

**THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, CHAPTER 90**

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

**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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**Great News: Helen Frazier Recovering**

We are delighted to report that founding member Helen Frazier has been released from Providence Hospital and is back at home. She had been admitted to the hospital on Christmas Eve and stayed throughout the holidays. Rodney Corry, one of our young members, is assisting with her care as she convalesces at home.

We've missed her and look forward to her gracious presence at our meetings. Helen, you have our very best wishes and prayers.

**Chapter 90 to Circulate Membership Lists**

by Ben Pubols

A number of ways to increase membership awareness, participation, and interaction were discussed at the December 11, 1996 meeting of the Chapter 90 Board of Directors. Most promising, it was agreed that the Chapter should circulate our membership list to all currently active local members (and out-of-towners who so request). This would enable all of us to know who we are and where we live. Who knows, but your neighbor might be a fellow Ellingtonian!

We hope to circulate the list in the near future. However, if for reasons of privacy, or any other reason, you do not wish to have your name included, please so inform any of the officers of the Chapter. We would like to emphasize, however, that the list will be circulated FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY and will not be made available to non-members, for commercial, or for any other purposes.

We also plan to increase public awareness of the Chapter and our meetings by seeking more widespread coverage by local jazz radio stations and in the local press.

**February Program — "Sitting In"**

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

A "Member's Choice" evening will be the program for the February meeting, the theme being recordings by the guests that frequently sat in with the Ellington band. Through the years many musicians recorded with, but were not members of the regular band, running the gamut, for instance, from Bing Crosby to John Coltrane. Others possibilities include Ella Fitzgerald, Benny Carter, Oscar Peterson, Alice Babs, Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Rushing, Earl Hines—but choose your own, and bring more than one (in case of duplication), on CD or tape. Out-of-towners can send in their choices on cassette, or phone it in to Mac Grimmer (202-546-7764) and we'll see that it gets played.

The date is **Saturday, February 1**, at our regular meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW**, at **8 PM**. Come and let us hear your favorites!

**TDES Website Planned**

Lynne Mueller, president of TDES (New York), announces in her column in their current newsletter that "thanks to member Will Friedwald and his committee," TDES will have a website, about which more will come.

**ELLINGTON '97**  
**MAY 22-26**  **LEEDS ENGLAND**  
11 Grosvenor Mount Leeds LS6 2DX England  
Telephone / Fax: +44 (0)113 275 9633

# "More to Us Than Just the Thrill of Listening"

Contributed by Jack Towers

All of us who are reading these pages get big thrills from Duke Ellington tunes. We love to hear the big band play, and revel in the performances of Johnny Hodges, Clark Terry, Paul Gonsalves, Barney Bigard, Tricky Sam and the others.

But there is another angle among this group of dedicated Ellington admirers. You could call it social. I ask you to jot down in your mind a list of your best friends, pals, and music cohorts. Most of them you would never have known if Duke and his music hadn't been around to bring you together.

I am sure you will agree that among your Ellington music friends, concern about race, gender, age, and other categories don't even exist. So, our devotion to Duke and his music means more to us than just the thrill of listening to the great performers in that great band.

## A Gem from the Ellington Collection

Thursday, June 18, 1964

THE WASHINGTON CITY TRIBUNE

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# ENTERTAINMENT

NITE CLUBS

NITE LIFE



## The June Norton Story

**THE DUKE'S BEEN A BOON TO JUNE.** Famed musician Duke Ellington expresses his well wishes to another Washington, D. C. hometown product, June Norton. Miss Norton who was encouraged in the early part of her singing career by Ellington, is currently planning an unlimited engagement at the Shoreham Hotel. She was honored at a reception last Friday (June 12) at the Shoreham given by Sterling Tucker, Jack Skloff and David Rusk. Miss Norton formerly starred as a featured vocalist with the Ellington Band.

Monday evening (June 15th) the latest chapter in the June Norton success story will unfold when the talented Cardoso High graduate opens at the Shoreham Hotel, for an unlimited engagement. For the songstress with the so sweet voice who once sang with another illustrious Washington product, Duke Ellington, playing the Shoreham is a long-cherished dream, and one that almost didn't come true. Despite a career that has spanned several years and most of the Nation's smart supper clubs, Miss Norton has not had an easy road. Personal tragedy has marred her path to stardom. Just a few years ago, the death of her mother so saddened June that she went into retirement from show business. So firm was her resolve to stay in seclusion, she resisted the combined efforts of Earl "Fatha" Hines and Jimmy Lunceford to induce her to continue an already distinguished career. But finally her love of entertaining audiences and the encouragement of her many admirers in the profession brought this lovely lady of song back to her many fans and into an unprecedented role in television. Back in 1961, June was selected by the General Electric Company, of Washington, D.C. to be the first of her race to do television commercials over stations in five states from Pennsylvania to Virginia. It all started when June was six years old and she began singing at school functions in her hometown. The big break came when she was asked to sing at her Junior High School graduation. June sang "Ave Maria", re-

