

# Ellingtonia

A Publication Of  
*The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.*



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XIX, Number 4

**APRIL 2011**

Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

Copyright © 2011 by The Duke Ellington Society, Inc., P.O. Box 15591, Washington, D.C. 20003-0787, U.S.A.

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



On April 29  
As in Previous Years  
Do Something Creative  
**Happy Birthday, Duke!**

## Welcome News: A 2012 Ellington Conference in Conception Stage

A recent e-mail from Antony Pepper, chairman of the organizing group for the 20th International Duke Ellington Conference in London in 2008, informs that he and associates have begun work on an "Ellington 2012" to take place in England.

This one would be pretty much structured as the traditional Duke Ellington Study Group conferences, that is, with daytime presentations of papers, research reports, panels, demonstrations, etc. and music in the evenings. Tentative dates are Wednesday through Sunday, 23-27 May. An opening reception would take place on opening night and a banquet on Sunday.

The venue in mind is Brunel University in West London, described by Pepper as an institution with "plush conferencing and 5-star personal accommodations," close to Heathrow Airport and with convenient ground transportation, and has favorable prices since the University is not in the center of London. He also states that details and a call for papers are coming "in due time."

### Clarification

In our previous issue and earlier we reported an announcement by Maison du Duke of their plan to hold an Ellington "conference" in France in 2012. Translated into English the French term "conférence" means, simply, "lecture." Unfortunately, the schedule in a media release in English that we received from Maison du Duke uses the spelling "conference," without the diacritical acute é. So, what the organization is planning is a series of thematic lectures on Ellington by authoritative individuals.

## 1938: It Was a Very Good Year

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

For our April program, Alan Schneider and Peter Machare will examine the year 1938. While it was not a very good year for much of the world, it was a great year for the music of Duke Ellington. Allan had the idea a while back to do programs on a few years of Ellington's music that he thought were pretty terrific. From Alan's idea, Peter got the idea to do a series of programs of some of Ellington's greatest years and to name the series "It Was a Very Good Year" after Frank Sinatra's famous recording. This will be the third program in the series (1939 and 1940 have already been done). Do you have a favorite year of Ellington? If so, consider volunteering to do a program about it.

Be there (don't be square) on **Saturday, 2 April at 7:00 pm** at the beautiful **Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 16th Street, NW**, at the corner of **Varnum Street, Washington, DC**. Guests are welcome.

## April Is Jazz Appreciation Month

"Women & Jazz: Transforming a Nation" is the theme for this year's Jazz Appreciation Month, the 10th such annual event produced by the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History (NMAH).

A JAM web posting states that emphasis will be on "the legacies of jazz women, and their advocates, who helped transform race, gender and social relations in the U.S. in the quest to build a more just and equitable nation." The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, founded in 1937 at Piney Woods School in Mississippi, will be the focus of the JAM Launch, a museum display, and online and public programming by NMAH.

The 2011 JAM poster depicts pianist, arranger, and composer Mary Lou Williams, one of several women in the new 6-CD *Jazz: The Smithsonian Anthology*. The poster, lesson plans, events listings, and other materials may be accessed online via JAM's home page.



**Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club**

Storyville Records 1038415.

**Reviewed by William McFadden**

“Did Duke Ellington make the Cotton Club famous or was it the other way around?” ask the jazz preservationists at Storyville Records in Denmark. What they fail to tell us is that this wonderful new 2-CD set consists mainly of eight different weekly radio broadcasts from the *downtown*, Broadway location during the Orchestra’s second stint (1936-1939). The performances begin in March 1938 and continue consecutively from mid-April through late May. The first two selections, however, are 1937 solo outings by the piano player: a hard-pumping stride “Swing Session” followed by a medley of “Solitude”/“In a Sentimental Mood.”

Then as we go to the Cotton Club a year later, the band is maturing while staying fresh and modern. Gone are Wellman Braud, Artie Whetsol, Freddy Jenkins, and Bubber Miley; enter Billy Taylor, Rex Stewart, and Wallace Jones, with a returning Cootie Williams. The Washingtonians have morphed into a Famous Orchestra led by a composer, an arranger, an international celebrity. These important recordings capture confidence, professionalism, virtuosity—a sound no other outfit (with all due respect to Fletcher Henderson) could ever approach or approximate.

One of the many marvelous aspects of Duke Ellington’s genius is how he could pack so much music into an average time span of three minutes, and on this set of discs we have forty-seven examples. Here the emphasis is on swinging up-tempo numbers for dancing, including four small group interludes. Fortunately, the Ellington repertoire is prominent throughout, with classic ballads and set pieces such as “Mood Indigo” and “Solitude.” Some selections were written for various editions of the Cotton Club Review, for example, “If You Were in My Place” and “I’m Slapping Seventh Avenue with the Sole of My Shoe.” There is some duplication of tunes due to the fact that these programs featured not only Duke’s current hits, but also a smattering of some other popular songs featured by the top bands. The sum of the parts therein offers snapshots of these journeyman musicians at a pivotal point in both their career direction and cultural impact.

