



# The elusive Ozzie Bailey

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# Möt Ozzie Bailey

Världen ser inte ut att må helt bra just nu, men jag önskar ändå alla medlemmar ett Gott Nytt År i sällskap med Duke.

Under sin långa karriär använde sig Duke Ellington av flera manliga vokaler. Vi har tidigare speglat Herb Jeffries, som var en typisk "crooner" enligt den tidens modell. Senare tillkom Al Hibbler med en helt annan karaktär, en nästan burlesk stil. Senare kunde vi höra Milt Grayson, som vi troligen kommer att spegla i en framtida Bulletin. Men däremellan kunde vi njuta under en ganska kort tid av en underbart vacker röst i Ellingtons orkester. Det rör sig om Ozzie Bailey, som Ellington lanserade speciellt i *A Drum Is A Woman*, men därutöver i ett flertal andra nummer. Hans röstläge kan sägas vara en ljus baryton och i mitt tycke en av Ellingtons bästa sångare. Men han var i alla sammanhang en anonym person-

lighet, som det finns mycket litet nämnt om i litteraturen.

DESS läsare har tidigare fått ta del av Sven-Erik Baun Christensens fördjupade studie i Lil Greenwoods karriär, och med vetskap om Sven-Eriks förmåga att forska bad jag honom att göra en studie i Ozzie Baileys liv och leverne. Med kännedom om hur litet vi vet om honom väntade jag mig inte mycket mer än ett bidrag, som skulle kunna utgöra en kortare sidoartikel i en framtida Bulletin. Men med sin bakgrund som bibliotekarie och känsla för forskning gick Sven-Erik in för att verkligen fördjupa sig i ämnet. Med tillgång till amerikanska folkbokföringsuppgifter och studium av artiklar i lokala tidningar plus det lilla som tidigare publicerats har Sven-Erik producerat en kvalificerad utredning om Ozzie Baileys karriär med detaljer som tidigare varit okända för oss alla. Jag tror

att artikeln kommer att fylla en lucka i forskningen runt Duke Ellington.

I förra Bulletinen bifogades ett inbetalningskort på medlemsavgiften för 2023. Glädjande nog har drygt hälften av våra medlemmar använt sig av detta, vilket jag tackar för och jag förväntar mig att den resterande hälften betalar inom kort.

På sista sidan visas som brukligt är programmet för nästa medlemsmöte den 6 mars, som tillika är årsmöte. Årsmöteshandlingar kommer att tillhandahållas via e-post i god tid före mötet.

Till DESS, ha det bra.



Bo Hausman, ordförande DESS

**Hm, I think  
Cootie sounds  
a lot better**



# Apropå Solitude

**DESS-medlemmen och tillika den internationellt erkände diskografen Björn Englund har inkommit med några synpunkter med anledning av artiklarna om *Solitude* i föregående nummer av Bulletinen.**

Under många år hade AFM (American Federation of Musicians) en regel om att en inspelning fick pågå i max fyra timmar och att endast fyra nummer fick spelas in.

Den 16 juni 1931 sändes ett memorandum till inspelningsstaben på Victor Records med följande lydelse: *Starting with this date, only one take to be processed, unless wax becomes defective.* Victor fortsatte att spela in två och ibland flera tagningar, men gjorde provskiva av enbart en. Denna regel gällde till december 1933, men tycks fortfarande ha gällt för Duke Ellingtons inspelningar den 9:e och 10:e januari 1934.

I inspelningslistorna kan man förutom matrisnummer även finna vissa förkortningar som indikerar hur Victor bedömde inspelningarna:

- M = Master, d.v.s. den take som användes för pressning
- D = Delete (kasserades)

- H = Hold (bevaras)
- H30 = Hold for 30 days
- HI = Hold indefinitely

Vissa matrisnummer hade tillägget "R" varmed menades att det rörde sig om en dubbnings, d.v.s. akustiskt överförd från annan matris.

1948 lanserade Columbia LP-skivan och efterhand hakade de övriga skivbolagen på. 1953 planerade Victor att ge ut 100 jazzåterutgivnings-LP. Victor introducerade sin 25 cm "X" LP och senare 30 cm LP Bluebird (ofta dubbelalbum). På den senare etiketten kom bl.a. "The Complete Artie Shaw" och "The Complete Glenn Miller". Den sista skivan i varje Complete Serie innehöll tidigare utgivna titlar och alternativtagningar till utgivna titlar.

Ur inspelningslistorna kan följande utläsas:

- 9 januari 1934. Inspelningslokal 1143 Merchandise Mart, Chicago.
- BS-80144-1 D/M – *Delta Serenade*
- BS-80144-2 M/H – Utgiven på Victor 24755
- BS-80144-2R (D)
- BS-80144-3R (M) – Utgiven på Victor

20-1533\*

- BS-80145-1 D – *Stompy Jones*
- BS-80145-2 M – Utgiven på Victor 24521
- BS-80145-2R (D)
- BS-80145-3R (M) – Utgiven på Victor 20-1533\*

\*Även utgiven på HMV (F) K 8305. Dubbade i New York 8 dec 1943.

10 januari 1934. Samma inspelningslokal.

- BS-80149-1 M – *Solitude* – Utgiven på Victor 24755
- BS-80149-2 D
- BS-80150-1 M – *Blue Feeling* – Utgiven på Victor 24521
- BS-80150-2 – Not processed
- BS-80150-3 – Not processed

Brian Rust anger inte i sin "Jazz Records" att Victor 20-1533 och HMV B 8305 är dubbar. Samma sak gäller åtskilliga återutgivningar på Bluebird. Detta har kunnat konstateras först senare efter att Victors inspelningslistor publicerats på nätet.

Den som vill fördjupa sig ytterligare i dessa detaljer hänvisas till Björns artikel *The myth of Victor's 1931-1933 "One-Take" recordings*. Publicerad i VJM (Vintage Jazz Mart) 171, Winter/Spring issue 2015, sid 8-9.

DESS tackar Björn för hans insiktsfulla kunskaper i ämnet.

## Bo Holmqvist in memoriam

Vår tidigare ledamot i DESS styrelse mellan 2007 och 2017, Bo Holmqvist, avled den 16 november 2022, 91 år gammal.

Bo var journalist och kom att göra en strålande karriär i branschen. 1952–1957 var han anställd vid Dagens Nyheter och 1957 anställdes han vid Sveriges Radio. Det finns i våra samlingar en inspelning av hans intervju med Duke Ellington när denne anlände till Malmö 1958. På femtitalet var han medarbetare i Orkesterjournalen tillsammans med bl.a. Benny Åslund och Leif Anderson, alla med anknytning till Duke Ellingtons musik. På sextiotalet blev han anställd vid Sveriges Tele-

vision och hade där befattningen som utrikeskorrespondent i USA och London. Bo utsågs till utrikesredaktör och programledare för *Rapport* i TV2 från 1986 fram till sin pensionering 1996.

Bo var en hängiven skivsamlare och hans skivsamling var omfattande. Han kom att bli en värdefull medlem i DESS styrelse med gedigna kunskaper om Duke Ellington och jazz över huvud taget. Under sina år i styrelsen skrev han många insiktsfulla artiklar i Bulletinen. Han var en trivsamt sällskapsmänniska och satte sin prägel på de lunchmåltider som avslutade våra styrelsemöten.

Leif Jönsson

## Ny medlem

DESS hälsar följande nya medlem välkommen i vår illustra förening:

Rolf Seydlitz, Stockholm

DESS behöver fler medlemmar.

Inspirera Dina vänner och bekanta att också vara med!

# The elusive Ozzie Bailey

By Sven-Erik Baun Christensen

*"One of my favorite singers was Ozzie Bailey. Not only was he endowed with an incredible voice, but his articulation and intonation were superior."*

So says Clark Terry in his autobiography about the young vocalist who in 1956 joined Duke Ellington to sing the part of 'Carribee Joe' in Ellington's TV fantasy about the history of jazz 'A Drum Is a Woman' and stayed with the band from 1957 to early 1960.<sup>i</sup>

Apart from his association with Duke Ellington and his music little is known about his life and musical activities beyond his association with Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Biographical information beyond data from official documents is scarce, and no interviews with him seem to exist.

The following is an attempt to assemble available information on his life and present his music and its reception by audiences and critics.

## A boy with several names

The boy who would become known to audiences and Ellington fans worldwide as Ozzie Bailey was born in New York on November 6th 1925 to parents who had immigrated to the US a few years before from the British West Indies. His given name, as reported to the authorities of the Borough of Manhattan, was Ramsey McDonald Bailey.

His father, McDonald Bailey, was born in 1889, probably in Barbados.<sup>ii</sup> He arrived in the US in June 1917 from Trinidad<sup>iii</sup> and settled in New York City; in 1918 he was living there, at 60 W 140 Street.<sup>iv</sup> McDonald had left his wife Matilda (born Matilda Lucien, in 1892 in Trinidad) and their 3 children Elaine (b. ca. 1913), Clair Austin (b. 1915) and Rita (b. 1917) back in Port of Spain, Trinidad. In 1918 he sent for Matilda and Elaine to join him in New York. The two sailed on the ship 'Mayaro' from Port of Spain and



Duke, Margaret Tynes and Ozzie Bailey.

arrived at the US immigrant inspection and processing station on Ellis Island in New York Harbor on November 18, 1918.

McDonald, Matilda and Elaine lived at 60 W 140 Street until sometime in the later part of the 1920's. In 1929 Matilda, who was now a naturalized US citizen, travelled back to Port of Spain together with four-year-old Ramsey McDonald. Her mission was to bring their two other children, Clair Austin and Rita, who had been living in Port of Spain with Matilda's family, back to New York with her. For reasons unknown, the name of young Ramsey given to the immigration authorities on their return to New York is 'Oswald' – written on the arriving passenger list as 'Auswald', possibly the result of a mishearing on the part of the recording official. The Bailey family was now together and living at 231 W 116th Street in Manhattan, where it would reside at least until sometime in the 1950s.

The youngest Bailey's changes of first name would continue over the next decades. To the US 1930 Census it was again given as 'Oswald'. 10 years later, however, the 1940 US Census taker re-

cords him as 'Ramsey Bailey'. When, in 1943 at the age of 18, he is called up to be registered for the U.S. military (the WWII 'Young Men's Draft'), he signs his name as Ramsey McDonald Bailey (the recording official pencils it in as 'Ramsay'). In the 1950 census, he is again 'Oswald Bailey'. He next appears in 1956 as 'Ozzie' Bailey, the name under which he would be known throughout his musical career. Finally, following his death on June 12, 1975, in the U.S. Department of Veteran's Death File, he is listed as Ramsey M. Bailey. In this article he will mainly be referred to as Ozzie Bailey.

