

Ellingtonia

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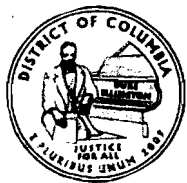
Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

Duke Ellington Selected For District of Columbia's Commemorative Coin

A design showing District of Columbia native son Duke Ellington seated at the piano has been selected by the US Treasury for its series of commemorative quarters of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US territories.



Inscriptions on this, the reverse side of the coin, include "Justice for All" rather than previously rejected "Taxation Without Representative," intended to call attention to the fact Washington,

DC does not have voting representation in Congress. The coin will be produced by the US Mint and is scheduled for issuance on 29 January 2009.

Competitors for the honor were Frederick Douglass, abolitionist and statesman, and Benjamin Banneker, scientist, inventor, astronomer, and surveyor who assisted in the physical design of the District of Columbia, the nation's Federal city. The design selection went through several stages involving various government and citizen groups that provided input and cast advisory votes. The final decision was made by the Treasurer of the US. An official US Mint statement notes that more than 300 original concepts were narrowed down to the three that were then sent to the Mint for artistic renderings.

DC's design is unique in that it features an iconic person. Designs of the 25-cent pieces already in circulation include, for instance, New York's statue of liberty, Tennessee's music instruments, and Texas' map.

Suites and Sweets For Valentine's Day

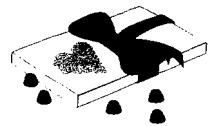
Saturday, 7 February at 7 PM

Grace Lutheran Church

16th and Varnum Sts, NW, Washington, DC

Some of Ellington's and Strayhorn's most beautiful music is contained in the Suites, which will be the subject of our February program. Listen as Ellington and Strayhorn take us through a world of French painting, ballet, handsome traffic policemen, sunrises, sunsets, apes, bugs, frogs, and monsters. The Suites will be even sweeter than usual as we will have Valentine's chocolates for you to enjoy with the music. You cannot resist such an enticing invitation, so we look to see you the first Saturday in February.

– Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator



Prez Fest 2009

Will Honor Billy Strayhorn

Music, presentations, talks, and star performers at the Prez Fest will celebrate Billy Strayhorn during 14-15 March at St. Peter's Church in New York.

Originally a "To Prez with Love" tribute to Lester Young for well over 30 years, it evolved as Prez Fest that has begun to highlight a different artist each year. Last year it was Billie Holiday.

An information release states that Prez Fest 2009 "will be providing the world with the opportunity to learn about the artistry of jazz pianist and composer Billy Strayhorn including his collaboration with Duke Ellington and . . . will recognize the restoration of the Billy Strayhorn piano" that will be in the Living Room of the church.

Among those who will participate are the Jimmy

(Continued on page 3 under "Prez Fest 2009")

Duke, King's "Aria" on Jazz, and Black History Month

February is the month for the observance of Black History (originally established as Negro History Month) and of the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. As we know, Duke Ellington was an admirer of King. Assuredly he is one of those about whom King says that "much of the search for identity among American Negroes was championed by jazz musicians" who "were returning to their roots to affirm that which was stirring within their souls." Duke's My People, BBB, and so many other of his compositions come immediately to mind.

Apropos of these February observances, with the kind permission of Ray Carmen, president of TDES, we reprint below an excerpt from his "A Note from the President" column published in that society's February 2007 newsletter:

Seldom do we now think of Dr. King beyond his civil rights activities. Gospels and spirituals are part and parcel of his religious calling. We never think of him as a jazz spokesman.

For the past three years, I have dedicated my February column to Black History Month. This month I offer you a portion of Dr. King's "aria" on jazz. The following message is Dr. King's opening remarks to the 1964 Berlin Jazz Festival.

God has wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed His creatures with the capacity to create and from this capacity have flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and joy that have allowed man to cope with his environment in many different situations. Jazz speaks of life, the blues tell the stories of life's difficulties and if you think about it for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph.

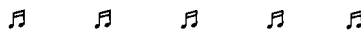
This is triumphant music. Modern Jazz has continued in this tradition, singing the songs of a more complicated urban existence. When life itself offers no order and meaning the musician creates an order and meaning from the sound of the earth which flows through his instrument.

It is no wonder that so much of the search for identity among American Negroes was championed by jazz musicians. Long before the modern essayists and scholars wrote of "racial identity" as a problem for a multi-racial world, musicians were returning to their roots to affirm that which was stirring within their souls.

Much of the power of our freedom movement in the United States has come from this music. It has strengthened us with its powerful rhythms when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits were down.

