
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

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**“ELLINGTON '94” SUPERB
CHAPTER 90 WELL REPRESENTED**

We are proud that this article is composed of mini-articles by all Chapter 90 members who attended the conference, each of whom assumed responsibility for some phase or activity: **Betty Dennis, Jack Dennis, Angela Grimmer, Mac Grimmer, Sjef Hoefsmit, Geneva Hudson, Teddy Hudson, Walter van de Leur, David Rossen, Jan Rossen, Marian Shell, Ted Shell, Jack Towers, Rhoda Towers, and Patricia Willard.** (An exception is Alexandre Rado, who joined at the conference and therefore had not been asked to accept an assignment.) Thanks from all of Chapter 90!

"Ellington '94 — Serenade to Sweden," May 19-22 at Stockholm, was an incandescent experience for the 240 international delegates and press who were treated to superb musical performances by Swedish and American Ellingtonians; the warm hospitality of the Duke Ellington Swedish Society; the sparkling air, invigorating weather and memorable vistas of Stockholm's "Old Town"; an intriguing exposure to the traditions and delights of Swedish culture; and an increased and largely fresh perspective on the mutual aesthetic influence of Duke Ellington, his musicians and the Swedish nation. An effervescent Alice Babs, little changed from the teenager in the vintage films shown, was unofficial hostess, soloist, panelist and personification of the energy and musicality of the conference. John Lewis, Clark Terry, Louie Bellson and Joya Sherrill from the U.S. joined exhilarating musical forces with Willie Cook, now of Stockholm; Jimmy Woode, now of Bern, Switzerland; Arne Domnerus, Bengtl Hallberg, Nils Lindberg, Bosse Broberg and Davor Kajfes of Stockholm; the alternately Swedish/American Rolf Ericson and bands of Stockholm's finest, including a special version of The Swedish Radio Jazz Group to present two sold-out concerts of exceptional Ellingtonia.

Eighteen countries were represented among pre-registrants, the largest delegation being from host country Sweden. Our chapter was well represented by delegates, five of whom were program participants — Sjef Hoefsmit, Ted Hudson, Walter van de Leur, Alexandre Rado, and Patricia Willard.

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LET'S PICNIC!

Saturday, July 16 is the date for our annual summer fun day at Ted and Marian Shells's summer home at Lake Caroline. Bring guests and refreshments. See page 8 for details.

“ELLINGTON '94”

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Conference Opening Reveals Mutual Sweden-Duke Love Affair

Although an informal reception had taken place the night before, the conference was officially convened Friday morning by Gören Wallén, head of the Duke Ellington Swedish Society, along with with Alice Babs, conference hostess. The first presentation was a panel of Alice Babs, Rolf Dahlgren, and Bertil Lyttkens sharing their memories of Duke's visit to Sweden in 1939 and discussing and playing examples of music from the occasion.

Following was a lovely "Sophisticated Lady" by pianist Berndt Egerblad. Next came a video presentation of Duke playing "Heaven" with Alice and Johnny Hodges soloing. Then Alice was summoned to the stage by Egerblad where she improvised an unnamed blues, an unexpected and exciting favor.

The morning's program ended on a high note: The audience enthusiastically greeted revered Benny Aasland, one of the world's great authorities on Ellingtonia. A program note by Sjef Hoefsmit reads in part: "A few lines is not enough to describe the importance of Benny Åslund for the still growing community of admirers of Duke Ellington. One line is nothing compared with the four to five editions of the DEMS-bulletin which Benny and Birgit [his wife] write, print and mail each year. And this is what they accomplished...for the last 15 years! . . . Benny became famous . . . on the very first discography dedicated to [a] single musician: *The 'Wax Works' of Duke Ellington*, the basis for every subsequent Ellington discography."

Aasland treated delegates to the first public showing of unique home movies of Duke's 1960s appearances in Sweden. Included were Alice singing "Take the 'A' Train" accompanied by the band, Ella Fitzgerald singing "Satin Doll," and the band playing "Mood Indigo."

