

# Ellingtonia



Newsletter Of The  
**Duke Ellington Society**

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## Still More International Events Contribute to Year's Celebrations

A two-day symposium in Lisbon and programs in Stockholm continued the world-wide honoring of Duke Ellington during the centennial year of his birth.

In September the Duke Ellington Swedish Society presented an evening of music and of memories by Alice Babs about her experiences as a Ducal vocalist. Ellington music was by Hasse Kahn, Nils Engström, Hasse Larsson, and Jesper Qviberg. Later in the month a concert featuring Mercedes Ellington, one of Duke's granddaughters, and Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., his lead trumpeter during his last years and an arranger and transcriber of note, took place in Stockholm. Others included Kustbandet, the Arne Domnérus Ensemble, and Magnus Lindgrens Storband.

"Duke Ellington-The First Hundred Years," a two-day symposium in Lisbon, Portugal in July was coordinated by Mark Tucker. Additional presenters included such respected Ellington scholars as Travis Jackson, Brian Priestly, Krin Gabbard, and Robert O'Meally. A special treat was Alice Babs, who talked on "Duke Ellington, My Maestro." Among contributors during the audience participation segments was Gören Wallén, from Sweden. At evening events about town, Mark Tucker and Priestly performed on piano, and Babs accompanied herself on piano as she sang two wordless blues.

## National Sorority Event Honors Duke Ellington

"Sophisticated Ladies: 100 Years of Duke Ellington" was the focus of an Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's program held locally in September for the benefit of its educational foundation. All the music for the fashion show part of the celebration was by Duke and Strayhorn.

Because some of the host committee had seen or heard about the exhibit by Geneva Hudson (who is not a member of the sorority) at Ellington '99, she was invited to display it there.

## President Emeritus Shell To Revisit Newport In November Program

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Our ex-president, Ted Shell, has promised us a program on Duke's greatest concert and best-selling album, *Ellington at Newport*. This was the scene, of course, in 1956, of Paul Gonsalves' improvisation on "Dimuendo and Crescendo in Blue," the most famous improvisation in the history of Ellingtonia. It was so successful Paul subsequently had to play it almost every night for the rest of his life.

The album has recently been re-issued as "complete," with additional tracks, both live and from the studio two days later. Gonsalves is no longer off-mike, and the music is now in stereo, and has greater clarity, thanks to the second (Voice of America) mike that was not available for the earlier LP release.

Ted Shell will straighten all this out for us, and give us a chance to hear the concert—deemed the greatest, by the band members themselves—at **8:00 pm on Saturday, November 6**, at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW**. Don't miss this chance to hear the concert as it was heard then — THE highlight of the first century of Ellingtonia!

## Please Remember . . .

Our upcoming membership year begins on January 1 and continues through December 31, 2000. Lest our personal Y2K systems malfunction on New Year's Day as a result of our celebrating its coming on New Year's Eve, let's get our dues in now.

## Student's Art Graces Website

The drawing of Ellington by Matthew Bier when he was a participant in the Duke Ellington Youth Project is the graphic one sees when entering the Smithsonian's "A Virtual Tour of the Duke Ellington Collection" internet site. It's the same art that we reproduced on the front of our March 1999 issue of *Ellingtonia*.

## A JOYA-FUL REISSUE

by Peter MacHare

I first heard Joya Sherrill sing "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" when I was a senior in high school in 1972. I must have been about the same age as was Joya when she recorded the song in 1945. I have remained a Joya Sherrill fan these many years. I very much enjoy the youthful exuberance and superb styling on her 1940s recordings for Duke. By contrast, Duke's later works with Joya, *A Drum Is A Woman* in 1956 and *My People* in 1963, consisted of weaker material and failed to capture the magic of the earlier recordings. It was, therefore, with some trepidation that I purchased *Joya Sherrill Sings Duke* (Verve 314 547 266-2), a CD reissue of the 1965 LP. I was ready to be disappointed, but I must say I was very impressed. This album is the best Joya Sherrill I have heard and has already taken its place among my favorite Ellington vocal albums. Now, let's hope that someone will reissue Joya's other albums *Sugar And Spice* and *Sammy Jumps With Joya* (the latter with Sammy Davis, Jr), so that we can hear more.



