

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

Dedication in Action: Putting Students First!

We reprint the following excerpt from a letter to us from the Ellington Fund at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts:

We began three weeks into the 2009-10 school year with a mandate to curb our budget by \$118,000. Even before this mandate, we budgeted down to the bare minimum while maintaining the integrity of our dual arts and academic curriculum. Effectively, our staff went on furlough to save other colleagues from losing positions, a magnanimous and gracious act of solidarity.

[Ed. Note: The Ellington Fund “provides academic and artistic opportunities for Ellington’s students through direct financial support to the school and programming that otherwise would not be possible.”]

A Swinging Nutcracker

As in previous years, we have enjoyed a holiday season of performances of the *Nutcracker*—Tchaikovsky’s, Ellington and Strayhorn’s, and variations. One with a modern twist was by students by Virginia’s West Potomac High School, West Potomac Academy, and Alexandria Community Dance group performing hip-hop and tap dance as well as gymnastics in black hooded sweatshirts and high-top shoes in place of ballet shoes. And, of course, on the dance program was “Sugar Plum Fairy,” or as Duke put it, “Sugar Rum Cherry.”

Sjef Hoefsmit Writes . . .

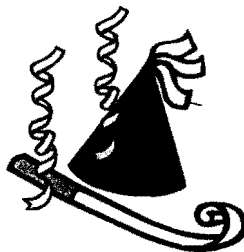
DEMS Bulletin 08/3 is online. Go to www.depanorama.net/dems and you will find it.

I wish you very, very happy holidays. If you have some time left after reading the Bulletin, you should go to www.laurentmignard.com and select “voir les vidéos du concert.” It’s amazing.

Happy New Year!

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Our annual New Year’s party will be on **Saturday, 2 January 2010** at 7 pm in our usual meeting room at **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.**



The Society will provide liquid refreshments, ice, plates, and cups. We ask our members to bring a pot-luck dish for the

table. If you forget a dish, please come anyway. Members may bring guests.

Ellington — Composer’s Role Model

The following passage is from an interview of John Adams by Vivian Perlis, as quoted in Composers’ Voices from Ives to Ellington: An Oral History of American Music (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005).

The composer as misunderstood, ignored, unappreciated, alienated, I find an absolutely pathological model. I decided early on in my life that a composer like Duke Ellington was a far more important model to me. Ellington particularly influenced me because he was a person who wrote for his audience. He wanted to be popular. He wanted to write hits. He worked constantly. He was like Bach. There was just this endless flow. He never stopped. He was married to his work and married to the players in his band. He created one of the great bodies of art in this century.

Attention

We have discovered that some mail addressed to our Duke Ellington Society at Post Office Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003 has been returned to the senders bearing an “Attempted - Not Known / Unable to Forward” notice.

Be assured that this problem is being looked into. In the meantime, if this has happened to mail sent by you, or if you want to get in touch with us for any other reason, please contact us by e-mail at spmachare@yahoo.com.

Two for Your Listening Pleasure, Reviewed by Theodore (Ted) Hudson:

Duke Ellington, *Retrospection: The Piano Sessions*. Lone Hill Jazz (LHJ10369), 2009.

While it is true that Duke Ellington's instrument was his orchestra, he was a singularly adventuresome and predictably unique solo pianist. On this CD he is by himself, as it were, accompanied only by rhythm, variously drummers Dave Black, Butch Ballard, and Sam Woodyard; bassists Wendell Marshall on most tracks and Jimmy Woode; and on one track, "Montevideo," Ralph Collier on conga. They tend not to get in the way, the better not to distract the listener from "the piano player," as Duke was wont to introduce himself at times.

This collection shows him exploring various moods and technical approaches. He is all whimsy and caprice on stride-based "Dancers in Love," intermittently flirty toward the lovely melody on two tracks of "All the Things You Are," assertive and straight-ahead on "Montevideo" and "Kinda Dukish," exploratory on "Who Knows," alternatively jaunty and pensive on "Janet," rag-ish on "Improvisation No. 4" while each of the other three is improvisatory in its own Dukish way.

