

# Ellingtonia

Newsletter Of  
*The Duke Ellington Society*



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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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## **DreamWorks Now Co-publisher Of Billy Strayhorn Compositions**

With the intention of bringing his music to a wider public via film, television, new recordings by a variety of popular musicians, and other media, Billy Strayhorn Songs, Inc., has selected DreamWorks Music as co-publisher of his compositions.

The undertaking is somewhat new to Hollywood-based DreamWorks, owned by Steven Spielberg and others who have been more associated with "showbiz" than with classic jazz. But according to a Los Angeles *Times* article by Don Heckman, Strayhorn Songs general manager Herb Jordan notes, "You wouldn't ordinarily think of Spielberg and jazz in the same sentence. But when you look at it from another perspective, from the sense of the whole approach of being committed to great works of art that make money, then the combination begins to make sense."

The same article quotes DreamWorks' president, Chuck Kaye, as saying, "We want to represent what tomorrow is about, and tomorrow's about yesterday. . . Billy Strayhorn's a great artist. And great art recycles, it doesn't go away." Strayhorn Songs also anticipates that the arrangement will increasingly expose Strayhorn as an artist in his own right beyond the already appreciative world of jazz enthusiasts.

A first project of DreamWorks is a songbook, *Billy Strayhorn: American Master*. Planned CD contents include newly recorded versions of compositions never before released on major labels as well as re-releases.

## **We Have Our First Memberships for 2002**

By paying her dues for 2002 back in May, Davie Yarborough, now a second-year student at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, is our first member to renew for the upcoming calendar year. Thanks, Davie, for setting such a fine example!

Second overall is Gina Rollins, a first-time-ever

## **October Program: Jump For Joy; The Bronze Buckaroo Rides Again!**

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

Actor, director, and singer Herb Jeffries is the subject of our October program. Herb was Duke's vocalist in



Photo courtesy of Ben Pubols  
Herb and Ben at Ellington 2000

the early 1940s. He is most famous for the fabulous "Flamingo," but many of his songs are memorable. Ben Pubols will present Herb acting in movies, being interviewed, and singing both

with Ellington and solo. All This and Heaven Too? It all takes place at our regular meeting, at 8 pm on Saturday, October 6, at Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW.

## **Nominations Sought**

by Peter MacHare, Chair

The Nominations Committee is soliciting nominations for officers of our Society for 2002—President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. There are seven members of the Board of Directors. We have a substantial number of people who are willing to be nominated to the Board, but we still have officer positions open. Therefore, if you or someone you know is willing to be nominated for an officer position, please get in touch with Peter MacHare right away by phone at 301-982-4249 (evenings) or by internet at < spmachare@yahoo.com >. Nominations must be received in time to be announced at the October meeting for vote in November.

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member, followed in this category by Charlene Jacob. Close behind these three is David Fleming of Great Britain, who has been first or almost first for several years. As to the rest of us, let's get our dues in now so as to be among the advance joiners for 2002.

## **The Duke At Fargo 1940, Special 60th Anniversary Edition**

Storyville Two-CD Set, STCD 8317 and 8318

Reviewed by Ben Pubols

November 7, 1940 — a date that lives on in celebrity, glory and renown, thanks largely to the efforts of our Jack Towers. The story of how Jack and his late friend and colleague Dick Burris recorded Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra at the Crystal Ballroom in Fargo, North Dakota on November 7, 1940 has been told too often to require repeating. The history of “Fargo” since then has been an auspicious one.

This “Special 60th Anniversary Edition” is the fourth legitimate release of the music recorded at the Crystal Ballroom, the first having been a three-LP set released by the Book-of-the-Month Club in 1978 with notes by Stanley Dance. This was followed by two different two-CD sets, the first appearing on the Vintage Jazz Classics label in 1990 with notes by Andrew Homzy, and the second on the Jazz Heritage label in 1992 with notes by Jack Towers and Stanley Dance. All four releases were mastered by Jack, who, like a fine vintage wine, improves with age. This boxed set, produced by Carl A. Hällström, a frequent contributor to the <Duke-LYM> internet site, is a joy to behold, both aurally and visually. The accompanying booklet includes an introductory essay by Jerry Valburn and reminiscences by Bill Strother, another frequent <Duke-LYM> contributor, and Jack Towers, but the heart of the booklet is the detailed program notes by our own Annie Kuebler.