Joya selected the material for this album herself. It is a nice mix of standards and rarities. The personnel consists mostly of Ellingtonians with a couple of guests from outside the fold. Ernie Harper has been a mainstay of the Chicago piano bar scene for many years. Shep Shepard is a conservatory trained drummer, who was born in Honduras and grew up in Philadelphia. The rest of the musicians need no introduction. The album was recorded in two sessions in January of 1965. Mercer Ellington is the producer, but Joya Sherrill disclosed in a fax to me that Duke was in the control room for the Chicago session. Duke isn't credited on the album because of contractual considerations.

The first session was on January 12, 1965 in Chicago. The personnel is Joya Sherrill, v; Cootie Williams, t; Johnny Hodges, as; Paul Gonsalves, ts; Ernie Harper, p; John Lamb, b; Sam Woodyard, d. The rhythm section plays on all tracks while the horns appear on each track as indicated below.

CW JH	1. Mood Indigo	6. In a Sentimental Mood
JH	2. Prelude to a Kiss	CW JH PG
CW PG	4. Sophisticated Lady	7. Duke's Place
CW	5. Kissing Bug	CW JH PG
		10. Things Ain't What They Used To Be
		CW
		11. Just Squeeze Me (But Don't Tease Me)

The second session was on January 20, 1965 in New York. The personnel is Joya Sherrill, v; Ray Nance, c, vn; Billy Strayhorn, p; Joe Benjamin, b; Shep Shepard, d. Ray splits his duties between cornet and violin evenly, as indicated below.

RN c	3. I'm Beginning to See The Light	RN vn	9. Day Dream
RN c	8. I'm Just a Lucky So-And-So	RN vn	12. A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing

This album is amazingly consistent, so much so that each of the twelve tracks is a highlight. Joya shines on every song, singing soulfully and imaginatively. I like "Kissing Bug," which Joya wrote with Billy Strayhorn and Rex Stewart, better than the 1945 RCA original. Strayhorn's "A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing" is also a special treat, here given an almost eerie treatment by the group featuring Ray Nance on violin and a vocal by Joya with a high degree of difficulty.

There's not much to complain about here. Joya doesn't do "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart." The total time on the CD is only 34:22, but there isn't any unreleased material from these sessions to add as bonus tracks. The horns play mostly obligatos rather than solos, but everyone plays so well on this album you won't feel short-changed. There has been so much released this year to celebrate Ellington's centennial. Don't let this treasure slip by without giving it a listen.

## Get Centennial Memorabilia!

A limited number of *Ellington '99* mementos are available, some at reduced and all at very good prices:

	Price	Add Postage & Handling		
		US	Canada	Europe
Commemorative Bust, Bronze, 6½"	\$40.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$18.00
Commemorative Bust, Ivory, 6½"	40.00	6.00	6.00	18.00
CD: <i>The Duke in Washington</i>	10.00	3.00	3.00	4.50
T-shirts (w/Logo)	<del>10.00</del>	<del>1.50</del>	<del>1.50</del>	<del>6.00</del>
Magnets (w/Logo)	3.00	1.50	1.50	2.50
USPS Ellington Stamps, Sheet of 50	20.00	.75	1.00	2.00
USPS Ellington Stamps, 1 <sup>st</sup> Day Covers	5.00	.50	.75	1.50
Ellington '99 Souvenir Program	5.00	1.00	1.00	3.50

**Hurry**, before they become hard-to-find collectors' items!

Send a US money order, a check drawn on a US bank, or an International Money Order to "Ellington '99" at: **PO Box 42504, Washington, DC 20015-9998, USA.**

## Anthony Brown Leads Unique Band

In addition to lecturing on Ellington, teaching master classes, and performing as a drummer, Dr. Anthony Brown has organized and conducts the Asian American Orchestra. This unusual group, replete with such unorthodox instruments as bamboo flute and Chinese mouth organ, has drawn very favorable reviews for its interpretation of the *Far East Suite*, arranged by Brown, at the Chicago Jazz Festival, Monterey, and other venues. The *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Brown, swinging away on drums, made the piece levitate"; and in a posting on the Duke-LYM internet site, a contributor named Al Sipp stated that the suite is "The best tribute to Duke I've heard this centennial year. . . ." The orchestra's *Far East Suite* CD is available via the internet at < [www.asianimprov.com](http://www.asianimprov.com) >.

We are happy to hear this news about Anthony who, while at the Smithsonian before returning to California, was a member of our Society. A gentle P.S.: You owe us a program, Anthony, for you had to cancel one because of an emergency, but promised to come back some day. And bring that band!

