

Ellingtonia



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Duke Ellington Society

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Ellington Youth Curriculum Serves As Model for Institutions Nationally

The Duke Ellington Youth Project's successful concepts and methods, developed over its nine years of existence, have influenced a number of cultural and educational entities to begin similar programs. Among them are Kansas City's 18th and Vine Authority Jazz



Courtesy Artist and Duke Ellington Youth Project
"The Duke" by Matthew Bier,
An Ellington Youth Project Student
Last Academic Year

Museum, the Kennedy Center, Detroit's Motown Historical Museum, and Chicago, IL and Prince Georges County, MD public school systems. According to one teacher, the curriculum offers "a rich kaleidoscope of possibilities to stimulate students." It has been called an "exemplar for arts education" because it involves not only music but also visual and tactile art, drama, dance, and creative writing. It also

embraces the study of history, government, geography, foreign languages, and other subjects. From its inception, the Project has been directed by our own Luvenia George.

Italian Program, Amherst Symposium Focus on Duke in Cultural Contexts

Seemingly appreciative of a foundation of excellent primary research and commentary by musicologists, music critics, discographers, biographical writers, and others, sponsors of various centennial year observances are offering broadened and deepened considerations of Ellington in cultural contexts.

"Beyond Categories of Twentieth Century," an international conference in a series of centennial events
(Continued on page 3 under "Duke in Cultural Contexts")

Beethoven, Mozart and Bach: Ellington and the Classics

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

In our March program, Peter MacHare will present Ellington and the classics. Peter has two goals in his program. The first is to present music that Ellington wrote or recorded that has classical overtones. Ellington recorded music by classical composers (Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Dvorak, and Chopin come to mind). Ellington wrote music for symphony orchestras. He wrote in some "forms" also used by classical composers (opera, suites, and ballet). Peter's second goal is to examine the notion that Ellington is as great as any of the classical composers. In this, Duke Ellington's centennial year, it is certainly appropriate not just to celebrate Ellington, but to wonder about his place in the history of music.

Certainly music critics are more inclined than ever to make comparison's between Ellington and the classical composers. The *Washington Post's* Jonathan Yardley, by way of example, recently wrote a column comparing Ellington to another American composer celebrating a centennial, George Gershwin. Yardley came to the conclusion that, among American composers, Ellington "... was our one true giant, and it's about time we said so." Nor does Ellington's music suffer when compared to the giants of European music. Let it be known that the great triumvirate of Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach is now a quartet.

The time is 8 pm, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Sts, NW, on Saturday, March 6.** Don't miss this unique program, a look at Duke's place in the Pantheon, so appropriate for this centennial year!

Reminder

Deadline for Registration at the Early Rate for
Ellington '99

March 1



At Long Last: Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide*

Reviewed by Peter MacHare

At long last, *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* by Eddie Lambert has been published by Scarecrow Press. At 374 pages and \$95, this book is nearly as hefty as its subject and puts more than a dent in your wallet. Yet each of those 374 pages is packed with information, and the quality of Mr. Lambert's prose is consistently high. Moreover, Scarecrow Press is offering a 20% discount to Duke Ellington Society members. Just call their toll free number, 1-800-462-6420, and mention your membership.

Truly this is a book that no serious Ellington fan should be without. It is the perfect companion to the extensive Ellington discographies that have already been published. Those discographies contain extensive lists of dates, personnel, titles, matrix numbers and record labels. Lambert's book describes the music itself in more detail than has ever been presented in published form.

The *Guide* was long in the gestation. An Ellington scholar of the first rank, Eddie Lambert died in 1987 with the work essentially finished. The published work has been brought to fruition by Elaine Norsworthy with some additional discographical information by Sjeff Hoefsmit. The copyright date is 1999, so this is the first major printed work about Ellington issued in his centennial year.

