

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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In Addition to the Collection, Wealth of Ellington Material Is in Archives Center

A surprising number of holdings about Ellington and Strayhorn may be found in scores of other collections in the Smithsonian's Archives Center in the National Museum of American History, repository of the Duke Ellington Collection. They include recordings, photographs, publications, performance programs, interviews, movies, videos, books, periodicals, brochures, sheet music, music manuscripts, music arrangements, news clippings, scrapbooks, posters, personal and business correspondence, financial records, and more.

There are some holdings that are essentially Ellington and Strayhorn sources: the Ruth Ellington Collection, the Eddie and Gayle Ellington Collection, and the Duke Ellington Oral History Project. Though not as well known, others are also directly related, among them a collection of music transcriptions of Ellington and Strayhorn music; Tom Whaley music manuscripts, audiotapes TDES (New York's Ellington organization) meetings and their newsletters; contributions by Morris Hodara, Sjef Hoefsmit, and Charles Waters of videocassettes, programs, etc. of the Annual International Ellington Study Group Conferences; the Frank Driggs collection of photographs; and phonograph records that belonged to Felix Grant.

Importantly among related ephemera are contributions by our "President Emeritus," Ted Shell; the Rex Stewart manuscript papers for *Boy Meets Horn*; and Willie Smith, Billy Strayhorn, and Sarah Vaughn items. Enthusiasts will recognize names of Ellington and Strayhorn researchers and scholars such as Klaus Stratemann, Steve Lasker, and Benny Aasland in the catalog of ephemera. In addition to the aforementioned Hodara, Hoefsmit, and Shell, we proudly note that other members of our Society have made various donations, among them Patricia Willard, Jerry Valburn, Ben Pubols, Teddy Hudson, and Dennis Dimmer.

Incidentally, there is no "Ellington Collection Staff" at the Archives Center; it's just that certain members

March Mumbles

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

College basketball may give you March Madness, but our next meeting will give you March Mumbles, as President Emeritus Ted Shell presents a program of music and video about trumpeter and flugelhornist Clark Terry. *All Music Guide* notes that Clark's "mumbles" vocals "started as a satire of the less intelligible ancient blues singers," but it is Clark's instrumental prowess that will amaze you.

Clark, born in 1920, began his career in the St. Louis jazz scene and played in a Navy band during World War II. After the war, Clark had stints in the bands of Charlie Barnet and Count Basie before playing with Ellington for almost all of the 1950s. Clark even spent some time in the Tonight Show Orchestra and remains busy to this very day.

The March program will take place at 8 pm on Saturday, March 2 at our regular meeting place, Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW.

concentrated on this collection when it was being processed, who, fortunately, have special appreciation for the creative efforts of Ellington and Strayhorn. Now these archivists and specialists engage in assignments that may involve any of the thousands of other holdings and collections in the Archives Center.

So how can one find out what's where there? A good start is the internet home page of the Archives Center: < americanhistory.si.edu/archives/d-1.htm >. Or to go directly to the Finding Aid for the Ellington Collection itself, try: < americanhistory.si.edu/archives/d5301.htm >. The Archives is located in the National Museum of American History, 12th and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20506; phone 202-786-4477; fax 202-786-2453.

Hint: Before going to the Archives, first call or write with a reasonably specific idea of what you are seeking. Don't go expecting to "try on shoes."

For Your Listening Enjoyment:

Beautiful Friendship* by Davey Yarborough and Esther Williams. Dav-Est Productions BF001. *The New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra at the Ellington School of the Arts.

by Geneva Hudson

I strongly recommend two new Davey Yarborough inspired CD,s. The first, *Beautiful Friendship*, is a collaboration of the wonderful talents of Davey on reeds and vocals and his wife, Esther, vocals. Though they have performed together for many years, this is their first recording as dual headliners. As the liner notes stress and the music bears out, “. . . this is an album to sit back and listen to a man [writing and playing] music for his best friend with whom he happens to be in love. It is the ebb and flow of a woman singing to her best friend with whom she happens to be in love.” All arrangements are by Davey, including several original compositions. The duo is joined on some cuts by outstanding musicians who are readily recognized, including drummer Harold Man, pianist Donald Waters, and bassists Keter Betts and Steve Novosel. The result is a warm, soothing, and mellow listening experience.