## Latest Opinions and Comments on Our Conference

Since we prepared our previous issue, in which we reprinted from DEMS Bulletin a comprehensive account of *Ellington '99* by Lois Moody, more reports have appeared in print. As a form of wrap-up, from them we adapt excerpts about Ellington '99 in general and our local participants in particular.

### from Duke Ellington Society of Sweden's Bulletin:

As a meeting place for new and social contacts the conference proved once more to be of greatest importance, writes Göran Wallen . . . in his comments to the proceedings in Washington, D.C. He headed a 15 people strong delegation from Sweden. A valuable conference, but we missed the presence of musicians from the DE organization and would have liked more about the Ellington impact on the international scene.

### by David Fleming in DESUK's *Blue Light*:

The Conference organisers did a good job. Things happened when and where they were scheduled to happen with only one or two exceptions which were beyond the control of the organisers. Registration, presided over by Ted Hudson went . . . Exemplary. [Ed. note: Not Ted, but Geneva Hudson chaired the Registration Committee, comprised of Elizabeth Braxton, Elizabeth Dennis, and Marion Shell.] A thoughtful innovation was the inclusion of a mini card version of the programme to be carried in wallet or purse. Sjeff Hoefsmit generously presented us with a new cassette, Azure CA-25, and a special Conference edition of *DEMS Bulletin*.

. . . Mac Grimmer did a fine job both in co-ordinating the tour [of Duke's residences, the venues he played in, and other sites]. . . . The afternoon was spent at the Library of Congress. Interesting though this might have been the programme was disappointing and the Library unfortunately decided to have a fire drill at the time. . . . Music [at the reception] was provided by The New Washingtonians from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. As at Chicago last year the music was unnecessarily loud, reception being essentially an occasion for registrants to meet and mingle and converse comfortably.

. . . The morning session was concluded with a discussion panel comprising five veteran Washingtonians (including alumni Yvonne Duke and June Norton) presided over by Ellington's one-time West Coast publicist Patricia Willard. This was not quite as bad as its title, "Memories of a Shared Blessedness", threatened but too much time was taken up in lengthy introductions of panel members—information mostly already available in the Conference programme.

The afternoon of the Centenary day was devoted to a guided tour of the Ellington Collection at the Smithsonian Institution.

Lack of space precludes reporting all daytime presentations but a mention of some of the highlights must be made. . . .

Annie Kuebler's spiel had the unappealing title "The Spiritual Works of Duke Ellington and Mary Lou Williams: Singing His Praises or Seeking Redemption". However some of the recordings she played were very appealing. Annie is currently researching the career of Mary Lou. . . .

. . . On Duke's birthday registrants were bussed to the Short

## Short Sheets . . .

An advertisement in the *Washington Post Magazine* for 26 September tells of two Caribbean jazz cruises in October with "impromptu jam sessions featuring Herb Jeffries, Clark Terry and the Duke Ellington Orchestra with Mercer (sic) Ellington." ♪ ♪ ♪ Charles Stewart is the new president of the Southern California Ellington Society, succeeding Bill Hill. ♪ ♪ ♪ The DES of Sweden is asking that correspondents give them e-mail and fax addresses, as these methods are less expensive than regular mail. ♪ ♪

♪ In addition to music, the schedule for an Ellington symposium at the University of Kentucky in October included papers by John Edward Hasse and Annie Kuebler. ♪ ♪ ♪ "Duke Ellington Centennial Celebration" was one of three finalists in the Best Virtual Exhibition competition at the Smithsonian. ♪ ♪ ♪ The title of Reuben Jackson's November presentation at OASIS is "100 Candles for the Duke."

♪ ♪ ♪ Plans are for a Jazz Idiom's concert of vintage and newly discovered Strayhorn compositions by the Billy Strayhorn Orchestra, "comprised of 17 of Chicago's finest musicians," to be released as an album. ♪ ♪ ♪ A choreographed "Ellington Suite" is a major attraction of the Ballet Theatre of Annapolis' October program. ♪ ♪ ♪

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National Cathedral for a Concert of Sacred Music. . . . a judicious mixture of items from all three Sacred Concerts. They were played splendidly by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra conducted by David Baker. . . . The singers were first rate. "Queen" Esther Marrow reprised numbers from the 1st Concert including "Come Sunday" and her gospel-tinged version of "Tell Me It's the Truth." The soprano DeVonne Gardner fearlessly tackled four or five demanding numbers including "My Love" and "Heaven." Kevin Mahogany sang three pieces including "David Danced Before the Lord" with accompaniment by the fine young tape dancer Noble Potts. Nathan Carter's direction of the Morgan State University Choir was impeccable. . . . The only reservation . . . is that the acoustics in the great cathedral with its high ceiling and pillars were really awful. . . .

