

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

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Ellington Youth Project Underway

Contributed by Luvenia George

The Duke Ellington Youth Project is an educational outreach program sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution's Program in African American Culture and the District of Columbia Public Schools. Initiated in 1990, the Project's primary objective is to introduce students to Ellington's life and legacy through an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes music, art, English, social studies and foreign language classes. Considered a model of its type by educators nationally, the highly acclaimed curriculum was researched, developed and is continually updated by utilizing the rich resources of the Ellington Collection at the Smithsonian.

Other important components of this unique Project for teachers include tours of the Archives, inspection of the Ellington Collection and lectures by outstanding educators, ethnomusicologists, and jazz scholars. Previous presenters have been John Hasse, Ernest Dyson and Luvenia George. This year Ted Hudson rewarded the educators with the topic "The Literature-Based Music of Strayhorn and Ellington: Shakespeare Samplings." Inspiring and informative, each presentation is an addition to the annual curriculum updates.

As of September 1995, teachers enrolled in the Duke Ellington Youth Project may receive graduate credit through Trinity College.

For students, the school-year culmination is the annual Duke Ellington Youth Festival at which they demonstrate and exhibit their visual art, sculpture, music, dance, poetry, drama, and other creative efforts resulting from exposure to and study of Ellingtonia.

Ed. note: Chapter member Luvenia modestly forgot to say that she is the Project Coordinator of this unique and highly successful program.

**Annual Holiday Party on January 6
At New Meeting Place**

Cap the holiday season with a great evening of camaraderie, mouth-watering food and drink, superb music, and merriment. We're talking about our winter party, this year at our new meeting place, Grace Lutheran Church.

Each member may invite three guests. There is no assessment (expenses come from of your annual dues); however, each member is asked to bring a food contribution for the buffet table. Questions about food choices? Give Helen Frazier (202-387-7071) or Marian Shell or Angela Grimmer a call.

See you on **Saturday, January 6, 8:00 pm, Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 16th Street, NW (corner of 16th and Varnum).**

**Good News about '96 Dues:
No Increase for Regulars,
Special New Member Rate Continued**

Please make your 1996 dues payment promptly. 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. Or you can hand your check to any Chapter officer, who will turn it over to Jack Towers, our treasurer. The proper amount: \$30 individual; \$50 couple; \$5 student; and a special \$20 membership for anyone who has never before been a Chapter 90 member.

What a bargain! Consider: all those great meetings (that's less than \$4 per evening out, including refreshments), plus the winter holiday party, the *Newsletter*, and the rewarding friendship of congenial Ellington-Strayhorn enthusiasts! Remember, dues are for the calendar year, so start 1996 on a happy note by getting your dues in.

Duke Ellington and His Orchestra: Chicago Concerts (1946)

Excerpts from November and January. (MusicMasters 1612-65110-2)

Reviewed by Jim Schneller

Contents: *Deep South Suite* ("Magnolias...", "Hearsay"/"Orson Welles," "Nobody Was Lookin'," "Happy-Go-Lucky-Local"); *Tonal Group* ("Rhapsoditti," "Fugue-a-ditti," "Jam-a-ditti"); *Handy Suite* ("Beale Street," "Memphis Blues"—omitted); *Beautiful Indians Suite* (omitted—omitted—"Hiawatha"); "Jammin' with Django" ("Ride, Red, Ride," "Improvisation No. 2," "Honeysuckle Rose"), sectional pairs "Come Sunday" and "Work Song" (*BBB*), "Naiveté" and "Sophistication" (*Perfume Suite*); "Magenta Haze"; "Sultry Sunset"; "Golden Feather"; "Frankie and Johnny"; "Pitter Panther Patter"; "Rugged Romeo"; "Circe"; "Suburbanite"; "Air Conditioned Jungle"; "Unbooted Character"; "In a Mellotone"; "Solid, Old Man"; "Blue Skies"; "Star Spangled Banner"; and five others.

Major Soloists: Edward and Oscar Pettiford; Hardwick and Hodges; Harold Baker, Taft Jordan, and Ray Nance; Brown and Hamilton; Al Sears and Django with rhythm section and orchestra.

References: *Prima DC 01 & 02* (Fr., out of pressing) and *D.E.T.S. No. 33* (USA, out of pressing)

Here's your front-row seat for Ellington and his professionals still in their prime. The history behind these two concerts involves chemist John Steiner, Ph.D., talking his talk with Edward for permission to record the concerts and then walking that catwalk (back and forth) to feed his microphone down above the band, near Duke's piano, Freddy Guy and Oscar Pettiford. He recorded both concerts on an expensive, high-quality portable acetate disk-cutter. The recorded sound on both of these CDs, engineered by Larry Appelbaum, Library of Congress and WPFW radio, is so wonderfully clear, so real, with such superb "presence," the experience of hearing the music is just as if you are really there in 1946 witnessing the concerts at the edge of the stage.

