



BLUE LIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY UK
VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2014



THE INTERNATIONAL
DUKE ELLINGTON
CONFERENCE 2014
AMSTERDAM MAY 14-18



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Alice Babs (11 February, 2014)

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- Victor Lawrance, Treasurer

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Civil Service Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London SW1; off Whitehall, Trafalgar Square end. 2nd Saturdays of the month, 2pm. 12 Oct, 14 Dec. For details contact Antony Pepper.

Tel.: 01342 314053; email: ap@antonypepper.com

Manchester Jazz Society:

Meets Thursdays 7:45 pm for 8:00 pm at the Unicorn, Church Street, off Oldham Street, M4 1PW

Contact: Eddie Little: 0161 881 3995

Email: tmonk52@hotmail.com

Sheffield Jazz Society:

Meets fortnightly at 1.45 pm on Mondays at Meersbrook Park United Reformed Church, Chesterfield Road/Beeton Road corner

Contact. Edmund Gregory: 0114 230 3742

TDES (New York):

Meets Wednesdays. St Peter's Church, Lexington Ave at 54th St, NYC, 7.30pm. For information contact Roger Boyes

Chris Addison, DESUK's Publicity Officer, is appealing to members to give him contact details for jazz and other music societies that they are aware of in their local area. He will then make contact to tell them of our existence, perhaps offer an Ellington-themed presentation, and encourage their supporters to join us.

Contact details above.

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Editorial

Preparations are well in advance now for The 22nd International Duke Ellington Conference in Amsterdam in May. For full details, turn to our News section beginning overleaf. For those delegates lucky enough to attend, it promises to be a mouth-watering feast of Ellingtonia. DESUK's AGM will be taking place on the Sunday morning of the conference, 18th May. As Peter Caswell points out in his piece on page 21, this reflects the international membership of DESUK, a fact we try to mirror, too, in the contents of *Blue Light* every issue. This edition, for example, contains a new piece from the USA on the music Ellington composed for the feature film *Assault On A Queen* and some exciting news from Italy.

Members of DESUK based in the UK who will not be travelling to Amsterdam (as well, of course, as those who are doing so) may well be interested in attending the annual DESUK concert given by the Guildhall Jazz Band, news of which we received shortly before *Blue Light* went to press. We include the details of this concert, a presentation of the music from *Such Sweet Thunder*, below. The concert has been coordinated by Antony Pepper. Should you require further details, his contact details are on the page opposite.

In the next edition of *Blue Light* we shall be reflecting upon the forty years which have elapsed since Duke Ellington's death. Ellington himself had little regard for looking back and it is a measure of his legacy that the forty years since his passing has continued to bring new gifts in terms of previously unreleased recordings, new performances of his music, new scholarship and research. That Ellington's work continues to garner admiration from young musicians and listeners who were not even born in 1974 is a measure of the durability of his legacy. Your thoughts on any of these facets of the inheritance he left us are, as ever, welcome and we will include as many as we can in the next edition.

Ian Bradley

This year's annual concert for DESUK by the Guildhall Jazz Band under the direction of Martin Hathaway will take place at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Silk Street, Barbican, EC2Y 8DT on May 3rd, 7.30pm.

Mercedes Ellington to attend Amsterdam Conference



Preparations for The 22nd Duke Ellington Study Group Conference are in their final phase. As we reported in BL 20/4, the conference will be held in Amsterdam 14-18 May, 2014.

Conference organizers Louis Tavecchio and Walter van de Leur are proud to announce that Mercedes Ellington is the conference guest of honour. She will be in conversation with Harvey Cohen. Louis also confirms that parts of the conference and concert performances will be filmed for DjazzTV. The broadcast service is active in thirty-five countries and will hold a special Duke Ellington week during the conference.

Each day of the conference will begin with a keynote address by a scholar who has written an important book about Ellington, each from a different perspective: the role of Duke Ellington in American history will be discussed by Harvey Cohen; Ellington's pivotal role in twentieth-century music will be the subject of David Schiff's lecture and Matt Cooper will dwell at greater length on Duke Ellington as pianist. Besides the keynotes, there is a variety of very interesting contributions from, among others, Marcello Piras, Ken Steiner, David Palmquist, Loren Schoenberg, and Walter van de Leur.

Not only will Ellington's music be discussed but it

will, of course, be performed also. Matt Cooper will give a piano *Brown & Beige* in the North Sea Jazz Club; Eric Boeren will present his All Ellington ensemble, featuring Dutch Jazz Award winner Oene van Geel on violin; the Calefax Reed Quintet will perform Ellington's ballet suite *The River* and the Ellington-Strayhorn Shakespearean suite *Such Sweet Thunder*, and the festival's Grand Finale on Saturday night will feature David Berger conducting the Conservatory Concert Band in a performance of *Black, Brown and Beige*.

The programme at present comprises the following:

- Welcome: Ruud van Dijk (Head of Conservatory of Amsterdam Jazz Department), Louis Tavecchio and Walter van de Leur (Conference Organisers)
- Harvey Cohen: *Duke Ellington in American History*
- Geoff Smith: *My Date with Duke and How We Stopped the Show*
- David Palmquist: *The Duke: Where and When?* (Ellington Itinerary on the Internet)
- Marcello Piras: *Black Beauty* or *How to Paint a Portrait in Sound*
- Carl Woideck: *Duke Ellington: Encounters with Africa, 1957-1974*

- Matt Cooper, piano: *Piano Transcriptions and Interpretations; Duke Ellington as Pianist: A Study in Styles*
- Ken Steiner: *Headlines: Duke Ellington's First Film*
- Luca Bragalini: *Duke Ellington's New World A-Comin': Proudly on the Air*
- Matthias Heyman: *Losing Count: The Ellington-Blanton Duet Recordings*
- Loren Schoenberg: *The Unheard Savory Ellington*
- David Schiff: TBA
- Michele Corcella: *Ellington's Scoring for the Saxophone Section*
- Catherine Tackley: "Art or Debauchery?": *The reception of Duke Ellington in the UK*
- Bill Saxonis: *Reflections on Duke and His World: The Oral History Project*
- Walter van de Leur: "People Wrap Their Lunches in Them": *Ellington and Notation*
- Stephen James: *Life on the Road with Duke Through the Eyes of his Nephew*
- Panel: *Biographies of Ellington* with Loren Schoenberg, Catherine Tackley, William McFadden and Walter van de Leur (chair)

Live performances comprise:

- All Ellington Project, featuring Oene van Geel, Jeffrey Bruinsma, violin; Jorg Brinkmann, cello
- Ellington music by the Amsterdam Accordion Joe Quintet: Rik Cornelissen, Cees Hamelink, Bert van denBrink, Tuur Florizoone, accordion/vibbrandoneon; Jacques Schols, bass; Ben Schroeder, drums
- Calefax Reed Quintet: *The River and Such Sweet Thunder*
- Concert at the North Sea Jazz Club: David Berger and the Amsterdam Conservatory Concert Band: *Black, Brown and Beige*

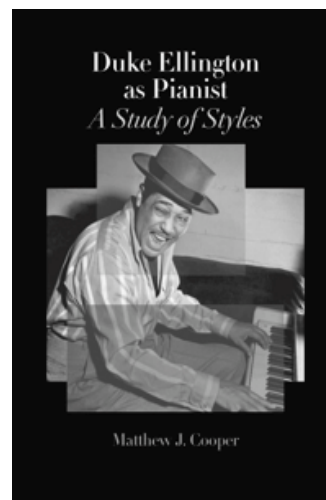
For a complete, more detailed view of the conference please go to www.ellington-2014.nl

New book on 'The Piano Player' published

Keynote speaker at Amsterdam 2014 Matthew J. Cooper has just seen publication of his book, *Duke Ellington as Pianist: A Study of Styles*. The work is Volume 24 in the series *Monographs and Bibliographies in American Music*, published by The College Music Society. Their website says:

"This volume by Matthew Cooper represents the first book-length study devoted exclusively to Duke Ellington as pianist. As such, it should be regarded as a substantial contribution to the Ellington

scholarship for the very reason that the piano was central to the Duke's achievements as a musician. He composed at the keyboard; he improvised at the keyboard; he led his musicians from the keyboard; and he—as the leading member of the rhythm section—delivered the fundamental energy of his creations on the keyboard.



"In his consideration of both representative and landmark recorded performances, Professor Cooper reports the views of a host of authorities and provides original commentary. He identifies three practices in Ellington's piano work: an early foundational stride style, a style typical of his swing maturity, and an atypical, post-bop / modern style. What might be understood as rather fascinating is that Dr Cooper argues that all three 'existed side by side from the 1940s (or perhaps earlier) until the end of his career.' The author's conclusions are supported by copious transcriptions."

The book is available from The College Music Society website and Amazon.com

Money talks

The 2014 Grammy Award for Best Jazz Instrumental Album was won by Terri Lyne Carrington *Money Jungle: Provocative in Blue*, a re-imaging of the original recording. The album includes a vocal by Clark Terry.

Carrington said, "When you start rearranging music by someone like Duke Ellington, you better feel really good about what you're doing. In the end, I felt confident that I didn't do him a disservice, because he was a very open-minded artist, and he was very much about moving forward."

A review of the album appeared in *BL* 20/3.

The Faulkner Archive

Upon his retirement from Leeds College of Music, Tony Faulkner generously donated his transcriptions of Ellington music to DESUK. The archive is presently in the care of DESUK member Mike Fletcher who performs concerts every month in Birmingham with his own big band, Kinda Dukish. Mike is presently busy auditing the archive, organising the manuscripts into sets of parts for each composition, reconstructing missing parts (there was no lead alto part, for example, to *Black Butterfly*, nor E-flat saxophone parts for *Such Sweet Thunder*) and preparing the archive for digitization. In the longer term, it is hoped to offer digital copies of the manuscripts for sale on behalf of DESUK and to house the collection of physical manuscripts, all of them Tony's working copies in pencil on A5 paper, permanently with a music department in an appropriate institution of Higher Education.

Mike has already tried out some of the scores with his own band – *Unbooted Character*, *Midriff* and the 1956 version of *Stompy Jones*. He tells us, "The manuscript parts are beautifully written – I think, the best I've seen."

We are grateful to Tony Faulkner for his generosity in donating the archive to the Society and to Mike for all the work he is doing curating and performing the arrangements. It is vital work. A full article about the archive and Mike's work with Kinda Dukish will appear in a future edition of *Blue Light*.

Duke on DVD

Here's Edie

MVD Visual MVD5920D (2013)

This 4-DVD box set contains all 20 episodes of the half-hour 1962-1964 black and white television variety series *Here's Edie*, starring Edie Adams, the widow of comedian and television pioneer Ernie Kovacs.

Duke Ellington and two or three of his sidemen appear in the second episode of the series, following the pilot. This show has five titles relevant to us:

I Got It Bad featuring Johnny Hodges,

Sentimental Lady featuring Harry Carney,

Take The 'A' Train and *Satin Doll* featuring Duke Ellington.

Hodges and Carney play on those two titles, within a studio orchestra conducted by Peter Matz.

Preceding *Take The 'A' Train*, Ellington plays a brief solo introduction that sounds to me like *Reflections In D* although other ears admittedly might hear something else.



I'm Beginning To See The Light features the studio orchestra. If Hodges, Carney, or Ellington play on this title, I can't hear them. I don't believe that Ellington plays on *I Got It Bad* or *Sentimental Lady*.

According to the credits, Ray Nance is there, but I neither see nor hear him.

Edie Adams sings soprano on all above titles except Ellington's solo piece and *Take The 'A' Train*.

Filmed on September 27, 1962, the programme was broadcast on October 23, 1962.

Ellington's encounter with soprano Adams may have influenced his February-March 1963 collaboration with Alice Babs, released on Reprise, which also included the titles *Satin Doll* and *I'm Beginning To See The Light*.

The remaining 19 episodes of *Here's Edie* may be of interest to jazz fans, since Stan Getz, Charlie Barnet, Lionel Hampton, Al Hirt, Count Basie, Pete Fountain, Spike Jones, Woody Herman, and Charlie Byrd show up, as do Hoagy Carmichael, Sammy Davis Jr., Nancy Wilson, Allen Sherman, Bobby Darin, and Johnny Mathis. **Brian Koller**

Alice Babs



We are sorry to learn of the death of Alice Babs who passed away on 11 February, 2014, a little over two weeks after her ninetieth birthday. She had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease and died at the nursing home where she had been staying. Her lawyer Thomas Bodström told the *Expressen* newspaper, "She died in peace with her family close by."