The second recommendation is a CD by the New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra, made up of talented young musicians from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts under the direction of Davey Yarborough. The program includes a small ensemble, a saxophone quartet, and the full orchestra performing works of various composers, among them Rogers and Hart, Waller, Mingus, and, of course, Ellington. They exhibit talent and technical maturity beyond their years. It is no wonder that they have performed at the North Sea Jazz and Montreux Festivals, the White House, Lincoln Center, and a host of other venues.

Needless to say, their instruments, sheet music, training, and valuable performance experiences involving even local travel take money. It is important to encourage and support these students in what they are doing and what those at the Ellington school are doing for the students. The purchase of this CD will not only bring listening enjoyment, it will also help to support these worthy students and the school. For information about direct contributions and where to purchase the CD, contact the Jazz Studies Program, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, 3500 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007; phone: 202-965-4695.

Reminiscing in Tempo

As one gets older and physically less active (no more water skiing or golf, for instance), one tends to become more retrospective and do more reminiscing. I got to thinking about my experiences with The Duke Ellington Society. I recalled how in the middle fifties our founder Maurice Lawrence and a few brothers of the Omega Psi Fraternity here in Washington started to meet at his home to listen to his collection of 78 rpms. As time went on, we included others and our sessions became too large for homes, so we migrated to the newly acquired Omega House on 13th Street, NW. I, having been appointed to the “housing board,” assumed the job of opening the doors and locking up after each meeting. After a decade or so, and after our president Terrell Allen died, I became president of The Duke Ellington Society. Soon thereafter we moved to our present place, Grace Lutheran Church on 16th Street, NW, and I continued to be the “opener-closer.”

You may recall that Terrell wrote a monthly letter to the members and, boy, weren't they newsy; we always looked forward to receiving them with their wit and humor. (Incidentally, they are in our archives.) Upon my becoming president and Teddy Hudson our vice president, I attempted to issue a projected newsletter, but gave up after several issues. Fortunately for us, I approached Teddy and he consented to be the editor, and now after nine years he has continued to produce this fine publication.

Now possibly the real reason I've written this letter is that I've come to realize how selfish I've been. I didn't realize that I have been responsible for getting this publication into your hands. I had been thinking, irresponsibly, that the efforts I have been exerting on your behalf was a sacrifice, and that I may have imagined that I was beginning to be irreplaceable. And then I realized how comforting it was to serve, how monthly I would get the newsletter from “Teddy, Jr.”—he delivered it to my door and all I had to do was buy the stamps (the Society provided envelopes and mailing labels), open the envelopes, fold the newsletters and insert them, place the stamps and addresses on said envelopes, seal them and then carry them to the post office. Since September 11, entering the post office with them seemed scary.

Now, going back to these duties: Sitting in a most comfortable overstuffed chair with a foot-rest, turning on the big screen “telly,” with feet up, with a small pitcher of the finest “martinis” beside me, with the Wizards or Redskins playing on the screen or any other favorite program desired, what better way is there for enjoying an evening, especially at my age. So you see, there seemed to be a perfect way to spend an evening selfishly. I didn't even include my wife, Marion, in the fun. How selfish can one be!! Now in my nether thoughts, I've been able to recognize how selfish I have been and ask your forgiveness. I am ready to allow someone else to experience this pastime. Incidentally, I will continue opening and closing the doors of our present meeting place.

(With apologies to Art Buchwald)

Ellingtonially yours,
Theodore A. Shell, Sr.

Short Sheets . . .

