

Ellingtonia

A Publication Of
The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

Volume XXI, Number 6

JUNE 2013

William McFadden, Editor

Copyright © 2013 by The Duke Ellington Society, Inc., P.O. Box 29470, Washington, D.C. 20017, U.S.A.
Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/ E-mail: Ellingtonia@comcast.net



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Duke Ellington Park in NW DC Are We There Yet?

At last month's meeting, a brief discussion was held regarding the April 29 birthday celebration at "Duke Ellington Park," located where New Hampshire Ave., 21st St., and M St., NW intersect. DC City Councilman Jack Evans (who originally secured the designation) spoke that day about how this lovely little urban oasis should have a statue of Duke in order that proper honor is bestowed, and the triangular Park no longer remain anonymous.

A most noble concept and proposal, to be sure, however ambitious. The **Friends of Francis Field** (West End Friends) along with the **Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A** have worked with **Golden Triangle**



The ensemble known as **King James and the Serfs of Swing** entertain on Duke's April 29 birthday.

DC in designating, maintaining and caring for the Park. A fundraising campaign for a bronze Ellington statue remains on their long-term agenda.

Consensus from our May 4 meeting is that our Society actively participate in and support those efforts, and maintain a closer relationship with the organizations referenced above.

Our own **Gayle Pinderhughes** has opened the line of communications. It was suggested that any designation project begin with installation of a plaque not unlike the one displayed up the street at the incongruously designed "Duke Ellington Building" (the location of Duke's birthplace, 2129 Ward Place, NW).

As any positive outcome will only result from a collaborative group effort, **we need your feedback, your suggestions, your contacts.** *Ellingtonia* will, of course, report any progress from the brainstorming.

The Conservatory Approach Ellington and Strayhorn by Musicians in Other Countries (Member's Choice)

Western European countries, for the most part. Duke's and Strays' music lives through interpretation and performance by an impressive number of credentialed ensembles. The results may vary, but the music always swings (when it's supposed to).

Have any favorites of your own from anywhere around the globe? The June meeting continues to be a **member's choice**, but this one—hosted by **Ed Morris** and **Bob Reny**—will have a backup list of over ten selections carefully chosen by **Ted Hudson**. We'll keep each offering capped at about five minutes, so we can listen to *everybody's* number one.

Our season *finale* will take place as always at **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW** in the Maestro's birthplace, **Washington, DC** on **Saturday, 1 June 2013**. Remember: **Our meetings now begin at 7:30 PM.**

Whether sweet or substantive, **pot luck** is how we share the edibles, so don't forget to bring something good to kick-off summer. Even if you do forget, come anyway because we do love you madly! Management brings beverages and ice.

Mr. Duvivier, meet Mr. Blanton . . .

Following up on the superior meeting program of May 4, **Ed Morris** discovered some quotations by and about the great bassist, George Duvivier:

"In 1983, I got to play the role of Jimmy Blanton in re-creating the famous Ellington/Blanton duets for the Duke Ellington Conference in Washington, D.C. The pianist was the Ellington expert and protégé Brooks Kerr. It was a challenge because I had to change my current style to do it properly. I had to forget all the advances that have been made on the instrument since Jimmy played it. In those days, soloing was done with only one finger, although I suspect there were times when Jimmy snuck his pinkie in! Most of the figures

(Continued on Page 2 under Duvivier.)

MERRY-GO-ROUND . . . by Ye Editor

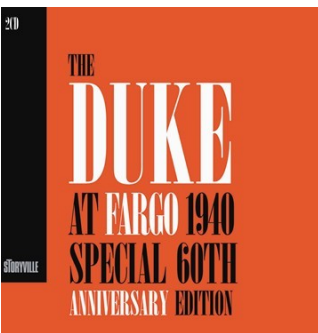


Fifty years ago, United Artists Records released *Money Jungle*, the product of producer Alan Douglas' efforts to bring Duke, Mingus and Max into the recording studio. In the current (June) *DownBeat*, Bill Milkowski has penned an analysis, "*Money Jungle—50 Years After the Summit.*" The author captures recollections from Douglas, adds historic context, and wraps-up with individual testimonials to the recording's inspiration from a select handful of current young jazz turks. Well worth your time.

It's significance has been oft-debated in the half-century since we've all been able to listen to some of the most highly-charged, emphatically emotional playing by Duke ever captured on tape. For us, the sheer boldness of the concept, making the listener pay attention to three brilliant minds attempting trio cohesiveness—conflict notwithstanding—have made *Money Jungle* a disc we cherish progressively with each listening.

Fast-forward to the here and now for percussion virtuoso Terri Lyne Carrington's recently released interpretation, *Money Jungle - Provocative in Blue*. Again we are thrilled that modern musicians maintain sharp eyes and ears for Duke's and Billy's music. We won't deign to review the CD, not that it's beyond our purview or anything. But we will let you know that it boasts a dream ensemble of players: Clark Terry ("sampled"), Herbie Hancock, Christian McBride, Lizz Wright, Robin Eubanks and Antonio Hart (among others). The reviews we've read vibe mostly positive. A little investigation reveals a ton of promo on YouTube and Facebook, as well as on the sites of your favorite internet music purveyors.

