



Alice Babs



1924 - 2014

När dagarna åter blir längre

Några dagar innan denna Bulletin skulle gå i tryck fick vi det sorgliga beskedet om Alice Babs bortgång. Som den hedersmedlem hon var i vår förening vill vi självklart spegla hennes karriär som en av Duke Ellingtons mest framstående vokalister. Vi tvingades därför omarbeta en redan färdig Bulletin vilket är anledningen till ett något försenat utskick men det tror vi att våra medlemmar har full förståelse för.

I förra numret av Bulletinen fick ni veta att röster inom styrelsen hade tagit upp frågan om att inhibera fjolårets sista konsert den 2 december. Så blev det lyckligtvis inte och satsningen med Ronnie Gardiner och hans stjärnband blev en stor succé.

Räkenskapsåret 2013 gick ändå med kraftigt minus huvudsakligen beroende på förlustbringande konsertverksamhet. Faktum är att medlemmar och icke-medlemmar inte kommer till våra konserter i tillräckligt antal för att alla kostnader skall kunna täckas. Några av våra vänner spår att vi kommer att förlora medlemmar främst bosatta i Stockholms län, om vi upphör med konsertverksamheten.

Arrangemang i Stockholm med det stora utbud av levande jazzmusik som här erbjuds, är vanskliga ur ekonomisk synpunkt. Det går inte att förutse vilka faktorer som kan påverka publiktillströmningen flera månader i förväg. Vi löper alltid risken att andra evenemang, musikaliska eller sportsliga, tilldrar sig ett större intresse. Jag erinrar mig en klassisk flopp från 1976 i Linköping när man där hade besök av Stan Kenton och hans magnifika orkester. Publiken stannade hemma och varför det? Jo Sverige spelade VM-finalen mot Sovjetunionens suveräna ishockeylandslag och matchen sändes i TV.

Styrelsen har därför beslutat att tills vidare upphöra med konserttaftnarna på den lokal som vi själva döpte till Duke's Place. Vi kommer i stället att koncentrera oss på våra sammankomster i Franska Skolans

aula på Döbelnsgatan 3. Där är det trivsamt, entréavgiften är låg, gästerna förses innan programmet och i pausen med öl, vin och välsmakande baguetter fyllda med delikat sallad, skinka, italiensk ost m.m. till en kostnad av 30 kr för vart och ett av alternativen. Där får man lyssna till kåserier, med musik från en utmärkt ljudanläggning och se filmer med Duke och "All The Kids in the Band" från olika tillfällen av hans karriär m.m. Kanske vi i fortsättningen skall ägna oss åt den verksamhet istället, för då går vi inte med förlust och medlemmarna behöver inte uppleva att det "kostar skjortan" att komma till oss.

I samband med att styrelsen fattade detta beslut fördes en längre diskussion där vi bl.a. försökte definiera vad våra medlemmar väntar sig av DESS. Väntar de sig att vi skall anordna konserter med bra orkestrar som spelar Ellingtonmusik? Eller är det vår Bulletin, vår hemsida och våra medlemsmöten med kåserier och filmförevisning som är intressantare. Eftersom vi ändå har förhållandevis många medlemmar i landsorten och även i utlandet vill vi tro att det är det senare som är avgörande för ett medlemskap i DESS. Styrelsen kommer därför att koncentrera sig på att förbättra Bulletinen och hemsidan samt att göra medlemsmötena värda att besöka så att våra medlemmar anser sig få valuta för den årliga avgiften även utan konserter.

Mina medarbetare, dvs. styrelsen och redaktionskommittén, valberedningen, vår revisor och alla andra som hjälper oss med både det ena och det andra, önskar er alla en fortsatt hjärtligt god fortsättning på 2014.



Leif Jönsson,
ordförande i DESS

Ny kalender 2014

Som framgår av innehållet i Ordförandens ledare tvingas vi ändra på DESS-evenemangen under året. Konserterna utgår och antalet medlemsmöten har utökats. Ett medlemsmöte med årsmöte har redan avhållits.

Årets resterande sammankomster är planerade enligt följande:

7 april - Medlemsmöte i Franska Skolan

6 oktober - - - -

24 november - - - -

Kallelser kommer i vanlig ordning att distribueras i samband med utskick av Bulletinen.

Styrelsen

International Duke Ellington Conference 2014

Amsterdam 14-18 maj

Organisatörerna av den 22:a Ellington-konferensen, med Louis Tavecchio och Walter van de Leur i spetsen, har nu skapat en hemsida <http://www.ellington-2014.nl> som ger läsaren bra information om priser, lokaliteter, konserter och hotell. I skrivande stund saknas dock uppgifter om själva konferensprogrammet. Följande kan dock läsas på sidan:

"The preliminary programme boasts keynote lectures by acclaimed writers on Ellington, such as Harvøy Cohen, David Schiff, and Matt Cooper, concerts of among others 'Black, Brown and Beige' by the conservatory big band under the baton of the renowned Ellington scholar David Berger, a commissioned arrangement for wind-ensemble of 'Such Sweet Thunder', a concert in the Bimhuis by Dutch Annual Jazz Award winner Oene van Geel, as well as a conference dinner in the prestigious Muziekgebouw ann het IJ (where King Willem-Alexander dined the evening of his crowning), and special hotel arrangements under auspices of the Conservatory of Amsterdam."

Man inviterar också intresserade delegater att inkomma med förslag till föredrag på temat "On the Road with Duke Ellington" vilket kan sägas rymma det mesta om föremålet för konferensen. Hemsidan kommer självklart att uppdateras ju närmare konferensdatum vi kommer.

Kostnaden för att delta är 58:50 Euro per dag och biljett till konserter och bankett går på 72:- Euro. Vill man delta i samtliga evenemang kan man inhandla ett paket för ett reducerat pris om 247:50 Euro. Dessa priser gäller t.o.m. 23 februari och innebär en prisreduktion om 10 % på ordinarie pris som därefter gäller.

Man rekommenderar två hotell i närheten av konferenslokalen. Det dyrare (Mövenpick) kostar 825:- Euro för 4 nätter och det billigare (Ibis) 595:- Euro. Biljetter och hotell kan bokas via hemsidan.

Med erfarenhet från tidigare konferenser vet vi att utöver intressanta föredrag och konserter är även umgänget likasinnade emellan väl så intressant och trevligt. Att efter en konferensdag samlas några stycken runt varsitt glas öl och prata om vårt gemensamma intresse kan vara nästan lika värdefullt som själva konferensen. Väl mött i Amsterdam!



Duke's
Place:

Jazz med glitter och substans

För nöjes skull och på allvar



Ronnie Gardiner's All Stars: Mathias Algotsson, Hasse Larsson (skymd), Claes Brodda, Karl Olandersson, Ronnie Gardiner (skymd), Anders Norell, Claes Askelöf. (Foto Sonja Svensson)

Det råder ingen tvekan om att Ronnie Gardiner är Ellingtonfolkets man – fullt hus och jubel och förväntan i luften redan före instampet av *It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*. Ett skickligt öppningsdrag av ett band som under kvällen skulle visa sig ha god kunskap om den ellingtonska repertoaren, serverad dock med egen kryddning.

Det är en orkester som har fått mycket rosor under tjoget år på Stockholms estrader och med all rätt. Maestro själv en färgstark, komplett trumslagare – till synes outtröttlig – omgiven av väl valda musiker i varierande ålder. Bra solister, konstateras det gång efter annan och solona blir många en sådan här kväll, där de flesta numren har i stort sett samma uppbyggnad: mellan intro och avslut en parad av solister, i jazzens äldsta jam-tradition.

Jag är stöddig nog att tycka att bandet skulle vinna på en mer disciplinerad spelstil, med hjälp av tätare arrangemang. Inte för att störa solisterna utan snarast stötta. Som Ellingtonfreak har jag småbandsinspelningarna av Barney Bigard, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster med flera i bakhuvudet som föredömliga exempel på vad jag menar.

Alla delar säkert inte den åsikten, så nog om detta och till det bästa, om vil-

ket vi sannolikt samsas. Det råder föga tvekan om att stjärnan heter Karl Olandersson, trumpetare – när han är riktigt bra hettar han upp hela orkestern. Och han gjorde det flera gånger denna afton som t.ex. i *When You're Smiling* (som annars också gav överbetyg till Mathias Algotsson för hans högklassiga pianospel). Men inte ens Olandersson kan alltid vara på topp och kan tappa energi såsom i *Walkin'* (om nu någon minns det så här långt efteråt?)

Själv erinrar jag gärna också om duetten mellan Claes Brodda och hans tenor och basisten Hasse Larsson i *In A Sentimental Mood*, utsökt vackert, mycket infallsrikt, i en melodi som var en av Ellingtons egna storfavoriter. Karl Olandersson tog upp idén en stund senare när han fick en kickstart av Mathias Algotssons briljanta solo i *In A Mellowtone*, och inledde en musikalisk konversation med denne som kulminerade i publikens oreserverade jubel.

Undertecknad tyckare instämmer då som nu och kallar dessa två stunder för höjdpunkter under en som helhet lyckad afton. Sånginslagen fick mig dock som vanligt att surna till. På något undantag när helt bortkastad tid.

Bo Holmqvist

Alice Babs in

Alice Babs left us on February 11 at the age of 90 years and after having suffered from bad health well over a year. Her personal situation and well-being over the last years has been subject of public discussions in the form of TV-presentations which have caused some commotion amongst family members on one side and friends on the other. We leave that discussion aside here.

Her career has been described and documented in almost every Swedish paper so we leave that aside as well and here we will concentrate on her Ellingtonian career.



Alice was very proud of her connection with Duke Ellington and in a TV-celebration on her 80th birthday she confirmed that she understood her cooperation with Duke as the climax of her career. She was proud of being considered an Ellingtonian. In this TV-show, which was just recently shown in Swedish TV, she explained how she very early in life became influenced by Louis Armstrong, Mills Brothers and Duke Ellington. She became the popular artist who in the early 1940's introduced "swing" to the Swedish people which was done under the influence of these giants. Still there were many cultural personalities who judged her to exercise bad influence on younger people but her popularity could not be broken.

Alice many times told her admirers that she participated in Duke's 40th birth-day celebrations which took place in Stockholm on April 29 while Duke made his extensive 1939 tour of Sweden. Duke surely had no memory of that when they met again in 1963 during Ellington's first tour of Sweden that year. On February 7, 1963, Swedish TV had arranged a broadcast from "Circus" and Alice Babs was invited to take part. Surely Alice was flattered by this invitation but we are unaware of Duke's knowledge about her capacity as a singer. There are unissued recordings from the rehearsals made in the morning and Alice sings *Take Love Easy*. Later the same day recordings were made for a TV-show to be named "Indigo" where Alice sang *Take The "A" Train*, *Take Love Easy* and *Come Sunday*. This show has been released in its entirety on the DVD

*Alice, Eric Ericson
and Duke in the
Gustav Vasa Church
1969.*



"A Duke named Ellington" (Issued by Council for Positive Images, Inc.).

Ellington was apparently impressed by Alice's performance. By the end of February 1963 his band performed on the Continent but after the last concert in Paris on February 24th the majority of the musicians were sent back to US. At this time Ellington had an agreement with Frank Sinatra and his Reprise Records to make recordings for that label with artists of his own choice. Duke called Alice and asked her to come to Paris immediately for a recording session. Alice was not in a position to go at once but on March 1st they spent a day together with the assistance of local musicians to record for an LP that was later released as "Alice Babs and Duke Ellington" (Reprise RS-5024). For unknown reasons Reprise never bothered to release this wonderful record in the US but only in Europe.

If not earlier Alice had now made a deep impression on Duke and he wanted her to become a regular member of his band but she was well aware of what touring with a band meant and therefore turned down the offer. Her private life and family meant more to her.

In 1965 Duke Ellington had performed his *First Sacred Concert* in San Francisco. By January 19, 1968, it was time for the *Second Sacred Concert* and Alice Babs was asked to participate because Duke had composed a few numbers especially for her. The concert was held at St. John The Divine in New York and Alice is featured in *Almighty God*, *Heaven*, *T.G.T.T.*, and *Praise God And Dance*. Duke had always been a bit religious and by his later years in life this religiosity became more obvious resulting in his Sacred Concerts. It is probably correct to say that Alice also had a belief in God and maybe they met here not only musically

memoriam



*Alice performing
in Gustav Vasa
Church.*

*Alice rehearsing
with Duke.*

but also in a common religious belief. The Sacred Concert was repeated next day in St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Connecticut and on January 22nd recordings were made.

