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**THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90**

P.O. BOX 15591 . WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003-0787

**NEWSLETTER**

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Theodore R. Hudson, *Newsletter* Editor  
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**Good News: Same Dues  
(Plus a Special for New Members)**

At the December meeting, members voted to retain the Chapter's current dues structure. An increase had been considered because of rising operating costs and a slightly sinking reserve. However, it is expected that possible budget problems can be countered with increased memberships. To encourage the enrollment of new members, a special \$20 First-Time-Ever-Membership category was adopted for calendar year 1995.

Continuing members know well that some of their best 1994 good times arose from their membership in Chapter 90. Just think: all those great meetings (not to mention the refreshments), the annual summer picnic by a beautiful lake, the joyous winter holiday party, the *Newsletter*, the genial companionship of fellow Ellingtonia aficionados . . . ! A lot of benefits! (As one value-conscious member notes, considering just the monthly meetings, that's less than \$4 a pop for each evening of excellent entertainment and refreshments.) You can't possibly pass up this bargain!

Remember, dues are for the calendar year. So, with the new year comes the time for your 1995 dues: \$30 individual; \$50 couple; \$5 student; and a special, one-time-only \$20 membership for anyone who has never before been a Chapter 90 member.

It's a simple matter: Just write your check payable to Chapter 90, Duke Ellington Society for the proper amount and mail it to the Society at PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787. But don't stop there: Recruit some brand new members.

**Chapter Merrymakers and Guests  
Will Party Hearty on January 7**

Our annual seasonal Holiday Party will happen on **Saturday, January 7, 1995** at the **Party Room** of the **Park Sutton Condominium, 1900 Lyttonville Road, Silver Spring, Maryland**, starting at 8:30 p.m.

You will want to be there for the camaraderie, great food and drink, superb music, and, of course, marvelous merriment.

Each member may invite three guests. While there is no assessment, each member is urged to bring a food contribution for the communal table to be shared by all. If you have questions about food choices, please call Helen Frazier or Marian Shell or Angela Grimmer.

**Directions:**

The Park Sutton is on the corner of 16th Street and Lyttonville Road in Silver Spring, about 1/2 mile from the District. You may park on the street or on the lighted lot behind the building.

**From D.C.**

Go north on 16th Street, NW, past the District line (the circle where North Portal Drive and Eastern Avenue meet). As you continue, you will see on your right the Spring Shopping Center. Lyttonville Road will be the next street on your left.

**From 495 (the Beltway)**

Take the Georgia Avenue exit south toward Silver Spring; after two lights, bear right onto 16th Street. After the next light, continue one block to Lyttonville Road on your right.

**Correction**

In our recent article about his death, the name of Haywood Henry was transposed so that it read incorrectly as Henry Haywood. We apologize for the typographical error.

## REVIEWS

***Duke Ellington: The Essential V-Discs - I***

Golden Age of Jazz JZCD 301.

Reviewed by Ben Pubols

This CD is a welcome addition to the growing library of Ellington reissues. V-Discs, for those too young to remember, were 78 RPM recordings produced by the U.S. War Department (now the Department of Defense) during and after World War II, strictly for the listening pleasure of servicemen and servicewomen. As the labels proclaimed, they were "the property of the War Department." All master discs were ultimately destroyed, but not before many copies made their way into private hands. These copies have been treasured by collectors ever since. This CD, produced in Italy, contains thirteen non-commercial Ellington recordings from the mid-1940s. It includes reworkings of Ellington standards as well as newer pieces utilizing the talents of the then-new members of the band. Some are studio recordings, while others were recorded off the air or during concerts.

While it is great to have these recordings available on CD, potential listeners should be warned that the sound quality is only marginally acceptable, and many sides contain noticeable surface noise—this is strictly pre-Hi-Fi. The selections range chronologically from a November, 1943 "Hop, Skip and Jump," featuring Johnny Hodges, to a November, 1948 "Tattooed Bride" excerpt. Among my favorite sides are the following: "Creole Love Call," following closely Duke's extended 1932 arrangement, with solos by Tricky Sam Nanton, Taft Jordan, and Harry Carney (on clarinet); "Kissing Bug," with Al Sears and Jimmy Hamilton; an extended "Frankie and Johnny," featuring Duke, Nanton, and Ray Nance (on violin); "The Blues" from *BB&B*, sung by Marie Ellington with an Al Sears tenor solo; and "New York City Blues," an Ellington solo vehicle, backed by an octet including both Junior Raglin and Oscar Pettiford.

