

Ellingtonia



Newsletter Of The
Duke Ellington Society

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Happy 101st Birthday!

As in past years, on
April 29



create something beautiful.

New York's Society to Stage Saturday Laughter Adaptation

TDES, the New York Chapter of the Duke Ellington Society, will present *Renaissance Man*, a modification of *Saturday Laughter*. The drama, with music by Duke Ellington and lyrics by Herbert Martin, was never staged or recorded by Duke. The original *Saturday Laughter* was based on the South African novel *Mine Boy*.

The event will be at 7:30 pm on Saturday, April 15 at St. Peter's Church, 54th and Lexington, NYC. All tickets are \$25 and may be obtained by sending a check payable to TDES, Inc. to Tom Detienne, 23 Grove St., Apt. #3-A, New York, NY 10014. Mail orders must be postmarked by April 5 and have enclosed a self-addressed and stamped envelope.

Better hurry, though, for tickets are reportedly going fast, so much so that a second performance is a possibility.

No Ellington 2001 in U. K., Possible in 2002

The Committees of DESUK and the projected United Kingdom Ellington Conference 2001/2, for various reasons, will not be able to host the annual conference next year. In a Duke-LYM internet posting, Elaine Norsworthy, a key person in the planning, writes that they "reluctantly rule out any possibility of staging a UK conference in 2001. We are however, investigating whether it is possible to reorganise our commitments in time to stage one in 2002 in a city and venue which has yet to be decided."

In a note in the latest *DEMS Bulletin*, Jerry Valburn wonders if a group in Belgium and The Netherlands might be formed to sponsor a 2001 conference in Antwerp.

Members' Choice Program For April: Duke, but Not Duke

by Mac Grimmer, Program Coordinator

We can expect to hear a wide variety of music in our April program, for this will be a "member's choice" night with each member bringing a couple of selections of other bands playing Ellingtonia. Through the years, almost every group has recorded their versions of some of Duke's compositions, from the early days of bands like those of Lunceford, Basie and even Glenn Miller to today's Lincoln Center, Smithsonian Jazz, and Anthony Brown's Asian-American orchestras.

So bring a couple of your favorites, Ellington (or Strayhorn) tunes played by a non-Ellington band, on cassette or CD. (No extended pieces, please.)

The date is **Saturday, April 1 at 8 pm** at our regular meeting place, the **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW**. Expect an interesting evening, with every selection a surprise, an evening of Duke, but not Duke!

Thinking about Buying A New Television Set-Up?

by Ted Shell, President Emeritus

What about giving the old working 32-incher to Grace Lutheran Church, where we meet. We could use it to show some of the multitude of jazz video tapes and video discs in our members' collections. You could write it off as a contribution.

Congratulations!

The 24-CD Centennial Complete Edition of Duke's RCA Victor Recordings won the Grammy for best historical release of 1999. Ellington 2000 co-chair Steve Lasker, who played a key role in its overall production and a crucial role in the sound engineering, deserves accolades, as does our member Patricia Willard, who wrote the excellent accompanying essay "The Last Recordings."

Four Sing Ellington: Tony Bennett, Dr John, Al Hibbler, Carole Sloane

by Peter MacHare

Fiscal restraint has been an illusive goal in the Ellington centennial. Not only has there been a bonanza of Ellington reissued, but there have been a number of singers who have devoted albums to Ellington's music. If you can't afford to get them all, Al Hibbler's *A Meeting of the Times*, Carol Sloane's *Romantic Ellington* (both reviewed below) and *Joya Sherrill Sings Duke* (reviewed in our November 1999 issue) are the cream of the crop.

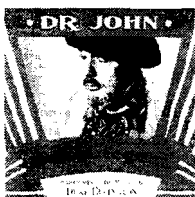
Tony Bennett Sings Hot & Cool. RPM/Columbia CK 63668 (1999).



Contents: 1. Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me, 2. Mood Indigo, 3. She's Got It Bad (And That Ain't Good), 4. Caravan, 5. Chelsea Bridge, 6. Azure, 7. I'm Just A Lucky So And So, 8. In A Sentimental Mood, 9. Don't Get Around Much Anymore, 10. Sophisticated Lady, 11. In A Mellow Tone, 12. Day Dream, 13. Prelude To A Kiss, 14. It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing).

This album just didn't do it for me perhaps because of the high expectations I had for an album of Ellington by such a well-known singer. The first problem is that there are annoying little segments of "Take The "A" Train" weaving in and out of the main tracks. The second problem is that the vastly overrated Wynton Marsalis is a major distraction. And third, it is sad to say that Tony Bennett's voice just ain't what it used to be.