In November 1969 it was time for Duke Ellington's and the orchestra's annual tour of Europe and on November 6 Ellington together with Alice Babs and The Swedish Radio Choir under the direction of Eric Ericsson performed the *Second Sacred Concert* at The Gustav Vasa Church in Stockholm.

Again on November 16th the *Second Sacred Concert* is performed in Eglise St. Sulpice in Paris, and now also together with The Swingle Singers. Finally the Concert was performed in Barcelona, Spain. This concert is recorded and one surprisingly finds how Duke calls forward Alice but decides to play another number while she politely sits down somewhat confused. Instead Duke calls

in Tony Watkins who is not at all prepared for his entrance and one notes from a camera placed behind the scene that Duke is far from pleased with the situation. The expression on his face shows that he utters some rough comments. But the concert works out well after all and Alice sings beautifully.

The next time Alice appears with the Ellington band is on July 1, 1973. The orchestra played two concerts during that year's Newport Festival which had been relocated to New York. Alice was invited to sing and surely made a good job but for once the Ellington orchestra got bad reviews. Whitney Balliett wrote: "a mishmash of bad taste, beauty and virtuosity". There exist no recordings from this concert but we have reason to believe that Alice stood for the two latter judgments, especially as New York Times wrote about "Miss Babs' lovely tone, impeccable vibrato and astonish-

ing accuracy in the upper register". Duke must have felt the same way because two days later he hired a studio for one of his private recording sessions. Four tunes arranged by Nils Lindberg and with Alice as vocalist were recorded and they were later released on the Phontastic's LP-album "Far Away Star" (Phont-50-11).

Later the same year it was time for Ellington to present his *Third Sacred Concert*, with its premier at Westminster Abbey in London. It was of course in a high degree built around Alice's capacity as a brilliant soprano singer.

Already next day the orchestra played a concert in Malmo, Sweden. Alice is in the audience and of course Duke calls her up on the stage. She sings amongst other tunes *Serenade To Sweden* and a wonderful version of *Jeep's Blues*, a number she had always been very fond of. Together with Nils Lindberg and Joe Benjamin she also presents a composition by Ellington that had never before been played publicly; *There's Something About Me*. This concert was later issued on CD by Swedish Caprice (CAP 21599). The very informative inlet has a chapter by Alice which is reprinted separately in this Bulletin.

The last time we find Alice sing with Duke Ellington is when the *Third Sacred Concert* is performed in Barcelona on November 10, 1973.

Those of our readers who use to attend the Ellington conferences held several times on various locations around the world have had the pleasure of meeting Alice under very informal and relaxed circumstances. On these occasions she has usually been the member of a panel together with other Ellingtonians talking about her experiences with Duke Ellington and his orchestra. At the two conferences in Stockholm in 1994 and 2004 she was of course a great attraction and contributed to the success of the events. Despite her long and successful career she was still very humble and always had time to talk to anybody having a question for her. Alice was of course a honorary member of DESS and the Society made contributions to an annual award in her name to a promising new Swedish talent in the field of jazz. Alice Babs will be missed by all of us. We loved her madly!

DESS

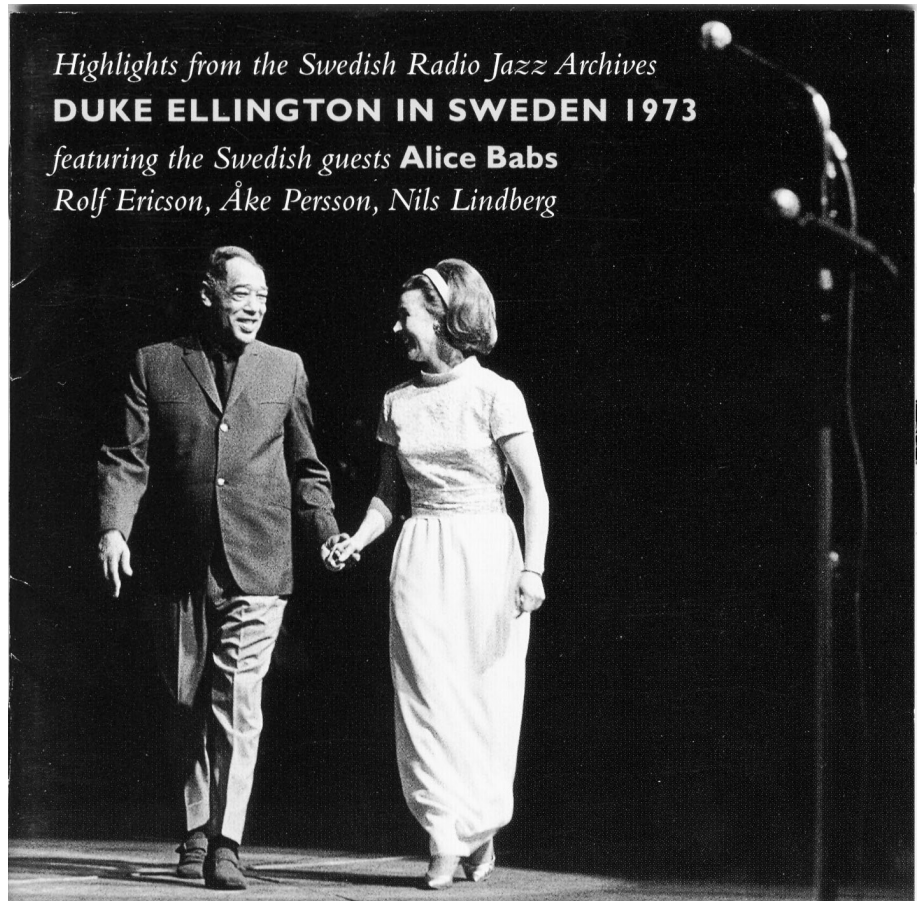
Malmö, October 25, 1973

In their series of *Highlights from the Swedish Radio Jazz Archives*, Caprice records back in 1999 re-leased the CD "Duke Ellington In Sweden 1973" featuring the Swedish guests Alice Babs, Rolf Ericson, Åke Persson, Nils Lindberg. (CAP 21599). The liner notes contain an essay by Alice Babs, which is here quoted in full:

When I hear anyone using the word "unexpected" or "surprise" I cannot avoid thinking about the Duke and those days leading up to this Malmö event. Why? Because only on the previous evening in Westminster Abbey I was fully convinced that this had been his "last night stand". Duke was very ill and even the painkiller shots applied by Mercer to his father seemed to have no effect. We had accepted an invitation to have supper with Prime Minister Edward Heath in no. 10 Downing Street immediately after the concert and so had Princess Margaret, Ruth Ellington and a few more people, but the Duke stopped by at no. 10 on his way back to the Dorchester Hotel only to make his excuses for not being able to come. Therefore, to meet D.E. just one day later in Malmö, apparently fit as a fiddle and even with the looks of that "young promising apprentice piano player" (as he announced himself at the concert), was to me the surprise of my life.

But then I have to forget the runner-up sensation of unexpectedness from only a few days earlier. I was engaged to sing "The Second Sacred Concert", which I knew by heart, when Duke phoned to ask me to come to London as soon as possible for rehearsal, because what he had in mind was an entirely new concert. To call that a surprise is an understatement.

Well, back to Malmö. To tell you the truth, I find it difficult to recall any occasion, when the Duke had displayed more of that contagious enthusiasm that had become his hallmark. Could it be the sounds of Åke Persson's trombone and Rolf Ericson's trumpet that had this invigorating effect? This was not an everyday listening pleasure for the Maestro who loved them both, and wel-



Highlights from the Swedish Radio Jazz Archives

DUKE ELLINGTON IN SWEDEN 1973

featuring the Swedish guests **Alice Babs**
Rolf Ericson, Åke Persson, Nils Lindberg

comed every opportunity to let them "sit in". I myself had a very special reason for wanting the Duke to be his normal fit self that day in Malmö. I had prepared my surprise for him by asking Nils Lindberg to fly down from Dalecarlia to accompany me on the piano for a performance of *There's something about me* without him that really is not me, a composition which the Duke had dedicated and presented to me during a luncheon four months earlier in the home of his sister Ruth in New York. He asked me to switch on my portable recorder, sat down at the piano and sang to me this entirely new composition. A week or two later I gave the recorded tape to Nils Lindberg asking him to make an arrangement for symphony orchestra for a TV programme I was contracted to make some weeks later in Stockholm. Nils was therefore prepared to help me with the big surprise that it turned out to be in Malmö. Some of my friends in the band assured me that D.E. was deeply moved during these rare moments of inactivity for him on the stage.

For my participation with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra during the Newport Jazz Festival earlier in July at the Lincoln Center in New York, Nils had made arrangements of *Checked hat* and *Far away star*, both of which came to be of the greatest interest to the Maestro. You will find the former on this CD, but

as no time was given to the orchestra for rehearsals, here is where Nils, too, gets his surprise.

I would like to comment on *Somebody cares*. I heard this song for the first time when Duke played it to me in between rehearsals for THE MAJESTY OF GOD, the *Third Sacred Concert*, in London only two days before the Malmö event. Anita Moore and Tony Watkins were present and Duke then asked them to sing it for me as he was very anxious that I should get to know it. Duke always gave his singers a lot of freedom to improvise and give their versions but Anita and Tony, he thought, were improvising the song all through, never once singing the melody straight. Therefore, considering that I still had no written music nor lyrics given to me, I was taken by surprise, when I heard Duke announce that I should sing the song together with Anita and Tony. It was just as big a surprise for me to find the song included on this CD.

In spite of everything I am very glad that these concerts in Malmö got to be documented, as they marked the end of my dream-come-true, singing with my Maestro. Apart from a Sacred Concert on November 11th, 1973, in Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona, we never saw each other again.

Alice Babs

A composer's dream

Duke Ellington's view of Alice Babs

Alice a legend at 85.

The Ellington Conference in Oldham 1988 - Alice fronting a band lead by Bob Wilber and Bill Berry.



There was mutual admiration between Duke and Alice. These two had a personal relation that probably not existed between Duke and many of his sidemen. When in New York, Alice together with Nils-Ivar got invited to Duke's home, where they met his sister Ruth and other members of the family. When Duke wrote his *Music Is My Mistress*, he devoted a page to Alice Babs. His portrait of Alice is full of superlatives and we quote his words in their entirety:



Duke paying his respects to Alice

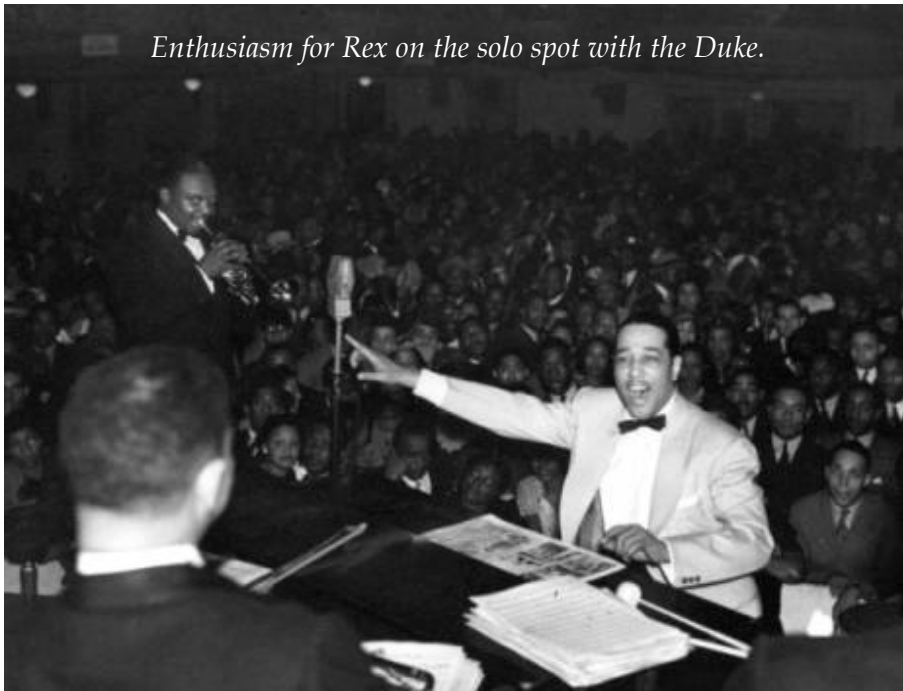


In 1963, I found myself in Paris with an unusual contract that gave me authority to act as A&R man for Reprise Records and record six or seven people of my choice. The first one I got was Alice Babs, for she is probably the most unique artist I know. She is coloratura soprano, an unlimited soprano. She sings opera, she sings lieder, she sings what we call jazz and blues, she sings like an instrument, she even yodels, and she can read any and all of it! No matter how hard the intervals, when you hand her the music, she sight-reads and sings it as though she had rehearsed it a month. Every word comes out perfectly enunciated, understandable and believable. Alice Babs is a composer's dream, for with her he can forget all the limitations and just write his heart out. When I persuaded her to come down from Stockholm to Paris, we made a wonderful record with her and four French horns. It never came out here, but the Swedes made sure it was issued in their country.

