

# *Seeking Harmony: The Life of Luther Henderson*

by Devra Hall

## Overview

Luther Henderson was a composer, arranger, conductor, musical director, orchestrator, and pianist. He was a proud black man who graduated from the Julliard School of Music in 1942, and in 1956, married a white woman, his second wife. He was Duke Ellington's "classical arm," orchestrating music for *Beggar's Holiday*, *Three Black Kings*, and other symphonic works. Duke spoke highly of Luther, but seldom gave him the credit he was due. Luther was Lena Horne's pianist and musical director. During his sixty-year career in music, he worked his magic on some of Broadway's greatest musical hits, including *Flower Drum Song*, *Funny Girl*, *No No Nanette*, *Purlie*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, and *Jelly's Last Jam*, starring such performers as Barbra Streisand, Laine Kazan, Robert Guillaume, Savion Glover, Andre Deshields, Tonya Pinkins, and Gregory Hines. His music was heard on television programs such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Bell Telephone Hour*, and specials for the pop stars of the day including Dean Martin, Carol Burnett, Andy Williams, Victor Borge, and Polly Bergen.

Despite the success of these shows, on both stage and television, his contributions were never properly valued. What reason, or combination of reasons, led to this oversight? Certainly there were those who usurped credit, whether due to ego, carelessness, or resentment of Luther's training and talent. Was he caught between two worlds – the elite classical world embodied in his Julliard training, and the world of jazz, his own heritage? Both worlds viewed him with suspicion; neither took him seriously. Was it due to the racial biases of the times? Or was it just the inevitable fate of a background man?

Those in the business understood his talent, but it is hard to communicate to an audience just what Luther really did. We value a composer above an arranger or orchestrator, thinking that

one is more original and creative than the other. When music is described as ‘incidental,’ the word used for background music as opposed to featured songs in a show, we assume it is, well, incidental, not very important. Even ‘background’ conveys lack of importance. Most of Luther’s major projects were based on songs written by others, but the difference between a song in its original form and Luther’s orchestration based on that song is vast. Luther’s interpretation is every bit as creative as the original song. He tried to explain it in an interview for *American Theatre* magazine in 1997:

Sometimes I call it ‘translating’ the music, but it’s more like *transporting* the music. It’s going through me, and I’m enjoying it going through me, and I’m adding to it what happens when it passes through me. I don’t try to *imitate* Duke Ellington. I can’t *copy* Jelly Roll Morton. I can’t *be* Fats Waller. But I can express what Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, and Duke Ellington mean to me. I can be the conduit.

Luther lived his life largely in the shadows, yet he never saw it that way. He was an affable man who appeared to view his experiences through proverbial rose-colored glasses, and for the most part, that is truly how he saw things. He lived as though he had plenty of money, but he was poorly compensated and he never liked to ask for proper recompense. He believed his work was important, but he said he enjoyed it so much, that it didn’t seem right to be paid. He thought everyone loved him – and most people did, but some didn’t. Growing up black in America, embracing both jazz and classical music – one, an American art form that has yet to be fully appreciated, and the other, a field not truly open to blacks at that time – was not a path to fame and fortune. But with a love of music, a prodigious talent, and an optimistic outlook, that is the life he chose. It was a life that required extreme dedication and concentration, sometimes to the detriment of family relations and his role as husband and father.

Luther’s obituary ran in the major newspapers, but during his lifetime very little was written about his life and work. This biography will be based on access to Luther’s voluminous

personal papers, and interviews with his family, friends, and colleagues. His papers, currently being catalogued before donation to the Library of Congress, include calendars, daybooks, business and financial records, and personal papers. But the real insight is provided by the primary source himself, through a treasure trove of files with headings such as “Classic Ellington,” “Jelly’s Last Jam,” “Jesse Norman,” “Polly Bergen,” “Sir Simon Rattle/Birmingham Symphony in Great Britain,” “Stormy Weather,” “St. Louis Woman” and “Queenie Pie.” He kept files containing journal entries and notes that document his feelings about each project’s progress and events.

Luther left his mark on Broadway shows for four decades, a time referred to as golden, but not necessarily for blacks. Being black was both a hindrance and also an asset – a hindrance because ‘they’ would never think of hiring a black man to do a white man’s work (that work being Composer with a capital C), but when it was black authenticity, a little bit of color, that was needed, ‘they’ called him.