Fargo. We'll bet you didn't think of the Coen Brothers movie just now. In April's *Ellingtonia*, we mentioned on the fly that Storyville Records has once again issued **Jack Towers'** recording of *The Duke at Fargo—1940 Special 60th Anniversary Edition* (2-CD



#1038435). This is a reminder, especially for those of us who downloaded or purchased the "on-demand" CD from Amazon. You know, the one with the deplorable sound quality with peaks and valleys variance? Get yourself a decent copy of this

must-have at: www.Storyville.com.

On three consecutive Saturdays starting on May 4, the "Star Spangled Radio Hour" on KEZW 1430 in Denver (www.kezw.com) showcased the music memorialized by Duke and the trumpet-challenged Orchestra that night in 1940. The Jack Towers recording and the Bjorn Almstead digital restoration are considered almost as important as the music itself.

From the promotional: "As you listen to this fascinating and crisp recording, please remember that this is a unique glimpse into what a great band sounded like 'on the road' for a dance. This is a magnificent historic document that reflects the careful and talented magic that Jack Towers could perform with sound recordings. We are presenting Bjorn's restoration, which is awesome. But the real stars of the recording are the Duke and the band themselves, who are caught at the peak of their abilities and history." Oh yeah!!

File this one under "Department of Inevitable Corrections:" **Dr. Yvonne Condell** graciously wrote to let us know that pianist Dwiki Mitchell actually passed on April 6 of this year, and that he was 83 years of age. Our apologies for failing to catch both typos.

Ever heard of or purchased a CD released in 2001, *Goin' Home - A Tribute To Duke Ellington/A Benefit For The Duke Ellington Foundation?* The recording is an all-star conglomeration of west coast talent; it's still available. Some of us were puzzled by the possible existence of "The Duke Ellington Foundation." There is no such organization. The album's producer was contacted and graciously explained that such an entity did propose a joint venture, but that poor sales resulted in a vanishing of the "Foundation." To our knowledge, nobody got hurt.

Do have a most pleasant, comfortable and safe summer, and may your electricity continue uninterrupted! We'll be back in the fall, and so will our meetings.

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

We mourn the sudden passing of our fellow Society member, jazz lover and friend

Alan Schneidmill

May 23, 2013

Sacred Concerts Music As Liturgy

On Sunday, May 19, liturgical music for the Pentecost service at St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon was comprised entirely of selections from Duke Ellington's First and Second Sacred Concerts under the direction of renowned bassist, orchestrator and jazz educator, Chuck Israels.

According to a feature in the May 18 edition of *The Oregonian*, Vicar LouAnn Pickering is thrilled that Ellington's music is being channeled into parishes such as St. Gabriel's. "It's a different language than we're used to. It's joyful, creative and very American."

For Israels it was challenging in that the Sacred Concerts were composed for orchestra, full choir, soloists and dancers. The selections for this service were rearranged for a small choir, three vocal soloists, trumpet, trombone and rhythm section. Also reworked were harmonies for some familiar parts of the Eucharistic celebration in order to give them an Ellington shading.

Noting that Duke's sacred music was the focus of his later life, Israels added, "It was deeply meaningful and heartfelt. It had the power and immediacy of the everyday vernacular."

Duvivier *(Continued from Page 1.)*

he played were dotted eighths and sixteenths and maybe a triplet. That's how everyone thought then, and I felt it just wouldn't make sense to play a Blanton solo using today's pizzicato techniques."

And this revelation: "By his own account, borne out by his earliest recordings, it is clear that George and Jimmy Blanton were working along the same lines (no pun intended). This affinity has been pointed out by contemporaries, as well as Duke Ellington himself, who asked the bassist to join his orchestra after Blanton's death." (*Emphasis ours., Ed.*)

Source: **Bassically Speaking**—*An Oral History of George Duvivier* by Edward Berger, Studies in Jazz, No. 17. Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey and The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, NJ & London, 1993.

'Battle Royal' Over DE Royalties Share

On May 6, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*, a New York appeals court ruled that music industry mega-corporation EMI Music will be allowed to pay itself for the foreign "exploitation" of Duke Ellington's music published by Mills Music, Inc.

This decision marked a major setback for Ellington estate executor, grandson Paul Ellington. In the triggering legal action, it was alleged that EMI had breached a 1961 royalty agreement by deducting fees for foreign affiliates before accounting for Duke's fifty percent share of net revenues.

In a previous 2011 New York State court, EMI successfully argued that the terms and conditions of the 1961 contract which pertained to the matter were clear and unambiguous.

