

# Ellingtonia

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Theodore R. Hudson, Editor

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Web Site: [depanorama.net/desociety/](http://depanorama.net/desociety/)

Wednesday, 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"*

## NEA Study Shows Jazz Audience Dwindling

As a result of its 2008 Survey, in participation with the US Census Bureau, of Public Participation in the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has concluded that "adult attendance at arts events declined in virtually all art forms" compared with prior studies.

As to jazz events, there was a 28% attendance decline during 2002-08, as contrasted with a 19% decline during 1982-08. The decline was higher for ages 18-24 than it was for ages 45-54.

"Jazz has arrived in the school curriculum and in government-funded concert hall, but hardly anyone listens," according to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* by Terry Teachout. Entitled "Can Jazz Be Saved?" the article is for the most part a commentary on the NEA's findings. Teachout writes that jazz is becoming more comparable to classical music in that it is being considered "a high-culture art form."

The NEA does not make conclusions about reasons for this general fall-off in attendance, but it does mention that its findings during its May 2008 survey "cannot prove that weak consumer spending over this period directly affected arts participation rates."

The NEA report entitled "Arts Participation 2008: Highlights from a National Survey," is available online at [www.nea.gov/research/research\\_brochures.php](http://www.nea.gov/research/research_brochures.php).

## November 14 Meeting: Members's Choice Featuring Billy Strayhorn and Flea Market

by Peter MacHare, Program Coordinator

Your assignment for our November meeting, should you decide to accept, is to find some beautiful music written or performed by Billy Strayhorn and share it with us all. That, my friends, is a very easy assignment, since everything that Billy Strayhorn wrote was beyond category. Bring more than one selection, if you like, and we will play them if there is time.

If you have any duplicates in your music collection, we will also be holding a flea market where you can sell music or other items of interest.

Please note that our November meeting will be the second Saturday of the month because of a scheduling conflict with a concert at the church. So it's **Saturday, November 14, 2009 at 7 pm at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW, in beautiful Washington, DC.**

## Pastor of Host Church Dies

by Marion M. Shell

Rev. Clinton W. Kersey, Jr., pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, died suddenly on September 19 at Shady Grove Hospital. He was born on June 21, 1949 in Roanoke, Virginia.

For the past three and a half years, he served at Grace Church as a warm and passionate leader who cared deeply for the members of his parish and was always ready to help them in their time of need. He was attentive to their problems, and was always available for their spiritual welfare.

Pastor Kersey was an ardent jazz fan, and both he and his beloved wife, Katheryn, were members of our Duke Ellington Society. He stated that he would have attended more of our meetings had they been held on a night other than Saturday because that was the important day in his sermon preparation. He and Mrs. Kersey attended several jazz concerts at the Kennedy Center with my husband, Ted, and me.

A beautiful Resurrection Celebration Service was held on Sunday, September 27 at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. He will surely be missed by all of us.

## About William Thomas Strayhorn

### They Say . . .

Gerry Mulligan: *When Strayhorn came on the scene, he just blew us away...*

Glenn Kenny: . . . *one of the greatest composers in American popular music. Make that music, period.*

Quincy Jones: *Billy to me is the boss of the arrangers.*

Lena Horne: *I wasn't born a singer. I had to learn a lot. Billy rehearsed me. He stretched me vocally. Very subtly, he made me stretch—he raised keys on me without telling me. He taught me the basics of music . . . He played good music for me to hear, because I hadn't heard anything. He went around with me to auditions and played piano for me. I was terrified, but he kept me calm and made me good.*

Dizzy Gillespie: *All those sevenths—man, I never heard anything like those things until him.*

Gil Evans: *That's all I did—that's all I ever did—try to do what Billy Strayhorn did.*

Cliff Colnot: *Strayhorn is like Beethoven—every note he wrote seems inevitable.*

Benny Carter: [*Strayhorn's compositions*] *made us all think a little differently about what we were doing.*