“I doubt I would have been hired by Jule Styne or Richard Rodgers had I not been black,” Luther told *Back Stage* magazine in 2001. “Yes, I had talent. But I represented the culture that they were looking for. Being black was an asset.”

Broadway was neither Luther’s first nor only playground. In the 1940s, after he graduated from the Julliard School of Music and did his duty patriotic as an arranger for the Navy Band stationed at Great Lakes Naval Station in Illinois, he created symphonic orchestrations and arrangements for Duke Ellington’s band, as well as orchestrations for Ellington's musical, *Beggar's Holiday* (1946). Ellington, who gave himself the nickname “Tentacles,” called Luther “my classical arm.” Luther’s musical love affair with all things

Ellington was life long, despite the hurt of being denied recognition for his work and the unpleasant end of a fifty-year friendship with Duke's son, Mercer, his childhood buddy.

From 1947 to 1950, Luther worked as pianist and musical director for Lena Horne. After that, singers flocked to him, wanting him to write their shows, a trend that continued for decades. Bea Arthur, Robert Goulet, Diahann Carroll, Nancy Wilson, Goldie Hawn, and Florence Henderson sing his praises to this day. Even Ms. Horne called him back thirty years later to work on her one-woman show, *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*. The 1950s also brought opportunities in television. It was Luther who simultaneously conducted two orchestras (one, on-camera, the other, off) for *Playhouse 90: The Helen Morgan Story*, starring Polly Bergen.

Luther was a classically trained artist who, because of his color, was denied the chance to truly participate in that field. But he carved his own inroads, for example, deriving great pleasure from his twenty-year association with the Canadian Brass, and writing over 150 classical and jazz arrangements for them, arrangements that are today being played by school brass ensembles nationwide. And even though his love of jazz, his native tradition, provided him a rewarding musical career, it is no surprise that he identifies his project with Sir Simon Rattle and the Birmingham Symphony in Great Britain as the highpoint of his career. He was 80 years old and had waited nearly 60 years for such an opportunity. It was a success, and gave rise to a reprise in America at Carnegie Hall, again with Sir Simon Rattle, this time conducting the Orchestra of St Luke's. Offers for other symphonic projects, including a commission from the Berlin Philharmonic, were finally coming in, but it was too late. Luther was fighting cancer.

When he was told that he had just been named as a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master Fellowship, an honor that pleased him greatly, Luther said one word: "Recognition." He had little energy to say more, and sadly, a few weeks later, his battle was

over. Luther died on July 29, 2003, at the age of 84, six months before the award ceremony took place.

Luther Henderson may have led his life in the shadows, but his legacy must be saved from obscurity. Filled with fascinating anecdotes about show business and the people Luther met and worked with, this biography of a man and his music will illuminate his career, professional associations, and his personal life including his childhood, four marriages (twice interracial, thrice a widower), and relationships with his children. All aspects will be examined within the context of the cultural and political developments of the time, and the experience for blacks in the American musical theater and pop music fields of the late twentieth century.

## Proposed Interviews

The list of people to be interviewed is extensive and still growing. In addition to family members (wife, children, and grandchildren), a partial list is provided below. I personally know or have easy access to many of these people; others are likely to make themselves available at the family's request. While a few might be elusive, the most important players in Luther's personal and professional life are expected to participate. Beside each name is the work they performed or their relationship to Luther.

Julie Andrews - TV: *Broadway of Learner & Lowe*  
Bea Arthur  
Polly Bergen - Nightclub acts and TV (*Helen Morgan Story, Polly Bergen Show*). Godmother to Luther's daughter  
Susan Birkenhead - Lyricist – *Jelly's Last Jam*  
Sarah Brightman  
Ruth Brown - Singer/actress, *Black & Blue*  
Joyce Brown - Conductor & vocal arranger for *The First*; Associate Musical Director *Dr Jazz*  
Carol Burnett  
Canadian Brass  
Carolina Brass  
Diahann Carroll - Nightclub acts  
Regina Carter – Jazz violinist, special guest on *Classic Ellington* concert and recording  
Chicago Symphony Brass  
Stephen Citron – Songwriter and author, close friend, neighbor, swimming buddy  
Barbara Cook - Singer  
Keith David – Actor, Chimney Man in *Jelly's Last Jam*  
André De Shields – Actor, Jester in *Play On, Ain't Misbehavin'*  
Placido Domingo – Opera star  
Norma Donaldson – Actress/singer, in *Bravo Giovanni*

