

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Founder and Editor

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Season's Greetings *from Our President*

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. sends you greetings and wishes you joy and good health as we look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving, our beautiful religious holidays, and the New Year.

We can look back at the past few years with satisfaction, as our active membership has grown. We have new members to get to know and old members who have returned to the fold. Let's keep things going in this direction—ever up and onward, as Billy Strayhorn would have said.

Encourage any music lovers you know to come to our meetings. If you have never done a program, consider doing one. If a whole two-hour program (really less since we have our "intermission") seems daunting, get with a friend and do a program together.

In 2012, we are looking forward to our holiday party and plenty of Ellington on video that have never seen. An exciting time to introduce some new members.

ELLINGTON 2012

23-27 May 2012 - Woking, England

Opening Reception - Four Days of Papers and Panel Discussions - Wednesday Evening Reception

Evening Concerts - Sunday Closing Banquet - And More

For details about registration, call for papers, daily schedules, programs, special attractions, lodging, and other information about the Conference, go to

www.Ellington2012.org

Other contact information: Postal address: Ellington 2012, 2 Julian Close, Woking, GU21 3HED, United Kingdom; E-mail address: E12@Ellington2012.org

A "beneficial" registration rate

for the Conference continues until the end of November.

Registration forms are available online at

www.ellington2012.org/E12-Oct-Reg-Form.pdf

December Meeting: See Ellington Performing in Copenhagen, 1965

by Peter MacHare

You won't want to miss our December program featuring a video made for two television specials of Duke Ellington performing live in 1965 at Copenhagen's Falkoner Center.

The DVD bears the title *Duke Ellington: Copenhagen (1965), Parts One and Two*. Program content for it is by Storyville Records, issued by arrangement with the Danish Broadcasting Corporation and Lene Ellington, and distributed by Image Entertainment.

Highlights include stunning performances by Johnny Hodges and Paul Gonsalves as well as all our other heroes of those days. There are unique moments in the proceedings as well, for example, as an encore, the composer playing "Take the 'A' Train" with the orchestra, and Gonsalves, mouth-piece at the ready, copping a little nap time.

As we say above, you won't want to miss this program, so be sure to reserve the date, **Saturday, 3 December at 7 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.**

Two Versions of *The Nutcracker* To Be Performed on Same Program

The Nutcracker Suite will be performed by the Temple University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Luis Blava, and the Ellington-Strayhorn version of it will be performed by the Temple University Jazz Band directed by trumpeter Terell Stafford.

The format will be unusual: Side-by-side, Blava will lead the symphony using Tchaikovsky's original work, and Stafford will lead his group using the Ellington-Strayhorn reinterpretation.

It will all take place on 5 December 2011 at Temple University's Lew Klein Hall in Philadelphia.

Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry, with Gwen Terry

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011

Reviewed by William McFadden

At an age where most of us were still becoming familiar with spelling and reading, Clark Terry made up his mind that he would play the trumpet—jazz trumpet. Having been blessed with singular talent, he augmented it with ambition and charm. They have never once failed him for nearly ninety-two years! They are the constant thread around which the story of Clark Terry is told. The fortunate reader can at last savor the facts which surround the life of a great artist and a great human being.

For twenty years, Mr. and Mrs. Clark Terry have devoted their minuscule spare time toward capturing this mostly chronological first-person narrative. What's especially fascinating is the way in which the pace of that narrative gracefully ages in synch with its teller. The people and places, the sights and the sounds (even smells) unfold in a vivid, almost cinematic reverie from the beginning chapters through his early successes in the organizations of Basie and Ellington, respectively. Terry's years at the height of his career as a first-call studio musician and member of the NBC Orchestra are portrayed occasionally in a bittersweet vein, yet his motto remains, "Keep on keepin' on."

The last several chapters cover life, love, and learning—both given and received. They also describe an itinerary and an endless cycle of gigs which might have exhausted lesser mortals. Adversity in any form is never something to stop him; inferiority and feeling the victim can never be regarded as options.

As might be expected, Mr. Terry regales the reader with his warmth, intellect and wit. There are no axes ground, tales told, scores settled, or dirt dished. Some may wish to learn the real cause behind the tardiness of Messrs. Clark Terry, Jimmy Woode, Ray Nance, and Jimmy Hamilton on that Saturday at Newport in 1956. Others may long for a "fly on the wall" perspective on the many times Terry and Dizzy Gillespie would hang out at Louis Armstrong's house. Prepare to be disappointed, for our storyteller will slyly set the stage but the action and script become products of the reader's imagination.

What little ire expressed is appropriately reserved for racism and segregation, narcotics, and lackadaisical student musicians. Happily, there are individual chapters devoted to portraits of Count, Duke, Miles, even Norman Granz, and an especially tender memory of his beloved late wife, Pauline.

This is a book that will uplift, inspire, and make you laugh out loud. A life lived this well, with constant integrity, enthusiasm, positive energy and good will is something for which to cheer. The celebration begins when you open the pages of *Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry*.

