

CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

GRANT PROPOSAL FORM

(Please print form and fill out completely)

Faculty Sponsor, Department: Mark Ossteen, English

Event Date: Spring 09 - Summer 10

Project Title: Baltimore Jazz History

SUMMARY BUDGET

	Proposed	Spent
Honoraria	<u>14,000</u>	_____
Travel	<u>500</u>	_____
Lodging	_____	_____
Advertising	_____	_____
Food	_____	_____
<u>Music purchases</u>	<u>500</u>	_____
<u>Office supplies</u>	<u>500</u>	_____
<u>Research Assist</u>	<u>1500</u>	_____
Requested from the Center:	<u>17,000</u>	_____
Funds from other Sources:	<u>33,000</u>	_____
Total Budget:	_____	_____

Have you consulted your chair? Yes No

FINAL REPORT DUE: _____ **Budget #:** _____

ABSTRACT: see attached

Baltimore Jazz History

I seek funds from the Center for the Humanities to support the *Baltimore Jazz History* project, which will culminate in a collection of essays researched and written by students in my spring 2010 Aperio Seminar, and supplemented by local writers and historians. I will serve as general editor and project supervisor. The book has already been accepted by Apprentice House.

Background

Baltimore has a distinguished jazz history, starting almost from the music's inception: pianist James Hubert (Eubie) Blake was born in Baltimore in 1883, and went on to become one of the most important performers and composers in early jazz. Three other major figures—swing drummer Chick Webb, singer/bandleader Cab Calloway, and vocalist Billie Holiday—were born, educated and/or received their early training in Baltimore. For example, Webb and Calloway are both graduates of Frederick Douglass Senior High School, where their mentor, W. Llewellyn Wilson, directed the music programs. Blake wrote his first compositions in Baltimore, and debuted his legendary musical *Shuffle Along* here as well. Holiday, born Eleanora Fagan in Philadelphia, was reared in Baltimore, where she also spent time in the House of the Good Shepherd. Holiday not only revolutionized jazz singing with a style that eschewed volume for evocation, but was also the first African-American woman to front an all-white band (Artie Shaw's orchestra), and one of the first jazz artists to confront America's racist past, with her provocative rendition of the anti-lynching song "Strange Fruit." The piece on Holiday will seek the origins of her style and sensibility in her hard-luck beginnings in Baltimore.

The book will begin with substantial essays on these four major figures, investigating each artist's contribution to the music and its culture, but particularly focusing on each one's

Baltimore connections. Contributors will immerse themselves in the recordings and secondary material relating to each artist. Fortunately, we have much helpful material available locally: the Eubie Blake papers are housed at the Maryland Historical Society, and several Calloway family members (one of whom I know personally) still reside in Baltimore. The archives of the Peabody Conservatory also offer a wealth of valuable material, including interviews, photos and oral histories, about Maryland's music and its history. The Frederick Douglass High School Alumni Association also possesses useful materials, as does the Maryland Room at the Enoch Pratt Library. Contributors will use these and other sources to write their chapters and to compile annotated discographies and bibliographies for each artist. At the end of the section, we will provide a map showing significant places in each artist's early life.

The next section will offer chapters on other Baltimore-based or-born national artists, such as alto saxophonist Gary Bartz (b. 1940) and big band composer/arranger Hank Levy (b. 1927), who have not received the attention they merit. It will also include essays on the Baltimore saxophone, piano and vocal traditions and incorporate discussions of a few Baltimore-born musicians in the primes of their national careers (e.g., Cyrus Chestnut). The emphasis in each case will be on local connections: for example, pianist Albert Dailey attended Morgan State and was a member of the house band at the Royal Theater (a major Pennsylvania Avenue venue) for three years before moving on to become a nationally-known recording artist; singer Ethel Ennis (another Douglass alumna) sang for more than a decade at the Red Fox; Bartz's parents owned the North End Lounge; Levy (whose odd-meter charts furnished challenging material for Stan Kenton's Orchestra and college jazz groups across the country) was music director at Towson State University for twenty years. Cyrus Chestnut has continued the legacy of Baltimore

jazz piano begun by Blake and carried on by Ellis Larkins and Albert Dailey; altoist Antonio Hart has followed in the footsteps of Bartz, and so on. This section will establish a Baltimore jazz tradition and show how it reflects the city's unique geographic and cultural location: just as the city is at once Northern and Southern, so Baltimore jazz is both modern and steeped in the blues and gospel idioms and cultures.

