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## THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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

# NEWSLETTER

Volume III, Number 3

MARCH 1995

Theodore A. Shell, President  
202-363-2446  
Angela Grimmer, Secretary  
202-546-7764

Theodore R. Hudson, Vice President  
301-585-9204  
Jack Towers, Treasurer  
301-570-4236

Theodore R. Hudson, *Newsletter* Editor

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### Washington Grove Concert on May 6 Dedicated to Memory of Ray Knight

*The following article is reproduced, with permission, from Washington Grove's Town Bulletin of 17 February 1995:*

#### A Tribute to Ray Knight – Saturday, May 6

The Grove Recreation Committee in cooperation with Chapter 90 of the Duke Ellington Society will present an evening of music by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn as interpreted by the Larry Eanet Quintet. The event to be held in McCathran Hall beginning at 8:00 p.m., will be open to members of Chapter 90 and to citizens of Washington Grove as their guests. Admission will be by ticket only due to limited seating in the hall. Tickets may be obtained by mail. Those Grove residents wishing to attend may send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Angela Grimmer, Secretary, Chapter 90, Duke Ellington Society, P.O. Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787. There will be no charge for the tickets, however those who wish to make a contribution in tribute to Ray and to defray the costs of presenting this fine music, may send such along with their ticket request, made payable to Chapter 90, Duke Ellington Society.

For those who did not have the privilege of knowing Ray Knight, he was active not only in the Town but in Chapter 90 of D.E.S. for years. Ray served on the Town Planning Commission during the development of the Master Plan of 1975, reviewed and approved building permits for the Commission and, along with Ann Briggs, initiated the program of conducting oral interviews with early Grove residents for our historic archives.

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**Concert Tickets Will Be Distributed  
To Chapter 90 Members  
At the April 1 Meeting**

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### Unique Presentation Set for April 1 Meeting

by Mac Grimmer, Program Chairman

The April 1 program will be at the home of Ben Pubols, 3302 Shepherd Street, Chevy Chase, Maryland (directions are enclosed on a separate sheet). Although the place will be different, the time will be the same, 8:30 pm sharp.

Ben is going to present "...an idiosyncratic introduction to the music of Duke Ellington," an account of the step-by-step process of how he became a fan of Ellington's music in the 40s and 50s.

Tickets for the May meeting/concert at Washington Grove will be distributed at this April meeting.

### Chapter to Enjoy Unusual Library of Congress Tour on March 25

A program especially for the our Ellington Society will take place at the Library of Congress on Saturday, March 25, at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Sam Brylawski, the Library's head of recorded sound, will give us a guided tour of the Music Division and of the remarkable Jerry Valburn Collection of Ellingtonia, which includes recorded sound, audio-visual, and photographic materials. Other jazz collections reside in the LC Music Division.

To take advantage of this rare opportunity, members should meet in Room 113, the Performing Arts Reading Room, in the Madison Building of the Library, located at Independence Avenue, SE, between 1st and 2nd Streets, Saturday March 25, at 2:00 pm. See you there.

## Getting the Picture

by Rod Jellema

Back in 1958, Seventh Street up around L Street, NW, was still crowded with Black-run junk shops and used furniture stores, and I was still drawn to them in the increasingly forlorn hope of finding old 78-rpm jazz records. The last shop I entered on this particular day I remember as being almost bare, and deep and narrow, with an unusually high ceiling. No, no records the shopkeeper said—and then my eye caught a photograph of a small band hanging some twenty feet up the peeling wall, in semi-darkness. Probably a jazz band, certainly 1920s—in Washington it was an easy leap to think, wow, that just might be The Washingtonians, Duke Ellington's first band. That's the kind of optimism that made junkshoppers certain that any Gennett label would be King Oliver or Morton when most of them turned out to be white country gospel duets by McGhee and Welling.