She is just one of the rare people, one of the rarest artists. Whenever I get an opportunity to do anything I feel is out of the ordinary, I think of her. So when I got ready to do my second sacred concert in 1968, where I had to go up over the top of the first, I sent to Sweden to bring her to New York. There were a couple of things in that concert which required real musicianship, which had to be read and executed just as they were planned, and she was the one I had complete confidence in to do that. She is a terrific musician, and when I look at the pictures of her taken in the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine - why, I think she looks like an angel! She is a beautiful person who has overcome the problem of singing as pretty as she looks. In referring to her, one never says, "There are just a few left," because she was probably the only one born.

REX STEWART

*A portrait of Duke Ellington's great cornet player;
before, after and while with Ellington*



Enthusiasm for Rex on the solo spot with the Duke.

Rex Stewart with Duke Ellington

When Rex Stewart joined the Duke Ellington orchestra on December 27, 1934, it has been said that Cootie Williams was far from satisfied with Duke's decision of picking a replacement for Freddie Jenkins, who was forced to leave for medical reasons. Cootie had carved a name for himself and wanted to remain the outstanding trumpet soloist in the band. He realized that with the advent of Rex he would surely have to share the lime-light with him. Duke, however, wanted to develop his music and with Rex in the band he possessed a new colour on his palette that made it possible to paint new colourful musical pictures. Moreover Rex played the cornet which was a new instrument in the orchestra. Cootie had nothing personally against Rex. He rather opposed Duke's choice

but surely Cootie soon found out that there was enough room for the two of them in the band.

Duke needless to say knew what he had acquired. Rex was an established jazz musician since several years. He had a past in many name-bands like Fletcher Henderson, Luis Russell, McKinney's Cotton Pickers and had for some time been running his own band. Rex was a capacity. It is surprising though, that Rex at the time of his joining Ellington was far from a fan of the band. He found many of Duke's earlier recordings awkward and moreover he has expressed an opinion that his pay was on the low side. We shall, however, consider that when Rex signed with Duke the country was suffering from a deep depression and it surely also affected the entertainment

business. Job opportunities may have been scarce. Later on we understand that Rex learned to appreciate Duke's music fully.

Soloist with Duke

When is the first time we can hear Rex soloing? Well, we can hear him in a chorus of *Let's Have A Jubilee* from January 9, 1935, where he plays a well constructed but conventional solo. On May 5 the orchestra is back in the studio and after the programmed recordings were made some of the orchestra members remained in the studio and now for the first time Ellington is recording with a small group out of his band, something that would be done to a greater extent a few years later. The unconventional group consists of Rex, Johnny Hodges with his soprano, Harry Carney, Duke and the two bassists Wellman Braud and Billy Taylor. Two excellent numbers were recorded; *Tough Truckin'* and *Indigo Echoes*. Wonderful moody music that was not released on the market until 12 years later.

Under the instigation of Helen Oakley Duke started to make recordings with small groups out of his band. One of these groups was led by Rex Stewart and was dubbed "Rex Stewart and his 52nd Street Stompers". On December 16, 1936, they recorded two tunes composed by Rex; *Rexatious* and *Lazy Man's Shuffle*. We can now clearly notice Rex's attempt to play with his half valve technique that would so clearly separate his style from that of Cootie's. He would later during his career with Duke develop this technique to its utmost.

A group under the same name is again assembled on July 7, 1937, for a recording session. We can especially enjoy Rex's whining cornet on *Back Room Romp* and *Tea And Trumpets*.

Needless to say Rex made numerous solo performances with Ellington's full orchestra. After Cootie Williams had left the orchestra in 1940 Rex had to take over his growl solos until Ray Nance began to find his feet. There are too many recordings featuring Rex as a soloist to

enumerate here except for a few remarkable ones. From the very beginning Duke had high regards for Rex and he showed his appreciation by composing *Rex's Concerto* which however was released under the name of *Trumpet In Spades*, a title with some double meanings. It is a show-off piece for a fast playing Rex without any half-valving.

As can be seen on pictures of Rex he was rather bulky and Duke took to nicknaming him "Fat Stuff" which Rex countered by calling Duke "Dumpy". However, there was humour behind the nicknames and Duke composed *Fat Stuff Serenade* that Rex recorded with his small group on March 20, 1939.

Boy Meets Horn

Rex is probably most remembered for his own composition *Boy Meets Horn* which became his big feature number with Ellington's orchestra. It originally went under the names of *Twits And Twerps* and *Stew Burps*. Here Rex is developing all his ways of handling his instrument and the half-valve technique really became his trade mark. Often he combined his half-valve playing with a mute and sometimes with a felt over the bell.

Maurice Peress describes Rex's technique in the following way: "Stewart was the undisputed master of the half-valve.

He humanized his solos with 'ghost' notes that seemed to come from deep inside the instrument. Normally, when a player depresses a valve to its full depth, the air stream is redirected through an extra length of pipe. But someone somewhere in our rich, still uncharted jazz history discovered that by depressing the valve less than its full depth an entire vocabulary of buzzes, bends, groans, and rusty whispers can be coaxed out of the horn." Rex knew how to do this. One of Rex's most beautiful performances is his own *Morning Glory*, which remarkably enough was only recorded once. It may have been played on dance sessions but if so none of them have been preserved. The recording we know was made for Victor on March 6, 1940. Ellington's name is given as composer together with Rex's but according to Rex's own words the composition was totally his own but he lost the right in a poker game on board the ship returning from the band's 1939 European tour.

In March 1940 Ellington had signed a new and successful contract with RCA and he soon started to make recordings with small groups as he had earlier done with Master/Brunswick. Two such sessions were made with Rex as the leader when such memorable sides as *Mobile Bay*, *Menelik* and *Poor Bubber* were created.

A bright new future

During his last year with Ellington Rex was away for a couple of months playing a gig in Mexico together with his good friend Brick Fleagle but eventually returned. The circumstances under which he finally left the Ellington organization in 1945 are a bit unclear.

According to his own memoir, in 1945 another holiday from the Duke "would not eliminate the current nemesis of mine", a new member of the band that harassed him. This is one of the lesser known effects that Cat Anderson's entrance had on the band. But Rex's choice to leave was certainly also caused by his weariness of travelling and by several other new opportunities opening up – as well as Ellington's ambition to modernize his band by giving it new blood. He knew that he could do without Cootie so surely he could also do without Rex. Many new trumpeters were lining up for a place in the band and the be-boppers were knocking on the door. Rex may have been considered "old fig" but he remained true to his style and was very successful with it for the rest of his career.

Bo Hauffman

Rex Stewart's daughter visiting Stockholm

Our chairman reminisces

One of the attendees at the Ellington Conference in Stockholm 2004 was Rex Stewart's daughter, Helena Ashby. I took the opportunity to chat with her and I told her I was a Detective Inspector. Then Helena, surprisingly enough, told me she too had worked as a police officer in the Los Angeles County Police Force but was now retired. It was Claire Gordon who had brought Helena with her to join the conference.

Claire Gordon assisted Rex Stewart in the writing of his autobiography *Boy Meets Horn* and in her presentation she talked about her recent book *My Unforgettable Jazz Friends* which contains a lot about Rex Stewart and his career. She also told the audience how Steven Lasker pushed her to finish Rex Stewart's biography and how she owed a debt of gratitude to David Hajdu for encoura-



Rex and Helena

ging her to write and publish her own memoirs.

Each speaker at the conference was presented with a silhouette drawing of Duke Ellington and when Claire Gordon was given her drawing the MC Åke Edfeldt also called forward Helena Ashby and presented her with a drawing of Rex Stewart made by the same artist.

When googleing on Helena's name I found that she joined the Sheriff's Department in 1964 and eventually retired in 2000 as the first female Division Chief in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Rex was no doubt proud of his daughter.

Leif Jönsson

REGINALD STEWART

The jazz dictionaries give the name of the Ellington cornetist as (William) Rex Stewart. This turns out to be not entirely true. According to his work permit for the Swedish tour of the Ellington band in 1939 his correct name was Reginald. This must have been based on his own information and/or his passport.

In this connection it is interesting to note that occasionally he signed his surname Stuart, which can be seen on some autographs from the 1930s.

Björn Englund

Rex Stewart

– life and career

Rex Stewart was only 14 years old when he left home 1921 to join Ollie Blackwell's Jazz Clowns. This was the start of a lifelong career as a professional musician. He became a cornetist of excellence – one of the foremost among trumpet/cornet players of the swing era. He led his own bands and played as a member of several name orchestras and in a vast number of more casual combinations. The high point in his career was his almost 11 years as third trumpet and featured soloist in Duke Ellington's orchestra between late 1934 and 1945.



Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, February 22 1907, Rex William Stewart Jr. moved with his family to Washington DC in 1914. Music and other cultural activities were of central importance in his home. Especially his mother was active in introducing Rex to music. She started giving him piano lessons when he was only four years. Her mother was, according to Rex, the pillar of the family, an author of hymns, lyrics as well as music who had also published poetry. She read him poetry and she was a fine organist and often with little Rex working the bellows.

Not surprisingly Rex was more interested in playing with friends than struggling with his mother at the piano, or with a profes-

sional teacher who took over lessons, or with his father who came next. After a year fighting with his father and the violin that had become Rex's new instrument, life changed: the parents divorced – and also Rex's musical life took a new turn.

As the leader of a boy's band Officer Johnson, a local police man now became responsible for Rex's musical education. The boys loved him and music became something funny. From Rex's own accounts it becomes obvious that for him Johnson filled a gap in his life, the role of a close father figure that his own father never was to him. Following his life story we can see how this was repeated; after Johnson more than one "father" followed.

Rather soon the cornet became Rex's instrument – for life (even if he obviously during a short period tested a change to the trumpet). When Johnson died three years later Rex was first cornetist in the band, playing in churches, parks, parades and concerts. One of his band mates, trombone player Danny Day, now organized his own orchestra with Rex on cornet playing "ragtime with a melodic Dixieland section". It was Day's move to Europe that led Rex to start his travelling

life with the Blackwell Clowns, soon thereafter joining the Musical Spillers where he also played trombone, soprano and tenor sax and xylophone.

With the Musical Spillers Rex made his first visit to New York in 1921. New horizons opened up. And the pay was fifty dollars a week – "there my childhood ends".

The New York scene

Two years later we find Rex Stewart playing with different bands in various New York clubs, an adventurous and exciting existence for the now 16-17 years old boy, filling himself with both musical and other impressions and inspiration. Life was a party.

Rex made well as a musician though this day-by-day life was sometimes hard for the short, already rather plump teenager. But he was also encouraged and supported. Among several older and at the time more established colleagues to whom he has later expressed his gratitude for backing and further schooling are Willie The Lion Smith. But the first thing this "majestic cigar-chomping figure" said when he saw Rex was "Who's that tomato?". It took some months before Rex dared to approach him with a request to play with him.

"Yeah, kid, if you know your tonics." Whatever "tonics" mean this led to a friendship, "kind of like a cat looking up to a king" and to "an important part in my musical education".

*Willie The Lion:
"Who's that tomato?"*



The way of living was also an unhealthy one; the musicians took active part of the carefree Roaring 20s with its glamour and continuous night life, but they lived on its backyard, an insecure social existence with insufficient sleep, bad eating and more than sufficient consuming the alcoholic liquids of the prohibition period. Rex realizes all this clearly in his memoir and expresses his sorrow for many colleagues and friends, also some of the most promising as young musicians who didn't have the strength – and luck – to survive the situation, who disappeared in obscurity or even died much too early. Rex admits his own luck having escaped this destiny, and his gratitude to those who helped him.

