

Ellingtonia



Newsletter Of The
Duke Ellington Society

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor
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Centennial Celebrations Will Be Widespread and Varied

Commemorations during 1999 of Duke Ellington's 100th birthday include music performances, lectures, visual and tactile art, drama, films, recordings, books, and other media and art forms. While the focal place will be his birthplace, Washington, DC, observations will take place internationally.

In a recent internet posting, John Edward Hasse listed four major events: Duke Ellington Centennial Symposium, Amherst, MA, March 4-6; New Orleans Music Colloquium: Duke Ellington and New Orleans, April 9-11; our Ellington '99, April 28-May 2; and Ellington Festival/Symposium, University of California at Los Angeles, May 1-2.

Year-long the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra will feature Ellington-Strayhorn music. In April, just before our Conference, they will appear in concert at the Kennedy Center. In Canada, on Duke's birthday Andrew Homzy will direct a band composed of musicians from a number of countries, assembled through the European Broadcasting Union, in a concert broadcast internationally and later issued as a double CD.

Publications include Eddie Lambert's eagerly-awaited *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide*, a new *Duke Ellington Story on Records (DESOR)* by Massagli and Volonté, and possibly a book by Austin Lawrence. Expressly for Ellington '99, sculptress Ferebee Streett has designed a bust of Ellington, and our members Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn are producing a commemorative CD of Ellington performances in his home town.

Ellington enthusiasts and groups in Sweden, the
Continued on page 4 under "Centennial"

February Program: Duke Ellington On the Marian McPartland Show

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

No, Duke was never actually on "Piano Jazz," Marian McPartland's long-running National Public Radio program, which began in the late 70s. Nevertheless he was present in many of her programs, in the reminiscences and performances of the musicians (mostly pianists) Marian interviewed. She has so far completed about 300 of these hour-long programs. Many of the participants knew Ellington and Strayhorn and discussed their personal encounters with them and the band, how they were influenced by them, what songs they liked, and so forth -- a unique contribution to jazz history and the world of Ellingtonia

We won't listen to all 300 hours, but we have excerpted some of the references, and a few of the performances, for our February program. We'll hear from, among others, Teddy Wilson, Jim Hall, Carmen McRae, Max Roach, Bill Evans, Ernie Andrews, Hazel Scott, and Bobby Short. And of course we'll hear from Marian herself, who was the pianist at the Hickory House, enamoured of Ellingtonia, when Duke and Billy frequently stopped by.

The program will begin at 8 PM, Saturday, February 6, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Sts., NW**. Don't miss this unique glimpse of the Ducal world, seen through the eyes of the other musicians!

*Don't Forget Your
1999 (Centennial Year) Dues!*

Maurice A. Lawrence

by Paul Baise

"I get lost if I have to carry a tune across the street," says Maurice Lawrence if asked whether he's ever been a professional musician. Yet he has spent a lifetime associated with some of the greatest names in jazz.

As a boy growing up in Harlem, Maurice was introduced to the jazz world by Al Brown, the drummer of McKinny's Cotton Pickers orchestra led by Don Redmond. Maurice spent his spare time listening to the jazz giants at the Apollo Theatre: Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Jimmie Lunceford, Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy, featuring Mary Lou Williams on piano, Ella Fitzgerald, the young singer with the Chick Webb Orchestra, etc.

His lifelong involvement with Ellington began in 1938 while attending Howard University, where he earned a degree in political science. Duke was performing at the nearby Howard Theatre and was invited to address the student body. Maurice was chosen to escort him to the campus, and Duke, in turn, invited him back to see the show. Between performances he went backstage and spent time with Ellington. Their friendship eventually became a father-son relationship which lasted until the musician's death in 1974.

Maurice traveled with the Ellington band, handling public relations. He helped organize the Duke Ellington Society, which holds annual conferences worldwide, and in 1999 will celebrate Duke's 100th birthday in Washington.

Today, Maurice, who recently turned 79, is busier than ever with the Statesmen of Jazz. The group was created when Maurice, realizing some great jazz stars were disappearing from the scene because of age or by just not finding any place to play, brought his idea to the American Federation of Jazz Societies at their convention in Fort Lauderdale in 1993. Its leaders offered support and Maurice next approached bassist Milt Hinton for assistance in forming the personnel. Despite his full schedule, Milt became the new band's musical director.

The first dates for the Statesmen, who are always introduced on stage by Maurice, were the 1994 Sacramento Jazz Jubilee, LA Class, New Jersey Jazz Festival, and Jack Kleinsinger's "Highlights of Jazz" series in New York City. In '97 they were invited to Japan to appear in Tokyo and Osaka.