Alice's daughter Titti was present. "We are truly glad for these past few months that we shared with our dear mother. She was comfortable and in peace where she was living," she told the newspaper.

Her pure soprano voice brought her to the attention of Duke Ellington who called her "probably the most unique artist I know." They worked together on an album in Paris in 1963 for the Reprise label but her best-known work with Ellington is perhaps those pieces written for her voice which helped to elevate the music of the *Second* and *Third Sacred Concerts* to such heights. Reviewing a concert of Sacred Music, held at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in Manhattan in 1968, John S. Wilson of *The New York Times* praised the "warmth and strength" of Alice's voice and said that she "took her place among the top rank of Ellingtonians — those instrumentalists and singers who have brought special distinction to the Ellington ensemble and who have drawn unique inspiration from the Duke's direction during the last 40 years."

She will be known to many members of DESUK for her luminous presence at many Ellington conferences. We extend our condolences to her family. We shall present a full tribute to Alice Babs in a future edition of *Blue Light*. **IB**

Obituary: Stan Tracey

For the first two decades of his 70-year career, pianist Stan Tracey was regarded by many as, at best, a maverick who could safely be ignored by his peers. The sentiments of younger musicians, however, and eventually of the wider public, warmed to such an extent that he has come to be seen as the colossus of an independent-minded British jazz scene. A concept such as this was so unlikely 50 years ago that it was a shock to the establishment when the noted American saxophonist Sonny Rollins said of Tracey, "Does anyone here realise how good he is?"

It was just months before Rollins' first encounter with him that Tracey had recorded his early masterpiece, titled *Jazz Suite* inspired by Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* (1965) but always known by those last three words. With the Scottish saxophonist Bobby Wellins he created some unforgettable soundscapes including the atmospheric *Starless And Bible Black*, of which the novelist Jonathan Coe has stated, "This piece has been part of my consciousness for almost 40 years." A defining achievement, it led to several more themed compositions, many of them commissioned by funded arts organisations — another factor that was unheard of when Tracey started out.

His musical interest was first awakened by hearing boogie-woogie on the radio and, since the family didn't possess a piano, at 14 he persuaded his mother to buy him an accordion. Soon he was playing in accordion ensembles in wartime London, and in 1943 he joined the forces entertainment service Ensa, which brought him into contact with young comedians such as Tony Hancock, Peter Sellers and later Spike Milligan.

He was soon favouring the piano, and Tracey's postwar acquaintance with forward-looking jazzmen such as Tony Crombie and Ronnie Scott was the icing on a heavy diet of touring with dance bands and singers. Tracey missed out on brainstorming sessions with a clique of local musicians about the new American bebop, recalling "I had an unusual relationship with them. They wouldn't let me in."

Indeed, Tracey would not have endeared himself, thanks to his interest in Thelonious Monk and in Duke Ellington, whose band was then more revered than his piano work. Tracey's dance-band career took a leap forward in 1957, however, when he began two years on piano and vibraphone with the popular Ted Heath, admired for his tours in the US as well as here. For Heath, he wrote pieces including *Baby Blue*, later covered by several other players, but Heath irked his soloists by expecting the same solo every night. This association led to Tracey's first album of standard songs, *Showcase* (1958),

which led Jackie Buckland of Decca's promotion department to push for a follow-up album of original material, *Little Klunk* (1959). Jackie and Stan married in 1960.

That same year saw Tracey taking over as house pianist at Ronnie Scott's recently opened jazz club, and the gradual influx of American star soloists working with him, from Rollins to Stan Getz to Wes Montgomery, helped refine a style full of unmistakable dissonances and crab-like runs. Apart from low-fidelity tapes that surfaced much later, Tracey had barely recorded for six years when the *Under Milk Wood* quartet album was done in a single day, but except for the early 1970s it has been in print ever since. Unusually for the time a piano score was published, although Tracey was frustrated that his arrangement of the character Polly Garter's song from the original radio play was blocked by the Dylan Thomas estate. Its equally literary follow-up, *Alice In Jazzland* (1966), financed by EMI since it required big-band resources, was subsequently played live at the 1967 Richmond Jazz Festival.

Having balked at the six nights a week working until 3am at Scott's, Tracey left in 1967 and for a while was on a small retainer from Lansdowne Studios, who had produced *Under Milk Wood*. This led to his writing an album for Acker Bilk, and another of Ellington material with soloists including both Bilk and Joe Harriott. But the early 1970s saw Tracey unemployed and contemplating work as a postman while trying to kick a heroin habit exacerbated by the Ronnie's routine (years later, he commented about documentary footage of his *Alice In Jazzland* sessions: "It's embarrassing to see myself stumbling around like that.") Now with two young children, Jackie showed her ability to steady the ship and, in later years, Tracey paid heartfelt (though hardly verbose) tribute to her encouragement.

Her organisational flair led to the establishment of a series of South London gigs under the name Grass Roots, which elicited some minimal subsidisation and resulted in Tracey associating with younger and more radical players such as John Stevens, Mike Osborne, Evan Parker and John Surman. Tempered by this experience, in 1975 he launched a new long-running quartet with the saxophonist Art Themen, which by 1978 also included his 17-year-old son, drummer Clark Tracey, who continued to play with Stan's groups until now. In 1976 Jackie also launched the label Steam Records (so named because Stan referred to his non-electric keyboards as "steam pianos"), initially to purchase and re-release *Under Milk Wood*, in time for a four-week tour with the new quartet and actor Donald Houston, reading from Dylan Thomas's prose.

In 1976 The Bracknell Connection, for the festival held there, became the first of a long series of commissioned compositions that actually compensated the time spent in creating the piece. Tracey remembered decades later how, when the BBC had first suggested a one-off big-band broadcast in the early 1960s, "There was no money for writing the music or copying the parts. The idea was that you should feel honoured to be asked." Many of these commissions were released on Steam, while a November 1993 concert celebrating his 50 years as a musician was recorded in full by the BBC and selections were issued on Blue Note as *Live at the QEH*. Sadly, a 70-year celebration last month at the London Jazz Festival took place without Stan's participation.

In the intervening years, Tracey was consistent in employing considerably junior performers, such as trumpeters Guy Barker and Gerard Presencer and many others, and reconnected with earlier partners, especially Wellins. As well as producing new material of consistently high quality he remained a probing interpreter of older standard items, whether from the American songbook or instrumentalists such as Monk and Ellington. A backing musician at the 1982 performance of Ellington's "sacred music", he himself directed several such productions, for instance at St Paul's (1990), Durham Cathedral (1996) and York Minster (2012). He gained an OBE and a CBE, and valued other honours bestowed by the Royal Academy of Music and Leeds College of Music.

The seemingly serious announcement in a 2005 interview that he had given up composing was happily belied in 2011 by a new Dylan Thomas "collaboration" in *A Child's Christmas*, with Stan's grandson Ben reading between tracks from the Thomas short story. This year saw the appearance of *The Flying Pig*, a compelling suite of pieces inspired by his father's experiences as a recruit in the First World War; his father was also Stan, so his mother called her only son Billy. His death from prostate cancer has robbed the British scene of a figurehead and the international arena of a major individualist.

Stanley William Tracey, pianist and composer: born Denmark Hill, London 30 December 1926; OBE 1986, CBE 2008; married 1946 firstly, 1954 secondly, 1960 Jackie Buckland (died 2009; one son, and one daughter deceased); died St Albans 6 December 2013.

Brian Priestley

Obituary reproduced by kind permission of the author and The Independent.

Wakefield Theatre Club 28 November 1969

I was surprised to read in *BL* 20 4 that Mike Vawdrey had found Duke's performance at Wakefield Theatre Club on Friday 28 November 1969 'not nearly so auspicious' as his 1967 appearance in Bradford. I remember the evening at Wakefield with more affection than any other Ellington performance I attended, apart from the first two at Leeds Odeon in 1958. I lived in London in 1967, so I wasn't at Bradford and cannot make a parallel comparison with Mike's. Different strokes for different folks!

I travelled to Wakefield directly from work by bus, through very back-end-ish weather, the sort of foggy night we don't experience nowadays. Smokeless zones had come to the West Riding by the 1960s, but not to Wakefield, which was in the coalfield. I walked through the murk along Doncaster Road to the club, located at Wakefield Trinity's ground near the edge of town. It was one of those nightspots which grew out of the working men's clubs, originally in the North-East, and which were big and successful enough to attract top entertainers. Batley Variety Club is probably the best known, for its Louis Armstrong associations; Blighty's in Farnworth was another. In later years Wakefield Theatre Club became the Pusycat Club, which didn't sound suitable for a well brought-up boy like me.

The club's geography impressed me first. Instead of the concert-hall arrangement, seats in rows between aisles, with the stage at one end and the exits at the other, the seating was arranged in a long, shallow arc at tables, and the bandstand occupied one of the long sides. There was side seating on the far short side, at right angles to the rest and a bit higher. It seemed more conducive to communication between performers and audience. There were brief sets from a warm-up band. Ken Vail calls Duke's appearance a concert (*Duke's Diary* 2, p369) but it didn't feel like the usual concert-hall experience.

The souvenir programme, a glistening gold-covered affair, consists largely of a long article by Derek Jewell. It has no listing of the band personnel. For that you have to turn to *New DESOR*, in which Wakefield isn't mentioned, since the performances were not recorded. The immediately obvious change was the absence of Jimmy Hamilton, the first defector from the reeds section which I'd first seen in 1958. Then I realised there were six reeds, not five, and only two trombones. Norris Turney, a new name to me along with Harold Ashby's, was playing a trombone pad.

Harold occupied Jimmy's chair. I don't remember Cootie turning up late and the worse for wear, but then I never felt his return was an adequate replacement for Ray Nance, for all his power. To me, watching him sitting gloomily at one end of the line of trumpets, he always looked the worse for wear. I don't for a moment question Mike's recall, but Cootie's absence wouldn't have perturbed me unduly.

Nor does the programme offer even a tentative list of the music to be played. As with the personnel, *New DESOR* supplies the information from other recordings made on the tour, and I don't recall any substantial deviation from the running orders listed there. I don't remember any tension between audience and performers leading to the sort of adaptations Mike describes – what nowadays we'd call dumbing down. The second house was warmer than the first, but surely it was ever thus? This was the first time I'd been

to both, but I've always known it's better to go for the second if you have to choose. The much-despised songs medley was there for sure, as it usually was at concerts. I don't remember thinking it was grossly extended.

The brand-new *4.30 Blues* brought tears to my eyes at both houses, and I enjoyed the Wild Bill Davis segment starting with *Azure Te*. It gave Hodges added exposure in a fresh and more intimate context which was well suited to the venue. *Satin Doll* was reprised as the vehicle for the closing 'finger snaps' routine, which I found just as enjoyable as I had in 1958.

The miracle was that for all the changes and the evident ageing, this did not sound like a band in decline playing the music of a composer past his prime. I'll grant there was nothing new on the scale of the *Far East Suite* or *Toga Brava*. But not for one moment did I think, I doubt if I'll make the effort to see them again. And while I knew he was the best, I was by no means an Ellington specialist in those days, and certainly not an avid collector. One record I did buy the following year though was the *70th Birthday Concert* set recorded in Manchester and Bristol a day or so earlier. For me it was a great souvenir of a memorable evening at Wakefield.

My wife and two friends joined me for the second performance, which meant I had a lift home and didn't need to worry about last buses. A pleasant surprise was that another friend who I'd last seen when we lived in Bradford earlier in the sixties had come across from Manchester for the evening; she recognized me and joined us in the second-house interval. I never saw Dot again after that night.

There were a few people in the auditorium in the period between the two houses, not many. Paul Gonsalves was at the bar with someone. I fell into conversation with another fan. Then I noticed Hodges and Carney, alone together at a table over a beer. So I excused myself and went over to join them, a thing I'd never done before. I knew not to make the mistake of boring them with stuff about old records, or make requests, or ask them their life story. They were taking a break from work, and I wasn't a journalist seeking an exclusive. I don't remember much about the conversation, but it was all very nice. We talked about the beer, of which they approved. Johnny observed: 'why is it that we Americans can put a man on the moon, but we can't brew decent beer? (It was the year of Apollo 11). Their signatures are on my Wakefield programme, Hodges' quite rushed with a flourish, Carney's neatly forthright. They constitute two of my small collection of three autographs (the third is Duke Ellington's, acquired at Leeds Odeon in 1958).