Duke Ellington, in his Strayhorn Eulogy: *Because he had a rare sensitivity and applied himself to his gifts, Billy Strayhorn successfully married melody, words, and harmony, equating the fitting with happiness. His greatest virtue, I think, was his honesty, not only to others, but to himself. His listening-hearing self was totally intolerant of his writing-playing self when, or if, any compromise was expected, or considered expedient.*

*He spoke English perfectly and French very well, but condescension did not enter into his mind. He demanded freedom of expression and lived in what we consider the most important and moral freedoms: freedom from hate, unconditionally; freedom from self-pity . . .; freedom from fear of possibly doing something that might help another more than it might help himself; and freedom from the kind of pride that could make a man feel he was better than his brother or neighbor. . . .*

*God bless Billy Strayhorn.*

### Selected Recordings from Outside the Ellington Circle of Musicians

Keith Ingham - Harry Allen Quintet, *Celebration of Billy Strayhorn Music, Vol. 1* (Progressive Records)

Ibid. *Celebration of Billy Strayhorn Music, Vol. 2* (Progressive Records)

Bill Charlap, Hank Jones, Joe Lovano, Diane Reeves, and others, *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life* (Blue Note Records) [Soundtrack for the *Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life* documentary]

Dutch Jazz Orchestra, led by Jerry van Rooijen, *Portrait of a Silk Thread: Newly Discovered Works of Billy Strayhorn* (Challenge)

Ibid. *So This Is Love: More Newly Discovered Works of Billy Strayhorn* (Challenge)

Ibid. *You Go To My Head: Strayhorn and Standards* (Challenge Jazz) [Other composers' works arranged by Strayhorn]

Joe Henderson, *Lush Life* (Verve Records)

John Hicks, *Something to Live For: A Billy Strayhorn Songbook* (HighNote Records)

Lena Horne, *We'll Be Together Again* (Blue Note Records)

Marian McPartland, *Marian McPartland Plays the Music of Billy Strayhorn* (Concord Records)

### Books

David Hajdu. *Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996.

Walter van de Leur, *Something to Live For: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

### Strayhorn Web Site

Billy Strayhorn Songs, Inc. at [www.billystrayhorn.com](http://www.billystrayhorn.com) includes Biography, Timeline, Photos, Books, Quotes, Discography, Online Store, About BSS.

## Short Sheets . . .

### ♪ Music at an Exhibition ♪

While browsing about in the “Picturing the Promise” exhibit of Scurlock photos at the Smithsonian Institution, we noticed Duke’s “The Single Petal of a Rose” ever so gently wafting as background music. Incidentally, a portrait of him by the famous photographer is among those on display.

### ♪ Duke’s Favorites ♪

A November 1952 issue of *DownBeat* celebrated “Ellington’s Silver Jubilee.” Among its features is “a list submitted by Duke of his special preferences in classical music.” They are Ravel, “Daphnis and Chloe”; Delius, “In a Summer Garden”; Debussy, “La Mer” and “Afternoon of a Faun”; and Holst, “The Planets.”

### ♪ More on Woodlawn Cemetery Jazz Corner ♪

In our last issue, we listed several persons buried in the so-called Jazz Corner of Woodlawn Cemetery, in the Bronx Borough of New York City. Our good Swedish friend Göran Wallén wrote to tell us that Lionel Hampton should have been included. He sent us photos of several stone markers, the largest of which bears the inscription “Sir Miles Davis.”

### ♪ New Itinerary ♪

We received online the “latest up-date: 15Aug2009” *Duke Ellington Directory/Itinerary*, compiled by Klaus Götting, but no info as to how or when the general public may get copies. However, comments, corrections, etc. “are most welcome at [eke.2kg@orange.fr](mailto:eke.2kg@orange.fr)”

### ♪ Bellson Receives Congressional Honor ♪

In a ceremony in October at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in San Jose, CA, Louie Bellson was posthumously awarded a certificate of recognition from the office of US Congresswoman Diane Watson. His widow, Francine Wright Bellson, accepted the award from the petitioner, Att. W. Steve Stevens.

