

Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of
The Duke Ellington Society



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Project Honors WW II Great Lakes Musicians

At the beginning of World War II, blacks in the racially segregated Navy were relegated to jobs as messmen and stewards. To make it possible for black inductees to be in positions other than of servitude, a program was created for the training of black bandsmen, albeit still racially segregated, at the Great Lakes Training Center in Illinois. During the war thousands overall were enrolled. As they completed their training, many were disbursed in 25-piece units to naval facilities to serve as military, concert, and dance bands.

Among those who went through the Great Lakes program were some of the finest and future finest instrumentalists, composers, vocalists, and leaders in jazz. Those who were or would be associated with Ellington and/or Strayhorn included Luther Henderson, Major Holley, Clark Terry, and Gerald Wilson.

To honor participants in this wartime initiative, a Great Lakes Experience group has been formed, chaired by Josie Childs, perhaps best known to us as co-chair of the Ellington '98 Conference in Chicago.

To begin the celebration, the current Great Lakes Naval Jazz Ensemble will present a concert on the base for servicemen, with Terry as guest soloist, during February, Black History Month. A second concert with Terry, this one public, will be in Chicago on March 2.

According to Ms. Childs, through the efforts of Terry and a network of Great Lakes alumni, "a reunion of all the guys we can round up" will be filmed at a reception for them in Chicago on March 1. She is trying to find as many of these bandsmen and/or their immediate relatives as possible. If you can help, please contact her by phone: 773-643-4828, fax: 773-643-4828, or mail: 6935 S. Crandon Ave., #2D, Chicago, IL 60649.

In addition to the concerts and reunion, the group's Project Description states that "The Great Lakes Experience group and WTTW Channel 11 propose a one-hour national documentary to explore the African American contribution to military bands with a look at the skilled and charismatic leaders of two Black Military bands" during WW I and WW II.

Saturday, 1 February 2003

Member's Choice:

A Favorite Ellington Recording

by Mac Grimmer & Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Our February Program will be a member's choice. Bring one of your favorite Ellington recordings and tell us a little about your selection. You might even bring a couple of favorites in case there is extra time. This very general theme is designed to encourage maximum participation, but please don't take this to mean that you shouldn't come to our meeting if you don't choose to bring a selection. You may bring your recording either on compact disc or cassette tape. If you have your selection only on LP or 78, I'll be glad to bring it for you if I have it in my collection.

Out of town members are encouraged to mail in their selections to our post office box or to get in touch with Peter MacHare at spmachare@yahoo.com or at 301-982-4249.

The program will be at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th & Varnum Streets, NW**, at **8 pm on Saturday, 1 February**.

TDES Program Will Spotlight Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn

At their Member's Choice meeting on April 23, New York's TDES will recognize the achievements of Jack Towers and Jerry Valburn with a program of works on which they collaborated, usually as restorer-engineer and source, respectively. Their efforts over the years have resulted in a wealth of studio and live recordings, radio broadcasts, and private holdings—all of exceptional technical and artistic quality—and information being made available to a grateful public.

Memberships

First-Time-Ever Member, \$20
Renewing Member, \$30 Couple, \$50 Student, \$5

Send Check Payable to
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA

***I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart* by Jessica Williams (HEP CD 2082)**

A Review by Lois Moody

Topping my list of today's pianists is Jessica Williams, and for just about every imaginable reason. Her grasp of essential qualities in classic jazz and standards repertoire is thorough. Her interpretations show a matching understanding of the composition and performance values of those who created this vast library. Her own pieces continue the creative tradition of individuality and her exploratory partnership with the piano taps its full potential for distinctive sound. A Williams performance is an experience in colorful, articulate expression of deep-rooted musical values, with pianistic technique the clear servant of musical substance.

Her recent CD tribute to Ellington finds all these qualities in play, so the performances themselves—and Williams' own liner notes—speak more effectively than any reviewer could. But just to whet your appetite, here are some personal observations.