This CD is labeled Vol. I. Hopefully, there will be a second volume, as other swinging Ellington V-Discs were produced during this period, including "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," *The Perfume Suite*, and a great, rousing "It Don't Mean a Thing." Stay tuned . . .

***Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington***

2 CDs, DMC/DMK2-1241 (also available on 2 cassettes). RCA, BMG Music, and Smithsonian Institution, 1994.

Reviewed by Mac Grimmer

Last minute Christmas shopping is solved, thanks to this two-CD set, the Smithsonian's latest Ellington project, a long-awaited introduction to the life and music of the Duke, wrapped in one package and ready to be put under the tree. Intended to complement John Hasse's biography *Beyond Category*, this is a survey of Ellington's recordings from the middle 20s to the late 60s and includes a booklet tracing his career. There are extensive notes on the music, largely taken from Hasse's book.

The inevitable problem of what to include in a survey of such a prolific talent as Ellington's doesn't begin until after one includes the selections without which no collection would be credible. This means one begins with the Ducal classics of the Cotton Club era and many of the intricately arranged instrumental miniatures of the Blanton-Webster-Strayhorn band. Of the later recordings one of the suites has to be included (in this case "Harlem") along with a couple of Johnny Hodges masterpieces ("Isfahan" and "Blood Count"). Once one gets beyond these (generally) inarguable choices it becomes a matter of personal taste for the balance of the collection, and it becomes a sampler. Ellington's output was of such a consistently high quality it is almost impossible to go wrong, but everyone will have his/her favorites. In this case the choices are made easier by, for some reason, restriction to only RCA recordings, but beyond this, the main problem is that there is little space left for the post-40s band. A third CD could have remedied this by fleshing out the collection with more of the great music of Duke's last 25 years, thus providing a more balanced perspective of Ellington's career. After all, he continued to write unique compositions, and the band continued to perform at an extraordinarily high level almost to the end of his life.

A previous attempt to survey Ellington's career (the three-LP Time-Life boxed set from the late 70s) included only one selection later than 1946! The Smithsonian set is a great improvement, but with 29 of the 37 selections recorded prior to 1950, it still comes up one short.

## Notes on Our Society's "Dramatis Felidae"

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

In *Book World's* highly favorable review of the recent anthology *In Search of Color Everywhere*, its editor E. Ethelbert Miller is quoted as saying an aim was "poems that would make readers laugh and clap their hands." As an example, the review includes a poem by **Reuben Jackson** from the book and describes it as "bittersweet mini-comedy." Reuben is in the company of greats, for the volume contains poems by the likes of Claude McKay, Sterling Brown, Robert Hayden, and Langston Hughes.

The unexpected entrance at our December meeting by **Don McCathran** prompted spontaneously enthusiastic applause. Don and his wife, Jean, were brought by son Joe, who lives not far from them. Because of vision difficulties while driving long distances at night (his home is in historic Washington Grove, Maryland, where for years he was its mayor), Don has not been able to attend meetings in recent years. However, a Chapter member since 1961, he never let his membership lapse, and recently contributed to our *Newsletter*. We look forward to seeing Don and guests at our Holiday Party and at other future gatherings.

**Walter van de Leur** popped in and out of town recently to do a bit of research at the Smithsonian.

Talk about making the gig! Since our meeting in November, **Roland Hayes** had been hospitalized for surgery, yet came to our December meeting to indulge his passion for Ellingtonia. His doctor has told him that as early as February, Roland will be able to again indulge another passion, it being tennis (yes, he's *good!* at it).

