

# Ellingtonia

A Publication Of  
*The Duke Ellington Society*



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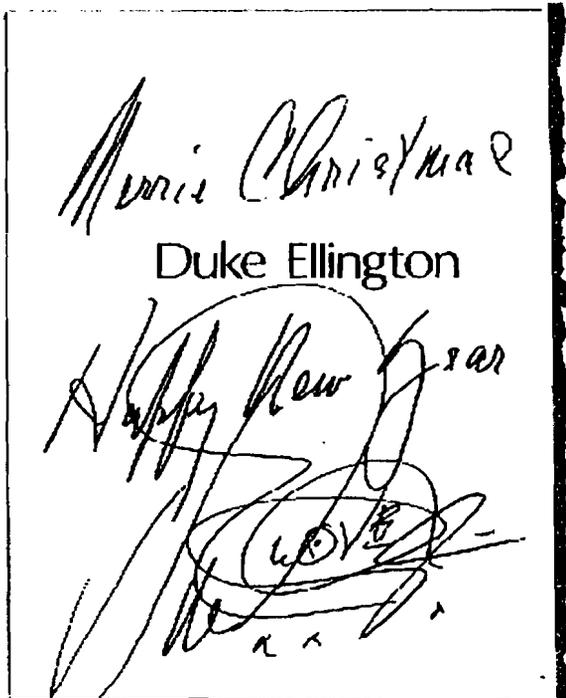
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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Courtesy Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center,  
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

## December Program: Let's All Dig Ellington's Roots

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

We all know that Duke Ellington was immeasurably influential on the musicians who followed him. At our December meeting we are going to examine two musicians who influenced Duke Ellington, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Sidney Bechet. Each of them has been the subject of a documentary recently released on DVD.

The date for this all-video program is **Saturday, 1 December at 8 pm** at our usual hang-out, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.**

All our programs are open to the public, so do bring a friend.

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IF YOU ARE AN OFFICER OR BOARD MEMBER OF THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY AND DO NOT WISH TO CONTINUE IN YOUR PRESENT POSITION, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH ANGELA GRIMMER AT 202-546-7764 BEFORE OUR NEXT MEETING.

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- PETER MACHARE, PRESIDENT

## 'Tis the Season for Nutcrackers

We reprint here announcements by sponsors of performances of music we all love. A choice? Both, of course!

**Nutcracker Suite** Concert by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra Concert, Saturday, December 8, 7:30 pm In the late '50s, Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn adapted Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, transforming it from Russian classical music to an American jazz classic for big band. In this treatment, such titles as "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and "Dance of the Red-Flutes" become "Sugar Rum Cherry" and "Toot Toot Tootsie Toot", while the orchestra syncopates, swings, and slides Tchaikovsky's classic lines. Location is to be announced.

**Reunion Jazz Orchestra Presents "An Evening with Duke Ellington"** The Reunion Jazz Orchestra, directed by Christopher Johnston, will present "An Evening with Duke Ellington" on Friday, November 30, 8 pm at the Ernst Community Culture Center at Northern Virginia Community College, 8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA. The concert features *The Nutcracker Suite* as adapted and arranged by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Tickets are \$15; seniors and students, \$10; and children under 12, free. Please contact Joseph Pincus at 703-569-0973 or send e-mail to [joseph@pincus.org](mailto:joseph@pincus.org) for information and reservations.

## **Rahsaan Roland Kirk & Al Hibbler: A Meeting of the Times**

Atlantic Masters 81227 3689-2

Reviewed by Peter MacHare

**Contents:** "Do Nothin' Till You Hear from Me," "Daybreak," "Lover, Come Back to Me," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "This Love of Mine," "Carney and Bigard Place," "I Didn't Know About You," "Something 'Bout Believing," "Dream." **Personnel:** Al Hibbler, vocals; Rahsaan Roland Kirk, tenor and baritone saxes, manzello, strich, clarinet; Hank Jones, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Oliver Jackson, drums (others on track 9).

### **A Mighty Fine Album Finally Done Right!**

How many times are you willing to purchase a favorite album? I now have two CD reissues of the magnificent 1972 collaboration between Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Al Hibbler, *A Meeting of the Times*. The album was originally reissued on Cd in 1999 coupled with an Ornette Coleman album entitles *Ornette!* Trouble was, in order to fit both albums onto one CD, one track had to be left off. The one left off was "Something 'Bout Believing," an Ellington composition from the *Second Sacred Concert*.

That problem has now been rectified by a new reissue that is complete. This is very good news because this CD is a diamond in the rough. It certainly deserves to be better known. I do not think that I am going out on a limb to say that everyone who reads this review will love it. If you don't buy it, you are missing something special. And, Lord, look at the rhythm section! Hank Jones, Ron Carter and Oliver Jackson are brilliant throughout.

Al Hibbler (1915-2001) is one of Ellington's best known vocalists for good reason. He sings ballads beautifully, but colors them with blues. His vocals are always moving, but still done with humor. He incorporates life's wide variety into his music.

