

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Founder and Editor

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

“Discover Ellington” Series To Be Presented at the Strathmore

The Music Center at Strathmore, located just north of Washington, DC at North Bethesda, MD will present several events in February celebrating Duke Ellington and his art.

The first program, on 3 February, will be a performance of Ellington standards by former artist-in-residence pianist Chris Vadala and his trio, including bassist John Previti and guitarist Rick Whitehead.

On 13 February there will be a lecture/ demonstration titled “The Duke” by our own Rusty Haddon. He will explore how blues, spirituals, work songs, ragtime, and New Orleans music were incorporated in what might be called the Ellington genre. The program will include a showing of *Symphony in Black*, a film that in a way presages some later extended works by Ellington.

Three days later pianist Robert Glasper will perform a “Mostly Ellington” program, to include some others’ compositions, including his own.

On the next evening, 17 February, students get a chance to show their talents as the Levine School of Music presents “Channeling Duke Ellington,” using scores that they transcribed themselves. That same night, Brian Stokes will sing selections from the Ellington songbook, supported by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, the whole affair augmented by tap dancers Manzari Brothers.

Two events are scheduled for 18 February: One is an afternoon panel discussion led by John Edward Hasse, including author David Schiff and another of our members, Davey Yarborough. That evening there will be “Duke Goes Latin,” a big band concert conducted by Arturo O’Farrill, joined by soloist Paquito D’Rivera.

The climax of the whole series will be on Sunday, 19 February, with a concert of Ellington’s sacred music by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, led by David Baker; the highly regarded Morgan State University Choir, directed by Eric Conway; and the Manzari Brothers. The program will not consist wholly of one of Ellington’s three sacred concerts; rather,

February Program: *Epiphany: The Ellington or Strayhorn Tune or Performance That Made Me a True Believer* by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Ellingtonians, February is your time to shine. Our program will be a member's choice. Bring the recording that made you an Ellington fan. Tell us about your first experience of loving the Duke! Members who have not yet done a full program are especially encouraged to participate. After everyone plays one recording, we'll entertain second recordings if there is time.

The date is **Saturday, 4 February at 7 pm.** The place is **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets NW, Washington, DC** Hear some great Ellington music and learn more about our members at the same time!

selections will be from these and other works that may be considered sacred.

Venues, dates and time, ticket prices (some free) vary for the series. For detailed information, go online to www.strathmore.org or call 301-581-5100.

ELLINGTON 2012

23-27 May 2012 - Woking, England

Among Those Confirmed for Presentations

Luca Bragalini: “Three Black Kings . . . in a Symphonic Celebration”

Matt Cooper: “Duke Ellington: The Pianist”

Corinne Chondee: “The Queen’s Suite”

Frank Griffitt: “The Clarinetists”

Ken Steiner: “Wild Throng Dances Madly in Cellar Club II”

For Full Conference Details Go To

www.Ellington2012.org

Other Contact Information:

Postal address: Ellington 2012, 2 Julian Close,
Woking, GU21 3HED, United Kingdom

E-mail address: E12@Ellington2012.org

Registration forms are available online at
www.ellington2012.org/E12-Oct-Reg-Form.pdf

The Harlem Renaissance Remembered:

Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and the Sound of the Harlem Renaissance

Jonathan Gross and "Mack" Jay Jordan
(Brilliance Audio CD)

Reviewed by Theodore (Ted) Hudson

This CD does not pretend to present a comprehensive, historically balanced survey of the cultural aspects of the so-called Harlem Renaissance. Rather, it "remembers" the phenomenon mainly through the works of poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen and composers Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, interspersed by monologues and running commentary. It is a tad spotty and wandering, but one gets from it a contextual, thematic exposure to or revisiting of their artistry, and it's pretty entertaining at that.

The CD begins with an introductory overview by Jonathan Gross, a literature professor and pianist. The format then changes to poetry or other spoken word over a background of music, or spoken word alone, or music alone.

Generally, the juxtapositions of word and music work. For example, Hughes' "The Weary Blues" is believably dramatized by "Mack" Jay Jordan accompanied by a background of "Solitude" by Gross on piano, followed by a vocal rendition of the song by Jordan. (Somehow, at this point the voice of Jordan sounded, at least to me, what Hughes' fictional Simple would have sounded like singing it.)

For our purposes here, let's consider the Ellington and Strayhorn music. Several selections focus on their compositions alone, with little or no introductory remarks or poetry or verbal continuity. Early on, Jordan's treatment of "Take the 'A' Train" confirms him as an authentic jazz singer. "Satin Doll" and "It Don't Mean a Thing" are other interesting offerings by Jordan and pianist Gross and a small combo.