(Update: We have received an announcement that soon the Louie Bellson e-mail address will change to [bellson1@att.net](mailto:bellson1@att.net).)

### ♪ A Fifth Timmer ♪

W.E. Timmer’s *Ellingtonia: The Recorded Music of Duke and His Sidemen, Fifth Edition* has been published by Scarecrow Press.

### ♪ Dutch Leader Jerry van Rooijen, 1928-2009 ♪

Jerry van Rooijen died on 15 September. He was a trumpeter, composer, and leader of the Dutch Jazz Orchestra that recorded several CDs of Billy Strayhorn’s then newly discovered as well as better known compositions.

### Memorial Donations for June Grant May Be Made to Felix Grant Archives

Reported by Elinor Eugene

The Washington *Post* noted at the passing of June Grant, Felix Grant’s widow, that contributions in memory of her may be made to the Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives at the University of the District of Columbia.

## Publication Calls for Papers on Duke

*Jazz Perspectives* has issued a call for papers that address the theme “Duke’s Place—Revisiting Ellington in the Twenty-first Century.” This particular issue of the interdisciplinary journal will be edited by Walter van de Leur, well known Billy Strayhorn authority and professor at the University of Amsterdam, and by John Howland, professor at Rutgers University and author of the recent book *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz*.

Instructions for authors can be found online at [www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rjaz](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rjaz); persons considering submitting proposals for this issue can get information at [www.tandf.co.uk/journals/cfp/rjazcfp1.pdf](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/cfp/rjazcfp1.pdf)

## Quentin Jackson Meets Inspector Lewis

by Ben Pubols

A recent TV episode of Inspector Lewis (successor to the popular Inspector Morse series) made reference to Duke Ellington. The title, “And the Moonbeams Kiss the Sea,” originally aired on February 24, 2008. The plot involves forgeries of letters by Shelley. An American rare book and manuscript dealer visits Oxford University and identifies himself as Quentin Jackson, so named because his father had been a Duke Ellington fan. This little snippet comes at just a little after one hour into the program.

Unfortunately, the Inspector Lewis program appears at different times on different TV stations, so good luck in finding it. Incidentally, the program is good even without reference to Duke.

## Quotation of the Month

“Duke Ellington learned ‘Carolina Shout’ from a piano roll and finally met Johnson at a concert in Washington in 1921. Afterward they stayed out until 10 a.m. ‘What I absorbed on that occasion,’ Ellington later wrote, ‘might, I think, have constituted a whole semester in a conservatory.’ He honed in on Johnson’s strong, grounding swing and sweet, splashing melodies; to link Scott Joplin and Ellington—or even Joplin and Thelonious Monk—you need to put Johnson between them.”

— Ben Ratliff, “Raising Roof and Headstone for Pioneering Pianist,” *New York Times*, 5 October 2009

## James P. Johnson Recordings

John Howland’s recent *Ellington Uptown: Duke Ellington, James P. Johnson, and the Birth of Concert Jazz*, has stimulated interest in finding some of Johnson’s recordings. The following are listed by the Smithsonian Institution’s Folkways Records: *James P. Johnson, Piano Solos* (F-2850); *Yamekraw* (F-2842); and *The Original James P. Johnson, 1942-1945: Piano Solos* (SF-40812)

For more information, write to Folkways at PO Box 37012, MRC 520, CG 2001, Washington, DC 20013-7012, or go online to [www.folkways@si.edu](http://www.folkways@si.edu)

**"Dramatis Felidae"** (To Use Our Man's Term from *M/M/M*)**About Our Members****Jack and Rhoda Towers**

Congratulations and cheers to Jack and Rhoda Towers, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on 21 September. Married in Aberdeen, SD, they honeymooned in the Black Hills of that state. An article about their anniversary and a color portrait of them appeared in the Montgomery County, MD *Gazette* on the next day, 22 September.