Dr John: Duke Elegant. BlueNote 7243 5 23220 2 2 (2000).

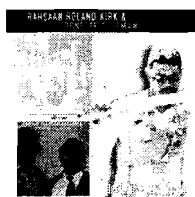


Contents: 1. On The Wrong Side Of The Railroad Tracks, 2. I'm Gonna Go Fishin', 3. It Don't Mean A Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing), 4. Perdido, 5. Don't Get Around Much Anymore, 6. Solitude, 7. Satin Doll, 8. Mood Indigo, 9. Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me, 10. Things Ain't What They Used to Be, 11. Caravan, 12. Flaming Sword.

New Orleans piano legend Dr John, known for music drenched in rhythm and blues, seems an unlikely candidate to do an album of Ellington songs. This album does little to dispel that notion. Yet all is not lost; there are excellent readings of "Solitude" and "Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me," as well as interesting versions of the less-known "On The Wrong Side Of The Railroad Tracks" and "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'."

The other eight tracks are worse than disappointing, especially when you consider the Ellington compositions that you would love to hear from Dr John such as "Rhythm Pum Te Dum" from *A Drum Is A Woman*, something from *The New Orleans Suite*, or maybe "Monologue (Pretty and the Wolf)" or "Moon Maiden." If you want to sample Dr John, his *Goin' Back to New Orleans* is easily one of the best albums of the 1990s.

Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Al Hibbler: A Meeting of the Times. Collectables COL-CD-6266 (1972, 1999).



Contents: 1. Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me, 2. Daybreak, 3. Lover Come Back To Me, 4. Don't Get Around Much Anymore, 5. This Love of Mine, 6. Carney and Bigard Place, 7. I Didn't Know About You, 8. Dream, 9. W.R.U., 10. T.&T., 11. C.&D., 12. R.P.D.D.

Lend me your ears! I recently picked up a copy of the CD reissue of the album that Al Hibbler did with Rahsaan Roland Kirk in 1972, *A Meeting of the Times*. Terrific!

I had never heard this album before, but have played it several times almost every day since I bought it. If you think the combination of Kirk and Hibbler won't work, think again. This is good stuff. Hibbler is much more bluesy than on his Ellington work. He uses moans and groans effectively. I thought Kirk provided the highlight of the album on the very first track (Do Nothin' Til You Hear From Me) when he plays the band

part all by himself (as only Roland Kirk could do) at about two minutes into the song. Admit it, Roland Kirk plays three saxophones at once better than anyone else. The personnel for the Hibbler portion of this CD is: Hibbs, vocals; Roland Kirk, tenor, baritone, manzello, stritch, flute, clarinet; Hank Jones, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Oliver Jackson, drums. Hank Jones and Ron Carter are, as always, superlative.

Two problems with the reissue, however. One track is left off ("Something 'Bout Believing") because of time constraints. The second problem is that it is one of those "two LPs on one CD" reissues and the second LP is Ornette Coleman. I'd much rather have the missing track and have to purchase (or not) the Ornette Coleman separately. So now I've got to hunt down the LP, too!

Carol Sloane: Romantic Ellington. DRG 8480 (1999)



Contents: 1. A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing (quartet with strings), 2. Daydream (quartet with strings), 3. Tonight I Shall Sleep (trio), 4. Don't You Know I Care (trio), 5. In My Solitude (piano), 6. Lush Life (piano), 7. All Too Soon (piano), 8. Prelude To A Kiss (piano), 9. Sophisticated Lady (piano), 10. Take Love Easy (quartet), 11. I Didn't Know About You (quartet), 12. Lotus Blossom (trio with strings), 13. Come Sunday (trio with strings).

First rate Ellington vocal albums are hard to find. Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett are among those who just couldn't get it right. It was, therefore, with great delight that I discovered Carol Sloane's new album (released in October 1999) of Ellington ballads. If you love Ellington, or just love good vocals, you will want to add this to your collection.

Carol has given us 13 intimate ballads in a variety of settings. But don't worry that an all-ballad album will sound monotonous. The variety of settings prevents the album from sounding too much the same from track to track. On five songs, Carol is backed with just piano, two songs with a trio, two songs with a quartet, two songs with a trio plus strings, and two songs with a quartet plus strings. The four quartet settings (with and without strings) feature saxophonist Benny Golson. For your listening, I've listed the settings for the individual tracks in the contents list above because the liner notes are not completely accurate about this.

Short Sheets . . .

