



# The Duke Ellington Society (TDES, Inc.)

Celebrating the music of Duke Ellington

Wednesday, January 16, 2008 at 7:30PM  
Saint Peter's Church, 54th Street and Lexington Avenue, New York, NY

## Brooks Kerr: An Appreciation of Duke Ellington

Pianist Brooks Kerr has long been a great fan and student of Duke Ellington's music. Ellington himself wrote in *Music Is My Mistress*: "Brooks is a twenty-year-old authority on Duke Ellington—all the way back—and his enthusiasm is such that in 1970 his mother sent him with us to make the European tour. He has not missed a single New York performance in four years." Before Duke's tour to Russia, Brooks Kerr taught the maestro how to say "Love you madly," "Thank you," and "You are welcome," in Russian as well as the numbers one through ten.



Kerr studied at both the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard, as well as with Willie "The Lion" Smith. After Duke's death, Brooks Kerr led bands and combos that included various veterans of Ellington's orchestra. Among those musicians were the drummers Sonny Greer and Sam Woodyard, reed players Russell Procope and Paul Gonsalves, and trumpet players Ray Nance and Francis Williams.

Michael P. Zirpolo, an attorney and jazz writer, wrote of Brooks Kerr, "He had assisted the maestro in various ways, and like so many others before him, he had become unable to resist the gravitational pull of Ellington's music and personality. His entire life became a study and expression of all that was Ellington. He got to know seemingly everything about Duke—"

Brooks Kerr is a member of TDES, and has participated both musically and verbally in many presentations at our society. At our January 19 meeting, he will play the piano and talk about Ellington.

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