
THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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

NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 1995

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Hoefsmits To Be Welcomed

While visiting in this area enroute to "Ellington '95," Sjef and Milia Hoefsmit, Chapter members from Belgium, will be guests at 8 pm Monday, May 22, at the home of our president and first lady, Ted and Marian Shell, 4326 Westover Place, NW. All Chapter members are invited.

Music, Art, Ballet Part of Big Ellington Youth Festival on April 28

Contributed by Louvenia George

The Fourth Duke Ellington Youth Festival will be on Friday, April 28 at Flagg Hall in the National Museum of American History of the Smithsonian Institution.

An educational outreach program of the Smithsonian in cooperation with District of Columbia schools, the Festival is the culminating activity of a year of curriculum study in the life and music of Ellington. The curricular theme this school year has been "Ellington in Retrospect."

Junior and senior high school choirs, bands, and string ensemble perform, and an art exhibit of student work inspired by Ellington's music is housed this year in the Taylor Gallery at the Museum. A feature at the Festival will be students from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts performing "The Lake" from Ellington's ballet *The River*.

Mark the date on your calendar and come out for an enjoyable evening. In addition, the Smithsonian and the students need our support.

Ed. note: Last year the performances, literary anthology, art, drama, and other results of students' study and creativity were excellent. You will be glad you attended this year's culminating festival. Incidentally, Louvenia is the schools' coordinator for the Duke Ellington Youth Project.

May 6 Concert at Washington Grove Eagerly Anticipated

Tickets have been going fast for the all-Ellington/Strayhorn concert by the Larry Eanet Quintet at McCathran Hall in Washington Grove on May 6 at 8:30 pm. The concert is a tribute to Ray Knight, a long-time, active member of Chapter 90 as well as a valued Washington Grove resident.

The event will take the place of our Chapter's regular May meeting. Because seating is limited, tickets are required for admission. There is no charge for tickets; however, to help defray expenses, persons may make contributions at the door.

If You Missed the April Meeting And Want Tickets for the May 6 Concert

Remaining tickets may still be available, by mail. Send your request along with a self-addressed and stamped envelope to: Angela Grimmer, Secretary, Chapter 90, Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003-0787.

Dr. Eanet, a dermatologist, is an accomplished pianist who enjoys music as an avocation. He is a regular pianist for Sunday brunch at a posh Washington hotel.

The concert was conceived and is coordinated by Chapter member Don McCathran, former mayor of Washington Grove.

For directions to Washington Grove and McCathran Hall, see the map insert. See you there!

In Case It Slipped Your Mind

Our Chapter memberships are for the calendar year. Our 1995 dues structure: Student member-\$5; First-time-ever member-\$20; Continuing or former member-\$30.

Reminiscing in Tempo

by Theodore Shell

For several years in the early seventies, the Duke Ellington Orchestra appeared in Baltimore at the Left Bank Jazz Society. And I believe that I along with several other dedicated Ellington lovers made all of them. They were always held on Sunday afternoons. On February 21, 1971 after a concert at the Armory in Whitehall, New York, the band was snowed in and the Duke arrived, apologetically, at the Left Bank two hours late with John Lamb in tow with his fender bass. He had commandeered Lamb from Philadelphia where he was employed as music professor in one of the local universities.

The crowd, though extremely restless, greeted them enthusiastically, and Duke, dressed in jeans, accommodated us graciously, loving us madly. He then responded with his usual eloquent discourse and apt rejoinders. He then broke into a rousing "Take the 'A' Train," "Soda Fountain Rag," and 14 selections usually requested by the crowd. The ambience was cabaret.



Photographs by Ted Shell used with permission.

The Duke in casual traveling attire; Duke and John Lamb with his fender bass, which he had hurriedly brought down from Philadelphia; Duke and Lamb; Duke and Tony Watkins

There followed a series of four pieces by Tony Watkins, who appeared out of nowhere. Next Duke and John played "Pretty and the Wolf" and the "finger snappin' bit." Then the whole band sauntered in bedraggedly. They played, without intermission, 24 numbers from the repertoire with enthusiastic soloing by Gonsalves, Turney, Ashby, Hodges and of course Wild Bill Davis, who played his favorites "April in Paris," "Azure Te," and "Do Nothin' 'Till You Hear from Me." Since the band had flown in, Wild Bill's organ was not available and he played piano.

