



Arthur Whetsel

*Duke Ellington's
sweet trumpeter*

I detta nummer / In this issue:

- 2 Ledare m. m.
- 3 Recensioner
- 4 Arthur Whetsel
- 9 Kustbandet
- 10 Willie Cook and Earl Hines
- 13 Ellington and Gershwin
- 17 Alice Babs on Reprise
- 18 Check And Double Check
- 20 Kallelse



4-2016

Succé med Kustbandet

Vårt konsertarrangemang den 9 oktober på Scalateatern i samarbete med nämnda teater och Kustbandet blev en succé. DESS hade åtagit sig att sälja ett visst antal biljetter och det antalet nådde vi utan större problem. För mig personligen blev evenemanget en dubbel succé eftersom jag blev officiellt uppvaktad för min nyligen uppnådda ålder av 75 år. Tack alla för det! Konserten recenseras på annan plats i denna Bulletin.

Innan denna konsert hade vi medlemsmöte i Franska Skolan den 3 oktober, vilket även det refereras på annan plats. Innehållet med Jens Lindgrens intressanta kåseri om Kustbandets historia och en superb Stockholms Jazz Trio med Gustav Rosén vill jag påstå var en succé även det ur kvalitetsmässig synpunkt. Men varför kommer inte våra medlemmar? Endast 21 medlemmar utöver styrelse och funktionärer hade gjort sig besväret att komma. Det innebar naturligtvis att kvällen gick med förlust för föreningen. Så kan vi inte fortsätta. Om vi inte kan intressera fler medlemmar för våra medlemsmöten måste vi ställa oss frågan vad vi gör för fel. Svaret på den frågan kan endast våra medlemmar ge oss och jag emotser era synpunkter, idéer och förslag om detta.

I denna bulletin som Du nu läser finns två bilagor. Den ena är vår

producerade CD med synnerligen intressant material från Duke Ellingtons tid på Sherman Hotel i Chicago 1940. Materialet är inte nytt men har under de senaste årtiondena endast kunnat införskaffas antikvariskt. Se särskild presentation av vår ljudtekniska restauratör Anders Asplund på annan plats.

Den andra bilagan är ett inbetalningskort för nästa års medlemsavgift. Tidigare år har vi trott att en enkel uppmaning att betala varit tillräckligt men det har fungerat dåligt. Tydligt är det så att de flesta människor vill ha en form av faktura eller inbetalningskort som de lägger i högen för betalningar vid månadens slut. Troligen är så fallet och därmed hoppas jag att det bifogade inbetalningskortet skall hamna i högen och leda till inbetalning av medlemsavgiften snarast, men senast under januari månad och att jag därmed kan slippa skicka ut en massa påminnelser.

Tycker ni att vår Bulletin har för många artiklar på engelska? Orsakerna till detta är flera. För det första är föremålet för föreningens existens av amerikanskt ursprung. Säkert är 95% av allt som skrivits om Duke Ellington under de senaste 90 åren författat på engelska och mycket av det material vi tvingas använda oss av är hämtat ur denna litteraturskatt. Nu tror jag inte att våra svenska och skandinaviska läsare har något

större problem med att hantera det engelska språket, men synpunkter på detta kan man naturligtvis ändå ha. Våra medlemmar i utlandet har tack vare våra engelskspråkiga artiklar ökat i antal under de senaste åren. Faktiskt är det så att procentuellt sett är ökningstakten större bland denna kategori än den är bland den svenska. Bulletinen har under de senaste åren rönt en positiv uppmärksamhet i utlandet och parallellt med vår engelska systerförenings "Blue Light" är vi de enda Ellingtonföreningar som ger ut en påkostad medlemstidning i s.k. "hard copy" version. Föreningen i Los Angeles ger ut ett läsvärt medlemsblad "In A Mellotone", men det distribueras endast digitalt. Föreningarna i New York och Washington ger ut månatliga 6- eller 8-sidiga publikationer, men de är mera av karaktären "newsletter".

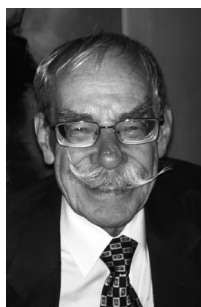
Den 13 februari 2017 har vi medlemsmöte och även årsmöte. Tänk på att eventuella motioner skall vara styrelsen tillhanda senast den 31 december i år.



Leif Jönsson, ordförande i DESS

BERTIL SWARTLING IN MEMORIAM

Bertil Swartling, medlem i DESS sedan begynnelsen, gick ur tiden den 4 september. Han var sedan 1991 tillsammans med sin fru Kerstin boende i Frankrike men höll under alla år en nära kontakt med vår förening. Han var en stor Ellingtonbeundrare och vi såg Bertil och Kerstin som deltagare på nästan alla Ellingtonkonferenser runt om i världen. Senast var i Amsterdam 2014, men försämrad hälsa började göra sig gällande så något deltagande i årets



konferens i New York blev det tyvärr inte. Bertil bidrog under årens lopp med flera läsvärda artiklar i Bulletinen. Han var mycket generös. När det var dags för att betala medlemsavgiften anlände alltid ett brev från Bertil med ett antal Euro-sedlar som vida översteg den formella avgiften.

Bertil kunde sin Ellington och han var en stor DESS-supporter. Vi kommer att sakna den sällskaplige mannen med de stora knävelborrarna. *Bo Haufman*

Nya medlemmar

DESS hälsar följande nya medlemmar välkomna i vår illustra förening:

Börje Carlson, Karlstad
Bengt Davidsson, Karlstad
Anders Edwall, Karlstad
Leif Nilsson, Karlstad
Magnus Tuneld, Karlstad
Patrick Standfast, Karlstad
Torbjörn Wahlström, Karlstad
(Samtliga ingående i
Frimurarensamblen
"Hejdukera")
Olof Björner, Filipstad

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



Förnämlig musik men få besökare

Den senaste sammankomsten i Franska skolan den 3 oktober präglades av låg närvaro och hög kvalitet på föredrag och konsert. Man kan ifrågasätta om DESS skall och kan fortsätta i nuvarande form. Styrelsen behöver få veta varför medlemmarna inte har möjlighet att komma till evenemangen fyra gånger om året i Duke Ellingtons anda. Enbart de som bor i Stockholm och näraliggande platser borde kunna fylla skolans aula varje gång. Se vidare ledaren!

Inledningsvis kunde ordförande Leif Jönsson avtacka Key Jigerström för många års arbete i styrelsen och med föreningens webbplats och överlämna en stärkande gåva. Leif fick därefter själv mottaga en hyllning med anledning av uppnådda 75 år.

Inför Kustbandets jubileumskonsert en vecka senare fortsatte programmet med orkesterns mångåriga speleman Jens "Jesse" Lindgren, som på ett underhållande och chosofritt sätt gjorde nedslag i den nära 50-åriga musikhistorien. Vi som inte upplevde Stockholmsjazzens arbetsvillkor under 50- 60- och 70-talen fick oss en verklig



Daniel Tilling,
Gustav Rosén,
Josef Karneback
och Jesper Kviberg.

Foto:
Bo Haufman

historielektion – från skoldanserna och de olika orkestrarna i läroverken till bl a Gazell Club, Bobadilla Club, Gyllene Cirkeln och Blidö Sund. Historieberättelsen interfolierades med väl valda låtar från åren som gått: *Washboard Blues*, *Corinna Corinna*, *Jubilee Stomp*, *After You Gone* och *Bourbon Street Parade*. Musikinslag som på ett bra sätt visade orkesterns olika faser och de mer eller mindre goda solisterna. Göran Axelsson hade ställt upp med dator och tekniskt stöd på ett förtjänstfullt sätt. Tack Jesse!

För kvällens konsert svarade Stockholm Jazz Trio med Daniel Tilling, piano, inhopparen Josef Karneback, bas i stället för ordinarie Jan Adefält samt Jesper Kviberg, trummor. Gustav Rosén på altsax fullbordade kvartetten. DESS-medlemmarna har kunnat lyssna på Gustav i andra konstellationer, men för undertecknad var denna den mest hörvärda. Det skall här också sägas att musikerna bara hade träffats en kort

stund innan föreställningen. Tro det om ni kan! Det kallas professionalism! Att grabbarna stod varandra nära i musikuppfattning var helt klart. Vi fick lyssna till *Cotton Tail*, *Day Dream*, *Don't get around much anymore* (*Never No Lament*) med intressant bassolo och trumkommentarer av Josef och Jesper och *Drop me off in Harlem*. Inte minst genom sitt intensiva kroppsspråk och drivande rytmik ger alltid Gustav kompet en match i form och takt. Den lyriska sidan visades upp genom Billy Strayhorns *My Little Brown Book*. Trio blev det bl a i *Johnny Come Lately* med intrikata pianostrukturer av Daniel. Konserten fortsatte med ytterligare några kända klassiker från Dukes penna. Ett speciellt inslag var Daniel Tillings tolkning av Charlie Mingus *Sound of Love* med intrikat och skickligt pianospel och basspel, helt i Mingus anda. Vilken bra konsert!

Thomas Harne

Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra at Hotel Sherman, Chicago, 1940.

Detta är titeln på vår nya CD 4, som producerats för våra medlemmar samt i samarbete med DESUK (vår brittiska systerförening) även för DESUKs medlemmar. Många i vår krets anser nog att Duke Ellingtons orkester nådde sin musikaliska höjdpunkt åren 1940-42, och vad som kan höras på denna skiva motsäger inte detta. Sejouren på Hotel Sherman varade från 6 september till den 17 oktober 1940. Under denna tid gjordes regelbundna radioutsändningar och flera finns bevarade. Kvaliteten är varierande och i en del fall är melodierna inte kompletta. Det mesta av materialet

har under 1980-talet givits ut på LP, men dessa är i dag hart när omöjliga att komma över och därför vill vi gärna låta våra medlemmar få ta del av några av dessa fina upptagningar. I betydelse kan man värdera dessa inspelningar av samma rang som de som gjordes i Fargo några veckor senare. Till skillnad från Fargo-inspelningarna, så finns Cootie Williams kvar i orkestern vid engagemanget på Hotel Sherman. Visserligen hade Duke vid denna tid redan startat sitt samarbete med Billy Strayhorn, men *Take The "A" Train* hade ännu inte lanserats, så under större delen

av 1940 användes *Sepia Panorama* som signatur och den återkommer därför ett antal gånger på dessa inspelningar. Denna CD innehåller material från fem olika radioutsändningar ordnade kronologiskt enligt New DESOR, samt en blandad session från september/oktober 1940. I allt en blandad kavalkad av såväl kända som mindre kända Ellington-nummer. För övrigt hänvisas till låtlistan och övrig information i skivlinägget. Vi hoppas ni skall tycka om innehållet i denna CD.

Anders Asplund

Arthur Whetsel



Whetsel 1924

He was Duke Ellington's trumpeter already in the early Washington days. His name is normally spelled Whetsol but research over the last decades has proved that his true name was Whetsel. Whetsol was consequently a commonly accepted misspelling.

He was born on February 22, 1905, in Punta Gorda, Florida, as Arthur Parker Whetsel. There exist several proofs of this spelling. Several signed photographs exist where it is clearly shown that his name is spelled Whetsel. His passport and union card were issued in the name of Whetsel. As a matter of fact the passenger list of the s/s "Olympic" aboard which the Ellington band in 1933 went to Europe show his name Whetsel. His gravestone at Woodlawn Cemetery bears the name Whetsel. The explanation why the incorrect spelling Whetsol became established is probably because of Irving Mills, Ellington's manager. He issued an advertising manual that was mailed out to all theatres and ballrooms that hired the Ellington band, and in it Whetsel's name was misspelled, and it stuck. Some early literature about Duke Ellington are using the name correctly spelled. Benny Åslund in his "The Wax Works of Duke Ellington" released in 1954 uses the correct spelling, but oddly enough New DESOR from 1999 is using the wrong variation. In modern literature, the spelling Whetsol is commonly used, and it has even been implied that Whetsel is a misspelling. But that was not the case. In this article, the correct spelling will be used throughout. His first name is sometimes written as Artie or Art. A thorough investigation about Whetsel's name was done by Steven Lasker and published in DEMS-Bulletin 02/2. (<http://www.depanorama.net/dems/02dems2b.htm>)

The year after Arthur was born his father died and his mother then remarried a Seventh-day Adventist Reverend named Charles N. Sheafe (possibly spelled Schiefe). Arthur is sometimes referred to under this name. He was sometimes nicknamed Chiefy. The family moved to Los Angeles where Arthur started to practice the trumpet already at an early age. When Arthur reached his teens the family moved to Washington, D.C., which eventually led to his early acquaintance with Duke Ellington.

