

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

Update on Ellington '08 Speakers and Music Groups

More persons and music aggregations have been confirmed for Ellington 2008, the 20th of these international conferences, this one to take place in London on 22-26 May.

Authorities Steven Lasker, Bill Saxonis, and Andrew Homzy, host of Duke-LYM, are among presenters added, according to an internet posting by event sponsors. A newcomer to the conferences, John F. Morton, a guest at our Society's recent holiday party and the author of the forthcoming book *Backstory in Blue: Ellington at Newport '56*, will be a speaker. According to the posting, there are more to come and "slots are certainly filling up well."

Previously we reported that two of our members will present: Harvey Cohen on "Duke Ellington in His Own Words" and Ken Steiner on "Wild Throng Dances Madly—The Washingtonians 1923-27."

Ellington bassist John Lamb and trombonists Art Baron and Buster Cooper will be on hand for both "conversation and performance." Among well-regarded British groups (with "Ellington alumni sitting-in along the way") are the 16-piece Echoes of Ellington band, the Alan Barnes and David Newton reeds and piano duo, and the Guildhall Jazz Band.

Sponsors note that at this stage of implementation of Ellington 2008, more registrations are welcome. To encourage advance commitments the so-called "Standard Registration" will be kept open for a while, and "the final price increase will be kept in reserve for the moment."

Places for Details about Program, Venues, Lodging, Participants, Registration Include:

Web Site: www.ellington2008.org

E-mail: contact@ellington2008.org

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

March Meeting: Come and Hear More of a Very, Very Good Thing

Our next meeting will be the second of a two-session program by our distinguished collector Theodore A. Shell that focuses on Paul ("Mex") Gonsalves outside the Ellington orchestra.

The first session featured Paul in a surprising variety of little-heard small groups. Think of musicians such as pianist Sir John Thompson, drummer Oliver Jackson, and Count Basie (on organ!).

The upcoming March program, as Marion Shell states, "will include more of the same, music not heard, music played by groups other than the Ellington band, and music on labels not reissued on CDs and therefore out of print." [See "February Meeting Notes" on page 4.]

Come out and enjoy some choice ear candy. Bring a friend. It all takes place at **8:00 pm** on **Saturday, March 1** at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC**. Our meetings are free and open to the public.

A Message about Lloyd and Norma Oldham

An e-mail by a person who identifies herself as the daughter of Lloyd and a niece of Norma Oldham states that both are alive and well and living in upstate New York. Her dad, she writes "is still performing, exciting audiences with his dynamic baritone."

Lloyd recorded with the Ellington orchestra in December 1951, while Norma was with Duke during June and July 1951. We hope to get more current information about these short-time vocalists with the band.

Three Souvenirs from Paul: *Smoke, Sketch & Song*

by Angela and Mac Grimmer

The time, a cool, rainy night in January, 1973. The place: a small, narrow bar named Churchill's on the upper east side. We can't remember why we came to New York for the weekend, but we know why the weekend became memorable for us: we met Paul Gonsalves.

We had gone there to hear Brooks Kerr, pianist, Ellington specialist and one of Duke's alter egos in his later years. Brooks had just arrived and the trio included Paul Quinichette (the vice-president) on tenor and Sam Woodyard on drums. (Sam was by then out of the band, but would soon reunite briefly with Duke on conga drums!) They were just setting up in the front window—that was the only place even a trio would fit in Churchill's—when Paul came in, walked up to the bar beside us, and looked around. We both had the same thought, where was the band and how can Paul be wandering around New York by himself? Angela immediately said, "We know who you are. Why aren't you out playing with the band?" Paul put his finger to his lips and said, "Shhh! Duke's in the hospital. Nobody's supposed to know. Don't tell anyone!" We promised we wouldn't. (We found out later that Duke was indeed in the hospital, in Los Angeles, for a virus infection and general fatigue.)

Paul reached in his pocket, pulled out a cigar, gave it to me, and started a conversation with Angela. I moved closer to the trio, which by now had begun playing. They found a table, where they sat and talked as Paul produced another souvenir of the evening, a sketch of Angela on the back of a menu, which we still treasure. He then borrowed the tenor from the other Paul, Quinichette, stood at the end of the bar—there was no room on the bandstand—and serenaded Angela in his unique ballad style with "Gone With the Wind." Even the conversations at the bar stopped as everyone turned to listen to Paul's tender, languorous glide through the melody.