The core of Annie’s contribution, of course, is the detailed and scholarly notes on each piece (40 references), but she also adds vital background information on both music and musicians, utilizing in many cases material available to her as Ellington archivist at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History as well as oral history material from the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies and other sources. Her writing style is at times lyrical (“Consider Ellington and Strayhorn two of the first environmentalists for their conscientious recycling of songs and song fragments,” or [re “Mood Indigo”], “Ellington gently lays down a bed of chords and soft ornamentation to support Wallace Jones’ fragile tone”) and always informative (the anatomical basis for the title “Warm Valley,” that Fargo was not Ray Nance’s first live appearance with Duke’s band as is generally assumed, but the second, perhaps third, such appearance in as many evenings).

The music itself is superbly reproduced. Jack has outdone himself again. A master audio engineer, he has made the Fargo date come to life as never before. In particular, Jimmie Blanton’s bass playing is startlingly alive and the balance among sections and between sections and soloists is all one could ask for. Everyone will have his/her own favorites of course; mine include “Mood Indigo,” “Warm Valley,” “Never No Lament,” the unbelievable “Cotton Tail,” the Webster-Blanton “Star Dust,” and finally, “St. Louis Blues,” with Ivie Anderson’s dazzling vocalizing and its wild ending. To everyone: Go buy this set, listen, pick your own favorites. It’s a win-win situation!

### **Reminiscing in Tempo**

by Brad Bradbie

Once on a moonless, but starry, late summer night during World War II, a young Merchant Marine seaman went to the mess room during his late 12 to 4 watch for a coffee break. His vessel, an empty Liberty Ship returning from the Normandy Beach invasion, was about a day and half out of the port of New York.

As the fledgling deckhand stirred (evaporated) milk into his cup, he recognized a familiar baritone voice coming through the mess room loudspeaker—it was Martin Block on WNEW’s famous late-night music program, “The Make-Believe Ballroom.” The next tune was not announced, but it was, with a warm glow, immediately recognized. Duke Ellington’s “All Too Soon” brought on a soft wave of nostalgia; it could be said the youthful seafarer had been raised on Ellington’s music.

Years then passed, all too swiftly it seemed, when one warm afternoon the former sailor, now a grandfather, sat comfortably sipping a cool drink at the Long Island home of an old city neighborhood chum. As they talked about bygone days, as senior citizens are wont to do, the old mariner’s eyes fell upon a record set in his friend’s collection entitled, *Duke Ellington: The Blanton-Webster Band*. Excitedly, he read the list of tunes in this treasure trove: “Cottontail,” “In A Mellowtone,” “Raincheck,” the haunting “Chelsea Bridge,” the misty “Warm Valley,” the immortal “Take The “A” Train” and many other masterful, swing-era gems, including the unforgettable “All Too Soon.” The old salt was ecstatic. He couldn’t believe these magnificent recordings were all in one collection. Happily, the shopping plaza where the friend had purchased this superb assemblage of Bluebird (a subsidiary of RCA Victor) reissues was close by. Arguably, this set contains some of the very best of the Ellington and Strayhorn oeuvres.

The joyous package comes with an informative (to a point), descriptive booklet detailing record dates, identification of the soloists and sundry background tidbits. The brochure’s author did, however, run into minor difficulty trying to trace the origin of the title of a tune—“Are You Sticking?”—Ellington composed for Barney Bigard’s clarinet. The writer believed the title to be related to “licorice stick,” a sometime nickname for the instrument. This all brought a smile to the face of the old ex-seaman (who, incidentally became a deck officer before the war ended), because he knew that had the commentator ever visited one of the hipper neighborhoods, Harlem or Brooklyn’s

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## Short Sheets . . .

♫ ♫ From Steve Hancoff, who performed at Ellington 2000: "I am delighted to announce the release of my new book *Acoustic Masters: Duke Ellington . . .* It is available at music stores everywhere, or directly from Warner Bros or me ([www.stevhancoff.com](http://www.stevhancoff.com)) or my record company DGM ([www.Disciplineworldmobile.com](http://www.Disciplineworldmobile.com))." The May/June *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine has reprinted "Day Dream" from the book. ♫ ♫ We note sadly the passing in May of Helen Oakley Dance, widow of Stanley Dance. She is remembered by Ellingtonia enthusiasts as producer of a number of now classic small band recordings by Ellingtonians in the early 1940s. ♫ ♫ The Smithsonian has acquired a collection of jazz historian/critic Royal Stokes' public relations photographs of musicians. ♫ ♫ The Center for Black Music *Digest* has announced that his widow, Carol Ola, has established a Mark Tucker Memorial Fund at the Center, for the purchase of materials in subject areas in which he had particular interest. Contributions may be sent to: The Mark Tucker Memorial Fund, Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, 600 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605-1996. ♫ ♫ Most unique renderings of Ellingtonia comprise the recent CD *In My Solitude: A Tribute to Duke Ellington and His Sacred Concerts* by a duo, Swedish musicians Johannes Landgren on organ and Håken Lewin on alto saxophone. They are scheduled to perform at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY in September and plan to visit New York City and New Haven, Connecticut as well. Another release by this unusual pair is *Negro Spirituals: Freedom*. Patricia Willard contributed the liner notes for both. ♫ ♫