## Life until joining Ellington

In the apartment building at 231 W 116th Street, where Ozzie grew up, most of the inhabitants were immigrants. In 1930 more than half of the 84 tenants registered were born in, or had a parent who came from, the British West Indies (39) or Porto Rico, Cuba or Central America. Ozzie's father was a book binder by profession, as he reported to the WWI draft registration in 1918. In the 1930 Census he is employed as bookbinder,

while his wife Matilda is not working. Work as bookbinder must have become difficult to find, and in 1940 McDonald Bailey reports to be working as a salesman in Cosmetics – retail, having earned no income during 1939. Matilda was now working, in the dress industry as she would also report to be in 1950. The 1940 Census states that Ozzie had completed 1st year of High School.

Ozzie appeared before the US Military draft board on November 11, 1943. In November 1942 the draft ages had expanded, and men of 18 were now eligible. Blacks were included in the draft at a ‘quota’ intended to correspond with their number in the overall population, roughly 10,6 %.<sup>v</sup> Ozzie reported himself as unemployed, living at 231 W 116th Street. According to the registrar’s report he was 5 foot 6 inches tall (ca. 168 cm) and weighed approximately 120 pounds (ca. 54 kg). An ‘obvious physical characteristic that will aid in identification’ was a ‘burn on the left arm at joint’. He signed his name *Ramsey McDonald Bailey*. He was considered acceptable for service, enlisted on March 15, 1944, and was discharged on October 6, 1947.

Beyond these naked facts, no information on Ramsey McDonald Bailey’s military service has been found for this article. The Fold3 archive of military records contains only the 1943 draft registration information and an index record from the US Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010, which confirms Ozzie Bailey’s dates of enlistment in and discharge from the military, and the date of his death. No enlistment card has been found in the database *U.S., World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946*. This database is not complete, and 80% of the records of U.S. Army personnel discharged between 1912 and 1960 were lost in a fire in 1973. No conclusions about Ozzie Bailey’s service can be drawn, due to the lack of further documentation.

In videos of his performances with Ellington in 1958 Ozzie can be seen walking with a limp, which Patricia Willard, who knew Ozzie Bailey, has described as appearing to be a permanent condition.<sup>vi</sup> No reduced mobility is mentioned at his draft registration in 1943,

and such a condition would most likely have exempted him from serving. In the absence of any documentation of his time in the military, the possibility that it resulted from a wartime injury can only be guessed at.

## Neighbors

On registering for the draft it was required to provide a ‘Name and Address of Person Who Will Always Know Your Address’. When Ozzie’s older brother Austin registered in 1940 he named as that person their mother Matilda. Ozzie, however, chose to give the name Louise Andrews, residing at the same address as the Baileys, 231 West 116 Street.

Louise Andrews was not a recent acquaintance of the Bailey family. Like

the mid-1950s he lived most years at 231 West 115th Street. To the US State Census 1925 he reported his occupation as ‘Door-man, Theatre’, to the Naturalization Service in 1931 as ‘Musician’ and to the 1940 and 1950 censuses as ‘Musician, Night-clubs’. This man is the ‘Walter Dennis’ who played with one of King Oliver’s later bands and can be seen in two 1931 photos of the Oliver orchestra.<sup>viii</sup> When he appeared for the draft in 1942 he was working at the Tango Palace, a dance hall (or, euphemistically, ‘dancing school’) on the corner of 48th Street and Broadway. This was remembered in interviews by New York-based musicians as a place of fairly steady employment where one ‘could stay and [...] wouldn’t have to do any running around.’<sup>ix</sup>

FORM APPROVED  
Budget Bureau No. 33-R012-42

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)  
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER 1. NAME (Print) ORDER NUMBER  
W. 197 RAMSAY MCDONALD BAILEY 12,899  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 231 W 116 St. #12A NYC  
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

(THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON LINE 2 ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL)

3. MAILING ADDRESS SAME  
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same, insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE NONE 5. AGE IN YEARS 18 6. PLACE OF BIRTH New York  
(Exchange) (Number) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (City) (County) (State)

DATE OF BIRTH 6 1925

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs. Louise Andrews 231 W. 116 St. #12 NYC  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Unemployed  
(Name) (Address) (City) (County) (State)

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE  
DSS FORM 1 (Rev. 11-16-42) 616-21630-4 (OVER) Ramsey McDonald Bailey (Registrant's signature)

them she was from the British West Indies; born in Barbados in 1896 she came to the US on ship from Trinidad in 1917. She stated no calling or occupation, but at the US State Census in 1925 (the last New York State Census carried out) she registered as ‘Dressmaker’, and in 1930, 1940 and 1950 as Finisher, Dress Industry / Factory’. The 1940 and 1950 censuses indicate that she and Matilda Bailey had been working at the same factory and had lived near each other for more than a decade.<sup>vii</sup>

Louise Andrews’ younger brother, Walter Denis (b. 1904) arrived in the US as a student from Trinidad in 1922. From the beginning of the 1930s at least until

It seems reasonable to assume that an experienced musician like Walter Denis exerted an influence on the young Ozzie Bailey and could have helped him in making contact with the world of New York jazz musicians and nightclubs.

Nothing in official documents up to and including the 1950 Census shows Ozzie Bailey having had any occupation outside his time in the Military. In the 1950 Census he is listed as unemployed and not seeking work.

It seems likely that Ozzie showed interest in and ability to sing at a young age. If he had any early ambitions of making a career as a vocalist, it would probably have had to be put on hold during

his time in the military. However, shortly after leaving the military Ozzie Bailey began receiving professional vocal training. The circumstances have been reported slightly differently; the liner notes for Ozzie's recording debut say that about the time of his discharge he was discovered by Luther Henderson, who made him his 'protégé' and coached him for several years,<sup>x</sup> up until he joined Duke Ellington's Orchestra in March 1957. Leonard Feather, writing to introduce Bailey to British audiences ahead of Ellington's 1958 tour of Europe, says that Ozzie first studied with 'a private teacher' in 1951 and with Henderson from 1952.<sup>xi</sup>

## Becoming a professional singer

Where, when and under what circumstances Ozzie performed in public during the years from 1947 until 1957 is not very clear. According to Feather<sup>xii</sup> he 'worked in small clubs, sang at special parties to gain professional experience.' A 1957 newspaper item mentions him having 'been touring the night club circuit for some years before his recent introduction to Ellington'.<sup>xiii</sup> The liner notes referred to above, presumably written with input from Luther Henderson, say that Ozzie 'has comparatively little in the way of credits to be listed here. He is quite new to showbusiness' but has 'already acquired a following of fans [including] Duke Ellington [...]'. No advertisements, reviews or other mentions of public performances by Ozzie Bailey in the years up to 1956 were found for this article.

In 1956 Luther Henderson was planning an LP album for MGM records, to feature two vocalists backed by a sextet led by, and with arrangements by, Henderson himself. The singers he chose for the project were Marian Bruce (later to become Marian Logan, wife of Duke Ellington's physician, Dr. Arthur Logan) and his pupil Ozzie Bailey. The album, 'Last Night When We Were Young' by the Luther Henderson Sextet was recorded in 1956 and released in the spring of 1957.<sup>xiv</sup> Vocals were shared evenly between the two vocalists, with each singing five tunes alone and duetting on two. The repertoire is dominated by

show tunes by Broadway composers but includes Bailey singing Strayhorn's 'A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing', and a 'medley' of *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* / *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* sung as a duet by Bruce and Ozzie. One new song, *What Can I Say To You Now*, sung by Marian Bruce alone, was co-written by Luther Henderson and Ozzie Bailey. From a jazz viewpoint the most appealing track is Ozzie's relaxed mid-tempo swinging treatment of 'The Way You Look Tonight'. Down Beat reviewed the album in its May 16th, 1957 issue, calling it 'a moody album of fine vocals' and describing Ozzie Bailey as having 'a pleasant voice and an easy way with a song'.<sup>xv</sup>

## 'A Drum Is a Woman'

In September 1956 Duke Ellington made the initial recordings of the music for 'A Drum Is a Woman', his combined 'history of jazz' and erotic fantasy, co-written with Billy Strayhorn and telecast in color by CBS TV on May 8, 1957. In advance of the telecast Columbia released an album of music from the show, accompanied by a big promotional cam-



paign program directed at TV Program managers and radio stations.<sup>xvi</sup>

In the show, the character 'Carribee Joe' sings three songs, *What Else Can You Do With A Drum*, *You Better Know It*, and *Pomegranate*. With his West Indian family background and connection to Luther Henderson, with whom Duke had worked with on occasions in 1955, Ozzie Bailey must have appeared as an obvious candidate for the vocals. In the TV show the character's dances were performed by the celebrated dancer and choreographer Talley Beatty, a friend of Billy Strayhorn's.

*What Else Can You Do with a Drum* is

a calypso-flavored song with music by Billy Strayhorn, sung by Bailey in a slight West-Indian accent. Ellington's *You Better Know It* is a medium-tempo swinger featuring, on record as well as in concert, a solo by Paul Gonsalves. Eddie Lambert calls these 'Two of Ellington's best songs since the forties'.<sup>xvii</sup> Strayhorn's exotic 'Pomegranate' was recorded in the studio in March 1957 and performed in the TV show, reportedly with different lyrics. The TV show version is sometimes referred to under the title 'On credit'. *Pomegranate* was not included in the original Columbia album.<sup>xviii</sup>

In spring 1957 Ozzie Bailey joined the Ellington Band on tour. Jimmie Grissom, who had been with Duke since early 1952 would stay on until the end of January 1958, and so, for a few months, the band had two male vocalists. Initially Ozzie's main role on stage was to present 'Carribee Joe's' songs from *A Drum Is a Woman*, at most concerts *What Else Can You Do With A Drum* and *You Better Know It*.

## Studio recordings with Duke

Besides the material for ADIAW, only a handful of studio recordings of Ozzie Bailey with the Ellington Band exist; only three of these were issued during his time with the band. The best known is his version of *Autumn Leaves* from the *Ellington Indigos* album, sung by Bailey in both French and English, and accompanied by Ray Nance's violin. The performance is nearly seven minutes long, and may have stretched the patience of some audiences yearning to hear as much of the Orchestra and its great instrumental soloists as could be crammed into a two-hour concert.

When a debate about the repertoire played during Duke's 1958 concerts in the UK took place in the pages of *Melody Maker*, *Autumn Leaves* in particular was singled out for criticism. Bailey's vocals in general were described by one critic as 'droolings' and by another as 'agreeable popular music if you like, but superfluous in an Ellington recital'.<sup>xix</sup> Humphrey Lyttelton, who sprang to the defence of Ellington, pointed out 'the brilliance and beauty of the voice, baritone and violin setting to 'Autumn Leaves'.<sup>xx</sup>

*Hand Me Down Love*, recorded in Au-

gust 1958, was issued in 1959 on a 45 RPM single, backed with Lil Greenwood's *Walkin' And Singin' The Blues*, recorded at the same session. This could have been an attempt at reaching the Rhythm'n'Blues buying public as well as Ellington fans. Cash Box magazine rated both performances 'B', its 3rd highest rating. The Cash Box reviewer wrote 'It's the blues again, with Ozzie Bailey artfully handling the disenchanted wordage.'<sup>xxi</sup> Variety called it 'a standout blues number' 'that would have been a sureshot hit in the old music biz days.'<sup>xxii</sup> The record has the reverb-laden Columbia studio sound which lessens the emotional impact; a live recording from the 1959 Newport Festival, with a strong vocal by Bailey and the band sounding enthusiastic behind him shows Ozzie's power to communicate to better advantage.

