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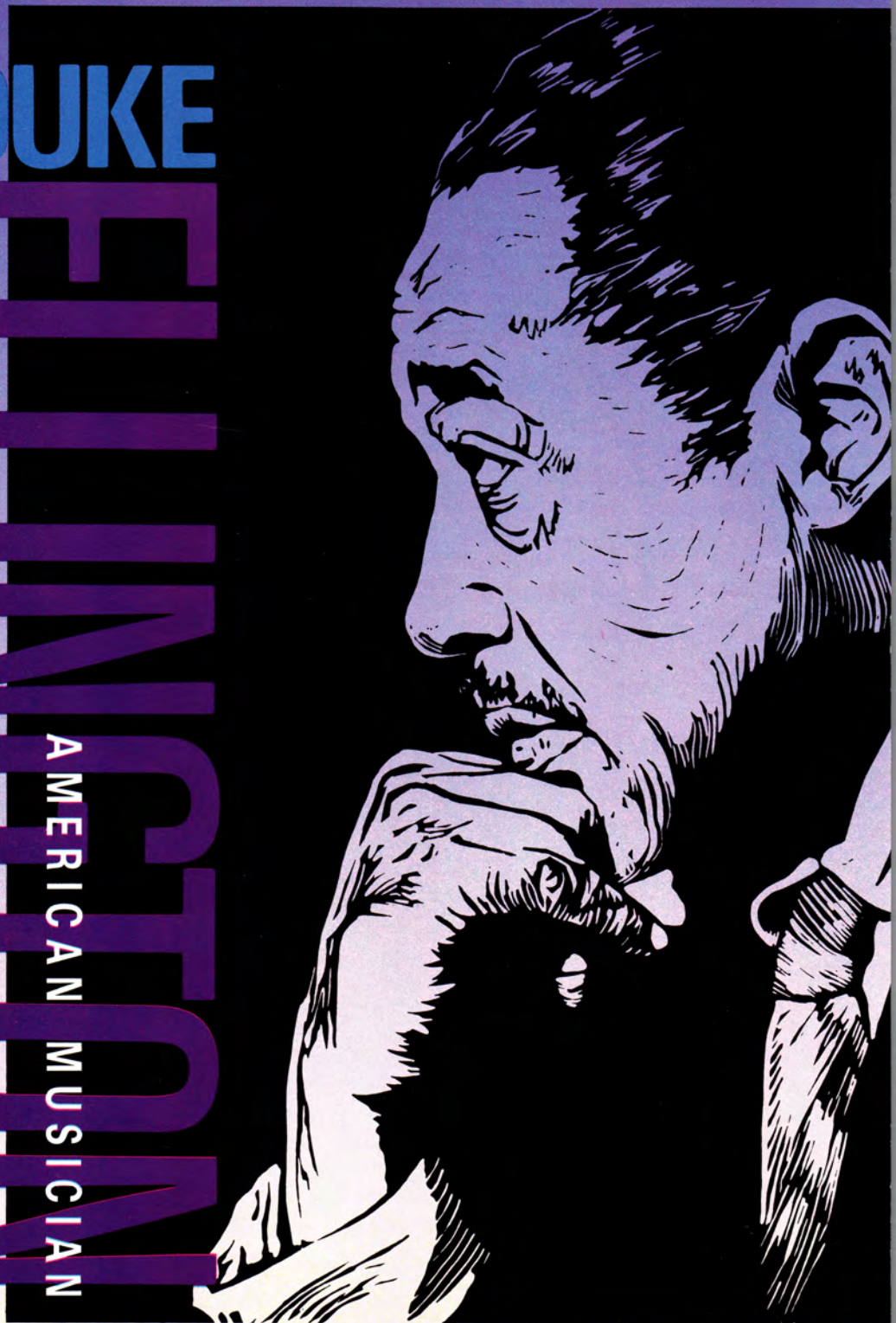
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Jazz and the
Smithsonian

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Stagefright

DUKE
ELLINGTON
AMERICAN
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Duke Ellington Collection, National Museum of American History.