Chapter 90 Members Make Outstanding Program Contributions

Chapter 90 members Hoefsmit, T.Hudson, van de Leur, Rado, and Willard drew high praise for their program presentations.

As he has so selflessly and generously done for the annual conferences, Sjef Hoefsmit prepared a special cassette of rare Ellington/Strayhorn music for free distribution to all conference attendees. Titled "20 Years Later" (produced by DEMS as Azure CA-18), this year's tape has—courtesy of Charles Waters, who discovered them—selections from soundtrack pre-recordings of 1949 and 1950 *Symphony in Swing* and *Salute to Duke Ellington* [see our *March Newsletter*].

For his program contribution, in keeping with the conference theme, Sjef showed excerpts from films of Duke's last concert in Stockholm, at the Konserthuset, October 28, 1973. Two encores in the film were "Woods" and "Lotus Blossom."

Having based his research as much as possible on primary documents and first-hand oral accounts, **Teddy Hudson** discussed the Washington in which Duke was raised, stating that, although oppressive racism was pervasive, the educational, religious, and social environment in which Duke grew into young manhood valued respectability, personal and group pride, and achievement. His family lived in the geographical corridor that was the social and entertainment center of the Negro community, providing opportunities for participation in varied activities. Washington's Negro schools were excellent. Ellington was part of a close-knit family with strong convictions and emphasis upon achievement. His earliest piano training was by his mother, Daisy.

Teddy reported that a 95-year-old/young

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member of the circle of high-schoolers (including Artie Whetsol, Gertie Wells, and Ewell Conway) of which Duke was a part says that Duke at that time was not considered by them to be as good a pianist for dancing as several others. Duke did develop enough to play for parties; possibly he also played at "speakeasies."

Walter van de Leur presented a paper that examined the musical collaboration between Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington. Only to tear it down, he posed the question: Does Strayhorn imitate Ellington or is there more Strayhorn in Ellington than had been credited in the past? Walter's thesis is that this question presents a false dichotomy. It is true that Strayhorn's contributions have been overlooked, and he deserves more recognition. This recognition does not signify better or separate but rather supports Walter's thesis that theirs was a musical partnership, and each of their roles was crucial and inseparable. Walter studied the extensive Smithsonian Ellington Collection as well as material from Dr. Gregory Morris, Strayhorn's nephew and the executor of his estate. It is clear the Walter van de Leur is becoming the foremost Billy Strayhorn scholar.

William "Cat" Anderson was the subject of a profile by **Alexandre Rado**, our chapter's new European member. Rado, who knew him, lectured on Cat's versatility on the trumpet, unfortunately overshadowed by his phenomenal high-note ability. Using examples mainly from lesser known recordings, he convincingly raised the appreciation of Cat as an unusually skilled all-around trumpeter.

Patricia Willard led two sessions—an interview of Joya Sherrill and a panel on *A Drum Is a Woman*. In her lively, effervescent way, Sherrill delighted the audience with her recollection of her

Ellington years. After being introduced to him by her father, she presented Duke with lyrics she had written for "'A' Train." After listening to her sing her lyrics, he asked her to sing several other songs, then informed her that she should contact him when she finished high school, for he would like for her to join the band. Eventually she did join, with her mother traveling with her. Ms. Sherrill related episodes in her stay with the band and her return to do special performances such as *My People*. She also told of her friendly relationships with Ivie Anderson and later with Marie Ellington (Cole) and Kay Davis. Amusing was her story of how she and Rex Stewart collaborated on composing "Kissing Bug," which, when shown to Duke, brought the remark, "That's nice. When did I write that?"

Patricia's panel of Joya Sherrill, Louie Bellson, Clark Terry, Jimmy Woode, and Willie Cook revealed a number of significant things about *A Drum Is a Woman*, produced in 1957 for TV. Though their memories have dimmed, they revealed that the production, contrary to received accounts that it was all "live," was partially taped and that changes and corrections were made in an editing studio. Some sections of the sound were pre-recorded, one in particular involving Ray Nance and Clark Terry. In some instances additional musicians were added, though they do not appear in the film, causing some confusion to viewers who hear more instruments than seen. However, the last part of the show was "live."