Tunes used as background or complementary music also serve their purposes admirably. A lilting "I'm Beginning to See the Light" piano solo metaphorically supports a brief soliloquy on that era's whites' and Negroes' differing perceptions of Harlem, the former glittering (or atavistic?) night life and the latter ordinary workaday life. "Prelude to a Kiss" supports a dramatization of Cullen's "She of the Dancing Feet." For the perplexed student in

Hughes' "Theme for English B," the fitting choice is a brooding "Mood Indigo," and for Hughes' "Dream Variations" it is "In a Sentimental Mood." Finally, "I Got It Bad" is played as a single entity that strangely leads to a discourse on the theme of Ralph Ellison's (*post*-Harlem Renaissance, indeed 1953!) great novel *Invisible Man*, then closes with Louis Armstrong's "Black and Blue," so apropos of Ellison's masterpiece.

The rhythm section, occasional horn, and economic and tasteful piano contribute impressively throughout; they complement but don't get in the way. And the poetry and other spoken passages are pleasantly informative, evocative and undoubtedly to some, nostalgic.

The Harlem Renaissance Remembered assuredly will appeal to those familiar with Ellington, Strayhorn, Hughes, and Cullen, and it can be an entertaining revelation to others.



Caveats: This production has more than one format, being described in advertisements as "Audiobook, CD, Unabridged, and Audio CD," the latter the one under consideration here. Further, there exists an commercially unrelated 1972 book titled The Harlem Renaissance Remembered: Essays Edited with a Memoir by Arna Bontemps, a close personal and professional friend of Langston Hughes.



Short Sheets . . .

♪ New Mural of Duke ♪

An e-mail from Serfio G. Vivanco, who identifies himself as the owner of the building, announces that he commissioned a 30-foot mural by artist Aniekana Udofia "to complement the plaque" there at Duke's birth site.

We have not seen the mural, but there is a link to a photograph of it at <http://hit.ly/roFxJF>.

♪ How about That Middle Name ♪

We quote from the Jazz Institut's internet site, 6 December 2011: "Kevin **Ellington** Mingus [emphasis added] . . . was born three years before Mingus died, and he only realized his grandfather's importance after he had himself taken up the bass and discovered that Mingus had played the same instrument. Now the filmmaker Kevin Ellington Mingus is making an independent documentary about his own journey searching for the truth behind the legend of the grandfather he never knew." The film's title is *Mingus on Mingus*.

They Did That? Yes, They Did.

Ever seen a flash mob in action? Well, you can see one on video. Go to kyoutube.com/watch?v=eImToAYIq70 and see the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir perform one in Monaco while on tour in Europe in the summer.

An on-the-scene observer wrote, "Wo9w...such TALENTED young people. I was actually fortunate enough to witness this flash mob. It was impressive!!!" An online viewer wonders, "Flash mobs are one of the coolest things ever. I just love [them]. What is people did a flash during a battle between countries..."

We think the singing and choreography are great, befitting the school's overall excellence. As we said, check it out.

"Butch" Ballard, 1918-2011

Drummer George "Butch" Ballard, who played with the Ellington orchestra for several months in 1950 as a backup for Sonny Greer and as the regular drummer during 1953, died in early October 2011.

Reportedly, he turned down a subsequent offer by Duke because he preferred not to change his technique in order to play the newer two bass drums style that his friend Louie Bellson had introduced. (Incidentally, he was a pallbearer for Pearl Bailey, Bellson's wife.)

During his career, Ballard played with major artists, among them Louis Armstrong and Count Basie. Those who attended the May 1990 International Conference in Ottawa may remember his playing with Ellington alumni Alice Babs, Harold Ashby, Wild Bill Davis, and John Lamb as well as with Kenny Burrell and with the Andrew Homzy Jazz Orchestra.

Clark Terry: "I'm Thanking Big Prez . . ."

Trumpeter Clark Terry, recovering from the amputation of a leg, is upbeat and optimistic. His wife Gwen writes that "As he continues to improve, he's not missing a beat."

One of his favorite sayings is "Keep on keeping on," so he celebrated his 91st birthday in his hospital room with music, birthday cake, balloons, family and several friends. "I'm thanking Big Prez for letting me see another birthday and Christmas," he said.

In the last several years Terry has confronted health issues with faith and courage. Regarding his high spirits, Gwen notes that "Your prayers are miraculous! They have certainly helped Clark. Please keep them coming." Messages to him may be sent to: clarkterry.com/.

