
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 1994

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JACK TOWERS HONORED AT HISTORIC FARGO RE-CREATION

Jack Towers was the guest of honor at Moorhead State University's January 13, 1994 celebration of Ellington's November 7, 1940 dance date at the Crystal Ballroom in Fargo, North Dakota. The evening program by the University's music department, "Elegant Ellington, Music and Memories of Duke," was a re-creation of classics performed that now famous night more than 50 years ago and recorded for posterity (and a 1980 Grammy) by Jack and his friend Dick Burris. Upon arriving, Jack was greeted by news crews from local media. That evening he saw himself on television. Seated with the president of the University, he was introduced at the concert. The evening's music was impressive, especially, according to Jack, the ensemble playing of the student musicians, who used Dave Berger transcriptions and who obviously had been well rehearsed.

The event was conceived and produced by James F. Condell, a recently retired professor at Moorhead, just across the river from Fargo. A regular at recent International Ellington Group Study Conferences, Jim has a twice-weekly jazz program on Fargo's KDSU-FM, "Condell's Corner," during which he customarily highlights Ellingtonia. During Jack's stay, Jim hosted him on a one-hour broadcast of the show.

The -25°F temperature was a reminder to Jack of his Dakota days. He was nostalgically warmed, however, by a trip with Jim to the site of the now-famed Crystal Ballroom, on which now stands Crystal Court, a condominium.

(Continued on page 4 under "Jack at Fargo")

ELLINGTON ITINERARY INFORMATION REQUESTED

Art Pilkington asks anyone who recalls seeing Duke perform on any occasion to please let him know so that he can check 1923-74 dates and places he has for the Ellington Itinerary on which he is working.

In the latest *LAJRC Journal*, he says, "If you can remember when you saw the Duke at ballrooms, theatres, nightclubs, hotels, concerts, college proms, military bases or private functions, please let me know. . . . Every piece of information is important."

Let's support Art in this important project. Get in touch with him at 75 Wynford Hts. Cres., Apt. #1804, Don Mills, Ontario, Canada.

BRING A SELECTION ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5

As announced in our December *Newsletter*, the format for our February meeting guarantees a variety of music, for members and guests, rather than one person, will provide the music. So bring your favorite, an unusual recording, or whatever else might be of interest. Your contribution, which may be on audio cassette or CD, should not exceed six minutes, including music and your commentary. (If time permits, you may have a chance to present a second selection.) If you use a cassette, you may record your remarks on it.

See you at 8:30 pm on Saturday, February 5, at the regular meeting place, Omega House, 1231 Harvard Street, NW (corner of 13th and Harvard Streets). Bring some friends.

PROBLEMS OF PERSON, PLACE, AND TIME NEED RESOLUTION

Contributed by Sjef Hoefsmit

From a good friend I received a copy of a magazine completely dedicated to the Ellington exhibition in the Museum of the City of New York. We read that Ellington's many international tours inspired several suites, including the *Far East Suite*, the *Liberian Suite*, and the *Latin American Suite*.

One wonders which tour specifically inspired him to write the *Liberian Suite*.

In this publication one can enjoy many beautiful pictures, one of which is of a rather young Duke listening to a musician playing the sitar. The picture's label identifies it as having been taken on a tour of India and Ceylon in 1972. This is not merely nine years wrong.

On the next page is a huge picture identified as the band at St. John the Divine in 1968. So far so good. But why is Steve Little sitting behind the drums of Rufus Jones, and how did Jeff Castleman become as dark as Joe Benjamin? Norris Turney apparently came earlier in the band than we know: May 1, 1969. We believe that we also see Money Johnson, Malcolm Taylor, Booty Wood, and even Ray Nance.

There is no known recording for such a concert. We believe that this concert was given in some other cathedral between June 25, 1970 and the end of March 1972, but we have not been able to find it. The only Sacred Concert in St. John the Divine of which we have knowledge was recorded on 19 January 1968.

It would be interesting to identify the correct date and location and to arrange that this picture carry the correct data when it is exposed as part of the exhibition. Who can help?



