

Ellingtonia



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*Happy Birthday, dear Edward.
Happy Birthday to you!*

April Twenty-Ninth, 1899



A Friday Happy Hour For Duke's 117th

Plans are proceeding for the 7th annual birthday concert and celebration at **Duke Ellington Park**—located where New Hampshire Ave., 21st St., and M St., NW intersect—**Friday, April 29, 2016 from 5:00-6:30 PM**. Once again, it's a West End community event made possible by the leadership of **Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A** in cooperation with **Golden Triangle DC Business Improvement District (BID)** and the **Friends of Francis Field**.

Edward Kennedy Ellington was delivered by a midwife at his paternal grandparents' home, 2129 Ward Place, NW. Today, a modern commercial building in his name occupies the block, complete with a commemorative plaque and a beautiful color Duke-themed mural extending down from the rooftop. Duke Ellington Park is literally at the foot of Ward Place, NW.

As public, neighborhood space, the Park and surrounding area continue to evolve. Some will recall the road work going on last year. BID continues to oversee the evolution, working with community leaders to incorporate diverse input toward redesign and improvement.

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Distinction on Trumpet Beginning 1942 Shorty Baker—With and Without Duke



Ed Morris will present a showcase exemplifying **Harold 'Shorty' Baker's** (1914-1966) beautiful trumpet tone to vividly verify what Ellington wrote about Shorty in *Music Is My Mistress*:

... with his phenomenal phrasing and tone control, he was an immense asset. He ad-libbed hot or blues ... His way of playing a melody is absolutely personal, and he has no bad notes at all.

On several recordings, Ed will first play Baker's solo before playing the complete selection. Featured will be Shorty's work with a George Wein and the Storyville Sextet recorded live in June, 1960 at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

This trumpet panorama starring one of Ellington's (and Johnny Hodges') favorite soloists will happen at **Grace Lutheran Church, 4300—16th Street (at Varnum St.), NW** in The Maestro's birthplace, **Washington, DC 20011** on:

Saturday, 2 April 2016—7:00 PM.

Pot luck defines our refreshments policy—everybody brings a little something good. But if you eschew catering, come anyway because we do love to see you—madly, that is. Management brings beverages and ice.

Next Meeting:

Saturday, 7 May 2016—7:00 PM



**The 24th International Duke Ellington
Study Group Conference**

May 19-23, 2016 ♦ New York City

**Sponsored by The Duke Ellington Center
for the Arts (DECFA)**

(Click on Conference logo to view updated program.)

MERRY-GO-ROUND . . . by Ye Editor

First off, some sad news: music educator, composer, performer, and conductor **Dr. David N. Baker** passed away at his home in Bloomington, IN on Saturday,

March 26. During his 20-plus years with the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, Dr. Baker helped build its extensive music library of more than 1,200 pieces. He also took Smithsonian's Duke Ellington Collection off the archival shelves to teach and perform the music, eventually leading a tribute series to honor the centennial of Ellington's birth. David Baker was 84 years of age.

It's also a resigned, wistful moment when we witness the end of another 20th century jazz icon—this time, famed DC nightclub, the **Bohemian Caverns**. Long the topic of rumors, the club's demise was well-reported in *The Washington Post* on March 29. We won't add to the lamentations, preferring to ruminate on how fortunate we were to have venues such as the Caverns throughout the years when our jazz journey was newer.

Speaking of real estate, Duke Ellington lived at 2728 Sherman Avenue, NW in Columbia Heights from 1919 through 1922. **Mark Tucker**'s research confirms that Duke purchased the house in 1919. But **Ken Steiner** did some more digging: "The DC Recorder of Deeds has online records going back to 1921, and it shows Duke and Edna Ellington on a Deed recorded December 13, 1923, and a Release recorded January 16, 1924 connected to this property. These are indications of a sale, confirming home ownership." One of Duke's five District addresses, it was the location for the Society's April 29, 2007 celebration coordinated by **Bill Hasson**. "For years the person who owned that house resisted our proposal to designate it with a plaque," remembers **Ted Hudson**. Fortunately the Society was persuasive enough that the commemorative was installed, remaining to this day. How much longer is anyone's guess, as the property was listed for \$499K and sold in March, final price unknown as it was marketed for fix-up or tear-down. (Thanks to **Patricia Willard**, and to **Rachel Elwell** of the Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives at UDC for bringing it to our attention.)



