

I am sure that there were many people in Sweden – and I was one of them – who listened to Willis Conover’s Voice of America Jazz Hour at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties. Even if the program was primarily broadcasted for listeners on the other side of the Iron Curtain, for listeners in Sweden it was a good complement to the rather poor offer of jazz on Swedish radio.

The program started to be broadcasted in January 1955 and existed all the way to the end of 2003. But by that time Conover was gone. He died in 1996.

Duke Ellington often appeared in the program. New records were played and VoA recordings from the Newport Jazz Festival and other festivals were broadcasted. Conover also interviewed Ellington and other jazz stars of the time.

The Jazz Hour also broadcasted live from Ellington’s funeral and it is a unique document.

Conover started to work for Voice of America at the end of the 1940s and, long before ‘Voice of America Jazz Hour’ started to be broadcasted, he produced jazz programs for VoA.

One of them was apparently called “American Jazz” and it was announced in a broadcast to the Swedish audience August 23, 1947. Conover then promised a program which would offer well-known and less well-known music by Ellington but also by Benny Goodman, Count Basie and others.

But he made the announcement through a Swedish voice and his own voice can only be heard now and then in the broadcast.

I suppose that using a native voice in the presentation was done to reach a wider audience. Perhaps this was something Voice of America normally did at the time.

Is there anyone among the visitors to the website who knows about this and also the name of the person who did the presentation in Swedish?