As the second-house audience began to file in, Johnny and Harry rose to go backstage. I'd recently bought the *Historically Speaking* LP on an Ember reissue, and was much taken with Billy's *Midriff*. So my final words were: I'd really like to hear the band play *Midriff*. It was a daft thing to say but I'm glad I said it, because Johnny just laughed as they walked off. I'd never seen him laugh before, and the next time I saw the band he was dead.

Roger Boyes

DUKE ELLINGTON'S *Three Black Kings* and *Celebration*: Luca Bragalini's exciting discoveries

By Geoff Smith

Italian musicologist and lecturer Luca Bragalini went down a storm at the Ellington 2012 Conference in Woking. Such was the excitement that he was accorded a standing ovation, not bad for any presenter let alone one who confessed to being short of fluency in English. He was too self-critical: his shortcomings were slight, and his passion more than made up for them. Afterwards, Luca gave me the full notes of his presentation. In these I noticed how much effort he had put into preparing his English pronunciation. For a flavour of his presentation there is fine video extract of it on You Tube. Search under Luca Bragalini Celebration. DESUK's Committee has decided to help Luca financially to have his book – *Duke Ellington's Symphonic Dreams* (due to be published by EDT, Italy, in Autumn 2014) – translated into English and published in Britain.

Luca Bragalini spoke under his own working title *Three Black Kings (and a Duke) in a Symphonic Celebration*. My paragraph in *Blue Light* Vol 19/2 pages 9 – 10 refers to this. Luca later summarised and updated his research and discoveries for me.

Luca's note for the conference programme reads: "**Three Black Kings** is a composition that has been discovered after Duke's death, and the information we have is very scarce and contradictory. Moreover, Luther Henderson's arrangement of the third movement titled after Martin Luther King, sounds extremely removed from Ellington's musical intentions. An alternative arrangement, arranged in a more Ellingtonian style and commissioned by me, will be played. **Celebration** (1972) is an important discovery; it is an unpublished work from the Duke, a symphonic score that has no official recording and that was lost without a trace, although **Celebration**, as a composition, was officially listed in Ellington's catalogue."

Regarding the 28 minutes of **Celebration**, Bragalini states categorically that he knows "everything" about the piece, has all of the articles on it, and the 1974 manuscript score. He described it as having "completely disappeared" from both the concert repertoire and Ellington-related areas of study. The reason for this, and the similar lack of attention given nowadays to **Three Black Kings**, was conveyed with considerable passion by Bragalini, who said it "lies in the concept that jazz is a music of performers, not a music of composers."

"Ellington didn't record these two works; he didn't play them. So they do not concern Ellingtonia, they don't even exist. (Yet) they are compositions beyond category, affecting both the classical and the jazz field. Each time Ellington ventured into the symphonic field he found a strong ostracism, both from fans and the press, not to mention record labels... It's a pity because Ellington's symphonic production is able to express an ancient faith that is rooted in 'Harlem renaissance'."

He continues: "The sublimation of black music's roots, blues and spirituals, their reinterpretation in a symphonic fashion, accompanied Ellington from Harlem in the 1920s until his deathbed. These ideas are found in both **Celebration** and **Three Black Kings**. Moreover, in these two

compositions investigated today there is a portrait of Ellington as a story-teller. The Ellington of the 1970s, like a patient grandfather, is still telling tales of blues, spirituals, and black kings, to his grandchildren.

"He called these stories 'portraits' or 'tone parallels' or 'swinging things about my people'. In any case, in any way you wish to call them, these stories are too fascinating not to be heard."

It is with **Three Black Kings** and its connection with Martin Luther King and choreographer Alvin Ailey that Bragalini told me some months later how he has discovered much new material. And it was a 2007 video recording with jazz and symphony orchestra of his own commissioned arrangement of the third movement, the Martin Luther King movement, "according to an Ellington idea", which was played at Woking to a rapt audience.

Bragalini is disparaging about the third movement as prepared by Luther Henderson and Mercer Ellington (and recorded by Mercer). There is "something wrong" about it and it is "not up to the task that was intended. Something is way off - for example, the heavy rough riff that echoes in the entire arrangement. Duke would never have approved it".

He cites Duke's sketch of **Elos** (mentioned by Stanley Dance in his notes for the *Private Collection*, KAZ CD 507/ Saja vol.9, 7 91233-2, comprising recordings from 1968), as showing what Duke himself wanted to arrange as the third movement, it being more poetic, and containing no "harmonic platitudes" as in Section C of the Martin Luther King movement (even though the harmonic progression is the same), and has "no clumsy riff".

So he had Italian arranger Bruno Tomasso do it again on the basis of **Elos**. Bragalini comments: "Harmonically speaking, Part B of **Elos** is much more poignant. The changes are similar but, as Ellington said: 'The art is in the cooking'."

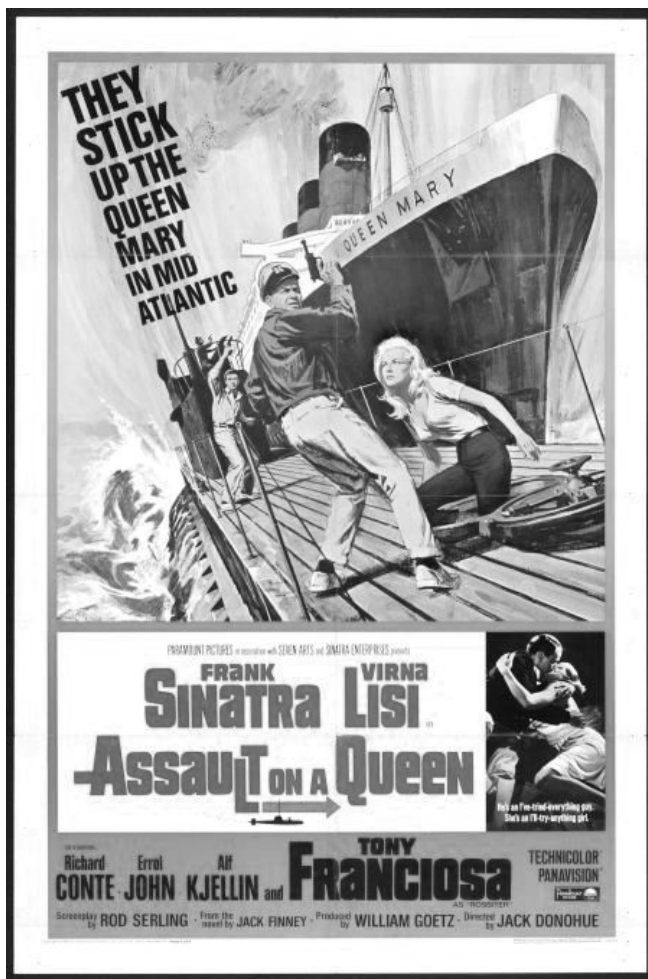
(Stanley Dance's CD note makes the link between the theme of **Elos**, or **Elous**, being used in **Three Black Kings** – GS).

Bragalini advises that his other discoveries about the symphonic Ellington include **La Scala** (47 hours of video interviews with La Scala musicians who recorded the composition, 20 unissued photos of the recording sessions, two alternative takes of the composition, complete transcriptions of the score and alternative takes, files from the Teatro La Scala Archive, Harlem renaissance connections), and **New World A-Comin'** (scores and analysis of all unissued recordings and the connection between the composition and its political roots). All in all, there is patently plenty of valid new material for a book, the publication of which is now imminent. It should have great historical significance as well as likely make for riveting reading.

As to the music itself, renowned US pianist Uri Caine played Luca's version of **Three Black Kings** in a concert arranged by Bragalini in Italy in Spring 2013. I emailed Caine about it and he replied: "I did play Luca's arrangements in March with a large orchestra of excellent conservatory musicians from Trento and I enjoyed playing the music very much."

What happens now? Hopefully Amsterdam will point the way forward.

Notes on *ASSAULT ON A QUEEN* by Joe Medjuck



Assault on a Queen doesn't live up to the promise of its credits: starring Frank Sinatra, screenplay by Rod Serling, from a book by Jack Finney (author of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Time after Time*), and music by Duke Ellington.

For readers of this journal the most disappointing part of the film will be the music. There are just over fifty minutes of music in the film, but despite what the credits say, less than half was written by Ellington, and only about fifteen minutes by the orchestra he assembled and conducted can be heard in the film. Often it's barely heard as it is buried under dialogue and sound effects.

I first became interested in the music for *Assault on a Queen* when I read an interview with Buddy Collette, in which he spoke of how much he'd enjoyed playing on the soundtrack and how good the resultant music was. I can no longer remember where I read or heard the interview. I wasn't planning to write anything at the time so took no notes. If anyone does know the exact quote or its source please let me know.

A little research turned up a little more information about Ellington's music for the film.

From *Music is my Mistress* (p194):

'In 1966, I did the background score for *Assault on a Queen*... Frank Sinatra told me confidentially that he wanted to talk to me about certain music for the picture. So one

night I flew over to Vegas for a visit and a conference, and all he said was, "When we open that safe door on the ship, I want you to *GO!*" We did. We made a track for that scene that was *really* going! I had taken eight of my guys out there, and augmented the group with about fourteen of those great Hollywood cats like Bud Shank and Buddy Collette. We put Jimmy Hamilton on clarinet with those two, and we did a track that was a chase. It was terrific. I still have a tape of it, and one day I'm going to talk Reprise into releasing it. I know Sinatra was unhappy that they took it out and didn't use it. After we left, they brought in another cat who did the boom-boom-boom—the old bass walking thing."

The New Desor lists four cues from the film as having been recorded on 19 and 20 January 1966 with one of the cues having a 'Studio orchestra cond. by Nathan Van Cleave added'. There is also a note stating: 'The remaining titles are not by Ellington, included *Blessings On The Night* performed by BSh (Bud Shank) and CGo (Catherine Gotthoffer) only. The studio orchestra was overdubbed on February 4.'

Klaus Stratemann's *Duke Ellington Day by Day and Film by Film* devotes six pages to the film, including two pages of photos from the Ellington recording session. Most importantly, he was able to obtain the cue sheets from the recording sessions as well as the cue sheet for the finished film.

Each of the cues is given a title, usually based on action or dialogue in the film. Stratemann reports that only two of the titles were chosen by Ellington: *Blessings on the Night* and *She Walks Well*, both of which were later performed by Ellington in concert, though he re-titled the latter *Beautiful Woman She Walks Well*.

Each cue was also given a number which referred to the reel in which the music was meant to be played, for example, *Mama Bahama*, Seq 1C is a cue meant to be the third cue in reel one. I say 'meant to be' because a cue might be meant for the first reel but eventually end up in reel 8 though it will still be referred to by its original number. Thus in this film 2C is used after 10B3X. And often a cue is used more than once.

Stratemann and *The New Desor* both refer to the Ellington recording sessions as 'pre-recordings', perhaps because in some cases other music was added, but it's a term that I've never heard used in this context (I work in the film business).

Both Stratemann and *The New Desor* say that it's now impossible to know which of the Ellington cues were recorded on which of the two days, so present them as one combined session. The musicians were Cat Anderson, Conte Condoli, Al Porcino, Cootie Williams (tp); Milt Bernhart, Hoyt Bohannon, Murray McEachern (tb), Ken Shroyer (b-tb); Jimmy Hamilton, Bud Shank, Johnny Hodges, Buddy Collette, Paul Gonsalves, Harry Carney (reeds); Duke Ellington (p/el p), John Lamb (b), Louie Bellson (d), Catherine Gotthoffer (harp).

I've found no identification for the musicians used on the recording sessions of 4 and 9 February 1966, nor have I found any record of who composed the music for the cues which were not by Ellington.

Stratemann reports that these sessions had 'arrangements & orchestrations by Herb Spencer, Nathan Cleave and Frank Comstock, employees of Paramount Pictures'. Presumably

some or all of these gentlemen composed the non-Ellington score (Comstock was a composer, though mainly for television).

The 4 February session was conducted by Nathan Van Cleave and used a bass, two percussion, six woodwinds, four trumpets and four trombones.

