

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90

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NEWSLETTER



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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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Students Vie for Ellington Logo Contest Honors

Our Chapter is sponsoring a Logo Design Competition — with cash prizes — via the Duke Ellington Youth Project in Washington public schools.

If you know students with artistic leanings who may not know about the competition, encourage them to enter without delay, for entries must be received or postmarked by January 17. They can get details from art teachers who have been or are now involved in the Project. All contestants will be awarded honorary memberships in our Chapter.

Chapter member Luvenia George is the Coordinator of this and all other activities of the Duke Ellington Youth Project, a joint endeavor of the D.C. Public Schools and the Smithsonian's Program in African American Culture.

Periodical Focuses on Strayhorn Legacy

Momentum: A Strayhorn Family Newsletter *Chronicling the Strayhorn Legacy* is published bi-monthly by Strayhorn Songs, the business entity for Billy Strayhorn music.

Edited by Billy's niece Alyce Claerbaut, the current issue includes coverage of the production "Something to Live For," a tribute to Billy, its purpose being to raise funds for a Strayhorn scholarship for Chicago area students. The program included a taped message from Lena Horne, vocals by Rosemary Clooney, a jazz comedian, solo piano of Fred Hersch, and the Jazz Idiom Orchestra led by Gene Esposito.

Among other features of the handsome eight-page publication are news and photographs of the Strayhorn concert by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra in

Holiday Party at Grace Lutheran Church on January 4

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Get ready for one last holiday fling, our annual winter party. It's going to be a great evening of camaraderie, mouth-watering food and drink, great music, and merriment.

Each member is asked to bring a food contribution for the buffet. Questions about food choices? Call Helen Frazier (202-387-7071), Marion Shell or Angela Grimmer for guidance. Guests are welcome—each member may bring three. There is no assessment — expenses come from your annual dues.

The time is **8:00 pm on Saturday, January 4**, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 4300 16th St, NW** (corner 16th & Varnum). Hopefully the weather will cooperate this year! See you there!

New CD by SMJO

Big Band Treasures (#RJ0044), a CD of selections from Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra live performances over the last four years is available.

Among Ellington and Strayhorn creations are "Echoes of Harlem," "Sepia Panorama," "Isfahan," "The Mooche," "Raincheck," and "Cashmere Cutie."

For information and to order, call 1-800-863-9943.

Don't Forget!

It's time for annual dues: \$30, single; \$50, couple; \$20, first-time-ever; and \$5, student.



Washington in late summer and the Archives Center's reception for the family preceding the evening concert.

Duke's Jitterbug

Contributed by Mac Grimmer

One of the Ellington band's contributions to the Swing Era was not just music, but words—after all, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing" was one of the battle cries of the day. However, one of the most surprising and little-known facts is that the band is responsible for the one slang word that symbolized that era: "jitterbug." This has come to light recently in the liner notes written by Our Man in Paris, Alex Rado, for the French *Masters of Jazz-Complete Edition* — which will surely be considered the definitive collection of Ellington in the 20s. Alex's extensive research has unearthed many fascinating details of early Ellingtonia, including an incident in late 1928 involving another Washingtonian, Harry "Father" White, an eccentric character who was with the band briefly on trombone, too briefly to be recorded. On the CD *Volume Five-1928*, in Alex's words, "Father White had his own personal language----he was in the habit of calling everyone 'bug.' He was also a heavy drinker, who always had his own special brew, which he called his 'jitter sauce,' close at hand. One day came the inevitable practical joke, one of his fellow musicians deciding to hide his bottle. When White disappeared into the wings to recharge his battery between two numbers, the vital liquid was no longer there. 'Where's my jitter, bug?' he shouted, and the whole band burst out laughing. The story did the rounds of Harlem, and the expression stuck, ultimately with the dance it so aptly describes."

Father White moved on, a trombonist and arranger for, among others, the Mills Blue Rhythm Band, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Lips Page. While with Calloway in 1934, Cab recorded the tune "Jitter Bug," which included the lyrics "Now here's ol' Father, that wicked ol' man / Drinks more sauce than the other bugs can / Takes that sauce up every morn, that's how jitter bugs were born / See him shake with his trombone, just can't leave that sauce alone / He'll always be a jitter bug!" A later song with that title was filmed and recorded, but cut from the final print of the *Wizard of Oz*, and, of course, the most famous and enduring is Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz."