Chicago always was a good jazz town. Chicagoans were hip enough so that Duke enjoyed working his Art there. Every member of the band was "up" and on their toes for both occasions. There is authentic drive and enthusiasm in both concerts, sections and soloists in fine shape to charm and excite the savvy audience and play like angels. Even Bill "The Cat" solos well twice, hits those effectual high ones on target instead of the stabs and squeals he became infamous for decades later. There is an atmosphere of good taste throughout both concerts.

My only complaint is in the programming and the loss of all announcements. *Beautiful Indians* (in three parts) is incomplete. "Chaugogagog Maushagagag" is an attractive line in front of an unusual rhythmic pattern with a good solo by Shorty Baker. This entire introduction is omitted. Similarly, Kay Davis is clearly recorded in good vocalese on "Minnehaha," but this is also omitted in a very pretty melody. Instead, we get Al Sears on "Hiawatha" where he moans and wails in a convincing climax to the suite. In the W.C. Handy trilogy, "Beale Street" is faded up and "Memphis Blues" is followed immediately by "St. Louis," then fading down and missing. The French *Prima* issue included *Beautiful Indians* and *Handy Suite* complete. The music, inspiring and attractive, could have replaced another "Air Conditioned Jungle" with Hamilton noodling and "Ring Dem Bells" which were live on several LP issues over the decades. Duke was under contract to Musicraft at this time, I believe, and did not record *Beautiful Indians* complete. Stanley Dance's notes are good for identifying soloists, but he manages to inject serious jazz fans of Ellington's concert music as "pseudo-intellectuals" (whom Duke enjoyed putting-on) as subjective slander he might have omitted.

There are many high spots. Al Sears and Toby Hardwicke play nice obbligato behind Johnny Hodges on "Magnolias" and "Rhapsoditti." *Deep South* and *Tonal Group* are dreamy and inspiring concert Art. The piano solo "Nobody was Lookin'" is a musical portrayal of a Summer Breeze on a brief romance between a puppy and a pretty flower, so good, so subtle it should have become part of his repertoire. But it didn't. Edward and Oscar Pettiford duet wonderfully on "Frankie and Johnnie" and "Pitter Panther Patter," while Hodges sensually charms on "Magenta Haze," certainly among the most beautiful melodies Duke ever wrote for him. Django is a terrific kick on electric guitar in top form backed up by Freddie Guy and Oscar Pettiford.

This is most likely the only time you'll hear this fine concert music in such presence and clarity. Overlooking the fade-up on three numbers, the programming reservations, this is one hell-of-a production, two-hour thrill. You won't be disappointed investing in this one.

Ellington Comes to the Internet

Contributed by Scott Schwartz

Access to the music collections, including the Ellington and related collections, of the National Museum of American History's Archives Center are now available through the Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS).

Non-Smithsonian users can access SIRIS by setting their PC modem and communication software for the following parameters:

Telephone number: 202-357-4304
 Baud rate: 1200-9600 bps
 Parity: None
 Date bit: 8
 Stop bit: 1
 Terminal type: VT100 or VT 102

Once you are connected to the system, you will see a SIRIS logo screen. Press the enter key for the SIRIS Welcome screen. To leave SIRIS, simply exit your communication software.

If you any have questions regarding SIRIS or access to the WWW Smithsonian Home Page, please feel free to call Scott Schwartz at 202-357-4477 or send e-mail to him at MAHOK15@SIVM.SI.EDU.

Happy computing.

Ed. note: Chapter member Scott represents the Archives Center to the SIRIS Member Group, of which he is co-chair, and to the SIRIS Management Committee.

"Ellington '96"

the

14th Annual International
 Duke Ellington Study Group Conference

June 19-23, 1996

Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto, Canada

"THE INTIMATE ELLINGTON"

Sponsor:

Toronto Chapter, Duke Ellington Society
 95 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Suite 2906
 Toronto, Ontario
 Canada M4H 1L7
 Phone: 416-422-4656; Fax: 416-239-0901

Clinker Alert!

Chapter member Lois Moody noticed that in our October issue we said that Wild Bill Davis had performed at Ellington '90 in Toronto. We should have said that the place was Ottawa. Lois, a key committee person for that wonderful conference, writes, "I'm sure Bill's spirit knows the difference, since he had such a good time with us." Thanks, Lois, for calling the error to our attention and for the moving observation about Wild Bill's spirit.

