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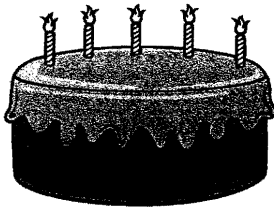
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Theodore R. Hudson, Founder and Editor

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April 29
Happy 113th
Birthday, Duke!

Ellington Birthday Celebrations

Ellington's birthday on 29 April 2012 will be observed in a variety of ways in a variety of places, for example:

A bit before the birth date, on April 21 Bill Saxonis will offer his annual birthday tribute to Duke Ellington on Bill McCann's "Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz" from 8 AM to Noon on WCDB at 90.9-FM and on the internet at: www.wcdbfm.com

This will be the 13th consecutive year that McCann and Saxonis have offered the program to a global audience. Some enthusiasts worldwide have made listening to it an annual tradition.

The program will include music, interviews, and conversation about Ellington's art, life, and times. A special feature will be excerpts from an exclusive interview with the legendary Willie Ruff, who reminisces about Ellington and other jazz legends and shares his remarkable life story from growing up poor in rural Alabama to becoming a Yale professor and world famous musician.

On his birth date, the Chamber Choir and B-3 organist Bobby Floyd will perform "The Gospel According to Duke: Ellington's Sacred Concert," an event presented by the University of Cincinnati's Conservatory of Music at the Corbett Theater on the campus.

Last but assuredly not least, on the afternoon of 29 April a birthday celebration will take place in Ellington Park in Washington, DC. The park is at the end of the block of Ward Place where Duke was born, in a triangle bordered by New Hampshire Ave., M and 22nd Sts. NW. Sponsored by West End Friends and the Advisory Neighborhood 2A Commission, the event is free.

Rex Is King!

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Art Luby will present an in-depth study of Ellington cornetist Rex Stewart (1907-1967) for our April program. He joined Ellington in 1934 and stayed for 11 years.

Rex is known for his excellence on the cornet and for his compositions, contributing "Boy Meets Horn," "Rextatious," and the incomparable "Menelik the Lion of Judah" to the Ellington legacy of recordings.

Before Ellington, he worked with people like Fletcher and Horace Henderson, Elmer Snowden, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, and Luis Russell. After Ellington, Rex had an amazingly varied career. He not only worked as musician and band leader, but worked in radio and television, as a music critic, author, and even as a farmer.

The program will be at **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Sts., NW, on Saturday, 7 April 2012 at 7 pm.** You don't wanna be square, so be there!

Long Time Member Jack Dennis Passes

John "Jack" Dennis died on Thursday, 16 February.

Ted Shell, one of our Society's founders, recalls that although Jack was not one of the originals, he was among the first ten Ellington devotees to join in the 1950s.

Affable, unassuming, and loyal, Jack was very much liked and will certainly be missed by members of our Society. For years and years he was a regular at our meetings and involved in the Society's activities. Unfortunately, health issues had compromised his attendance at our meetings in the last year.

He and founder and first president Maurice Lawrence remained close friends over the years, even after Lawrence retired to Florida.

Jack is survived by his wife Betty and four daughters—twins Jacqueline and Elizabeth, Joanne, and Laura—and other loving relatives and friends. A sister Constance predeceased him. We extend deep sympathy to his family and other loved ones.

A memorial service for him will take place in March.

Cheers for the Strathmore's "Discover Ellington" Month

"Discover Ellington" during the month of February at the Strathmore Music Center in North Bethesda, Maryland as part of its American Composers series, accomplished its title's goal, for it was highly engaging, informative, entertaining, and inspiring. Ellington, and to a lesser degree Strayhorn, were examined through discussions, demonstrations, clinics, and concerts to present him as arranger, dramatist, band leader, pianist, and a number of other things—but mainly as composer. The festival opened in early February with an "Ellington Standards" program by the Chris Vadala Trio, followed several days later by what could be called a keynote presentation, "The Duke" by Rusty Hassan. Among events to follow were a "Mostly Ellington" concert by pianist Robert Glasper; a "Discover Ellington: Panel Discussion"; and three concerts, "Big Band Ellington: Duke Goes Latin" by the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra conducted by Arturo O'Farrill and two more and a panel reported below. A closing Ellington open house on the last Saturday of the month was a wonderful day designed for children of all ages from toddlers to grandparent types, with, among other attractions, face painting, student concerts, arts and crafts, and a clinic on tap dancing. Below we offer reports on the Hassan session, panel, and two more concerts.

