

Ellingtonia

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Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Season's Greetings

From *The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.*



President Peter MacHare, the Officers, and Executive Board of your Society extend warmest greetings and wish you joy and good health as we begin our annual religious and cultural celebrations lasting through the new year.

We can reflect upon the last few years with comfort and joy, as our active membership continues its growth. There are new members to get to know as well as long-standing members returning for the love of Duke. May we continue in this happy direction — ever up and onward, to use Billy Strayhorn's motto.

We hope you will encourage fellow music lovers to try one of our meetings. You might consider planning a meeting program presentation; if two hours minus intermission seems daunting, then team up with a friend on an audio or video showcase of your choice.

For 2013, we look forward to kicking things off with our holiday party, followed by a calendar of lively and informative meetings made all the more special by your being there.

ONE MORE 2012 ELECTION

Or should we say, "HELP WANTED?" We are due to elect officers and board members at our December meeting. This year, we will be in the unique position of electing a President, Vice President, and Treasurer as Peter MacHare, Ted Hudson, and Frank 'Bruiser' Arnold are stepping down. Your Society urges you to please consider stepping up.

December Member's Choice:

Happy (Belated) B-day Billy Strayhorn!

By Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Billy Strayhorn's birthday (November 29) is just a few days before our December meeting. Let's celebrate with a member's choice featuring some great Strayhorn compositions. The performance can be anyone you like, in or out of the Ellington fold. We expect to have a grand time enjoying and learning about the music of Strayhorn, so you definitely want to participate in this member's choice. Bring more than one recording and we will play seconds if there is time after everyone has played one.

Let's do our usual pot luck for the meeting's sumptuous libations and victuals in keeping with the season.

The program will be on **Saturday 1 December at 7:00 pm** at our usual hangout, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW in beautiful Washington, DC.**



Annual Holiday Party and Fundraiser for Scholarships and Programs . . . In the key of Ellington!

RING DEM BELLS!

Monday, December 10, 2012 6:00-9:00 PM
Landmark on the Park—Central Park West at 76th Street
New York City

The Duke Ellington Center for the Arts will donate a portion of the proceeds to relief for those affected by Hurricane Sandy. "In the theatrical tradition we spring from, 'the show must go on.' We hope to bring notes of hope and positive energy to these stressful times." — Mercedes Ellington

For more information on this festive evening's program, and to make your tax-deductible purchase/donation, please go to:
www.thedukeellingtoncenter.org

Battle Royal—Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra vs. Michel Pastre Big Band

Columbia Europe/Sony/just une Trace LC88725 (Import)
CD Reviewed by William McFadden

“The scope of music is immense and infinite. It is the Esperanto of the world,” said Duke Ellington. We now routinely witness outstanding examples of this nearly prophetic Ducalism from western European musicians who study and perform Ellington and Strayhorn in disciplines identical to what their classical colleagues devote to Bach and Mozart. Jerry VanRooijen’s Dutch Jazz Orchestra immediately comes to mind, and lately so does the Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra from France.



On *Battle Royal*, you get twice the jazz orchestra excitement, a 2011 concert pairing Mignard’s organization with the Michel Pastre Big Band. This performance for an enthusiastic audience of 5,000 at the *Jazz `a Vienne* (Vienna) festival was conceived as a 50th anniversary *homage* to the 1961 record coupling Duke’s Orchestra with that of Count Basie: *First Time*. The original concept of a joint recording

produced what many serious Duke and Count fans have come to regard as an incongruous novelty. But brother, did that side cook! With a full complement of musicians working the arrangements of Billy Strayhorn, Thad Jones, and the “Two Franks” Wess and Foster - in tandem, *First Time* packed a hefty, attention-getting punch. Ultimately and thankfully this unique collaboration proved to be much more swinging harmony than competition, a remarkable achievement, then and now.

Battle Royal was the realization of *Jazz `a Vienne* founder Jean-Paul Boutellier’s dream of recreating *First Time* for a concert audience. Mignard signed-on and became executive producer; saxophonist and swing bandleader Pastre was a natural choice for the “Basie” requirements. *Battle Royal* is a joyful, vibrant mix of recreation, re-constitution and tribute. Rather than copy or impersonate, both orchestras play in the *manner* of the original instrumentations and arrangements. The energy, the jubilation, the pride, the heart—all consistent and never held hostage to patronization or gimmick.