Although my taping left much to be desired, my photographs, which many of you saw at our last meeting, were o.k. The crowd noise and poor microphone placement didn't help the recordings. They closed with a rousing "Satin Doll." This was probably the longest of the Ellington concerts on record.



Orchestral Works Concert Reveals Talents of Bellson the Composer

Percussionist Louie Bellson's formidable technique and swing are well known. The recent concert at Ft. Myer featuring Bellson and his extended works proved him to be a formidable composer as well. The music was played with sensitivity and verve by a full orchestral complement—including strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion/tympani, harp, piano, voices. Conducted by Maj. Tony W. Cason, it consisted of components from the acclaimed U.S. Army Blues, Army Orchestra, Army Chorus, and Army Chorale.

A centerpiece for the concert was the three-part *Tomus*, composed by Bellson with text by Pearl Bailey, the second public performance of this heady work. Guest soloist was Kenneth Pasmanick, major bassoonist with the Washington Symphony, whom Bellson has known since they were both in the military at Walter Reed Army Hospital years ago. Pasmanick performed an lyrical, flowing, hauntingly beautiful "Love" written by Bellson. By way of introducing the premiere performance of "Blues for Kenny," a showcase for Pasmanick by Bellson and Jack Hayes, Bellson recalled how years ago he and Pasmanick had gone while on leave to New York's

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Jazz at the Portrait Gallery

Contributed by Mac Grimmer

The National Portrait Gallery, a branch of the Smithsonian in downtown Washington isolated from the mall cluster of museums, has more to offer than just portraits of the presidents. The arts are well represented, including many notables from the entertainment and music worlds.

Of special interest is Duke's portrait by Peter Hurd which appeared on a *Time* magazine cover in 1956 and appears to be on permanent display. It's been in a prominent spot there for some years now, across the hall from Leonard Bernstein.

The latest edition to a smattering of jazz portraits is one from 1988 of Dizzy Gillespie, a five-by-six foot painting by the Russian artist Marc Klionsky. There's Dizzy, informal in plaid slacks, blue sweater, and gold chain, seated facing the artist and holding forth. African masks, flanking the bop king, may give a clue to the discussion. It's an impressive addition to the Portrait Gallery's collection, and one that takes up a lot of wall space.

Down the hall is another new addition, a 1947 color photograph of Louis Armstrong, trumpet in hand and ready to blow. There is also a color lithograph/caricature of Duke's mentor, Willie "The Lion" Smith, seated at the piano, in the middle of a small group session. The only other jazz subject, an oil portrait of Benny Goodman playing the clarinet, is painted in a style that makes it look as though the picture is about to slide off the canvas onto the floor. There were photos of Ben Webster and Billie Holiday on exhibit not long ago, and hopefully they will reappear as the permanent collection rotates.

Also new is a self-portrait by Billy Dee Williams holding a gardenia. Williams has long been rumored to be the candidate to play the lead if and when a movie is ever made of Duke's life.

Members Enjoy Music, Food, and Gracious Hospitality at April Meeting

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

There were two sources of entertainment at the well-attended April meeting at Ben and Lillian Pubols' home: first, Ben's engaging account of his development as a fan of Duke's music and second, the lavish spread of food and drink they provided Chapter 90 members. Ben's program was well illustrated with many examples of early Ellington music, and many of us lingered and socialized and enjoyed the Pubols' collection of jazz memorabilia.