*Duke's Place* (a.k.a. *C Jam Blues* with lyrics) recorded in April 1958 was issued on a single, backed by Jones from the small group 'Duke Ellington's Spacemen' sessions. It was included in the band's concert repertoire in the autumn of 1958.

Billy Strayhorn's 1937 composition *Your Love Has Faded* was first sung on record by Ivie Anderson in 1939; several attempts at a vocal version by Ozzie Bailey were recorded in March 1957, but none were issued until the LP era. No instance of Ozzie singing it in concert is found in discographies.

Bailey's performance of Strayhorn's *Multicolored Blue* at the 1958 Newport Festival was rerecorded, together with seven other performances from the Newport concert, in the studio to replace the live recordings on the original LP issue. In Newport Ozzie makes a mistake in the lyrics at the start, so a rerecording of this was probably inevitable. The live performance, issued later, is superb with Hodges delivering himself of one of his most majestic blues statements between Bailey's vocals.

Bailey 'inherited' the arrangement of *Together* recorded with Jimmie Grissom as vocalist in December 1957. In concerts from 1958 he follows Grissom's performance<sup>xxiii</sup> closely while showing a superior quality of tone, ease in handling of shifts in dynamics, and conveying a sen-

## JAZZ FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

<p><b>Miles Davis Sextet</b>  <b>Randy Weston Trio</b>  <b>Rex Stewart</b>  <b>Tony Scott</b>  <b>Kenny Burrell Trio</b>  <b>Bill Henderson</b>  <b>Buddy Rich</b>  <b>Jerome Richardson Quartet</b>  <b>Philly Joe Jones &amp; Band</b>  <b>Dakota Staton</b>  <b>Babs Gonzales</b></p>	<p><b>The Treniers</b>  <b>Horace Silver Quintet</b>  <b>Timmie Rogers</b>  <b>Billy Taylor</b>  <b>Art Blakey</b>              and Old Jazz Messengers  <b>Maxine Sullivan</b>  <b>Tyree Glenn &amp; Orch.</b>  <b>Don Elliott</b>  <b>Crystal Joyce</b>  <b>Ozzie Bailey</b></p>
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**SUNDAY, OCT. 4, 1959 — 8:30 P.M.**  
 Hunter College Auditorium — 69th St. & Park Avenue  
**TICKETS: \$2.40 — \$3.30 — \$4.40**

**TICKETS ON SALE AT**

<p><b>NAACP</b>              1239 Bedford              Brooklyn</p> <p><b>NAACP</b>              20 W. 40th St.,              New York</p> <p><b>Burland Radio</b>              975 Prospect Ave.,              Bronx</p> <p><b>Graphic Printing Co.</b>              1299 Boston Road</p>	<p><b>J. AGUSTUS &amp; CO.</b>              Radio Records              3240 3rd Ave., Bronx</p> <p><b>THE RECORD SHACK</b>              274 W. 124th St.,              New York</p> <p><b>COLONY RADIO</b>  <b>RECORD CENTER</b>              1671 Broadway</p> <p><b>YMCA</b>              180 W. 135th St.</p>	<p><b>J. Augustus &amp; Co.</b>              3240 3rd Ave.</p> <p><b>Bradford Barber Shop</b>              712 E. 116th St.</p> <p><b>RECORD CENTER</b>              41 W. 8th St.              665 Lenox Ave.              314 W. 125th St.</p> <p><b>J. Augustus &amp; Co.</b>              100 W. 116th St.</p>
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**BENEFIT — NAACP**

Sponsors: The Bronx Aids of the Committee of 50  
 Committee Member: Elsie Carrington. Alan Morrison, Concert Chairman

se of 'power to spare' in loud passages, all likely due to his years of receiving professional vocal training.

Bailey did not travel with the Ellington Band for its five-week autumn 1959 tour of Europe but rejoined on its return to the US in November. While the Band was away Bailey, together with a host of prominent jazz musicians and singers including Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Rex Stewart, Tyree Glenn and Dakota Staton, participated in a benefit concert for the NAACP named 'Jazz For Civil Rights' held in New York on October 4th.

After Jimmie Grissom's departure in January 1958 Ozzie Bailey continued as Ellington's sole male vocalist until the beginning of February 1960. Until the summer of 1961 newspaper items announcing Ellington concerts and dance engagements continued to mention Ozzie Bailey and Lil Greenwood — who had also left — as featured singers with the band, probably due to outdated publicity material still circulating among the press.

On March 5, 1958, the Ellington Orchestra played at a dance date on Mather Air Force Base in California. As Johnny Hodges was absent, working with Billy Strayhorn in Miami in a quartet under the name "The Indigos", Ozzie Bailey took his place in *The Star-Crossed Lovers* with a wordless vocal. This is a daring experiment that comes off surprisingly well, due to Bailey's excellent voice control. It shows an aspect of Ozzie Bailey's talent not heard on other recordings.

Bailey was replaced by Milt Grayson, who for a few months continued to sing *What Else Can You Do With A Drum* in concerts, affecting a heavy West Indian accent bordering on parody. At the end of July 1960 the song was dropped from the Ellington repertoire, and was never brought back.

### After the Ellington Band

After leaving Duke Ellington Ozzie Bailey again seems to disappear from the limelight. It is not unlikely, though, that



Ozzie continued performing in public for a number of years after his time with Ellington; he certainly had plans to do so. Among the Luther Henderson Papers at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, part of The New York Public Library, there is an Application for Registration of a Claim to Copyright, partly filled out by Ozzie Bailey and signed in his real name, Ramsey M. Bailey.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The document has no date and was apparently never submitted, but must date from 1960, or possibly a few years after. Attached to the application form is a typewritten manuscript for a one-man performance 'Ozzie's Act', titled 'The Ways of Love'. The performance was to consist of 12 songs (plus – signaling optimism about the project – four encores), connected by spoken interludes. three songs connected to his time with Ellington are included: *What Else Can You Do with a Drum*, *Hand Me Down Love* and Strayhorn's *A Flower Is a Lovable Thing*. The rest of the repertoire consists mostly of well-known musical numbers (*Younger Than Springtime*, *Cockeyed Optimist*, *I Wish I Were in Love Again*), plus three songs written or co-written by Luther Henderson, and four songs for which authorship has not been identified. The 10 spoken interludes – 106 lines are written in rhyme – move, like the songs, from describing the optimistic and naïve beginnings of love to sad and somewhat cynical reflections on life at love's end.

Authorship of the interludes is not stated in the manuscript, and the songwriters are not credited. The only name listed on the copyright application under 'Composers, Authors, Etc.' is Ramsey M. Bailey, Pseudonym: 'Ozzie'. 'Title of Musical Composition' is not filled out; the title 'The Ways of Love' appears only in the manuscript.

Perhaps filling out the application form was, at this stage at least, as much wishful thinking as a sign of serious expectations of having the act copyrighted in Ramsey M. Bailey's name. If the idea of a show in his name is to make sense, Ozzie Bailey must surely have contributed some of the original material himself, probably most – if not all – of the interludes, and perhaps a couple of the songs for which credits have not been identified.

The tone of the lyrics of a couple of the songs is similar to that of some of the interludes. It is tempting to read lines like:

*"In my time I may have had play with  
May have been a bit excessively gay with  
Too much love and too many cigarettes"*

from an uncredited song titled 'Too Much Love' as a personal statement by Ozzie. Other lines from songs and interludes seem open to interpretation as being autobiographical. One should be careful not to put too much weight on these, though. Seeing a similarity to the world-weariness in some of Billy Strayhorn's lyrics is tempting as well, but nothing indicates that Strayhorn was involved with Ozzie's project. Though the manuscript for *Ozzie's Act* was found among Luther Henderson's papers, nothing tells us in what ways Henderson might have contributed to developing the act.

No signs have been found of 'The Ways of Love' having been performed. As is the case for Ozzie's performing career before joining Ellington, we are left without advertisements or reviews of him singing in public after 1960, except for the two instances mentioned below. This does not necessarily mean that he did not continue to sing, quite likely in smaller venues that went under the radar of music/entertainment publications and the daily newspapers. *Ozzie's Act* may well have been performed in such surroundings.

### The last reported performances

At the Billy Strayhorn studio sessions in July 1965 Bailey recorded vocals on six Strayhorn compositions, four with only piano accompaniment by Strayhorn, ranging in time from the 1937 *Something To Live For* to the 1965 *Love Came*.<sup>xxv</sup> Five with piano accompaniment by Strayhorn alone or in a trio, plus a small band version of *Multicolored Blue* with Clark Terry and Bob Wilber very eloquent in the blues choruses. It is most likely this session that caused a September 1965 newspaper report by syndicated columnist Ralph Gleason claiming that 'Singer Ozzie Bailey has recorded an LP of Ellington tunes for the Mercer label.'<sup>xxvi</sup> No

other evidence of recordings by Bailey at this time has been found. He returned to the studio one more time with the Ellington band, on February 25, 1969, at an unissued session from which discographies list only two songs recorded. Joya Sherrill sang *Something About Believing* from the Second Sacred Concert, and Ozzie Bailey singing *Woman*, probably the song of that title included in Duke's posthumously premiered music-theatre work *Queenie Pie*. These are the last known recordings by Ozzie Bailey.

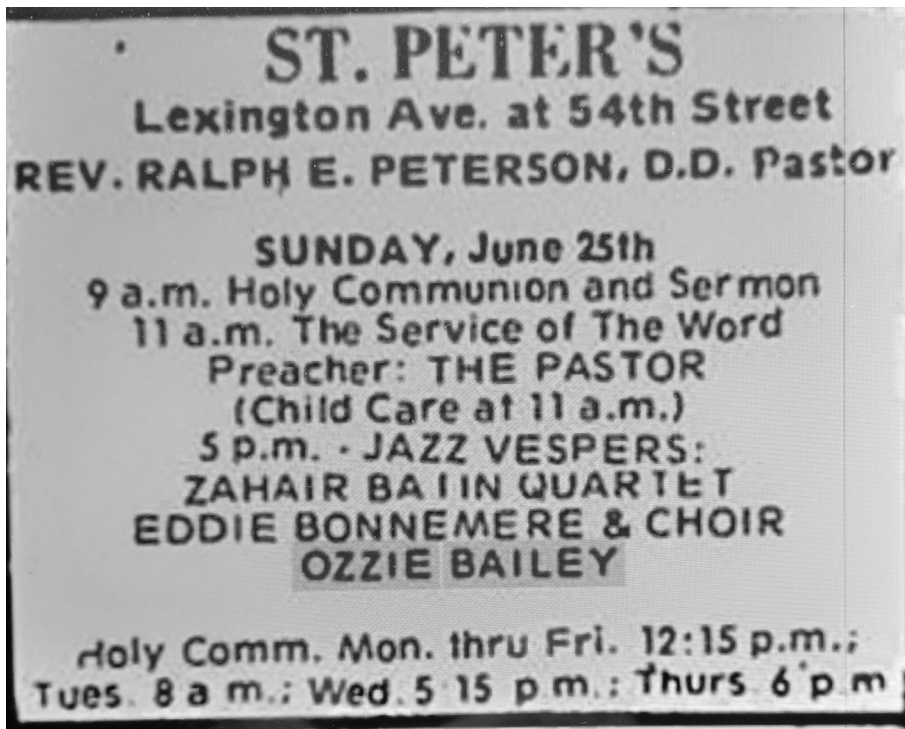
In June 1972 Bailey performed at a 'Jazz Vespers' at St. Peter's on Lexington Avenue in New York, together with pianist and composer of religious works Eddie Bonnemere and a choir. Sunday Jazz Vespers at the Lutheran St. Peter's church were started in 1966 by the Rev. John Gensel, the man honoured by Duke Ellington in *The Shepherd (Who Watches Over the Night Flock)* included in the 2nd Sacred Concert. The Jazz Vespers continued for several decades at St. Peter's and other venues in New York; among the many other jazz musicians and vocalists who performed at the weekly Vespers or the annual 'Anniversary Vespers' were Betty Roche, Clark Terry, Howard McGhee, Joe Newman and Willie 'The Lion' Smith. In April 1972 St. Peter's hosted an Ellington performance of the 2nd Sacred Concert.