In a letter from the White House, President Clinton wrote: "...As you share this uniquely American art form...you remind us to celebrate the power of music to transcend race, age, nationality and language." Maurice and his wife Sylvia accompanied the statesmen on their return to Japan this October.

The personnel of the Statesmen changes due to availability and health factors. Artists include: Reeds—Bob Wilber, Buddy Tate, Jerry Jerome, Red Holloway, Rick Fay; trumpets—Clark Terry, Joe Wilder, Bill Berry, Buddy Childers, Irvin Stokes; trombones—Al Grey, Benny Powell, Spigle Wilcox, Buster Cooper; piano—Jane Jarvis, known as the 'First Lady', Johnny Varro, John Bunch; jazz violin—Claude 'Fidler' Williams; bass—Milt Hinton, Bob Haggart, Jack Lesberg, Earl May; drums—Eddie Locke, Jake Hanna, Louis Bellson, Panama Francis, and Bobby Rosengarden.

Maurice credits Mat Domber, who produced their first CD on Arbors Records in 1994, and his wife Rachel, for the band's success both financially and professionally. He also credits Wilma Dobie, who serves as their publicist.

In addition to his jazz activities, Maurice pursued a career with the U.S. Postal Service in Washington. He was involved in labor management activities, served on several advisory committees, and became a member of a White House Task Force. He also served with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, becoming deputy regional director of the New York area, until he retired in 1975. He and his wife lived for 10 years in the Bahamas, where one of their neighbors was Count Basie. The Lawrences presently reside in Fort Lauderdale.

Maurice is optimistic about the future of big band jazz. In his travels, he has noted that many colleges feature jazz courses and most have dedicated students who play the big band charts. He is confident that these young jazz musicians will continue playing his kind of music well into the next century.

This article first appeared in the November/December 1998 issue of Gold Coast Jazz Notes. We are grateful to the Gold Coast Jazz Society, Fort Lauderdale, FL for kind permission for us to reprint it here.

We also thank our member Richard Firda for bringing the article to the attention of Angela and Mac Grimmer who, in turn, provided us with a copy.

Short Sheets . . .

The new, two-volume edition of *DESOR* reportedly will be more complete than any published discography. Plans are afoot to introduce it and its authors, Messrs. Luciana Massagli and Giovanni Volonté, at our Ellington '99, at which time orders for copies may be placed. ♪ ♪ The Association of Howard University Retirees is presenting Queen Esther Marrow and the Harlem Gospel Singers in *Inspiration* at the Ford Theater on February 6. For information, call 202-806-1230. ♪ ♪ Fred Turco, well known and relied upon by collectors internationally as, until 1994, the owner of Oaklawn Book and Jazz Records, died in December. His was a personalized mail order service, for he came to know his customers and their tastes. ♪ ♪ Pianist Michel Petrucciani, one of whose CDs was "Promenade with Duke," passed away in early January.

Magazine Article Focuses On Duke and His Washington

"Duke" is the title of an illuminating discussion of Ellington and his hometown by Barbara Matusow in the January issue of *Washingtonian*. In addition to personal information about his life from birth to young manhood, the author describes the social, educational, economic, and cultural environment of the city during that time. The article is enhanced by an interesting list by our president, Ted Shell, of CDs he would take with him if "sent into exile on a desert island." Also, there is a calendar of local celebrative events during the year. Period photographs and reproductions complement the text. Among persons quoted in the piece are four of our Society members: Ted Shell, Maurice Lawrence, Ted Hudson, and Dennette Harrod.

Quotation of the Month

In the early 1900s Washington's black community was a place of promise. Its institutions were strong and its leading figures—in music, as in other professions—were men and women of learning, ambition, and discipline. Ellington may have spent his earliest years in a city deeply divided by race and class. But this same city inspired its black citizens to aim high and, in so doing, to move beyond category.

— Mark Tucker, *Ellington: The Early Years*

Quotation for Valentine Day

♡ ♡ ♡ *Love You Madly* ♡ ♡ ♡
-- Our Hero

New Strayhorn Scores Offered

In time for the Ellington centennial year, Billy Strayhorn Manuscripts Editions has added new titles to its catalogue of available performance scores of his compositions and arrangements. Described as "authoritative scholarly editions" with accuracy, authenticity, and "artistically successful interpretations" as goals, they have been drawn from Billy's original handwritten scores rather than ear-transcribed from existing recordings.

These new scores include: "Blue Bird of Delhi," "Bli-Blip," "Drop Me Off in Harlem," "Everything But You," "I Ain't Got "Blue Nothing But the Blues," "I Didn't Know About You," "I'm Just a Lucky So and So," "Lost in Meditation," "Clementine," "Dirge," "The Eighth Veil," "Grievin'," "Isfahan," "The Kissing Bug," "Newport Jazz Festival Suite," "Nutcracker Suite," "Peer Gynt Suites Nos. 1 & 2," "Perfume Suite," and "Sophisticated Lady."