In Washington, D.C. young Arthur studied at the Dunbar High School, and he found a position in the school band. There he met Otto Hardwick, who was also a student at the school and most probably it was Hardwick who introduced Whetsel to Duke Ellington. Already as early as 1917 Duke Ellington started to put together a loosely organized band which he called "The Duke's Serenaders". In addition to Duke the band consisted of three brothers named Miller, a guitarist and a drummer. Occasionally, Otto Hardwick and Arthur Whetsel were included. The band used to play purchased scores and thereby they got a certain experience in reading music. It is now the ties between Whetsel and Ellington are bind. Ellington has later on described Whetsel as reliable, careful about his appearance, the way he dressed, and how he expressed himself. It is possible that these good values may be a result of his religious stepfather's way of bringing him up.

However, before being closely connected with Ellington, Whetsel played in different bands in the Washington area. Rex Stewart, who happened to spend some time in Washington, has said that he once heard a band lead by Doc Perry in which Whetsel played, and as Rex explained it "rarely have I heard a sweeter tone".

To New York

The group around Duke Ellington and his Serenaders would eventually be joined by Elmer Snowden and Sonny Greer. All of them had a desire to try their fortune in New York. The cultural movement that came to be known as "The Harlem

Renaissance" had made its impact and many writers, actors, and musicians went to Harlem in New York in search of a career. The expression "If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere" was as evident in those days as it still is today. Already in November 1922, Elmer Snowden together with Arthur Whetsel and Claude Hopkins went to New York to participate in a recording session with the blues singer Sara Martin. (The recording is registered in Rust's Jazz Records on November 18, 1922, but Columbia never released the two numbers that were recorded.) They returned to Washington with a little money in their pockets and surely put a seed in Ellington's mind about the possibilities in The Big Apple.

In February 1923, Duke Ellington made his first trip to New York. Sonny Greer had arranged for an engagement by Wilbur Sweatman for Duke, Otto Hardwick and himself. It is somewhat doubtful whether Whetsel took part in this trip to New York. Sonny Greer in a late interview says he did but there exists pictures of the Sweatman band with Ellington, Hardwick and Greer taking part but no Whetsel. So it is unlikely, Whetsel did go along. The job lasted less than two months and they returned to Washington somewhat disappointed. Ellington has stated that being unable





Arthur Whetsel, Fredi Washington and Duke Ellington in the film "Black And Tan".

Washington Arthur spent a lot of time taking care of his ailing mother and also played in various local bands. Rex Stewart in his memoirs says that Whetsel toured with Al Jolson.

to find work for a few weeks after the Sweatman engagement, he happened to find an envelope with \$15 in it on the street, and the three Washingtonians returned to Washington.

While in New York Duke established a friendship with Fats Waller who held out the prospect of a job in New York for the group now under formal leadership of Elmer Snowden. Snowden, Hardwick, Greer and Whetsel went ahead to New York. Duke arrived a few days later only to find that the job did not exist, and all of them were out of money. However, with the help of some good friends they got a job at Barron Wilkin's Exclusive Club and it is from this point of time that Duke Ellington's rise to stardom starts. The group called themselves "The Washingtonians". At this time it was quite common among orchestras coming from the country side to take a name that indicated from where they emanated, e.g. The Missourians, The Georgians, The Buffalodians.

Leaving The Washingtonians

In the fall of 1923 Arthur Whetsel decided to leave the band and he returned to Washington. Ellington tried to convince him to stay but did not succeed. The reason why Whetsel left was that he wanted to study medicine at Howard University. It is somewhat unclear how much studying actually took place. Modern researchers have studied the university's register from those days but found no evidence of Arthur Whetsel being registered as a student. It is possible that by searching for the misspelled name Whetsol they did not find the registration under the name Whetsel. However, during this time in

In November 1924 Whetsel joins a tour of South America. He is appearing as a musician in a society band led by Norwood A. Fenner at the Peruvian Centennial Exhibition at Lima, Peru. It is possible that the tour covered other countries in South America, but on January 10, 1925, he boarded the ship "Santa Ana" for a journey back to New York. To obtain a passport his application included an identification signed by Norwood Fenner and the description of Whetsel reads as follows: 5 feet 7 1/12 inches tall, medium forehead, brown eyes, short strong nose, moustached, small mouth, round small chin, black hair, colored complexion, and a pale face. Apparently the tour was suddenly decided because Whetsel seem to have started the journey without a passport because after being issued it was mailed to the US Embassy in Lima.

The band under Fenner's leadership also included James Butts, Earl Gray, Leroy Harris, Arville Harris and James E. Saunders. Fenner, in the early 1920s, spent time in Norway and Sweden and he continued to lead bands in New York in the mid-1940s. The name of Arville Harris is appearing quite often in the discographies. A.o. he spent time with Cab Calloway and Leroy Harris (probably a brother) played with Earl Hines and so did James Butts.

In the meantime big changes took place in The Washingtonians. They got an engagement at Hollywood Café soon to be renamed Club Kentucky. Snowden was forced to leave and Duke Ellington was appointed leader. Bubber Miley joined the band and his influence was great and would mean a lot to Ellington's future development. Even though Miley's time with Ellington

was not without problems and his stay was relatively short, his musical ideas influenced Ellington very much. As from the advent of Bubber Miley the Washingtonians was no longer a sweet band. He converted it into a jazz band. After Miley's premature death in 1932 it can be said that his spirit soared over Ellington for the rest of his life. Duke Ellington would not have developed as he did without Bubber Miley.

Rejoining Duke Ellington

Soon came the big break-through for Ellington. In December 1927 Duke Ellington and the Orchestra got the prestigious engagement at the Cotton Club. The job called for an enlargement of the band and from March 1928 Arthur Whetsel is back in the band. He replaced Louis Metcalf. Metcalf, who was something of a diva, and when he did not get enough solo exposure he decided to leave the band. Bubber Miley was unreliable, did not function socially and was forced to leave. He was replaced by Freddy Jenkins. Later on Cootie Williams joined to form an excellent trumpet section with Jenkins and Whetsel. After Miley's departure an unspoken question arose; who should take over Miley's position as a growl specialist? Ellington had no preferences and both Whetsel and Jenkins tried out the method before, as we know, Cootie Williams took on the duty and developed it into mastery.

When Duke Ellington and his friends played in Washington under the name of The Duke's Serenaders it was most likely so that the name was a good description of the kind of music they offered. They were a so called "society band" that played for dances and entertained at parties. They played what was called "sweet music" and Arthur Whetsel became forever connected with this style of playing. He never developed into a genuine jazz musician. However, at the Cotton Club, and forever after, Ellington had to satisfy all kind of musical tastes and Whetsel had a definite role to function as a "sweet trumpeter" and Ellington made use of him to the utmost in this position at the same time as he served as the section's first trumpeter. Duke Ellington would always have a requirement for this function and it was later to be filled, more or less expressed, by personalities like Wallace Jones, Shorty Baker and Willie Cook.

In his autobiography *Music Is My Mistress* Ellington has described Arthur Whetsol with the following words; "The Washingtonians were different in several ways. We paid quite a lot of attention to our appearance, and if any one of us came in dressed improperly Whetsol (sic) would flick his cigarette ash in a certain way, or pull down the lower lid of his right eye with his forefinger and stare at the offending party. Whetsol (sic) was our first unofficial disciplinarian, and he carried himself with dignity befitting a medical student of lofty ambitions. His tonal character, fragile and genteel, was an important element in our music. As a result of playing all those society dances in Washington, we had learned to play softly, what is sometimes known as under-conversation music".

Recordings

Arthur Whetsol rejoined the band in March 1928 and his initial recording with the band took place on March 21 when a.o. *Black Beauty* was recorded for the first time. On this occasion the title of the tune was not *Black Beauty* but rather *Firewater*. It was not until later that Ellington renamed it to *Black Beauty* with the subtitle *A Portrait Of Florence Mills*. Whetsel states the melody in an exact and beautiful way and even makes a few growl trials.

On July 26, 1928, we find Arthur Whetsel together with James P. Johnson accompanying the yodeling blues singer Roy Evans in two numbers recorded for and released by Columbia (*So Sorry* and *Syncopated Yodelin' Man*).

On October 30, 1928, Duke Ellington records two versions of *No Papa No*. They are quite different. On take one Freddy Jenkins is the soloist while Arthur Whetsel solos on take two. A comparison listening is recommended.

Misty Morning is a melody with a bluesy character and it has Arthur Whetsel as composer together with Duke Ellington. The tune was recorded several times in November 1928 and Whetsel can be heard on all of them. He plays his solo almost exactly the same on each occasion. Beautifully and very lyrical and as always it can be established that



Whetsel was no improviser. But certainly Ellington did not want to utilize him as an improviser. For that purpose he had both Cootie Williams and Freddy Jenkins. He required Whetsel as his sweet trumpeter stating themes without any variations. Whetsel was ideal for this task and Ellington used his way of playing as a contrast against the more jazzy individualists.

In August 1929 Duke Ellington and his Orchestra acted in the soundie *Black And Tan* for RKO. It can be found on YouTube. The opening scene shows Duke Ellington composing *Black And Tan Fantasy* in company with Arthur Whetsel and a watching Fredi Washington. Duke instructs Whetsel who plays the melody with a growl effect. Apparently Cootie Williams had not yet approved the growl idea at this point of time. In the following years Duke would feature Whetsel in *Black And Tan Fantasy* with the following explanation: "I like great big ole tears. When he played the Funeral March in *Black And Tan Fantasy* I used to see great big ole tears running down people's faces".

Over the following years Arthur Whetsel got many opportunities to express his lyrical trumpet playing and he can to advantage be heard in numbers like *Big House Blues*, *The Dicty Glide*, *Eerie Moan*, *Maori*, *Rent Party Blues*, *Rocky Mountain Blues*, *Saturday Night Function*, *Stevedore Stomp*, *Sweet Dreams Of Love* to name a few in a long list.

On October 14, 1930, the beautiful *Mood Indigo* was recorded for the first time. The orchestra is reduced to a septet and went under the name of "The Harlem Footwarmers" and consisted of Whetsel,

Nanton, Bigard, Ellington, Guy, Braud and Greer. Whetsel plays muted. He is using a special kind of mute "Solotone" made of wood, giving his tone a special character. On this recording, as on all following renditions of the melody, it is a trio of Whetsel/Nanton/Bigard that plays the first chorus in unison.

A typical and beautiful solo by Whetsel can be heard in the Victor version from June 11, 1936, of *Creole Rhapsody Pt. 1* where Whetsel delivers a very emotional outchorus.

Arthur Whetsel can also be heard in the first recording of *Solitude* on January 10, 1934, together with Nanton and Bigard. The melody was composed by Ellington in haste, but would still become one of his most requested compositions. When recorded, the melody had not yet been given a title, but everybody present were deeply touched by the atmosphere created and Whetsel immediately came up with the fitting title *Solitude*.

Whetsel may be seen in action on some film clips easily found on YouTube, e.g. *Old Man Blues* in the film "Check and Double Check" (1930), and the short film "A Bundle of Blues" (1933) with *Rockin' In Rhythm*, *Stormy Weather* and *Bugle Call Rag*.

