

Ellingtonia

A Publication Of
The Duke Ellington Society



Courtesy Carlyle Productions

Volume XVII, Number 1

JANUARY 2009

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Web Site: depanorama.net/desociety/

"Echoes of Ellington" Conference Planned for April 2009 in Texas

"Echoes of Ellington: A Conference on the Music and Life of Duke Ellington" sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin and its Butler School of Music is scheduled for 15-17 April 2009 in Austin, Texas.

John Lincoln Collier, a biographer of Duke Ellington, and John Franceschina, author of *Duke Ellington's Music for Theatre*, will be keynote speakers. The University of Texas Jazz Orchestra will present an all-Ellington concert on 16 April. Five performances of *Queenie Pie* starring Carmen Bradford will take place over several days. Another feature of the conference will be awards of \$1,000 each to five "emerging scholars" at the masters and doctoral levels who submit winning abstracts.

A call for papers has been issued. Submissions are welcomed that "address Ellington's music, life and times from any perspective, including historical, sociological, analytical, theoretical, and performance. Papers concerning Ellington's music for the theater and for film are especially welcomed. Proposals for round tables, lecture recitals and novel formats will also be considered. Presentations for individual papers should be approximately 30 minutes." Abstracts from proposers of no more than 500 words and their biographies of no more than 150 words should be sent to Prof. James Buhler at jbuhler@mail.utex.edu by Monday, 20 December.

For more details, you can go online to www.music.utexas.edu/echoesof_ellington; contact Prof. Jeff Hellmer, Director of Jazz Studies, at jhellmer@mail.-utexas.edu; write to the Butler School of Music, University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station E3100, Austin, TX 78712-0435; or phone 512-471-7764.

Happy New Year!

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator



Our annual New Year's party will be on **Saturday, 3 January at 7 pm** in our usual meeting room at **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, Washington, DC.**

The Society will provide liquid refreshments, ice, plates, and cups. We ask our members to bring a pot-luck dish for the table. If you forget to prepare a dish, please come anyway. Members may bring guests.

Historic Highway Marker Honors Billy Strayhorn

The text of a North Carolina Highway Historical Marker in Hillsborough reads:

BILLY STRAYHORN 1915-1967

Jazz Composer and Pianist. Wrote "Take the A Train" and Other Songs for Duke Ellington Orchestra. Boyhood Home Site 1/4 Mi. W.

A dedication took place in front of the Hillsborough fire station on 29 November. An essay issued by the state's Department of Cultural Resources states in part:

"Although Strayhorn was 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. His father and grandfather both worked at the Eno Mill. His grandparents, who owned a piano, lived in a house (now gone) . . . Returning with his mother and siblings to North Carolina from Ohio regularly from age five, Strayhorn attended his first year of school while in Hillsborough . . . He spent breaks and summers in North Carolina through his early teenage years . . . Initially gospel tunes drew him to the piano. He often wandered through the slave cemetery across from his boyhood home and walked along the Eno River."

Ten, by Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra

Water Baby Records (WBR 1101)

Reviewed by Theodore R. Hudson

Ten is a music anthology culled from Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra's previously released CDs *Rhapsodies*, *Monk's Moods*, *After the War*, *Far East Suite*, and *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire*. All pretty well fit Brown's characterization of his compositions and arrangements as Fifth Stream Music. The CD's title refers to the tenth anniversary of this unusual orchestra, an innovative group that features principally his original works and fresh interpretations of others', in this instance Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, and to a lesser extent Monk, Gershwin, and Mingus.

Dr. Brown's re-composing of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was funded by a Guggenheim Fellowship, his intention being to reflect 21st century demographics. From it, "Andante/Adagio," essentially variations on Gershwin's theme, are vehicles for guitarist Will Bernard. The Native American drumbeat, we understand, is a reference to the Choctaw heritage of Brown's father. Added here are a Cuban box drum and Trinidadian steel drums.

"Self Portrait in Three Colors" calmly follows the contours of Charles Mingus' orchestral whole-piece original, with no solos.