Harken, Ye Moulde Figs From the cradle of recorded jazz, Richmond, Indiana, comes the first issue of the Starr-Gennett News. Published by the Starr-Gennett Foundation, among its contents are an invitation to membership, a "Historical Corner" by Duncan Schiedt, and an announcement of the "imminent release" of Volume III of *Gennett Records Greatest Hits*. Volume II of the series includes Wilbur Sweatman's "Battleship Kate" with Duke on piano. For information or to order items, contact the Foundation at: 33 South 7th Street, Richmond, IN 47374; 765-962-1511; fax 765-966-0882; www.starrgennett.org; or gennett@starrgennett.org. ♪ ♪

Saturday Laughter Music Promised Described by eJazznews as a collection of songs from the never-produced theatrical work *Saturday Laughter*, a CD entitled *Secret Ellington* has been announced for March release by the Navarre Corporation. Reported performers include Grover Washington, Jr., Freddie Cole, and Joe Lovano. ♪ ♪

Hancoff Tour of African Nations Steve Hancoff announced his schedule to perform, beginning in January, in seven African countries as an "Artistic Ambassador" under Department of State auspices. For details, check his website < www.stevhancoff.com >.

Strayhorn Arrangements! Keep an Eye (and Ear) Open For . . .

You Go to My Head: Strayhorn and Standards by the Dutch Jazz Orchestra, produced by Challenge Records (CHR 70090), a CD with 14 Billy Strayhorn arrangements from the Great Songbook repertory. Eight of these are premieres, having never been commercially recorded before.

What'cha Know?

So you know a few things such as matrix numbers for "Black Beauty" and who Lonnie Johnson and Little Posey were and when Ray Nance actually first played with the band and what kind of reed Procope used. Now let's see how knowledgeable you really are. The person whose letter to our PO address bears the earliest postmark and contains the three correct answers gets (limited) fame and, tah-dah! – a mystery prize. If we get no winner, the quizmaster gets to keep the prize.

(A) Two first cousins, both bassists, played in the Ellington orchestra. In a sense, one carried on what the other started stylistically. Who are they? (Aw, this is too easy, isn't it?)

(B) An Ellington vocalist's uncle sang with the Jimmie Lunceford orchestra. Name both of them.

(C) Two brothers-in-law played trombone in the Ellington orchestra, at different times except for one brief period. Who are they?

Events Honor Walter van de Leur

March 12, 2002, will be a historic day for our member Walter van de Leur (and for Billy Strayhorn enthusiasts as well). It all starts with his public defense of his Ph.D. dissertation at Aula of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

After a formal academic ceremony during which he is questioned about his dissertation, all will be invited to a nearby concert hall for a performance of all-Strayhorn music by the Dutch Jazz Orchestra. A reception follows the concert at which time Walter will be on hand to autograph his recently released book, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*, and the orchestra will introduce its new CD, *Strayhorn and Standards: You Go to My Head*.

Get the picture: The *promovendus* (Walter) in formal attire, tails, escorted by *paranymphs* (from the ancient Greek word meaning groomsmen), and profs in academic gowns and accoutrements, filing in and awaiting the *pedel* (presiding academician) to intone, "Hora Est!" Is this our boy, author of a scholarly book and now Doctor van de Leur, among other things for which we have known him. Yep, it really is.

And we shout from afar, "Take a deep one, Walter!"
We are very, very proud of you.

Calendar

11th Annual East Coast Jazz Festival
Thursday February 14 through Sunday, February 17
DoubleTree Hotel, Rockville, Maryland, and Other Venues

Ellington Sacred Concert

Saturday, March 9, 4 pm

Senior Choir and Jaques "Saxman" Johnson and an Ellington Size Band
Peoples Congregational Church, 4704 - 13th Street, NW - Donation \$20

Duke Ellington Youth Project Activities and Festival

Monday, April 22 - Thursday, April 25

Smithsonian Institution

(Watch for Further Announcements)

Final Notice!

If you are or have been a member of The Duke Ellington Society and see a star ☆ beside your name on your mailing label, it means we really miss you but will have to do what we don't want to do—suspend the mailing of *Ellingtonia* until we receive your dues for 2002.

On the other hand, if you see two ☆☆ stars beside your name, we most cordially invite you to join us.

In any event, without delay send your dues to:
The Duke Ellington Society, PO Box 15591,
Washington, DC 20003-0787, USA. Membership remains a bargain: Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; First-Time-Ever Member, \$20; Student, \$5.