Anne Edwards – Author, close friend, collaborator, and neighbor  
Anita Ellis - *Flower Drum Song*  
Sheldon Epps - Stage producer/director  
Eileen Farrell - Opera star  
Savion Glover – Actor/tap dancer, Young Jelly in *Jelly's Last Jam; Black & Blue*  
Eydie Gorme - *Golden Rainbow*  
Robert Goulet - Nightclub acts  
Lil Green  
Robert Guillaume – Actor, *Purlie*  
Goldie Hawn – Actress, nightclub acts  
Sherman Hemsley – Actor, *Purlie*  
Florence Henderson – Singer/actress, nightclub acts  
Linda Hopkins – Singer/actress, *Black & Blue*  
Lena Horne - Singer  
Dick Hyman – Jazz pianist, *Dr Jazz*  
Neeme Järvi  
Sy Johnson – Arranger/orchestrator, *Black & Blue*  
Quincy Jones  
Lainie Kazan - Actress/singer, *Funny Girl; La Contessa in Bravo Giovanni*  
Steve Lawrence - *Golden Rainbow*  
Michele Lee - Actress  
Ann Margaret – Singer/actress, TV special  
Lonette McKee – Actress, *The First*  
Al McKibbon – Musician, *Black & Blue*  
Armelia McQueen – Actress/singer, *Ain't Misbehavin'*

Mormon Tabernacle Choir  
Odetta  
Leonard Oxley – On-stage pianist, *Play On*,  
*Ain't Misbehavin'*,  
Ken Page – Actor, *Ain't Misbehavin'*  
Mandy Patinkin – Actor/performer  
Brock Peters - Actor  
Tonya Pinkins – Actress, Lady Liv in *Play*  
*On*, Anita in *Jelly's Last Jam*  
Sir Simon Rattle – Symphony conductor  
Dianne Reeves – Jazz vocalist  
Rachael Robinson - Consultant for *The First*  
(about Jackie Robinson)  
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Rita Rudner – Actress, *So Long, 174<sup>th</sup> St.*  
Ruben Santiago-Hudson – Actor, Buddy  
Bolden in *Jelly's Last Jam*

Carrie Smith – Singer, *Black & Blue*  
Barbra Streisand – Actress/singer, *Funny*  
*Girl*  
Grady Tate – Drummer, *Black & Blue*, Lena  
Clark Terry – Jazz trumpeter, Navy Band;  
*Classic Ellington* CD  
Linda Twine – Conductor – *Jelly's Last*  
*Jam*, asst conductor for Lena  
Leslie Uggams – Performer, *Hallelujah*  
*Baby*  
Gerald Wilson – Musician and bandleader,  
Navy Band  
George C. Wolfe – Writer, *Jelly's Last Jam*  
Charlaine Woodard – Actress *Ain't*  
*Misbehavin'*

## Author

Devra Hall is the author of “Men, Women, and Girl Singers” (Beckham Publications Group, 2002), the life story of jazz bassist John Levy, who became the personal manager of many of the most notable names in jazz.

Hall began her writing career in the early 1980s by composing press releases and artist biographies for her public relations clients and providing promotional copy to record companies. By the late 1980s, Hall was a frequent contributor to *Billboard* magazine. Then she took a detour to become a best-selling computer trade book author. After writing several books about computer programming, CD-ROMs, and building web sites, Hall turned to her attention back to her first love – music.

Hall is a prolific chronicler of jazz luminaries. In addition to her work on the printed page that includes liner notes for recordings by Oscar Peterson, Joe Williams, and Jim Hall, among others, Hall is a writer and music/talent coordinator of television programs and jazz videos. Her television and video credits include: talent coordinator for “Red, Hot & Cool,” a nationally syndicated television show hosted by Nancy Wilson; musical coordinator for the “George Shearing: Lullaby of Birdland” and “Joe Williams: A Song Is Born” videos produced live at the Paul Mason Winery; and writer for “Jim Hall: A Life In Progress,” a documentary produced by Rhapsody Films.