Style and character

In *Music Is My Mistress*, Duke Ellington has devoted a short chapter to Arthur Whetsel and gives him credit for his excellent tonal qualities; "sweet, but not syrupy, nor schmaltzy, nor surrealistic, it had superiority of extrasensory dimensions". At another place he describes Whetsel's tonal character as "fragile and genteel". When listening to some of the above mentioned recordings one can do nothing but agree with him. Ellington also makes a comparison between Bubber Miley and Arthur Whetsel and says: "They painted pictures in music, one in one style and one in another. They spoke different languages, and though the listener didn't understand their language he believed everything they had to say". Duke also tells that it was Whetsel who convinced Juan Tizol to join the band at Cotton Club. The background is that Whetsel and Tizol had worked together in local bands and were close friends and

Ellington had confidence in Whetsel's recommendation. What is surprising about what Ellington has to say about Whetsel in his autobiography *MIMM* is that he throughout spells his name incorrectly. As he knew Whetsel since his boyhood he ought to have known the correct spelling.

In the jazz literature one can find opinions about Arthur Whetsel. Joe Nanton has the following to say; "Whetsel was a great trumpet player. When Bubber left, Whetsel could play most of his parts, not exactly as Miley played them, but almost. Whetsel had a brilliant mind and was extremely adaptable, a complete master of his horn. His ideas for obbligato were outstanding and had lots of soul".

In 1931 a writer described Whetsel in the following way; "went to Howard University to become a doctor but the call of the wild, in the form of Ellington, got him. Very loyal, always on job even when not well, intellectual, tender personality, a press agent's pet love, a bridge fanatic".

In an interview made much later

Ellington said about Whetsel: "He could speak up in a minute on the subject of propriety, clean appearance and reliability. If and when any member of our band made an error in grammar he was quick to correct him. He was aware of all Negro individuals who were contributing to the cause by commanding respect. He knew all about Negro colleges and he also knew all the principal scholastic and athletic leaders personally".

Ill-health

In 1935 Arthur Whetsel started to show signs of deteriorating health. He was out of the band in June/July for medical treatment and was during this time replaced by Charlie Allen. He returned to the band but in February 1938 his mental problems became severe. He had to leave and was admitted to hospital where he was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. This eventually led to his passing away on May 1, 1940, at Central Islip State Hospital, New York. Ellington is said to have paid his medical bills as he did for many others at this time. Whetsel's substitute was Wallace Jones,



Arthur Whetsel's gravestone

who unfortunately as a solist became overshadowed by Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart. After Whetsel's departure Ellington removed all his feature numbers from the book except for *Mood Indigo* where Wallace Jones took up Whetsel's position between Nanton and Bigard.

Arthur Whetsel is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, the same as his good friend and orchestra leader Duke Ellington.

Bo Haufman

(In writing this article I am grateful for the assistance of Steven Lasker, David Hill, David Palmquist, Roger Boyes, Basilio Serrano and Fred Glueckstein)

Mercer Ellington's view on Arthur Whetsel

In his biography about his father "Duke Ellington In Person – An Intimate Memoir" Mercer has the following to say about Arthur Whetsel:

The formal knowledge in Duke Ellington's early band was nowhere the equal of that in Fletcher Henderson's. If a man auditioned for Fletcher and didn't quite make it, the recommendation was to see if Duke would be interested, because he didn't require so much reading! This hadn't been too serious when they were palyng society dances in Washington and he had Artie Whetsol (sic) on trumpet. Whetsol was more or less like Peck's bad boy. Because he was such a charming child, his family never looked down on him. No matter what he did, they regarded it as a prank that would be over in a few days – one of those little scrapes wonderful people sometimes get into. What was impressive about Whetsol as a musician was not so much that he was creative as that he was

consistent. The fact that he could sustain notes on the horn as long as he could, with a pure sound that was almost violinlike in the range he was capable of – that was very valuable. For example, take the trumpet part he played on Mood Indigo: to play that high D, to stay on it and sustain it up there, haunted trumpet players for many years and to the extent that they never wanted to play the lead part. That was what drove Wallace Jones into becoming a funeral director! He said the reason he was no longer staying in show business was very simple – Mood Indigo. He had nightmares and cold sweats about it. It was certainly one of the numbers Whetsol did best, and it was such a big hit that Ellington had to keep playing it after Whetsol left, although, a lot of other things he had been featured on were abandoned at that point. That's something else Pop learned along the way: when a man did something brilliant, something almost impossible, it was better to quit playing his number after he left the band, not

only to avoid invidious comparisons, but because he himself did not want to hear an inferior version. (p. 22-23)

Mercer had the following opinion about Whetsel's capacity as a reader:

Although Ellington was already established as a composer, he did not do very much writing in these fomative years because of the men in the band who didn't read well. The arrangements were usually created orally, and I know that Mills used to complain when he had nothing on paper to copyright. Pop would play the melody on the piano and have Artie Whetsol learn it. Then he played the second part, or let the second trumpet figure out his part from what he'd heard. He'd play the background according to what sounded right to him, and then assign notes from the piano for different guys to play. Eventually he took books home, studied them, and learned a whole lot more about notation himself. He never really had anybody to help him. (p. 42)

The following article by the Ellington scholar Eddie Lambert was originally published in the April issue of Jazz Monthly 1964. Lambert used to write articles in the magazine under the heading "Ellingtonia" and this is one of them. Throughout the article Lambert is using the incorrect spelling "Whetsol" but we prefer to reproduce the article in the same way as he once wrote it.

Arthur Whetsol

By G. E. Lambert

"Our band changed character when Bubber came in – that was when we decided to forget all about the sweet music". This quote from Duke Ellington is very well known and is some measure of the impact which Bubber Miley had on his music. The man who Miley replaced in late 1925 was not forgotten however, and early 1928 Arthur Whetsol returned to take over the lead trumpet chair from Louis Metcalf. His style, to use the parlance of the day, was not particularly "hot", but his gentle, rather melancholy voice was a prominent one in the Ellington band during the next decade. In the Ellington brass section of the early 1930s the functions of the three trumpeters could be said to be



roughly as follows: Whetsol was lead trumpet and "sweet" soloist, with Cootie Williams taking the growl work and most of the trumpet solos and Freddie Jenkins acting as the band's comedian and also contributing an occasional "hot" chorus. The view that Ellington casts each musician in a particular role would be justified if such patterns were rigidly adhered to, but in fact each of these musicians was encouraged to develop his art in different ways. It is for this reason that the inhibiting effect of playing Ellington's highly stylised music, which some critics feel to be an inevitable consequence of this methods is nowhere evident in the music of his soloists.

The general view seems to be that after Miley's departure Duke handed Williams a mute along with Miley's book and that Cootie at once mastered the growl style. In fact in the records cut immediately after Cootie joined the band most of the growl solos were given to Jenkins, with Whetsol apparently acting as first reserve. Jenkins can be heard playing characteristic growl trumpet in Harlemania and Hot Feet, while the solo in this idiom in Jazz Lips is by Whetsol. The situation regarding growl trumpet solos at this time is shown rather clearly by the Doin' The Voom Voom of September 1929 (the Cameo version). Here Cootie was allocated certain passages which had previously been played muted in the growl manner firstly by Miley (on the Brunswick version where all the growl trumpet is by Bubber) and then by Jenkins (on the Victor version where the growl was divided between Miley and Jenkins). Yet despite these precedents Cootie chose to play open trumpet without the use of growl effects.

Jungle Jamboree

The rather fragile quality of the growl solo in Jazz Lips reveals that while Whetsol had mastered the mechanics of the style his temperament was not of the kind to exploit it to full advantage and Duke's use of Jenkins as a growl player prior to the emergence of Cootie as a master of the idiom was unquestionably a wise decision. When substituting for Miley in the Victor version of

The Mooche Whetsol is hardly convincing, although in other solos his use of occasional growl flourishes is often successful, for example during the muted solo in the Brunswick version of Black Beauty. Despite the delicate, fragile quality of much of his muted playing Arthur Whetsol had a broad open tone of sufficient depth and sonority to be occasionally mistaken for that of Cootie Williams, for example on Big House Blues, where despite the fact that Whetsol is the only trumpet on the session many collectors persist in the belief that Williams is the soloist. A good instance of the quality of Whetsol's tone is to be found in the OKeh Jungle Jamboree where a brass section of two pieces (Whetsol

and Nanton) produce a surprisingly full and rich ensemble. This title also contains a good example of the trumpeter's "hot" manner at up-tempo; his solo, which is played without mute, is notable for the clarity of phrasing and the characteristic lyrical undertones. There is a certain stiffness about the rhythmic articulation in Whetsol's phrasing, although to a lesser extent than is the case with several other trumpeters of the period, including Freddie Jenkins.

Other examples of Whetsol's hot manner include Stevedore Stomp, perhaps his best known solo in this vein, and the blues solo on the Victor Saturday Night Function. On the OKeh version of this Whetsol plays a restrained muted solo, but on the Victor recording the same chorus is played open in a more dynamic and forceful manner. Many commentators have thought that the soloist here is Jenkins, but apart from the Whetsol characteristics of the melodic line the playing is far too legato for Jenkins and a comparison with Big House Blues and Jungle Jamboree reveals clearly that Whetsol is the man responsible.

Saturday Night Function

The muted solo on the OKeh Saturday Night Function is in the manner of which Whetsol is best known, plaintive and rather pastoral in feeling, with precise phrasing and intonation which owe little to the jazz styles of the time. Yet Whetsol's taste and musicianship were such that these solos are acceptable even during blues performances such as Saturday Night Function or Rent Party Blues. His solos on the OKeh and Brunswick versions of Mood Indigo, on all versions of Misty Morning and on Rocky Mountain Blues are probably the best known in this vein. On the latter his chorus is especially notable for its grace and restraint while in Misty Morning (originally recorded in 1928) we find the first use by Ellington of Whetsol's trumpet in a lyrical, pastoral interlude. The presence of a musician of Whetsol's unusual style and talents unquestionably gave Ellington an opportunity to develop a more delicate, restrained aspect of his music at a time when his ensemble lacked the finesse of later years. On many titles

of this period Whetsol's solo trumpet is heard in short "functional" bridge passages, which in later years would have been taken by the section (examples include Move Over, Doin' The Voom Voom, Hot And Bothered and Flaming Youth). The lyricism and careful craftsmanship of Whetsol unquestionably made their impact on the development of the band and in much of the Ellington brass writing of the 1930s it is the precision of Whetsol which determines the style of both scoring and execution. The type of trumpet interlude first heard in Misty Morning has become a constant feature of Ellington's musical vocabulary. Ray Nance's solo in the 1959 Blues In Blueprint being an excellent example, as are many of Harold Baker's solos with the band.

Delta Serenade

Arthur Whetsol's solo variations have distinction of style and are excellently constructed, yet equally valuable to Ellington were his unusual talents as a player of straight melody. While his style in a theme statement is as unmistakable as Bubber Miley's, Whetsol's prime concern seems to have been to play the theme as cleanly as possible, throwing the melodic contours into sharp relief. Black Beauty and Awful Sad are the earliest examples of this kind of playing and the melody of the latter especially shows the extent of which Ellington was influenced by the Whetsol style. The pastoral quality of Delta Serenade is largely the result of the use of Whetsol in duet with Bigard's clarinet at the outset. On many of the popular tunes which were recorded by the band at this time Whetsol was given the task of a first chorus theme statement, as on Maori, where the trumpeter lends distinction to a most commonplace melody. At the opposite extreme of the Ellington repertoire Whetsol can be heard on the theme statements of such important works as Blue Tune and Reminiscing In Tempo, but perhaps his finest achievement in this field is in the first chorus of The Dicty Glide. This is one of the most unusual melodies that Ellington has written and although the performance overall is a fine one it is obvious that

neither the later soloists (Hodges and Nanton) nor the ensemble quite grasp the correct accents for the various twists of the melodic line, yet Whetsol's theme statement is so lucid that the excellence of the melody is fully realised. This passage is of great beauty in itself and it is possible to say of The Dicty Glide that Whetsol's opening chorus is as essential a factor in the piece as is Miley's playing at the beginning of Flaming Youth. The Dicty Glide is a striking score by any standard and it is amazing to realize that it was created in 1929. Against the background of contemporary jazz the sheer originality of Ellington's art can be seen clearly.