Twelve Ellington songs and three Williams originals are linked by a shared creative spirit. Except for the pretty and playful "Angelica," the Ducal selections are all frequently-performed favorites but these versions are neither tired nor predictable. Different approaches to mood and tempo reshape "Things Ain't What They Used To Be." Quirky edges reminiscent of both Ellington and Thelonious Monk (another major inspiration to Williams) brighten "It Don't Mean a Thing." A nod to Duke's early stride roots introduces "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" before Williams moves forward in time with a strong walking bass line. A somewhat eccentric dissection and reconstruction of melody takes place in "Prelude to a Kiss," which also showcases her ability to develop remarkable solos with either hand. This trading of solo responsibility also shows up on a buoyant "Caravan." For "In a Sentimental Mood," new harmonic setting for a distinctive Ducal piano figure provide the program's most direct reference to Ellington's style but otherwise this is Williams in her own voice. And even the shopworn "Satin Doll" is revived with some interesting counterpoint. The remaining tunes sample everything from lyricism to happy romps.

The three numbered "Interludes" woven into the program reflect Williams' deep appreciation of key elements in Duke's composing and performing and honor his legacy by embracing similar values in the pursuit of her own fresh ideas, sounds and phrasings. Highly recommended listening.

***Duke's Diary, Part Two: The Life of Duke Ellington, 1950-1974* by Ken Vail**

Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

A Review by Theodore R. Hudson

When Ken Vail's *Duke's Diary, Part One*, covering 1927-1950, was published in 1999 amid the centenary celebration of Duke Ellington's birth, we wrote here, "This is a wonderful book for pleasurable browsing as well as for finding chronologically arranged information on Ellington, his musicians, and his music" and "You will want [it] beside your favorite listening chair to return to time after time . . ." The same praise can be given to just-published *Part Two*, covering 1950-1974.

Vail graciously acknowledges debts to the foundation works of Klaus Stratemann, *Duke Ellington Day by Day and Film by Film*, 1992; the Duke Ellington Itinerary compiled over years by Joe Igo, Art Pilkington, and Gordon Ewing; and W.E. Timmer, *Ellington: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sideman, Fourth Edition*, 1996. However, this book is a thing apart.

As the reader follows the calendar on the left of each page, abstract dates and events take on a life as the reader peruses a amazing wealth of data, clippings, quotations, advertisements, publicity, event programs, album covers, reviews, tour maps, photographs, and intriguing ephemera. Detail and minutia abound. For example, for anyone interested in the band's day-to-day personnel, it's all there, or for that matter almost hour-to-hour: We read, for example, that when the band played its last Washington engagement, at Georgetown University on 10 February 1974, Paul Gonsalves was absent during the first set [we have witnesses who saw him asleep on the band bus], but was on the stand for the second set. And there are gems about lesser known as well as brightest stars in the Ducal constellation of musicians. Consider this accolade from a review of a Sacred Concert at Cambridge, England on 27 February 1967: "Esther Marrow . . . moved more souls with a few magnificent bars of Ellington's *Come Sunday* than the combined forces of the composer, his orchestra, and the London Philharmonic had succeeded in doing the previous evening when they all but filled the vast arena of London's acoustically antiquated Royal Albert Hall."

It's not all detail and minutia, though; there are extended pieces. For instance, remember hearing or reading somewhere that Duke said, "I never replace people"? It's found in a complete transcription of an interview by Gary Moore on his "New York, New York" broadcast, 27 August 1969. And the book closes with the full text of the eulogy by Stanley Dance at Duke's funeral.

Ken Vail is a collector-diarist, thus not obligated to confirm as apocryphal or factual every datum or tangible item he has gathered. Fortunately, his materials will stimulate and aid discographers and historian-researchers as they continue the work of comparing, analyzing, and assessing questionable news items, publicity, tales, other materials, and data in a search for truth. Some of that truth, it will be found, is that many inaccuracies, misconceptions, and rumors that have persisted over the years are indeed just that.

This engaging and evocative book is a joy that, like good music, will keep on giving.