**Harvey Cohen**

Harvey Cohen jests(?) about the "Sir" that prefixes Duke's name in the headline of the article by him, Cohen, in the London *Independent* that we quoted from in our previous issue: "... I don't think Duke was ever officially knighted or made a 'sir'—but of course Stevie Wonder made him 'Sir Duke' and that is probably a better accolade than anything the Queen could bestow."

**Patricia Willard**

"Sir Gordon and the Duke: Parks-Ellington Connected" is the title of a presentation by Patricia Willard at The Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity on 10 October at Fort Scott, Kansas, his home town. She was introduced to Parks by Ellington in 1960. The celebration took place 7-10 October.

**James Earl Lewis and Clinton W. Kersey**

At our October meeting, a period of silence honored our recently departed members James Earl Lewis and Clinton W. Kersey.

**Mark Harvey**

The Rev. Mark Harvey and his Aardvark Jazz Orchestra presented an "All Blues" show at Scullers Jazz Club in Boston on 30 September. Harvey will perform with the MIT Festival Jazz Ensemble on 14 November, and he and the Orchestra will present their 37th Annual Christmas Concert on 20 December at Boston's Emmanuel Church.

Aardvark has now produced 10 CDs, the latest, his *American Agonistes: Music in Time of War*, has drawn impressive reviews. The previous one, *No Walls/A Christmas Concert*, features carols from around the world and Harvey's "No Walls Without Borders."

**Bob Reny**

The Duke Ellington Society of Sweden's current *Bulletin* carries a reprint in English of Bob Reny's review of Sathima Bea Benjamin's *A Morning in Paris* that appeared in the March 2009 *IAJRC Bulletin*. The DESS reprint is prefaced in Swedish by Bo Haufman.

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Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Student, \$5;

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Keep in mind that memberships are for the calendar year.

**Oscar Peterson Plays Duke Ellington**

by Art Luby, Secretary

Our first meeting of the fall focused on Ted Shell's presentation of Oscar Peterson's numerous performances of Ellington standards. Peterson's flowing and technically exacting style was almost a polar opposite of Ellington's spare, thematically focused playing. Nevertheless, each held the other in his esteem, as evidenced not only by the audio of Duke's gracious remarks about Peterson many years ago at a performance at the Carter Barron, but also by a picture circulated at the meeting featuring a happy interaction between the two in Washington with an equally pleased, but partially obscured Ted Hudson.

Peterson's concerts were captured on DVDs, laser discs, and videos dated from the early 60s into the mid-1980s. He was accompanied in most these performances by his long time bassist Niels-Henning Pedersen, and the two musicians' understanding of each other's playing is clear throughout, but particularly on a lovely medley from a performance in Japan that included "Lush Life," "Perdido," and a powerful swinging "Caravan."

Several numbers also featured two of Ellington's greatest sidemen, Ben Webster and Clark Terry, and Peterson showed he could supply fine support as he allowed Webster to stretch out on "Cottontail" and inspired Terry to develop a series of superb trumpet choruses on "God Bless the Child." However, his extraordinary skills as a soloist were on full display in a unique seven-song medley from 1975 that began with a rollicking "Take the 'A' Train" and featured a lovely reflective "In a Sentimental Mood."

The program concluded with a unique video featuring a rare live performance by a bearded Coleman Hawkins near the end of his life. Hawkins, inspired by a wonderful rhythm section of Peterson, Sam Jones on bass, and Louis Hayes on drums, delivered a fine, hard edged performance of "Moonglow" that stressed swing rather than sentimentality. All in all the collection showed Peterson in a variety of roles from soloist, to leader of a trio, to accompanist. Whatever the format and whomever he was with, Peterson's respect and love for the maestro's body of work was on full display.

**THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.**

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