On April 26th 1974, a month before Duke Ellington's death on May 24th, the New York Jazz Repertory Company gave a tribute concert in New York's Carnegie Hall, celebrating Ellington's upcoming 75th birthday on April 29th. Ellington was unable to attend; several newspapers reported that he was 'in the hospital with an undisclosed illness'. Among the Ellingtonians performing were Harold Ashby, Norris Turney, Quentin Jackson, and Taft Jordan. Ozzie Bailey and Joya Sherrill sang two tunes each, accompanied by a group led by pianist Brooks Kerr and including Sonny Greer and Russell Procope.<sup>xxvii</sup> No further reports of Ozzie Bailey performing in public or private have been found for this article.

### Life outside music

Ozzie Bailey was apparently never interviewed. Information about his life





and personality is limited to what can be gleaned from official documents and the few bits of recollections that have been published or shared in correspondence. Without any words of his own, whether in print or on tape, it is hazardous to speculate about his personal life and reasons why his career in music was not longer and more high-profiled. What remains are a few glimpses from newspapers, journals and books to cast light on his activities and personality outside the recording studios, dance halls and concert stages.

Ozzie and Billy Strayhorn, both gay, had very likely known each other before Ozzie's involvement with *A Drum Is A Woman*. There are no indications that the two were ever romantically involved, but clearly Strayhorn valued Bailey's interpretations of his songs, as shown by his choice of Bailey as partner for the intimate 1965 piano/vocal studio sessions mentioned above. The two had performed together before, very likely frequently. In early January 1958 they were among the guests at a 'most exciting weekend party given by Mrs. Ruth Ellington Davis [Duke's sister] at her fashionable Riverside duplex'. Ozzie Bailey and several other prominent black performers entertained, including Mark Zeller who had performed at the recent

Ethel Merman Broadway show 'Happy Hunting' and Lawrence Winters, one of the first generation of black opera singers to achieve wide success. All were 'accompanied on the piano by the famous Billy Strayhorn'.<sup>xxviii</sup> No other members of the Ellington band were reported to have been at the party; the band was in Florida from January 3rd, working at the Americana Hotel in Miami Beach.

David Hajdu interviewed dancer/choreographer Talley Beatty, who danced the role of 'Caribee Joe' in *A drum is a woman*. Beatty recalled Ozzie as 'a dear boy', who during breaks in studio work liked to entertain singing American songs in French, to the amusement of Billy Strayhorn who himself liked to show off his French-speaking skills.<sup>xxix</sup>

In 2010 the U.S. blogger 'IWitnessEd' (alias author, music critic etc. Ed Leimbacher) asked his readers for information about Ozzie Bailey, following it up with a second blog entry in 2011. Several people responded, many sending discographical information and quotes from David Hajdu's Strayhorn biography. One responder in 2011 sent a personal recollection of having worked with Ozzie in the Doubleday Bookshop on 5th Avenue & 53rd Street in New York. It is the only substantial personal recollection found for this article.<sup>xxx</sup> As Mr. Leimbacher's

blog seems to have been inactive since 2017 and in case it disappears from the Internet, the item is quoted here in full:

*"I met Ozzie in New York in 1971. He and I worked together as sales clerks in the record department in the Doubleday Bookshop on [673] Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street. He was extremely shy and spoke very little about his experiences with Duke Ellington but other employees already knew of his incredible talent. We played music in the store all day and he frequently sang along to everyone's delight. His favorite lunch was a Smithfield Burger from the hamburger shop down the block.*

*I never saw him lose his cool. He was a real gentleman. Ozzie had a great musical memory and he would always help customers find what they were looking for. Famous New York entertainers frequently visited Ozzie at the store and we were all impressed with his circle of friends. Ozzie passed on some years ago but his beautiful voice goes on forever."*

In 1974 Patricia Willard met Bailey, also in the Doubleday Book Shop, where he was employed as 'a roving floor salesman'.<sup>xxxi</sup> Willard, who had known Ozzie in the 1950s during her time as Duke's researcher, editorial collaborator and public relations counsel, remembers him as 'a very warm and friendly person, well liked by everyone', with a beautiful voice. Given his father's original profession as a bookbinder, it may not be very surprising to find Ozzie working in a bookshop during the last years of his too short life.

Some reports of Ozzie's demeanor on stage seem to indicate that he presented himself with a lack of forcefulness or even shyness: 'Ozzie Bailey delivered the other vocals in his quiet little way'<sup>xxxii</sup> or 'Singer Ozzie Bailey, a sensitive and sincere performer was obscured by the more raucous vocalizing of shouter Lil Greenwood'. Such an impression is not borne out by the filmed evidence of Ozzie on stage with Ellington. He was certainly able to assert himself before the demanding audience of the Harlem Apollo Theatre, as *Variety* reported of a September 1958 Ellington engagement there: 'Bailey, who handles the vocal chores is no slouch, possessing a fine voice *plus plenty of showmanship*' [author's italics]<sup>xxxiii</sup>, a quality not emphasized in oth-

er reviews, and perhaps not often called for on other concert stages.

Ozzie Bailey may, in the words of Eddie Lambert, not have been ‘a jazz singer in any sense’.<sup>xxxiv</sup> His voice lacked – in the words of Quincy Jones<sup>xxxv</sup> – ‘the coarseness, the deep-rooted earthiness and warmth’ of Al Hibbler. It is clear, though, that he possessed qualities Duke appreciated in his male vocalists: a strong voice, precise intonation, clear enunciation, and an ability to swing when called for. As Dan Morgenstern has pointed out he was also, with his silken voice, an ideal interpreter of Billy Strayhorn’s romantic songs.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Evidence of Ozzie Bailey’s voice’s ability to move listeners today, almost half a century after his death, was given by young Armenian-American vocalist Lucy Yeghiazaryan in 2021. When asked about her favourite vocal tracks and albums, she answered, referring to the 1965 Strayhorn studio recordings: ‘I was recently introduced to a singer I had never heard of – Ozzie Bailey. It’s some of the most beautiful singing I’ve ever heard’.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Ramsey McDonald ‘Ozzie’ Bailey passed in June 1975. The exact date, place and circumstances of his death have not been found during research for this article. Personally he remains, to a certain extent, a shadowy figure. His singing, however, speaks for itself, and will surely continue to be enjoyed among Ellington enthusiasts, and be a pleasant discovery for anyone who appreciates great vocalizing.

His song has ended but the voice lingers on.



*Thanks to Bo Haufman for suggesting this article and providing support and gentle nudging during the writing process. Many thanks also to the friendly and helpful staff at The Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture in The New York Public Library for access to scans from the Luther Henderson Papers. The Yale Library Oral History of American Music Collection allowed me to hear a 1981 interview with ADIAW dancer Talley Beatty, for which I am grateful. The author would be grateful to hear from anyone who has information on or recollections of Ozzie Bailey, or ideas for further research*



Carmen de Lavallade and Ozzie.

*into his life and music. I can be contacted at: sven\_baun@hotmail.com.*

## Footnotes

<sup>i</sup> Terry, Clark: *Clark : the Autobiography of Clark Terry*. Univ.of California Press, 2011, p.138

<sup>ii</sup> Various official sources say ‘Barbados’, ‘British West Indies’, and ‘Trinidad and Tobago’

<sup>iii</sup> McDonald Bailey. US Draft Registration Card, September 12, 1918

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Internet: [history.com/this-day-in-history/united-states-imposes-the-draft](https://history.com/this-day-in-history/united-states-imposes-the-draft) (accessed 13.9.2022)

<sup>vi</sup> Willard, Patricia. In e-mail communication with Bo Haufman, November 3, 2020.

<sup>vii</sup> US State Census 1925; US Censuses 1940, 1950

<sup>viii</sup> Reprinted in Wright, Laurie: “King” Oliver. Storyville Publications, 1987, p. 146-147

<sup>ix</sup> Griffiths, David: Take a Bow. [Interview with trumpeter George Hancock]. Storyville, No. 85, p.19

<sup>x</sup> About Ozzie Bailey. Liner notes to MGM LP E3408, Luther Henderson Sextet: ‘Last Night When We Were Young’

<sup>xi</sup> Feather, Leonard: Ellington – meet the Duke. *Melody Maker*, October 4, 1958, p.3

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiii</sup> Duke Ellington on TV Steel Hour Showcase. *Detroit Tribune*, May 4, 1957, p.5

<sup>xiv</sup> The album can be listened to for free at: <https://archive.org> (accessed 9.12.2022)

<sup>xv</sup> D.C. [Dom Cerulli]: Marian Bruce-Ozzie Bailey. *Down Beat*, May 16, 1957, p.24

<sup>xvi</sup> Biggest Col. Beat for Ellington LP. *Billboard*, April 27, 1957, p.17

<sup>xvii</sup> Lambert, Eddie: *Duke Ellington : A Listener’s Guide*. Scarecrow Press, 1999. Chapter 22 (Kindle edition)

<sup>xviii</sup> The version performed in the TV show had different lyrics, and the title On Credit

<sup>xix</sup> Jones, Max: A knockout of course, but ... *Melody Maker*, October 11, 1958, p3, 13

<sup>xx</sup> Lyttelton, Humphrey: Of course I am uncritical. *Melody Maker*, November 8, 1958, p.10

<sup>xxi</sup> *Cash Box*, June 27, 1959, p. 12

<sup>xxii</sup> Schoenfield, Herm: Jocks, Jukes and Disks. *Variety*, June 24, 1959, p. 100

<sup>xxiii</sup> Hear Grissom on a New Year’s radio program from the Blue Note, Chicago on January 1, 1958 – at time 30:00 (<https://pastdaily.com/2021/12/31>)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Luther Henderson papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. Sc MG 322, b.24 f.19

