

Ellingtonia

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Substance, Entertainment, Camaraderie at Ellington 2008

The day sessions were informative and evocative; and the evening and banquet concerts were—well, those English bands are so good they are scary. And the renewing of friendships from previous conferences and the making of new ones were integral to the overall happy tone of this event.

In other words, Antony Pepper and his associates staged a memorable 20th International Duke Ellington Conference in London, 22-26 May 2008. For this, we congratulate and thank them.

Members of our Society were there from far and wide: Janna Steed (Iowa), Sjeff Hoefsmit (Belgium), Harvey Cohen (England), Ben and Lillian Pubols (Oregon), and Alan and Ferna Schneidmill and Ted and Geneva Hudson (Maryland).

A reception at the headquarters hotel opened the conference on Thursday evening. Presentations on the next day at Mary Ward House included the keynote address, "Ellington Tours the UK: 1933, 1948 & 1958" by Michael Pointon; "Wild Throng Dances Madly in Cellar Club: The Washingtonians 1923-'27" by Steven Lasker representing Ken Steiner, who regrettably could not be there but sent a recorded message; "Reminiscing in Conversation," a panel of Ellington alumni John Lamb, Buster Cooper, and Art Baron moderated by Brian Priestley; and "Duke Ellington in His Own Words" by Harvey Cohen. Evening entertainment featured solo pianist John Law and the Michael Garrick Orchestra.

The program on the next day included Bjarne Busk on "European Interpretations of Ellington 1925-1939"; "The University of Duke Ellington" by Duke-LYM host Andrew Homzy; Peter Caswell leading a panel reminiscing about Duke's 1958 UK tour; Arne Neegaard and "The Far East Suite and Tour: Far from Duke's Fairytale Version"; and Steven Lasker (Continued on page 2 under "Conference")

October Program: Member's Choice: "If You Like Duke Ellington, You'll Like . . ."

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Note New Starting Time

Our first program of the 2008/2009 season will be a member's choice. Bring two recordings: one by Ellington, one by someone else, and tell us about your selections. If you bring several pairs of recordings, we will get to them as time permits. Almost all of our members expressed a desire to start our meetings earlier, so, as an experiment, we are starting at 7 pm.

Our program will be on **Saturday, 4 October at 7 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.**

Good News and Hopeful News About Those Commemorative Designs

In our last issue, we noted that a new US Postal stamp will feature Duke and that a design bearing his image is a finalist for a new twenty-five cent coin that represents Washington, DC.

The 42-cent stamp, part of a Black Cinema commemorative set, was released on 16 July. Its design has the *Black and Tan* movie motif. Others in this series are *The Sport of the Gods*, based on a Paul Laurence Dunbar fiction, *Princess Tam Tam* headlined by Josephine Baker, *Caldonia* with Louis Jordan, and *Hallelujah* starring Nina Mae McKinney.

In June, Washington mayor Adrian Fenty announced that a poll of over 6,000 residents indicated that Ellington is favored over Frederick Douglass and Benjamin Banneker for the new quarter's design. Earlier, a citizens advisory committee had chosen the Banneker design.

The final decision is up to Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr. An e-mail has been circulating urging interested persons to write to Mr. Paulson in support of the Duke Ellington design.

Ellington 2008 — “75 Years On: The Duke in London”

We invited our members in attendance for their personal impressions, reactions, and accounts of Ellington 2008. We thank the following persons for their contributions.

Harvey Cohen (United Kingdom)

There were many highlights from the London conference, but the one that comes to mind first is Andrew Homzy's presentation on "The University of Duke Ellington." Not only was he masterful at pinpointing the continuing musical traditions within the trumpet section of the Ellington orchestra through the decades, but the well-chosen excerpts of tracks he picked to illustrate his points provided a quick and multi-sided reminder of why we love Ellington's (and Strayhorn's) music so much, and why people follow his output for decades of their lives without coming close to becoming tired of it. I'm always hungry for more, personally. Also, it was particularly nice to see the DC DES contingent, whom I have not seen since moving here to "the Big Smoke" [London] a couple of years back.

Sjef Hoefsmit (Belgium)

To describe the London Conference in one word, none is better suited than the one Duke used in one of his poems: TOGETHERNESS.

Ben Pubols (Oregon)

I had a ball at Ellington '08. Antony Pepper and his colleagues are to be congratulated on their efforts in producing a near-perfect conference. It was especially nice having three remaining Ellingtonians—bassist John Lamb and trombonists Buster Cooper and Art Baron—both speaking during the day and performing in the evening. Kudos to our own Society members Harvey Cohen and Ted Hudson on their presentations, especially Ted who stepped in at the last minute to present John Fass Morton's reflections on Newport '56. And of course everybody's favorite, Sjef Hoefsmit, was there diligently recording all of the daytime presentations. It was good seeing him again.