## Quotation of the Month

*It was tough and we travelled by bus some of the time. We'd do at least five or six shows a day. You'd hit town at 8 am after travelling all night. The first show would be at 10 and you'd jolly well better look good.*

*You just never got any rest. We played the Howard Theatre in Washington, the Paradise in Detroit, the Royal in Baltimore and the Apollo Theatre in New York. These were the theatres with the juries. They didn't have audiences; they had juries!*

— Dolores Parker quoted in "Dolores Parker," by Ken Vail, *Blue Light*, April-June 2001

## Reminiscing in Tempo (Continued from page 2)

Bedford-Stuyvesant, he would have learned that "Are You Sticking?" meant, as the urban salt-water sailor knew, "Do you have any bread?"

This important record set we have been discussing—*Duke Ellington: The Blanton-Webster Band* can still be found on cassette and CD, and maybe final vinyl. You can't be considered a serious jazz fan if you don't have it. The next time you're out shopping: "Don't come home without it!"

## Our Outstanding Outing

A cornucopia of irresistible delectables from a to z—apple pie to zucchini salad. Ear candy—Ellington and Strayhorn music. Wished-for weather—smiling blue skies and gently bussing breezes. And most important, absolutely beautiful people from near and afar—the Powhatan Bradbies from Southern Maryland and Lois Moody from Ottawa, Canada. All combined to make our annual picnic in July a memorable experience.

Held again this year at our prexy and first lady's haven at historic Highland Beach on the Chesapeake Bay, the event was especially well attended by members and guests, the most in recent years. The town's mayor, Raymond Langston, stopped by to extend a welcome and stayed a while to chat and enjoy refreshments. A bit later glasses were raised and "Happy Birthday" was intoned in observance of the birthday of thoroughly surprised Geneva Perry, our member who played with the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. During the afternoon first lady Geneva Hudson, a member of its board, conducted several tours of the Frederick Douglass Museum and Cultural Center, formerly known as "Twin Oaks" after it was built, as designed by Douglass, near the end of the 19th century as a summer home.

While few swam or played beach blanket bingo or fished and crabbed, a number sunbathed, cooled their tootsies in the soothing surf and fine sand, ambled about, or otherwise enjoyed nature's offerings. Most, however, simply preferred the congenial, relaxing company of others.

## Janna Steed's Transplant a Success

We very happily report that the June 21 living-donor liver transplant at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha to our member The Reverend Danna Steed went well. After having been "promoted" from cooperative care to outpatient status on July 23, on August 3 Janna was allowed to return to her home in Iowa, some six weeks after the transplant procedure. Her donor, Jean Anne Paul, was able to return to Iowa six days after surgery. The prognosis for both is good.

During the cooperative care and outpatient phases of her convalescence at the hospital's Nebraska House, several persons served blocks of time as Jana's live-in nurses. Among them was Lynne Mueller, former TDES president.

On August 5, Janna gratefully celebrated her birthday at home. "The prayers offered on my behalf by people literally around the world sustained me and my caregivers," she writes. "Even when I was afraid, I felt hopeful about the outcome and confident of God's love and was able to do my part of the work of recovery. The whole experience has blessed me in countless ways."

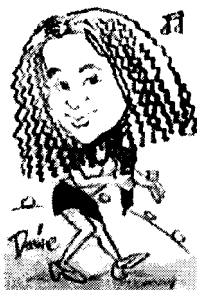
## Back Copies Available

For back copies of *Ellingtonia*, just send a self-addressed and stamped envelope and indicate the specific issue/s you want. We have at least several copies of most editions.