<sup>xxv</sup> Issued on CD in 1992: Billy Strayhorn: *Lush Life*. Red Baron AK 52760

<sup>xxvi</sup> Gleason, Ralph: The Rhythm Section. *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 12, 1965, p.17

<sup>xxvii</sup> Duke Ellington 75 next Monday [Concert review, Carnegie Hall April 26, 1974]. *Evening Times*, April 27, 1974, p.5

<sup>xxviii</sup> Lucille Cromer’s Society Script. *New York Age*, Jan 11, 1958, p.14

<sup>xxix</sup> Hajdu, David: *Lush Life*. Granta Books, 1996, p. 158

<sup>xxx</sup> Internet: <https://mrebks.blogspot.com/2011/06/ozzie-bailey-too.html> Comment by Art Serating. (accessed 9.12.2022)

<sup>xxxi</sup> Willard, Patricia. [Personal communication with Bo Haufman, November 3, 2020]

<sup>xxxii</sup> Bass, Milton R.: Duke Ellington Orchestra. *Berkshire Eagle*, July 7 1958, p.5

<sup>xxxiii</sup> ‘Bern.’: House reviews. *Apollo*, N.Y. *Variety*, September 17, 1958, p.77

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Lambert, Eddie: *Duke Ellington: A Listener’s Guide*. Scarecrow Press, 1999, Chapter 22. (Kindle Edition)

<sup>xxxv</sup> Jones, Quincy: Review of Duke Ellington, Newport 1958 (Columbia LP CL1245). *Jazz Review*, vol.2 no 4, 1959, p.30

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Morgenstern, Dan: Billy Strayhorn in Concert. *Living With Jazz*, Pantheon Books, 2004, p.103

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Internet: <https://www.allaboutjazz.com/news/interview-lucy-yeghiazaryan> Jazzwax blog entry, April 2, 2021 (accessed 9.12.2022)

# SWEJS 25 år

Den 25 november 2022 firade SWEJS (Swedish Executive Jazz Society) sitt tjugofemte levnadsår. Detta gjordes genom en charmant tilldragelse i Odd Fellows-huset i Stockholm. Evenemanget var fullbokat med 230 besökande och gästerna bjöds på en superb tvårätters lunchmeny med vin plus naturligtvis musikalisk underhållning. Efter välkomstord av styrelsemedlemmen Elisabeth Matsgård höll ordföranden Anders Sjöstedt ett kortare anförande och berättade om föreningens historia. Idén till föreningen hade hämtats från USA, där det i New York finns en förening med namnet "Jazz At Noon", vars idé var att presentera levande jazz på dagtid. Några entusiaster, med den nu bortgångne Ingmar Matsgård i spetsen, anammade idén och startade SWEJS, som genom åren tillhandahållit förstklassig jazzmusik för sina medlemmar, alltid med start kl. 11.00 på en fredag. Lokal har varierat under de tjugofem åren men nu har man sedan några år tillbaka hyrt in sig på Odd Fellows för ändamålet idealiska lokal, där även finns



tillgång till ett förstklassigt kök, som alltid serverar en prisvärd lunch i samband med konserterna.

Som underhållning för medlemmarna hade SWEJS denna jubileumsdag engagerat det finaste band Sverige har att visa upp, nämligen Stockholm Swing All Stars, bestående av Fredrik Lindborg, Karl Olandersson, Klas Lindquist, Dick-

en Hedrenius, Daniel Tilling, Göran Lind och Mattias Puttonen. Deras framförande utgjorde ett bevis för att det verkligen rör sig om "All Stars" och "Swing", precis den typ av jazz som de något till åren komna medlemmarna föredrar.

Stockholm Swing All Stars har alltid haft en viss preferens för Duke Ellingtons och Billy Strayhorns musik och det märktes tydligt denna dag. De startade med *In A Mellowtone*, följt av en sällan spelad *Way Back Blues*. Fredrik Lindborg plockade fram basklarinetten i *Blues In Blueprint* och Karl Olandersson spelade och sjöng i *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*. Sedan följde *Isfahan, I'm Beginning To See The Light, It Don't Mean A Thing* och avslutningsnumret var en otroligt vacker version av *Mood Indigo*. Dessa nummer interfolierades naturligtvis med musik av andra kompositörer.

Nu ser vi fram emot nästa jubileum, men innan dess erbjuder SWEJS månatliga konserter under nio av årets månader. Se [www.swejs.se](http://www.swejs.se).

Bo Haufman

## Charles Mingus and Duke Ellington

Many interesting things can be found on FaceBook. Here follows an extract from an interview with the author Fran Lebowitz made by Doug Doyle and published on FB December 4, 2022. In addition to being an author Lebowitz was also an actor and political commentator. She knew Charles Mingus and through him got to meet Duke Ellington. She recalls:

About Duke Ellington, whom I met because of Charles Mingus. We had breakfast with him. When I say breakfast, like five in the morning or whatever. There used to be a restaurant, Reubens, which was on Fifth Avenue around 58th Street, I think. And it was open all night. We went to see Duke Ellington perform and then we went out to breakfast with him.

Charles was like a kid with Duke

Ellington. I was shocked. That's why I remember it. There were other musicians who Charles respected that he treated in a respectful way. But with Ellington, he was like a kid. For instance, Charles hated to be called Charlie, and Duke Ellington constantly called him Charlie. He never reacted to it. Also, I know that Ellington had fired Charles from his band once. Charles was a very touchy person. The idea that someone fired him and he still behaved that way? Duke kind of teased him and he just didn't respond, in a way it was like, to me, "Where's Charles? This is not the Charles I know." And that I ever saw with any other person. There was also age difference between Ellington and Charles. So maybe that was part of it, that he was older than Charles.

When I first met Charles, he was

probably in his late forties. He was so young when he died. At the time I didn't think he was that young because I was in my twenties. I just couldn't believe this was the same person. Charles was very greedy with food. He could have like a whole pizza in front of him and no one could get a bite of his pizza. One of the famous things this place had was this thing called an apple pancake. It was the size of a giant pizza. Charles ordered it and he fully expected to eat the whole thing. Duke took a bite of it without asking him. Anyone else would've been murdered who did that and he didn't say anything. I saw Charles pretty frequently. I never saw him behave that way, except that one time with Duke Ellington. He had a very unusual and unique response to Duke Ellington.

# When did Bechet play with Duke?

By Ulf Lundin with the support of David Palmquist

It is generally presumed that Sidney Bechet played with Duke Ellington in the mid-1920s as a member of The Washingtonians. This presumption is based upon what Bechet and Ellington say in their respective autobiographies.

In **Treat Me Gentle**, Bechet says that he linked up with Ellington in mid-1924; "It was a fine thing to playing with Duke Ellington in 1924." However, in **Music Is My Mistress** Ellington says that Sidney Bechet joined his band in 1926.

So was it in mid-1924 or in 1926 that Bechet became a member of The Washingtonians?

It can't have been in 1926. By that time, Bechet was in Europe with Revue Negre (The Black Revue) and he stayed there until 1930. It is difficult to understand how Ellington made this mistake or was it Stanley Dance's error?

This article will try to find the dates when Bechet played with Ellington as a member of The Washingtonians. The main sources for the article are:

- **John Chilton's** well researched and detailed biography of Bechet – **Sidney Bechet; The Wizard of Jazz**. It has some information about what Bechet did in 1924-1925, but for crucial dates it is rather incomplete.
- **Guy Demole's Sidney Bechet – His musical activities from 1907 to 1959**. It is a very solid discography and has a lot of good information about his whereabouts.
- **Ken Steiner's Wild Throng Dances Madly in Cellar Club**. It is the result of an impressive harvesting of contemporary newspapers and journals on Duke Ellington's whereabouts 1923-1927.
- **David Palmquist's** invaluable online database **The Duke Where And When** (TDWAW). It is available at <http://tdwaw.ca/>. The information in Steiner's booklet is incorporated in the database together with Palmquist's own findings and those



A young Sidney Bechet.

of others. All references to TDWAW in the article are from TDWAW 1.

- **Steven Lasker's** also impressive and detailed **The Washingtonians, A Miscellany**.

Let's start to look at the information available from these sources for the period May 1924 to May 1925.

By the beginning of 1924, both Ellington and Bechet were firmly established in New York. Ellington as the leader of the house band – The Washingtonians – at Hollywood Cabaret, while Bechet primarily worked in (touring) shows, participated in recording sessions and played in bands.

## Bechet's whereabouts

As regards Bechet, at the beginning of 1924 he got involved in the Will Marion Cook/Abbie Mitchell musical **Negro Nuances**. It was being written at that time and Bechet apparently contributed to it. Chilton says that the project never got beyond the embryonic stage but the entry on the show in the **Musicals in Black and White** encyclopedia says that it "apparently went on tour in 1924". If there was a tour with the musical, it was most likely a short one, not involving

Bechet. According to **A Century of Musicals in Black and White**, Bechet had signed up with **Jimmie Cooper's Black and White Revue** and toured with it in the winter of 1924.

However, Bechet was back in New York at the end of February or early March 1924 and then joined the Noble Sissle/Eubie Blake show **In Bamville**, which opened in Rochester, NY., on 10 March 1924 (Chilton). It was another short engagement for Bechet and when the show went on a tour that lasted 24 weeks, he remained in New York for short gigs and recording sessions.

Only two recording sessions materialized. He participated in one around 16 May 1924 with Clarence Williams and Eva Taylor and one circa 30 May 1924 in which he accompanied the singer Maureen Englin.

**Guy Demole** is the only one who gives some details about Bechet's gigs in New York during the spring of 1924. He says that Bechet played clubs around 134th Street in Harlem (Small's, Leroy's, Fritz's, Connie's, Owl's and others). However, he must also have gigged in clubs in mid-Manhattan, like Hollywood Cabaret and others.

## Ellington's whereabouts

As regards Ellington, in mid-February 1924 he became the leader of The Washingtonians after Elmer Snowden had left the band. By that time, Hollywood Cabaret was running a new and apparently successful show called **Mississippi Revue**, but the club had also started to get into trouble for having served whisky and beer. In the early morning of 4 April 1924, Hollywood Cabaret burnt down and The Washingtonians were out of work. They then left New York for a tour in New England from about 12 to 26 April (Steiner page 16 and TDWAW 1924-04-03). There is no indication that Bechet was part of the orchestra at that time.

When Hollywood Cabaret reopened on 1 May, 1924, it was with a new show by Leonard Harper called **The Virginia Girls** (or *The Virginian Girl Revue*). James P. Johnson wrote the music and also led the band, which included Sidney Bechet and Benny Carter among others (TDWAW 1 1924-05-01). It did not go well between Johnson and Bechet. Johnson expected the band to play his written arrangements but this was not Bechet's cup of tea. So he got fired by Johnson. Shortly thereafter, Johnson went the same way.

In **Treat Me Gentle**, Bechet says "after James P had got me out then he went and got himself fired. And the band that took his place was Duke and me".

