



Ellingtonia

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William McFadden, Editor

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Courtesy Carlyle Productions

The world received a gift named William Thomas Strayhorn on November 29, 1915 . . .

Commemorating One Hundred Years of **BILLY STRAYHORN**

Duke Ellington, 'Eulogy for Swee' Pea'

Poor little Swee' Pea, Billy Strayhorn, William Thomas Strayhorn, the biggest human being who ever lived, a man with the greatest courage, the most majestic artistic stature, a highly skilled musician whose impeccable taste commanded the respect of all musicians and the admiration of all listeners.

His audiences at home and abroad marveled at the grandeur of his talent and the mantle of tonal supremacy that he wore only with grace. He was a beautiful human being, adored by a wide range of friends, rich, poor, famous, and unknown. Great artists pay homage to Billy Strayhorn's God-given ability and mastery of his craft.

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 of freedoms: freedom from hate, unconditionally; freedom from self-pity (even throughout all the pain and bad news); 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.

His patience was incomparable and unlimited. He had no aspirations to enter into any kind of competition, yet the legacy he leaves, his oeuvre, will never be less than the ultimate on the highest plateau of culture (whether by comparison or not).

God bless Billy Strayhorn.

(Written on May 31 or June 1, 1967. Originally published in *DownBeat* July 13, 1967 and reprinted in Ellington's *Music Is My Mistress*.)

Centennial Anniversary Month Spotlight on . . . **The Strayhorn Touch—With All Due Credit**



How do we love thee, Billy Strayhorn? Let us count the ways! November's program will naturally be taken up with finding ways to count, as we continue our focus on a musical legacy more pervasive than even most music aficionados realize. And so we'll listen to familiar examples in and out of the Ellington mansion. But dig

we will for some distinctively Strayhorn efforts which often go un-noticed, perhaps some you'll hear for the first time (or the first time in a while).

This risk-free method for treating mind, body and spirit happens at **Grace Lutheran Church, 16th and Varnum Streets, NW** in the Maestro's home town, the District of Columbia on **Saturday, 7 November 2015—7:00 PM.**

Our refreshments customs call for, whether sweet or substantive, pot luck in sharing the edibles, so don't forget to bring something good. Even if you do forget, come anyway because we do love to see you—madly, that is. Management provides beverages and ice.

Another Great Man Celebrates 100 Years Happy Birthday, Dr. Ted Shell !!

Our Society's founding member **Dr. Theodore A. Shell** was born in Rahway, NJ on **October 26, 1915.** Several friends and his immediate family joined Ted Shell in a celebration of his 100th birthday on Monday, October 26, 2015 at Clyde's restaurant in Washington, DC.

Dr. Shell graduated from Shaw University in 1937 with a degree in science and chemistry, and he served five years in the U.S. Army's chemical warfare service during World War II in the European Theatre. In 1950

Continued on Page 3. under Ted Shell



Thanks to CA-FAM III, Incorporated . . . Strayhorn 2015 Goes Full Circle In DC

The unprecedented amount of concerts, presentations and *fun* to wrap up Strayhorn Centennial 2015, will culminate with a multi-faceted [celebration event](#) on November 29 at We Act Radio, 1918 Martin Luther King Avenue, SE .

A Strayhorn Centennial Celebration will begin with “**The Four Freedoms of Billy Strayhorn**” featuring music and spoken word impressions from pianist Janelle Gill, trombonist Reginald Cyntje, saxophonist Craig Alston, vocalist Karen Lovejoy, folklorist Luci Murphy, saxophonist Carl Grubbs, pianist Alon Nechushtan, and trumpeter Freddie Dunn, all leaders of ensembles that have performed earlier in the *Celebrating Strayhorn!* Series. Each will relate the Four Freedoms when presenting their performances of favorite Strayhorn compositions, either as a solo performer or a member of a small (duet/trio) ensemble composed one or two others in the group.