Monk is represented by three tunes: "Monk's Mood" offers extended solos by Hung Wang on Chinese viola, Gangquin Zhao on Chinese dulcimer, and Melecio Magdaluyo on alto sax. "Misterioso" showcases guest artist Steve Lacy on soprano sax over a background of the economical notes of this composition. A varied tempo "Hackensack" also features Lacy, this time with input from trumpeter John Worley.

The Brown originals show his creativity and the Asian American Orchestra to great advantage; and why not, they were created especially for the band's instrumentation and distinctive personnel. [Can you, perceptive reader, think of another composer who did the same?] "Anthem/Baile de la Orisha" are from two works, the first from *Mo, Shimasen! (Never Again!)*, commissioned in 1995 by the Asian Heritage Council in recognition of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is an orchestral work that explores a theme, or perhaps mantra is the better term, with scoring for layers of instruments. "Baile de la Orisha" is from still another extended composition, *Incantation Suite*, commissioned in 1983 by the San Francisco Chamber Music Society. Both are orchestral with only integrated, spot solo/obligato passages. As performed, the two works are almost seamless.

One may wish that there were more than the too brief, tantalizing excerpts from Brown's soundtrack for *After the War*, a play by Philip Gotanda that premiered at San Francisco's American Conservatory in 2007. "After the War (Act II)" is a haunting muted passage by trumpeter Hung, "Interlude" a brief solo by guest pianist Frank Martin, and "Prelude L'Amour," another spotlighting Hung, it also haunting in its simplicity.

From *Big Bands Behind Barbed Wire*, the short "Intro to Rhymes" seems subtly ominous rhythmically. Then follows "Rhymes for Children" itself, beginning with a playful, child's repetitive rhythm and engagingly simple melody. In a free-play atmosphere, trombonist Wayne Wallace, tenor saxist Francis Wong, trumpeter John Worley, and reed trumpeter Zi Chao Liu have their say. Resolution comes with orchestral counterpoint followed by return to the thematic introduction. A brief pause, then—surprise!—it's the melody of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" to close. Kinda' heady stuff here.

Duke's "Come Sunday" opens reverently with Wang on Chinese violin and guest David Murray on bass clarinet in melodic counterpoint, then separately over a background suggestive of a choir or organ, all pleasantly church-y. Strayhorn's "Isfahan" showcases alto saxist Melecio Magdaluyo sticking closely to Hodges. A gorgeous trumpet solo continues the mood, then Magdaluyo develops his own variations before returning to the familiar melody. A "Mount Harissa Prelude" is a sort of ethereal mood setter for the grandeur of Mount Harissa. An opening piano statement and the orchestra introduce "Mount Harissa" itself, after which Worley and tenor saxist Hafez Modirzadeh solos express their conceptions of this place of spirituality and mystery. This piece is a showpiece for percussion, of course, which is all dramatically and tastefully integrated.

What is to be made of the leader-composer-percussionist of *Ten* and his Asian American Orchestra. The answer is clear. Anthony Brown is a major creative artist. He points out that Duke Ellington was influenced by different cultures and interpreted them musically. He, too, has been influenced, in a major way, by different cultures and heritages, mainly American and Japanese, and has interpreted them musically. And that Asian American Orchestra can play, both individually and collectively. Brown and most of his musicians are trained in both Western and Asian musics, and they have chops a-plenty to boot. And what is to be made of all those intriguingly complex textures, colors, tunes, and rhythms, and of all those familiar instruments mixed with those "strange" ones, among them Chinese mouth organ, reed trumpet, Chinese viola, hammered dulcimer, two-string violin, Chinese flute, and an array of percussion instruments. In short, what's to be made of *Ten*.

Advice often given by our hero Edward Kennedy Ellington comes to mind: "Listen."

We Get Mail . . .