TDES plans to honor **Morris Hodara** at its annual holiday party in December for service to it and for other activities in the world of Ellingtonia. He has been a member of TDES (formerly known as the New York Chapter of the Duke Ellington Society) for over thirty years, serving in a number of responsible positions, for the past six years as president. He continues to hold several key positions. (Morris is also a member of our Chapter 90.)

## Members and Guests Enjoy Viewing Rare Laser Video Discs

Contributed by Angela Grimmer

Ted and Marian's entertainment room was jammed for our December meeting featuring the Shells' video collection. In addition to our steadfast regulars we welcomed new guests and old friends.

The evening began with videos of the Ellington band at Newport in 1962 and from the Timex TV show in 1972, when Duke joined Count Basie and his band in a two-piano rendition of "One O'Clock Jump." Ted moved on to videos of Duke's tunes played by other musicians, including Basie, Benny Carter, Oscar Peterson, and Keith Jarrett. This full evening barely scratched the surface of Ted's superb collection, which includes many laser discs from Japan not available in this country.

During the business meeting, Jack Towers presented the treasurer's report. Members voted to maintain dues at the current level and to add a first-time-new member-one-year-introductory price category [see page 1]. Ted urged us to send our '95 dues to our treasurer, Jack Towers, promptly!

Everyone was reminded of the Holiday Party-January meeting at the same place as last year, the Park Sutton in Silver Spring [see page 1 for directions].

Ted Hudson passed around brochures from the Billy Strayhorn Chapter inviting proposals for presentations at next year's Pittsburgh conference. Ted also asked for contributions to the *Newsletter*, just a few lines of news or anything else of interest is welcome.

## Society Chapter Formed in England

Contributed by Mac Grimmer

Another chapter of the Ellington Society is being formed, this time in London. A recent letter to *Jazz Journal* announced plans to produce a quarterly newsletter and hold regular meetings; they invited inquiries from interested parties. No doubt the founders would also welcome correspondence with other Ellingtonians around the world. Their address is: Duke Ellington Society (UK), c/o Dave Fleming, 6 Derby Lodge, Sigdon Road, London E8 1AR, England.

## McHenry Boatwright, Husband of Duke's Sister, 1920-1994

McHenry Boatwright, husband of Ruth Ellington Boatwright and brother-in-law of Duke Ellington, died at his Manhattan home in November.

A formally trained musician, during his career Boatwright taught voice and performed in major venues as a soloist and in other contexts. A baritone, evidence of his talents include two Marian Anderson Awards, lead roles in operas, and the lead in the premiere of Gunther Schuller's *Visitation*. After Duke's death, Boatwright produced and sang in several of his Sacred Concerts.

We extend to Ruth Boatwright and family our sincere condolences.

## Proposals for "Ellington '94" Presentations Invited

The host committee for "Ellington '95" has issued a call for day program presentations, particularly in four areas: (1) the Ellington-Strayhorn collaboration, (2) Ellington Study Group research projects being undertaken worldwide; (2) historical events for which 1995 will be a major anniversary; and (4) tributes to recently deceased Ellingtonians.

Proposals may be sent for review, by December 31, to the attention of David Hill, Billy Strayhorn Chapter, Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 10285, Pittsburgh, PA 15232.

13th Annual  
International Duke Ellington  
Study Group Conference  
May 24-28, 1995

## CELEBRATING THE ELLINGTON AND STRAYHORN COLLABORATION

For Further Information, Write To:

The Billy Strayhorn Chapter of TDES  
PO Box 10285, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

Call or FAX:

1-800-209-9696 (USA)  
412-681-3538 (Outside USA)

## Chapter Member Commissioned By TDES to Edit Masterwork

In the current issue of their newsletter, TDES president Lynne Mueller writes that their Masterworks Committee has commissioned Chapter 90's Walter van de Leur "to do research at the Smithsonian and uncover and revitalize a lost Ellington masterwork."

As to its performance, the organization looks forward to having the edited work played by a big band at a concert planned for April.

Recipients have reported that it was not unusual for Duke to send Yuletide greetings in the spring or summer rather than in December. The reduction below is of a large, four-fold, bright red ink card. We thank Patricia Willard for lending us the original to reproduce here.