Ed. note: Thanks, Sjef, for your perceptive contribution. We would like to reserve this page in each issue for commentary, criticism, reviews of music and publications, queries, remembrances, queries, anecdotes, opinions, informational pieces, and the like. Send us your contributions. If appropriate, we will proofread and do minor editing. If your contribution might take more space than this page allows, get in touch with the Editor.



WHO WAS THE FIRST FEMALE SINGER TO RECORD WITH DUKE?

According to standard references, the first female vocalists to record with Ellington were Alberta Prime and then Florence Bristol, both in 1924. However, Rohulamin Quander, founder and president of his family's historical society, wonders if Elizabeth Ann "Sis" Quander preceded them. A relative of "Sis" remembers her asserting that around 1922 she recorded a song, with lyrics by her, with Duke somewhere "off Broadway." The family is now trying to find a lost photograph of "Sis," Duke, and others supposedly taken on the occasion.

Ann "Sis" Quander is said to have held, in later years, a managerial position at Dyke's Stockade, a popular Washington area night spot during its 1930-40s heydays. In 1975, she sang at a Kennedy Center "Salute to the Duke" program in observance of the first anniversary of his death. At that time, for an *Afro-American* newspaper article [reproduced in part on page 4 of this *Newsletter*], "Sis" recalled having sung to Duke's accompaniment at the Poodle Dog, among other places.

Attorney Quander, highly regarded in genealogy circles, is writing a book about the family and will appreciate any information about "Sis". You may contact him c/o the Quander Historical Society, 1703 Lawrence Street, NE, Washington, DC 20018, USA.

MEMBERS ENJOY FESTIVE PARTY

Reported by Angela Grimmer

On a cold and windy night the Duke Ellington Society, Chapter 90, held its annual holiday party at The Park Sutton in a beautiful club room made available to us through the good offices of Teddy and Geneva Hudson. We were all warmed by the convivial comradery of members and guests—more than 40, all told! Jack Towers provided more heat with his usual terrific choices of Ellington music and a good time was had by all: schmoozing, dining, listening and dancing! Happy New Year!

DUES

Where can you get an evening's entertainment, cordial company, and refreshments prorated at \$3.00? Plus *Newsletters*, an annual summer picnic by a lake, an annual mid-winter holiday party, and other goodies? All of these are yours for your \$30 yearly dues to your Duke Ellington Society, Chapter 90. And couples get an even better break: \$50 for two. But that's not all; if you're a student, you can be a member for \$5.00!

Remember, our membership is for the calendar year, so 1994 memberships, new and renewal, are being accepted now. If you haven't already taken care of this bit of business, just use the enclosed membership form. We don't want our Treasurer to get the dues blues.

SID KULLER, 1910-1993
MARIAN LOGAN, 1920-1993

Two long-time associates of Ellington, Sid Kuller and Marian Logan, died during the fall. Ms. Logan, widow of Duke's personal physician and dear friend Arthur Logan, was likewise a close friend. Kuller, in addition to being credited with the idea that led to *Jump for Joy*, co-directed and wrote much of the script for it.

At "Ellington '91" in Los Angeles, Kuller participated in *Jump for Joy* program items. Ms. Logan was a panelist at "Ellington '93" in New York, providing delightful personal reminiscences of her and her husband's experiences with Duke.

ELLINGTONIA IN CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY FILM SERIES

Included in the "Jazz on Film" series at the Library of Congress, January 11 through March 29, are programs focused on Ellington and Strayhorn, some with Chapter 90 members as commentators:

Jan. 20: *Duke Ellington* introduced by Reuben Jackson*, Smithsonian Institution

Bell Telephone Hour - On the Road with Duke Ellington
The 20th Century - Duke Ellington Swings through Japan

Jan. 25: *A Drum Is a Woman* introduced by David Parker, Library of Congress

The U.S. Steel Hour - Duke Ellington's A Drum Is a Woman (rarely seen jazz ballet followed by discussion with Ellington scholar Patricia Willard* and Dr.