## "Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term in MIMM)

### About Our Members

♪♪ **John Hasse** is the "Profile" subject in the June issue of *The Torch*. ♪♪ Did you know that **Don Rouse** plays clarinet with several groups, recently including the Pontchartrain Causeway New Orleans Jazz Band alumni in a tribute session. ♪♪ **Rusty Hassan** continues as host-producer of popular jazz broadcasts over WPFW-FM. ♪♪ **Patricia Willard** contributed a photograph of Herbie Jones and several items to the latest Duke Ellington Society of Sweden *Bulletin*. ♪♪ D.C. educator Barbara Lois Fullard in a letter praised **Luvenia George** for her work as Director of the Ellington Youth Project, stating that "You have helped to put D.C. Public School children . . . on the map in a very positive light. . . . It is projects like these that give veteran teachers, especially, a new academic and professional charge." ♪♪ Student member **Davie Yarborough** spent the summer studying creative writing and photography at Dartmouth College in a special arts program for secondary school students. ♪♪ In a note in the current *Blue Light*, editor **David Fleming** extends thanks for the "Goodwill from Washington" during his illness. He has been re-elected Vice Chairman of DESUK. ♪♪ In "Random Recollections of an Ellingtonian" in the same issue, Dr. Andrew Dunn writes, "I told **Jack [Towers]** that if the house was on fire, the first record I would grab would be the Fargo disc . . ." Also, there is a reprint of a **Patricia Willard** Duke-LYM internet posting about Frank Sinatra's contribution to *DownBeat's* special issue for Duke's 75th birthday, which she edited. ♪♪ To assure that it is maintained in a manner befitting Ellington, **Ulysses "Speedy" LaPradde** on his own has routinely checked on Duke's grave site at Woodlawn Cemetery and personally contributed to its upkeep. For Duke's April birthdate this year, he organized a trip, arranged for a bus, and led a TDES group there for a memorial service. Among the participants was Mercedes Ellington. ♪♪



Self-Portrait by Davie at Dartmouth

## "Battle" Theme Brings Variety and Surprises

by Angela Grimmer, Secretary

Our June "Member's Choice" meeting, with the theme of "battle of the bands" featured an Ellington version and another band's version of the same tune. This theme turned up an interesting and varied selection of Ellingtonia, recalling the swing era days of the big bands.

One of the most interesting selections was Ben Pubols' choice of Jessye Norman singing "The Holy City," which was the inspiration for the Miley-Ellington "Black and Tan Fantasy." Jack Towers played a Chris Griffin version of "Boy Meets Horn," to contrast to the one by Rex. Richard Firda had Ivy Anderson and Rosemary Clooney sing the same song, "I'm Checkin' Out, Goombye," both backed by the Ellington band, 20 years apart. The battle of the singers continued with Kitty Kallen and Joya Sherrill both singing "I'm Beginning to See the Light"; we concluded that Joya had the edge. Teddy Hudson's contribution was an "I Got It Bad" vocal by Larry Hamilton with The Jazz Edge (the St. Louis repertory orchestra managed by our member George Davis and in which he plays trumpet), followed by an Ellington version featuring Jimmy Grissom. Ted Shell brought Jimmie Lunceford's version of "Sophisticated Lady." Patricia Willard's selections were recent recordings of "Heaven" and "Freedom" by two Swedish musicians, Håkan Lewin, alto, and Johannes Landgren, organ. Don Rouse brought two versions of "Moonglow," a tune suspected of being Ellingtonian from the start. Ray Nance's "Artistry in Rhythm" was a sharp contrast to one of Kenton's versions of his theme, the bombastic "Artistry Jumps." And Peter Machare brought "I Got It Bad" by the (relatively) new singer, Jane Mondheit, who seems to have it all.

The fascinating variety of selections gave us an evening of delightful surprises.

## Guidelines for Presenters

by Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare, Program Coordinators

The survey forms that our Program Committee mailed to members yielded results. We had quite a few suggestions regarding our monthly meetings that we would like to begin to incorporate in our presentations as appropriate. The two most frequent suggestions were that our meetings were too long and that there should be more time to interact with our presenters. To address these issues, the Committee suggests (no hard and fast rules here) that we no longer divide our presentations into two parts. We'll have the presentation (one hour or a little longer), then our happy hour, and then time for brief discussion before we head home.

Other suggestions were that presenters use our video capabilities to a greater extent and prepare programs to pass out at the meetings. Another suggestion is that members be encouraged to bring show-and-tell items (new books, new recordings, Ellington memorabilia) to each meeting. One sturdy soul suggested that we record each presentation for our archives and make copies available to out-of-area members.

### THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY

President	Theodore R. Hudson
President Emeritus	Theodore A. Shell
Vice President and Treasurer	Ben Pubols
Secretary	Angela Grimmer
Program Coordinators	Mac Grimmer and Peter MacHare
At-Large Board Members	
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