With Elmer Snowden

An important step in Rex's career was his engagement with Elmer Snowden's band in 1925. (This is not long after the break between Snowden and the rest of the Washingtonians, now under Duke Ellington's official leadership.) Rex was unhappy that his closest friend at the time reed man Happy Caldwell didn't get an offer too, but anyhow happy "playing in the heart of the action" and in "one of the best outfits for its size in New York" with members as "outstanding clarinetist and tenor sax man" Prince Robinson and Walter Johnson on drums, "what a great swinger he was!".

Rex expressed great appreciation for Snowden both as a person and as a musical leader and arranger, he was if not a new father figure anyhow a very important mentor. Not the least was Rex grateful to Snowden for his way of dealing with the situation when he got his next, life changing offer:

Rumours of the quality of the Snowden band spread among musicians and many colleagues came to listen. One night Snowden had spotted three of the stars of the Fletcher Henderson orchestra in the audience at the Nest Club, trombonist Charlie "Big" Green, Buster Bailey and Louis Armstrong. Snowden announ-



Elmer Snowden's band at the Nest Club 1925, left to right:

Te Roy Williams (trombone), Elmer Snowden (banjo), Joe Garland (alto and baritone saxophones), Walter Johnson (drums), Freddy Johnson (piano), Bob Ysaguirre (tuba), Prince Robinson (tenor sax and clarinet) and Rex Stewart 18 years old (cornet).

ced a number in which Rex was supposed to take a solo as long as he wanted, to set the tempo and show off. In Rex's own words: "I must have played pretty well because Louis and other fellows in Henderson's band took to dropping in from time to time". Henderson's orchestra was the No 1 of the day, and Armstrong was more than a star, he was King not to say God, especially to trumpet/cornet players like Rex who idolized him.

A few days later Rex got a telephone call at the Nest Club where the Snowden unit played. Anxious it was due to some emergency back home he listened to a voice that sounded familiar: "I've got a job for you, Boy". Rex became a little uncertain if this wasn't a joke, but the man laughed and continued "This is Louis, and I want you to take my place with Smack (Henderson). I'm going back to Chicago." The offer was confirmed the next day by Henderson himself, but Rex loved working with Snowden and was also a little afraid of succeeding Armstrong, "nobody could replace Louis's power and high notes". Snowden helped him decide: "I'm firing you for your own good".

A rising star

In jazz musicians' own history telling, at least up to Gillespie, to perform with power and hit-

ting the high notes are qualities in trumpet playing that are commonly stressed as determining. For Rex this was no problem. He was now turning 19 years old. He was obviously a fine technician on his instrument, he played with the force and lively fieriness that characterized his style through the years. He was a very good high note player. On a musical scene full of excellent instrument colleagues he was now chosen to take the place of their great favourite.

The Henderson years

Rex could join the No 1 orchestra as a more than qualified musician – or "music" which is the expression he himself often used. But he had not yet reached his own peak level as a soloist, and he was in many ways still a boy. During his years with the Hendersons, Fletcher and his younger brother Horace, Rex matured to a profiled soloist, forceful and executing in a gripping manner. He was an excellent section player and an

orchestra member even capable of taking responsibility for more than his own playing, and he was a grown up man.

Even after Armstrong left Fletcher Henderson's orchestra it was full of leading musicians. Coleman Hawkins was revolutionizing solo playing on the saxophone. Henderson, Don Redman and Edgar Sampson wrote arrangements that was leading to the big band bash in the swing era. Clarinetist Buster Bailey, trumpeters Russell Smith and Bobby Stark, trombonist Big Charlie Green and drummer Kaiser Marshall were other leading men on their instruments.

Rex has spoken warmly about Big Green as an important trombone player, but his personal relation to this dominating and quite obviously rather nasty man soon became a real problem. Even if Green heckled him on the bandstand newcomer Rex tried to be helpful, fixed the two bottles of gin that Green nightly demanded him to bring to the stand and so on. Rex started to hate going to work but luckily Henderson became aware of the situation, realized that the teenager needed help to take care of himself and invited him to live in his house. Later Rex found out that Miss Lee, Henderson's wife, had promised his mother in Washington

Louis Armstrong – Rex's great favourite and his predecessor in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra.





Four men who were very important to young Rex, professionally and personally: Horace Henderson, Luis Russell, Benny Carter and Fletcher Henderson.

to take care of him. "This she did, as much as possible."

Still Big Green harassed Rex. Peace on the bandstand could be kept only until the railing in front was filled with musicians coming to pick up ideas from the innovative arrangements and Rex had a solo. He was poked in the back with a trombone slide, or a mute fell on the floor – anything to distract him. "That's how Charlie Green drove me out of the band." – (Later on we will see how a similar situation with a horn man in another orchestra contributed to Rex leaving that group.)

After a short period of traumatic blankness, not working and with the bottle as his solace, he was saved by the Hendersons: Miss Lee presented him with a ticket to Xenia, Ohio, "where you will enroll at Wilberforce (University) and play in Fletcher's brother's band". Not known by Rex at the time was that the decision had been taken with the support of his parents. "Something had to be done about me. My drinking had reached a dangerous point."

At Wilberforce Horace Henderson was leading a university band, "the best in the country. Or so the fellows kept telling me."

From Rex's own stories we can understand that parts of his bad behavior didn't cease. But what became two years at Wilberforce still was a restoration period for Rex. The university orchestra was a full time working professional unit, playing for dances and clubs on tour, once even a six-week engagement at the Savoy Ballroom in New York. (Where and when Rex also met his future wife.) The band included a o drummer Bill Beason and Ellington-to-be trumpeters Freddie Jenkins and Shelton Hemphill. For a period Benny Carter joined as a musical leader who "performed miracles as he drilled us".

Fletcher Henderson took Rex back in 1928, to live in the Henderson home and soon also to function as a liaison between himself and the orchestra and as the nominal leader on the bandstand when Fletcher not seldom attended other businesses.

Rex stayed until 1933, but with shorter breaks to play with McKinney's Cotton Pickers where he got more payment which was welcome since his wife expected a child. But the Henderson band was his home

where he loved to be and he never really thought of leaving.

When Henderson in fact fired Rex his expressed reason was that Rex played too loud and also tried to take the band away from him. Rex found Henderson's arguments illogical: he had been hired to play like Armstrong which meant "over the band", and Henderson had himself put him in charge of the orchestra. Rex knew another reason: Henderson had without the member's knowing promised that they should play for a benefit without payment and Rex had spoken against him in favour of the at the time rather over worked band members.

But Rex was now ready to go on without a father-figure to lean on. His next step was a band of his own.

Interlude: Between kingdoms

Rex was asked to take a good stomping band with him to the Empire Ballroom at Broadway for a few weeks.

The engagement lasted for 14 months. Rex had quit both drinking and smoking. He was an ambitious leader and he had a strong lineup, the most well known members being Edgar Sampson (chief arranger, first sax and violin), trumpeter Ward Pinkett, Rudy Powell (sax and clarinet), Roger Ramirez on piano and for most of the period no less than Sidney Catlett on drums.

The famous Fargo dance performance November 7, 1940: Rex close to the camera with drummer Sonny Greer and at the right newcomer Ray Nance and Wallace Jones, Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, Lawrence Brown.



Among the original numbers created during rehearsals with the Stewart orchestra are the classics *Stompin' at the Savoy* and *Blue Lou*.

The band was successful, and in some respects ahead of its time. Already with Henderson Rex had, without acclaim, suggested that they should hire a singer (in fact Cab Calloway, less than two years later Henderson's successful competitor). Now Rex sent for a singer and although members of the band found the idea crazy it turned out more than well. Rex: "The band rocked along, trying to sound like Smack when we swung, and like Leo Reisman's society band on the ballads." Stewart's orchestra had three half-hour broadcasts a week and began to win reputation more than just locally.

The breakup of the band was to a large extent the logical consequence of Rex's lack of both knowledge and real interest for the business aspects of leadership. He began free-lancing around New York again before joining Luis Russell, a job that lasted only a few months because of the new offer which he later described as "that was just about the best thing that could have happened".

Joining Duke

"Man, I've been waiting for you to join my band. How about coming home?" – This was according to Rex what Duke Ellington

Duke Ellington with his trumpet trio 1938 - 40: Wallace Jones, Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart.



said to him when they happened to meet in December 1934 in Irving Mills's office, "home" being a reference to their common home town Washington DC. When Rex didn't receive a "yes" as a reply to his payment claim, he refused the offer. He was also fond of Russell and liked playing in his orchestra (for a better salary than the one offered by Ellington).

However, when Rex arrived home a little later he saw Ellington's valet Jonesy standing at the bottom of the stairs. Rex heard him yelling to his wife to tell Rex that Duke had said that everything was okay and that Rex should go to get his band uniform the next day. This was also heard by Paul Barbarin, drummer with Luis Russell, who had been standing in the doorway talking to Rex's wife. Barbarin rushed directly to Russell telling him that Rex was negotiating with Ellington. When Rex arrived to play

that night he was met by Russell demanding him not to enter the stand. Rex didn't even get a chance to tell Russell that he had refused Ellington's offer. - Now Rex was an Ellington man.

Rex's musical home was the Henderson idiom; the Ellington effects and moods were alien to him. He was also shocked by the welcome and introduction he got as a newcomer, that is: none. But both musically and on a personal level he rather soon became an integral part and one of many highly individual profiles in a group that in a unique way functioned together like an instrument.

Rex filled the spot left by Freddie Jenkins. "Duke always knew what was best for the band, I've found out", Rex himself has summoned up the discussion that followed upon Duke's hiring another trumpet soloist beside Cootie Williams. The personal relation between Rex and Cootie went up and down, for at least two years they didn't speak to each other, but when Cootie left in 1940 they as friends "had footstomped that band into a swinger --- I bet that Duke never realized the influence we had over his rhythm section".

Compared with Cootie, and later on Ray Nance, Rex Stewart was the driving, forceful and peppery big band trumpeter, and also a high note player when needed. In the development of Ellington's small unit to a full big band, not only in the numerical sense, the addition of Rex and a

little earlier trombonist Lawrence Brown were determining factors (as the later addition of a fifth reed player and trumpeter no 4 - even sometimes 5 and 6). Clearly influenced by Armstrong he developed his soloing in a direction that in trumpet history make him a major link in the development leading to Roy Eldridge.

Rex's unique "half-valve" technique became a success that Ellington made use of and for Rex a trade mark - not only for his own good: his "normal" performance has unjustly been overshadowed by the tricky exercises (by some critics even called clownish).

Many facts confirm that Rex and Ellington developed their relation on a familiar basis, more so than the case was with the Maestro and most of his men. Rex in periods also served as Duke's cook and hair dresser.

After Ellington

After leaving Ellington in late 1945 Rex toured with JATP and then formed his own combos again. His group of six, the "Rextet", toured Europe in 1947. Rex remained and worked as a soloist. He also lectured at the Paris Conservatory in 1948 on "Jazz, Original Art Form" and spent half a year in Australia in 1949.

When back in the US in 1950 Rex changed his way of life for a time, he moved to Troy, near New York, and ran a farm. But this semi-retirement from music didn't last long. Parallel to music play-

ing he presented to the public his talents in other areas. While leading a band in Boston he also worked as a disc jockey in local radio. And he began successfully to write articles on jazz.

In 1954 he returned to playing more frequently (though not completely leaving his farm). He was back on the New York scene in 1956, which led to two years 1957-58 as musical director of the Great South Bay Festival. The same years he held the trumpet chair at Eddie Condon's club in New York, demonstrating his ability to play a forceful and imaginative lead in a more traditional repertoire and style than his customary one.

A close friend of his (Francis Thorne in the postscript to *Jazz Masters of the Thirties*) has characterized Rex in his later years as surprisingly "a little bit inhibited", contrary to his dynamic assurance as a cornet player. He was essentially a modest and highly sensitive man.

Like so many belonging to his generation of "muscicos" Rex could in later years express bitterness and cynicism concerning the current jazz scene, and there is no doubt that he never really received deserved credit for his considerable contribution over fifty years in jazz.

Rex Stewart died suddenly from a brain hemorrhage on December 7, 1967.

Claes England

Rex Stewart in his last years.





Rex Stewart's recording career

We can find Rex Stewart on a great number of records made both before and after his period of 11 years with Duke Ellington. In fact he also participated in several recording sessions without any Ellington connection during that period.

His discography is comprehensive.

The following is a brief account of Rex Stewart's activities as reflected on records, and with only a chary quantity of sessions and numbers.

Recordings prior to joining Ellington

The first time we find Rex' name mentioned in discographies is on May 23, 1924, when he is a member of Billy Page and his Broadway Syncopators. It was an early start for Rex. He was only 17 years old at the time. They recorded for Okeh but for unknown reason the recordings were rejected.

