
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

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BY POPULAR DEMAND: MEMBERS' CHOICES AT MAY 7 MEETING

Pleased by the variety of music and especially pleased by the anecdotes, reminiscences, and reasons for the selections offered by the presenters in February, at our March meeting members voted to have another "Members' Choices" program at our regular meeting on **May 7**.

The designated coordinator for the May program, Mac Grimmer, has announced that the choices this time will be music by small Ellington, Strayhorn, or orchestra members' units, not by the full orchestra. As before, your presentation should not exceed six minutes, including both the music and your commentary. If time permits, you may have an opportunity to make a second presentation after everyone has made his or her first. The selections may be on CD or tape cassette. (Shy? Record your commentary on the cassette on which you will have the music.)

"Members' Choices" will be another great evening of music, commentary, conversation, and refreshments (and we hope, spontaneous dancing as before) on **Saturday, May 7**, at the usual place, **Omega House, 1232 Harvard Street, NW (corner of 13th and Harvard)**. As you know, we start promptly at **8:30 pm**, so be there on time so as not to miss a word or a note. And bring friends.

NEWSLETTER ITEMS REPRINTED

Recent reprints from our *Newsletter* include reviews by Reuben Jackson and Ted Shell in the April issue of TDES' publication. The notice of our October meeting (featuring music from the November 9, 1968 Ellington concert at the Armory attended by fewer than 100 people) appears in the March-May *DEMS Bulletin*. It even includes the reproduction of Ted Shell's ticket to the affair.

READY TO SERENADE SWEDEN

Chapter 90 will be well represented at the "Serenade to Sweden" ("Ellington '94") in Stockholm in May. Those who already have reservations and happy expectations include: Betty, Joanne, and Jack Dennis, Angela and Mac Grimmer, Geneva and Ted Hudson, David Rossen, Jan Rossen, Marian and Ted Shell, Rhoda and Jack Towers, and Patricia Willard. For details about going, see recent *Newsletter* issues.

JOHNNY HODGES AT SPORTPALAST, BERLIN

Pablo Live 2PACD-2620-102-2 [2 Compact Disk Set]

Reviewed by Mac Grimmer

At the end of this concert Norman Granz calls it the "happiest I've ever seen in ten years of bringing concerts to Berlin." It is indeed a relaxed and swinging affair, the nucleus of the Ellington band on its own while Duke is working on *Paris Blues* a country away.

The arrangements are mostly familiar, but the solos are still as fresh as newly minted coins. Without the big band backgrounds necessary for the sensual and somewhat erotic ballads, Hodges is fluent and melodic, dancing his way through the swingers, working his magic with every appearance. Ray Nance, alternately campy and soulful on his vocals and cornet, adds his romantic violin on "Autumn Leaves." Lawrence Brown is at his playful best on several of his features. At one point Harry Carney strays from the Ducal domain with "I'll Get By," playing only the melody but with shading and use of dynamics that demonstrate why he was the boss of the baritone.

The rhythm section also has a slice of the pie, Sam Woodyard on "Stomp Jones" and Aaron Bell on "Satin Doll." The piano player is Al Williams, who had recently toured Europe with Buck Clayton. As Stanley Dance puts it in his liner notes, he "faced up valiantly to a singularly demanding role."

This is a welcome addition to the meager Hodges CD catalog. Few musicians have given so much pleasure to so many with so little recognition. This is the only CD in the Hodges bin at Tower Records.



From "Happy Birthday, Duke,"
Downbeat, 25 April 1974:

Everything I ever wrote or played came from you. I doubt that I could have played music without you. — Charles Mingus

All musicians should get together on one certain day and get down on their knees to thank you. — Miles Davis

April 29 — Duke's 95th Birthdate!

NOTES ON OUR SOCIETY'S

"DRAMATIS FELIDAE"(To Use Our Man's Term in *MIMM*)

In reporting in *Australian Jazz and Blues* on "Ellington '93," Joya Jenson includes Patricia Willard's "The Real Professors: The Ellington Orchestra at the University of Wisconsin 1972" as one of the special features of the Conference.



From The Netherlands, member Walter van de Leur writes, "From April 1 on I will be working part-time for the Hilversum Conservatory as advisor, lecturer and 'Ellington-Strayhorn specialist.' (In the land of the Blinds, One-Eye is King.)" [*Modest jokester, that Walter.*] His letter continues, "The Conservatory, which claims to have the largest jazz-division in Europe, is organizing a year-long Ellington project, culminating in a week-long visit of Gunther Schuller."