Re the note about the Federal Jazz Commission, Tom Gray was also a noted member of the Country Gentlemen and Seldom Scene groups for years. They're both noted bluegrass ensembles who began locally in 1957 and 1971 (respectively) and have acquired international acclaim over the years. The Gents went through several bass players before settling on Tom; he was a charter member of the Scene.

I'm sure most of the bg crowd doesn't know he plays old-time jazz.

I hope all's well—I miss the DES a lot!

-- Dick Spottswood

[Ed. Note: A long-time member, Dick has lived in Florida for quite a while now. Here he is referring to our "Short Sheets" note about the "retirement" of the Federal Jazz Commission, for whom Tom Gray played bass.]

Denyce Graves to Perform at Ellington School of the Arts Benefit

A graduate of the school, Denyce Graves will appear in "Sophisticated Lady: An Evening with Denyce Graves" at the Kennedy Center on 25 February. For more information go to info@ellingtonarts.org.

William Fawcett Hill, 1918-2008

William (Bill) Hill, founder in the late 1980s of the Duke Ellington Society of Southern California and its president for 11 years, died at his home in California on 13 November. Also, it is said that he was chairman and only member of the Las Vegas Ellington Society when it was founded in 1959.

His professional career included service as a clinical psychologist and university-level teaching.

Memorial contributions in his honor may be made to the Dr. William Hill Scholarship Fund of the Duke Ellington Society of Southern California, PO Box 2652, Culver City, CA 90231-2652.

We extend sincere condolences to his family and other loved ones.

Another Book on the Way

The University of Michigan Press has announced a forthcoming book entitled *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz* by John Howland.

Clinker Alert!

In the account of our November meeting on page 4 of our previous issue, Mr. Lewin's name is misspelled. The sentence beginning the second paragraph should have read "Another unusual instrumentation was "I Like the Sunrise" played by *Håkan Lewin* on alto sax . . ." [emphasis added]. We humbly apologize to Mr. Lewin and to our readers.

Update on Members' Orchestras

Mark Harvey and His Aardvark Jazz Orchestra
Under the direction of the Rev. Mark Harvey, the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra will have its 36th Annual Christmas Concert at 7:30 pm on Sunday, 14 December at Emmanuel Church, 15 Newbury Street in Boston. The program includes selections from Ellington's *Second Sacred Concert*.

The band's *American Agonistes: Music in the Time of War* CD has been earning critical praise. Francois Couture of Billboard.com calls it "Beautiful, poignant and raucous . . . drips with honesty, intelligence, sound design, and art," while *AllAboutJazz*'s Elliot Simon says that it showcases "the limitless range that a big band allows in compositional freedom, breadth of sonic palette and electricity . . ." According to the orchestra's web site, "From the Greek word *agon*, to struggle, the music probes the ongoing struggle for the soul of American democracy. All compositions are by Aardvark founder and music director, Mark Harvey."

For more information and a calendar of the band's 2008-09 season, go to aardvarkjazz.com.

Davey Yarborough's New Washingtonians with Esther Williams-Yarborough

In a program titled "From True Reformer Hall to the Cotton Club: Ellington's Formative Years," Davey Yarborough led his New Washingtonians in a concert at Washington's Kennedy Center in November. Offerings included "Sepia Panorama," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Old King Dooji," "Creole Love Call," and "It Don't Mean a Thing," with wife Esther Williams-Yarborough handling the vocals on the last two.

This group of seasoned musicians bear the same name as Davey's student group at the Ellington School of the Arts. He considers the title as a rubric for three continuously evolving and interrelated groups: the band that played at the Kennedy Center, the student orchestra at the Ellington School of the Arts, and the predominantly young musicians in his and Esther's mentor-method, non-profit Washington Jazz Arts Institute.

Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra
A "Bridging Japantown and the Fillmore With Jazz" concert at San Francisco's Yoshi's in September celebrated the 10th anniversary of Dr. Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra. Next door at the Fillmore Heritage Center an exhibit of photographs and other materials graphically chronicled the band's ten years.

In November, the band played at the Foellinger Great Hall at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. An online report stated that a five-minute standing ovation followed the performance.