ceived a standing ovation and was on her way as the singing prodigy of the Washington school system. During her years at Cardoso, June so impressed one of her instructors, Dr. Marie Clark Taylor, that the teacher offered to finance June's way through the Howard University School of Music. All toward, June worked hard at acquiring a classical music background that has stood her in very high esteem since that time. In addition, she became fluent in German, French, and Italian. This led to appearances before many of the Nation's Capital's Foreign Embassy audiences. With the recent international emphasis on popular music, June's linguistic ta-

lents have given her an easy mastery of most of the foreign imports. After graduation from Howard, June faced one of most difficult decisions of her life. Should she continue her classical education or perhaps follow the advice of a distinguished group of fellow artists and enter the "pop" field. Choosing the latter offers to June poured in. First it was on local radio that opportunity beckoned and then the old Dumon TV network. This appearance led quickly to bookings in supper clubs. Finally she attracted the attention of Duke Ellington. The musical genius was so impressed with her audition that he asked her to cancel all her commitments and join his

band as featured vocalist. Until the death of her mother, June was on her way to becoming one of America's best known vocalists. It wasn't an easy decision to return to the field she loved so much. June faced many trying days until she resolved that personal tragedy can sometimes be over come by good hard work. In her choice of material, June favors the sort of wry wit epitomized by Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hart. This may come from any of the composers who call for a wide vocal range, precise phrasing and the ability to put understanding and sensitivity into a lyric. This is her calling card. In short just the sort of repertoire that Shoreham audiences seem to prefer. It should be a happy June at the Shoreham---in more ways than one.

A classically trained mezzo soprano, June Norton sang with the Duke Ellington Orchestra during 1949-50. Unfortunately, we have no publicly available recordings of her with the orchestra. She has, however, graciously performed and spoken at several of our Annual International Duke Ellington Study Group Conferences. One of our own, June still resides in Washington, DC.

*Courtesy the Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution*

June sang "Ave Maria", re-

## Checking In and Out, Goom-Bye

A trail of moves by the Ellington family, as recorded in *Boyd's Directory* of Washington, DC, from 1898 to 1922 reveals the following: James E. Ellington (Duke's father) and then his family - 1462 Rhode Island Avenue (Dr. Cuthbert's residence); 2129 Ward Place (Duke's birthplace of record); 420 Elm Street; 1805 13th Street; 1816 13th Street; 1212 T Street—all in NW. As a youngster/young man, Duke is identified as "Edward K. Ellington, student." In 1922 he is listed as "Edward K. Ellington, musician" at 2728 Sherman Avenue.

## Did You Know That...

Reported by Earl Swann

As part of its 20th Anniversary, Publick Playhouse on April 12 will present Dick Morgan in a tribute to Duke Ellington, whose birthday is on April 29. The event is co-presented by the Charlin Jazz Society.

As part of its seasonal promotions, Old Navy Clothing Co. offered the CD *Holiday Classics*, which includes *The Nutcracker Suite Overture* by Ellington. The company stated that \$1 from each sale would go to Public Education Network.

## Of/In All Places

Have you noticed how often Ellingtonia pops up in sampler, promotional, collection, and other CDs? Here are a few examples:

"Duke's Place" on *Blue Note Blend*, Blue Note  
CDP 2243 [Starbucks Coffee!]

"The 23rd Psalm" on *The Best of Mahalia Jackson*,  
Columbia/Legacy CK 66911

Introduction by Duke at NJF Concert, July 17,  
1955, on *Miscellaneous Miles Davis, 1955-1957*,  
Unlimited JUCD 2050

"I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" on *The Past  
Perfect Sampler CD*, Past Perfect PPCD 78100

"Harlem Air Shaft" and "I Got It Bad" on  
*Compact Disc for Concise Guide to Jazz* by  
Sony Special Music Products A2396 and  
Prentice-Hall publishing company

See also "Did You Know That..." above.

## Work to Continue on Igoe and Ewing's Duke Ellington Itinerary

The current *DEMS Bulletin* corrects a statement by another publication that Sjef Hoefsmit has taken on the Ellington Itinerary started by Joe Igoe and continued by Gordon Ewing, both deceased. According to the *Bulletin*, "Sjef needs all his valuable time for issuing the DEMS bulletins in time."