In this article the qualities discussed have been rather different from those usually cited when considering a jazz soloist. But Arthur Whetsol's was an unusual talent, one which would almost certainly have remained undeveloped in any orchestra but Ellington's. For his virtues are not particularly those of jazz. He was not an idiomatic blues player and although his playing has a definite rhythmic poise it does not "swing" a great deal. The construction of his solos was both original and immaculate, however, as was their execution, while their restrained character was a perfect foil for the blues based playing of Cootie Williams and the effervescent choruses of Freddie Jenkins. In his distinctive manner and his high standard of craftsmanship, for his virtues as a section leader and his self-effacing yet individual solos, Arthur Whetsol's contribution was an important one in the first decade of Ellington's music. Like almost every musician who has played for any length of time with the band he had a distinct influence on Ellington's music and its subsequent development. Arthur Whetsol was hardly a jazzman of the stature of a Cootie Williams, a Rex Stewart or a Clark Terry, yet the value of his work is considerable and too often ignored. Both in the continuing validity of the old records and in the prevalence of the Whetsol approach in later Ellingtonia his music has been enduring, a potent influence in this most fascinating of all jazz ensembles.

Kustbandet på Scalateatern

En kulen 9 oktober men en lycklig söndagseftermiddag inne på den trevliga Scalateatern, som med matsal och bar och en uppsnopsad revyscen återerövrar en plats i Stockholms nöjesliv, med plats för jazzen. En i det närmaste fullsatt salong med stora förväntningar på Kustbandets minnesstund med Duke Ellington, som här kan ses som en lämplig upptakt till Stockholms Jazz Festival. Det visade sig snart att publiken valt rätt plats för söndagsnöjet.

Det är en ren njutning att få lyssna till Kustbandets arkeologiska returren till Harlems 30-tal. Titlarna vittnar, som t.ex. *Harlem Speaks* (1933), *Freeze And Melt*, (superbt utförande), *It Don't Mean A Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*, *Tishomingo Blues*, som fick fem extra plus i



programmets marginal, *Old Man Blues* från 1930 – och en lista som kunde göras mycket längre skulle kunna avslutas med *Corrine Corrina*, med den statuariske trumslagaren Christer Ekhe som vokalist. Förra och första gången han sjöng den på skiva med Kustbandet var 1969, men då spelade han kornett i brasset. Tiden går.

Tacket går också förstås till Jens Lindgren, som med sitt goda lynne alltid styr och ställer – och för den stora överraskningen med Klas Lindquist med klarinet och saxofon, briljant som förväntat. Och förstås också till en annan surprise, nämligen till sångtrion THE HEBBE SISTERS, Emelie,

Josefine & Maria, en nyupptäckt trio i Andrew Sisters anda, hottiga, jazziga och klämmiga på ett trevligt värländskt sätt. En trio som vi säkert får höra mer av i populärsammanhang. Ljuset kommer ju från Värmland som bekant. Dessutom sjunger Hebbe Sisters förbluffande rent och showigt.



De som inte nämnts vid namn får vänta tills nästa gång, som med säkerhet kommer, för jublet ekar in i framtiden. Underbart att få skriva en recension utan ett enda kritiskt ord. Tack för hjälpen.

Bo Holmqvist

Willie Cook and Earl Hines (1943-1947)

An interview made by Göran Wallén in Stockholm 1997.

In our previous Bulletin we presented an interview made by Göran Wallén about Willie Cook's career in general and especially about his years with Duke Ellington and his time in Sweden. However, Willie also spent time with other bands and here follows Göran's interview about Willie's years with Earl Hines.

Göran Wallén: Good afternoon Willie. Can you tell me something about your time with Earl Hines?

Willie Cook: I began to work with Earl Hines' big band on December 18, 1943. Earl Hines played at the Howard Theatre, Washington, D.C. One night Earl Hines and his musical director Jesse Stone, who was a great writer and composer of the hit *Idaho*, came to me and said: "Come and listen to us". They needed some musicians in Earl's band and for their show. They asked me and a singer named Earl Coleman, Rudy Morrison (tb), Arnett Sparrow (tb), Bob Merrell (tp), he was Jay McShann's first trumpeter, to join Earl Hines' band.

I said "yes" because I had always been admiring Earl Hines' band over the years and he was my favourite. There were Hines, Basie and Duke and I had always wanted to play with Earl Hines because he had a good trumpet section. Anyway, Jay McShann, with whom I played at the time, went down to Norfolk, Virginia and to Newport News and we knew that after Newport Jay didn't have any more work and everybody were sad about that. I told Earl that I would join him together with four other musicians. We went down to Jacksonville in Florida and I started to play with Earl at the "Two Spot Club". You know I have always been lucky. After one week with the band Bob Merrell got some crazy ideas and one day he throws lye into



Göran Wallén and Willie Cook

Thomas Crump's eyes. We never understood why he did it. After that night Bob disappeared. However, Crump was able to continue with the band after this incident. Well, now Earl wanted the trumpet players to stay on for a while. The trumpeter Ira Pettiford, who already played in the band, had tried a bluff to get more money, but when he found out that Earl had other alternative trumpeters the bluff did not work out so well. He stayed with us without a raise.

The last war years

Now I was lucky because I was the youngest. I was only 19 years old and Earl had one trumpeter too many, but I could stay and after a week or so Ira left the band anyway and a week later I became the first trumpet player and I stayed with Earl up to 1947 when he broke up the band. During wartime we had problems with the Army, because they grabbed the musicians all the time, so we had to work hard to keep the band together. We lost musicians practically every month. We loved the band during the war and we were happy to have a job and to play in such a great band. Earl and

his manager Eric Illidge gave me the responsibility to take care of the trumpet section. Before I joined the band both Benny Harris and Rostelle Reese had been playing in the trumpet section.

Earl Hines' band in the beginning of January 1944 had the following members:

Willie Cook, Maurice "Shorty" McConnell, Bob Merrell, Ira Pettiford, Palmer "Fats" Davis (tp), Arnett Sparrow, Rudy Morrison, Alfonzo Pettiford, Cliff Smalls (tb), Scoops Carey (as), Wardell Gray (as/ts), Harold Clark, Thomas Crump (ts), John Williams (bars), Earl Hines (p), Gene Thomas (b), David "Chick" Booth (dr), Essex Scott and Sarah Vaughan (vcl). Second pianist was trombonist Cliff Smalls and he taught me a lot in orchestrating.

Bugs Roberts was arranger and he arranged tunes of the great composers for our concerts in Chicago. Ernie Wilkins was also an arranger at the time. Additional musicians in the band was one harp, five violins and cello and four singers called the "Blue Bonnets". All together 32 people in the group. I had to buy tickets and other things for the travelling and I had to pay in cash. It was not as today with a credit card. To be sure about the money and not being robbed, we had to have tough guys handling the money. Eric Illidge, the manager, was a tough guy and once two men came up to him in his room in Chicago, but he picked up a pistol and they disappeared.

GW: Did you go to the military

service during the war?

WC: No, I didn't go to the Army and I am glad for that. Well, it was a good start of my career and I became known, because a lot of people came and listened to the band and they heard what we did. I still took lessons and I worked hard to be a good first trumpeter. People also wondered who was the first trumpeter sitting there with 125 pounds weight because I had on my right side trumpeter "Fats" Palmer weighing 250 pounds. Fats had earlier played with Dizzy Gillespie, Carl "Bama" Warwick and Charlie Shavers back in Philadelphia.

GW: Was there a big man on your left side as well?

WC: Yes, later on I had Vernon Smythe (nowadays Smith), who married Dolores Parker. Dolores sang with Ellington later on in 1947-48 and she was really a knock out when she came from Gerald Wilson's band from Los Angeles. Vernon became a photographer and worked in New York and I think he also played around New York.

In walked Charlie Parker

GW: Did you play with Hines when Charlie Parker was in the band?

WC: No. Dizzy told me that Earl wanted Dizzy to join the band and he asked him to get a tenor saxophone to the band. Charlie Parker came from Jay McShann's band and he played only tenor saxophone all the time in Earl's band. That was in the beginning of 1943. Both Dizzy and Charlie left the band in June 1943. Thomas Crump was our tenor player in the band and he was sitting beside Charlie Parker. He couldn't play very well because he was so exalted about listening to Charlie. He said: "it was like having handcuffs on".

GW: Had Charlie Parker become a big name at the time?

WC: He was well known among the musicians but the public was not aware of him. I heard him already 1942 with the Jay McShann band playing strictly



Earl Hines

the alto saxophone. Another man of interest was Scoops Carey, the alto player. He became later on an attorney. He was very well known and he was a good clarinet player too. He made some great recordings with Earl in the same period as Billy Eckstine was in the band. Scoops took over as "strawboss" for the band after Budd Johnson had left. Scoops also played with Roy Eldridge, when he didn't work with Earl, at a place called "Four Deuces" in Chicago.

Mixture of Musical Directions

The Chicago big bands were musically a mixture between how they played in New York and Kansas City. Earl Hines' band always had an array of good musicians and was a band of this category on the Chicago jazz scene. In New York they played more technically and in Kansas City they played soulfully. In Chicago the music was a mixture of the two musical directions.

Earl's musical philosophy was that he wanted to have some old musicians as a nucleus in the band and the young musicians should back up the older guys. Duke Ellington had more of charisma than Earl Hines but Earl's ideas were greater and nobody could beat him. His problem was that he never had enough money. Earl should have played more in New York and maybe in Los Angeles. But the people in New York were not interested in booking Earl and he didn't want to go to New York. As long as the Chicago mob had money and backed up Earl it was OK in Chicago, but then the mob lost their power and Earl didn't earn enough to keep his big band

running. Well, everybody wants to be big for themselves. I think the Hammond family backed up Count Basie's band and maybe Fuller Alexander worked as a manager for Basie.

We played in "Regal Theatre" on 47th St./South Parkway. Duke used to play there in the 1930s up to 1950s but the old "Regal Theatre" is now gone and today you can find the "New Regal Theatre" but it has another address. We never played during my time in the famous "Grand Terrace". Earl played there earlier in the 1930s but we didn't.

Earl had some ideas about music and one of them was that we should play with felt hats over the instruments. He wanted the sound to be soft, so that the people could talk in the clubs and not being blown away, because of the music. But still the music got to have the fire. Later on we found a place to rehearse at without the felt hats.

GW: Gunther Schuller wrote in his book "The Swing Era" that Earl Hines didn't travel much but played mostly in Chicago. He was not so much known in spite of the fact that he was almost equal to Duke Ellington?

WC: Earl wasn't very good with going along with the booking agencies. I don't know why. Duke was much better with that. Earl liked to produce shows and he had one of the premier bands at the time. A more important thing about Earl Hines is that he was the platform and base for the new direction of jazz in the 1940s. Many of the big names, who were connected with Bebop like Charlie Parker, Billy Eckstine, Budd

Johnson and Dizzy Gillespie they all came through Earl Hines and his orchestra. Earl and his band developed the music and Charlie, Billy and Dizzy learned from that. The most important person was probably Budd Johnson. His ideas of music were carried on by these musicians. Budd was one of the first arrangers for big bands with head arrangements. Budd's greatness was his musical concept. Budd would have been much more famous if he had been playing with Duke. But Budd was kept in the background. Ben Webster became famous through his playing with Duke. He was a great tenor player and had a lot of successors who tried to copy his way of playing and his music. But Ben didn't develop the music like Budd did.

New Directions

When Billy Eckstine started his band Charlie, Dizzy and Budd were with him. And later on when Billy disbanded and Dizzy started his band Budd and Billy were there too. In the meantime Dizzy and Charlie had made jazz history with their small groups. Budd Johnson was a close friend of Charlie Parker in the 1940s.