Great News

A Billy Strayhorn Centennial Committee has been established to celebrate his birthday in 2015. He would have been 100 years old on 29 November of that year.

Gregory Morris was designated by his Uncle Billy to be the executor of his estate. Currently, Alyce Claerbaut, a niece of Billy, is president of Strayhorn Songs, Inc., controller of the rights to the music.

Attention: Itinerary Researchers

Vail doesn't mention this gig in his Diary, only an Apollo engagement on 23 February and a Hodges recording session for Vocalion on 26 February.

NAVY SECOND MID-SEASON BALL SKY
SPONSORED BY THE
AXIM CLUB OF BROOKLYN
PRESENTING NONE OTHER THAN THE FAMOUS
DUKE ELLINGTON

First Appearance in Brooklyn



First Appearance in the Club World

AND HIS ORCHESTRA
To be held at the Bedford Ballroom
1153 Atlantic Avenue, Corner Bedford, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Saturday Evening, Feb. 25th, '39

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

Sjef Hoefsmit

We extend heartfelt "get well" wishes to Sjef Hoefsmit, who underwent surgery recently. The current issue of *DEMS Bulletin*, the quarterly that he publishes and edits, has been postponed due to his illness.

Patricia Braxton

It's always good to see someone's article from *Ellingtonia* referenced or reprinted in another publication. A recent example: Information about June Norton researched and reported by Patricia Braxton in our October issue is noted in an article about Norton in the current issue of *Blue Light*, the fine quarterly published by the Duke Ellington Society, United Kingdom.

As Our Hero Was Wont to Say,

Everybody Look Handsome!

The following members and friends earned Certificates of Appreciation for services to and/or contributions published in *Ellingtonia* during 2011. Those in attendance were given theirs at our annual Seasonal Party on 7 January. Those who live out of the area or in foreign countries will receive theirs in the mail. The list is:

Patricia Braxton, Elvira Dorman, Rusty Hassan, Bill Hasson, Geneva Hudson, Bro. Juniper, Art Luby, Erica MacHare, Peter MacHare, John Edwin Mason, Bill McFadden, Ed Morris, Ben Pubols, Bill Saxonis, Ken Steiner, and Patricia Willard.

We thank each and every one of you!

**Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival Theme:
"Standing Up for Real Jazz"**

The popular Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival will take place on 17-20 February at its usual venue, the Hilton Hotel in Rockville, MD.

Among established artists on the schedule are Carmen Bradford, Nicholas Payton, Terell Stafford, Roy Haynes. Young lions will be there as well.

Formats will include jam sessions, solo performances, small and large instrumental groups, drama, gospel, a Trumpet Summit, and more.

Presentations by students and other youth are a looked-forward-to, gratifying aspect of these festivals and all told this year there will be 12 performances from high school bands from North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, DC, West Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut!

To learn more about this event, here is some contact information: Internet: www.midatlanticjazzfestival.org; Phones: 301-563-9330, 1-888-909-6330; Fax: 301-563-9339; Email: inquiry@midatlanticjazzfestival.org; Festival Location: 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.

New Year's Party

by Art Luby, Secretary

The first meeting of the Society for the New Year was our annual New Year's party. It is our one meeting devoted to socializing rather than music and, as always, it was a well attended happy affair. There was more than enough good food and (non alcoholic) beverages supplied on a pot luck basis, and contributors to the monthly newsletter were rewarded with certificates of appreciation.

The meeting was also concluded in traditional fashion with the singing of "Twelve Days of Christmas" led by Geneva Hudson. The voices were occasionally off key, but unwavering, and a good time was had by all.

We Welcome Material for *Ellingtonia*

We heartily encourage members and friends to submit items for publication in our newsletter. We will be happy to receive news, commentary, opinions, humor, graphics, reviews, fiction, poetry, anecdotes, essays, and research findings.

Clinker Alert!

In our last issue, the line "First-Time-Ever Member, Just \$20" was somehow squeezed out of its space on page 4 just above the box that gives the names of our Executive Board. We shamefacedly apologize and stress that such new members are encouraged to join, so tell your friends (and frienemies, if you have any).

Attention Members

Please check your membership expiration date on the upper right of your address label. Remember, our membership is by the calendar year.

Thank you.

To Join or To Renew Membership

Send your check payable to

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA`

Our dues remain a bargain:

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

First-Time-Ever Member, Just \$20

[See "Clinker Alert!" Above.]

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

Executive Board

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