

Ellingtonia



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Duke Ellington Society

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Davey Yarborough Profiled On National Television Show

Our member Davey Yarborough was spotlighted on ABC network's "20/20" television program, hosted by Connie Chung and seen by millions during prime time on October 18. Entitled "The Jazz Teacher," while recognizing his success teaching technicalities of music, focused on his influence on his students' evolving character and undergirding values. As one put it, "He teaches me morals, how to survive."

In opening, Chung said, "In a school system often criticized for its failures, he is a legend for creating success. . . . one man who's really made a difference."

Described during the show by his wife as "a good-hearted, spiritual, God-fearing and God-loving Person," Yarborough demonstrates faith in his charges ("Energy, spirit, you know, [students] just come in wired") and a loving teacher's sense of responsibility for their development, claiming that if one points them in the right direction they will say, ". . . watch me go."

While he is known in the professional jazz world to be "a phenomenal musician," Chung pointed out that. "Instead of using his friendship with jazz greats such as Wynton Marsalis to get himself into the performing world, Yarborough brings [him] into his students' world." In other words, Yarborough sacrifices his name in lights by putting his students first.

"Art and Discipline," he states, "go hand-in-hand." His Ellington School of the Arts students travel long distances to be there by 7:30 am, before normal school hours, practice even during lunch breaks, and stay late. They must make the honor roll to stay in the band. He permits no excuses, no tardiness, no halfhearted effort; he encourages determination, initiative, best effort, responsibility. "Can you live by those rules and standards," Chung asked. Students' unison answer, "Yes."

This "God on the podium," as one student characterized him, has innate concern for others. Parents of a student who died of a rare ailment recalled how "Mr. Yarborough went to David's bedside night after night. They'd do schoolwork together and listen to CDs. . . .

(Continued on page 4 under "Television Profile")

Smithsonian Archives Center To Host December Meeting

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

Once again we will be guests of the Smithsonian for our regular monthly meeting, on Saturday, December 4. The Archive Center's program will be based on their presentations at our Ellington '99 conference, held here in Washington in April. This will be a particularly welcome program, since many of our members were busy with conference chores or otherwise missed the Smithsonian programs at the conference.

We will have a chance to see some of the photos, music manuscripts and documents in the Ellington Collection as well as see and hear, with commentary by Ben Pubols, some of the multimedia presentations. These are an Archive Center specialty, expertly produced by Deborra Richardson, Scott Schwartz, Reuben Jackson, Annie Kuebler, and the rest of the Archives staff. Annie will make a special presentation based on her recent discoveries and study.

The Archives Center is in the National Museum of American History, on Constitution Avenue between 12th & 14th Streets, NW. Please use the Constitution Avenue entrance and arrive between 7:30 and 8:00 pm, when the guards on duty, the staff, and volunteers will be available to direct you to the Archives Center, since the the museum will be closed to the public except for us at this time. The program starts at 8:00 pm, on Saturday, December 4 – don't miss this unique evening of Ellingtonia!



Season's Greetings!

*A Perfect Gift to a Dear
Friend (Whom You of Course
Love Madly) Will Be a
Membership in Our Society.*

*(We'll Send a Special Notice of Your
Thoughtful Generosity to the Fortunate Recipient.)*

Centennial Celebration Books Provide Information and Pleasure

Reviewed by Theodore R. Hudson

Beginning with Eddie Lambert's *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* (reviewed by Peter MacHare in a previous issue), in the last two years we have been blessed with outstanding books about Ellington for our collections. For the informed enthusiast, novice, casual listener, and others there is great value in the following books.. (See page 3 re others we will report on soon.)

***Duke's Diary: Part One: The Life of Duke Ellington 1927-1950* by Ken Vail.** Cambridge, England: Vail Publishing, 1999.

This is a wonderful book for pleasurable browsing as well as for finding chronologically arranged information on Ellington, his musicians, and his music. Its some 368 calendar-formatted pages are chock full of recording, appearance, venue, and person data complemented by a plenteous array of intriguing photographs, advertisements, playbills, news clippings, movie stills, poster reproductions, and other fascinating ephemera. It could be two books, one of text and another of visuals.

Don't let the title fool you: this is not a variation of Stratemann's masterpiece nor is it an expansion of the Igo-Ewing-Pilkington itinerary. You will want *Duke's Diary* beside your favorite listening chair to return to time after time for its ready reference material and illustrations.

