



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Duke Ellington Collection Records, circa 1985-1993

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Smithsonian Institution Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Duke Ellington Collection Records
Identifier:	Accession 98-129
Date:	circa 1985-1993
Extent:	3 cu. ft. (3 record storage boxes)
Creator::	National Museum of American History. Archives Center
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 98-129, National Museum of American History. Archives Center, Duke Ellington Collection Records

Historical Note

Fitzroy Thomas is a foreign national and historian who worked on contract at the Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution from 1985 to April 1993. While there, he participated in several projects including the Field to Factory (1985-1987) exhibit and the African Diaspora Conference with the Program in African American Culture. The last was the Duke Ellington Collection program, of which he was the historian and project coordinator (1987-1993).

At the time that Thomas was project coordinator, the Program was jointly administered by the Archives Center, the former Division of Musical History, and the Program in African American Culture. In his position Thomas conducted historical studies to place the Duke Ellington Collection materials in context socially and culturally in the 20th-Century, both nationally and internationally. He developed detailed research plans for the Duke Ellington Collection program including topics such as business operations, histories of specific compositions, State Department sponsored tours, and sidemen. Thomas was responsible for the acquisition of additional Duke Ellington Collection materials. He either prepared or supervised acquisitions planning, and the preparation of field surveys and inventories. His outreach responsibilities included reference assistance, dissemination of information about the program to museum staff and to the wider community, and publication of research guides and catalogs.

Thomas' duties included oversight of the Duke Ellington Collection budget and personnel, liaison between the Chief Archivist and the collection staff, and liaison between the Archives Center, the Program in African American Culture, and the (former) Musical History Division, and the processing of all Duke Ellington Collection archival materials. He facilitated the hiring of personnel, both paid and unpaid, and negotiated tasks with Duke Ellington Collection staff and the Chief Archivist. He worked with the staff to shift, rehouse, label, box, and describe materials using standard archival practices. He contracted services and equipment. He facilitated travel arrangements, and hosted the many and varied persons needed to

assist in uncovering the factual history of the Ellington Organization. He also planned and coordinated meetings among participating museum personnel.

In addition to his oversight responsibilities, Thomas administered the Oral History Project that was managed by the Duke Ellington Collection program. This collection of 39 oral histories represented band members, business personnel, singers, and family surrounding the Ellington Organization. The interviewers were Marcia Greenlee (an eminent oral historian) and Patricia Willard (long-time publicist for Duke Ellington and his orchestra). The interviews occurred between August, 1989 and December, 1992. There was a set of questions that was asked of each interviewee concerning Ellington as musician (composer, arranger, performer, band leader), Ellington and the band as ambassadors and statesman, their impressions of the reception of the Ellington Organization - perceptions and influences, race relations and its impact on the Ellington and the band's psyche and performance, and Ellington and the organization as a business entity.

Descriptive Entry

This accession consists of the records of Fitzroy Thomas. Materials include Duke Ellington Collection budget information; Thomas' correspondence and memoranda; meeting minutes; information documenting the Duke Ellington Collection program; Oral History Project information; articles on Ellington and those associated with him; and photographs.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Museum archives
Oral history

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs
Brochures
Clippings
Manuscripts

Names:

Ellington, Duke, 1899-1974
National Museum of American History (U.S.). Duke Ellington Collection
Thomas, Fitzroy

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