The Smithsonian will preserve and perpetuate Duke Ellington's legacy

Had he been alive, Duke Ellington would have been 90 this year. Just last year his archive, the record of a lifetime of extraordinary creativity, was returned to his hometown of Washington, D.C. Here it will reside at the national museum, the Smithsonian Institution, along with other American treasures. The news of the Ellington archive's transfer to the Smithsonian has created a wave of excitement in the jazz world.

During this past April, the nation's capital was alive with the sounds of Ellington in honor of his 90th birthday. At the Smithsonian and throughout the city, high school, college, and professional musicians were ardently celebrating the Duke.

Everyone in those audiences knew that Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington was a major figure in jazz, but perhaps not everyone realized how tall he stands in American culture. No other American musician left such a massive and complex legacy in composition and performance. He was known to the public primarily as a bandleader and writer of popular songs. Yet his achievements as a composer and orchestrator were even more significant. In fact, he was one of America's most prominent instrumental composers.

Long considered the foremost composer of jazz, Ellington is now increasingly being considered one of the most original harmonic thinkers and tonal colorists of the 20th century.

Using his unique inventiveness, he produced dozens of masterpieces, from three-minute miniatures such as *Mood Indigo*, *Creole Love Call*, *Reminiscing in Tempo*, *Cottontail*, and *Ko-Ko*, to suites such as *Suite Thursday* and *Black, Brown, and Beige*, and motion picture soundtracks such as *Anatomy of a Murder*. He developed what Gunther Schuller considers the ideal balance between composition and improvisation.

While Ellington played the piano, his real instrument was his orchestra. He knew intimately the capabilities of his soloists and he wrote for the remarkable individual voices of Johnny Hodges, Barney Bigard, Cootie Williams, Bubber Miley, Juan Tizol, Ben Webster, Ray Nance, Rex Stewart, and others. "Ellington's identity fused with that of his performers," writes scholar Mark Tucker, "creating a kind of collective expression unlike that of any other American orchestra."

In short, Ellington was unquestionably one of a kind. Or to use the phrase he reserved for describing someone in the highest terms, Ellington was "beyond category."

Unlike Louis Armstrong, who was a meticulous saver of music, recordings, and other materials, Ellington was not very interested in compiling a personal archive. Nonetheless, a great deal of music and other material gathered in his apartment. After he died in 1974, his collection of music and memorabilia was moved to a warehouse in New York City, where it remained for 14 years.

Several years ago the Smithsonian Institution learned of the collection from the composer's son, Mercer Ellington, who is a trumpeter, composer, and bandleader in his own right. In 1988 an agreement was reached with Mercer Ellington to bring the Duke Ellington Collection to the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The acquisition was made possible by the generosity of Mercer Ellington and the support of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congress as a whole. In March 1988, the archive was put into cartons, loaded onto a truck, and moved to Washington to join the other collections of the Smithsonian Institution. It is housed in the Archives Center and the Division of Musical History of the National Museum of American History.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON COLLECTION

The most valuable part of the collection is the music: manuscripts, lead sheets, short scores, performance parts for his orchestra members, and full conductor's scores. Ellington wrote an estimated 1,500 pieces of music, and the majority of them are represented in some form in the Ellington Collection.

Thanks to continuing federal funding, the Museum has been able to move quickly to begin preserving and organizing the collection and to interpreting it for the public.

As the first step, the Museum has moved the collection to safe quarters, where it has the benefit of around-the-clock security and fire protection and climate-controlled storage. The collection has been rehoused in acid-free folders for the sake of preservation, and some damaged papers have been restored. The scrapbooks have been microfilmed for preservation purposes.

Three catalogers are working full-time to organize this massive collection, an undertaking that will require several years to complete. The task of cataloging the music is particularly complicated because many of the orchestrations are incomplete; some have epigrammatic or ambiguous titles; and some of the music manuscripts are fragmentary. Sometimes one piece is written on the back of another. Under which title, then, should the cataloger place that piece of paper? This is but one of the challenges facing the staff. To facilitate the music cataloging, a computerized database is being developed.

The Museum also developed an exhibition, *Duke Ellington, American Musician*, to introduce Ellington and the collection to the public. The exhibit opened in April, 1988, and will continue indefinitely. It comprises fifty-some artifacts, including a number of photographs; rarely-seen manuscripts in Ellington's hand; the Presidential Medal of Freedom; a trophy from *Esquire* magazine; and concert posters from the Soviet Union, India, and Japan.