The co-leaders wisely decided not to merely cover the eight tunes on *First Time* and leave it at that. Naturally, out of the gate, charging is “Battle Royal,” with a total of 21 soloists at four bars apiece. For maximum chill-inducing impact, we recommend positioning a speaker next to each ear, at a tolerable volume, of course. “Duke” is on the right; “Basie” the left. Each musician will be heard with stunning clarity. Next is a swing tempo “In a Mellow Tone” followed by an opulent transposition of Billy Strayhorn’s “Manhattan Murals” with “Take the ‘A’ Train.” From there, the bands take turns showcasing familiar compositions owned by each of their respective forebears: “Dickie’s Dream,” with some robust voicings for the reeds section, and “Kinda Dukish/Rockin’ in Rhythm,” the closest any of the tunes comes to imitation, from piano intro through solos. This is not a complaint. Back in joint formation, the orchestras remain so for the concert’s duration. “Segue in C” has some of its edges buffed, and may be the best performance of all. On “It Don’t Mean a Thing,” the rhythm sections propel vocalists from each ensemble trading off in French-accented English lyric scat. Returning to swing mode (which begs for dancing), the “Duke” pianist is featured in yet another jewel by Strays, “Midnight in Paris.” Momentum again builds as “Wild Man Moore” commands the soloists to trade fours in a hurry. “Jumpin’ at the Woodside” is every bit the flag-waving closer it was on *First Time*. The encore is an equally powerful “Perdido” utilizing that great Gerald Wilson arrangement.

The late Sjef Hoefsmit advised those curious about what Duke Ellington and His Orchestra sounded like live to visit France. Getting yourself a copy of *Battle Royal*, be assured, is a terrific immediate alternative to overseas travel. *Viva la France!*

Single Petal of a Rose by Duke Ellington Legacy with special guest Houston Person

Renma Recordings B0086FKSK8
CD Reviewed by Patricia Braxton

Single Petal of a Rose by the Duke Ellington Legacy with special guest saxophonist Houston Person is the newest family project to emerge from under the highly capable direction of Edward Ellington, II (who also contributes some guitar licks using Kenny Burrell's own instrument). This recent release, recorded in 2011 is mainly comprised of individual Ellington and Strayhorn standards. On this date, the Legacy is an ensemble of nine master jazz musicians giving fervent readings of arrangements alternating between musical director Norman Simmons and saxophonist Virginia Mayhew (last heard with the Legacy Big Band). Eddie's sister, artist Gaye Ellington contributes a colorful original inspired by the title tune for the CD's cover.

Single Petal begins eponymously, softly played by pianist Simmons, and dedicated to Eddie and Gaye's mother, Evelyn. The pace then picks up with a bouncing "Happy-Go-Lucky Local." "In My Solitude" features Nancy Reed providing solid vocals and Houston Person on tenor with a lovely harmonization by the horns. These, in turn are backed by a slow Latin percussive rhythm. Billy's "Johnny Come Lately" is extended with tight harmony and a mid-tempo groove. This is my favorite song on the CD. The Strayhorn mode continues, taking in "Blood Count," "Upper Manhattan Medical Group," and everyone's favorite, "Lush Life" beautifully performed by the band. Houston Person also solos on Norman Simmons's "Home Grown," as well as on "In a Mellow Tone" and "Squeeze Me." Erskine Hawkins's bluesy "After Hours" also a fan favorite, is well done. The album concludes with yet another floral metaphor, "Lotus Blossom."

Single Petal of a Rose is a project clearly conceived and designed by Eddie and Gaye with loving care to honor Grandfather's musical legacy. Highly recommended.



In Memoriam

Melvin Saxton

1929-2012

Co-founded Duke Ellington Study Group

Melvin Saxton, D.T., a prominent Chicago expert and educator in dental ceramic technology passed away on August 14 one month after his 83rd birthday. Ellington scholars the world over know of his pivotal role in helping form the Duke Ellington Study Group in 1981. From that effort the annual International Conferences began.