Short Sheets . . .

A Note from Ben Pubols of Interest to Bibliophiles

"I just discovered that Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon, has two copies of the first edition of Barry Ulanov's biography of Duke Ellington (1946). One is without dust jacket, but with Duke's customary autograph, 'Good Luck, Duke Ellington'—asking price, \$1,200.00, marked down from \$1,500.00. This one is in their rare book room. The other, in their open shelves, is not autographed but includes the dust jacket—asking price, \$65.00. This price differential might give you some idea of what Duke's autograph is worth these days. If interested, Powell's web site is < <http://www.powells.com> >. Once there, go to 'Music,' then to 'Jazz Biography.' From there, you're on your own, as there are 618 'matches' listed. Luckily I bought my copy as a close-out in 1947 for \$1.00."

In a follow-up on the Duke-LYM internet site, Sjef Hoefsmits wrote: "My dear father (who hated Ellington's music) bought me this book 28May46 during his first visit to the USA . . . He paid the official price: \$3.-"

Leadership Change at New York Ellington Society

Having accepted a position as visiting professor and writer-in-residence at the University of Chicago, David Hajdu has stepped down as president of TDES. In a switch of responsibilities, former vice president Ray Carmen has assumed the duties of president, with David now serving as acting vice president until the next election.

We wish Ray and David our best!

Good News: Ashby Recovering

Ellington orchestra alumnus Harold Ashby was hospitalized recently because of a heart condition after becoming ill after a concert in Kansas City with The Duke's Men. He reportedly is undergoing physical therapy and improving. We wish Harold Ashby swift and hearty good health.

Noted Music Historian Dies

Eileen Jackson Southern passed away at her Florida home in October. An expert on the history of American music, she is the author of *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, a standard; compiler of *Biographical Dictionary of Afro-American and African Musicians*; author of many other works; and co-founder of the journal *Black Perspectives in Music*. Dr. Southern was the first black woman appointed a tenured full professor at Harvard University. [Ed. note: We thank Tex Gathings for sending us information about Dr. Southern.]

Ellison's Choices

The CD *Ralph Ellison: Living with Music* (Columbia CK 85935) contains some of this famous author's favorite recordings. Among them are three by Duke: "Up and Down, Up and Down" and early versions of "East St. Louis Toodle-O" and "Black and Tan Fantasy." An extra that literature lovers especially will appreciate is an excerpt of a 1964 talk by Ellison at the Library of Congress in which he recalls some of the sounds of music that impressed him as he was growing up and later informed his writing.

Apropos February's American History Focus

According to Ortiz M. Walton in his book *Music: Black, White & Blue*, Duke Ellington "composed works [all circa 1944] commemorating black freedom fighters: Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Crispus Attucks, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass. None . . . have been recorded . . ."

We know of Duke's compositions about Barzillai Lew and Martin Luther King, but does anyone have information about these other historical figures?

Examples for Us

We proudly point out that we have two families of parents and children who all are members of our Society. They are the MacHares: Peter, Senn, and daughter Erica, and the Yarboroughs: Davey, Esther, and daughter Davie.

Who Is He?

What is the last name and the nickname of William Henry Berthol Bonaparte Bertholoff?

Hint: Duke composed and recorded a tribute to him

Some Kisses

I would kiss that bird if I could,
The one who comes to the window sill
And sings along when I play the piano;
Maybe it's not one bird, but more, and
If so, I could kiss them all, I feel so pleased
By their presence and the fact that
They seem to like some Bach and the
Songs of Duke Ellington, who is
Another someone I would kiss
If I could—and if you ask me why,
I'll tell you it's those intelligent chords
He wrote, and that face, which together
Comprise the soul of sex and elegance.
The man who said "I love you madly"
To his audience would have understood,
I think, about the bird and my joy, and
Might even have written a song about it,
"A Kiss for the Songbird," or something
Which might be in the key of D, with
Many lovely, lovely chords, and surely
After the band finished playing, he would
Stroll to the mike, look straight at me and
Say "I love you madly" one more time.