This Side of Strayhorn, by Terell Stafford

(MaxJazz MXJ 408)

Reviewed by John Edwin Mason

Long ago, in a land far, far away, few musicians were as shrouded in myth as Billy Strayhorn. He was the tortured soul who wrote "Lush Life," the booze-soaked anthem of loneliness and despair, and the talented but ultimately minor satellite that orbited around Duke Ellington's radiant genius.

Over the last ten or fifteen years, that mythical Billy Strayhorn has all but disappeared. Writers and musicians have teamed up to allow the man whom Wynton Marsalis once called "a Duke Jr. of sorts" emerge as one of the true giants of twentieth-century music.

Unencumbered by the need to shatter myths or prove a point, Terell Stafford's new CD, *This Side of Strayhorn*, is a joyful, swinging celebration of Strayhorn's music, ranging from standards such as "Raincheck" and "U.M.M.G." to rarely heard gems like "Smada" and "Lana Turner."

This is very much Stafford's album. Even though he's a generous leader, allowing other members of the quintet ample room to solo, he and his trumpet or flugelhorn set the mood on most of the songs. Pianist Bruce Barth's charts are respectful and understated without being simplistic. Neither he nor Stafford sets out to reinvent the wheel. Nothing on the album would surprise Strayhorn, but all of it would probably delight him.

The CD opens with a sunny, up-tempo reading of "Raincheck." Stafford's formidable, fluid chops immediately on display, as is his fine musical taste. Peter Washington contributes a singing, melodic bass solo that's a model of concision and expression.

The band delivers a gently Latin take on "Smada" before moving on to "My Little Brown Book," a small masterpiece unto itself. Stafford's muted trumpet and the buttery, Websterian sound of Tim Warfield's tenor conjure up the bluesy feel of Ellington's great bands of the '30s and '40s. Especially in the lower range, Warfield's tone has the warmth and power of a lion's purr. Given enough space, which he has on "Multicolored Blue," it envelops you like a fat lover on a cold night.

Stafford is reflective, but not sentimental, as he plays "Lush Life's" melody over quiet chords from Barth's piano. Barth takes the first solo and brightens the mood, banishing all

(Continued on page 3 under This Side of Strayhorn)

Short Sheets . . .

♫ Clark Terry Subject of Cover Story ♫

The cover of the July 2011 issue of *JazzEd, the Jazz Education Magazine* has a photograph of Clark Terry, and its feature article of the month is mainly about his teaching and mentoring, one of his passions.

♫ "Suite Life" Celebrates Strayhorn ♫

The birthday of Billy Strayhorn was celebrated on 26 November by "Suite Life: A Billy Strayhorn Birthday Bash" at Pittsburgh's Kelly Strayhorn Theater. The event included his music, both hits and rarely heard gems performed by drummer Roger Humphries and an ensemble of local musicians and vocalists.

The theater is named in honor of Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Strayhorn.

♫ "Lush Life" One of Most Popular Songs ♫

A chapter on Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life" is in the book *Stardust Melodies: A Biography of 12 of America's Most Popular Songs* by Will Friedwald (Chicago: Acapella Books, 2004).

♫ Lasker, Mosaic Earn Another Accolade ♫

Last month we noted that Steven Lasker for his notes and Mosaic for its production won the Jazz Journalists Association award as best historic album *Complete 1932-1940 Brunswick, Columbia, and Master Recordings of Duke Ellington and His Orchestra*.

Congratulations are in order again! Now they have won the Historical Release of the Year award in *DownBeat's* Annual Critic's Poll.

Quotation of the Month

On Monday January 8, 1940, Duke and the Orchestra opened a two-week engagement at the Southland Café in Boston. Right in the middle of a set, Blanton's predecessor, Billy Taylor, packed up his bass and told Duke, "I'm not going to stand up here next to that young boy playing all that bass and be embarrassed." Taylor then left the stage and went out the front door. . . . On that date, Ben Webster rejoined the band on tenor sax, and the Duke's recordings from 1940-1942 have been known as The Blanton-Webster Band, which many critics regard as the Ellington orchestra's golden period.

— excerpt from Fred Blueckstein, "Jimmie Blanton." *Duke Ellington Society of Sweden Bulletin* Nr 3, September 2011.

This Side of Strayhorn (Continued from page 2)

thought of late nights and stale drinks. Stafford then solos in a similar vein, until he ends the tune in the same contemplative mood with which he started. It's an unconventional reading of "Lush Life," and it's utterly convincing.

Other highlights include an appropriately sultry reading of "Lana Turner" and an exuberant, bop-inflected account of "Johnny Come Lately." The latter tune features strong, athletic solos from Barth and drummer Dana Hall and brings the album to a close.

There's an understated elegance—a kind of restraint—to all these performances, even when the band is stompin' the blues. I'm sure that I'll be coming back to it for many years to come. Highly recommended.