The following years Rex is a member of different groups accompanying female blues singers like Lena Henry, Monette Moore and Viola McCoy. Often he joined a band called The Choo Choo Jazzers that seemed to specialize in accompanying blues singers such as Helen Gross, Rosa Henderson and Ethel Ridley. Surprisingly enough we find that already in April 1927 Rex made a rejected recording for Vocalion with his own ten piece orchestra consisting of so far unnamed musicians.

As from Spring 1926 Rex started an engagement with Fletcher Henderson that lasted throughout 1932, but with breaks for playing two years with Fletcher's brother Horace and later on shortly with McKinney's Cotton Pickers. No doubt it was during these years that Duke Ellington observed Rex's originality as a musician and cornetist. While with Henderson Rex took part in several recording sessions. Already in *Stampede*, May 14 1926, Rex's personality is clearly demonstrated in two short solo passages, brisk, eager and brave playing with a little rasping tone on the open horn.

Under the name of The Little Chocolate Dandies Henderson recorded for Okeh on September 18, 1929. Here Rex was joined by such big names as J.C. Higginbotham, Don Redman, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins and Fats Wal-

ler - all of them at the time with Henderson. One of the recorded numbers was the well known *Six Or Seven Times*.

We can hear Rex's style clearly maturing while with Henderson: In *Sugar* (October 16 1931) and *My Gal Sal* (February 5 1931) fluently swinging with muted horn. In *Chinatown* (October 3 1930) a fierce solo with high notes and great technique. In *Underneath the Harlem Moon* (December 9 1932) demonstrating his trixes.

With McKinney's Cotton Pickers Rex recorded in 1930. Shortly before joining Ellington he made a recording with the Luis Russell's orchestra and from this session *Primitive* and *Ol' Man River* are especially noteworthy (August 8 1934).

On December 12, 1934, Rex with a small pick up band made a recording for Vocalion. They numbers were *Stingaree* and *Baby, Ain't You Satisfied*, which have been re-released on many LPs and CDs over the years.

While with Ellington

After Rex joined Duke Ellington he made recordings under his own name with Duke and members of the band. These small group recordings went under the name of Rex Stewart and his 52nd Street Stompers. They are however left aside in this essay as they are considered to fall under the Ellington label.

Most jazz musicians who had made a name for themselves were also invited to take part in recording sessions with other leaders. This applied very much to Rex.

Bob Howard was a drummer and vocalist who never led a regular band but brought together musicians to many recording sessions for Decca. On March 4, 1935, Rex together with Barney Bigard

were invited to take part in a recording of four tunes.

The Danish baron Timme Rosenkrantz who seems to have been friend of every jazz musician in New York including Duke Ellington arranged for a recording for Victor on May 27, 1938. Rex is taking part together with amongst others future Ellingtonians to be; Tyree Glenn and Russell Procope. The group went under the name of Timme Rosenkrantz and his Barrellhouse Barons. On guitar is Brick Fleagle who was a very good friend of Rex and would co-operate with him on many occasions in the future. Fleagle was introduced to Ellington by Rex and was for a time employed by Ellington as arranger and copyist.

When Duke Ellington and the orchestra toured Europe in 1939 Rex made some recordings with the French guitarist Django Reinhardt for the French label Swing.

In the late 1930s Lionel Hampton had some kind of a contract with Victor that seems to have given him free hands in selecting melodies and personnel. It seems like the A&R-man had no influence. Hampton picked men depending on what orchestra happened to be in town on the given day. We know that many recordings were made by Hampton on this basis, recordings that have become jazz classics. On June 13, 1939, Ellington's orchestra was in New York and Hampton assembled Rex, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney, Billy Taylor and Sonny Greer. Oddly enough only three tunes were recorded against the normal number of four. One of them was *Memories Of You* where Rex is shining.

In one of Sidney Bechet's Victor sessions with his New Orleans Feetwarmers, September 6 1940, Rex proves to

be one of very few trumpeters who could match the dominating Bechet. With Earl Hines on the piano the Bechet-Stewart duel becomes great duets in *Ain't Misbehavin'* and the Ellington tune *Stompy Jones*. (Herb Jeffries sings in *Blues For You Johnny* from the same session.)

Hot Record Society (H.R.S.) was a minor recording company but its standards were set high. In order to give the listener a maximum of pleasure they mostly issued 12" records. On December 15, 1940, Jack Teagarden was invited to lead a band consisting of also Rex, Barney Bigard, Ben Webster and Brick Fleagle.

A similar recording company was Keynote that generally produced jazz records of high standard. On July 5, 1944, they employed Rex, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney and Brick Fleagle plus a few others for recording four melodies.

After leaving Ellington

During his years with Ellington Rex had become a "name" in jazz circles. Even though he may have been overshadowed by the be-boppers and their new type of jazz that developed after the war Rex didn't seem to have problems finding his place on the market. Over the years 1945/47 he made recordings with different groups for Capitol, Parlophone, H.R.S and Mercury. He also appeared with JATP.

In September 1947 he formed a group of his own for a recording session in New York. The band was named Rex Stewart's All Star European Tour Band. The intention was obvious. The band consisted of Rex, Sandy Williams (tb), John Harris (cl, as), Vernon Story (ts),

Rex with Sidney Bechet and Earl Hines in recording studio. September 1940.



Recording 1957-58 with the Henderson All Stars, from left Paul Webster, Emmet Berry, Rex.

Don Gais (p), Billy Houston (bs), Red Curry (d) och Honey Johnson (voc). Soon after they went to Europe and in November they appeared in Stockholm and made recordings for Cupol when Simon Brehm replaced the bassist.

As from November 1947 we find the band in Switzerland and later in France where they had a long stay into the following year and made a lot of recordings for the French label Blue Star. They also made appearances in several other European countries. However, in the middle of the year the band was dissolved and Rex remained in Europe as a solo performer. Vernon Story who had made a name for himself as a capable tenor man during the European tour was never heard of anymore which has been regretted by many.

On July 15, 1948, Rex was invited to East Berlin to make recordings together with local musicians for the East German label Amiga. One of the sides recorded was a composition by Rex called *Air Lift Stomp* and the record was issued with that title. However, after some time this was observed by the authorities and the record was hastily withdrawn. The title was of course interpreted as a homage to the air bridge into Berlin because of the Russian blockade in effect at the time. The record was re-released with a new more neutral name, *Amiga Stomp*.

Back in Paris Rex recorded with groups led by French pianist Claude Bolling. He also made detours to London and recorded for the British label Tempo.

Then in August of 1949 Australia called and Rex spent the rest of that year there, mainly in Sydney and Melbourne. He made recordings with Graeme Bell's band, with his own Sydney Six, with his Jazzartists (for the label Jazzart), and with Jack Brockensha's Big Band. There was also time for a detour to New Zealand in February 1950.

As from mid 1950 Rex is back in USA and for the remainder of his career he makes numerous recordings both under his own name and as a sideman with others. They are too many to mention here except for a few:

The Big Challenge is the name of a well known LP originally produced 1957 for Jazztone but that has been re-released on several other labels. Here we find Rex, together with Cootie Williams, Lawrence Brown, J.C. Higginbotham, Coleman Hawkins, Bud Freeman plus accompaniment. The idea behind the combination of band members was that different styles on the instruments

Rex recording,
1950s.

Below:
Brick Fleagle,
friend of Rex and
his partner on several recordings.



should challenge each other. In 1958 Victor formed a studio band called The Big Eighteen. It was sort of a pick up big band consisting of the most well known names available that particular day and one of them is Rex. Recreating numbers from the big band era, the Ellington tune is *Five O'Clock Drag* with Rex in excellent shape.

Reunions of the Fletcher Henderson alumni have been made on several occasions. Rex Stewart and the Henderson All Stars make recordings on two occasions in 1957 and 1958.



In December 1957 Rex played with a Red Allen all star combo in Nat Hentoff's and Whitney Balliet's television program *The Sound of Jazz* on CBS. The show can be found on DVD, but also on record. Rex plays wonderfully on *Wild Man Blues* and *Rosetta* (as do Allen, Coleman Hawkins, Pee Wee Russell and Vic Dickenson).

Those who really want to study Rex's way of talking, laughing and screaming through his cornet are recommended to listen to the recording called *Chatter Jazz*, where he plays together with trombonist Dickie Wells who also could use his instrument in an unconventional way.

On March 18, 1960, he makes a recording under his own name with a sextet, *The Happy Jazz of Rex Stewart*. In the summer of 1966 Rex is back in Europe performing and recording in England, Switzerland and France. His last recording was made on September 28, 1966, in Paris.

Bo Haufman,
Claes Englund

Discographical news

Brian Rust's latest edition of *Jazz and ragtime records (1897-1942)* gives for Rex Stewart's first session (April 4, 1927) 2-3 saxes, but the Brunswick files give nine musicians and thus the personnel should be co/tb/2 as/ts/p/bj/tu/dr. *Ten O'Clock Blues* was composed by Bud Allen who might have been a member of the group and *Oh! Malinda* was composed by James P. Johnson with lyrics by Andy Razaf, who is also the vocalist.

Rust also missed a test session:

REX STEWART (no more details given)
Brunswick studio 2, New York, May 20, 1931.
TCL 1485-A/B (*I'm Crazy 'Bout My Baby*
(Alexander Hill & Thomas Waller)
Brunswick test

It should furthermore be noted that the Hollywood session on December 16, 1936 (*Relax-tious* and *Lazy Man's Shuffle*) does not have Brick Fleagle on guitar (he was in New York at the time) and neither Jack Maisel on drums. It is rather Ceele Burke on electric guitar and Sonny Greer behind the drums. Neither did Duke Ellington take part as there is no piano. Ceele Burke was one of the pioneers on electric guitar together with Eddie Durham, Charlie Christian and Leonard Ware, who preceded Christian with Benny Goodman. Burke recorded on electric steel guitar with Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller as well as with Ivie Anderson after her departure from Duke.

Björn Englund

Rex- excellent jazz historian

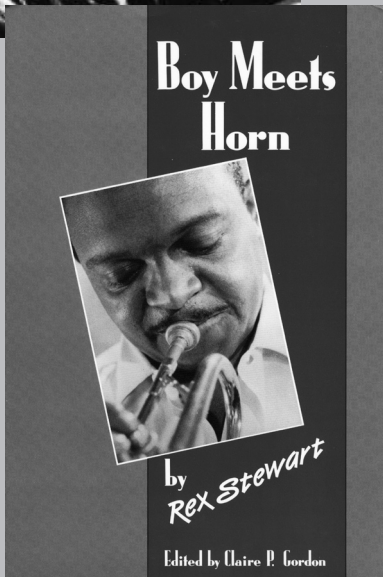
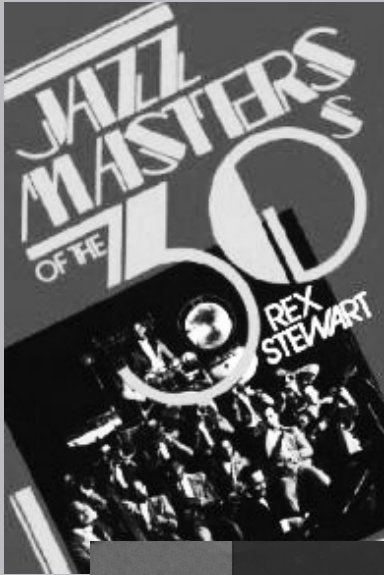
"I do not consider myself a writer", Rex Stewart says in the prologue to his memoir. A far too modest judgment. He had a great talent for writing and luckily we possess proofs of this.

Many jazz musicians have written their autobiographies and these testimonies make a priceless contribution to our knowledge of jazz history. Several are good ones, some superb. But as a rule they were written by someone else, in the best cases as close as possible to the story told orally by the "author".

Rex is unique in this; he wrote his memoir *Boy Meets Horn* himself, although it was published posthumously and his close friend and editor Claire P Gordon has put in a few connecting sentences, explanations and such items. This is a fascinating openhearted and clear-sighted account of a life; emotions, reflexions and the sometimes effortless but mostly hard struggle for a position.

In the 60s Rex wrote jazz reviews regularly for the Los Angeles Times and in his last years essays on jazz to *Down Beat* and other magazines. These essays are a real gold mine, a wonderful source of knowledge about jazz, the music, the musicians and the social reality that they lived in. One of the musts even in the tiniest jazz library is the only jazz history written by a musician: *Jazz Masters Of The Thirties*, a collection of the main part of these articles by Rex, all from the years 1965-67.