Possibly, this was what happened but according to TDWAW (1924-05-15), Johnson's band was replaced by a "French Jazz Orchestra" (TDWAW 1924-05-15) but it was also short-lived, and on 10 June The Washingtonians was back at the club (TDWAW 1924-06-10).

### Bechet's joining?

It is often presumed that Bechet joined The Washingtonians at this moment, but it is contradicted by Chilton, who says that Bechet after having parted his ways with James P. Johnson joined the band at the Rhythm Club in Harlem and became a leader of it after a while. However, Chilton does not give a source for this piece of information, so it is impossible to know how accurate it is.

Chilton offers no date as regards when Bechet joined The Washingtonians, but he identifies Leo Bernstein – one of the owners of Hollywood Cabaret – as the instigator of Ellington's recruitment of Bechet, and this points to mid-June as the date.

Another discography information to consider is what Bechet says in **Treat Me Gentle**: "When I first joined the band, Bubber Miley was in jail over some trouble concerning a girl". Unfortunately, it has not been possible to establish when this was the case or for how long Miley was in jail.

Was he in jail in June? If so, it must have been only for a few days since Miley did a recording for the Ajax label in that month (as he also did in May and

July). If it was a longer jail period, then it must have been in the spring and have no connection to Bechet's linking up with Ellington and The Washingtonians.

In any case, based on what has been found, it seems likely that Bechet joined The Washingtonians sometime between **10 and 15 June 1924**.

### Duration of stay

For how long did he stay with the



band? It is not easy to give a clear-cut answer but Chilton and particularly Ken Steiner and David Palmquist give some help. I will use their information (and some other) to trace Bechet's movements from July 1924 to the spring of 1925.

Apparently, Hollywood Cabaret stayed open all the summer of 1924 and "it seems likely that The Washingtonians worked at the Hollywood through the summer" (Steiner page 18). "Another possibility", Steiner says "is a side trip to New England" for the band and that such a tour could be the summertime tour of New England with Bechet in the band that Ellington writes about in **Music Is My Mistress** but misdates it to 1926. However, so far there has been no proof of such a trip.

In my view, a third possibility could be that Hollywood Cabaret was closed in August since Otto Hardwick is reported to have played with the White Brothers' orchestra in Chicago in August.

Anyhow, on 6 September, a new revue by Leonard Harper, **Creole Follies**, opened at Hollywood Cabaret and "Washingtonian's Hollywood Jazz Orchestra" was in place to provide music (Steiner page 18, TDWAW 1 1924-09-06). If Bechet was still in the band is impossible to say since no ads with listings of the band members have been found yet.

In the early morning of 16 December 1924, there was another burn-down of Hollywood Cabaret and The Washingtonians had to go on tour again.

### Ellington touring again

There is some evidence that they played the Fox Theatre circuit in upstate New York for the rest of December and most of January 1925 (TDWAW 1 1924-12-16) but also some more firm information that the orchestra played dances and did concerts in New England from 24 January to 7 February (TDWAW 1 1925-01-26). Was Bechet in the band during this tour? It is doubtful since there is no mentioning of Bechet in any of the reviews of the New England tour reprinted in **Wild Throng Dances Madly in Cellar Club**.

Did he appear when Ellington and The Washingtonians went back to New York circa mid-February for the reope-

ning of Hollywood Cabaret (now re-named Club Kentucky) on 19 February 1925? His name is not mentioned in any of the newspaper articles, reviews and listings which were published after the opening, but neither were other members of the band except Ellington.

All this indicates that Bechet was out of The Washingtonians in late summer or early fall of 1924. In his autobiography, **Barney Bigard** says that Ellington fired Bechet after he had been absent for three days without any trace. "Where the hell have you been? Ellington asked Bechet" according to Bigard. And he answered: "I jumped into a car and we got lost and I just now finally found out where I was."

Did this happen while the band was on tour or in New York? One possibility is that he was fired in conjunction with "the side trip to New England" that Ken Steiner talks about in his booklet (see above). In **Music Is My Mistress**, Ellington says that the New England tour with Bechet was quite unruly in terms of band behaviour and that he had enough of Bechet when the band was back in New York.

Another possibility is that Bechet did not appear when Ellington and the band started to rehearse for the **Creole Follies Revue** or in conjunction with that.

Whether it was one or the other, there is evidence that Bechet may have been out of The Washingtonians by mid-August. An ad in The Post-Star, Glen Falls, NY, 12 August 1924 announces a three day appearance by Sidney Bechet and his orchestra of coloured dancers and singers at the Empire Theatre on 14-16 August (Thursday, Friday and Saturday).

As can be seen in the ad, it was not a show like **In Bamville** or **Seven-Eleven**, but rather a kind of vaudeville with different elements. The role of Bechet with his dancers and singers is not clear, neither is it if this was a one time thing or something with which Bechet toured.

A show appearance is of course not in itself proof enough that Bechet was fired in mid-August 1924, but together with the other indications above and the fact that he also resumed his recording activities in October 1924 makes it quite



obvious that Bechet's stay with Ellington and The Washingtonians was only three months.

### Bechet after leaving Ellington

In his Bechet biography, Chilton says that "Bechet casually resumed his work in late-night clubs after he was fired by Ellington and again secured the job as a leader of the Rhythm Club's resident group". But Chilton complicated matters for us when he starts to talk about Bechet's recording activities. He does not say anything about Bechet's recording sessions during the last three months of 1924 but starts with the ones in 1925. This might indicate that Chilton considers that Bechet was fired by Ellington in late 1924, but he does not say this directly and does not provide a date or a span of dates for when it happened.

In the spring of 1925 Bechet had joined or was preparing to join a tour with the show **Seven-Eleven**. In his book, Chilton quotes a news piece in the 9 May, 1925, issue of the Baltimore Afro-American: "Bechet, the clarinet wizard, has been added to the musical unit in **Seven-Eleven**." The tour was quite long, and Bechet stayed with it until early July, when it arrived in New York.

There he collected a big payment of royalties for his compositions and decided to open a club at 145th Street called Club Basha. Johnny Hodges joined the band there and "it was then he used to show me different things on the soprano" (Chilton). More about Club Basha can be read in Chilton's book and also about Bechet's departure for Europe with **La Revue Nègre** in September 1925.

### Postscript

The short stay with The Washingtonians was not the only time Bechet played with Ellington. It also happened in 1932, when Bechet joined the Ellington Orchestra for a week (23-29 April). Ellington was to record **The Sheik of Araby** and when he heard that Bechet was out of work, he decided to invite him to be part of the Ellington Orchestra for a week to help Johnny Hodges to recreate the spectacular chorus that Bechet usually played on the song. So he had Juan Tizol transcribe what Bechet played. It became Hodges's solo when Ellington recorded **The Sheik of Araby** on 16 May 1932. Those who would like to know more about this are recommended to read the article in the DEMS Bulletin 2002-2.

# George Wein remembers Duke

George Wein, tillsammans med Norman Granz, var de i särklass mest betydande entreprenörerna inom jazzen. Granz företrädesvis genom JATP och Wein genom Newport Jazz Festival. Båda hade en mycket nära relation till Duke Ellington. George Wein har i sin självbiografi "Myself Among Others" (Da Capo Press) utförligt beskrivit sin relation till Ellington. Självklart har han detaljerat beskrivit sina intryck från Newportkonserten 1956, men han beskriver också många andra tillfällen då de samarbetat.

George Wein startade redan 1948 sin jazzklubb Storyville i Boston och under årens lopp fram till början av 1960-talet torde alla jazzens stora namn någon gång ha uppträtt på denna estrad. Wein var själv en habil pianist och satt ofta in i band där en ordinarie pianist saknades. Han startade även grammfonbolaget Storyville, som inte skall förväxlas med det danska bolaget med samma namn, vilket gav ut ett antal LP med inspelningar från klubben.

I sin självbiografi ägnar George Wein speciella kapitel åt Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk och Duke Ellington. Vi citerar här hans intryck från första tillfället Duke Ellington och hans orkester var engagerade på Storyville i Boston. Det var 1953.



I was a twenty-seven-year-old neophyte promoter when I first brought Ellington into Storyville. We rang in the New Year of 1953 with a week-long residency by the Duke Ellington Orchestra. It was the fulfillment of a dream; my love affair with the Ellington band had only grown deeper with time. I was in total awe of this man.

But what I saw as a truly momentous occasion, Duke must have perceived as just another club on the circuit. "George Wein's Storyville" meant little to him, beyond a meager wage and a place in which to set down the band for a week. I could only afford to pay the band four thousand dollars for the typical Boston "eight-day week" - seven nights plus a



Duke with Mr and Mrs George Wein.

Sunday matinee. I'm sure that Ellington, after settling his payroll and expenses, lost money.

Duke Ellington loomed so large in my perception of jazz that I expected to see a full house every night. But the band opened to a half-empty room. I was incredulous; I had no idea that Ellington's career had suffered ever since the demise of the ballrooms. He always had admirers, even during this slump. One night, Frank Sinatra walked in for the late set. Sinatra's career, like Ellington's, was languishing at that time. He had been dropped from Columbia Records, but the motion-picture branch of Columbia had just offered him the role of Maggio in *From Here To Eternity*.

I connected personally with Duke quickly. He seemed to listen attentively when I talked; he made me feel as if he was interested in everything that I said. On this part, I believe he recognized that I was a legitimate admirer of his music, and not just another nightclub owner. Instinctively, he must have understood that this first engagement at Storyville would not be his last. He could count on returning to the club for a brief but comfortable residence, a much-needed respite from the road.

More than once, I joined him in his room upstairs after the last set, to see if he needed anything. Each time, I encountered the same scene; I would find

Duke on the telephone with his collaborator, Billy Strayhorn. "Well, alright, I've got it through this first part - the second part, we developed that thing. You pick up there, and then get back to me when you've got that done so we can get into the third movement ....."

This was quite a peak behind the curtain. After performing all evening, Duke composed until well into the morning. He kept a small electric piano in his room, and the hotel phone was practically an open line to Strayhorn in New York City.

Duke was never irritated by my appearance at his room. "George!" he would say warmly, his features brightening as he glanced up from his manuscript paper. Then: "Look, can you get me some ice cream?" I would either send someone out or go myself to the all-night drug store and return with a quart of ice cream, which we would share as he took a break from the composing. I learned that Duke was quite adept at writing music in even the most adverse conditions. He had no problem concentrating in my presence.

Duke often mixed business and pleasure. He would reserve several rooms in the hotel and use each for a different purpose. After the gig, he'd retire to his own room to compose. When he needed a moment of relaxation, he'd step out into the hallway and cross over to another room, to attend to one of several ladies-in-waiting.



# Brooks Kerr

Vem var Brooks Kerr? När man läser diverse litteratur om Duke Ellington stöter man ofta på detta namn. Han är ofta konsulterad av författare när det gäller att få bekräftat en viss detalj i Ellingtons karriär och han kunde även tillhandahålla okända detaljer om Ellingtons tidiga liv. Men vem var han?