Sherrill Berry Mann-Miller from Howard University)
Feb. 1: *Thelonious Monk* introduced by Rusty Hassan*, WDCU-FM

Thelonious Monk - Straight No Chaser
plus unreleased tape of Monk playing with Duke Ellington's orchestra

March 8: *West Coast Jazz* introduced by Patricia Willard*, Jazz Historian

Ernie Andrews - Blues for Central Avenue
Art Pepper - Notes from a Jazz Survivor

March 15: *Jazz Record Industry* introduced by Bill Holland, *Billboard* Magazine

Record Making with Duke Ellington
Anatomy of a Hit

South Bank Show - Blue Note Records

*Member of the Duke Ellington Society, Chapter 90

All the 20 or so programs in the series are free, but seating is limited. Reservations may be made by phone, beginning one week before any given show. Call (202) 707-5677 between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. All films begin at 7:30 unless otherwise noted. For details, call Larry Applebaum at (202) 707-5049.

GET READY FOR OUR "SERENADE TO SWEDEN"

Time is fast approaching for "Ellington '94" in Stockholm, Sweden. Let's have a large contingent from Chapter 90. For details, see the Special Insert Page in the December *Newsletter*; write to the Duke Ellington Swedish Society, P.O. Box 4020, S-102 61 Stockholm, Sweden; or send a fax to the Society at +46 8 702 21 18.

Singer, 82, recalls her vocalist days with Duke

MAY 24 1975

By Gail Hamer
AFRO Staff Writer

May 25th Duke Ellington fans will once again enjoy the enchantment of his music in a "Salute to the Duke," a concert



ANN SQUANDER, formerly a singer with the late Duke Ellington in the 20s, is still singing at 82 years old. (AFRO Staff Photo by Cabell)

commemorating the first anniversary of the composer's death, at the Kennedy Center.

It will be an especially nostalgic time for Ann Quander, a charming 82-year-old lady who sang with "The Duke" in the early twenties, and believe it or not, is still going strong.

Ann's days with "The Duke" date back before his band joined him or as she puts it "before he made it big," and she frequently glances over her shoulder at good times with him.

Ann and "The Duke" are both District natives and she refers to him as "the sweetest boy in town. We got along fine."

Recalling that she, "The Duke," and a couple of other female vocalists would do "gigs" around town, Ann said, "that was when southwest Washington was in full bloom."

MAY 24 1975

Performing at the Philadelphia House, formerly on Pennsylvania Ave., NW, the Ottaway House in southwest, and the Poodle Dog, Ann said she would accompany "The Duke's" lovely piano music.

The last place where she and "The Duke" performed together was the Liberty Hotel at New Jersey Ave. and D St. After that, she said "The Duke" went on to greater heights while she worked clubs in eastern cities such as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Scranton, Pa. and Atlantic City.

(Continued from Page 1)

That was Ann Quander some 50 years ago.

She met "The Duke" in a jewelry store on 8th St. where they both worked, and he was searching for talent.

She noted, "The last time I saw 'The Duke' was in New York at an Elks convention when they made him an honorary member, I believe. That was in 1968."

Although she relishes her memories, Ann says she lives for the present. She commented, "I enjoyed every bit of it and I'm still enjoying myself."

This article, reproduced in part here, appeared in the Afro-American newspaper on May 24, 1975. (See the related item on page 2 of this Newsletter.)

JACK AT FARGO

(Continued from page 1)

The affair was well publicized. Posters were all over the city; there were radio announcements, television spots. Jack, as we know a modest person, was surprised that many people recognized him from both the preliminary publicity and coverage of the events. He was pleasantly surprised also to learn that many of the townspeople have the Book-of-the-Month release of *The Duke at Fargo*.

Ed. note: We had hoped to reprint a news article and other material regarding the event, but our deadline for this issue caught us before they arrived. Look for more coverage in our February edition.

EXHIBIT FILM WINS AWARD

Reprinted from the Smithsonian's *The Torch*, January 1994

"Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington," produced by Jacqueline Gales Webb, won a 1993 Council on International Nontheatrical Events Golden Eagle Award. The video was produced for American History's Division of Musical History and a Traveling Exhibition Service exhibition of the same name.

JAZZ YEARBOOK PUBLISHED

Annual Review of Jazz Studies 6 is out and includes an essay by Charles Waters on Duke's appearance on the cover of *Time*. We will have a copy. Who will review it for our next issue?