None of the "Dictionaries of Slang" have any specific comment on the origins of the word, only generalizations such as "frenetic dancing" and "alcoholic nervousness." The *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* has an entry for Harry White, but doesn't mention his connection with "jitterbug." Both John Chilton's *Who's Who of Jazz* and Leonard Feather's *Encyclopedia* attribute the origin of the word to White, but, apparently influenced by the song, when he was in the Calloway band. We know now, thanks to Alex Rado, that "jitterbug" was a word coined and popularized six years earlier, another bit of Ellingtonia's contribution to Americana.

Dr. Martin Luther King's Opening Address to the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival

Ed. note: Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday is celebrated on January 15, was greatly admired by Duke Ellington. This admiration is openly reflected musically in Duke's "Martin Fit the Battle of Alabam" and The Three Black Kings, they being the black king of the Magi, Solomon, and Dr. King. The following text of his 1964 address is from an otherwise unidentified, all-caps, typed, photocopied manuscript in the Duke Ellington Collection at the Smithsonian Institution.

God has wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed His creatures with the capacity to create, and from this capacity has flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and joy that have allowed man to cope with his environment in many different situations.

Jazz speaks of life, the blues tell the stories of life's difficulties, and if you think about it for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph. This is triumphant music. Modern jazz has continued in this tradition, singing the songs of a more complicated urban existence. When life itself offers no order and meaning, the musician creates an order and meaning from the sounds of the earth which flow through his instrument.

It is no wonder that so much of the search for identity among American Negroes was championed by jazz musicians. Long before the modern essayists and scholars wrote of "racial identity" as a problem for a multi-racial world, musicians were returning to their roots to affirm that which was stirring within their souls.

Much of the power of our freedom movement in the United States has come from this music. It has strengthened us with its powerful rhythms when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits were down.

And now, jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America, there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man.

Everybody has the blues. Everybody longs for meaning. Everybody needs to love and be loved. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith. In music, especially this broad category called jazz, there is a stepping stone towards all of these.

Toronto Chapter Plans Scholarships, Quarterly Publication

The newly-elected Executive Committee of the Toronto TDES has decided to supplement its *Monthly Meeting Notes* by publishing an eight-page quarterly newsletter, beginning in March. The plan is to encourage input from correspondents throughout Canada.

The publication will be free of charge during 1977 to anyone who requests a trial subscription. To be placed on the list for this offer, you may contact the Toronto TDES "by snail mail, e-mail or fax at": 132 The Kingsway, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M8X 2V3; (e-mail) nerlich@ican.net; and (fax) 416-239-0901.

Also, the chapter has matched a \$1,000 gift to the University of Toronto by Hermes Canada in the name of "Ellington '96." According to its monthly newsletter, new president Syd Blackwood intends that a comparable bursary or scholarship be awarded annually by the Toronto chapter.

Incidentally, memberships of non-Canadians are welcome. Annual dues are \$25.

Chapter 90 Board of Directors

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Mailbag

The following is from correspondence from Greg Morris addressed to "Members and Friends of the Billy Strayhorn Chapter of TDES":

Ellington '95, the 13th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference is history, but the memory lingers on. The bills are all paid, the 1995 return has been filed with IRS, the registration has been filed with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations of Pennsylvania. At Ellington '96 in Toronto, I saw the conference booklet that one of the Canadian delegates assembled for Ellington '95. It was so impressive! I have to say again to all of you who contributed your time, effort and support--thank you, thank you, thank you! Many exciting things are going on where Billy Strayhorn is concerned. His biography, Lush Life is one of the best sellers in its category. It will soon be released in paperback. The CD of his recently discovered music by the Dutch Jazz Orchestra, Portrait of a Silk Thread, has sold over 12,000 copies and continues to garner rave reviews. Strayhorn's 1961 jazz classic, The Peaceful Side was released as a CD this fall. It's difficult to keep up with all that is going on, but my sister, Alyce Claerbaut, is attempting to do so through the Strayhorn Family Newsletter. . . .

Make a note on your calendar that the Dutch Jazz Orchestra is returning to the USA in March, 1977. I'll get more details as soon as they are available.

May the holidays be all that you desire. I wish for you:

*Love Laughter Joy Good Health
Peace Prosperity Knowledge*

Getting That Elusive Harry Carney Sound

by Andrew Homzy

Ed note: Recently on Andrew Homzy's Ellington internet site (duke-lym@concordia.ca), a number of persons have taken part in an engaging discussion-some technical, some not technical-of Harry Carney's distinctive sound. We thank Andy for graciously permitting us to reprint his contribution, as follows.

