

Ellingtonia

A Publication Of
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XVIII, Number 9

DECEMBER 2010

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

Copyright © 2010 by The Duke Ellington Society, Inc., P.O. Box 15591, Washington, D.C. 20003-0787, U.S.A.

Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/



Erteğün Jazz Series Launched At Turkish Embassy Residence

When their father Münir Erteğün was appointed the Republic of Turkey's ambassador to the United States in 1935, teen-age sons Nesuhi and Ahmad came to Washington, DC.

Both, especially the older, Nesuhi, had an interest in jazz that developed into a love for the art form during their stay in the States. They got to know local musicians, frequented jazz events, and became acquainted with other stars, including Ellington, when they appeared in the area. The brothers held jam sessions in the official Turkish residence, and before long were producing concerts by such "name" musicians as Lester Young and Sidney Bechet.

When their father died here in 1944, they remained in the States. From that time their history is fairly well known by jazz enthusiasts. Among other things, Ahmet became president of Atlantic Records and Nesuhi produced jazz records, including some with Atlantic, and for a time was editor of *Record Changer* magazine.

But to get to the promise of our headline, the current Turkish ambassador, Namik Tam, has announced a renewal, as it were, of the legacy of jazz at the Turkish Embassy Residence. Thus, the Erteğün Jazz Series began with a reception and concert there on 26 October. Our Society had been invited to partner with the Embassy in this initiative.

The program began with welcoming remarks by Ambassador Tam, followed by excerpts from PBS' documentary "Atlantic Records: The House that Ahmet

An All-Strays Member's Choice for December

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

William Thomas "Billy" Strayhorn, Weely, Swee' Pea, Strays is certainly one of the most beloved musicians and composers this great country has produced. Our meeting on 4 December comes so soon after Strayhorn's birthday (29 November) that we decided to celebrate by having an All-Strays Member's Choice.

Bring any recording of a Billy Strayhorn composition or arrangement—the performance can be by anyone in or out of the Ellington fold. Tell us a little about your selection. If you want to bring more than one selection, we'll play it if time permits. We have a good number of new members lately, so this will be your chance to get your feet wet. We look forward to hearing from you.

Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 16th Street, NW, at 16th and Varnum, Washington, DC will be the site of the excitement. The meeting will begin at **7 pm on Saturday, 4 December**. Ever up and onward!

Built" and expository remarks on behalf of the Howard Theatre Restoration Project by Roy Ellis.

Then the Davey Yarborough Jazz Ensemble played a remarkable concert. Yarborough left his alto saxophone at home in favor of his soprano and tenor. Trumpeter Michael Thomas was the other "front line" lead, with Jon Ozment, piano, Jerry Jones, percussion, and Cheyney Thomas, bass providing a tasteful rhythmic foundation. All the selections were highlights, but arguably the best of these bests may have been "Bye, Bye Blackbird" and extended (about 10 minutes!) variations on "In a Sentimental Mood."

The closer was a delightful surprise, "Here's to You" by vocalist Esther Williams Yarborough that had the diverse audience on its feet, a testament to the universality of great music, regardless of genre.

Echoes of Duke Live

by Kusbandet, Arne Domnérus, Lars Estrand, The Swedish Jazz Kings, SAXSÅMYCKÉ, Kjell Fernström, and Kenneth Arnström
Duke Ellington Society of Sweden DESSCD01

Commentary by Theodore (Ted) Hudson

Happily, there are jazz aggregations in the United States that carry on two key criteria that have been constants in the still evolving genres labeled as jazz, blues, and their variations—they have chops and, more important, they swing. Several, for example, that readily come to mind are the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Seattle Jazz Repertory Orchestra, Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, Ellington Orchestra led by Barrie Lee Hall, Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, Asian American Orchestra, and a number of combos whose lineage can be evidenced by the spirit, if not the notes, of Coltrane, Davis, Blakey, et al.

Happily also, there are authentic jazz groups in foreign countries. Enthusiasts who have attended various Ellington Conferences in Europe have been delighted to experience live performances by groups in the host countries. Not the least of these is Sweden, whose *Echoes of Duke Live* CD has been produced specifically for its members by the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden. These groups have the chops and they swing.

Although the CD's title suggests only Ellington and Strayhorn music, there is other good music. Seven groups contribute a total of 14 selections, 9 of which are Ellington pieces.

First, about the non-Ellington standards: Well known alto saxophonist Arne Domnérus, since deceased, supported by only a rhythm section, took up his clarinet to contribute a, if not exactly stomping, then certainly danceable "Stomping at the Savoy." Lars Estrand's "Cherokee," at up-tempo, shows off his vibraphone skills, and his "It Might as Well Be Spring" is as tender as a soft spring morning. SAXSÅMYCKÉ, an 8-piece group, plays the bop standard "Now's the Time," while Kenneth Arnström goes back to an earlier time with "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans," a clarinet feature with some stride piano.