Another of our members, Dr. Scott Schwartz, former Smithsonian Archives staffer and now head of the University's Sousa Archives, was included in the activities for an on-stage conversation with Brown.

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

We wish "Brad" Bradbie a swift and complete recovery from recent surgery. He is now in the Charlotte Hall Veterans Rehabilitation Home in Southern Maryland.

Georgia Brown

Georgia Brown, a student member of our Society, is one of the percussionists on *Ten*, the latest CD by dad Anthony Brown's Asian American Orchestra.

Harvey Cohen

The cover story in the London *Independent* on 13 November was "Dawn of the Jazz Age: Sir Duke Ellington's Adventures in Britain" by Dr. Harvey Cohen, of King's College London. With luck one may still find it at independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/. It's an excerpt from his forthcoming book.

Geneva Hudson

As her selection for the culminating "concert" of a "just for fun" class in jazz singing at the Strathmore cultural center in Bethesda, MD, Geneva Hudson sang an up-tempo "Bye, Bye Blackbird."

Dick Spottswood

The popular "obsolete music" Dick Spottswood Show is aired on WAMU-2 88.5FM on Sundays, midnight; Wednesdays, 1pm; and Fridays, 4am. In good humor, he explains the term: "... 'obsolete music' was designed to disarm critics and to make people who've never seen LP discs aware of 78s and cylinders, and alternate worlds of music therein." Re WAMU's making his show available on its Bluegrass Country programming, he says they "banished us to HD and cyberspace."

Arthur Luby

Art Luby has completed a draft of a one-act play, *Paul Gonsalves on the Road*. The script had its premiere reading in December. The drama is based on an essay on Gonsalves that Art published a while back and on an article done some 38 years ago by Patricia Willard for *DownBeat*.

"Flash! Bellson Leaves Hospital for Rehab"

Thus begins the News page of the Louie Bellson internet site. There follows: "Mr. Bellson suffered a fall and was taken to the hospital. (We'd like to think he was so happy about the election that he jumped up and broke his hip!)" For the very latest info, go to: louiebellson.info.

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 Fantastic Mr. Terry

by Peter MacHare

Ted Shell has presented quite a few programs on Clark Terry over the years. The one that he prepared for our December gathering was one of the best.

Ted began the program, as many Ellington programs begin, with "Take the 'A' Train." This performance was from the album *Johnny Hodges and the All Stars* and featured Ray Nance on violin as well as Clark Terry on trumpet.

One of the favorite selections of the evening was "Big Ben's Blues" from the album *One World of Jazz*. This featured Terry, Ben Webster on tenor, and the mighty Jo Jones on drums. It brought down the house.

In addition to hearing so much fine Clark Terry, we heard wonderful performances by sidemen, in addition to those already named, Quentin Jackson, Duke Jordan, Hank Jones, Thelonious Monk, Joe Pass, Yusef Lateef, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and the always engaging Major Holley, who plays bass and sings along. Yes, Clark Terry keeps some pretty impressive company.

A special word of thanks is owed to Geneva Hudson for bringing in the refreshments on very short notice because Georgiana Bair was at home on the mend. Georgiana, we wish you a speedy recovery.

Election Results

At our regular meeting on 1 November, our Society re-elected Peter MacHare, president; Theodore Hudson, vice-president; and Francis Arnold, treasurer. Arthur Luby was elected secretary. These four officers compose the President's Executive Committee.

Patricia Braxton, Luvenia George, William Hasson, Joseph McMillan, Olivia McMillan, and Theodore A. Shell were re-elected to the Board of Directors.

Another director is to be elected or appointed by the president, filling the requirement for seven Board members.

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.**Executive Board**

President		Peter MacHare
Vice President	-	Theodore Hudson
Secretary		Arthur Luby
Treasurer		Francis Arnold

Patricia Braxton		Luvenia George
William Hasson		Joseph McMillan
Olivia McMillan		Theodore A. Shell
	(Vacancy)	