The only extended composition is "New World A-comin'," based on Roi Ottley's 1934 book *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America*. Although the composition hardly parallels the thematic and emotional contours of Ottley's tome, it has been widely approved as a concerto written by Ellington expressly for Ellington.

Ellington seems most emotive when he is introspectively, reflective and uses notes sparingly, unhurriedly, with a minimum of ornamentation and elaboration. Listen to "Retrospection," "Passion Flower," parts of "All the Things You Are," and in our opinion the most illustrative, a superb "Reflections in D."

Others on this CD, all ear-candy as well, are "Retrospection," "B Sharp Boston," "Passion Flower," "Melancholia," "Prelude to a Kiss," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "All Too Soon," "Mood Indigo," and "December Blue."

Liner notes are by Arthur Morton. No source credits are given for accompanying photographs, including a group photo that bears a misleading caption. (The same photo appeared in the January 2006 issue of our *Ellingtonia*.) As to the sources of the music, Sjef Hoefsmit points out in *DEMS Bulletin* (09/2 August-November 2009) that the first fifteen numbers on this CD had been directly dubbed from Capital's *Piano Reflections*, the next six directly dubbed from Columbia's *Piano in the Foreground*, and that the last two have been previously released elsewhere. Collectors who already have these may want the convenience of having all the tunes on a single CD. Enthusiasts who don't may want *Retrospection: The Piano Sessions* mainly because it's such good music, but also because single releases of Ellington's solo piano recordings have been rare over the years.

Duke Ellington, *Live in Warsaw 1971*. Gambit Records (69323), 2009.

Practically all the selections on this CD are fairly well to well known. No matter, this Warsaw performance has never been commercially released before, and a number of the soloists are relatively new to the numbers on which they are spotlighted. As a sort of bonus the CD includes some music familiar to collector aficionados, the *Dance Date Air Force* by Jazz Connoisseur back in the 70s. Even so, with the exception of "Caravan" and "Blues in Orbit," none from this Air Force gig has been previously available on CD.

At the Warsaw concert, then relatively new tunes such as "Addi" and "Goof" showcase then relatively new artists, in this instance altoist Harold "Geezil" Minerve and trumpeter/flugelhornist Johnny Coles. On the former Minerve is strong-voiced, articulate, direct, and given to soaring at times—indeed a new music personality. Coles, on the other hand is nuanced, a bit intricate, obviously grounded in bop idioms, and a tad tentative in execution and maybe indecisive in dealing with a composition Duke reportedly had written for him. Harold "Money" Johnson contributes what probably was a crowd pleasing "Hello Dolly" a la vocalist Louis Armstrong. For this writer one of the best fun things on the entire CD is a rousing "Everybody Wants to Know" by vocalist Nell Brookshire! Happily, of this Warsaw concert there is even more to be listened to with fresh ears: "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," "La Plus Belle Africaine," a "Sophisticated Lady"/"Caravan" medley, "Lotus Blossom," and obligatory "Satin Doll."

The seasoned veterans are at the fore at the Air Force date. "Vivi" is a sweetly lyrical tune played by too rarely heard John Sanders on slide—and here as heir to Juan Tizol's role—on piston trombone. He is followed by Rick Henderson's "Frisolous Banta," likely by short-term altoist Bill Graham, given that composer Rick Henderson was not present. Clark Terry takes care of new tune "Juniflip" in characteristically fine fashion. Of course Carney, Baker, Nance, *et al* do their thing on various tunes. And there's a not-to-be-missed extended version of "Caravan" that Duke introduces as "real, genuine, authentic Latin music . . . a genuine, original, synthetic hybrid." In the course of the evening, Duke apparently straight-facedly and in good humor announces that "a very pretty lady" has requested a polka and the band lights into "Beer Barrel Polka" as if it were a regular in the book. Other selections are "Smada," "Just Scratchin' the Surface," "Blues in Orbit," and "Bassment." It must have been a fun night for audience/dancers and the band.

