

New Leisure

SATURDAY MAGAZINE

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Sacred music one of Duke's two concerts

Duke Ellington and his orchestra will play two concerts in Winnipeg March 27 and 28.

The first will be a special Good Friday concert of sacred music at the Centennial Concert Hall. The second, a jazz concert at the Winnipeg Auditorium.

Now 68, the Duke — who has poured forth more than 1,000 songs, many of them part of the American culture — seems unjaded by more than 40 years in show business, seemingly untired after a day in which he worked from 9 a.m. to 2 a.m., except for a 30-minute nap, writing more music, playing piano, and leading his band — he's had a band since Coolidge was in the White House.

Referring to people he's known over the years in jazz, Ellington says, "Just about everybody has contributed something. There are some outstanding influences — Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Lester Young. With the exception of Bechet, these people were successfully imitated. People built tremendous careers on the imitation of these people. They launched categories, like bop, based on Parker and Gillespie.

"But there were three inimitables — Bechet, Art Tatum and Django Reinhardt. Other people could get three notes but never an exact thing."

Recently an honorary doctorate from Yale was added to the many honors he has received. "A doctorate is wonderful: it means that obviously somebody has been listening.

"But if I write some music and I hear it, that is my pay," he said. "I've got my reward."

Ellington has been working on liturgical jazz ever since two Episcopalian priests heard him at a night club in Redwood City, California, and asked him to write a musical service for Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. His *In the Beginning, God* was premiered there in 1965 and since then has been much in demand in the United States and Europe.

"I'm one of those people who can't say no. I'm like the girl in Oklahoma. So I say 'Oh, sure' and before you know it the date is on me and they're saying, 'Where's my music?'

"I always have to have deadlines. I wrote *Black and Tan Fantasy* in a taxi coming down through Central Park on my way to the recording studio. I'd been in an after-hours joint all night and I had to write it. That was in 1928, when staying up 24 hours a day didn't mean anything."

Tickets for the Duke Ellington concerts are on sale at the usual outlets. The concerts are sponsored by the Manitoba Centennial Interfaith committee.

THE DUKE PLAYS WINNIPEG MARCH 27 AND 28