Last spring, we waxed skeptical in this column on the prospects for organizing the **24th International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference** in New York next month. And now, we're happy to eat our words (with a side dish of ice cream). Owing to the excellent submissions from the call for papers, it seems that event producers **Mercedes Ellington** and **Michael Dinwiddie** will preside over what's shaping-up to be a most substantial conclave. For example, keynote speaker **Robin Bell-Stevens** is Director of Jazzmobile, Inc. and the daughter of one of The Orchestra's greatest bass players, **Dr. Aaron Bell**. A rare screening of "A Drum Is A Woman" will be augmented by remarks from original cast members and legendary artists, **Carmen de Lavallade** and **Candido Camero**. Next day is an examination of "Anatomy of a Murder" as both music and cinema.

May 20 and 21 will contain most of the individual presentations and newest research. **Mathias Heyman** continues to share his doctoral thesis on Jimmy Blanton with "Low Key Lightly—Ellington, Blanton and Composing the Jazz Bass Revolution" and from **Bill Saxonis** comes "Duke's Legacy—the Ellington Continuum." In the evening, our own **John Edward Hasse** steers things close to home with "Duke Ellington's Washington." On Saturday, **Marcello Piras** adds to a fascinating topic informally discussed two years ago in Amsterdam, "Brother Edward the Freemason—An Introductory Survey." Early Ducal history is covered both by **Steven Lasker** in "Earliest Ellington" and our good member from the other Washington, **Ken Steiner** digs through the celluloid archives with "Headlines - Duke Ellington's 1925 Film Debut." Continuing on a theme of Duke in front of the cameras is **Will Friedwald** with "Ellington and Ellingtonia—New Video Discoveries." And on the final day, Sunday, **Phil Schaap** presents "The Maestro's Superstar Sessions of April 3, 1961 and September 26, 1962."

Those are just a few of the plums we've picked for what looks to be a fun and worthwhile Duke parlay in the city where he used to pick-up his mail. Check out the latest details with the hyperlink on the front page, and go!

For now, please pay attention to the fact that April is **Jazz Appreciation Month**, and the music abounds. Our friends at Smithsonian Jazz in The Museum of National History instituted JAM in 2002, and it has thrived ever since. JAM is intended to stimulate and encourage people of all ages to participate in jazz - to study the music,

(Continued next page.)



Merry-Go-Round (Continued from previous page.) attend concerts, listen to jazz on radio and recordings, read books about jazz, and more. There's a link in the logo to your left which will help you find anything you need to know about JAM and this year's honoree, the great **Benny Carter**.

A fine individual who wishes to remain anonymous is in search of **"Billy Strayhorn: Lush Life"** by Robert Levi from the PBS series, "Independent Lens." We thought a DVD was coming during Centennial 2015, but no such luck. This is a legitimate request on behalf of a qualified party; so if you know how a copy might be obtained please contact *Ellingtonia*. Confidentially . . .

Amidst all this talk of April 29 commemoration, parks, memorials, signs and statues, it's good to remember something our friend **Gary Griffith** maintains: whenever it comes to recognizing Edward Kennedy Ellington, **"his music is the monument."** Enough said . . .

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

Duke Ellington Park (Continued from Front Page.)

An architecture firm will lead a half-day intensive design workshop to re-think the park and surrounding space. Its participants will work side-by-side with designers to brainstorm options and develop feasible proposals to be implemented in small, independent phases with minimum disruption.

Where the Park's namesake is concerned, the community insists there be an official Ellington designation, preferably a statue in the center planting area. (Duke was highly averse to yellows and greens, making the current choice of flora somewhat ironic.) As in past discussions the question of funding remains, along with the costs for a statue, bust or bas relief.

For 2016, however, the more immediate task remains to secure a permanent electrical service, rather than a generator to power sound on April 29.

For the Love of Duke . . . 16 Years Strong Bill Saxonis Program on the air April 23

On **Saturday April 23, 2016**, from 8 AM to Noon, jazz historian **Bill Saxonis** will be a guest on Bill McCann's **"Saturday Morning Edition of Jazz"** on **WCDB 90.9-FM** in Albany, NY, and on the internet: www.wcdbfm.com.

The show will commemorate Duke Ellington's birthday with an eclectic collection of music, interviews, and conversation about his art, life, and times.