"The Duke"

Reported by William (Bill) McFadden

In keeping with Strathmore's emphasis on Ellington the composer, a lecture and demonstration entitled **The Duke** was presented by our Society member and Washington's pre-eminent jazz musicologist, Hugh (Rusty) Hassan.

He began by noting Duke Ellington's dislike of the term "jazz," or indeed for categories in general. For the ensuing two hours, Rusty captivated the audience with a fascinating exploration of the themes in Ellington's music—their origins and development. The composer's palette was vast, encompassing the African-American aesthetic of nearly the entire 20th Century. From these influences Ellington created tone colors of intricate melodies along with counter-intuitive orchestrations. The depth of each composition was made all the more remarkable by time restrictions imposed on the making of a record. On the other hand, early Hollywood films featuring the orchestra such as *Symphony in Black* (1934) offered Duke the freedom to extend his compositions. Using a combination of recordings, taped interviews and well-reference anecdotes, Rusty made various, carefully chosen stops along the Ellington chronology: creation of the "jungle" sound, the many "Portraits," the extended period of collaborations with Billy Strayhorn, the unique deployment of instruments, his genius for finding and retaining talent, to name several.

Rusty Hasson more than capably delivered a session great for the casual fan wanting to know more about the maestro and his music. Even nicer was the way in which certain jaded *cognoscenti* among us could be completely stimulated and refreshed.

Panel Discussion and Two of the Several Concerts

Reported by Theodore (Ted) Hudson

Discover Ellington: Panel Discussion participants were John Edward Hasse, curator of American Music at the Smithsonian Institute and author of *Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington*; Davey Yarborough, performing musician, co-founder and president and artistic director of the Washington Jazz Arts Institute, and head of the music department at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts; Deborra Richardson, head of the Archives Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History; and David Schiff, composer and author of the just released book *The Ellington Century*.

Their remarks reflected their knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Yarborough's Institute employs the mentor method in that it has those who have "gone on," whether now professionals or in a higher grade level in school or advanced enough in technique to return and mentor those coming behind them. Richardson said that there are over 10,000 collections at the Archives Center and that it took five music archivists and a number of volunteers ten years to process the Ellington Collection. Schiff noted that Ellington wrote his scores for musicians and performance, not for publication, and that for 30 years Haydn had his own orchestra to play his music, as did Duke. Hasse reported that the Ellington Collection had been sitting in a warehouse for 12 years before it was acquired by the Smithsonian. Further, in his opinion Ellington is the best all-around musician that America has produced.

The "**Brian Stokes Mitchell Sings Ellington American Songbook**" concert was a delight. Mitchell, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra (SJMO), guests vocalist Julia Nix, and masterful young tap dancers John and Leo Manzari, one still in high school and the other now a college student, and *the songs! the songs!* created the milieu of a Broadway musical or supper club.

Mitchell, remember, is not what one may call a jazz singer or a crooner. The presence of a full, 15-piece orchestra of veteran musicians of high quality allowed him the more lush background of an ensemble with varied instrumental solos and obbligatos than would a supporting trio or, say, sextet such as frequently supports such a singer outside a theater or concert hall. And with remarkable taste and restraint, Mitchell interspersed his performance with supportive patten and subtle dramatic gestures.

The SJMO's opening "Cotton Tail" showcased a primed and enthusiastic

(Continued on page 3 under Discover Ellington)

“Discover Ellington” (Continued from page 2)

ensemble. “Take the ‘A’ Train” was Mitchell’s first selection, and the chronology of the train theme continued with “Drop Me Off in Harlem,” then “Don’t Get Around Much Any More” that morphed in a “Do Nothing ‘Till You Hear From Me” that showcased a mellow plunger trombone interlude. Later he was to sing “I Didn’t Know About You,” “Perdido” “In a Mellotone,” and the one that no concert of Ellington songs should be without, “Sophisticated Lady.”

On the classic “Ko-Ko” the Manzari brothers electrified the audience with their athleticism, creative skill, and obvious fun they were having playing off one another. After an ovation, they slowed down a tad with an encore on “Satin Doll.”