The musical direction was not the same as for Duke Ellington. Duke went his own way. Another musical line was developed by Claude Thornhill, the pianist. Earl and Claude were as close friends as Louis Armstrong and Guy Lombardo. Louis loved Lombardo's pretty music. Claude learned from Earl Hines and Claude's band became the predecessor to the bands of Gil Evans and Gerry Mulligan. Gil and Gerry were arrangers for

Claude and later on they worked for Miles Davis, which resulted in the famous album "Birth of the Cool" from 1948-49.

GW: Walter Fuller was a great trumpeter but very little known about him outside the band?

WC: Yes, he left the band before my time but we met him once with his band in San Diego.

Wardell Grey's early death

GW: Wardell Grey, the tenor player, was in the band. What about him?

WC: Wardell was in the band when I came in and first he played alto but later on he switched to tenor saxophone which became his real instrument. Wardell was one of Sonny Stitt's teachers. He played with Sonny 1942 and he told me about that.

GW: What do you know about Wardell's early death on May 25, 1955?

WC: Wardell was working with Benny Carter's orchestra in Las Vegas at the time. They played at Moulin Rouge Club and Benny had a good band and the shows were very good too. The club was owned by black promoters. The tap dancer Teddy Hale, a member of the band got together that night with Wardell to use drugs. Wardell was the first to use the drug that night and it was too strong for Wardell, so he passed out. Teddy got frightened, because he had a white girl friend and at this time in Las Vegas and in the South it was not so good for him to be with a white girl. He got frightened and scared. Teddy borrowed a car from a guy I know and he took Wardell out to some railroad track close to Inter-Race Hotel Moulin Rouge in Las Vegas, and he laid him down beside the track and they thought he was dead. They later found out that he had died by a broken neck. How it happened nobody knows.

GW: Did somebody go to court or investigate about Wardell? Was it only the musicians who knew what actually happened?

WC: No, nothing happened as far as I know, but some musicians

knew about it. Wardell had a lot of friends and some of them accused Teddy for the accident and tried to punish him later on, but nothing happened. Teddy has passed away now, so we will never know exactly what happened that night.

Benny Green was another member of Earl's band. Benny played later on with Duke in 1969. He left Duke's band in Las Vegas and stayed there and worked with the show bands. Mercer Ellington was the manager for Duke's band and Benny had a disagreement with Mercer so he quit and stayed in Las Vegas.

Billy Eckstine and later on Essex Scott called "Lord Essex" were the singers in Earl's band. I admired Billy very much and he was a great singer. He sang so musically almost like a horn or a trombone. But I think the the public didn't understand that. When Billy started to play he played the trumpet, but he changed later on to valve-trombone and of course he sang all the time. He taught Sara Vaughan how to sing when they worked together in the band and they were friends through their entire lives. And then Earl broke up his band in the end of the 1940s and Billy asked me to join him in his band, but nothing came out of that.

Essex Scott was a fabulous singer. He had a voice with high pitch like a woman. His weight was 240 pounds. He later on worked with the singer Charles Fuqua, who was one of the founders of "The Ink Spots". They hired a boat for fishing or something like that and went out to sea from Miami and disappeared. They were never found again and it happened late 1950s or early 1960s. It's a sad story.

Other musicians in the band were Jo Jones, the drummer, and René Hall, the arranger and guitar player. René wrote arrangements for the 15 piece-band in the bus while we were travelling.

Willie Cook the arranger

GW: I have heard that you arranged some music for Earl

Hines' band and that it was recorded in 1944-46?

WC: Yes, I wanted to learn how to arrange music and to play french horn besides being the first trumpeter. I arranged *Let's Get Started*. I stole the composition from the bass player Gene Ramey in Jay McShann's band. He wrote it and called it *You Say Forward And I March*. I took the first 16 bars of it. The other one was *At The El Grotto*, which was brought in from the tenor player Kermit Scott, who had played at the Minton's Play House with Thelonious Monk. The third tune was *Bambi* but it should be called *Wambi*, which is the name of my oldest son. In the discography Earl Hines is named as composer, but he didn't have anything to do with these tunes. Later on I didn't arrange or compose anything in Dizzy's band or in Ellington's band, because there you had too many giants working. Most of the arrangements for the band at the time were done by Bugs Roberts. Later on Bugs had a little band in St. Louis but he unfortunately died too early of pneumonia. After Bugs, Ernie Wilkins became the arranger in Earl Hines' band and he made some arrangements for our last concerts. I think it was in 1945 we recorded for Jubilee in the Orpheum Theatre in Los Angeles. (In 1945 Earl Hines' band had the following personnel: Palmer Davis, Billy Douglas, Willie Cook (tp), Arthur Walker (tp, vcl), Druie Bess, Walter Harris, Gus Chappel (tb), René Hall (tb, g), George "Scoops" Carey, Lloyd Smith (as), Kermit Scott, Wardell Gray (ts), John Williams (bars), Earl Hines (p), Gene Thomas (b), David "Chick" Booth (dr).)

GW: Let's listen to some records. Here is *Scoops Carry's Merry* recorded probably in October, 1944.

WC: Well, we heard Arthur Walker as the first trumpet soloist and then Billy Douglas as the second trumpeter with a mute. The arrangement was made by René Hall. Earl was crazy about Billy and he used to say "Billy reminds me all the time of 'Pops'

Armstrong".

GW: Let's also listen to *Furlough Blues* from January 12, 1945, and *Stormy Monday Blues* from March 19, 1942.

WC: It is Arthur Walker on vocal and it is a typical title of Earl in connection with the war. In *Stormy Monday Blues* Shorty McConnell made his fantastic trumpet solo. Everybody wanted to play that solo.

Dinah Washington made a record with Gus Chappell's orchestra and me in January 1946. Kermit Scott had been playing with Thelonious Monk at Minton's Club in New York when we picked him up in the band. John Williams was playing with Andy Kirk as first alto player before he joined us. He was married to Mary Lou Williams for a while too.

In January 1945 Earl recorded with Paul Baron and Gordon "Specs" Powell. An interesting point with Specs is that he was the first black musician to play as a studio musician in New York. He later left New York and moved to Virgin Islands.

Earl Hines' finances

GW: Why did Earl Hines dis-banded and what happened then?

WC: Earl was not aware of the importance of having broadcast time. And he was underpaid as well. During his time at Grand Terrace he had more time on the air, but his agent Fox created some trouble. So all together Earl had problems and when he organized a band with harps, violins and four singers in the 1940s he ran out of money. In 1948 Earl had to pay \$18.000 to William Morris Agency and that may be little money today, but it was a lot of many back then. So what happened was that Morris Agency sold the note to Joe Glaser and he told Earl that if he couldn't pay the note he had to play with Louis Armstrong. That is the reason why Earl Hines broke up his band. Joe Glaser wanted to hear the Hot Five again. Later on, when the note was paid, Earl

started a new little band again.

GW: Were you well paid when you worked with Earl Hines?

WC: He did not pay very well but he was not as bad as Jimmie Lunceford. Black bands were paid day by day or weekly as per agreement. Cab Calloway paid his men weekly and he paid \$135 and that was a lot of money and he was the only one who did that. He was the best paying black band leader in the business. Jay McShann paid \$10 or 12 a day and Earl paid \$15/20 a day and we got the money every night. As a first trumpeter in Earl's band I got some extra money. When I started as a musician on my first job I got \$21.50 a week. The living costs during those days were different from today. The room rent was \$3 a week and the meals cost \$1.5 a week. Despite these living costs the daily average was better than a workers salary. The salaries started to go up during the war and we played sometimes two or three times a night. We started the dances at 10 o'clock up to 2 o'clock in the night and then from 3 up to 7 o'clock in the morning and sometimes with breakfast dances up to 10 o'clock in the morning. All that because the industry workers worked around the clock and they could always come and dance. That also meant that we got two or three salaries in one day. That was a lot of money for us.

After Earl Hines broke up the band I worked as a construction worker in Pittsburgh. At this time I had got married to Alma in April 1943. We got two sons and one daughter. My oldest son John Wambi was born in 1946 lives now in L.A. My second son Taru was born in 1948 and now lives with my exwife in Pittsburgh and my daughter Tawana was born in 1953 and she now lives in Maryland and is a teacher. As a matter of fact she lives close the the Ellington buff Ted Hudson.

(In future Bulletines we will learn more about Willie Cook's career with Dizzy Gillespie and Billie Holiday)



Duke Ellington och George Gershwin

Likheter och olikheter.

En studie i deras personligheter
och utveckling av Erling Torkelsson

*Jag läste nyligen en biografi om en kompositör och pianist
av Guds nåde. Föräldrarna var inflyttade ryska judar
och namnet Yacov Gershovits. På amerikanska blev det
George Gershwin. Själveste Duke Ellington har fått en svår
konkurrent om min omåttliga beundran.*

Det som först slog mig var hans likheter med Ellington. Båda drömde om att bli erkända som "riktiga" kompositörer, och inte bara som snitsiga låt- och kuplett-skrivare. Från enskilda låtar sökte de sig mot större verk, konsertmusik och sammanhållna sviter, musikaler, scenprodukter och t o m opera, med sammanhållen berättelse, och inte bara vackra melodier.

Detta är dock en sanning med viss modifikation. Vad de ville var snarare att den musik de spelade med sina jazziga inslag, som tonspråk, rytm och melodier, skulle godkännas som konstmusik, och de själva därmed accepteras som "riktiga" kompositörer.

Många olikheter visade sig också mellan de båda. En jämförelse är svår. Man kan säga att Ellington redan i unga år tog orkestervägen och fick en orkester att administrera, och handskas med mer eller mindre unika personligheter. Ett icke obetydligt problem som Gershwin slapp. Han tog istället en mer individuell väg. Kunde koncentrera sig mer på sitt pianospel, sin utbildning och sina kompositioner, och slapp tidskrävande ansvar för ett band. Han blev tidigt ekonomiskt oberoende.

Inte blev det lättare att klassificera dem. Det går inte att sätta dem under en rubrik. Båda hade för brett register. Att Ellingtons musik är jazz är klart, och att Gershwin gillade och använde jazzuttryck är lika klart.

Klassisk eller populär musik?

För musiker under de första decennierna av 1900-talet fanns två huvudspår. Ville man gå den klassiska vägen (konst-, klassisk- och symfoni- opera- etc.) utbildade man sig på sitt instrument, ofta piano, studerade harmonilära och komposition enligt europeiska, klassiska begrepp och de gamla mästarna Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner osv. Målet var framträdande och framförande av egna verk i kända konserter.

De som var intresserade av populär-musik (jazz- musikal- populär-), hade att välja mellan två huvudspår. Ett var att bli framgångsrik låtskrivare som kämpade på Tin Pan Alley om att skriva de bästa låtarna. De mest framgångsrika fick sina alster framförda på Broadway i shower, musikaler (Kern, Rodgers, Gershwin m fl). Bäst var att skriva all musik till en komplett show, men man kunde också få in enstaka låtar. Så började det för Gershwin.

Det andra spåret var orkesterbanan som utövande musiker eller bandledare. En hel del hade bra utbildning, men åtskilliga var huvudsakligen självlärda. De lyssnade, snappade upp, bildade små band och förkovrade sig efterhand efter sina förebilder. Hit hörde Ellington. Resultatet blev ofta en personlig stil. Här låg inte tonvikten på notspelning, även om man i större ensembler måste vara bra notläsare, utan mer på frihandsspel-

ning och improvisation. Många blev också solopianister och spelade på barer, klubbar och salonger. Under 20-talet fanns omkring 30 000 krogar i New York som serverade smuggelsprit s. k. speak-easys under alkoholförbudstiden. Den varade från 1920 till 1932, men kunde aldrig helt implementeras. Det fanns således gott om speltillfällen.