And now, jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man. Everybody has the blues. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for faith. In music, especially this broad category called jazz, there is a stepping stone towards all of these.

We know Duke had concerns when we tried to categorize him. We know Duke's feelings about being categorized. I do not know if he was ever aware of Dr. King's words on jazz, yet I believe he would have had no objection to having his works placed in Dr. King's category. If by chance you are in need of another explanation of jazz, I suggest that you cut these words out and carry them in your pocket. When someone asks you what is jazz, just read these words that have been passed down from the mountaintop.



Ellingtonia Contributors Thanked

At our New Year's Party in January, persons who had contributed items published in *Ellingtonia* during 2008 received Certificates of Appreciation. Also, several were acknowledged for other reasons. A special one had been prepared for Erica MacHare, our student member who voluntarily serves so well as our Distribution Manager. Honorary Member certificates were awarded to Maurice Lawrence and Jack Towers in absentia. In this photo by Patricia Braxton, from left to right are editor Ted Hudson, Jack Dennis, Elinor Eugene, Patricia Willard, Peter MacHare, Art Luby, Geneva Hudson, and Bob Reny.



Short Sheets . . .

♪ Bet You Didn't Know, Did You? ♪

We read in the current *Blue Light* that after Harry Carney and Sonny Greer, Russell Procope had the longest tenure in Duke's band, 1946 to 1974.

♪ Jazz at the Pyramids ♪

The Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, under the direction of David Baker, presented concerts at Egypt's Great Pyramids of Giza and at Cairo and Alexandria opera houses. John Hasse, who helped organize the week-long affair, reports that their Egyptian hosts "rolled out the red carpet," including dinner at a palace with actor Omar Sharif, who was following the US elections very closely, and an obligatory camel ride. John's "insider's" account of the trip was published in *DownBeat*.

♪ Howard Theater Project Receives Grant ♪

The National Park Service announced that an award of \$350,000 to Howard Theatre Restoration, Inc. A press release by the corporation states that the funds will be used to provide a historic structure report, to replace the failed roof, and to stabilize the structure.

♪ Researcher Seeks Info on Geneva Perry ♪

Member of the Sweethearts of Rhythm and our late member Geneva Perry is the subject of a research project. If you knew or know about Geneva and think that you might be helpful, get in touch with our editor who will in turn ask the author/researcher to get in touch with you, or vice versa.

♪ Hear Them Smoking?!! ♪

Purists who favor the sound of music on LPs will be interested in Roy Furchgott's "You Say You Want a Revolution (at 33 1/3)" in the *New York Times* of 2 December. He quotes a listener who describes the experience: "... I felt like we were in a jazz club. I could hear the musicians breathing. It felt like I could hear them smoking." It seems that sales of CDs are decreasing but sales of records are going up.

Prez Fest 2009 *(Continued from page 1)*

Heath Quartet, Valerie Capers Trio, Aaron Diehl, and Jimmy Owen Trio; others are still to be confirmed.

Among events are a listening session of Strayhorn music on the afternoon of 14 March, a presentation by David Hajdu on the afternoon of 15 March followed by Jazz Vespers. At 7 pm there will be a concert in a "Prism" format—different size groups at various locations in the Sanctuary. Tentative plans call for a series of piano duets using a Baldwin piano and Strayhorn's Steinway. These events are free; for the concert there is a suggested donation of \$20.

The church is located at 619 Lexington Avenue (at 54th Street), New York City. For updates and more information, call 732-549-0876.

Inaugural Poet Is

Arthur Logan Descendant

Elizabeth Alexander, the poet selected by Barack Obama to deliver a poem at his inauguration is granddaughter of Arthur Logan, Duke Ellington's close friend and physician. Her mother, Adele Logan Alexander, daughter of Dr. Logan, is a history professor at George Washington University and an author. Elizabeth Alexander's father is Cliff Alexander, Secretary of the Army during the Jimmy Carter administration.

Attention Itinerarists And Social Historians

Our member Brian Gilmore writes:

"One of my first accidental finds in a *Jet* issue from 1951 was Duke Ellington in Atlanta, 1951. . . . commenting on 'integration.' He was touring with Nat King Cole and Sarah Vaughn. They were to play the Municipal and blacks were relegated to entering the side door. Ellington's comments were very direct and he urged blacks to raise \$100 million and then integrate. The suggestion was—if we had \$100 million, there would be no argument about integration.