Local songstress Julia Nix, sang “I Got It Bad” and caressed a “Come Sunday” that intimated that the lovely lady must have had some experience with church music. Mitchell then joined her for a duet on “I’m Just a Lucky So and So.”

After Mitchell’s closing “I’m Beginning to See the Light” it was encore time for the whole cast—the Manzari duo, Julia Nix, the SMJO, and Brian Stokes Mitchell—to say good night, far too soon for a highly appreciative audience.

The forecast of light snow on the Sunday of “**Ellington: A Sacred Concert**” apparently did not deter patrons who knew of the excellence of the Morgan State University Choir, directed by Eric Conway, or of the SJMO, or who were familiar with any of Ellington’s sacred music, for there were very few empty seats in the spacious Strathmore Concert Hall. Other performers were jazz vocalist and composer Allan Harris; Kehembe V. Eichelberger, Chair of the Music Department at Howard University who has appeared in operas as soloist and ensemble member and on radio, television, and recordings; and several soloists from the Choir, mentioned below. (When we say “soloist/s” we must keep in mind that Ellington wrote much of his sacred music for interplay of orchestra, choir, and soloist, so few solos were sung with just piano or rhythm section accompaniment.)

A spirited “The Biggest and Busiest Intersection” by the orchestra was the opener. The Choir and vocalist Allan Harris began the choral music with “Something ‘bout Believing,” a fitting tune for what was to follow—a series of selections in what could be conceived as a theologically thematic order.

Ms. Eichelberger, delivered a full-voiced “Tell Me It’s the Truth,” whereupon having heard the truth, the Choir sang “Hallelujah.” Subsequent renditions by her included “My Love,” “Is God a Three-Letter Word for God,” and “Heaven,” this latter including a beautiful alto saxophone solo that was in a way a tribute to Johnny Hodges. Harris, too, was again heard, the tunes being “Freedom,” “Ain’t Nobody Nothin’ Without God,” and “Will You Be There?”

For their contribution to the proceedings the Manzari brothers tap danced to the melody of “Come Sunday” with its tempo sped up and now titled “David Danced.” Not surprisingly, a spontaneous standing ovation ensued.

At this point three members of the Choir came forward. The first was Thomas Allen, a contra-tenor, a rarity, who sang “Heaven” that elicited hearty applause. He was followed by soprano Tylar Montgomery doing a “Almighty God Has His Angels,” including the wordless voicing. But that’s not all. Soprano Dimery Mowery sang the challenging finale “Praise God and Dance” with marvelous clarity, control of dynamics, articulate delivery, and most important, feeling.

Ellington would be happy to have heard the performers, especially the students, invest his works with such feeling, respect, and technique. Ms. Eichelberger demonstrated great tonal range and sensitivity to the music. Mr. Harris was more just competent. The Choir, exceptionally well trained and richly talented, was superb. As for the orchestra, conducted by David Baker, it was in fine form, executing tricky passages with aplomb, as if they had played this concert many times before.

“Ellington: A Sacred Concert” was an artistic and emotional triumph.

Kay Davis, 1920-2012

For the celebration of the life of Kathryn Elizabeth Wimp at the Church of St. Edmund, King and Martyr on 11 February in Chicago, the prelude was “Creole Love Call” and the postlude was “Mood Indigo.” Both were signature songs from the time when she sang as Kay Davis with the Ellington orchestra in 1944-50. The rest of the program was a funeral mass based mainly of the *Book of Common Prayer* and tradition.

Kathryn MacDonald was born in Evanston, IL in December 1920 and died in Apokpa, FL, where she currently resided, on 27 January 2012.

She joined Ellington after completing a master’s degree in voice at Northwestern University. Her funeral obituary states that one of her first experiences was when he taught her “the simple melody to ‘Creole Love

Song.” Within an hour she was on stage performing it at Carnegie Hall. She was noted for her ability to sing wordless songs such as “Transblucency” and “On a Turquoise Cloud,” an Ellington-related technique that began with Adelaide Hall. The Chicago *Sun* describes such vocals by Davis as “soaring bell-like filigrees over melodies.”

After leaving the Ellington orchestra, she married Ed Wimp, who predeceased her, and settled in Chicago.