Other highlights for me included the two presentations by the ever-amazing and knowledgeable Steven Lasker, the first subbing for Ken Steiner on his publication *Wild Throng Dances Madly in Cellar Club: The Washingtonians 1923-27*—a true labor of love on Ken's part—and the second on Ivie Anderson and Steven's ubiquitous newly-discovered recorded gems. I also enjoyed meeting Norway's frequent and informed contributor to Duke-LYM, Arne Neegaard.

The evenings were also exciting, including the night I played hookie and went with Lillian to the Old Vic to see Shaw's *Pygmalion* (I don't tell anyone which night that was). Among the orchestras performing for us, I especially appreciated Michael Kilpatrick's group, Harmony in Harlem, disciplined but swinging, with several good soloists and a cool canary. But the real evening winner for me was at the banquet: the rug-cutting of Ellington '97 co-organizer Roger Boyes and his partner in orange, Siobhan Bryar. A good time was had by all.

Conference

(Continued from page 1)

revealing fresh research on Ivie Anderson and newly discovered Ellington recordings. Evening entertainment was furnished by Harmony in Harlem, a big band from Cambridge led by Michael Kilpatrick.

Presentations on the last of the day sessions were "The Popular Side of Duke Ellington" by Frank Griffith; "The Inspiration of Place (or Not)" by Brian Priestley; "Ellington's Sophisticated Folk Music" by Bill Saxonis; Ted Hudson substituting for author John Fass Morton re his just-released book *Backstory in Blue: Ellington at Newport '56*; and Ian Wellens on "14 Into Eight Does Go," an introduction to an evening concert. At a sumptuous banquet that night, Ellingtonia, an octet led by Wellens performed, followed by Vodeodo Orchestra led by David Jones.

On Monday there was day-long music by four groups: Brian Priestley and a sextet that showcased Ellington alumni Baron, Cooper and Lamb; the Harlem Jazz Orchestra, a big band from Birmingham led by Paul Munnery; a six-piece band led from the piano by Val Wiseman; and the Guildhall Jazz Band, "arguably the best student band in Britain." That evening's performances began with Alan Barnes and David Newton. The festivities were climaxed by Pete Long's Echoes of Ellington orchestra reprising Newport '56 with *Festival Suite* and "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue."

We can hardly wait until 2010, for Lawrence (Larry) Mirando is planning to host the next conference then in Brooklyn, USA!

Ellington Orchestra Performs for AKA Centennial Anniversary

by Elinor Eugene

I'm a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. which celebrated its 100th Anniversary at the Centennial Boule in Washington, DC in July. The climax of the week was a Gala Banquet. The featured musicians during and after the program were the Duke Ellington Orchestra. I don't remember the name of the orchestra leader.

The orchestra played many of Duke's classics, including "Cottontail," "Take the A-Train," "Satin Doll," "Sophisticated Lady," "It Don't Mean a Thing," "Do Nothing 'Till You Hear from Me." Needless to say, I thoroughly enjoyed the music.

I remained at the table until the orchestra finished playing even as the members of the audience were leaving the hall. The music was an outstanding and fitting contribution to our historic celebration.

Ed. Note: We were told later that the leader was Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., a true Ellington alumnus.

More on Paul Gonsalves and Cape Verdean Morna Music

by Dick Spottswood

Art Luby's recent Paul Gonsalves review reminded me of an informal home recording I heard at a DES meeting 'way back in the Omega House [our Society's former meeting place] days, of PG singing a Cape Verdean *morna* in Portuguese to his own guitar accompaniment. I thought it came from the estimable Shell archive, but Dr. Ted doesn't remember it.

According to historian Ronald Barboza, "Cape Verdeans trace their origins to the Portuguese settlers who intermingled with slaves they brought from the West African mainland." Many emigrated to 19th century New England coastal communities where, as Luby notes, including Brockton and New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Pawtucket, Rhode Island, all places where Paul lived as a youth.

I included some historic Cape Verdean tracks on a CD *Portuguese String Music* (Heritage HT 05) 20 years ago. They were made during the depression and for years were the only records documenting New England Cape Verdean music. It's out of print, but used copies are available online, as is Ron Barboza's informative self-published book *A Salute to Cape Verdeans and Their Music* (1989). Each gives a good idea of Paul's musical and cultural heritage, and I recommend Art Luby's affectionate portrait, *Paul Gonsalves Remembered*, viewable at paulgonsalves.org.

Alumni News

Clark Terry Reported Doing "Much Better"

Good news: Following hospitalization for a heart condition, Clark Terry was back home and recuperating in May. For recent postings about him, try the website clarkterry.com.

