

# Ellingtonia

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



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XIX, Number 5

**MAY 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/)

## Maurice Lawrence, Founder, Passed Away in December

Maurice A. Lawrence, our founder and first president, died in Pompano Beach, Florida on 2 December 2010, following an extended illness.



Maurice A. Lawrence  
Photo from the Official Program for  
Ellington '99

He was born in New York City in 1919 in a family of professionals: his father was an attorney, one uncle a judge and another a physician, an aunt an attorney. During his growing up days in Harlem, Maurice saw Duke, Count, Lunceford, Ella, and other luminaries at the Apollo Theater and heard them and others on recordings and the radio.

After graduating from a private secondary school in New Jersey, Maurice enrolled in Howard University and earned a bachelor's degree in political science. While a student there he met Duke Ellington by chance, having been assigned to escort him from the Howard Theater to the campus to address some students. According to an article in the 1998 issue of *Gold Coast Jazz Notes*, when Maurice escorted Duke back to the theater, invited by Duke, he "went backstage and spent time with Ellington. Their friendship eventually became a father-son relationship which lasted until the musician's death in 1974." And it was not unusual for him to travel with the Ellington band on their bus.

Early in the 1950s, Maurice invited friends, especially members of his fraternity, to meet at his home to listen to and discuss the music of Ellington. Soon, under Maurice's leadership they organized themselves as The Duke Ellington Jazz Society with him as president. This

## May Video Program

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Our May program will feature recently released film *Reminiscing in Tempo*, a collage of Ellington's music and people speaking about him. Our video programs are always popular, since we get to see as well as hear some of our heroes. Our vice president, Ted Hudson, will present the program.

Our member Alan Scheidmill is sponsoring a contest. Make a list of musicians who had acting roles in movies. Jimmy Rushing in *The Learning Tree* is one example to get you started. Bring your list to the May meeting. Alan will award a cake to the winner, so don't forget to make a list.

The program will be on **Saturday, 7 May at 7 pm** at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 - 16th Street, NW**, at the corner of **Varnum Street, Washington, DC**.

---

was likely to have been as early as 1953 and as late as 1955, as referenced by a local newspaper, subsequent print media, ephemeral documents, and personal recollections. At Duke's suggestion they dropped the word "Jazz" from their title.

When the International Duke Ellington Society, an umbrella organization, was founded in California by Bill Ross in 1958, this Society joined, adding "Chapter 90" to its title to indicate its geographic area. However, the federation did not last long, though there are still Ellington societies that were established as members of it. Later the appellation "Chapter 90" was dropped from our Society's name.

As far as we know, our Theodore (Ted) Shell is the only surviving member of this founding group. Maurice was succeeded as president by Juanita Hardwick (Otto's widow), Terrell Allen, Ted Shell, Ted Hudson, and Peter MacHare

Maurice had a long career in the Federal service,  
(Continued on page 3 under "Maurice Lawrence")

## **Reminiscing in Tempo by Gary Keys**

(MVD Visual MVD 50710)

Reviewed by Theodore (Ted) Hudson

In 1980 Gary Keys made a documentary entitled *Memories of Duke* that was not available to the general public. Now his recently released DVD *Reminiscing in Tempo* has been called a “companion piece” to the previous film, mainly because it contains some of the former’s content.

Duke, we have been told, never wanted to celebrate his birthdays. (Well, the White House bash was another thing, wasn’t it?) So the setting for *Reminiscing in Tempo* is a birthday party for him at his sister Ruth Ellington Boatwright’s home 23 years after his death. By then such birthday celebrations hosted by her had become annual affairs.

Guests included family, friends, and musical “comrades” (to use a term from the film), including, for example, granddaughter Mercedes Ellington, pianist and Ellington authority Brooks Kerr, former band vocalist Al Hibbler, pianist Billy Taylor, supper club singer Bobby Short, jazz archivist and author Dan Morgenstern. Principal commentators at the party include Taylor, Short, and of course, Ruth. All told, the comments, opinions, recollections, and anecdotes add immeasurably to the success of the film.

Interspersed with guests’ comments and conversation are clips of Ellington in various contexts, the band in performance, travel scenes, and so on. All of this is divided into ten segments, not always clearly delineated by verbal continuity, but who really cares.

A promoted central feature of this film is the so-called *Mexican Suite*, a misnomer, for such a completed, integrated composition does not exist, although Duke had intended one. He changed the title to *Mexicantipación* but finally included individual pieces in his *Latin-American Suite*.

Nonetheless, this 1968 band seems at its peak performing “Oclupaca” and the pensive “The Sleeping Lady and the Giant Who Watches Over Her.” And in this *Suite* segment are especially engaging shots of Mexico’s people and touristy attractions.