Studier och förkovran

Duke Ellington och George Gershwin var jämgamla. Båda hade ambitiösa mammor. Ellington hade från början piano i hemmet, och båda föräldrarna kunde spela. Gershwins föräldrar spelade inte. Första pianot i hemmet anskaffades när unge George vara 12 år. Det var emellertid tänkt för storebror Ira, men knappt var pianot på plats förrän George, till allas förvåning, satt sig vid pianot och spelade. Han hade lärt sig hos kompisar. Föräldrarna hade klassisk musik i åtanke för sina söner, som tidigt fick börja öva på klassiska skalor och etyder. Gershwin fortsatte men Ellington gillade det inte alls och slutade. Ellingtons verkliga intresse vaknade på allvar först några år senare efter att ha hört pianisten Harvey Brooks. Då var det synkoperad musik som gällde. Nu började Ellington, 15 år gammal, lära sig. Han lyssnade, frågade och fick tips. I huvudsak var och förblev han självlärd i all sin musikutövning. Han sa själv senare att han inte ville skola sig klassiskt. Han uppfattade det som en begränsning. Men han hade ett mycket lyssnande öra, och lärde sig på det sättet. Både Ellington och Gershwin var oerhört receptiva. 12 år gammal lyssnade Gershwin på all musik han kom åt, inte minst klassiska konserter, helst med piano. Han lärde sig oerhört snabbt. 1912

när han var 14 år gammal tog Jack Miller, pianist vid den lokala Beethoven Symphony Orchestra, honom till sin egen lärare Charles Hambitzer. Denne var skicklig lärare, pianist och kompositör, som omedelbart tog hand om George gratis. I ett brev till sin syster skrev Hambitzer att han fått en ny elev "who will make his mark if anybody will. The boy is a genius." Här fick Gershwin studera grunderna i pianospel, och mästarna Bach, Chopin, Liszt, Debussy etc. Han började också studera harmonilära för Edward Kilenyi. Båda såg i Gershwin en begåvning långt utöver det vanliga. Han fick således en bättre grund i klassiskt avseende, och även som pianist, än Ellington.

Efter skolan satte modern honom i ekonomistudier på High School of Commerce, men Gershwin ville ägna sig helt åt musik. Som 15-åring lämnade han skolan. Redan då var han så skicklig och allsidig som pianist att han fick anställning hos musikförlaget Jerome H Remick & Co som s.k. "songplugger". Han stannade tre mycket betydelsefulla år och slutade 1917 men fortsatte att studera, skriva låtar och kompa artister fram till det stora genombrottet. Det var två år dit.

Som 17-åring blev han ombedd spela in pianorullar. Innan grammofoon- och skivproduktionen kom igång användes självspelande pianon, Player Piano. Till dem köpte man pianorolls med olika låtar som pianot kunde spela. Marknaden upphörde när grammofooner och skivor kom i ropet. Vid den här tiden hade Duke ännu inte fått fart på sin musikverksamhet. Embryot till Duke's Serenaders och lite senare The Washingtonians skyntade dock om hörnet.

Tin Pan Alley

Populärmusiken hade sitt centrum i det som kallades Tin Pan Alley. I verkligheten ett distrikt på Manhattan mellan Väst 28:a gatan och 6:e avenyn. Jämför Fleet Street, som syftar på den London-baserade tidningsindustrin, även om inga tidningar numera finns där. På 1910-talet innan skivindustrin kommit igång, handlade musikproduktionen mycket om att ge ut notblad för sång och piano. Där producerades, demonstrerades, köptes och såldes sånger från alla håll. Kontrakt ingicks med låtskrivare, musiker och så småningom orkestrar. Här verkade musikförläggare och producenter, bland dem J H Remick & Co. Till sin hjälp med låtarna hade man songplug-



George Gershwin

gers eller pianopounders som demonstrerade sånger för hånade spekulanter och kompade vokalisterna med uppdraget att presentera förlagets musik och sälja pianonoter. Gershwin var den yngste någonsin, 15 år gammal. Han blev en verklig mästare. Även Irving Mills jobbade en tid som songplugger. Till förlagen på Tin Pan Alley kom musiker med sina låtar som man ofta sålde för några futtiga dollar. Även Ellington hittade så småningom hit. Man drömde om att komma på en egen låt som kunde bli en hit och sälja i hundratusental. Ett undantag var George Gershwin. Han slutade inte studera klassikerna. Han siktade högre. Det skulle Ellington också komma att göra, fast senare. Gershwin skriver egen musik och siktar på Broadway och dess teatrar och börjar få med en och annan låt.

Duke's Serenaders

Medan Gershwin spelade piano på Remicks, började Ellington bli känd hemma i Washington som en ganska duktig, lokal, pianist och fick sitta in som vikarie då och då bl a för sin mentor Doc Perry. Omkring 1917 samlade han några high schoolvänner till ett litet band. Dit hörde bl a tre bröder Millers, Otto Hardwick och Artie Whetsel. De kallade sig Duke's Serenaders. 1918 fick de sitt första jobb. 1919 hade hans rörelse växt till en orkesterförmedling och samma år blir han kompisk med Sonny Greer.

1918 träffade Gershwin Max Dreyfus, vd för musikproducenten T B Harms. Avtal slöts som varade tio år, och från början gav det Gershwin en stadig veckoinkomst på 35 dollar.

1920-talet

1920-talet var en strålande tid på Manhattan. Det producerades mängder av glittrande shower på Broadway. Den sångskrivare som skrev musiken till en hel show tjänade mycket pengar och fick god reklam för sitt namn. Men man kunde även ta in enstaka melodier av andra kompositörer. Det var så det började för Gershwin. Efter åren på Remicks var han mycket väl införstådd med vad musik och affärer innebar. Han blev Broadways Master of Musicals.

Redan 1919 var ett kanonår. Han fick sin första kompletta show, La La Lucille, lanserad på Broadway. Den blev lyckad, men ingen braksuccé. Det blev däremot *Swanee*. Gershwin spelade den på ett party hos Al Jolson, som blev förtjust och tog den med i sin revy Sinbad. Den blev en jättehitt som sålde över två miljoner skivor och lika många notblad. Gershwin och Jolson tjänade 10 000 dollar var, en förmögenhet. 1920 skrev han sin första show för George White's Scandals, sedan ytterligare fyra de närmaste åren.

1922 kom enaktsoperan Blue Monday. Den ingick i årets upplaga av George White's Scandals och handlade om svarta i ett tragiskt drama, men spelades av vita med blackfaces, dvs svartmålade ansikten. Den beskrevs av någon som en jazzopera, och the first piece of symphonic jazz, och det första riktiga försöket att förena klassisk och populär musik. Den sågades av de klassiska kritikerna och lades ner eftersom den, enligt Ira Gershwin, inte passade in med tidens stämningar. Paul Whiteman framförde den dock 1925 i arrangemang av sin orkestrator Ferde Grofé i Carnegie Hall med titeln *135th Street Blues*.



Ferde Grofé

1923 fick Gershwin det hedrande uppdraget att ackompanjera mezzosopran Eva Gauthier. Hon hade en imponerande europeisk utbildning och planerade konserter som solist med modernistisk musik och inslag av amerikansk populärmusik, dvs jazzinslag. Gershwin utsågs som en av ackompanjatörerna men skulle också framföra egna verk. Allt detta

skulle äga rum i klassiska konserthus. Detta var provocerande för klassikerna, men blev en publiksuccé för Gershwin.

Duke till New York

Under tiden utvecklades Ellingtons lilla Washingtonorkester. Men det är ännu på ett helt annat, lokalt, plan, långt från mångfalden och konkurrensen i New York. Men det gick bra för rörelsen. Ellington tjänade bra och bildade familj. Men New York hägrade. Det var där saker hände. 1921 reste Ellington och kompanierna dit för att pröva lyckan, men var snart tillbaka i Washington. 1923 for de till New York två gånger fastän Ellington själv var tveksam. Andra gången fick de, på rekommendation av Ada Smith, jobb på Barron Wilkins Exclusive Club i juni och sedan på Hollywood Café på 49:e gatan and Broadway i september. Efter eldsvåda återöppnade klubben med namnet Club Kentucky. Men det musikaliska genombrottet dröjde ännu ett par år. Han var fortfarande bara en lokal för många, medan Gershwins namn var känt över hela nationen.

Genombrott för Gershwin

1924 kom Gershwins andra, och verkliga, genombrott. Dels skrev han musikalen *Lady Be Good* med *Oh Lady Be Good*, *Fascinating Rhythm* m fl kända inslag, men det riktigt stora var *Rhapsody in Blue*. Den blev en stormande publiksuccé. Kritiken som vanligt blandad. Det var egentligen Paul Whitemans idé att Gershwin skulle skriva ett klassiskt stycke för piano och jazzorkester. Det skulle ingå i en stor konsert, som skulle vara An Experiment In Modern Music och framföras i Aeolian Hall, regisserad av Whiteman. Gershwin hade ungefär en månad på sig att skriva, och Ferde Grofé, Whitemans arrangör, var klar med arrangemanget 8 dagar före konserten. Gershwin var lugn, men Whiteman var dödsförskräckt inför premiären. Det skulle dock sluta bra, trots att konserten blev lång, och folk började tröttna innan Gershwins avdelning hade startat. Några började gå hem "But from the moment Gotman's clarinet wail rose into the air, everything changed, Gershwin's virtuosity at the keyboard eclipsed everything heard earlier... The applause was almost frenzied. At half past five on the afternoon of February 12, at 19:24, we took our fifth curtain call," meddelade en lättad och överlycklig Whiteman. Det var Gershwins *Rhapsody* som drog allt intresse. Som vanligt publiksuccé, men

den klassiska kritiken var som vanligt blandad.

Det är jazz, skrev kritikern Henry O Osgood, men det är seriös jazz, och det är otroligt amerikanskt. Dirigenten för Bostons symfoniorkester, Serge Koussevitzky skrev att jazzen var: "ett värdefullt bidrag till den moderna musiken. Den är inte överflödigt, utan av fundamental betydelse."

Leonard Bernstein skrev 1939: "American music owes one of its greatest debts to the Negroes, not only for the popularly acknowledged gift but for the impetus jazz has given to American art music..."

Chocolate Kiddies

Samma år bidrog Ellington med melodier till musikalen *Chocolate Kiddies*. Den togs inte upp på Broadway, men gjorde succé i Berlin och framfördes även i Sverige. Grabbarna från Washington blev allt mer kända i New York, men ännu var orkestern bara en i mängden, utan något särskilt utmärkande drag. Mycket handlade om att utveckla orkestern. 1924 fick Elmer Snowden sparken och ersattes av Fred Guy. Ellington blev nu oomstridd ledare.

1925 kom Gershwins klassiska *Concerto in F for piano and orchestra*. Dirigenten för New York Symphony Orchestra Walter Damrosch hade föreslagit att Gershwin skulle skriva en komposition för piano och symfoniorkester. Stycket skulle framföras i ett antal konserter av New York Symphony Orchestra med George som pianist. Det var oemotståndligt! Arbetet startade i juli. En skiss för två pianon var klar i september och orkestreringen var klar 10 november. Arbetsnamnet var *New York Concerto*, som ändrades till *Concerto in F for piano and orchestra*. Premiär den 3 december 1925 i ett fullsatt Carnegie Hall. Publiken älskade konserten. Kritiken var som väntat delad.

Genombrott för Ellington

Ellington hade ännu inte hittat sin stil, men 1926 började den klarna. Det blev fyra viktiga inspelningar det året: *East St. Louis Toodle-Oo*, *Birmingham Breakdown*, *Immigration Blues* och *The Creeper*. På hösten kom Irving Mills in i bilden. Det skulle få enorm betydelse. Det sägs att Irving Mills blev begestrad när han hörde Washingtonians spela *St. Louis Blues*. Duke fortsatte att spela in sina blivande klassiska melodier på skiva. September 1927 fick Ellington, ganska tursamt, en

gagemang på nattklubben Cotton Club som varade till 1931. Den låg i korsningen Lennox Avenue och 142:a gatan och drevs av Owney Madden. Här serverades smuggelsprit till höga priser, och ganska vågade shower, dans- och sångnummer. Artisterna var färgade, men publiken bestod av rika vita och kända artister. Många var nyfikna på grabbarna från Washington. Viktigt för Ellington var de nationella musikprogram som varje vecka sändes över radio från Cotton Club. De gjorde Ellington känd över landet och tillsammans med Mills förvaltades möjligheterna väl.