Perhaps the best thing a reviewer can do is to describe a book in sufficient detail so that you can make your own opinion about whether you should purchase it. The *Guide* is divided into 32 chapters. Roughly half of them tell the history of Duke Ellington & His Orchestra. These chapters contain a textual account of Ellington's activities during the time period covered by the chapter,



Photo by Ted Hudson

Eddie and Elaine at the First International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference, Washington, DC, 1983

followed by short essays on the contributions of important sidemen. For example, the six pages of "Chapter 5: The Miley Era" present Mr. Lambert's account of the importance of that period in Ellington's development supported by a wealth of detail. The chapter concludes with discussions about the specific contributions of Barney Bigard, Wellman Braud, Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges, Freddie Jenkins, and Arthur Whetsol. Representative recordings for each sideman are also listed so you can quickly find examples of their best work.

The other chapters are analyses of Ellington's recordings during specific periods, each concluding with a list of outstanding recordings. These tend to be the long chapters. For example, the 22 pages of "Chapter 16: The Records-January 1943 to September 1946" give the best account I have yet to read of the period immediately after Jimmy Blanton's death. This period troubles so many writers because the Blanton-Webster Band is vanishing an Ellington is moving on to new material, namely his first very long works like *Black, Brown and Beige* and *The Perfume Suite*. Most writers on Ellington concentrate on the Blanton-Webster era because it was undeniably great and they don't have to listen to a lot of new

material and form an opinion. Mr. Lambert takes the opposite view (his chapter on the recordings of the Blanton-Webster Band is 10 pages, by way of contrast) and finds for us many gems we may otherwise have overlooked. For example, most basic books on Ellington fail to mention the 48-LP set of the Duke Ellington Treasury Series recorded in 1945. Mr. Lambert treats it extensively. Finally, the *Guide* concludes with four appendixes. Appendix 1 is a nicely annotated bibliography; Appendixes 2 and 3 are discographies. Appendix 4 is an extremely useful chart concerning "The Ellington Musicians and the Dates They Were with the Band." All of the above conclude with an extensive 22-page index that will get you to exactly the right spot in the book.

Oscar Wilde suggested that no book is worth reading unless it can be read over and over again. This is exactly that sort of book. It will reside near your Ellington collection where it will prove a valuable and trusted listening companion. On those evenings when your friends can't make it over to play and discuss Ellington, you will turn to Lambert for the same pleasures. You may find that Lambert doesn't like one of your favorites and says it is "anything but a masterpiece" ("You You Darlin'," page 88). You may find your favorite story about "Harlem Air Shaft" demolished by Lambert at page 90: "At the time of recording, the piece was known as 'Rumpus In Richmond,' suggesting that Duke's famous program was something of an afterthought." "Well," you might say to Lambert, "afterthought or not, it perfectly describes the quick development of the piece." Then, while listening to Duke's stunning performance of "Passion Flower" on *And His Mother Called Him Bill*, Lambert might perfectly express in words what you have always felt about Duke at the piano, as does on page 171: "Ellington was not the most dexterous jazz pianist on record, but his inherent musicality makes him one of the most fascinating. In terms of musical rather than digital virtuosity, he is unexcelled. His timing is astonishing in its absolute rightness, and his touch can vary from the most delicate caress to a positively brutal attack." Your humble reviewer never met Eddie Lambert in the flesh, but is most happy to have met him in this book.

There are two kinds of people who should buy this book and one kind who should not. First are those who have already immersed themselves thoroughly into the glories of Ellington. This book will send them off into their collections finding overlooked gems. Second are those who have climbed a bit of that big mountain of Ellington-Stayhorn music. This book will guide their next steps very well. (If you are totally new to Ellington, I would suggest the excellent *Beyond Category* by John Edward Hasse, which contains a more basic listeners guide called "Essential Ellington" at the end of each chapter. Then you will be ready for Lambert. Who should not buy this book? People who do not like music and have no desire to learn more about the man who is certainly the greatest American composer and one of the greatest in the history of the world should not buy this book.

Short Sheets . . .