Rex writes about cutting sessions and studio recordings, but the main part of the book is devoted to portraits of several of the greatest musicians from his own era. Of course Armstrong, Ellington and Fletcher Henderson are among them. Portrayed Ellingtonians are Harry Carney, Barney Bigard, Joe Nanton and Ben Webster and among



the others Benny Carter, Sidney Catlett, Coleman Hawkins and Art Tatum. Maybe a little surprising in this parade of giants is the chapter on lesser known trombonist Jimmy Harrison, in Rex's words "The Father of Swing Trombone". As a friend of his subjects Rex writes with affection but without hiding their foibles. All this offers generous and amusing information.

Rex writes vividly, with authority and humour. In both books he tells us about Henderson, Ellington and some others but there is very little repetition of material, so don't hesitate: read them both!

Claes Englund

Rex Stewart:
Boy Meets Horn, edited by Claire P Gordon, University of Michigan Press, 1991

Jazz Masters Of The Thirties, Macmillan, 1972. Paperback: Da Capo, 1982.



Duke and French friends having a good time listening to Rex playing with Django Reinhardt. Paris 1939.

Finesse à la Rex

This article is part of the inlet of the Rex Stewart album *Affinity* CD AFS 1029 "Finesse". It was written by the late **Vic Bellerby**, one of the founders of our British sister society DESUK:

First date with Duke

Rex Stewart (1907-1967) never forgot his first date with the Ellington band at the State and Lake Theatre, Chicago, when he joined in December, 1934.

There had been no "run-through" of the parts (in fact there was no music on the stand) when he sat nervously in the idle of the great brass section as the band roared into such ducal "standards" as *It Don't Mean A Thing* and *Stompy Jones*. He could not hear clearly Duke's announcements at the front but managed to catch, distantly, Duke introducing *Some Of These Days* (a tune played by the band but rarely). Cootie Williams suddenly nudged him in the ribs - "Get out there, Fat Stuff, you're on", he yelled. Rex stumbled down to the microphone and Duke whispered "Sing the tune and play two out choruses" before retreating to his piano. Rex did not know the words and burred "Some of these days scat, scat, mumble, scat". Let Rex take over; "The band then hit a series of chords which I had to scramble to find notes to fit. After what seemed hours of this I hit an altissimo A, the band for once made the same chord, and I was home free, covered with sweat that poured out from everywhere." Later he asked Duke why he did that to him. The master smiled and said simply, "I wasn't concerned, I knew you could do it; that's why I picked you for my band".

Rex's style

This was the truth of the matter. Many years before, Duke's ever-searching antennae had "homed in" on Rex; unknown to the trumpeter/cornettist himself he had been pinpointed as the successor to Freddy Jenkins. Rex's work with Fletcher Henderson and

McKinney's Cotton Pickers had established him as a soloist of great individuality and a fine section man. His own playing in the December 1934 session (*Stingaree* and *Baby Ain't You Satisfied?*) reveal him as a soloist of great individuality and a stylish singer. When he joined Ellington he switched permanently to cornet and the style developed quickly and in many directions.

The Stewart style was always propelled by a singular nervous intensity and embraced a variety of moods - penetrating sadness, wry cynicism and touches of both innocence and jauntiness. Much of the effect was achieved by a superb technique and emphasised by Rex's individual "half-valve" application. The latter was produced by partial pressure of the instrument's valves, resulting in a strange echo-like effect described by one critic as a "throttled eloquence". Rex himself observed, "This technique caused me to produce a tone related to concert G instead of C - this was for all intents and purposes the G sound on the horn but it sounded like it was being heard through a fog".

The Feetwarmers session

There was no music to hand for the famous, essentially improvised Paris "Feetwarmers" session of April 5, 1939: Rex had three of the tunes in his head as he walked down to the studio and it is interesting to note that *Finesse* won a Grand Prix award for the best jazz composition of 1939. Sonny Greer failed to appear for the date and Barney Bigard occasionally deputised by drumming on a telephone book behind Django Reinhardt's guitar! This was one of the greatest of all European jazz dates and one wonders if Rex, Django and Barney ever surpassed their fine contribution to these five selections. (*Montmartre*, *Low Cotton*, *Finesse*, *I Know That You Know*, *Solid Old Man*).

DUKE:

A Life of Duke Ellington

Terry Teachouts Ellington-biografi har mött de mest motsatta reaktioner: Från jubel över ett förnämligt standardverk om vår hjälte, till avståndstagande inför ett hopknyckt collage av negativa omdömen.

Vår recensent Peter Lee hör till de positiva.



Det finns väl ingen jazzmusiker som är så väl dokumenterad i litteraturen som Edward Kennedy Ellington. På bokhandelsdiskarna finns nu en nyskriven biografi om Duke, skriven av Terry Teachout, bl.a. verksam som teaterkritiker på *The Wall Street Journal*. Teachout har i sex år även varit bosatt i Kansas City där han spelade bas och skrev i lokaltidningar om jazz och klassisk musik.

Författaren deklarerar att boken inte utgör ett vetenskapligt arbete utan är en sammanställning av de forskningar och undersökningar som gjorts av andra, vilket medfört att mängder av förhållanden och upplysningar som tidigare varit okända kommit i dagen under det senaste årtiondet. Fakta och historier är inte alltid nya, men de har knappast tidigare återberättats på ett så underhållande och trovärdigt sätt som här. Efter att ha läst ett 30-tal böcker om Duke finner jag denna bok vara den överlägset bästa, enligt mitt förmenande ett mästerverk. Boken förmänskligar en man som under största delen av sin karriär hållits på en piedestal, en position som han mycket medvetet själv byggt upp. Han gjorde allt som krävdes för att den publika imagen skulle tilltala honom själv, samtidigt som privatlivet hölls hemligt.

Enligt system Ruth var han inte rak och tydlig om någonting han sade. Han berättade bara vad han ville att allmänheten skulle veta och höll resten dolt. Inte ens hans självbiografi *Music is my Mistress*, som kom ut ett år före Dukes bortgång, ger några klara svar utan ökar dimmolnen kring hans liv. Som exempel kan nämnas att Duke älskade att berätta historier om bakgrunden till åtskilliga av sina kompositioner. Vi har väl alla hört hur han beskriver tillkomsten av *Harlem Air-Shaft* som inspirerats av ljud, lukter och händelser i ett bostadshus i Harlem. Historien låter trovärdig men Teachout avslöjar att låten från början hette *Once Over Lightly*.

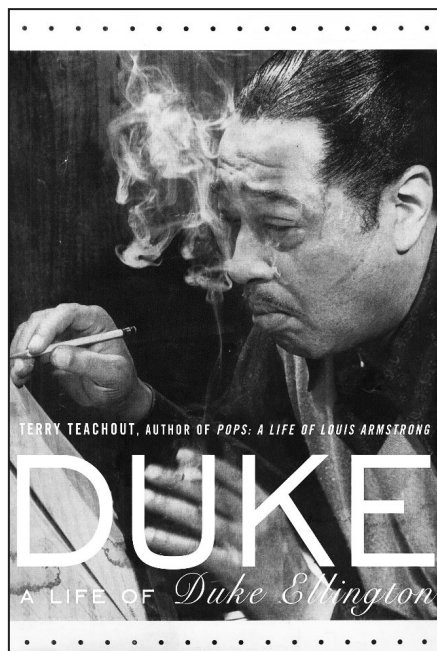
Att Ellington gick till överdrift med mat, dryck och sex är välkänt. De förstnämnda två behoven dämpades med tiden men intresset för kvinnor fanns kvar hela livet. Boken innehåller en hel del pikanta historier om hustrun, älskarinnorna, rakkniven, hotellnycklarna, mordhoten m.m. men jag ska inte förstöra nöjet för envar att läsa dessa skrönor och andra avslöjanden som Duke gjort sitt bästa för att dölja.

Teachout beskriver Ellington som musikalisk arkitekt och sammanfogare. Det är välbekant att han lånade takter

och riff från sina musiker och vidarebearbetade dessa till populära melodier utan att upphovsmännen fick något erkännande eller del av copyrighten. Detta förorsakade naturligtvis missämja och krav på ersättning i efterhand. Det finns en mängd historier om tillkomsten av kända melodier, bl.a. hur Duke och Bubber Miley utvecklade *Creole Love Call* från en idé de fått från klarinettisten Rudy Jackson. Det uppstod en viss pinsamhet när det framkom att Jackson delvis stulit denna från sin tidigare arbetsgivare King Oliver som redan 1923 spelat in melodin som *Camp Meetin' Blues*. Det konstateras även att om inte Duke lånat och bearbetat slingsor från sina musiker, hade knappast de själva kunnat utveckla sina takter till välkända melodier.

Åtskilliga sidor ägnas även åt samarbetet med managern Irving Mills. Särskilt intressant är beskrivningen hur Ellington marknadsfördes av Mills, inte som musiker och orkesterledare, utan som en stor artist som uppskattades av namngivna klassiska kompositörer och musiker. Det beskrivs även hur Mills tjänade grova pengar på att uppge sig själv som medkompositör, en metod som Ellington senare använde sig av i samarbetet med Billy Strayhorn. Dessa uppgifter har förorsakat livlig debatt på Ellingtonanknutna diskussionsfora där det framhållits att Strayhorn aldrig fick det erkännande och den ekonomiska kompensation som han var förtjänt av. Om det var Duke eller skivbolagen som strök Strayhorns icke säljande namn är väl oklart, men detta torde vara orsaken till Strayhorns alkoholism och brytningen mellan herrarna. När Strayhorn senare återvände till fadershuset framhölls hans namn på korrekt sätt.

Att Duke föddes en andra gång i Newport 1956 känner vi alla till. Orkestern var pånyttfödd och spelglädjen höll i sig 3-4 år varefter nedgången sakta började skönjas. Särskilt intressant är Clark Terrys berättelse om varför han och fyra andra slutade vid årsskiftet 1959-60. Terry beskriver hur man känner sig när man spelat med Ellington några år. Man blir en del av orkestern och förväntas spela på ett speciellt sätt kväll efter kväll. Duke bestämmer allt och trots en utifrån sett viss frihet, får man aldrig gå utanför den form som skapats av Duke. Utvecklingen som musiker stannar av. Den som vill måste byta arbetsmiljö. Terry nämner även att Johnny Hodges, Cootie Wil-



liams och Lawrence Brown alla sökte sig bort från Ellingtons orkester, men att samtliga återkom efter några år då de alla tre var så stöpta i Ellingtonformen att de passade bättre ihop med Duke än i andra sammanhang.

Åtskilligt utrymme ägnas även åt Ellingtons misslyckanden att komponera längre verk samt musik för Broadway-shower. Först och främst konstaterar Teachout att Duke saknade den formella kunskap som erfordras för att skriva större verk som kan vinna erkännande av musikkritiker. Dessutom omöjliggjorde hans arbetssituation att få upp ett verk på Broadway. *Jump for Joy* var ett halvyckat arbete som gick drygt 100 gånger i Kalifornien. Det bestod av lösa sångnummer och sketcher utan inbördes sammanhang. Ellington hade inte besökt en teater under de senaste årtiondena och hade helt missat att i musikalerna på 60-talet måste melodier och text föra handlingen framåt. Vidare gav han sig aldrig tid att besöka intresserade teatrar, som så krävde då han ständigt var på resande fot. Det fungerade inte att lite då och då producera en melodi utan något samband med det som tidigare skrivits. Då Ellington alltid kom i tidsnöd med beställningsverken blev slutet ofta svaga.

Such Sweet Thunder får väl sägas vara ett av de mera lyckade av Ellington-Strayhorn's större verk under senare år. Strayhorn kunde sin Shakespeare medan Ellington, som förmodligen aldrig läst eller sett hans verk, hittade på små historier om de personer som avbildades musikaliskt i sviten. Men som vanligt hann inte Duke bli färdig före premiären och åtminstone de stycken

som benämns *Half the Fun* och *The Star-Crossed Lovers* utgör återbruk av tidigare kompositioner, av vilka den sistnämnda redan fanns inspelad av Hodges under annat namn.

Sista kapitlet som avhandlar tiden 1967-1974 är en sorglig historia om nedförsbacken som The Duke Ellington Orchestra befann sig i. De stora solisterna försvann en efter en. Deras platser kunde omöjligen fyllas av de yngre i och för sig kompetenta musiker som kom in, men inte hade någon erfarenhet av hur orkestern låtit tio år tidigare, ännu mindre på 30-talet.