Med den driftige Mills öppnades nya möjligheter för Ellington. Mills engagerade sig djupt i Ellington och hans skivproduktion. Med Bubber Mileys och Joe "Tricky Sam" Nantons sordinspel som mycket viktiga ingredienser utvecklades djungelstilen. Mills lyckades övertyga Madden att inreda och anpassa lokal och show till djungelstilen. Det blev ett lyckodrag. Storheter inom musik och jazz blev intresserade och kom för att lyssna. Förutom Bubber och Tricky, bestod bandet av Sonny Greer, Otto Hardwick, Rudy Jackson, Harry Carney, Fred Guy och Wellman Braud. Man spelade in *East St. Louis Toodle-Oo*, *Black and Tan Fantasy*, *Creole Love call*, *The Blues I love to sing* m fl.

An American in Paris

Gershwins nästa större verk hade premiär den 13 december 1928 med titeln *An American In Paris*. Stycket skildrar en amerikan, som strosar omkring i Paris och upplever staden och dess atmosfär. På originalpartituret antecknade Gershwin: "*An American in Paris*. A Tone Poem for Orchestra. Composed and Orchestrated by George Gershwin. Begun early in 1928, finished November 18, 1928." Observera att Gershwin nämner sig som orchestrator – ett viktigt påpekande. Han hade tidigare fått några snytingar om att han inte kunde instrumentera. Premiären kom i Carnegie Hall med New York Philharmonic Orchestra med Walter Damrosch som dirigent. Strålände uppskattning av publiken men som vanligt blandad kritik av pressen. Sin verkliga upphöjelse fick den när Toscanini senare framförde den.

Dukes första storhetsperiod

Under tiden etablerade sig Ellington på Cotton Club. Orkestern kompletterades efter hand med Hodges, Bigard och Jenkins. Whetsel kom tillbaka. Klassikerna

Black Beauty, *Jubilee Stomp*, *The Mooche*, *Awful Sad*, *Misty Morning* m fl. spelades in. Cootie Williams och Juan Tizol tillkom 1929 och Lawrence Brown 1932.

1929 möttes Ellington och Gershwin under en period i sina professionella roller, i Florence Ziegfelds Show Girl med Ellingtons orkester och musik av Gershwin. Enligt Ellington var det en lärorik tid, särskilt kontakten med Will Vodery som var Ziegfelds musikaliska ledare och arrangör. 1930 spelades nya klassiker in. Bl.a. *Hot and Bothered*, *Mood Indigo*, *Rockin' in Rhythm* och *Ring Dem Bells*. 1931 kom *Echoes of the Jungle*, och *Creole Rhapsody*. 1932 lanserades *Sophisticated Lady* och samma år anslöt Ivie Anderson till orkestern. Ellington hade kommit igång ordentligt. Orkestern var i toppform. Vi är inne i Ellingtons första storhetsperiod.

Creole Rhapsody är Ellingtons första exempel på en längre komposition. Tidens kritiker och deras efterföljare har berömt *Creole Rhapsody* som ett av de första lyckade försöken att spela jazz i en större och mera sammansatt form. Några ansåg nu, att *Rhapsody in Blue*, Gershwins jättesuccé från 1924, inte var jazz, utan bara hade inslag av jazz. Ellingtons *Rhapsody* däremot var riktigt jazz. Den fick New Yorks musikskolors årliga utmärkelse 1932 som bästa nya amerikanska komposition, och fick stor betydelse för uppfattningen om Ellington som kompositör av jazz.

Orkestern är bemannad med de kommande stjärnsolisterna. Paletten välförsedd med färger. Huvudet fullt av idéer med påfyllning från musikerna. Radioutsändningar, skivor, konserter, dansspelningar och resor fyller tiden. Ellington slår sig fram i enorm konkurrens. Mills jobbar målmedvetet med Ellingtons image som kompositör och musikgeni. Odödliga låtar växer fram från Ellingtons penna. Musiken sprids över landet och Europa: *Mood Indigo*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *Solitude*, *In a Sentimental Mood* m fl. 1934 belönades *Solitude* som bästa schlager av musikkritikerna och kompositörerna.

Filmmusik och Cubabesök

1930 presenterades musikalen *Girl Crazy* med bl a succén *I Got Rhythm*. Samma år fick Gershwin erbjudande att skriva filmmusik i Hollywood för RKO Pictures, senare känd för sina musikfilmer med Fred Astaire och Ginger Rogers. Gaget var enorma 70.000 dollar för, som

det visade sig, mycket liten konstnärlig insats. Han trivdes emellertid inte och var tillbaka i New York i februari 1931. Med sig hade han skisser till en ny konsert för piano och orkester. Det var tänkt som en skildring av New York, men fick till slut heta *Second Rhapsody for Orchestra with piano*, och hade premiär den 29 januari 1932 i Boston med Boston Symphony Orchestra under Serge Koussevitsky. Det blev som vanligt publiksuccé, men pressen blandad. Framförandet i New York mottogs dock positivt. "It is full of youth and recklessness. It is America of untrammelled manners and cocktail energy," skrev en recensent.

På besök i Havanna 1932 blir Gershwin intresserad av cubansk musik särskilt dess rytmer. Det resulterar i *Cuban Overture* med diverse exotiska rytminstrument som han skaffade och tog med hem till Amerika. 1933 hade han flyttat in i en grandios 14-rumsvåning på East 72th Street som fyllde alla behov, däribland plats för den dyrbara konst han köpt och sina egna målningar. Han var en av landets högst betalda musiker, och hade bostad därefter. De sista åren tjänade han 250 000 dollar per år.

Depressionen slår till

För musikerna i USA var första halvan av 30-talet ganska dyster. Förbudstiden var slut och folk kunde köpa laglig sprit själva. Speakeasys, som sålt smuggelsprit, blev onödiga och speltillfällena minskade för musikerna. Musik kunde man höra på radio. Den ekonomiska depressionen lade sin dödande hand över skivförsäljningen som minskade med 90 % på kort tid. Glittret kring Tin Pan Alley hade mattats betydligt i konkurrens med ljudfilmen från Hollywood med allt bättre kvalitet. Mycket framgångsrika vita swingband tog över den bästa dansmarknaden. Segregationen var en av flera orsaker till detta. Ellingtons orkester hade emellertid bra med jobb runt om i landet.

Ellington till Europa

1933 reste Ellington med orkestern till Europa. Resan blev succéartad och Ellington upptäckte att han här, särskilt i England, hade hängivna beundrare bland musiker och kritiker, bland dem de mycket kompetenta engelsmännen Spike Hughes och Constant Lambert. Ellington fann till sin överraskning att de inte bara såg honom som låtskrivare och orkesterledare utan också som en

framstående amerikansk kompositör vars musik hade stort konstnärligt värde. Uppmärksamheten var stor både i engelsk och amerikansk press. Ellington blev ett världsnamn. Klassiska kompositörer började uppmärksamma honom. Canadafödde P Grainger rankade Ellington år 1934 som en av de tre största kompositörerna i världshistorien i sällskap med Bach och Frederic Delius. Året betraktas som en vändpunkt för Ellington.

Svår period för Ellington

Samma år fick Duke veta att hans älskade mor Daisy led av cancer. Det plågade Ellington mycket, men hjulen snurrade för fullt. Året efter avled Daisy. Duke tappade allt initiativ för en tid, men orkade ändå till Daisys minne skriva *Reminiscing in Tempo* som blir en flop. Mottagandet var mycket ljumt, även från hans största beundrare i England. Ellington blev mycket besviken och tappade modet. Swingmusiken är på gång. Skall han hänga med i den allmänna swingtrenden eller fortsätta sin egen bana med utvecklade jazzkompositioner och större samlade verk?

Man måste tillstå att han hade en påtaglig nedgångsperiod i mitten av decenniet, innan han börjar repa sig 1937 för att komma igång riktigt 1938-39 med massor av ny musik.

Porgy and Bess

Gershwins sista konsertstycke blev *Variations on I Got Rhythm* 1934. Musiken uppfattas som rolig, intelligent men lite snabbt tillkommen. Undra på det. En stor turné låg i startgroparna och Porgy and Bess var kontrakterad. Variationerna var mellanspel, men ett prov på enorm improvisationsförmåga. Gershwin hade bara tre år kvar att leva. Han använde tiden väl. Den 26 oktober 1933 tecknade DuBose Heyward och Gershwin kontrakt med Theatre Guild om att skriva en opera utifrån Heywards novell Porgy. Gershwin var klar över sina intentioner: "Though of course I will try to keep my own style moving in the opera, the Negro flavor will be predominant throughout." Här kom Ellington senare med kritik: Han klassade den som: "black on stage, white everywhere else...time to debunk Gershwins lampblack negroisms. No negro could possibly be fooled by Porgy and Bess." Kritiken är förvånande eftersom Duke aldrig kritiserade sina konkurrenter, och han nekade se-

nare till innehållet som missuppfattning och feltolkning.

Operan utspelade sig på en gata i Charleston kallad Catfish Row. I verkligheten var namnet Cabbage Row Church Street 89-91 i Charleston, som tidigare var bebodd av frigivna slavar. Hit kom Gershwin, mellan radioserierna, och tillbringade några veckor av sommaren 1934 i ett litet strandhus på Folly Island 15 km från Charleston, Carolina. Lärde känna Gullah Negros på James Island och tog intryck av deras sång och liv. Gershwin instrumenterade, och skrev själv partituret på 700 sidor. *I got plenty of nothing, It ain't necessarily so, Summertime, Bess you is my woman now* är exempel på kända melodier i operan.

Före premiären på Broadway gavs några framföranden i Boston från 30 september 1935 med lysande mottagande från publiken, bl a 15 minuters ovationer. "He must now be accepted as a serious composer." Före dessa Bostonkonserter gjordes en privat generalrepetition utan scenrekvisita och dräkter. Bara den nakna musiken och sångerna framfördes. Nära vännen Henry Botkin ansåg: "in some way it was the most beautiful performance I ever heard. Without the distractions of the stage, the music itself became a profound and moving experience and stirred everybody listening to the very depth of their being." Originallet tog tre timmar. Det ansågs alldeles för långt för Broadway varför man, i en smärtsam process för Gershwin klippte bort fyrtiofem minuter.

Operan blev en av de mest älskade och en av de mest kontroversiella. Även en del svarta var kritiska och ansåg att den inte representerade den amerikanske negern. Det dröjde innan den fick rätt uppskattning: "But its canonization came in 1985 when it arrived on the stage of Metropolitan Opera." Då hade det gått 50 år sedan premiären 1935.

Gershwin arbetade hårt 1936. Broadway hade förlorat mycket av sin glans. Av de bästa hade bl a Jerome Kern, Richard Rodgers, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter och Harold Arlen flyttat till filmens Hollywood där pengar fanns att tjäna. Gershwins publik började minska. Han hade inte haft någon "smash hit" på länge och verkade mest intresserad av opera och symfonisk musik. Men Hollywood ville ha hits så Gershwin var inte alltför intressant för dem - och Gershwin inte värst intresserad av dem. Trots allt för

han till Hollywood för att skriva musik till *Shall we dance*, med gamla vännerna Fred Astaire och Ginger Rogers. Under denna period komponerade han bl a *Let's call the whole thing off, They can't take that away from me, Love walked in och Love is here to stay*.

Gershwins sista sommar

Under 1937 blev Gershwin alltmer ensam och deprimerad. Plågades av huvudvärk som eventuellt enligt läkarna berodde på stress. Något var galet när han snubblade över passager i sin Concerto. Gershwin avled den 11 juli av en hjärntumör och begrovs några dagar senare.