***The New Desor: An Updated Edition of Duke Ellington's Story on Records* by Luciano Massagli and Giovanni M. Volonté.** 2 volumes. Milano, Italy: no publisher indicated, 1999.

The fastidious effort that the authors put into this labor of pure love give meaning to words like amazing, incredible, and an extensive list of superlatives. Their monumental *New DESOR* (as it is familiarly known) was 16 years in the making, many more if one considers it the result of continuous revision of the first of the multi-volumed previous *DESOR*, published serially. For this one, Messrs. Massagli and Volonté re-listened to and re-analyzed every recording in the previous editions and added some 500 more released or discovered since. While the authors use the term "discography" to describe their publication, it is much, much more. It has four sections: "Sessions," "Titles," "Discs," and "Musicians." The first section lists, chronologically, recordings from any source, including studio, air check, venue, etc., beginning with the November 1924 Blu Disc session and ending with a 20 March 1974 concert in DeKalb, Illinois.

Tune descriptions are found in the alphabetically arranged second section, "Titles," which is cross-referenced to the "Sessions." Since the descriptions under each title are arranged chronologically, it is possible for one to follow evolution and permutations of applicable compositions and arrangements. This information is rich in detail, down to alternate takes and break-downs. Want to know the music sequence of, say, "Limbo Jazz," recorded 18 August 1962 and released on *Duke Ellington Meets Coleman Hawkins* Impulse CD? The data reads: "int4DE;1°BAND;2°BAND&JH;3°RN . . ." This lets us know that intro is 1 bar by Duke, followed by 1 by the band, 2 by the band and Johnny Hodges, 3 by Ray Nance, and so on.

"Discs" is arranged alphabetically by issuer and thereunder by disc title. "Musicians" provides name, nickname if any, birth and death dates, instrument/s, dates with the band, and titles of tunes in which he/she played or sang at least an 8-bar solo.

While entries in sections have, as appropriate, cross-references, the General Index is a great finding aid. Also helpful are a list of alternative titles and keys to abbreviations for instruments, countries, musicians, and discs.

Modestly, Massagli and Volonté state that the *New DESOR* "will require constant updating and amending in order to remain a valid tool. We hope to accomplish this through the DEMS Bulletin . . ." which, incidentally, is published by their good friend (an our member) Sjef Hoefsmit, whom in the Foreword they acknowledge "for his constant encouragement and great help in the very difficult field of interpreting, classifying and determining reasonable recording dates of the Ellington interviews."

Ellington experts, scholars, music historians, enthusiasts, and admirers yet to come will benefit immeasurably from the fastidious research and writing by Luciano Massagli and Giovanni M. Volonté that went into this monumental work.. No question, it is an exemplification the oft-repeated phrase "All for the Love of Duke!"

***Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* by Stuart Nicholson.** Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1999.

In the Foreword of his book, Nicholson posits two hardly arguable points: "For all his outgoing charm, [Ellington] gave posterity only that part of him which was necessary to achieve his ends" and ". . . biographies are not advisable reading for those who seek heroes, as most jazz fans do." With these noted, one may profitably read this book, a chronologically ordered compendium of bits and pieces of oral history, not often more than a short paragraph, many the equivalent of what we now call "sound bites." In one context, he referred to some as "snippets."

Given the challenges and dangers of what academicians call scissors-and-paste-scholarship, the book is nevertheless a success, but not in the sense that it keeps the promise of its title of "A Portrait." It is a composite of disparate reflections and refractions and perceptions and insights, opinions, facts (and we might suspect, factoids), and memories—some primary, some secondary, some tertiary, and so on—that yield portraits.

Nicholson's sources are such repositories as the Smithsonian, Library of Congress, Institute of Jazz Studies, and to a lesser extent, private recordings and written texts. The most frequently quoted are long-term sidemen, the likes of Greer, Bigard, Brown, Tizol, Mercer, and most of all proportionately, Ellington himself. To a lesser extent are voices of friends, jazz critics/historians, and music and business associates. The source of each quotation is documented.

(Continued on page 3 under "Centennial Books")

Short Sheets . . .

The current issue of *Callaloo*, an academic journal published by Johns Hopkins University Press, contains a thoughtful and well-crafted poem by Reuben Jackson about Frank Sinatra. ♪ ♪ ♪ Now somewhat a collector's item, *The British Connection*, the official CD for Ellington 1997 in Leeds, England is available in local record and book stores. ♪ ♪ ♪ "The Duke Ellington Symposium" at the University of Kentucky in October included a concert by the Kentucky Jazz Repertory Orchestra directed by David Baker and a day of presentations by Ellingtonia scholars, among them Annie Kuebler, who spoke on "Between the Sheets: Relationships Uncovered in the Duke Ellington Collection," and John Edward Hasse, whose topic was "Genius Beyond Category." Both also were on a panel along with Aaron Bell, Andrew Jaffe, and David Baker.