Hall holds a Masters Degree in Educational Technology & Media from California State University, Pomona, and a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College. Today, while Hall continues some of her music-related activities, she devotes most of her time to writing and editing books and articles. She lives in Southern California with her husband.

## Luther Henderson – Timeline

Chronology will dictate the basic structure of this biography, while allowing for thematic digressions. Because research has only just begun, a chapter outline is not yet available. Though still sketchy and incomplete, this timeline affords a rough idea of how Luther’s life unfolds. The events listed here are by no means of equal importance. Some will merit only a passing reference, while others may require a chapter.

### March 14, 1919

- Luther Henderson Jr. born in Kansas City, MO.

### 1920s

- 1923 – Henderson family, Luther age 4, moved to New York City
- Luther grows up, middle class and educated, in the Sugar Hill section of Harlem; friends with Mercer Ellington

### 1930s

- 1934 - winner of an amateur contest at the famed Apollo Theater
- 1935 or 36 - Entered City College

### 1940s

- Married Tuleen; a secret elopement while still attending Julliard
- Son, Denson B. Henderson, born
- Son, Luther L. Henderson, III, born.
- 1942 - graduated Julliard, B.S. Music
- 1942 - a piano player (and arranger) with the Leonard Ware Trio
- 1943 and/or 1945-46 - Katherine Dunham's Tropical Revue
- 1944 - Duke Ellington: “Duke’s classical right arm” Luther’s first job out of Julliard as band pianist, composer and arranger. Arranger of *Three Black Kings*, composed by Duke Ellington, originally commissioned by the Dance Theatre of Harlem as *Les Trois Rois Noirs*; also *New World Coming*
- WWII – Navy: Arranger with the U.S. Navy Band at the famed Great Lakes Naval Station
- 1946 - Duke Ellington and John Latouche's *Beggars Holiday* (a work inspired by John Gay's "The Beggars Opera"): Luther’s first theatre project; both the arrangements and orchestrations.
- 1946 – *Rose Colored Glasses*. An original show.
- 1946-47 - New York University, Graduate School of Music

- Mid 40s: played piano for: Buddy Tate (on recording, between 1945-1950); Al Hibbler (on recording, between 46-49); Etta Jones (on recording, between 44-47).
- 1947 – 1950 - Lena Horne’s pianist and musical director for three years.

## **1950s**

- Television specials
- 1955 – “Carmen McRae Sings Great American Songs” – arranger and conductor for *I’ll Be Seeing You*
- 1956 - Married Stephanie; lived at Chelsea Hotel
- 1956 - Arranger for Anita Ellis recording *I Wonder What Became of Me*
- 1957 - Clark Terry recording *Duke with a Difference* (credits show Luther playing celeste).
- May 16, 1957 - *Playhouse 90: The Helen Morgan Story* starring Polly Bergen; simultaneously conducted two orchestras
- 1957 - *The Polly Bergen Show*.
- 1957 - Luther’s daughter, Melanie, born at St Vincent's Hospital during the live show.
- 1958 *Polly [Bergen] & Her Pop* (recording)
- Dec 1, 1958 - May 7, 1960 - *Flower Drum Song*. An original musical comedy. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.

## **1960s**

- Dec 26, 1960 - Jan 13, 1962 - *Do Re Mi*. An original musical comedy. Music orchestrated by Luther Henderson
- 1961 - Conducts recording for Polly Bergen. *Sings the Hit Songs from DoReMi*.
- May 19, 1962 - Sep 15, 1962 - *Bravo Giovanni*. Original musical. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- Apr 19, 1963 - May 25, 1963 - *Hot Spot*. An original musical. Music arranged and orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1964 – Helped Billy Goldenberg orchestrate overture for *High Spirits*.
- 1964 Cocomanut Grove Show for Nancy Wilson. Wrote song *10 Good Years*
- Mar 26, 1964 - Jul 1, 1967 - *Funny Girl*. An original musical comedy. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- Dec 15, 1964 - Jun 12, 1965 - *I Had a Ball*. An original musical comedy. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- Apr 26, 1967 - Jan 13, 1968 - *Hallelujah, Baby!* An original musical. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- Wife Stephanie died June 3, 1967
- Feb 4, 1968 - Jan 11, 1969 - *Golden Rainbow*. An original musical. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.