As Duke well knew, there are unique benefits for Night Creatures. Recently at 3 am (an appropriately Ducal hour) on its "Jazz Scene" show, BET television interviewed Luvenia George, John Hasse, Reuben Jackson, and a member of the SJMO about the Smithsonian's centennial year programs. ♪ ♪ For years, we have depended on H.F. Huon's increasingly hard to find *Index* for locating material in Duke's *MIMM*. We've heard that an index to the book is now available online. Does anyone have details? ♪ ♪ Some TDES members plan to charter a bus for the trip to Ellington '99. ♪ ♪ Reuben Jackson will speak on Ellington as pianist at Borders Books, 18th and L, 7 pm, April 22.

Print Media Commemorate the Maestro

In addition to the already distributed *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* by Eddie Lambert and already announced new *DESOR* by Massagli and Volonté, volume one of *Duke's Diary* by Ken Vail and a biographical work by Austin Lawrence are scheduled for release during the centennial year.

Ellington has been getting well deserved attention in other print media as well. *American Legacy* (Spring 1999) celebrates with "Duke Ellington in Person" and by Bobby Short, "A Salute to the Duke." A recent Sunday edition of the *New York Times* ran a multi-article feature on him, written by such respected authorities as Robert O'Meally and Mark Tucker. *American Visions* is planning a feature on Duke in its April/May issue.

Locally, in the *Washington Post's* "A Building of the People" (January 18), attention is called to Duke in connection with the True Reformers Hall, now designated as a National Historic Landmark; it also speaks of other historic buildings such as the Howard Theater and Murray Casino. Among the significant institutions and organizations mentioned are the United Order of the True Reformers, Washington Conservatory, Colored Men's Business League, and *Washington Bee*.

Panorama Expands, Has New Address

To meet the need for more webspace for his popular "A Duke Ellington Panorama," Peter MacHare has gone to another site which will allow for expansion. The old address will be operative for the time being. Peter advises that the pop-up windows will disappear when he expands to 25MEG. In the meantime, he asks to be informed of difficulties accessing the new site. The new www address: geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/2660/ell/index.htm

Quotation of the Month

Had I been a rich young man, I would have bought a house in Harlem and built musical steps up to the front door, and installed chimes that at the press of a button played Ellington tunes. -- Langston Hughes

A Haiku

by Reuben Jackson

*Sunrise above Shaw.
Indigo and crimson skies-
Shades of Ellington.*

Ed. Note: We thank Reuben for permission to publish this poem before its appearance in his new book. Lovers of poetry know haiku to be a demanding Japanese form consisting of a total of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, that subtly captures a evanescent emotion or spiritual perception.

Duke in Cultural Contexts (Continued from page 1)

in Italy produced by Stefano Zenni (an occasional DUKELYM website contributor) and Teatro Metastasio in collaboration with others, has scheduled lectures by cultural historians and aestheticians as well as musicologists. Titles such as "Ellington as Folk Artist Between Futurism and Exoticism" and "Jungle in African Ellington: Myths, Metaphors, Imagery, Reality" suggest the scope of the meeting's discourse. Hopefully, the papers will become available in English.

Program presenters at the Amherst College Ellington Symposium, March 4-6, are to analyze individual compositions of Ellington, rehearse an orchestra, and discuss aspects of Ellington in sociological as well as artistic settings. Among them will be scholars and researchers familiar to Ellington aficionados, such as Andrew Homzy, David Berger, Mark Tucker, and William Russo. From our area, John Edward Hasse and Annie Kuebler will give cultural history lectures. An unusual feature will be an open rehearsal of the orchestra by Gunther Schuller, followed by evening performances. An internet address for information is: ekeel@amherst.edu

We expect that commemorations in other places will also take on a multidisciplinary tone, for example, the city of Cleveland's in-progress celebration and the symposium at UCLA in April. And, we might add, sessions at our Ellington '99 promise to be varied in scope.