Conference Marks 40th Anniversary Of New York's Duke Ellington Chapter

An all-day program on November 13 celebrates the founding in the fall of 1959 of the New York Chapter of the Duke Ellington Society, now known as TDES.

Coordinated by Krin Gabbard, the commemorative event includes talks by Robert G. O'Meally on Ellington's songs and singers, Lisa Barg on re-visioning "Black and Tan Fantasy," Travis Jackson on Duke's musical souvenirs ("tourist point of view"), Rich Ehrenzeller on Bubber Miley away from Duke, and a panel of past TDES presidents on the history of the organization.

We wish a very Happy Birthday and many more to come to our friends!

More Books . . .

The Reverend Janna Steed's spiritual biography, *Duke Ellington*, is now available at bookstores and via the internet. We now have a copy and plan to have more information about it in our next issue.

Recently we talked with Lawrence Austin by phone. He reported that his *Duke Ellington and His World* is scheduled for release before Thanksgiving, that Net Hentoff will write a review of it for the *Wall Street Journal*, and that Barnes & Noble has ordered 2,000 copies.

Society's Archives in Formative Stage

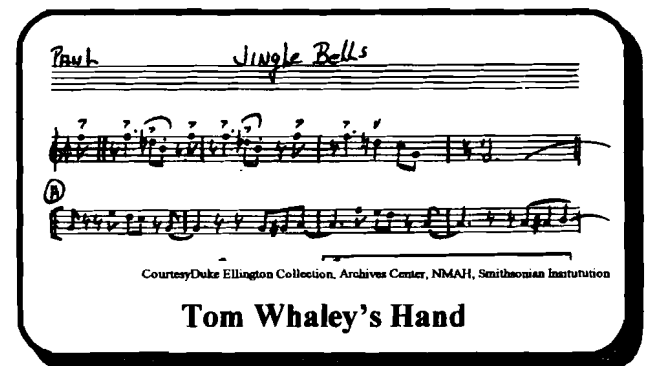
by Peter MacHare

There is only one Duke Ellington organization that has had a longer life-span than the Duke Ellington Society of Washington, DC, and that is the Ellington Orchestra itself. Even though we have been meeting continuously since 1955, we have never engaged in the systematic documentation of our rich history. To remedy this situation, I have volunteered to be our Archivist.

If you have any documents relating to the history and activities of our Society, please consider donating them (copies are fine). So far our Archives consists of copies of our newsletter (contributed by Ted Hudson and Ted Shell) and material relating to Ellington '99 (soon to be turned over by Ben Pubols). If you are really ambitious, please consider writing and donating your recollections.

Meanwhile, we do have a complete set of our newsletters. If you are missing any from your collection, I will be happy to provide them.

Ed. Note: Peter particularly wants copies of the letters that Terrell Allen, our beloved president for almost 30 years, sent to members before each monthly meeting. They are now collector's items. Classics of his good will, humor, and warmth, these letters are rich in details of our history.



Tom Whaley's Hand

--- Dues Due ---

On the first page, we suggest that give a friend a membership in our Society. But don't forget to be a dear friend to yourself and get your own dues in right away. (You will thank yourself! (If you have already paid, give the enclosed membership form to a prospective member.)

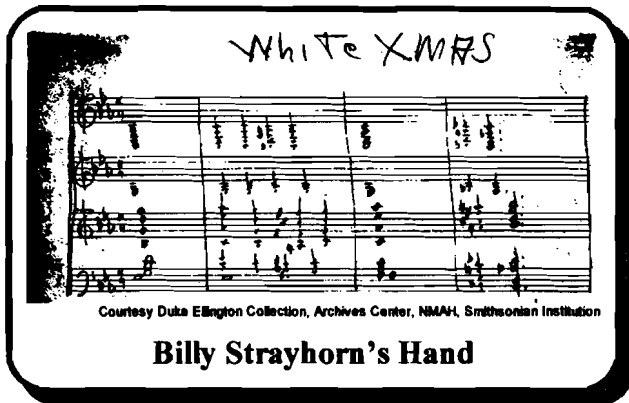
Centennial Books (Continued from page 2)

The book is divided into chronologically thematic chapters; after a brief historical introduction in each, the conversation begins. As in real discourse, some contributions are tangential, but the overall effect is a verbal aura of time, place, person, and circumstance. Occasional illustrations, reproductions of some historical items and (too few!) photographs enhance the text. Courtesy of the Institute of Jazz Studies, there is a discography, alphabetically arranged according to label, but strangely and frustratingly, with no title cross-reference, but there is a good general index.

