

Ellingtonia

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Courtesy Carlyle Productions

New on Compact Disc

Bigbands Live: Duke Ellington Orchestra

Jazzhaus/SWR 4UJSRQ (Import)



A previously unavailable recording of a March 6, 1967 Orchestra concert at Liederhalle Stuttgart has been released by this German label, expanding a series of CD's which include live performances by such artists as Gillespie, Goodman, and Mulligan.

In addition to several Ellington standards, the set list consisted of "Swamp Goo"; "Knob Hill"; "Eggo"; "La Plus Belle Africane"; "Rue Bleue"; "A Chromatic Love Affair"; "Salome"; "The Shepherd"; "Freakish Lights"; and "Kixx"- all being newly road tested at the time.

Cat Anderson, Cootie Williams, Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, Russell Procope, Harry Carney, and Rufus Jones are the featured soloists.

Alice Babs Convalesces After Stroke

It has been reported on *Duke-LYM* that our beloved Alice Babs has suffered a series of debilitating strokes over the past year. Her daughter, Titti Sjoblum recently stated, "I'm sorry to say that there hasn't been too much of a progress after the Stroke... The doctors/nurses have tried to work with my Mom in order to make her be able to sit or stand by herself, but so far in vain. My mother can lift her left leg and arm a little bit, but that's all. And her left hand is "useless". (I tell you this because Mom wanted me to). She is always very pleased to hear that people think of her, and she remembers with joy lots of happy meetings and moments with all The Ellingtonians all over the world. Mom enjoys listening to music. She also enjoys speaking about memories from far back, even if she mixes a few things up sometimes."

Send your warm wishes through Ms. Sjoblum:

info@seafflowermusic.se

Our March Meeting is the February Program **Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus**

Since the auspicious start of February, we've been all ready to go with this exploration of the blues-tinged musical relationship between Duke and one of his most fervent acolytes. (Details in last month's issue.)

The meeting will take place at our usual hangout, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW** in our Hero's birthplace of **Washington, DC, on Saturday, 2 February 2013 at 7:00 PM.**

Our **pot luck** method for delectable small plates seems to be the way to go, and we ask you to bring along something yummy. If you're without a dish, come anyway! Management will provide the soft drinks and ice.

A 'Must Read' Critical Essay

In these waning days of Black History Month 2013, *Ellingtonia* discovered a most provocative posting to the internet journal Slate.com entitled, "**The 'One Drop Rule' of Jazz** by **Seth Colter Walls** (February 7, 2013).

According to Walls, "As far as shameful secrets go, the fact that African American composers aren't featured on our classical music stages as frequently as they should be is one few people bother keeping anymore."

Walls identifies a broad range of composers from Scott Joplin to James P. Johnson to William Grant Still to Duke Ellington, all the way to Leroy Jenkins and currently, Wayne Shorter. Each has written major extended pieces for the concert stage, only to have them be categorized as "jazz" by the classical music world.

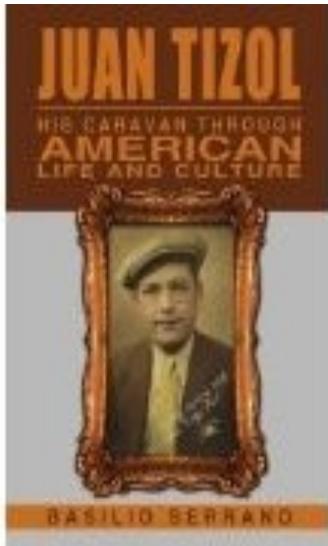
The author draws a striking comparison between the reception of Ellington's "Black, Brown and Beige" at Carnegie Hall some 70 years ago and Shorter's recently debuted "Pegasus" at the same venue. In both cases, the New York Times enjoyed the jazz but could not fit the rest of the music into the classical scope.

Article at www.Slate.com, then search by title/author.

Juan Tizol: His Caravan through American Life and Culture

by Basilio Serrano, Xlibris Corporation, 2012

Reviewed by **Theodore (Ted) Hudson**



While seldom a “down front” solo instrumentalist, Juan Tizol was a key factor in the artistic success of Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra. Basilio Serrano tells how and why. And he discusses other things, especially Tizol’s Latin American music activities, which as well contribute depth and dimension to the overall Tizol story.

He begins with Tizol’s growing up days in Puerto Rico, adapting to life in the United States, and beginning a life-changing relationship with Duke Ellington, whose orchestra he joined in 1929.

In “La Familia Tizol: A Music Dynasty, Educators, and Public Servants,” Serrano delves more deeply into Tizol’s family and acquaintances as influences during his maturation. He was born in Vega Baja in 1900 and resided most of his growing-up years in San Juan. His father having died prematurely, Juan lived in a household of four aunts, a cousin, and most important, paternal model and source of musical training, his uncle Manuel Tizol. He is shown at the age of 10 in a photo as a violin-

ist in this uncle’s band, the first of aggregations in which he would play other instruments too before settling on trombone as his primary instrument.