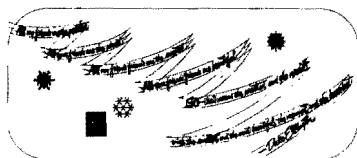
A wide range of Ellington pieces are presented. The Kusbandet big band will especially warm the hearts of fans of early Ellington with pretty-close-to-the-originals "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo" and "Double Check Stomp," replete with trombone growls and a bass that sounds like what Wellman Braud must have sounded like. Other "oldies" include "Black Beauty" by the 7-piece Swedish Jazz Kings, with its Whetsol inspired opening trumpet and the Ellington-Mills "Rocky Mountain Blues" with its banjo and dutifully played trombone.

There's more Ellington to enjoy. SAXSÅMYCKÉ goes all out on "Cotton Tail," with a baritone saxophone in the opening solo with a lighter, less urgent concept than that tune usually elicits from musicians. "In a Mellotone" by Kjell Fernström showcases the leader's piano and a muted "talking" trumpet, and the 5-piece group is perky and agile on "It Don't Mean a Thing." The Kenneth Arnström Combo Band's offering is a delightful Earl Garner-ish "Do Nothing 'Till You Hear from Me."

Overall this is a delightful CD, a showcase of the excellent musicians and groups in Sweden. Congratulations, Duke Ellington Society of Sweden!

Duke's Seasonal Greetings

Reportedly, Duke Ellington the nonconformist sent seasonal greetings at odd times during the year. Here are a several from over the years



[All my friends are the prettiest
All my friends are the nicest
All my friends are the sweetest
All your friends' friends are beautiful
SO—that means the prettiest and the nicest
with the sweetest and the most beautiful,
the merriest and the happiest

- Duke Ellington]

Merrill Lindgreen
Duke Ellington
Happy New Year
Kjell Fernström



Short Sheets . . .

♫ And Still Rising, May We Add? ♫

In its October issue *DownBeat* reports that in the August Critics Poll, baritone saxophonist Joe Temperly, age 81, received 14 votes in the Rising Star category.

♫ Ellington at DC's Tussauds Museum ♫

Rhythms, a publication of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, reports that "Madame Tussauds [Washington] DC is home to the Duke's iconic wax figure and his famous piano!" A graphic on the museum's web site shows Duke seated at a white piano accompanying a lady in white.

♫ Ellington Website Being Updated ♫

If you have visited the official Ellington web site (dukeellington.com) recently you have probably noticed that it was not quite up to date. For instance, there is an item about the release of the Duke Ellington Quarter, and a list of personnel of the Ellington Orchestra includes Quentin "Rocky" White, who died three years ago, as its drummer. Happily, though, a pop-up panel reads, "We apologize but we are currently updating the Duke Ellington website for a better experience. Please come back again later."

Update on Duke Ellington's America

Interest in and appreciation of member Harvey Cohen's *Duke Ellington's America* (University of Chicago Press, 2009) continues. The book is now in its second printing, unusual in that comes within a year of its initial publication.

Cohen's recent schedule included a multi-media presentation on "Duke Ellington in His Own Words" at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) on 10 November. The host for the event is Kenny Burrell, guitarist and Director of Jazz Studies there.

Then, back in London where he currently resides, on 20 November at the London Jazz Festival, Cohen will speak on his book, concentrating on Billy Strayhorn. Next, he is scheduled to be interviewed on 29 November by BBC Radio 3 host Alyn Shipton, who is also a jazz history lecturer.

DownBeat readers probably noticed in its August 2010 issue that *Duke Ellington's America* is an "Editor's Pick."

Quotation of the Month

The Orchestra is a marvelous instrument in its own right. . . . [My] freedom of expression has outgrown jazz. There is no clear dividing line between jazz and other music. I just write to the tonal personalities of the musicians.

– Duke Ellington, quoted by Geoff Smith in "My Dates with Duke—And How We Stopped the Show," *Blue Light* (Summer 2009)

Time for Another Election

We are due to elect officers and board members at our December meeting. If you would like to nominate someone or volunteer yourself to run for an officer or board position, please do so at the December meeting. Otherwise you'll get stuck with the same people you've got now.

If you are presently a board member or officer and do not wish to run for re-election, please send a note signed by both your parents to Peter MacHare before you receive this newsletter.

If you will volunteer for other duties, we need people for the following committees: Refreshments, Membership, and Nominating.

– Brother Juniper

Mosaic Set Ready for Release

The much anticipated limited edition box set by Mosaic titled *The Complete 1932-1940 Brunswick, Columbia, and Master Recordings of Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra* is scheduled for availability in November or early December.

This "definitive" edition of over 100 selections is presented in 11 discs. In addition to the well known Ellington personnel, the set includes selections with Bing Crosby, Ethel Waters, and the Mills Brothers.

It also comes with booklet by Steven Lasker that includes an authoritative text, a complete discography, and track-by-track analyses. There are also rare photographs.