Herb Jeffries a Featured Artist at Festival

Vocalist (as well as movies singing cowboy and, yes, raconteur) Herb Jeffries was headlined with the Gerald Wilson band at the Remecula Valley International Jazz Festival in California in July. He reportedly is 94 years "vintage" (Herb's word for "old"), but we've seen a document that gives 1911 as his birth year. No matter, we wonder what this Bronze Buckaroo will be up to when he reaches maturity!

CD of Our Publications Being Readied

Peter MacHare, our estimable president, has compiled a CD of scanned publications by our Society beginning with some of the famed monthly letters by a former, long-term prexy, Terrell Allen; through communications by his successor, Ted Shell; and on to 2008 issues of *Ellingtonia* (and its untitled predecessor). This is exciting news!

Peter plans to have finished CDs available for general distribution in due time. Wearing another hat, this one as our official archivist, he thanks all who have donated documents to our archives, and he appeals to anyone who has newsletters, newspaper clippings, and other items about our Society and its members that may not have been included in the CD to get in touch with him at peter@depanorama.net.

We Sadly Report

Our member William Joseph Saunders passed away on 18 August in Washington, DC. Joe, as he was familiarly called, was a very highly regarded educator and later the administrator of a professional association. Contributions may be made in his memory to the Berean Baptist Church Expansion Fund, 924 Madison, St, NW, Washington, DC 20022 or to a charity of one's choice.

Rocky White, the regular drummer in the last orchestra led by Duke himself, died in Houston, Texas in early June. He had joined right out of Texas Southern University, well known for its jazz program. After Duke's death, he played with the Ellington band led by Mercer Ellington and then several ones led by successive leaders, including Barrie Lee Hall, Jr., his close friend from college days who also played with Duke's last band.

We extend to the loved ones of Rocky and of Joe our sincere condolences.

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

Davey Yarborough

We quote from *Rhythms*, Spring 2008: "Davey Yarborough has won a Lowell Mason Fellowship . . . awarded to individuals who have furthered MENC: The National Association for Music Education's mission of ensuring accessibility to music education for all."

Jerry Valburn

Jerry Valburn has produced Volume 13 of the DETS series of *Treasury Shows* recordings. Released by Storyville, it was available in time to debut at Ellington 2008.

Mark Harvey

The Rev. Mark Harvey writes, "Should you happen to be in the Boston area in late September, we'd love to have you join us for our Aardvark Jazz Orchestra season opener . . ." This 36th season event will be on 30 September at the Regattabar. For more about this band, go to www.aardvarkjazz.com.

Scott Schwartz and Anthony Brown

Along with the release of a CD entitled *Ten*, Anthony Brown's Asian American Jazz Orchestra will celebrate its tenth anniversary with a performance at Yoshio's San Francisco in September.

Scott Schwartz, who heads the Sousa Archives and Center at the University of Indiana at Champaign, reports that they will be bringing Anthony Brown and orchestra to the campus in November for the institution's American Music Month celebration.

Sjef Hoefsmit and Ted Hudson

We stand to be corrected, but we know of no one who has attended all of the 20 international Ellington conferences. However, while there was no official survey at Ellington 2008, it is believed that Sjef Hoefsmit and Ted Hudson, each of whom have missed only one, had attended more of the conferences than any other registrants there.

Quotation of the Month

A recent Johns Hopkins [University] study showed that when jazz musicians improvise, their brains turn off areas linked to self-censoring and inhibition and turn on those that let self-expression flow.

Although lots of studies have focused on what happens to people's brains when they're listening to music, few have looked at brain activity while people are spontaneously composing it.

— from *Johns Hopkins Health*, Summer 2008

Duke, Ella, and Joan Miró — Imagine, All Three!

Reported by Peter MacHare

At our June meeting, Peter MacHare presented the newly released DVD *Duke Ellington at the Côte d'Azur with Ellington Fitzgerald and Joan Miró* recorded in late July 1966 in Juan-les-Pins, France. We saw the first disc of this two-DVD set at our May meeting. The DVD features a stunning array of live Ellington performing such numbers as "The Opener," "Such Sweet Thunder," "The Shepherd," the adventurous and sublime "La Plus Belle Africaine," Terrell Allen's favorite "Satin Doll," and Ella singing the stunning "Something to Live For" and others. Peter couldn't resist closing out the show with Ella singing "Cotton Tail" in a scat duet with Paul Gonsalves from the 8-CD set released on Verve some years back of the same concerts that are on the DVD.

Conference Web Shop Opens

Proceeds from its recently opened Web Shop will go to the Ellington 2008, which experienced a deficit. In addition to main items *My Unforgettable Jazz Friends* book by Claire Gordon and the previously unreleased double CD of Duke in London in 1958, other items available are conference souvenir t-shirts, pens, and extra copies of the official program.

For more information and payment options, go online to <http://www.ellington2008.org#shop>.

To Join or To Renew Membership

Mail your check payable to
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA.

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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