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There are hundreds of pages of unpublished manuscripts in Ellington's hand. The collection also includes hundreds of original orchestrations for the Ellington orchestra (from *Awful Sad* through *Zurzday*), including versions of *East St. Louis Toodle-Oo*, *Azure*, *Mood Indigo*, *Take the A Train*, *Black, Brown, and Beige*, the sacred concerts, and other works for jazz orchestra, symphony, and the musical theater.

Most of the music is rare, one-of-a-kind material that was not commercially published, and, until now, unavailable to the public except on record. Some of the compositions were never even recorded, and these works have not been available to the public at all.

The Ellington Collection also includes work notes; scripts; more than 500 audio tape recordings of concerts and broadcasts; 2,000 photographs; 70 scrapbooks of clippings dating from 1933 to 1974; concert posters and programs; correspondence; financial records; a complete set of the Ellington orchestra's music stands; awards, plaques, medals, and certificates; items of clothing; legal records; magazine and newspaper articles; and memorabilia.

The most popular part of the exhibition has been a kind of video jukebox stocked exclusively with classic Ellington. The visitor walks up to the monitor and touches the screen to select any of seven vintage performances, from *Black and Tan Fantasy* of 1929, through *Mood Indigo* of 1952. Older visitors are rediscovering Ellington, often after 30 years, while young visitors are discovering his magic for the first time.

In honor of Ellington's 90th birthday, the Museum also organized a month-long Duke Ellington Festival, featuring 20 afternoons of concerts, lectures, panel discussions, and film showings. On April 27, an all-day symposium on the topic "The Ellington Legacy and the Smithsonian" was held. Speakers included Rep. John Conyers, Mercer Ellington, Albert Murray, Museum director Roger Kennedy, Martin Williams, oral historians Patricia Willard and Marcia Greenlee, Mark Tucker, and the present author. The audience included representatives from ten nations.

Much work lies ahead. The cataloging of the Duke Ellington Collection will be completed so that the materials can be made available to scholars and musicians. An oral history



The Duke Ellington Orchestra during an appearance on the Maurice Chevalier show at New York City's Fulton Theater, between 1930-31; left to right, Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams, Sonny Greer, Ellington, Arthur Whetsol, Juan Tizol, Wellman Braud, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Joe "Tricky Sam" Nanton, Freddy Guy, and Barney Bigard.

project will collect interviews from 35 relatives and associates of Ellington's to shed further light on the collection and his legacy. The Museum will continue to produce historically-grounded concerts of his music.

The Museum will also continue to add related materials to the Duke Ellington Collection and to the History of Jazz Collection. The latter collection includes Dizzy Gillespie's specially-built trumpet, Buddy Rich's drumset, Harry James's engraved trumpet, sheet music, recordings, and works of art documenting the history of jazz.

There are also plans to publish Ellington's music. The performance and study of Ellington have been greatly hampered by the lack of accurate, published music. "There has never been a really authentic piece of Ellington music published," said the Smithsonian jazz authority Martin Williams. "That's why this collection is particularly important, to have that music as near perfect as we can get it."

A new publishing project called Jazz Masterworks Editions, co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and Oberlin College, will oversee the preparation of accurate editions of not only the great compositions of Duke Ellington, but also of Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Dizzy Gillespie, and others. There will be a series of conductors' scores and performance parts, as well as a parallel series of study-scores. The first volumes in the series are expected to be published in 1991.

The Museum is working to achieve the highest possible standards of stewardship of the Ellington Collection. The goals are to help the American public better understand Ellington's extraordinary legacy, to help Ellington's music find a place of higher esteem in American and world culture and to carefully preserve the collection for the millenia.

Ellington the composer created unique timbres and colors in a very complex harmonic language that, without the scores, is almost impossible to fully understand. Both the study and performance of Ellington's music have been severely hindered by the inaccessibility of his music. The collection offers the possibility of unlocking the musical secrets through which Ellington created his unique sound. In addition, the scripts, clippings, financial records, and other non-musical materials offer rich resources for all future biographers of Ellington.

