

Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

Monday, 29 November

Is

BILLY STRAYHORN'S BIRTHDAY



In Loving Memory of Billy,
As We Have Done in Previous Years,
Let's Thankfully Immerse Ourselves in
The Beauty of His Music



His Motto:

"Ever Up and Onward"

Strayhorn Celebrations Include

The Music of Billy Strayhorn

Inside Jazz: Insights on Billy Strayhorn

2 July, Campbell Recital Hall, Stanford University

Billy Strayhorn Celebration

First Annual Hillsborough [NC] Jazz Festival

Born in Dayton, Ohio, "his roots ran deep in Orange County and, importantly, his frequent stays in Hillsborough as a boy were essential to his musical development. An historical marker on Churchton Street in downtown acknowledges his time in Hillsborough."

— Hillsborough Arts Council, Sponsor

Suite Life: A Billy Strayhorn Birthday Bash

27 November, Kelly-Strayhorn Theatre, Pittsburgh

Ed. Note: This theater is named in honor of Pittsburghers Gene Kelly and Billy Strayhorn.

Strayhorn the Songwriter

Purcell Room / Southbank Centre, London

Saturday, 20 November 2010

Frank Griffith Nonet with China Moses and Alexander Stewart

Billy Strayhorn Songs, Inc.

For printed Strayhorn music and to learn more about this great composer, go to billystrayhorn.com

November Program:

"1939 - It Was a Very Good Year"

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

For our November Program we will continue our series examining great years in the history of Duke Ellington's music.

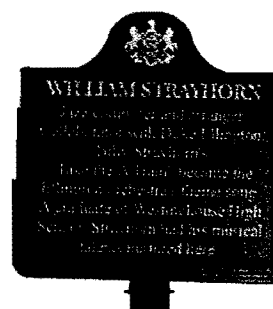
Last year we did an in-depth look at 1940—the first year of the Blanton-Webster Band. Alan Schneidmill and Peter MacHare want to prove that the years leading up to the Blanton-Webster Band are just as fabulous and will cover the year 1939.

The program will be on **Saturday, 6 November** at our usual meeting place, **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC** at 7 pm — and frankly Scarlett, I think you will love this program.

That's Telling 'Em (Well, Something), Clark!

A special feature of the this year's Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Competition at the Kennedy Center in October was a Great American Songbook Gala Concert that included 89-years young Clark Terry.

The *Washington Post* reported that he "came out in a wheelchair . . . and belied an appearance of frailty with a full-blown and fully enjoyed rendition of his classic song 'Mumbles' [that] sounds almost like conversation, but without actual words."



Plaque at Westinghouse High School, Pittsburgh

The last three lines read:

*A graduate of
Westinghouse High
School, Strayhorn
had his musical talents
nurtured here.*

Memories of Paul

by Arthur Luby

Paul Gonsalves died at a relatively young age (53) some 36 years ago leaving a wife and four children. One of those children is his stepdaughter, Mrs. Colette Lappin, whom Gonsalves formally adopted after he married her mother Joanne in the late 1950s. Joanne was employed as a Las Vegas showgirl when Gonsalves met her during one of the band's many engagements in the city, and the logistical problems of their romance must have been considerable given that the town was, at the time, still strictly segregated by mob edict. However, as Colette stressed throughout our conversation, while Paul considered himself a black man, he never made race an issue with anyone and made clear to his new stepdaughter that he considered her to be his real daughter. "I never knew my real father," said Mrs. Lappin, "and from everything I was told I didn't miss anything, so Paul was the only father I've ever known. He always wanted me to call him 'Daddy' and I always did."

Colette quickly understood that her father had a unique calling and unique talents. "I saw him play frequently, including on the Ed Sullivan show, which was a very big deal back then. I also remember the band playing a big concert at Freedomland, which was an amusement park, with Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme. Paul took several solos that night, and it always made me nervous when he played because I wanted him to do well and not make mistakes. And, of course, he played extremely well and I was very proud."

"He also used to let me ride in his lap on the band bus. That was fun and all the musicians were very friendly. And Duke used to go out of his way to make me feel special. He always knew how to treat ladies, even little ladies. In fact, I used to talk to Duke a fair amount because Paul was always late and Duke called our house frequently to find him.

Unfortunately, while Gonsalves was an openly affectionate man and never abusive to those around him, his daughter over time became aware of his substance abuse issues. "Duke once sent him to a place where he could be treated for his addictions, but he hated being there and was trying to get out the entire time, so I can't imagine how the staff could have helped him very much. And towards the end of his life he began having seizures which I am sure were caused by drugs or alcohol, or both. In fact, recently I saw a DVD of him performing a year or so before he died [I believe she is referring to the recording of the orchestra at the Tivoli Gardens in Denmark] and he had white hair and looked so old and unkempt that it was hard to watch... But, he would never drink in front of us. When he came home he would talk to me until late in the night and would chain smoke cigarettes, but not drink. He did that out of our sight."