The final section will consist of essays and interviews treating the heyday of Baltimore jazz—a scene centered on Pennsylvania Avenue in the 1950s and '60s. Chapters will discuss notable venues, such as The Club Tijuana, the Comedy Club, The North End Lounge, The Arch Social Club, The Royal Theater (which produced concerts by its own house group and national artists through the 1950s). Another chapter will discuss The Famous Ballroom on N. Charles St., where the Left Bank Jazz Society hosted performances by national jazz artists in the 1960s and '70s. This section will also include a map of the period's significant venues. In addition, using playbills and advertisements collected from sources such as the *Afro-American*, we will create a "snapshot" of one month in the life of Pennsylvania Ave., probably from 1959, the most important year in modern jazz. I have not pinned down every piece in this section, because ongoing research will dictate the final shape of these contributions. Whatever its final form, this section has a special urgency, since it will capture the voices of jazz performers and fans who are quite elderly and whose irreplaceable memories would otherwise be lost.

The book will be a tapestry of voices and approaches as rich as Baltimore jazz itself. It will also make several important scholarly contributions. First, no previous book has explored Baltimore's jazz history in detail. Second, though much has been written about the major figures, they have never been placed together as part of a Baltimore tradition. Third, the project will

unearth an under-recognized domain of regional culture. Its pedagogical values are also significant: it will initiate students into the use of primary research materials and bibliographic techniques; introduce Loyola's undergraduates to, and integrate them with, venerable members of the local African-American community; and it will instill students with valuable experience in the processes and demands of professional publishing.

Audience

I envision an audience that starts with Baltimore's thriving jazz community, but stretches to encompass Maryland history experts and aficionados, as well as national readers interested in African-American and music histories. Indeed, the book should appeal to jazz fans around the globe, not only for its essays on seminal figures such as Blake and Webb, but also for its exploration of a relatively unknown but significant regional jazz scene.

Editor

A Professor of English at Loyola, I am the author or editor of six previous books and a special journal issue on jazz writing, as well as a successful and experienced instructor of undergraduates at every level. I am also President of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing jazz in the region, and a veteran jazz musician who has performed regularly in the area since 1995. I thus have a wide range of contacts on the local jazz scene, including musicians, promoters, club owners, and local historians. Hence, I bring a unique combination of literary, pedagogical, and musical skills and knowledge to the project. My CV is attached.

TENTATIVE TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE MUSICIANS

I. Major Figures (6,000-7,000 words each)

Eubie Blake

Cab Calloway

Chick Webb

Billie Holiday

II. Neglected Gems, Local Legends and Rising Stars (3-4,000 words each)

W. Llewellyn Wilson and Early Jazz in Baltimore

Ellis Larkins, Albert Dailey, Jessica Williams and Baltimore Jazz Piano

Gary Bartz: Blues Chronicles

Hank Levy: Master of Meter

Vocal Legends: Baltimore Jazz Singing (Ethel Ennis, others)

The Baltimore Saxophone Sound (Mickey Fields, Antonio Hart, Mark Gross, et al)

Cyrus Chestnut: In the Tradition

THE SCENE

Pennsylvania Avenue: Jazz Central

The Royal Theater

The Arch Social Club

The Famous Ballroom

A Snapshot of Pennsylvania Avenue in 1959

Map of significant venues

Interviews and Oral Histories

Discographies

Bibliography

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The primary contributors to *Baltimore Jazz History* will be students in my Aperio Seminar (spring, 2010). Some of these students will have completed my course in fall, 2009 (*Blue Notes: The Literature of Jazz*) that will educate them in the general history of the music, as well as its literature and culture. I will invite a handful of these students to enroll in the Aperio Seminar, in which we will concentrate on completing the research for, and writing the pieces in *Baltimore Jazz History*. A smaller, already selected group will begin work during the summer of 2009; this is the main period for which I seek funding. This summer work is essential in order to train and supervise students in research techniques, investigate the range of materials, track down interview prospects and begin recording them, and start the bibliographic and discographic work.