"Lo and behold, later in the same issue, the Mayor of Atlanta at the time intervenes, and contacts the owner of the auditorium who allowed blacks to enter through the front like everyone else. One wonders—did Ellington's comments have an effect upon the Mayor of Atlanta.

"I did have one question about the incident—was Clark Terry on that tour. Would love to hear what he had to say about the incident. He was in the band in 1951, correct?"

Quotation of the Month

Get a radio or phonograph capable of the most extreme loudness possible, and sit down to listen to a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony or of Schubert's C-Major Symphony. But I don't mean just sit down and listen. I mean this: Turn it on as loud as you can get it. Then get down on the floor and jam your ear as close into the loudspeaker as you can get it and stay there, breathing as lightly as possible, and not moving, and neither eating nor smoking nor drinking. Concentrate everything you can into your hearing and into your body. You won't hear it nicely. If it hurts you, be glad of it. As near as you will ever get, you are inside the music; not only inside it, you are it; your body is no longer your shape and substance, it is the shape and substance of the music."

—James Agee, from "Preamble"
of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

"Dramatis Felidae" (To Use Our Man's Term from MIMM) About Our Members

Ken Steiner

Ken Steiner continues his unearthing of itinerary information from previously unexplored sources. See some of his latest findings in the current issue of *DEMS Bulletin*, available at www.depanorama.net/dems/, as well as in the Winter 2008-9 *Blue Light*.

Steve Mokone

We happily report that Steve Mokone, having had several operations and hospital stays during 2008, is much better and plans to be at our next meeting.

Scott Schwartz

Scott Schwartz was recently in DC to accept a Mellon technology innovation award for "Archon," a software program that he initiated and helped to develop at the University of Indiana. He continues to head the Sousa Center at that institution.

Sjef Hoefsmit

The newest issue of *DEMS Bulletin*, edited by Sjef Hoefsmit, is available online at depanorama.net/dems/

Looking Ahead

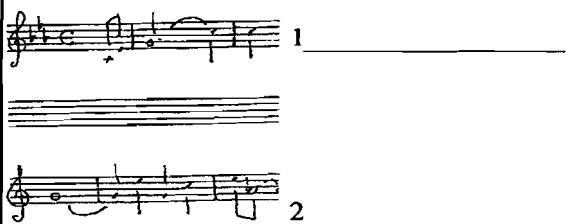
February 25 Denyce Graves. **Sophisticated Lady: An Evening with Denyce Graves.** Kennedy Center Concert Hall. Benefit of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, alma mater of Ms. Graves. Contacts for more info: info@ellingtonarts.org and 202-333-2555.

February 21 Theodore "Ted" Hudson. **Duke Ellington's Spiritual Life and Sacred Music.** Ebenezer UM Church, 4th & D Sts, SE, DC. 1:00 pm. Free.

March 1 Blues Alley Youth Orchestra and Peoples Congregational UCC Chancel Choir. **Concert of Duke Ellington's Sacred Music.** At the church, 4604 - 13th St, NW, DC. 4:00 pm. Free.

March 14-15 Prez Fest 2009 Honors Billy Strayhorn. St. Peter's Church, New York City.

Name These Tunes



Courtesy Ellington Collection,
Archives Center, NMAH

First five responders who correctly identify these well-known pieces will gain fame, albeit without fortune, by way of announcement in our next issue. Send your answers to our e-mail or snail-mail address.

Annual New Year's Party

by Art Luby, Secretary

On January 3 the Society held its yearly holiday party. Well attended, its guests included Ray Carmen, President of TDES down from New York, as well as several long-term members who had been unable to regularly attend for some time.

While we were intentionally light on recorded music, the annual tradition of singing "Twelve Days of Christmas" was properly, if shakily, observed. A self-graded, revised "EQ [Ellington Quotient] Quiz" was also presented, with many of us frustrated with questions that did not call for the name "Billy Strayhorn" as an answer. I was impressed with myself for, at least, remembering that San Francisco was the site of Duke's first sacred concert until Patricia Willard pointed out that she had, in fact, organized the concert.

Still, it was heartening to see the loyalty and warmth of so many long-time members at the event and, by the conclusion of the evening, it certainly seemed that we all loved one another madly. Many thanks to all who took the time to bring food and drink.

Board Vacancy Filled

Elinor F. Eugene has accepted appointment by President MacHare to our Executive Board. This means that we now have all our officer and board positions filled.

To Join or To Renew Membership

Mail your check payable to

The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. at
PO Box 15591, Washington, DC 20003, USA.

Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5;
First-time-ever member, just \$20.

Keep in mind that memberships are for the calendar year.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

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