## **1970s**

- Mar 15, 1970 - Nov 6, 1971 – *Purlie*. An original musical comedy. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson; music orchestrated by Luther Henderson; choral and vocal arrangements by Luther Henderson.

- Jan 19, 1971 - Feb 3, 1973 - *No, No, Nanette*. A revival; musical comedy. Incidental music by Luther Henderson; dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- Dec 7, 1971 - Dec 7, 1971 - *Wild and Wonderful*. An original musical. Music orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- Married Margo (third wife).
- Apr 14, 1972 - Apr 16, 1972 - *That's Entertainment*. An original musical revue. Musical Director, Luther Henderson; Music arranged and orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- Dec 27, 1972 - Jan 7, 1973 – *Purlie*. A revival; musical comedy. Choral Arranger, Luther Henderson; dance arrangements by Luther Henderson; music orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- Performance at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago? Kenny Burrell's story meeting Luther and Duke Ellington.
- Met biographer Anne Edwards & songwriter Stephen Citron.
- Dec 23, 1974 - Jan 4, 1975 - *Good News*. A revival; musical comedy. Dance and incidental music composed and arranged by Luther Henderson
- Mar 19, 1975 - Mar 22, 1975 - *Doctor Jazz*. An original musical. Music and dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- May 13, 1975 - Aug 16, 1975 - *Rodgers & Hart*, an original musical revue. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson; principal orchestrator, Luther Henderson.
- Apr 27, 1976 - May 9, 1976 - *So Long, 174th Street*. An original musical. Music orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1976 The MGM Records Symphony with Odetta and Brock Peters, Leonard De Paur conducting. *Ballad for Americans; The Lonesome Train*
- 11/20/76 - 7/10/77 - *The All Night Strut* (Ford Theatre, DC). Luther Henderson, musical supervisor, orchestrator, and arranger.
- May 9, 1978 - Feb 21, 1982 - *Ain't Misbehavin'* An original musical revue. Musical Supervisor, Luther Henderson; music arranged and orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1978 recorded cast album of *Ain't Misbehavin'*.
- 1978 first contact with Canadian Brass. Three charts for Fats Waller recording: *Lookin' Good, Feelin' Bad; Loungin' at the Waldorf; and Handful of Keys*.
- Jun 14, 1978 - Dec 3, 1978 - *The American Dance Machine*. An original, special dance production. Dance arrangements by Luther Henderson.
- 1/27 - 3/4/79 - *Storyville* (Ford Theatre, DC)
- Margo (third wife) died in April, from cancer.

## 1980s

- Bea Arthur rehearsed with Luther to sing at the Cy Coleman Tribute at Waldorf Hotel.
- Apr 27, 1980 - May 10, 1980 - *Happy New Year*. An original musical. Musical Supervisor, Luther Henderson; music orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1980-81 *The Crystal Tree*, an original musical by Luther Henderson. Directed by Billie Allen, book/lyrics by Doris Julian, starring Jean Dushon at AMAS Playhouse

- *Ain't Misbehavin'* goes to Paris.
- February 8, 1981 - Married Billie Allen (fourth wife)
- May 12, 1981 - Jun 30, 1982 - *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*. An original production, special concert. Music Consultant, Luther Henderson.
- Nov 17, 1981 - Dec 12, 1981 - *The First*. An original musical. Musical Supervisor, Luther Henderson; dance arrangements by Luther Henderson; music orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1980s orchestrations for Barbara Cook recordings: *It's Better With a Band* (1981 and 1986) *Disney Album* (1988)
- 1983-1985 – Three years of *Miss Teen U.S.A. Pageant*
- 1984-85 *Miss Waters To You*, an original musical by Luther Henderson. Directed by Billie Allen at AMAS Playhouse
- *Miss Universe Pageant* 1986
- 1987-88 Royal Philharmonic recordings. Luther arranged music and wrote liner notes for: *Digital Trip Down Broadway* (1987), *Broadway Extravaganza*, (1987) and *Two Symphonic Pictures*.
- Aug 15, 1988 - Jan 15, 1989 - *Ain't Misbehavin'*. A revival; musical revue. Music supervision and arrangements by Luther Henderson; conductor and pianist Luther Henderson.
- Jan 26, 1989 - Jan 20, 1991 - *Black and Blue* Original. A musical revue. Additional arrangements and orchestrations by Luther Henderson.
- 1989 - Orchestration for Mandy Patinkin.