Personnel: Terell Stafford, trumpet and flugelhorn; Tim Warfield, soprano and tenor sax; Bruce Barth, piano; Peter Washington, bass; Dana Hall, drums.

Rare Video Uncovered

A video, little known even among Ellington enthusiasts, titled *Le Roi du Jazz Americain: Duke Ellington et Son Orchestre* [The King of American Jazz: Duke Ellington and His Orchestra] may be viewed and downloaded free on the internet at www.archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.47984, and a DVD version of it may be bought from Amazon.com. (A note at this source reads, "This product is manufactured on demand when ordered from Amazon.com.")

The film's venue and origin are in question. Possibilities include a video or telecast of Duke at a theater in Lebanon, a broadcast from some other place in Lebanon or in Baghdad, and a kinescope of a performance in Iraq.

What is reasonably certain, though, is that the performance occurred in the Near or Middle East, 1963, while the orchestra was on a State Department tour, at a time of serious unrest in the area.

Looking Ahead (Wherever You Are)

Mason du Duke Orchestra

5 Dec. *Duke Ellington et le Sacré*
College des Bernardins, Paris, France

Westminster Church

Dec. tba *Billy Strayhorn*
At the church, 401 Eye Street, SW, Washington
(Watch for or call church for updated information.)

Aardvark Jazz Orchestra

10 Dec. *39th Annual Christmas Concert*
Emmanuel Church, Boston, MA

Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra

26 Dec. *23rd Annual Duke Ellington Sacred Concert*
Town Hall, Seattle, WA

The Strathmore

The Strathmore, in North Bethesda, Maryland, is presenting a "Discover Duke Ellington" series in February:

- 16 Feb. *Mostly Ellington* by Robert Glasper, piano
- 17 Feb. *Brian Stokes Mitchell Sings Ellington's American Songbook*
- 18 Feb. *Big Band Ellington: Duke Goes Latin*
Featuring the Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra with Arturo O'Farrill
- 19 Feb. *Ellington: A Sacred Concert*
Featuring the Morgan State Choir and the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra

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

In a discussion of the *Duke Ellington Treasury Shows, Vol. 15* in the April-July 2011 of his *DEMS Bulletin*, Sjef Hoefsmit writes, "A special compliment should go to Ken Steiner for the liner-notes, informative, very agreeable to read and impeccably documented."

Harvey Cohen

Harvey Cohen's book *Duke Ellington's America*, is now available in paperback and in a Kindle edition.

He plans to use sabbatical leave from January to August to work on "the next book," to use his phrase.

Hugh (Rusty) Hassan and Davey Yarborough

Davey Yarborough was the guest on Rusty Hassan's regular weekly radio show on WPFW-FM 89.3 on 7 November, the topic being education and the arts.

A major theme was the current positive encouragement and training of aspiring musicians. Davey praised "elders" who had mentored and encouraged him, including Billy Taylor, Sonny Stitt, and Frank Wess. It is this methodology that is used at the Washington Jazz Arts Institute, founded by Davey and his wife, vocalist Esther Williams. Former students come back to mentor current students, graduates, and those in the area who are seeking further development.

Extra treats on the program were several recordings featuring Davey, among them "Silky" on flute and his composition "Royal Essence," a tribute to Duke on which he plays alto sax and is accompanied only by pianist Sir Roland Hanna, another of his personal encouragers.

Recent Books of Interest

Hershorn, Tad. *Norman Granz: The Man Who Used Jazz for Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)

Contains substantive material on Duke

Rosenkrantz, Timme, ed. and trans. Frandley Garner. *Harlem Jazz Adventures: A European's Memoirs, 1934-1969* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011)

Includes chapter on Ellington

Terry, Clark, with Gwen Clark. *Clark: The Autobiography of Clark Terry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)

— *'Tis The Season* —

For A Special One, Yourself Included
The Perfect Present Is



A Membership In Our Society

Billy Strayhorn's Month

by Art Luby, Secretary

As is traditional, the Society focused on the work of Billy Strayhorn during our November meeting which, of course, is the month of his birth. The members responded by bringing numerous unique performances that left room for only one take of "Take the A Train," provided courtesy of Jazz at the Philharmonic and featuring Roy Eldridge at his hard swinging best.

Every re-examination of Strayhorn's music reconfirms its staying power and centrality to the Ellington legacy. However, the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the unique lilting, yearning quality of Strayhorn's compositions which some great artists could handle, but others could not. For example, Frank Sinatra, for all his talent, simply could not adjust his phrasing style to deal with the subtle demands of "Lush Life."

By contrast, Lena Horne and Ella Fitzgerald, both of whom were close personally to Strayhorn, had a natural affinity for the nuances of his music and this was illustrated particularly in Fitzgerald's unsurpassed performance of "Something to Live For." Similarly, Dizzy Gillespie provided a fine solo on "Chelsea Bridge," but the performance we heard later in the evening by Ben Webster captured the lonely brooding quality of the song far more effectively.

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

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Our dues remain a bargain:

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

First-time-ever member, just \$20

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