Percussionist Nasar Abadey’s Washington Renaissance Orchestra Sextet featuring trumpeter Thad Wilson, saxophonist Antonio Parker, trombonist Julien Lane, pianist Mark Meadows and bassist James King will premiere a body of work celebrating “**The Magical Legacy of Billy Strayhorn.**”

Below is a summary listing of the remaining schedule. At the bottom of the page is a blue hyperlink to complete information on locations, times, and tickets.

The Strayhorn Centennial Celebration Series programs throughout 2015 have been made possible by **CA-FAM III, Incorporated**, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the preservation of African-American cultural expression. Its jazz preservation projects - **East River Jazz in DC / Baltimore's Be Mo Jazz** - have presented more than 70 events since March 2008. **Vernard R. Grey** is its heroic *impresario*; music lovers everywhere cannot sing his praises loudly enough in gratitude on Strays’ behalf.

- ◆ **Thu, November 12, 7:00 PM**
Paris Blues: A Film Viewing & Conversation
- ◆ **Fri, November 13, 7:00 PM**
Day Dream
- ◆ **Sat, November 14, 2:00 PM**
Strayhorn and Hodges, Coltrane
- ◆ **Sun, November 15, 3:00 PM**
Strayhorn Inspired: The Rick Henderson Catalogue—Bowie State Univ. Community Jazz Band
- ◆ **Sat, November 21, 2:00 PM**
A Conversation with Freddie Dunn
- ◆ **Fri, November 27, 6:00 PM**
Strayhorn, The Giant Who Lived in the Shadows

Link to more details for each event [here](#).

Listen in on November 28 Celebrating Strayhorn On The Radio

Every April for the past 15 years, **Bill Saxonis** has offered a four-hour radio program celebrating Duke Ellington’s birthday on **Bill McCann’s “Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz.”** An essential ingredient of every show is a tribute to Duke’s writing and arranging companion, Billy Strayhorn. In November Mr. Saxonis will be celebrating Strayhorn’s centennial with another four-hour special focusing on Strayhorn’s life, offering an eclectic blend of music, conversation and recorded interviews. The program will include reflections on Strayhorn from biographer David Hajdu, musicologist Walter van de Leur, Ellington bandmate Buster Cooper, and nephew Gregory Morris. Vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin will describe recording with Billy and Duke in Paris, and Willie Ruff will recount working with Strayhorn on “The Suite for Horn and Piano.” The program will air on **Saturday, November 28 from 8:00 AM to noon (Eastern time) on WCDB 90.9 FM (Albany, NY)**, and to a worldwide audience on the internet at www.wcdbfm.com.

New Season For Peoples Jazz Society

The Peoples Jazz Society 2015-2016 Program kickoff took place on October 17 with a “Members Choice Salon” facilitated by Artistic Director **Davey Yarborough**. Upcoming are the three events which traditionally witness capacity participation:

- ◆ The 18th Annual Christmas Eve Jazz Vespers on Thursday, December 24
- ◆ The Annual Easter Vigil Jazz Vespers on Saturday, March 26, 2016
- ◆ The Annual Jazz Worship Service on Sunday, August 28, 2016

Annual memberships in Peoples Jazz Society help produce these, and other distinctive jazz recitals held on an offering basis, always at Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ, 4704—13th St., NW, DC 20011. Find out more, or renew your membership by clicking on [this link](#).

MERRY-GO-ROUND . . . by Ye Editor

Just as November snuck up on August had the conference, [Ellington and Strayhorn: A Celebration](#) snuck up on us. There was scant time to consider attending, let alone plan the trip, especially since we had registered for another confab (unrelated to music) taking place the first weekend in October. Missing two consecutive Society meetings was naturally out of the question. Tough break indeed, and we envy those of you able to

*Continued on Page 3. under **M-G-R***

M-G-R *(Continued from Page 2.)*

finagle the journey to Reed College in Portland, OR. It will be a substantive three days, something much more than a reprise of the 2014 Amsterdam conference as some have suggested. So many of our friends will be attending and presenting. This yeoman effort was quietly organized by **David Schiff**, music professor at Reed College and author of the fine book, *The Ellington Century*.