Bellson pointed out that though he was in the credits, he did not play tympani and that Sam Woodyard was the drummer. Woode remarked that to his knowledge *Drum* was the first full-length jazz spectacular produced on TV.

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Delegates Relax, Enjoy Social Events: The Opening Reception and the Luncheon Sponsored by the City of Stockholm

It was an evening to remember, the "Get-Together Party" on Thursday, May 19 in the attractive Panorama Room of the host hotel in the center of beautiful Stockholm. Friends and acquaintances from many countries and prior conferences began gathering with warm kisses, hugs, and smiles of joy.

It was an exciting prelude to a wonderful conference, a time to partake of refreshments, talk, and listen to the delightful sounds of live music. The evening was extraordinary because the shimmering daylight continued to light the faces of happy guests until well into nighttime, for we were in the land of the late evening sun. And, of course, our own local Chapter 90 members were there in force.

The next day, conference participants enjoyed a sumptuous buffet luncheon of Swedish delights hosted by the Stockholm City Council in the magnificent City Hall where certain Nobel prize activities take place. Upon entering the courtyard, they were serenaded by the Transportation Band, including a moving fluegelhorn rendition of "T.G.T.T." ["Too Good to Title"], the haunting, wordless, and artistically demanding piece by Duke that Alice Babs premiered at one of his sacred concerts.

The guests were then escorted to the magnificent great hall, to be welcomed by Alice and the Vice Mayor of Stockholm. After these brief greetings, Kenny Burrell then played several Ellington/Strayhorn melodies in his inimitably sensitive style.

Concerts Feature Ellington Alumni, Original Works in Celebration of Duke, and First Performance of a Discovered Strayhorn Composition

Sold out months ahead of time, the "Gala Concert" on Friday was at the Stockholm Concert Hall (Konserthuset), scene of several of Duke's triumphs. The Swedish orchestra, called the "Ellington '94 Big Band" for the occasion, was sprinkled with no less than seven Ellingtonians! It had barely begun when Alice Babs almost stopped the show with "In a Little Red Cottage," first with the vocal originally sung by Ivie Anderson, then with scattering of the horn lines in the final chorus. Jimmy Woode and Louie Bellson, who provided the fireworks on "Skin Deep" and "The Hawk Talks," were two-thirds of a Ducal rhythm section. On piano was Nils Lindberg, one of Sweden's leading Ellington interpreters.

The first half of the program featured several of the big band charts, including "Serenade to Sweden" and "Such Sweet Thunder." Joya Sherrill sang songs identified with her stay with Duke, and Clark Terry's fluegelhorn sailed through "Perdido" one more time.

After intermission John Lewis provided an interlude of intricate solo piano pieces, some adapted from the MJQ album *For Ellington*. Then he was joined for piano duets by Devor Kajfes, whose mesmerizing solo on "Lush Life" was one of the high points of the concert.

Other highlights included Clark Terry in a small group setting and Rolf Ericson's and

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Willie Cook's trumpet solos. After a rousing encore of "Cottontail" the crowd went away happily into the Swedish twilight.

On Saturday evening we enjoyed a very ambitious concert at the Berwald Hall (Berwaldhallen) by the Swedish Radio Big Band. Six new compositions written as tributes to Duke were conducted by their composers: "Sorrow Is the Birth of Joy" by George Riedel, "A Day and a Night and Something in Between" by Mikael Råberg, "Serenade From Sweden" by Bengt Hallberg, "Ducal Somewhat and Not" by Bosse Broberg, and "One of a Kind" by Bengt-Arne Wallin.

This concert was recorded and will be issued on a CD. We are very much looking forward to hearing this music again several times. We will not make the error, made by quite a few, after Duke's first Carnegie Hall Concert in 1943, to give an opinion based on the first and only encounter. The music is too complicated for us to fully understand after hearing it the first time.

The almost completely filled concert hall, the very well rehearsed orchestra and the brilliant soloists were very impressive.