Chester Monson Brooks Joseph Kerr III var född den 26 december 1951. Han föddes prenatalt och drabbades av förlösningsskador. Han var vid födseln blind på ett öga och endast delvis seende på andra ögat. Åkomman förvärrades och vid 28 års ålder var han helt blind. Men han hade andra utförsågor, vilket särskilt visade sig i hans musikaliska talanger. Redan vid två års ålder lät hans föräldrar honom ta pianolektioner och vid vuxen ålder var han en duktig professionell pianist.

Hans kontakter med Duke Ellington startade tidigt. Redan vid åtta års ålder tog hans föräldrar med honom på en Ellingtonkonsert. Efter konserten fick han tillfälle att träffa Ellington och ställa frågor om hans musik. Duke lär ha blivit imponerad av hans kunskaper i musik när unge Kerr påpekade att ett nummer under konserten spelades i annan tonart än den som använts vid grammfoninspelningen.

## Levande uppslagsverk

Under de följande åren besökte Kerr ofta Ellingtons konserter tillsammans med sina föräldrar när tillfälle gavs och Duke kände alltid igen honom och ägnade tid åt honom efter konserterna. Vid fjorton års ålder fick han t.o.m. medverka vid en Ellingtonkonsert. Duke förklarade för föräldrarna; "He knows everything I've ever written. He knows more about my music than I do myself." Brooks Kerr kom med tiden att bli något av ett levande uppslagsverk om Duke Ellington.

Kontakten med Duke Ellington intensifierades och vid arton år ålder fick han medfölja orkestern på den europeiska turnén 1969. Efter Billy Strayhorns



bortgång 1967 verkar det som Brooks Kerr fyllde en del av tomrummet efter honom. Inte som kompositör och arrangör men mera som en samtalspartner och bollplank. Brooks, som hade ett perfekt gehör, kunde exakt spela alla Ellingtons kompositioner och solon. Speciellt de äldre inspelningarna kunde han upprepa ton för ton. Om en äldre och sällan spelad komposition hade fallit Ellington ur minnet, kunde Brooks på begäran spela upp den. Det förekom även tillfällen när Ellington kände sig indisponerad och då fick Brooks sitta in som pianist i bandet.

I sin blinda tillvaro förklarade han en gång för Ellington att varje ton på pianot gav honom ett intryck av en särskild färg, men förklarade också att om en annan pianist spelade samma ton fick han ett annat färgintryck. Duke hade med sitt sinne för musik och färg säkert den största sympati för detta sätt att uppfatta musik. Att som ung man och pianostuderande växa upp på 1950/60-talen borde rimligen innebära att man blev färgad av den tidens musik, men Brooks blev i stället gripen av den äldre jazzen och äg-

nade sig huvudsakligen åt den. Han var god vän med Willie "The Lion" Smith och lärde sig genom honom att behärska stridestilen till fulländning.

Vid firandet av Duke Ellingtons 70-årsdag i Vita Huset deltog Brooks Kerr, men som en artonårig ung man har hans närvaro inte blivit registrerad. Han nämns inte som deltagare i boken "Ellington at the White House" av Edward Allan Faine, men han var bevisligen närvarande.

När Duke författade sin *Music Is My Mistress*, tvingades han ofta konsultera Brooks för att bli påmind om vissa glömda detaljer i det förgångna. Vid Duke Ellingtons begravning i The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine den 27 maj 1974 spelade han, tillsammans med Ray Nance, Ellingtons *Come Sunday*.

## Egna skivinspelningar

Brooks Kerr kan höras på ett mindre antal skivor. Den 18 april 1974 spelar han in tillsammans med Paul Quinichette, Gene Ramey och Sam Woodyard en LP för skivmärket Famous Door (LPHL106).

Det är standardlåtar som spelas och inga Ellingtonkompositioner ingår i repertoaren.

1975 spelar han in en solo LP, kompad enbart av Sonny Greer, på skivmärket Chiaroscuro (CR2001) kallad "Soda Fountain Rag – The Music of Duke Ellington". Han har här valt att spela enbart ett urval av Ellingtons äldsta kompositioner och han demonstrerar sin förmåga att spela stridepiano.

Sedan dröjer det ända till 1981 innan han åter tar plats i en inspelningsstudio. För skivmärket Blue Wail gör han tre LP. Den 13 maj 1981 spelar han, tillsammans med Sonny Greer, in "Brooks Kerr Salutes Irving Berlin" (LP1002). Den 1 juni 1981 spelar han in "Brooks Kerr Salutes Fats Waller" (LP 1001) tillsammans med



basisten George Duvivier och Sonny Greer och slutligen den 26 april 1982 spelar han in hyllningsskivan "Brooks Kerr Salutes Duke Ellington" (LP 1003) in. Vid denna sista inspelning kompas han enbart av George Duvivier. Repertoaren på denna LP består av ett urval av Ellingtons modernare kompositioner.

### The Brooks Kerr Trio

Någon gång under 1970-talet började Brooks Kerr tillsammans med Russell Procope och Sonny Greer regelbundet spela på mindre klubbar i Greenwich Village i New York. Detta samarbete de tre emellan tycks ha pågått i ett flertal år. Mike Zirpolo har i sin blog "Swing&Beyond" skildrat ett besök på en klubb där trion spelade. Den kan läsas under titeln "4:30 Blues".

Brooks Kerr lämnade detta jordeliv den 28 april 2018.

Bo Haufman

# Sterling Conaway



I flera böcker som behandlar Duke Ellingtons tidigaste karriär, kan man se en bild på Duke tillsammans med Sonny Greer och en banjoist. Bilden påstås vara tagen c:a 1920 när trion uppträdde på något som kallades Louis Thomas's Dreamland Café, som låg på 9th and R Street i Washington, D.C. Banjoisten är en man vid namn Sterling Conaway. I vissa sammanhang uppges hans namn som Conway, men Conaway torde vare det rätta. Det existerar faktiskt två bilder från samma tillfälle. På den andra bilden har trion fått sällskap av två damer, Berta Ricks och Mrs. Conaway. Om de på något sätt ingick i gruppen låter jag vara osagt.

Sterling Conaway hade tidigare lett ett band tillsammans med sin bror Lincoln, The Conaway Boys, som vid ett tillfälle hade ett engagemang i New Jersey, där Sterling råkade träffa Sonny Greer och övertalade honom att följa med till Washington, D.C. De spelade på Louis Thomas's Café tillsammans med Claude Hopkins innan Duke Ellington kom in i bilden. Sonny Greer har uppgett att meningen var att han endast skulle medverka över en weekend, men han blev kvar ett flertal år. Resten är historia.

Conaway är omnämnd i *Music Is My Mistress*. I sin tidiga ungdom ägnade sig Ellington även åt produktion av affischer för olika evenemang, oftast musikaliska sådana. Han arbetade då tillsammans

med Ewell Conaway, som var bror till Sterling, och det var troligen så kontakten mellan Sterling och Duke etablerades. En intressant detalj i sammanhanget är att efter det att Ellington koncentrerade sig på sina musikaliska aktiviteter fortsatte Ewell att driva företaget på ett framgångsrikt sätt ända in på 1960-talet.

Enligt Wikipedia föddes Sterling Bruce Conaway den 26 oktober 1900 i Washington, D.C. Han var alltså i det närmaste jämnårig med Duke Ellington och de spelade tillsammans under Ellingtons tidigaste karriär i Washington. Exakt hur länge är okänt. Elmer Snowden skulle senare ta platsen som banjoist i bandet, som senare skulle bli The Washingtonians. Conaway flyttade senare till Chicago där han bl.a. kom att ingå i Carroll Dickersons orkester. 1922 finner vi honom i New York där han gör grammofoninspelningar med ett flertal bluessångerskor, bl.a. Lucille Hegamin och Helen Gross.

Under det sena 1920-talet flyttar han bopålar till Europa och bosätter sig i Paris, där han ingår i band ledda av flera amerikanska expatriots såsom Eddie South, Noble Sissle, Freddy Johnson m.fl. 1936 lockas han till Indien och gör där en inspelning med Crickett Smiths orkester. 1939 återvänder han till USA, men hans vidare öde är okänt. Vi vet bara att han gick ur tiden i november 1973.

Bo Haufman

# Hyllningar till Duke Ellington

Under sin levnad fick Duke Ellington mängder av utmärkelser, inte bara i USA utan också i flera länder runt om i världen. I Sverige invaldes han 1971 i Kungliga Svenska Musikaliska Akademien. Kanske hans finaste utmärkelse är The Presidential Medal of Freedom, som han 1969 tilldelades av president Richard Nixon. Dukes självbiografi "Music Is My Mistress" innehåller ett flertal sidor, som listar de olika medaljer, ordnar och utmärkelser, som han fått under sin långa karriär. Till sin stora besvikelse blev han dock aldrig utsedd till vinnare av Pulitzer priset. På senare tid har det drivits en kampanj för att han skall tilldelas priset postumt, men den tycks ännu inte ha givit något resultat.

Men Duke Ellington fick även ett flertal uppskattningar på annat sätt. Flera av hans kollegor tillägnade honom musikaliska kompositioner som en hyllning till hans storhet. Men då är det inte mer än rättvist att även nämna de hyllningar, som tillägnats Ellingtons närmaste medarbetare Billy Strayhorn, utan vars medverkan hans storhet varit något begränsad. Här listas några av dem:

**Charlie Barnet** var en stor beundrare av Duke Ellington och många av Ellingtons kompositioner ingick i hans egen repertoar. 1939 spelade han in *The Duke's Idea*, som var ett s.k. "head arrangement". Titeln gör skäl för namnet. Man känner igen många Ellingtonpassager. Även John Kirby gjorde en inspelning av numret. Tio år senare komponerade Barnet ett hyllningsnummer betitlat *Portrait of Edward Kennedy Ellington*. Det är ett nummer som sträcker sig över drygt sex minuter och innehåller flera tydliga Ellingtoninslag. Bl.a. kan höras antydningar till Ellingtons *Harlem*, som vid inspelningstillfället ännu inte hade fått sin officiella premiär, men kanske hade Barnet fått ta del av förberedelserna. När Barnets inspelning gjordes i mars 1949 ingick Rolf Ericson i bandet.

Under **Dave Brubeck's** tidigaste karriär på 1940-talet uppträdde han stundtals vid samma konserter som Ellington,



Dave Brubeck och Duke.

som faktiskt kom att fungera som en slags mentor för honom. Brubeck visade sin uppskattning 1954 genom sin komposition *The Duke*. Melodin blev mycket uppskattad och inspelningar har gjorts av en stor mängd jazzmusiker som Miles Davis, Teddy Wilson, Bob Wilber, George Shearing m.fl. Alice Babs tillsammans med Svend Asmussen framförde numret vid en tillställning på Berns i februari 1972.