I always thought one of the keys (no pun intended) to Carney's sound was an unorthodox use of the octave key. Years ago I had a beginning student trying to play in the upper octave without depressing the octave key. I'm sure he had no idea what I was saying when I shouted: "You've got it—the Harry Carney Sound." Anyway, the student went on to take lessons with a very good saxophonist and now sounds like a very good saxophonist.

Among the anecdotal stories regarding the Duke and the Baron, one goes like this: Mingus tried to hire Carney for a session. Duke found out about it and offered Carney \$1,000.00 not to do it. Mingus then hired 2 baritone saxophonists to play the part.

I believe more than anyone, Carney was the cornerstone to Duke's tonal concept—and Mingus well knew this. Carney was the only musician who was never replaced.

When Duke wrote unison passages for the saxophones, often only 3 of the 5 would play—Procopé, Gonsalves and Carney. This allowed Carney to dominate or lead the section. A subtle effect—but one which created a distinctive sound and very different from other bands which could only claim having very good saxophone sections.

Other saxophonists on the list: What do you think?

"*Dramatis Felidae*"

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

About the Cats and Kittens in Our Chapter

Deborra Richardson, Scott Schwartz, and Ted Hudson have articles in the fall issue of *Daybreak Express*, the handsome "occasional newsletter" edited by Reuben Jackson and published by the Archives Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. ♪♪♪ Among new members listed in the latest issue of DESUK's *Blue Light* are our Jack Dennis and Ben Pubols. One of our members who reside in Europe, David Fleming, contributed a review of David Hajdu's *Lush Life*. David also edits the always interesting publication. ♪♪♪ Peter "Rabbit" MacHare's "A Duke Ellington Panorama" internet site (www.nicom.com/~machare/) continues to earn praise, as in the Toronto Chapter's monthly meeting notes, which states that "As a bonus [it provides] access links to a number of other interesting Ellington and Strayhorn pages, including Yoshioka Toshiya's listing or more than one thousand tunes with discographical data." ♪♪♪ Walter van de Leur is scheduled to be on hand at the IAJE Conference in Chicago in January, where Strayhorn Songs will have a booth for display of its Manuscript Editions, edited by Walter. Estate executor Greg Morris heads Strayhorn Songs, which manages the catalog.

"Ellington '97"

the

15th Annual International
Duke Ellington Study Group Conference
May 22-26, 1997

The Queen's Hotel
11 Grosvenor Mount, Leeds, England

Sponsor:
Duke Ellington Society, United Kingdom
(DESK)

For Further Information, Contact:
Roger Boyes, Conference Coordinator

11 Grosvenor Mount

Leeds LS6 2DX

England

Phone/Fax: +44 (0)113 275 9633

Smithsonian Hosts Memorable Reception-Exhibit-Program

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

On the evening of December 7, we convened our regular meeting at the Smithsonian Archives Center, which houses the Ellington Collection, and enjoyed a program that met every expectation. Annie Kuebler and Scott Schwartz treated us to a reprise of the acclaimed program they presented, with the help of Ted Hudson and Ben Pubols, at "Ellington '97" in Toronto. "Through a Moon Mist: Duke Ellington in Our Intimate Lives" interwove audio interviews, archival photographs and film clips with Annie's spoken commentary, illustrating various aspects of Duke's career. During intermission we enjoyed viewing items from Ted Shell's collection of Ellingtonia, and John Fleckner presented Ted Hudson with a pin commemorating his seven years of service in the Archives Center. In the second half of the program Ben Pubols showed rare film clips from Duke's early days. Many thanks to John Fleckner and the Archives staff for an evening to treasure.

TDES Offers Deal on CD

The three-CD *Duke Ellington on the Air* (Hindsight HBCD-501) is available from TDES at a special price of \$20 each plus shipping. It consists of 1946-47 radio broadcasts from original Langsworth transcriptions restored by Wally Heider.

The digitally remastered release is accompanied by a 20-page booklet, rare photos. It is annotated by our Patricia Willard, and has liner notes by Brad McCuen.

To order, send a check or money order to Ellington on the Air, c/o TDES, Inc., PO Box 31, Church Street Station, NY, NY 10008-0031, USA. Shipping is \$3.50 for one or two sets, US/Canada; \$4.50, other; and \$1 and \$1.50 each additional set, respectively.

Calendar

Sat., Jan. 4 - Chapter's Annual Holiday Party
Dec. 12-Jan. 23 - Library Version, "Beyond Category," Brunswick, GA and Carson City, NV