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

Reuben Jackson

Scattered Clouds is the title of Reuben Jackson's latest book, scheduled for release in late spring. Also, Reuben is the new Writer-in-Residence for the Howard County Poetry and Literature Society. ♪ ♪

Bill Flemons

The current issue of the British publication *Blue Light* carries a reprint of Bill Flemons' "Re Duke's '(A Very) Unbooted Character' – and 'Chico Cuadrado' As Well," originally published in our April 2001 issue. ♪ ♪

Ronnie Wells

Vocalist Ronnie Wells is again producer of the Annual East Coast Jazz Festival, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Rockville, MD, February 14-17. Featured artists include James Moody, Mose Allison, Keter Betts, Buck Hill, Dick Morgan, and Ronnie with Ron Elliston and Friends. Proceeds support the Fish Middleton Scholarship Fund.

Dick Spottswood

Some of the liner notes for the 7-CD box set on bluesman Charlie Patton were contributed by Dick Spottswood.

John Edward Hasse

Under the supervision of John Hasse, Roshni Lal, a Smithsonian summer intern, compiled an international *Directory of Jazz Societies*. John had copies available at the recent IAJE convention in California.

Brian Gilmore

One may remember the essay that Brian Gilmore authored in *emerge* magazine in celebration of Duke's 100th birthday. Well, he has done another; this time a feature article, "The Seventh Street Blues," in the *Washington Post*, Sunday, January 27, about Langston Hughes, whose centenary birth date is February 1. Brian doesn't mention whether blossoming poet Langston and blossoming musician Duke ever crossed paths during the time in 1924-26 that Hughes lived in Washington—probably they didn't, for neither mentions the other in autobiographical sources. Another article by Brian, "Deconstructing the N-Word" appears in the January-February *Crisis*.

Ferebee Streett

The City of Baltimore has commissioned Ferebee Streett to create four eight-foot bronze statues for the new Police Memorial Garden (to be located at the historic Shot Tower site) to be dedicated in the fall. Ferebee, you may remember, sculpted the bust of Ellington for the commemoration of the centennial of his birth, "Ellington '99."

Charles Stewart, Steve Mokone

During his college days a star swimmer at West Virginia State College, Charles Stewart has been inducted into the National "W" Club Sports Hall of Fame. Steve Mokone, now a clinical psychologist, is a former professional soccer player in Europe for whom a street is named in Amsterdam (and about whom we will say more in an upcoming issue). In 1998, Steve was inducted into the Commonwealth [U.K.] Sports Hall of Fame.

An Evening with Ben, Jack's Buddy

by Peter MacHare

Tenor-great Ben Webster truly came to life at our February program.

Jack Towers mixed Ben's recordings with video, personal reminiscences, and tapes that Ben made just for him in a way that highlighted our appreciation of the music. For example, Jack told the story of how Ben came to rejoin Ellington in 1948. Then Jack played Ben's solo on "How High the Moon," recorded only a few days later at Carnegie Hall—a solo which brought many audible gasps of disbelief from our members.

Jack also played for us a tape that Ben Webster recorded just after the death of Johnny Hodges. The tape included a radio segment of Johnny himself talking about his early career. Everyone agreed that they had never heard Rab talk so much. Other tapes that Ben had sent to Jack included both music and Ben talking.

Jack closed the program with "St Louis Blues" from the Fargo date in November 1940. Jack pointed out that after Ivie Anderson sings, "Where did you stay last night?" you can hear Rex Stewart answer, "I don't know" on his cornet.

If you've got to run and hear it for yourself, it is at 2:11 into the track on the latest Fargo release. Thank you, Jack, for a wonderful program.

Our February meeting was one of our best attended regular meetings, with about 45 people. I don't think I ever saw so many good looking people in one room before. We were especially pleased to have many wonderful guests whom we hope to see again in March.

Clarification

Peter MacHare's announcement at our holiday party that Lillian and Ben Pubols are moving to Oregon gave some the impression that their relocating is imminent. Happily, it's not Checkin' Out, Go'om Bye until later this year.

Meeting

The Duke Ellington Society Executive Board
Saturday, March 2, 7 pm, Grace Lutheran Church

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

Executive Board

President	Peter MacHare
Vice President	Theodore Hudson
Secretary	Open
Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Co-Treasurer	Francis Arnold
Theodore A. Shell	Olivia McMillan
Joseph McMillan	William Hanson
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