All in all, *Live in Warsaw 1971* has a certain freshness and an overall satisfying quality. Get it and listen anew.

Short Sheets . . .

♪ Village Gate Owner Dies ♪

Art D'Lugoff, who converted The Village Gate in New York City's Greenwich Village in 1958 to an all jazz club, died at the age of 85 in New York in November. It was a place to hear luminaries such as Coltrane, Marsalis, Monk, and of course Ellington. In 1996 he moved the venue to 52nd Street, where it was short-lived.

♪ We Recently Learned That ♪

- Music student graduates of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, DC have earned some \$2,000,000 in scholarships in the course of a few years.
- All members of the school's New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra are required to stay on the school's Honor Roll.
- For three consecutive years the orchestra has participated in the Bahamian Jazz Festival.

♪ Louis Bellson ♪

Louie Bellson is prominently featured in the just-published book *Sticks 'n' Skins: A Photography Book about the World of Drumming* (Folletts 2009).

J.P. Johnson and Ellington Recordings on Folkways CDs

Among Smithsonian's Folkways recordings still available are:

- Duke Ellington, *First Annual Tour of the Pacific Northwest, Spring 1952* [2-cassettes set or 2-CD set] (F2968)
- James P. Johnson, *Piano Solos* (F-2850); *Yamekraw* (F-2842); and *The Original James P. Johnson, 1942-1945: Piano Solos* (SF-40812)

For more information about these or for a catalog of their recordings, write to Folkways at PO Box 37012, MRC 520, CG 2001, Washington, DC 20013-7012 or go online to www.folkways.si.edu.

Duke's Favorites

In our November issue we listed, as reported in the 5 November 1952 *DownBeat*, Ellington's classic favorites.

In the same issue we read that Duke "finally broke his long-standing rule of evasion" and listed his own favorites: "Birmingham Breakdown," "Old Man Blues," "Creole Rhapsody," "Reminiscing in Tempo," "Showboat Shuffle," "Harmony in Harlem," "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart," "Something to Live For" [Hey, we thought that was Billy's composition], "Country Gal," "Flamingo," and "The Brownskin Gal."

An Ellington Itinerary Is Available Online

A *Duke Ellington Itinerary: The Ellingtonia Time Machine*, covering 1930-1950, may be downloaded at home.swipnet.se.dooji/duke.html

The producer advises that "This itinerary is a work in progress. . . . Additions & Corrections should be sent to dooji@swipnet.se "

There have been more itineraries than the first begun by Joe Igo that was carried on mainly by Art Pilkington and Gordon Ewing until their deaths. Over the years chroniclers of Ellington's recordings have contributed importantly to and have benefitted from the information in itineraries.

In this online itinerary credit is given to "Steve" [Stephen] Lasker, our member Ken Steiner, "and others" for updates.

Tune? Arranger?

April 20, 1960

Duke —

The saxophone dynamics are crucial in this piece, especially before [D]. Paul goes from a solo at [D] etc into leading the section at [D]. So he will probably have to memorize his part if he wants to stay at the mike.

The tempo is literally as fast as the band can play it — no slower than ♩ = 2.40 (four beats per second) or else it will sound like a dirge. This makes the part that goes twice as slow (at [E]) a nice groove. But never let the rhythm section fall into $\frac{3}{4}$, because the arrangement will lose its force.

This one is very difficult to play, so better rehearse slowly. It can use an hour's rehearsal, especially the sax choruses at [D].

Oh yes — something else. The tight plungers should be so tight at [D] that the brass section sounds like an echo of itself (except for the lead note which is *de*). Hope this thing works.

"Birmingham Blues" as a surrealist's nightmare, eh? There's more than one way to skin a cat.