**Charlie Mingus** var engagerad av Ellington som basist 1953, men sejouren blev kort p.g.a. en kontrovers med Juan Tizol, som ledde till att Mingus tvingades lämna bandet. Han skulle senare återkomma för att medverka i Ellingtons triospelning *Money Jungle* tillsammans med Max Roach. Under hela sin karriär beundrade han Ellington och han konkretiserade detta bl.a. med att 1974 komponera och spela in ett nummer som han kallade *Duke Ellington's Sound of Love*. Det är en vacker melodi och Mingus spelade in den första gången med en mindre grupp den 27 december 1974. Inspelningen sträcker sig över tolv minuter och Don Pullen, George Adams och Charlie Mingus får mycket soloutrymme. Melodin har spelats in av otaliga orkestrar. Enligt Lord har inte mindre än 93 inspelningar gjorts, bl.a. av en svensk orkester kallad The Swedish Mingus Band.

**Willie "The Lion" Smith.** Han känns igen på sin ständiga cigarr i munnen och ett plommonstop lätt på sned på huvu-

det. Han var en av Ellingtons tidigaste bekantskaper i New York och lärde Duke ett och annat om hur man spelar piano och speciellt hur vänsterhanden skulle användas. Han var en mentor för Ellington och när the Washingtonians hade det svårt med inkomsterna bidrog han ekonomiskt till deras överlevnad. Ellington erkände detta senare genom sin hyllning till honom med sin *Portrait of a Lion*. Wille Smith skulle även han hedra Ellington med en komposition, som han följaktligen kallade *Portrait of the Duke*. Han framförde numret första gången i Paris 1949 och hade den därefter på sin repertoar ända in på 1970-talet.

**Abdullah Ibrahim**, som innan han konverterade hette Dollar Brand. 1963 spenderade Duke Ellington en kortare tid i Paris utan sin orkester. Han hade då ett uppdrag för sitt grammfonbolag Reprise Records att spela in material för ett antal LP. Han spelade då bl.a. in med Alice Babs LP:n *Serenade to Sweden*. Han spelade också in en LP som kom ut som *Duke Ellington Presents The Dollar Brand Trio*. Abdullah Ibrahim var gift med sångerskan Sathima Bea Benjamin med vilken Ellington likaledes spelade in en LP vid detta tillfälle med deltagande av Ibrahim. För att hedra sin vänskap med Ellington komponerade Ibrahim *Ode to Duke*, som han framförde vid flera tillfällen under sina turnéer runt om i världen. Han komponerade även en hyllning som han kallade *Duke 88*.

## Hyllningar till Billy Strayhorn

Den förste som hyllade Billy Strayhorn var ingen mindre än **Duke Ellington**. Redan den 14 oktober 1939 spelade orkestern in *Weely* med underrubriken *A Portrait of Billy Strayhorn*. Ellington hade då inte känt Strayhorn i mycket mer än ett och ett halvt år, men redan efter så kort bekantskap fann han det befogat att tillägna honom en komposition. Det säger en hel del om Ellingtons uppskattning av Strayhorns kapacitet. Vid inspelningen överlåter Ellington pianostolen till Strayhorn. "Weely" var ett smek-

namn som Strayhorn troligen hade med sig från sin tid i Pittsburgh. Han skulle bli mera känd under smeknamnet "Swee Pea", en populär seriefigur, som Strayhorn tydligen hade en viss likhet med. Utöver nämnda inspelning finns numret registrerat vid endast ett ytterligare tillfälle, vid en radioutsändning från Hotel Sherman, Chicago, 1940, men denna inspelning är ännu outgiven.

**Harry James.** Från det han lämnade Benny Goodman 1939 drev Harry James ett av de bättre storbanden ända in på sena 1970-talet. Han hade flera Ellington-melodier på repertoaren och hade även sin hand med i tillkomsten av *I'm Beginning To See The Light*. Till vilken grad är oklart. 1961 spelar man in en komposition med titeln *Hommage à Swee Pea*. Kompositör och arrangör var Ralph Burns, som på detta sätt hyllade en kollega.

**Count Basie.** Den 12 januari 1976 tog Count Basie och hans orkester plats i en studio i New York för att spela in ett flertal kompositioner och arrangemang av

Bill Holman. Ett av dessa var *Swee Pea*, som kan avlyssnas på Pablo CD J33J-20020. Likaledes en kompositörs hyllning till en kollega i branschen.

**Mercer Ellington** arbetade ofta tillsammans med Billy Strayhorn under många år. När Ellington gjorde sin turné i Europa 1939, var Strayhorn ny i organisationen, men tillsammans med Mercer tog de sig för att analysera Ellingtons arrangemang för att därmed hitta den s.k. Ellingtoneffekten. Man kan lugn konstatera att Strayhorn kom underfund med den. Mercer försökte vid flera tillfällen frigöra sig från sin fars inflytande, men det slutade som regel alltid med att han åter kom under Dukes inflytande. Han gjorde under åren flera inspelningar under eget namn och då ofta med personal ur Ellingtonbandet. I januari 1966 spelade Ellington in en LP för Doctor Jazz (FW 40359) där även ges plats för några nummer under Mercers ledning. Det är en sextett med i huvudsak Ellingtonmusiker men pianot hanteras av Chick Corea.

Ett nummer är *Portrait of Pea*, som är en komposition av Mercer och där man bl.a. kan höra ett vackert bidrag av Corea.

**Ernie Wilkins** hade ett förflutet i Count Basies orkester, men spenderade sina sista verksamma år i Danmark. Han ledde då ett band som han kallade "Ernie Wilkins Almost Big Band". I Köpenhamn den 17 november 1986 är bandet emellertid ett reguljärt big band och de spelar in en LP för Steeplechase Records (SCS1225) där ett av numren är *Ode to Billy Strayhorn*.

Den som fördjupar sig i diskografierna kan finna åtskilliga fler hyllningar till både Duke Ellington och Billy Strayhorn, exempelvis kan nämnas Gerald Wilson, Django Reinhardt och Les Swingles. Marion McPartland har dessutom spelat in *Portrait of Mercer Ellington*, som gjordes i samband med en av hennes "Piano Jazz Broadcasts". Men jag överlåter åt den intresserade läsaren att själv botanisera bland diskografierna.

Bo Hausman

## Duke et les Lumières

Detta är devisen för Ellingtonkonferensen i Paris, som kommer att äga rum den 28-30 april. När dessa rader skrives har förberedelserna för att ge ut denna Bulletin påbörjats, men konstigt nog är vi ännu i avsaknad av en formell inbjudan från arrangören, vår franska systerförening La Maison du Duke, som hittills endast bitt intresserade deltagare att reservera datumet.

Ulf Lundin, boende i Frankrike, har emellertid haft vissa kontakter med föreningen och lyckats få fram följande ännu inofficiella detaljer:

Konferenslokal är Médiathèque Musicale de Paris i det centrala Les Hallesområdet, som man lätt når med Metron. I området finns ett flertal hotell i olika prislägen. Talarlistan är inte känd i sin helhet men vi vet att första dagen kommer John Hasse att kåsera på temat "Duke Ellington in Paris", Leila Olivesi beskriver "Programs of Duke's concerts in Paris". Mercedes Ellington är inbjuden att berätta om "Sophisticated Ladies at Théâtre

du Cha-telet" och Anne Legrand talar om "Turcaret". Vidare kommer Jean-Francois Pitet att tala om "1933, Ellington's first steps in Paris".

Den andra konferensdagen är bl.a. vikt för Philippe Baudoin och Loren Schoenberg, som kommer att tala om samarbetet mellan "Duke and Django", och Ken Steiner som valt att berätta om "Julian Priester, an Ellingtonian in Paris". Fler programpunkter kommer att annonseras i det slutgiltiga programmet.

Vissa kvällsevenemang är också förberedda. På biografen Cinéma Le Louxor kommer den 28 april Laurent Cugny att berätta om och visa filmen "Paris Blues". Leila Olivesi Octet kommer dessutom att



framföra en hyllningskonsert till minne av Claude Carrière.

Den 29 april kommer Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra att spela för delegaterna i en lokal vid namn Le Bal Blomet. Bl.a. kommer de att framföra Ellingtons "Boola". Michael Kilpatrick har studerat Ellingtons efterlämnade dokument och återskapat verket så som han menade att det en gång var tänkt.

Sista dagen den 30 april är tänkt att ägnas åt en vandring i "Pigalle, the musicians' district in Paris" ledd av Philippe Baudoin och konferensens avslutning skall äga rum på Sunset Jazz Club med en musikalisk underhållning betitlad "Ellington Consequence Set".

Detta torde endast vara några glimtar i ett program, som vi får veta i sin helhet inom en nära framtid. De av våra medlemmar som är intresserade bedes gå in på [www.maison-du-duke.com](http://www.maison-du-duke.com) där i sinom tid alla detaljer torde finnas tillgängliga.

Låt oss möta våren i Paris!

# KALLELSE!

Duke Ellington Society of Sweden kallar härmed sina medlemmar till kombinerat medlemsmöte och årsmöte:

**Måndagen den 6 mars 2023**

Liksom vid vårt föregående medlemsmöte har våra medlemmar även denna gång möjlighet att delta via ZOOM. Länk till mötet skickas ut till alla via e-post. Alla är hjärtligt välkomna på vilket sätt ni än väljer att delta.

## PLATS:

Franska Skolans aula,  
Döbelnsgatan 3, Stockholm.  
Portkod för kvällen: 0306  
Entrén öppen från kl. 17.00.  
Entréavgift: 100:- i kontanter eller via Swish. Gratis inträde för den som endast vill övervara årsmötet.

## PROGRAM:

**17.30 – 18.00 – Årsmöte.** Årsmöteshandlingar kommer att tillställas alla medlemmar via e-post i god tid innan mötet.

**18.00 – 19.00 –** Denna kväll gästas DESS av ingen mindre än **Jens Lindgren**. Närmare presentation torde vara överflöd. Han är känd för oss alla som ledare av Kustbandet och andra mindre tradjazzband. Med sina genuina kunskaper om Duke Ellingtons musik kommer han att ta oss med på en resa i Ellingtons värld i ord och ton.

**19.00 – 19.30 – Paus** med möjlighet till mingel och inköp av vin och baguetter. Obs! betalning endast i kon-



tanter eller via Swish. Lotteridragning kommer även att genomföras.

**19.30 – 20.30 – Anders Asplund** har återigen plockat ihop ett antal intressanta och sällan sedda filmavsnitt med Duke Ellington.

Tidsangivelserna är ungefärliga.

Tag gärna med Dina vänner och bekanta till mötet. Det är viktigt för oss att besöksantalet blir så högt som möjligt för att ekonomin skall gå ihop. Det är likaledes önskvärt att alla köper lotter i största möjliga omfattning.

## PRELIMINÄRT PROGRAM 2023:

**28-30 april** – Ellingtonkonferens i Paris (se sidan 19).

**16 oktober** – Medlemsmöte

Under året kommer Ulf Lundin dessutom att vid olika tidpunkter bjuda in till sitt DESScafé varvid något särskilt tema kring Duke Ellington kommer att behandlas med medverkan av olika medlemmar. Allt detta sker via ZOOM och alla medlemmar blir löpande underrättade om tidpunkter och innehåll.

## Duke Ellington Society of Sweden (DESS)

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