellington Legacy*: Virginia Mayhew (ldr, ts, arr); Mark McGowan (tp); Wyclife Gordon (tb); Joe Temperley (bar, bass cl); Norman Simmons (p, arr); Edward Ellington II (g); Tom Dicarlo (b); Sheila Earley (perc); Paul Wells (d); Nancy Reed (vcl).

The *Duke Ellington Legacy* is a penny bright small band, usually eight to nine musicians and one, sometimes two vocalists. It's led by the talented tenor player and arranger Virginia Mayhew, with Edward Ellington II, guitar, tagging along to provide the link to his grandfather\*, jazz immortal Duke Ellington. If you're expecting an Ellington wannabe outfit, forget it. *Legacy* is not into ghosting Duke's music, but performs songs he made famous with new arrangements and a modern, exciting, slightly bopish sound. Ms. Mayhew is the key ingredient that makes *Legacy* jell, taking outstanding solos and capitalizing on Norman Simmons' sensitive piano and interesting arrangements. The other members of the group are all seasoned, experienced, uniquely talented musicians who obviously came to play. They have a nice fat sound that gives the illusion of a bigger group. One major reason for the *Legacy* performing so well in the studio is that they tour together in New York and New Jersey and those live engagements promote cohesiveness.

The five cuts featuring Nancy Reed, one of the more accomplished jazz vocalists on the current scene, are all high points in the album. She's made four albums with her husband as part of the Nancy and Spencer Reed Sextet and at least five more with pianist David Leonhardt. Folks in eastern Pennsylvania, where she resides, can catch her at local clubs when she's not touring in Japan or appearing at jazz festivals here, there, and everywhere.

The CD opens with Ms. Reed wailing on Juan Tizol's "Perdido," one of the oldest numbers in the Ellington book. It's usually done as an instrumental, although Ellington made a few recordings with vocalists, usually in a guest capacity. Ervin Drake's lyrics, with their short phrases, are perfect for Nancy's bop-tinged vocalizing, and accompanying solos by McGowan and Mayhew.

"Pretty Woman" lets the grandson, Ellington II, have a few licks on guitar after an ambling bass/piano introduction, followed by Mayhew smoking with a nice warm tenor, the sparse, but melodic piano of Norm Simmons, and some fluid earthy baritone by Joe Temperley.

"Caravan" (1937) is another old number in the Ellington inventory, again usually an instrumental, played slow and exotically or fast and swinging. Billy Eckstine turned the Irving Mills lyrics into a hit that sold over a million copies in 1949. But this version by Nancy, with the group cooking behind her, is one of the best on record. Simmons' arrangement is responsible for its excellence—he keeps the undulating almost hypnotic Latin underpinning for all the solos, not breaking stride as in most of the instrumental versions. Nancy is in good voice, buoyed by the band, and Gordon, Simmons, and McGowan take impressive solos—Simmons punctuating, shading, pulsing throughout and McGowan's tasty muted trumpet solo more Clyde McCoy than Cootie.

"Mainstem" has a busy frontline working the head arrangement, a bass moment, and then Mayhew and company take sequential solos with an interlude on percussion before returning to the head arrangement. It's up tempo and in your face!

Nancy returns for the Ellington/Strayhorn "Day Dream," rich and sultry, just easing into J. Latouche's lyrics while the band shades behind her. Simmons and Mayhew have sensitive pillow talk solos. Ella Fitzgerald sang this with Duke in 1957.

"Toe Tickler," written and arranged by Mayhew, is the only cut not associated with Ellington and features an aggressive, inventive Mayhew throughout the number, her notes tumbling but always in control.

Nancy's fourth cut is "Cotton Tail" and she serves up Jon Hendricks' lyrics with sauce and swagger, scatting a la Annie Ross. Mayhew and Gordon also shine. Duke recorded this in 1940 with his Blanton/Webster band—he made two classics on that May 4th for Victor: "Cotton Tail" and "Never No Lament," which evolved into "Don't Get Around Much Anymore." As an aside, David Richert wrote that "Cotton Tail" was, at the time, a startlingly modern composition, an example of modern jazz before there was ever such a term. The beboppers of the forties in particular were influenced heavily by the record's angular melody, tricky structure, and advanced harmonic theory." (*All About Jazz*, 2007) Ms. Reed sings the Hendricks lyrics, made famous in the 1960 album, *Lambert, Hendricks and Ross Sing Ellington*, vice the truncated five lines that Ella Fitzgerald and others sang with the band in earlier editions. The Hendricks version accurately reflects the modernity of the tune as he tries to duplicate the band's sound in song.