That the Ellington archive is now at the Smithsonian — the national museum — means, in effect, that the collection belongs to the American people. It also means that the

collection will be made accessible to and interpreted for a wide section of the public.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR JAZZ EDUCATION

The Smithsonian's acquisition and perpetuation of the Duke Ellington Collection will have at least three effects on jazz education.

First, it will serve to increase Ellington's standing in the society at large. The music and artifacts of the greatest figure in jazz have been acquired by the national treasure-house. They will be preserved alongside other national treasures such as the Wright Brothers' original airplane, the Hope Diamond, and masterpieces by Stradivarius and Picasso. This fact will help the public take Ellington's enormous contributions more seriously. The entire jazz community can now point with pride to the fact that the National Museum acquired these riches; it reinforces the perceived value of Ellington's legacy.

Second, it will stimulate serious Ellington scholarship. As noted above, until now, virtually none of Ellington's music has been available to students and scholars. Because Ellington's orchestral style was complex and unique, it has made transcribing from his recordings extremely difficult. Now that scholars will have access to thousands of pages of his music, knowledgeable studies of Ellington should accelerate. Questions for which no answers have been possible will now be answerable. (Fellowships for work in the collection are available; see accompanying box.)

Third, the Ellington Collection is already enhancing performance of his music. Recently, conductor/arranger Maurice Peress spent a day locating orchestrations in order to reconstruct Ellington's famous 1943 concert at Carnegie Hall. The practicality of authentic recreations of the Ellington sound, complete with all its rich voicings, will be assured once performance editions are issued through the Jazz Masterworks Editions series.

Like Bach's works, Ellington's music is for the ages. As jazz educators increasingly incorporate his music into their curricula, their students and audiences will be rewarded beyond measure.

John Edward Hasse, Ph.D., is Curator of American Music, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, where his duties include responsibility for the Duke Ellington Collection. Hasse is the editor of *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music* (Schirmer Books), and the producer of the four-record album *The Classic Hoagy Carmichael* (Smithsonian Collection of Recordings).

Ellington and the Smithsonian

A VISIT TO THE EXHIBITION

The small introductory exhibition *Duke Ellington, American Musician*, is available for viewing during regular hours at the National Museum of American History. The exhibit will be on display indefinitely. Also, Dizzy Gillespie's custom-made King Silver Flair trumpet is currently on display in the exhibition *A Nation of Nations*, on the third floor. The Ellington poster reproduced on the cover of this issue of *Jazz Educators Journal* is available at the Museum Shop.

The Smithsonian Institution comprises the world's largest museum complex. The National Museum of American History is located at 14th Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily; extended summer hours are determined annually. The Museum is open every day of the year except December 25. Admission is free. Sign language and oral interpreters are available on advance request: 202-357-1697 (TDD: 202-357-1696).

Special tours, including those for visually handicapped persons, may also be arranged in advance: 202-357-1481 (TDD: 202-357-1563), Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Museum exhibition areas, performance spaces, and most restrooms accommodate wheelchairs. For further information, call 202-357-2700 (TDD: 202-357-1729).

THE ELLINGTON COLLECTION

Until it is fully catalogued, the Duke Ellington Collection is available on a limited basis for researchers. Appointments are necessary. Contact: The Duke Ellington Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Room C340, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Telephone 202-357-3270.

SMITHSONIAN FELLOWSHIPS

The Smithsonian Institution offers fellowships, on a competitive basis, for graduate students, doctoral candidates, post-doctoral scholars, and senior post-doctoral scholars, to pursue research in its collections and with its staff. Proposals for working with the Duke Ellington Collection are welcome.

The annual deadline for receipt of applications is January 15. For more information and an application form, contact: Office of Fellowships and Grants, 455 l'Enfant Plaza, Room 7300, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Telephone 202-287-3271.

SMITHSONIAN RECORDINGS OF DUKE ELLINGTON

The Smithsonian Collection of Recordings has published six critically-acclaimed albums of Ellington music. Ordering information is given below.

Duke Ellington, 1938. 2 LPs. R 003.
Duke Ellington, 1939. 2 LPs. R 010.
Duke Ellington, 1940. 2 LPs. R 013.
Duke Ellington, 1941. 2 LPs. R 027.
Duke Ellington, Symphony in Black.