– Barbara Young – 2002

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

About Our Members

The Rev. Mark S. Harvey

Mark Harvey and his Aardvark Jazz Orchestra celebrated their 30th season and 30th Annual Christmas Concert with a new live-recorded CD, *Duke Ellington/Sacred Music*. It is dedicated to his friend and mentor, the late Rev. John Gensel, so loved in the jazz community. Another CD features Sheila Jordan in a Christmas cantata, *Bethlehem Counterpoint*. Both may be ordered via e-mail at: < mharvey@mit.edu >. A United Methodist minister, Mark also teaches jazz history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Lyndzey Elliott, Erica MacHare

Our newest member is nine-year-old Lyndzey Elliott, a fourth grader at Saratoga Elementary School in Springfield, Virginia, who plays the piano. She is now our youngest member, being months younger than Erica MacHare, now ten, who became a member when she was six, the youngest ever to join.

Willard, Volonté, Hoefsmit, Fleming

For various things, David Fleming, Sjeff Hoefsmit, Giovanni M. Volonté, and Patricia Willard are among those thanked by Ken Vail in the Acknowledgments in his book *Duke's Diary, Part Two*.

Luvenia George, John Hasse, Davey Yarborough

John Hasse has been elected secretary of the International Association of Jazz Educators, Luvenia George is on its Resource Team for Jazz and Music Education, and Davey Yarborough has been elected vice-president of its local chapter.

Hoefsmit, Steiner, Towers, Kuebler, MacHare, Valburn
Sjeff Hoefsmit does an incredible job of writing for, editing and publishing *DEMS Bulletin*, a true labor of love if there ever was one. Included in his current issue are a descriptive itinerary by Ken Steiner for selected Ducal performances during 1937-1940, an informative note by Jack Towers on "Aberdeen" in *The Tattooed Bride*, titles by Annie Kuebler for the three movements of the same work, a notice by Peter MacHare about Tom Lord's "Jazz Discography" CD, and Jerry Valburn's regular feature on new CD releases.

Don Rouse, Harold Gray

Harold Gray has an article, "Jazz at the French Embassy," in the current issue of *Tailgate Ramblings*. Don Rouse is one of the two alternating editors of the publication.

Walter van de Leur

Looking for a copy of Walter van de Leur's great book, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*? TDES has "a few copies left" and will not restock. To purchase it at \$35, including shipping, contact: TDES Marketplace, c/o Morris Hodara, 30-20 Parsons Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354, USA.

Another Enjoyable Holiday Party

by Peter MacHare

Our annual holiday party is always a delight and this year was no exception. We had a wide assortment of good, drinks, and dessert. I don't think Duke himself would have been disappointed with our desserts. We had a substantial number of members attending, many of whom brought guests. We even had one new member attending her very first meeting, nine-year old Lyndzey Elliott.

Music was provided by Jack Towers. Among the recordings Jack featured were the two Ellington reissues "Ko-Ko" and "Take The 'A' Train" on the French label Dreyfus Jazz which feature excellent sound, but which are sadly difficult to find in the United States ("a week in Paris would ease the bite of it").

Our vice-president and *Ellingtonia* editor, Ted Hudson, presented certificates of appreciation to all of those who contributed articles to it during the past year. Thanks to all of you for helping to make *Ellingtonia* an outstanding newsletter. We should all especially thank Ted for putting it all together every month.

Lastly, the Ellington Society thanks all of you who came early, stayed late, or brought something for the festivities. We do love you madly.

Some Useful



Internet Sites

Our Society:

depanorama.net/desociety/

Peter MacHare's *Duke Ellington Panorama*
depanorama.net/

Sjeff Hoefsmit's *DEMS Bulletin*:
depanorama.net/dems/

Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection Text Tour:
americanhistory.si.edu/archives/de-tour

Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection Finding Aid:
si.edu/organiza/museums/nmah/archives/d5301a.htm

Member Anthony Brown's New Website:
anthonybrown.org

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

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