The following five students have committed to the project:

Erin Bowman, '10 (History)

Cathleen Carris, '10 (History)

Frank Graziano '10 (Communication)

Jennifer Nordmark '11 (Political Science/Writing)

Andrew Zaleski '11 (English).

Ethel Ennis (jazz singer and educator)

Connie Fields (widow of Baltimore saxophone legend Mickey Fields)

John Fowler (former President of Left Bank Jazz Society)

Stuart Hudgins (archivist, graphic designer, local historian)

Camay Calloway Murphy (daughter of Cab Calloway)

Rosa Pryor-Trusty (author of *African-American Music in Baltimore*)

Whit Williams (saxophonist and bandleader)

Biddy Woods (long-time Baltimore jazz fan)

Others to be determined.

Budget (I)*:

Research stipends (summer): 3 full-time @\$3,000 each; one part-time @ 1,500	\$10,500
Project director (summer)	3,500
Travel	500
Music purchases and fees	500
Office supplies	500
Research assistant (fall)	1,500
Total Budget:	\$17,000

*I have applied for a grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. The above budget will obtain if we receive that grant, which would provide funds to support a spring semester course release for the supervisor, pay fees for non-student contributors, and fund other costs associated with

publication.

The following budget will obtain if we do *not* receive the MHT grant.

Budget (II):

Research stipends (summer): 3 full-time @\$3,000 each; one part-time @ 1,500	\$10,500
Project director (summer)	2,500
Travel	1,000
Music purchases and fees	2,000
Office supplies	500
Honoraria for non-student contributors (7 @ \$500 each)	3,500
Research assistant (fall)	1,500
Total:	\$21,500

Bibliography

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- Chilton, John. *Billie's Blues*. New York: Da Capo, 1989.
- Emery, Lynne. "Black Dance and the American Musical Theatre to 1930." In *Musical Theatre in America*. Ed. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., 301-07. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984.
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- Graziano, John. "Black Musical Theater and the Harlem Renaissance Movement." In *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., 87-110. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990.
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- Jasen, David A., and Gene Jones. *Black Bottom Stomp: Eight Masters of Ragtime and Early Jazz*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Johnson, J. Wilfred. *Ella Fitzgerald: An Annotated Discography; Including a Complete Discography of Chick Webb*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000.
- Kimball, Robert, and William Bolcom. *Reminiscing with Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake*. New York, NY: Cooper Square, 2000.
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- Pryor-Trusty, Rosa & Tonya Taliaferro. *African-American Entertainment in Baltimore*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003.
- Rose, Al. *Eubie Blake*. NY: Schirmer Books, 1979.
- Shipton, Alyn. *Hi-de-ho Man: The Life of Cab Calloway*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007.

Videos and Films:

The African American Cinema II: The Scar of Shame (1926) and *Sissle and Blake* (1923). Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1993. 1 videocassette (VHS) (80 min.); si., b&w; 1/2 in. In *Sissle and Blake*, the duo performs "Affectionate Dan" and a spiritual.

Eubie Blake: Memories of Eubie. Weston, CT: Ruth Leon Productions, 1979. 1 videocassette (VHS) (59 min.); sd., col.; 1/2 in. A biography of Eubie Blake that includes many performances

by Eubie. It was broadcast on January 13, 1980 on PBS's *American Masters* series.

Websites:

Shuffle Along: The Eubie Blake Collection

www.mdhs.org/eubieblake

Sheet music, letters, biography, and photos of Eubie Blake

Sound & Stories: The Musical Life of Maryland's African-American Communities

www.peabody.jhu.edu/sas

The Storm is Passing Over: Celebrating the Musical Life of Maryland's African-American Community from Emancipation to Civil Rights

www.peabody.jhu.edu/archives/storm

Both websites listed above explore the musical heritage of African Americans of Maryland in jazz, gospel, blues and symphonic music.