The 9 February session was conducted by Irving Talbot and used one bass, two percussion, five trombones, six woodwinds, five trumpets, one bongo, sixteen violins, six violas and six celli.

In his two sessions Ellington recorded nearly 31 minutes of music. 58 minutes of music were recorded at the following two sessions.

While working on a film at Paramount I asked a friend in the music department if they could find the tapes from the sessions and make me a copy. I received two CDs, but rather than the original session what they contained was the music used in the final film. The music is in the order in which it appears in the film and between the music cues there are long stretches of what I originally thought was silence but eventually realized was the dialogue from the film at an almost inaudibly low volume. Listening to these discs and watching the film, my observations differ slightly from Stratemann's.

He writes: 'One of the two themes from the film to achieve a degree of public exposure was inspired by the film's leading lady, Virna Lisi. The film's love theme, it opens with piano and harp, to introduce a trombone solo by Murray McEachern, followed by a trumpet-harp bridge (Williams & Gotthoffer), before Bud Shank plays an extended flute solo. The theme is known as *Beautiful Woman* or - more descriptively - *Beautiful Woman Walks Well* (also known as *BWWW*; *She Walks Well* in Paramount files) in reference to what Ellington termed Virna Lisi's "very European walk".'

Stratemann's description of *She Walks Well* doesn't exactly match anything in the film or on my CDs. I suspect that he's referring to a cue from the Ellington sessions entitled *Under the Stairs* (it should be *Under the Stars*), which begins with *She Walks Well* and then segues into *Blessings On The Night* but I don't hear any trumpet-harp duet.

Stratemann continues: 'The only other number to emerge from *Assault on a Queen* as a separate piece was titled *Blessings On The Night*. It featured the clarinet of Jimmy Hamilton and Harry Carney's bass clarinet, and was one of the numbers occasionally performed during the European tour of early 1967, though far less frequently than *BWWW*.'

This does not describe any cue in the film but rather the arrangement played in concert, as described in *The New Desor*. In the film it is performed mainly as a duet between Gotthoffer and Shank; it was recorded during the Ellington sessions.

Last year *Assault on a Queen* was released on Blu-ray in the US. Having obtained a copy, and using the cue sheets in Stratemann, I attempted to identify the cues as heard in the film. I refer to the musicians in the non-Ellington session as the "studio orchestra".

The Blu-ray was issued not by Paramount but by a company called Olive Films who have added their logo to the beginning of the film. That logo lasts eight seconds, so if

you're watching the film on another issue without the extra logo, all my notations will be off by eight seconds.

The score begins over the Paramount logo, and for 40 seconds we hear Ellington's composition *She Walks Well*, as performed by the studio orchestra with strings. After 40 seconds it segues into the score by the unknown composer. Ironically that is what we hear when Ellington's credit appears on screen.

At the 4:06 mark we get our first pure Ellington, a cue titled *Mama Bahama* featuring Johnny Hodges. It begins on an exterior shot of a bar, but unfortunately when we cut inside the music's volume is lowered and heard as if coming from an unseen juke box. After exactly one minute it ends. Then at the 5:30 mark new music begins, also as if from the unseen juke box, and we hear Ellington's version of *She Walks Well* for 3 minutes and 23 seconds. The scene ends with Sinatra repeating the line "She walks well".

At 8:50 we dissolve to the next scene as the music segues to a solo harp version of *Blessings On The Night* from the Ellington sessions.

At 10:15 there is 17 seconds of a cue titled *Can He Swim* which is actually a studio orchestra version of *Mama Bahama*. It continues over a fade to black and then a fade up to the next scene.

At 14:30 there is a 3 minute and 4 second cue which Stratemann lists as *The First Drive*, but which I presume should be called *The First Dive*. This music is not by Ellington.

At 20:11 we once again hear *She Walks Well*, as performed by the studio orchestra on 4 February with strings added which were recorded on 9 February. Also a very weird bongo is added at one point as punctuation to the scene, at the newspaper photo of the Queen Mary.

At 28:16 we hear another version of *The First Dive*, which runs for eight minutes. I believe that from the 30-minute mark to about 32:20, the music is composed and conducted by Ellington. Unfortunately it has what sounds like sawing strings laid over it as well as sound effects. I'm basing this on listening as well as the cue sheets, which somewhat contradict me. I think this is part of 4B-5A which was recorded by Ellington, but although the studio orchestra recorded "bridges" for these cues they did so on 4 February when there were no strings present. Perhaps what I hear as strings is something else.

At the 37-minute mark there is a non-Ellington cue entitled *Skeleton Crew* which plays for 90 seconds. This was recorded by the studio orchestra on 4 February and was augmented with strings recorded on 9 February.

At 43:10 we hear the studio orchestra playing yet another version of *Mama Bahama* which after about 10 seconds segues into *She Walks Well* and 45 seconds later segues to the *Blessings On The Night* from the Ellington sessions for 43 seconds. It's basically a harp/flute duet but if you listen carefully you'll also hear bass clarinet and drums as well.

There is a long section with no music, and then at 56:10 we hear 21 seconds of the studio orchestra playing *She Walks Well* segueing into *Mama Bahama* (titled *Mama Bahama Islander*) for 27 seconds, then a reprise of *The First Dive* for 53 seconds.

At 58:15 we hear a reprise of the studio orchestra's version of *Mama Bahama Islander* for a minute and nine seconds.

At 1:00:15 we hear the cue titled *Under the Stars* from the Ellington session, which the final cue sheet breaks down into its component parts: 52 seconds of *She Walks Well* and 1 minute 46 seconds of *Blessings On the Night*.

At 1:04:23 there is for 58 seconds a non-Ellington cue titled *Hatch Secured*.

At 1:06:15 there is 2 minutes and 16 seconds of a repeat of *The First Dive* plus some added cues and sweeteners, all non-Ellington.

At 1:11:24 there is a 25-second cue titled *Bands 3 and 4* that is obviously by the studio orchestra, but the number listed on the final cue sheet is not to be found in any of the sessions; this cue is a variation of the *First Dive* theme.

At 1:15:46 there is 1 minute and 4 seconds of *The First Dive* with slightly different sweeteners and a different ending, all non-Ellington.

At 1:18:16 we hear a non-Ellington cue titled *Gentlemen the Queen* for 1 minute 23 seconds.

At 1:25:58 there is a brief non-Ellington cue titled *An Explosive Situation* for 9 seconds.

At 1:26:42 we have a 10-minute 9-second cue made up of *The First Dive*, *Gentlemen the Queen* and *The Big Heist* pts 1-4. This is the cue Ellington complained about in *Music is My Mistress*. But some of what he composed and conducted is in this cue. At 1:30:47 and 1:31:50 there are a few bars where we can hear Jimmy Hamilton. At 1:32:58 there is about two minutes from the Ellington sessions including part of a Bud Shank solo. There are probably other places in this cue where a bar or two of the Ellington sessions are used as stings — I think I hear Cat Anderson a couple of times.

At 1:43:55 the final cue begins. It is all by the studio orchestra and consists of 33 seconds of *Finale*, 43 seconds of *She Walks Well* and another 1 minute and 19 seconds of *Finale*.

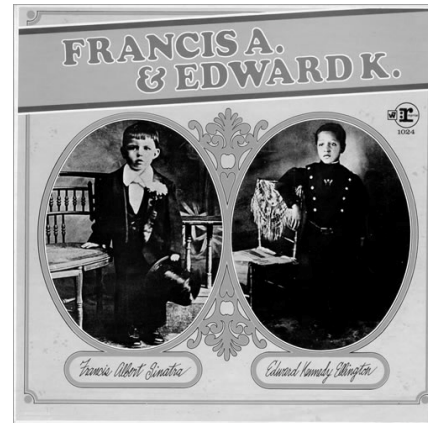
If anyone else is as obsessive as I am and wants to follow these notes while watching the film, please feel free to correct any mistakes.

Ellington's statement in *Music is My Mistress* leads me to hope that someday his original recording session will be released.

One unadulterated sample of Ellington's music for the film is available: a combination DVD/CD entitled *Bud Shank: Against the Tide* includes a CD cut entitled *The Big Heist* which is 5 minutes, 48 seconds of the cue Ellington described in *Music is My Mistress*. Somewhere I read that after the session someone gave a copy of the cue to Shank saying something like: 'This is too good, they'll never use it in the film.' Again, I don't remember where I read this (it may have been on-line) but if anyone can find it, please let me know.

Maybe the late Bud Shank's estate will someday release the entire ten-minute cue. Even better, maybe the tape that Ellington says he kept for himself will be released, or perhaps some private collectors have a copy and will share it with the rest of us. We can only hope.

Francis Eh?



The most famous collaboration between Duke Ellington and Frank Sinatra, of course, was the 1968 album *Francis A and Edward K* on the Reprise label. The two sessions took place at United Recorders, 6052 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles on 11 and 12 December, 1967. The second of the sessions therefore fell on Sinatra's fifty-second birthday.

In his book *The Music of Billy May: A Discography*, Jack Mirtle refers to the less than easy circumstances of the album's creation. He quotes an interview Billy May gave to Stanley Dance for *Jazz Journal International*, as it then was, in 1982 for the series *Big Band Memories*. May recalled:

"When Billy Strayhorn died, they had been talking about doing an album with Frank Sinatra. I felt very flattered when I was called to do it. I got with Frank and Sonny Burke, who picked the tunes, got the keys and everything. 'They don't read very well,' he said, 'so you've got to rehearse.' After I had written the stuff, Bill Miller (Frank's pianist and an old friend from the Charlie Barnet band) and I flew up to Seattle, where they were working. We rehearsed. It was unbelievable.

"Hodges was there and Lawrence Brown. Lawrence's hypochondria had got to the point that he did everything with his topcoat on. Cootie Williams was back, more ornery than ever. Paul Gonsalves and Russell Procope came in so loaded!

"The four trumpets were Cootie, Mercer, Cat and Herbie Jones. When I'd asked to hear it (the section), Mercer would be blowing straight at me, Cootie off to one side, Cat in another direction and Herbie — he was reading a book about cameras! The trumpet section really wasn't making it on the record session, but it wasn't my place to say so. 'Let's try it again' was all I could keep saying. It helped a lot when Al Porcino came in and sat back there.¹

"*Indian Summer* on which Johnny Hodges soloed, was a classic. Oh, God, he played good on that! Duke himself didn't play much on the dates. I remember his playing the melody on *Poor Butterfly*, but Jimmy Jones was at the piano most of the time. Duke would be in the control room talking to Frank and Sonny Burke until we were ready for Frank to come out and sing.

"Some of the tracks turned out pretty good."

Ian Bradley

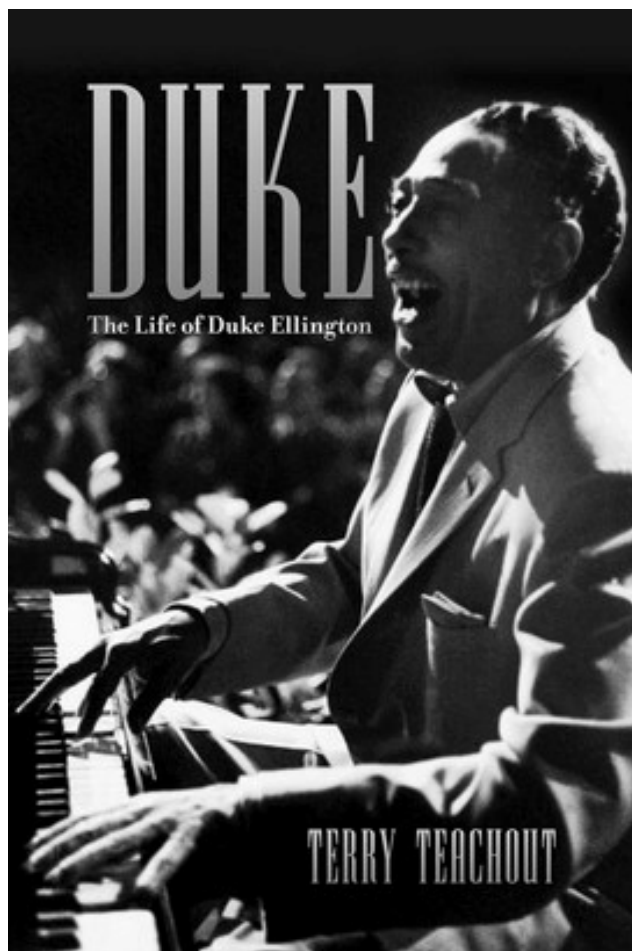
¹ In 1995, Billy May recalled that the "chops" of Cootie and Herb Jones gave out and that Al Porcino was added for *I Like the Sunrise*. Al Porcino died on 31 December, 2013 in Munich where he lived.