The last premiered piece, "Portrait of a Silk Thread," from the hand of Billy Strayhorn, found in the Smithsonian Institution and prepared for the orchestra by Walter van de Leur, could be appreciated immediately. The beautiful melody stayed in [your reporter's] mind the whole evening. The next morning it was gone. We hope that there will be enough room for it on the forthcoming CD.

Day Programs Are Both Substantive and Interesting

Day sessions were of high quality—well planned and timed, convincingly researched, informative, and interestingly presented. As

was the aforementioned opening morning program, especially welcome were the first-hand accounts of Ellington in Sweden. Jan Bruer, a Stockholm musicologist, gave glimpses of the 14 tours of Sweden that Duke made between 1939 and 1973, with samples of music from some of the events. Ove Hahn recounted his relations with Duke as manager of the Gröna Lund amusement park when Duke played there. On the basis of later research, in "Ellington Storms Sweden," John Hasse presented a synthesis of press and public response to Duke's European and Swedish itinerary.

Others directed attention to Ellington/Strayhorn music. Using examples, Ken Rattenbury analyzed Ellington composition methodology, explaining how he drew upon blues, ragtime, and Tin Pan Alley. Erik Kjellberg's topic "Harmonious Conversation or Brisk Competition?" was about Duke's piano style, both within and outside the orchestra. With some 38 music excerpts, Andrew Homzy graphically and aurally showed techniques and devices Ellington adopted or innovated which placed him in the forefront of developments from the 1920s to the 1970s. Using recorded examples, TDES' Phil Schaap talked about the uniqueness of Ellington rehearsal-composition-recording sessions. Nils Lindberg, conductor of the orchestra for the recording after which the song is named, gave his thoughts about Alice Babs singing "Far Away Star," the Swedish folk song that Duke ordered and recorded. Richard Wang, from the Chicago contingent, discussed *Beggar's Opera*, its conversion to *Beggar's Holiday* with music by Duke, and the latter's 1994 revival in Chicago. Following, Alice Babs sang "Take Love Easy" from the show. Austin H. Lawrence, a clinical psychotherapist who played with

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the likes of Luis Russell and Benny Carter, posited that Bubber Miley was the first great soloist to collaborate with Ellington.

Pianist John Lewis gave a biographical sketch of his earliest experiencing of Ellington/Strayhorn music and of his increasing admiration of it. As he has done in previous conferences to his audiences' delight, Klaus Stratemann, author of the exhaustively researched, reliable, and highly acclaimed *Ellington Day by Day and Film by Film*, showed rare film footage of the band.

Great Audio and Visual Effects for Day Sessions

Conference presenters are always at the mercy of the visual and audio equipment and the operator for the effectiveness of their message. At Stockholm, all of the presentations had beautiful sound and visual support. Klaus Stratemann said several times during his presentation on Ellington films that this was the first time he had no problems running his films. On the other hand, the acoustics and overly strong PA made it difficult to hear the marvelous band at the Concert Hall on Thursday evening.

DESOR Compilers' Appearance an Unexpected Extra

Surprise presenters were Luciano Massagli and Giovanni M. Volonté, who, with Liborio Pusateri, authored multi-volumed *The Duke Ellington's Story on Records [DESOR]*. They revealed that work is under way for an augmented and updated one-volume version of this monumental work. The three compilers' having somehow meticulously completed *DESOR* before the age of computers is a source of amazement.

Pittsburgh's Billy Strayhorn Chapter to Host 13th Conference

The official day programs came to a close with Dr. Gregory Morris inviting everybody to Pittsburgh in 1995, May 24-28. The newly founded Billy Strayhorn Chapter, Duke Ellington Society will host the 13th Annual Conference, celebrating the musical collaboration of Duke and Billy. Dr. Morris pointed out the historic and cultural importance of the Steel City, and announced that the conference will be held in downtown Pittsburgh at the Hilton and Towers, located near the convergence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers.

Knowing the outstanding committee and the exciting initiatives they already have underway, [your reporter] can assure you that we are all in for a treat. Register right away!