Duke hade alltid varit rundhänt med pengar, även då han inte hade dem. Förskott på musikuppdrag eller för hans memoarer spenderades så snart de kom in. Han hade en utökad familj som levde på honom och de sista åren blev ekonomiskt svåra. När han dog efterlämnade han inget testamente, däremot en skatteskuld på 700.000 dollar. Upphovsrätterna till hans kompositioner auktioncerades ut för att betala skatteskulden.

Den mening i boken som fick mig att tänka till lite extra sade att Duke var "a major composer but not an influential one". Visst – han skrev inte för olika instrument, utan för de musiker i sin orkester som hade vissa egenskaper när de trakterade de aktuella instrumenten. Andra orkesterledare, som inte hade tillgång till dessa stjärnsolister, kunde därför aldrig få sina nya verk att påminna om Ellingtonsmusik. Tänkvärt.

Det har skrivits åtskilliga böcker om Ellington och hans musik, men den senaste biografien är från 1993. Mycket nytt har framkommit under de senaste 20 åren och Teachout torde ha läst allt. Han tackar bl.a. DEMS och föreningarna i olika länder för deras tillmötesgående att dela med sig av sina forskningsresultat.

För Ellingtonintresserade är denna bok ett måste och för en musikerbiografi är högsta tänkbara betyg att den får läsaren vilja lyssna igen på det som författaren avhandlar.

Peter Lee



Terry Teachout:
DUKE. A Life of Duke Ellington.
Gotham Books, New York, 2013
Boken kan köpas på Adlibris för SEK 187:-

New book A'Comin'

*Precis när Terry Teachouts bok om Ellington kommit ut på marknaden får vi veta att ännu en ny bok om Duke Ellington är i antågande. Det är David Berger som låter oss veta att hans bok publiceras någon gång under detta år. Vad den kommer att behandla är oss inte känt men med tanke på att David Berger har ett förflutet som trumpetare i Mercer Ellingtons band kan man våga gissa att den kommer att huvudsakligen röra sig kring Ellingtons musik. Det är möjligt att boken får titeln *The Cambridge Companion to Duke Ellington*. David Berger fungerar numera mest som orkesterledare och arrangör. Han har även besökt Sverige i den kapaciteten. Närmast kommer han att framträda vid konferensen i Amsterdam.*

Rättelse

I förra numret av Bulletin smög sig ett ombrytningsfel in och trasslade till Max Eastermans artikel om den nya CD-utgåvan med *The Washingtonians*. Så här skall spalt 2 på sid 19 läsas: De åtta rader som återfinns till höger om bilden hör hemma mellan raderna 2 och 3 i den följande texten, efter "point" och före "covered".
Vi beklagar denna miss i vår korrekturgranskning.

Redaktionen

Chocolate Kiddies

När observerades Duke Ellingtons namn för första gången i Sverige? Det torde ha varit år 1925 då en revy med namnet *Chocolate Kiddies* besökte vårt land. I programmet nämndes Duke Ellington som kompositör till ett antal av revyns musikaliska nummer.



Redan 1921 hade Noble Sissle och Eubie Blake haft en stor succé med den helsvarta revyn *Shuffle Along* som fick en lång och uppseendeväckande sejour på Broadway. Flera impresarier både i USA och i Europa började inse att det fanns en god marknad i att lansera revyer och shower med uteslutande svarta artister. Självklart riktade sig marknadsföringen enbart mot den köpstarka vita delen av publiken. En show kallad *From Dover to Dixie* turnerade i England under flera månader 1923. En Berlinbaserad impresario vid namn Leonidow ville få över en liknande revy till Tyskland och Berlin där kabarélivet blomstrade i efterkrigstidens tyska kaos. Han tog kontakt med producenten av *From Dover to Dixie*, Arthur S. Lyons, och denne började arbeta för att få till en show som kunde skickas över till Europa.

Under sin första tid i New York hade Ellington startat ett samarbete med Jo Trent som står som medkompositör till flera av Dukes tidigaste verk. Det är inte helt omöjligt att Duke vid den här tiden såg sin framtid mera som "song writer" snarare än orkesterledare. Det fanns gott om "role models" att ta efter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Eubie Blake för att nämna några i den långa raden. Alla dessa levde bra på de royalties de tjänade på sina kompositioner. Jo Trent

var den som stod för texterna till Ellingtons kompositioner men samarbetet upphörde efter några år. Trent var dock fortsatt verksam på "Tin Pan Alley" och skrev texter åt flera kompositörer. Han kan eventuellt ha varit ägare till skivmärket Blu-Disc som Ellington gjorde några av sina tidigaste inspelningar för. Trent avled i Barcelona 1954.

Teamet Ellington/Trent var vid denna tid inte alltför kända som melodikonstruktörer. Det fanns de som var betydligt mer uppmärksammade och lyckosamma men kanske av ekonomiska skäl fick Ellington och Trent uppdraget att skriva musik till den tilltänkta showen. Beställarens tanke var att man skulle få till ett antal slagkraftiga melodier som kunde byggas upp till en enklare story och därutöver lägga till ett antal komedi sketcher och instrumentala nummer.

I en intervju har Ellington berättat följande om hur uppdraget kom till: One day Jo Trent came running up to me on Broadway. He had a big proposition and there was urgency in his voice. "Tonight we've got to write a show," he said. "Tonight!" Being dumb and not knowing any better, I sat down that evening and wrote a show. The next day we played and demonstrated our show for Jack Robbins, who liked it and said he would take it. (Jack Robbins var musikförläggare).

Uppenbarligen så var detta ett snabbjobb för kompositörsteamet. Under bara några timmar komponerar Duke melodierna och Trent skriver texterna för en show som man säkert inte visste alltför mycket om.

Vilka nummer bidrog då Ellington/Trent med? I Ellingtons självbiografi *Music Is My Mistress* finns en lista med hans kompositioner. Under rubriken *Chocolate Kiddies* nämns följande: *Deacon Jazz*, *Jig Walk*, *Jim Dandy* och *With You*. Samtliga med Ellington som "komposser" och Jo Trent som "author". Ytterligare ett Ellington/Trent-nummer ingick i showen, *Love Is A Wish For You*, en vals, men oklarhet råder hur den melodin förlades. *Deacon Jazz* är inte listad i *MIMM* bland Ellingtons kompositioner så det är något oklart hur den blev förlagd. Emellertid spelades *Deacon Jazz* in för Blu Disc redan i November 1924 av the Washingtonians med Jo Trent som vokalist så den kan så att säga ha hämtats ner från hyllan för att användas i musicalen. Ett av showens populäraste nummer tycks *Jig Walk* ha varit som hade en tydlig Charlestonkaraktär. Den populära dansformen vid denna tidpunkt.

Det är inte omöjligt att Duke Ellington och hans Washingtonians aspirerade på att få bli engagerade för showen men som musikalisk ledare valdes Sam Wooding som hade en succéartad karriär bakom sig och erfarenhet av liknande projekt. Han hade lett orkestrar på många av Harlems kända nattklubbar och var vid denna tidpunkt mer känd än Ellington. Han bildade en elvammaorkester som tidigt 1925 tillsammans med ett trettiotal dansare och komiker reste till Berlin för att börja sitt engagemang på Admiral's Palace den 25 maj. I bandet fanns många namn som senare skulle komma att bli kända i jazzsammanhang; Adelaide Hall, Edith Wilson, Tommy Ladnier, Bobby Martin, Willie Lewis och Gene Sedric bl.a.

Under tiden i Berlin gjordes flera grammofoninspelningar men dock ingen av Ellingtons kompositioner. Det är möjligt att flera av dessa inspelade nummer ingick i showen.

Framträdandet i Berlin blev uppenbarligen en succé och efter avslutat engagemang fortsatte man på Thalia-Theater i Hamburg från 28 juli t.o.m. den 24 augusti. Därefter påbörjades en omfattande turné som sträckte sig över större delen av Europa och också inkluderade Sverige. Man uppträdde på Circus på Djurgården mellan den 28 augusti och 13 september 1925. Senare följde besök i många europeiska huvudstäder och även Moskva fick ta del av *Chocolate*

Kiddies. I maj 1926 upplöstes showen men Sam Wooding och hans orkester fortsatte turnera i Europa nu under namnet *Sam Wooding and his Chocolate Kiddies Orchestra*. Orkestern besökte t.o.m. Sydamerika 1927 innan man återvände till USA.



Det är intressant att notera att i de afischer och program som presenterades nämns enbart Duke Ellington och Jo Trent som ansvariga för musiken. Men avsevärt fler nummer användes i showen utöver de ovan nämnda av Ellington/Trent. Flera av dessa har okända upphovsmän men bl.a. ingick W.C. Handys *St. Louis Blues*.

Av sina kompositioner för Chocolate Kiddies har Ellington under sin senare karriär bara använt sig av en i sin egen repertoar nämligen *Jig Walk*. Den 22 maj 1938 kan man höra numret i en radioutsändning från Cotton Club och likaledes den 21 september 1940 i en radioutsändning från Hotel Sherman i Chicago. Därefter faller numret i glömska men den 18 juni 1971 återupplivar Duke det vid en s.k. dance date i Paramus, NJ, men som dessvärre ännu inte publicerats. På skivmärket Paramount (14024) finns *Jig Walk* utgiven med Duke Ellington angiven som nickelodeonpianist. Senare forskning har emellertid visat att det är en helt annan pianist som spelar.

Bo Haufman

För den som vill få en djupare inblick i Sam Woodings turné med *Chocolate Kiddies* rekommenderas följande publikationer:

Bertil Lyttkens: *Svart och Vitt*, Svenskt visarkiv, Stockholm, 1998.

Björn Englund: *Chocolate Kiddies*, Storyville #62

Berhard H. Behncke: *Sam Wooding and the Chocolate Kiddies*, Storyville #60

Nya skivor

The Treasury Shows – Vol. 17

Danska Storyville Records fortsätter sitt ambitiösa projekt med att återutge Duke Ellingtons Treasury Shows och har nu kommit till volym 17 i serien. Därmed har man nått den 33:e DETS-LP:n av de ursprungliga 48. Storyville skall ha en stor eloge för att man så ihärdigt vidhåller sitt löfte att ge ut hela serien. För att Ellingtonsamlare skall finna det av intresse att skaffa des



sa DETS-CD har man även lagt in mängder av tidigare utgivet material från ungefär samma tidsperioder. I denna senaste utgåva ingår radioupptagningar från Hurricane Restaurant den 9, 20, 21 och 27 april 1944.

Det kanske mest intressanta med live-upptagningar av detta slag är att framförandena ofta avviker från studioinspelningarna. Det kan röra sig om alternativa solister, längre soloframträdanden eller annan solistordning. Eller vad sägs t.ex. om att en i Ellingtons sammanhang så obskyr solist som Claude Jones får framträda i *Fancy Dan* och det är en fröjd att höra Johnny Hodges och Lawrence Brown i långa solon i *I'm Just A Lucky So And So*. I ett så ovanligt nummer som *On The Atcheson, Topeka And Santa Fe* får vi njuta av en avslappnad Al Sears. Avsevärt fler exempel kan nämnas. Det med-

följande texthäftet innehåller värdefulla och insiktsfulla kommentarer av Graham Colombé. Ett inköp rekommenderas.

Last Trip To Paris



Skivmärket Squatty Roo Records har utkommit med en CD som innehåller Duke Ellingtons konsert i Palais Des Sports, Paris, den 14 november 1973. (SR-0197). Besöket i Paris ingick i Ellingtons sista turné i Europa och skivtiteln är följaktligen helt riktig. Så här dags i Ellingtons karriär hade orkestern degenererats. Harry Carney, Paul Gonsalves och Russell Procope är kvar liksom Cootie Williams, som dock inte har något framträdande på denna spelning. Nya namn har kommit in i bandet. Musiker som inte lever upp till de gamla idealen. Orkestern spelar alldeles utmärkt och Ellington själv låter förvånansvärt pigg trots att hans sjukdom var långt framskriden vid denna tidpunkt. Men att höra Money Johnson imitera Louis Armstrong i *Basin Street Blues* och *Holly Dolly* anser undertecknad inte ha med Ellington att göra utan endast bevisar den kvalitetsnedgång som drabbade orkestern under de sista åren. För en Ellingtonkomplettist kan skivan utgöra ett måste och den inhandlas enklast på Amazon.com.