## **1990s**

- 1991 - Arranger for Placido Domingo recording *Broadway I Love*
- Apr 26, 1992 - Sep 5, 1993 - *Jelly's Last Jam*. An original musical. Musical supervisor, Luther Henderson; Music adapted and orchestrated by Luther Henderson; additional music by Luther Henderson.
- 1992 - Luther nominated for Tony Award® Best Original Score *Jelly's Last Jam*.
- December 3-4, 1993 - The Brooklyn Philharmonic, Conductor/Arranger for *Harlem/A Tone Parallel* and *Queenie Pie* at Brooklyn Academy of Music.
- February 26, 1995 - *In Tribute To Martin Luther King*. The Canadian Brass at the Kennedy Center. Luther attended as composer/arranger.
- 1996 - *Jelly's Last Jam* for HBO. Actor's strike, project aborted.
- January 12-13, 1996 - *Hamburg Jazz Festival*. The Canadian Brass in Hamburg, Germany. Luther participated as arranger and pianist.
- Mar 20, 1997 - May 11, 1997 - *Play On!* An original musical. Musical supervisor, Luther Henderson; Music arranged and orchestrated by Luther Henderson.
- 1997 - Luther nominated for Tony Award® Best Orchestrations for *Play On*
- 1998 – arranger and conductor for Eileen Farrell recording *Carols for Christmas Eve*.
- 1998 – Arranger for The Mormon Tabernacle Choir *Christmas Gloria*.
- 1998 - Orchestration for Ron Raines *Broadway Passion*
- 1999 – first problems with neck and throat; double surgery (remove tumor and unblock carotid artery)

- 1999 – Ellington Centennial at UCLA
- 1999 – Duke Ellington concert with Sir Simon Rattle and the Birmingham Symphony in Great Britain

## **2000s**

- September 2000 – Duke Ellington concert reprise with Sir Simon Rattle and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, with guests Clark Terry, Diane Reeves, and Regina Carter. First arranger to have a full evening of own work performed at Carnegie Hall.
- 2000 – Canadian Brass recording of Ellington's music, *Take the A Train*, nominated for a Grammy
- 2001 - Orchestrator/arranger for *Little Ham* - a musical version of Langston Hughes' play, an AMAS Musical Theatre production playing Off-Broadway at the Hudson Guild Theatre
- 2002 - Arranger for Carolina Brass recording *That's a Plenty*
- July 29, 2003 – Luther Henderson died in New York City
- August 8, 2003 – Memorial at The Riverside Church.
- January 2004 – NEA Jazz Master Ceremony award accepted by Luther's widow, Bille Allen Henderson (accompanied onstage by Luther's son, Luther Henderson III, and daughter, Melanie Henderson.)

## Positioning

*Seeking Harmony: The Life of Luther Henderson* will not only be a well-researched biography, but also entertaining reading in the narrative nonfiction tradition. Use of Luther's journals and personal papers allows readers to see his life from the inside. Containing both an index and endnotes, this book will also be valuable to educators and students, libraries and repositories of African-American, musical theater, and cultural history.

No competing works exist for this title. While a few books about musical theater, and biographies of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, make passing reference to Luther Henderson, this will be the first biography written about him, and the only account of his life based on his own papers, family reminiscences and personal interviews.

Recent acquisitions show a receptive market not only for biography in general and biographies in the field of entertainment, but also for biographies of lesser-known people who have made a contribution despite their lack of celebrity status. A short list of new acquisitions reported by trade magazines in recent months includes:

- *The Great Black Way: Central Avenue and the Legacy of African-American Los Angeles* by RJ Smith (Perseus Books)
- *Go, Girl, Go! The Women's Revolution in Music* by James L. Dickerson (Schirmer Trade Books)
- *I Feel So Good: The Life And Times Of Big Bill Broonzy* by Robert Riesman (Routledge)
- *Father Of Dignity: Biography of James Weldon Johnson* by Hugh Pearson (Lawrence Hill Books/Chicago Review Press)
- *A Beautiful Life*, biography of actress, singer, and dancer Lois Moran, by Richard Buller (Amadeus Press/Limelight Editions)