The Study Group was organized for its initial event on May 9 and included **Jack Towers**, Jerry Valburn, Gunther Schuller, John Steiner, and Prof. Saxton. The rapidly expanding Group held its third session in Washington, DC after more than a few enthusiasts wondered how long it would take to hold a meeting in Duke's birthplace. Prof. Saxton wrote, "For many, the history of the Duke Ellington Study Group began in Washington in 1983."

At the 16th International Duke Ellington International Conference in Chicago, May 9, 1998 Prof. Saxton presented an historical overview of the Study Group's establishment and development. This essay is maintained in the Jazz Institute of Chicago's web archives.

His August 25 memorial service reflected Prof. Saxton's abiding love for Duke. The musical selections were "Harlem Nocturne" as Greeting, "Solitude" (his favorite), "In a Mellow Tone," and a Recessional of "Take the 'A' Train."

INTERNET LINKS for this issue . . .

Battle Royal	www.laurentmignard.com
Ellington Legacy	www.ellingtonlegacy.com
The Treasury Shows	www.storyvillerecords.com
Beggars' Holiday	www.beggarsholiday.com
DE Center for the Arts	www.thedukeellingtoncenter.org
DE Study Group	www.jazzinchicago.org/educates/journal/articles/ellington-study-group

“Dramatis Felidae” (To Use Our Man’s Term in *MIMM*)

About Our Members . . .

In the column next door, you can read all about the superb program prepared and presented by **Ed Morris** for our last meeting. He explained that the 47 sets of recordings which comprise *Duke Ellington and His Orchestra: The Treasury Shows* were originally made at various broadcast studios and theater dates in the mid-1940’s. The US Treasury sponsored these weekly national broadcasts to promote sales of War Bonds. Thus far, **Storyville Records** has released 16 double-CD volumes of *DETS*.

Ed has created a remarkable data base consisting of 600 entries, the only comprehensive reference source on *The Treasury Shows*, Duke’s largest single recording project.

The December issue of *DownBeat* contains a feature by **Patricia Willard**, “When Dizzy Chose to Run.” It’s a warm, behind-the-scenes remembrance of Dizzy Gillespie’s 1964 campaign for President of the United States. **Patricia** served as Southern California Campaign Chairperson, as well as public relations director for Shelley Manne’s Hollywood jazz venue. The campaign launched from there as did the announcement of an engagement by Dizzy’s quintet. We were fortunate our copy of the magazine actually arrived on Election Day to help quell our anxiety.

Patricia also let us know that a new production of Duke Ellington’s *Beggar’s Holiday*, (lyrics by John Latouche and Dale Wasserman) has opened recently in Paris with David Serero as its star. An album of the music has been recorded, but seems to be available only on download for either Amazon or iTunes. Obviously something we need to investigate . . .

It’s That Time of the Year Again:

YOUR 2013 DUES ARE DUE!

Why not renew today? Give yourself or someone close another year of The Duke Ellington Society. What better holiday gift could there be?

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

The 1945 Treasury Shows - Superb Sounds From A Band In Its Prime

by Mr. Saturday Dance

The November meeting featured one of the best programs this year. Ed Morris was our guide for an evening’s tour of the *Duke Ellington Treasury Shows* culled from a cross-section of 1945 Saturday afternoon national radio broadcasts. Of special interest were four Buck Clayton arrangements: “Hollywood Hangover”, “Blues on the Double” (both of which were added to the Orchestra’s book), “One O’Clock Jump,” and “9:20 Special.” The Clayton charts brought a touch of Basie-esc swing to that portion of the band’s repertoire thereafter. (Duke would go on to record “One O’Clock Jump” for Capitol in 1954.)

Ed gave us about 20 selections and offered background commentary based on Eddie Lambert’s *Duke Ellington: A Listener’s Guide*. The extraordinary sound quality of these digitized original “remotes” allowed us to hear each musician with unsurpassed clarity, including, at last, the variegated percussive nuances of Sonny Greer.

The Orchestra swung hard and blew to perfection on all the tunes, with notable contributions from Messrs. Nance (also as first chair violinist), Anderson, Stewart, rookie Jimmy Hamilton, Taft Jordan, and Junior Raglin. Billy Strayhorn’s piano on “Midriff” was a blast. And so was our night, thanks to the stellar direction of Ed Morris.

To Join or to Renew Membership

Please Send Your Payment to:

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

Our dues remain a bargain:

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

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