For the past fifteen years, listeners worldwide have made this highly acclaimed program an annual tradition. On this year's show Mr. Saxonis will offer insights from his latest research, **Duke's Legacy-The Ellington Continuum**, which he will present at the 24th International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference in New York City this May.

The Ultimate Festivity on April 29:

Duke Ellington
School of the Arts est. 1974

The Annual Duke Ellington Birthday Celebration

The Duke Ellington School at Garnett Patterson Theatre
2001 10th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

General Admission: \$15
Ellington Students: \$5

April 28, 2016, 7:00pm

Featuring...
The New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra

With Small Jazz Ensembles
Directed By: Davey S. Yarborough

For tickets, visit: www.EllingtonSchool.org

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

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PO Box 29470, Washington, DC 20017, USA

Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Students FREE (limited time)

First-Time-Ever Member, Just \$20

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 . . .

The four-week course, “**The Music and Life of Duke Ellington with Rusty Hassan**” concluded on March 8 at the Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital. Rusty’s special guest for the final session was none other than **Patricia Willard**. Those who were wise enough to be present enjoyed a rare public discussion of her longtime association and friendship with Ellington, and with Billy Strayhorn, Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves and other members of The Orchestra. Also shared were Patricia’s first-hand insights on some of the recording sessions and on the Concerts of Sacred Music.

On March 22, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts was the locale for a ceremony honoring the **2016 winners of Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards**—a series of annual grants which recognize American teachers by spotlighting their extraordinary impact on the lives of students. 14 teachers from across the country were selected in 2016 from a pool of nominations submitted first to ‘The Kennedy Center Sondheim Awards’ website.

If, upon reading the above, you thought it characterized **Davey Yarborough**, then you’re absolutely correct! In his typically self-effacing manner, the honoree permitted mention of this latest distinction when he was introduced to the audience March 26 as leader at the Peoples Congregational Church Easter Jazz Vespers.



In town to research Max Roach’s *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* at the Library of Congress was educator, composer, arranger, bandleader, percussionist and outstanding human being, **Dr. Anthony Brown**. A small Society committee of Ted Hudson, Geneva Hudson, and Bill McFadden scheduled an all-too-brief March 23 summit, where Anthony was eager to discuss his findings in the Max Roach archive. The most compelling information revealed the true depth of Max’s active involvement with, among others, the NAACP and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) during the pivotal years immediately prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Anthony is adapting the Suite for performance by his Asian American Orchestra.

Forget ‘crisis.’ He was on top of his game . . .
Paul Gonsalves at Mid-life

as told to *Ellingtonia*

When it comes to the tenor saxophone artistry of **Paul Gonsalves** (1920-1974), few of our Society’s members can match the study and research of **Art Luby**. Conclusive proof of Art’s expertise and playwright skills were publicly proven in 2012 at the debut of the one-act play, *Paul Gonsalves on the Road*.

At our March meeting **Davey Yarborough**, who was tasked with acting the title role, joined Art for a focused analysis of Gonsalves at the height of his talents. This period was defined as approximately between his iconic performance at Newport in 1956 and the death of Strayhorn in 1967 (after which emotional and physical issues began to negatively impact his playing).

One of the numbers examined in depth was a rendition of “Stardust” on the LP *Salt and Pepper* led by a teaming of Paul and Sonny Stitt. Davey, who took lessons from Sonny while he lived in Takoma Park, commented that both players were “tagmasters,” meaning that they were both adept at adding their own special signature lines to their individual performances. Also heard was the original version of “Happy Reunion,” in which Paul meandered from the melody line far less than he would in later years.

Two late 50’s albums, “Cookin” and “Tell It The Way It Is” provided some notable examples of Paul playing his own compositions in the studio. Gonsalves always regarded himself primarily as a balladeer. Two wonderful, soulful interpretations of “Body and Soul” and “Second Chance” (theme from an early 60’s movie, *Two for the Seesaw*) validated his self-image.

Art Luby reports that for several years there has been interest from the Fringe Festival in reviving *Paul Gonsalves on the Road*. According to the playwright, “This summer, all the crucial contributors, including Davey and director Andy Wassenich are available at the same time, so I decided to make an effort to mount it. Like all plays, it has its difficult spots, so I’m currently in the process of edits and re-writes.”

THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

In Memoriam Theodore A. Shell (1915-2015)

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