Performed by the Smithsonian Jazz Repertory Ensemble, conducted by Gunther Schuller. R023.

Duke Ellington, *Jump for Joy*. R 037.

In addition, a breathtaking six-record album, *Duke Ellington: Seventy Masterpieces, 1926-1968*, is under preparation by a team headed by Martin Williams and Gunther Schuller. Publication by the Smithsonian Collection of Recordings is expected at the end of 1990.

OTHER SMITHSONIAN JAZZ RECORDINGS

The Smithsonian Collection of Recordings has also issued a number of other historical recordings which belong in any jazz record collection. They include the cornerstone *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, selected and annotated by Martin Williams, and now in a revised edition (7 LPs); *Big Band Jazz* (6 LPs), *Singers and Soloists of the Big Bands* (6 LPs), as well as albums devoted to Louis Armstrong, Freddie Keppard, Art Tatum, Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, Dizzy Gillespie, John Kirby, ragtime, and other topics.

A free catalog can be obtained from: Smithsonian Collection of Recordings, 470 l'Enfant Plaza, Room 7100, Washington, D.C. 20560. Tel. 202-287-3738. To place orders using a credit card, dial toll-free 800-678-2677, Monday through Friday.

Essential Duke Ellington Resources

OTHER RECOMMENDED DUKE ELLINGTON RECORDINGS

- Anatomy of a Murder*. Ryko RCD 10039. (CD). Recorded 1959.
Black, Brown, and Beige. RCA 6641-2-RB. (3 CDs). Recorded 1943-46.
The Blanton-Webster Band. RCA S659-1-RB. (3 LPs). Recorded 1940-42.
A Concert of Sacred Music. RCA LSP-3582. Recorded 1965.
Early Ellington (1927-1934). RCA 6852-2-RB. (CD).
The Ellington Era, 1927-40, Volume One. Columbia C3L-27. (3 LPs).
Far East Suite. RCA 7640-2-RB. (CD). Recorded 1966.
Giants of Jazz: Duke Ellington. Time-Life Records TL-J02. (3 LPs). Recorded 1926-56.
Great Paris Concert. Atlantic 2-304. (2 LPs). Recorded 1963.
Masterpieces by Duke Ellington. Columbia CSP JCL 825. Recorded 1950.
Such Sweet Thunder. Columbia CSP JCL 1033. Recorded 1957.

PUBLISHED BIG-BAND TRANSCRIPTIONS

- Such Sweet Thunder*. P.O. Box 1802, Ansonia Station, New York, New York 10023, (212) 362-7890 has recently issued 14 transcriptions of Ellington works:
Bundle of Blues, Clarinet Lament, Concerto for Cootie, Cotton Tail, Flaming Sword, Harlem Air Shaft, Jack the Bear, Ko-Ko, Main Stem, Merry-Go-Round, Mood Indigo, Rockin' in Rhythm, Saddest Tale, Subtle Lament, all transcribed by David Berger. Also, the firm has a number of other Ellington transcriptions in the works.

COLLECTIONS OF ELLINGTON MUSIC

- Duke Ellington Compilation: Album Hot*. Paris: Editions Salabert, 1988.
Duke Ellington. Introduction by Stanley Dance. Miami Beach: Hansen House, ca. 1981. Order no. MM10b.
The Great Music of Duke Ellington, ed. Leonard Feather and others. Melville, New York, and London: Belwin Mills, 1973. Order no. 11632.
Sacred Concerts Complete: Duke Ellington Inspirational Music. Miami Beach: Hansen House, 1977. Order no. M475a.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Dance, Stanley. *The World of Duke Ellington*. New York: Scribner's, 1970. Reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1981.
Ellington, Duke. *Music Is My Mistress*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973. Reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1976.
Ellington, Mercer, with Stanley Dance. *Duke Ellington in Person: An Intimate Memoir*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978. Reprint, New York: Da Capo, 1979.
Gammond, Peter, ed. *Duke Ellington: His Life and Music*. London: Phoenix House, 1958.
Schuller, Gunther. *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. "Duke Ellington: Master Composer," pp. 46-157.
Williams, Martin. *The Jazz Tradition*. rev. ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. "Duke Ellington: Form Beyond Form," pp. 100-121.