Other biographical releases of a similar nature, to which this title might be favorably compared, include:

- *Fine and Dandy: The Life And Work Of Kay Swift* by Vicki Ohl (Yale University Press, 2004)
- *In Black And White: The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr.* by Wil Haygood (Knopf, 2003)

- *Deems Taylor: a biography* by James A. Pegolotti (Northeastern University Press, 2003)
- *Wishing On The Moon: The Life and Times of Billie Holiday* by Donald Clarke (Viking, 1994)
- *Becoming Something: The Story of Canada Lee* by Mona Z. Smith (Faber & Faber 2004)

Although *Seeking Harmony* could be viewed as a music biography, it would be more appropriately shelved with biographies of the stage and screen – Performing Arts/Theatre or Performing Arts/Entertainment Bios – along with titles about Cole Porter, Billy Wilder, Sammy Davis Jr., Canada Lee, and Margaret Webster. Additionally, it might also be shelved in African-American Studies.

## Marketing

### Who will read *Seeking Harmony*?

- People who love biographies.
- People interested in the history and contributions of African-American individuals.
- People interested in musical theater.
- People with an interest in jazz and popular music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- People who appreciate the life and work of those behind the scenes.

### Who might offer endorsements/back-cover blurbs for this book?

Any number of individuals from the list of interviewees (see pages 4 and 5) may be willing to offer comment. While all A-list people might be approached, those most likely to agree include: Bea Arthur, Polly Bergen, Andre De Shields, Savion Glover, Robert Guillaume, Lena Horne, Quincy Jones, Tonya Pinkins, Sir Simon Rattle, Rachael Robinson, and George C. Wolfe.

Several writers who are acquainted with the author, many of them biographers, might also be approached for comment.

- William Zinsser (Author of *On Writing Well*, *Easy To Remember: The Great American Songwriters and Their Songs*, *Mitchell & Ruff: An American Profile in Jazz*, and other books on topics ranging from baseball to travel and American history.)
- Terry Teachout (Author of *The Skeptic: A Life of H. L. Mencken*. Arts critic for the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Smithsonian*, and others.)
- Wil Haygood (Award-winning writer and runner-up for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in 1990, currently on staff at *The Washington Post*. Author of four books including *In Black and White: The Life of Sammy Davis, Jr.*)

- Anne Edwards (Luther’s close personal friend and author of more than a dozen biographies including *The Reagans: Portrait of a Marriage*, *Maria Callas: An Intimate Biography*, *Ever After: Diana and the Life She Led*, and *Streisand: A Biography*.)
- Marita Golden (Author of *Don’t Play in the Sun*, *Migrations of the Heart*, *A Miracle Every Day*, and *Saving Our Sons*. Co-founder and President/CEO of the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation.)

What will the author do?

- ✓ **Publicity** – With more than two decades of experience as an entertainment industry publicist, Hall will work tirelessly to promote her work. The publicity campaign she mounted for her last book, *Men, Women, and Girl Singers*, yielded coverage from the print and broadcast media, including five national print publications (*Los Angeles Times*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Jet Magazine*, *Jazz Times*, *Jazz Improv*), many local features, and several radio talk show interviews. Hall also orchestrated several promotional events ranging from readings/signings at a Los Angeles nightclub and a private party sponsored by SFJAZZ in San Francisco, to moderated discussions and signings at the Dusable Museum in Chicago and Borders Books in Washington, DC.
- ✓ **Mobilize Henderson Family, Friends, and Fans** – Hall will also mobilize Henderson’s family and friends, who can be expected to spread the word throughout the entertainment world, reaching devotees and aficionados of music and theatre worldwide.
- ✓ **Create Web Page** – On her web site hosted by The Authors Guild (devrahall.com), Hall will create one or more new web pages dedicated to *Seeking Harmony* and promote the book through a variety of online means including newsgroups.

- ✓ **Create A Buzz** – Hall will spread the word through various organizations and institutions, including but not limited to: Creative Nonfiction Foundation, The Authors Guild, National Writers Union, American Society of Journalists and Authors, Independent Writers of Southern California, WriterL, Associated Writers & Writing Programs, Jazz Journalists Association, and schools at which she matriculated or taught.