The Manuscript Editions project is an initiative of Billy Strayhorn Songs, Inc. and our Society member Walter van de Leur. For more information on these handsomely prepared scores, one may write to PO Box 10285, Pittsburgh, PA 15232 or visit the Strayhorn website: <http://www.billystrayhorn.com>

We'd Like You to Meet . . .

Starting with discussion of origins of the likes of "Bubber" and "Rabbit," recently the Duke-LYM internet site has had postings of nicknames of Ellingtonians. Here are a few for you to identify:

1. Boo, 2. Steps, 3. Brute, 4. Rev, 5. Piano Red, 6. Scad, 7. Speedy, 8. Cadillac, 9. Dumpy, 10. Little Posey

Answers are on page 4 under "Nickname Answers."



April 28-May 2, 1999
Washington, DC

Ellington '99

Theme:
"Edward, You Are Blessed."

PO Box 42504, Washington, DC 20015-9998, USA

"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term in *MIMM*) About Our Members

Yvonne Condell, widow of recently deceased member **Jim Condell**, received over 1,200 calls, letters, flowers, gifts, and other shows of concern and love from friends all over the world. She has very few relatives, so Mrs. Condell is especially thankful for these expressions, for they have helped sustain her. ♪ ♪ **Luvonia George** and **Walter van de Leur** were at the International Association of Jazz Educators Convention in January. ♪ ♪ **Ben Pubols** and **Ted Hudson** attended "Duke Ellington at 100: New Historical Perspectives" at the American Historical Assoc. Convention. Mark Tucker served as respondent to the speakers. Mrs. Adele Alexander, Dr. Arthur Logan's daughter, contributed brief remarks during the audience participation segment. ♪ ♪ **Brian Gilmore** reviewed Trey Ellis' latest book in the January 10 issue of *Book World*.

Nickname Answers

1. Harold Baker, 2. Barney Bigard, 3. Jimmy Blanton (bet you thought it was Frog), 4. Lawrence Brown, 5. Duke, 6. Shelton Hemphill, 7. Rufus Jones, 8. Nelson Williams, 9. Duke, again, 10. Freddie Jenkins. You knew all the time, didn't you. But do you know *how* they got their nicknames?

Centennial

Continued from page 1

the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, and other countries are planning celebrations. An organization in Cleveland, OH is planning a revival of *A Drum Is a Woman*, a sacred concert, and performances by Ellington alumni.

Locally, as announced in our last issue, a three-day course on Ellington is being offered by the USDA Graduate School. The Duke Ellington Youth Project, coordinated by our Luvonia George, will culminate the academic year with its annual Festival. The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra will play selections from the sacred repertoire at the National Cathedral on Duke's birthday, April 29. Society members Jack Ladd Carr and Ted Hudson are proposers of an Ellington Component and information booth at the Annual Annapolis Jazz Festival, at St. John's College in June. The Charlin Jazz Society has been planning a variety of activities for the year.

For area events in the immediate future, see the calendar in the next column.

Party Put on Ice



by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

In the last year (or more) we have had one ice storm, and it lasted for five hours. On January 2, 1999, from 9 pm to 3 am our streets were covered by a layer of the hard stuff, and the annual party of the Washington chapter was canceled. One and all we missed the camaraderie of good friends and the delicious food, but wait 'til next year...!

A Web Warren for Rabbit Lovers

A Johnny Hodges internet site has been created by Michael Palmer of Australia. It may be accessed at two web addresses: <http://thrill.to/Hodges> and at <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~michaelp>.

Coming Soon – Mark Your Calendar

Friday, February 5 — Birthday extravaganza with Billy Taylor Trio, Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, and others, Kennedy Center (202-467-1710)

Saturday, February 6 — Society's Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 10–Sunday, February 14 — Eighth Annual East Coast Jazz Festival, to benefit Fish Middleton Scholarship Fund, two venues (301-933-1822)

Thursday, February 11 — An Evening of Oral Histories: "Remembering Ellington," 7:30 pm, 19th Street Baptist Church at 4606 - 16th Street NW. Free. (202-785-2068)

February 20-21, 27-28 (Saturdays 2 pm, Sundays 4 pm) — Ellington films and documentaries, National Gallery of Art (202-842-6799)

Friday, February 26 — PEN-Faulkner series celebrates Ellington with drummer-author Rafi Zabor reading from his novel *The Bear Comes Home*, Folger Library (202-544-7077)

Ed. Note: For publication in Ellingtonia, please keep us informed about upcoming Centennial events.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

Washington, DC

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[Remaining Position Open]