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

Among those acknowledged for providing "assistance and encouragement during the writing and gestation" of Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* are **Patricia Willard, Jerry Valburn, Jack Towers, John Hornsby,** and the late **John Callanan.** Jack and Patricia also contributed photographs. June Norton is among several Ellington musicians whose conversations "contributed greatly to the author's understanding of the music." Further, Sjeff Hoefsmid provided much helpful material and compiled "Part Four" of the discography. ♪ ♪ Our members continue to be active as consultants, writers, speakers. "The Bard and the Duke" was **Patricia Willard's** topic for a talk as part of Cleveland's ongoing celebration of Duke's 100th birthday. In March she will be on the Ellington panel at Denver's Jazz Film Festival and will be the discussant of *Love You Madly*, the Emmy-nominated 1965 documentary by Ralph J. Gleason. But that's not all: She is one of the essayists for the upcoming 24-CD *Ellington Centennial Edition* of complete RCA recordings, 1927-73. **Walter van de Leur** is one of the invited lecturers for at the "Beyond Categories of Twentieth Century" conference in Italy as part of the worldwide celebration of Ellington's birth. **Rusty Hassan, Ted Shell** and **Jack Towers** will be on the "Styles and Music of Ellington" program at Prince Georges Community College in April. ♪ ♪ Don't-time-fly-when-you're-having-a-good-time-department: **Ben Pubols** and **Ted Hudson** received Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer service awards from the Smithsonian last month. Ben is now in his 6th year, Ted in his 10th. ♪ ♪ We've found out why lately we've missed **John Coffey** at several of our meetings. Writing is his thing, and that's what he's been up to, having just completed an autobiographical novel, *Me and the Education of Johnnie Negro*, which hopefully will be in print in several months. ♪ ♪

Ambitious Centennial Concert Attracts Large Audience

Those fortunate enough to get tickets to the "Duke Ellington One-Hundredth Birthday Celebration" at the Kennedy Center heard not only the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra but also special guests. Helpfully informative program notes were written by Annie Kuebler.

The orchestra's contribution was a full program of classic Ellington/Strayhorn compositions and arrangements from the early 1940s, the so-called Blanton-Webster era, taking on such challenges as "Ko-Ko" and "The Flaming Sword" as well as the sonorities of "In a Mellotone." Guests performed other favorites, including "Cottontail" by Frank Wess, "Just Squeeze Me" sung and on flugelhorn by Clark Terry, "Skin Deep" by Louie Bellson, "Lucky So and So" sung by Kevin Mahogany, "I Got It Bad" sung by Reeves, and a long medley by the Billy Taylor Trio.

Duke & Marian Star in February Program by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

The February program was an unusual treat, selections from interviews and performances by Marian McPartland's guests on her long-running National Public Radio program, "Piano Jazz." Mac Grimmer had excerpted references of interest to Ellington and Strayhorn fans from about a dozen of the programs. Many of the musicians had known Duke and Billy, and their comments and performances gave us a fresh look at the world of Ellingtonia. Highlights included Max Roach's story of how his career was kick-started when he sat in for Sonny Greer at the Paramount; Teddy Wilson, who said he was looking for all the Strayhorn material he could find; and Bill Dobbins, with his stunning variations on "Clothed Woman." Carmen McRae told the story of the time she requested that Duke play "I Never Felt That Way Before," and when he asked, "How does it go?" she chased him off the stage and performed it herself. Of particular interest to Washingtonians were Jim Hall's reminiscence of the 1969 White House birthday party; Bobby Short's interview at the Smithsonian's Baird Auditorium, which resulted in an almost-all-Ellington program; and Marian's story of Duke's last Washington appearance, on Feb. 11, 1974, as a surprise guest at the Hawthorne School for one of Marian's high school music education workshops.

Coming Soon – Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, March 6 — Society's Regular Monthly Meeting
Sunday, March 7 — Duke Ellington School Orchestra, conducted by Davey Yarborough, with guest artist Clark Terry, Rankin Chapel, Howard University

Sundays, March 21 & April 18 — "Duke Slept Here: A Storytelling Stroll through Duke Ellington's Washington" led by AU professor Edward Smith; 2 pm; Washington Storytellers Theatre & Charlin Jazz Society (202-891-1129)

Monday, March 22 — Guided tour of "Beyond Category" exhibit led by Dr. John Edward Hasse; part of a series (202-416-8811)

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY
Washington, DC

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