Roland Kirk (1936-1977) of course is known for his ability to play several instruments at once. One of the pleasure of this album is hearing Kirk play the Ellington orchestra parts all by himself. Perhaps you have wondered about the unusual instruments he plays. A mantelli is a soprano sac that has an upturned bell like an alto sax. A strich is an alto sax that is straight like a soprano sax. Kirk invented these instruments himself. He never sounds like one man playing three saxophones at once; he sounds like three musicians playing three saxophones. But don't bet the idea that Kirk is a novelty act—his moving rendition of "Something 'Bout Believing" dispels all notions of that.

The only weakness on the CD is the last track, "Dream," an afterthought from a previous Kirk session. It's not a bad performance, it just has little to do with the main proceedings.

## **Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke Ellington and His Sidemen, Fifth Edition Studies in Jazz Series #54. Compiled by W.E. Timner.**

Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007. List prices: \$150 cloth, \$90 paper.

Previewed by Theodore R. Hudson

This forthcoming book holds great promise. It is a meticulous compilation of commercial, public, and private recorded music of Duke Ellington and other musicians, mainly his sidemen. Though in the denotative sense of the term it is not a discography, it can serve well as a supplement to and checkpoint for discographies as well as for itineraries in print and those continuously being updated.

Why a Fifth Edition? In his Introduction, Timner says that new material uncovered since his Fourth Edition in 1996, ongoing research, and the opportunity to add new features and to make it more "user friendly" led to this edition. This time all studios used for the band's recordings are listed, including those Duke rented for the recording of his "stock pile." Also included are unissued live recordings by amateurs, fans, et al. A new section, "On the Air" identifies performances recorded from radio and television broadcasts/telecasts. These fill some important gaps; as Timner points out, there were not many new commercial recordings from 1972 on.

"The "Chronology" section is the heart of this scholarly enterprise. It begins with a 26 July 1923 recording by Snowden's Novelty Orchestra and ends with the band's last known recorded performance, on 20 March 1974 at Northern Illinois University. Recording takes that are considered "irretrievably lost" have been deleted in this edition; titles recorded but never issued remain but are in brackets. Alternate and variously spelled titles are given in footnotes.

To answer his own question "Who is an Ellingtonian?" Timner replies, "He or she is a person who stayed with the Ellington organization for any length of time and has made a significant contribution to the style and/or general performance of the band," then proceeds to an unenviable task of refining these summary criteria. The result is Hodges, Carney, Rex, Nance, et al, of course, leaving the reader/user to wonder why someone is included or left out. In any event, Timner's entries in the "Ellingtonians" section are listed by names of nominal leaders, most Ellingtonians but some who are not but whose groups include Ellingtonians. (Continued on page 3 under Timner)

## Academy Honors Gathings

For "significant contributions to the broadcast . . . industry over the span of 50 years," Joseph "Tex" Gathings was inducted into the Gold Circle of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences at a formal ceremony in Washington, DC in November.

A friend of Ellington and Strayhorn, Gathings extolled their artistry beginning in his early years as an informed, articulate radio personality and, later, as a television producer and station manager, and still later, a university media professor.

The filmed event will be shown on television at a time to be announced.

*Ed. Grace Note: The photograph of Gathings in the program for the occasion was taken when he spoke at the "Ellington '99" International Ellington Conference sponsored by our Society.*

## Holiday Music by Ellington on CDs

Two CDs of seasonal music by Ellington should raise the spirits, the 2006 *Duke Ellington Christmas* (Laserlight) and the 1999 *Take The Holiday Train* (KRB), both still available online.

## Condolences

*We extend sincere sympathy to our member Ken Steiner on the death of his father, Dr. Bob Steiner, a described as "0a film star in the world of chemistry."*

## ASV Jazz Reissues Discontinued "Get 'em While They Last!"

by Ben Pubols

According to a recent note on the <Duke-LYM> internet discussion group, the ASV Living Era jazz reissue series has been discontinued. The British outfit producing them, Academy of Sound and Vision Ltd., has been taken over by an American company, Universal Music, which immediately shut down the ASV Living Era label. No more will be produced and once the supply currently in record stores is exhausted, that will be it.

All of the ASV reissue material is in public domain in Europe, but that obviously has not stopped the new owners of ASV from preventing future production and distribution of jazz reissues, even over there. Although there are other jazz reissue labels, this loss is particularly devastating, as ASV has produced a wide variety of material and the sound quality has generally been excellent. Worlds Records lists more than 500 ASV CDs in their catalogue. Of particular interest to Ellington enthusiasts are reissues under the names of Duke Ellington, Webster, Hodges, Stewart, and the Cotton Club, not to mention Basie, Shaw, Webb, Wilson, Teagarden and Goodman, and many other jazz luminaries.

Get 'em while they last!

## This Jazz Man by Karen Ehrhards with Illustrations by R.G. Roth

Orlando, FL: Harcourt Children's Books, 2006.

Reviewed by Geneva Hudson

Intended for 3 to 7 year olds, *The Jazz Man* is appropriate for children of other ages—and adults as well. It will appeal to the very young child who is learning to count and to the older student being introduced to jazz as a musical experience, to the various instruments, and to some of the jazz greats (one to each two-page spread: Armstrong, Bird, Diz, Pozo Gonzáles, Bojangles, Blakey, Waller, Mingus) who made it happen.