A few minutes later Teddy Wilson came in, looked around, said a few hellos, and turned to leave. Brooks tried gesturing him over to the piano bench, but Teddy smiled, waved, and was gone. Soon, Paul, too, was gone, out the door and off to the next stop on his evening tour.



Courtesy of Angela Grimmer

In our May 1977 issue, we published the above account of an unexpected meeting of Paul Gonsalves by Angela and Mac Grimmer with a happy result, a sketch of Angela. Apropos of Ted Shell's programs in February and March, on which the focus is on Gonsalves, we reprint the original account here, with the Grimmers' kind permission..

Coleman Reed Tuckson, D.D.S., Long-Time Ellington Aficionado

We extend heartfelt sympathy to Evelyn B. Tuckson, his wife of 58 years, and their two sons, Drs. Reed V. and Wayne B. Tuckson, and the extended family on the occasion of Coleman Reed Tuckson's death on 24 January.

Dr. Tuckson, who established the Department of Radiology at the School of Dentistry at Howard University where as a specialist in oral surgery he taught for many years, was a member of our Society. In recent years health issues compromised his attending our meetings regularly.

The obituary for his memorial service noted, "When not at sports venues, he could be found wherever the music was happening." He was an accomplished, albeit amateur, drummer, his first idol being Sonny Greer. Later he added Buddy Rich and others. He was an engaging imitator of Lionel Hampton. A sports photographer, he earned an award from the White House Press Photographers Association and membership in the National Press Club.

Coleman Reed Tuckson lived his commendable, full life with unassuming yet infectious verve. He will be missed by many. Those who knew him foremost as friend will be thankful for that blessing.

Rising/Risen New Star on the Horizon

Adrian Cho, a Canadian composer, bassist, and band leader, has been critically described as "one of [Ottawa's] most adventurous musical renaissance men." Our member Lois Moody, herself a resident of Ottawa, writes to us, "Despite being rather recently formed, [his] Impressions in Jazz orchestra is making a strong mark on our community . . ."

During the December holiday season, his orchestra presented *The Canuckracker*, a Cho creation involving story, music, dance, and computer animation. Ms. Moody reports that "It was a standing-room-only show for the most innovative *Nutcracker* I've ever seen The music, of course, owed its heart to Tchaikovsky and the Ellington-Strayhorn team, but for relevant background, when some of the excellent dancers took the stage, Adrian Cho turned to some other themes from the Ellington library. It all flowed together beautifully, just as if the Duke and Billy's version of the suite had always been this way."

Last summer (see our October issue) the 50th anniversary of *Such Sweet Thunder*, originally composed for the Stratford Festival in Ontario, was performed in its entirety in Ottawa by Cho and his Impressions in Jazz Orchestra.

Let's hope that Adrian Cho's art will soon become available as recorded music and/or video.

Ed. Note: For more about Adrian Cho, see CODA, January-February 2008.

Good News about Legendary Howard and Apollo Theaters

The San Francisco *Chronicle* reported that New York's Apollo will hold a fund-raiser to finance the restoration and expansion of the historic Harlem building. It is said that about 30 million dollars have been spent on the seats and marquee. Now construction of a larger lobby, a grand stairway, and other projects are in the works, with completion anticipated in 2010.

When plans were finalized for construction of new headquarters for Radio One, a block away from Washington's Howard Theater, talk resumed for the restoration of it. Redevelopment in the neighborhood by Radio One and other enterprises, it is believed, will spur the contribution of funds for projects such as the Howard.

The Howard opened in 1910, became a venue for musicals, concerts, stock company productions, community events, variety shows, and the like. During the Great Depression, it closed in 1929, but re-opened in 1931 with native son [Guess Who] as the featured attraction. Then in the 1970s after several attempts to remain viable it closed again.

An organization known as the Howard Theatre Restoration, Inc. announces on its e-mail site (info@howardtheatre.org) that the Howard Theatre Development Project is coming in the summer of 2010. For more information, including pictures, go to ellisdevelopmentgroup.com/howardTheater.html.

Closing of Popular Book Store Chain Surprises

(What Will Happen with Brian Gilmore's Book?)