A Mosaic media announcement urges early orders, as "like all Mosaic sets, this edition is strictly limited . . ."

Paul Ellington Reportedly Suing EMI

According to a recent Courthouse News Service online posting, Duke Ellington's grandson Paul Ellington has filed a suit in New York Supreme Court claiming that EMI owes Paul and his siblings unpaid royalties. According to the complaint, EMI was "double dipping, retaining both its own share and that of its foreign affiliate."

Courthouse News Services states that "Ellington seeks a declaration that foreign royalty funneling scheme is a scam, an injunction ordering EMI to pay the correct amount of royalties in the future, and 'hundreds of thousands' of dollars in damages."

The Duke Ellington official web site lists Paul Ellington as the Estate Executor.

Several years ago there was a media report of a federal lawsuit by Paul Ellington against persons who produced a liquor called "Duke Ellington XO Cognac" without getting proper permission. We are unaware of any disposition of this case.

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

Richard Gray

Richard Earle Gray, a member of our Society for several years, died on 29 September 2010. He is survived by a great number of loving and lovely relatives and friends, including his brother John Gray and his great niece Lyndzey Elliott, both members of our Society.

Richard was born 7 July 1939 in Alexandria and grew up in the family home on Duke Street in Old Town. He went to Parker Gray High School and served in the US Army. Richard worked in radio and TV repair and at the Postal Service and the Hecht Company.

Like all of us, Richard loved music. He sang in the men's choir at the historic Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church in Alexandria and was a member of the Ecumenical Choir of Northern Virginia. At the Memorial Service for him, our member John Gray sang one of Richard's favorite songs, "In the Upper Room," and received a standing ovation.

Ed. Note: We thank his friend Peter Machare for contributing this article, and we extend deep sympathy to Richard's family and other loved ones.

Rusty Hassan

Hugh "Rusty" Hassan was selected to conduct an informal interview on 9 November of Blair A. Ruble, author of the recently published *Washington's U Street: A Biography* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press), described in a media release as "the first full history of the iconic D.C. neighborhood." Venue for the event was Busboys and Poets Bookstore in the so-called Shaw area of Washington.

The Perfect Holiday Gift



A Membership in The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

Executive Board

President	Peter MacHare
Vice President	Theodore Hudson
Secretary	Arthur Luby
Treasurer	Francis Arnold

Patricia Braxton	Elinor Eugene
Luvenia George	William Hasson
Joseph McMillan	Olivia McMillan
Theodore A. Shell	

If It's November It Must be 1939

Reported by Brother Juniper

Duke Ellington in 1939 was the theme for our November program, presented by Alan Schneidmill with production assistance from Peter MacHare. This program was the second in a series called "It Was a Very Good Year" where we feature one year of Ellington. Last season, we looked at 1940 and all those great recordings made for Victory on the superb album *The Blanton-Webster Band*. In our November program, we tried to show that 1939 was also a great year, if somewhat overlooked because of what was to come.

We began with the year's theme song, Frank Sinatra singing "It Was a Very Good Year." Then we gave a broad overview of 1939, the year Ellington had his 40th birthday, toured Europe, visited Sweden for the first time, and cut ties with Irving Mills. The rest of the world, however, was not having such a good year, as Hitler invaded Poland and World War II began.

In 1930, Ellington continued recording small groups from the Orchestra; we heard "Dooji Wooji" by Hodges, "Barney Goin' Easy" by Bigard, and the first of the Ellington-Blanton duets, "The Blues" and "Plucked Again." We heard some wonderful Ilie Anderson vocals, "I'm Check in' Out Goo'm Bye" (which more than a few of us realized was the same melody as "Barney Goin' Easy"), "A Lonely Co-Ed," and "Killing Myself," where Ilie shared the vocal with Billy Strayhorn! Some of the band's highlights were "Pussy Willow," the beautiful "Way Low," Serenade to Sweden, "Bouncing Buoyancy," and "The Sergeant Was Shy."

We closed the evening with a selection recorded in February 1940, not 1939, but which wasn't included in the previous program of 1940 because it was made before the Victor contract—"Sophisticated Lady" with beautiful solos by Carney, Hodges, and Brown.

Alan Schneidmill also brought in the Smithsonian LP that this program was based upon—we couldn't help but notice that the recordings were remastered by our members Jack Towers and the late Jerry Valburn and that the photographs for the liner notes were provided by Jack Towers as well. Harry Birthday, Jack! We were thinking of you.

Lastly, I hope you all listened to "Hot Jazz Saturday Night" on your drive home because Rob Bamberger was celebrating the 70th anniversary of the recording of the Fargo concert by replaying an interview with Jack and Rhoda Towers 10 years ago. It was fantastic hearing Jack and Rhoda on the air and all that great music from Fargo.

Attention Members

Please check your membership expiration date on the upper right of your address label. Remember, our membership is by the calendar year. Thank you.