Warm regards —
Bill

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

What is the name of this tune and who is the signatory/arranger? This is not a rhetorical question. Get out your magnifying glass if necessary and take a look. Then drop an edifying note to us at spmachare@yahoo.com.

"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term from *M/M/M*)

About Our Members

John Hornsby

A number of photographs taken by John Hornsby at the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors' convention in Minneapolis are featured in the current issue of the *IJRC Journal*. In the same issue, he contributes a short commentary in the "Discographical Forum." A resident of Toronto, Canada, John is one of the trustees of the association.

John Edwin Mason

John Edwin Mason, a history professor at the University of Virginia, will visit Cape Town during December and January to resume research on the interrelationship of contemporary politics, culture, and popular music in South Africa. He has become a member of the Pennsylvania Crooning Minstrels, a music organization there. Traditional so-called minstrel troupes, known in Afrikaans as "die Kaapse Klopse," are popular participants in Cape Town's annual Carnival. For spectacular photographs of Dr. Mason's troupe, go online and follow the "Photo Gallery: Cape Town New Year's Carnival" link at johnedwinmason.typepad.com/.

The Yarboroughs

Davey Yarborough and Esther Williams-Yarborough recently returned from a brief trip to Parma, Italy. They met with institutional and other key persons to explore and exchange ideas for cultural exchange projects that would involve conservatory, secondary school, and university students in Italy with Ellington School of the Arts, Washington Jazz Arts Institute, and other students who live in the States.

The home of Verdi, Toscanini, and others, Parma is known for its rich music ambience.

Mark Harvey

The Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, led by the Rev. Mark Harvey, is scheduled to present its 37th Annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, 20 December at Emmanuel Church in Boston.

Its first concert was 23 December 1973 at Boston's Church of the Covenant.

Mark writes, "Should you be in the Boston area, please join us for this performance. If you have friends up this way, feel free to pass along this notice. And have a cool yule!"

To Join or To Renew Membership

**Make your check payable to
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.
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.

Duke Ellington and the Great American Songbook

by Brother Juniper (filling in for Art Luby)

While Duke Ellington was primarily an instrumental music composer, he also kept a hand in that wonderful body of music called the Great American Songbook, which consists of songs from stage, screen, and Tin Pan Alley mainly from the 1920s to the 1960s. At our December meeting, John Gray and Peter MacHare explored some of his contributions to the Songbook.

Our presenters first pointed out that this area is vast. Ellington's songs have been recorded thousands of times, leaving plenty of material for future explorations of this delightful music. John Gray began with Dinah Washington singing "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart." Then, as if to say that Ellington's influence is without bounds, he continued with songs from Phyllis Hyman, Charlie Watts (of the Rolling Stones), and Etta James. John then settled down with some of the "usual suspects" such as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Tony Bennett, and Johnny Hartman—some of the most accomplished singers in our music. To vary the pace, he included Ernie Andrews, Charles Brown, and especially Arthur Prysock with that wonderful Basie band.

After intermission, Peter MacHare took over with performances by B.B. King, the Ink Spots, and Chuck Berry. Interestingly, he included a performance of "Sophisticated Lady" by Billy Eckstein recorded off the radio and introduced by radio giant Jerry "The 'Bama" Washington. He also included Nat "King" Cole, Louis Prima, and big Joe Turner before concluding with Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, and fabulous Carmen McRae singing "Satin Doll" in duet with a bass.

Peter MacHare used a short video segment to remind us that Ellington also had excellent singers in the band. We saw Ivie Anderson backed by the vocal trio of Rex Stewart, Harry Carney, and Hayes Alvis sing "I've Got to Be a Rug Cutter" from the film *Hit Parade of 1937*. Ray Nance and Taft Jordan sang "It Don't Mean a Thing" from the *RKO Jamboree No. 7* recorded in 1943. Finally we celebrated the birthday of lovely Kay Davis with her singing "On a Turquoise Cloud" from the film *Symphony in Swing* recorded in 1949.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

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