Medan Gershwin blev allt sämre, återhämtade sig Ellington efter sin depression efter moderns död. Juan Tizols *Caravan* blev succé, och *Crescendo and Diminuendo in Blue* spelades in på hösten 1937. Ellington har återhämtat sig och går mot en strålande framtid. Han har nära 40 år kvar av sin karriär. Vad kunde Gershwin ha bjudit på om han fått leva?

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Alice Babs & Duke Ellington – Serenade To Sweden



Den inspelning som Duke gjorde med Alice i Paris den 28 februari-1 mars 1963 har alltid behandlats något styvmoderligt av Reprise. LP-utgåvan RS 5024 gavs bara ut i Europa. När Reprise för ett antal år sedan gav ut en LP-box med alla Ellingtons Reprise-inspelningar ingick inte inspelningarna med Alice Babs. Så var inte heller fallet när Mosaic gav ut en CD-box med samma innehåll. Nu kan vi notera att engelska Amazon annonserar skivan i CD-format med tillgänglighet fr.o.m. 18 november 2016. Det är återutgivningsbolaget Real Gone Music som ger ut skivan och bolaget förefaller ha gott rykte vad gäller ljudkvaliteten. Tyvärr har man inte utnyttjat tillfället att låta oss höra några av de många alternativtagningar som gjordes. Men någon annan kanske ger oss tillfälle till det någon gång i framtiden.

Ulf Lundin

Amos 'n' Andy 1930 Comedy Film

Check And Double Check

Featuring Duke Ellington and his Orchestra

By Fred Glueckstein

On January 12, 1926, Freeman Gosden and Charles Carrell debuted a two-man comedy series, which they created and starred in, titled *Sam 'n' Henry* on the WGN radio station in Chicago. In 1928, the radio program moved to a rival station, changed its name to *Amos 'n' Andy*, and became one of the most popular radio programs in American history. Although Gosden and Carrell were both white, the characters they played were two black men from the Deep South named Amos and Andy, who came to Chicago to seek their fortunes.

So popular was *Amos 'n' Andy* that in 1930, RKO Radio Pictures decided to film a Hollywood comedy based on the radio program. The film was to star Gosden and Carrell, the *Amos 'n' Andy* radio voices, and titled *Check And Double Check*, a catch phrase associated with the radio program.

Irving Mills succeeded in arranging for Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club Orchestra to appear in *Check And Double Check*. Both Mills and Ellington knew that the Orchestra's appearance in the Hollywood film would give the group national exposure for the first time. Mills also arranged for the Ellington orchestra to be under contract by RKO from August 4 to August 31, 1930. Ellington was to receive a payment of \$27,500 in weekly installments of \$6,875.

Check And Double Check brought to the screen the characters of the highly popular radio program, which included Amos and Andy involved in their taxicab business; stressed by their girl friends Ruby and Madame Queen; caught up in duties of their lodge "The Mystic Knights of the Sea"; advised on how to make millions by lodge member Kingfish, and amused by the shiftless and lazy Lightnin'.

The basic plot of *Check And Double Check* involved: Amos' and Andy's "Fresh Air



Taxicab Co. of America Incorporated" being hired to transport the Ellington orchestra to a high society ball at the Blair Mansion; after they drop off the orchestra their taxicab breaks down; Amos And Andy become entangled with a young white couple who wished to get married; the couple's hope is jeopardized by the young man's inability to

locate a deed to a family property; Amos and Andy are required by "The Mystic Knights of the Sea" to keep watch for a night at an old haunted house, and while there, they stumbled on the missing deed and the young couple's marriage was assured.

Duke Ellington Orchestra performs

After arriving in Hollywood, Ellington and the band members were photographed on the RKO lot. The photo appeared in Ellington's memoir, *Music Is My Mistress*. With a cheerful Ellington conducting on a stool, the band members are sitting on chairs and playing their instruments. They include Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, trombones; Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams, Artie Whetsol, trumpets; Sonny Greer, drums; Fred Guy, banjo; Wellman Braud, bass; Harry Carney, Johnny Hodges and Barney Bigard, reeds.

The Ellington Orchestra shot their first movie scenes on August 14, 1930. When director Melville W. Brown saw Tizol, a Puerto Rican, and Bigard, a Creole, both of whom were light skinned, he ordered them to wear black makeup. A.H. Lawrence, author of *Duke Ellington and his World*, wrote: "The rationale for this bit of racism was that he wanted the band to have a more uniform appearance for the film".

Others viewed the movie maker's action differently. One wrote "that racial mixing, even on stage, was opposed by a number of white people, especially

in the South and band members were forced to put on black makeup". In the end, Tizol and Bigard, like Gosden and Carrell, appeared to be Negro in *Check And Double Check*.

A.H. Lawrence, in his Duke Ellington book, identified the Ellington Orchestra's musical performances in the film. When Amos and Andy arrive at the society ball and drop off the orchestra, their decrepit taxicab gets a flat tire. Meanwhile, inside the mansion the Ellington band played their first piece, Harry Ruby's *When I'm Blue*. With Amos and Andy working on the flat, the band was heard softly in the backdrop, which included brief solos by Cootie Williams and Johnny Hodges.

During the lengthy dialogue, Ellington's *The Mystery Song* plays in the background. The orchestra is next heard, and seen, in a ballroom sequence. The band played a few bars of its radio theme *East St. Louis Toodle-00*; Harry Ruby and Bert Kalmar's *Three Little Words*, and Ellington's *Old Man Blues*, which was originally titled *Awa Awa* based on the vocal routine of the radio program's character Lightnin'.

In the Victor studios on August 20, 1930, the Ellington orchestra recorded three takes each of *Old Man Blues*, *Three Little Words*, and an Ellington composition, allegedly written for *Check And Double Check* but never used, titled *Ring Dem Bells*.

In his memoir, Ellington discussed the film's music. "The big song in it was *Three Little Words* but an instrumental of mine called *Ring Dem Bells* also became very popular. It was taken up by other bands, and for a considerable time it was a much-requested item".

Amusingly, The Rhythm Boys comprised of Bing Crosby, Harry Barris, and Al Rinker were brought in at the last minute to sing the vocals on *Three Little Words*, when Ellington's drummer, Sonny Greer, got stage fright about performing on film. After Greer couldn't get over his fear, Bing Crosby was supposed to sing the song solo, but when director Melville Brown heard Crosby's version, he reportedly said "This guy can't sing", and the entire trio was brought in to record the song.

Check And Double Check released

On Friday, October 24, 1930, Ellington and his Orchestra participated in a

special NBC Amos 'n' Andy broadcast from the Roxy Theatre in New York City to publicize *Check And Double Check*. On October 25, 1940, the film had its Harlem premiere at the Douglas Theatre which was downstairs from the Cotton Club. Ellington and the Orchestra appeared on stage at the premiere.

Three weeks later, the Ellington Orchestra opened a 5-night stage show engagement at the Douglas Theatre. *Check And Double Check* was shown at each performance. Interestingly, on Thursday, November 13, 1930, the following newspaper article appeared:

DUKE ELLINGTON TO WORK IN NEXT AMOS 'N' ANDY FILM

Duke Ellington and his famous Cotton Club Orchestra, who worked along with Amos 'n' Andy in the production of their big film "Check And Double Check", are said to have been engaged to work with these two famous radio comedians in their second big picture to be started soon.

The work of Ellington is one of the outstanding features of the film.

Ticket sales of *Check And Double Check* were profitable for RKO; however, when the studio examined ticket sale patterns they determined that the success of the film was due to the curiosity of the audience. The film goes wanted to see the black-face performances of their two radio stars, but once seen, the novelty wore off. Consequently, RKO decided not to budget another Amos and Andy feature film and *Check And Double Check*, with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, would be the radio stars only Hollywood motion picture.

Note to reader: The full 1930 77-minutes film with the Ellington Orchestra may be seen on YouTube by searching "Check And Double Check".

Duke Ellington had prepared himself for the appearance in the film by composing "Double Check Stomp" which was recorded for RCA-Victor already on April 11, for Brunswick on April 22, and for Columbia on June 12, 1930. However, RKO decided not to make use of the composition for the film.



A view on "Check And Double Check"

When studying the photo of Duke Ellington and his Orchestra taken while they were filming *Check And Double Check*, a critical viewer cannot help raising a few questions. If the picture was supposed to be a "publicity photo" which it probably was, why did not RKO bother themselves with finding a more proper surrounding. The band is brought out on a gravel yard, and in the background can be seen some studio buildings and undefined material. Ellington himself is ridiculously placed on top of a chair in a directing pose. Sonny Greer has not brought his drums along but is sitting with a snare drum in his lap. A studio of the size of RKO had of course all kinds of possibilities to find better surroundings for a picture of this kind. They certainly had several studios that could be used and one cannot help wondering why they did not let the orchestra appear under more suitable conditions. Duke Ellington was very much in favour of elegance and it is difficult to understand why he agreed to let himself and his band be photographed under such poor conditions. A white orchestra, e.g. Paul Whiteman, would never have agreed to be photographed in this way, and RKO would surely never have suggested something like that to a white band.

The picture was taken in 1930 and back in those days the differences in society between black and white were more obvious than it is today. The picture can be regarded as an evidence of the Jim

Crow attitude of the time. The only thing one can credit to RKO is the fact that they allowed the band to be dressed in clothes with white shirts and ties. Most black artists who appeared on film in those days had to appear and dress as cooks, cleaners, porters or similar low class professions. Ellington was probably the first black musician who broke this trend. Irving Mills wanted Ellington to show an attitude of elegance and in the contract with RKO it is likely that he insisted that Ellington and the orchestra should be presented in this way.

There are more viewpoints that can be considered in a film like *Check And Double Check*. The characters Amos and Andy are supposed to pose as two somewhat less intelligent black people. As long as they appeared on radio it may not have been quite obvious to everybody that they were supposed to be black but when they appeared on the screen in black face everything became clear. How did the black audience react to white people making fun of the black portion of the population? Black people must have found themselves being ridiculed in the film. Did the black audience boycott the film? Could that have been one reason why RKO did not invest in a second picture?

Has anyone of our readers a view on this? Our American readers should have an opinion. We would certainly like to hear from them.

Bo Haufman

Posttidning B

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KALLELSE!

*Duke Ellington Society of Sweden
hälsar sina medlemmar välkomna till årets sista
medlemsmöte den 12 december*

PLATS:

Franska Skolans Aula,
Döbelnsgatan 3, Stockholm.
Portkod för kvällen: 1212
Entrén öppen från kl. 17.00.
Entréavgift: 100:- i kontanter
Notera portkoden som endast
gäller för denna kväll.
Kommer Du inte in så ring:
070-622 88 16 eller 070-540 70 09

PROGRAM:

17.30 - 18.30

*Duke Ellington
– ur ett snett perspektiv.*

Rune E. Sjögren, DESS-medlem,
konstnär och jazzentusiast kåserar
om sin syn på Duke Ellington.
Rune målar ofta tavlor med jazz-
motiv och några av dessa kommer
han att visa.

18.30 - 19.00

Paus med möjlighet till mingel och
inköp av öl/ vin 30:- och wraps 40:-
Obs! Endast kontanter gäller.

19.00 – 20.15

Swedish Pastry – en grupp under
ledning av DESS styrelsemedlem
Claes Brodda (cl. ts.) tillsammans
med Martin Wikström (vibrafon),
Bertil Fernqvist (gitarr) och Curt
Andersson (bas) bjuder oss på jazz
inspirerad av Benny Goodman,
Ove Lind och Åke Hasselgård. Men
något av Ellington kommer säkert
också att erbjudas.

Tiderna är ungefärliga.

**Obs! Nästa medlemsmöte äger rum den 13 februari och är tillika
föreningens årsmöte. Motioner, skall enligt stadgarna, vara inlämnade
till styrelsen senast den 31 december 2016.**



Martin
Wikström
vibrafon



Claes
Brodda
klarinet och
saxofon



Bertil
Fernqvist
gitarr



Curt
Andersson
bas

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