Without warning, Karibu, one of the largest black-owned book store chains and the largest one in the mid-Atlantic region, announced its closing by mid-February, leaving loyal readers wondering what to do next. Media reports state that internal management disagreements contributed to the closing.

Important to our readers, Karibu is the publisher of our member Brian Gilmore's *jungle nights and soda fountain rags*. While Duke has been the subject of other poetry, this is the only book of poetry that we have ever heard of whose entire contents are about him, his music, and his musicians. It has remained available since its first publication, but Karibu's web site indicates that it is not currently available there.

Fortunately for a situation like this, Brian, not Karibu, owns the copyright. We have talked with him; he is hopeful that a resolution will be effected that will resurrect the chain in some manner.

An earlier book by Brian was published by Third World Press: *elvis presley is alive and well and living in harlem*.

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

Elinor Eugene

Elinor Eugene underwent hip surgery recently, stayed at a rehabilitation center for a short time, and is continuing her therapy at home. We wish her a speedy and complete recovery.

Jack Towers

On a fine Sunday in January, Jack and Rhoda Towers warmly welcomed to their Maryland home Swedish guests Johannes Landgren and Gören Wallén, who were traveling in the States. Gören got to have a photo of him actually holding original acetates of Jack's famous recording of the Ellington band at Fargo, and Johannes recorded a brief, impromptu interview during which Jack recounted the famous event. All told, for them just being in the presence of such an icon as Jack was a never-to-be-forgotten delight.

Gören was a founder and the first president of the Duke Ellington Society of Sweden. Johannes is a music professor and an organist whose recording of Ellington music is available on CD.

They were accompanied to the Towers' home by our members Patricia Willard and Ted Hudson.

Davey Yarborough

Davey Yarborough will put aside his instruments to deliver a pre-concert lecture for the Monterey Jazz Festival 50th Anniversary Tour to take place in February at the Music Center at Strathmore in North Bethesda, Maryland. Advertised performers will both include younger and established artists, for instance, Terrence Blanchard, James Moody, Benny Green, Derrick Hodge, and Kendrick Scott.

Art Luby

At our February meeting we learned that some years ago one of our newer members, Art Luby, published an account of an interview he had with a sister of Paul Gonsalves. Hopefully we can hear/read more about this interesting conversation.

Itinerary Item: Duke Performs in 1922 "Greatest Ball of the Age"

Our member Don Rouse has given us a photocopy of a late 1921 Washington *Tribune* article/ad about the "greatest ball of the age" to be staged in Washington, DC on 25 November at Washington's Convention Hall. A list of "Washington musical satellites . . . slated to shine" includes Doc Perry, Louis Brown, Elmer Snowden, Pekin Theater Orchestra, Bill Branson's Arcade Band, and J.P. Johnson "playing for Q.R.S. piano rolls." Dancing would take place from 9 to 5am [that's no typo]. while "Edgar Martin's Joyland Girls will appear at twelve o'clock sharp."

Would we ever like to see a review or follow-up news account of this event!

February Meeting Notes

Reported by Marion Shell

The February presentation by Ted Shell was enthusiastically received by our members. Unfortunately, attendance was relatively low, and those not there missed rousing performances by Paul Gonsalves and his fellow musicians—Harry Carney, Cat Anderson, Sonny Stitt, et al.

As last month's article in *Ellingtonia* states, much of the presentation was from albums not issued in the US and also not reissued on CDs. By the way, if you were not there you missed Paul's playing the guitar.

The last piece offered was incomplete: "Star Dust" featuring Paul on tenor and Sonny Stitt on tenor and also sax, reminiscent of the old Coleman Hawkins rendition of the same. Ted teased us by short-cutting the playing of it, stating that it would be the first piece played on next month's program.

The March program will include more of the same—music not heard, music played by groups other than the Ellington band, and music on labels not reissued on CDs, and therefore out of print. Hear the likes of Cat Anderson, Earl "Fatha" Hines on piano, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Ray Nance on vocals and violin.

We hope to see more of you at the March meeting to hear the second part of Ted's presentation. Come, relax, enjoy and bring a friend.

We are grateful to Marion Shell for graciously stepping in for our regular meeting reporter, who was not feeling well on that evening and could not get to the meeting.

To Join or To Renew Membership

Mail your check payable to

**The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003.**

Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5;

First-time-ever member, just \$20.

Keep in mind that memberships are for the calendar year.

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