With practiced casualness I asked the shopkeeper if she might know what band that might be. No, she didn't. And, well, she didn't know what price it would be because she wouldn't know how to get it down. "It just might turn out to be an early picture of an old friend of mine, a trombone player hereabouts," I said. I wasn't entirely lying; I had in mind Walter "Slide" Harris, who was playing in a band at the Charles Hotel in those days—but really I was convincing myself that it was Ellington's band, 1924.

The inscription reads:

*The Washingtonians  
To My "Mother"  
N.Y.C.  
From her "Son"  
Otto*



I said I would borrow a ladder somewhere and she said I could have it for half a dollar, and when I got up there I knew what I had. The Duke, Bubber Miley, Sonny Greer.... "Nope," I said, heart pounding, "it isn't him."

It looked familiar, but when I got home and compared it to the picture in Ramsey and Smith's *Jazzmen*, I saw that it was an alternate take of the same photo session. Something rare, like a test-pressing. And this one was signed, by Otto Hardwick.

Although this take has not been published, I now know that the negative to it does exist in the Ellington Archives. That's good, and it doesn't diminish at all the pleasure I got from it, remembering that day on old Seventh when I didn't find any records.

*Ed. Note: Rod Jellema is the recent president of the Potomac River Jazz Society. He is the father of David Jellema, an Ellington Collection worker at the Smithsonian, jazz musician, and previous contributor to our Newsletter. We thank the senior Jellema for his contribution.*

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

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

The 36-page booklet accompanying Volume 6 of the *Duke Ellington Masters of Jazz* CDs contains an essay in English and French by our Chapter member in France, **Alexandre Rado**. We understand that the CD includes all takes of January to March 1929 sessions. The booklet also contains a discography and list of solos. ♪ ♪ ♪ TDES has commissioned one of our European members, **Walter van de Leur**, to reconstruct Ellington music from a major motion picture. Plans are to have the music performed at their 96th Birthday Anniversary Concert on April 29. ♪ ♪ ♪ Last year he gave client-friends membership in Chapter 90, but this year, **Willis O. Webb**, head of InfoTech Resources of Memphis, TN gave himself a membership. Welcome, Willis. (Hint to other CEO types: Follow his example and treat your employees, clients, and yourself to Chapter 90 memberships.) ♪ ♪ ♪ We may well see some European members of our Chapter here around the time of "Ellington '95." **Sjef and Milia Hoefsmit** plan to visit the Washington area before going on to the conference in Pittsburgh. We have heard that **Alexandre Rado** will probably come here after the conference. And **Walter van de Leur** almost certainly will pop in to research music manuscripts at the Smithsonian. ♪ ♪ ♪ **Rusty Hassan** continues his teaching of jazz courses at American University, this semester focusing on the evolution of jazz and the blues. It occurs to us that Rusty has conducted his excellent weekly jazz radio program for how-many-years-now? and is still going strong. His shows are always instructive as well as entertaining. ♪ ♪ ♪ As you probably know, long-time member **Don McCathran** is the conceiver and coordinator of the upcoming May 6 concert and tribute to Ray Knight at idyllic Washington Grove. But did you know that for many years Don was the mayor of this lovely, tree-laden, historic town. ♪ ♪ ♪ Did you hear **Ted Shell** during his recent bout with laryngitis? His voice changed from its rich baritone to—well, you're familiar with some of those Rex Stewart half-valve tones. Kidding aside, Mr. President, we are glad that you have recovered your voice and are doing fine.

## CD Highlights Featured at March Meeting; Drum Program Rescheduled

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Our president, Ted Shell, presented the March program when scheduling problems forced postponement of Anthony Brown's analysis of Ellington's drummers to a later date. Ted's program sampled recent CD releases, highlighting Duke's many variations on familiar themes as well as some of his less well-known material. One of the surprises was his use of "Carolina Shout" instead of "Kinda Dukish" as a lead-in to "Rockin' in Rhythm" at a 1965 Paris performance.