But much more important news is that Ilona's pregnancy is progressing nicely. She and hubby Walter have heard their little one's heartbeat and have seen him/her during a sonar session at the hospital.



Wasn't it great to see Roland Hayes at our last meeting. As you may know, Roland underwent surgery during the winter and missed a few sessions.



Poetry by multi-talented Reuben Jackson is included in *Every Shut Eye Ain't Asleep*, an anthology of significant post-1945 African American poetry edited by Michael Harper and Anthony Walton (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994). One of his poems selected for inclusion is "for duke ellington," read by Reuben at one of our meetings last year.

"OCHT" / "ACHT"

An exchange of correspondence between Sjef Hoefsmit and Stanley Dance seems to have resolved the question of the title of Duke's piece ending ". . . O'Clock Rock." It's "Ocht O'Clock Rock." The "Acht" that appears in Ole Nielson's discography does not agree with the "Ocht" in the title on the apparent lead sheet for the piece.

As their correspondence points out, "Acht" in German means "eight" [*perhaps leading one to think that the tune's referent is a rocking good time at 8 o'clock*]. However, Duke may have been playing alliteratively with the "ock" in "o'clock" and "rock," or perhaps he was familiar with an "och" that is a common Scottish exclamation. Sjef and Stanley agree that the use of accurate titles will help avoid confusion in identifying Duke's many creations.

[*Ed. note: Thanks to Sjef for sharing the letters and the apparent lead sheet upon which this article is based.*]

TORONTO CHAPTER
CONTRIBUTES TO FUNDING

The Toronto Chapter (#40) of the Duke Ellington Society has contributed to the funding of a promising musician, Bonnie Brett; has considered financing scholarships; and has donated to CJRT, a listener-supported radio station with an active jazz policy. In February, the chapter issued a "Retrospective Issue Newsletter," highlighting past activities, ongoing program, and plans. For information and/or to join (\$25/year), write to: The Duke Ellington Society, 95 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Suite 2906, Toronto, Canada M4H 1L7.

MUSIC AS GOOD AS PROMISED

Contributed by Angela Grimmer

Looking forward to a program by Jack Towers, Chapter 90 members gathered eagerly on April 2 at our regular monthly meeting. The music he gave us lived up to all our expectations.

Before beginning the main program, Jack shared a tape of the Moorhead State University students' band playing "Concerto for Cootie" at the University in January. The students played an all-Ellington program to mark the anniversary of Jack's Fargo recording, once again confirming the vitality of this music. As reported earlier, Jack was the guest of honor at the commemorative activities.

Jack then played recordings by John Steiner of Ellington performances in the '40s. The music was as good as promised. One of the highlights was a long version of "Frankie and Johnny" featuring the piano player. He also treated us to a rare recording of a rehearsal, in this case of "Chelsea Bridge," as Duke and Strays and Ella worked out the arrangement.

TDES PLANS APRIL 29 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

There's still time to go to the Duke Ellington 95th Birthday Party and Concert in New York City and be back in time for our May 7 meeting. The TDES sponsored affair, at 7:30 pm on April 29 at St. Peter's Church, will feature the Manhattan School of Music Big Band conducted by David Berger, with vocals by Milt Grayson. Donation is \$15.

EARLIER ELLINGTONIA AMONG PRJC INTERESTS

Contributed by Dave Jellema

The Potomac River Jazz Club is devoted to traditional jazz, including ragtime, early New Orleans, Chicago and New York styles; "classic" jazz; bits of the swing era; and various revivals of these styles. During the year, the club holds three major events featuring area bands that play these styles. A newsletter announces events, lists traditional jazz activities in the area, and offers articles about jazz greats and broader jazz happenings. A hotline, 703-673-PRJC, announces PRJC specials and lists regular activities with dates and venues.

The current issue of PRJC's *Tailgate Ramblings* contains a notice of our Society's activities and meetings. For a complimentary copy of *Ramblings*, phone editor May Cagle at 703-481-1622 or publicity coordinator Don Farwell at 202-244-6636. *Tailgate* welcomes submission of a variety of entries.

Members of the Duke Ellington Society who would like to hear occasional and various interpretations of Ellington's earlier music are encouraged to check out the Last Chance Jazz Band, Doc Scantlin's Imperial Palms Orchestra, Brooks' Tegler's Hot Jazz, the youthful Federal Focus Jazz Band, and the Buck Creek Jazz Band. For those who would like to explore other sounds in traditional veins, many of these bands are listed in *Tailgate* or on the hotline.

Come on an' hear!