I can see many possibilities to engage children with the book. A multi-disciplinary approach could incorporate reading, listening, writing, mathematics, acting, dancing, and even playing of some instruments. It's helpful when children can interact with the materials they are learning, and *The Jazz Man* provides for such activity. As most children are familiar with the tune and rhythm of "This Old Man," the text for each jazz man can be recited/sung to this tune. Take Ellington's page; it goes: *This jazz man, he plays four / He conducts 'em through the score, / with a "One, and-a two, and-a / Give the man a hand, / This jazz man, he leads the band.*

This is a delightful book that is cleverly written and illustrated. The one thing I would like to see added is an accompanying CD of the music by these jazz men.

## Timner *(Continued from page 2)*

A helpful "Guide for Users" is in the opening pages. Finding aids, crucial to a book of this type, work well. Indices of cities and venues list the pages on which they may be found. The "Alphabetical Section" has a new name, "Index of Titles." Entries here cite recording dates. (Test yourself: Guess which title takes the most space. And you will find one-time listings, for instance, "Tapioca.") The old, somewhat awkward to use "Attendance Chart" has been replaced by an "Index of Musicians" that tells the pages on which their recording dates may be found, not handy if one wants to check a musician's overall tenure/s. A general index takes care of other data.

Of course, the overall worth of an undertaking such as this Fifth Edition rests upon its completeness and accuracy. Given W.E. Timner's reputation, as we said at the beginning, this book holds great promise. Ellington scholars are a tireless lot who, over time, will often turn to it.

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

### Esther Williams and Davey Yarborough

The liner notes for their most recent release, *In the Spirit* (IST0001), by the husband-wife team of vocalist Esther and instrumentalist Davey describe the CD as "born of our spiritual foundation and a fruit of our love and journey together." The Yarboroughs are both well known in the world of jazz, but as Davey has said in another context, "Jazz is very spiritual." Among supporting artists in this collection of religious music are Jeff Majors, harp; Gary Vincent and e'Marcus Harper, vocals; and for an arrangement of "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross," Bernice Reagon Johnson.

### The Rev. Mark Harvey

Mark Harvey celebrated Duke's birthday in April with a major concert at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His Aardvark Jazz Orchestra performed Ellington film music as well as improvisations with contemporary film maker Kate Matson's short animated features. The Puppetoon *Perfume Suite*, starring Duke at the piano, was screened as well.

More recently, Mark lectured on Ellington's career in conjunction with an Aardvark concert titled "Ellington Extensions" at Cape Elizabeth High School, near Portland, Maine.

This December marks the band's 35th Annual Christmas Concert and the release of its ninth CD, *No Walls/ A Christmas Concert*. For more details, visit [www.aardvarkjazz.com](http://www.aardvarkjazz.com).

### Harvey Cohen and Ken Steiner

Among those slated to make presentations at Ellington 2008 are Ken Steiner, who will make the trip from Seattle, and Harvey Cohen, who is currently residing in London. There likely will be others about whom we have not yet heard.

*"75 Years On - The Duke in London"*

### The Twentieth

## Duke Ellington International Conference London, England - 22-26 May 2008

For Details and Updates:

*Postal Mail:*

Ellington 2008, 38 Thurlstone Avenue,  
London N12 OLP, United Kingdom

*Web Site:*

[www.Ellington2008.org](http://www.Ellington2008.org)

*E-Mail:*

[contact@Ellington2008.org](mailto:contact@Ellington2008.org)

## "Anything Goes" Theme Well Explored at Our October Meeting

by Peter MacHare, substituting for Secretary Gina Rollins

"Anything Goes" was the theme of our November program. Our members responded with a variety of music. Elinor Eugene kicked things off by going back to the source, Louis Armstrong. She played two selections from the albums that Armstrong and Ellington recorded together, "The Beautiful American" and "Azalea."

John Anderson got the crowd rocking with selections from the album by Johnny Hodges and Wild Bill Davis. John Gray slowed it down with the Divine Sarah Vaughan singing "Sophisticated Ladies." Peter MacHare featured two selections from the album that Rashaan Roland Kirk and Al Hibbler recorded in 1972, "A Meeting of the Times" (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). Peter also played Hibbler's hit version of "Unchained Melody."

Patricia Willard gave us an insiders glimpse of Frank Sinatra at work in the recording studio, recording several takes of "Moonlight in Vermont" and an incomplete "Lush Life."

Ted Hudson was unable to attend the proceedings because he was off at an award banquet honoring Joseph "Tex" Gathings (way to go, Tex!). But Ted still sent us an interesting trilogy, "Harlem Air Shaft" by Rex Stewart and Stuff Smith, "September Rain" by Lorraine Feather, and a magnificent "The Shepherd by Barrie Lee Hall, Jr.

## Have You Taken Care of Your Dues for 2008? — and Beyond?

Keep in mind that memberships are for the calendar year.

*Mail your check payable to*

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at  
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*Our dues remain a bargain:*

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