There is other good music, some on film clips and some by party guests. Duke gently caresses “Single Petal of a Rose”; guest Kerr accompanies Hibbler on “Do Nothing ‘Till You Hear from Me”; Billy Taylor, recalling how Ray Nance played it at Billy Strayhorn’s funeral, offers “‘A’ Train” as a slow ballad; and “In a Sentimental Mood” is first rendered lovingly by a guest, pianist and vocalist Hiromi Saki, the scene segueing into a film clip of Paul Gonsalves on tenor saxophone, and then the tune ending back at the party with Taylor playing it on Ruth’s piano.

For this reviewer, an unexpected high spot of music closes the film. In the background the orchestra has been grooving on a blues with vocals by Tony Watkins and Trish Turner, the credits have run, the screen has grown dark, and the band has calmed down. You think it’s all over. But then Buster Cooper offers reflective parting words on his trombone. Ahh — nothing less than a benediction!

Add *Reminiscing in Tempo* to your collection. Hear wonderful music, see rare film clips, and learn important oral history all at the same time.

---

### **A Note about Wilbur Sweatman**

Wilbur Sweatman was an early vaudevillian, a musician who could play three clarinets at the same time, and perhaps the first African-American to make a recording labeled “Jass.” For Ellington devotees it is important to know that Greer, Hardwick, and Duke played in Sweatman’s band at a Lafayette Theatre engagement in Harlem in 1923 and on other occasions, but declined to go on the road with him. Later Duke reportedly said that “I learned a lot about show business from Sweatman,” but nothing else is known about their artistic relationship, if any.

Did Duke record with him? In *DEMS Bulletin* (05/2), Sjef Hoefsmit responds to a query about whether it is Duke on piano on Sweatman and His Acme Syncopators’ recording of “Battleship Kate” for Gennett records. In brief, his response, after noting that there was not much piano to be heard, was that it is “unlikely” and noting that Duke had his own band at the time.

A new book out by Mark Berresford, *That’s Got ‘Em! The Life and Music of Wilbur C. Sweatman* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi), likely reveals much about this multi-talented vaudevillian, musician, and, in his own way, businessman at a time when Ellington was evolving as a musician, composer, and showman.

## Short Sheets . . .

### ♪ *The Duke Ellington Express* ♪

The online newspaper of P.S. 4M / The Duke Ellington School Community ("The Mighty Dukes") in New York City is titled *The Duke Ellington Express*.

### ♪ *Clark Still At It (We Hope Mumbling, Too)* ♪

We see that Clark Terry is listed to be featured with the University of Missouri St. Louis Big Band at the St. Louis Jazz Festival on 15 April.

### ♪ *But Had Harvman Been Born Then?* ♪

The first sentence of a paragraph in an online reprint of Nat Henthoff's "The Duke, Before My Time" from the 8 March *Wall Street Journal* begins, "In 1966 Duke told interviewer Harvey Cohen . . ." Cohen, as we know, is the author of recently published *Duke Ellington's America*.

### ♪ *Learning about Duke in Comfort of Home* ♪

The Homeschool Learning Network had a special "Duke Ellington Lesson Plan" for 29 April.

## Smithsonian Releases New Jazz Anthology

Back in 1973 Martin Williams, a director of jazz at the Smithsonian and since deceased, produced the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, six vinyl LPs, a breakthrough of sorts. Recognizing that almost two generations of jazz history have taken place since then, the Smithsonian, through its Folklore label, has now released a new six-CD collection, *Jazz: The Smithsonian Anthology*.

The previous one reflected Williams' estimates of proportional importance of the artists. It paid relatively more attention to the Armstrongs, Ellingtons, Davises, Gillespies, et al in this respect. The new anthology differs in that more artists are included, but are intended to be more representative of the historical sweep of jazz, from Scott Joplin to, say, the Mahavishnu Orchestra—what some may call evolving jazz, world music, or fusion. A key to the different approaches may be sensed from the two collections' titles; one uses the term "Classic" and the other simply the more connotatively inclusive term "Anthology."

## Quotation of the Month

Never the world's most highly animated showman, or greatest stage personality...but a tone so beautiful it sometimes brought tears to the eyes...this was Johnny Hodges...this is Johnny Hodges. . . .

Johnny Hodges never over-did, never under-did. He just played Alto Saxophone.

— *Duke Ellington, excerpted from a typescript Eulogy for Johnny Hodges, who died on 11 May 1970*

## Maurice Lawrence (Continued from page 1)

including the US Postal Service and the last nine years with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In the former he was the first person appointed as a US Contract Compliance Examiner, handling complaints and grievances of employees. This prepared him for the EEOC, where among other duties, he was an original member of the White House Task Force for the implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. His work with EEOC was sometimes risky. For instance, an EEOC document states that at certain times and places where they were conducting investigations and hearings, he and other EEOC personnel could not be safe riding in government-marked cars.

After retiring, Maurice and his wife Sylvia lived in the Bahamas for 10 years, neighbors of Count Basie. Having relocated in Florida, in 1993 Maurice conceived of and led in the organizing of the Statesmen of Jazz, a group of highly regarded jazz players over the age of 65.

