

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER

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**Must-See Ellington Youth Festival
At Smithsonian on April 24 and 26!**

Contributed by Luvenia George

A large turnout is expected for the 5th Annual Duke Ellington Youth Festival on Friday, April 26, at 7 pm in Flag Hall of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History on Constitution Avenue.

The Festival is the annual culmination of the Ellington Youth Project, a years study in over 20 District of Columbia schools about the life and music of Ellington, with a curriculum developed by the Smithsonian's Program in African American Culture. As Mercer Ellington was strongly supportive of our concept of perpetuating the Ellington legacy among young people, the program will include a musical tribute to him.

The Project has an interdisciplinary curriculum. Music, English, social studies, foreign languages, and art are all subject components that broaden students' knowledge and understanding of Ellington's as well as Billy Strayhorn's creativity.

At noon on Wednesday, April 24, students will give poetry and dramatic readings. On Friday the 26th, festivities will begin at 6 pm with an Art Exhibit of student work in Taylor Gallery. Events later that evening will include the Senior High Band rendering selections ranging from "The Mooche" to the challenging "Day-break Express" and performances by the Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir and Dance Ensemble, Junior High Band and Choir, combined string ensemble, and Senior High Choir.

Luvenia A. George is Coordinator of the Duke Ellington Youth Project. Niani Kilkenny is Director of the Smithsonian's Program in African American Culture.

The Festival will be a fabulous evening of entertainment with special fervor in honor of the Smithsonian's 150th anniversary. Attend and support the young people in perpetuation of the Ellington legacy.

**April 6 Meeting Will Be
A Special Event at the Smithsonian**

by Ben Pubols

The April meeting, to be held on Saturday the sixth, will be sponsored by the Ellington Collection of the Archives Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The meeting will be held in the Museum, beginning at 8:30 pm. Please use the **Constitution Avenue** entrance and **arrive between 8:00 and 8:30 pm**, when a guard will be on duty and Archives Center staff and volunteers will be available to direct you to the meeting site (except for our meeting, the Museum will be closed at this time).

Chapter members will have the opportunity to hear rare recordings by Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra as well as to see (and hear) videos from the Ernie Smith Jazz Film Collection. Music manuscripts, photograph albums, programs and other ephemera will be available for viewing. If there are any items you would especially like to see, contact Anne Kuebler at (202) 357-4477. Refreshments will be served.

**Mercer Ellington
Eulogized by Hasse**

In his eulogy at the memorial service for Mercer Ellington at New York's St. Peter's Lutheran Church on February 18, John Hasse noted that "To be born to a world-famous celebrity and genius must create a challenge for any offspring." He spoke of Mercer's fortitude, among other things, in going into the same field as his father, in going into and later leading the orchestra, and in opening "to the world his life, his heart, and his pain" in *Duke Ellington in Person*. John further stressed the foresight of Mercer in collecting his father's materials over the years and of his generosity by later depositing them in the Smithsonian to be "owned by all the American people."

A Ducal Encounter

Contributed by Ben Pubols

Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra appeared at the Starlight Ballroom in Hershey, Pennsylvania on J 24, 1965. My wife, Lillian, and I were then living in State College, but drove the 100+ miles to Hershey to make a week-end of it. And what a wonderful week-end it turned out to be! In addition to an exciting evening of listening and dancing to The Duke, we were able to enjoy an extended duet between him and Johnny Hodges, played "just for us."

During intermission, Duke was engaged by two ladies bearing a song one of them had written and which they wanted him to audition. (How many times did this happen throughout his career?). Lurking nearby, we realized what was happening and wondered how Duke would charm himself out of this awkward situation. Suddenly, he spotted us and excused himself, rushing over to meet "two old friends." We had a very amiable chat in the course of which I gave Duke a set of 8x10 photos of the band that I had taken in Logan, Utah in 1958 ("Man, that sure was a long time ago! . . . Whatever were you doing in a place like that?"). During the conversation, we requested an old favorite of ours, "The Gal From Joe's." Duke pointed out to us that it was not currently in the book and that it would not be familiar to the newer members of the band. As intermission drew to a close and Duke returned to the piano, Johnny Hodges was the first one back on the stand. He and Duke held a brief conference. Then, as the others straggled in, Duke and Rabbit honored us with a ten-minute rendition of "The Gal From Joe's," Duke supplying the trumpet do-wahs on the piano while Rab laid it on mellow on alto.

One of the most cherished memories of my life!