"Moon Mist" is taken at a languid pace, a slow and easy ballad, featuring Ellington II's guitar intro and then thoughtful pensive musings by Temperley and McGowan. (Continued on page 3 under "Duke Ellington Legacy")

## Good News

from Claire Gordon

The Bay Area/San Francisco Duke Ellington Society was founded in 1996 by Claire Gordon. When she relocated to Southern California a while back, Chairman Michael MacDonagh kept it going with bi-monthly meetings. But over the years as often happens, many of the original attendees moved away. Gradually the group fell apart.

Isabelle Revoir, current chair, deserves many kudos for picking up the pieces. We are happy to pass on the news that for the last year, her efforts have brought the group back to life.

## More About Howard Theatre Project

In our last issue, we noted plans underway for the refurbishing and re-opening of the Howard Theater. Since then, as a *Washington Post* article on 25 February states, "an eclectic group of Washingtonians gathered" at a fund raising kick off to revive the theater, "an architectural landmark." Cheers!

## From Our Mailbag (E-mail, that is)

*In recent correspondence to us, our member Brian Gilmore poses a question:*

For weeks I have been contemplating buying the new Herbie Hancock CD as he is one of my all time favorites. Of course, after he won the Grammy for Album of the Year, for *The River: The Joni Letters*, I immediately bought it. It is full of Joni Mitchell remakes, jazz style. However, a few songs are not Joni Mitchell songs. One is Ellington's "Solitude." I don't think a lot of Ellington fans know that. Yet, another version of "Solitude" for the ages to go with all the others. I keep wondering if he put it on there because Mitchell recorded it?

## JJA Awards Nominees

Our readers will be interested in knowing that among the nominees for the Jazz Journalists Association's awards for the year 2007 are the following:

Jazz Reissue, single CD: *A Meeting of the Times: Raheem Roland Kirk & Al Hibbler* (Atlantic Masters 81227); Jazz Reissue, boxed set: *The Duke Box: Ellington in the 1940s* (Storyville 108 86700) and *How Low Can You Go: Anthology of the String Bass, 1925-1941* (Dust to Digital); Composer: Anthony Brown, score for *After the War*; Large Ensemble: Duke Ellington Orchestra conducted by Barrie Lee Hall, Jr.; Saxophonist: Davey Yarborough; Excellence in Jazz Broadcasting: Dick Spottswood, "Obsolete Music Hour," Sundays, 1-3 pm, WAMU 88.5FM; Best Periodical: *DEMS Bulletin* and *Blue Light*; Best Website: DE Panorama

## Quotation of the Month

... in 1951-52, when he led Duke Ellington's reeds, Willie Smith used to upset his colleagues by insisting on regular section rehearsals. This was a regimen unknown to Duke's band. But Ellington's saxes did seem to shine with a new sparkle, sounding fuller and richer, during the time Willie was in the orchestra.

— Eddy Determeyer, *Rhythm Is Our Business: Jimmie Lunceford and the Harlem Express*, p. 38.

## Ellington 2008

**Places for Details about Program, Venues, Lodging, Participants, Registration Include:**

Web Site: [www.ellington2008.org](http://www.ellington2008.org)

E-mail: [contact@ellington2008.org](mailto:contact@ellington2008.org)

Mail: Ellington 2008, 38 Thurlstone Avenue, London, N12 0LP, United Kingdom

## Duke Ellington Legacy (Continued from page 2)

The *Legacy's* performance of "In A Sentimental Mood" is just outstanding! Unlike the many versions that you've heard by Ellington since he wrote, arranged, and recorded the song in 1935 for the old Brunswick label, this fresh Mayhew arrangement has the rhythm section laying down an infectious Latin foundation for delightful solos by Mayhew, McGowan, Gordon, and Simmons. I suppose some of the conservative Ellington fans will be unhappy with this rendition of "Mood," but I think that Duke would be very pleased with Ms. Mayhew's creation.

Ms. Reed sings the final song in the album, "Come Sunday" (1943), moving easily into this solemn piece, buoyed by the band's soft section work. She's excellent throughout and Temperley complements her effort on baritone. Norm Simmons arranged this tune, capturing the mood of Ellington's 1958 version with Mahalia Jackson, but adding his own interpretation to make it unique for Nancy.

Those of you who live in the New York/New Jersey area should watch for *Legacy's* appearances and hear the band in person. When traveling, the band usually retains its core players, Mayhew, Ellington, Simmons, Di Carlo, and Wells, but adds and subtracts other musicians according to availability. Its schedule is on its website ([www.dukeellingtonlegacy.com](http://www.dukeellingtonlegacy.com)). Highly recommended.