Conference Ends on Festive Note

A gourmet formal dinner and dance concluded a splendid "Serenade to Sweden." The Sunday evening affair in the beautifully appointed dining room featured the Kusbandet Orchestra authentically playing early Ellington music, so infectiously that the dance floor was soon happily crowded.

CONFERENCE GRACE NOTES

Ellington-Strayhorn music was everywhere in Stockholm. Even the elevator music in the host hotel was by the Ellington orchestra. ♪ ♪ ♪ The Swedish weather

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“ANATOMY OF A COVER” BY CHARLES H. WATERS, JR.

A Review by Patricia Willard

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In "Anatomy of a Cover: The Story of Duke Ellington's Appearance on the Cover of *Time* Magazine," in the current *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 6, 1993 (Metuchen, NJ and London: Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey and Scarecrow Press), Houston, Texas attorney and Ellington scholar Charles H. Waters, Jr. documents the meticulous research with which he establishes incontrovertibly that neither Paul Gonsalves' 27-chorus "wailing interval" on "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" nor Elaine Anderson and her followers dancing in the aisles at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival was responsible for the editors of *Time* choosing Duke Ellington as a cover subject.

Until Waters' significant revelation, Ellington's reiterated assertion that the "epic ride by Paul Gonsalves...brought us...the cover of *Time* magazine (*Music Is My Mistress*, 191) was accepted unquestioningly as a logical and fortuitous cause and effect. It was, in reality, another dramatic structural block in Ellington's savvy legend-building.

What Waters discovered, originally quite serendipitously through his abiding admiration for the Western artist Peter Hurd, brother-in-law of Andrew Wyeth, was that Hurd had completed the tempera-on-panel portrait for the *Time* cover between June 8 and 17 in San Francisco, and the finished art was delivered to the magazine's New York headquarters on June 23, a fortnight before Gonsalves' celebrated Rhode Island performance.

The thoroughness of Waters' research is, for the most part, exemplary. He gained access to *Time*'s correspondence and internal memos of the period, interviewed *Time* staffers, determining that assistant managing editor Otto Fuerbringer did feel that the Newport triumph was a good lead-in for the already completed story by Carter Harman, who had interviewed Ellington in May in Las Vegas, and justification to schedule the Hurd cover, which appeared on the August 20, 1956 issue.

News accounts of Newport and the prestige of a *Time* cover did indeed capture the somewhat lagging attention of record company promotion departments, record buyers, booking agents and impresarios. The band, for anyone who was listening, had not lagged. When Duke insisted that he had been "born in 1956 at the Newport Jazz Festival," economically this was true. Waters' allegation that "the Ellington orchestra...had endured a period of eclipse during the first half of the decade," however, begs for definition. Eclipse suggests, in just one of several demeaning dictionary definitions, "a reproduction or loss of splendor." The Ellington band of the '50s is ebulliently preserved on recordings which require no dictionary.

Since Gonsalves and Newport did not instigate the cover coup, Waters relates its genesis. Ellington's New York press agent Joe Morgen was the source, but in crediting him, Waters tends to attribute to Morgen a media canniness and professionalism that were beyond his ken. Waters seems to crave heroes. He faithfully quotes accounts of Morgen being "of little formal education, unkempt, uncouth, [with] the finesse and persistence of a bulldog," yet insists upon characterizing Morgen as "Falstaffian" when "Runyonesque" would be closer. Waters seems unable to accept that Morgen's modus operandi was to nag and whine at every magazine, newspaper and wire service editor and columnist in New York incessantly on Ellington's behalf. Occasionally someone gave in. Regarding a *Time* piece on Sam Woodyard in January, 1956, Waters quotes Harman: "I wrote this article to keep Joe Morgen quiet. It didn't work and I knew it wouldn't."

Those reservations aside, Waters has produced a laudable and comprehensive body of research, which includes a color reproduction of the *Time* cover and the complete cover article (with no comment, incidentally, on *Time*'s gaffe of publishing a photo of Cab Calloway rather than Duke at the Cotton Club), copious footnotes, the complete history of "Diminuendo in Blue" and "Crescendo in Blue" and other valuable corollary data. Unfortunately, although his singular research and conclusions have been incorporated into one recently published Ellington biography, Charles Waters is given NO credit or acknowledgement of any kind in that volume.