Duke – The Life of Duke Ellington

by **Terry Teachout**

The Robson Press 2013. 465 pages + index

£25 (price on dust jacket)



A recurring flaw in books about Duke's life and career has been a tendency to concentrate on the first half of the story, to the mid-1940s, at the expense of the second half. Some writers avoid this trap. Janna Steed did, in her *Spiritual Biography*, and so did DESUK's David Bradbury; two of the shortest and most tightly constrained books are two of the most balanced. Teachout's coverage promises well. At page 180 out of 360 he's in 1939, the year of Duke's fortieth birthday, and about right for the 75-year lifespan. But it's not so good for the career, whose midpoint comes in the late 1940s (just when depends on when you decide it began). He's discussing 1949 on page 266, and with 90 of his 360 pages of text to go one fears this will be yet another sketchy approach to the later years.

So it proves, though Teachout is much better than Collier, who might as well have written, around p250; 'that's it, I've had enough, it was all downhill from 1943 on, and I'm going home to bed.' But players of real consequence are mentioned only in passing – Baker, Jackson, Woodman; or not at all – Sears, Cook, Lamb. Nance fares better, but it doesn't bode well that reaction to his arrival is summarized (p218) by Harry Lim's superficial rejection in *Down Beat*, recycled straight from page 241 of Collier.

I don't need to spell out the detail of such a chronicle of the last half of Ellington's career for *BL* readers. It's all there: the first LPs; the sweeping dismissal of the Capitols; Newport and the first of the late Columbias; the world travelling; the final disintegration in the 1970s. At this level of discourse most DESUK members know the story before Teachout re-tells it. He's writing for the general reader and the neophyte of course, not for us. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that his account of these years contains little that is fresh; and accuracy and balance are more important, not less, in a book written for the uninitiated. That said, I was moved by the short account of Duke's final illness and death.

There are signs of over-egging. *Satin Doll*, we are told, is one of 'only two truly noteworthy recordings' for Capitol – the other is of course the piano trios. Turning to *Historically Speaking* - *The Duke*, Teachout focusses predictably on Hodeir's attack on the remake of *Ko-Ko*, but adds that other tracks are 'indifferent' – he doesn't say which. The other Bethlehem LP, which focusses mainly on standard songs, is unsurprisingly judged, equally predictably, 'less interesting'.

It's a shame, because he starts well. His Prologue goes straight to the heart of the story, the build-up and reaction to the first Carnegie Hall concert and *Black Brown and Beige*. He writes well too (he's a journo on the *Wall Street Journal*). The narrative flow sweeps the reader along from the first page. It's a 'good read'. He makes the point, often overlooked, that most of the adverse reviews of the 1943 concert were written by the newspapers' *classical* music critics. He touches on Ellington as composer, personnel manager, self-centred egoist manipulating the people on whom he relied to run his life. Early mention of these important issues promises well.

But there are warning bells from the start. He seems to accept at face value the idea that Duke's son Mercer had a brief creative flowering during the 1941 ASCAP ban. He says Duke repeated the Carnegie Hall programme at Boston later in the week without making changes. He characterizes Paul Bowles as a 'classical composer of note'. There were times (1945, 1965) when Duke performed far more than 'snippets' from *BB and B*. At a more basic level, he misdates Victor's studio excerpt recordings to 1945. Sometimes he writes tendentiously, and sometimes he's simply wrong. Such things raise the eyebrows of the knowledgeable, and arouse fears that the newcomer will be misled. To enumerate all the examples in the book would be tedious, though maybe it should be done.

Here are a couple of straight errors of fact. Teachout tells us (page 304) that Duke met Queen Elizabeth in 1958 in London. I've never seen that suggested before, anywhere. He must have simply failed to verify what popped up in his head. And Lawrence Brown did not go 'marching off to war' in 1943 (p252). He thought he'd have to. But he didn't, and soon returned to the band.

Here's an instance of tendentious writing: 'Never a natural melodist, he continued to collaborate with Johnny Hodges and some of his other sidemen on many of his mid-forties hits....' Leaving aside the 'natural melodist' assertion, I've never read any suggestion that he ever 'collaborated' with the sidemen from whom he 'stole their stuff'. It seems to have been a characteristic of Ellington that he had great difficulty in collaborating with anybody,

whether his musical associate Billy, or his women, or the Internal Revenue, or his son. The inability is a recurring theme of Teachout's book. Yet he uses the word 'collaborate' to describe the process by which a warm-up lick (or a melodic line which someone sold to him outright) became an Ellington song. What does 'composer' mean?

It's a shame, because I found much to like in the first half of the story. Until Teachout, I hadn't appreciated the extent to which tightening segregation undermined the aspirations of the black Washington strivers among whom Duke grew up. If he plays down the European tours of 1933 and 1939, he spells out the significance of Duke's venture into the US South in 1934 with care. He reminds us that the Swing Era did not make life easier for black bandleaders. He's good on the way Duke adapted the ideas of his musicians to his purposes (p115), with apt quotations from T S Eliot and Billy Strayhorn, though his view of Ellington as a *petit maître* who couldn't write melodies and couldn't develop and organize extended musical discourse clouds his judgment and leads to bias and selectivity. In the sketchier account of the second half of Duke's career, works like *Idiom '59*, *Ad Lib On Nippon*, *La Plus Belle Africaine*, which could be adduced to challenge his view, go unmentioned. His opinion of *Creole Rhapsody* and *Reminiscing In Tempo* might carry more weight if he'd mentioned Bishop and Schuller, as well as Hughes and Hammond. He does, to be fair, cite Howland on the 1935 work. And he acknowledges his debt to Lasker and other Ellington experts, and also to *DEMS Bulletin* and *Blue Light*, which is gratifying.

Teachout makes little attempt to get to grips with the music, though he opines about it frequently. In a sense this is fair enough. He doesn't claim that his is a critical biography with regard to the Ellington *oeuvre*. On the other hand he writes much about Ellington's strengths and weaknesses as a composer, frequently linking both to the fact that Duke found it impossible to operate independently of his performing troupe, the band. His working to (and beyond) last-minute deadlines, his problems equipping himself with the skills to negotiate extended form as this is conventionally understood, his difficulties with a co-operative venture like a Broadway show, are themes to which Teachout returns repeatedly. So it is a weakness that the book doesn't demonstrate better acquaintance with how the band sounded, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s when the going was tough and his relations with record companies were not always happy. It's a big ask, but it's necessary, I'd have thought, for a biographer who addresses Ellington's later career. Teachout mentions the video of the 1958 Amsterdam concert and Atlantic's *Great Paris Concert* set, which is a big advance on Collier. But the Treasury Shows, the live broadcasts from 1949, the Pacific North West concerts of the early 1950s are just three of the readily available live recordings which lend perspective to the second half of the Ellington story. I'd go further. That story cannot be satisfactorily told without reference to documents like these. I recently enjoyed reading Teachout's earlier book on Louis, though I'm no Armstrong expert. I'd like to know how it went down with people who are.

It's twenty-five years since Collier's book, and while Hasse (1993) and Nicholson (1999) did much to correct Collier's imbalance, neither book is strictly a biography.

Teachout is an advance on Collier, and I imagine that his will be the biography to which people will turn from now on, until some commissioning editor asks someone else to take on the task. It's a poisoned chalice. Unlike Louis, Ellington was no memoirist or letter writer. He communicated by telephone, in an age when phone calls were neither recorded nor hacked. He had no confidants (how could a man who was obsessed with protecting himself by concealing himself have confidants?). Many of his musicians recorded their recollections and opinions for the oral historians, but Duke himself was dead before that industry got going. If he hadn't been, he wouldn't have let slip the mask. The would-be Ellington biographer is not to be envied.

Yet it can be done, and occasionally Teachout forgets his biases and petty preoccupations – the lefties, always dodgy; the medley, invariably 'dreaded' – , and sheds a shaft of light on the enigma that was Ellington. He quotes (p305) an observation I've never seen before, made by John D Voelker, the lawyer who wrote *Anatomy of A Murder*. Writing in a Detroit newspaper in 1967 he recalls watching Ellington during the filming of his novel: 'I felt gradually drawn to him, not because I savour disillusion, but rather because I sensed that, in his case at least, [his disillusion] masked great sensitivity and pride and even, however finely veiled, a vein of melancholy and loneliness.' What a fresh springboard for a biography of Duke Ellington that clear-sighted observation could be.

Roger Boyes

The Juggler of Notre Dame: a personal response to Terry Teachout's *The Life of Duke Ellington*

Last year, I read F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* for the first time. The story is narrated by Nick Carraway, a visitor to the eponymous hero's exclusive home in Long Island, New York in 1922. The origins of Gatsby's wealth and his social success are mysterious to say the least but Carraway idolizes the man, particularly his romantic devotion to Daisy, the wife of Tom Buchanan, an acquaintance of Carraway's from their college days. Buchanan has a much more prosaic view of Gatsby's success, saying, "I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him and I wasn't far wrong." Buchanan is determined to expose the small time crook behind the smoke and mirrors of Gatsby's reputation.

Had *The Great Gatsby* been narrated by Tom Buchanan rather than Nick Carraway, then we would have a work which approximates the tone of much of Terry Teachout's new biography *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington*. Indeed, the description Fitzgerald gives of Jay Gatsby could apply equally well to Teachout's view of Ellington:

"(He) sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about his Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty."

In interview, Teachout has made his intention to look at Ellington's life and achievements with a very level and clear-eyed gaze. He said, for example:

"...too many of Ellington's fans don't want to know the truth about their hero, who was both a great man and a deeply flawed one. Me, I believe that the greatest tribute that a biographer can pay to a genius — and that's what Ellington was — is to tell the truth about him, even when it hurts. *Especially* when it hurts."

Teachout's claim to telling 'the truth' is an odd one since his book was titled *A Life...* rather than *The Life...* at his insistence (It was the UK publishers who insisted on the use of the definite article in the title). But, then, to rehearse an age-old problem: what *is* the truth?

I was about a third of the way through *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington* when I realised precious little legwork must have gone into the writing of the book. Where were the new interviews, for example? True, forty years after Ellington's death there aren't going to be that many people who knew Ellington personally who survive today to comment but there are some significant players (Patricia Willard, for example) who could have contributed much to bringing Ellington to life again on the page. The answer is to be found at the back of the book where Terry Teachout very candidly confesses that his work is "not so much a work of scholarship as an act of synthesis, a narrative biography that is substantially based on the work of academic scholars and other researchers..." No A H Lawrence, Teachout is scrupulous in acknowledging his sources but a 'synthesis', however well it is written, is what it is. If your shelves are groaning already with books about Ellington's work and life, then you need only decide if you wish to buy into Mr Teachout's particular 'interpretations' (his word) of previous scholarship, interpretations which are, he says, his own. Interpretations are not 'the truth'. Expect no new revelations direct from the horse's mouth, either. Terry Teachout has expressed in interview his regrets about what is not available. He said:

"I wish we had Ellington correspondence. I wish that he had been a man who might have kept a diary. He was not inclined to introspect outside the form of music. Now Ellington's music is itself a musical autobiography, a kind of rendering of his inner life and his understanding about it but because Ellington was so careful about keeping that private life private we don't know how he felt about it in a way that we might want to. We certainly know about what happened in it. We know a great deal about his love life. We know about the women. We know how he behaved toward them. We know what we need to know now but I wish that we could see some of it from his point of view."

Despite his best efforts to the contrary, what with lurid details of an alleged *ménage à trois* between Ellington, Fredi Washington and Lawrence Brown, in truth (that word again), Teachout runs up the white flag with regard to the vexed and thorny problem of Ellington's inner life fairly early on in the book. Writing of Ellington's marriage to Edna, Teachout asks:

"Had he ever loved her? Or was their marriage an empty vessel of necessity, and later convenience? Fanny Holmes, the wife of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., said that Washington is 'full of famous men and the women they married when they were young'. Perhaps the Ellingtons were that kind of couple — but we can never know."