Still, while fully aware of his weaknesses, Colette looks back on her father and the years spent with him with fondness and love. "He never cursed—in fact he was very straight laced about cursing and didn't want to hear it around the house—and was never mean, and I always looked forward to him coming home. To me that's when our home was happiest. One of the great things about him being home was that he was a wonderful cook... I still remember a Cape Verdean dish he used to make... linguiso. It was seafood sausage and it was absolutely delicious.

"We lived in Cambria Heights when I was a teenager and that was where a lot of jazz musicians lived, mostly I think because the neighborhood was accepting of interracial families. In the early seventies, though, my mother threw him out of the house and he moved down to the Edison Hotel. I used to visit him there, but that was the end of our family. When Paul moved out our family basically crumbled. My mother sold the house and the kids dispersed. I went to live with the man who I married and my brother and sister left too. In the end, as much as he was gone and on the road, it turned out that Paul had been the one who really kept the family together.

"It's funny... after all of the Ellington and Strayhorn compositions he played, his favorite pieces were 'Laura' and 'When Joanna Loved Me'—both very romantic compositions. But, he loved Duke and loved being part of his orchestra. It was his life and nothing else was as important. The final months were difficult, his physical condition got worse, and he didn't take care of himself. But, I truly think the reason for that was that he knew Duke was dying and he simply didn't want to be alive if Duke wasn't around and he couldn't play for him."

Reviewer Arthur Luby's one-act play Paul Gonsalves on the Road had a June date for a public reading at Metrostage in Alexandria, Virginia. His seminal essay "Paul Gonsalves Remembered" can be accessed on the Gonsalves website at paulgonsalves.org/; interview excerpts from it appeared in our June 2008 issue.

The Strayhorn Project by Don Braden and Mark Rapp

Premium Music Solutions

Reviewed by John Edwin Mason

Say the words “virtuoso tour-de-force” and whomever you’re talking to will immediately start thinking about dazzling displays of individual technique. When I tell you that tenor saxophonist Don Braden and trumpeter Mark Rapp’s new album, *The Strayhorn Project*, is a virtuoso tour-de-force I mean something very different. In this case, it’s all about the understated brilliance of six superb musicians bouncing idea after idea off each other and, in the process, creating something that’s deeper and richer than any single one of them could have created alone.

Don’t get me wrong, there’s a lot of individual virtuosity on display. You couldn’t hope for stronger soloists than Braden and Rapp. You’re also unlikely to find more generous leaders, so everyone has lots of room to stretch out. But the ensemble is the thing, and that’s a large part of this album’s charm.

It should go without saying that an equally large part of its appeal is the material that the group has chosen to work with—a collection of timeless Billy Strayhorn songs, four by him alone, five co-written with Duke Ellington, one with Johnny Mercer, and another with Barney Bigard. This is the sort of material musicians live for—beautiful, complex, and challenging.

In *The Strayhorn Project*, Braden and Rapp have translated the maestro’s Swing-Era classics into a variety of other jazz languages. They transform “Raincheck,” the album’s opening track, into a New Orleans-inspired romp that will make you want to find a second line and dance down the street. Their reworking of “Isfahan” summons up memories of Miles Davis’s mid-60s quintets, while the subtly funky groove in “Johnny Come Lately” veers off in the direction of jazz-rock fusion. If Braden, Rapp, and company weren’t so respectful, so true to the material, these transformations probably wouldn’t work. But they are and they do, brilliantly.

The album’s ballads are particularly beautiful, and it’s here that Braden and Rapp’s generosity as leaders allows vocalist Sachal Vasandani and pianist Gerald Clayton to shine. Vasandani’s smokey, late-night sound in “Something to Live For” and “Daydream” creates an atmosphere of lamentation and regret that suits the songs perfectly. A magical reading of “Chelsea Bridge,” featuring Clayton and the rhythm section, opens with a gentle, out-of-time piano solo that eventually gives way to soft, inventive interplay between the piano, bass, and drums. It’s one of the highlights of the album.

This review wouldn’t be complete without a shout-out to the engineers Jim Czak and Bill Moss. From start to finish, the album’s sound is simply gorgeous.

Personnel: Don Braden, tenor saxophone, flute, and alto flute; Mark Rapp, trumpet; Sachal Vasandani, vocals; Gerald Clayton, piano; Rene Hart, bass; Greg Gonzalez, drums.

Reviewer John Edwin Mason’s latest book is One Love, Ghoema Beat: Inside the Cape Town Carnival, about one of the best known of the 60-plus music troupes that participate in Cape Town’s annual carnival. Published in South Africa by Random House Struik in 2010, it is also available from the University of Virginia press.

Quotation of the Month

Billy Strayhorn was “my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head, my brainwaves in his head, and his in mine.”

– Duke Ellington

Title Matching Quiz

Match the Strayhorn compositions with their alternate titles.

Answers are on page 4.