Inauspiciously [the Duke Ellington Youth Festival] started a bit late with a long series of greetings, introductions, thanks, tributes, acknowledgements etc., all rather over the top. . . . What eventually followed was a programme of performances of *Ellingtonia* by high school students—a couple of bands, a pianist, a string ensemble, a troupe of dancers, and choirs. These were interspersed with presentations of awards and yet more speeches. The performances were creditable coming from such young people but obviously they could not be expected to do full justice to the Maestro's compositions. The coordinator, Luvenia George, is to be congratulated for her achievements in propagating Ellington's musical legacy amongst Washington's youth. . . .

The final music event followed the Saturday evening 'banquet'  
(Continued on page 4 under "Opinions and Comments")

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

About Our Members

*Ed. Note: This column will resume in our next issue.*

**Opinions and Comments** (Continued from page 3)

at the hotel. The 'Great American Music Ensemble' conducted by Doug Richards was fine, very much improved since their appearance at the Ellington Conference in Washington in 1989. . . . Their second set brought on alumnus Art Baron who galvanised the band to greater heights. The artist formerly known as Yvonne Lanauze sat in for "Love You Mad-ly." Interestingly it was "Creole Love Call" which first induced many to take to the dance floor. . . . It was a good end to the conference.

Thanks to the two Teds, Luvenia, Ben Pubols, Angela and Mac Grimmer, Pat Braxton, Geneva Hudson et al.

by **Ralph Gadicke** in **TDES' Newsletter:**

. . . music by students from the Ellington High School of the Arts . . . was a fun way to start the conference.

The annual banquet and concert . . . turned into a dance party. Let's try to keep this spirit of fun in all future events, both local and international.

by **Morris Hodara** in **TDES' Newsletter:**

. . . To me, the highlight of the conference occurred with the delivery of the very first paper, "Retrospection: Ellington, Washington, and the Music of Memory" by Mark Tucker, who took us through a tour of Ellington's Washington at the turn of the century with words and music. . . .

. . . The [next day, Friday] highlights for me were an unscheduled talk by Peter MacHare . . . on "Ellington the Classical Pianist" (I may have the title wrong) and Steven Lasker's "New Discoveries of a Very Old Vintage." . . .

Saturday's highlights were a talk by Jeff Lindberg on . . . the difficulties of producing and publishing Ellington and Strayhorn transcriptions and the marvelous music of Doug Richards' The Great American Music Ensemble at the dinner dance that night.

Other activities of note were the distribution to all of the attenders of Sjef Hoefsmit's annual tape prepared just for the conference, Jerry Valburn and Jack Towers' CD, *The Duke in Washington* and the complimentary breakfasts where we could gather and plan our days. . . .

Finally, I want to thank the Ellington '99 conference committee, all of them, for the wonderful conference and loving hospitality that they showed us. . . .

by **Charles Stewart** in **Southern California DES' In a Mellotone:**

Not only did the Washington Chapter provide an excellent conference, but they also gave us beautiful weather, gorgeous colors, with the blooming of the azaleas and dogwoods that complemented the total scene. The host members were very gracious and hospitable, making their conference a hard one to follow.

**About Our Davey Yarborough...**

"He is rare—He changes kids' lives." — Wynton Marsalis

**Centenary Choices Run Gamut**


by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Our October meeting, the first of the new season, featured Ellington selections from a *Village Voice* survey of critics and historians. Jazz editor Gary Giddins had requested 200 words on any aspect of Ellingtonia, and the results were both enlightening and entertaining, running the gamut from piano works to the full band, and from the Cotton Club days through the late 60's. Of particular interest to Washingtonians was Nat Hentoff's choice, Jack Towers' recording of the 1940 Fargo dance date, when the band was at one of its early peaks.

With Mac Grimmer playing the selections, we could refer to the comments, as everyone had a handout of the article, printed from the *Voice* site on the internet. This can still be accessed at:

<<http://www.villagevoice.com/features/9923/jazz.shtml>>

**See you in  
HOLLYWOOD  
in 2000!**



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