James Zimmerman, former producer for the Smithsonian's Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, is now its executive director. Kenneth Kimmery, former assistant producer, is now producer. ♪ ♪ Re the reproduction of a Gertie Wells and Sis Quander 1922 ad from the *Washington Tribune* in our February issue: A follow-up in *Tailgate Rambler* states that 1927 recordings by Quander, one with pianist Cliff Jackson and several Pathes accompanied by Louis Hooper, are listed by Dixon and Godrich. ♪ ♪ *In Jazz Man's Journey: A Biography of Ellis Louis Marsalis, Jr.* by D. Antoinette Handy (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), there is mention of an *Ellington Suite* composed by this Marsalis. Also, it seems that while he was in college, he managed to see that, in addition to classical music, some Ellington music was in the library's holdings. According to a classmate, "When you listened to music with [Ellis], you could count on receiving a lecture on . . . Ellington's compositional brilliance." ♪ ♪ An internet posting says, "*CMG Worldwide* and *Whats Hot Now* are pleased to announce the opening of the Duke Ellington Store." Has any member tried it yet? ♪ ♪ Warner Brothers plans to publish a book of arrangements by area guitarist Steve Hancock.

Want a Bargain CD? (Caveat: Involves Travel)

In a delightful note, Josef Mahdal, our friend in the Czech Republic, writes: ". . . the [24-CD] Centennial RCA Victor set . . . cost me 7,499 Czech crowns which equaled 208,30 USD; this was an absolute bargain. Never have I heard of a such low price, probably the cheapest Centennial set all over the world.

"From this reason, I appeal to all members of the Duke Ellington Society, Washington, DC, all of those educated scholars, keen listeners and fanatic collectors: remove to Czechlands, a western country with eastern population, the country of Jaroslav Hašek and Franz Kafka, to the charming landscape by its own people called Absurdistan!"

However, he subsequently informs that ". . . in comparison with prices for a 24-box CD set in other countries it's a really low sum of money, but one must see that monthly income of he who works in my country is [about] 11,200 Cz. Crowns, which equals [about] 310 USD." Whatever the cost, we know that Josef's recordings of Ellingtonia are priceless to him by aesthetic standards.

Quotation of the Month

Life has two rules:

Number 1, Never quit!

Number 2, Always remember rule number 1.

– Duke Ellington

[We thank a friend, Joseph Saunders, for sending us this bit of advice, which he found on one of the postcards offered by American Greetings online.]

A Thank You Note

In response to a sympathy card we sent to Maurice Lawrence, our first president, on the occasion of his wife Sylvia's death, he writes:

Dear Fellow Ellingtonians,

From the bottom of my heart, I thank each and every one of you for your warm message of condolence. As I read each individual signature, I reflected on our respective relationships with Ellingtonia.

I am sure that Sylvia is looking down on us and with her pleasant smile, she joins me as we say THANK YOU.

Check Peter's Internet Site

Our member Peter MacHare always has interesting items on his "A Duke Ellington Panorama" web site. Recently he included an invitation to join The Duke Ellington Society, with a membership form that could be down-loaded, filled out, and mailed to us. Thanks, Peter. The address is: < www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/2660/ >.

There Have Been Inquiries . . .

. . . about the book that Peter MacHare used as the basis for his program at our February meeting. It is *Duke Ellington: A Listener's Guide* by Eddie Lambert, published by Scarecrow Press and the Institute of Jazz Studies in 1999. It is available from major book stores and internet sources.

Incidentally, it is not true that Klaus Stratemann's *Duke Ellington: Day by Day and Film by Film* is unavailable. If one has trouble finding it, the book can be obtained from its publisher, Jazzmedia, Dorteavej 39, DK-2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark.

And How Many Angels Can Dance on the Head of a Pin?

On the Duke-LYM internet site, Loren Schoenberg asked if anyone had a count of how many tunes Duke actually composed during his lifetime?" Annie Kuebler responded, "...I am asked that . . . a lot. There are ca. 1,000 copyrighted compositions. My very conservative answer is ca. 2000..."

"First off, one would have to establish the criteria. Are distinct arrangements of comp different songs? Is the original "Mood Indigo" the same song as the *Ellington Indigoes* version or others? Are "Sentimental Lady," "Home," "I Didn't Know About You," etc. three songs or one song?"

"How many songs do you think Ellington wrote in the 1920s and 1930s alone that were never recorded. . . . How many songs were discarded by the time the recording bans were over? How many more songs than necessary did he write for extended works and unproduced plays?"

"Let's say he wrote one song a week in a 50 year career, how many does that get us? So, Loren, on the records I stick to ca. 2000. . . . But off the record? MY mind boggles at the thought."

And what's your count, gentle reader?