\* You may be wondering why the album is titled *Thank You Uncle Edward* rather than *Thank You Grandfather Edward*! Ted Hudson sent me an interesting article by Duke's granddaughter Mercedes in which she explains that Ellington "didn't want people to think he was getting old, so he never allowed his grandchildren to call him 'grandfather.' To them, he was Uncle Edward.."

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

### Olivia McMillan; Steve Mokone

We are pleased to report that Steve Mokone and Olivia McMillan are back in their respective homes following recent hospital stays. Olivia, in fact, felt well enough to make it to our March meeting. We wish both complete and speedy recoveries.

### Ben Pubols; Ted Hudson

Ben Pubols perceptive review of *Willis Conover: Broadcasting Jazz to the World* by Terence M. Ripmaster appears in the current *Bulletin* (Number 1, Årg. 15), published by the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden. It also appeared in our January 2008 issue.

Both Ben Pubols and Ted Hudson have been or will be teaching OASIS courses during the winter-spring term. In Portland, Oregon, Ben has already presented a series on "Louis Armstrong and the Golden Age of Pop Singing." In North Bethesda, Maryland in early April, Ted's topic will be "Meet (or Revisit) Duke Ellington." For information about OASIS sites, programs, and offerings nationally, start at their web site, [www.oasisnet.org](http://www.oasisnet.org); for local OASIS offices, consult educational and cultural directories.

### John Mason

While on a history research trip to South Africa, John Mason had the opportunity to take quite a few photographs of musicians and other performers in Carnival scenes. Upon his return, a number of them comprised a photograph exhibit, "The Cape Town Minstrel Troupes," at the 214 Arts Center in Charlottesville, Virginia. He says that in these minstrel troupes' singing, dancing, and precision marching "you can see elements of the American influence to this day." While there, Prof. Mason, himself an avocational musician, was honored to accept an invitation for induction in the Pennsylvania Crooning Minstrels troupe.

### Mark Harvey

The Rev. Mark Harvey and his Aardvark Jazz Orchestra presented "Come Sunday: Spiritual Songs and Ellington's Sacred Music" at Emmanuel Church in Boston on 24 February. Selections included music from Ellington's Second Sacred Concert, Duke Pearson's "Cristo Radiant," Harvey's "Benedictus," and his latest work, *Urban Meditations*, inspired by Kip Nieman's book of the same name. This performance replaced the 16 December Christmas concert that was postponed because of adverse weather. A CD by the Aardvark group, *American Agonists: Music in Time of War*, is scheduled to be released by Leo Records in April.

### Re: Instructions in Birthday Box, Page 1

If you really, really don't think you can sing, then hum. If you can't hum—well, spend the day listening to those *Happy Birthday Duke!* April 29th Birthday Sessions CDs by LaserLight.

## Gonsalves Doing the "Talking"

Reported by Peter MacHare

At our March meeting, Ted Shell completed his magnificent two-part program spotlighting Paul Gonsalves. Ted prepared extensive program notes for us and then basically sat back and let Paul Gonsalves do most of the talking.

We hear Paul in a variety of tempos and settings. If any of you hadn't heard, Paul was a master of the ballad and Ted let us hear "Stardust," "I Cover the Waterfront," and an especially moving "Over the Rainbow" as well as other slow ballads. Among the up-tempo numbers, I'll mention only one—a version of "It Don't Mean a Thing" showcasing Gonsalves with Earl Hines on piano and Jo Jones on drums that, quite simply, blew everyone's mind.

In addition to Earl Hines and Jo Jones, we heard many other fine musicians. Ray Nance was featured on vocal, trumpet, cornet, and violin. Our member Alan Schneidmill volunteered the suggestion that Ray Nance was simply the best violinist ever to play jazz. We also heard good sounds from other giants such as Hank Jones, Johnny Hodges, and Cat Anderson.

I am also pleased to report that two of our prettiest members, Elinor Eugene and Olivia McMillan, were back with us after missing a few meetings.

## Attention Hodges Fans - And Who Isn't!

Mosaic Records has added *The Complete Verve Johnny Hodges Small Group Sessions* 6-CD box set to its "Running Low/Last Chance" page on its web site.

### To Join or To Renew Membership

Mail your check payable to

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at  
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA.

Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5;

First-time-ever member, just \$20.

Keep in mind that memberships are for the calendar year.

## THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

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