Titles

- 1) Upper Manhattan Medical Group 2) Lotus Blossom 3) Blue Bird of Delhi 4) Elf 5) A Flower Is a Lovesome Thing 6) Charpoy 7) Blood Count 8) Violet Blue 9) Take the ‘A’ Train 10) Polly’s Theme

Alternate Titles

- a) Manhattan Murals b) Isfahan c) Nocturne or Passion d) Blue Cloud e) Charlotte Russe f) Mynah g) U.M.M.G h) Haupé i) Lana Turner or Francesca j) Multicolored Blue

Maison du Duke (Duke’s Place in Paris)

Founded in 2009 in Paris, Maison du Duke consists of Ellington enthusiasts, among them Laurent Mignard, leader of The Duke Orchestra whose CD *Duke Ellington Is Alive* was reviewed in our October issue.

Among the group’s plans are collection of scores and transcriptions; concerts; a translation into French of Duke’s *Music Is My Mistress* and its publication by Parenthèses; a website; a 2012 Ellington European Festival in Provins, France; and a college of specialists to explore Duke’s work in a cycle of thematic conferences.

For membership and other information, write by postal mail to La Maison du Duke, 5 bis cité midi 75018, Paris, France; go online to the web site at www.maisonduduke.com; or write by e-mail to contact@maisonduduke.com.

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

cited, referenced, and/or quoted, some several times, in Harvey G. Cohen's *Duke Ellington's America* (University of Chicago Press, 2010) are Scott Schwartz, Ted Hudson, Ben Pubols, Maurice Lawrence, Patricia Willard, Sjef Hoefsmits, Jerry Valburn, Ken Steiner, and Janna Tull Steed.

This is not a rhetorical question: *Did we miss anyone?*

Mark Harvey

The Boston-based Aardvark Jazz Orchestra of Mark Harvey opened its season on 19 September with a concert showcasing cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum. In early September, Rev. Harvey, himself a trumpeter, was the featured expert on NPR's WGBH "Jazz in the Classroom" program on trumpeters, among them Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, and Lester Bowie.

Harvey Cohen

Harvey Cohen's *Duke Ellington's America* (University of Chicago press) is already in its second printing.

Marjorie Felton Hooper

Marjorie Felton Hooper, a long-time member of our Society, died on 3 September 2010 in Washington, DC. She is survived by her husband of 55 years, Charles, Sr., a musician and teacher; sons Charles, Jr., Louis, and Craig; and her sister, Elinor Felton Eugene. Charles, Sr. and Elinor, too, are members of our Society.

Born in Washington, DC in 1921, she attended local schools, including Miner Teachers College, before going on for additional degrees at Smith College and Columbia University. She taught at DC secondary schools, Howard University (where she met Charles) and Tuskegee Institute. She was also an administrator at Howard, first in the College of Medicine and then in the School of Business.

She was noted for her warmth, graciousness, loving disposition, and concern for the well-being of others.

We extend to Mrs. Hooper's immediate and extended family and other loved ones our sincere condolences.

Duke the Engineer Honored

The 27 January 1934 issue of the Cleveland *Call and Post* included a photograph of Duke and text that reads, "The American Society of Engineers has just voted Duke Ellington an honorary membership for his latest Victor recording 'Daybreak Express.'"

As enthusiasts know, later Duke was also at the throttle and whistle of "Happy Go Lucky Local," "Across the Track Blues," "Track 360," and other musical locomotives. Speaking of trains, of course there is the historical and artistic importance of Billy Strayhorn at the controls of a different kind of train, the "A."

Ed. Note: We thank Ken Steiner for sending us a copy of the item.

Duke and Strayhorn by Non-Ellingtonians

by Art Luby, Secretary

The Society's first meeting of the fall featured an excellent presentation of DVDs by Ted Shell that could appropriately be titled "Duke Played by Non-Ellingtonians."

The list of others was formidable and included Wynton Marsalis, Al Hirt, Maynard Ferguson, Harry James, Roy Eldridge, Oscar Peterson, Art Blakey, and the great Detroit guitarist Kenny Burrell. All delivered fine performances on tunes ranging from "Prelude to a Kiss," "Lush Life," "A' Train," "Caravan," "In a Sentimental Mood," and several versions of "Perdido."

However, the highlight of the presentation was a joyous performance by a late seventies Basie orchestra of "In a Mellotone" led by a very pleased Count, his timing and swing fully intact.

While Ted's program primarily featured musicians who never played for Duke, an exception was made for his favorite Ellington trumpeter, the great Clark Terry. Ted selected a DVD of a Terry-led quartet from the early eighties, in which Clark was accompanied by the underrated Duke Jordan and former Ellington bassist Jimmy Woode—the latter effectively guided by Terry's trumpet while scatting on "Squeeze Me."

Answers to Title Matching Quiz on Page 4

1-g, 2-e, 3-f, 4-b, 5-c, 6-I, 7-d, 8-j, 9-a, 10-h

Attention Members

Please check your membership expiration date on the upper right of your address label. Remember, our membership is by the calendar year.

Thank you

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