Her survivors include a son, Edward Lawson Wimp and a grandson, Edward Wickliffe Wimp.

We extend to her relatives and other loved ones our sincere condolences.

Ed. Note: We thank Josie Childs for sending us one of the funeral programs. Though not an official member, Josie, lead producer of the 1998 International Ellington Conference in Chicago, has been a welcome supporter of our Society.



"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term in *MMMM*)**About Our Members****Hugh "Rusty" Hassan**

A bit of a reunion took place right after Rusty Hassan's keynote "The Duke" multi-media presentation during the Discover Ellington festival at the Strathmore. Present were Toby Mason, who lived in the same residence as Rusty during their Georgetown University days, and a close friend of the two from "back in the day," John Morton, author of *Backstory in Blue: Ellington at Newport '56*, then a student at nearby George Washington University.

Harvey Cohen

Mojo, the most popular music magazine in the United Kingdom (according to the latest ABC rating) and noted for its articles on music history, in the April issue awards four stars ☆☆☆☆ for Harvey Cohen's book *Duke Ellington's America*, calling it "the most thoroughly researched book on Ellington."

"Real" Jazz at Mid-Atlantic Festival

"Standing Up for Real Jazz" was the theme for the 2012 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival on 17-20 February at the Hilton Hotel in Rockville, Maryland, and by all accounts the standard was adhered to by the performers, tune selections, and audiences, who stood up and applauded happily as they heard the "real" thing.

Among the headliners, all veteran real jazz exponents, were drummer Roy Haynes, vocalist Carmen Bradford, trumpeters Nicholas Payton and Terell Stafford. And as is the custom at these annual festivals, there was plenty of music by middle through high school students, college music majors, and novice instrumentalists and vocalists, all whose performances pleased and by their expertise even surprised some spectators.

Other events included discussions, soul line dancers and open dancing, gospel music, band competitions, documentaries, a little theatre production, a midnight jam session, a Sunday morning brunch with a gospel group and a Monday brunch with a small aggregation.

A nice touch was the designating one of the performance halls as the Ronnie Wells Room in honor of the late Ms. Wells, whose annual East Coast Jazz Festival was, in a way, the precursor of the now annual Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival. Further, a scheduled program of compositions written by her performed by her widower, Ron Elliston, with Tacha Coleman Parr and Michelle Hoye, on Sunday evening was dedicated to her. Ms. Wells was also a member of our Society.

Are Your Dues Due?

Please check your membership expiration date on the upper right of your address label.

Remember, membership is by the calendar year. Thank you.

Harold "Shorty" Baker in the Spotlight
by Art Luby, Secretary

The March meeting program was a wonderful presentation by Ed Morris on the work of trumpeter Harold "Shorty" Baker, a major force in the Ellington trumpet section in the 40s and thereafter, on and off, through 1963. His playing featured a unique lyricism and a pure tone that fellow St. Louis native Clark Terry stated was his inspiration, but also never replicated by him or any other trumpeter he ever heard. This achievement was the result of devotion to the instrument so intense that Baker taught himself to blow into his trumpet without holding it while it was hung by string from the ceiling. In this way he learned to avoid jamming the instrument into his mouth and teeth and developed just the right "feel" between lip and mouthpiece.

The results displayed on recordings played at our meeting, are truly impressive. Baker delivered a powerful and romantic version of "Star Dust" that was often featured in Ellington concerts. We also heard his highly personal rendition of "Boy Meets Horn," one of the most demanding trumpet numbers ever written for a jazz orchestra, as well as the famous lilting trumpet chorus on the extended version of "Sophisticated Lady" recorded as part of *Masterpieces by Ellington*. Ed concluded with some of Baker's all too rare recordings outside the Ellington organization in small group settings, including one made with his wife, Mary Lou Williams, and another with Doc Cheatham. The latter featured "Chitlins" in which Baker's mellow trumpet is clearly the dominant voice.

Introducing a version of "Harlem Airshaft" featuring Baker's work, Duke remarked that his music was highly personal in the sense that it was written and arranged to display the unique talents of his soloists. It has been many decades since those great instrumental voices were on display, but, as Ed's presentation made clear, their memory is as important to the Ellington legacy as the written music.

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