(Ed. note: We thank Ben for this wonderful anecdote. In earlier issues we have published personal recollections by Jack Towers and Ted Shell. There are any number of other interesting reminiscences that our members could share. Tell us about yours so that we can publish it.)

Duke Ellington, *The Cornell University Concert*. Music Masters 01612-65114-2.

Reviewed by Reuben Jackson

Perhaps what's most interesting about this December 1948 performance at prestigious Cornell University (in addition to the interesting variety of compositions, that is) is how even the unique aural palace that is Ellingtoni was, like so many large ensembles, being affected by the rapid post-war changes in American music.

For 1948 was, for all intents and purposes, the beginning of the end of what's referred to as the big band era, and for some scholars at least, the beginning of the Maestro's creative slump (albeit the "slump" of many a composer's dreams!).

And while there is no symptomatic evidence of the alleged lull present at Cornell, there is, in addition to the characteristically stunning tonal colors heard throughout titles such as "The Symphomaniac" and the ever evocative "Lady of the Lavender Mist," a palpable sense of tradition within in this incarnation of the orchestra, one in which Ellington standards like "Creole Love Call" seem to be in search of new directions, and compositions such as "My Friend," which features the soulful, preaching tenor sax of Al Sears more than hints at what was soon to be labeled "Rhythm and Blues."

Still, Ellington remains his urbane, slightly elusive self. Note how his spoken introduction to the autobiographical "Reminiscing in Tempo" deftly sidesteps any first-person references.

Also worth noting is a rare performance of Strayhorn's characteristically sensual "Paradise"—a composition which will hopefully find its way into the handbooks of the ever growing number of musicians performing his work, and or course, the titles penned by "the piano player."

Antonio Berini and Giovanni M. Volonte, *Duke Ellington: Un Genio, Un Mito*.

Firenze: Ponte Alle Grazie Spa, 1994.

At "Ellington '95" in Stockholm, an unexpected treat was the attendance of Luciano Massagli and Giovanni M. Volonté, who, with Liborio Pusateri, authored multi-volumed *Duke Ellington Story on Records (DESOR)*. At that time an announcement was made of a forthcoming sequel or revision of their famed reference. We now have by Volonté and Berini *Duke Ellington: Un Genio, Un Mito*, a different work. In an internet posting, Andrew Homzy reports that it is divided into parts and sections—biography, short works, artistic periods, suites, etc.—but has little discography. Alas, though, the book is in Italian. Hopefully, translations will become available. Meanwhile, have we someone with a working knowledge of Italian who will write for our *Newsletter* a commentary/review of this important publication?

Color of Mind

by Mark Prince

Indigo ---

The twilight sky at night
That puts us into that sentimental mood

Black ---

Is it a blessing or a curse?
Am I to remain in my Solitude?

Blue ---

Such sweet sorrow
Without which I am not I
And you are not you.

Beige ---

The lightest of hues
It's not far from white
But it still sings the blues

Tan ---

It's kinda in between
Ya know what I mean?

Red ---

The color of passion
That enraptures my soul
Whenever we cross those
Burning sands in that
Wondrous caravan of life.

Duke ---

The sum total of
This spectrum of light,
Color and emotion.

Spirit ---

Once your mind is set in locomotion,
The lucidity of your
Soul is all that remains
After you've taken a
Ride of that celestial
"A" Train.

Note: This poem appeared in the first Anthology of the initial Duke Ellington Youth Festival in April 1991. Mark was a student of mine [in the 12th grade] at Wilson High School. An extraordinary, multi-talented musician, he served as an intern with the Youth Project while in college and has since graduated from Howard University with a bachelor of music degree, percussion major. --Luvenia [George]

Ellingtonia Books on the Way

The awaited *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* by Eddie Lambert is scheduled for release in the fall by Scarecrow Press. Also forthcoming by that press is a revised *Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen, 4th Edition*, compiled by W. E. Timmer.

Jazz Heritage Project Needs Support of Friends

Congressional budget cutbacks have seriously affected "America's Jazz Heritage," a partnership of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Smithsonian. To continue its programs, the project needs financial help from the public.

Most of us are familiar with the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra concerts and the "Beyond Category" exhibits, while some other programs may not be so well known: the "Jazz Smithsonian" radio series, curating and preservation, educational outreach, oral history, Ellington classics editions for performance, and productions of recordings.

Some of our members have already responded to a mailed appeal from the Smithsonian. Let's all show our support by promptly sending tax-deductible contributions payable to Smithsonian Jazz, NMAH 4127, MRC 616, Washington, DC 20560.