[The *Annual Review* is available for \$39.50 plus shipping from Scarecrow Press. It also contains an excellent contribution from Krin Gabbard, among other distinguished authors and photographers.]

ANNUAL PICNIC ON JULY 16

At Lake Caroline, Virginia, on July 16, our president and first lady, Ted and Marian Shell, will again host our annual picnic. Each member may bring two guests and is asked to bring something for the communal tables, as much as would feed the number of guests in his/her party. There will be charcoal on hand for cooking or warming food. The Society will provide beer, sodas and ice as well as plates and eating utensils.

You can play tennis, badminton, horse shoes, cards; go boating; water ski; hike; snooze; commune with nature; loaf; and, of course, listen to music.

In the past, some members stayed at a nearby motel on Friday or Saturday night. For persons who want to do so this year, Helen Frazier is seeing about a special rate. Check with her at (202) 387-7071.

The Shells' phone number at Lake Caroline is 1-804-448-0330.

Directions: Take I-95 south 70 miles to the Ladysmith exit. Make a right turn at intersection, go one (1) mile. This will bring you to Route 1 at a traffic light. Make a left turn onto Route 1, go one and one-eighth mile (1 1/8) mile to Lake Caroline (a sign will be on the right). After leaving the gate, travel about 25 yards to the next intersection, Lake Caroline Drive. Turn left onto Lake Caroline Drive and follow the yellow line in the road for three (3) miles to the Shell gasoline sign. You're there.

ABOUT YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

We try to have the *Newsletter* printed and in the hands of Ted and Marian Shell for mailing within a week after each meeting. This means that you should try to have your contributions ready no later than the first Saturday of each month. However, since this will be our last issue before our fall resumption of meetings, if you will have an item for the next issue, plan to get it in by September 3. Thanks.

CONFERENCE GRACE NOTES

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cooperated, with blue skies, cool breezes, and late sunsets. ♪ ♪ ♪ Leo Hunt, who wasn't quite up to making this year's conference, called several members to wish them a great trip. By way of Baltimoreans Alice and Rob Jackson, Milia Hoefsmit sent Leo a complete conference registration kit, and Geneva Hudson sent him a souvenir piece of Swedish glassware. ♪ ♪ ♪ Other than musicians Clark Terry and Louie Bellson, our Patricia Willard is the only United States resident mentioned in the current issue of *IARJC Journal* as an "Ellington '94" program participant. ♪ ♪ ♪ SAS airline had a notice of "Ellington '94" in its on-board magazine. ♪ ♪ ♪ "Brilliant!" was the term heard several times to describe Walter van de Leur's presentation. ♪ ♪ ♪ Eighteen countries were represented among pre-registrants. Of course, Sweden had the largest number of participants. Percentage-wise, Chapter 90 had more of its members in attendance than did any other United States chapter or group. ♪ ♪ ♪ After his presentation, Ted Hudson was interviewed for a Belgian radio program. ♪ ♪ ♪ Frequent questions at the conference: "Did Deborra [Richardson] come?" "Did Reuben [Jackson] come?" Followed by: "Why not!?" ♪ ♪ ♪ Some of our chapter members added sightseeing or travel to other places: Marian and Ted Shell took two cruises out of Stockholm, one to St. Petersburg and the other to Helsinki; Joanne, Betty, and Jack Dennis left Stockholm for England; Angela and Mac Grimmer visited London after the conference; Patricia Willard went on to Vienna for an Ellington festival and clinic, as did musicians Clark Terry, Louie Bellson, and Jimmy Woode; Rhoda and Jack Towers enjoyed leisurely sightseeing in Stockholm before and after the conference. ♪ ♪ ♪ At the conference, Angela and Mac Grimmer enrolled Alexandre Rado, of France, in our chapter. We welcome Alexandre, gracious person and Ellington-Strayhorn authority.