

Duke Ellington in church: 73

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Duke **Ellington** — the grand old man of American Black music — celebrated his 73rd birthday at his favorite pasttime last Sunday.

He conducted and played his "Concert of Sacred Musci" for 2,700 gathered in a

tribute at the Mother A.M.E. **Zion** Church on West 137th St. in Harlem.

He was joined for the occasion by the Mother **Zion** Cathedral Choir in the 90-minute performance that has won Duke
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'duke Ellington concert

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Ellington new praise and honors in recent years.

Duke brought with him to Mother **Zion** most of the musicians whose names have become by-words in the classic development of the Duke **Ellington** school of music.

Included among the soloists during the performance were Harry Carney on the sax and clarinet; Russell Procope on the sax and clarinet, Trumpeter Cootie Williams; saxophonist Paul Gonsalves and drummer Rufus Jones.

The Mother **Zion** Cathedral Choir sang and narrated for the concert, which combined traditional sacred musical idioms with contemporary sounds.

The packed audience responded with obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment to the combination of gospel choir and jazz band.

While Duke's music spoke for itself, he attempted in a written introduction printed in the concert program, to describe the intent of this new music.

"These concerts are not the traditional mass jazzed up," he said. "I think of myself as a messenger boy who tries to bring messages to the people — not the people who have never heard of God, but those who were more or less raised with the guidance of the Church.

"We deliver lyrical sermons, fire-and-brimstone sermonettes and reminders of the fact that we live in the promised land of milk and honey, where we have prime beef and 80 per cent butterfat ice cream."