



# Duke Ellington Society

Washington, DC

## Laurent Mignard Duke Orchestra

### *Duke Ellington is Alive*

Juste un Trace AMOC305369175646

Didier Desbois (as, cl) Aurelie Tropez (as,cl) Nicholas Montier (ts) Christophe Allemand (ts, cl) Philippe Chagne (bars, cl) Frank Delpout (tpt) Franck Guicherd (tpt) Francois Biensan (tpt) Richard Blanchet (tpt) Jean-Louis Damant (tbn) Guy Figlionlos (tbn) Guy Arbion (bs-tbn) Philippe Milanta (pno) Bruno Rousselet (bs) Julie Saury (dms) Patrick Bacqueville (vcl) Laurent Mignard (cond); Rec. Aris, France, 2009

Ko-Ko / Harlem Airshaft / Black and Tan Fantasy / Kinda Dukish (into) Rockin' in Rhythm / Sophisticated Lady / Madness in Great Ones / Half The Fun/Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue / Isfahan / The Eighth Veil / It Don't Mean a Thing / Ad Lib on Nippon / Take The 'A' Train

The Duke Orchestra was founded in 2003 by highly respected French composer/arrange/conductor Laurent Mignard. This CD, recorded live in concert in 2009, demonstrates that this aggregation has earned a reputation as an authentic Ellington repertory orchestra. The arrangements are remarkably close to the originals, and the ensemble passages technically and nuanced, are remarkably like the originals. Wisely and respectfully, the instrumental soloists do not, however, attempt to replicate Ben or Cootie or Tricky Sam or any of the other unique, one-of-a-kind musical personalities on the original recordings, but assuredly they capture the spirit as they just 'play themselves'.

While all the renditions deserve praise, we were particularly drawn to two extended pieces. As evidenced here by tastefully delivered lessening and increasing dynamics and tempo, *Diminuendo and Crescendo* is a fascinating piece on its own without an ear-catching so-called wailing interlude, which is not to say that Nicholas Mantier cannot play an interesting sustained solo of his own between the two. A twelve-minute *Ad Lib on Nippon* presents a wonderful interplay of piano, bass and clarinet; dauntless ensemble bravado and a truly splendid clarinet obligato/solo by Aurelie Tropez.

There is plenty more to enjoy on *Duke Ellington is Alive*. Fine muted trumpet and trombone and mellow clarinet on *Black and Tan Fantasy*, *Kinda Dukish* with pianist Philippe Milanta that segues into *Rockin' in Rhythm* and ends with trumpeter Jean-Louis Damant up in Cat territory, a Philippe Chagne baritone concerto *Sophisticated Lady*, Shakespeare inspired *Madness in Great Ones* and *Half the Fun*, the serene beauty (or is it melancholy) of *Isfahan* by altoist Didier Deshois, the inherent lyricism of *The Eighth Veil* explored by trumpeter Frank Delpout and a romping *It Don't Mean a Thing* this too, featuring vocalizing by Bacqueville.

We always feel a tinge of sadness for people who say they never got the chance to see Duke Ellington and his band in person. With this in mind, we say "amen" to the insightful words of Sjef Hoefsmit, "I never dreamed that it would be possible to come that close to the original performances. If you want to hear Ellington live, go to Paris, if you do not believe me, try and find a copy of this marvelous CD".

♪ Ted Hudson