As a young man he relocated to Washington and played with local bands, some containing fellow Puerto Ricans. He met, fell in love with, and married Rosebud Browne, an African American, with whom he remained deeply devoted until death parted them some 60 or more years later. Having entrepreneurial inclinations, they opened a delicatessen, essentially managed by her, at 5th Street and Rhode Island Avenue in an area where cultural, social, and educational amenities for blacks were concentrated.

In discussing racial identity and its manifestations, the author reports that Tizol was described as “black, Negro, African American, white, Caucasian, pale Cuban, and according to a contemporary swing bandleader, as someone ‘passing for black.’” Tizol, though, did not seem to be particularly concerned with racial categorization. However, by all accounts there was a well-deserved identity for him: prankster.

His Ellington band mates regarded Tizol highly as an instrumentalist, but more importantly looked up to him, it seems, as the most technically informed of them. He was a composer of note, of course. Additional talents and training made him virtually indispensable to Ellington at times — copyist, extractor, transcriber, and, yes, arranger. Significantly, he was privy to Ellington and Strayhorn’s notation code for their music manuscripts. While such a musician pretty much works alone, he and Duke often worked together preparing scores and parts. Reportedly, Tizol could listen to a group or individual during a recording, rehearsal, or cooperative composing and arranging session at which original scores or parts were created or changed, then later write music notations of what he had heard them play.

Tizol left Ellington for the first time in 1944, a likely major reason being that Juan and Rosebud had acquired property in California as early as 1941 and he wanted more time to spend there with her. Then, too, there were concerns, for which she reportedly was a catalyst, as to whether Ellington properly acknowledged and compensated him for his contributions. The author quotes Tizol as having said, “Yeah, he did some bad things to me, but he was a nice fellow, too.” After a tour with Woody Herman, he signed with California-based Harry James. Then in 1951 “The Great James Robbery” took place: Tizol, Willie Smith, and Louis Bellson left James for the Ellington orchestra. Tizol stayed until late 1953, then rejoined James. In semi-retirement years he went back with Duke occasionally for short stays and recording dates, and played from time-to-time with other headliners.

(Continued on page 3 under Tizol)

MERRY-GO-ROUND . . . by Ye Editor

Hey! Who called-off the meeting at the last minute? Guilty to all charges, in the name of precautionary safety. The farther we drove along MD Rt. 50 around the 6:00 hour, the heavier the “wintry mix” became. At the District line, we heard a non-chalant WTOP-FM tell us it was no big deal, while we watched the car thermometer drop to the high 20’s. Visions of slips, trips and falls. **Pat Braxton, Bob Reny, Ed Morris, and Olu Yemisi** were already on-premises, getting things ready for the meeting and others were *en route*, only to be stung not long before 7:00 PM. Most of the telephoning was handled by (who else?) **Ted Hudson**. Meanwhile, the presiding officer sat parked in a lot at Brentwood Rd. and Rhode Island Ave., NE, frustrated by a paucity of Society members’ contact info on his Android. Slush began to accumulate on windshields.

In the space where we usually profile last month’s meeting, the need of a **notification process** for meeting cancellations will be advocated.

The sudden February cancellation also postponed the *ad hoc* elections for Society Officers and Board. All will be resolved at the March 2 meeting. Do not even think about what the weather will be like. Please.

Peter MacHare found a great video on YouTube of

Cootie Williams and His Orchestra from 1943, with a vocal by **Eddie ‘Cleanhead’ Vinson**:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnpcPFnHLUQ>

(Anybody want to give us a crash course in hyperlinks for the .pdf edition?)

When thoughts turn to evaluating electric utility energy efficiency, Duke Ellington immediately comes to mind. At least that’s the way it works for our friend, **Bill Saxonis**. His regular gig is Evaluation Manager for the (NY State) Office of Energy Efficiency Evaluation. As part of a day-long 2012 workshop, Bill’s facilitation and presentation included multiple references to the Maestro, something the participants found “interesting and upbeat.” Referring to Duke’s emphasis on skillful listening, Bill noted that excellent listening skills for evaluators is mandatory. “Energy program evaluation is almost always problematic, but Ellington viewed problems not as a burden, but as a chance for you to do your best. Staff always try to bring Ellington’s positive spirit to the complex challenge of producing accurate and unbiased reports designed to help ensure that ratepayer funds are being spent wisely.” Sounds like our kind of boss.

Having not yet examined the 9-CD box set, **The Complete**

(Continued on page 4 under M-G-R)

Tizol *(Continued from page 2)*

With appreciative nods to Ellington trombone authority Kurt Dietrich, Serrano discusses Tizol as both a classical and as a jazz musician. True, he was not an improviser (many of his solos were written out), but as did many admired jazz musicians, Tizol played with a singularly identifiable tone, his described variously as warm, sweet, smooth, leathery, mellifluous, melodic. He thought of himself as a “legit” instrumentalist. Although Serrano states, too, that Tizol was not a “jazz man,” he cites Ellington’s “12th Street Rag,” “Moon Over Dixie,” and “Dinah” as examples of his ability to play jazz.