What better month to publish a reprint of “Eulogy for Swee’ Pea” than Strays’ 100th birth anniversary? Duke’s verbal impressions demonstrate how profoundly affected he was by the premature loss of his closest associate for nearly 30 years, “my right arm, my left arm, all the eyes in the back of my head, my brainwaves in his head, and his in mine.”

It occurs to us that some of you may never have read these poignant words in their entirety; should that be the case, we encourage you to consider their full impact. Many of us have read the eulogy—certainly more than once—but it’s so good to be reminded and refreshed from time to time.

We took the liberty to highlight that portion of Duke’s loving assessment which describes the “four freedoms” by which Strayhorn approached life, a characterization of his courage and strength (applied to the myriad other aspects of Billy’s genius). These freedoms are purposeful principles by which any of us could and should live. They also constitute the theme of Luci Murphy’s verbal/musical presentation at the *Strayhorn Centennial Celebration* in DC on Sunday, November 29.

Though not a member of our Society, **Ulysses LaPradde** was an Ellington devotee of the highest order. He passed away in New York on September 13 at 97 years of age. Long active in TDES, New York Mr. LaPradde was a stalwart attendee at the International Conferences until his health made travel impractical. His personal relationship with Duke began as Army sergeant during the (segregated) war years of the 1940’s, and Ellington was his lifelong hero. Mr. LaPradde was perhaps known best for organizing annual outings to the Ellington gravesite at Woodlawn Cemetery on April 29. According to TDES President Ray Carman, “Of all of the members I have met over the years, he was the one member that I feel stood head and shoulders above the crowd for his love of Duke Ellington.”

For the members of our Society, and for all who cherish the legacies of Ellington and Strayhorn, the virtue of gratitude is never in short supply. When you think about it, none of us really need a designated day to profess our gratitude. But for US members we wish you and yours a most happy and warm Thanksgiving!

That’s it for this ride on your Merry-Go-Round!

Ted Shell *(Continued from front page.)*

he received his dentistry degree from Howard University and began a practice here in the District. Ted also held the position of Clinical Professor of Dentistry for 43 years at Howard. He retired in 1993.

He first became interested in Ellington’s music in 1952. He and **Maurice Lawrence**, a fellow member of the Omega Psi Phi National Fraternity, founded a Duke Ellington Club in 1956, and it eventually became Chapter 90 of The Duke Ellington Society by 1962. Other founding members included **Grant Wright, Terrell Allen, and Juanita Jackson**. Over the course of his activities with the Society, Dr. Shell had the privilege of meeting with Duke Ellington on numerous occasions, the first time in 1964. In 1971 he hosted a party in his own home to honor the Maestro on the occasion of Duke’s 72nd birth anniversary. Additionally, Dr. Shell served for many years as President of what we know today as The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

The *Dr. Theodore Shell Collection of Duke Ellington Ephemera, 1933-1990* at the Smithsonian Institution Archives Center, National Museum of American History contains autographs, concert programs, publicity booklets, conference materials, correspondence, periodicals, news clippings, photographs, play lists, radio transcriptions and a variety of other ephemeral materials that document the life, career, and legacy of Duke Ellington, as well as the early history of Jazz. [A complete listing of the collection can be accessed here.](#)

A skilled photographer, Ted Shell was a familiar, avid participant at many of the Duke Ellington International Study Group Conferences. His collection of recordings in every medium and format numbers more than 7,000 selections.

Dr. Ted Shell, for your unmatched devotion to the world of Duke Ellington, and for all you’ve accomplished for it and for us, your Society salutes you on this milestone—in our hearts, on our minds, through our prayers, and with love!

by **Charles D. Chuleau**

Renew Your Dues Now for 2016**To Join or to Continue Membership**

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Our dues remain a bargain:

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We meet on the first Saturday, October—June at 7:00 PM. Guests are always welcomed!