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

About Our Members

Shortly after Ellington 2000, **Charles Stewart** and wife, Rita, will be off on a trans-Atlantic jazz cruise aboard the QE2. We thank them for recommending our Society to Washingtonian **Jeanne King**, whom they met on a previous such cruise and who subsequently joined our Society. ♪ ♪ Two of our vocalist members are appearing locally. **Ferebee Streett** (sculptor who designed our Ellington '99 commemorative bust of Duke) will perform on April 8 at a program produced by the Candlelight Concert Society. She sings regularly with hubby Bob Thulman's Last Chance Jazz Band. **Esther Williams** and her trio are booked for appearances at the Washington Plaza Hotel through May: March 10-11, 17, 30; April 1, 7-8, 21-22; and May 12-13, 26-27. ♪ ♪ Happily we report that **David Fleming** is feeling better and, wisely it seems to us, is curtailing some of his many Ellingtonia-related duties and activities. He continues his editing of *Blue Light*. ♪ ♪ Time flies department: **Rusty Hassan** has been teaching jazz history now for some 20 years in Georgetown U.'s continuing education program and since 1984 at American U., including about a half dozen courses specifically about Duke. And he's been on the air with highly informative jazz programs for about 35 years. ♪ ♪ ♪ A brief bio of Paul Mercer Ellington may be accessed online at: < www.cmgww.com/music/ellington/intro.html >.

Nominees Sought

At our May meeting, our Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers and board members for our June elections. Our members are urged to make recommendations by way of anyone on the Committee: Marion Shell, Ben Pubols, George Henderson, and Jack Dennis.

Important Reminder



If you haven't already, please hurry and mail your dues (\$30 single, \$50 couple, \$20 first-time-ever, \$5 student), check or money order, payable to the Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003. Thanks.

DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY Washington, DC

President	Theodore R. Hudson
President Emeritus	Theodore A. Shell
Vice President and Co-Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Secretary	Angela Grimmer
Treasurer	Jack Towers
Program Coordinator	Mac Grimmer

At-Large Board Members

Aledra Allen	Patricia Braxton
John Dennis	Luvenia George
Mac Grimmer	Peter MacHare

Theodore A. Shell

Ellington Society Hears Duke's Unheard Carnegie Hall Concert

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

At our March meeting Jack Towers treated us to a rare recording of Ellington's 1947 Carnegie Hall "snowstorm" concert, performed on the day after Christmas. New York was all but closed down by a blizzard; the instruments barely arrived in time, the band uniforms did not, and the audience was sparse. The concert was more or less repeated the next night under more favorable conditions, and most of this second performance was eventually released on a double LP by Prestige. However, the first concert has remained largely unheard, and Jack played several selections not on the release, including Duke's introductions and comments on the situation. Of special interest was one of the first performances of the *Liberian Suite*; a "Sunny Side of the Street" with solo space for Lawrence Brown as well as Johnny Hodges; the first recorded version, with band interjections, of Duke's both modern and retro piano piece, the "Clothed Woman"; a swinging "Stomp, Look and Glisten"; and Mary Lou Williams' rousing arrangement of "Blue Skies," called "Trumpets No End," to close the program.

All members attending our March meeting had their names added to the list of the very few people who have heard this almost unheard concert.

Members on Conference Program

A preliminary outline indicates that our members Anthony Brown, Patricia Willard, and Dennis Dimmer are among those who will make presentations during the day sessions of Ellington 2000.

18th Annual International Duke Ellington Conference at Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel - May 24th to 28th, 2000

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING ROOM RESERVATIONS

Reservations must be made directly with reservation department by Telephone 1-800-950-7667 or 323-466-7000

or Fax 323-469-7006 or E-mail <reserve-hollywoodroosevelt.com>

To take advantage of following 'special' Conference rates reservations must be made prior to April 23rd, 2000.

HOTEL RATES

\$109 for a deluxe single or double; \$119 for 3 persons and \$129 for 4. Also \$119 for Cabana Room or Junior Suite. 25% discount will apply to all other suites. Rates are per room, per night, including existing beds plus a 14% tax. Guests that reserve at least 60 days prior to arrival and stay 6 to 14 nights will be extended a rate of \$99 for a deluxe single or double room. Reservations made prior to January 15th for any number of nights will also be offered this rate.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEE

Early Registration - post-marked by March 20th - \$170 U.S. Funds

Later Registration - \$195 U.S. Funds

Payable to Duke Ellington Society

PO Box 2652, Culver City, CA 90231-2652

CALL FOR PAPERS

Proposals for Daytime presentations - please submit name, affiliation, topic, length, audio/visual requirements and any other pertinent information to Duke Ellington Society, Attention: Steven Lasker, PO Box 2652, Culver City, CA 90231-2652 or E-mail <him-wphill@telis.org>