Further, DEMS states that Rick Ewing is planning to put the Itinerary on the internet, but first, decisions about how additions and corrections will be checked before being entered have to be worked out. "The most experienced and most dedicated researcher for the itinerary is Art Pilkington," the *Bulletin* says. "He is willing to collect all the 'fresh' information that anybody could send to him. He will check and double check the information and is in contact with Rick Ewing."

## Terry Shares Spotlight at "A Celebration of America's Music"

Ellington alumnus Clark Terry was among stellar musicians who honored Quincy Jones and Clint Eastwood in "A Celebration of America's Music" during the tenth celebration of the Thelonious Monk Institute for Jazz. The program was taped before a live audience at the Kennedy Center for airing on ABC on December 28.

Incidentally, there is a Clark Terry quarterly newsletter, *Mumbles*. For information about it, contact Sheree Thomas at 244 W. 139th Street, NYC 10030.

### Chapter 90 Board of Directors

Patricia Braxton	Helen Frazier
Angela Grimmer	Mac Grimmer
Rusty Hassan	Theodore Hudson
Ben Pubols	Bob Reny
Theodore Shell	Jack Towers
Patricia Willard	

## Quotation of the Month

*Washington was a very good climate for me to come up in musically.*

Duke, as quoted in Hollie I. West, "Duke at 70," *Washington Post*, 27 April 1969

### "*Dramatis Felidae*"

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

About the Cats and Kittens in Our Chapter

**Luvenia** and **Henry George** were in London in December for their daughter's wedding. ♪♪♪ More recognition of **Peter MacHare's** internet site ([www.nicom.com/~machare/](http://www.nicom.com/~machare/)) appears, this time in the *DEMS Bulletin*, which notes that it "provides loads of information on Duke's recording sessions, his musicians, his singers and available CDs."

### Guaranteed Enjoyment!

The local Hot Mustard Jazz Band has made a new CD, *Don't Postpone Joy*. Larry Eanet, whose group presented that great concert for us at Washington Grove, is featured on piano. Among other area musicians on the CD are Buck Hill, Steve Novosel, and Chuck Redd.

Hint to other producers: In a promotional card are the reassuring words "Money Back if you don't enjoy this CD!" "

### New *A Drum Is a Woman* CD Released

In our October 1996 issue, member Dennis Dimmer wrote for us a review of a revival of *A Drum Is a Woman* in Paris. Now Richard Ehrenzeller reports in the TDES newsletter that a CD of this production, staged by Claude Bolling, has been released on Milan Jazz 73138 85784-2. He understands that there were two productions, one in English and the other in French on respective CDs.

### Going to the Apple?

If you're going to NY City during the next couple of months, you might want to catch one of these TDES programs: February 20 - Reading of Duke's play *Man with Four Sides*; March 19 - Loren Schoenberg discussing unknown or little known music from the Smithsonian's Ellington Collection, with examples on the piano and from recordings by his orchestra. Or you might want to make trips just for these programs.

### Don't Forget!

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

### New Year Welcomed At Annual Holiday Party

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

We welcomed in the new year with our annual holiday party on the first Saturday in January at the Grace Lutheran Church. We were a group of more than 40 good friends sharing great food, and a good time was had by all. Teddy Hudson awarded to each and every contributor to the *Newsletter* in 1996 a handsome certificate of appreciation. The gastronomical delicacies were the stars of the evening—each and every dish was consumed with pleasure and these tasty treats make us wish the holidays came more than once a year.

### Paperback Version of *Lush Life*

We have heard that David Hajdu's *Lush Life* in hard cover is out of stock, but will be reprinted and that a paperback version is scheduled for delivery in June.

### Rex on Those Half-Valve Notes

As we know, one of the distinct characteristics of Rex Stewart's playing is "cocked," or half-valve notes. The following excerpt is from a typescript of a c.1963 interview by Robert Oliphant and Anne Judd Kennedy now in her papers at the Smithsonian's Archives Center, repository of the Ellington Collection.

*Rex - . . . that's something I won't say I discovered but I embellished upon it because on the cornet there's ten or twelve notes you can make 1/2 piston, 1/2 valve.*

*Anne - That you can't make clear down?*

*Rex - You can make them clear down but if you elevate the valve 1/2 a position you can make the same note that you would by pressing down except that it appears oblique, rounded and even slightly dissonant, but it's the same note.*

*Anne - Like you just caught it.*

*Res - Yes. That's the thing I've been criticized so much for during my time in this business. They said I was a tricky player but so many people have been doing it since I demonstrated it could be done that it's almost become an accepted form of playing.*

*Anne - Who does it now?*

*Rex - Almost everybody. Al Hirt does it, Buck, Roy. They all do it.*