We can never know? That is some admission for a biographer to make with ninety per cent of the biography

still to go. Being told that loveless, empty marriages seem to be a problem specific to the Washington area is scant consolation, coming as it does, in any case, from a woman whose principal claim to fame seems to be that she was married to a famous man. Is Fanny, in actual fact, talking about herself? We need to be told. Perhaps she will be the subject of Mr Teachout's next biography.

With Ellington's countenance maintaining its Buddha-like mask of inscrutability on the subject of his private life, that only leaves Teachout the music. The main tenets of Teachout's argument with regard to Ellington's musical achievements were summed up quite appositely by a Mr Bill Desowitz, reviewing the biography for the website *USA Today*. Mr Desowitz states:

"Ellington wasn't formally trained or even well-versed in classical music, so he found it difficult to write hummable tunes or structurally develop themes with any complexity. But he could meld together disparate musical fragments from his band members' solo performances, mastering a 'mosaic method of composition.' While not a flagrant plagiarist, Ellington still took most of the credit."

One is left to wonder what all the fuss was about.

Desowitz states the case a little baldly but given what Teachout has written, this is a perfectly reasonable summation of the critic's position. Time and again, Teachout loads the dice against Ellington in terms of his selection of the 'facts' and the emphasis he gives them.

Take the vexed issue of the composing credits for *Mood Indigo*, *In A Sentimental Mood*, *Sophisticated Lady* or any number of titles that could be said to comprise Ellington's 'greatest hits'. To whom do you listen? Given that what passes for truth is rarely absolute, whose opinion should we value most? On this particular issue, Terry Teachout is clear:

"Billy Strayhorn said it best," he writes in the book. He then quotes Strayhorn:

"So this guy says you and he wrote it, but he thinks he wrote it. He thinks you just put it down on paper. But what you did was put it down on paper, harmonize it, straightened out the bad phrases, and added things to it, so you could hear the finished product. Now, really, who wrote it?"

"It was ever thus.

"But the proof is that these people don't go somewhere else and write beautiful music. You don't hear anything else from them. You do from Ellington."

If Strayhorn really did say it 'best', (and who is better placed than Strayhorn — by the evidence Teachout himself assembles in this book — to pass judgement on Ellington's appropriation of the work of others as his own?) then why is it that this particular chapter closes not with Billy's views on the subject but the critic's own contention, expressed in terms that read like the verdict of a disappointed high school principal in an end-of-term report on one of his students:

"... his (Ellington's) lifelong reluctance to give full credit to his collaborators places his personality in an unflattering light" (p 116).

Teachout himself argues that this appropriation of credit and diverted royalties was "anything but unusual" in the band business. (Surely Ellington suffered exactly the same fate himself at the hands of Irving Mills?). He will not give Ellington a pass, however, because the bandleader was "a great composer". Given the quietly devastating way

Teachout goes about demolishing that idea (of which more anon) this is a particularly savage irony. Teachout writes: "...many of his sidemen (were) great soloists, and some of the songs for whose melodies they were partly or wholly responsible became standards that are still performed throughout the world. Hence it *matters* who wrote *Mood Indigo* and *Sophisticated Lady*."

Ellington's reputation is damned twice over, then: it is built upon a songbook of standards some of which he only half- or quarter- or some other indeterminable fraction – wrote and quite a few of which he didn't have any hand in at all. The income stream those compositions generated, moreover, which kept the 'expensive gentlemen' on the road long after the fireworks of the Swing era had burnt themselves out and left nothing but the acrid smell of cordite, should presumably have gone straight into the pockets of said expensive gentlemen themselves.

The story of Billy Strayhorn is another stick with which to beat Ellington. His presence on Ellington's payroll is the pretext for launching the following broadside:

"When it came to high culture, Ellington was a poseur, a strangely incurious man who knew next to nothing about classical music and read not systematically but at random, taking care to display *Remembrance of Things Past* on his shelves for the benefit of journalists who assumed he had read the whole thing from cover to cover, just as they believed him whenever he said that he had just finished writing his first opera (or symphony or Broadway show). Not Strayhorn." (p. 198)

Quite what the relevance of these assertions is to an understanding of what Ellington did achieve as an artist escapes me. Having admitted defeat on an insight of any significance into Ellington's personal life, presumably Mr Teachout had to fill his pages with something. For preference, I would rather some consideration as to what made Ellington's music unique than gratuitous slights on Ellington's reading habits. But such is life... *a life*...

Teachout characterizes the relationship between Ellington and Strayhorn predictably enough along the lines already established with Ellington cast in the role of 'Monster', appropriating the younger man's efforts as his own and never giving sufficient credit where it is due. Even where there is direct evidence to the contrary: when the famous profile of Ellington, which appeared in *The New Yorker* under the title *The Hot Bach*, for example, refers to Strayhorn as 'a talented composer in his own right', Teachout still finds it 'dismissive' of Strayhorn. He poses such questions as:

"Could the bourgeois from U Street who learned in childhood the importance of keeping up appearances have been secretly jealous of his bilingual protégé from Pittsburgh, who turned himself by sheer force of will into that which his patron longed to be? And if he was, might that jealousy come between the two men?"

Is the reader meant to take these as rhetorical questions? Where is the evidence that Ellington was 'jealous' (and does Teachout, in any case, mean 'envious'?) of Strayhorn? Without that evidence, questions such as these simply read like the narrative hooks designed to trap the unwary into making sure they catch the next instalment of some hackneyed daytime soap. Tune in next week...

In order to hit the narrative beats it is soon time for Strayhorn to take his sabbatical from the band in the early fifties and to be dispatched terminally over the course of a couple of pages later in the book. The grievous nature of the loss of his friend to Ellington is grudgingly acknowledged with the qualification that Ellington had in any case been taking steps to cover his arranging companion's declining output for some time and the chief effect of Strayhorn's demise was merely to concentrate Ellington's mind ever more furiously on intimations of his own mortality.

Was Strayhorn's talent not only assumed into but subsumed by Ellington's musical world? The evidence would seem to suggest that largely it was. How did Strayhorn feel about that? We can never know. Even attempting an opinion on the matter is to dabble in the stuff of other people's souls. Terry Teachout seems ill qualified to do this if his ruminations on the significance of the lyrics to *Strange Feeling* (from *The Perfume Suite*) are anything to go by. Relegated, mercifully, only to a footnote, and in spite of his assertion on page 197 that, "by all accounts, Strayhorn was at ease with his homosexuality," the biographer speculates that the lyric ("This strange feeling is seeping through my blood/ This strange feeling is sleeping cuddled up inside me") "... seems to refer to (Strayhorn's) homosexuality." I hope not. Had the lyricist of *Something to Live For* wished to reflect so publically on his sexual orientation, one would hope he would have been able to give more profound expression to it than the bathetic 'strange feeling'.

Teachout administers the final hammer blow to his subject's reputation with his assessment of Ellington's qualities as a composer. In his review of the book, Ted Gioia says, "I suspect many Ellington fans will feel Teachout has gone too far, if not in his personal revelations, then certainly in his constant suggestions that Ellington's skills were inadequate to his ambitions."

These suggestions are made constantly indeed: Ellington's story is framed by a Prologue in which the 'chronic procrastinator' completes *Black, Brown and Beige* only hours ahead of his début at Carnegie Hall in 1943. "If *Black, Brown and Beige* mattered so much to Ellington," the critic writes addressing the elephant Teachout himself has introduced into the room, "then why did he wait so long to start writing it?" He calls the piece "a patchwork, a not-quite-unified composition in which stretches of sustained musical argument were linked by transitional passages that sounded as though they had been lifted from the score of a Broadway musical. It was clear that the last movement had been written too hurriedly, for its sections barely hung together." Teachout's cataloguing of those longer form pieces composed in the late forties in the wake of *Black, Brown and Beige* serve only, in Teachout's opinion, as a litany of Ellington's inadequacies as a composer of long form pieces. On the subject of *The Tattooed Bride* and *Harlem*, specifically, the critic concludes that "they are extended pieces of programmatic 'symphonic jazz' that consist of more or less end-stopped musical episodes played in continuous succession, capped by codas that reprise the main themes in order to create an impression of stretched unity. And despite their harmonic resourcefulness and matchlessly colourful scoring, (they) are melodically

nondescript, making them sound more aimless than they are.”

Much of this is Terry Teachout’s opinion to which, of course, he is entitled. For my money, his day job as cultural commentator and Broadway theatre critic for *The Wall Street Journal* has influenced the tone of this book and the terms by which he judges the merits or otherwise of Ellington’s music, thus casting the artist, variously, as the poor man’s Gershwin or the poor man’s Copland. Quoting Alec Wilder (himself a frustrated miniaturist) hardly lends weight to these assertions either. Given that Teachout’s judgements, moreover, are often couched in the acerbic language of the critic’s pithy put-down and given also the average critic’s propensity for sending his opinions out upon the world as if they are fact, in my opinion, whilst it is scrupulously researched and exactly written, this biography does not serve well the sheer scope and durability of Ellington’s singular achievements.



Duke Ellington lived by metaphor. ‘Tone parallel’ is the phrase he used, a phrase which, Teachout tells us, Ellington himself coined. For half a century, working within usually nothing more than the limitations of the dance band, Ellington and his collaborators, Billy Strayhorn in particular, created music from this standard instrumentation which scales the heights of human experience and frequently transcends it. I prefer metaphor to opinion. Metaphor is largely more forgiving than opinion and certainly much more edifying. Ellington himself gives us a very telling metaphor for his life. Teachout quotes it but its larger significance seems to have escaped him. Writing about the first *Concert of Sacred Music*, Teachout refers to the lengthy tap dance routine by Bunny Briggs incorporated into the programme. The explanation the pianist, bandleader and composer gives for its inclusion serves, to my mind, as the perfect metaphor for the life of Duke Ellington, personal and professional. Referring to the medieval legend of the juggler of Notre Dame, Ellington recounts:

“It has been said once that a man who could not play the organ or any of the instruments of the symphony, accompanied his worship by juggling. He was not the world’s best juggler but it was the one thing he did best. And so it was accepted by God.”

Ian Bradley

***A Drum Is A Woman* - The Guildhall Jazz Band and Singers Directed by Martin Hathaway**

New recording to be launched at Conference

I was privileged recently to be given a pre-production copy of the compact disc being launched during the forthcoming International Duke Ellington Conference in Amsterdam.

A Drum Is A Woman was performed in its entirety by The Guildhall Jazz Band and Singers under the direction of Martin Hathaway on 24 May 2012 as part of the Woking Conference. It is a recording of that performance which comprises this new album.

The original album has always been amongst my favourite Ellington/ Strayhorn works. Never performed again in full by the Orchestra after its initial broadcast as part of the ‘US Steel Hour’, the music was revived for a season by the Claude Bolling Big Band which was also released as a compact disc (I seem to have acquired two versions – one with the narrative in English, the other in French). Neither Ellington’s original Columbia album nor the Bolling version present the full score. The Guildhall Jazz Band does so here, however, including the elusive *Pomegranate*, working as the band was from Tony Faulkner’s transcriptions. His own DERO performed the work in The Venue, Leeds, in April 2005 (See Michael Kilpatrick’s review in *BL* 12/2, p12)

The musicians and singers more than rise to the challenge of breathing new life into Ellington’s rich and mischievous allegorical fashioning of the origins of jazz. Theirs is a bravura performance which captures the nuances and humour of the writing, the modern stereo recording allowing the listener to hear the vivid detail in the charts.

The quality of the vocal performances, including Sam Merrick’s onerous task of following Ellington himself as the narrator, is particularly striking, redolent of the era they are seeking to present. If the balance of the recording is tipped a little in favour of the instruments, well, that only adds to the charm, conjuring the immediacy of live performance all the more effectively.

The musicianship, as one would expect from this aggregation, is first class, particularly the searing take-off of Buddy Bolden (via Clark Terry). This is a spirited and refreshing take on this too-neglected work, the enthusiastic involvement of so many young people only adding sauce to the dish.

More than a history of the music, its sense of romance, of irony, of the relationship between the artist and his art, *A Drum Is A Woman* always rewards the listener’s close attention with something new. Part tone parallel, part musical Mardi Gras, this work is ripe for reappraisal. This excellent new recording should be an instrumental part in that reappraisal.