Two of the books may be purchased directly: ● *The New DESOR* may be obtained through Luciano Massagli at Foro Buonaparte 52, 20120 Milan, Italy for US \$145 (132 Euros), which includes shipping to North America. Airmail costs an additional \$35. Checks must be from an Italian bank; International Money Orders are also acceptable. ● *Duke's Diary* is available to US, Canada, and South America, including postage, for £39 International Money Order from Vail Publishing at 36 Histon Road, Cottenham, Cambridge CB4 8UD, United Kingdom

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

Our president emeritus, **Ted Shell**, contributed a number of photographs to Janna Steed's book, *Duke Ellington*. An award-winning photographer, he has always been very generous about letting people use his extensive collection of photographs, recordings, and memorabilia. ♪ ♪ We are grateful to **Betty Dennis** for graciously agreeing to take care of the refreshments at our meetings. We thank **Angela and Mac Grimmer**, who so faithfully and cheerfully assumed this responsibility for a number of years. ♪ ♪ In late summer, **Davey Yarborough** led a group of his Ellington School of the Arts student musicians in a concert sponsored by the World Bank/IMF Staff Jazz Society. **Aledra Allen** continues as president of the organization, and **Pat Braxton** serves as its secretary.



Billy Strayhorn's Hand

Television Profile (Continued from page 1)

The night before David died, he came to the hospital and he spent all night with us, all night. . . . Even though David didn't understand or hear Mr. Yarborough, he was physically there."

A telling bit of dialogue came during the discussion of his continuing to teach rather than pursuing what would likely be a rewarding career as a performer: (Chung) "Do you believe you're wealthy? (Yarborough) "Yes!"

ELLINGTON 2000

Wednesday, May 25 thru Sunday, May 28, 2000

The Los Angeles Duke Ellington Society will host the next International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference, at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where they have obtained "extremely good rates": \$109 per night for deluxe single or double, \$119 for triple or "cabana jr. suite," and \$129 for quadruple occupancy. For reservations, contact the hotel at 7000 Hollywood Blvd, Hollywood, CA 90028; phone 213-466-7000, fax 213-462-8056.

Conference registration is \$175 by March 20 and \$195 thereafter. Registration should be sent directly to: The Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 2652, Culver City, CA 90231.

Ted Shell's Program Features Duke's Most Famous Concert

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Ellington at Newport from the new "complete" CD was the featured attraction at our November meeting, played with comments by our President Emeritus, Ted Shell. This was the concert that changed people's lives, Paul Gonsalves and Duke Ellington in particular, but also many listeners, for whom the original album was their introduction to Ellingtonia. Dr. Shell's "piece de resistance" was, of course, "Dimuendo and Crescendo in Blue." We had heard the original recording in mono many times, with Gonsalves off (the Columbia) mike, which is now one side of the new stereo recording. The other side is the one we heard, also as a mono recording, some time ago when we had a program at the Library of Congress. This side was taken from the second (Voice of America) mike, the one Gonsalves used. Finally, with the two recordings synchronized, we have true stereo, greater clarity, and a heightened experience of Duke's most famous concert and Paul's most famous solo.

Perryman Performs in Dakar

While on vacation in Dakar, Senegal, which he visits frequently, our member Sam Perryman played a set on piano at Le Meridien President, a posh hotel. He also performed several Ellington numbers with the local band. Sam stopped by the School for Performing Arts where, despite mutual language difficulties, he was able to find out about the jazz band at the school, with which he hopes to perform when he goes back for another visit.

Both the hotel's and the school's bands are interested in receiving music materials. Anyone wishing to contribute may contact Sam at 715 Barnes Street, NE, Washington, DC 20003, or by phone at 202-388-7872.

☞ Copies of "20/20" Telecast Available

A video, with its impressive scenes and voice-overs, and a transcript of "The Jazz Teacher" may be purchased from the network. Contact ABC by phone at 1-800-CALL or on the internet at < www.abc.com >.

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