Strayhorn Program at Smithsonian

Contributed by Annie Kuebler

Billy Strayhorn's birthday was celebrated at the National Museum of American American History on November 29. The staff of the Duke Ellington Collection reprised their Pittsburgh conference presentation, "A Mysterious Process: The Ellington/Strayhorn Collaboration." The audience heard Billy's and Duke's voices interweaving the tale of their initial meeting in Pittsburgh and Billy's induction into the band. Billy explained how he came to be an arranger: "One day Duke sent me two pieces and he said, 'Arrange these. We are recording at 10:00.' So, what could I do? I learned fast. He liked those two; he thought they were kind of nice so he didn't do any more small band arranging—he gave it all to me!" Strayhorn quickly moved on the big band arrangements. "The 'Jim-Jam Jumpin' Jive?' Well, as a result of that arrangement he gave me charge of all the singers!"

More opinions and stories about their collaborations were offered by members of the organization through their oral history interviews. The program concluded with Strayhorn's death in 1967. But did the mysterious process that was the Ellington/Strayhorn collaboration end there? Maybe Herb Jeffries said it best: "Unfortunately, Strayhorn moved upward and onward into a different dimension rather than staying in the one . . . of course, they're both there now in the same dimension and probably doing some fantastic things."

In this dimension, their music, interviews and original scores are alive and available for research at the Archives Center Institution. Please visit us. Call 202-357-4477 with any questions or to make a research appointment.

"Best Record of the Year"

In a reprint in *Jerry's Rhythm Rag #5*, published in Sweden, according to Paul Eduard Miller in the January 1939 *Downbeat*, "Counting only recordings of original and standard hot jazz compositions, the orchestra of Duke Ellington led the entire field in the matter of productivity . . ." In his opinion, the year's best was a Brunswick recording that included the composition "most unique in its approach and treatment," Juan Tizol's "Pyramid." He goes on to say that it is "as melodic as the same composer's Caravan [sic], and what surprises me is that it has not been as frequently played as the latter."

Ellington Exhibit Includes Symposium

Contributed by Luvenia George

The "Beyond Category" exhibit opened in Memphis at the National Civil Rights Museum on July 8 and ran through September 17. A special one-day symposium was held on August 3 on: "Ellington: The Complexities of Race, Romance and Good Times." The panelists were pianist Billy Taylor, ethnomusicologist [and Chapter 90 member] Luvenia George, jazz critic Dan Morgenstern and writer Stanley Crouch.

Popular Jazz Smithsonian Concerts And Radio Series Continue

The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, led by David Baker and Gunther Schuller, opens its 1996 season in January. As before, music by Duke Ellington and other jazz greats will be featured. Broadcasts of these concerts, hosted by Lena Horne, will follow. For a schedule of the orchestra's presentations here and on tour, call the Smithsonian's Division of Cultural History at 202-633-9163; for information about the radio broadcasts (over almost 200 stations nationwide), call Radio Smithsonian at 202-357-2985. (P.S. You might want to ask if you may have a copy of *Jazz Smithsonian's beautiful 1995-96 calendar*.)

The concerts and the broadcasts are part of America's Jazz Heritage (co-directed by Chapter member John Hasse), a 10-year Partnership of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Smithsonian Institution.

Members Delighted by Program and Setting for December Meeting

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Reverend Dean Moe warmly welcomed us on the night of December 2 in our new meeting location at the Grace Lutheran Church, on the corner of 16th and Varnum Streets, NW.

It was only fitting that the first program in our new location was presented by the first president of Chapter 90, Maurice Lawrence, who treated us to a first-hand account of the circumstances and the program of the 1964 Carnegie Hall concert, in which Duke premiered some new material which became, with further refinements, the *Far East Suite*.

In anticipation of Maurice's program, we had a great turnout, including many of the founding members.

Everyone left looking forward to our holiday party at our new location on the first Saturday in January.

NEA Jazz Funding Categories and Process Being Restructured

The National Endowment for the Arts is re-considering its categories, guidelines, and process for its sponsorship of jazz programs and is asking for patience during this transition. NEA has awarded grants for such undertakings as fellowships, performances, study, special projects, ensembles. In addition to grants to individual musicians, there has been a Jazz Specials Projects/Services category under which organizations only may apply.

Calendar

Saturday, January 6

Annual Holiday Party

Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 - 16th St, NW

TBA

★ Programs at Marion and Ted Shell's and at Lillian and Ben Pubols' ★ Special Reception and Meeting at Smithsonian ★ Member's Choice Night ★ Jack Towers Program ★

June 19-23

"Ellington '96," Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto

Sponsor: Toronto Chapter, DES

Coda!

Dues ♪ Dues \$ Dues ♪ Dues \$ Dues ♪ Dues