In “The Progenitor of Latin Jazz: Trombonist Extraordinaire,” Serrano writes that “One cannot underestimate the decades-long omnipresence of the trombone in Puerto Rican music. Juan Tizol’s ‘trombonesque’ compositions are clearly a byproduct of that legacy.” Citing Tizol as a “pioneer,” he discusses the origins of Latin jazz and then under subtitles describes types of this music.

A final expository chapter is titled “With Duke, Woody, Harry, Louie, Nat, Frank, and Beyond,” but also in it are sections about Tizol’s professional relations with others, including Strayhorn.

Among the book’s lagniappes is a gallery of photographs, a rewarding number of them from Tizol’s early life. Another is a catalogue of his Puerto Rican contemporaries who played roles in the jazz scene in America, each with a biographical sketch. A gathering of the author’s analyses of Tizol compositions is followed by a chart of his compositions and, as much as possible for each, the following data: date recorded and registered, ASCAP or LOC numbers, and publisher and/or record company. An excellent bibliography precedes an index in which is found personal names and composition titles but that is disappointingly devoid of topic listings for such a highly informative book.

An “Epilogue” places Juan Tizol “with the great African American musicians of his day” and extols him as “a key player in the integration of jazz” with Latin American music.

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

Brad Bradbie recently announced that his CD, *Now and Then* (reviewed in our June 2012 issue by **Bill Hasson**) is now available via Amazon and iTunes.. Sample tracks can be heard on iTunes, as well.

Betty Dennis wrote to tell us she is maintaining Society membership in the name of her late husband, **Jack Dennis**. “He sorely missed the meetings and his fellow members whose company he enjoyed. Regards to all.”

From Toronto, **Alan Shiels** of The Duke Ellington Society Chapter 40 reports that many activities are the rule, including the Society’s Spring Scholarship Concert. He invites us to read Chapter 40’s newsletter at:

www.torontodukeellingtonsociety.com

Scott Schwartz spent a sabbatical last year studying the metallurgy of historic brass instruments. He teaches graduate archives classes and still manages the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana, Campaign. Before becoming director of this facility at the University, Scott was an archivist at the Archives Center of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

M-G-R (Continued from page 3)

Columbia Studio Albums Collection 1951-1958, we’re nonetheless certain it is a handsome project, packaged lovingly by the art and marketing departments at Sony Columbia. It consists of nine albums: *Masterpieces by Ellington*; *Uptown* (including *The Liberian Suite*); *Blue Rose*; *A Drum is a Woman*; *Such Sweet Thunder* (where the editing error in Clark Terry’s part on “Up and Down” remains un-corrected); *Indigos*; *Black, Brown and Beige*; *At the Bal Masque*; and *The Cosmic Scene* (small group-”Duke Ellington’s Spacemen”).

The promo material states the set contains *Blues in Orbit* and *Anatomy of a Murder*. On the *Black, Brown* disc, the tunes “Blues in Orbit” and “Track 360” are inserted in the middle of the movements. That’s it. Nothing at all from the *Anatomy* soundtrack. Neither is “U.M.M.G.” amongst the track on any of the discs, contrary to the ad. And one of the album listings is titled *The Drum is a Woman*.

We’re wondering why the arbitrary cut-off was 1958. Was a more comprehensive offering considered? We’re guessing that **all** of Duke’s output on Columbia in the 50’s and 60’s could have been accommodated on, perhaps, a 12-CD set instead of the one-LP-per-CD formula used in this collection. What would it have taken to fix the digital remix errors and stereo issues?

For those of us who haven’t previously obtained these albums

Our February Meeting:
Duke and Mingus Put on Ice

The abrupt cancellation of our February 2 meeting due to slick conditions on streets and pavements was no laughing matter with the knowledge that it inconvenienced too many Society members.

We need a notification system to alert members of emergency cancellation, as well as to have a communication process for other unplanned minor crises. This effort will be coordinated through *Ellingtonia*. Please make sure we have your contact information, including mobile and home telephone numbers along with your email address. We’ll circulate the list at meetings, but will also add your information if you drop us an email or phone call at:

Ellingtonia@comcast.net

410-320-1143 mobile or 410-268-5740 home

You may also use the above contacts for questions, compliments, or complaints.

M-G-R cont’d.

in various audio media, the **Collection** would be a smart purchase at a good price. For the rest of us, it’s “nothing to see here folks; keep moving.”

We have a slogan to propose to the execs at Sony Columbia: “Columbia Records—You Bought It Once. You’ll Buy It Again. And Again . . .” Paging Steven Lasker and Michael Cuscuna!

That’s it for this ride on your Merry-Go-Round . . .

Gentle Reminder: Dues are due.

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Our dues remain a bargain:

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