### Mark Your Calendar for These Events March 25

Library of Congress Tour  
April 1

Meeting/program (at Ben Pubols')

April 28

4th Duke Ellington Youth Festival, National  
Museum of American History, Smithsonian

May 6

Concert, Washington Grove

May 24-28

"Ellington '95," Pittsburgh

## Tell Your Friends in Other Places That the Exhibits Are on the Way

The Smithsonian's exhibit *Beyond Category* continues to travel. Approximate dates for venues are:

Present-March 19: California Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles, CA

April 8-June 18: Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, Rochester, NY

July 8-Sept. 17: National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN

The small scale adaptation, or Library Format, of the exhibit tours as follows:

April 6-May 18: Providence Public Library, Providence, RI

April 6-May 29: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

June 1-July 13: St. Johnsbury Atheneum, St. Johnsbury, VT

June 8-July 20: McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI

July 27-Sept. 7: Prince Georges County Memorial Library, Hyattsville, MD

## Strayhorn Chapter Prepares Array of Activities for "Ellington '95"

Among the varied events that the host Billy Strayhorn Chapter of the Ellington Society has planned for "Ellington '95" are an Ellington Reunion Concert, "Strictly Strayhorn" concert, installation of a Billy Strayhorn historical marker, banquet, and jazz brunch boat ride.

The rich variety of daytime sessions is suggested by inclusion of a Strayhorn family panel, dancers and choreographers panel, discussion of Strayhorn's historical Pittsburgh, and consideration of "Ellington/Strayhorn and the Arts." Audio visual presentations will include rare glimpses of Strayhorn on film and video footage of "The Jazz Nutcracker." Of special interest to our Chapter will be presentations by our Sjef Hoefsmit, Walter van de Leur, Scott Schwartz, Patricia Willard, and others.

Among musicians to perform are former Ellingtonians Clark Terry, Louie Bellson, and Jimmy Woode. Others include Kenny Burrell, McCoy Tyner, Gerri Allen, and special guests with Dr. Nathan Davis and the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra. "A Taste of Jazz" will explore the Pittsburgh jazz scene.

This year's "Ellington '95" will be the thirteenth annual International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference. As usual, the world's most respected researchers and experts on Ellington and Strayhorn will be well represented, as presenters and attendees.

Gregory Morris, president, and his dedicated conference committee are to be commended for such a special conference. Remember, the Billy Strayhorn Chapter is practically brand new, yet took on the project. Thanks, we'll be there.

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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)

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## Netherlands Conservatory Presents "Duke's Bass Players"

In a personal letter, Sjef Hoefsmit speaks of attending in February the third program in a series at the Conservatory of Hilversum (the broadcast city of The Netherlands), this one concentrating on the Ellington bassists. Unfortunately, the music was not presented in the best of settings and was from only commercial records augmented by still pictures on a screen.

Because bass playing has developed so much in recent years, Sjef observed that what they heard was not a great surprise to the young musicians present. On the other hand, he was pleased to hear the reactions of the younger people to the likes of Tricky Sam and Rex.

## European Basis for Duke (& Pops)

For the 19 February issue of the *Washington Post's Book World*, Robert (Bob) O'Meally wrote an incisive review of Reid Badger's biography of James Reese Europe, *A Life in Ragtime*. Bob quotes Europe as saying, "We have developed a kind of symphonic music that, no matter what else you think, is different and distinctive . . . and that lends itself to the playing of the peculiar compositions of our race."

Bob then writes: "Here was the national symphony Walt Whitman had predicted some 20 years earlier would derive from 'the speech of the slaves.' Here was the sound that would pave the way for Louis Armstrong, who took Europe's model and turned its algebra of percussive and melodic innovations into a higher calculus of swing. Here too was the context into which Duke Ellington, who started out as a ragtime pianist, arrived. Ellington, that other Washingtonian who thrived on the city's rich musical scene, put Europe's audacious conception of a jumping dance orchestra together with Armstrong's gospel of swing and created a multicolored music that was thoroughly definitive of American and of the 20th century."

Speaking of James Reese Europe's "bold departure" from European forms, Bob contends that this early 20th century Afro-American musician "is the father of the contemporary jazz band and jazz as America's classic music—a true native form . . ."