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

Rusty Hassan continues to burnish his academic chops, er, credentials by teaching *Jazz 101*, a series of music appreciation courses this month offered by the Arts and Performances/Lectures and Conversations programs from the **Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital**, 921 Pennsylvania Ave., SE, DC 200032. This course traces the history of the music from its roots in work songs, blues, ragtime and spirituals to the contemporary forms of fusion and avant-garde. The emphasis will be on listening to appreciate a jazz performance and to learn about the great artists who created this uniquely American art form. *Jazz 101* also examines the current jazz scene of contemporary performers and the best spots to hear the music. (Hyperlinks in blue.)

Not only has Rusty been broadcasting jazz in the DC area for over forty-five years (currently heard on WPFW 89.3FM Thursday nights), but he has also taught jazz history courses at Georgetown, American University, University of Maryland University College and the Smithsonian. He has lectured at the Corcoran, the World Bank and the National Geographic Society.

Storyville Records has just released the 2-CD **Volume 20 of the Duke Ellington Treasury Shows**. That now makes two DETS releases in one year, Volume 19 having been issued this past spring;



can the remaining four double-CD volumes be far behind? This news is by way of informing you that our man in Seattle, **Ken Steiner** wrote the detailed booklet of liner notes (as he did so expertly for Volume 18). Ken recently reported on a unique detail of the CD packaging,

stating, "I am very pleased that for the cover of Volume 20, Storyville matched the color of Sjef Hoefsmit's Azure cassettes. I have dedicated my notes to him."

From Storyville's [web page](#): *"Big bands were dying off like the dinosaurs, but Ellington transcended Swing and its era. Television was in its developmental stage and by the 1950s would supersede radio. Duke Ellington would outlive the reign of the medium that he so well mastered,"* writes Ken Steiner, author of the extensive liner notes, and concludes: *"The band must have been saving its best for this broadcast, which finds them in top form"*.

Moreover, at the upcoming *Ellington and Strayhorn: A Celebration* Conference in Portland on November 8, Ken will deliver a presentation, "The Goal Was Impact: Duke Ellington's Radio Shows." True devotion.

Easy Going Begins 2016 Season Members' Choice—Anything Goes

by Art Luby, Secretary

The October meeting of the Society was a musical pot luck affair, with contributions from about ten of our members. The selections were diverse, as could be expected, featuring recordings by the Ellington Orchestra ('Main Stem' from *Piano in the Background*), Ellington small groups ('Stomp Jones' from a late 30's session fronted by Barney Bigard), and Ellington descendants (Michael Brockman leading the Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra in their adaptation of Strayhorn's 'Isfahan').

One of the evening's most interesting performances heard the great Willie Smith with a hard-swinging Harry James Orchestra on a superb late 50's recording of 'Cotton Tail.' Along with Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter, Willie Smith was one of the most influential alto saxophonists from the Swing Era. Regrettably his discography is not nearly as lengthy as either those of Hodges or Carter, as he is best remembered for his early work with Jimmy Lunceford (particularly a solo and vocal on 'Rhythm is Our Business'). Additionally, Smith had a productive, although too brief, stint with Duke in the early 50's before being displaced by the returning Hodges, and then enjoyed a happy relationship with Harry James' Hollywood orchestra for the balance of the decade.

2015-2016 Meeting Schedule

- ◆ **Saturday, December 5**
- ◆ **Saturday, January 2**—Annual Holiday Party
- ◆ **Saturday, February 6**
- ◆ **Saturday, March 5**
- ◆ **Saturday, April 2**
- ◆ **Saturday, May 7**
- ◆ **Saturday, June 4**

All meetings begin at 7:00 PM.

There are a number of open slots for presentations at our monthly meetings, which means it's time for beautiful, sweet, generous, gracious YOU to help keep the programs creative and interesting. Let's hear from you before the season ends!

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

Theodore A. Shell, Founding Member

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