Calendar

- Saturday, April 6* - Monthly Meeting and Reception for Chapter at Smithsonian
Friday, April 26 - Duke Ellington Youth Festival, Smithsonian
Saturday, May 4 - Monthly Meeting: Ben and Lillian Pubols' Home
TBA - Monthly Meeting: Program by Jack Towers

"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
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"*Dramatis Felidae*"

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

Coincidences department: The first tune Duke recorded after Peter MacHare was born in March 1954 was "Bunny Hop Mambo." And guess what McHARE's lifelong nickname is. Right—"Rabbit." Note: You, gentle reader, are not likely to have been the first to think of putting his given name, Peter, in front of that nickname. ♪ ♪ ♪ Luvenia George is curating permanent Eubie Blake materials for the Blake Museum in Baltimore. Among other things, the exhibit will show Blake's early contributions to the development of ragtime to stride piano and his influence on James P. Johnson and other East Coast rag-time players. ♪ ♪ ♪ Wayne Shirley is program chair for the annual convention of the Sonneck Society (Washington, March 20-24). Patricia Willard will chair a session on Jazz Icons and Teddy Hudson will chair the one on Jazz during World War II. ♪ ♪ ♪ February was a busy month for retired professor and now lecturer Ben Pubols. On the ninth, he spoke at the Evergreens Retirement Community in Moorestown, NJ on the history of classic jazz, from Bessie Smith to Miles Davis (and of course Our Man); on the 22nd and 29th, at the OASIS senior citizens' organization in Chevy Chase, he gave a two-part presentation on Duke's life and music. All presentations were profusely illustrated with recordings.

Chapter Member Jackson Published in Major Poetry Anthology

Five of Reuben Jackson's poems are in *The Garden Thrives*, a collection of important twentieth-century African-American poetry just published by HarperCollins.

Reuben is in great company (and vice versa, you say?): the likes of Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott, former U.S. poet laureate Rita Dove, Pulitzer winner and former Library of Congress poet-in-residence Gwendolyn Brooks, long-established writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar and Langston Hughes, and others of stature.

None of the Ducal-related poems or those he allowed us to print in our *Newsletter* is included, but his poignant "Lady's Way" is.

We salute Reuben, a creative artist whom we are justifiably proud to have in our midst!

Highlights of "Ray Nance Night"

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Our March meeting, "Ray Nance Night," produced a varied selection of members' choices in tribute to the prolific Ellington sideman.

A special highlight was a tape from Gloria Nance, sharing with us personal reminiscences of Ray—her words creating the mood which gave his recorded performances a feeling of the here-and-now.

Both well-known and relatively rare selections were played, including contributions from Ted Shell ("Duke's Place," small group), Ben Pubols ("It Don't Mean a Thing," V-disc), Patricia Willard ("Dance No. 3" from *Liberian Suite*), Dennis Dimmer (phoned in from England, "Sittin' & Rockin'," 1953), Ted Hudson ("Elysee," 1963), Mac Grimmer ("I'm in the Market," with Paul G.), David Cummings ("Going Up," Hurricane Club), Ed Morris ("Mr. Gentle & Mr. Cool," Newport), Don McCathran ("Hash Brown," with Earl Hines), and Walter van de Leur ("Dancing in the Dark," 1958).

We closed the evening with a rousing Jimmy Rushing version of "When I Grow Too Old to Dream" featuring the inimitable Ray Nance.

Four of Our Own Contribute Essays to Encyclopedia

The recently released, six-volume *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History* contains entries researched and written by Deborra Richardson, Reuben Jackson, Theodore Hudson, and John Hasse.

John wrote six biographical entries and one on music museums and historical sites. Buddy Bolden, Tom Fletcher, W.C. Handy, Bennie Moten, Jimmy Rushing, and Will Vodery were Teddy's subjects. Reuben's article is on Milt Hinton, whom, incidentally, he introduced and interviewed as part of the Washington premiere of the documentary film *A Great Day in Harlem*. Deborra contributed the section on Ulysses Kay, also the subject of a book she co-authored a year or so ago.

Our Chapter Chairpersons/Coordinators

Amenities	Helen Frazier
"Ellington '99" (<i>Pro Tem</i>)	Ben Pubols & Bob Reny
Membership	Angela & Mac Grimmer
Nominating	Jack Dennis, Bill Flemmons, & another/others t.b.a.
Program	Mac Grimmer