Prior to EMI's acquisition of Mills Music, the deal signed in 1961 had foreign publishers pay the royalties directly to Irving Mills, who then made the 50/50 payout to Ellington. *Ed. Note: Let us temporarily refrain from any facetious remarks on this arrangement.*

Not only did EMI take over Mills, they also gradually acquired all of the foreign publishers, affiliated and otherwise with whom Mills conducted business. As a result, one division of the corporation could deduct royalty payments from another division.

To read the entire article, with a link to the court ruling, go to www.hollywoodreporter.com. Key search terms are *EMI-wins-dispute-Duke-Ellington*.

2013 Essentially Ellington Competition

Jazz at Lincoln Center's annual *Essentially Ellington* Competition and Festival took place May 10 and 12. The program was created during the 1995-96 school year to make Ellington's music accessible to as many high school musicians as possible while supporting the development of their schools' music curricula.

The three-day festival allows students, teachers and musicians from across North America to participate in workshops, rehearsals and performances, concluding with an evening concert/award ceremony at Avery Fisher Hall. The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis closes the show with a performance of music from next year's curriculum.

Our friend, **David Berger** has transcribed many of these charts, and continues to conduct workshops as well as serving as a Competition judge. This year, four top-placing bands were recognized among fifteen finalists.

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

Cultural historian **Dr. Harvey G. Cohen** appeared throughout the week of April 29 on BBC Radio 2 as part of a new documentary entitled “Jazz at the Movies,” hosted by British jazz performer Jamie Cullum. Drawing from material from his book *Duke Ellington’s America* (University of Chicago Press), Cohen discussed how, during the 1930s, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra were featured in Hollywood movies earlier and more respectably than any other African American figures during the decade. He also talked about Ellington’s 1959 soundtrack for the Otto Preminger film *Anatomy of a Murder*, and how it formed one element in Ellington’s many efforts of the period to fight nostalgia and create a new identity for senior citizens in the popular music world.

This program, as with others in the “Jazz at the Movies” also had a one-week run on BBC iPlayer. Could Harvey be cajoled into adding the broadcast to his web site for the majority of us who missed it due to lack of prior awareness?

Quotation of the Month: Ken Peplowski

Bob Reny discovered these laudatory remarks by master clarinetist Peplowski in the May 2013 issue of *JAZZTIMES*:

“I always felt that Jimmy Hamilton could easily have played in a symphony orchestra, with that beautiful dark sound of his. He, more than anyone, inspired me to strive toward my eternal goal of not sacrificing that centered classical sound just because I play jazz. I’m glad I got to meet him when he came back to New York to play a couple of engagements at the short-lived club Carlos 1. I thanked him for being such an inspiration.”

Peplowski’s comments were taken from the “Artist’s Choice” feature, where he listened to a live 1954 performance of Ellington’s “Duet” by Hamilton with Wendell Marshall on bass.

2013 Dues still due? Please renew TODAY!
(Gratefully accepted year-round . . .)

To Join or to Renew Membership

Please Send Your Payment to:

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

PO Box 29470, Washington, DC 20017, USA

Our dues remain a bargain:

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

**May Meeting:
 30 Years Ago, We Were The Very First**

by Art Luby, Secretary

The May meeting of the Society celebrated the 30th Anniversary of “The First International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference” held in May of 1983 in Washington, D.C. Ed Morris introduced the primary performance of the event – a concert by pianist Brooks Kerr accompanied by bassist George Duvivier and recorded by the late **Jack Towers**. Duvivier was, of course, one of the true gentlemen of jazz whose approach to his instrument was obviously rooted in Jimmy Blanton’s style and technique, something confirmed by his wonderful work on “Pitter, Panther, Patter”. Brooks Kerr was barely thirty years old at the time of the conference, but by then had spent most of his life immersed in Ellington’s music and, as noted by **Patricia Willard** in her *DownBeat* article, was considered to be so knowledgeable of the orchestra’s history and work that Duke often directed people with questions to Kerr when he accompanied the band.

Kerr is one of the few pianists of his generation whose style is clearly derived from Ellington’s. His thematic control, facility, and insight into the music is evident throughout the concert, but particularly on some less well-known gems such as “Plucked Again”, “Sweet Mama”, and “Jubilee Stomp”. It was a happy performance in which the music swung throughout and the musicians clearly enjoyed the audience and one another’s company.

Time is often unkind and Duvivier and many of the conference participants have passed on in the years since. Kerr, hampered by failing eyesight and other infirmities, is no longer active. One can only be grateful (again) to Jack Towers for preserving a record of Kerr at the height of his powers drawing on his unsurpassed insight into the Ellington musical tradition.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

Executive Board

President	William McFadden
Vice President	Barbara Anderson
Secretary	Arthur Luby
Treasurer	Patricia Braxton

Luvenia George	Edward Morris
William Hasson	Robert Reny
Tom Henderson	Lawrence Smith
	Theodore A. Shell