The album is bound to be a collector’s item. Contact Geoff Smith (details on page 2) to secure a copy.

Ian Bradley

Clouds In My Heart

Clouds In My Heart, a 32-bar composition (AABA) credited to Barney Bigard, Duke Ellington and Irving Mills, was recorded in the American Record Corporation studios at 1776 Broadway in New York on 18 May 1932. The same session yielded *Slippery Horn* and *Blue Ramble*. *Blue Ramble* was the only one of the three to be issued, on Brunswick 6336, coupled with *The Sheik Of Araby*, recorded two days earlier. *Clouds In My Heart* and *Slippery Horn* languished in the vaults until 1947, when George Avakian unearthed them and coupled them for issue on Columbia 37299, as part of a 4-disc album *The Ellington Special*, numbered C-127. The familiar version of *Slippery Horn*, much brisker, was recorded and issued in the early months of 1933. In the essay he wrote for his Mosaic set *The Complete 1932-40 Brunswick, Columbia and Master Recordings*, Steven Lasker states that *Clouds* was originally recorded as *Harlem Romance*.

Soloists are Barney, Duke and Tricky Sam Nanton. Duke sets the tempo with a four-bar introduction. The theme is stated by muted trumpets, very much in the manner of *Lazy Rhapsody*, recorded a few months earlier. Against them Barney weaves a beautifully relaxed counter-melody for the first sixteen bars. The clarinet takes over the lead in the release, against held chords from the band until the final two bars, which are a 'break'. The closing A section is entirely orchestral. A rising flourish from Duke rounds off the chorus, and leads into a 16-bar contrasting interlude, or verse if you prefer; it comprises eight bars, played twice. Otto Hardwicke's voice is prominent, and a triplet figure in the brass adds further interest to the ensemble. The recapitulation of the theme is shortened to ABA, presumably to fit the piece onto a 10-inch 78. Barney takes the first A, solo, with well-judged piano accompaniment, and Tricky takes the release, with rhythm only. As in the first chorus, everyone cuts out after bar 6 for the two-bar clarinet break. The final A section restores the timbre of the opening 16 bars. Barney returns at the fourth bar, and the piece ends with a final *rall*.

A recently-discovered second take, matrix B 11867-A, is one of the eight previously unissued tracks on Mosaic's 11CD set. There are minor differences only. Barney's clarinet line in the first half of the first chorus is more free-ranging, and so less successful as a countermelody. Against this I find his long line in B more elegant than the one on the issued take. After the break in chorus 2 Barney returns at the second bar of the final A section, which suggests that his late re-entry on the issued take was unintentional, and a possible reason why it didn't surface until 1947.

I can see no other reason why *Clouds In My Heart* should have been suppressed in 1932, but given that it was, it made sense to re-record Barney's tune in 1936, when the opportunity arose at his first 'small-group' session in the Associated Cinema Studios at 1357 Gordon Street in Hollywood, on 19 December. Steven Lasker reports that on this occasion it was listed in the Variety ledgers as *Never Again*. It's tempting to read this title as Barney's initial reaction to Duke's suggestion that his composition should be disinterred after four years. We'll never know, but we do know that the familiar title was established around this time

at the latest. *Clouds In My Heart*, so titled, was issued on Variety 525, coupled with *Frolic Sam* from the same session, on 10 April 1937. Since it is the title under which Barney's tune first became known, it is no surprise that, when the 1932 recording appeared in 1947, it was as *Clouds In My Heart*, not *Harlem Romance*. A second take of the small-group version, L-0371-1, appeared on an Up-To-Date LP, UTD-2004, in 1981.

The 1936 recording is a little jazzier than the 1932 original by the full Orchestra. Did Brunswick elect not to issue the earlier reading because of its relative lack of 'hot' qualities? It is restrained, and decidedly 'sweet' for a band which in 1932 still belonged firmly in the 'hot jazz' category. On the other hand, such wistful compositions were already becoming established by 1932 as a part of the Ellington 'territory', eventually to become known as the 'pastels'.

As in 1932, the 1936 recording opens with a piano set-up, to which Billy Taylor's supple bass responds with a descending run. Juan Tizol is confined to the ensemble, which supplies a simple cushion of support behind Barney's fine theme-statement. In the first A section he plays in the clarinet's singing clarion register; in the second he drops into the instrument's darker chalumeau range. An up-and-over 'break' from the band rounds off both. Scored horns take charge in B, and Barney comments, *obbligato*. In the closing A the clarinet leads as before, and bass and drums do not cut out for the 'up-and-over'.

Cootie Williams takes a fine solo, open, in the first half of the next chorus. In B the horns have short clipped figures which leave gaps for Ellington's piano to occupy, and the closing A is even more terse, with the bass prominent in the gaps. Duke rounds off the piece with a return to his introduction. The alternate take differs only in minor details from the one chosen for issue. The interlude, or verse, does not appear.

Clouds In My Heart is a wistful little piece, pleasant but of no great distinction, and of more interest for its curious recording history and varied titles perhaps, than for its intrinsic merits. Barney himself makes no reference to his composition in his autobiography *With Louis And The Duke*. On the other hand there's no reason to dismiss it out of hand, and it's one of the virtues of complete collections like the Mosaic boxed sets, as opposed to anthologies, that such pieces are not entirely overlooked. One anthology which did include the 1932 version by the full band was the inexpensive Sony-BMG 4CD set in their *Columbia and RCA Original Masters* series (2008).

Finally, and much more recently, Bob Hunt's Duke Ellington Orchestra recorded *Clouds In My Heart* for their 1999 CD *What A Life!* on Lake Records LACD115. If you don't know this CD, in the production of which DESUK was much involved, I commend it. Its interesting programme of Ellingtonia and near-Ellingtonia includes several out-of-the-way pieces, among them two from 1928 which Duke recorded but which were never released, and one from 1926 which was never recorded at all.

Roger Boyes

On Record

DUKE ELLINGTON

THE TREASURY SHOWS VOL 17

CD1: (A) Take The "A" Train; Way Low; C-Jam Blues; Kissing Bug; Bond Promo; Just A-Settin' And A-Rockin'; Caldonia; Fancy Dan; I'm Just A Lucky So-And-So; Take The "A" Train; Take The "A" Train; The Last Time I Saw You; On The Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe;

Bond Promo; If I Loved You; I Can't Begin To Tell You; The Wonder Of You; Riff 'N' Drill

(B) Take The "A" Train; Do Nothin' Till You Hear From Me; It Don't Mean A Thing; Things Ain't What They Used To Be; (C) Take The "A" Train; San Fernando Valley; Way Low / Suddenly It Jumped; Summertime; On The Alamo; Things Ain't What They Used To Be.

(A): Nov. 24, 1945, Radio City Studio 6B, New York City

(B): Apr. 9, 1944, MBS Broadcast at the Hurricane Restaurant, New York City

(C): Apr. 20, 1944, same location.

CD2: (D) Caravan; Rugged Romeo; Sono; Air-Conditioned Jungle; Circe; Rhapsoditty; Fugueaditty; Take The "A" Train; Jam-A-Ditty; Magenta Haze; Diminuendo In Blue / Transblucency / Crescendo In Blue; Pitter Panther Patter; Suburbanite; (E) Boy Meets Horn; Jump For Joy; Three Cent Stomp; F: Solid Old Man; How Blue The Night; Ring Dem Bells.

(D): Jan. 20, 1946, Civic Opera House, Chicago

(E): Apr. 21, 1944, MBS Broadcast at the Hurricane Restaurant, New York City

(F): Apr. 27, 1944, same location.

Storyville Records 903 9017

These recordings comprise the latest entry in the long-running Storyville series covering Duke Ellington's 1945 to 1946 Treasury Shows.

These CDs reissue the content of Jerry Valburn's 1980s limited release D.E.T.S. LPs, and add, as extras, miscellaneous air checks from the 1940s and early 1950s.

Volume 17 in the series includes titles from Valburn's D.E.T.S. volumes 32 and 33, and adds surviving portions of four April 1944 air checks from one of the Ellington Orchestra's lengthy engagements at the Hurricane Restaurant in New York City.

All of D.E.T.S. LPs 32 and 33 are present on Volume 17 except for the first four titles of D.E.T.S. 32, which were previously issued on Storyville's Volume 16.

On Volume 17, the first 18 tracks on CD 1 are from the final 1945 episode of *Your Saturday Date With The Duke* which, of course, was sponsored by the U.S. Treasury as part of their efforts to sell war bonds to the American public.

The series would not resume until April 13, 1946, by which time Rex Stewart and Joya Sherill had left the orchestra, and Otto Hardwick was about to be replaced by Russell Procope.

The first 13 tracks on CD 2 are selections from the orchestra's two shows at Chicago's Civic Opera House.

The definitive discography for these two concerts is from page 14 of the 1998/3 DEMS bulletin, available online at <http://www.depanorama.net/dems/1998-3-DEMS-Bulletin.pdf>

Note that a majority of the second show was never recorded; *Suburbanite* from the second show is lost and several selections from the two shows remain unissued. It remains unexplained how the Armed Forces Radio Service issued titles from the second show if the only recording of that show was privately made by John Steiner's friend.

Among those titles that overlap between the MusicMasters 2CD *The Great Chicago Concerts* and Storyville's Vol. 17, I prefer the sound quality on MusicMasters, due to the moderate surface noise audible throughout the Storyville issue.

Track 13, *Suburbanite*, repeats a 16-second section of Al Sears and the band, beginning at 3:22, heard earlier at 3:05.

Completists in search of *Jam-A-Ditty* from the second show will find it buried on disk 9 of the Radio Archive CD box set *Date with the Duke*.

Brian Koller

Storyville continue to be as good as their word in regard to publishing a complete run of Duke Ellington's Treasury Shows and serious collectors of Ellingtonia are indebted to the label's fidelity on this point. A treasury is a very apt term for the contents of these two discs. Riches indeed are contained within the selections offered here.

From the first disc, Harry Carney's exquisite work on the bass clarinet on *I Can't Begin To Tell You* is a particular pleasure. General popular taste perhaps never corresponded more closely to what Ellington had to offer than during the years the Treasury Shows were broadcast (between the Petrillo ban and Sinatra's first LP, to paraphrase Larkin). Perhaps that is why we have so much of the music recorded.

I have to say I find the music of Disc 2, Ellington's concert fayre, more rewarding than the popular songs the band covers on the first disc. Graham Colombe's liner note on *Caldonia*, for example, shows the desperation of the serious music listener's search for solace in singling out Oscar Pettiford's bass playing.

I have long admired Graham Colombe's acuity with regard to Ellingtonia. His fine taste and excellent judgement are in abundance in his liner notes for this volume, directing the listener's attention to those most rewarding aspects of these recordings and continuing to contribute scholarly research on a particular interest of his, the identity of trumpet solos within the performances. There is an illuminating discussion here on the provenance of solos on *C Jam Blues*. Read in conjunction with an audition of the music, these notes only enhance the listener's enjoyment. This double compact disc album is an exemplary production in every respect. **IB**

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

At our last quarterly meeting, held in London on 18th January 2014, your committee confirmed that the 2014 DESUK Annual General Meeting will be held in Amsterdam. It will, of course, coincide with the 22nd International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference being held there from Wednesday 14th to Sunday 18th May. The rationale for this decision was that, just as at Woking in 2012, our overseas members would be able to participate. Indeed at Woking there were almost as many such members as members from London! In addition we expect to recruit more new members than we normally achieve at our London-based AGMs.

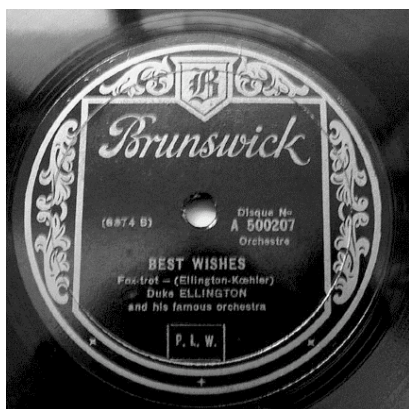
Geoff Smith, our Vice Chairman, has been in regular contact with the conference organisers Louis Tavecchio and Walter van de Leur, giving them the benefit of his experience as Chairman of Woking 2012. Please visit the excellent website www.ellington-2014.nl to read the latest on the fast-developing conference programme. In a recent telephone chat with Louis, he was able to confirm to me that our AGM can be accommodated in a room adjacent to the "Blue Note" room, within the Conservatory of Amsterdam, where most of the proceedings will be held. Even free coffee will be provided! Our current plan is to hold the AGM from 10.00am to 11.00am on the Sunday. This timing will enable all members to attend before departing mid-afternoon to Schiphol for their return flights.