Bo Haufman

Ivie Andersons karriär

DESS-medlemmen David Palmquist i Vancouver har låtit oss ta del av denna artikel som här återges i översättning. Den är författad av Al Monroe och publicerades ursprungligen den 16 juni 1946 i Chicago Defender.

"My Mamma Don' Told Me" berättar att en flicka som skolkar från skolan aldrig kommer särskilt långt i livet. Men mamma hade tydligen fel för Ivie Anderson som skolkade från skolan för att svara på en annons blev en av professionens största vokalist.

Så här gick det till: Ett antal skolflickor i San Francisco såg en tidningsannons där "Fanchon and Marco" sökte talangfulla flickor som kunde sjunga och dansa och medfölja på en turné. Två som svarade på annonsen var Ivie Anderson och Carolyn Snowden vilka båda senare skulle bli stjärnor på film, radio och scen. Flickorna uppgav att de var 18 år gamla och blev anställda. Saker och ting gick bra i en veckas tid. Men sedan fick föräldrarna rapporter från skolan som uppgav att flickorna varit frånvarande i fem dagar. De fick förklara sig för föräldrarna och deras argument fick mammornas hjärtan att vekna så Ivie och hennes kamrat fick tillåtelse att fortsätta engagemanget.

Ivie fick sin första chans med artistgruppen när den uppträdde på Tait's, ett av San Franciscos mera exklusiva ställen. Från och med sitt första framträdande rosades hon av kritikerna. Senare satte "Fanchon and Marco" upp en påkostad show som inkluderade Harvey Brook's band där Coleman Hawkins var en firad stjärna. Ivie Anderson var vokalist tillsammans med en komiker vid namn Strut Mitchell. Showen var en succé.

Efter en lyckosam turné bestämde sig Ivie för att lämna sällskapet och i stället ansluta till en annan grupp som hade Broadway i sikte. Men här stötte hon på sin första motgång. I stället för att få uppträda i Broadways strålkastarsken fick hon en mindre roll i den andra

upplagan av "Shuffle Along" som nu turnerade i landsorten. Ivie blev dock inte alltför nedstämd för det var ändå en utmaning för en ung nybörjare. Vid den här tiden var hela teatervärlden Shuffle Along-tokig.

När "Shuffle Along" lades ner åter-



vände Ivie till New York och fick en roll i den första showen på Cotton Club. Klubben hade just öppnat i den lokal som tidigare utgjorde Jack Johnson's old DeLuxe Club. Men strax därefter reste Ivie till Australien med en grupp som bl.a. inkluderade Four Harmony Kings, som också hade ett förflutet i Shuffle Along. Hon blev mycket uppskattad av de jazzintresserade australiensarna. Efter återkomsten fick hon engagemang i en grupp som skulle turnera i Kina men hon kom inte längre än till Honolulu där hon drabbades av sjukdom. Hon återvände till San Francisco för att vila upp sig och reste efter tillfrisknandet till Chicago. Där fick hon uppträda på Grand Terrace Café och där råkade Duke Ellington, den berömde "Jungle Rhythm King" höra henne. Duke och hans orkester spelade på The Oriental Theatre och Ivie fick göra en provsjungning. När hon drog ner massor av applåder bestämde sig Duke för att engagera henne. På så sätt blev Ivie Anderson den första kvinnliga vokalisterna engagerad

av ett namnkunnigt färgat band. Det var faktiskt bara Mildred Bailey hos Paul Whiteman som föregick Ivie som fast anställd vokalist.

1933 när Ellington besökte Europa efterfrågades Ivies sång lika mycket som hans egen säregna musik. Var helst orkestern uppträdde så ville publiken höra mer av Ivie. 1939 när Duke gjorde sin andra resa till Europa var Ivie om möjligt ännu populärare tack vare de grammofooninspelningar hon gjort med Duke och som europeerna hade hört.

Det finns gott om många "förstahändelser" i Ivie Andersons karriär. Hon var den första vokalisterna i ett känt färgat band, hon var den som populariserade den långa vita klänningen som scendräkt och hon var den vokalist som förblev längst engagerad i ett och samma band – 12 år.

1941 lämnade Ivie Ellingtons orkester för att gifta sig med sin fästman Marque Neal och för att starta en affärsrörelse. Hennes första steg i den senare riktningen var att öppna en restaurang i Los Angeles, Ivie's Chicken Schack, som hon efter vad jag förstår står i begrepp att sälja. Anledningen torde vara att Ivie trots allt känner sitt engagemang för scenen och inte är nöjd med att bara sitta och se slantarna ramla in i kassaapparaten. Detta bevisade hon senast förra året då hon accepterade ett 15 veckors engagemang på ett av Mexicos största hotell.

Efter avslutat mexikanskt uppdrag ville Ivie dra sig tillbaka trots att hon var överöst av agentsers erbjudanden om engagemang. Hon reste till New York för att vila och träffa gamla bekanta men återvände snart till Kalifornien. Vid ett senare besök i Chicago erbjöds hon att återinträda i Ellingtons orkester men tackade nej till det erbjudandet. I Chicago uppträdde hon på det eleganta El Grotto Café där hon fick ett så generöst arvode som 650 \$ i veckan för att fortsätta sitt engagemang där. Hon tackade nej till det erbjudandet och konstigt nog säger Ivie att hon nu drar sig tillbaka trots att Dick Campbell vill kontraktera henne för en USO Shows turné till Europa.

Vi tvivlar på att Ivie kommer att lämna scenen. De applåder hon får varje kväll på El Grotto måste kännas frestande.

Trombone Buster



Buster Cooper, hos Ellington 1962-69, här under konsert i Stockholm. (Foto Leif Wigh).

Melodin "Trombone Buster" komponerades och arrangerades av Cat Anderson och hade ursprungligen titeln "El Busto". Kanske det betyder Buster på spanska.

Första gången Duke Ellington framför numret är vid en av sina privata studioinspelningar för hans s.k. "stock pile". Det är den 30 augusti 1965 i San Francisco. New DESOR visar att Ellington vid tillfället gjorde 8 tagningar av numret och de undergår alla en utveckling. Från början tycks det vara ett nummer som skall presentera Louie Bellson men det förändras alltmer till att bli ett nummer för Buster Cooper. För varje tagning får han ökat utrymme och det blir under de närmaste åren ett featurenummer för honom där han får alla möjligheter att briljera med sina 64-delar, som hans solon som regel var uppbyggda kring.

Härvidlag skiljde han sig väsentligt från alla Dukes övriga trombonister.

Vi har haft nöjet att se Buster Cooper som gäst vid flera Ellingtonkonferenser runt om i världen. Senast i Woking i England 2011. Han är alltid glad och lättillgänglig och vill gärna prata med delegaterna och låta dem få ta del av hans erfarenheter från sin tid med Ellingtons band. Han bor numera i sin födelsestad St. Petersburg, Florida, där även Ellingtonbasisten John Lamb har sin hemvist. De båda har ett nära samarbete och spelar ofta tillsammans.

För drygt ett år sedan kunde man ta del av en intervju med Buster Cooper som var gjord av Tom Zucco för tidningen Tampa Bay Times. Där får vi veta en hel del om Buster, allt från att han varit gift med sin Sarah i 61 år och att han började spela trombon 1944 när han var 15 år gammal. Han började sin professionella karriär i en orkester som uppträdde på

St. Petersburgs Manhattan Casino, men senare gick han vidare och har spelat med sådana personligheter som Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman, Josephine Baker, Miles Davis, Jackie Wilson och Ella Fitzgerald. När Duke Ellington erbjöd honom en plats i sin orkester tackade han dock nej. Två gånger till och med. Vid tiden hade han nämligen sitt eget band och han ville inte ställa sina kollegor utan arbete. Men när erbjudandet kom för tredje gången nappade han på betet. Han anslöt i juni 1962 och stannade till juli 1969.

Som otaliga musiker intygat var det ideliga turnerandet tröttande och Buster slutade för att i stället bli studiomusiker i Los Angeles och stundtals ställa upp i något tillfälligt storband. 1994 återvände han till St. Petersburg och kunde nu bosätta sig i en stadsdel som han under sin ungdom inte hade tillträde till.

Buster säger sig öva på sitt instrument minst två timmar varje dag. Trombonen, säger han, är ett av de svåraste instrumenten att hantera i en jazzorkester. Jag har aldrig plagierat någon annans stil, hävdar han vidare; "You see if I did that, I couldn't turn the corner until they turn the corner. No, I gotta be me."

Sedan 17 år spelar Buster varje fredag kväll på Garden Restaurant i St. Petersburg. Han verkar vara nöjd med sitt numera relativt tillbakadragna liv och intervjun avslutas med Busters ord; "The trombone has been very good to me. I'm not bragging, just blessing."

Bo Haufman

Jazz Humour

Music, clothes, and women were Duke Ellington's callings. One time in New York, Ellington was walking along the sidewalk. In front of him he noticed an extremely attractive and seductive woman. After walking behind her and being all eyes, Duke tripped on the curb and fell forward. No injuries except a little pride.

Ruefully, Ellington stated: "Maybe I'd better off watching the curbs instead of the curves!"

Nya medlemmar

DESS hälsar följande nya medlemmar välkomna i vår illustra förening:

Lars Axelson, Lund
Hans-Ola Berg, Saltsjöbaden
Lars Björkman, Sundbyberg
Erik Bremer, Höljes
Christer Krantz, Bergsjö
Sten-Åke Lindgren, Danderyd

Göran Nilsson, Stockholm
Mats Olsson, Norrköping
Bo Sellstedt, Stockholm
Lars Starland, Stockholm
Sven-Åke Törnquist, Ösmo
Harald Westling, Stockholm

DESS behöver fler medlemmar. Inspirera Dina vänner och bekanta att också vara med!

Medlemsmötet 3 februari 2014:

HARRY CARNEY

– Diskret gentleman



Ett välbesökt årsmöte (protokoll bilagt denna Bulletin) övergick sedan i en trevlig blandning av nöje och pedagogik i Franska skolans skrivsal. Den ene av centralgestalterna,

denna gång Harry Carney, var en av Ellingtons livslånga skuggor på orkesterpodiet sedan 1927 då han gjorde sin entré. Hans roll var då inte barytonsaxofonistens, som skulle ge honom världsrykte. Huvudinstrumenten var altsaxofonen och klarinetten men det dröjde knappt ett år innan han inrättade sig på saxsektionens ytterplats, reserverad för den mörka och mullrande barytonen. Ingen stor improvisatör, men väl en solist med integritet och lätt igenkännlig profil syntes Bo



Håkan Skytt ledde årsmötet med sedvanlig brio.
Vid protokollspennan Bo Jarwander. (Foto Sonja Svensson)

Haufman mena i sin mättade exempelkavalkad av Carneyinspelningar utanför den innersta Ellingtonkretsen. Harry Carney var en lågmäld och mycket tillbakadragen person som höll sig för sig själv. Egentligen vet vi därför inte så mycket om honom. Han avled 1974, ett halvår efter Duke Ellington.

Vi såg också Harry Carney skymta förbi några ögonblick i Anders Asplunds bidrag ur

sitt rika bild- och filmarkiv. Det började med ett groteskt, ja faktiskt skrämmande fantastikeri kring temat på *Ungersk Rapsodi* i svartvitt ur filmen "Murder at the Vanities", och slutade nästan som en tanke i färg i en mycket välgjord video från Berlin 1969 med titeln "Things are not what they seem to be".

Just det! Och tack Anders – Du är ovärderlig.

Bo Holmquist

Korsordslösning

Korsordet i Bulletin 4/2013 var tydligen svårare än vad konstruktören trodde. Svårt, ja visst, men förvånande få försök till lösningar har sänts in. En har inkommit men den var inte helt rätt men utgjorde ett gott försök. För de som ändå försökte lösa korsordet visas här lösningen.

Vad som gör ett korsord svårt eller lätt är en fråga om hur nycklarna formuleras. I detta fall har konstruktören enfaldigt nog trott att nycklarna inte var alltför svåra men han antydde ändå att lösaren skulle kunna behöva tillgång till diverse jazzlitteratur för

att komma på lösningarna. Konstruktören trodde faktiskt att alla kände till att tenoristen Vido Musso var praktiskt taget analfabet, vilket finns konkretiserat i mängder av historier. T.ex. den när han sitter i en alltför varm turnébuss och ropar till chauffören; "Fresh air please, or we will all get sophisticated."

Om ett korsord någon gång i framtiden åter skall införas i Bulletinen lovar undertecknad att nycklarna skall vara avsevärt lättare. Vinstskivan får sparas till det tillfället.

Boaufman

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