Mark Your Calendar

Friday, April 28

4th Annual Duke Ellington Youth Festival
Flag Hall, Nat. Museum of American History
Smithsonian Institution

Saturday, May 6

Concert

McCathran Hall, Washington Grove

Monday, May 22

Chapter Get-Together with Foreign Members
8:00 pm at Ted and Marian Shell's
4326 Westover Place, NW

May 24-28

"Ellington '95," Pittsburgh

New Ellington Book

We thank Louvenia George for bringing to our attention a recent addition to Ellington literature, *Duke Ellington* by Francois Billard and Gilles Tordjman. Published in 1994 by Solfege's Seuil, it is a rather concise account of Ellington's life and contains pictures rarely seen.

Bellson the Composer

Continued from page 2

52nd Street, where Pasmanick sat in on bassoon with Dizzy Gillespie! Bellson's *Percussion Internationale* conveyed four modes, "India," "Flambafrik," "Rhumbop," and "Nacirema" (American spelled backwards). The evening closed with a spirited "Carnaby Street," another Bellson and Hayes composition.

We hope that these excellent compositions by Bellson will become available not only in live performances but by recordings as well. The concert gave support to what Duke is quoted as asserting, that Louie Bellson is "not only...the world's greatest drummer...(but) the world's greatest musician!"

Group Hears Different "Diminuendo" During Library of Congress Tour

Contributed by Louvenia George

On Saturday, March 25, the Chapter was given a tour of the Recorded Sound Reference Center in the Performing Arts Reading Room at the Library of Congress. This special visit was hosted by Sam Brylawski, specialist in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division.

Members saw fascinating materials from the Jerry Valburn Collection of Ellingtonia, which includes an incredibly rich archive of photos, programs, correspondence and other memorabilia in addition to the most complete collection of Ellington recordings in this country. Sam Perryman, music specialist and reference librarian in the Music Division, made available to us a guide to the Valburn/Ellington Collection, a long-term project on which he is still working.

Mike Turpin, studio engineer, escorted us into the huge, state-of-the-art magnetic recording lab where we heard the Voice of America recording of "Crescendo and Diminuendo in Blue" taken at the historic 1956 Newport Jazz Festival. What makes this recording so special is that, unlike the Columbia version in which Paul Gonsalves' solo is caught off-mike, here he is recorded blowing directly into the microphone before him. The difference in "presence" and fidelity is dramatic.

One of the great features of the afternoon was that, amid rows and rows of thousands of recordings, we were encouraged to request any recording we wanted to hear. What a treat!

Many thanks to the Library of Congress staff for a very enlightening and entertaining afternoon.

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)

TV Celebration of Duke's Birthday Features Ted Shell

Our president, Dr. Theodore Shell, and Stanley Cowell are guests on the "Artistically Speaking" television show of Marilou Donahue entitled "A Duke Ellington Birthday Celebration." This special program will be aired on various stations and at various times, scheduled as follows:

Channel 25, DCTV

Saturdays, 2:30 and 7:30 pm - April 1, 15, 29
Thursdays, 3:00 and 8:00 pm - April 6, 20

Channel 10, Fairfax Cable Corp.

Sunday, 12 Noon - April 2
Tuesday, 6:30 pm - April 4
Saturday, 4:30 pm - April 8

Channel 10, Jones Intercable (Alexandria, VA)

Every Saturday in April, 2:00 pm

Channel 33, Arlington, VA

Every Wednesday in April, 5:30 pm

Channels 15a and 15b, Prince Georges Community TV

Every Tuesday in April, 10:00 am

Channel 49 and Cableready Channel 23, Montgomery County Community TV

To be shown at a later date

Channel 38, Continental Cablevision (Richmond, VA)

To be shown at a later date

We look forward to seeing Ted on this important telecast.

Duke's Influence on Woody Herman

We thank Mac Grimmer for noting material about Ellington in recently released *Woody Herman: Chronicles of the Herds* by William D. Clancy (Schirmer Books, 1995). It seems as if Woody was a high-schooler when he first heard Duke's orchestra, then the eight-piece band called the Washingtonians (some recordings coming out under the name of the Jungle Band). At that time Herman was intrigued with what he described as "weird sounds." In the book he is quoted as saying, "I have always been interested in Duke down through the years. To this day (1986) he is still my biggest inspiration and most important influence."



**Do Something Creative
on
APRIL 29!**