At the aforementioned committee meeting on 18th January, all current members agreed to seek re-election. So, once again, we will be able to save time in Amsterdam by presenting a "slate" of current committee members seeking re-election.

As I have said in the past, the existence of a slate of names does not preclude the democratic right of any member from standing for any position. Anyone interested in this is most welcome to 'phone me for a chat and/or write to our Secretary stating the position sought and the names of a proposer and seconder.

Best Wishes (17 May 1932, NYC)

Peter Caswell



EVENTS CALENDAR



In general, we announce live performances by bands with DESUK connections, and/or a repertoire with an Ellington element. Not all performances listed here will be strongly Ellingtonian. Ed.

Duke Ellington Orchestra, directed by Paul Ellington:
29 April, Le Grand Rex Paris

Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra:
22 May, Jazzelrault à Chatellerault *Battle Royal* with Michel Pastre Big Band
24 May, Poissy - Théâtre de Poissy *Ellington French Touch* with Nicolle Rochelle
30 May, Jazz sous les Pommiers, Coutances *Battle Royal* with Michel Pastre Big Band
13 June, Olympia, Paris
www.laurentmignard.com
Maison du Duke: www.maisonduduke.com

Kinda Dukish:
Thursdays, 8.30pm, British Oak,
Perschore Rd., Starchley, B'ham B30 2XS
Contact Mike Fletcher on
0121 444 4129
mike@efletcher.fsworld.co.uk

Harmony in Harlem:
<http://www.harmonyinharlem.co.uk>

Frank Griffith:
3 April, 9pm. FG with the Brodowski String Quartet at Pizza Express as part of "Bowed Over" the Dean String Festival. 10 Dean Street, W1. £18. www.pizzaexpresslive.com
23 May, 1-2pm. Frank Griffith Trio with Charlie Wood and Alec Dankworth at Roberts Room, Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 3PH. Free
25 May, 11.30AM-1pm. FG with Charlie Wood and Nic France with "Memphis Soul Swamp" at The Stables, Wavendon, MK17 8LU. £10. www.stables.org
19 July, 8pm FG with *Jazz on a Summer's Day*-a tribute to the epical 1958 film about the Newport Jazz Festival. Bridport Arts Centre, South Street, Bridport, DT6 3NR. 01308 427183. £14. www.bridport-arts.com

BLUE LIGHTLY

Geoff Smith, Managing Editor

I am trying hard to keep up with the continuing hot-and-cold debate over Terry Teachout's *Duke*. Will it have blown over by the time you read this (or the book itself)? I doubt it and surely that in itself is a good thing for writer, publisher, and not least our Ellington community.

Cards on table. Before publication I was wildly enthusiastic that this respected critic and author of *Pops* was heading our way. Then I swerved anti as I confronted the actual book and its sensationalist cover blurbs about Duke's endless "transient lovers" giving him inspiration and promises of revealing the "unvarnished truth" of this "self-centred bastard".

Now I am back on side and that stems from pages 363 to 482 inclusively – the afterword (with its credit to *Blue Light*), Teachout's 50 key Ellington recordings, bibliography, and most significant of all, the source notes. These pages make the purchase worthwhile. They, with the index, are meticulous and more than good enough for the likes of me who spend almost as much time reading about Duke as listening to him.

I agree that there seems to be nothing new in the book but I am more than happy to have Teachout's take with its comprehensive sources, craftsmanship and presentation. Geniuses plough singular furrows and I am certain that when he wanted to Duke could be as open, outgoing, honest, and friendly as any of us. In its narrative, the biographical side of the book does not detract from this, not for me it doesn't.

*

If the music is live I do the musician or musicians the courtesy of listening for a while. It's the least I can do, whether they are good or bad. But here's a thing with regard to cocktail pianists, you rarely hear them tackling Duke or Strayhorn.

I raised this with Dave Peterson, cocktail pianist and more. He told me there were three golden rules in his trade – play the tunes, play the tunes people know, don't play jazz.

He then dived through his busker files and sensitively played *Chelsea Bridge*. No-one but me took a blind bit of notice.

*

More on the 1946 Musicrafts (*Lightly*, BL 20/4). Roger Boyes notes my reporting of the Brian Koller recommendation of the CD *Happy-Go-Lucky Local*, remastered by Jack Towers, and asks: "What's wrong with the inexpensive Naxos CD reviewed in BL 17/4 page three? It seemed fine to me though I am no expert on sound recording issues. It does include the two songs."

Those two songs are *Tulip Or Turnip* (Ray Nance) and *It Shouldn't Happen To A Dream* (Al Hibbler). *Jam-A-Ditty*, *Duke Ellington Original Recordings Volume 13*, on Naxos Jazz Legends CD 8.120813, also contains six Capitol transcriptions from 9 and 10 June 1947, so perhaps I should settle for that. Is anyone able to compare the two sound-wise for me?

*

Between the DESUK AGM and the Guildhall Jazz Band set at the Pizza Express jazz room, Dean Street, London, in May 2013, members were entertained with some personal anecdotes from Duke's latter days trombonist Vince Prudente, who had travelled over with his wife from their home in Paris. Questions came from Peter Caswell, in the chair, and from the floor.

Vince kicked off by saying he had been with Woody Herman when that band was at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas, while Duke was at the Sahara. "I had never heard Duke live so I went down to the Sahara and heard him. It was pretty impressive so every night I was down there on our break. I knew Willie Cook and he introduced me to Mercer.

"Back in New York I needed work. I called Mercer and almost two years later Mercer called me up and he asked me to meet the band in Philadelphia and work two nights with them, one a sacred concert."

Vince found himself playing lead next to Chuck Connors on bass trombone "and I was scared to death". At a rehearsal for the sacred concert Mercer asked him how he liked the band. "I said come on, I love it. So he said do you want to come into the band, so I did. That was it."

Asked about soloing, he reminded the audience he had often played three short solos a night on regular concerts, on *C Jam Blues*, *Rockin' in Rhythm*, and *Tiger Rag*. And on dances he was featured on *Stardust*. When he first joined the band Duke had said he had to get him more solos, "but just playing those notes was what mattered".

On the gruelling afternoon rehearsal and performance at Westminster Abbey in 1973, he said: "Yesterday we went over to Westminster Abbey and it was pretty special. I remembered where I was sitting and where Princess Margaret was. We were all pretty tired because we had actually had a little rehearsal before the singers came. It was somewhere back in the catacombs and it was freezing in there and Paul Gonsalves had a seizure...It was quite an amazing experience.

"On this particular concert maybe a third of the music we never saw... but Duke knew how to push the right buttons at the right time."

Asked about playing Duke's music, he said: "One thing that was different about Duke compared with anybody I ever worked with was that he wanted you to do just what you wanted to do. He never asked you to do something you couldn't do. That was so wonderful because you didn't have that pressure to be another person. You weren't in somebody else's chair."

He said he once played a Tyree Glenn solo on *Mood Indigo* and Duke later came up to him saying: "Vincenzo, don't try to play like those old blankety-blankers. Make it melodic, melodic."

*

You will not be surprised that I'm counting the days to the 22nd Ellington Conference, *Ellington2014*, *Duke Ellington On The Road*, in Amsterdam, 14 – 18 May. All I will say about it in this space is to repeat I am thrilled it is happening, the ultimate justification of what I always hoped for with *Ellington2012*, *Duke Ellington In Woking*.

See you there and, if you have one, wear your *Ellington In Woking* badge with pride.

MINUTES of the DESUK Committee Meeting
1pm on SATURDAY 19th October 2013
Punch Tavern, 99 Fleet Street, London, EC4Y 1DE

Present: Peter Caswell (Chair), Ian Bradley, Quentin Bryar, Catherine Coates, Victor Lawrance, Phil Mead, Antony Pepper, Geoff Smith

Observers:

Joan Bellerby, Roger Boyes, and Michael Kilpatrick

1. Chairman's opening remarks (PC). The meeting commenced at 1 pm, with the Chairman welcoming guests and members, noting that RB and MK were involved with agenda items.

2. Apologies for absence: Chris Addison and Frank Harvey had sent apologies.

3. Draft Minutes of 20th July 2013 for consideration. These had been circulated previously and after two minor amendments, the Minutes were approved.

4. Officers' Reports.

a. Treasurer's Report and Membership Secretary's Report (VL). Both reports had already been circulated. VL stressed rising costs and proposed that the reports could be inserted as a separate page with BL. IB approved this. IB reassured members regarding the publication of the annual reports. The Treasurer's Report was accepted. On the Membership Report, VL expressed his concern that despite retaining a low subscription fee, membership had fallen slightly. VL said that it was not possible at present to produce an events page on the DESUK web site but UK members are being notified of events by email. Both PC and GS congratulated VL on this initiative. AP proposed that the Events Page should be temporarily removed from the website. Michael Kilpatrick then offered to help restore it and his offer was gratefully accepted. AP and VL would liaise with MK on this. GS stated that items of interest submitted by musicians (or others) should be included in BL, with the proviso that they were submitted prior to the publishing deadline.

b. Blue Light (IB). The report had been circulated prior to the meeting. IB said the issue had gone very smoothly, with three particular items taking up the bulk of the magazine. Under item 4 of his report, IB proposed that AGM items could be sent to members in pdf form rather than being included in BL, in order to leave more space for articles and reviews. There was a prolonged discussion on this. With the proviso that members must have the option of requesting AGM information by post, the proposal was accepted. Under item 5, IB suggested issue 20/3 could be emailed in pdf form to potential new members, as an alternative to posting a hard copy. After reassurances by IB on security issues, the proposal was carried on a split vote.

c. Publicity Report. (CA). In CA's absence due to illness, no report was available.

d. Vice Chair's Report (GS). GS confirmed that the Eastbourne concert had been cancelled, lack of ticket sales being giving as the reason. GS felt an available smaller venue would have been more feasible.

e. Meetings organiser (AP). AP gave dates of next London meetings - his aim is to have a programme to publicise, as attendances have declined. PC suggested that

the London members should decide themselves on their future and AP/VL should report back to DESUK committee.

f. Website (AP). The website is up to date, nothing else to report.

5. Update on Amsterdam 2014 (GS). The website should be live at the end of October 2013. A jazz violin session in some form, also *Black Brown and Beige* are expected to feature. AP proposed to try to arrange for the 2014 AGM to take place in Amsterdam. This proposal was agreed by a majority vote.

6. Luca Bragolini / Three Black Kings (GS). LB's book will be published by EDT Autumn/Winter 2014. (The same publisher has also published LB's *Stories of Standards*.) EDT feel the CD should be included with the book and are now seeking suitable English publishers. At Amsterdam, LB plans to feature Chapter 4, which has not been done before. PC said we need more information on costs before committing to much but we are thinking about a total of £500 - £300 for the literary translation, £200 for the CD. This was agreed. GS will request further information.

7. Request for support (MK). Shakespearean notable anniversaries come up in 2014 and 2016. MK's plan is to perform *Such Sweet Thunder* on 22nd March 2014 and he is asking the committee to help in identifying venues of suitable size/distance. GS elicited more details from MK and then indicated Woking could possibly be appropriate. BL could also be used to ask for possible venues.

8. After DEMS (PC/RB). (Proposal from David Palmquist) PC has spoken to DP on phone. DP says this project will cost virtually nothing. PC proposed (a) we agree this society does participate; (b) RB and IB are nominated as our moderators. GS seconded this. This was carried unanimously.

9. Any Other Business.

a. RB advised he had brought some back BL issues and these were no longer his responsibility.

b. Mrs Jean Adkins had sent a letter to RB expressing thanks for his BL tribute to her late husband Tony - the letter was passed round for the committee to view.

c. RB confirmed that member Leland Farley was not based in UK but lives in California, and his email address included in the recipient list of David Palmquist's email.

10. Dates of future meetings

Saturday 18th January 2014 CONFIRMED

Saturday 5th April 2014 CONFIRMED

AGM 18th MAY 2014 - AMSTERDAM tbc

The meeting closed at 3.01 pm.

Catherine Coates.

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