Fans of Ivie Anderson (and who isn’t?) will find much to cherish in this collection, as she is featured on sixteen selections showcasing her not merely as the band’s “girl singer,” but also as a stylist who could live the lyric. Soloists featured in rotation throughout the programs include Messrs. Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Lawrence Brown, and to a lesser degree, Joe “Tricky Sam” Nanton and Otto Hardwick. Harry Carney stays mainly in the upper register on many of the arrangements, and Williams tears the joint up completely whilst in the background we hear the swells tapping their cocktail glasses in approval.

A special treat waits at the end of Disc 2: the only three selections recorded during the orchestra’s concert in Stockholm during their second European tour on 29 April 1939—the day that Edward Kennedy Ellington completed his fortieth year—were “Serenade to Sweden,” recorded for the first time a jubilant “Rockin’ in Rhythm,” and “In a Little Red Cottage,” based on a Swedish pop tune.

The ten Columbia System broadcasts were originally recorded directly from the radio on acetate discs with what was then state-of-the-art equipment. Indeed, the fidelity is surprisingly good and improves with each successive recorded broadcast. Be advised that four selections on Disc 2 are truncated by abrupt fade-outs for station ID and commercials.

The booklet with the CD set shares many fascinating details on how the recordings were originally made, on the musicians, and on the music. Noted Ellington scholar Andrew Homzy tells us, for example, that “If Dreams Come True” was a big hit for Duke but came from the Benny Goodman organization, “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart” was a big hit for Goodman but came from You-know-who.

*Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club* belongs in the library of every Ellington collector and devotee. Yet we still haven’t answered the question tendered at the onset. Or as the Maestro might ask, “Just *who* is in the shadow of *whom*?” With The Ellington Effect in full flower as demonstrated amply throughout both discs, let’s simply declare that Duke’s music, genius, and presence had transcended mere venue for quite some time. Without him, the storied nightspot would have been just another gin mill.

## Short Sheets . . .

### ♪ NEA Jazz Awards Faces Budget Cut ♪

President Obama's proposed budget for 2012 includes reduction in funding for the National Endowment for Arts, including no money for its Jazz Masters Awards program. An National Public Radio blog mentions a possible replacement by a more general and less expensive American Artists of the Year Honors.

### ♪ Jazz Education Network ♪

The Jazz Education Network (JEN) held its second annual conference in New Orleans in January. Its first took place in St. Louis in 2010.

According to a Facebook posting, JEN "is dedicated to building the jazz arts community by: advancing education, promoting performance, and developing new audiences."

In a way, JEN takes the place of the International Association for Jazz Education, which filed for bankruptcy in 2008 and went out of existence the next year.

## Update on June Norton

by Patricia Braxton

Many Ellington fans have been wondering about June Norton, a Washingtonian who sang with the orchestra during of 1950 and occasionally thereafter. Recently I discovered with the help of a genealogist friend who got in touch with one of June's cousins that June had later in life married a US military man named Thomas Cuff and that they had resided in Washington, DC.

Then I found in the *Washington Post* archives that June Norton Cuff had passed on October 30, 2004. Her husband survived her. Her funeral was held in her birth city of Alexandria, Virginia and she was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

An entry in a genealogy databases indicates that June was born on October 19, 1924. A history of her family is included in a 2010 survey entitled *African American Settlement in the Uptown Neighborhood of Alexandria, Virginia: A Study of the 200 Block of North West Street* by Paul Doherty. You may find this unpublished manuscript in the Local History Collection, Kate Waller Barrett Branch, Alexandria Public Library in Virginia.

### Quotation of the Month

*It's just the magic name, Duke Ellington. Once you're with him, there [are] no more auditions you have to do for any jobs.*

– Buster Cooper, *Bay News 9*, 17 February 2011



For the Bay News article and a video of Buster Cooper, go to: <http://www.baynews9.com/video?clip> and follow the link.



This year's Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival in Rockville, MD, 18-21 February, like its predecessor the

East Coast Jazz Festival, was a wonderful experience for students, ranging from middle school to high school to college and on to neophyte professional and avocational musicians.

They gained performance experience and, importantly, had an opportunity to meet, talk with, listen to, and in some instances play with seasoned instrumentalists and vocalists. Features for youth included jam sessions, master classes, and clinics. There was even a "Jazz for Small Boppers—Intro to Jazz for Kids" session conducted.

On the other hand, headline veterans were in relatively short supply, but those who there were first rate, for example, vocalist Freddy Cole, saxophonist Jimmy Heath, and trumpeter Randy Brecker.

Duke? Billy? Well, neither was the subject of a session, but were frequently referenced in discussions, master classes, and the like. For instance, in explaining double embouchure, Heath mentioned Johnny Hodges' matchless glissandos, and in speaking of master reedmen on "romantic" tunes, he pointed out Ben, Paul, and Johnny.