The personnel changed from time to time, depending mainly upon availability. Among them were such stellar veterans as Harry "Sweets" Edison, Louie Bellson, Clark Terry, Al Grey, Buddy Tate, Bucky Pizzarelli, Warren Vaché, Panama Francis, Claude "Fidler" Williams, and (at age 93!) Benny Waters. The musical director for a time was "The Judge," bassist Milt Hinton. Frequently accompanied by Maurice, the group toured nationally and performed in Japan.

Several configurations of the Statesmen were recorded on *Statesmen of Jazz: A Multitude of Stars* (Arbor Records) and *Statesmen of Jazz* CD sponsored by the American Federation of Jazz Societies (Clinton Recording Studios).

Maurice was the recipient of honors and awards during his distinguished career in government and for his activities in cultural affairs. He was one of four official honorees at the centennial commemoration of Duke Ellington's birth, the 17th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference, popularly known as "Ellington '99," that took place in Duke's home town, Washington, DC, in 1999. On that occasion he also was a member of a panel entitled "Memories of Shared Blessedness" composed of several people who knew Ellington personally in various ways.

We revere Maurice Lawrence as our founder and, to some fortunate persons in our Society, as a dear friend of many years. We extend to his wife, Eulamae Lawrence, other relatives, and his other loved ones our sincere condolences.

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

### Mark Harvey

Mark Harvey's Aardvark Jazz Orchestra celebrated the Charles Sumner Bicentennial on 16 April in a concert in Cambridge, MA and on 30 April performed an "Ellington Celebration, from Standards to Sacred" concert in Boston, both JAM events. Rev. Harvey is a descendant of Sumner, a US senator and tireless abolitionist. For the occasion, he wrote and premiered *Sumner* in honor of his ancestor.

### John Edwin Mason

*African Lens* has just published 26 great photos taken by John Edwin Mason at the Cape Town International Jazz Festival and a brief article in which he talks about the music. They may be seen at <http://t.co/szx4CA> and [african.lens.com/stories/photos](http://african.lens.com/stories/photos). Among artists from the US were Wayne Shorter and Esperanza Spalding. For his analytical write-ups of the performances by these two and others, check out Prof. Mason's blog at [www.JohnEdwinMason.com](http://www.JohnEdwinMason.com).

### Harvey Cohen

Harvey Cohen, author of *Duke Ellington's America*, recently premiered a radio show titled "Whenever You're on My Mind" on King's College London Radio. Termed as a "adventurous monthly program," it will present eclectic new and old recordings. Every month Harvman (by which he will be known on the show) will present a musical historical special. You don't have to be in London to catch the broadcasts; they may be heard at: <http://www.kclradio.co.uk/music/index.php>.

### Patricia Willard, Ted Hudson, Sjef Hoefsmit, and Morris Hodara

As far as we can ascertain, no one has attended all of the International Duke Ellington Conferences, half of which have taken place outside the United States. And also as far as we can ascertain, only four have missed only one. They are—Tah Dah!—our Morris Hodara, Sjef Hoefsmit, Ted Hudson, and Patricia Willard.

### William (Bill) Flemmons

We learned just recently that Bill Flemmons, a member of many years, perhaps back to the 1960s, died in November. In recent years health issues prevented his regularly attending our meetings.

### Rusty Hassan, John Morton, Patricia Willard, and Ted Shell

At a Spring Jazz Series session at Kensington Library in Maryland on 9 April, Rusty Hassan moderated, Patricia Willard provided fascinating insights of Duke's personality and composing habits, author John Morton recounted his epiphanic first hearing of the recording of Paul Gonsalves' '56 "interlude" at Newport that resulted in his writing of *Backstory in Blue*, and Ted Shell provided an exhibit of his Ellington related photos.

## The Mosaic Recordings – Installment 2

by Art Luby, Secretary

The April meeting of the Society continued our exploration of Mosaic's set of 1932-40 Brunswick, Columbia and Master recordings (with a booklet containing a discography, track-by-track analyses, and expository essay by Steven Lasker). The presentation, organized by Peter MacHare and Alan Scheidmill, focused on 1938 which, as Peter and Alan pointed out in their notes, was generally a very bad year for the world, but quite a good year for the orchestra.

This installment featured original performances of some of Duke's greatest standards ("I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" and "Prelude to a Kiss"), but also a number of powerful swing numbers with titles illustrating Duke's love of and talent for the double entendre. The presentation also highlighted several numbers arranged for members of Duke's brass section and, after listening to the series of solos on "Braggin' in Brass" (Williams, Brown, Stewart) or Rex Stewart's incredible valve work on "Boy Meets Horn," one doubts that the assortment of trumpeters and trombonists in the 1938 orchestra was ever surpassed by any big band.

## Errata aka Clinkers

The surnames of Peter MacHare and Allan Schneidmill were misspelled on page 1 of our last issue. And on page 4 in the box that lists our Executive Board members, the names of Tom Henderson and William McFadden were replaced by those of two former members. We shamefacedly apologize for these egregious typos. ☹

### 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
Tom Henderson	William McFadden
	Theodore A. Shell