With so many offerings taking place simultaneously, singling out "bests" would be, ultimately, what one had taken in and one's tastes. For those who saw the "Sistas Can Sang [sp. sic]: A Tribute to Female Legends in Jazz and Blues" matinee, it was over the top, with wonderful vocalists themselves recalling Holiday, Dinah, Mahalia, Ella, et al. Or, say, one person who caught pianist Vince Evans and his "Gospel Roots" (rhythm section, a male and four lady backup/solo singers) testified that they "had church up in there." So it seemed that no matter what one's choices, one was pleased.

## Traditional Annual Radio Show Will Commemorate Duke's Birthday

On 23 April Bill Saxonis will offer his 12th Annual birthday salute to Duke Ellington on Bill McCann's "Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz" from 8 am to Noon on WCDB - 90.9 and on the internet at [wcdbfm.com](http://wcdbfm.com). Listeners worldwide have made this program an annual tradition.

This year's show will celebrate Duke birthday with an eclectic collection of music, interviews and conversation about his art, life, and times. Highlights will include music from Ellington's "folk opera" *Queenie Pie* and tributes to several members of Ellington's extended family, including Jack Towers, Joya Sherrill, Billy Taylor, and Lena Horne.



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

### About Our Members

#### John Daniel Clipper

At the unveiling ceremony on 10 March of Joseph Daniel Clipper's portrait of Louis Stokes at the recently built Stokes Health Sciences Library at Howard University, Clipper was introduced and on the printed program was accorded "special recognition" for his photographic artistry.

#### Ken Steiner

At Storyville's request, Ken Steiner will write the liner notes for the forthcoming Volume 15 of the *Duke Ellington Treasury Series (DETS 15)*.

#### Ted Hudson and Bob Reny

Ted Hudson's review of *Duke Ellington Is Alive* by the Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra, first published in October 2010 issue of *Ellingtonia*, has been reprinted in *IAJRC Journal* 44:1 (March 2011).

In the same issue of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors publication, Bob Reny, a regular writer, has articles on recordings by Buddy Collette and Charlie Ventura.

## Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, 9 April, 2:00pm

Spring Jazz Series, Kensington Park Library  
4291 Knowles Avenue, Kensington, MD

"Conversations about Jazz" featuring John Fass Morton, author of *Backstory in Blue: Ellington at Newport '56*; Patricia Willard, Ellington's longtime publicist; and Hugh (Rusty) Hassan, WPFW "Night Jazz" host. An added attraction is a exhibit of photographs by Theodore (Ted) Shell from his Ellington collection.

Wednesday, 20 April, 7-9 pm

DC Music Salon - Watha T. Daniel Library  
1630 7th St, NW, Washington, DC

"Duke Ellington as Our Neighbor" with special guest John Hasse, author of *Beyond Category*, showing of the documentary *Duke Ellington's Washington*, and conversation. Several of our members are expected to contribute to the discussion.

Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra

Wednesday-Saturday, 13-15 April

Small Group at Durham Museum, Omaha, Nebraska

Saturday, 23 April

Full Orchestra "Big Band Jazz on the Mall"

Sylvan Theatre, Washington, DC



### Want Your Event Listed on the JAM Calendar?

JAM invites events for its national and international calendars. Just e-mail your event to [jazz@si.edu](mailto:jazz@si.edu), tweet it @celebrateJAM, or post it on the Facebook wall.

## March Meeting: Selections from Complete Brunswick, Columbia and Master Recordings by Art Luby, Secretary

The March meeting of the Society featured an excellent Peter McHare on the Ellington Orchestra's recently unearthed recordings from Brunswick, Columbia, and Master labels restored by sound engineer Steven Lasker. The recordings span a period from the early to mid-thirties just as the band emerged from its Cotton Club era when it featured one of the strongest trumpet sections in the history of the orchestra, including Arthur Whetsol, Rex Stewart, and Cootie Williams at the dawn of his career.

One of the numbers – "Dusk on the Desert" – contains a brilliant solo, probably produced by one of the aforementioned musicians, though several commentators make a case for trombonist Lawrence Brown. There was also a fine number by Bing Crosby, who (at least at that stage in his career) was a surprisingly intense jazz singer who fit in well with Duke's powerhouse band. The collection contains Barney Bigard's classic solo on "Clarinet Lament" and Cootie Williams' rendition of "Echoes of Harlem," number that never seems to lose its impact.

As Peter made clear, we only scratched the surface during the evening of what has now become available from that crucial era in the band's history. Hopefully we will have occasion to review more of this material in coming meetings.

### 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.

## To Join or To Renew Membership

Send your check payable to  
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc  
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA  
Our dues remain a bargain:  
Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5  
First-time-ever member, just \$20.

### 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	

